

LPD captures 2 in child porn bust

One of the men had videos of local girls, LPD says ... Page 8A.



Two funny amigos to take stage at Mahaffey

Steve Martin and Martin Short are on the road, sharing their latest collaboration. Read more about the show and other events on tap this weekend. ... Page 1B.

LARGO LEADER

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BEACHES



IRB preparing for a pirate invasion

For years, residents of Tampa Bay have watched pirates invade the port of Tampa and witness the mayor of the city surrender and hand the keys over to the marauders. Now they are about to invade Indian Rocks Beach. Starting Saturday, Jan. 27, the day of Tampa's festival, the IRB invasion begins in earnest, with the flotilla sailing down the Intracoastal Waterway to invade the city. ... Page 13A.

LARGO LPD event aims to empower seniors

The Largo Police Department Senior Services division is teaming up again with Aging in America Advocacy conferences to offer the third annual Senior Empowerment Day on Tuesday, Jan. 23, at St. Paul United Methodist Church, 1199 S. Highland Ave. The free event includes speakers on senior issues, including fraud prevention, abuse and successful aging, vendor tables, door prizes and a complimentary lunch. ... Page 4A.

Winterfest to help Largo High PTSA

The Largo High PTSA and Simply Events, Inc., are teaming up to bring Winterfest to Largo High School, 410 Missouri Ave., on Saturday, Jan. 20. Winterfest is the largest Largo High PTSA fundraiser held on campus and it will be open to the public as well as students. ... Page 4A.

SCHOOLS SHS launches sports program

This school year, Seminole High School launched a new program for students interested in pursuing a career in the world of sports - the Seminole Sports Career Institute. SSCI stands out from other high school sports academies, said Charles Miller, the school's head football coach and government/global studies teacher who founded the program. ... Page 10A.

VIEWPOINTS Bob Driver

What if Oprah runs for president? ... Page 11A.



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Mayor urges Forward Pinellas to explore every option — even if some of them are unpopular

By CHRIS GEORGE
Tampa Bay Newspapers

LARGO - Forward Pinellas Executive Director Whit Blanton told Largo commissioners Jan. 9 during a work session that bolder Complete Streets projects typically pay off with bigger economic rewards.

So, when it comes to a West Bay Drive pilot project, Mayor Woody Brown said he wants the county planning agency to take its foot off the brake and explore every option, even if it means upsetting some people on their first project.

The boldest plan discussed thus far - eliminating two lanes of the four-lane road - would most certainly do that.

"Personally, I don't think that east of Indian Rocks Road could handle the traffic with one lane," Brown told the Leader on Jan. 12. "But I also don't want Forward Pinellas or us to just say, 'OK this is the safe thing to do, this isn't going to garner any public opposition,' because a five-lane, 70-foot swath of asphalt is the product of that in the past. I certainly think we should take every opportunity to improve it, and we should look at everything and not just discount it."

"I certainly think we should take every opportunity to improve it, and we should look at everything and not just discount it."
- Largo Mayor Woody Brown

Two proposals and a wild card

Blanton presented two concepts for the pilot project that includes safety and accessibility improvements to a nearly 2-mile stretch of West Bay Drive from Clearwater-Largo Road to the Belleair Causeway Bridge. Work on the project would be done in conjunction with Pinellas County's planned resurfacing of the roadway later this year.

Each of the two projects would narrow the road's four 12-foot lanes to two 10-foot inner lanes and two 11-foot outer lanes.

The first proposal includes two 5-foot bicycle lanes, two 10-foot sidewalks and

See WEST BAY, page 2A

Breaking down the project

OBJECTIVES

- Update a dated corridor to enhance potential for economic development
- Connect the Pinellas Trail to nearby beaches with enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- Increase safety and lower speeds
- Improve crossings, including landscaped medians

CHALLENGES

Danger: The speeds commonly exceed the posted speed limit of 35 mph (east of Indian Rocks Road) and the 30 mph (west of Indian Rocks Road) speed limit.

"Speaking from a former patrol officer's perspective running radar on that stretch of roadway," said Commissioner John Carroll, "it made you feel like a Highway Patrol officer, because nobody does 30 or 35 down that road."

Between 2011 and 2015, there were a total of 396 crashes, including 78 injury crashes and one fatal crash.

Driveways to businesses also impact the safety of pedestrians and cyclists using the sidewalks.

In fact, Blanton said cyclists are more likely to get hit by a vehicle riding on the sidewalk than a bike lane, because motorists aren't looking for them.

Median Refuge: There are few areas where pedestrians are able to safely cross the intersections in multiple phases. In particular, the crossings at Indian Rocks Road need improvement.

Traffic: The average amount of daily two-way traffic ranges from 17,000 vehicles near the Belleair Bridge to 21,500 near 20th Street, according to Forward Pinellas. The area, however, has a capacity of 30,618, according to FDOT. Since it provides access to the beaches and is parallel to SR 60, the corridor experiences higher volumes on weekends and holidays periods.

READ MORE ABOUT THE CONCEPTS ON PAGE 2A

Grad rates on the rise in Pinellas

Largo High School among 13 in district with hikes

By SUZETTE PORTER
Tampa Bay Newspapers

LARGO - The Pinellas County School District recently received some welcome news about its graduation rates.

According to a Jan. 10 report from the Florida Department of Education, the district's 2016-2017 graduation rate went up 2.8 percentage points over the previous year and 11 percentage points since 2012-2013.

In addition, the county's graduation rate of 82.9 percent surpassed the state graduation rate of 82.3 percent.

"Our graduation rate increase is an accomplishment for all of our schools," said Superintendent Michael A. Grego in a press release. "From our Pre-K classrooms onward, every teacher, staff member and school leader plays a role in helping students find their pathway. We will build on this success and strive to grow greatness in all of our students."

The state's report revealed even more news that is celebration-worthy. Florida's high school graduation rate has reached a 14-year high. As of the 2016-17 school year, the statewide graduation rate has increased 23.1 percentage points since 2003-04 and 1.6 percentage points over last year.

"I am thrilled to celebrate our state's students and educators on this monumental accomplishment," said

See SCHOOLS, page 10A

Events aims to give adults new reason to visit Central Park

By CHRIS GEORGE
Tampa Bay Newspapers

LARGO - Events like Halloween Spooktacular, the Fourth of July celebration and Holiday Stroll bring thousands of children to Largo and have made Central Park a staple of family-friendly activity in the Tampa Bay area.

With a series of free arts and music events, the city of Largo wants adults to know it hasn't forgotten about them.

Beginning Jan. 19, Central Park will feature live music and local food vendors on the third Friday of each month.

"Basically, we are trying to get more of our adult crowd to come to events in our park," said Christina DeVoe, special events coordinator with the city. "A lot of the things we do are for families and families are still welcome, but we'll have beer and wine for sale. We'll also have a couple of food trucks there."

See PARK, page 3A

Defect no match for determination

Teen with rare condition to undergo life-changing surgery

By LOGAN MOSBY
Tampa Bay Newspapers

Courage comes in all shapes and sizes. It can be big and tall, but often, you'll find its package to be quite small. It can be found on the playground or the operating room or sitting in the cubicle next to you at work. Courage can be loud and proud, but more times than not it is like a quiet secret, simmering just below the surface.

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In the summer of 2000, Kim Cashman was nearing the end of a difficult pregnancy with her second child. She knew something wasn't right, but neither she nor her doctors knew what was to come.

"It felt like something was off," Cashman said. "I kept getting very big, which was weird. My stomach was just huge. They weren't sure what was going on. They didn't see anything funky going on but they did notice that her amniotic fluid was increasing."

See LEXI, page 4A



How to help

Lexi will undergo her latest surgery on Jan. 22 at All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg. To learn how you can help, visit www.gofundme.com/lexi-our-hero.

Kim Cashman and her daughter, Lexi Banks, sit outside Tampa Bay Newspapers, where Cashman works as an advertising representative.

Photo by LOGAN MOSBY

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WEST BAY, from page 1A

minimal landscaped medians in areas that would include additional crossings. The second, which the commission preferred, features a 12-foot multimodal path set off from the road by a 10-foot landscape buffer, enhanced lighting, landscaped areas at the median and additional pedestrian crossings.

While discussing the economic benefits of such projects, Blanton cited Edgewater Drive in Orlando, which went from four lanes to two with a center turn lane. He said the road saw an influx of 77 new businesses and a huge increase in property values.

Brown asked Blanton to explore the concept, so Blanton said he would check with the county to see if it was even feasible and report back to the commission.

"We've long thought that (West Bay Drive) is a great candidate for lane reduction from four down to two - at least west of 20th Street going toward Indian Rocks Road - and I think would really create a sense of arrival and a presence for a walkable district," Blanton said in an interview with the Leader.

After previous discussion with Belleair Bluffs officials, though, Blanton said he's not sure if it would get very far.

"I'm glad they were having that thought process," he said. "I just know the furor and upset that we heard from people in

TBN Visit TBNweekly.com to read more of Forward Pinellas executive director Whit Blanton's thoughts about traffic and safety in Pinellas County.

Belleair Bluffs - whether it's city commissioners or residents - over a plan to take 1 foot away to add to a bike lane. It kind of makes me believe that a lane reduction is going to be a nonstarter from their perspective."

Blanton will meet again with Belleair Bluffs officials at 6 p.m. Monday, Jan. 22.

Finding funding

While Concept 2 is more likely, it also is about \$2 million more than the county has budgeted because it entails moving the curb in order to make room for a multimodal path.

For the right project, however, Brown said the city would probably be willing to help pay the bill.

"We are not going to make a financial commitment just to make traffic drive through our town faster," Brown said. "But we will make that financial commitment to make it a better road for the people that live here and the businesses along the corridor and make a huge economic impact. That makes sense."

He said the city could use transportation impact fees or funds from its West Bay Drive

Community Redevelopment to help bridge any gap in financing.

He doesn't think Concept 1 is the right project, though.

"I think that if we left the cross-section the way it is ... and then just repaved it, slapped some bike lanes on the side and called it a day, it would be a waste of money, and they might as well just repave it," he said. "It's not going to help the neighborhood, it's not going to help the businesses along that corridor. Out of the options, I'm in favor of increasing the trail or sidewalk along the side of the road and looking for opportunities to enhance that."

Blanton said FDOT grants for making the road safer are also an option, and that it's possible the county could pay for the project upfront and Largo could reimburse it later.

He said the lane reduction could actually be the cheapest of all the projects, because they could repurpose and restripe the lanes within the existing curb.

"It's definitely a low-cost option," he said. "What we have to do is make sure the traffic will work and that we're not building in a safety problem or a massive congestion problem."

According to FDOT estimates, the road has a daily traffic volume of about 17,000 motorists near the Belleair Bridge to 21,500 near 20th Street. After traffic engineers take a look at it, Brown said they should know quickly whether it's feasible.

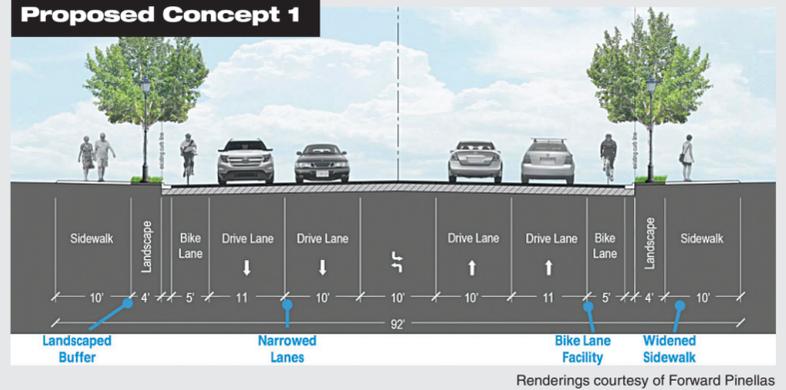
"If it's a real boon for the economy and makes those businesses thrive even more and makes the neighborhood more connected to those businesses and it does everything that we want a Complete Streets to do, then I think we should consider it," he said. "If there's too much volume to support one lane each way or a three-lane road, then we should learn that pretty quickly."

Breaking down the project

WHAT WEST BAY DRIVE LOOKS LIKE NOW

From Indian Rocks Road to Clearwater-Largo Road, West Bay Drive includes four 12-foot lanes, a 12-foot two-way left-turn lane and separated 8-foot sidewalks without bicycle accommodations. It spans 60 feet from curb to curb. The portion further west of Indian Rocks Road to the Belleair Causeway narrows and consists of two drive lanes and bicycle lanes.

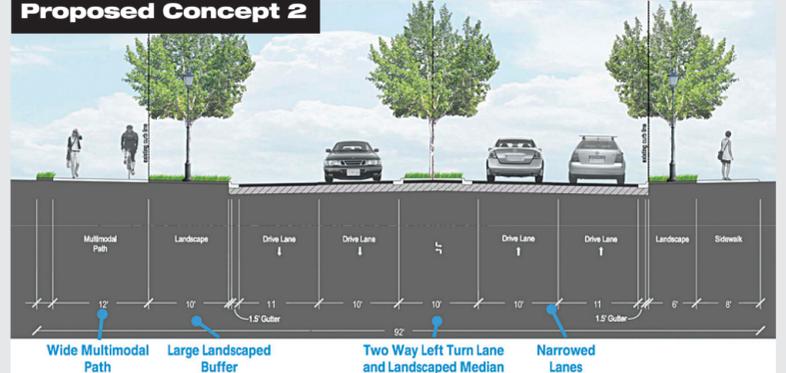
Proposed Concept 1



Cost: About \$3 million

Concept 1 would reduce lane widths to 10 feet on the inner lanes and 11 feet on the outer lanes, expand the sidewalks to 10 feet, add 5-foot bicycle lanes and include minimal landscaped medians in areas that would include additional crossings.

Proposed Concept 2



Cost: About \$5 million, which is about \$2 million over the county's budget.

Concept 2, which was favored by the Largo commission, would also reduce lane widths to 10 feet on the inner lanes and 11 feet on the outer lanes in order to add a 12-foot multimodal path (likely on the southside) and a much larger landscaped separation between the roadway and the path. Enhanced lighting, landscaped areas at the median and additional pedestrian crossings also would be included.

OTHER POSSIBILITY

Cost: About \$3 million

In early discussions, Forward Pinellas considered reducing the number of lanes from four down to two, possibly west of 20th Street going toward Indian Rocks Road. Business owners and elected officials, however, did not like the idea so it wasn't pursued. Largo commissioners, however, still wish to discuss such a design.

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Kiwanis Club honors LPD chaplains



Photo courtesy of BRUCE BLAZEJ

Largo Police Department chaplains Phillip Gray, left, and Robert Cohee, right, flank Police Chief Jeff Undestad while displaying a Certificate of Appreciation given to them by the Kiwanis Club of Largo/Mid-Pinellas during a recent meeting of the club. The Kiwanis Club uses the first meeting of each January to honor the LPD's volunteer chaplains, who were also given a \$50 gift card to help defray their expenses. Gray has served in Largo for the past six years and Cohee, a former Clearwater police officer, just started as a volunteer chaplain. They not only minister to the officers of LPD, but also victims of crimes the officers handle. The club, which performs many activities each year to benefit children and others in the Largo area, is looking for new members to help expand its service to the area. It meets for dinner at 6:30 p.m. on the second and fourth Thursday of each month at Suncoast Café, 1921 W. Bay Drive in Largo. For more information, call 727-536-0412.

PARK, from page 1A

Each month will feature a different, local headliner from 7 to 10 p.m. Singer-songwriter Este Loves will take the stage Jan. 19 to kick off the Thirsty Third Friday series.

"She is a local artist and she always travels with a very different band," DeVoie said. "She has what's called the church choir that comes and sings with her. It's about 15 to 20 backup singers and it's really cool. They do a lot of funky music."

Retribution, which offers a variety of rock, classic metal, pop rock and soul music, will perform Feb. 16. On March 16, high-energy rock band Come Back Alice performs and Lynyrd Skynyrd tribute band Nuthin' Fancy will close out the series April 20.

Showcasing local art

DeVoie said she hopes a new interactive and visual arts event in Largo Central Park at the end of March also appeals to adults.

Art in the Park, which will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. March 31, will feature the work of local photographers, performance artists, painters, crafters,



Photo courtesy of CITY OF LARGO

musicians and more. "We do a lot of family events, but the community was saying they wanted more music and more art events," DeVoie said. "So, Art in the Park is us trying to give the community more of what it wants."

The event, hosted in partnership with Beach Art Center, Creative Pinellas, Excalibur Consultants and Largo High School, also will include live music, food vendors and more. DeVoie said the city is currently seeking artists for the event and encourages them to register at LargoEvents.com before Feb. 16. The cost for an artist to show off their work is \$30 for residents and \$45 for nonresidents. For more information, contact DeVoie at cdevoie@largo.com.



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Submitted PHOTOS

Lexi Banks, now 17, was born with a rare congenital condition, Goldenhar syndrome, which affected the growth and development of her face and spine. Lexi has undergone more than 20 surgeries and will face her biggest yet on Jan. 22 when doctors will harvest a bone from her leg to create a new jaw for her. At right, Lexi is held by her mother, Kim Cashman.

LEXI, from page 1A

Her doctors told her that if she were to go into labor early, it was likely she would lose the baby. Cashman was restricted to bed rest in the hospital for the last three months of her pregnancy. She underwent daily procedures to drain the excess amniotic fluid, but doctors were still puzzled as to what was causing it.

"They couldn't figure out what was going on," Cashman recalled. "The ultrasounds weren't what they are today. They couldn't see. They couldn't figure it out."

After a long and uncomfortable pregnancy, Cashman's labor was difficult, a departure from her first, and when the baby, a girl, made her way into the world, it was clear right away that something was wrong.

"When she was born, she was gray," Cashman said. "They immediately wrapped her so I couldn't see her. I knew then something was wrong. Everyone was just staring."

As doctors and nurses rushed into the room, frantic, all Cashman wanted to do was hold her baby, later christened Lexi. Before she was taken to All Children's Hospital, Cashman was allowed her first look.

"I pulled down the blanket that was around her and I didn't understand," she said. "She was gray. She didn't have an ear and she had skin tags up her face. And she was only 4 pounds."

■■■

Lexi would have the first of more than 20 surgeries that day – an emergency tracheotomy that allowed her to breathe. A second to insert a feeding tube would soon follow.

It would take weeks for a diagnosis, and when it finally came, Cashman knew her baby had a tough road ahead of her.

Goldenhar syndrome is a rare congenital condition characterized by abnormal development of the eye, ear and spine. It affects one in every 3,000-5,000 births.

Children with Goldenhar syndrome are born with partially formed or totally absent ears, benign growths of the eye, and spinal deformities such as scoliosis.

In Lexi's case, she was born with no right ear, and a series of skin tags on her face. She has no external ear holes and no middle ear canal, although her cochlear is intact. She has scoliosis and one side of her body has more ribs than the other. She has no mandible on the right side of her face and no chin and her tongue is paralyzed on one side.

And she was, from the very beginning, the apple of her mother's eye.

■■■

After a three month stay in the ICU, Lexi was allowed to go home, on a heart monitor and with a 24-hour live-in nurse.

It was right about this time that Cashman would be thrown another curveball – she was pregnant with twins.

And just a month before Lexi turned 1, Dustin and Riley joined the brood, which included older brother Cody.

Life settled into a routine, and with the help of nursing care, Cashman and her now ex-husband were able to get some small respite to tend to housework and normal everyday things.

That all changed one fateful day right before Lexi turned 2.

While the nurse was off duty, Lexi had a muscle spasm while her tracheotomy tube was being changed.

"We'd gotten pretty comfortable doing it, even though it was a life-threatening thing, but we had to do it," Cashman said.

But the muscle spasm closed Lexi's airway and her parents weren't able to immediately resuscitate her. After minutes that felt like days, Lexi's dad was able to resuscitate her, just as paramedics arrived.

"She almost died," Cashman said. "Because she almost died and we proved that we could save her, the insurance pulled our full-time nursing. Isn't that insane? Because we proved to be capable parents, that we could save her life successfully, they pulled her nursing."

While the loss of the nurse was a setback for the family, Cashman was undaunted.

■■■

A stay-at-home mom since the birth of her eldest, Cashman re-entered the work force following her divorce. But Lexi was never far from her thoughts – or her sight for that matter. Cashman enrolled her kids at Cross Bayou Elementary in Pinellas Park, where she took a job as a substitute teacher. She would work alongside her children for nine years, eventually training in Braille and then serving as a teacher of the visually-impaired.

Cashman said she struggled with the school system early on, having to fight for what she thought was best for Lexi.

"I fought a lot of things," Cashman said. "She's not profoundly deaf. She's not totally deaf. She has the ability to talk."

"What the school system wanted her to do was to be with the profoundly deaf and sign. I said she can be with the profoundly deaf and sign, but she's also going to talk," she continued.

Cashman said that Lexi's own teachers often didn't realize she could talk, despite the fact that she had bone-conducting hearing aids.

"As they were teaching her how to sign, I was working on talking," she said.

■■■

It's a disconnect that has at times left Lexi floundering to find her place in the world.

"That's where she feels a bit left out," Cashman said. "She's not in the profoundly deaf world and she doesn't completely fit in the hearing world, so she's kinda been stuck in the middle, which has



made it hard at school."

An inquiring and often cruel public hasn't made life any easier for Lexi.

"Sometimes people stare at me and whisper to other people and laugh," Lexi said. "I try to ignore them and just walk away, but sometimes that's hard."

"In public, too, going to the mall, going anywhere, people always stare," she continued. "One time, I went to the mall with my mom, and a few kids came up to me, took pictures of me and then ran off."

Having her mom with her during her elementary and middle school years helped tremendously.

"It was easy when I was there," Cashman said. "When I was there, we made leaps and bounds in progress. And if there was an issue, I'd go take care of that issue."

"If people bring me down, she tells me to ignore them, be positive. Sometimes she will go to my school and confront them," Lexi said proudly, and somewhat sheepishly.

Lexi said the bullying has continued into her teen years, making her hesitant to reach out and meet new people.

"Another time at school, kids would try to beat me up in the bathroom stalls, push me around, and laugh at me constantly," Lexi said. "Bullying changed me, I don't like going out in public and I always hide behind my mom, and still to this day I do."

■■■

Over the years, more surgeries followed. By her side throughout most of them has been Dr. Ernesto Ruas, a Tampa plastic surgeon specializing in cranio-facial reconstruction.

With more than 20 surgeries under her belt, Lexi will soon undergo what she considers her biggest. On Jan. 22, she will spend more than 12 hours in the operating room of Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, where she will have the first of two surgeries in which bone from her leg will be harvested and used to create a mandible. The surgeries will better enable Lexi to eat without a feeding tube, which was removed last year.

This surgery was first attempted when Lexi was just 6 years old, but was ultimately unsuccessful. The bones were too young, Cashman said, and disintegrated.

"We are really hoping this time it will take and it won't disintegrate like it did last time," Cashman said.

■■■

You could say in many ways, Lexi is much like any other 17-year-old. Her favorite class in school is marine science and she hopes to one day be an interpreter for deaf children. She loves making YouTube videos and hanging out with her friends – chief among them is her mom.

"She's very supportive and positive and always encourages me to be a good person in the world," Lexi said of her mom.

It's because of that unwavering support that Lexi took to the Internet and shared her story, hoping to ease some of the financial burden placed on her mom.

Lexi launched a GoFundMe page last month in an effort to raise money to help pay off mounting medical bills.

"It's very difficult, this being the biggest surgery of her life," Cashman said. "We have medical bills stacked up. It's an unfortunate situation. We are in and out of court fighting over medical bills and insurance. It's been hard – beyond hard."

Cashman said she is in the process of selling her Seminole home to offset some of the bills.

So far, more than \$5,500 has been raised, for which both Lexi and her mom are grateful.

"The support has been amazing," Cashman said. "In all aspects – between churches and friends. It's just been amazing."

■■■

With her surgery now just days away, Lexi said she hopes her story can inspire others like her – those who face struggles most people couldn't even imagine.

"I want to inspire other people to share their stories, so they will know they are not alone," Lexi said. "And, most importantly, to not be ashamed of everything they've had to overcome."

To learn more about Lexi's story, in her own words, visit www.gofundme.com/lexi-our-hero.

Logan Mosby is editor of the Clearwater Beacon. She can be reached at 727-397-5563, ext. 304, or by email at lmosby@TBNweekly.com.

Around Largo

Largo Winterfest to benefit Largo High PTSA

LARGO – The Largo High PTSA and Simply Events, Inc., are teaming up to bring Winterfest to Largo High School, 410 Missouri Ave., on Saturday, Jan. 20, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Largo Winterfest is the largest Largo High PTSA fundraiser held on campus and it will be open to the public as well as students. Community residents are encouraged to attend, and all proceeds will support the Largo High PTSA directly.

Main Winterfest features include K-12 Battle of the Bands and Chili Cook-Off sponsored by Pinellas Technical College; silent student art auction; carnival games; food trucks; photo booths; free kids games and activities; arts and crafts; Largo Business Expo and local Artisan Craft Fair; kids area including face painting and much more. Other school programs will also be raising funds for the 2018 School Year offering fun activities.

Event entry is free. Cost is \$5 to park on the school grounds. All event activities and parking fees will directly benefit the Largo High PTSA.

LPD to host Senior Empowerment Day

LARGO – The Largo Police Department Senior Services division is teaming up again with Aging in America Advocacy conferences to offer the third annual Senior Empowerment Day on Tuesday, Jan. 23, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at St. Paul United Methodist Church, 1199 S. Highland Ave.

The free event includes speakers on senior issues, including fraud prevention, abuse and successful aging, vendor tables, door prizes and a complimentary lunch.

CarFit also will be on site offering free car safety evaluations. Learn more about the CarFit program at www.car-fit.org. Free registration is required and can be made at www.eventbrite.com, www.aginginamerica.net or by phone at 1-800-530-7047.

Karyn Rizzo, author of "Aging in America: Navigating our Healthcare System," said the goal of the event is to empower seniors by educating them about what scams are out there and what tools and resources are available to them.

Largo Police Senior Services Officer Joel Quattlebaum also will be discussing the current scams targeting vulnerable older adults, and the Pinellas County Consumer Protection department will be on site to address potential fraud as well as the protections available. A panel discussion will outline best practices for aging.

St. Paul United Methodist Church will feature its Joy and Handicapable Ministries, highlighting the spiritual opportunities available.

For more information, please contact Largo Police Senior Services Officer Joel Quattlebaum at 727-586-7351.

Clinic offers free help for narcotics users

Dr. George Kamajian, founder of the Largo Clinic and Medical Spa, is offering a free visit to his office for any patient seeking help for narcotics use Sunday, Jan. 28.

Along with the free visit, the clinic will provide suboxone for free. Suboxone is drug approved by the federal government to help people discontinue the use of narcotics. Kamajian is founder of the Largo Clinic, which is at 10500 Ulmerton Road, Suite 360.

For more information, visit largoclinic.com or call 727-517-1500.

St. Jerome Church to host health fair

LARGO – A health fair will take place Friday, Feb. 2, 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., at St. Jerome Catholic Church, 10895 Hamlin Blvd.

The free event will feature health care services and education. Attendees will have an opportunity to meet neighborhood doctors and health care professionals. Health screenings will be provided by Morton Plant Faith Community Nursing. Oak Manor will offer a healthy cooking demonstration. There also will be flu vaccines and stress management information. Screenings for glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol will be available.

For information, email StJeromeHealthFair@gmail.com.

Historical Society to host Cracker Supper

LARGO — The Largo Area Historical Society will hold its annual Cracker Supper on Saturday, March 10, at the auditorium of St. Paul Methodist Church, 1199 S. Highland Ave. The event begins at 5 p.m. and supper will kick off at 6:30 p.m.

This year's event also will include a silent auction.

The cost for the dinner is \$21 or \$12 for children age 12 and younger. Deadline for reservations is March 1.

For information about how to reserve a seat, call Joan Huntley at 727-584-4430, Jean Beistle at 727-535-7342 or Sarah Svabek at 727-400-6567.

Largo Central Park

Largo Central Park is at 101 Central Park Drive. Within the park are the Central Park Performing Arts Center, 105 Central Park Drive; the Largo Feed Store, 295 Central Park Drive; and the Largo Public Library, 120 Central Park Drive. To contact the library, call 727-587-6715.

Friends of the Largo Library set for book sale

LARGO – The Friends of the Largo Library will hold a book sale Wednesday through Saturday, Jan. 24-27, at the Largo Public Library.

The sale will feature several genres of books, CDs, DVDs, VHS tapes and LPs. The cost is 50 cents each book or \$1 for three books. Credit cards are not accepted.

On Wednesday, Jan. 24, from 3 to 5 p.m., the sale will be for members only. The sale is open to the public Thursday and Friday, Jan. 25-26, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Saturday, Jan. 27, from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

On Jan. 27, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., attendees can fill a brown paper grocery bag with books for \$1.

Library features exhibit on Florida fishing

LARGO – "The Lure of Florida Fishing" will be on exhibit at Gallery 120 in the Largo Public Library through Wednesday, Feb. 28.

On loan from the Museum of Florida History, the exhibit features 22 paintings by noted southern artist William Aiken Walker (1838-1921). He traveled throughout the south painting scenes of rural life. From 1889-1920, he wintered in Florida and stayed for a season at the artists' studios at Henry Flagler's Ponce de Leon Hotel in St. Augustine. Walker was an avid fisherman and outdoorsman and painted images of many kinds of game fish.

For more information, call 727-587-6715, email libraryinfo@largo.com or visit www.largopubliclibrary.org.

Library offering genealogy classes

LARGO – The Largo Public Library hosts several free genealogy classes each month.

Class duration is 60 to 90 minutes depending on content and questions.

No registration required. For the complete listing of all classes and scheduled times, visit lpgs.org/classes.aspx, email Bob Bryan at BBryan84@gmail.com or call 727-595-4521.

SHINE offering assistance at library

LARGO – If you are celebrating your 65th birthday this year, recently retired or just want to know more about your health care options under Medicare, SHINE may be able to help.

SHINE, a free program offered by the Florida Department of Elder Affairs and the local Area Agency on Aging, schedules free, unbiased and confidential counseling appointments each month at Largo Public Library. Please call 727-587-6715 to schedule your appointment.

Highland Recreation Complex

Highland Recreation Complex is at 400 Highland Ave. Visit HighlandRecreation.com or call 727-518-3016.

Highland offering ballroom dancing classes

LARGO – Highland Recreation Complex is now offering ballroom

LARGO, from page 4A

dancing classes for families, who will be taught in a casual, fun environment with lively, contemporary music.

Class will be on Thursday evenings from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.

The monthly cost is \$40 for members and \$80 for nonmembers.

Friday Night Fever events set

LARGO – Kids can play in the gym, Playworld, Game Room and Exerplay at Highland Recreation Complex during Friday Night Fever events from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Jan. 19 and 26.

The snack shop will be open for pizza, drink and snack purchases.

A registration form is required for each child, who must be between ages 3 and in the fifth grade. Preschool children are separate from school-age children.

The cost is \$6 for members and \$12 for nonmembers.

Highland offers woodcarving classes

LARGO – Woodcarving and woodburning classes are held every Thursday from 6 to 9 p.m. at Highland Recreation Complex and every Tuesday from 6 to 9 p.m. at Seminole Recreation Center, 9100 113th St. N., Seminole.

The cost is \$8 or more, depending on the facility. For more information, contact Robert and Carolyn Marek at 727-807-9454.

Southwest Rec Complex

Southwest Recreation Complex, which includes an aquatic complex, is at 13120 Vonn Road. Call 727-518-3125 for recreation or 727-518-3126 for the pool. Visit PlayLargo.com or LargoPools.com.

Southwest set for garage sale

LARGO – Join Southwest Recreation Complex for its annual indoor community-wide garage sale Saturday, Jan. 20, from 8 a.m. to noon.

With over 65 tables, you are bound to find some great treasures. The garage sale, which is free to attend, will feature more than 65 tables that include home goods, toys, gently used clothing and more.

The cost to include a table is \$10 with a limit of two tables per person.

Community Center

The Largo Community Center is at 400 Alt. Keene Road. Visit LargoCommunityCenter.com or call 727-518-3131.

City to host volunteer fair Jan. 20

LARGO – The city of Largo's Recreation, Parks and Arts Department will host a Volunteer Fair on Saturday, Jan. 20, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Largo Community Center.

Citizen involvement and volunteer service are important to the city, especially to the Recreation Department, which has more than 300 registered volunteers performing more than 120 different jobs.

Representatives from all of the department's divisions will be on site introducing participants to positions such as greeters, ushers, coaches and program leaders. The city is also looking for youth volunteers.

For more information, call 727-518-3131 or visit Largo.com/volunteer.

Center's aspiring writers group seeking writers

LARGO – The Aspiring Writers Group at the Largo Community Center is looking for new members.

Under the direction of Angela Pisaturo, the program teaches the fundamentals of writing for beginning writers through word exercises, group writing and class critique. The group meets on Thursdays from 10 a.m. to noon.

The cost is \$12 per week for members and \$24 for nonmembers. Preregister for the entire month and receive a discount.

Center offering paint and sip party

LARGO – The Largo Community Center will host a Painting Party at The Studio @ The Center on Friday, Feb. 2, from 7 to 10 p.m.

In a stress-free environment, experienced instructor Pamela Armentano will guide participants through the process of creating a painting. No art experience or special skills needed.

The price of \$40 includes one 16-by-20-inch canvas, all paints and supplies and one beverage (beer, wine, soda, bottle water, coffee or tea). Additional beverages are available for purchase. Preregister by Friday, Jan. 26.

Center to host wellness workshop

LARGO – A wellness workshop will be presented Tuesday, Feb. 13, 10:30 to 11:15 a.m., at Largo Community Center.

The workshop will focus on healing with food. These short workshops offer techniques for staying healthy and active.

The workshop is free to Largo Recreation members and \$5 for nonmembers.

Candle-making party slated for Feb. 16

LARGO – Join the Tampa-based Topsy Candle Co. on Friday, Feb. 16, at the Largo Community Center from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. for a fun candle making workshop.

From melting the wax to selecting the scent for a one-of-a-kind candle, this workshop is a great experience for individuals and groups.

The price is \$40 and includes all supplies for one full-size scented candle plus one beverage.

Center to host Sweethearts Ball for adults, seniors Feb. 24

LARGO – The Largo Community Center will host the 2018 Sweethearts Ball on Saturday, Feb. 24, from 7 to 10 p.m.

Adults and seniors will enjoy a romantic, semiformal evening complete with live music, dancing, hors d'oeuvres, dessert, cash bar and plenty of photo opportunities.

Tickets, which are on sale at the Center, cost \$15 per person or \$25 per couple. Registration deadline is Feb. 1.

Classes and lessons

• Adult tap and ballet classes: Tap classes are Tuesdays from 1 to 2 p.m. and Thursdays from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Ballet classes are Wednesdays from noon to 1 p.m. For an additional cost, participants may stay for a choreography class that builds off the technique taught each week. Tap Technique is \$4.50 for members and the

combination class is \$7 for members. Ballet classes cost \$7.50 per class for members.

• Ukulele lessons: Hour-long private lessons are \$25. Students must provide their own ukulele. Instructor Michael Desselle will focus on basic chords, timing, strumming and learning melodies.

Weekly events

• Bridge games: Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:30 to 4 p.m. All players are welcome to join the American Contract Bridge League-sanctioned games. The cost is \$4 with membership or \$5, with snacks included. Call Joan Waff at 727-895-9073.

• Sunday Social Dance: Sundays, 6 to 10 p.m. Dress to impress, and join about 150 singles and friends of all ages to dance to an extensive music library to fit every taste. Cost is \$10.

Bimonthly events

• Karaoke party: First and third Fridays, 7 to 10 p.m. Using the big screen in Studio A, singers can choose from an extensive online library. Admission is \$5 per person and beer and wine will be available for purchase.

Monthly events

• Senior adult luncheon: Third Thursdays, noon to 2 p.m. Tickets are \$12 and include lunch and a show. Tickets go on sale for Recreation Card holders on the first of the month prior to each show. Those without Recreation Cards can purchase tickets on the second of the month. On the day of the show, doors open at 11:45 a.m., lunch is served between noon and 1 p.m. and the show is from 1 to 2 p.m.

• Line dance parties: Fourth Fridays, 7 to 10 p.m. Line dancing is a low-impact exercise for all ages. Beginner dancers can easily follow the more seasoned dancers on our split floor setup in the Goodman Ballroom. Admission is \$8 per person.

Group meetings

Largo Woman's Club

LARGO – The Largo Woman's Club meets the first Tuesdays of each month at Royal Palms, 200 Lake Ave. NE, from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., with sign-in at 11:15 a.m.

The cost is \$8, which includes lunch and a special guest speaker.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, Feb. 6, and the speaker will be Nick Patel from USAmeriBank.

Meetings and fundraisers are open to all women, and Largo residency is not required to attend.

For more information, call Rita at 727-447-1808 or Ginny at 321-288-1239.

Largo-Seminole Women's Bible Study

SEMINOLE – The Largo-Seminole Women's Bible Study will begin with an opening coffee on Thursday, Jan. 18, 9:25 to 11 a.m., at Seminole First Baptist Church, 11045 Park Blvd., Seminole.

This is a non-denominational study group meeting every Thursday. Ladies of all ages are invited. The group will be studying the book of Ruth. There is no charge and child care is provided.

For information, call Mary Jane Schmidt at 727-709-6482 or Marguerite Harter at 727-474-7139 or visit www.lswbs.org.

American Legion Post 119

LARGO – American Legion Post 119, at 130 First Ave. SW, will host several events that are open to the public.

Lunches are served Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. featuring burgers and specials each day.

Friday Night Dinners are served from 5 to 8 p.m., with music by Karaoke DJ Bill Johnson, 7 to 11 p.m. The cost is \$7.25 for shrimp or a four-piece chicken dinner or all-you-can-eat fried fish. It is served with rolls, French fries and coleslaw.

Saturday Night Dinners are served 5 to 8 p.m., with music by various artists weekly, 7 to 11 p.m. The cost is \$8.25 and includes bacon-wrapped filet mignon served with a salad, baked potato and rolls. Coffee is \$1.

Sons of the American Legion Post 119 sponsor "Wing Madness" every Monday night, 5 to 8 p.m. Enjoy chicken wings served hot, mild, barbecue, butter and garlic and spicy barbecue for \$5 for six or \$8 for 12. French fries and onion rings are available. Bob Swenson provides music from 6 to 8 p.m.

Proceeds benefit the Special Olympics, Fisher House at Bay Pines, and American Legion National Child Welfare Foundation and National Emergency Fund.

Largo Lions Club

LARGO – The Largo Lions Club meets on the first and third Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. at Tailgaters, 13847 Walsingham Road.

The club is a network of volunteers who serve their communities, meet humanitarian needs, encourage peace and promote international understanding.

For more information, email info@largolionsclub.org or visit largolionsclub.org.



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County Briefs

St. Pete-Clearwater airport sets passenger record

Officials at St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport have announced a historical milestone. For the first time, it surpassed 2 million passengers, breaking an all-time passenger record for the third consecutive year.

Officials also announced that December 2017 was the airport's biggest December in history. Monthly passengers increased by 17 percent over 2016. The airport's year-end increase was 12 percent with 2,055,269 passengers. Allegiant added service to nine new cities in 2017.

The Federal Aviation Administration recently published its top growth airports list for 2016. PIE was ranked No. 3 in the nation for small airports. PIE has achieved double-digit growth for five consecutive years.

County issues MLK Jr. Day Proclamation

CLEARWATER – In honor of the national holiday Jan. 15, the Pinellas County Commission issued a Martin Luther King Jr. Day proclamation during the first board meeting of the year to recognize community leaders in Pinellas County who embody the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Commission Chair Ken Welch presented the proclamation Jan. 9 to Largo residents James and Gwen Fezell, co-founders of the Bridging the Achievement Gap program and members of the 2020 Plan Taskforce.

Mr. and Mrs. Fezell, both former educators, started BTAG more than 14 years ago. In this time, the program has served more than 1,500 students who have gone on to many achievements, including graduating high school and earning diplomas, attending colleges and universities, completing technical and vocational programs and having military careers.

The 2020 Plan Taskforce is a collaborative effort made up of community leaders seeking to improve the lives of citizens of South St. Petersburg with the goal of reducing poverty in the area by 30 percent by the 2020 census.



Photo courtesy of PINELLAS COUNTY MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION

Members of the 2020 Plan Taskforce and founders of Bridging The Achievement Gap receive the MLK Jr. Day Proclamation from the Pinellas County Commission on Jan. 9.

Property appraiser offers help with exemptions

Jan. 1 is an important date as far as property taxes are concerned. Florida Property Appraisers determine the value of your home as of this date every year based upon sales of similar properties from the prior year.

Jan. 1 is also the date used to determine residency status for exemption purposes.

Exemptions save property owners hundreds in tax dollars each year and they are quick and easy for which to apply. The popular Homestead Exemption can be eFiled from the Pinellas County property appraiser's homepage at www.pcpao.org. Once you receive a homestead exemption, it is automatically renewed unless your residency status changes.

In January and February, representatives from the property appraiser's office will be traveling around the county to reach out to those unable to visit an office.

Events will be held at the following locations:

- Thursday, Jan. 25, 5:30-7 p.m., Highland Lakes Clubhouse, 3300 MacGregor Drive, Palm Harbor.
- Wednesday, Jan. 31, 9 a.m.-noon, Five Towns Community Center, 8141 54th Ave. N., St. Petersburg.
- Wednesday, Feb. 7, 1-4 p.m., Pasadena Community Church, 227 70th St. S., St. Petersburg.
- Thursday, Feb. 8, 9 a.m.-noon, Dunedin Community Center, 1920 Pinehurst Road, Dunedin.
- Tuesday, Feb. 13, 9 a.m.-noon, Jim & Heather Gills YMCA, 3200 First Ave. S., St. Petersburg.
- Thursday, Feb. 15, 9 a.m.-noon, Largo Community Center, 400 Alt. Keene Road, Largo

Each January, the property appraiser's office mails a "renewal receipt" to residents who have a homestead, listing exemptions it plans to renew. If ownership and occupancy have not changed, you simply save the receipt for your records. However, if you added someone to the deed, moved, or rented the property during 2017, you should indicate that change on the receipt, sign it, and return it so the proper adjustments can be made.

Some exemptions, such as the low income senior exemption, are not renewed automatically. You will be sent an application to renew the exemption by mail. Other exemptions you may qualify for include widow/

widower, senior, disability and veterans to name a few.

If you purchased a property in 2017 that benefited from a former owner's exemption, that benefit is removed on Jan. 1 each year, resetting the property's assessed value to just/market value. You must apply for your own homestead exemption by March 1.

Kids Tag Art program raises \$100K in three years

CLEARWATER – Clay, paint, markers, paper. Quality classroom art supplies don't come cheap, and it can be difficult for public schools to dedicate enough dollars to the arts. But a program that allows Fifth graders to design their own custom license plates has stepped in big time, providing elementary art teachers between \$800 to more than \$1,000 apiece to keep their classrooms stocked.

The program called Kids Tag Art Pinellas is an unconventional partnership between the Pinellas County Tax Collector's Office and Pinellas County Schools. And by all accounts, it's working. In just three years, Kids Tag Art Pinellas has raised \$100,000 for elementary art programs and college scholarships. Statewide, the Kids Tag Art program is expected to reach the \$1 million mark in 2018.

On Thursday, Jan. 18, Fifth grade student artists will be honored at the Kids Tag Art Pinellas Award Ceremony, beginning at 6 p.m. at the Largo High School auditorium, 410 Missouri Ave. N. This free public event honors top designs hand-picked by a panel of retired Pinellas County art teachers. Event organizers hope to fill the 700-seat auditorium with supporters.

Residents asked to 'skip a week' of irrigation

The Southwest Florida Water Management District is reminding residents who irrigate their lawns to "Skip a Week" or more of watering during the cooler months of January and February.

According to research by the University of Florida, grass doesn't need to be watered as often during the cooler months. One-half to three-quarters of an inch of water every 10-14 days is sufficient. In fact, if your lawn has received any significant rainfall, then you can turn off your irrigation system and operate it manually as needed.

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'Optics' prompt county administrator to dismiss long-term temporary employee

By SUZETTE PORTER
Tampa Bay Newspapers

CLEARWATER - Saying it was the right thing to do, Pinellas County Administrator Mark Woodard explained to commissioners Jan. 9 the set of circumstances surrounding his decision to terminate a long-term temporary employee.



County Administrator Mark Woodard

Potential improprieties with the employee hired by Randstad, the agency that provides much of the county's temporary workforce, were revealed in a recent news story by local media. Commissioner Pat Gerard asked why the Commission wasn't briefed on the situation before she was "ambushed in her office" by a reporter and questioned when she had no idea about was going on.

Woodard admitted he had not known about the situation in time for a briefing, which was discovered when he asked for information about temporary employees from Randstad after a discussion by commissioners in November about the possibility of the Unified Personnel Board hiring a new agency to provide temporary workers.

The report from Randstad didn't come in until Mid-December and, because of the holidays, Woodard didn't get it until the first week in January.

"I took some time off over the holiday and didn't see it," he said.

He explained that the county had two types of temporary employees - those hired through the county's Unified Personnel System and those supplied by Randstad. Most of the ones hired by the county are seasonal workers, such as lifeguards and park workers.

He said during the Great Recession, UPS had begun to use a private firm to supply temporary employees, which after a certain time could become permanent employees. He said at that time, the county had been losing many employees to private firms. He said using an employment agency was a flexible and efficient way to get talent to do the work needed.

He said when he looked at the report from Randstad last week, he found one temporary employee that had recently retired from the county. The employee was receiving a rate of pay far in excess to what he had made as a county employee, which was a concern, Woodard said. Although, he pointed out that the position was a highly skilled technical job.

He said plans had been made to hire someone to replace the retiring employee, who had been under the state's Deferred Retirement Option Program, aka DROP. A replacement had been hired and had started to work, but soon thereafter found another job and left. Staff tried to find another replacement but could not find one before the retirement date.

Woodard said staff then made a decision to bring the employee back under the Randstad contract. He said it was a "sound decision" at the time due to the employee's level of skill and knowledge about the courts and jail consolidation project. He said the alternative would have been to hire a consultant, which he said would cost a lot more.

"The issue is optics," he said.

He said once an employee in DROP retires, they cannot be rehired for 12 months. The county had "adhered to the letter of the law," Woodard said, because the worker was no longer employed by the county, but was instead employed by Randstad.

"The optics is bypassing the intent and spirit of the law when we need to be complicit with the letter and spirit of the law," he said.

He said to bring back the employee at a much higher rate of pay "from an optics standpoint was not right" even though it likely would have cost more to get a consultant to do the job.

Woodard said as soon as he found out about the situation, he had Randstad terminate the employee.

Woodard doesn't blame staff for what happened.

"This is on me," he said.

Woodard is continuing to review the list of temporary workers and said he had not yet found a situation that rose to the same level. He said if another were discovered, he would take appropriate action.

The county administrator also is working on a plan to prevent a similar scenario in the future. He plans to do an annual review of temporary employees at the end of each year.

He pointed out that the county pays wages and an administrative fee to the employment agency, which pays all the payroll taxes and other expenses. He also said

County opposes offshore drilling plan

By SUZETTE PORTER
Tampa Bay Newspapers

CLEARWATER - Pinellas County commissioners laid out their strategy Jan. 9, gearing up to fight the possibility of oil drilling off Florida's west coast.

The Commission is opposed to a new five-year offshore drilling plan revealed Jan. 4 by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke that would have lifted the moratorium on drilling for oil in the eastern Gulf of Mexico. The Draft Five Year Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program included areas where oil and gas companies could buy leases starting as early as 2019.

Brian Lowack, the county's government intergovernmental liaison, showed commissioners a map of how close drilling operations could be located to Pinellas County's beaches if the draft plan became reality. The current drilling program makes the area off limits through June 30, 2022.

Commissioner John Morroni suggested sending a "very strongly worded" resolution informing federal officials of the Commission's opposition. He said he was surprised the governor hadn't been able to influence the decision due to his relationship with President Donald Trump.

Later that day, Zinke announced that Florida had been removed from the draft plan. He credited the governor's influence as the reason.

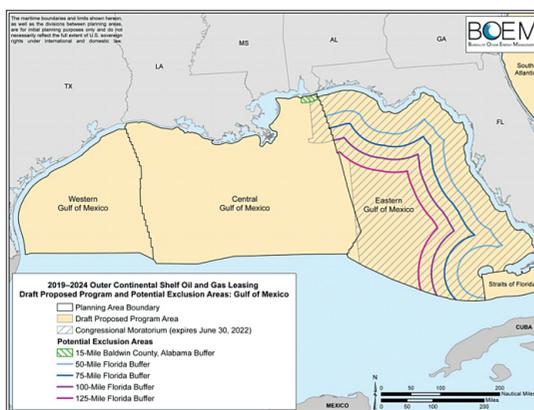
Gov. Rick Scott sent out a press release confirming that after his meeting with Zinke, the Department of Interior had announced that Florida's coastline had been removed from the draft plan for future oil drilling.

"I am proud to announce that Secretary Zinke has agreed to remove Florida's coastline from consideration for future oil drilling," Scott said.

He thanked Zinke for traveling to Tallahassee that day to hear the state's concerns.

In the same press release, Zinke said he supported the governor's position that "Florida is unique and its coast is heavily reliant on tourism as an economic driver."

"As a result of today's discussion and Gov. Scott's leadership, I am removing Florida



Map courtesy of U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
The eastern Gulf of Mexico is highlighted with a crosshatch denoting it is part of a Congressional moratorium against oil and gas drilling through June 30, 2022.

from consideration for any new oil and gas platforms," Zinke said.

Commission Chair Ken Welch responded to the late-breaking news, saying the Commission would stay engaged in the debate and would maintain its opposition to increased drilling in the Gulf.

"Even hundreds of miles away, a spill could be devastating to Florida ... to Florida's environment and economy," he said.

Prepared to fight

The Commission stands ready to fight against the threat of oil drilling offshore Pinellas' beaches. Plans are in the works to attend a Feb. 8 public hearing on the draft plan in Tallahassee. The county's federal lobbyist team has been activated to work on the Commission's behalf and has signed up to attend a Feb. 22 public hearing on the matter in Washington, D.C.

Lowack told commissioners that a 60-day comment period on the draft remained open until March 9. After that, a 90-day comment period was scheduled for a proposed program followed by a 60-day comment period on the final proposed program.

Commissioner Janet Long said opening Florida's waters to oil and gas drilling was "irresponsible." Welch talked about the "real threat" to the county's beaches

should an accident occur like the 2010 BP Deep Horizon oil spill.

"We don't want it here for many reasons," Commissioner Dave Eggers said. "We don't want it and we don't need it. Our supplies are being met. Don't do it."

Nelson questions Zinke's actions

U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Florida, wants specifics on any new offshore drilling plans. He wrote a letter to Zinke Jan. 10 asking for more information.

"The public has a right to know exactly what Interior's plan is," Nelson said in his letter to Zinke.

Nelson asked Zinke several specific questions, including whether a new revised plan would be published and if that plan would maintain the current moratorium beyond 2022. He asked if new maps would be issued showing areas excluded from consideration.

Nelson said it was "unreasonable" to expect Floridians to provide "input on a plan that may or may not be the plan" that the Department of Interior is actually considering. Nelson wants Zinke to expand the public comment period to give adequate time to respond to any new plan proposed.

In a speech on the Senate Floor, Nelson said Floridians might be

discouraged from commenting because they have been "given false assurances that we are all in the clear." In that same speech, Nelson announced that he had filed legislation to permanently ban drilling off the Florida coast.

Nelson released a statement the evening of Jan. 9 calling Zinke's announcement a "political stunt" by the Trump administration designed to make Scott look good. There has been much talk that Scott will challenge Nelson for his senate seat in the next election.

Welch was asked to comment on Nelson's claim. He said the quick turnaround was "curious."

"One would think that such an impactful decision would have been well thought out and not so malleable," he said.

He pointed out that having the decision reversed after one brief meeting brought into question "the fundamental soundness of initial recommendation to expand coastal drilling."

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Police Beat

Pinellas deputies arrest man wanted for murder in Kentucky

LARGO - Pinellas County Sheriff's deputies arrested a 46-year-old Spring Hill man Jan. 12 wanted in connection with a triple homicide in Kentucky.

The Louisville Metropolitan Police Department Homicide Unit coordinated with the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office and authorities in Hernando County to locate the suspect.

Deputies assigned to the Violent Crimes Task Force stopped a vehicle driven by Christopher Cruz Olivo about 10:13 p.m. at the intersection of U.S. 19 North and Ulmerton Road in Largo. He was arrested on a Kentucky warrant for three counts of murder and one count of tampering with physical evidence.

According to a press release from the sheriff's office, Olivo is charged with murdering a man and two women while inside a residence in Louisville, Kentucky. Two juveniles were located inside the home unharmed, however Olivo fled the scene with his 3-year-old daughter, who was safely located in Hernando County.

When deputies arrested Olivo, he was wearing a ballistic vest and had an AK47 assault rifle on the passenger seat of his vehicle.

Olivo was transported to the Pinellas County Jail. Members with the LMPD Homicide Unit are traveling to Florida to transport him back to Kentucky.

The Violent Crimes Task Force is a countywide, multi-jurisdictional task force that focuses on violent crime in Pinellas County. The task force is comprised of law enforcement officers from the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, St. Petersburg Police Department and the Clearwater Police Department.

Pinellas Park man dies after crash in St. Petersburg

ST. PETERSBURG - A 40-year-old Pinellas Park man died at a local hospital Jan. 11 from injuries suffered during a one-vehicle crash on southbound 71st Street North in St. Petersburg.

Florida Highway Patrol reports that Sean William Pinnell was driving a 2006 Chevrolet Silverado traveling southbound on 71st Street North, just

north of 40th Avenue North when for some unknown reason he lost control of the vehicle.

The Silverado left the roadway and traveled onto the west grass shoulder where it collided with a power pole and fence, and overturned. Pinnell was ejected from the vehicle.

He was transported to St. Petersburg General Hospital where he later died.

St. Pete man charged with 11 counts of child pornography

ST. PETERSBURG - Pinellas County Sheriff's detectives charged a 64-year-old St. Petersburg man with 11 counts of child pornography Jan. 11.

Lester Thomas Schwark was arrested at his home about 2:52 p.m. He was booked into the county jail where bail was set at \$1.1 million.

Detectives with the Crimes Against Children Unit began an investigation in August, after receiving information that Schwark was in possession of child pornography. Detectives recovered numerous images depicting child pornography from Schwark's cellular telephone.

86-year-old cited in crash with deputy in Dunedin

DUNEDIN - An 86-year-old Dunedin man received a traffic citation for failure to yield after a Pinellas County Sheriff's cruiser crashed into his vehicle about 4:07 p.m. Jan. 9 at the intersection of Main Street and Pinehurst Road in Dunedin.

Deputies assigned to the sheriff's Major Accident Investigation Team say Detective Jennifer Zinge, 45, was on-duty driving an unmarked 2013 Ford Fusion westbound on Main Street in Dunedin. George A. Gillies was driving a 2000 Ford Taurus eastbound on Main Street. Gillies attempted to make a northbound turn onto Pinehurst Road in front of Zinge's vehicle, causing the crash, investigators say. The traffic signal at the intersection was green in both directions.

Zinge and Gillies were transported to a local hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

Deputies say it does not appear that speed or impairment were factors in the crash.

- Compiled by SUZETTE PORTER



Olivo



Schwark

Largo Police arrest two on child porn charges

Investigation finds thousands of images, videos of local girls playing volleyball

LARGO - Largo Police have released information about two recent arrests involving numerous counts of possession of child pornography and three counts of distribution of child pornography.

Members of the Investigative Services Division, assisted by the department's Problem Oriented Police unit, arrested Alexander Kyle McCuen, 30, of Largo after serving a search warrant at his home Jan. 10.

He was booked into the Pinellas County Jail and charged with eight counts of possession of child pornography and two counts of distribution of child pornography. Bail was set at \$560,000.

Police say McCuen recently "made the mistake of moving" into Largo Police Department's jurisdiction. Within 30 days, the department's peer-to-peer detection software led to the discovery that McCuen was downloading and distributing child pornography.

After the search warrant was served at his home, McCuen reportedly confessed to the crime during an interview. Police say additional charges are pending a forensic review of the suspect's computer.

During the search of McCuen's home, police say they discovered a "disturbing" item - a small safe in McCuen's bedroom that contained used and unused children's clothing.

The second arrest came as the result of a cybertip through the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children about an email registered to a Largo man with a Dropbox account containing illicit images.

After receiving information from subpoenas, Largo police identified the owner of the email account as 28-year-old Cameron Alistair MacDonald. Police located MacDonald at his workplace Jan. 5

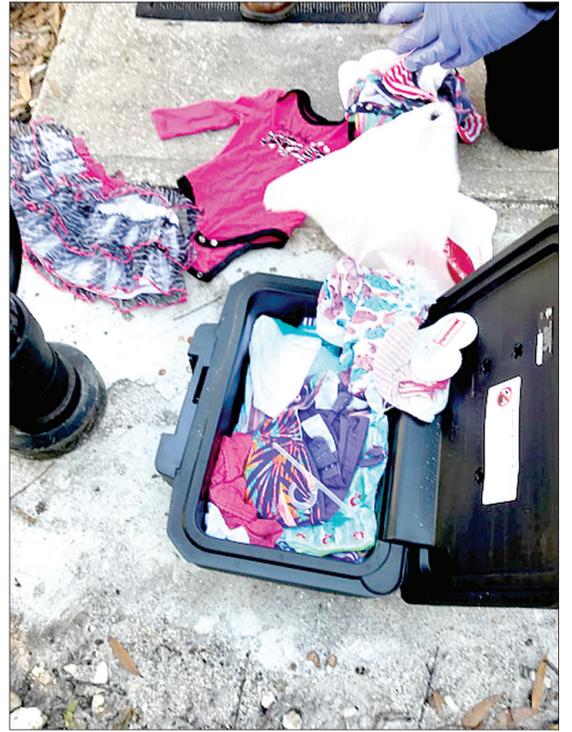


Photo courtesy of LARGO PD

Largo police found a small safe filled with used and unused children's clothing in Alexander McCuen's safe when officers searched it Jan. 10 as part of a child pornography investigation.



McCuen



MacDonald

where they interviewed him.

Police say MacDonald admitted to using cloud storage to stash files of child pornography, as well as sharing Dropbox links of child pornography to other users of Kik software.

He reportedly told detectives that he had viewed at least 1,000

images of child pornography over the last six to eight years.

Police say during a forensic exam, additional videos and files of child pornography were found on MacDonald's cellphone. The forensic exam also revealed thousands of images and videos of local girls playing volleyball and pictures from their social media sites.

MacDonald was booked into the Pinellas County Jail where he was charged with 10 counts of possession of child pornography. Bail was set at \$1 million. He also was charged with one count of distribution of child pornography. Bail was set at \$10,000.

- SUZETTE PORTER

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Briefcase

Quaker Steak and Lube to host annual Florida Motorcycle Expo

CLEARWATER – The 20th annual Florida Motorcycle Expo and Bike Builder Invitational will take place Friday through Sunday, Feb. 9-11, at Quaker Steak and Lube, 10400 49th St. N., Clearwater.

The entertainment lineup will include performances by Love and Revenge and Warrant on Friday; The Black Honkeys, Den of Thieves, Jasmine Cain and Lita Ford on Saturday; and Greg Billings and Stormbringer with Robby Steinhardt, formerly of Kansas, on Sunday.

The event also will include a 10-class ride-in bike show, beer drinking contest, wing eating contest, Miss Full Throttle Bikini contest, giveaways, ribbon-cutting ceremony and more than 100 vendors.

Custom motorcycle builders from across the country will be on hand competing for one of the largest bike shows in the United States. More than \$20,000 in cash and prizes will be given away in the Bike Builder Invitational.

The concert and event are free to attend. There will be limited free motorcycle parking. Paid parking will be available across the street.

For more information, visit www.FloridaFullThrottle.com.

FDOT program to host career fair at PTC

ST. PETERSBURG – The Florida Department of Transportation OnBoard4Jobs Construction Careers Program will partner with Pinellas Technical College to sponsor the Pinellas County Construction Careers Fair on Tuesday, Jan. 30, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., on the PTC campus at 901 34th St. S., St. Petersburg.

"There is great demand for workforce in the road construction industry," said Stephanie Araujo in a press release. Araujo is project manager for Quest Corporation of America, an organization that helps facilitate the program on behalf of FDOT. "Contractors are hiring and OnBoard4Jobs Construction Careers is organizing this job fair to connect them with job seekers in Pinellas County and throughout the surrounding area."

Job seekers age 18 and older are invited to attend and learn more about available positions, such as general laborers, carpenters, concrete finishers, flaggers, truck drivers, heavy machine operators, asphalt pavers, pipe fitters and a variety of other construction positions. Those without road construction experience are encouraged to attend to learn about on-the-job training opportunities.

Representatives from the Florida Department of Transportation, contractors and industry resources will be on hand to discuss training and skilled worker opportunities. Advice on career development, job skills, effective interview techniques and resume writing will also be offered.

For information, email OnBoard4Jobs@QCAUSA.com or call 866-662-6273, ext. 3.

Tint World opens new location in Palm Harbor

PALM HARBOR – Tint World Automotive Styling Centers, a leading auto accessory and window tinting franchise, has opened in Palm Harbor.

Owned and operated by Brian Miller, the store will provide the community with a variety of services, including mobile electronics and

BBA meets



Photo courtesy of BLUFFS BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

Pictured are attendees of the recent Bluffs Business Association monthly after-hours mingle and ribbon-cutting, hosted by Charlotte Mullen of Strategic Financial Advisory Services. The next mingle will be Thursday, Feb. 8, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., at The Alley, 596 Indian Rocks Road, Belleair Bluffs. Businesses may bring a door prize and give a quick commercial. For information or to RSVP, call Bonnie Trembulak at 727-686-8797 or visit BluffsBusinessAssociation.com.

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Tint World of Palm Harbor is at 30950 U.S. 19 N., Unit B.

Ruth Eckerd Hall named Seminole Hard Rock Hotel January 2018 beneficiary

CLEARWATER – Ruth Eckerd Hall recently was chosen as one of the 12 charities that Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa will sponsor by selling a customized retail item and donating 100 percent of the proceeds.

For the entire month of January, the Seminole Hard Rock Tampa will sell a customized bracelet featuring the Ruth Eckerd Hall logo in its retail stores. Each bracelet is priced at \$5 and 100 percent of the proceeds will be donated to Ruth Eckerd Hall for its wide-ranging arts education program. Seminole Hard Rock Tampa works alongside a local Tampa Bay charity each month to help raise awareness and funds directly for the selected organization. During the month the charity is assigned, an item customized with the charity's logo is sold within Hard Rock Tampa's stores.

Rays president Auld tells chamber about the importance of sports

By BOB McCLURE
Tampa Bay Newspapers

ST. PETE BEACH – Tampa Bay Rays president Brian Auld and two other leaders in sports marketing explained the importance of sports and sports organizations on the local economy Jan. 11 to members of the Tampa Bay Beach Chamber of Commerce.

Speaking during the chamber's annual dinner at the TradeWinds Island Grant Resort, Auld was joined by Rob Higgins, executive director of the Tampa Bay Sports Commission, and Tim Ramsberger, chief operating officer of Visit St. Pete Clearwater.

Auld, who lives with his family in St. Petersburg and is a graduate of Harvard Business School, is credited with an employees-first culture within the Rays organization and the creation of a community service program that awards Rays employees one paid day per month to volunteer in the community.

His accomplishments also include the addition of maternity and paternity benefits for full-time staff, paid parental leave, adoption benefits, a staff wellness program and a \$10 minimum wage for all part-time employees.

"We just want to represent the region the right way," said Auld. "We hope you can be as proud of the organization as we are."

From a marketing standpoint, Auld said sports "have a unique way of attracting attention to themselves" and the Rays,

being a small market Major League Baseball franchise, must often make decisions that are unpleasant to fans, from a business standpoint.

"We're not doing stupid stuff on purpose," he said.

Higgins, who served on the committee that landed the 2009 Super Bowl at Raymond James Stadium and most recently the award of the 2021 Super Bowl to Tampa, said sports provide both a social and economic impact to the area.

As an example, he pointed to last year's college football national championship game in Tampa, which he said provided Pinellas County with more than \$4.5 million in revenue over the same weekend a year earlier.

Ramsberger, an attorney and former director of the Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg, is involved in a wide range of projects, including marketing of Pinellas County as a sports destination.

Ramsberger, who works closely with Higgins, said their partnership resulted in 125 events last year, providing over 130,000 hotel room nights and an estimated \$500 million economic impact to the local economy.

Ramsberger said Visit St. Pete Clearwater has marketing partnerships with the Rays, Tampa Bay Rowdies, P1 Powerboats and Major League Soccer, which now has three teams that train in Pinellas County. Those teams are the New York Red Bulls, Philadelphia Union and DC United.

Outback Steakhouse the latest to join Seminole City Center

By TIFFANY RAZZANO
Tampa Bay Newspapers

SEMINOLE – Seminole City Center announced that Outback Steakhouse and Maple Street Biscuits have signed leases to move into the outdoor mall in a Jan. 3 post to its Facebook page.

Jeff Preston, a managing partner at North American Development Group, the site's developers, initially told the Beacon in a Jan. 8 phone interview that the deal with Outback was "not 100 percent."

But in an additional interview later that day, Preston said a lease has been signed with Outback.

"I have not heard that the site plan and final design has been approved by the tenant and the city," he added. "I fully expect it to be done, but have not heard anything yet."

In a Jan. 8 email, Mark Ely, the city's community development director, wrote, "Outback is still in concept review, no city approvals yet."

He added that Outback will be located on the vacant lot next to Pollo Tropical.

Elizabeth Watts, director of media and community relations for Bloomin' Brands, Inc., which owns Outback, declined to confirm

that a lease had been signed with Seminole City Center.

"What I can confirm is that we are interested in the area," she said.

In a Jan. 8 email, Dale Johnson, director of development and construction for Primerica Group One, which is overseeing the site's redevelopment for NADG, wrote, "The Outback Steakhouse addition to Seminole City Center dining has been in the works for some time. We expect construction to commence very soon."

Preston also said the deal bringing The Lucky Dill to the Seminole City Center is now up in the air.

"There is no valid lease at this very moment," he said.

City Manager Ann Toney-Deal announced that The Lucky Dill, along with several other retailers and restaurants, had signed a lease with the developers at the July 12, 2016 City Council meeting.

Johnson wrote in a Jan. 8 email that though she hasn't seen a lease with The Lucky Dill yet, "I was told that construction would commence by March."

Karen Wiewiura, a manager at The Lucky Dill's Palm Harbor location said "there is no update at this time," but indicated that the

deal is moving forward.

According to a list of permits for businesses in the Seminole City Center provided by Ely on Nov. 22, the Lucky Dill is in the "tenant build" phase. In a Jan. 8 email, Ely said the Lucky Dill's owners have not picked up their permit from the city yet, though.

Preston called previous announcements made by NADG about the Lucky Dill coming to the Seminole City Center an "error."

"If you're going to say The Lucky Dill is a done deal...that's an erroneous statement," he said. "I'm telling you what the real facts are."

He added, "Unfortunately, there are a lot of challenges in The Lucky Dill. We're working through it with the owners of The Lucky Dill. I'm hopeful we'll get through it at the end of the day."

In other news, the long-awaited Studio Movie Grill, an upscale theater that serves food and drinks, held its grand opening and VIP celebration Nov. 9.

"We love our new home and neighbors in Seminole and will continue to innovate our concept to offer the best in full-service, in-theater dining for local residents," said Studio Movie Grill CEO & Founder, Brian Schultz.

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SHS launches Sports Career Institute

By TIFFANY RAZZANO
Tampa Bay Newspapers

SEMINOLE - This school year, Seminole High School launched a new program for students interested in pursuing a career in the world of sports - the Seminole Sports Career Institute.

SSCI stands out from other high school sports academies, said Charles Miller, the school's head football coach and government/global studies teacher who founded the program.

"Most of them are geared towards athletes becoming better athletes," he said. "Our focus isn't on the athletes. Our focus is on the kids who want to work in sports. The journalists. The coaches. The trainers."

He added, "We did a lot of research while putting this together. To my knowledge, I don't think anyone in the country is doing anything like what we're doing."

Miller said he initially came up with the concept in 2013, when SHS Principal Dr. Thomas Brittain "decided he wanted to create wall-to-wall academies" at the school.

Other elective magnet programs at SHS include the iHawk Academy, the Engineering Academy, the Graphic Media Communications Academy, and the Center for Education & Leadership.

"For me, having a career in



Submitted Photo
The Seminole Sports Career Institute offers students real world experience in various sports career paths, including journalism, coaching and sports medicine.

sports and sports being my passion, I wanted to create an academy that would give kids the opportunity to get real world, resume-building experience towards a career in sports while they were still in high school," Miller said.

SSCI focuses on three career paths - sports broadcasting and journalism, sports medicine and training, and coaching.

Each path offers students hands-on experiences in their career of choice. In broadcasting and journalism, students are

assigned roles as beat writers, photographers and media specialists for each athletic team at the high school.

Students who opt for the coaching path take on coaching assistant roles for the various teams, helping out by filming practices and games, or compiling statistics.

Meanwhile, those interested in sports medicine, work as a trainer's assistant, learning how to tape wrists and ankles, and how to assess injuries.

They've also brought in several

guest speakers. So far, Ryan Bass, the sports anchor for Channel 10 news, and Jeff Darlington, a SHS graduate who is a reporter for ESPN, have visited the SSCI students. Miller will bring in more speakers this school year, including Bobby Slater, the head athletic trainer for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, though a date isn't set for his presentation yet.

All of these activities are completed in the students' free time.

"So, you really have to be dedicated," he said.

Next year, the program will add specific academic classes as requirements for each track.

Miller also stresses that students "don't have to be an athlete" to join the program. "You don't have to be physically gifted," he said. "This gives an outlet for kids who really love sports and enjoy sports, but maybe don't play sports competitively. They're able to still give their passion towards the sport in a different way. It's been unbelievable."

Currently, there are 50 students in the program, which was opened to upperclassmen for the first year of enrollment. Moving forward, the program will be open to incoming freshmen only.

"That way they get to experience all four years with us," Miller said.

For more information, visit seminolesportsacademy.com.

Notebook

PCS hosts sessions on prekindergarten

The application period for Pre-K for 3-year-olds and Voluntary Pre-kindergarten is Jan. 22-Feb. 2.

PCS will hold six "LEAP into Pre-K" events to help families prepare for Pre-K 3 and VPK and apply for a seat. LEAP into Pre-K events will take place from 6-7:30 p.m. at the following locations:

- Jan. 22 - Pinellas Park Elementary, 7520 52nd St. N., Pinellas Park.
- Jan. 23 - Campbell Park Elementary, 1051 Seventh Ave. S., St. Petersburg.
- Jan. 24 - Belleair Elementary, 1156 Lakeview Road, Clearwater.
- Jan. 29 - Tarpon Springs Elementary, 555 Pine St., Tarpon Springs.
- Jan. 30 - Fairmount Park Elementary, 575 41st St. S., St. Petersburg.
- Jan. 31 - Eisenhower Elementary, 2800 Drew St., Clearwater.

Parents can attend any event to apply for available seats throughout the district.

For more information, call 727-588-6513.

Daughters of Italy offer scholarships

CLEARWATER - Applications for a \$1,000 scholarship are available through the Daughters of Italy Lodge #2825, the Clearwater chapter of the Order Sons of Italy in America.

The applicant must be a Florida resident and of Italian descent. In addition to high school graduates, returning students as well as continuing students of higher education are also eligible to apply.

To receive an application or for more information, call Robyn Rinberger, scholarship chairwoman, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. at 727-742-6473, or email robrynrinberger@gmail.com.

The deadline for sending in completed applications with supporting documents is March 31.

SPC institute offers info sessions

ST. PETERSBURG - St. Petersburg College's Workforce Institute offers a suite of non-degree training services and options that are affordable and accessible to both individuals and organizations.

Upcoming information session will outline the certificates or certifications that are offered.

- Jan. 18, 6-7 p.m., Room 210 at SPC's Downtown Campus, 244 Second Ave. N., St. Petersburg.
 - Jan. 31, 6-7 p.m., Room 217 at SPC's Midtown Campus, 1300 22nd St. S., St. Petersburg.
 - Feb. 6, 11 a.m.-noon, Room 210 at SPC's Downtown Campus, 244 Second Ave. N., St. Petersburg.
- Reservations are requested, and interested parties can RSVP at web.spcollege.edu/survey/25162. For more information, email seiter.sondra@spcollege.edu.

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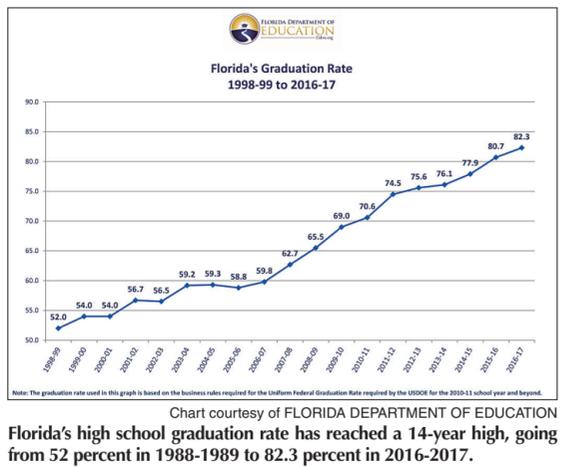
SCHOOLS, from page 1A

Commissioner of Education Pam Stewart in a press release from the governor's office. "Excelling in high school opens doors to opportunities that provide students long-term benefits, and Florida's steady increase is promising for our state's and students' futures."

Pinellas County officials noted another local accomplishment. The county has the third highest graduation rate among the state's eight largest school districts. And, the 11-percentage-point increase since 2012-13 is the highest increase among those eight districts.

Neighboring Hillsborough County and Orange County had the second highest increase, each with an 8.8 percent hike in the last five years. Hillsborough's 2016-2017 graduation rate was the same as Pinellas' at 82.9 percent and Orange County's rate was 84.7 percent.

Pinellas County also is doing bet-



ter than the state with hikes over the past five years in the graduation rate for black students, Hispanic students and students with disabilities. The graduation for black students in the county increased 3.8 percentage points to 69.3 percent. Since 2012-2013, the graduation rate for black students in Pinellas increased 12.9 percent.

The statewide graduation rate among black students went up 10.2 percentage points over the last five years, going from 64.6 percent in 2012-13 to 74.8 percent in 2016-17.

The graduation rate for Hispanic students in Pinellas increased 6 percentage points to 81.3 percent, matching the state's Hispanic graduation rate. Since 2012-13, the graduation rate for Hispanic students has increased 18.7 percent in Pinellas.

The statewide graduation rate among Hispanic students increased 6.4 percentage points over the last five years, rising from 74.9 percent in 2012-13 to 81.3 percent in 2016-17.

The graduation rate for students with disabilities in the county in-

creased 8.7 percentage points to 67.1 percent. The statewide graduation rate among students with disabilities increased 13.7 percentage points, rising from 52.3 percent in 2012-13 to 66.0 percent in 2016-17.

Another area highlighted by local school officials was the graduation rate for English Language Learners, which increased 13.7 percentage points to 63.7 percent.

District officials also singled out two schools that received top marks. Palm Harbor University High School increased its graduation rate by 2.4 percent for a 97.6 percent rate, the highest rate in Pinellas. Dixie Hollins High School in St. Petersburg had the greatest improvement with a 7.8 percent increase to 85.3 percent.

Thirteen of the district's 16 traditional high schools increased their graduation rates from 2016 to 2017, including:

- Boca Ciega High from 91.1 percent to 91.5 percent.
- Clearwater High from 88 percent to 89.5 percent.
- Dixie Hollins High from 77.5 percent to 85.3 percent.

- Dunedin High from 85.8 percent to 88.5 percent.
- East Lake High from 95.8 percent to 97 percent.
- Lakewood High from 84.9 percent to 89.5 percent.
- Largo High from 84.3 percent to 85.9 percent.
- Northeast High from 88.2 percent to 90.9 percent.
- Osceola Fundamental High from 95.4 percent to 97.5 percent.
- Palm Harbor University High from 95.2 percent to 97.5 percent.
- Pinellas Park High from 86.9 percent to 92.1 percent
- St. Petersburg High from 89 percent to 92 percent
- Tarpon Springs High from 94.8 percent to 95.7 percent

The three schools that had a decreased graduation rate were:

- Countryside High from 86.8 percent to 83.4 percent; and
- Gibbs High from 84.4 percent to 84.2 percent.

Seminole High from 96.6 percent to 95.8 percent.

The Florida Department of Education pointed out that those not included in the graduation rate weren't necessarily dropouts. Students are classified as graduates, dropouts and non-graduates. Non-graduates include students who were retained but are still in school and those who received a certificate of completion or GED-based diploma.

Of the 17.7 percent of students who did not graduate statewide, only 4 percent were dropouts.

"We want every Florida student to have access to a world-class education so they can succeed in the classroom and their future careers," Gov. Rick Scott said.

He is recommending an increase in state funding for education for the sixth consecutive year.

"I look forward to working with the Legislature during the upcoming session to make sure our students have the resources they need to continue to build on this accomplishment for years to come."

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- Submissions must include the couples first and last names, wedding date, location and name of the photographer.
- All submissions must be emailed to lmosby@tbnweekly.com.
- For submissions with more than one photo, compressed files are recommended.
- There is no cost to submit photos, but all photos may not be published. Photos are selected at the discretion of Tampa Bay Newspapers editors.

For more information, contact Logan Mosby at 727-397-5563 or lmosby@tbnweekly.com

President Oprah?

Is Oprah Winfrey seriously considering a run for the presidency in 2020?



Darryl Paulson

If so, will Americans support another celebrity politician with no political experience after the disaster known as Donald Trump?

If you ask me whether I would prefer having Trump or Oprah as a neighbor or a dinner companion, it is clearly Oprah. Ask me which one I would prefer having as president, the answer is neither.

I opposed Trump as president because I found him neither to be a Republican or a conservative. Most importantly, I found Trump to be uniquely unqualified to be president. Nothing has happened in his first year in office to change my opinion.

I would oppose Oprah Winfrey for the same reasons. She is extraordinarily successful; so was Trump. She is a billionaire; so is Trump. She has no political experience; neither did Trump.

Politics may be the only career where experience is considered a weakness. I hope you don't choose your heart surgeon using the same criteria.

For those who argue that Oprah could not do any worse than Trump, I would argue that it is a low standard on which to judge a candidate. In addition, we won't know if Oprah would be better or worse than Trump until she holds the position.

Supporters of Oprah argue that she is far more likable than Trump. She has consistently been rated among the most admired women in America. So was Hillary Clinton, and that did not help her in her presidential campaign.

Although Winfrey has no formal political experience, she did help secure passage of what is known as the "Oprah bill," or the National Child Protection Act, which set up a national database of convicted child abusers.

Winfrey has given away tens of millions to support various causes, including the construction of 60 schools in 13 nations. One of those schools was the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in South Africa.

Winfrey has strong ties to two critical Democratic constituency groups, women and African-Americans. This could be an asset in a presidential race.

Even many Republicans see Winfrey as a strong candidate. Bill Kristol, editor of The Weekly Standard, stated that Oprah is "more sensible on economics than Bernie Sanders, understands middle-class Americans better than Elizabeth Warren, is younger than Joe Biden and nicer than Andrew Cuomo."

Oprah Winfrey's negatives are long. Will Americans support another celebrity candidate with no political experience, or will they see her as a left-wing version of Trump?

Voters often select someone who is the opposite of the person occupying the White House. Will Oprah be seen as more of the same?

As a longtime media personality, every statement Winfrey has ever made will be reviewed and analyzed. How many times will we hear: "And you win a car. Everyone wins a car?"

A recent piece by Robert Tracinski described Winfrey as "our nation's premier snake oil salesman." Gwyneth Paltrow pushed her coffee enemas, Suzanne Somers offered her hormone therapy and vitamin treatments, and Jenny McCarthy attacked vaccinations for children on Oprah's show.

Oprah created Mehmet Oz as "America's Doctor." Dr. Oz has recommended so many controversial cures that his colleagues at Columbia University wrote an op-ed saying that over half of his recommendations lacked scientific underpinnings. "Many of us are spending a significant amount of our clinical time debunking Oz-isms regarding metabolism game changers."

Oprah is a successful person who has been a voice for the voiceless. Is that enough to qualify her as a presidential candidate?

Oprah's elevation as a presidential candidate may simply signal the weakness of the Democratic Party and its pool of presidential candidates, just as Trump's candidacy signaled the debacle that is now the Republican Party.

Darryl Paulson is Emeritus Professor of Government at USF St. Petersburg specializing in Florida politics and elections.

LETTERS

Looking in the mirror at the opioid epidemic

In 2017 the United States witnessed over 65,000 overdose deaths from narcotics. Florida is, in many respects, ground zero to this tragedy. Those deaths were our mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, and neighbors in the prime of health and in the prime of economic productivity. How can the richest country in the world sustain more deaths from narcotic overdoses in one year than in the entire Vietnam war combined and not declare "war" on something or someone? The problem is "war on whom?". Most of our overdose deaths come from abuse of prescription narcotics written in good faith by physicians who are doing their best to alleviate pain. Are we to declare war on the drug companies? Do we ban the manufacture of certain compounds like we did Quaalude's in 1985? Can we legislate away the problem? The poppy plant, the source of heroin and morphine, has been around for thousands of years. Should we institute capital punishment as a deterrent as many countries do?



As I See It
Dr. George Kamajian

Opioid addiction is a disease, not a choice. It's not a punishment from God or a test of willpower. Addiction is multifaceted and there is no "one size fits all" treatment model. People are not cars or machines and not everyone responds to the same treatment program. But the operative words are "treatment program."

Chirlane McCray, wife of New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, summarized it best when she said, "Opioid addiction is a mental health crisis, not a crime wave. Every opioid death is preventable, because addiction is treatable. But we need to shift from a culture of shame to one of treatment."

Medication (buprenorphine, Suboxone, Zubsolv and Bunavail), counseling and family therapy are the tripod of current treatment models. Successful treatment is based on years, not days or weeks. These treatments work, but are very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain on demand.

Addiction knows no race, sex or national origin boundaries. Not everyone addicted to narcotics is poor or without insurance. Even those with the best of financial resources have difficulty getting medical help when they are in narcotic withdrawal. Hospitals cannot, nor do they want to, prescribe Suboxone on demand. Yet would we turn away a diabetic in ketoacidosis or someone with chest pain from getting medical care?

Access to health care is a basic human right. Access to timely health care must include geographic and provider availability. To that end we, as a society, must rethink the process in which we trust to take care of our loved ones. We must grow past the stigma of "you are just a dirty drug addict."

We must look in the mirror.

Dr. George Kamajian is founder of the Largo Clinic, which is at 10500 Ulmerton Road, Suite 360.

Some thoughts on the Age of Oprah

By the time this column appears in the middle of January many persons will already have become overwhelmed and a little tired of Oprah Winfrey. Not the real-life Oprah, who by most accounts is a thoroughly decent person, but tired of the 63 billion words that will have been spoken or printed in the last 10 days on only two subjects: Will Oprah run for president? If she does, will she be elected?

I don't know the answers to those questions. So, I will instead comment on how to distinguish between American men and those from foreign countries, when all these fellows dress up fancy and are photographed speaking to lovely, hyperventilating female interviewers named Gloria Gushy at (for example) the 75th Golden Globe Awards ceremony of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association.

Here's how to tell the difference: the foreign dudes will stand quietly with their hands hanging at their sides, out of the way. In contrast, the American dudes will almost always shove one hand, or both, into their trouser pockets. Don't ask me why. For years I've tried to find out why. Maybe Oprah can tell me.

The Jan. 7 Golden Globes event will be remembered for several reasons. When Oprah was given the Cecil B. DeMille award, she gave a stirring speech about sexual harassment, racism and the need for a free and courageous press. If you wish, you can boot up her words on any of several websites, although most of them will require you to first give your name and email address so that the website and its marketing department can hound you for years



Driver's Seat
Bob Driver

to come.

The best thing about Oprah's passionate delivery was that not once did she mention Donald Trump, Harvey Weinstein or any other guardians of American idealism. She did not call for vengeance against scoundrels. Instead she drew pictures of a new and better day for women and minorities, both in Hollywood and outside the acting profession.

Each year as the Golden Globe and Oscar ceremonies are broadcast, I feel like a backwaters idiot for not having seen or even read about many of the nominated films, TV series and performers. But before I overwhelm myself with self-criticism I usually come to my defense by realizing that it's virtually impossible for most persons - even admitted entertainment addicts - to keep track of the many productions that come our way in the course of an average year. There is simply too much going on.

The Golden Globes and Academy Award shows are a yearly blessing for those of us who, for any reason, do not keep abreast of what's coming at us down the movie highway. All we need do, each year at this time, is read the summaries of which actor, director, producer

and screenwriter captured the big prizes the night before. Then, at our leisure, we can choose the pictures we'd like to see during the coming months.

As in the past, the waiting for the Academy Awards night (this year it's March 4) will give the critics and the movie fans a chance to predict who the big winners will be. In recent years many of the Golden Globe selections have also done well when the Oscars are given out. This year it will also allow more time for the controversy over "The Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri."

Frances McDormand won "Best Actress" for her role in that film, which also received three other Globes. But the movie's portrayal of a racist cop has come under fire on a number of points, none of which I'll reveal here because I haven't even come close to seeing the film. But I intend to.

Getting back to Oprah: she is the first black woman ever to receive the DeMille award, for her achievements in various fields. If she chooses to run against Donald Trump for the White House in 2020, I can't think of any two opposing political candidates who would be less alike.

But I dread what may happen if she wins the Democratic nomination. Our country's racist and right-wing devil dogs will try to tear her apart. The 2016 assault on Hillary Clinton will look like a picnic, in comparison.

Bob Driver's email address is tralee71@comcast.net.



Move on to change ethanol mandate

WASHINGTON - On the campaign trail, candidate Donald Trump embraced the federal mandate for ethanol in fuel - as many politicians, including Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush before him, did in the rush to grab votes in corn-rich Iowa.

As president, Trump has stuck by that campaign promise. But now free-market conservative groups and oil-state Republicans are pushing the administration to cut the corn cord.

For Ken Cuccinelli of the conservative group FreedomWorks, it's a moral issue. As the former GOP Virginia attorney general sees it, the ethanol mandate, which is part of Renewable Fuel Standards adopted in 2005 and 2007, drives up the price of both fuel and food.

"Any time you are driving up the price for the necessities of life" the poor pay a higher percentage of their incomes for basic needs, Cuccinelli said.

Like many government programs that reality has mugged, the fuel standards started with good intentions. The idea was to reduce America's dependence on fossil fuels by requiring that renewable ethanol and other biofuels be added to the mix - which also was supposed to reduce greenhouse gases.

Thing is, the government mandates that refiners pay so much for biofuels that some 40 percent of U.S. corn is turned into ethanol, according to Scientific American, and much of the rest is exported.

And contrary to expectations, a 2014 Government Accountability Office report found that corn ethanol may lead to higher greenhouse gas emissions.

Environmentalists now see a mandate that has led to over-farming, and the environmental degradation that accompanies it.

Former Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif., sent out a note last week in which he lamented that the RFS legislation he supported in 2007



Debra Saunders

Environmentalists now see a mandate that has led to over-farming, and the environmental degradation that accompanies it.

"has not stood the test of time." The letter accompanied a report by the Rethink Ethanol coalition that focused on the law's devastating unintended consequences.

So who likes the program? Big Corn, politicians who represent corn country and presidential hopefuls who want to win primaries and general elections in corn-rich Iowa.

Pro-ethanol pols aren't afraid to remind candidates of their electoral clout. When U.S. Ambassador to China Terry Branstad was governor of Iowa, he used to warn presidential hopefuls, "Don't mess with the RFS."

To keep the president on the ethanol train, Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, has read Trump's pro-ethanol remarks on the Senate floor. In the fall, when Grassley heard Trump's Environmental Protection Agency was considering reducing the required renewable fuels, Grassley railed, "I'll make sure the EPA hears loud and clear the impact the EPA's proposal will have on Iowa's corn and soybean

farmers and biofuel producers."

The old-school approach to ethanol, however, may be crumbling.

Cuccinelli faulted the assumptions that drove the 2007 regulations. Officialdom predicted that Americans would be increasingly reliant on foreign fuel and that the U.S. fuel supply would continue to drop. Fracking upended those assumptions, which now are "devoid of any market reality."

The politics of ethanol are changing, too. Trump supported ethanol in 2016, yet lost the Iowa caucus to Sen. Ted Cruz, who braved conventional wisdom by opposing the scheme.

In December, Cruz and other oil-state lawmakers lobbied the White House for change, which could come from the EPA or Congress. Later Cruz told Fox News it was "a very positive and productive meeting."

Liz Bowman, spokesperson for EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, told the Las Vegas Review-Journal that Pruitt will continue to have discussions about forms "with regard to what we can realistically achieve, while following the statute."

Scott Faber of the Environmental Working Group believes Pruitt has enormous discretion. After a decade fighting a good fix, Faber confessed, "It's just really hard to see how you put together 60 votes in the Senate" to produce a farm package that makes sense.

"I think this is one of the biggest question marks going into 2018 in the regulatory universe," Cuccinelli opined. How viable will it be for Trump to hold onto a program that drives up food and gasoline prices because it's supposed to be good for the environment, even though many environmental groups have turned against it?

Contact Debra J. Saunders at dsaunders@reviewjournal.com or 202-662-7391. Follow @DebraJSaunders on Twitter.

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Anglers looking forward to spring

So far, January hasn't been too kind to fishermen. With another big cold front coming through this week it might be awhile before we see consistent fishing in our area again.

Lucky for us we have a great winter time fishery. Speckled trout, drum (both redbfish and black drum) as well as sheepshead are very cold tolerant.

Inshore, speckled trout fishing was just getting good again prior to last weekend's cold front. Water temperatures of 62 degrees had trout feeding aggressively on both live bait and artificial lures. The productive pattern remains the same.

Target sand directly adjacent to sparse grass beds. Many of the fish have been hanging shallow in 2 to 3 feet of water. Bouncing a soft-



Fish Tales
Capt. Tyson Wallerstein

plastic jig off the bottom has been the best way to locate pods of trout and even when the pod has been located a properly retrieved jig will outfish a shrimp.

However, one exception is if we get those clear calm conditions, you might be able to sight cast the trout as they move along the sand. The fish can be very spooky in this scenario, making a free-lined live shrimp your best bet.

Redfish numbers are on the rise and it seems that the most logical looking areas are holding some

numbers of reds if not a small school. Clean water was hard to come by last weekend with all the wind. Most no-motor zone flats were too exposed and dirty to fish. However, lee-side shorelines did offer some cleaner water and a few redbfish. Targeting long docks with plenty of grass around them proved to be a good pattern. Live select shrimp casted close to the dock will let you know quickly if there's any redbfish around.

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.

Register now for Belleair Fun Run



Photo courtesy of the TOWN OF BELLEAIR

The Belleair Parks & Recreation Department will host the 16th annual Belleair Sunset 5K & 1 Mile Fun Run Saturday, Jan. 27, 5 p.m. Register online at Racehawk.com until Jan. 24 or in-person at the Dimmitt Community Center, 918 Osceola Road in Belleair. Registration packet pickup will be held Friday, Jan. 26, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., at the Center. Visit www.belleairrec.com to view maps of the 5K and Fun Run courses. For more information, contact the Center at 727-518-3728.

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FWC seeks input on scallop season

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is seeking input from the public about recently proposed regionally-specific bay scallop season dates.

The proposal was developed following a series of public workshops and meetings with community leaders before and after the 2017 scallop season. The proposal will be

brought back before the Commission at the Feb. 7-8 meeting in Tallahassee for a final public hearing.

If approved in February, the following regionally specific bay scallop open season dates would be effective starting in 2018 and would extend into the future:

- Franklin County through northwestern Taylor County (including Carrabelle, Lanark, and St.

Marks): July 1 through Sept. 24 every year.

The remaining portion of Taylor County and all of Dixie County (including Keaton Beach and the Steinhatchee area); the third Saturday in June through Sept. 10 every year.

- Levy, Citrus and Hernando counties (including Cedar Key, Crystal River and Homosassa): July 10 through Sept. 10 every year.

Real estate newsmakers

RE/MAX ACR Elite Group announces top agents for 2017

BELLEAIR – RE/MAX ACR Elite Group Inc. recently honored its top agents for 2017.

Dorita Mayeux was the top agent in the office with the highest sales volume in 2017. Regina Ruffner had the second highest sales volume, while Kelly Castellano/Peggy Phillips had the third highest sales volume in 2017.

"Their absolute dedication and commitment to going the extra mile for their customers is part of the secret of their success," said James Paxton in a press release. Paxton is the broker/owner of the office.



Dorita Mayeux



Regina Ruffner



Kelly Castellano/
Peggy Phillips

Downing joins Coldwell Banker Residential Real Estate

CLEARWATER – Coldwell Banker Residential Real Estate recently announced the affiliation of Jim Downing with the Clearwater office in Countryside.

Downing is originally from Washington, D.C., and has a strong business and real estate background.

"We are delighted he has affiliated with our office and know he will provide truly remarkable real estate service," said Julia Stander, managing broker, in a press release.



Jim Downing

Allen joins Century 21 Real Estate Champions

MADEIRA BEACH – Century 21 Real Estate Champions recently welcomed Edd Allen as a new agent.

According to a press release, Allen is proud to join the Century 21 Real Estate Champions team in Madeira Beach. He is looking forward to helping clients find their dream home or sell the home they have loved for a lifetime.

Adamo & Associates recognizes top agents for December

SEMINOLE – Realty Executives Adamo & Associates recently named its top agents for the month of December.

Pam Raymond was recognized as the top listing associate for the month. Pam Raymond was the top sales associate. The Dicus-Harrison Realty Group was named the top sales team for December 2017.



Pam Raymond



Lindsay Dicus-Harrison

Klein & Heuchan sells in-fill site in Largo

LARGO – Klein & Heuchan Inc. recently represented KCD Associates LLC, the seller, in the sale of 15232 U.S. 19, N. in Largo.

The buyer was BFJ Affiliated Properties of Florida LLC. This site was purchased by an affiliate of the Fucillo Automotive Group for construction of their Nissan store. The property provides a very high traffic count of over 70,000 vehicles per day and offers easy access and excellent visibility. The sale price was \$2,500,000. Bud Lytle of Klein & Heuchan Inc. handled this transaction.

"Our firm has handled this property for almost 30 years," said Mark Klein, CEO and president of Klein & Heuchan, in a press release. "When the Fucillo organization told us what they were looking for we were able to quickly zero in on the potential of this redevelopment site."

Outdoors Briefs

McGough Park holds free raptor shows

LARGO – George C. McGough Nature Park, 11901 146th St. N., hosts free raptor shows at 1 p.m. each Sunday.

The show details the adaptations raptors use to exploit the natural world for their gain and will focus on themes, such as bald eagles, hawks, owls, falcons and Florida's most common raptors.

A show focused on the park's new vultures will be coming soon. Donations to help care for the birds are welcome.

McGough Park to host nature hike

LARGO – A guided nature hike will be offered Saturday, Jan. 20, 9 a.m., at McGough Nature Park, 11901 146th St. N., Largo.

Participants will walk through the woods seeking out animals. The hike is free but donations are kindly accepted.

To preregister, call 727-518-3047.

Weedon to host walkabout

ST. PETERSBURG – A Weedon Walkabout will be offered Thursday, Jan. 18, 9 to 11 a.m., at Weedon Island Preserve, 1800 Weedon Drive NE, St. Petersburg.

Participants will have an opportunity to hike through coastal mangrove and upland ecosystems of the preserve and learn about the coastal environment and the early residents of Weedon Island Preserve. A hat, closed-toe shoes and water are also recommended. The free program is best for ages 6 years and older.

Advance registration is required. To register, visit www.weedonislandpreserve.eventbrite.com. For information, call 727-453-6500.

Brooker to present Book Time

TARPON SPRINGS – Book Time at Brooker will be offered Thursday, Jan. 18, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., at Brooker Creek Preserve, 3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs.

Designed for children ages 3 to 5, this free program connects attendees to the wonders of the natural world. In addition to hearing a great story, children will participate in a craft, game or other hands-on activity related to the story that is read. Space is limited. Preregistration is required.

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Rich Rippetoe
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Pirates prepared to invade IRB for Gasparilla

By **BRIAN GOFF**
TBN Correspondent

INDIAN ROCKS BEACH – For years, residents of Tampa Bay have watched pirates invade the port of Tampa and witnessed the mayor of the city surrender and hand the keys over to the marauders. Now they are about to invade Indian Rocks Beach.

In Tampa, the invasion is called Gasparilla; in IRB, it will be Party Pirates on the Rocks. The invasion is the idea of IRB resident Stacy Myers, who for years participated in Gasparilla then realized it made more sense to do it closer to home.

"For the first few years we'd head over to Gasparilla across the bay and put 16 pirates on our boat," she said. "That took a lot of gas and money. Then one year we froze so bad. It was so cold so I said let's try doing it here on the island. Others had mentioned that they would like to do it here as well."

Three years ago, Myers and her friends then began a modest version of what they will be staging

this year. They dressed up as pirates and had a party at Jimmy Iguana's in the Holiday Inn. That was the extent of it. Myers said her friends came out and celebrated mostly because they couldn't go across the bay.

"Small boats just couldn't hold enough gas to go across the Bay and take part in the invasion and make it back here," she said. "That's why we started to have the party on the same Friday evening as the beginning of Gasparilla."

Now Myers and her friends up stepping it up a notch. The party at Jimmy Iguana's will still be held on Friday, Jan. 26, and then on Saturday, Jan. 27, the day of Tampa's festival. IRB invasion begins in earnest, with the flotilla sailing down the Intracoastal Waterway to invade the city.

The IRB pirate invasion is expected to attract somewhere in excess of 200 people.

"We have up to 20 boats that will gather at the Belleair Causeway and we'll head down the Intracoastal, through the narrows and to Caddy's Pub in Indian Shores. We'll all dock there and



Photo SUBMITTED

Stacy Myers, shown in front in the gray hat, is organizing a pirate invasion of IRB during the celebration of Gasparilla Pirate Festival Jan. 27. The lineup of pirates is called the "Treasure Chests."

invade the place," she said.

After that the "invaders" will make their way back north and tie-up at the IBB's floating docks and from there will invade JD's for an

hour or so.

From there they head over to Crabby Bill's for yet another party.

When asked if all these establishments know they are

coming, Myers said without a doubt.

"They are excited and are looking forward to us coming," she said.

Helping Myers organize the event is Dav, "Hippy" Laramee. He's no stranger to organizing events and has been an executive member of the Homeowners Association for some time. He says this pirate invasion will be good for the city.

"I think it will be great for the community," he said. "A lot of people don't want to make the long trip to Tampa so they will be able to join in and do it on a smaller scale here locally."

Laramee said the event will be a lot of fun and will help support local businesses.

"They are all happy to see us," he said.

As for the "pirates," Laramee said anyone can participate.

"I will have 28 people on my boat and a lot of them are from out of state," he said. "They are people who know about Gasparilla and think it is a great thing. Everybody can enjoy the festivities."

He said people can enjoy it even

if they don't dress up as pirates.

"We do have some pretty shifty pirates and some not so much," he said. "Everyone is welcome whether in costume or not. People who don't have boats can hitch a ride. It is a way to celebrate our community without going to Tampa."

Laramee said the city of IRB is cooperating with the event as well.

"They are letting anyone who wishes to leave their boat docked overnight at the floating docks which they normally are not permitted to do," he said.

Myers said while much of the event is patterned after Gasparilla there are differences.

"We're not looking to form a crew or anything like that," she said. "There are no fees; it is just a fun community party."

Laramee had another word about the event and Gasparilla.

"We're not trying to outdo Gasparilla; that will never happen," he said.

Anyone interested in joining in can get information on the group's Facebook page "Party Pirates on the Rocks."

Madeira parking system brings benefits, confusion

By **WAYNE AYERS**
TBN Correspondent

MADEIRA BEACH – The city's new paid parking system, which ties payment to license plates, offers a number of benefits – like ease of use by both residents and non-residents, the ability to track occupancy of parking space and efficient enforcement.

It has also created confusion for motorists attempting to figure out a new system.

New "how to" signs will soon be going up over the parking meters, which will lead parkers step-by-step through the process, said Natalie Pick of Cale America, the company that makes the parking machines. Pick spoke of the benefits and addressed some of the problems of the new parking system at the Jan. 9 city commission meeting.

Pay-by-plate is the newest innovation in paid parking, Pick said. It follows previous pay-and-display and pay-by-space technology with a system that ties everything to the license plate, she

said. The process was rolled out in the U.S. in 2012. Pittsburgh was the first major location, where it has been "very successful," said Pick.

Pick said the system is easier to use for residents, non-residents and the city. Residents, who park free, can be identified by their license plate number and given the free rate without needing to have a resident permit sticker in their car. Visitors can simply enter their license plate number, parking duration, payment and be on their way, says Chris Tarkenton, the city's parking department supervisor.

Mobile payment apps can also be used, which allow visitors to extend their parking time from their phone, while sitting on the beach or in a restaurant.

Visitors can also buy a prepaid parking card and use it whenever they want, without having to pay each time they park, Pick said.

"Pay-by-plate offers residents and visitors a seamless way to park," said Pick. Also, the system allows easy enforcement by city

staff, who capture license plate numbers using hand-held devices and get instant information on payment status for each car.

The new system has also been creating some confusion, according to Commissioner Terry Lister. That will be remedied soon, when signs explaining exactly how to use the system are placed over the parking machines, and information pamphlets are made available, Pick said.

"When you roll out something new, there's going to be some confusion," she said.

"You should have had the signs up when the meters were put up," said Lister, who said he had seen people "getting frustrated, and getting back into their car and leaving."

The signs have been printed, and will be put up soon, Pick promised. Then, residents, visitors and the city can enjoy the benefits of pay-by-plate described by Tarkenton, who said the 29 new salmon-colored parking stations are a vast upgrade from the ones residents are used to.

City to challenge recall effort

On the advice of the city attorney, the city will challenge the "legal sufficiency" of the recall petitions to remove Commissioners Douthirt and Oakley from office.

City Attorney Ralf Brookes cited an opinion given by former City Attorney Erica Augello that the recall petition "was insufficient to allege malfeasance" or "a wrongful, unlawful or dishonest" act on the part of Douthirt or Oakley, when they voted to hire Walter Pierce as Budget Director. Douthirt and Oakley have both said they were acting on the advice of then-City Attorney Thomas Trask.

Brookes said a judge will decide whether the grounds are sufficient for recall. The legal action would be filed against the recall committee by the two commissioners. If the commissioners are victorious, and the judge rules the recall grounds are insufficient, Douthirt and Oakley are entitled to have their attorney's fees reimbursed by the city, Brookes said.

Belleair Beach council debates the future of park playground

By **WAYNE AYERS**
TBN Correspondent

BELLEAIR BEACH – Replacement and repair of worn out equipment at the Bayside Park playground turned into a debate about its future at the Jan. 8 City Council meeting.

Council members had a lively discussion about the playground equipment's cost, its value to the city, changing demographics and whether the property would be better suited to another recreational use.

The playground equipment is rusted out, with pieces broken off and is a safety risk, said Interim City Manager Lynn Rives. The city is required to maintain the park as part of a grant agreement dating to the 1990s, Rives said. He said the city "will be spending \$46,000 on the playground, with the council's approval."

Council members questioned the expense, and the playground's role in a changing environment. Council Member Pamela Gunn asked why the city could not just remove the playground equipment "so we don't run into this liability and safety issue down the road."

Gunn said she questioned "spending almost \$50,000 when we have so much neglected

infrastructure."

Gunn also wanted to know how many people use the playground and if they are from Belleair Beach. She also had concerns about the city's liability connected to the playground.

City Attorney Paul Marino said the city's insurance would cover the playground's use. He also said, "There are a lot of young people with kids in this city who take advantage of that playground."

Marino reminded the council that Bayside Park's upkeep is mandatory. Options to simply maintain the playground or enhance it were included by Rives for the council to consider. He recommended "leaving the park as is, and just replace and repair the equipment in place as needed."

The council should consider eliminating the playground altogether, said Council member Rob Baldwin. That would open up options for other park improvements that would be of more benefit to more residents, he said.

Rives was uncertain whether the city would be allowed, under the terms of the original grant, to take out the playground equipment.

Council Member John Pietrowski

disagreed with the idea of removing the playground.

"We definitely need to have something there for the kids," he said.

"We do have more young families moving in," Schwerer added.

Mayor Leslie Notaro said she favored adding exercise equipment.

"We can do a lot of different exercises," said council member Julie Chandler.

Chandler asked whether the majority of council members wanted a playground or not.

A common concern was the cost. "I'd like to look at cheaper options," said Gunn.

"I could go with that," Chandler said.

Resident Glenn Gunn, who is running for a council seat, said the city's demographic makeup has become older since the 1990s, and the average age of the citizens is now 56-plus. Based on that, "We should be adding more fitness equipment, stretching bars, and chin-up bars."

"The greatest playground in the world is 500 yards away. It's called the beach," Gunn said.

Mayor Notaro said the city attorney would check the grant contract for the park "and find out what we are required to do. Then we will talk more about this."

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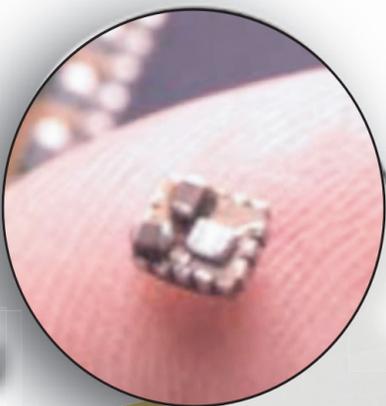
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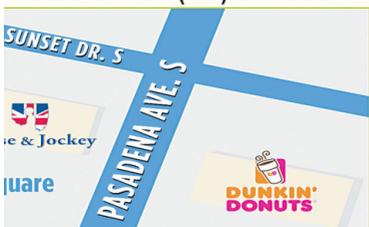
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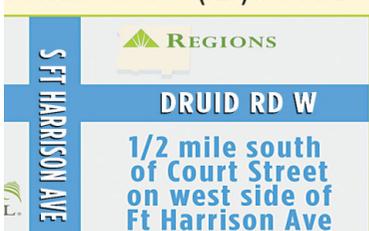
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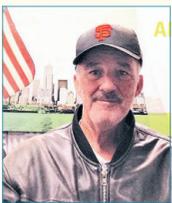
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"My new Audibel hearing aids are beautiful and wonderful! I can hardly feel them and can't even see them. It's almost like my own natural hearing is back."



Eileen Wood

"I have been pleased with everything and the best of all is that I can hear and understand others, including the telephone."



Thomas Coughlin

"I had hearing aids for approximately 4-5 years. I had purchased these from Audibel and continued to go there for service. My experience has been OUTSTANDING."



Helen Morse

"I didn't realize how poorly I was hearing until I started wearing Audibel aids. I love them and they have made a big difference in my everyday life."



Bonnie Novak

"My hearing aids have brought about the most remarkable change to my life. Since I purchased them I feel more confident when I'm out in a crowd because I don't feel like I'm missing out on anything."



Carolyn Roberts

"I want to thank Audibel for giving me back my hearing. At age 81 I wasn't the easiest listener. The specialist was very patient bringing me through the process."



Harley Lewis

"Friends and family are amazed at the difference. Audibel has made life better. Their staff is amazing with follow ups and care."



Marjorie & Charles Johnson

"We have never had hearing tests like the specialist at Audibel gave us. We now hear sounds we never heard before."



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"I have had hearing aids for about 40 years. For TV I relied on closed captioning. Since I have been wearing the new aids, I find myself listening to TV and not relying on the captioning."



Catherine Brownell

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"I first began wearing Audibel hearing aids when I was a professor and traveled internationally to teach. Audibel provided me an international number and representatives in many nations to help me if I encountered issues while travelling and teaching abroad. I have found all staff members to be helpful and accommodating."



Brent Tharp

"Losing some of my hearing was devastating and depressing for me. I was plagued at an early age – running into my adulthood with chronic ear problems. I thought that was just how life was supposed to be. Until, I met the professional staff at Audibel."



J. Michelle Cianfarra

"I lost a great deal of my hearing in a vehicle accident ten years ago. This new set of Audibel wireless, Bluetooth-enabled hearing aids have given me a better hearing experience with greater variety than I had with my last pair (which were not Audibel's). I feel refreshed since wearing my new Audibel hearing aids. I don't feel as if I'm relying on other means of communication as I was before. They have enhanced my living experience as I come in contact with others every day and can communicate better all because I hear so much better than I did before. The friendly staff are customer-service oriented and help me with my hearing challenges. Thank you for this experience."



Evelyn Straughn

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Top five diversions

• **"Mike Hammer: Encore for Murder,"** Jan. 18 through Feb. 3, in Murray Theatre at Ruth Eckerd Hall, 1111 McMullen Booth Road, Clearwater. Tickets start at \$35. For tickets and performance times, call 727-791-7400 or visit www.rutheckerdhal.com. This is the world premiere of an all-new mystery play that features bullets, Broadway and babes. In the style of the 1940s radio plays, "Mike Hammer Encore for Murder" stars Gary Sandy ("WKRP in Cincinnati") as Mike Hammer, the toughest PI of all, who draws a seemingly routine assignment – playing bodyguard to diva Rita Vance on the eve of her big Broadway comeback.

• **"Rumors,"** by Neil Simon; Jan. 18-28, 2018, at Francis Wilson Playhouse, 302 Seminole St., Clearwater. Performances are Thursday through Saturday, 8 p.m.; and Sunday, 2 p.m. Tickets are \$26 for adults and \$15 for students with current ID. Call 727-446-1360 or visit www.franciswilsonplayhouse.org. Four well-to-do couples are invited to the 10th anniversary celebration of Charlie and Myra Brock. They arrive at intervals to the party, only to find a rapidly developing set of unexpected, unlikely, and disturbing circumstances. Suddenly, eight successful professionals become eight scrambling lunatics running for cover, and turning on each other at a moment's notice. This hilarious farce by Broadway's most prolific playwright wrings laughter out of every twist and turn, culminating in a breathless comedic conclusion.

• **Steve Martin and Martin Short,** Friday, Jan. 19, 7 p.m., at The Mahaffey, 400 First St. S., St. Petersburg. Tickets start at \$95. Call 727-893-7832 or visit themahaffey.com. Martin and Short have famously shared the spotlight in films like "Three Amigos" and "Father of the Bride" and are now on the road together, sharing their latest collaboration with fans around the country.

• **Massenkoff Russian Folk Festival,** Friday, Jan. 19, 8 p.m., at Central Park Performing Arts Center, 105 Central Park Drive, Largo. Tickets start at \$24.50. Call 727-587-6793 or visit largoarts.com. The Massenkoff Russian Folk Festival is an authentic, cultural presentation of Russian songs, balalaika music and Russian folk ballet in authentic Russian style, language and costumes. The company features professional musicians who are conservatory graduates as well as professional Russian dancers. The program will include Russian songs performed by Nikolai Massenkoff.

• **The 24th annual St. Pete Beach Corey Area Craft Festival,** Saturday and Sunday, Jan. 20-21, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., on Corey Avenue in St. Pete Beach. For information, visit www.artfestival.com. American Craft Endavors is continuing an annual spring tradition with the 24th annual St. Pete Beach Corey Area Craft Fair, bringing contemporary crafts from more than 100 of the nation's most talented artisans to this free community event. A variety of jewelry, pottery, ceramics, photography, painting, clothing and much more, all handmade in America, will be on display. An expansive Green Market with plants, orchids, exotic flora, handmade soaps, gourmet spices and freshly popped kettle corn further compliments the weekend, blending nature with nurture.



Photo courtesy of AMERICAN CRAFT ENDEAVORS

Festivalgoers can expect to find a vast array of artistic media at the 24th annual St. Pete Beach Corey Area Craft Festival running Jan. 20-21 on Corey Avenue and Gulf Boulevard in downtown St. Pete Beach.



Photo by DAVID JAMES/WARNER BROS.

Geoff Stults, left, stars as Sean Coffers and Chris Hemsworth as Captain Mitch Nelson in Alcon Entertainment's, Black Label Media's and Jerry Bruckheimer Films' war drama "12 Strong," a Warner Bros. Pictures release.

Opening this weekend

Heist action flick 'Den of Thieves' hits theaters; Hemsworth leads cast in '12 Strong'

Compiled by LEE CLARK ZUMPE

Tampa Bay Newspapers

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

'Den of Thieves'

Genre: Action
Cast: Gerard Butler, Pablo Schreiber, O'Shea Jackson Jr., Evan Jones, Brian Van Holt and Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson
Director: Christian Gudegast
Rated: R

"Den of Thieves" is a gritty Los Angeles crime saga which follows the intersecting and often personally connected lives of an elite unit of the LA County Sheriff's Dept. and the state's most successful bank robbery crew as the outlaws plan a seemingly impossible heist on the Federal Reserve Bank of downtown Los Angeles.

'12 Strong'

Genre: Drama and war
Cast: Chris Hemsworth, Michael Shannon, Michael Pena, David Negahban, Trevante Rhodes, Geoff Stults, Thad Luckinbill, Austin Stowell, Ben O'Toole, Austin Hebert, Kenneth Miller, Kenny Sheard, Jack Kesy, Laith Nakli, Fahim Fazli, Yousuf Azami, Said Taghmaoui, Elsa Pataky and William Fichtner
Director: Nicolai Fuglsig
Rated: R

"12 Strong" is set in the harrowing days following 9/11 when an elite U.S. Special Forces unit, led by their Captain, Mitch Nelson (Hemsworth), is chosen to be the first U.S. soldiers sent into Afghanistan for an extremely dangerous mission in response to the attacks.

Leaving their families behind, the team is dropped into the remote, rugged landscape of northern Afghanistan, where they must convince General



Photo by JACOB YAKOB/ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS

Jessica Rothe and Alex Roe star in "Forever My Girl."

Rashid Dostum (David Negahban) to join forces with them to fight their common adversary: the Taliban and their Al Qaeda allies.

In addition to overcoming mutual distrust and a vast cultural divide, the Americans – accustomed to state-of-the-art warfare – must adopt the rudimentary tactics of the Afghan horse soldiers. Despite forming an uneasy bond and growing respect, the new allies face overwhelming odds: vastly outnumbered and outgunned by a ruthless enemy that does not take prisoners.

The following will open in limited release. It may be several weeks before these films appear in local movie theaters.

See OPENING, page 3B

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Mahaffey to present Pink Martini, China Forbes

ST. PETERSBURG – Pink Martini with singer China Forbes will take the stage Tuesday, Jan. 23, 7:30 p.m., at The Mahaffey, 400 First St. S., St. Petersburg.

Tickets start at \$39.50. Call 727-893-7832 or visit themahaffey.com.

For more than 20 years, Pink Martini has toured the world, providing an around-the-world musical adventure singing in 22 languages at opera houses, concert halls, film festivals, museums and fashion shows. Fans know the musical group that formed in 1994 was known as a "little orchestra," mixing many genres including classical, Latin, jazz and classic pop.

Equally at home performing its romantic, multi-lingual repertoire on concert stages and in smoky bars, Pink Martini draws a wildly diverse crowd. The ensemble made its European debut at the Cannes Film Festival in 1998 and in the years following toured throughout Europe, Turkey, Taiwan, Lebanon and the United States.

"We're kind of like musical archaeologists, bringing melodies and rhythms from different parts of the world together to create something which is modern," says founder and pianist Thomas M. Lauderdale in a biography provided by Wrasse Records. "It's like an urban musical travelogue and I think as citizens of the world and in a sense as musical ambassadors for the United States, we must always strive to study the languages, customs, and histories of other countries. We're very much an American band, but we spend a lot of time abroad, in Europe, in Turkey, in Lebanon and therefore have



Pink Martini with singer China Forbes performs Jan. 23 at The Mahaffey.

Photo courtesy of THE MAHAFFEY

the opportunity to demonstrate that Americans are indeed serious about engaging in a dialogue with the rest of the world."

The ensemble has come a long way since Thomas Lauderdale founded Pink Martini in 1994 to provide more beautiful and inclusive musical soundtracks for political fundraisers for causes such as civil rights, affordable housing and the environment. In 2014, Pink Martini was inducted into both the Hollywood Bowl Hall of Fame and the Oregon Music Hall of Fame.

A&E news

SPB Community Center to present Music in the Afternoon

ST. PETE BEACH – Music in the Afternoon will be offered Sundays, Jan. 28, Feb. 25 and March 25, 2 to 4 p.m., at the St. Pete Beach Community Center, 7701 Boca Ciega Drive, St. Pete Beach.

The event will feature light refreshments and plenty of dancing and socializing to the classic music of the Rhythm Kings. For information, visit www.spbrec.com or call 727-363-9245.

Snapper's Grill & Comedy Club to welcome Lindsay Glazer

PALM HARBOR – Stand-up comedian Lindsay Glazer will headline a comedy show on Wednesday, Feb. 14, 7:30 p.m., at Snapper's Grill & Comedy Club, 36657 U.S. 19 N., Palm Harbor.

The Valentine's Day show will feature Glazer's signature brutal honesty and her comedic take on a wide range of hot-button issues like dating, marriage and the hookup culture. Singles, couples and people whose relationship status is complicated, are invited to celebrate the evening by enjoying Glazer's irreverent and unapologetic stand-up performance.

Glazer has been rising in the comedy scene. She has toured the country and performed in more than 30 cities, including at the world-famous Laugh Factory on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles. Demand for Glazer continues to grow, as she is scheduled to make another significant appearance at a famous venue on March 15, when she performs at the Comedy Central Stage in Los Angeles for Sit 'n Spin.

Tickets for the Valentine's Day show are currently on sale. Visit lindsayglazer.com/tickets.

RTP to present new plays at Studio@620

ST. PETERSBURG – The Radio Theatre Project has a roller coaster of emotions in store when it opens the new year with original, new plays on Monday, Jan. 22, 7 p.m., at TheStudio@620, 620 First Ave. S., St. Petersburg.

"Pests in the House" by Nicholas Penrke is a tale of bed bugs and murder. "To Mr. Wilson, c/o Shapiro & Gold" by Aleks Merilo takes an eerie look at student/teacher relationships and their consequences. Brutal honesty emerges in "White Cop/Black Kid" by Thom Molyneux. Audiences will leave laughing with "Look Alive" by Bara Swain.

The RTP ensemble is joined by some favorite guest actors such as Lisa Tricoli, Colleen Cherry and Jim Sorensen. Matt Cowley will be back with his sound effects magic.

Admission is \$10. Visit www.studio620.org or call 727-895-6620 for more information.

New play 'Gladiola' to premiere at The Studio@620

ST. PETERSBURG – "Gladiola," a new play by local playwright Colleen Johnson, will run Jan. 25 through Feb. 4, at TheStudio@620, 620 First Ave. S., St. Petersburg.

Performances will be Thursday and Friday, Jan. 25-26, 7 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, Jan. 27-28, 2 p.m.; Thursday and Friday, Feb. 2-3, 7 p.m.; Saturday, Feb. 3, 2 and 7 p.m.; and Sunday, Feb. 4, 2 p.m. Admission is \$25.

A preview performance will take place Wednesday, Jan. 24, 7 p.m. Tickets for this show only are \$15.

Directed by Christopher Rutherford, "Gladiola" explores the concept of later life divorce – sometimes called "silver divorce" – and the effect it has on older couples and their loved ones. The piece examines the role of marriage in society – whether marriage is necessary to have a fully integrated life and whether an unhappy marriage is preferable to none at all. The main character must decide what is more valuable to him, a supportive and caring friendship or a damaged romantic relationship. His grown children face their own struggles as a result of the sudden instability of their parents' 30-year marriage.

Johnson wrote "Gladiola" as the final dissertation for her master's program at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, King's College London. This project received a distinction, the highest mark possible, from professors at RADA and King's College.

After a reading in May 2017, the play has been further developed for this first fully staged production.

Johnson theater addiction began in seventh grade, when she played Peep-Bo in "The Mikado." Favorite roles include Belinda in "Noises Off," Olga in "Three Sisters" and The Woman in "Laughing Wild." Unable to choose between her two great passions, writing and acting, Johnson pursued a master's degree in text and performance from London's Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. She is currently an editor for a television network.

Tarpon Springs Public Art Committee awards grants

TARPON SPRINGS – The Tarpon Springs Public Art Committee recently awarded grant funding to two local deserving groups.

The available grant funds were part of the Art for Charity program through which the Ama mermaid sculpture, located on the water's edge in picturesque Craig Park, was purchased. The committee purchased the bronze sculpture from Koh-i-Noor, a European art supply company, and through their special program, Koh-i-Noor donated one-third of the purchase price back to local organizations in our area, which the Tarpon Springs Public Art Committee distributed through a grant process. After receiving and reviewing the applications, the committee selected and awarded the grant funds to the Unitarian Universalist Church's Charity Quilters and the Tarpon Springs Art Association.

The UUnique Quilters makes fabric and yarn items, such as hats, scarves and quilts, for deserving people. The initially small group has grown to 22 community members who meet weekly, and have provided annually an average of 200 quilts, 65 knit hats, 35 sweaters, 100 girls dresses, and 40 toiletry bags to those in need. Local recipients have included Advocates Against Human Trafficking, Church on the Bayou Migrant Ministries, Citizen's Alliance for Progress, Metropolitan Ministries in Holiday, Shepherd Center, Sunset Hills Elementary School, Tarpon Springs Elementary, Tarpon Springs Affordable Christmas Event, Walton Place Nursing Home, Wellness Ministries, and individual Tarpon families. The grant award of \$4,355 will help the organization to expand and continue their great work in not only this community, but in other countries as well.

The Tarpon Springs Art Association provides art instruction for children at the Boys & Girls Club every month. Each art class educates the children involved by focusing on a famous artist, showing a piece of their work, and allowing the kids to be introduced to the medium used and get an opportunity to explore using that medium. As many as 75 children participate in each class, allowing exposure to visual art that they may not otherwise receive. The association provides all materials needed: paint, pencils, brushes, paper, canvases, wood, pastels, chalk, frame, etc. The grant award of \$1,451 will help offset the cost of materials and allow the association to continue its valuable arts education programs for children in the area.

One Act Plays Festival seeks local playwrights, directors

TARPON SPRINGS – Tarpon Arts and producer Rick Kastel are extending an invitation to novice, emerging or accomplished local playwrights, directors and actors to participate and perform in the 2018 One Act Plays Festival, Tampa Bay's premier production of one-act plays.

The festival has been popularly produced at various Tampa Bay locations for several years and Tarpon Arts is thrilled to be welcoming it back for the second year to the Tarpon Springs Performing Arts Center stage, July 19-22.

The festival will consist of 10 short one-act plays, approximately 5 to 15 minutes in length, chosen by a volunteer selection committee from all script submissions received. Playwrights may submit up to three one-act plays for consideration to appear as featured productions. Once the volunteer selection committee has chosen the 10 plays to be performed, they will then be matched up with interested directors and actors to fill the roles and will begin rehearsals to prepare for the four-day festival.

"For people who have always thought they might like to be on stage but were afraid of trying to memorize the lines in a full-length play, here's a good place to dip your feet into the water," said Kastel in a press release. To be considered for inclusion, all script submissions must be electronically submitted no later than April 8. Those interested in being a member of the volunteer selection committee as well as all interested directors, actors and set designers can get all necessary information on being a part of the festival online at TarponArts.org/oapfsubmit.

For additional information, email 2018oapf@gmail.com. Those interested in attending this popular festival as a patron will be able to purchase tickets in February.

Horoscopes

January 18, 2018

Aries

March 21 – April 19

Aries, if a special opportunity or circumstance comes your way, jump at the chance to be a part of it. Such opportunities might not come along too often, so enjoy the ride.

Taurus

April 20 – May 20

Taurus, a newfound devotion to exercise may improve your life in many different ways. If you have been vacillating on whether or not to embrace a new lifestyle, just do it.

Gemini

May 21 – June 21

An unexpected situation has put you out of your element, Gemini. For now you can simply go with the flow and see how things work out. Don't let this get the better of you.

Cancer

June 22 – July 22

Cancer, dabbling in a few different projects may give you a unique perspective and the inspiration to take things in a new direction. Keep putting out those feelers.

Leo

July 23 – August 22

Leo, you have just about sold one of your ideas and now it's just a matter of being patient. Soon the results will support your vision, and you can enjoy the fruits of your labors.

Virgo

August 23 – September 22

Let other people's perceptions roll off you like water off of a duck's back, Virgo. To get the full picture, you need to immerse yourself and make up your own mind.

Libra

September 23 – October 22

Libra, take a few steps back and think about whether or not a new approach is needed regarding a specific situation. Thinking logically instead of emotionally may help.

Scorpio

October 23 – November 21

Scorpio, take a day to recharge your batteries if you feel your energy stores are running low. You may not need an extended vacation to do so, just a day to relax.

Sagittarius

November 22 – December 21

Sagittarius, looking within yourself can help you get a grasp on your situation and your future. Make the most of this introspection and use it as a catalyst for positive change.

Capricorn

December 22 – January 20

Take certain things with a grain of salt, Capricorn. Until you can flush out the facts, there is no point in worrying or passing judgement. Be patient and things will come to light.

Aquarius

January 21 – February 18

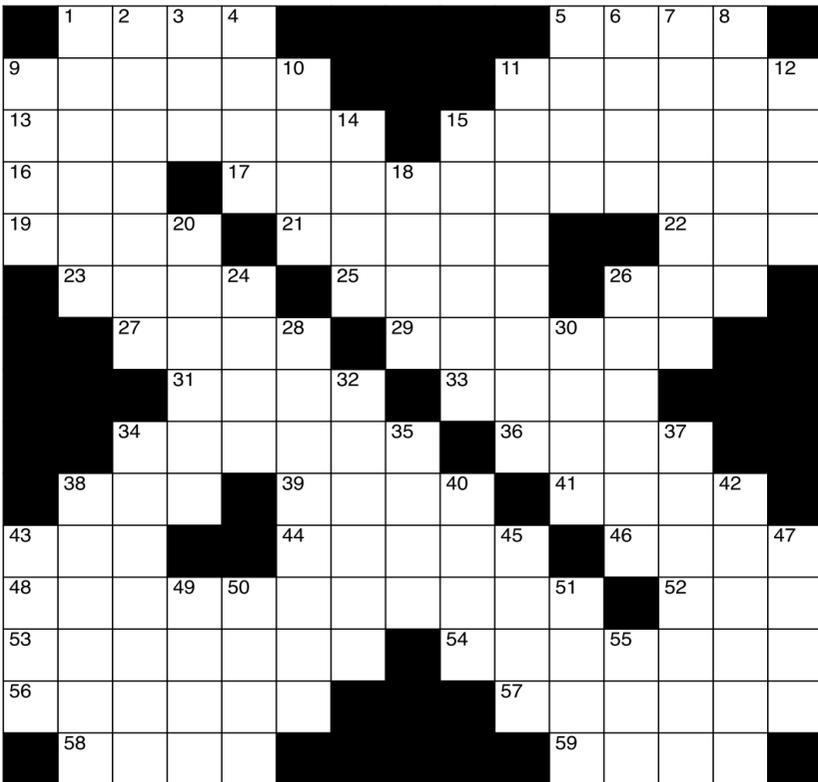
Find more time to explore an important relationship, Aquarius. Don't overlook the importance of date night. Make time for this important person even if it requires sacrifices.

Pisces

February 19 – March 20

Pisces, do something unexpected this week and watch as those around you are inspired by your willingness to try new things.

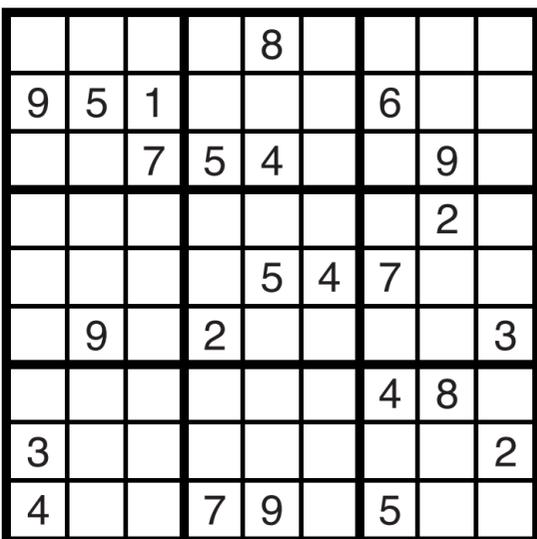
Crossword



- Across**
- Methaqualone pill (slang)
 - Religious service
 - Woodland gods (Greek myth.)
 - "Where Is My Mind?" rockers
 - Deliberately contrary states of affairs
 - Inflection of the voice
 - "Great Expectations" character
 - Becomes a butterfly
 - Spoke
 - Tennis player Sharapova
 - Midway between northeast and east
 - Afrikaans
 - No instruction set computing
 - Pacific Standard Time
 - Relaxing places
 - Confiscates
 - Gladys Knight's fellow performers
 - Witnesses
 - Taking place in a series
 - Satisfy
 - Freshwater fish of N. America
 - Laments
 - "Girls" creator Dunham
 - Indian title of respect
 - Cocoa plum
 - Network of nerve cells
 - Link together in a chain
 - Cool 70s crew "The ___ Squad"
 - Persons engaging in energetic pursuits
 - Accumulation of glacial debris
 - Fastened
 - A cotton fabric with a satiny finish
 - Whiskey and bread are two
 - Scottish tax

- Down**
- Rope used to lasso
 - Idyllic places
 - Field force unit
 - Guitar great Clapton
 - Slang for type of skirt
 - Figure skating jump
 - Innocent
 - Mathematical ratio
 - Slowly drinks
 - Line where edges meet
 - Offices of the pope
 - Dry or withered
 - "___ the Man" Musical
 - Difficult situations
 - Greek goddess of discord
 - Marked by smartness in dress and manners
 - Habitat
 - Annoy constantly
 - Full of life
 - Great energy
 - BBQ and soy are two
 - Virtuous
 - Not fatty
 - Foes
 - Merchandiser
 - Dishonest scheme
 - Repents
 - Protective crust
 - Native American people
 - Any place of bliss or delight
 - Bring up
 - Birds
 - Geological times
 - Consumed

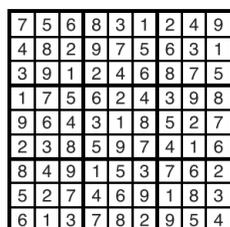
Sudoku



Place a Number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

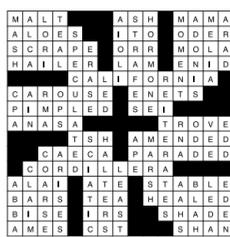
Sudoku answers

from last week



Crossword answers

from last week



'Encore for Murder'

World premiere production at Murray Theatre to kick off celebration of Mickey Spillane's 100th birthday

CLEARWATER – Ruth Eckerd Hall's 2017-18 Broadway season will continue this month with the world premiere of Max Allan Collins' "Mike Hammer Encore for Murder," starring Gary Sandy.

The production will run Jan. 18 through Feb. 3, in Murray Theatre at Ruth Eckerd Hall, 1111 McMullen Booth Road, Clearwater. Tickets start at \$35. For tickets and performance times, call 727-791-7400 or visit www.rutheckerdhall.com.

Starring in "Mike Hammer Encore for Murder" is Gary Sandy, best known for his portrayal of Andy Travis on the classic American sitcom "WKRP in Cincinnati."

Collins' mystery series with his wife Barbara. Collins was recently the recipient of the Grand Master Award, the highest award bestowed by the Mystery Writers of America.

Sandy portrays Mike Hammer, the toughest PI of all, who draws a seemingly routine assignment – playing bodyguard to diva Rita Vance on the eve of her big Broadway comeback. Rita is an old flame of Hammer's and when their romance is rekindled, the detective finds the actress facing death threats – and he finds himself the target of one hit man after another. When the actress disappears, the show must go on, which with Mike Hammer means swift, violent retaliation.

While the cops and feds go down a false trail, Hammer seeks to make a rescue before Rita's curtain comes down.

The production will feature a jazz-quartet (piano, bass, drums and saxophone) performing music on stage.

"This story takes place in the Broadway district of New York City," said Buffman. "From a Soho art gallery to Little Italy, to a waterfront confrontation that is way, way, off Broadway."

In addition to his starring role on "WKRP in Cincinnati," Sandy has performed in over 100 theatrical productions. He played the Pirate King in the Broadway production of "The Pirates of Penzance," the title role in "Barnum," Chance Wayne in "Sweet Bird of Youth," Stanley Kowalski in "A Streetcar Named Desire" and Billy in "Billy Bishop Goes to War,"



Photo by JEFF O'KELLEY

Gary Sandy, left, stars as Mike Hammer and Michèle Young as Liz Barrett in "Mike Hammer Encore for Murder," running Jan. 18 through Feb. 3 in Ruth Eckerd Hall's Murray Theatre.

"Mike Hammer Encore for Murder" performances will be in the all-new Murray Theatre.

"We are thrilled to premiere the production of 'Mike Hammer Encore for Murder,' starring Gary Sandy in our newest crown-jewel of the Ruth Eckerd Hall experience, the all-new Murray Theatre," said Zev Buffman, president and CEO of Ruth Eckerd Hall, in a press release. "In the first act, Mike's .45 kills six gangsters! But don't be misled, there are four-times as many laughs as killings in this all-new production."

Collins is the author of the acclaimed graphic novel "Road To Perdition," the basis of the Academy Award-winning film, author of the multiple Shamus Award-winning Nathan Heller historical novels, writer/director of numerous indie films including the Lifetime movie "Mommy" and the documentary "Mike Hammer's Mickey Spillane." Collins, Spillane's chosen successor, co-authored "Encore for Murder" and is currently completing unfinished Mike Hammer novels from the late author's files and co-author of the An-



Photo by JEFF O'KELLEY

Mary Rachel Dudley, left, stars as Rita Vance and Rand Smith as Andrew Gold in "Mike Hammer Encore for Murder."

whose first novel, "I, The Jury," introduced the character Mike Hammer. Hammer appeared in a series of



Image courtesy of RUTH ECKERD HALL

"Mike Hammer Encore for Murder" runs Jan. 18 through Feb. 3 in Ruth Eckerd Hall's Murray Theatre.

mystery novels and film adaptations (most notably "Kiss Me, Deadly").

"2018 will be marked with national celebrations of Spillane's 100th birthday," said Buffman. "We will be the first to kick off this celebration in January."

Richard Rice, St. Petersburg resident and previous director of theater at Eckerd College, will be the director of the all-new world premiere play.

Rice earned his Ph.D. in theater at the University of

Utah in 1970. Since then, he has been the director of theater at University of New Hampshire, New England College, University of Memphis and St. Petersburg's Eckerd College. Rice has directed over 95 plays during his fulfilling career.

"It's an exhilarating challenge to direct a Mike Hammer/Mickey Spillane script as a stage play given the

See ENCORE, page 8B

OPENING, from page 1B

'Forever My Girl'

Genre: Drama, romance and music
Cast: Alex Roe, Jessica Rothe, Abby Ruder Forson, Travis Tritt, Judith Hoag and John Benjamin Hickey

Director: Bethany Ashton Wolf
Rated: PG
"Forever My Girl" tells the story of country music super-star Liam Page (Alex Roe) who left his bride, Josie (Jessica Rothe), at the altar choosing fame and fortune instead.

However, Liam never got over Josie, his one true love, nor did he ever forget his Southern roots in the small community where he was born and raised. When he unexpectedly returns to his hometown for the funeral of his high school best friend, Liam is suddenly faced with the consequences of all that he left behind.



Photo courtesy of GKIDS

Mary (voiced by Ruby Barnhill) discovers a mysterious flower that can give her magical powers for one night in "Mary and the Witch's Flower."

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'Mary and the Witch's Flower'

Genre: Action, animation and adventure
Cast: Ruby Barnhill, Kate Winslet and Jim Broadbent
Director: Hiromasa Yonebayashi
Rated: PG

From Academy Award-nominated Hiromasa Yonebayashi – animator on Studio Ghibli masterpieces "Spirited Away," "Howl's Moving Castle" and "Ponyo," and director of "When Marnie Was There" and "The Secret World of Arrietty" – comes a dazzling new adventure about a young girl named Mary, who discovers a flower that grants magical powers, but only for one night.

Mary is an ordinary young girl stuck in the country with her great-aunt Charlotte and seemingly no adventures or friends in sight. She follows a mysterious cat into the nearby forest, where she discovers an old broomstick and the strange Fly-by-Night flower, a rare plant that blossoms only once every seven years and only in that forest.

Together the flower and the broomstick whisk Mary above the clouds, and far away to Endor College – a school of magic run by headmistress Madam Mumblechook and the brilliant Doctor Dee. But there are terrible things happening at the school, and when Mary tells a lie, she must risk her life to try to set things right.

The film is based on Mary Stewart's 1971 classic children's book "The Little Broomstick, Mary and The Witch's Flower."

For more movie news, visit www.TBNweekly.com. Lee Clark Zumpe is TBN entertainment editor. He can be reached at 727-397-5563, ext. 341, or by email at lzumpe@TBNweekly.com.



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Brookdale Pinecrest Retirement Community is Currently Seeking Applicants for a Part Time Driver. Must Have a CDL License in Good Standing. Drivers Transport our Resident To and From Doctor Appointments; Banking; Shopping and Scheduled Activity Trips. Candidates Must Follow Company Guidelines Regarding Resident and Vehicle Safety. Part Time Various Hours Including Some Weekends and Holidays. Please Send Resumes to:
Margaret.kristall@brookdale.com or Fax: (727)581-8409 or Complete an Application in Person 1150 8th Ave. SW, Largo FL. DFWP; EOE.

BROOKDALE
SENIOR LIVING SOLUTIONS
LPN
Brookdale Pinecrest is Seeking LPNs to Work Within our Upscale Retirement Community - PART TIME OPENINGS - VARIOUS SHIFTS. Candidates Must be Enthusiastic, Energetic and Caring, Committed to Making a Difference in the Lives of our Residents. Position Requires Level I & Level II Background Checks; EOE; Drug-Free Workplace. Please Apply in Person to 1150 8th Avenue SW, Largo, FL, 33770 or Submit Resume to Margaret.kristall@brookdale.com

485. Help Wanted

BROOKDALE SENIOR LIVING SOLUTIONS SERVERS FULL-TIME

Brookdale Pinecrest Retirement Community is looking for full-time experienced mature Servers to staff our upscale Independent Living dining room. Candidates must have experience taking food orders, delivering meals to residents in a timely manner; able to follow instructions/procedures in accordance with Department and company standards. Must be able to respond to resident/guest requests, interact with residents to ensure their satisfaction. Candidates must be responsible and take pride in their appearance. Full-time Associates are eligible for Brookdale's benefit programs to include medical, dental, vision, life insurance, 401K plan and accrual of paid time off hours.

Varied shifts and hours to include weekends and holidays. If you take pride in the job you do, and love to serve others, we are looking for you. EOE, Drug free workplace, Level II background check required.

Send resume to Margaret.kristall@brookdale.com or apply in person: 1150 8th Avenue SW, Largo, FL 33770

Health Center Job Fair

Come tour our 5 Star Facility & meet our staff!

Wednesday, January 24, 2018 from 9am - 4pm

We are currently looking for CNAs & RNs for Part-Time & Full-Time Shifts.

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BROOKDALE SENIOR LIVING

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485. Help Wanted

Rental Agents Needed for Multiple Properties in North Pinellas County. Manage One Unit at a Time. No Experience Necessary & No License Required. Excellent Earning Potential! Call for More Information and to Apply (609)466-5687

HANDYMAN Must have Skills, Vehicle and Tools. Part Time or Regular Work. (609)466-5687



RESIDENT AIDES Brookdale's Lake Seminole Square is seeking Resident Aides to work in our Assisted Living department within our upscale retirement community. This position requires candidates to assist our residents with daily living activities. Must be able to communicate effectively, possess excellent customer service skills and have a desire to care for our residents. Part-time positions available for all shifts. Position requires Level II background checks; DFWP. **Please apply in person: 8333 Seminole Blvd., Seminole, FL 33772.**



CNA's Brookdale's Lake Seminole Square is seeking CNA's to work in our private duty home care department within our upscale retirement community. This position requires candidates to assist our residents with daily living activities. Must be able to communicate effectively, possess excellent customer service skills and have a desire to care for our residents. **ALL SHIFTS AVAILABLE**, including weekends, holidays and short shifts. Must have a valid CNA license and have current CPR training. Position requires Level II background checks; DFWP. **Please apply in person: 8333 Seminole Blvd., Seminole, FL 33772.**

FRONT DESK RESERVATIONIST For Active Property on Maderia Beach. Weekends Required. Please call (727)392-2213

505. Part-Time Help

HOUSEKEEPERS WANTED GREAT WEEKEND WORK! For Beach Vacation Rentals. **Saturdays Only!** Background Check Required. **Apply in Person: Florida's Best Accommodations, 18610 Gulf Blvd, Indian Shores or call Heather (727)278-2539.**

485. Help Wanted

SCHOOL CROSSING GUARD Part-time job helping to facilitate the movement of children to and from school. Split shift limited to hours when school is opening, recessing, or closing. For more details, go to: www.largo.com/jobs
The City of Largo - A great place to work!!
EOE/DFWP

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CUSTODIAN Part time manual work Housekeeping/building maintenance Night shift: 9PM-1AM \$12.24/Hour For more details, go to: www.largo.com/jobs
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CHURCH CUSTODIAN/ MAINTENANCE 20/Hours +/- Per Week. Operate Maintenance Equipment, Lift 50 lbs., Valid Driver's License, Own Transportation. Able to Pass Level II Background Screening. Call (727)584-2318 and Request Full Job Description.

510. Home Care Help

CNAs & HHAs NEEDED. All days and hours. Live-in and Weekend availability a PLUS! Call Griswold Home Care. (727)547-7000

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835. Auto Services

975. Garage-Yard Sales

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January 19 & 20
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11200 Walsingham Rd, Largo. Saturday, January 20th, 2018, 8:00a.m.-1:00p.m.
Breakfast & Lunch Available!

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Household Items, Sports Equipment, Motorcycle Gear, Collectibles.

835. Auto Services

975. Garage-Yard Sales

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980. Moving Sales

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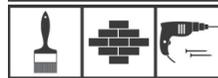
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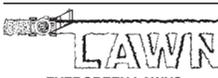


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Jobsite to stage 'The Tempest' at Straz

TAMPA – Jobsite Theater, resident theater company of the Straz Center, will continue its beloved tradition of offering exciting, dynamic, audience-centric productions of Shakespeare with "The Tempest," playing Jan. 19 through Feb. 18, in the Shimberg Playhouse at David A. Straz Jr. Center for the Performing Arts, 1010 N. MacInnes Place, Tampa.

Single tickets start at \$29.50. For performance times, tickets and information, call 813-229-7827 or 800-955-1045 or visit strazcenter.org.

On a distant island a woman waits. Robbed of her position, power and wealth her enemies have left her in isolation. But this is no ordinary woman, nor an ordinary island. She is a magician, able to control the very elements and bend nature to her will. When the vessel carrying those who wronged her appears in the distance, she creates a vast magical storm to bring them to her – then they awake finding themselves in a place where nothing is as it seems.

Jobsite is thrilled to continue their commitment to making the Bard accessible to regional audiences with this delightful fantasy. This production reimagines the character of Prospero as a woman, played by Jobsite ensemble veteran Roxanne Fay. Fay has previously been seen in Jobsite's humble home as Touchstone in "As You Like It," Feste in "Twelfth Night" and Beatrice in "Much Ado About Nothing" as well as Madame in their Best of the Bay Award winning production of "The Maids."

This production also stars Jobsite veterans Katrina Stevenson (Ariel), Giles Davies (Caliban), Emily Belvo (Miranda), Brian Shea (Antonio), Ward G. Smith (Sebastian), Derrick Phillips (Trinculo) and Alvin Jenkins (Alonso) while welcoming Nicole Maahs (Sebastian), DeQuan Mitchell (Ferdinand), Cornelio Aguilera (Francisco), India Davison (Adrian), and Michael Mahoney (Gonzalo) to their mighty ensemble. The Tempest is directed by David M. Jenkins, who also provides set and sound design, with lights by Ryan E. Finzelber and costumes by Katrina Stevenson.

Jobsite believes Shakespeare is meant to be seen, not read, and the company prides their work on always being audience-centric, accessible and exciting. The themes of greed and ambition, revenge and retribution are timeless, and so is the idea that we must do what society tells us, for better or worse, lest we endure the consequences. This production is sure to delight audiences ages 8 to 80 with the way it embraces the play, the imagination, and the magic of live performance.



Photo courtesy of PRITCHARD PHOTOGRAPHY/JOBESITE THEATER
Pictured are, from top to bottom, Katrina Stevenson (Ariel), Roxanne Fay (Prospero), Emily Belvo (Miranda), and Giles Davies (Caliban), in Jobsite Theater's production of "The Tempest," playing the Straz Center in downtown Tampa Jan. 17 through Feb 11.

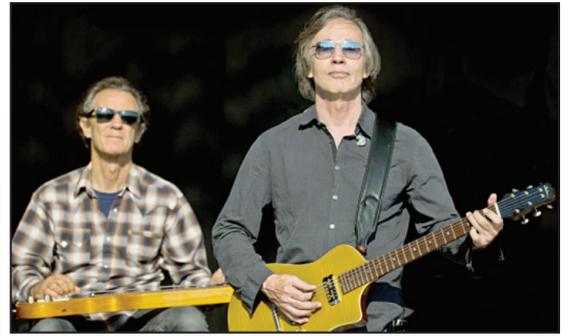


Photo courtesy of RUTH ECKERD HALL
Greg Leisz, left, and Jackson Browne perform Jan. 18 at Ruth Eckerd Hall.

Ruth Eckerd Hall to present Jackson Browne, Greg Leisz

CLEARWATER – Singer-songwriter Jackson Browne will be joined by pedal steel player and guitarist Greg Leisz for an acoustic performance Thursday, Jan. 18, 8 p.m., at Ruth Eckerd Hall, 1111 McMullen Booth Road, Clearwater. Tickets start at \$52.75. Call 727-791-7400 or visit www.rutheckerdhall.com.

Browne has written and performed some of the most literate and moving songs in popular music and has defined a genre of songwriting charged with honesty, emotion and personal politics. He was honored with induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2004, and the Songwriter's Hall of Fame in 2007. Beyond his music, Browne is known for his advocacy on behalf of the environment,

human rights, and arts education. He's a co-founder of the groups Musicians United for Safe Energy and Nukefree.org.

Among Browne's best-known recordings are songs such as "These Days," "The Pretender," "Running on Empty," "Lawyers in Love," "Doctor My Eyes," "Take It Easy," "For a Rocker" and "Somebody's Baby."

Leisz is known for hit songs such as "I Will Take Care of You" and "You Dig" and has played with Joni Mitchell, Sheryl Crow, Peter Case, Paul Westerberg, Victoria Williams, Joe Cocker, Dave Alvin and mores. Not to be pigeonholed in just roots music, Leisz has also played with the likes of Beck, Matthew Sweet, Bad Religion, the Smashing Pumpkins, and Brian Wilson.

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010418

ENCORE, from page 3B

historical popularity of the radio program and TV series," said Rice. "I plan to bring to our production of 'Encore for Murder' all the best elements of the noir mystery genre – intrigue, colorful characters, crisp dialogue and suspense. Our incredible cast of 10 professional actors bring experience from Broadway, local and national theatre, film, TV and radio theatre, who will be led by Gary Sandy of 'WKRP in Cincinnati' fame. I look forward to kicking-off 2018, celebrating Mickey Spillane's 100th birthday with this nod to his most popular character Mike Hammer."

"This is where the greatest private eye in American folklore began, with Mickey Spillane and his character, Mike Hammer," added Buffman. "There have been thousands of films and novels in the private eye genre sweeping the world of TV, radio, movies and novels. We are honored to present this all-new theatrical production as we celebrate the 100th birthday of Spillane in 2018 and we are so fortunate to have Richard as our director working with this terrific cast of talented pros, local and regional actors and the best up and coming talent in Tampa Bay."

The production also will feature state-of-the-art technology including a cinematic screen with continuous projections of Broadway and New York City locations, more than 200 stunning sound effects and an original music score.

Times, dates, performers, performances and descriptions of performances are subject to change.

Performance times are as follows:

- Thursday, Jan. 18 at 7:30 p.m.
- Friday, Jan. 19 at 7:30 p.m.
- Saturday, Jan. 20 at 2 and 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday, Jan. 21 at 2 p.m.
- Thursday, Jan. 25 at 7:30 p.m.
- Friday, Jan. 26 at 7:30 p.m.
- Saturday, Jan. 27 at 2 and 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday, Jan. 28 at 2 p.m.
- Tuesday, Jan. 30 at 7:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, Jan. 31 at 7:30 p.m.
- Thursday, Feb. 1 at 7:30 p.m.
- Saturday, Feb. 3 at 2 and 7:30 p.m.

A limited number of VIP tickets priced at \$100 are available which includes a premium, up-close cabaret table reserved seat, commemorative VIP laminated pass and limited edition autographed show poster, champagne and light hors d'oeuvres prior to performance and a post-show exclusive look behind the curtain with a Q&A session with Sandy and the cast, as well as a photo opportunity. In addition, single tickets priced at \$75 are available which includes a general admission up close cabaret table seat, a pre-show reception with champagne and hors d'oeuvres and a post-show exclusive look behind the curtain with a Q&A session with Sandy and the cast, as well as a photo opportunity.

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- Pure Point Financial
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- Simply Health Care Plans
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