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# Local governments share forum

By Kathy Steele  
 ksteele@lakerlutznews.com

Pasco County has shared interests with city governments, but it's a rare occasion for county and city officials to meet in a joint public forum.

But, that's exactly what happened on June 26 when staff members and elected officials from Pasco County, the town of St. Leo, San Antonio, Zephyrhills and Dade City sat down at Saint Leo University to discuss topics of mu-

tual interest, and such meetings could become an annual or semi-annual event.

"We need to do more things together," Pasco County Commission Chairman Mike Wells Jr., said.

Most of the talk centered on roads, traffic and redevelopment.

Each of the city and town representatives highlighted accomplishments and issues of concern.

Traffic and road projects topped the list, including one traffic crossroad, known as

"calamity corner."

The intersection is where State Road 52, headed toward St. Leo, takes a turn to the right. But, motorists at that juncture also are navigating along Pompano Street and College Avenue.

They are guided by signs to stop or yield, and a string of three red caution lights that motorists can find confusing.

"There are a lot of accidents, near acci-

See FORUM, page 11A

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Please be sure to include what kind of animal it is, and where you took the picture. Also include your contact information, so we can get in touch with you, if we need to.

**B**



**INSIDE, PAGE 1B**



CHRISTINE HOLTZMAN

# New skills are something to cheer about

Girls were doing 'back walkovers,' cartwheels and other athletic maneuvers during Wiregrass Lions Cheer Camp, held recently at the Samuel W. Pasco Recreation Complex at 39835 Chancey Road in Zephyrhills. The cheer team is part of the Pasco County Athletic League, a nonprofit organization that has teams throughout Pasco County. In addition to cheering for all of the football teams in their league, they also take part in several competitions throughout the year. The teams are based on age, so no formal tryouts are needed. Children of all skill levels, ages 3 to 13, are welcome to join. Brittany Dickinson-Paton, team coordinator, said these no-cost camps are a good way for a child to experience cheerleading before making a commitment to be on a team. Above, the afternoon's guest speaker, professional cheerleader for the Tampa Bay Storm and USF 'Sun Doll' alumni Amber Aversa poses with the campers after sharing with the girls her formula for success. She touched upon many subjects, including her career experiences, the proper cheer/dance etiquette, tips on time management and pointers to help the girls stay focused.



Five-year-old Audrei Kroft, of Zephyrhills (on mat), performs a maneuver called a 'back walkover,' while 11-year-old Kaitlin Merrifield, back left, and 10-year-old Hailey Dortch, both of Zephyrhills, watch and await their turn.



Brittany Dickinson-Paton, the team coordinator, left, and her junior coach, 16-year-old Katelyn Jones, right, spot 10-year-old Cylee Laclair, of Zephyrhills, as she does a 'round off backhand spring.'

# Training underway for Pasco school safety guards

By Kevin Weiss  
 kweiss@lakerlutznews.com

Bang. Bang. Bang.

The echoing sound of simulated rounds of ammunition permeate throughout Rushe Middle School in Land O' Lakes on a recent late June afternoon.

One by one, school safety guard trainees, with 9mm pistols drawn, carefully and methodically traverse stairwells and hallways, checking classrooms, searching to take out a fake assailant armed with an AR-15.

As each active scenario unfolds, Pasco County Sheriff's Office instructors, such as Sgt. Christopher Squitieri, bark out directives: "Get going, gotta get going! ... Know your terrain, where you're trying to search! Where that gun goes, you go!"

Brice Hayes, a fit 26-year-old with a security background, was out of breath and sweating heavily after one such drill.

When the drill was over, Squitieri debriefed him on the effectiveness in clearing the school, and in assessing and responding to the threat.



KEVIN WEISS

Safety guard training began in June, with a goal of having the guards prepared for duties by August. The guards must go through at least 132 hours of training with the Pasco County Sheriff's Office. That includes mastering various active shooter drills, where guards must search and take out a fake assailant, and render first aid to shooting victims.

See SAFETY, page 11A

# Pasco tax revenues are up this year

By Kathy Steele  
 ksteele@lakerlutznews.com

Rising property values in Pasco County could provide about \$11 million in increased revenues.

That's a bigger windfall than the \$10.5 million initially projected.

That extra cash - about \$650,000 - would play a key role in helping to close a \$3.3 million gap in funding requests for 2019 from the Pasco County Sheriff's Office.

Pasco County expected to receive final revenue data by July 1 from the Pasco County Property Appraiser's office.

The Pasco County Commission received a budget update - including two possible scenarios on the sheriff's budget - at a June 26 public workshop at Saint Leo University.

Both options on the sheriff's budget relied on the \$650,000 of additional revenue.

County commissioners quickly rejected one option to also withdraw \$2.6 million

See TAX, page 11A

# St. Joseph's Hospital-North undergoing \$75 million expansion

By B.C. Manion

bcmajian@lakerlutznews.com

St. Joseph's Hospital-North is the midst of a \$75 million expansion that will double the hospital's capacity and support additional services.

Crews are currently working to build out four additional operating suites, in shelled spaces that were included during the original construction in anticipation of future need.

The operating suites are expected to be completed in September, said Sara Dodds, director of operations.

Meanwhile, work is underway to prepare for a two-floor expansion.

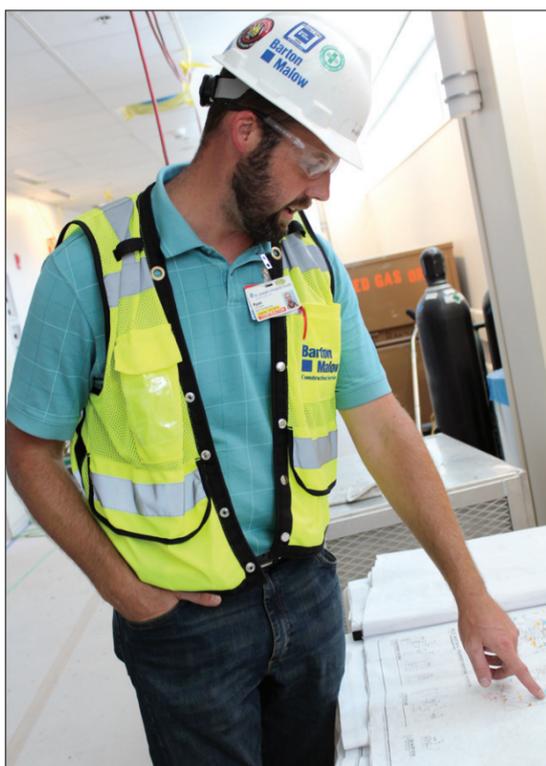
That portion of the project is expected to begin in July, said Ryan Bittner, who works for Barton Malow and is the project superintendent for the hospital's expansion.

"We'll start with the concrete shear walls first, like the stairwells, the structural concrete portions that we'll tie all the steel into. Once that's up, our steel contractor will come in and erect. That's when you'll see the biggest change because you'll see all of the steel framing go up, the floors being installed, all of the decking," he said.

The additional floors, which will each have 54 patient rooms, are scheduled for completion in the first quarter of 2020, Dodds said.

Although the expansion of the facility at 4211 Van Dyke Road, in Lutz, was always planned, the need came faster than initially expected, Dodds said.

"The growth rate around us is higher than the state of Florida and higher than the nation. If you drive around, there's more than 1,000 homes and apartments going up,



B.C. MANION

Ryan Bittner, project superintendent on a \$75 million expansion project at St. Joseph's Hospital-North, explains the complexity of the construction drawings needed for the project.

just within 1 mile of us," she said, adding, "we are regularly now running at capacity."

When the expansion is completed and the patient rooms are full, the hospital expects to add around 200 positions, including clinical staff and support services.

The expansion will allow the hospital to double the number of beds it has in its intensive care unit from 12 to 24, by converting 12 existing progressive care beds into intensive care beds.

The 108 beds being added will consist of 48 beds for patients receiving progressive care and 60 beds for those receiving medical surgical care.

Progressive care beds are for patients who are not typically as ill as those needing critical care, but require more specialized at-



Crews are preparing to do the framing for the ceiling in four operating suites that are being built out at St. Joseph's Hospital-North.



Sara Dodds, operations director for St. Joseph's Hospital-North, is overseeing the expansion of the hospital, which she said was anticipated when the hospital opened in 2010, but came faster than expected because of area growth.

## St. Joseph's Hospital-North, by the numbers

- 404 births
- 4,467 outpatient surgeries
- 7,814 discharges
- 42,869 emergency department visits
- 463,414 lab tests
- 799 team members
- 156 physicians

These figures are for 2017, the last complete year that statistics are available.

noise, Dodds said.

"We'll work with every patient that comes to make sure they understand there may be some noise," she said, adding that the hospital will give patients earplugs, if they need them.

"Whenever possible, we will minimize whatever work needs to be done at night," she added.

If the project is finished on time, it will roughly coincide with the hospital's 10-year anniversary.

When it opened, St. Joseph's Hospital-North was the first new hospital that had been built in Hillsborough County for 30 years. Before that, area residents had to drive for miles to get to the nearest hospital.

Dodds vividly recalls opening day on Feb. 15, 2010.

She was a charge nurse at the time and remembers gazing out of the third-story window to see the hospital's first patient approaching the building. It had 2,918 discharges that first year.

In 2011, its first full year of operation, the hospital had 4,831 discharges. That compares to 7,814 last year, which is a 61 percent increase since 2011, hospital officials note.

The larger hospital will address the community's growing needs, Dodds said.

attention than a general patient recovering from surgery.

When the expansion is completed, the hospital will have 12 dedicated private rooms for infusion services, Dodds said. Currently, those services are provided in a shared space.

Before work began, the hospital reached out to its neighbors to share its plans, Dodds said.

"One of the things that there was concern about was the path of the deliveries and the construction crews, and we addressed that," Dodds said, noting those deliveries and crews will not be cutting through residential areas.

The construction team will do what it can to minimize noise, but there will be



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A Nigerian dwarf goat relaxes as Thonotosassa resident Lea Bourlan, in the background, waits for the start of 'goat yoga' at American House in Zephyrhills.



A Nigerian dwarf goat comes face-to-face with Connie Gonzales, 60, of Dade City.



Wesley Chapel resident Kayleen Jenkins, 15, is surprised and delighted when she realizes a goat is balanced on her back. She was one of about 35 people who enjoyed 'goat yoga' at American House in Zephyrhills.

FRED BELLET

# Goat yoga brings happy hour to American House

By Kathy Steele

ksteele@lakerlutznews.com

Goats turned loose in a yoga class behave pretty much like nature meant them to act - like goats.

They nibble a button on Ron Hinson's shirt.

They climb higher plateaus, like Michele Ryan's inviting back as she drops down onto four hands into the cow pose.

They take snack breaks — and munch the greenery in the enclosed garden at the American House senior living community in Zephyrhills.

Or, they jump into the laps of unsuspecting observers, who thought they could sit in chairs and wonder from inside their goat-free bubble: Why all the fuss about "goat yoga?"

The answer came in a chorus of "ohs" and "whoa" that burst forth from yoga students, charmed by the antics of about a dozen Nigerian dwarf goats.

About 35 people from American House, and local residents, unfurled yoga mats (or sat and watched) for an hour of gentle yoga, with rambunctious goats.

The humans gave in to laughter and fellowship.

"See the joy," said yoga instructor, Leiko "KoKo" Bergers.

"Everyone has a little bit of the love of nature in them. And, the goats bring that out."

American House resident Jack Hanrahan, 84, laid on his mat while a goat stepped onto his tummy.

He's an avid yoga student for its health benefits. He thought adding goats was just plain fun and a "good experience."

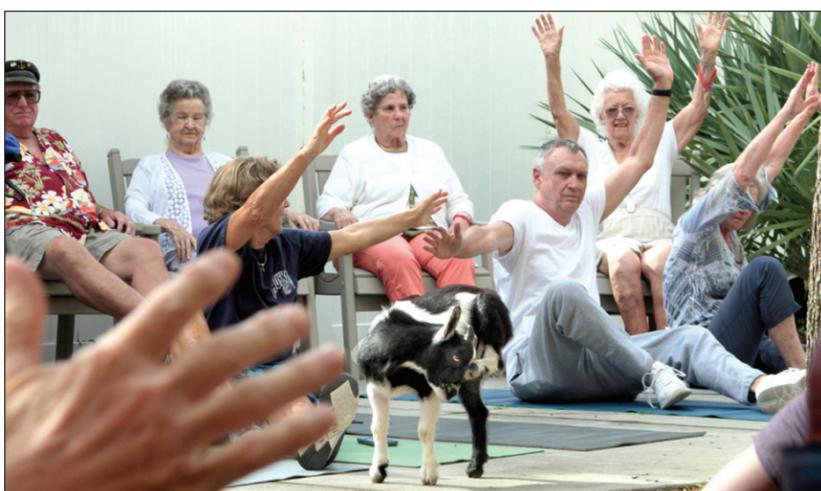
Michele Ryan and Judy Chassey saw a flier about the goat yoga experience at their gym.

"We really didn't know what to expect, but we're animal lovers," Ryan said.

Goat yoga was a first for American House, which is home for assisted living and memory care residents.

It won't be the last.

Animals are a big deal at American House, whether goats or kittens, or birds. Special visits are regular events.



A Nigerian dwarf goat strikes a pose — or just balances on three legs while scratching his ear. Meanwhile, humans raise their hands in a stretching exercise during 'goat yoga.'

"Animals are always so therapeutic," said Debbie Kern, American House's activities director. "We're always doing something up close with animals and nature."

Goat yoga started trending about two years ago when a ranch owner in Oregon let her goats roam freely through an outdoor yoga class.

Debbie Canton, founder and executive director of Grady Goat Foundation, rounded up her crew of goats for the inaugural goat yoga class at American House.

Canton and her family operate a working ranch in Thonotosassa, where she has about 90 goats.

On Saturdays and Sundays once a month, people are invited to Hat Trick Ranch for goat yoga. Donations are accepted, and funds given to charities to aid children with physical, mental or economic challenges.

The nonprofit foundation is named for Grady, a goat that couldn't stand or walk at birth. Though he learned to walk, he also was blind and deaf. Canton said his struggles and his perseverance were inspiring.

From the time a goat is born, socializing with humans begins, Canton said.

"They are all handled from Day 1," she said.

Interaction between goat and humans adds a little spark.

"We consider ourselves to be full-contact goat yoga," Canton added.

As the class began, she laid down a few rules to follow.

For one, be wary of putting fingers near

their mouths.

"They do nibble," Canton said. "But, they also do like to be scratched anywhere. Under the chin is their favorite spot."

She enticed a few goats to climb onto students' backs with small treats of animal crackers. "We take out all the goat ones," she joked.

There can be hazards during class. Canton has a spray bottle of cleaner fluid at the ready for goat "accidents."

Everyone adapted. "Glad to see you today," said Hinson, as a pair of goats nuzzled him. One heard the call of nature. "Hey, you're peeing on my blanket."

Canton quickly eradicated the blotch. Chassey summed up the experience in one word: "Awesome."

Dade City resident Connie Gonzalez, 60, found herself surrounded by goats, eyeing her dangly earrings and climbing on her back.

"You can feel the points of their feet," she said. "It feels good. And, I have trouble with my back."

Thonotosassa resident Lea Bourlon shared the feeling.

"I loved it," she said. "They really give you a good massage when they're on your back."

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## DRIVE-THRU PRAYER

Atonement Lutheran Church, 29167 State Road 54 in Wesley Chapel, continues to offer Drive-Thru Prayer under the portico every Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Stop by; you can stay in your car. Our Caring Ministry partners are there to share your cares and concerns in prayer. Everyone is welcome.

## CUB SCOUTS REGISTRATION

Cub Scout Pack 33, of Land O' Lakes, is registering girls and Lions (kindergartners) as part of its pack. Girls and boys meet separately on Tuesdays at 7 p.m., but will be considered part of Pack 33. For information, email [cubpack33lol@gmail.com](mailto:cubpack33lol@gmail.com).

## RHYTHM-N-BREWS

The second annual Fourth of July party at Rhythm & Brews, 4711 Gall Blvd., in Zephyrhills, will be on July 4 from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. Food will be provided by Flaming Q BBQ and Rhythm & Brews. There also will be beers from local brewers, and wine. Live band music will begin at 2 p.m., with a lineup for the entire day of festivities. Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$15 the day of the event. For information, visit [Rhythm-n-brews.com](http://Rhythm-n-brews.com) or [Facebook.com/RhythmBrewsZephyrhills](http://Facebook.com/RhythmBrewsZephyrhills).

## CARDBOARD BOAT REGATTA

The Seven Oaks Clubhouse, 2910 Sports Core Circle in Wesley Chapel, will host a "4th of July Celebration & Cardboard Boat Regatta" on July 4 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Families can build a two-person cardboard boat and celebrate our freedom. The two people must be able to race in the boat. There will be awards for fastest, best team, most creative, people's choice, best younger team and the Titanic-best sinking. For information, visit [813Area.com](http://813Area.com).

## SPARKLEBRATION

The annual "Sparklebration" celebration will be July 4 from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m., at the Pasco County Fairgrounds, 36722 State Road 52 in Dade City. There will be live entertainment, free face painting, and for a nominal charge: a bounce house, pony rides and a petting zoo. There also will be a watermelon and hot dog eating contests, and a karaoke contest. Fireworks are scheduled for 9:15 p.m., weather permitting. Gates open at 4 p.m. Parking is \$5 per vehicle. Admission is \$6 for ages 13 and older. For information, visit [PascoCountyFair.com](http://PascoCountyFair.com).

## AVALON'S INDEPENDENCE DAY

Avalon Park West in Wesley Chapel will host an Independence Day celebration on July 4 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., at its clubhouse, at 5227 Autumn Ridge Drive. There will be an apple pie bake-off, a bike parade, a wet/dry bounce park, community performances, and fireworks at 9 p.m. Admission is free. For information, call (813) 783-1515.

## Vegetable gardening

UF/IFAS Pasco County Extension will host a free seminar on vegetable gardening July 12 from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., at One Stop Shop, 15029 14th St., in Dade City. Participants can learn about how to choose a location for a garden, what makes good soil, when to plant different vegetables, and how to control common vegetable garden pests. For information, contact Eden Santiago at (352) 521-1255 or [esantiago@pascocountyfl.net](mailto:esantiago@pascocountyfl.net).



## Shade plant seminar

UF/IFAS Pasco County Extension will offer a free seminar on "Made in the Shade" July 14 from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., at the Land O' Lakes Heritage Park, 5401 Land O' Lakes Blvd. The guest speaker will be a master gardener on plants that love the shade. Registration is requested online at [tinyurl.com/y7mt6gu5](http://tinyurl.com/y7mt6gu5).

## Mushroom workshop

UF/IFAS Pasco County Extension will host a lecture on mushrooms July 14 at 10 a.m., at the Zephyrhills Public Library, 5347 Eighth St. The guest speaker will be Dr. Whitney Elmore, Pasco County Extension director, on the topic of small-scale mushroom farming. Topics include mushroom cultivation and species selection. To register for this free workshop, visit [tinyurl.com/ybaq5md8u](http://tinyurl.com/ybaq5md8u).



## Butterflies & blooms

UF/IFAS Pasco County Extension will offer a "Butterflies and Their Blooms" lecture July 17 from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., at the New River Library, 34043 State Road 54 in Wesley Chapel. Participants can learn the six steps in designing a butterfly garden to attract butterflies. To register for this free lecture, visit [tinyurl.com/y8jmm4h](http://tinyurl.com/y8jmm4h).

## LECTURE & CONCERT

The Jimmie B. Keel Regional Library, 2902 W. Bearss Ave., will host "A Flutist's Tour de France" July 7 at 2 p.m., for teens and adults. There will be a 'tour' of French music and composers. Participants can learn about different time periods, composers and styles of music, while listening to a variety of flutes. For information, call (813) 273-3652, or visit [HCPLC.org](http://HCPLC.org).

## DAY CAMP

Grace Lutheran Church at Carrollwood, 3714 W. Linebaugh Ave., will host the Luther Springs Day Camp on the church campus July 9 to July 13 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., each day, for kindergarten through eighth grade. Register online at [GraceTampa.org](http://GraceTampa.org), or call (813) 961-8747 for information.

## FREE KIDS' MOVIES

Cobb Grove 16 Theatres, 6333 Wesley Grove Blvd., in Wesley Chapel, will again offer its free Kids Summer Movie Escape. The theater will show "The Peanuts

Movie" and "Trolls" July 10, July 11 and July 12 at 10 a.m. Doors open at 9:30 a.m. Same-day ticketing only. Large groups, schools and camps are welcome. For information, call (813) 948-5444, or visit [CobbTheatres.com](http://CobbTheatres.com).

## NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

The Nature Coast Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society will meet July 10 at 7 p.m., at Land O' Lakes Heritage Park, 5401 Land O' Lakes Blvd. The guest speaker will be Lara Milligan, natural resources agent for UF/IFAS Extension in Pinellas County, on "Creatures of the Night." The program will highlight common nighttime yard visitors, basic biology about each species, tips on how to identify species, and how to coexist with nocturnal creatures. There will be light refreshments and a native plant drawing. For information, call Sandy Vanno at (727) 207-1853, or visit [PascoNativePlants.org](http://PascoNativePlants.org).

## FLORIDA LICENSING ON WHEELS

Florida Licensing on Wheels will bring motorist services to the New Tampa

Regional Library, 10001 Cross Creek Blvd., July 11 at 10 a.m. Services will include first-time licenses, conversion of out-of-state licenses, renewals, replacements for lost or stolen licenses, address/name changes, ID cards, reinstatements, emergency contact information registrations, vehicle registration renewals, and disabled parking placard issuances and renewals. Fees may vary. Visit [GatherGoGet.com](http://GatherGoGet.com) for a complete listing of documents needed. For information, call (813) 273-3652, or visit [HCPLC.org](http://HCPLC.org).

## BOOK BAZAAR

The Hugh Embry Library, 14215 Fourth St., in Dade City, will host a book bazaar July 13 and July 14 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. There will be a diverse selection of books, audio and video media, magazines and related materials, for a modest cost. For information, call (352) 567-3576.

## SCIENCE-RELATED FILM

Tampa Theatre, 711 N. Franklin St., in downtown Tampa, will show the movie, "The Perfect Storm," July 13 at 4 p.m., as part of its CinemaSTEM series, films with an educational twist. After the screening, Fox 13's Good Day Tampa Bay meteorologist Dave Osterberg will talk about the weather patterns that created "the perfect storm," what a perfect storm in Tampa Bay would look like, and tips on weathering the 2018 hurricane season. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$8 for kids ages 2 to 12, and \$7 for theater members. For information, visit [TampaTheatre.org](http://TampaTheatre.org).

## BOOK LAUNCH

James Willis III will host a book launch July 13 from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m., at the Hilton Garden Inn, 2101 Northpointe Parkway in Lutz, for his book, "How on Earth Did I Get Here?" To RSVP or preorder the book, visit [JimWillisBooks.com](http://JimWillisBooks.com).

## SOUNDS OF SUMMER

The Hilton Garden Inn, 2155 Northpointe Parkway in Lutz, will host "Sounds of Summer" July 14 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., to benefit the Alzheimer's Association. There will be local talent performances, local vendors, a free car wash, family games and more. For information, call (813) 491-4900.

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Pasco County Historical Society will meet July 20 at 7 p.m., at the Pioneer Florida Museum & Village, 15602 Pioneer Road in Dade City. The guest speaker will be Jeff Miller on the topic of Pasco County from the 1800s to today, via the origins of the names of the towns appearing on historical maps. A carry-in dinner precedes the program, so guests should bring a dish to share, as well as cutlery for personal use, plate(s) and a beverage. For information, contact Madonna Jervis Wise at (813) 782-0246 or [MadonnaJWise@gmail.com](mailto:MadonnaJWise@gmail.com).

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## Candidates qualify

Candidates have qualified for the upcoming election, giving voters plenty to consider. Here are candidates in key races during the 2018 election cycle.

Primary voters could decide the outcome for three Pasco County School Board seats. School board races are nonpartisan. Although candidates must live within specific districts, voters countywide select the winners. If a candidate does not receive more than 50 percent of the vote in the Aug. 28 primary, the top two vote-getters will face off on the Nov. 6 general election ballot.

Winners in two Pasco County Commission districts will be decided in the general election.

### KEY PASCO COUNTY RACES

#### PASCO COUNTY COMMISSION

##### DISTRICT 2

Mike Moore (Rep), incumbent  
Kelly Smith (Dem)

##### DISTRICT 4

Brandi Geoit (Dem)  
Mike Wells (Rep)

#### PASCO COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

##### DISTRICT 1

Allen Altman (NPA), incumbent  
Kenneth J. Mathis (NPA)  
Brian Staver (NPA)

##### DISTRICT 3

Cynthia Armstrong (NPA), incumbent  
Meghan E. Hamer (NPA)  
Heide R. Janshon (NPA)

##### DISTRICT 5

Mike Aday (NPA)

Megan C. Harding (NPA)  
Kathryn "Kassie" Hutchinson (NPA)  
Tara M. O'Connor (NPA)

### STATE AND FEDERAL RACES

#### FLORIDA STATE SENATE

##### DISTRICT 10

Michael Cottrell (Dem)  
Wilton Simpson (Rep), incumbent

##### DISTRICT 16

Ed Hooper, (Rep)  
Leo Karruli (Rep)  
Amanda Murphy (Dem)

##### DISTRICT 20

Joy Gibson (Dem)  
John Manners Houman (Rep)  
Tom Lee (Rep), incumbent  
Kathy Lewis (Dem)

#### FLORIDA STATE HOUSE

##### DISTRICT 36

Linda Jack (Dem)  
Amber Mariano (Rep), incumbent

##### DISTRICT 38

Danny Burgess (Rep), incumbent  
David 'TK' Hayes, (NPA)

#### U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

##### DISTRICT 12

Gus Michael Bilirakis (Rep), incumbent  
Chris Hunter (Dem)  
Stephen M. Perench (Dem)  
Angelika Purkis (Dem)  
Robert Matthew Tager (Dem)

#### MOSQUITO CONTROL,

##### SEAT 2 CANDIDATES

Andy Carney, Matthew Skeeter Abbott, Cory P. Sommers and Chris Tyler have qualified for this nonpartisan race.

## Political meetings

### WESLEY CHAPEL REPUBLICAN CLUB

The Wesley Chapel Republican Club will meet July 12 at 6:30 p.m., at Lexus of Wesley Chapel, 5350 Eagleston Blvd., in Wesley Chapel. Pasco County Supervisor of Elections Brian Corley will speak about the many layers of security protecting the Pasco County voting system, as well as changes in voting laws since the last election. Admission

is free, all are welcome, and coffee and homemade desserts will be served. For more information, contact Peter Cracchiolo at (813) 360-9813 or peterzbear@aol.com.

### LAND O' LAKES DEMOCRATS

The Land O Lakes Democratic Club will meet July 11 at 6:30 p.m. The featured guest will be Chris Hunter, former FBI agent, federal prosecutor, and now a candidate for U.S. Congress. The club also will be talking about boosting voter turnout. The club meets at Brick City Eatery, 16540 Pointe Village Drive, Suite 108, in Lutz.



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# Spreading a gospel of love through brown-bag lunches

By B.C. Manion  
bcmanion@lakerlutznews.com

Sharing food with those in need has been part of the Father and Son Love Ministries since its inception, but now the Lutz church has branched out to create a free summer lunch program — with no strings attached.

The church is tucked away in a commercial office plaza, just off State Road 54, at 24156 Foggy Ridge Parkway.

All families and children are welcome to come by the church on Mondays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., and Wednesdays from noon to 3 p.m., to pick up the free bagged lunches.

The free Father and Son Love Ministries Summertime Lunch Program runs through Aug. 29, but will be closed on July 4.

Although the program operates just two days a week, the church provides multiple bagged lunches to help families to get from one distribution to the next.

For instance, a family with four or more children will be offered up to two lunches per child, per visit. A family with one to three children will be offered up to three lunches per child per visit.

Each lunch consists of a turkey or peanut butter and jelly sandwich; salad or fruit; cookies, doughnuts or pastry; and, a small bottle of water.

The program aims to send a message of hope to those in need, said Pastor C.J. Johns Sr., who said he felt spiritually compelled to launch the program this year.

“It’s hard for people to be knocked down and still feel dignity,” Johns said. “If you don’t have kids and you’re struggling, what do you do? You’re not lesser than be-



Assistant Pastor Ken Waters prepares sandwiches for the Father and Son Love Ministries' free summer lunch program.

cause you don't have money.

“We’ve turned into a society where if you don’t have an American Express card, you’re a throwaway. It’s ridiculous,” Johns added.

By reducing grocery bills for families, perhaps they’ll be able to pay for summer camps for the kids, go on some family outings, or do other things they enjoy during their summer break, Johns said.

At the very least, he added, it can take some pressure off families: “You don’t have to open a can of Spam every day.”

Assistant Pastor Ken Waters and his wife, Cheryl, typically arrive about an hour before the doors open, to begin preparing the sack lunches.



B.C. MANION

Helping to feed those in need is more important than focusing on strategies to build church membership, said Pastor C.J. Johns Sr.

“We are making sure that these sandwiches are nice and fresh,” the assistant pastor said. “We try to make sure they get a healthy portion (of turkey),” he added, as he layered several slices of meat on two large pieces of bread.

Being involved in the ministry is rewarding, the couple said, adding that they hope those receiving the lunches will enjoy them.

The church covers most of the cost of the free summer lunch program, but Publix helps by donating bread and pastries every Sunday and Wednesday, the assistant pastor said.

The biggest problem so far is that there hasn’t been much traffic.

It’s been difficult to get the word out, Johns said.

He hopes that will change as the church does more outreach to food pantries, apartment complexes and other places where there may be people in need.

Those dropping by to pick up lunches aren’t required to listen to any type of preaching or to sign any paperwork, Johns said. “We don’t need names. ID. Social (Security numbers). They don’t ever have to see me again.”

And, when it comes to how many lunches are provided to a family, the church is operating on an honor system, the pastor added.

The free lunch program isn’t intended as a promotional tool for the church, Johns said.

The only information included in the bagged lunches is a flier listing the program’s days and hours of operation.

The idea is to be of service, and to perhaps serve as an example for others, Johns said.

“We need some boots on the ground. We need ministers who are going to be doing the servant’s work, of serving people,” he said.

In the pastor’s view, doing this kind of work is far more important than focusing on strategies to boost church membership.

He wants to spread a message that: “Maybe there is goodness in the world, maybe somebody does care.”

Assistant pastor Waters agreed it’s important work: “Walk the walk.”

Johns added: “People may think we’re crazy, but I believe we can change this world, one person at a time. I believe it. It’s not a slogan.”

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-Florida Hospital Center Ice, Wesley Chapel

-Odessa Community Center, Odessa

-Pasco County Utilities Admin Bldg, Land O' Lakes

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#### To Go ★ ★ ★ ★

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## TOPS PROGRAM

TOPS Club Inc. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly) meets at the JF Swartzel Lodge, 3109 Lutz Lake Fern Road in Lutz, every Wednesday.

Weigh-in is from 9 a.m. to 9:45 a.m., followed by a meeting until 10:30 a.m.

The cost is \$5 a month, or \$32 for the year. New members are welcome.

For information, call (813) 908-3587.

## STRENGTH AND BALANCE

Silver Sneakers Flex Strength & Balance Classes take place on Wednesdays at 9 a.m., and Fridays at 10:30 a.m., at The Groves Golf and Country Club Civic Center in Land O' Lakes.

These are low-impact classes for men and women, designed to improve flexibility and balance, which can help prevent falls, broken hips, and more.

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For information, contact Tom Marbell at (352) 409-2984.

## RED CROSS ANGELS

Officers of the Red Cross Angels, a support group for the Tampa Bay Chapter of



COURTESY OF REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER BAYONET POINT

Dr. Rao Musunuru, seated center, visits with children during a weeklong event to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Kids at the Point.

## CENTER CELEBRATES MILESTONE

Regional Medical Center Bayonet Point proudly celebrated the 20th anniversary of Kids at the Point, a center that has been caring and educating young children on the hospital campus since 1997.

Kids at the Point was the idea of Dr. Rao Musunuru and others who believed that employees who worked at the hospital should

be able to have needed child care close-by and convenient for both themselves and their little ones.

A week of activities was dedicated to the children's concepts of a superhero, and included creating superhero masks, watching "The Incredibles" movie, wearing superhero pajamas and having a superhero decorating contest.

the American Red Cross, were installed at a recent luncheon.

New officers for the 2018-2019 year are Al Van Voris, president; Glenda Barlow, vice president; Mary Jo Sherk, recording secretary; Nancy Watkins, corresponding secretary; and Sandy Hill, treasurer.

Glenda Barlow was recognized as the

Angel of the Year for her work as chairwoman of the Red Cross Angels Silver Coffee, which raised almost \$40,000 for the Tampa Bay chapter.

This year's Silver Coffee will take place Nov. 8 at a location yet to be determined.

For information about the Angels, call (813) 348-4820.

## WOUND CARE EXCELLENCE

Regional Medical Center Bayonet Point was recognized with the Center of Distinction Award, which was given to the hospital's Wound Care and Hyperbaric Medicine by Healogics.

Continued on next page

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For more information about Healogics and the distinction award, visit [Healogics.com/2017-Center-of-Excellence-Winners](http://Healogics.com/2017-Center-of-Excellence-Winners).

#### NAMI FAMILY SUPPORT

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Pasco offer a NAMI Family Support Group the first and third Tuesday of each month, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., at Atonement Lutheran Church, 29617 State Road 54 in Wesley Chapel.

The group is open to family members and caregivers of someone with a mental illness diagnosis.

For information, call (727) 992-9653, or visit [NAMIPasco.org](http://NAMIPasco.org).

#### GULFSIDE BENEFIT

Gulfside Hospice & Pasco Palliative Care will host a Charity Casino Night on July 14 from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m., at Gulfside's West Clinical Office, 6117 Trouble Creek Road in New Port Richey.

The event will feature mystery prize drawings, a silent auction, and casino-style gaming.

All proceeds will benefit hospice patients and their families in Pasco County.

Event gaming tickets are \$35 per person in advance and \$40 at the door. Admission includes three hours of gaming, fun money tokens, door prizes, hors d'oeuvres, one free drink and a photo booth souvenir.

Guests must be age 21 and older, and cocktail attire is requested.

Tickets can be purchased online at [CharityCasinoNight.org](http://CharityCasinoNight.org).

For information and sponsorship opportunities, contact Leesa Fryer at (727) 845-5707 or [leesa.fryer@gppc.org](mailto:leesa.fryer@gppc.org).

#### NURSING AWARDS

Regional Medical Center Bayonet Point recognized its staff with excellence in nursing awards.

Gwenn Hartley was the recipient of the Excellence in Nursing Compassionate Care

Award, which is given to a nurse who demonstrates exceptional nursing knowledge and expert skills, and consistently applies both with compassion and integrity.

Crystal Drilea earned the Excellence in Nursing Professional Mentoring Award, given to a nurse who advances nursing practice in any clinical setting or nursing specialty by guiding or supporting career development for individuals or groups of nurses.

The Nurse of the Year award was given to Lezonie Burney at the 12th annual Good Samaritan Health Clinic Nurses' Gala Bayonet Point.

A secret selection committee chose Burney upon information submitted by her nominator.

She will reign for one year and make community appearances.

Also nominated for the award was Brooke Dupont, who has been employed at Regional Medical for 13 years. She currently works in the Medical Intensive Care Unit.

#### PATIENT SAFETY RECOGNIZED

Oak Hill Hospital, Regional Medical Center Bayonet Point and the Medical Center of Trinity each received the Healthgrades 2018 Patient Safety Excellence Award, a designation that recognizes superior performance of hospitals that have prevented the occurrence of serious, potentially avoidable complications for patients during hospital stays.

The distinction places all three hospitals among the top 10 percent of all short-term acute care hospitals reporting patient safety data for its excellent performance as evaluated by Healthgrades.

During the 2014 to 2016 study period, Healthgrades found that patients treated in hospitals receiving the Patient Safety Excellence Award were, on average:

- 55.6 percent less likely to experience an accidental cut, puncture, perforation or hemorrhage during medical care
- 52.4 percent less likely to experience a collapsed lung due to a procedure or surgery in or around the chest
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# Chalk Talk

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## FIND YOUR FUTURE

Hope Services will host "Finding Your Future," a game plan for life after high school, July 9 to July 13 and July 16; and, July 23 to July 26 and July 30, at St. James United Methodist Church, 16202 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., in Tampa. This camp, for students with IEPs or 504 plans, will have classroom modules and community experiences. For information and registration, visit HopeServicesOnline.com.

## SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

The Columbiettes of Our Lady of the Rosary Auxiliary 8104, of Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church in Land O' Lakes, announced the recipients of its 2018 scholarships.

The students receiving the awards are Bianca Alejandro, Emily Bendert, Kelly Hutson, Haylee Martinez, Reney Santos and Rebecca Urbanas.

## FINE ARTS AWARD WINNER

Holly Peyton Brown, a 2018 graduate at The Broach School in Zephyrhills, was awarded the Nereim Fine Arts Award from the Heritage Arts Center Association.

Heritage Arts is a local nonprofit volunteer organization dedicated to promoting and supporting the performing and visual arts in the community.

Brown is an artist and writer who has studied art privately for more than six years. Her paintings have been featured for the past four years at the annual "Moonlight and Ivory" concert and art show at the Dade City Women's Club.

Brown also is a past recipient of the Pasco Library Arts Award. She is currently working on her second children's book, which combines the Anime illustrative style with history.

In addition to a certificate, Brown received a \$1,000 check at The Broach School's graduation ceremony.

## LOCAL GRADUATES

These students from The Laker/Lutz News coverage area have graduated from their respective schools this spring.

Gianna Basulto (Land O' Lakes), earned an Associate of Science in pre-health pro from Andrew College, Cuthbert, Georgia.

Students from Lutz receiving degrees from Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) were: Emily Harriott, Bachelor of Arts, College of Arts and Sciences; Jalisa White, Bachelor of Arts, College of Arts and Sciences; Madeline Quinn, Bachelor of Arts,

College of Education; Montana Knight, Bachelor of Science, College of Arts and Sciences; Gregory Zielinski, Bachelor of Science Civil Engineering, U.A. Whitaker College of Engineering; and, Andrew McNutt, Bachelor of Science, Lutgert College of Business.

Florida Gulf Coast also handed out degrees to these Odessa students: Calvin Daily, Bachelor of Arts, College of Arts and Sciences; David Geagan, Bachelor of Arts, College of Arts and Sciences; Samantha Yarish, Bachelor of Arts, College of Education; Sebastian Shindel, Bachelor of Science, College of Arts and Sciences; Wyatt Baggett, Bachelor of Science, U.A. Whitaker College of Engineering; and, Carter Hargreaves, Master of Science, Marieb College of Health & Human Services.

Also graduating from FGCU were Trinity students Annalese Johnson, Bachelor of Arts, College of Arts and Sciences; and, Bernadette Petika, Bachelor of Science, Lutgert College of Business.

## Other Lutz graduates:

Jessica Chung earned a Doctor of Nursing Practice in Advanced Practice from Samford University, Ida Moffett School of Nursing.

Stuart Hernandez received a Bachelor Degree in Computer Science at the Florida Institute of Technology.

Victor Alexander Monteith received his Juris Doctor from the University of Kansas.

Casey Muse received a Master of Science in Computer Science from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Katie Quintana earned a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education from Berry College in Rome, Georgia.

Emily Schwitzgebel graduated from The College of Wooster, in Ohio, with a Bachelor of Arts in Music. She also was a member of the Wooster Symphony Orchestra and the COWBelles, a female a capella group.

Madison Stevens graduated from Harding University with a Bachelor of Business Administration in Marketing.

## Wesley Chapel students:

Davon Henry earned a Bachelor of Science in Management at Missouri Valley College.

Krista Widler received a Bachelor of Applied Science in Business Administration-Management from Peru State College in Nebraska.

## Odessa students:

Phebe Albert received a Master's Degree from Georgia State University.

Kelly R. Barry earned a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Clemson University in South Carolina.

Mackenzie Morgan Cuffe also graduated from Clemson University with a Bachelor of Science in Marketing.

Brianna Honeywell received a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

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COURTESY OF NICK WATERS

Jacob Salmon and Tabur Salmon demonstrate their first-place winning entry in the EnergyWhiz Solar Energy Cook-off. The third member of their Sun Food team, Thomas Cui, could not attend due to a conflict in his swimming schedule.

## COMPETITION CHALLENGES STUDENTS' CREATIVITY

EnergyWhiz is all about clean energy and creative kids. Every year, hundreds of students converge at the Florida Solar Energy Center in Cocoa to participate in renewable energy-themed events.

Students from Martinez Middle School in Lutz placed in several categories.

Teams of two to six students working in teams designed and built solar cookers for the Solar Energy Cook-Off, using digital or infrared thermometers to help ensure food was safe for testing. The teams created an original dish of food for the competition.

Martinez's team, Sun Food, won first place for Best Design-Yellow Division, as well as the Wow! Award.

The school's cook-off team of the Three Amigos earned second place in the Culinary Award category and third place in Best Design-Yellow Division.

And, the California Kings team earned third place in the Junior Solar Sprint-Green Division. Even though the weather didn't exactly cooperate, the sprint cars were still able to race. Battery backup is now an essential part of a car's design.

For information on the annual challenge, visit EnergyWhiz.com.

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Officials from Pasco County, the town of St. Leo, San Antonio, Dade City and Zephyrhills held a joint forum at Saint Leo University to discuss topics of mutual interest.



KATHY STEELE

## FORUM, from page 1A

dents, and complaints," said Eric Stallworth, who serves on the San Antonio City Commission.

Former Pasco County Commissioner Ted Schrader spoke a few months ago at a Pasco County Commission meeting about the intersection and urged county commissioners to find a fix for it.

One idea was for a roundabout.

That appealed to Pasco County Commissioner Kathryn Starkey, who said the topic could be brought up at the August Pasco County Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Discussion also focused on current and ongoing road projects, including widening and realigning State Road 52.

An additional extension of State Road 56 is being sought, too.

Currently, State Road 56 is being extended from Meadow Pointe Boulevard in Wiregrass Ranch to U.S. 301 in Zephyrhills.

Zephyrhills' officials are seeking additional state funding for a study on linking State Road 56 to State Road 39.

City and county benefit from greater roadway connectivity, said Todd Vande Berg, Zephyrhills' planning director.

With roads and existing rail lines, Vande Berg said, "We think there's an opportunity to have an inland port at the (Zephyrhills) Municipal Airport."

Zephyrhills and Dade City representatives also provided brief views on projects paid with revenues from their Community Redevelopment Areas, or CRAs.

Zephyrhills has used funds for items, including Hercules Park, street lighting and three neighborhood cleanups that removed 900 tons of debris.

"It has made a difference," said Gail Hamilton, the city's CRA director.

Future plans include Zephyr Park improvements.

Dade City (which has two CRAs) used its CRA funds, along with Florida Department of

Transportation money, to extend Hardy Trail. The trail is envisioned as part of a network of area trails.

The CRA also provides matching grants as incentives to redevelop Dade City's historic downtown.

The projects brought praise but also criticism of CRAs in general from Pasco County Commissioner Mike Moore.

"It's no secret. I'm not a big huge fan of CRAs," he said. But, he added, "I do appreciate both cities doing it properly, and not including the entire city in a CRA."

Moore and other county commissioners have been critical of CRAs in Port Richey and New Port Richey, which are drawn to include all properties within city limits.

State law has since been amended to be more restrictive, with a CRA being no more than 80 percent of a municipality.

CRAs are special taxing districts that generate property taxes for reinvestment in community projects to end blight within those districts. Once a property tax baseline is established, future property tax revenues are available to the CRA. Those revenues, then, aren't available to the county's general funds.

Moore said it doesn't make sense for areas with expensive homes to be in a CRA. "Obviously, we know an entire city isn't blighted," he said. "That's not too kosher."

He anticipates the Florida legislature eliminating new CRAs after complaints about mismanagement statewide.

Zephyrhills City Manager Steve Spina disagreed.

"I'm not sure they're going away," he said.

If they do, Spina said the city would lose the incentives it can now offer to spark redevelopment. "We have a much more vibrant downtown now," he added, because of the city's CRA.

It's the "bad apples" that are misusing CRAs that are the problem, said Starkey.

"I'm OK with it, if we add accountability and transparency," she said. "I think the language in the (Florida) statute was poorly written."

## TAX, from page 1A

from a reserve fund.

Instead, they accepted a staff recommendation to pair the \$650,000 with budget cuts. An estimated \$2.4 million for temporary on-site pods at the overcrowded Land O' Lakes Detention Center would be delayed until 2020. And, a proposed \$250,000 for Safety Town would be eliminated.

Commissioners agreed with the staff's recommendation, except for cutting the Safety Town proposal.

Pasco County Commission Chairman Mike Wells Jr., said funds should be found for Safety Town either from the county's fund balance or new property tax revenues.

Safety Town is a safety education program for children, ages 5 to 8, that the sheriff's office operates.

"It's really for youth," Wells said. "It's needed. I think we need to absolutely fully support the sheriff on this."

The sheriff's budget for 2019 is nearly \$133 million, an 11.5 percent increase. However, most of that increase is related to jail overcrowding.

While temporary on-site inmate housing would be delayed, the proposed budget still includes funds for out-of-county inmate housing.

The existing jail was built for a capacity of about 1,400 inmates but currently is about 200 inmates over that cap. While that's a dip in recent weeks, the jail, at times, has had nearly 1,800 inmates.

"It's a safety issue for deputies," said Pasco County Sheriff Chris Nocco. "We've seen a spike in fights going on."

Currently, Seminole County's jail has about 60 of Pasco's inmates, at a cost of under \$74 a day per inmate.

The sheriff also said 13 new detention officers will be hired and trained during the next nine- to 12-month period.

When money is available for on-site pods, those officers will be ready, he said.

Commissioners also reviewed funding requests for about 40 items from various departments, split into two tiers based on priority.

One package would cost about \$4.4 million for expenses such as wage increases for

county employees, restoration of library hours, fire rescue stations, and an additional inmate work crew.

The other package of about \$1.1 million would pay for new positions in departments, including public services and development services.

There also was a recommendation for \$15,000 to the United Way of Pasco County, for an emergency fund to aid low-income residents who aren't eligible for other programs.

Wells asked that funding for United Way be increased to \$50,000. Later on, Pasco County Commissioner Jack Mariano suggested \$100,000.

Pasco County Commissioner Kathryn Starkey asked for details on those expenses.

"I support the United Way. I just want to know where the money is coming from," she said.

Anticipated property tax revenues might be enough to fund the United Way request, said Pasco County Administrator Dan Biles.

He also noted that county officials are taking a realistic approach to crafting the 2019 budget to withstand potential revenue losses for 2020.

A major concern is a November referendum for an additional \$25,000 homestead exemption for homes valued more than \$100,000. Most county officials expect it to pass, with a projected revenue loss as high as \$14 million, effective for the 2020 budget.

Even so, Biles said county officials looked at the potential revenue losses "and what that would do to the budget so we don't have to go back on any of these decisions for 2019."

That includes the priority items for wages, library hours and new job positions, he said.

The county also has other referendums in November that could change spending priorities.

County commissioners recently approved four bond referendums for the November ballot that would bring new revenues for public safety, fire rescue, parks and libraries, if approved.

"If the park referendum doesn't pass, we have a huge amount of backlog for our parks for safety reasons," Starkey said. "I don't want to see parks closing down."



KEVIN WEISS

Hearing the sound of simulated gunshot rounds, safety guard trainee Brice Hayes, with Pasco Sheriff's Sgt. Christopher Squitieri following behind, sprints into Rushe Middle School to respond to an active shooter. With his 9mm pistol drawn, Hayes searches the school far and wide to take out the fake assailant.

## SAFETY, from page 1A

Hayes said he pursued the school safety guard position to offer "a helping hand to kids that need help, whether it's active shooters or a permanent threat in the schools."

To him, the active shooter drills felt like the real thing, his mind racing throughout.

"You've gotta lot of things going through your head, 'Where's this guy at? Where's this guy at? I gotta get to him and kill this guy,'" Hayes said. "There's no ifs ands or buts about it, no questions — you've gotta take the threat out."

The Pasco County School Board in May approved Superintendent Kurt Browning's proposal to hire a director of safety and security, and 53 school safety guards, for the district's elementary schools.

The school board's action came in response to a 2018 bill passed by the state Legislature and signed by Gov. Rick Scott, in the aftermath of the Valentine's Day shooting that left 17 dead at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland.

The law requires all school districts to provide security at all schools beginning in the 2018-2019 school year. Pasco County Schools has School Resource Officers in its middle and high schools who will continue to be stationed there.

The school safety guards — which are a less expensive option — will be posted at the district's elementary schools. The guards, who won't have arrest powers, will make \$20 per hour.

Safety guard training began in June, with a goal of having the guards prepared for duties by August.

Before they are stationed at schools, the guards must receive at least 132 hours of training with the Pasco County Sheriff's Office.

The main objective: respond and neutralize on-campus threats, particularly in the event of an active shooter.

"We pray to God this never happens, but we're training for worst case," said Pasco Sheriff's Capt. Jared Hill, an ex-green beret who leads the agency's emergency management division and oversees the guard training program.

Besides active shooter scenarios, guards have been instructed on defensive and less lethal tactics, weapon retention, first aid and CPR. They've also undergone diversity training, which was handled by the school district.

"Basically, we're looking for someone's that cognizant," said Pasco Sheriff Sgt. Richard Jones, who helps supervise the guard training program. "We're looking for proficiency on the range, we're looking for proficiency in defensive tactics, and, the ability to save lives during the medical portion of the training."

Jones said the guards' biggest strides have come in its 10 days on the firing range.

"We're shooting nonstop. We're shooting upwards to 1,600 rounds, and they've improved quite a bit," Jones said.

In addition to guards being stationed at all Pasco elementary schools, private and charter schools in the county have hired their own guards and have taken advantage of the sheriff's office training.

Jones said 77 guards are undergoing training this summer with the law enforcement agency. Each has passed background checks, physical and psychological exams,



A Pasco County Sheriff's deputy plays the role of an assailant armed with an AR-15.

### School safety

The Pasco County School Board in May approved Superintendent Kurt Browning's proposal to hire a director of safety and security, and 53 school safety guards, for the district's elementary schools, in addition to the School Resource Officers who work in the district's middle and high schools. The school board's action was in response to a 2018 bill that the Legislature passed and Gov. Rick Scott signed into law. That law requires all school districts to provide security at all schools beginning in the 2018-2019 school year.

and drug screenings.

Many, like Chuck Balderstone, have an extensive background in either military or law enforcement.

A 28-year veteran of the Pasco Sheriff's Office, Balderstone retired from the agency in 2013, as a lieutenant and commander of the agency's vice and narcotics unit.

Becoming a school guard was "a no-brainer" for him.

"When you do something like law enforcement for 28 years, you kind of miss it," Balderstone said. "I certainly didn't want to be full (time), right back into being a cop again, but this gives me a chance to go back and work with the most important part of our community — our kids."

Hiring armed guards in all schools, while unfortunate, is necessary in today's society, Balderstone said.

"I think it's crazy that its come to that point and we need this, but you know what, times are changing and the bottom line is, we do need it," he said.

"I think the biggest thing is you never want to see your schools turn into some kind of stockade-type situation," he said.

There needs to be a balance, he said. "Hey, we've got to keep this place safe, but we don't want to scare these kids."

The former sheriff's lieutenant is confident the county's schools will be in good hands when it comes to campus safety.

Balderstone said he knows many of the people he's in class with and knows they have many years of experience.

"I know that a lot of us have had as much, if not more training, than a lot of these young deputies working out there now," Balderstone said.

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## Academy at the Lakes leads All-State picks

By Kevin Weiss

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With the high school softball season complete, the 2018 Miracle Sports All-State teams were released June 15, recognizing Florida's top players.

Nineteen athletes from The Laker/Lutz News coverage area were recognized, either as first-team, second-team or honorable mention.

Unsurprisingly, the Class 2A state champion, Academy at the Lakes Wildcats, had the most representatives from the area among all classifications, with a total of six selections in Class 2A.

Further, Wildcats head coach Diane Stephenson, freshman shortstop Brooke Blankenship and junior pitcher Lexi Kilfoyl earned Class 2A Coach of the Year, Player of the Year and Pitcher of the Year honors, respectively.

Last month, the Wildcats (26-4) claimed its first-ever state title, defeating Monticello Aucilla Christian 1-0 in 11 innings on May 22 in the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) Class 2A state finals at Historic Dodgertown in Vero Beach.

Along with Stephenson, a former long-time Division I softball coach, Blankenship and Kilfoyl proved integral to the Wildcats success all season.

Blankenship, a Florida State University commit, batted .467 and led the team in home runs (six), doubles (12), hits (42) and runs scored (41). Defensively, she posted a .940 fielding percentage and committed just two errors the entire season.

In the state title game, Blankenship plated the winning run on a two-out single in the 11th inning.

Meantime, Kilfoyl was a force both in the circle and at the plate.

The 2017-2018 Gatorade Florida Softball Player of the Year and University of Alabama commit went 23-1, posting a 0.32 earned run average and 249 strikeouts in 154 innings pitched, with opposing batters hitting a mere .097 against her.

As a hitter, Kilfoyl led the Wildcats in batting average (.482) and RBIs (35), along with five home runs, nine doubles and 41 hits.

Kilfoyl pitched a complete game shutout in the state title game and singled in the game-winning run (scored by Blankenship).

Wildcats freshman infielder Devyne Davis joins Blankenship and Kilfoyl as first-team selections, while eighth-grade catcher Hannah Church, freshman infielder Vanessa Alexander and seventh-grade outfielder Caitlin



COURTESY OF ACADEMY AT THE LAKES SOFTBALL

The Academy at the Lakes varsity softball team had six representatives on the 2018 Miracle Sports All-State team. The Wildcats won the Class 2A state championship last month.



COURTESY OF LAND O' LAKES SOFTBALL

Land O' Lakes High junior Callie Turner was named 2018 Miracle Sports' Class 6A Player of the Year as well as Pitcher of the Year — an award she also won in 2017.

Blankenship were second-team choices.

Academy at the Lakes wasn't the only Land O' Lakes-based school well-represented on the All-State team, however.

In Class 6A, Land O' Lakes High junior Callie Turner picked up both Player of the Year and Pitcher of the Year honors.

Turner, a University of Tennessee commit, went 17-6, posting a 0.78 earned run average and 252 strikeouts in 153.1 innings pitched. She tallied 20 complete games, including one no-hitter and six shutouts.

Also a solid hitter, Turner batted .309 and six RBIs in 65 plate appearances.

Turner — also the Class 6A Pitcher of the Year in 2017 — was joined on the first-team by Ashley Smith, a senior infielder for the Gators (25-7), which finished state runner-up, falling to Plantation American Heritage 5-1 in the Class 6A state championship game on May 24.

In Class 7A, Sunlake High outfielders Kendra Falby, a freshman, and Paige Maseda, a junior, were named to the second-team, while senior catcher Emma Sica was an honorable mention.

The Seahawks (23-3) lost to Braden River 4-2 in the Class 7A regional semifinals on May 2.

Other schools in our coverage area also had showings on the All-State list, for their respective classifications.

Cypress Creek, a first-year program in Class 5A that finished 15-9, had four representatives — junior infielder Payton Hudson (first-team), junior catcher Neely Peterson (second-team), junior shortstop Jasmine Jackson (honorable mention) and sophomore first baseman Anna Margetis (honorable mention).

Gaither (7A), Pasco (6A), Steinbrenner

### 2018 Miracle Sports All-State

#### CLASS 8A

- Megan Pierro, Steinbrenner, senior (second-team)

#### CLASS 7A

- Katelyn Richards, Gaither, senior (second-team)
- Kendra Falby, Sunlake, freshman (second-team)
- Paige Maseda, Sunlake, junior (second-team)
- Emma Sica, Sunlake, senior (honorable mention)

#### CLASS 6A

##### PLAYER OF THE YEAR, PITCHER OF THE YEAR:

- Callie Turner, Land O' Lakes, junior (first-team)
- Ashley Smith, Land O' Lakes, senior (first-team)
- April Lorton, Zephyrhills, junior (first-team)
- Kacie Huber, Pasco, senior (honorable mention)

#### CLASS 5A

- Payton Hudson, Cypress Creek, junior (first-team)
- Neely Peterson, Cypress Creek, junior (second-team)
- Jasmine Jackson, Cypress Creek, junior (honorable mention)
- Anna Margetis, Cypress Creek, junior (honorable mention)

#### CLASS 2A

##### COACH OF THE YEAR:

- Diane Stephenson, Academy at the Lakes

##### PLAYER OF THE YEAR:

- Brooke Blankenship, Academy at the Lakes, freshman (first-team)

##### PITCHER OF THE YEAR:

- Lexi Kilfoyl, Academy at the Lakes, junior (first-team)
- Devyne Davis, Academy at the Lakes, freshman (first-team)
- Hannah Church, Academy at the Lakes, eighth grade (second-team)
- Vanessa Alexander, Academy at the Lakes, freshman (second-team)
- Caitlynn Blankenship, Academy at the Lakes, seventh grade (second-team)

(8A) and Zephyrhills (6A) each had one selection apiece.

There were no All-State representatives in our coverage area from Classes 9A, 4A, 3A or 1A.



### SAINT LEO FINISHES FOURTH FOR DIRECTORS' CUP

For the third time in four years, Saint Leo University finished in the top 10 of the Division II Learfield Directors' Cup. It earned fourth place out of 268 schools in the 2017-18 final standings that were released June 14 by the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA).

The Lions totaled 695.25 points, scoring in seven of the spring championships, including a runner-up finish in men's lacrosse and third place in softball.

Saint Leo tallied 428.75 points in the spring from men's lacrosse (90), softball (83), men's golf (72.75), women's golf (51), men's tennis (50), women's tennis (50) and women's track (32).

The Lions added their spring points to their 119.50 winter points and 147.00 fall points.

This marked the 17th Directors' Cup standings (Sears, NACDA, US Sports Academy or Learfield) in which the Lions have ranked. It was the second-highest finish in school history.

"We have an incredible staff and student-athletes who strive for excellence," Saint Leo athletic director Francis X. Reidy said, in a release. "Our five-year run of great finishes is a remarkable feat when you consider where Saint Leo was just a short time ago. We are proud of our two top-five finishes over the last three years, as we strive to be one of the best all-around programs in Division II."

Saint Leo's Directors' Cup mark also is tops in the Sunshine State Conference, ahead of fifth-place finisher Florida Southern (673.35 points).



### Division II Learfield Directors' Cup final standings

#### TOP 5

- California Baptist — 905 points
- Grand Valley (Michigan) State — 834.75
- West Texas A&M — 772.50
- Saint Leo — 695.25
- Florida Southern — 673.25

California Baptist University, in Riverside California, won the Directors' Cup title, with 905 points.

The Learfield Directors' Cup was developed as a joint effort between the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA) and USA Today. Points are awarded based on each institution's finish in NCAA Championships.

### ADULT SOFTBALL LEAGUE IN LAND O' LAKES

Registration is ongoing for the Pasco County Parks & Recreation Department's 2018 Fall Adult Softball League.

The softball season begins the week of Aug. 6. Coed games are played on Mondays, while men's games are played Tuesdays through Thursdays.

Sign up by visiting PascoCountyFL.net, and clicking on "Parks, Recreation and

Natural Resources" under Land O' Lakes Heritage Park. Interested parties must first create an account and profile/username.

Cost is \$475 per team, plus an additional \$25 for an NSA (National Softball Association) sanctioning fee. The season includes an 11-game regular season and a single elimination tournament.

For information, email A.J. Fernandez at afernandez@pascocountyfl.net, or call (813) 929-1229.

### TRIPLETAIL AND SHEEPSHEAD REGULATIONS IN EFFECT

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has announced the following changes to the management of tripletail and sheepshead, effective as of July 1:

#### Tripletail:

- The minimum size limit will increase to 18 inches total length.
- The FWC's recreational and commercial regulations for this species will extend into federal waters (including only allowing the use of hook-and-line gear and the new size limit).

#### Sheepshead:

- The recreational bag limit will be lowered to eight fish per person, per day year-round.
- There will be a recreational vessel limit of 50 fish per vessel, per trip during March and April.
- FWC's recreational and commercial regulations for this species will extend into federal waters (including the new bag and vessel limits).

According to the FWC, the new regulations will help conserve both fisheries for current and future generations. For more information, visit MyFWC.com/fishing.

### PHSC HOSTS SUMMER CAMPS

Registration is open for summer youth



COURTESY OF ERIC HANDMAN

## All-American!

Wiregrass Ranch High School attacker Jeremy Handman has been named a 2018 U.S. Lacrosse All-American, a first in program history. As a senior, Handman helped guide the Bulls to a 13-3 mark this past season — its first season as an FHSAA-sanctioned varsity lacrosse club. He scored 46 goals and had 26 assists. Handman, who graduated from Wiregrass Ranch in May, will play collegiate lacrosse this fall at Division II Southern New Hampshire University, in Manchester, New Hampshire.

sports camps at Pasco-Hernando State College's New Port Richey Campus, 10230 Ridge Road. The next available camps include youth running (July 9 to July 11) and boys baseball (July 16 to July 18).

The camps, hosted by various PHSC coaches and athletes, strive to "provide the ideal environment to improve athletic skills, develop friendships and learn life lessons in leadership, teamwork and responsibility," according to the college.

For cost and other information, visit Athletics.phsc.edu/departments-information/events.