

LARGO LEADER

Review: Jackson's 'The Hobbit' thrives as a gripping fantasy

Also, catch several holiday events happening in Tampa Bay this week ... **Page 1B.**



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LARGO



20 local families shop with officials

Largo police and firefighters treated 20 local families to a Christmas shopping spree Dec. 15. More than \$6,500 was raised for the program this year. ... **Page 3A.**

COUNTY

Concussions raise concerns for youth

Several local physicians concerned about the health of Pinellas County's youth who participate in sports talked to Pinellas County Commissioners Dec. 11 about the need to do more to protect against concussions. ... **Page 4A.**

POLICE BEAT

Police looking for robbery suspect

Largo detectives are looking for a man suspected of robbing the BB&T Bank at 14141 Walsingham Road the morning of Dec. 14.



Detectives linked the robbery suspect to this man.

Largo detectives linked the robbery suspect with a man loitering around the Publix at 12022 Indian Rocks Road. ... **Page 5A.**

COMMUNITY



Sunlight seeps through cloud banks, creating an array of colors in the sky at dusk recently over the Belleair Causeway Bridge. For the full photo, see page 9A.

VIEWPOINTS

Suzette Porter

Columnist looks beyond the glitter of Christmas. ... **Page 15A.**



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Senior tax exemption to increase

Resolution to support domestic partnership registry passes Dec. 18

By JULIANA A. TORRES

LARGO - The Largo Commission gave initial approval Dec. 18 to increase the extra homestead property tax exemption granted to seniors who have an income of about \$27,000 or less.

The city is poised to lose \$83,171 in tax revenue in order to grant the additional relief to low-income seniors. The exemption set for a boost is one added on top of the standard exemption of \$50,000 for

homesteaded properties.

Largo first enacted the additional \$15,000 exemption for seniors during the 2007 tax year. The new proposal, supported by the commission last week, would increase that exemption to \$25,000. The change comes thanks to an amendment to the Florida constitution approved by voters in November.

In order to qualify for the exemption, residents must be 65 years or older and be a permanent resident of their home-

stead home for 25 years. The residents' household income also must fall below the level defined as low-income, which is currently \$27,030, but likely will increase slightly for 2013, explained Amy Davis, city budget manager.

The Pinellas County Property Appraiser's Office estimates that roughly 1,273 Largo homes would be affected by the change, Davis said. Seniors will have to apply every year in order to take advantage of the exemption, but would be re-

minded after they qualify the first time.

The resolution, which commissioners approved unanimously Dec. 18, must pass a second reading, scheduled for Jan. 8.

Resolution supports domestic registry

With county commissioners considering
See COMMISSION, page 3A

Stealing hearts

Young Largo dancer becomes Buccaneers' 'Little Fear' and overnight sensation

By JULIANA A. TORRES

LARGO - A little over a week ago, Christian Bottger was just another 10-year-old kid who occasionally showed off his talent for dancing at his dad's work.

Granted, his dad, Ed Bottger, was the video production manager for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. But leading the Bucs cheerleaders and mascot in a dance for the game day crowd was just the beginning of Christian's shoot to fame. Snatches of his performance during the Dec. 9 Buccaneers game against the Philadelphia Eagles was featured before commercial breaks on national TV. Less than 24 hours later, Christian was on a plane to New York City to perform the routine on NBC's Today show.

"Sunday when we went to bed, everything was normal," his mother Christine Bottger recalled. "Monday morning everything was no longer normal."

Christian's parents called him out of his fifth grade class at Fuguitt Elementary School to tell him the news. Then the family started packing for the sudden trip.

Christian is a student at Starstruck Dance Academy in Largo, where he dances six days a week, between two and four hours a day. The 10-year-old who never quite sits still began taking classes at the academy five years ago, in the footsteps of his two older sisters, Ashley and Brandi.

"He was dancing around here when he could walk," said Stefanie Valentine, his teacher and the co-owner of the academy. "We had to work on getting him

See DANCER, page 2A



Wearing the number of Tampa Bay Buccaneers' star rookie running back Doug Martin, Christian Bottger of Largo dances a routine to the song "Teach Me How to Dougie" during the Dec. 9 home game against the Philadelphia Eagles.



Photos by WAYNE CATHEL

Largo shopping center sells

By JULIANA A. TORRES

LARGO - The Champions Center, a 37,574-square-foot shopping center at 3690 East Bay Drive that has been in foreclosure, has been sold for \$2.65 million.

The recently announced sale was finalized on Nov. 15. The buyers, the Cantor Spellman Family Partnership, gain a property first built in 1986 that features the fifth Outback Steakhouse in the nation, built in 1989. Colliers International represented the seller, LNR Partners.

The center, which includes retail and office space, was 66 percent occupied at the time of the sale. The owners are in negotiations with new tenants, but are working to improve the center first and foremost, said Ron Scultz, director of retail investment services for Colliers International Tampa Bay.

"The first thing was to take care of maintenance issues. They're highly engaged in that," he said.



Photo courtesy of COSTAR

The Champions Center, at 3690 East Bay Drive, features an Outback Steakhouse, the fifth ever built. The center recently sold for \$2.65 million.

Potential changes include cosmetic improvements, including the color scheme of the buildings, and the name of the center, he said. The owners also wish to improve the parking lot, increasing its current grade for level of service from a C to an A.

The former owners deferred maintenance issues while going

through the foreclosure process over the past year, Schulz said. The owners are working to reverse that trend.

The brokers used Auction.com and their local connections to foster the eventual deal.

"We're local to the product,

See CENTER, page 3A

Board reports on the 'state of child'

By SUZETTE PORTER

CLEARWATER - Since January 1944, Pinellas County's Juvenile Welfare Board has been working on keeping kids in school and out of jail.

Gay Lancaster, executive director of the Children's Services Board of Pinellas County, presented the State of the Child report to Pinellas County Commissioners Dec. 11.

Lancaster said the good news is that most kids in Pinellas County are doing "really well."

"But the rest are doing really poorly," she said. More of the county's children and youth are homeless than are being reported because kids don't want to be removed from their parents, she said. There are too many not ready for school, which cost the system seven times more to remediate.

"Children are hardwired to learn by 18 months," she said - and that's when education should start.

"If they haven't learned to read by third grade, they probably won't graduate," Lancaster said.

The Juvenile Welfare Board and the Children's Services Council of Pinellas County are investing in the county's children and building on a foundation in a variety of ways. The mission is to "remove barriers preventing our community's children from reaching their fullest potential."

"We're committed to providing an innovative investment for those most at risk," Lancaster said.

JWB splits its funding three ways. One-third goes to making sure

See CHILDREN, page 4A

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Going back in time at Heritage Village

Heritage Village's Holiday Traditions continue to charm visitors at Pinellas County's 21-acre living history museum through Dec. 30. Historical houses are decorated true to their time period, locality and lifestyle, from an elaborately decorated Victorian home to a simply adorned 1852 log cabin.

Heritage Village is closed Mondays and Tuesdays, including Dec. 25 and Jan. 1.

Plans have been made for the 2013s Pinellas Folk Festival on Saturday, Jan. 26. Dozens of the Tampa Bay area's premier folk musicians are scheduled to play traditional folk, gospel, country and bluegrass music on stages throughout Heritage Village.

Music as well as many historical demonstrations and activities will be available from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., all sponsored by the Pinellas County Historical Society.

The event is free to children younger than 12; suggested minimum donation of \$5 per adult. A free shuttle will operate from free parking on 119 Street between Ulmerton and Walsingham roads to the event entrance; handicapped parking and drop-off is located at 12211 Walsingham Road.

The Pinellas County Historical Society was founded in 1976 when Pinellas County donated the land for Heritage Village during the American bicentennial year. The society is a nonprofit volunteer organization that supports Heritage Village's mission to collect, preserve and interpret the history of Pinellas County within the context of Florida history. Visit www.pinellascounty.org/heritage to learn more.

Heritage Village is located at 11909 125th St. N. in Largo. This living history museum brings more than 150 years of local history to life. Tour 28 authentic buildings and structures, and experience historical Pinellas County through hands-on exploration. Paths wind through 21 acres and connect with the Florida Botanical Gardens and the Florida Gulf Coast Center for Fishing and Interactive Museum.

Heritage Village is open Wednesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m. It is closed all Pinellas County holidays. For more information on Heritage Village, visit www.pinellascounty.org/heritage, or call 582-2123.

Send news to Largo Leader Editor Juliana Torres, Tampa Bay Newspapers, 9911 Seminole Blvd., Seminole, FL 33772. Email jtorres@TBNweekly.com. or call 397-5563, ext. 324.

DANCER, from page 1A

into actual class."

Now Christian is open to taking any class the dance school offers: tap, jazz, ballet, hip-hop and lyrical.

"All of them except for pointe, because I'm not a girl," he clarified. "I get to be with my friends and actually express myself."

The family aptitude for dancing starts with Ed Bottger.

"I think that's where they all get it from, not from me," his wife Christine said.

Starstruck Academy has become a second family for the Bottgers — where Christian is if he's not at school or at home. All three children have been Valentine's students, even before she and her parents took over ownership of the business when she was just 18.

Christian's dancing talent began to show up on the Bucs football field when the organization's Junior Cheerleaders program began to incorporate boys three years ago. Children in the program perform in halftime routines. From that, Christian was asked to make a short appearance in the Buccaneers' parody of the Gangnam Style music video, which featured mascot Captain Fear in the place of Korean rapper Psy.

Christian had his first game day feature performance Oct. 21 when the cheerleaders needed a Michael Jackson for a choreographed routine that morphed from Gangnam Style to Jackson's "Thriller." Then came the idea for a routine to the song Cali Swag District's "Teach Me How to Dougie," as a way to highlight the Buccaneers' star rookie running back Doug Martin, and to counter his unwanted nickname Muscle Hamster, the team website explains.

The routine starts with a few bars from Gangnam Style before Christian sheds his jacket to reveal Martin's No. 22 jersey and hard-hitting "Dougie" moves, backed by the Buccaneer cheerleaders and Capt. Fear.

"It's been a success ever since," Christian said proudly.

The football organization has dubbed the much shorter mascot "Little Fear." Christian has performed the dance at Raymond James Stadium twice, during the Nov. 25 game against the Atlanta Falcons, during which the Starstruck team also performed at halftime, and most recently on Dec. 9, against the Philadelphia Eagles. His dad's video of his first performance has been viewed more than 700,000 times on YouTube.

He picks up new dances quickly, working with the Bucs choreographer only about 30 minutes and running through the routine with the cheerleaders only once on game day, his mother said.

"He's always ... picked up choreography really fast. Which helps a lot if you're going to do something like this," Valentine said.

Christian claimed that he still gets nervous before dancing in front of so many people, but he seems to revel in the spotlight.

"I just liked dancing all over and seeing the fans clapping and



Photo by JULIANA A. TORRES

Members of the Starstruck Dance Academy team surround Christian Bottger, also known as Tampa Bay Buccaneers' newest mascot Little Fear. Pictured from left are Amanda Cropsey, 13, of Seminole; his best friend Danny Stuart, 10, of Largo; Christian Bottger; teacher and studio owner Stefanie Valentine, his sister Brandi Bottger and Hayley Panaro, 10, of Largo.

screaming out loud," he said.

Christian has busted out Gangnam Style when the song came on while the family ate at Buffalo Wild Wings.

"He's his own personal flash mob," Valentine said.

Valentine said Christian is her first student to become famous, but explains that the goal of her studio is to equip students to be able to take dance wherever they want.

"It's kind of surreal for me," she said. "You always hope something like this will happen, and it's really cool. But I don't think it will be the last time. I have a lot of talented kids here."

Among his circuit of local appearances, Christian recently was featured on the Tampa Bay radio station WILD 94.1. The family is in talks for appearances on Anderson Cooper Live, Headline News and Entertainment Tonight, Christine Bottger said. The experience has been amazing, crazy and overwhelming, she said, but the mother is determined to keep Christian level-headed.

"It couldn't happen to a nicer kid," she said. "I'm extremely proud of him, as I am of Brandi and Ashley as well because they've been very supportive of him through this journey."

To see videos of Christian, visit his father's YouTube feed at www.youtube.com/user/edtv69.

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COMMISSION, from page 1A

a countywide domestic partnership registry in January. Largo city leaders passed a resolution 6-1 supporting the effort and recognizing the need for a registry that would grant certain privileges to domestic partners.

The registry would recognize couples who are not married but maintain a committed relationship, typically residing within the same household, possibly with children. Registered partners would be able to make health care facility visits, make decisions on each others' behalf about health care and funeral arrangements and participate in the education of their dependents.

The majority of the Largo Commission passed the resolution without comment. The sole dissenter was Commissioner Curtis Holmes, who argued that the measure would set up a "special class of people" who are "totally avoiding all the consequences" of being married.

"When you are married, yes, you have certain privileges, you have certain rights. But being married also has consequences," he said.

Married couples can be held financially responsible for medical claims and their spouse's care in a nursing home, he said.

"If you want to make the whole good for the goose is good for the gander, I don't have a problem with that whatsoever," he explained. "Whether this passes or not, the county is going to pass theirs."

One Largo resident, Geoffrey Moakley, also voiced opposition to the proposal, arguing that government should stay "out of individual decisions and responsibilities."

"Common law marriage, it's not recognized in Florida. Therefore, Largo and Pinellas County should not be encouraging, enabling it and embedding it with this proposal," he said. "It's just one more step in the ever proceeding religion of the non-marrieds."

Shop with a Cop

During the meeting, Holmes reported on the city's seventh annual Shop with a Cop or Firefighter program, which treated 20 local families to a Christmas shopping spree Dec. 15.

The off duty personnel from the police and fire departments volunteered their time for the shopping trip that morning at the Walmart on Missouri Avenue in Largo. Families designated a child as their shopper to pick out presents for the entire family.

One 11-year-old girl, a victim of a crime herself, said she had to look for presents for father, mother, step mother, brother, sister and best friend before picking out something for herself, Holmes said.

"It was an unreal event," Assistant Fire Chief Michael Handoga commented.

More than \$6,500 was raised for the program this year, including \$3,000 from the Walmart Foundation, \$2,000 from the West



Photo courtesy of LARGO FIRE RESCUE
Largo firefighter Todd McCarthy helps a family pick out Christmas presents, including a Schwinn bicycle during the city's annual Shop with a Cop/Firefighter program Dec. 15.

Florida Y Runners Club's annual Turkey Trot proceeds, \$500 raised by a 13-year-old Largo resident and past beneficiary of the program Jeremy Watton and \$100 from City Manager Mac Craig. Police officers and firefighters also donated money and gift cards to the cause.

"Also donations were made directly to Chief Carol by shoppers at Walmart who were shopping at the store at the time of the event," Holmes said.

CENTER, from page 1A

leasing and managing centers in the area," Schulz explained.

Members of the local Colliers team - specifically Ben McLeish, director of retail services, and Marissa Conrad, assistant property manager - will be handling the leasing and management of the center.

"Our team has an intimate

knowledge of the property as well as the submarket," Milano said. "This allowed us to demonstrate how the property can have significant long-term value through leasing up of the vacant space."

Other than the Outback restaurant, current tenants include Kut Doctors, Color Pages, Miracle Ear, Vitamin Outlet, Select Staffing, Next Step Rehab, Allstate and West Shore Pizza.

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Physicians concerned about concussions in students

By SUZETTE PORTER

CLEARWATER – A blow to the head can be serious, especially for young people involved in sports.

Several local physicians concerned about the health of Pinellas County's youth who participate in sports talked to Pinellas County Commissioners Dec. 11 about the need to do more to protect against concussions.

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head that can change the way the brain normally works, according to Dr. Carlos Rodriguez, director, Bayfront Sports Medicine Fellowship; director, All Children's Hospital John Hopkins Medicine Sport Medicine Fellowship; and assistant director, Bayfront Family Medicine Residency. Concussions also can occur from a blow to the body that causes the head to move rapidly back and forth.

"Even a ding, getting your bell rung or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious and should be treated," he said.

Symptoms of a concussion include confusion, amnesia, ringing in the ears, nausea and vomiting and convulsions. Loss of consciousness is another symptom, but only occurs in about 10 percent of cases.

Delayed symptoms, including irritability, headaches, depression, sleep disorders, poor concentration and trouble with memory, are even more important, Rodriguez said. As are the cumulative effects, which he said could make a person more prone to suffer a concussion again.

Emergency departments across the United States treat an estimated 173,285 sports- and recreation-related traumatic brain injuries every year in individuals from birth to age 19. In the last decade, those injuries have increased by 60 percent.

In youth sports, the highest incidents of traumatic brain injuries

come from football followed by girls' soccer. More than 70 percent of traumatic brain injuries are among persons age 10 to 19, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

So far, in 2012, 10 schools located in Northern Pinellas have reported close to 48 concussions, Rodriguez said, and approximately 104 of 1,000 sports-related injuries are concussions. Pinellas trends with the nation with the most injuries coming from football, followed by girls' flag football and girls' soccer.

He said students who suffer a concussion require a longer time to recover. He said teachers should be aware of potential problems with memory and socialization. He said students who had suffered a concussion could require more time to take tests or complete schoolwork. Studies show that 20 percent of youth had fatigue, headaches, forgetfulness and difficulty paying attention for up to a year.

A group of local physicians are recommending that every student who plays sports be given a baseline test for brain function before the beginning of the school year so doctors would have something to compare to if the student athlete suffers a concussion. That comparison would allow physicians to better judge when a student is ready to return to play.

Currently, local physicians and athletic trainers practice a "when in doubt, keep them out" policy to ensure students don't go back to their sport before they are healed.

Cost for the baseline test is about \$1.50 a student. With 10,000 students in Pinellas playing sports at the high school level, the cost would be approximately \$50,000 the first year, Rodriguez said. However, the cost would go down in subsequent years. The cost for the second year was estimated at about \$7,500. The baseline test would be given every two years.

He said certified athletic trainers, who have four-year degrees, are a necessary component to keeping youth athletes healthy.

"They're the physicians' eyes and ears when we can't go (to a game)," he said.

He said physicians attend almost every Friday night game in Pinellas, but don't attend practice.

"We need a trainer there," he said.

A state law that went into effect in July requires that student athletes diagnosed with a concussion be cleared by a physician before they can go back to their sport.

"They (physician) have to say it is safe to play," Rodriguez said.

Rodriguez and other physicians involved in youth sports medicine are working on a plan for consistent education and management of youth sports in Pinellas County.

Rodriguez said they asked to speak to the County Commission to educate them about the problem and to ask for help with funding a countywide program for baseline testing.

The physicians also advocate that a certified athletic trainer be present at all youth sports events. They recommend "early and appropriate management via physicians knowledgeable about youth sports concussions," including Bayfront Sports Medicine, All Children's Sports Medicine, Morton Plant Mease Sports Medicine, St. Anthony's Sports Medicine and others.

Commission Chair John Morroni asked if recent improvements in helmets were helping with the problem. Rodriguez said no. He said while they do protect against head injuries, they don't stop the jolt to the brain.

"The perception that helmets are safer give a false sense of security," Rodriguez said. "Helmets protect the head, but not the brain."

New contract, revenue for utilities pleases commission

By SUZETTE PORTER

CLEARWATER – Pinellas County Commissioners unanimously approved a consultant contract Dec. 11 for revenue enhancement opportunities for its Utilities department.

Commissioners approved staff's request, 5-1, Aug. 7, to negotiate a contract with Water Company of America of Oviedo for the Department of Environment and Infrastructure. Commissioner Norm Roche voted no, saying the county should have its own experts available to do the job.

Roche and Commissioner Ken Welch were absent Dec. 11.

County administrator Bob LaSala explained back in August that the company would be using a proprietary software application to look for lost revenue or opportunities to generate more.

New revenue generated by the company's findings would be split for three years after the savings were identified. The split would be 52 percent to the DEI Utilities Enterprise Fund and 48 percent to WCA.

Commissioners asked staff to try to get a better deal as they negotiated the final contract.

The final contract calls for WCA to receive 46 percent of any savings for 36 months. Utilities will receive 54 percent for 36 months and 100 percent thereafter.

WCA will not receive money from back billing. Water meters previously identified by staff as needing replacement are excluded from the contract. New rates imposed after the contract is signed are not part of the contract nor are fees.

Discoveries also must present an "economic feasibility," which is defined as having a return on investment of less than 36 months.

Staff says the average annual revenue WCA typically "discovers" for a utility the size of Pinellas County's is \$1.1 million. The county's share would be \$594,000 for 36 months and 100 percent thereafter.

Commissioners also approved advertising a Feb. 12 public hearing to talk about collecting non-ad valorem assessments for surface water management program services in unincorporated areas of the county.

LaSala said commissioners would not be expected to approve a special assessment. He said the action only "preserves the opportunity." He said the tax collector and property appraiser have to be notified by Jan. 1 of the possibility.

"This keeps the door unlocked," LaSala said. "But it is not opening it for passing through. It just allows the board the ability to make choices after it receives more information about the master plan."

LaSala is referring to the Surface Water Management master plan being prepared by staff. LaSala said a work session would be scheduled when the plan was complete to go over the details.

Commissioner Karen Seel said the only reason she would consider supporting the measure would be if it paid for infrastructure improvements and not just operations and maintenance.

"We have a problem in Pinellas County that needs to be solved," she said.

Commission Chair John Morroni said he wanted to make sure residents wouldn't pay duplicate fees. Seel pointed out that the commission was only looking at unincorporated areas, but added that a coordinate countywide plan would be best.

Staff says a dedicated source of income is needed to fund critical elements of the surface water management program.

All aglow



Photo by TOM GERMOND

Residents of a house in the Old Northwest area of Largo created a miniature light show in their yard, which is adorned with ample holiday decorations and a cast of Christmas characters, including Mickey Mouse.

Fuel prices continue to fall in time for holiday travel, report says

By SUZETTE PORTER

Millions of travelers will be grateful for falling gas prices as they take to the roadways this holiday season.

As of Sunday, Dec. 16, a gallon of regular unleaded was almost the same as it was last year, \$3.25, according to AAA's Fuel Gauge Report.

Floridians were paying slightly more than the national average, \$3.27, which is 1.5 cents less than the same date in 2011. People living in the metropolitan area of Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater were playing an average of \$3.18 – 2 cents less than last year and 7 cents less than they paid at the pump last week.

The good news is that experts predict the downward trend will con-

tinue with prices below \$3 becoming commonplace in the near future.

Prices in Pinellas County had already fallen below \$3, according to prices posted Sunday night on www.tampagasprices.com. Stations throughout the county were offering gas at \$2.99. Prices ranged to a high of \$3.18.

"The year-end holiday season is the busiest travel time of the year," said Jessica Brady, AAA spokesperson for The Auto Club Group. "Whether families plan a traditional holiday at grandma's house or a cruise to the Caribbean, one thing is certain, being with family and friends remain the most important factor during the holiday season."

Despite an increase in holiday travel throughout the year and an expected increase for Christmas and New Year's, AAA reports that three

in five people prefer to stay home for Christmas.

However, a large number, three in four, said they were interested in taking an unorthodox holiday vacation, such as a cruise to the tropics or visiting another country, according to a recent AAA Consumer Pulse Survey.

Vacationing to the tropics was the top pick of those surveyed interested in traveling during the holidays with 63 percent opting for a cruise and 50 percent setting their sights on international destinations. Fifty percent want a tropical vacation and 37 percent plan to take a trip to the beach.

Pinellas County residents can enjoy low gas prices, take a holiday vacation with a trip to the beach and still be home for Christmas.

Briefs

Don't trash the holidays

The holidays are a season for giving, but also a good time to think about waste reduction. People often end up sending large gifts of holiday discards to the landfill.

Gift-wrap, packaging and party goods add up to truckloads of extra garbage. Pinellas County Utilities encourages residents to start their own holiday traditions to reduce, reuse and recycle holiday trash.

Green holiday tips:

- Save holiday wrappings such as gift bags, ribbons, bows, boxes and plastic peanuts to use again.
- Replace incandescent Christmas lights with energy efficient LED lights.
- Give eco-friendly gifts such as a fishing license or movie tickets instead of "stuff" that will ultimately be tossed.
- Buy rechargeable batteries and a charger for electronic gifts.

- Draw names for family giving instead of buying for everyone.
- Find a new home for usable items that have been replaced by visiting our A to Z "Get Rid of It" Guide at www.pinellascounty.org/utilities/getridofit.
- Entertain with reusable dishes, silverware and cloth napkins instead of disposable items.
- Recycle giftwrap, tissue paper or greeting cards with "mixed paper" at curbside or drop-off. For a list of local recycling programs, visit www.pinellascounty.org/recycle.
- Buy paper items, such as greeting cards, with recycled content.
- Set up a recycling bin for cans and bottles for holiday parties.
- Reuse an artificial tree, or recycle a "real" Christmas tree. Most cities in Pinellas County collect trees for recycling either at curbside or drop-off sites.

Visit www.pinellascounty.org/utilities/holidays for more valuable

tips to cut holiday waste.

For more information on recycling, contact Pinellas County Solid Waste at 464-7500, or visit www.pinellascounty.org/recycle.

Catch county commission meetings on the go

Residents can watch a live stream of Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners on their smart phone or tablet computer.

Mobile Internet users can visit the Pinellas County mobile website at www.pinellascounty.org/mobile and click on the Live Streaming Video link which provides a video stream optimized for portable smart devices including iPad, iPhone, tablet computers and Android phones.

The new mobile live stream is available 24/7 making all programs available on-the-go. Meeting calendars, schedules and agendas are also available at both the mobile site www.pinellascounty.org/mobile and at the main website, www.pinellascounty.org.

CHILDREN, from page 1A

children are ready to go to learn when they start school. The second third is spent on making sure they can be a successful student. The final third goes to keeping children safe and preventing child abuse.

"We work with families who are circling the drain," she said. "The ones in crisis."

New family-services initiatives now provide what they need immediately. Lancaster said the system as a whole saves money by providing a low-investment early on, which costs about \$300 and takes about two weeks to get families the services they need.

"We've had one-size fits all for way too long," she said. "Now we serve the need when it presents itself."

Of the 162,418 children in Pinellas, 19 percent live in poverty. Fifty-two percent, or 59,809, receive free or reduced price lunches at school. More than 7,000 are chronically hungry. An estimated 3,177 are homeless.

Officials have identified certain areas in the county that have the greatest need. At least one-third of children not ready to learn when they start school come from nine county zip codes. More than 50 percent live in zip code 33714 – the Lealman area.

Others include 33705 in southeast St. Petersburg, 33709 in Kenneth City, 33711 in central-south St. Petersburg, 33713 in the Kenwood area of St. Petersburg, 33755 in south St. Petersburg, 33756 in the Clearwater-Belleair area, 33760 in the Clearwater area of Highpoint and 33765 in mid-Clearwater.

When it comes to the county's graduation rate, white students with an 86 percent rate in fiscal year 2010-11, are doing better than African-American students with a graduation rate of only 47 percent in the same year.

School readiness is critical to the future of children. Lack of education is one of the major disqualifiers for 18 to 24 year olds wanting to enlist in the military. It's critical to reducing the cost of helping those children. From kindergarten to 12th grade, the government may spend up to \$100,000 on a child that was not prepared to learn in school.

Lancaster's report showed that 27 percent, or 2,181 of Pinellas County's children, were not ready to learn when they started school in 2011.



The Juvenile Welfare Board is Pinellas County's safety net for children and families.

Lancaster talked about the investments JWB is making through its programs. "Learn and Succeed" cost \$19.6 million with \$9.1 million spent on quality care scholarships for 1,000 children ages 0 to 5. Another \$5 million provided before and after school scholarships for 4,375 children ages 9 to 14. Specialized interventions for 853 young children cost \$1.8 million.

An additional \$800,000 served 1,336 children in need of violence prevention and conflict resolution.

An "evidence-based" mentoring program aimed at preventing risky behaviors served 1,256 children at a cost of \$572,000. A second "evidence-based" in-home parent education program for literacy cost \$517,000 and served 737 children. Pregnancy prevention cost another

\$600,000 and served 63.

Lancaster explained that evidence-based program were just that – programs in existence with proven records of accomplishment for success.

JWB spent \$19.2 million on "Stable and Nurturing" programs, including \$7 million for an evidence-based nurse family partnership, healthy families and kinship program, which served 2,352 kids. A family services pool cost \$6.2 million and provided an array of services, support, coordination, information, referral and "family navigation." Mental health and substance abuse services cost \$5.5 million and served 4,383 children.

"Safe and Supportive" programs received an investment of \$4.6 million of which \$3.8 million provided family stability services for 1,698 children. Another \$690,000 was spent on shelters for victims of domestic violence and homeless and runaway shelters. School-based health clinics at Gibbs, Northeast and Boca Ciega high schools shared \$716,000 in funding.

Lancaster said the work JWB does is made possible by its community partnerships, including Pinellas County government and its Business Technology Services department. Other partners are the Pinellas County Department of Health, Pinellas County Schools, the cities of St. Petersburg, Clearwater and Tarpon Springs, the Wealth Building Coalition, Early Learning Coalition, All Children's Hospital and the Homeless Leadership Board.

Commissioner Karen Seel, who serves on the JWB board, praised Lancaster and "the enormous difference in the lives of our children now." Seel talked about the way it was before Lancaster took over as director.

"You created a whole new world in six years," Seel said.

Lancaster is set to retire in June 2013.

"It means the world to this county for you to have such a commitment," Seel said.

"It's a joy," Lancaster replied. "It's my joy."

She said her biggest fear is that due to the long-term nature of the work, officials will get "bored with the activity and funding before the work begins to show."

"We have a potential to make a difference," she said. "Our investments can matter."

Police looking for BB&T robbery suspect

LARGO – Largo detectives are looking for a man suspected of robbing the BB&T Bank at 14141 Walsingham Road the morning of Dec. 14.

The robbery occurred at 9:11 a.m. Detectives have linked the robbery suspect with a man seen, and caught on surveillance camera, loitering around the Publix at 12022 Indian Rocks Road.

Inside the bank, the suspect approached a teller and demanded money.

"We don't have any indication that he had a weapon at this time," department spokesman Lt. Mike Loux said.

The suspect left the property on foot.

He is described as a black man between 25 and 30 years old with a thin build who is about 5 feet, 9 inches tall. He was seen wearing dark pants, a dark jacket with white writing on the back.

Anyone with information on the identity of the suspect can call Detective John Berard of the Largo Police Department's Investigative Services Division at 587-6730. For more photos of the suspect, visit the department's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/LargoPoliceDepartment.



Largo detectives have linked the robbery suspect to this man, seen loitering in the Publix at 12022 Indian Rocks Road Dec. 14.

Police beat

Worker dies in accidental electrocution

LARGO – Largo police and firefighters began investigating a fatal and reportedly accidental electrocution that occurred on Dec. 14 at 1415 East Bay Drive.

A worker touched a ladder that was linked to overhead electrical wires, police reported.

Largo police were called to respond at 12:32 p.m., department spokesman Lt. Mike Loux said.

The identity of the worker, who died at the scene, has not been released yet, pending notification of next of kin.

Deputies arrest man who shot water tower

DUNEDIN – Pinellas County sheriff's deputies arrested a Dunedin man early Tuesday morning for felony criminal mischief, discharging a firearm and use of a firearm while under the influence.

According to the Sheriff's report, Mark Fitzgerald, 49, fired multiple shots on the Dunedin Golf Course, 1050 Palm Blvd., and caused damage to the city of Dunedin's 200-foot water tower.

Deputies responded to the scene at about 3:44 a.m. Dec. 11 after several calls came in about gunfire in the area.

Upon arrival, deputies began to search for the source of the reported gunfire. Deputies then spotted a vehicle coming off a golf cart access just south of Palm Boulevard and directly across from the Country Club.

They stopped the vehicle, driven by Fitzgerald, who had a high-powered rifle, a .380 caliber, and a .45-caliber handgun in the vehicle. Deputies say Fitzgerald also displayed signs of impairment.

Fitzgerald told deputies he was searching for his lost dog and had his weapons with him for protection in case he encountered any coyotes. Deputies encountered him in his vehicle, but deputies say Fitzgerald had fired the rounds earlier, while on the course on his golf cart.

Deputies say Fitzgerald fired multiple rounds. One of those rounds hit a city of Dunedin water tower located just south of Curlew Road and east of Alt. U.S. 19. The tower holds about a million gallons of water. Deputies say water has been draining out from the hole caused by the round.

The city of Dunedin is working to get the damages to the water tower repaired.

Fitzgerald was booked into the Pinellas County Jail. Bond was set at \$2,400.

Unlicensed contractors caught in sting

DUNEDIN – Ten individuals were arrested for operating as unlicensed contractors in Pinellas County during a sting conducted out of a Dunedin home Dec. 10-13.

The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office report that the 10 were issued misdemeanor notices to appear for violation of the unlicensed contractor statute. Several other charges were issued, including 10 cease and desist citations with no fine and one \$2,500 fine issued by the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation. The county's Construction Licensing Board issued nine \$500 fines.

Boot drive a success



Largo firefighters Dough Hiatt, left, and Tim Anthony encourage drivers to "Fill the Boot" during the firefighter's annual drive on behalf of the Muscular Dystrophy Association Dec. 11-13. The firefighter union thanked its residents for their help in the campaign. "The Largo Professional Firefighters are very proud of their citizens," stated Lt. Warren Cargill, on behalf of the firefighter union. "The famous firefighter boot drive was a great success."

Deputies also made two misdemeanor arrests for driving with a suspended or revoked driver's license and one vehicle was impounded.

The sting was conducted by the Sheriff's Office along with the Department of Business and Professional Regulation, the Department of Financial Services Insurance Fraud Unit and the Pinellas County Licensing Board.

According to the sheriff's report, the multi-agency operation targeted unlicensed contractors who advertised various types of home repair services to include, roofing, AC repair, plumbing and electrical work. The unlicensed contractors were identified through advertisements listed on Craig's List, Angie's List and the Seminole Beacon. According to investigators, all the identified ads were published without a license number in the ad.

See POLICE BEAT, page 6A

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Sheriff hosts promotion ceremony

LARGO – Sheriff Bob Gualtieri took center stage during a promotion ceremony Dec. 13, recognizing more than two dozen Sheriff's Office members – one of the largest single promotion events in PSCO's 100-year history.

As part of the afternoon promotion ceremony in the Magnolia Room of the Cooperative Extension Complex in Largo, family members and friends pinned new badges on their fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, and colleagues.

The majority of the promotions were effective Dec. 16.

Among the promotions was that of Major George Steffen who was promoted to chief deputy, second-highest rank in the sheriff's office. He replaces Chief Deputy Dan Simovich who retired in September.

Deputies promoted to sergeant were Bryan Bingham, Deanna Carey, Eric Forcade, Brandon Harvey, Frank Holloway, Michele Houghton, Mathew Ingoglia, Timothy Kelly, Scott Kremser,

Jennifer Olley, Rusty Roberts, Paul Rogers, David Stang and Keith Williams.

Officers promoted to lieutenant were Jennifer Davis, Craig Degenhardt, Cindy Gibson, Amy Moyer and Jeremy Nygren.

Glenn Luben with the Patrol Operations Bureau was promoted to captain. Tim Pelella, also with patrol operations, was promoted to major, as were Mike Ring with Investigative Operations and John Tilia with Inspections Bureau and Administrative Investigations.

The ceremony also included promotions for three civilian positions. Associate Counsel Shannon

Kennedy is now PSCO general counsel. Former public information office coordinator Marianne Pasha is director of a new division, Media Communications and Legislative Affairs. Pasha's position will be filled by Cecilia Barreda, who was promoted to PIO coordinator. Barreda will manage the public information office.

97 bikes go to kids in need

Bechtel Financial donated 97 bicycles to the Pinellas County Sheriff's Christmas Sharing Project.

Kevin and Debbie Bechtel and the Bechtel family presented the children's bicycles to the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office Friday, Dec. 14 where Sheriff Bob Gualtieri thanked the Bechtel family.

Deputies and other Sheriff's Office staff members will distribute the bikes to families receiving holiday assistance through the Sheriff's Christmas Sharing project.

The Christmas deliveries are part of the annual Sheriff's Christmas Sharing Project, where Pinellas Sheriff's Office members submit the names of children, crime victims and families who need help over the holidays.

Sheriff's Office members shopped for more than 700 children during the 2012 holiday season. The gift items, clothes and toys were purchased with \$40,000 earned during the annual "Ride & Run With the Stars" event, which was held at Fort De Soto Park Dec. 1.

Donated bikes roll out from courthouse

CLEARWATER – Forty-five new bicycles and helmets donated by Pinellas County employees brightened the lobby of the Pinellas County Courthouse in Clearwater for a time.

But on Dec. 14, they began their journey to help make the holidays special for children of all ages.

Now in its 26th year, the bicycle drive is a team project. County employees donate money throughout the year to go toward the purchase of the bicycles and helmets.

Pinellas County Real Estate Management Department delivered the bicycles to the courthouse where they were on display for a short time. On Dec. 14, Mosquito Control trucks transported the bikes to the Pinellas County Health and Human Services offices in St. Petersburg and Clearwater.

The bicycles will be distributed to pre-approved families who have received benefits from the county's Health and Human Services department this past year. County employees also donated items to fulfill wish lists, which included personal prod-



Photo courtesy of PINELLAS COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS
Matt Laverdure, left, and James Brown of Pinellas County Mosquito Control load bikes on the trucks Friday morning outside of the County Courthouse. The bikes were delivered to the department of Health and Human Services to be distributed to needy families. Pinellas County employees donated the bikes.

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POLICE BEAT, from page 5A

Investigators made 38 phone calls to the individuals listed in the advertisements and scheduled appointments to the home in Dunedin. Ten individuals from eight ads arrived and offered their repair services. Quotes ranged anywhere from \$50 up to about \$1,500 depending on the service. Deputies said in one instance one individual offering AC repair services quoted \$1,567 and wanted \$783 immediately.

Sheriff Bob Gualtieri, who announced the results of the operation, urged Pinellas County residents to protect themselves.

"It is very important that people use licensed contractors for work in their homes. Take the time to verify those licenses in order to avoid becoming a victim to those who would prey upon those needing home repair services," Gualtieri said.

Tampa Bay Newspapers, publishers of the Seminole Beacon, maintain regular contact with the Pinellas County Contractor's Licensing Board to help ensure the legality of all service advertisements placed in their publications, TBN Publisher Dan Autrey said.

"Like all media, we unfortunately have no control over these individuals if they should decide to mis-

represent their services to potential customers," Autrey said. "TBN has ended, and will continue to do so, advertising relationships based on verified complaints from readers responding to advertisements placed in their papers."

Florida law sets specific rules and guidelines for obtaining professional licensure, and the people who have met these requirements are held to professional standards, according to the Department of Business and Professional Regulation. Consumers can verify professional licenses online at www.myfloridalicense.com. Floridians should report any suspected unlicensed activity by emailing ULA@dbpr.state.fl.us or calling the Unlicensed Activity Hotline at 1-866-532-1440.

Citizens in Pinellas County may also verify an individual's license through the Pinellas County Construction Licensing Board website at www.pccbl.org.

Those arrested and charged were Michael David Morrison Jr. of Clearwater; Eric Michael Pusateri of Palm Harbor; John Samuel Young of Largo; Nicholas Achilles Vaseliades of St. Petersburg; Lynnoid Damon Stewart of St. Petersburg; Robert Bhola Deonarine of St. Petersburg; Michael J. Perez of Orlando; Juan J. Dones of Orlando; Gamal Ibrahim Baker of Clearwater and Randy Scott Carr of Largo.

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Starkey Road Baptist Church Celebrates Christmas & New Years with joyful worship. You're invited!

Christmas Sunday Service is December 23 at 10:30am. Enjoy the sounds of the Christmas Choir, worship with talented vocalists, and sing carols with the festive sounds of the orchestra. Pastor Lancaster will be bringing a unique and encouraging message about Christ's birth. Christmas Eve Service, December 24 is at 5pm. At this special family celebration enjoy the story of the Savior's birth depicted by children in costume, with readings and carols. The evening will conclude with a young string duo playing "Silent Night" as we participate in a candlelight celebration. Starkey First Night: Sunday, December 30, from 5:15 to 8pm. Talented individuals and groups will be performing throughout the evening at different venues on the campus.

Located at 8800 Starkey Road in Seminole. Church Services: Sunday at 10:30am and 6pm, Wednesdays at 7:15pm. There will be a presentation by the Creative Ministry Team, a Craft Display, and a display of some "show" cars for the auto enthusiast. Refreshments are provided. So come one, come all, to the Starkey Road Baptist Church. Worship and enjoy this wonderful time of the year.

The Holidays come to life at the PIER- Fun, Shopping, Dining, and Lights & Musicians performing Holiday Music.

Visit the Pier during the holidays. Area schools, churches and dance groups will perform through December 22nd. The strutting Dickens Carolers welcome you to join them on Friday & Saturday, December 21st and 22nd between 5-8pm. The weekly Music Fest by the Bay is held on Sundays from 1-4pm in the Courtyard. During the month of December a variety of musicians will perform holiday music. Dec. 23, Holiday tunes with the "Robert Harris Group and Dec 30th, White Hot Grill. New Year's Eve at the Pier is ALWAYS a family treat with face and body painting, comedy, a hypnosis show, a chance to star in your Own Dance Video and a lineup of great bands perform from 1pm to 1am. "Father Time" will appear with the fabulous music of "Big Night Out" from 9pm-1am. Don't forget the Fireworks at 9pm and midnight. Make the Pier your destination place. **This is where locals and visitors of our area blend together to sightsee or just relax. Open until May 31, 2013, with day and night fun for all ages. For details on all events go to: www.stpetepier.com. Facebook.com/StPetePier or Twitter.com/StPetePier.**

Gather around the tree and enjoy the strutting Dickens Carolers on Friday & Saturday evenings. Dec., 21, 22.

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Clearwater breaks ground for revitalized Capitol Theatre

By LESTER R. DAILEY

CLEARWATER – The historic Capitol Theatre has survived a World War, several hurricanes and a few close calls with the wrecking ball, but it is now facing what city officials hope will be a rosy future. On Dec. 11, dignitaries participated in a ceremonial groundbreaking for a new entertainment venue centered around the downtown landmark.

"We've located drawings and plans of the building's interior and facade in the (19)20s and '30s and will use them in the restoration," said Zev Buffman, president and CEO of Ruth Eckerd Hall, which also operates the city-owned Capitol.

"This is really an exciting time, not only for the Capitol Theatre, but also for all of downtown," said Kevin Dunbar, the head of Clearwater's Parks and Recreation Department.

The 1921 theater will be restored and the buildings on either side will be razed so the land can be used to enlarge it. A three-story building behind the theater also will become part of the complex, which will have a 1920s-style Mediterranean Revival facade.

"At the end of construction,

you won't know there were four buildings," Buffman said. "There will be only one building. The entire stage will be updated and redone, and the lobby will be triple its current size."

He added that the seating capacity will be increased from 500 to 700 and the restroom capacity, a frequent source of complaints in the past, will be greatly upgraded.

In its heyday, the Capitol was the hub of a bustling downtown Clearwater. During World War II, Hollywood stars sold war bonds on the sidewalk near its door, and Donald Roebing, grandson of Brooklyn Bridge builder Washington Roebing and inventor of the Roebing Alligator amphibious assault vehicle of World War II fame, had his own double-wide seat in the front row to accommodate his 421-pound frame.

Toward the end of the 20th century, the theater went downhill, and in 1981, there was a murder in the balcony. In the 1990s, the city passed up an opportunity to buy it for \$250,000.

Socrates Charos, who owned the building from 1999 to 2008, claimed that it was haunted and liked to show visitors photos of what he claimed was a ghostly

apparition that materialized in the balcony and floated down to the stage.

The city eventually bought the theater and the adjacent Lokey Building for \$2.6 million. It is estimated that by the time the theater reopens in November 2013, the city will have sunk \$7.1 million into the project.

Buffman, who has overseen the restoration of six other historic theaters and produced 40 Broadway hits, says that with the Capitol revitalized he expects downtown Clearwater to become "a destination like nothing you ever dreamed of."

"I really do believe it will be an anchor" for downtown, former Clearwater Councilmember John Doran agreed.

"This is exciting, in capital letters," Clearwater Mayor George Cretekos said. "The Capitol Theatre is going to be the catalyst not only for the redevelopment of Cleveland Street, but for the entire Tampa Bay area." He added that special events now periodically bring people downtown, but the Capitol will draw a crowd almost every night.

U.S. Congressman Gus Bilirakis, whose district includes downtown Clearwater, sent a letter saying that he is "thrilled



Photo by LESTER R. DAILEY

that the city and Ruth Eckerd Hall have teamed up to save the old theater and make it the focal point of a revitalized downtown business district. But Buffman said that Ruth Eckerd Hall is being given too much credit for a renaissance that was already under way thanks to the city's Cleveland Street beautification program.

"I think this downtown is much farther along than people give it credit for," Buffman said. "And the new Capitol Theatre will be the anchor for the thousands of people to come."

Perhaps the loudest applause of the day came when State Representative and former Clearwater Councilman Ed Hooper told the crowd gathered in the closed-off street in front of the theater, "I'm going to do whatever I can to find you some money to help you become successful."

Above, dignitaries wield shovels at the ceremonial groundbreaking of the historic Capitol Theatre on Dec. 11. Below, a rendering of what the Capitol Theatre should look like when renovations are complete.



Image courtesy of KATIE PEDRETTY

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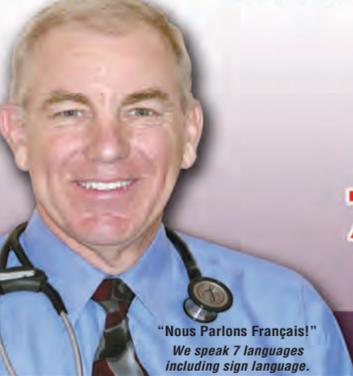
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Treasure Island OKs \$48,000 for Beach Trail

TREASURE ISLAND – After a lengthy discussion, city commissioners voted 3-2 on Dec. 4 to spend \$48,000 to refurbish a 500-foot section of the Central Beach Trail across an area of beach owned by the city of St. Petersburg.

Mayor Bob Minning, along with Commissioners Julian Fant and Carol Coward voted for the proposal while Alan Bildz and Phil Collins voted against it. The vote reversed an earlier 2-2 dead-

lock when the late Butch Ellsworth was absent. The decision means the entire length of the \$1.236 million project will have a similar appearance. The .85-mile trail, which is presently under construction, runs from 103rd to 119th avenues. It was first built in 1966 and widened in 1998.

The latest renovation is a complete rebuild that includes a curved, lighted walkway with walls and benches along the route.

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County adds new eSeries programming

Residents can learn more about Pinellas County's services by tuning in to Good to Know, PCC-TV's newest 15-minute eSeries program. Building on the success of Prepare to Survive, the original eSeries presentation, Good to Know begins with a perfect topic for the holiday season. This first program of the series is a profile on the county's Consumer Protection service, which helps residents become safer and smarter shoppers. Whether the best way to protect yourself from tricky sales practices to how to

learn about charities you may want to contribute to, Lead Investigator Doug Templeton gives you the 4-1-1 on the right way to make your holiday a memorable one for all the right reasons.

New topics will be covered in detail each month. Visit www.pinellascounty.org/eseries to check out Good to Know and all of the other eSeries videos, or visit PCC-TV's YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/pccvtv1 to check out the station's entire video library.

Around town

Guide dog presentation set

CLEARWATER - The Clearwater Aging Well Center, 1501 N. Belcher Road, will host a presentation given by Stephanie Miller, spokeswoman for Southeastern Guide Dogs on Friday, Jan. 4, 2 p.m.

Coastie, a yellow Labrador retriever that the city of Clearwater is sponsoring to become a guide dog, will accompany Miller. The free presentation also will include other guide dog puppies and those who are raising them.

The presentation is open to the public and will focus on the Southeastern Guide Dogs' mission and the process of helping those with visual challenges to maintain their independence with help from service animals.

Call 724-3070 or visit www.myclearwater.com/agingwell.

Miniature Art Society offers scholarships

The Miniature Art Society of Florida is offering six \$1,000 scholarships. To apply, visit miniatureartsocietyofflorida.com and fill out the application by Friday, Feb. 8. Applicants will be interviewed on Saturday, March 16 or 30th.

The primary purpose of the scholarships is to encourage young artists to pursue a career in the fine arts, whatever their creative goals may be. The society hopes that scholarship recipients will be motivated to create miniature art in the future and that miniature art aficionados from around the world will be able to enjoy these creations in a future MASF annual show.

MOA to meet

PINELLAS PARK - The Military Officers Association will meet for lunch Friday, Dec. 21, at Banquet Masters, 8100 Park Blvd., Pinellas Park.

Social hour will begin at 11 a.m. with lunch at noon. Following lunch, there will be a short program. Attendees should bring a toy for the Marine Corps Toys for Tots.

Military officers that are retired, active duty or former officers and their spouses or widows are invited to attend. MOA meets third Fridays.

For reservations, call Bill Bolin at 584-1595.

Veterans with back pain can get help

ST. PETERSBURG - The Bonati Spine Institute in Hudson is piloting a program to bring relief from back pain to U.S. Veterans. The Wounded Warriors Program will treat veterans who sustained back injury in service to their country and who have been medically treated unsuccessfully. Veterans admitted to the program would receive services and related expenses for free.

The Bonati Institute has pledged \$1 million to treat 12 veterans over the next year, or about one per month. In addition to previous surgical treatment, eligible veterans also must have available to them MRI or other diagnostic tests.

Expenses paid will include ground transportation, the surgery, and three days of intense rehabilitation at the Amir Academy Training Center in St. Petersburg.

Eligible veterans interested in applying may fill out an application at www.helpforwoundedwarriors.com.

Free shuffleboard family days

CLEARWATER - Free shuffleboard family fun days are offered each Sunday, 1 p.m., at 1020 Calumet St.

Families are invited to come learn to play shuffleboard for free.

Beauty and the bridge



Sunlight seeps through cloud banks, creating an array of colors in the sky at dusk recently over the Belleair Causeway Bridge. Such sunset shows are a nice reward for exercise buffs who cross the bridge in the evening.

Photo by CYRUS HARN

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Buy a Best Beads for Charity glowing necklace and a portion of the proceeds will go to the Hurricane Sandy Relief Fund. Use your necklace to get discounts at all your favorite places from Dec. 26, 2012 to January 31, 2013.

\$10.00 per person available at:

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- Beach Chamber Office
- Visitor Center in the Surf Style Mega Store















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Make holiday gift card purchases with care

Gift cards may take the guesswork out of gift giving, but you sure don't want to leave the recipient feeling bamboozled.

"Gift cards make excellent presents, especially when you're unsure of what to buy for a family member or friend," said Karen Nalven, president of BBB serving West Florida. "However, it's important to read the fine print before buying to understand if there are any hidden fees or strings attached."

Both the United States and Canada have recently made changes in federal laws to improve consumers' chances of getting full value out of the cards they buy and give. These rules generally apply to gift certificates, store gift cards and general use prepaid cards, which are often branded by payment networks such as Visa or MasterCard.

- Here are some helpful tips from BBB regarding gift card purchases:
- Buy from sources you know and trust. Avoid buying gift cards from online auction sites, because the cards may be counterfeit or may have been obtained fraudulently.
 - Read the fine print before you buy. Is there a fee to buy the card? If you buy a card by phone or online, are there shipping and handling



fees? If you don't like the terms and conditions, buy elsewhere.

- See whether any fees will be deducted from the card after you purchase it.
- Inspect the card before you buy it. Verify that none of the protective stickers have been removed. Make sure that the codes on the back of the card haven't been scratched off to reveal a PIN number. Report any damaged cards to the store selling the cards. Give the recipient your original receipt so they can verify the card's purchase in case it is lost or stolen.
- Consider the financial condition of the retailer or restaurant.

Despite ongoing issues with gift cards, sales of gift cards are still expected to increase this year. According to a survey by Consumer Reports, 62 percent of consumers are planning to buy gift cards this holiday season.

For more information on U.S. regulations of gift cards, visit www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/alerts/alt010.pdf. For advice on holiday shopping, lists of BBB Accredited Businesses by industry and BBB Business Reviews on local businesses, visit www.bbb.org.

Business notes

Chamber launches glowing fundraiser

CLEARWATER - The Clearwater Beach Chamber of Commerce will launch a Best Beads for Charity discount program as part of the Light It Up Clearwater Fireworks Celebration.

The Best Beads for Charity Necklace offers a glowing necklace to consumers for \$10 with a portion of the proceeds going to the Hurricane Sandy Relief Fund. Consumers can then use the necklace to get discounts off at shops, services, restaurants and attractions.

The necklaces will be good for discounts from Dec. 26 to Jan. 31.

Consumers will get a card listing some of the vendors and can go online to see all the discounts.

The Best Beads for Charity Necklace will allow Beach Chamber businesses to advertise for free when they offer a discount on their product or service to prospective customers. Each participating vendor will be supplied with a colorful poster to advertise their special and a listing online at www.lightitupclearwater.com.

Furniture consignment business opens

ST. PETERSBURG - The Gypsy Queen Fine Furniture Consignment, Antiques & Collectibles recently opened its doors at 7255 Central Ave.

The Gypsy Queen offers an assortment of quality antiques and col-

HomeBanc buys 8 branches of First Bank

TAMPA - Tampa-based HomeBanc N.A. has executed a purchase agreement with First Bank based in Creve Coeur, Mo.

Under the terms of the agreement, which is subject to regulatory approval, HomeBanc will acquire eight retail branches in Pinellas County with deposits of approximately \$130 million from First Bank. The transaction is expected to be completed in the second quarter of 2013.

"We are committed to building an outstanding company in a great Florida market by providing distinguished, personal service which exceeds customer expectations," said Jerry Campbell, Chairman, President and CEO of HomeBancorp, Inc., in a press release. "This acquisition will provide our customers with even more convenient locations in the Tampa area market."

All HomeBanc customers are assigned a personal banker who works with them to easily and effectively handle their banking needs. HomeBanc is known for its "distinctive personal service" and provides customers a different kind of banking experience - delivering service that exceeds expectations.

During 2012, HomeBanc received a 5 Star "Superior" rating from BauerFinancial, Inc., was ranked one of the Best Companies to Work for in Florida by Florida Trend magazine and was named the No. 2 bank headquartered in Florida for 7(a) SBA lending by the Small Business Administration.

HomeBanc is a wholly owned subsidiary of Tampa-based HomeBancorp, Inc., with eight retail offices in Lake Mary, Winter Park, Lakewood Ranch (Sarasota), Belleair Bluffs, Countryside (Clearwater) and in Tampa at Rocky Point, on Dale Mabry at I-275 and in Westchase. HomeBanc also operates five loan-production offices in Tampa, Belleair Bluffs, Lake Mary, Brandon and Gainesville.

HomeBanc offers a variety of retail products, along with SBA, conventional commercial and residential mortgage loan products. The bank has assets of more than \$525 million.

More information on HomeBanc can be found at www.homebanc.com.

lectibles as well as fine furnishings on consignment. The grand opening is a dream realized and the culmination of a lot of hard work for owner, Bianca Natal.

The Gypsy Queen offers a 15 percent discount to all veterans.

Synovus names vice president

ST. PETERSBURG - Synovus Bank of Florida, a division of Synovus Bank, recently announced that Aaron Sherwood had been named vice president and business banker.

Sherwood joined Synovus Bank in 2007 as branch manager of the Bryan Dairy office and was later promoted to vice president and branch manager of the downtown St. Petersburg office.

In his new role as a business banker, Sherwood is responsible for serving clients and prospects in the mid and north Pinellas markets and will be based at Synovus Gulf to Bay office.



Aaron Sherwood

Woman earns Master Bridal designation

Special Moments recently announced that Tamara Waterman has been awarded the designation of Master Bridal Consultant.

This honor was awarded at the 2012 Association of Bridal Consultants annual conference in Denver. Waterman was interviewed and judged by a panel of Master Consultants from across the country. Her wedding portfolio and presentation showcased a Nigerian wedding of more than 500 guests at USF's Botanical Gardens with the reception in South Tampa. Waterman is the Tampa Bay area's first and only Master Bridal Consultant and one of only nine in Florida.

See NOTES, page 11A



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Pinellas County • 727-823-4120

070512

The Pinellas Realtor Organization reports real estate statistics

The Pinellas Realtor Organization recently released its report detailing Pinellas County real estate statistics for the month of November. According to the report, the Pinellas market is currently considered to be stable, although the area has been struggling to some extent with a lack of inventory in single-family homes. This continues to push median sales prices higher. Distressed listings as a percentage of total listings are slowly decreasing, suggesting that most of the bargains are starting to disappear. This is part of what is forcing prices higher. Single-family homes sales from November 2011 to November 2012 increased 34.6 percent and the total average sales price increased 10.06 percent, according to the report. However, single-family active listings are down 30.75 percent. The lack of inventory is pushing the average sales price higher, but Realtors are struggling to find proper-

ties. Condo sales are up 37.79 percent from November 2011 to November 2012. There was a big drop in sales for both condo and single-family homes between August and September of this year. Condo sales have gradually increased from September to October and November. Single-family homes had gradual increases in September and October with a slight drop in sales for November. The condo and single-family home market also saw three months of steadily increasing listings from August to October with a drop in listings for November. The strongest supply of inventory is in condos. The report indicates that Pinellas currently has a 7.3-month supply of condo inventory. Residential properties are at a 4.6-month supply and single-family homes are the weakest link with a 3.2-month supply of inventory.

NOTES, from page 10A

The Master Bridal Consultant designation is the highest level of achievement for the Association of Bridal Consultants. Special Moments will be celebrating eight years in the Tampa Bay area in February.

Bank names VP for commercial lending

CLEARATER - Jacquelyn Roth McIntosh recently joined 1st United Bank as vice president of commercial lending, serving the Clearwater and Tampa Bay markets. McIntosh will be based out of the Countryside Banking Center. She has more than 17 years of banking experience in the Tampa Bay market. Prior to joining 1st United Bank, she was market leader in Tampa Bay for EverBank. Her banking expertise includes commercial real estate lending, credit administration, operation and management positions.

McIntosh's affiliations include the International Council for Shopping Centers, Plato Academy PTO, Sacred Heart and involved with the USSSA Baseball and USAG and TOPS Gymnastics Leagues. She is an Alumni of both the University of South Florida College of Business and the Global Institute for Leadership Development.

"We are pleased to have Jackie join the 1st United Bank team," said Rudy Schupp in a press release. Schupp is president and chief executive officer of 1st United Bank. "Her expertise in banking will assist us as we continue to grow and further develop our brand and business in the marketplace. Jackie is dedicated to our business model which puts our clients first."

BBA hosts holiday party

BELLEAIR BLUFFS - The Bluffs Business Association hosted a holiday party recently at Marlin Darlin. The next meeting will be Thursday, Jan. 10, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. It will be hosted by Agnes Green at the Physicians Center for Weight Loss and Age Management, 232 Indian Rocks Road N., Suite C. Members and guests are welcome.

Making holidays brighter



Annie Lonardo held a charity event at the Publix Bardmoor on Dec. 9, giving away angels, teddy bears and Christmas cash to children to make their Christmas season a little bit brighter. Ruth White and her grandchildren Matt and Courtney Lonardo assisted her. They met and gave out packages to 25 different families with small children. This is the third such event Annie, who is also known as the founder of Annie's Apron Strings, has held. Lonardo is seated on the left.



The Bluffs Business Association celebrated the season during a holiday party at Marlin Darlin.

Holiday Dining

Country Harvest Christmas Day Specials Open 7am-6pm
Includes:
Our Famous Christmas Family Feast
Turkey, Ham, and includes appetizer
Adults \$19.99 Children 12 & Under \$13.99

Prime Rib of Beef Feast
Certified Angus Prime Rib of Beef
16 oz. \$20.99 • 10 oz. \$16.99

First we start everyone with a shrimp cocktail appetizer, a bowl of Turkey Rice soup. Then choice of real mashed potatoes & gravy or candied yams, sweet corn, sage stuffing, cranberry sauce, rolls & muffins. Finally a choice of one dessert, Pumpkin, Pecan or Apple Pie, Rice Pudding or Custard Bread Pudding or Cheese Cake

Your Choice
Pan Fried Strip Pangasius • Roast Loin of Pork
Roast Turkey • Baked Virginia Ham
Adults \$13.99 • Children \$8.99

Includes: a bowl of Turkey Rice soup, Choice of real mashed potatoes & gravy or candied yams, sweet corn, sage stuffing, cranberry sauce, rolls & muffins and a choice of one dessert, Pumpkin, Pecan or Apple Pie, Rice Pudding or Custard Bread Pudding

Country Harvest Restaurant
Reservations Suggested 466-0241 Walk-ins Welcome
1285-A South Missouri Ave., Clearwater

Join Us for the Holidays!
Accepting Holiday Reservations
Catering Off-Premises
Steaks • Seafood • Pasta

Balla's STEAK HOUSE

HAPPY HOUR ALL DAY AT THE BAR

Dining Room 16 oz. Draft Beer \$1⁷⁵
House Wine \$2⁵⁰
Till 6pm Well Drinks \$2⁵⁰

Pick Up New Dining Rewards Card
FREE APPETIZER
Buy 1, Get 1 FREE

\$5.00 OFF
Purchase of \$25 or More
Excludes Tax, Dine-In Only
Cannot be combined w/ Specials, Early Bird, Holidays, Parties & other Offers. SD coupon expires 12.22.12

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Cannot be combined w/ Specials, Early Bird, Holidays, Parties & other Offers. SD coupon expires 12.22.12

OPEN DAILY 3:30PM • Outdoor Patio • Private Party Dining Room

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Christmas Day Buffet
Tuesday, December 25th, 2012
10:30am-9pm

Carving Station
Grainy Mustard & Horseradish Crusted Prime Rib
Honey & Brown Sugar Baked Ham

Entrees
Lobster Enchiladas w/tequila seafood bisque
Bourbon Christmas Goose w/caramelized red onion jam
Seafood Gumbo w/steamed white rice
Slow braised Pork shoulder w/green chili sauce
House BBQ Baked Salmon
Chicken Diane w/brandy sauce
Sage marinated Lamb top round w/mission fig chutney
Crispy fried shrimp
Cedar Key Clams
Mussels steamed in lager beer, garlic & shallots
Lobster bisque

Seafood Bar
Peel & Eat Shrimp
Oysters on the Half Shell
Sashimi Tuna
Smoked Salmon
Sushi

An array of sides, salads, hors d'oeuvres and traditional desserts including pies, cakes, cookies, ice cream & more!

\$29⁹⁵ Adults • \$13⁹⁵ children 3-10

Shepherd's Waterfront Restaurant
619 S. Gulfview Blvd., Clearwater Beach
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Fresh Lobster Seafood & Steaks
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Make your reservations for New Years Eve

Live entertainment
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The Shops of Sandpearl
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or
17814 Gulf Boulevard
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LobsterPotRestaurant.com

The LOBSTER Pot

Christmas Day
The Wine Cellar
Restaurant and Fine Catering

Seating 12:30pm through 9pm

Crisp Garden Fresh Relishes
Atlantic King Salmon
Cream of Asparagus Soup
Assorted Field Green Salad
Raspberry Sorbet

Choice of:
Roasted Long Island Duck Breast
Pan Seared Wisconsin Veal Chop
Fresh Gulf Snapper "Orleans"
Steak "Diane"

Sugar Cured Baked Virginia Ham

Desserts
Apple Strudel "mit Schlag"
New York Cheesecake
Chocolate Mousse Martini
Traditional Bread Pudding
With rich bourbon sauce

\$30.50 • \$15 children under 10
15% gratuity and 7% sales tax will be added to your check

17307 Gulf Boulevard, N. Redington Beach
727-393-3491

Holiday Services

Following is a listing of some holiday services scheduled at places of worship throughout Pinellas County.

North Bay Community Church

CLEARWATER – North Bay Community Church, 3170 McMullen Booth Road.
A Christmas Eve candlelight service will be presented Monday, Dec. 24, 7 p.m. Call 796-0071.

Trinity Presbyterian Church

CLEARWATER – Trinity Presbyterian Church, 2001 Rainbow Drive.
On Christmas Eve, Tuesday, Dec. 24, the church will present a candlelight service and concert by the choir at 7 p.m.
Visit www.trinityclearwater.com.

Union Street United Methodist Church

CLEARWATER – Union Street United Methodist Church, 1625 Union St.
On Christmas Eve, Monday, Dec. 24, a candlelight family worship service will be presented at 5:30 p.m. Call 442-9300.

St. John's Episcopal Church

CLEARWATER – St. John's Episcopal Church, 1676 S. Belcher Road.
Christmas Eve services, on Monday, Dec. 24, will include a family Eucharist, 5 p.m.; special music choir and instruments, 9 p.m.; and candlelight choral Eucharist, 10 p.m.
On Christmas Day, Tuesday, Dec. 25, the holy Eucharist with carols will be presented at 10 a.m.
Call 531-6020 or visit www.stjohnsclarwater.org.

The Episcopal Church of the Good Samaritan

CLEARWATER – The Episcopal Church of the Good Samaritan, 2165 NE Coachman Road.
On Christmas Eve, Monday, Dec. 24, the church will present "O Come Let Us Adore Him," a family liturgy. The choral prelude will be at 7 p.m. followed by the Eucharist at 7:30 p.m.
On Christmas Day, Tuesday, Dec. 25, the church will present liturgy at 8 a.m. Call 461-1717.

St. Catherine of Siena Parish Catholic Church

CLEARWATER – St. Catherine of Siena Parish Catholic Church, 1955 S. Belcher Road.
Christmas Eve services, on Monday, Dec. 24, will include a children's mass, at 4 and 6 p.m.; a midnight musical prelude, from 11:15 to midnight; and a midnight mass.
Christmas Day masses, on Tuesday, Dec. 25, will be presented at 7, 9 and 11 a.m. Call 531-7721 or visit www.scosparish.org.

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church

CLEARWATER – Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, 3200 McMullen Booth Road.
Christmas Eve services, on Monday, Dec. 24, will include a Christmas pageant and Eucharist, 5 p.m.; and candlelight mass, 11 p.m.
On Christmas Day, Tuesday, Dec. 25, a Christmas Eucharist will be presented at 10 a.m. Call 796-5514 or visit www.holytrinityclw.org.

Chapel-By-The-Sea

CLEARWATER – Chapel-By-The-Sea, 54 Bay Esplanade, Clearwater Beach.
A Christmas Eve family candlelight service will be presented Monday, Dec. 24, 7:30 p.m., and will include special music from the chapel choir and instrumentalists as well as a children's sermonette.
Visit www.chapelbythesea.net.

First United Methodist Church

CLEARWATER – First United Methodist Church, 411 Turner St.
Christmas Eve services, on Monday, Dec. 24, will be presented at 5:30 p.m. and will include chancel choir, tower ringers, children's choir, Crosswind Praise Team and candle lighting.
Call 446-5955 or visit www.fumc-clw.com.

Highland Presbyterian Church

CLEARWATER – Highland Presbyterian Church, 1885 S. Highland Ave.

A Christmas Eve candlelight music service will be presented Monday, Dec. 24, 4 p.m. Call 584-1191.

Church of the Isles

INDIAN ROCKS BEACH – Church of the Isles, 200 24th Ave.
Christmas Eve services, on Monday, Dec. 24, will include a family service, 5 p.m.; carols and candlelight, 7 p.m.; and communion and candlelight, 11 p.m. Call 595-1038.

Calvary Episcopal Church

INDIAN ROCKS BEACH – Calvary Episcopal Church, 1615 First St.
Christmas Eve services, on Monday, Dec. 24, will include a service especially for children and families, 5 p.m.; a traditional, old English service, 7 p.m.; and a candlelight mass, 9 p.m.
Christmas Day services, on Tuesday, Dec. 25, will be a Holy Eucharist, at 10 a.m. Call 595-2374.

St. Paul United Methodist Church

LARGO – St. Paul United Methodist Church, 1199 Highland Ave.
Christmas Eve services, Monday, Dec. 24, will include family worship in the Christian Life Enrichment Center, 5 p.m.; and candlelight worship in the sanctuary, 7 and 9 p.m. Call 584-8165.

St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church

LARGO – St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church, 10888 126th Ave.
A Christmas Eve service will be presented Monday, Dec. 24, 7 p.m. Call 586-6968 or visit www.episcopalswfl.org.

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

LARGO – Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 455 Missouri Ave.
Christmas Eve services, on Monday, Dec. 24, will include worship with children's choir and youth bells, 5 p.m.; and worship with pre-service music beginning at 7:10 p.m. and at 9:40 p.m. Child care will be available at the 5 and 7:10 services.
Call 585-9969 or visit www.poplargo.org.

St. Matthew Roman Catholic Church

LARGO – St. Matthew Roman Catholic Church, 9111 90th Ave. N.
Christmas masses will be presented Monday, Dec. 24, 4 and 6 p.m. Christmas music will begin at 9:30 p.m. followed by a candlelight mass at 10 p.m.
A Christmas Day service will be offered Tuesday, Dec. 25, 10 a.m. Call 393-1288.

Everyone is Welcome!
St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church
Sunday Service 10:15 a.m.
1088 126th Ave. N., Largo, FL 33778
727-586-6968
www.stdunstansfl.org
Christmas Eve Service 7:00 p.m.

Starkey Rd. • Largo • Bardmoor Area
ST. MATTHEW ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
CHRISTMAS MASSES
Monday, Dec. 24, 4:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m.
Christmas Music Begins @ 9:30pm
Candlelight Mass at 10:00 p.m.
Christmas Day, Dec. 25, 10:00 a.m.
(727) 393-1288 • 9111 90th Avenue North
(Starkey to blinking light west at fire station)

St. John's Episcopal Church
1676 S. Belcher Road, (south of Belleair Rd.)
Clearwater (727) 531-6020 • www.stjohnsclarwater.org
Christmas Eve
5pm-Family Eucharist
9pm-Christmas Music with Choirs & Instruments
10pm-Candlelight Choral Eucharist
Christmas Day
10am-Holy Eucharist with Carols

Join us this Christmas at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship
"O Come Let us adore him, Christ the Lord"
At each worship service we celebrate Holy Communion
Festival Eucharist - Saturday, Dec. 24th
5:00pm **Worship** with Children's Choir and Youth Bells
7:10pm **Pre-Service Music**
7:30pm **Worship** with Choir, Pipe Organ, Bells, Brass and Timpani
**Childcare available at 5:00 and 7:30 Services*
9:40pm **Pre-Service Music**
10:00pm **Worship** with Choir, Pipe Organ, Bells, Brass and Timpani
Proclamation of the birth of Christ Choirs and instruments support our song.
PRINCE OF PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
455 Missouri Avenue (across from Largo High School)
727-585-9969 † www.poplargo.org

Rejoice Christ the Lord is Born
COME JOIN US
Connect2Christ Church
CHRISTMAS MUSICAL "REJOICE"
Dec. 23, 9:45am
CHRISTMAS EVE Communion & Candle Light Service
Dec. 24, 6:00pm
Freedom Square (Roskamp Auditorium)
7800 Liberty Lane, Seminole Florida

CHRISTMAS 2012 Mass Schedule
Monday, Dec. 24th
4:30 PM • Midnight Mass
Tuesday, Dec. 25th
8:00 AM & 10 AM
NEW YEAR'S Mass Schedule
Monday, Dec. 31st
4:30 PM Vigil
Tuesday, Jan. 1st
9 AM & 11 AM
St. Patrick Catholic Church
1507 Trotter Rd., Largo
727-584-2318

Christmas Eve Faith Presbyterian Church
Monday, December 24
4:00 p.m. - Especially for families with younger children
8:00 p.m. - Features Chancel Choir
11:00 p.m. - Candles, Carols and Communion
11501 Walker Avenue
Seminole, FL 33772
727.391.0596

Celebrate Christmas
CHRISTMAS EVE, DEC. 24
6:30 PM: Family Service with Pageant • Praise Band
9:30 PM: Christmas Carols
10:00 PM: Rite II Service with Incense • Soloist
CHRISTMAS DAY, DEC. 25
9:00 AM: Rite I Service
St. Anne of Grace Episcopal Church
6650 113th Street North
Half mile south of Park Blvd.
Seminole, FL 33772
727-392-4483
www.stanneofgrace.com

Come Join Us at
Seminole First Baptist Church
Monday, December 24
in the Worship Center
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
at 6:00 PM
11045 Park Boulevard
Seminole, Florida 33772
(727) 392-7729

CHURCH OF THE ISLES
Christmas Eve Services
5pm Family Service
7pm Carols & Candlelight
11pm Communion & Candlelight
727-595-1038
Rev. James D. Rapp, Pastor
200 24th Avenue • Indian Rocks Beach
www.churchoftheisles.org

Holiday Services

Christ Presbyterian Church

LARGO – Christ Presbyterian Church, 3115 Dryer Ave.
A candlelight service will be presented on Christmas Eve, Monday, Dec. 24, 5:30 p.m. Prior to the service, carols will be sung at 5:30 p.m. Call 584-8695.

St. Patrick Catholic Church

LARGO – St. Patrick Catholic Church, 1507 Trotter Road.
Christmas Eve services, on Monday, Dec. 24, will include a mass at 4:30 p.m.; and a midnight mass. Christmas Day services, on Tuesday, Dec. 25, will include mass at 8 and 10 a.m.
On New Year's Eve, Monday, Dec. 31, there will be a mass at 4:30 p.m. and a vigil.
New Year's Day services, on Tuesday, Jan. 1, will include mass at 9 and 11 a.m. Call 584-2318.

St. Dunstan's Anglican Church

LARGO – St. Dunstan's Anglican Church, 403 First Ave. SW.
Christmas Eve services, on Monday, Dec. 24, will include holy communion, 4 and 8 p.m.; Christmas carols, 7:30 and 10:30 p.m.; and festal holy communion, 11 p.m.
Holy communion will be offered on Christmas Day, Tuesday, Dec. 25, 11 a.m.

Friendship Community Church

MADEIRA BEACH – Friendship Community Church, 4321 Duhme Road.
On Christmas Eve, Monday, Dec. 24, the church will host candlelight and live nativity services at 5:30 and 7:30 p.m.

Church By The Sea

MADEIRA BEACH – Church By The Sea, 13701 Gulf Blvd.
On Christmas Eve, Monday, Dec. 24, the church will present contemporary worship at 7 p.m. and a candlelight service at 11 p.m. Call 391-7706 or visit www.churchbythesea.com.

First United Methodist Church of Pinellas Park

PINELLAS PARK – First United Methodist Church of Pinellas Park, 9025 49th St. N.
A Christmas Eve candlelight service will be presented Monday, Dec. 24, 7 p.m. Call 546-5741.

Good Samaritan Church

PINELLAS PARK – Good Samaritan Church, 6085 Park Blvd.
The Christmas Eve service will be presented Monday, Dec. 24, 7 p.m. The service will include familiar carols, scripture readings and a moving candlelight observance.
For information, call 544-8558 or visit www.goodsam-church.org.

Park Place Wesleyan Church

PINELLAS PARK – Park Place Wesleyan Church, 4400 70th Ave. N.
A Christmas Eve service will be presented Monday, Dec. 24, 6 p.m. Call 526-3674.

New Journey Fellowship

PINELLAS PARK – New Journey Fellowship, 4090 78th Ave.
Christmas communion services will be presented Sunday, Dec. 23, 9:15 and 10:45 a.m.
Christmas Eve candlelight services will be presented Monday, Dec. 24, 5 and 6:30 p.m. Call 344-1063.

Temple of the Living God

ST. PETERSBURG – Temple of the Living God Metaphysical Community Church, 1950 Second Ave. N.
On Christmas Eve, Monday, Dec. 24, the church will present "A Shepherd's Vision," 7 p.m. Call 822-3157.

St. Anne of Grace Episcopal Church

SEMINOLE – St. Anne of Grace Episcopal Church, 6650 113th St. N.
Christmas Eve services, on Monday, Dec. 24, will include a family service at 6:30 p.m. with Eucharist, Christmas pageant and praise band; Christmas carols at 9:30 p.m.; and Rite II service with Eucharist, incense and soloist at 10 p.m.
On Christmas Day, Tuesday, Dec. 25, there will be a Rite I Eucharist service at 9 a.m. Call 392-4483 or visit www.stanneofgrace.com.

Christ the King Presbyterian Church

SEMINOLE – Christ the King Presbyterian Church, 5400 Seminole Blvd.
A Festival of Lessons and Carols will be presented on Christmas Eve, Monday, Dec. 24, 6 p.m. Call 394-0787.

Seminole First Baptist Church

SEMINOLE – Seminole First Baptist Church, 11045 Park Blvd.
A Christmas Eve candlelight service will be presented Monday, Dec. 24, 6 p.m. Call 392-7729.

St Paul United Methodist Church

Christmas Eve Services

5pm Family Worship in Christian Life Enrichment Center

7 & 9pm Candlelight Worship in Sanctuary

1199 Highland Ave., Largo 33770

stpaulumc.org 727-584-8165

Faith Presbyterian Church

SEMINOLE – Faith Presbyterian Church, 11501 Walker Ave.
Christmas Eve services, on Monday, Dec. 24, will include a service especially for families with younger children, 4 p.m.; a service with chancel choir, 8 p.m.; and candles, carols and communion, 11 p.m. Call 391-0596.

Bay Ridge Baptist

SEMINOLE – Bay Ridge Baptist, 1655 113th St.
A Christmas Eve candlelight service will be presented Monday, Dec. 24, 6 p.m. Prior to the service, cookies and homemade cider will be served at 5:30 p.m. Call 391-1935.

Connect2Christ Church

SEMINOLE – Connect2Christ Church, in Freedom Square Roskamp Auditorium, 7800 Liberty Lane.
"Rejoice," a Christmas musical, will be presented Sunday, Dec. 23, 9:45 a.m. Communion and a candlelight service will be offered Christmas Eve, Monday, Dec. 24, 6 p.m. Visit www.c2church.com.

Oakhurst United Methodist Church

SEMINOLE – Oakhurst United Methodist Church, 13400 Park Blvd.
Christmas Eve services, on Monday, Dec. 24, will include a family service with Christmas pageant and candle lighting, 5 p.m.; contemporary worship and candle lighting, 6:30 p.m.; and traditional service with candle lighting, 8 p.m.
Call 391-4769 or visit www.oakhurstumc.com.

Temple of the Living God
Metaphysical Community Church

Christmas Eve Reader's Theater
"A Shepard's Vision" 7pm

www.TempleoftheLivingGod.org

Merry Christmas and Wonderful New Year

1950 2nd Avenue North, St. Petersburg
727-822-8628 • 727-822-3157

Highland Presbyterian Church

Welcomes Back Northern Friends and New Neighbors seeking a caring place to worship.

Join Us

Monday, December 24th @ 4pm
Christmas Eve Candlelight Music Service

Traditional Services Sundays @ 10am
Scottish Minister, Great Fellowship
Sunday Sermon and Calendar Available on Website
www.highlandpcusa.org
Bible Study, Tuesday - 11:30am
Monthly Book Review

Small Enough to Care, Friendliest Church in Town
1885 S. Highland Ave. (Above Rosery)
(727) 584-1191 • Rev. D. Lindsay Frame, Pastor

Christ Presbyterian Church
Christmas Eve
Carols 5:30pm
Candlelight Service 6:00pm

Located two blocks east of Indian Rocks Road at:
3115 Dryer Ave., Largo
Phone (727) 584-8695 • Nursery Available
Bus Transportation Available

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE

Good Samaritan

"O Come Let Us Adore Him"

Christmas Eve
Family Liturgy
7:00 p.m. Choral Prelude
7:30 p.m. Eucharist

Christmas Day
Liturgy
8:00 a.m.

WWW.GOODSAMARITAN-SWFLA.ORG
2165 N.E. Coachman Road • Clearwater
727-461-1717

Celebrate Christmas this year at...

First United Methodist Church

411 Turner St.
Corner Ft. Harrison & Turner
Downtown Clearwater • 446-5955

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES
5:30 p.m.
Chancel Choir
Tower Ringers
Children's Choir
Crosswind Praise Team
Candle Lighting

St. Dunstan's Anglican Church
403 First Ave. SW, Largo
727-581-1435 • www.stdunstansfl.com

Christmas Schedule

Christmas Eve., Monday Dec. 24, 2012

4:00pm Holy Communion
Traditional Worship

7:30pm Christmas Carols

8:00pm Holy Communion
Contemporary Worship

10:30pm Christmas Carols

11:00pm Festal Holy Communion
Contemporary Worship

Christmas Day, Tuesday Dec. 25, 2012

11:00am Holy Communion
Traditional Worship

St. Catherine of Siena Parish
Catholic Church
1955 South Belcher Road, Clearwater
531-7721 + www.scosparish.org

Monday, December 24, 2012
Christmas Eve Vigil
4:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m. (Children's Mass)
11:15 p.m. to Midnight Musical Prelude
12:00 a.m. Midnight Mass

Tuesday, December 25, 2012
Christmas Day Masses
7:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m.

O Come, Let Us Adore Him!

For Those Seeking A Return and Renewal of their Catholic Faith
This Christmas Try a Jesus-Centered Purpose Driven Catholic Church

St. Justin Martyr
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
JESUS CENTERED & PURPOSE DRIVEN

Join us for Christmas Services
December 24th Christmas Eve
4:00pm, 6:30pm (Family Mass) and 10:00pm Candlelight Mass

December 25th Christmas Day
10:00am Mass and Special Call To Worship 15 min before Mass

10851 Ridge Road, Seminole • www.stjustinmartyr.net • Mass Times: Sat. 4pm, Sun. 8am, 9:30am, 11:30am (Praise & Worship Band)

Our FREE GIFT to You with no obligation
Call Now!
727-397-3312 Ext. 311

All are welcome, learn more about our SCCs and January Bible study classes • call 727-397-3312 ext. 311

The Lasting Gift of Christmas is the One who Keeps on Giving!



Share the Gift this Christmas at

Calvary Episcopal Church

1615 1st St Indian Rocks Beach (727) 595.2374 www.calvaryirb.org

Christmas Eve: 5 PM Especially for Children & Families
7 PM "Traditional" - Old English "Rite I"
9 PM "Midnight Mass" of the Nativity

Christmas Day: 10 AM Holy Eucharist of Christmas Day

Letters to Santa

OK, kids, you've done your part. Thanks for sending us all those great letters to Santa Claus. Because of Tampa Bay Newspapers' connections to the North Pole through the Reindeer Express, we'll make sure that Santa gets your letters in a timely fashion. Though they're very busy at this time of year, Santa and his helpers cheerfully read every letter and try to make every good boy and girl happy on Christmas morning.

DEAR SANTA,
all I want for christmas is my cat named Tiger home for christmas. And my hamster wants a hamster playhouse set and tube's for his cage. And my sister wants a black hamster.
love Hope

DEAR SANTA,
What I will want is a phone and a Bike for my brother and some shoes, slippers, sandals and a christmas tree to put in my room and a backpack.
Daniel B.

DEAR SANTA,
Please, send me a Princess Doll for Christmas.
Thank you,
Merry Christmas, Santa!

DEAR SANTA,
for christmas I want some movies and art tools and paper. the movies I want is Brave and R. U. D. and Secret of the Wings. I want video games for my 3DS. I want 2 bean bag's and a nice n' comfy chair. from:
Alexis Felix-Rolle

DEAR SANTA,
For Christmas May I have MY Little Pony, all of them please. A Hello Kitty castle with a Hello Kitty car. And some Princess toys.
thank you
JESSICA QUICK
age 6

DEAR SANTA,
Hi it is Colton, we have the E. H. Ben. He was named after our grand father. I want a IPAD remote control airplane and a Nintendo Wii games. Dale my brother with Down Syndrome wants a iPad and more little people.
THANK YOU,
SANTA!

DEAR SANTA,
What I want for Christmas is please all of the monster high dolls, a dream like a monkey puppy an iPhone a computer and a car for mom to me and my sisters to school.
I Love you Santa
Sincerely
Robi
12-24-12

DEAR SANTA,
I want a white furby a Wii, some hottest pe-shops toys, a laptop and a mouse for it, a 3DS, a beautiful dress, a new phone, a new bigger beautiful funner cage for my hamster, a big play house for my cats, ten more dresses for my build a bear workshop bear and four movie ticket pass's.
Bella

DEAR SANTA,
I want a new bicycle, a DSi, a angry bird toy, a JUST dance 4 game, a Wii a iPod touch, a movie camera to the MISTY RIVERS island, a gymnastics bar, a trampolin, a slushy maker, a wheel chair, a new Wii control, a go-go stick, a glow dance, a swing, a choo-choo train, and electric scooter.
Pare J

DEAR SANTA,
I am from Russia, or phuge! I love my adopted parents, Mom, Dad and I am so glad my brother & I are here in America, the land of opportunity. My brother & I wish everyone a wonderful holiday.
God bless
Emma Kay Leifer

DEAR SANTA,
My Name is Emma Grace Morely and I live in Clearwater FL. I like to read and I want a kindle or a Nook and Santa if you can't get me what I want just get me whatever your Elves can make for me. Santa Your My heart and the elves
Your truly
P.S. Emma
Please Send a letter back

DEAR SANTA,
I would love... a Jeep, I would love... a Nerf gun and... a new pair of shoes and... real fish because my turtle died... and I like trucks so I would love that... and I love angry bird stuff... and I would cry for tools that so fun!!!!
Dillon

DEAR SANTA,
I'm sorry for being bad lately. To make up for it I promise to be nice to my sissy and listen to mommy. In return I would like
1. A trampoline
2. play heels
3. laptop
4. makeup
5. puppy & kitten
Love,
Ariana - 4

DEAR SANTA,
this year I don't want anything, instead I would like to give back to my community. I would like to give all the little girls and boys a chance to really know and remember for Christ mas! If you could do this for the needy children, I would most like to remember this Christmas too! Thanks Santa!
Holly B.

DEAR SANTA,
SCOOTER
SHOES
Baby Set
monster high Dolls
monster high Sheets / PJ's
Puzzles
coloring Books
GAMES
My Brother Junior would like
Mater Jawaks
and Cars
HAILEY



We're delighted to publish some of the letters to Santa. Merry Christmas, one and all.

Holidays restore faith in goodwill toward everyone

I love the holidays. I adore the lights, the glitter and that feeling of excitement humming through the air. And, most especially, I thrive on the feeling of goodwill as the community comes together to help our own.

Most of us stay unaware of what it is like to be poor. We cannot imagine what it is like to work all day, every day and still not have enough money to pay rent and buy food. We cannot know how it feels to have to tell your child there is no supper tonight.



Suzette Porter

We cannot fathom what it is like to be in pain and have no money to see a doctor, or even worse to have a sick child, spouse or parent and not be able to afford medicine. We cannot imagine the fear, the hopelessness.

It's beyond our ability to relate to the elderly who have no family and no one to care. We do not know how it feels to be miserably lonely, hungry and scared.

At a recent Pinellas County Commissioners meeting, an official talked about visiting a family living in deplorable conditions. There were eight or nine people living in a one-bedroom home. The only light was from a single bulb hanging from the ceiling. The cook stove was the only source of heat.

I remember going to places like that as a child in a small town in Arkansas. My mother is what some would call a professional do-gooder. My brother and I often thought we might starve as we waited for her to come home to feed us. We complained that she cared more for "those people" than her own family. Yes, we were spoiled.

During the holidays, she took us with her to visit those less fortunate. We took boxes of food and gifts of toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, deodorant, toilet paper and the like. We took socks, underwear and coats. My brother and I did not think the gifts were worthy Christmas presents. My mom told us we would think different if we did not have those things at home.

I remember hating to go into some houses because they smelled. When I complained, I was told to be kind. They are doing their best, my mother said. The next year, our boxes included cleaning products and bleach.

My church group went to the nursing homes at Christmas as well. We sang carols and visited with the residents. In the beginning, I did not like it. Those old folks were weird and they smelled funny, too. My mom ignored my complaints. She said, "Suzette, this makes them happy for just a little while. It will not hurt you to help."

Some of them would cry. They were so grateful that someone cared. They would say thank you over and over. Many begged us to come again. I did not understand that; for some our visit would be the only thing that made the holiday different from any other day.

The needs of others are not something most of us consider as we go about our day-to-day business. But the need is there. People just like you and me are struggling. The only thing that separates us is a paycheck, decent health and having someone to care.

More families are homeless in Pinellas than ever before. Children are living in their cars with their parent(s). There will be no Christmas tree or presents or holiday meal – unless it comes from you or me.

The holidays truly are magical. Amidst the glitter and lights and that feeling of excitement is a huge effort to reach out to those in need. Businesses, organizations, churches, charities and individuals are collecting food, clothing and toys with the goal to make the holidays a little bit brighter for us all. Law enforcement agencies, fire departments and other government agencies go beyond their normal jobs of public servants to do as much as they can.

Imagine if we could take the spirit of Christmas and apply it every day to helping those in need without judgment of their circumstance.

Could we stop homelessness? Could we end hunger? Could we prevent unnecessary pain and suffering? Could we create hope?

I love the magic of Christmas. Here's to peace on earth and goodwill to us all.

Suzette Porter is Tampa Bay Newspapers online editor and Internet services manager. Write her at webmaster@TBNweekly.com.

LETTERS

The elderly wait in silence for their children

Editor:

Where have the children gone? She sits in the hallway with the suitcase by her side. As I pass, she takes hold of my arm and pulls me and motions me to come closer. She says she is waiting for her daughter to take her home.

As she talked, tears rolled down her face. Yet I could see a sparkle in her eyes and a smile on her face. She reminded me of my mom, who once had that same look on her face, but my mom was in a hospital, not a nursing home.

I was happy for this frail little lady, until I heard the head nurse. This lady has sat in that hallway with that empty suitcase for seven years, ever since her daughter left her, never to return.

Where have all the children gone? Don't they remember the love and happiness once given? Are their loved ones so busy that they can't even share just a visit, a kiss and "I love you" or just a thank you? Their hearts must truly be frozen.

Each day she'll sit and wait, with that same sparkle in those eyes and that same smile and return to her room and wait for tomorrow.

I hurt when I think of that lady and the tomorrows to follow. I don't think she really is waiting for her daughter any longer. I think now she sits and waits for her death. I'm sure when it comes it will be an angel, and he'll pick her up in his arms, and she will still have that sparkle in her eyes and that smile on her face.

Dolores Pryor

Largo

Appreciates meeting coverage

Editor:

Millie and I have just finished reading (with great pleasure), the coverage of our recent City Commission meeting and the vote taken on this project. We both concur that this article did much to answer questions and to clarify the issue regarding the 500 feet owned by St. Petersburg. Several phone calls to our home have all been positive, and we want to extend our thanks for excellent reporting!

P.S.: We feel fortunate to have Bob (McClure) and your newspaper in our community.

Julian Fant

Commissioner, District 2,
Treasure Island

Thank you, Lighthouse

Editor:

My husband and I had a lovely vacation in the Indian Rocks Beach area last week. We arrived on Sunday, Dec. 2, and drove directly to the Lighthouse Donuts because we love their key lime donuts. After enjoying donuts and coffee, we heard that the IRB Parade was about to begin. We walked around and enjoyed the floats and entertainment. We returned to the Lighthouse only to find that I had left my purse on the front deck. I had no idea I had left it there and was quite shocked. A young employee met us and said he had been keeping an eye on my purse for me until I returned. Everything was intact and I was so thankful. It is nice to know that there are honest people in the world. We will definitely be back to Indian Rocks Beach and the Lighthouse. Thank you again to the Lighthouse.

Janice Holden

Burlington, Ontario

At Christmas, what of Yoka?

Each year at Christmas time it saddens me to be the lowest specimen of religious life – a lapsed Presbyterian – but I still manage to hold my head up and enjoy the goings on. Most Christmas practices are based on traditions, and that's reassuring. Old memories are often the best – the giving of gifts, the singing of carols, the bright lights, the sending of greeting cards to people you haven't seen or even thought about for the past year.

It takes me back to my childhood and my early religious training. This consisted of our parents dropping my siblings and me off at the nearest Protestant Sunday School each week, and then picking us up an hour later. To their credit, our parents seldom asked us, "Well, what did you learn today?" The truthful answer would have been, "Very little," thanks to the hodge-podge of Sunday school teachers our little minds were exposed to. Most of the teachers possessed only an approximate idea of who Jesus was, but they taught us that he had been murdered by a gang of Jews and Romans in order to save us all. 2000 years later, from unspecified sins we didn't even know we had committed. From that point it became even more confusing, and still is.

I'm glad I wasn't bright enough to raise my hand and ask the teacher, "Could you please explain the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception?" I'd probably have been expelled. This would have forced me to dream up some really imaginative excuses to give my parents. Or it would have allowed my mother to introduce me to neighbors by saying, "Have you met my brilliant son? He was recently kicked out of Sunday School."

"And what of Yoka?" Have you ever heard a less gripping opening line in one of the seg-



Driver's Seat

Bob Driver

ments of a Christmas pageant? Nor have I, but it was mine and mine alone in December 1945 at the First Presbyterian Church of Ashland, Pa. The Sunday school's teen-agers had been hornswoggled into presenting a play describing how Christmas was celebrated in various nations. I can't remember where Yoka lived. Somewhere in Africa, I believe.

When I told my brother Dave about Yoka and the knock-'em-dead first words of my monologue, he laughed for an hour. So did I. We wondered which amateur playwright had dreamed up the script. Dave nicknamed me Yoka, and to this day we can dissolve into paroxysms of jollity just by inquiring "And what of Yoka?" On the night of the pageant's presentation I don't recall my getting any curtain calls. Still, it was a Christmas anecdote to put in my memory box.

You're probably aware that one of our Christmas traditions is fading fast and being replaced by a new holiday custom. Disappearing is the Battle of the Malls, complete with fighting for a parking space, endless trudging from store to store, competing with other shoppers for a clerks' attention, and then lugging home gift packages. The growing replacement for all of this is the computer. It lets us sit happily at home, coffee or beer at our side, and punch up dozens of commercial

websites whose owners will gladly ship to us (for a fee) any of 6 million gifts shown on our computer screen.

Computerized shopping brings with it yet another major improvement over the weariness of in-store shopping, namely, no Christmas carols assaulting our ears. I'm not talking about the religion-based songs, such as Come All Ye Faithful, Joy to the World and Hark the Herald Angels Sing, presented by outstanding choral groups such as the Robert Shaw Chorale or the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Most malls don't choose those carols, to start with.

What they prefer and continue to play is secular holiday garbage having little or nothing to do with Christ or his teachings. If I were king I'd levy crippling taxes on any store or radio station that played warmed-over, moss-eaten songs about Rudolph, silver bells, chestnuts roasting on an open fire, baby it's cold outside, bells jingling, singing chipmunks, a brat who saw mommy kissing Santa Claus and that most god-awful concoction, the Twelve Days of Christmas. The list is endless, and keeps growing as singers and music moguls think of new ways to make a buck out of our often-uncritical fascination with Christmas and its trappings.

But oddly enough, by 1 a.m. each Dec. 26 Christmas enthusiasm abruptly stops. Its replacements on the excitement scale: New Year's Eve and the Super Bowl playoffs. Ain't life grand?

And so it goes. Along with my predictable kvetching, I send sincere holiday wishes to all of my 37 Faithful Readers.

Bob Driver is a former columnist and editorial page editor for the Clearwater Sun. Send him an email at tralee71@comcast.net.



U.S. must prepare for violence

The massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School on Friday reawakened us all to the terrible fact that we are not as safe and secure as we used to be in our homes, in our workplaces, in our shopping malls and in our schools.

Friday, we were again reminded that the U.S., in the course of becoming too free a nation over the last half century, has evolved into the amoral society envisioned in the 20th century films of Stanley Kubrick and Quentin Tarantino. Many of those films anticipated today's graphic violence and foretold of our acceptance of such disgraceful, surreal chaos.

It's been 12 years since 9/11, and except for increased security at airports, we Americans have continued to live our day-to-day lives within a false framework of harmless refuge, deadened to the realities to which we are all vulnerable.

It's a bizarre culture that chooses to overlook, sanction, and even glorify bloodshed and mayhem. And it's made worse by the 24-7 instantaneous news cycle that pounds our senses with constant news of violence to the point that we can't listen or care anymore.

Despite this particular massacre, which hit home to every parent, we will continue to discourage common sense limits to the propagation of violent behavior. We do that in the name of protecting important constitutional rights, including that to bear arms, to speak freely and to make our own decisions, even if we're mentally disturbed.

Actually, we have gone off the deep end, and continue to pay the price, including the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School, in pushing these rights to nonsensical limits. So while we learned the lessons of 9/11



Florida Voices

Steven Kurlander

well enough to be vigilant against hijackings by terrorists, nevertheless, over and over again, we permit mentally ill people – domestic terrorists – to get their hands on legal semi-automatic weapons. And sometimes they enter college campuses, movie theaters, malls and elementary school classrooms to shoot away.

Dangerous mentally ill people will continue to live among us and roam our streets unfettered, and legally purchased semi-automatic weapons will continue to fall into the wrong hands. And we as Americans will continue to be numb and accepting of media presentation, even promotion of violent behavior.

Yet, despite this concurrence, President Obama spoke, and cried, on behalf of every American parent on Friday when he spoke the real truth. We are tired of the violence; our country has endured too many shootings; and we must do something to address this behavior.

In his most moving and evocative speech ever, Obama said, "We're going to have to come together and take meaningful action to prevent more tragedies like this, regardless of the politics." Just as our government took immediate action to secure air travel after 9/11, school districts and the federal government must now dedicate substantial resources toward making our schools less prone to at-

tacks like the one that took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

But it's not about arming teachers or making schools into forts. It's all about creating a culture of preparedness and responsibility. School districts, and business entities too, must take steps to teach and train staff better to prepare and prevent violence in their schools, workplaces and public settings.

And it's not just about implementing physical security like metal detectors and surveillance equipment. It's about getting educators and students, even kindergartners, to learn and practice to protect themselves against threats to their well-being and how to respond in moments of crises.

While it is still important to debate gun control of automatic weapons and discuss how to limit access to guns to criminals and the criminally insane, more importantly, Americans need to dedicate our resources toward teaching and preparing our citizens to deal with the ever-present threat of violence, just as the Israelis do. It's not about being fearful. It's about being ready to react the next time a gunman enters your violence-prone 21st-century American life.

Steven Kurlander is an attorney, communications strategist/writer and columnist for the Sun Sentinel and Florida Voices and a blogger for the Huffington Post.

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Correction

A hunting license is not needed to participate in the Python Challenge that will be conducted in Florida. Tom Germond's column last week about the python hunt stated otherwise.

Tampa Bay Newspapers

BEACON • LEADER • BEE

Publisher/President: Dan Autrey

dautrey@tbnweekly.com

Accounting Manager: Andrea Marcarelli

tbnandy@yahoo.com

Retail Advertising Manager: Jay Rey

jrey@tbnweekly.com

Classified Advertising Manager: Shelly Fournier

sfournier@tbnweekly.com

Executive Editor: Tom Germond

tgermond@tbnweekly.com

Production Manager: David Brown

production@tbnweekly.com

Internet Services Manager: Suzette Porter

webmaster@tbnweekly.com

Seminole/Beach Beacon: Bob McClure

bmccclure@tbnweekly.com

Largo Leader: Juliana A. Torres

jtortes@tbnweekly.com

Belleair/Beach Bee: Tom Germond

tgermond@tbnweekly.com

9911 Seminole Blvd., Seminole, FL 33772

727-397-5563 • Fax: 727-397-5900 • www.TBNweekly.com

Clearwater Beacon: Alexandra Lundahl

alundahl@tbnweekly.com

Pinellas Park Beacon: Tiffany Razzano

trazzano@tbnweekly.com

General Editorial

editorial@tbnweekly.com

Circulation: L. Shiflett

Phone: 727-397-5563



Defining mercury-free and mercury-safe

Today many dentists are mercury-free (amalgam-free) but are they mercury-safe? Strictly speaking, the term "mercury-free" refers to dentists who do not put amalgam fillings in their patients' teeth. This term was first used more than 40 years ago by dentists who wanted to distinguish themselves from dentists who felt that amalgams were safe and continued to use them.



Health matters
Dr. Paul Rodeghero

However, the term mercury-free wasn't a truly accurate description because even dentists who didn't put in amalgam fillings still had to remove them - and the removal process releases excessive and unnecessary amounts of toxic mercury vapor.

Over time, dentists who were mercury-free developed protocols and equipment that allowed them to dramatically minimize a patient's exposure to mercury during the removal process. In effect, using these protocols meant that their practices were also mercury-safe.

Today it is no longer enough for a dentist who is both mercury-free and mercury-safe to just promote his or her practice as mercury-free. Why? Recently a survey showed that 52 percent of general dentists no longer use amalgam and call themselves mercury-free. But, and this is important for every dental patient to know, not because they were concerned about safely removing them, but because they no longer felt amalgam was a good filling material when compared to the newer composite fillings.

This has created a problem for patients who believe that dentists who said they were mercury-free also meant they used protocols to safely remove amalgam fillings. But there is a solution. Patients who

are looking for a dentist who will safely remove their amalgam fillings must ask the question: "Are you both mercury-free and mercury-safe?" Bottom line ... you can't assume that a dentist who advertises his or her practice as being mercury-free, is also mercury-safe - unless you ask!

Unsafe removal of amalgam fillings can generate huge amounts of toxic mercury vapor, easily up to a 100 times more than the maximum levels of mercury vapor allowed by all government regulatory agencies. What really separates mercury-safe dentists from those who are only mercury-free, is their understanding that:

- When unsafely removed, amalgam fillings release huge amounts of poisonous mercury vapor.
- The mercury released from amalgam fillings negatively affects patients health.
- Patients, the dentist and his assistant need to be protected from exposure to toxic mercury vapor during the amalgam removal process.
- Mercury-safe dentists also have the specialized equipment, training, experience, and skills necessary to minimize their patients' exposure to mercury during amalgam removal. If you want to protect yourself from excessive and unnecessary occupational exposure to mercury vapor at the dental office make sure your dentist is not just mercury-free - but also mercury-safe!

Dr. Paul Rodeghero at Clearwater Family Dental is a mercury-safe dentist trained by the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology. He practices at Clearwater Family Dental, 706 S. Fort Harrison Ave., Clearwater.

Help teens avoid alcohol this holiday

Holidays are a time for reflection and celebration. While this is also true for teens, in some cases, holidays are also a time for great temptation.

From block parties to small family gatherings, celebrations of all sizes can lead to underage drinking, while alcohol is more plentiful and accessible and parents are distracted by the festivities.

Underage drinking is widespread problem among today's youth. By age 18, more than 70 percent of teens have tried alcohol, according to the National Institutes of Health, and this statistic is especially alarming for parents of teenagers with their driver licenses.

"As a teenager, you do hear about other teens partying more during Christmas break because it is followed by New Year's Eve," said Kierra Keys, a 15-year-old from St. Petersburg who will be celebrating with her family at an alcohol-free party. "I have just learned that it's not a good thing."

To help protect teens and the community this holiday season, Jackie Griffin, executive director of LiveFree! Coalition, an alliance in Pinellas County that promotes awareness about the harmful effects of substance abuse among youth, young adults and adults, offers the following tips:

- Lose the booze. Concerned about your teen attending a party where you know alcohol will be readily available? Considering hosting a kid-friendly, alcohol-free party for your family and friends. It's the best way to eliminate temptation and ensure that everyone (even adults) get home safely.
- Do not take a vacation from vigilance. The kids are on vacation from school and things are likely very relaxed at home. But now is not the time to relax the rules. Store the alcohol in a safe place, keep an eye out for signs of drinking and remind your children of the consequences.
- Express your expectations. Talk to your kids about your expectations for them at holiday parties. Address alcohol head-on and reinforce the idea that while adults might be drinking, alcohol is not a party favor for everyone.
- Set an example. Remember that kids often learn by example. Do not drink excessively at holiday parties and ensure that you have a designated driver. If you are hosting, then make sure that your guests also have arranged for a sober driver and there are plenty of non-alcoholic refreshments available.
- My older cousin sat down with me to talk about drinking and where you can end up if you drink," added Keys who also tries to be a good role model for her younger sister and brothers. "It's important to have family members who care, but you also need to have a strong mind to not be pressured into it. You are the one who has to make the decision to not drink."
- Taking the time to establish rules and open the lines of communication can really keep them safe during the holidays and beyond," added Griffin.

Visit www.livefreeblog.org for some events, groups and ideas.

Pediatric health clinics open in Pinellas

The Pinellas County Health Department is offering health services to children and those younger than 18 at two clinic locations. Appointments are available at both clinics. Fees are on a sliding scale based on the declared income of the child's family.

A twice-weekly clinic at Boca Ciega High School, 924 58th St. S., Gulfport, is open from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Although walk-ins are welcome, appointments are preferred. Call 893-2780, ext. 2199, to schedule an appointment or before planning a walk-in visit.

The second pediatric clinic is at the Pinellas County Health Department's newest center, Mid-County, located at 8751 Ulmerton Road., Largo. Clinic hours are 2:30 to 5:30 p.m., Mondays and Fridays, and 8 to 10 a.m. Wednesdays. For an appointment, call 524-4410, ext. 7646.

For information about the Pinellas County Health Department and its services, visit www.PinellasHealth.com.

Briefs

Lifesaving screenings available for women

Mammograms and Pap tests save women's lives, but their costs can be out of reach for those who are uninsured or can't afford them on their own.

The Florida Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program has been serving some of those women by providing a link to screenings and treatment with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention since 1994. Early detection is the key to successfully diagnosing and treating breast and cervical cancer.

The Pinellas County Health Department administers the county's Florida Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program that serves women between the ages of 50 and 64 who are uninsured and whose household income is at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. For a family of four, 200 percent is \$46,100 in gross income.

During the 2011-2012 fiscal year, the Pinellas program provided 2,208 breast screenings and diagnostic services. Almost 1,000 women received mammograms to detect breast cancer and 478 received Pap tests to detect cervical cancer.

Testing detected 29 breast cancers and three cases of cervical cancer or pre-cancers. The Florida program serves about 5.4 percent of the eligible population in the state that needs its services.

For information about the Pinellas County Health Department's breast and cervical screening program, visit www.pinellashealth.com/Breast-CervicalScreening.asp or call 824-6917.

The Florida Department of Health provides statistics on the state's

program at www.doh.state.fl.us/family/cancer/bcc/index.html.

Dixon attends NIH conference

ST. PETERSBURG - Barnali Dixon, associate professor of environmental science, policy and geography at USF St. Petersburg, recently returned from a national conference organized by the National Institute of Health about the impact of nitrogen on human health.

Dixon, director of the USF St. Petersburg Geo-Spatial Analytics Lab, was the only groundwater and soil scientist invited to the conference, "Impacts of Excess Nitrogen in the Environment on Human Health," held in November in Maryland. The conference focused on the impact of excessive nitrogen on human health and brought together environmental, biomedical researchers, and public health experts. Dixon made an oral presentation on statistical regional modeling of nitrate in groundwater, based on her innovative research published in *Hydrogeology Journal* in 2009. The research was funded by the Florida Water Resources Research Center.

"It was an honor to be invited to the conference as the only soil and groundwater scientist," Dixon said.

Excess nitrogen in groundwater is a serious problem in the U.S., Dixon said, particularly in states like Florida with a large number of septic tanks, or states where there is intensive agriculture and higher fertilizer application.

"Her research is a very good example of the use of statistical methods to predict the risk of nitrate contamination in rural wells," said Tom Nolan of the U.S. Geological Survey.



Dr. Barnali Dixon

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Inaugural Dare to Dream winners announced

CLEARWATER – Ruth Eckerd Hall has announced the winners of its inaugural Dare to Dream awards. The new fundraising event was held on the Main Stage at Ruth Eckerd Hall on Nov. 29 and showcased the breadth of students trained at The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute.

There were five performance categories, and each first prize scholarship recipient received \$3,000. The winners are as follows:

- Cameron MacMillan took first place in the instrumental category, with his performance of *Gigue* from Bach's *Third Cello Suite in C Major*. A 17-year-old senior at Seminole High, MacMillan maintains a 4.6 grade-point average. He has studied at The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute for five years as a member of the Pinellas Youth Symphony and Serenade Strings Orchestra. He was awarded first place at the FMTA District IV Concerto Competition and was a finalist last year at Ruth Eckerd Hall's Youth Scholarships in the instrumental category.

- Jessica Sullivan, a 17-year-old senior at Palm Harbor University High won first place in the dance category with her performance of *Terrible Things*, choreographed by Beth Caprio. She maintains a 4.3 grade-point average and has studied at the Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute for four years in tap and jazz and is part of the Rhythm and Sole Tap Ensemble. She is also involved with her student council, is in the International Baccalaureate Program, is a volunteer with Suncoast Hospice, Clearwater Marine Aquarium and UNICEF and is a member of both the National and English Honor Societies.

- Aaron Lehrian is a 17-year-old senior at Seminole High and won first place in the jazz category with his performance on piano of *Lush Life* by Billy Strayhorn and third place in the instrumental classical category. He maintains a 4.5 grade-point average and has studied at The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute for two years, primarily in jazz and is part of Ruth Eckerd Hall's Big Band and Jazz

Combo. Last year, he was selected as the All-State Jazz Pianist and took first place in Walker Rising Star's instrumental category. He was also awarded a scholarship to attend Sacramento's Trade Jazz Camp. He can be found playing piano for his church on Sundays.

- Rachel Salzman is a 17-year-old senior at East Lake High and won first place in two categories – drama, with her performance of *Dog Sees God* from *Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead*, and vocal, with her performance of *Unusual Way* by Maury Yeston from the musical, *Nine*. She maintains a 4.1 grade-point average and has studied at The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute for more than two years, focusing on drama and voice. She is active both at the institute and around the area in programs such as the Broadway Theater Project while also actively giving back through volunteer hours at the St. Vincent DePaul Soup Kitchen and the Homeless Emergency Project.

- Esther Schneider, a 17-year-old junior at Tampa Preparatory School, where she maintains a 3.8 grade-point average, was voted Fan Favorite, with her vocal performance of *Done Lieta* from Puccini's *La Boheme*. She has studied at The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute for more than four years, focusing on voice. She is a member of her school's chorus, studies piano and sol fege and teaches swimming lessons to youth at her YMCA. She was awarded a superior rating at the State French Competition in 2012. She received a \$1,000 scholarship for being fan favorite.

The event proceeds benefitted the Youth Scholarship and Tuition Assistance Programs offered at The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute at Ruth Eckerd Hall. Local and national members of the entertainment industry assisted in judging the students, including Guest Artist Judge Quentin Earl Darrington, a former Institute student and a 1994-95 scholarship winner in musical theater. He has starred in many productions, including *Ragtime*'s 2009 revival on Broadway and national tours of *The Color Purple*, *The Lion King*, *Memphis* and others.

Foundation raises more than \$300,000 from walk

The Pinellas Education Foundation exceeded its \$300,000 fundraising goal for Take Stock in Children during the Stride for Education 5K Walk/Run held Dec. 8 at Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg.

Nearly 600 people participated in the event, helping the Pinellas Education Foundation raise more than \$300,000.

"We were very excited to have the support of the community on board with our Strides for Education effort and we hope it will continue to grow every year," said Tamra Eitel, the foundation's associate director. "Because of the community's support in this event, we'll be able to help more deserving students in Pinellas realize the dream of college or technical school through our Take Stock in Children/Doorways scholarship program."

Pinellas County School Board member Robin Wikle, Superintendent Michael A. Grego, and the district's wellness program's Train for a 5K, all fielded teams. This is the second year of the event.

Take Stock in Children is Florida's flagship and most successful mentoring program with a 92 percent high school graduation rate. The organization receives a dollar-for-dollar state match in its efforts. Take Stock in Children provides scholarships, mentors and hope for more than 17,000 student scholars throughout Florida.

School Board member wins award

Pinellas County School Board Member, Robin Wikle, was among three statewide Star Superintendents and School Board Members in Florida, recognized for their exemplary leadership by the Consortium of Florida Education Foundations Nov. 29 at the 67th annual Joint Conference of Florida School Boards Association and Florida Association of District School Superintendents in Tampa.

Terry Boehm, president of the Pinellas Education Foundation, nominated Wikle, noting that she spends countless volunteer hours enthusiastically supporting various local Foundation events and programs, including organizing a community team to support the Strides for Education 5K.

"Robin's work ethic, generous spirit and dedication to education shines through not only as a volunteer but also as a strong advocate and leader on the school



Photo courtesy of FLORIDA EDUCATION FOUNDATION
Robin Wikle, right, poses with Mary Tlachac of Suncoast Schools Federal Credit Union, as Wikle accepts her award.

board for Foundation initiatives, taking a stand for the good of students and the community," said Jim Myers, chairman of the foundation.

Briefs

Northside Christian School marching band wins top prize

ST. PETERSBURG – More than 10,000 students participated in the Florida Marching Band Competition semifinals and finals at four locations in Tampa and St. Petersburg, recently. Four of the five state champions were Tampa Bay area schools.

Class 1A champions were the Royal Ambassador Marching Band from Northside Christian School in St. Petersburg. This is the third state championship in six years for the school.

Finalists for support employee award announced

Pinellas County Schools has announced the finalists for the 2012-13 Support Employee of the Year award. The finalists were chosen from a group of 21 semifinalists.

The finalists were chosen in three categories: direct involvement with students, where an employee spends 75 percent or more of his or her work hours in direct contact with students; indirect involvement with students, where they spend less than 25 percent of their work hours in direct contact with students; and limited involvement with students, where an employee spends little or none of his or her work hours in direct contact with students.

The finalists are as follows:

Direct involvement

- Lori Gooding, Dunedin Elementary, ESE associate
- Amy Putnam, Cypress Woods Elementary, high needs associate
- Irma Vargas, Skycrest Elementary, bilingual assistant I

Indirect involvement

- Tameaka Brown, Gibbs High, office clerk
- Essie Sneed, Tomlinson Adult Learning Center, secretary/bookkeeper

- Debra Stotts, Largo Middle, office clerk

Limited involvement

- Katherine Dickinson, Curlew Creek Elementary, secretary/bookkeeper
- Kristy Hayes, Ponce de Leon Elementary, secretary/bookkeeper
- Lisa Packard, administration building, clerk specialist I

The winner in each category will be named at a recognition breakfast on Friday, Jan. 18, at Feather Sound Country Club. The program is sponsored by Achieva Credit Union.

Flo the Dolphin to reside at school

CLEARWATER – Clearwater Gas System's newly developed Dolphin Loaner Program is partnering with Mildred Helms Elementary to become the program's first participant.

The program was formed when CGS sponsored a 6-foot fiberglass dolphin this summer, known as Flo, during Clearwater's Dolphins Public Art Exhibition. During the next few years, Flo will reside at Mildred Helms Elementary, the location where part of the movie, *Dolphin Tale*, was filmed.

The goal of the program is to partner with local schools to heighten the awareness of diversity and inclusion of individuals from all walks of life.

The students and faculty are welcoming Flo and made a place for her to reside at the main entrance of the school.

The partnership works out particularly well, since the school is "Home of the dolphins."

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Murray

Murray is a sophisticated looking tuxedo cat. He and his twin brother, Murphy, were born in July. Murray is a handsome lover boy who likes to share a chair or bed with his favorite human. Great with other cats, he will fit in well with his new family. He is neutered, current on his shots and microchipped. To see him in his foster home or at PetsMart, call 545-1116 or visit www.saveourstraysinc.com.



Angela

Angela is a 3-year-old cat who loves to play and get attention. She is very easy to get along with and is outgoing. She is spayed, microchipped, up-to-date on her shots and is ready to find her forever family. For more information on Angela or other adoptable pets, call Friends of Strays at 522-6566 or visit 2911 47th Ave. N., St. Petersburg. Visit www.friendsofstrays.com.



Lucky

Lucky is a 5-month-old terrier puppy mix who weighs about 30 pounds. She has cute "radar" ears and is a sweet, happy girl who is fantastic to be around. She's lucky, in part, because she was scheduled to be killed at Pasco County Animal Services for overcrowding reasons, but she got a second chance when the Suncoast Animal League rescued her. She is very loving and sweet with people, but she must have had some scary experiences in her past because it takes her a while to adapt to new surroundings and is nervous around new dogs sometimes. She's just a baby, and so far what has been seen is fear, not aggression, so with training and socialization with the right owner, she could outgrow this quickly and be a fantastic dog. But she must be adopted by a family who has experience with raising puppies and does not have preschool-aged children. She would benefit from living with an older, well-trained dog that could be her mentor. She is crate trained and nearly housetrained. Call the Suncoast Animal League at 786-1330 to meet her.



Fifi

This 3-year-old domestic shorthair cat is nearly 9 pounds and is playful and affectionate. Her former owners moved and could not take her with them, so she is looking for a new loving family of her own. She loves to be petted and is great around other cats. Bring this article with you to Pinellas County Animal Services and adopt her for only \$25 at 12450 Ulmerton Road, Largo. Call 582-2600 or visit www.pinellascounty.org/animalervices/petfind.htm.

Yappy Hour set

ST. PETERSBURG - Pet Pal Animal Shelter will host a Yappy Hour event Thursday, Dec. 20, 6 to 8 p.m., at World of Beer, 100 Fourth St. S. The event will include adoptable dogs, raffles, Pet Pal trivia and beer specials.



Ray "Radar"

Ray, also known as Radar, is a 6-month-old male pit bull terrier mix. He likes to play with other dogs of all sizes and to take long walks in the park. You must own your home to adopt Ray. He has been neutered, vaccinated and microchipped. To learn more about him and the other adoptable animals at Pet Pal Animal shelter, call 328-7738 or visit 405 22nd St. S., St. Petersburg or www.petpalanimalshelter.com.

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Fishermen brace for a big cold front

It appears as if we will receive our first major cold front in quite awhile this Friday.

This one looks significant enough to mess things up for a few days. So while you may not be able to get out this weekend, just as soon as the conditions moderate the fishing should get back on track and with any luck we'll have a good stretch of weather over the holiday break.

Inshore anglers were treated with some astronomically low tides last week. East winds and a new moon left only enough water in the Intra-coastal Waterway to safely navigate the main channel. As we make our way through winter we will probably see this phenomenon again. The upside to this is the fish will get concentrated into smaller areas, so if you can find where they are holding up chances are you'll have a pretty good day.

Finding them, however, may not be so easy. You'll definitely have to look in areas you may have never fished before, so look for those obvious signs of life like: Diving birds indicating baitfish or mullet traveling up and down a particular edge and if nothing else, seeing some of your favorite flats empty could give you a better idea of how the fish make their way on and off with the tides.

East winds have made it possible to fish the beach for silver trout and flounder.

Target near-shore artificial reefs and jetties for flounder that are lying on the bottom waiting to pounce on a live shrimp or white bait rigged on a drop-shot.

Silver trout are schooled up along the beach. The schools can be found as close as the swim buoys and as far out as a half a mile or so. Look for diving birds to help narrow the search for the trout. If there are no birds around you can simply drift with the wind and tide as you cast soft plastic jigs.

This is the time of year when schools of sheepshead congregate around area bridges. The Gandy Bridge, Skyway piers and most inland bridges are great places to target sheepshead and are open in some capacity to land based anglers.

Using pieces of fresh shrimp or fiddler crabs fished on a quarter ounce jighead or a small hook and a sliding egg sinker, gives you a good feel for when these crafty bait stealers get a hold of your baits.

Tyson Wallerstein can be reached at capt.tyson@hotmail.com. To get a fish photo in the paper, send the photo along with your name, when and where it was caught to editorial@TBNweekly.com or mail it to Tampa Bay Newspapers, 9911 Seminole Blvd., Seminole, FL 33772.



Fish Tales
Capt. Tyson Wallerstein

Watershed Management earns award

CLEARWATER – Tampa Bay Area Environmental Professionals awarded Pinellas County's Watershed Management Section with the 2012 Environmental Excellence award on Nov. 29 during the TBAEP's annual meeting held at the Rusty Pelican in Tampa.

Each year, the TBAEP, a local chapter of the Florida Association of Environmental Professionals, gives an award for excellence in environmental science in the Tampa Bay area. This year's award was based on the successful implementation of Pinellas County's Fertilizer and Landscape Management program.

The fertilizer ordinance addresses nitrogen loading to Tampa Bay and the Gulf of Mexico from overuse and improper application of residential landscape fertilizers. While some 40 Florida communities currently regulate the use of lawn and landscape fertilizers during the summer, only Pinellas County and the city of Tampa have ordinances that regulate the retail sale of nitrogen fertilizers. Tampa's ordinance was modeled after the 2010 Pinellas law, which bans the sale of nitrogen fertilizers from June to September and requires the sale of slow-release fertilizers the rest of the year.

The Watershed Management Section is responsible for implementation of the ordinance including the training and certification of professional applicators and landscapers, inspection of 90 retail outlets and enforcement of violations. Implementation of the ordinance is expected to reduce nitrogen in Pinellas waterways by 22 tons per year. Keeping 22 tons of nitrogen from the bay is like taking two sewage plants off line.

"The single best reward has been the buy-in from a number of local industry professionals. Many of these individuals have become our strongest allies. These individuals are in the field every day and can have either a positive or negative impact and they chose to be the ultimate stewards of our environment," said Watershed Management Section Manager Kelli Levy, who led a team of six members responsible for implementing the ordinance and was on hand during the award presentation.

Ecological benefit of reducing fertilizer inputs to the area waterways has led to cleaner waters for all those who live, work and play in Pinellas County. Cleaner water also benefits tourism in Pinellas County, which hosts more than 5 million overnight visitors each year, most drawn by the county's beautiful beaches and water-based recreational activities.



Photo courtesy of PINELLAS COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS

The staff from the Watershed Management Section of the Pinellas County Department of Environment and Infrastructure accepts the 2012 Environmental Excellence award at the annual meeting of the Tampa Bay Area Environmental Professionals. Pictured are, from left, Tim Terwilliger, president of the Tampa Bay Area Environmental Professionals; Anamarie Rivera, Lynn Smith, Ryan Ryczek and Kelli Levy of the Watershed Management Section and Will Davis, interim director of DEI's Transportation and Stormwater Division.

Briefs

FHS to meet

CLEARWATER – The Florida Herb Society will meet Tuesday, Jan. 15, 6:30 p.m., at the Clearwater Garden Club, 405 Seminole St.

Herbalist Deserie Valloero of HerbalWise will share her top 10 favorite natural remedies. Attendees will have an opportunity to sample items and learn to make and use remedies. The goal as the FHS is to educate members and the general public in the growing and preservation of herbs for use in culinary, medicinal and decorative purposes.

Refreshments and herbal swaps begin at 6:30 p.m. Visitors are welcome. The first meeting is free. Cost is \$25 a year to join the society. Call Emily Wenzel at 365-8574 or email emily@floridaherbsociety.org.

Orchid program set

TARPON SPRINGS – Orchids and Epiphytes of Brooker Creek Preserve will be presented Saturday, Jan. 5, 10:30 a.m. to noon, at Brooker Creek Preserve, 3940 Keystone Road.

Brooker Creek Preserve naturalist James Stevenson will examine the fascinating world of orchids and "air plants" found on the preserve. This free class will introduce participants to identification skills and will include a walk to discover these plants in their natural habitat.

Preregistration is required. Call 453-6800 or visit www.brookercreekpreserve.org.

Brooker to present tree program

TARPON SPRINGS – Ecosystems Services, Trees and Me will be presented Saturday, Jan. 12, 11 a.m. to noon, at Brooker Creek Preserve, 3940 Keystone Road.

The free program will explain the benefits of trees, especially in urban settings. Attendees will meet the local Pinellas County Natural Resource Extension Agent who will explain the many ecosystem services that trees provide. Participants also will find out about the Traveling Tree Walk.

Preregistration required. Call 453-6800 or visit www.brookercreekpreserve.org.

Weedon to offer rain barrel workshop

ST. PETERSBURG – A rain harvesting program will be offered Saturday, Jan. 26, 9 to 10:30 a.m., at Weedon Island Preserve, 1800 Weedon Drive NE.

Attendees will learn how to save rainwater in a recycled plastic barrel. The collected water may be used for plant beds, potted plants and vegetable and herb gardens. In this free class, the group will learn how to make and set up a rain barrel. An optional rain barrel may be purchased for \$25 with advance registration.

Call 453-6500 or visit www.weedonislandpreserve.org.

Archaeology lecture set

ST. PETERSBURG – Life and Death at Windover, a free archaeology lecture, will be presented Thursday, Dec. 20, 7 to 8 p.m., at Weedon Island Preserve, 1800 Weedon Drive NE.

The lecture will cover excavations of a 7,000-year-old pond

cemetery. Dr. Rachel Wentz' latest book examines the discovery, excavations and analyses of one of the most important archaeological sites in the world – Windover. This fascinating site at Titusville produced the well-preserved remains of 168 individuals along with hand-woven textiles, a beautiful assemblage of artifacts and ancient soft tissue.

Advance registration is required. Call 453-6500 or visit www.weedonislandpreserve.org.

Brooker to host extended hike

TARPON SPRINGS – A guided hike will be offered Saturday, Dec. 22, 9 to 11:30 a.m., at Brooker Creek Preserve, 3940 Keystone Road.

Trained volunteer guides will conduct a 2.8- to 4-mile walk to look at how the land has changed over time and discuss the ecological footprints left by those changes. Insect repellent may be helpful. Water, a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen along with sturdy closed-toe shoes are recommended. All ages are welcome. Children 15 and younger must be accompanied by an adult. Children 9 and younger may find this hike challenging.

Preregistration is required. Visit www.brookercreekpreserve.org or call 453-6800.

Fort De Soto to offer guided walks

TIERRA VERDE – Free, guided nature walks will be offered at 10 to 11 a.m., at Fort De Soto Park, 3500 Pinellas Bayway S., on the following days:

- Saturday, Dec. 29 – A guided walk on the beach trail is planned.
- Sunday, Dec. 30 – A guided walk on the soldier's hole trail is planned.

Guests will enjoy the beauty of Fort De Soto Park with a one-hour nature walk great for the entire family.

To register and for tour information and meeting locations, call 552-1862. Visit www.pinellascounty.org/park.

Bird hike set

TARPON SPRINGS – The Birds of Brooker hike will be offered Saturday, Jan. 12, 8 to 10:30 a.m., at Brooker Creek Preserve, 3940 Keystone Road.

Birds seen and heard will be identified while attendees meander along a one-mile trail gathering information. Call 453-6800 or visit www.brookercreekpreserve.org.

Urban farming conference set

LARGO – An Urban Farming: Small-to-Large Conference will be presented Saturday, Feb. 9, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., at Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmertown Road.

Attendees will learn how to grow food for the table as well as grow an urban farming business. Pinellas County Extension will conduct a morning session geared to homeowners and commercial farmers covering hydroponic systems, chickens and integrated pest management. The afternoon session will focus on commercial urban farming to include getting a business started, regulations and marketing.

Attendance is limited to 200 participants. Cost is \$7.50 each for morning and afternoon session or \$12 for the full day.

Call 582-2100, ext. 2, or visit www.eventbrite.com/event.

Extension to host Roots to Shoots

LARGO – The third annual Roots to Shoots tree program will be offered Thursday, Jan. 10, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmertown Road.

University of Florida Extension agents, staff and O'Neil's Tree Service will demonstrate canopy cleaning, lifting, structural pruning, tree climbing techniques and safety. Classroom topics will include safety, tree roots and creating a wind-resistant urban forest. Cost is \$30 for adults and free for employees of Pinellas County, the Pinellas County School Board and Pinellas County Master Gardener Volunteers with identification the day of class.

Advance registration is required. Call 582-2562 or visit pce-commercialhort.eventbrite.com.

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Diversions

Things to do around Pinellas County



- Classifieds
- Events
- Movies

Leader
Section B
December 20, 2012
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Top five diversions

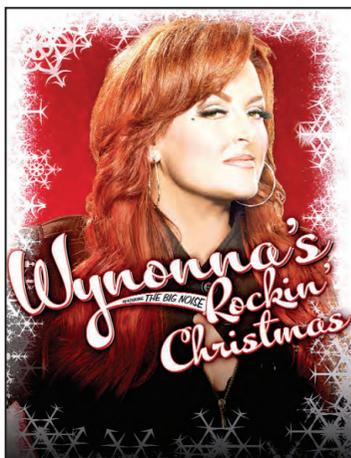
• **Holiday Pops**, Friday, Dec. 21, 8 p.m., at the Straz Center, 1010 N. W.C. MacInnes Place, Tampa; Saturday, Dec. 22, 2 and 8 p.m., at The Mahaffey, 400 First St. S., St. Petersburg; and Sunday, Dec. 23, 7:30 p.m., at Ruth Eckerd Hall, 1111 McMullen Booth Road, Clearwater. Tickets start at \$15. For information, call 892-3337 or 800-662-7286 or visit www.floridaorchestra.org. The 150 voices of The Master Chorale join the orchestra in this holiday celebration for the entire family with such musical chestnuts as "Jingle Bells," "Winter Wonderland," "Sleigh Ride," "Hanukkah in Santa Monica" and beloved Christmas carols such as "Joy to the World," "The Twelve Days of Christmas," "O Come, All Ye Faithful" and more. Stuart Malina conducts.

• **R5**, featuring Ross Lynch from Disney Channel's "Austin & Ally," Friday, Dec. 21, 7:30 p.m., at the Capitol Theatre, 405 Cleveland St., Clearwater. Tickets start at \$17.50. Call 791-7400 or visit www.atthecap.com. Pop-rock teen sensations R5 will bring their latest tour to the Capitol Theatre. R5 is the fastest-rising young band on the pop-rock scene with more than 150,000 Twitter followers. R5 consists of siblings Ross Lynch, star of "Austin & Ally," Riker Lynch, a featured "Warbler" in the Fox TV series "Glee," Rocky Lynch and Rydel Lynch as well as family friend, Ellington Ratliff.

• **"Bucket" with Tony Gaud**, Dec. 21-23 and Jan. 4-6, at Venue Theatre, 9125 U.S. 19 N., Pinellas Park. Performances are Friday and Saturday, 8 p.m.; and Sunday, 2:30 p.m. Tickets are \$15. Gaud comes to Venue from Ybor City's improv where he is a regular MC. He takes his bucket list on a reality test drive in this dark comedy, coming to terms with failure, success, faith and ambition. Shows lead up to a taping for festival submission and feature release. Call 822-6194 or email venueactorstudio@gmail.com.

• **Wynonna Judd**, presenting "Wynonna's Rockin' Christmas," Friday, Dec. 21, 8 p.m., at The Mahaffey, 400 First St. S., St. Petersburg. Tickets start at \$39. Call 892-5767 or visit www.themahaffey.com. Judd - a five-time Grammy Award winner - combines her smoky vocals and powerful stage presence to bring "Wynonna's Rockin' Christmas" to The Mahaffey. Joined on stage with her longtime band, The Big Noise, the fiery redhead blends a mix of classic Christmas favorites and some of her biggest hits. "Wynonna's Rockin' Christmas" will infuse Judd's signature style into traditional holiday classics like "White Christmas" and "Winter Wonderland" for a completely different holiday performance for the entire family.

• **"Christmas TV Special,"** by Gidget Cross, Saturday, Dec. 22, 4 p.m., at St. Petersburg City Theatre, 4025 31st St. S., St. Petersburg. Presented by the Children's Theatre Workshop at the Academy of St. Petersburg City Theatre, the show will feature a cast of children ages 7 to 13. The production will take the audience "on location" all over the country to see how the holidays are celebrated. There also will be preshow entertainment by Pizazz Song and Dance Troupe. Tickets are \$5. Call 866-1973.



Wynonna Judd brings her Rockin' Christmas show to The Mahaffey on Dec. 21.

Photo courtesy of THE MAHAFFEY



Photo by JAMES FISHER

Martin Freeman stars as the Hobbit Bilbo Baggins in the fantasy adventure "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey," a production of New Line Cinema and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures, released by Warner Bros. Pictures and MGM.

Movie review

Despite Jackson's uninhibited fervor, 'Hobbit' thrives as gripping fantasy

Having already achieved universal acclaim for helming the three-film cinematic adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings," director Peter Jackson now kicks off the prequel trilogy with the first installment of his adaptation of "The Hobbit."

The first film in the series, "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey," is vibrant, impeccably cast, exhilarating and fun ... but it never quite achieves the artistic virtuosity of Jackson's previous forays into Tolkien Middle-earth.

"The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey" primarily follows the journey of its title character, Bilbo Baggins. Baggins is enticed by the Wizard Gandalf the Grey to participate in an epic quest to reclaim the lost Dwarf Kingdom of Erebor from an intimidating dragon named Smaug.

Though it goes against his passive disposition, Bilbo ultimately agrees, joining a company of 13 dwarves led by a legendary warrior, Thorin Oakenshield. Their journey takes them far from Bilbo's beloved Shire, through treacherous lands patrolled by Orcs and deadly Wargs and home to Goblins and Trolls. Meanwhile, a growing menace casts a shadow over Middle-earth. The Wizard Radagast the Brown discovers an evil power, the Necromancer, has taken up residence in Dol Guldur in Mirkwood.

As they make their way east toward the Lonely Mountain, the members of the company face increasingly daunting challenges ... and Bilbo meets a creature who will change his life and shape the destiny of Middle-earth.

While the source material provides sufficient substance, Jackson veers from the written word to expand the narrative. Sometimes his flights of fancy flourish; sometimes, it just seems like he's being overindulgent.

It has been nine years since "The Return of the King" - the last film in "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy - was released. It is evident that Jackson missed playing in the sandbox of Tolkien's literary creation. His uninhibited zeal is particularly apparent in an unnecessarily long cinematic prologue establishing connections to his previous films.



Reel Time
Lee Clark Zumpe



Photo by MARK POKORNY

Richard Armitage stars as the Dwarf warrior Thorin Oakenshield in "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey."

Instead of starting in Tolkien's familiar "hole in the ground" - the one that isn't "a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat," but instead "a hobbit-hole" - Jackson launches his adaptation 60 years after the events depicted in "The Hobbit." It's almost as if Jackson had to find an excuse to let Elijah Wood get into costume one more time.

See REVIEW, page 3B

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Singing in the 'snow'



Photo courtesy of JAY RICHMOND
Largo's own Bet Me I'm Lying plays at Snow Fest in Safety Harbor City Park Dec. 8. From left are band members Kirk Adikes, CJ Harris, Brendan Marquardt, Jackson Marquardt and Jamie Craske. The group has been playing together for six years and has made three albums. They frequently tour with the rock band Red Jump Suit Apparatus.

REVIEW, from page 1B

Jackson shows a lot of exposition into the first hour of the movie. Audiences are forced to wait for the first taste of action, wade through the lethargic pace of the first 60 minutes and excuse the director's excesses as he flaunts his creative license. All this might be excusable if Jackson also used this time to develop the characters fully - there are a lot of dwarves to keep track of, after all: Thorin, Balin, Bifur, Bofur, Bombur, Dori, Dwain, Fili, Gloin, Kili, Nori, Ori and Ori. Real character development, though, doesn't commence until the party gets under way and starts facing the challenges of the quest.

Once things get moving, "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey"

delivers an enthralling phantasmagoria of repellent creatures, noble crusaders and reluctant heroes facing overwhelming odds. Jackson's Middle-earth is as vibrant as ever, overflowing with emerald-green woodlands, soaring mountain ranges, towering dark castles and unearthly vistas. Top-notch casting helps reinforce the quality of the film. Jackson tapped Martin Freeman to play the central role of Bilbo Baggins. Freeman imbues Bilbo with a neurotic demeanor appropriate for someone with a disinclination toward adventure. The actor is careful not to make Bilbo's eventual acquiescence seem like some hasty epiphany. The character's worldview evolves over the course of the entire adventure. Ian McKellen returns as Gandalf

the Grey, the character he played in "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy. McKellen mixes authoritative charisma and humble goodwill to make Gandalf both potent and munificent, depending on the scene context.

Richard Armitage portrays Thorin Oakenshield. Armitage provides his with a brash swagger and the perfect degree of self-importance. His powerful performance makes the audience question his motivation.

Radagast the Brown is played by Sylvester McCoy. McCoy emphasizes the character's eccentricities wonderfully, adding a comic element to the Wizard's departure.

Reprising their roles from "The Lord of the Rings" in "The Hobbit" Trilogy are Cate Blanchett as Galadriel, Ian Holm as Old Bilbo,

Hanukkah celebration



Above, Clearwater Mayor George Cretkos and Rabbi Shmuel Reich light the giant menorah in celebration of Hanukkah on Dec. 9. At left, men do a traditional Jewish dance in front of the menorah.

Photos courtesy of RABBI SHMUEL REICH



Photo courtesy of WARNER BROS. PICTURES
Adam Brown stars as Ori, Jed Brophy as Nori and Ian McKellen as Gandalf and the Great Goblin is performed by Barry Humphries.

Christopher Lee as Saruman, Hugo Weaving as Elrond, Elijah Wood as Frodo and Andy Serkis as Gollum.

An undeniable asset to the previous films, Serkis again gives a hauntingly memorable performance as Gollum. The digitally animated character seems even more real - and even more disturbing - this time around.

"The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey" doesn't quite transcend its genre like Jackson's "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy, but it is still an exceedingly entertaining film.

Bolstered by the runaway success of the previous films, Jackson gorged himself on Middle-earth imagery and mythology and asks audiences to join him at the buffet. The result is a somewhat overinflated introduction to Tolkien's tale of a reluctant Hobbit confronting the world outside his comfort zone. Though at times the film comes off as a bit overstated, Jackson's cinematic audaciousness still can't overshadow the film's visual splendor, its compelling characters and its imaginative narrative.

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LOOKING AHEAD, from page 2B

reunions of the David Bromberg Big Band. His latest release, "Use Me," features Bromberg collaborating with friends including John Hiatt, Levon Helm, Los Lobos, Tim O'Brien, Vince Gill, Widespread Panic, Dr. John, Keb' Mo' and others.

• **Out of the Real: Contemporary Abstraction.** Jan. 11 through Feb. 20, at the Octagon Arts Center, Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater, 2470 Nursery Road, Clearwater. This eight-person art exhibition will feature work by Jack Ellis, Patton Hunter, Joan Duff-Bohrer, Kas Turner, Vas Gardiakos, David McKirdy, Jennifer O'Neill-Lederhouse, and George B. Trimitis. The artists all approach the challenge of abstraction in unique and contrasting styles. This exhibition is curated by Denis Gaston. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon; and Sunday, 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. and noon to 1 p.m.

Dunedin

• **16th annual Downtown Dunedin Art Festival.** Saturday and Sunday, Jan. 12-13, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., on Main Street in downtown Dunedin. The event is free and open to the public. Visit www.artfestival.com. The juried outdoor gallery style art showcase will feature original art, unique and affordable gift items and more than 100 artists from 30 different states. According to festival organizers, prices are set to suit all budgets, ranging from as little as \$25 to \$30,000. Participating artists were hand-selected from hundreds of applicants and will be on site for the duration of festival. The show will feature an array of artistic media, including paintings, life-size sculptures, photography, ceramics, glass, wood, handmade jewelry, collage and mixed media.

• **Downtown Dunedin Pioneer Park Winter Art Show.** Sunday Jan. 13, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., at Pioneer Park on the corner of Douglas and Main Street. The show will feature artwork by members of the Creative Artist Guild. Parking and admission are free. Email Polly@PollyBerlin.com.

• **Winter Wonderland Art Walk.** Friday, Jan. 18, noon to 3 p.m., at 1248 County Road One. The show will feature local affordable art, refreshments, music and prizes. Participants can meet the artist. There will be an art demonstration. Call 724-4278.

North Redington Beach

• **Holiday Opera Luncheon.** Friday, Dec. 28, 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., at The Wine Cellar Restaurant, 17307 Gulf Blvd. N., North Redington Beach. Cost is \$35. Call 391-2658. The Richard Wagner Society of Florida will present an operatic performance. RSVP is required by Dec. 23.

Pinellas Park

• **"Bucket" with Tony Gaud.** Dec. 21-23 and Jan. 4-6, at Venue Theatre, 9125 U.S. 19 N., Pinellas Park. Performances are Friday and Saturday, 8 p.m.; and Sunday, 2:30 p.m. Tickets are \$15. Gaud comes to Venue from Ybor City's improv where he is a regular MC. He takes his bucket list on a reality test drive in this dark comedy, coming to terms with failure, success, faith and ambition. Shows lead up to a taping for festival submission and feature release. Call 822-6194 or email venueactorstudio@gmail.com.

• **Pinellas Park Orchestra.** Sunday, Jan. 6, 7:30 p.m., at the Pinellas Park Performing Arts Center, 4951 78th Ave. Admission is free but donations are encouraged. Call Dick VanDommelen at 415-9650 or visit www.pinellasparkorchestra.com.

• **"Fragile Fate,"** by Lloyd Lewis, Jan. 11-27, at Venue Ensemble Theatre, presented at Venue Actors Studio, 9125 U.S. 19 N., Pinellas Park. Call 822-6194 or visit www.venueactorstudio.org. Performances are Friday and Saturday, 8 p.m. Matinees are Sunday, 2:30 p.m. Tickets are \$20. A portion of ticket sales from each show is donated to a benefit organization.

Safety Harbor

• **Children's book debut,** Saturday, Dec. 22, 11 a.m., at the Safety

Harbor Public Library, 101 Second St. N., Safety Harbor. Author Katie Bush and local artists Kiralinda and Todd Ramquist will take part in this outrageous, Whimzeyland presentation of the book "1206 Third Street." Bush's book highlights the transformation of an ordinary house into a work of art through color, patterns and imagination. A unique bowling ball painting craft for children ages 2 and older will follow the book presentation. The Whimzey House, an artistic project over 20 years in the making, has become a popular destination for Tampa Bay area visitors and has been featured on Roadside America.com as well as on MTV's show "Cribs" and is frequently referred to as the "Bowling Ball House" in reference to its colorful display of repurposed bowling balls. The event is free and open to the public. For information, call 724-1525, ext. 112.

• **Native American Flute Concert.** Thursday, Jan. 17, 6:30 p.m., at the Safety Harbor Library, 101 Second St. N., Safety Harbor. Call 724-1525. Mark McGourley, a seasoned multi-instrumentalist, will perform. This free multi-media presentation features McGourley's live flute performance combined with a soundscape of instrumentation synchronized to spectacular images of nature from the country's most prominent national parks and beyond. All ages are welcome.

St. Pete Beach

• **Art of the Season,** through Dec. 31, at Vincent William Gallery, 320 Corey Ave., St. Pete Beach. The show will feature more than 40 local artists exhibiting art for the holidays. Gallery hours are Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free. Call 363-0598 or visit www.VincentWilliamGallery.com.

• **St. Pete Beach Corey Area Craft Festival,** Saturday and Sunday, Jan. 26-27, on Corey Avenue and Gulf Boulevard in downtown St. Pete Beach. The juried outdoor craft showcase will feature original crafts handmade in America. Unique and affordable gift items will be available for purchase from 150 crafters from 30 different states. All participating crafters will be on site for the duration of the festival. The festival will feature a variety of media such as folk art, pottery, handmade jewelry, paintings, personalized gifts, handmade clothing, scented soaps and body products. There also will be a green market offering a wide variety of quality plants including exotics as well as dips and gourmet items. The event is free and open to the public. For information, visit www.artfestival.com.

St. Petersburg

• **The De La Torre Brothers: Home for the Holidays,** Dec. 22 through Feb. 2, at Mindy Solomon Gallery, 124 Second Ave. NE, St. Petersburg. Gallery hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call 502-0852, email info@mindysolomon.com or visit www.mindysolomon.com. Artists and brothers Einar and Jamez de la Torre will bring their inventive, irreverent, inspired glass and mixed media works - rife with tongue-in-cheek religious iconography and pop-cultural references - to Mindy Solomon Gallery. The blown and cast glass sculptural works featured in this program are largely taken from the de la Torres' 2012 exhibition at the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, Va. In addition to the museum works, the brothers' recent explorations in digital art and mixed media round out Home for the Holidays. The works on display showcase the multiplicity of their religious and political story, always with an eye toward humor. One example of note is the sculpture "Animaluchador" (2008). In Spanish, "anima" translates to souls burning, and "luchador" means wrestler. The figure appears to be standing in a religious pose of prayer, but is wearing the costume of a wrestler. His body is engulfed in flames, while he stands astride a pop-cultural doll. The relationship between religious icon and heroic figure (masquerading as an object of significance) personifies the de la Torres' irreverence for cultural iconography as nothing more than cartoon. This objectification of symbolic masculine and spiritual strength enables viewers to tackle their own senses of religious alienation with candor and humor.

• **"9 to 5,"** with music and lyrics by Dolly Parton and book by Patricia Resnick; Jan. 18 through Feb. 3, at St. Petersburg City Theatre, 4025 31st St. S., St. Petersburg. Performances will be Friday and Saturday, 8 p.m.; and Sunday, 2 p.m. Tickets are \$24. Call 866-1973 or visit www.spacitytheatre.org. Based on the screenplay by Resnick and Colin Higgins, the cult movie classic comes to the stage in this Tony Award nominated musical. With more than a dozen new songs that add fun and dimension to an already fast paced and hysterical show, the musical boasts all the things audiences loved about the movie.

• **"The Piano Lesson,"** by August Wilson, presented by American Stage Theatre, Jan. 18 through March 3; previews Jan. 16-17, at the Raymond James Theatre, 163 Third St. N., St. Petersburg. Call 823-PLAY (7529) or visit www.americanstage.org. Generally, main stage performances are Wednesday through Saturday, 8 p.m. Matinees are Saturday and Sunday, 3 p.m. Ticket prices range from \$29 to \$59 depending on the date and time of the performance.

• **27th annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drum Major for Jus-**

tice Battle of the Bands and Drumline Extravaganza, Sunday, Jan. 20, 4 p.m., at Tropicana Field Dome Stadium, One Tropicana Drive, St. Petersburg. General admission tickets are \$10 in advance and \$12 the day of the event. Visit mlknationalparade.org.

• **Sunshine Blues Festival,** Sunday, Jan. 20, 11 a.m., at Vinoy Park, 701 Bayshore Drive NE, St. Petersburg. The inaugural Sunshine Blues Festival will feature two stages and a day of blues music. Entertainment will include performances by Tedeschi Trucks Band, Dr. John, Walter Trout, Sonny Landreth, Joe Louis Walker, Jaimoe's Jasss Band, Matt Schofield, The Wood Brothers, Big Sam's Funky Nation, Sean Chambers and Bobby Lee Rodgers. Tickets are \$49.50. Visit www.sunshinebluesfestival.com.

Tampa

• **Marcia Ball,** Friday, Jan. 4, 8 p.m., at Skipper's Smokehouse, 910 Skipper Road, Tampa. Tickets are \$20. Call 813-971-0666 or visit www.skippersmokehouse.com. Texas-born, Louisiana-raised pianist/vocalist/songwriter Marcia Ball, touring in support of her Grammy-nominated Alligator Records CD, "Roadside Attractions," will perform Jan. 4, at Skipper's Smokehouse. Ball's groove-laden New Orleans R&B, heart-wrenching ballads and driving Gulf Coast blues have made her a one-of-a-kind favorite of music fans everywhere. Her music mixes equal parts simmering soul fervor and rollicking Crescent City piano. Over the course of her career, Ball's infectious, intelligent and deeply emotional songs have won her a loud and loyal international fan base. "Roadside Attractions" is her fifth release for Alligator, and the fourth to receive a Grammy nomination.

• **"Hay Fever,"** by Noel Coward, presented by Jobsite Theater, Jan. 9 through Feb. 3, at the Straz Center for the Performing Arts, 1010 N. W.C. MacInnes Place, Tampa. Call 813-229-7827 or visit www.jobsiteheater.org. Performances are Thursday through Saturday, 8 p.m. Matinees are Sunday, 4 p.m. Tickets are \$28.

Tarpon Springs

• **The Jews of Tin Pan Alley,** Thursday, Jan. 3, 7:30 p.m., at Tarpon Springs Cultural Center, 101 S. Pinellas Ave., Tarpon Springs. The Jews of Tin Pan Alley is a unique one-man show presented by America's favorite Jewish folksinger Lil' Rev. Rev traces the rich heritage of Jews as contributors to the American musical landscape. As writers, song pluggers, publishers, singers, comedians, and entertainers Jews contributed and dominated every facet of American popular music. Learn how our immigrant past shines brilliantly in song and dance with popular standards, blues, ragtime, sentimental ballads, Yiddish theater pieces and the influences of the old country. Performing on banjo, guitar, ukulele, mandolin, harmonica and recorder, Rev highlights the work of Sophie Tucker, Fanny Brice, Al Jolson, the Gershwins, Irving Berlin, and more. Cost is \$16 for adults and \$14 for members and students. Call 942-5605 or visit www.tarponarts.org.

• **Acoustic Evening of Songs and Stories with Lil' Rev,** Friday, Jan. 4, 7:30 p.m., at Tarpon Springs Cultural Center, 101 S. Pinellas Ave., Tarpon Springs. Lil' Rev is a phenomenal musician, whose performances engage, entertain, educate and captivate audiences of all ages. He brings the rare combination of in-depth knowledge of folk music with an instant rapport with audiences young and old. He infuses the audience's musical experience with an unforgettable connection with their musical heritage. Join America's favorite Jewish folksinger, Lil' Rev, for a heartfelt evening of songs, stories, humor and instrumental magic. Cost is \$16 for adults and \$14 for members and students. Call 942-5605 or visit www.tarponarts.org.

• **The Brothers Four,** Saturday, Jan. 12, 8 p.m., at Tarpon Springs Performing Arts Center, 324 Pine St., Tarpon Springs. Cost is \$28 for adults and \$24 for members and students. Call 942-5605 or visit www.tarponarts.org. The smooth, musical sound of The Brothers Four has delighted millions for well over 45 years. Folk songs from America, Ireland, Scotland, Africa, Japan and China round out a repertoire of acoustic tunes old and new. Hit songs include "Greenfields," "Try to Remember," and "Across the Wide Missouri." Since the early 1960s The Brothers Four have played thousands of concerts, sung at the White House, performed with symphony orchestras and jazz stars, and are currently touring as part of the This Land is Your Land live all-star folk concert tour, inspired by the recent PBS TV Folk Music Special.

Treasure Island

• **Treasure Island Kite Festival,** Jan. 19-20, on Treasure Island Beach behind the Thunderbird Beach Resort. The festival is an AKA sanctioned event. The Eastern League kite flyers will be competing in skilled events throughout the weekend. There also will be fun flying all weekend long. There will be kites of all sizes and shapes flown by kite enthusiasts from all over. There will be food vendors on the beach and Windworks will have a kite store set up on the beach. Call 492-5614 or email cellboomerr5@msn.com.

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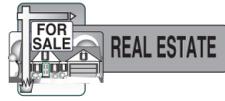
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VILLA MILAN: ON LAKE Seminole, 2BR/2BA, Great Views, 2nd Floor. \$800/Month. 1st/ Last/ Security. Best Beach Rentals. (727)398-1200.

160. Unfurnished Condos

A BEAUTIFUL SEMINOLE, 2BR/2BA, nicely upgraded, 2nd floor, Living/Dining Room, Eat-in Kitchen, W/D, Pool/ Spa, Carport. \$775/Month, 1st month/ security. Annual. (727)482-9139.

BEST UNIT IN SEMINOLE Gardens, 2BR/2BA, 55+, Completely Remodeled, Near Shopping. No pets, Non-smoking. \$875/Month includes water/sewer, cable. Robert G. Castles Realtor (727)595-8229

CLEARWATER, BAY OAKS 1BR, 2nd Floor Unit, W/D Hookups, Carport, Heated Pool. No Pets. \$625/Month Includes W/S/T +Cable. Rainbow Property Management (727)446-9633

DUNEDIN, (2) 2BR/2BA 55+, First Floor, W/D, Small Pet Okay, \$850/Month. All Ages, Cute, Fireplace, W/D, Near Community Center, 2nd Floor, \$900/Month. Linda Lyford, Van Hook Properties, (727)785-1610

MINUTES TO BEACH, 2BR/2BA +Florida Room, Immaculate, Spacious, C/H/A, Heated Pool, 55+, Nonsmoking, Petless. \$650/Mo. Includes Cable, W/S/T. (727)742-6455.

NEW ATLANTIS: 1BR/1BA, MILE To Beach! Heated Pool, Jacuzzi, Tennis, Gate. \$650/Month. Call Kerry, (704)996-1962.

SEMINOLE GARDENS 1BR/1BA, 608SF, 55+, Unit, Ground Floor. New Floors! \$600/Month-Yearly. Ridge Seminole Mgmt. Corp. (727)397-2534

SEMINOLE GARDENS 1BR/1BA, 874SF, 55+, Water View, 2nd Floor. WOW \$675/Month-Yearly. Ridge Seminole Mgmt. Corp. (727)397-2534

SEMINOLE GARDENS 55+ 2BR/1BA \$725/Month. Just Remodeled, New Windows on Porch overlooking Lake, 1,012SF, Bill (727)397-5512, (727)641-6681.

SEMINOLE SQUARE 1BR/1BA First Floor, 55+, Close: Beach, Bus, Shopping. Cable. Updated, No Pets. \$630/Month, 1-Month Security. (727)394-2915.

SEMINOLE, LONG BAYOU, Newly Remodeled, Modern Condo. 2BR/2BA, 1,200sf, 3rd Floor, Elevator, 55+. Gated community, Resort Style Living. \$925/Month. (727)385-7718.

SHIPWATCH 3BR/2BA/1CG Villa, 2nd Floor Stairs, Gated, W/D, Screened Balcony, \$1,400/Month. Annual Only. Best Beach Rentals. (727)398-1200.

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170. Furn. Apartments

AFFORDABLE HOUSING for OEF/OIF Vets. M/F. No pets. Space is limited. Call Zak White: (727)442-9041, Ext. 114.

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175. Unfurn. Apartments

SEMINOLE GARDENS, 55+ 1BR Standard, Furnished. 2BR/2BA, \$875/Mo. Winter Rentals. No Pets. Nonsmokers Only. Robert G. Castles, P.A., Broker. (727)595-8229 www.SeminoleGarden.com

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PINELLAS VILLAGE NOW ACCEPTING FAMILIES 1ST MONTH FREE!! 2/BED \$625, 3/BED \$747 CALL TODAY!!! (727)399-2500

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LARGO: VERY CLOSE TO Transportation, Shopping, Hospital. 1BR/1BA, \$600/month, 2BR/1BA, \$650/month, 2BR/2BA, \$700/month. (727)280-6001.

185. Beach Rentals

INDIAN ROCKS BEACH Cozy, Clean, Furnished Cottages. 1-2BRs starting at \$395/week +tax (January) \$595/week +tax (February/ March) Steps to Gulf Beach. Pet Friendly. (727)595-8013. www.SunshineCozyCottages.com.

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TREASURE ISLAND 1BR/2BA, No Smoking/ Pets. Pool. \$800/Month +First/ Sec. All Utilities Included. Available Immediately! (727)367-2727.

190. Waterfront Rentals

Waterfront Living @ Inland Prices *Scottish Towers II* APARTMENTS 55+ Dunedin Causeway Studio, 1 & 2 Bedroom Starting at \$680 CALL TODAY! 727-734-8479 www.ScottishTowers.com

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185. Beach Rentals



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190. Waterfront Rentals

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SAND KEY, CLEARWATER BCH Furnished 2BR/2BA Condos Available 1-12 Months. Florida Dreams RE Sales & Rentals, Inc. (727)595-5774.

210. M.H. Rentals

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195. Seasonal Rentals

NEAR BAY PINES VA & Madeira Beach, 1BR, \$555/Month +\$300 Security, Includes W/S/G, Cable. Pets OK. (727)393-1628.

225. Duplex-Triplex Rental

NEAR LARGO CENTRAL PARK, 2BR, C/H/A, Nice Condition, Carport, W/D Hook-ups, Smoke Free, Credit Check, \$675/Month, (727)584-6283.

265. Commercial Rentals

OFFICE & RETAIL SPACE. From \$429 Per Month. Ample Parking. Madeira Beach. (727)641-6465.

NEWLY RENOVATED, TWO offices/ connecting door. Includes shared signage, parking lot, lobby, kitchen, restrooms, and server/ phone room. \$750 plus electric. John (727)631-5900.

265. Commercial Rentals

BELCHER RD. S. OF EAST BAY Professional Office Condo, 1,500 SF. \$1,400/Mo. End Unit. (727)530-3535

265. Commercial Rentals

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CLASSIFIED DEADLINE: Noon Monday

Call 397-5563

265. Commercial Rentals

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EMPLOYMENT


485. Help Wanted
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 Need agent to follow through
 mostly via telephone. Earning
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 We are the company who sold
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 the Mellon Bank.
 In Business for 28
 Successful Years.
Contact Nick Kayafas,
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 seeking a motivated individual
 to receive and process incoming
 emergency & non-emergency
 calls via telephone and radio,
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 Shift work required: Nights,
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 pay is \$15.92 per hr + benefits.
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 wanted. P/T, Saturdays required.
 Apply in person:
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 travel benefits, plus booking
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 customer service skills.
 Fax resume: (727)467-9097,
 E-mail: kbrazier@gcitravel.net

CLASSIFIEDS ROCK!

485. Help Wanted
**NOW HIRING
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 Great Cases
 All Hours**
 Experience Required
COMPETITIVE PAY

 Health & Homemaker Services, Inc.
**Celebrating
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PINECREST PLACE Retirement
 community is looking for
 candidates to work the wait-staff
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 We have multiple positions open;
 various hours including weekends
 and holidays. We are looking for
 candidates to provide quick,
 efficient, and pleasant delivery of
 food to our residents and guests,
 ensuring all quality standards of
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 We offer competitive wages.
 Position requires Level II back-
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 workplace. Please apply in person
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 position with benefits. Resume
 w/work History and 3 References
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Let us help you with
 your advertising needs.
 Call today! 397-5563

525. Medical Help

PERSONAL CARE ASSISTANT
 We are looking for experienced, dependable CNAs/HHAs
 to help our clients in Pinellas and Pasco counties.
We offer:
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 • Flexible Schedules
 • Mileage Reimbursement
 • Employer Paid Life Insurance
 • Company Banking Benefits
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 • Light Housekeeping
 • Meal preparation
 • Shopping, Dinners and more
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 We have cases available today!
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 HHA299992282

505. Part-time Help



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 We are looking for men and women to deliver FREE
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 Experience preferred but will train the right person. This
 is a supplemental income. Applicant must have good
 transportation; preferably a van, large car, SUV or
 pickup truck. For more information, please contact Mr.
 Shiflett at 727-530-5521.

505. Part-time Help

485. Help Wanted
UTILITY WORKER- PINECREST
 Place, a premier retirement
 community located in Largo, is
 seeking reliable individuals to
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 staff. PT positions available. Will
 include evenings and some
 weekend hours. Interested
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 • Hidden costs can add up
 • Requirements may be
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 Learn how you can avoid
 Work-At-Home Scams.
 Call: Federal Trade Comm.
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**A message from
 Tampa Bay Newspapers
 and the FTC.**

525. Medical Help
CNAs, HHAs NEEDED FOR
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 Choose Your Hours. \$10-\$13.50
 Per Hour. (727)822-3034

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 Needed In The...
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 Private Duty, In-Home-Care
 Flexible hours/days/nights
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 Come join our team of Angels today!

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 FAST RESULTS!**
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525. Medical Help

535. Business Opportun.
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 \$800-\$1,500 per month profit
 potential, paid weekly.
 Early morning hours.
 Be your own boss!
Areas now available:
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 • St. Petersburg - Tierra Verde
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 • Clearwater - Palm Harbor -
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 Reliable vehicle and
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 Arista Bicycle. Hardly used.
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 Used, Lounger, Light. Can Deliver.
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PARROT BIRD CAGE, LARGE,
 Table-Top, w/accessories.
 Very Good Condition. \$60.
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 • have the rest of your day free and a prescription drug card
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 • Delivery areas available in your
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Paid Weekly
**Ask about our limited-time
 EXTRA INCENTIVES**
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615. Appliance Sales
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885. Autos Wanted
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NO JUNK!

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 AUTOMOTIVE RECYCLING
**YOU'VE CALLED THE BEST
 NOW CALL THE BEST!**
 RUNNING OR NOT,
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 MON. - SUN. 9AM - 9PM
**WE PAY \$400 TO
 \$6,000 CASH!**
 FREE TOW 24/7
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**(727)
 286-3209**
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LOOK
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910. Boat Slips
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980. Moving Sales
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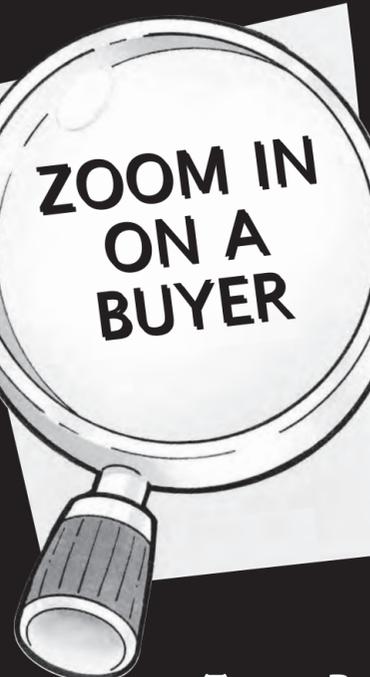
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Opening this weekend

Barbra Streisand, Seth Rogen hit the road for 'The Guilt Trip' stars ; Tom Cruise is 'Jack Reacher'

Compiled by LEE CLARK ZUMPE

A number of new movies will hit theaters this week, including the following films opening in wide release:

'The Guilt Trip'
 Genre: Comedy
 Cast: Barbra Streisand, Seth Rogen, Kathy Najimy, Colin Hanks and Adam Scott
 Director: Anne Fletcher
 Rated: PG-13
 Andy Brewster is about to embark on the road trip of a lifetime, and who better to accompany him than his mother Joyce.
 After deciding to start his adventure with a quick visit at Mom's, Andy is guilted into bringing her along for the ride. Across 3,000 miles of ever-changing landscape, he is constantly aggravated by her antics, but over time he comes to realize that their lives have more in common than he originally thought. His mother's advice might end up being exactly what he needs.



Photo by SAM EMERSON



Photo by MARK FELLMAN

'Jack Reacher'
 Genre: Thriller
 Cast: Tom Cruise, Rosamund Pike, David Oyelowo, Richard Jenkins, Alexia Fast, Robert Duvall, Jai Courtney and Werner Herzog
 Director: Christopher McQuarrie
 Rated: PG-13
 From The New York Times bestselling author Lee Child comes one of the most compelling heroes to step from novel to screen - ex-military investigator Jack Reacher (Tom Cruise).
 When a gunman takes five lives in what seems like an open and shut murder case, all evidence points to the suspect in custody. On interrogation, the suspect offers up a single note: "Get Jack Reacher!" So begins an extraordinary chase for the truth, pitting Jack Reacher against an unexpected enemy, with a skill for violence, a secret to keep and a target on Reacher's back.



Photo by KAREN BALLARD

Top left, Brett Cullen stars as Ben Graw and Barbra Streisand as Joyce Brewster in "The Guilt Trip," from Paramount Pictures and Skydance Productions. Above, Erica Linz plays Mia and Benedikt Negro plays Le Vieux in "Cirque du Soleil: Worlds Away," from Paramount Pictures and James Cameron. At left, Tom Cruise is Reacher and Robert Duvall is Cash in "Jack Reacher," from Paramount Pictures and Skydance Productions.

'This Is 40'
 Genre: Comedy
 Cast: Paul Rudd, Leslie Mann, Megan Fox, John Lithgow, Iris Apatow, Maude Apatow, Melissa McCarthy, Robert Smigel, Charlene Yi and Albert Brooks
 Director: Judd Apatow
 Rated: R
 Five years after writer/director Judd Apatow introduced us to Pete and Debbie in "Knocked Up," Paul Rudd and Leslie Mann reprise their roles as a husband and wife both approaching a milestone meltdown in "This Is 40," an unfiltered, comedic look inside the life of an American family.
 After years of marriage, Pete lives in a house of all females: wife Debbie and their two daughters, 8-year-old Charlotte (Iris Apatow) and 13-year-old Sadie (Maude Apatow). As he struggles to keep his record label afloat, he and Debbie must figure out how to forgive, forget and enjoy the rest of their lives ... before they kill each other.
 In his fourth directorial outing, Apatow's new comedy captures what it takes for one family to flourish in the middle of a lifetime together.
 What emerges is a deeply honest portrait of the challenges and rewards of marriage and parenthood in the modern age. Through the filmmaker's unblinking lens, we follow one couple's three-week navigation of sex and romance, career triumphs and financial hardships, aging parents and maturing children.
 The all-star cast portraying the family and friends, colleagues and neighbors represents an ensemble of actors from many of Apatow's previous projects, as well as new comedy players who have been welcomed into the fold.

'Monsters, Inc. 3D'
 Genre: Animation and family
 Cast: John Goodman, Billy Crystal, Mary Gibbs, Steve Buscemi, James Coburn, Jennifer Tilly, Bob Peterson, John Ratzenberger, Frank Oz and Bonnie Hunt
 Director: Pete Docter, Lee Unkrich and David Silverman
 Rated: G
 "Monsters, Inc.," one of Disney•Pixar's most beloved and visually imaginative feature films ever, returns to the big screen to delight a whole new generation of audiences and fans alike, this time in stunning 3D.
 The now-classic Academy Award-winning animated comedy adventure "Monsters, Inc." is set in Monstropolis, a thriving company town where monsters of all shapes and sizes reside. Lovable Sulley (voiced by John Goodman) and his wisecracking best friend Mike Wazowski (voiced by Billy Crystal) are the top scare team at Monsters, Inc., the largest scream-processing factory.
 The main power source in the monster world is the collected screams of human children - and at Monsters, Inc., an elite team of scarers is responsible for gathering those precious natural resources. Believed by monsters to be toxic, children are strictly forbidden from entering Monstropolis.
 But when a little girl named Boo (voiced by Mary Gibbs) accidentally follows Sulley back into his world, he finds his career in jeopardy and his life in utter chaos. So pals Mike and Sulley plot to rectify the mistake and return Boo to her home. But when the trio encounters an unexpected series of complications, they become embroiled in a cover-up catapulting them into a mystery beyond their wildest dreams.

'Not Fade Away'
 Genre: Musical
 Cast: John Magaro, Jack Huston, Will Brill, Bella Heathcote, Brad Garrett, Christopher McDonald and James Gandolfini
 Director: David Chase
 Rated: R
 It's 1964, the Rolling Stones appear on television and three best friends from the suburbs of New Jersey decide to form a rock band.

'On the Road'
 Genre: Drama
 Cast: Garrett Hedlund, Sam Riley, Kristen Stewart, Kirsten Dunst, Amy Adams, Viggo Mortensen, Tom Sturridge, Alice Braga, Elisabeth Moss, Danny Morgan and Marie-Ginette Guay
 Director: Walter Salles
 Rated: R
 Sundance
 Directed by acclaimed filmmaker Walter Salles and based on the iconic novel by Jack Kerouac, "On the Road" tells the provocative story of Sal Paradise (Sam Riley), a young writer whose life is shaken and ultimately redefined by the arrival of Dean Moriarty (Garrett Hedlund), a free-spirited, fearless, fast talking Westerner and his girl, Marylou (Kristen Stewart).
 Traveling cross-country, Sal and Dean venture out on a personal quest for freedom from the conformity and conservatism engulfing them in search of the unknown, themselves, and the pursuit of "it" - the pure essence of experience.
 Seeking uncharted terrain and the last American frontier, the duo encounter an eclectic mix of men and women - Bull (Viggo Mortensen), Camille (Kirsten Dunst), Carlo (Tom Sturridge), Jane (Amy Adams), Terry (Alice Braga), Galathea (Elisabeth Moss) - each impacting their journey indelibly.

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