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Pasco supports hemp as a crop

By B.C. Manion
bcmansion@lakerlutznews.com

The Pasco County Commission has unanimously approved a resolution backing the legal cultivation of hemp in Florida. The issue came up for discussion at the board's Jan. 8 meeting, but was delayed for two weeks to give Commission Chairman Ron Oakley the chance to learn more about the issue.

When Commissioner Jack Mariano brought up the issue again, commissioners quickly approved it. Board members had discussed the issue extensively during their Jan. 8 meeting, when Mariano encouraged his colleagues to support the resolution, noting that it will give farmers another crop option. The passage of the U.S. Farm Bill changed everything, Mariano said. "It's now going to allow local people to actually grow

it and do something with it, as opposed to large corporations. This is like a monumental step forward." Hemp can be used to make CBD oils for people's pain, rope, plastics and other materials, Mariano said. "Farmers struggle, losing their orange groves - this just creates a huge market for Florida, itself."

See HEMP, page 15A



CHRISTINE HOLTZMAN

LOCAL WILDLIFE



STEFANIE BURLINGAME/STAFF PHOTO

Share your wildlife photos

If you've captured a photograph of an interesting bird or wild creature, we'd love to share your image with our readers.

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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.

Rain didn't deter beauty at arts fest

More than 100 artists turned out for the Suncoast Arts Fest, which also featured live music and activities during the weekend of Jan. 19 and Jan. 20 at The Shops at Wiregrass, 28211 Paseo Drive in Wesley Chapel. Light rain and gusty wind, at times, made for less than ideal weather conditions, but artists offered plenty of choices for patrons who ventured out. Proceeds from the event support the 'Art for Kids' grant that supports arts education in Pasco County schools. Above, Shannon Macklin, of Flagstaff, Arizona, sits among his cedar wood and copper water fountains at the Suncoast Arts Fest.



Steve McLeod, of Wesley Chapel, looks over a large canvas painting created with high-end acrylic paints. The painting was called 'The Sun Garden' by artist Jim Tucker, of Kansas City, Kansas.



Making their way down Paseo Drive, the Emmel family from Minnesota, Kate, left, Tom and 18-month-old Grace head toward the stage area where the musician, Mr. Harley, was performing a show geared toward children. The Emmels were in town visiting cousins in Lutz.

Looking for **FUN** things to do?

THEN CHECK OUT

What's Happening

Your Community Calendar

PAGE 4A

The LAKER / Lutz NEWS

Commissioners spar over selection of design firms

By B.C. Manion
bcmansion@lakerlutznews.com

The Pasco County Commission has selected Wannemacher Jensen Architects Inc., and Harvard Jolly Inc., as the top-ranked firms for design services for an indoor recreation center at the Wesley Chapel District Park. It also authorized county staff to negotiate with Wannemacher Jensen, and if an agreement can't be reached, to conduct negotiations with Harvard Jolly. Commissioners approved the action on a 4-1 vote, with Commissioner Mike Wells dissenting, and following a clash between commissioners over whether to proceed with the process, or reject all of the proposals and start over. Wells advocated starting the process over. "I don't know if any of you have looked at it. I do have some concerns," Wells said. Specifically, he questioned why there was such a large discrepancy in points awarded to various proposals, and the lack of written comments to explain those differences. He made a motion to reject all proposals

Plenty on tap for Pasco ASAP in 2019

By Kevin Weiss
kweiss@lakerlutznews.com

As it continues its mission to reduce the overuse and misuse of illicit drugs and alcohol, the Pasco County Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention has witnessed progress during several areas during the past year. During 2018, Pasco County:

- Saw its drug poisoning death rate, or overdoses, register a slight decrease — for the first time since 2014
- Reported lower figures of illicitly used prescription pain relievers among its high school student population
- Saw a decline in alcohol usage among youth in the county
- Registered dips in other alcohol-use indicators, such as underage drinking and impaired driving

Chrissie Parris, interim director for the alliance, which is also known as ASAP, characterized those reports as "big wins" and "good signs" for the county during a recent interview with The Laker/Lutz News. "The message seems to be getting out there," Parris said, regarding the dangers of drugs and alcohol. But, there continues to be much work to be done by ASAP — a coalition which seeks to address the underlying issues of addiction, and ways to address and prevent it in among youths and adults. The opioid crisis will continue to be a priority area for ASAP in 2019, Parris said.



COURTESY OF THE PASCO COUNTY ALLIANCE FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

Since it was founded in 2006, the Pasco County Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention (ASAP) has helped coordinate community efforts to reduce risk factors for addiction and substance abuse countywide.

Reducing alcohol abuse will be a key issue, too. Parris said ASAP has seen an increase in total deaths in related to alcohol overconsumption — despite the decline in alcohol usage in the youth population countywide. Chronic liver disease also remains one of the top 10 causes of death in Pasco, she said. "Alcohol is never off of the table," Parris said. "It's still the most prevalent drug that we see." Meanwhile, she said the organization will seek to address a drug that has popped up

See SPAR, page 15A

See ASAP, page 15A

INSIDE, PAGE 1B

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COURTESY OF PASCO COUNTY FIRE

Pasco County Fire Rescue was among numerous agencies responding to a two-alarm blaze at the Dade City Business Center. It took 19 hours to put the fire out. Pasco County Fire Rescue investigators attributed the cause of the fire to welding being done by an employee.

Responders' work praised in Dade City Business Center fire

The Laker/Lutz News Staff Report

Pasco County Commission Chairman Ron Oakley praised the work of emergency responders who converged on the Dade City Business Center, in Dade City, to put out a two-alarm fire, which began in the early afternoon on Jan. 18.

It took about 18 hours to bring the fire under control, according to a report from Pasco County Fire Rescue.

Pasco County Fire Rescue investigators attributed the cause of the fire to welding being done by an employee. The estimated damage to the business center was put at \$3 million.

Oakley said local firefighters were joined by crews from other counties and received support from various agencies, in the quest to put out the raging fire.

"At the height of the fire, there were approximately 114 personnel on the scene working to mitigate the incident," Oakley told his fellow Pasco County commissioners, during the board's Jan. 22 meeting.

"There were no injuries. That's the best part of the whole thing," Oakley said.

"The fire started about 12:30 or 1 o'clock on Friday. You could see it from downtown Dade City. Just black smoke. It was hard to figure what was going on at the time.

"It started in one warehouse and it moved from one to three warehouses, and it affected five out of seven businesses right in that area in the business center," Oakley said.

Combating the fire involved having to shut down the railway, which is no easy feat, he said.

Fortunately, there was sufficient water at the business center site to battle the blaze, Oakley said. Otherwise, crews would have had to close U.S. 301 to get to the closest water, Oakley said.

The commission chairman said he plans to send a letter thanking everyone who helped, including various agencies and the businesses that provided food to feed those working the incident.



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In the two years since Ron Ierna opened his new company, Lakeside Heating, Cooling & Plumbing, he has created a culture of technical expertise and exceptional customer service that has helped hundreds of Tampa Bay families with their air conditioning and plumbing needs.

"I've been in this business for almost 25 years, both as a technician and owner of two HVAC companies," said Ierna. "That experience has allowed me to hire the most qualified A/C and plumbing technicians in the area, and to build an office staff that always focuses on the customer."

Ierna is a Florida native, growing up in Lutz and graduating from Land O' Lakes High School. He went to work in the A/C industry after high school, and discovered that he had the aptitude and skills needed to excel as a technician.

A few years later, he started his first A/C company with a partner, which grew to over 65 employees by the time he left that business in 2016 to start Lakeside Heating, Cooling & Plumbing.

"I took all that I learned from my previous business, and applied it to make Lakeside successful," said Ierna. "I plan to keep this company small, with no more than 10 service vehicles on the road, to ensure that I can provide my customers top-notch technicians and a more personalized experience."

Ierna's experience and passion for customer service is key to Lakeside's quick success.

"After 24 years of helping families with their A/C and plumbing problems, I've seen every problem there is, and can quickly and accurately assess the best course of action when someone calls," said Ierna.

In addition to making service calls himself, Ierna employs licensed HVAC and plumbing technicians, all who are highly skilled craftsmen who specialize in designing, engineering, servicing



Owner, Ron Ierna

and installing HVAC systems and water heaters.

This expertise allows Lakeside Heating, Cooling & Plumbing to specialize in helping families with A/C units that are 10 to 15 years old.

"There are thousand of homes in Lutz, Land O' Lakes and Wesley Chapel that were built in the early 2000s, and whose air conditioning systems need service and upgrades," said Ierna. "We can save these homeowners a lot of money and stress if they call before the system breaks down in the heat of the summer."

Lowering your energy cost is another reason to upgrade your A/C system, Ierna adds.

"Most people see savings of 20 to 50 percent on their power bill when they upgrade to a new system with a higher SEER rating," he said. "All the units we install have a minimum SEER rating of 14, and our top-rated, quietest Rheem system gives an unbelievable rating of 20.5."

Lakeside Heating, Cooling & Plumbing is proud to be recognized as a Rheem Pro Partner, a prestigious designation awarded by the manufacturer to contractors who adhere to continuing education, professionalism and exceptional customer service guideline. The company has also earned an A-plus rating from the Better Business Bureau, an A Rating from Angie's List, and is a 5 Star Contractor with HomeAdvisor.

"We are very proud of these honors bestowed on our company,

which is a reflection of the quality work of our entire team," said Ierna.

In addition to Rheem air-conditioning systems, it also installs systems made by Trane, Goodman, Frigidaire and Mitsubishi. Both Duke Energy and TECO offer rebates of up to \$800 to customers who replace their old system with a new unit that has a SEER rating of 15 or higher.

The plumbing division of the company installs water filtration systems and hot water heaters, and helps homeowners qualify for up to \$550 in water tank rebates with the purchase of tankless gas system. Lakeside takes care of all rebate paperwork for its customers through its customer service department.

Working alongside Ierna in the field is Omar Matos, Michael Moody, Robert Love, Richard Harrilal and Robert Goldsborough, who all strive to use their vast expertise to provide the best experience for each and every customer. Jackie Horruitiner and Amy Miranda work in customer service.

Lakeside Heating, Cooling & Plumbing is located on U.S. 41 in Land O' Lakes. Its central location gives it fast access to customers in Pasco, Hillsborough and Hernando counties.

"We take our responsibility very seriously when you place your trust in us," said Ron. "Please give us a call, and see what you've been missing."



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Spring is the time to plant cheerful flowers

By Nicole Pinson

Special to The Laker/Lutz News

Florida has a long warm season and a shorter cool season.

We are now in our cooler months, which is a time to plant cool season annuals.

An annual is a plant that completes its life cycle in one season. These annuals offer bright color choices. They are plants such as pansies and petunias that might remind us of "up North."

You can plant many annual, spring flowers January through April.

You may also want to mix spring flowers into your existing containers and landscape beds. When planting flowers in containers, choose pots that are large enough for the plants. Pots that are too small may dry out quickly, which requires more frequent watering. Flower pots that are too small may also stress plants by causing them to repeatedly wilt and bounce back.

Spring flowers planted in clumps or masses will look more dramatic than flowers planted in small groups or individually.

Be sure to find out if your spring flowers prefer full sun or part shade. For example, most wax begonias would prefer some relief from afternoon sun and grow best in a part-shade environment.

Have you ever wondered what a snapdragon tastes like? Consider planting a few edible spring flowers. Edible flowers add a nice touch when used as a garnish to soups, salads and other dishes. It's fun to eat flowers with kids, and edible flowers can help them appreciate the garden.

Easy to try edible spring flowers include



COURTESY OF NICOLE PINSON

Petunias are cool season annuals that may be grown in the landscape, flower pots, or hanging baskets. Some petunias are fragrant and smell lovely during the evening.

dianthus, pansies, Johnny jump-ups, and snapdragons. Do not eat flowers that have been treated with pesticides.

Some annual plants perform double-duty. Not only are they beautiful flowers, but they also provide nectar and pollen for pollinators. If you'd like to plant spring flowers to attract pollinators, try ageratum, dahlberg daisies, melampodium and zinnias.

Most spring flowers require little care. If you compost or amend your soil with organic matter, mix that in before you plant your flowers. You can apply a slow-release fertilizer, add a 2-inch to 3-inch layer of mulch around the base of plants to conserve water, and water when needed.

Watering with a handheld wand or micro-irrigation may reduce damage to flowers that can be caused by overhead irrigation.

Perform routine pinching or "deadheading" to remove spent flowers and encourage the formation of new flower buds.

To deadhead flowers:

- Look for blooms or flower clusters that are past their prime and have already bloomed.
 - Cut these back to a node with hand pruners or floral scissors (A node is a place on the plant stem where leaves develop).
 - Make a cut just above the node and compost the spent flower stems.
- This practice helps plants stay healthy, in-

vest their energy into producing more flowers and keeps them from getting leggy.

As you deadhead your flowers, learn whether or not these old flower stalks contain seeds.

The seeds of some flowers may be planted easily in the garden, or in small pots, to provide you with more plants and more color.

Scout or check your garden for pests regularly. Many pests that affect spring flowers, such as aphids and mealybugs, may be treated with less toxic products, such as insecticidal soaps and horticultural oils. These products are available at local garden centers and nurseries.

Protect your plants during frosts by covering them with frost fabric, a sheet or blanket, or a cardboard box.

Don't forget to enjoy your flowers indoors. Examples of spring flowers that make great indoor flower arrangements include snapdragons, dianthus, cosmos, delphinium and gomphrena. Use them, along with your garden greenery (palm leaves, fern fronds, shrub branches), to make inexpensive bouquets.

Share photos of your spring flower garden on our Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Facebook page.

Sources for this column included these IFAS publications, "Natural Products for Managing Landscape and Garden Pests in Florida" and "Gardening with Annuals in Florida."

For additional information, or sources of information on this topic, contact pinsonn@hcfllgov.net or (813) 744-5519, ext. 54145.

Nicole Pinson is the Urban Horticulture Agent in Hillsborough County.

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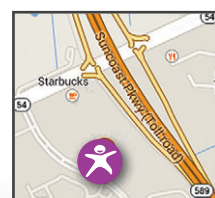
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Danny Burgess bids farewell to House District 38

The Laker/Lutz News Staff Report

Gov. Ron DeSantis' selection of Danny Burgess to serve as the state's executive director of Florida's Department of Veterans Affairs has been confirmed, and Burgess has issued a letter of farewell to his constituents in House District 38.

The letter recounts Burgess' love for Pasco County, the wonderful memories he has and his love for serving the community.

"I could not imagine a better place to grow up and, now, watch my children create their own lasting memories here," Burgess wrote.

He also noted that the two fundamental questions that have guided his life and public service have been:

- Is this the right decision for my family?
- How can I best serve my community to achieve the greatest good?

Although he did not seek his new appointment, he decided to accept it, keeping those two questions in mind, he wrote.

When he was offered the appointment, he said, "I felt it my duty to accept. We owe each and every service member a debt of gratitude, and if I can do my part to make the lives of our veterans healthy, prosperous and safe, I am humbled to be in a position to do so."

He also told the constituents of District 38 that's not leaving the community.

"Pasco County and Zephyrhills are my home, and my wife Courtney and I could not think of raising our three children anywhere else. The headquarters for the FDVA is right here in the Tampa Bay Area. So, while I may no longer be your State Representative, I will continue to be your neighbor and friend."

Burgess also noted, "It is only by the grace of God and the unconditional support of my friends and family that I have this op-



Danny Burgess

portunity to help make a positive difference in the lives of others by serving those who served us."

He then specifically thanked his wife, Courtney, and their three children; his parents; Gov. DeSantis; and colleagues in the House of Representatives, especially Speaker Jose Oliva, Chairman Chris Sprowls, Sen. Wilton Simpson and the entire Pasco County delegation; and his staff, Robin Ringeisen and Jonathan Till.

Finally, he thanked his family and friends in District 38.

"Sometimes it's easy in times of political acrimony and gridlock to forget the amazing accomplishments we've made together for our District," he wrote, including renewed economic development opportunities, securing record funding in state appropriations, transportation improvement projects, and consumer friendly legislation.

Burgess recently won a third term for District 38, so a special election will be held to fill the seat he is vacating.

State grant supports Pasco business park

By B.C. Manion

bcmansion@lakerlutznews.com

Pasco County has announced the receipt of a \$3 million state grant to support the development of the Overpass Business Park.

The business park is intended to promote economic development in Pasco County.

The county received a grant for \$3,088,580 from the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund, according to a news release from the county.

The grant will support the creation of the Overpass Business Park project.

At its completion, the project will be home to 2.2 million square feet of industrial and office development, and will support between 4,000 and 5,000 jobs, the news release says.

"Overpass Business Park represents another realization of Pasco County's ongoing commitment to strategic, robust economic growth, and we sincerely thank the State for its partnership in moving this critical initia-

tive forward," Pasco County Economic Growth Manager David Engel said, in the release.

The 100-acre, shovel-ready economic development site overlooks Interstate 75 and is 1.5 miles north of State Road 54. It is just south of the proposed new connection at Overpass Road and I-75.

The project design is in its final stages.

By 2022-2023, the site improvements will be completed and Overpass Business Park will be ready for development, the release says.

The Florida Job Growth Grant Fund was established in 2017 by Gov. Rick Scott and the Florida Legislature. It provides \$85 million for improving public infrastructure and enhancing workforce training in Florida, the release says.

For more information about the Pasco County Office of Economic Growth, visit bit.ly/PascoEconomicGrowth.

To stay abreast of the Overpass Business Park Project progress, visit bit.ly/OverpassBusinessPark.

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Middle – Amy Uhal | VP SR. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

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Right – Jeffrey Gonzalez | BRANCH MANAGER

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Closer Look

AN ADVERTISER PROFILE

Land O' Lakes' Newest Salon

Special to The Laker / Lutz News

When Tabitha Anton decided to open a hair salon with her friend and coworker, Ashley Catrett, she wanted to create a family culture reminiscent of old-time barber-shops, where friends and neighbors gathered to socialize while having their hair cut. And, this is what her new shop, Stylist Inside, is all about.

"Our clientele have come to be a part of our family," Anton said. "They come. They hang out, even when they're not getting their hair done."

Robert Anthony handles the technology needs of the business and creates social media posts for the salon.

"Our posts invite guests to just stop by to say hi, because they are our friends first, before they are clients and customers," Anton said. "We have guests, friends, family, and that's how we would like to keep it. Most of your chain salons are purely get-in-the-door and get-out places, and that's not what we're all about."

Stylist Inside is a full-service hair salon for men, women and children, offering haircuts, color, highlighting, lowlighting, relaxers, waxing, flat ironing, conditioning treatments, thermal smoothing, Malibu treatments, flattops, fades and special event styling. The shop uses Matrix products, and will also be adding Nioxin and Redken to its product line.

Color is one of the specialties offered at Stylist Inside.

"We can do colors that make your hair look very natural," Anton said. "We can do fun and bold and exciting colors. Whatever somebody wants, we will go to every extreme to give it to them."

Stylist Inside offers online check-in through Mindbody.com, and also welcomes walk-ins. First responders, active



L-R Robert Anthony, Tabitha Anton, Ashley Catrett and Alice Anton.

duty military and law enforcement officers receive \$10 haircuts or 10 percent off. Monday and Wednesday, from 3pm-6pm, we offer \$10 cuts for children.

Starting a small business is a collaborative enterprise involving many supporters, contractors, and regulatory bodies, and Anton and Catrett are thankful for the smooth process they experienced starting their business, and all the help they received along the way.

"I want to thank all the people who have gotten us here," Anton said. "Our clientele, SunTrust Bank, the plumber, the electrician, the floor guy, the person who did my sign, my mom—who came up with some money when we didn't have enough. I just want to thank all these people, because we would not be here today if it weren't for the people who got us here."

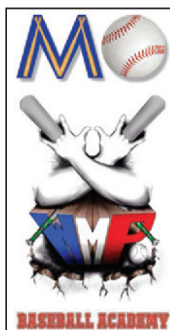
Being active members of the Central Pasco Chamber of Commerce, Anton is especially grateful for all the help they have received from everyone at the Chamber.

Come out and say hello. Stylist Inside is located in the former Central Pasco Chamber of Commerce building on Land O' Lakes Boulevard, a half mile north of State Road 54 in Land O' Lakes.



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30 winners will be randomly selected on February 14th. Each of the winners will receive 4 tickets to the Renaissance Festival. Tickets will be mailed to winners. Deadline for entry is February 13, 2019. **ONLY ONE ENTRY PER HOUSEHOLD.**

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HOW-TO SEMINARS

Hope Services, 2406 Cypress Glen Drive in Wesley Chapel, will offer free How-to Seminars on the first Monday of each month from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., starting Feb. 4.

These are informative sessions for persons with disabilities and their supporting families.

Group seminars focus on mindfulness and goal setting; self-awareness and emotional regulation; time management and organizational skills; challenges of adjusting expectations; maintaining balance; and, coping skills.

The topic for Feb. 4 is self-awareness and emotional support.

The meetings are guided by a licensed clinician.

For information, all (813) 907-1903.

GET MOVING WITH ZUMBA

The Arthenia L. Joyner University Area Community Library, 13619 N. 22nd St., in Tampa, will offer "Get Moving Zumba" Feb. 4 at 5:15 p.m.

This total workout combines cardio, muscle conditioning, balance and flexibility, and helps boost energy.

For information, call (813) 273-3652.

AORTIC STENOSIS

The Heart Institute at Regional Medical Center Bayonet Point will host a Tuesday Tutorial on Feb. 5, at the Rao Musunuru M.D. Conference Center, 14100 Yosemite Drive in Hudson, on the topic of aortic stenosis.

The guest speaker will be Dr. Keshav Ramireddy, board certified in cardiovascular disease and interventional cardiology.

Registration and lunch start at 11:30 a.m., followed by the tutorial at noon.

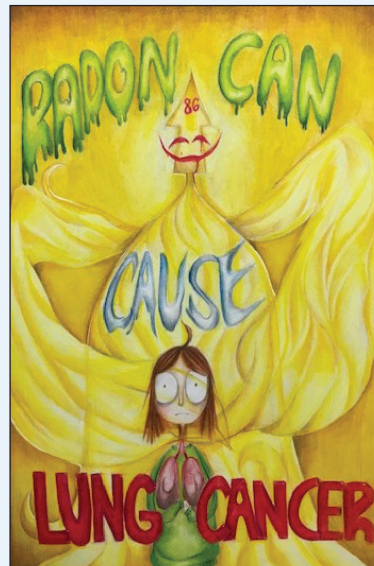
Admission is free. A complimentary lunch will be served.

Reservations are required by calling (727) 869-5498.

HEART SEMINARS

AdventHealth Wesley Chapel will offer two heart seminars on Feb. 5:

- "Heart to Heart" at noon, in the fourth-floor classroom. Dr. Paul Citrin will discuss the importance of knowing the signs and symptoms of heart disease, and how it can save your life.



COURTESY OF FLORIDAHEALTH.GOV

First-place winner Arina Mubarakshina's "Unsuspecting Victim" poster

BRINGING AWARENESS TO RADON DANGERS

The Florida Department of Health highlighted National Radon Action Month in January with the announcement of the winners of the 2019 Florida Radon Poster Contest.

First place was awarded to Arina Mubarakshina, "Unsuspecting Victim."

Second place went to Emma Ortiz's "Radon Has No Upside."

Ava Nash, "Safe Home, Safe Life" won third place; and honorable mention was for Lily Shahid's "Radon Possesses Your Lungs."

Radon is a cancer-causing radioactive gas that cannot be seen, smelled or touched.

Radon in indoor air causes an estimated 21,000 lung cancer deaths every year, and is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States after smoking.

For information on how to test your home for radon, visit Radon.FloridaHealth.gov.

NEW DENTAL CHAIR

The Department of Health Pasco Dental Program received a new dental operator chair at the Cox Dental Clinic in Dade City.

The chair replaced a 20-year-old chair that was previously at the dental clinic, which was located at Cox Elementary School, and will aid in providing dental treatment for students at the Title 1 elementary school, and surrounding schools.

The new chair was purchased using Pasco County Special Project Funding, and cost \$11,676.

MEDICATION SAFETY

The Lutz Senior Center, 112 First Ave., N.W., will present a medication safety game Jan. 31 at 1 p.m.

Participants can play medication-safety "Jeopardy," while earning tips for safety with University of South Florida pharmacy students.

For information, call (813) 264-3804.

JOINT REPLACEMENT

The Medical Center of Trinity, 9330 State Road 54, will offer a seminar on "Revision Joint Replacement: Preventing Problems and How to Manage Them" Jan. 31 at noon.

The guest speaker will be Dr. Stephen Hanff, orthopedic surgeon.

A light meal will be provided. Reservations are required.

For information and to RSVP, call (727) 834-5630, or email MedicalCenterTrinity@hcahealthcare.com.

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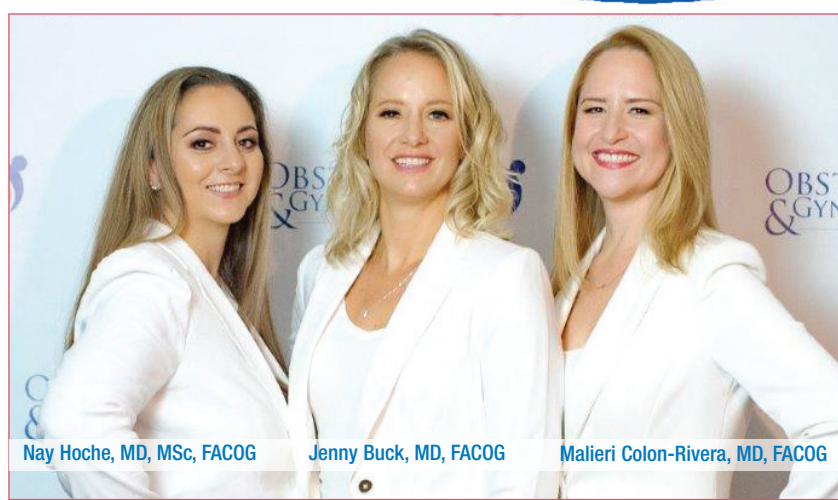
Join the Pasco County Sheriff's Office to raise awareness to end human trafficking for a concert and candlelight vigil Feb. 2 from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., a Trinity College of Florida, 2430 Welbilt Blvd., in Trinity.

Jonny Diaz will be the guest performer.

All donations will benefit organizations

The Laker/Lutz News likes to keep our readers informed about available classes, seminars, lectures and events regarding health and wellness issues. Hospitals, doctors, individual practitioners and anyone related to the health care industry can submit information, at least two weeks in advance, to be considered for publication. Photos of events, recognitions and so on, also are welcome. Submissions should include who, what, where, when, cost, contact information, identifications for individuals in a photo (unless it is a large group), and a photo credit. This information should be emailed to news@lakerlutznews.com.

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COURTESY OF PATRICIA SERIO

In support of our troops

Members of the GFWC Lutz-Land O' Lakes Woman's Club regularly volunteer at the Wesley Chapel warehouse of Support the Troops, packing many boxes of needed items to be shipped to military serving overseas. The club has supported this organization for many years through donations and volunteer hours. From left are Dee Knerr, Nancy Taylor and Nat Cunningham.

County and United Way help during shutdown

The Laker/Lutz News Staff Report

Pasco County and United Way of Pasco have stepped up to help keep some local nonprofit agencies operating during the federal government shutdown.

The Pasco County Commission approved a \$400,000 temporary loan to help the agencies in danger of ceasing operations during the federal government shutdown, due to funding shortages.

The county is loaning the money to United Way, which will act as an intermediary — lending the money to the agencies in need, which will reimburse the United Way, which, in turn, will repay the county's loan.

Chuck Anderson, director of United Way,

told commissioners: "The federal government shutdown has had a huge impact on agencies, individuals, a lot of people.

"A survey was done of our agencies, two in particular who are in danger of not being able to continue their programs if they do not receive some type of interim funding between now and the first of the upcoming month," he said.

The funds must be repaid within 60 days of the conclusion of the federal government shutdown.

Anderson thanked commissioners for stepping in to help.

"There are so many people who would go unserved without this support, so thank you on their behalf," Anderson said.

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Chalk Talk

Send school news to news@lakerlutznews.com

LITERACY BOOK DRIVE

Goodwill's BookWorks childhood literacy program starts Feb. 1 and runs through March 15. People are encouraged to donate children's books in good condition or to make a donation to purchase books for the program.

The BookWorks program promotes literacy by giving books to children from families with low incomes. Goodwill volunteers read to children at Head Start centers and other locations, and then present each child with a personalized book to take home.

Last year, BookWorks presented books to more than 41,000 children.

To donate books, attach a note indicating they are for "BookWorks," and drop the books off at any Goodwill-Suncoast store or donation site in Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, Hernando, Sumter, Marion or Highlands counties.

For locations, visit Goodwill-suncoast.org, or call (888) 279-1988.

SCIENCE & ENGINEERING FAIR

The Pasco Secondary Regional Science & Engineering Fair will take place Feb. 2 at Thomas E. Weightman Middle School, 30649 Wells Road in Wesley Chapel.

Judging will be from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Public viewing will be open from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. An awards ceremony will take place 3 p.m., at the Center for the Arts at Wesley Chapel, 30651 Wells Road.

Students in the regional fair have won their school science and engineering fair competition.

If they place in the regional fair, students are eligible for a variety of prizes, and top winners move on to the state competition.

GUEST TEACHER HIRING EVENT

Qualified applicants who want to substitute teach in Pasco County can attend the "Guest Teacher Hiring Event" Feb. 6 from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., at the Pasco County Schools district office complex, 7227 Land O' Lakes Blvd., Building 2, in Land O' Lakes.

Pasco Schools is looking for guest teachers and professional guest teachers.

Qualified applicants can interview on-the-spot.

A high school diploma or GED is required to be a guest teacher. Pay depends on level of education and length of substitute teaching assignment.

All guest teachers must complete a 20-hour training course, work a minimum of 10 days per semester, and be available to work on short notice.

Professional guest teachers must have a minimum bachelor's degree in a certified subject and have a current teaching certifi-

cate. The professionals fill in for teachers on leave for 30 days or more.

Anyone interested should preregister at HirePasco.eventbrite.com.

DEAN'S LIST HONOREES

- Lauren Dobles, of Lutz: Emerson College (Boston, Massachusetts)
- Carson Oakes, of Odessa: Berry College (Rome, Georgia)
- Sarah Sprague, of Lutz: Berry College (Rome, Georgia)
- Mariela Deynes Tofani, of Lutz: Emerson College (Boston, Massachusetts)

ESSAY CONTEST

Pasco County Tax Collector Mike Fasano's offices are accepting entries for an essay contest, for Pasco County's high school students in grades 9 to 12.

Students of Pasco County's public/charter, private, parochial, non-public and home-schools can enter.

In 500 words or less, students should answer the question, "Should property taxes be raised or lowered? What would be the impact of whichever decision you make?"

Entries will be judged by a panel of directors from the tax collector's office, and will be reviewed on how well the student communicates the response to the question, as well as overall essay structure, appearance and readability.

All entries must include the student's name, school, grade and contact information.

Students should submit essays to their principal, who will then forward it to the tax collector's office.

Those in private, parochial, non-public or home-schools can send essays directly to Greg Giordano, assistant tax collector, Pasco County Tax Collector's Office, P.O. Box 276, Dade City, FL 33526.

Entries also will be accepted by email to ggiordano@pascotaxes.com.

The deadline to enter is 5 p.m., Feb. 28.

The winner will be notified by telephone no later than March 22.

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR WOMEN

GFWC Florida will award two \$3,000 scholarships to women returning to college who need financial assistance for education to achieve their goal to gain employment and become self-sufficient.

Recipients must be a Florida resident and attend an accredited Florida public college, university or technical school as a full-time student.

The recipient's application, personal statement and two references must be submitted by email to GFWCflscholarshipprogram@gmail.com.

The application and recommended forms are available online at GFWCFlorida.org, under Member Resources, Grants, Scholarships and Awards.

The deadline for applications is March 1.

For more information about the program, contact Candi Aubin at (850) 508-3107 or aubin5@aol.com.

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Every semester, Cypress Creek Middle High School recognizes its students who excel, during a Howl-a-bration. The school's mission is to 'H.O.W.L.' — Have a growth mindset, Own your education, Work as a community and Lead responsibly. Seventh-grader Jacob Valdes proudly holds his certificate, while Matthew Vreeland, also in seventh grade, accepts his outstanding student award from Jena Ferry, assistant principal HS 216.

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and to begin the process again "and that the evaluation process be more thoroughly documented."

Commissioner Jack Mariano seconded Wells' motion.

But, Commissioner Mike Moore told his colleagues: "I've got citizens waiting for this project to happen in that area. We've worked hard on this. I want to hear from staff."

Stacey Ziegler, the county's purchasing director, told the board: "We followed the process that we've been following the last six months, since we updated our purchasing manual."

"There were no actual comments that were written down specific to the evaluation committee members, but, if you listen to the tape, they did have full discussion."

"We feel like we've done our due diligence and that our recommendation should stand," Ziegler said.

Moore said starting over would delay the project for months.

"They're already scheduling for these new leagues to be inside. We need this to happen on the timeline we told them it was going to happen," Moore said.

Commissioner Kathryn Starkey asked: "Did we have anybody protest the selection?"

Ziegler responded: "No."

Then Mariano weighed in about the county's evaluation process, in general. "I don't like the way that these committees are set up. I'd like to have a commissioner sit on it," Mariano said. "A local firm didn't even make the top nine, and I think the competency was there."

That's why he supported Wells' motion, Mariano added.

Commissioner Starkey rejected Mariano's suggestion. "I 100 percent disagree with putting a commissioner on an evaluation like that. There's a lot of political pressure," she said, adding she's aware of commissioners who have wound up in prison because of improprieties.

"There is a reason why our county attorney has strongly recommended that commissioners stay off those kinds of committees," Starkey said.

Wells said this is only the second time he's pulled this type of recommendation.

"I'm not trying to disrespect our team," he said.

"What's concerning to me is the point spread. The way this process works is that each individual person scores it and then they go to the meeting and they discuss it."

"Sometimes it is hard for me to understand how they scored it, when there are no notes," Wells said.

He reiterated his call for starting over.

"I think this is the fairest way to do it," Wells said.

Starkey disagreed: "I feel we have competent staff who pick competent companies based on the criteria that are in front of



Mike Wells



Mike Moore

them. "At the end of the day, I trust our staff, and I feel time is of the essence and we should move forward," she said.

Moore asked what the county would gain by going through the process again.

"If it goes out for bid again, and they write their comments down, and it ends up in the exact same order, what do we get out of it?" Moore asked.

Mariano noted that Spring Engineering was the only local company and it didn't make the top four.

"We're trying to push local companies, local jobs," Mariano said, adding perhaps there was some bias relating to some other work done by the company in the past.

County Administrator Dan Biles responded: "The evaluation committee can only evaluate the packet that is before them."

County Attorney Jeffrey Steinsnyder told the board: "You clearly do have the right to reject all bids."

But, he noted: "You've got a series of qualified folks. You've got a short list before you. "Rejecting all proposals. You may not get the same group of people proposing."

Starkey warned her colleagues: "I think we open the door for trouble, if we're going to throw this out, because there weren't any notes."

Moore urged commissioners to act on staff's recommendation.

"This facility was supposed to be part of the park many, many years ago.

The basketball leagues play outdoors.

"For one thing, it's very hot to play on cement. There's no covering out there," Moore said. Plus, "they get rained out, constantly."

He also noted that there's no place for boys and girls to play volleyball.

"They're literally going to New Tampa to play volleyball. Or, they travel over to Land O' Lakes," Moore said.

"You're looking at almost a 1,000 kids that are going to be put off a season," Moore said.

When it appeared the board was heading for a vote, Mariano pulled his second. He said he didn't want to delay the project.

But, Wells maintained his opposition. "It's about picking the most qualified person. I don't feel we did that," he said.

Mariano also asked county staff to find out whether other counties have a commissioner on their evaluation committees.

Starkey retorted: "Start with Broward County, you'll have to go to the prison to interview some of them."

"It puts the state in a great position," Mariano said.

Unlike medical marijuana, which must be cultivated indoors, in controlled conditions, hemp can be grown outdoors, Mariano said.

"With all of this open farmland that we have, you can actually grow the hemp. Florida, especially in our area, we can actually get three crops year out of it. That could be a huge boon for us, to go stimulate agricultural, stimulate maybe some manufacturing," Mariano said.

Joseph Heinzman, representing the Florida Sustainable Agriculture Coop, explained the difference between hemp and marijuana during the Jan. 8 discussion.

"Because they did go ahead and pass it at the federal level, several of Florida's laws are going to have to change over the next six months to a year," Heinzman said.

"As it stands right now, medical marijuana dispensaries are the only companies that can grow hemp in Florida. That's causing, for lack of a better word, a monopoly at the moment."

ASAP, from page 1A

on its radar of late: methamphetamine.

More drug users have turned to meth as law enforcement and health organizations crack down on other substances, she added.

"A lot of it has to do with availability and accessibility," Parris said, also noting that meth "creates a strong psychological dependence very quickly."

Parris said ASAP is trying to find ways to interface with meth users in the county.

Parris put it this way: "We have a hard time finding out, 'What's the underlying cause there?' and 'Why are we still turning to meth?' It seems to be more of a cultural thing in certain pockets of the county."

Another "big priority" for ASAP this year is reducing the stigma associated with mental health issues, Parris said.

Part of that involves increasing awareness regarding the need to recognize early signs and symptoms of possible mental illness, and helping those who are struggling to gain access to assistance.

The coalition also is working on several programming tracks with health care professionals, recovery community organizations and the faith-based community, to provide

Heinzman's organization is working to change state laws so farmers can grow hemp without the fear of it being considered marijuana.

He explained that hemp can be used for fiber and other products.

Commissioner Mike Wells spoke in favor of the shift.

"I was in Georgia a couple of weeks ago and they've got hemp farms there. I know the freeze kills it. We need it. It's coming," he said. "I think we need to lead this. It would be a cool thing for the east side of the county for those farmers who can't have citrus anymore. They can harvest that."

Commissioner Mike Moore noted that it's possible today to go into retail stores to purchase clothing, handbags and other items made using hemp fibers.

Commissioner Kathryn Starkey also talked about various uses of hemp, including for birdseed, bedding for animals, and the manufacture of oil-based paints, and creams, moisturizing agents, cooking and plastic.

"I don't doubt that this going to get fixed by the Legislature," Starkey said. "I think if our state waits a long time, it puts our state at a disadvantage."

more awareness on available resources for substance abuse prevention and recovery.

There will also be several workshops and other general meetings throughout the year to engage youth, parents and other community members, Parris said.

"We're trying to help everybody work better together, to fill in those gaps in services or pockets of need in our community."

"We'll continue to build our action plans around drugs that we see trends with in Pasco County," Parris said.

The alliance also plans to have its annual conference, "Strengthening Our Communities on Mental Health and Drug Prevention," on May 14 at Saddlebrook Resort in Wesley Chapel.

The event's keynote speaker is Austin Eubanks, a Columbine survivor, who will

discuss how he treated a lot of his emotional pain with opioids he was prescribed after being shot in the school shooting, and what communities can do for prevention, treatment, recovery and relapse prevention for substance abuse.

"It's pretty powerful," Parris said of Eubanks' talk. "We're really excited to have him on board."

For more information on ASAP, visit PascoASAP.com, or call (727) 315-8658.



ASAP interim coordinator Chrissie Parris

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Cypress Creek girls soccer finds success in year two

By Kevin Weiss

kweiss@lakerlutznews.com

They went from one of Pasco's worst, to one of the firsts.

That's one way to describe the turnaround the Cypress Creek varsity girls' soccer team experienced this season.

After winning just three games in its inaugural campaign during the 2017-18 season, the Coyotes this year emerged as one of the county's top programs.

They finished the season with an 11-4 mark — quite the contrast to last year's 3-13 finish.

It included wins against such rival schools as Land O' Lakes, Pasco, Sunlake, Wesley Chapel and Wiregrass Ranch, each of whom have fielded top-flight squads over the years.

In fact, the Coyotes went undefeated against all of its Pasco opponents.

The team's only defeats came against private schools: Berkeley Prep, Clearwater Central Catholic, Academy of the Holy Names, and a season-ending 1-0 loss in the District 9-2A quarterfinals to Tampa Catholic.

The Coyotes biggest accomplishment, however, was winning the Sunshine Athletic Conference East championship.

It marked the first conference championship for any boys' or girls' sport for the second-year Wesley Chapel-based school.

They claimed the title after securing late-season conference wins against Pasco (5-0) and Wiregrass Ranch (2-1), respectively.

"It's super exciting," Coyotes second-year head coach Jennifer Richardson said of the conference crown. "It's a great accomplishment for the team, for the school. The girls were very excited and they knew what was on the line in the last game, and they came and they played hard."

Said senior sweeper Katelyn Leavines: "It makes me proud that I know I can end my senior year like this, and, like helping the school bring its first conference championship in history...makes me really happy."

She added, "Going from winning three games last year to now being conference champs, it just shows like the dedication that we all have and the hard work that we put in to make it happen."

So, how exactly did Cypress Creek secure a winning season so quickly?



COURTESY OF JENNIFER RICHARDSON

The Cypress Creek varsity girls soccer team recently won the first conference championship among all sports in school history.

2018-2019 Cypress Creek girls varsity soccer roster

Jennifer Richardson, head coach
Abby Murphy, junior, midfielder
Alina Vizza, junior, goalkeeper
Anna Margetis, junior, defender
Briana Rivera, freshman, midfielder
Brianna Sharpe, freshman, midfielder
Emily Dominguez, freshman, striker
Hailey Canady, freshman, goalkeeper/striker
Katelyn Leavines, senior, sweeper
Raegan Bourne, junior, forward
Riley Copeland, junior, defender
Rylee Crawford, freshman, defender
Rylie Showalter, freshman, defender
Sierra Rivera, senior, midfielder
Sofia Ibata, freshman, midfielder
Sophia Mitchell, junior, midfielder
Tiffany Pike, senior, goalkeeper/defender
Ximena Garcia, freshman, midfielder

Game-by-game results for 2018-2019 season

Nov. 12: Gulf (8-1 win)

Nov. 14: Wesley Chapel (3-2 win)

Nov. 15: at Brooke DeBartolo Collegiate (5-0 win)

Nov. 26: Sunlake (3-1 win)

Nov. 27: Berkeley Prep (3-0 loss)

Nov. 29: Tampa Prep (2-1 win)

Dec. 4: Clearwater Central Catholic (4-1 loss)

Dec. 7: at Land O' Lakes (3-2 win)

Dec. 11: at Fivay (4-2 win)

Dec. 13: at Academy of the Holy Names (8-0 loss)

Jan. 9: at Tampa Prep (1-0 win)

Jan. 11: Tampa Catholic (4-1 win)

Jan. 18: Pasco (5-0 win)

Jan. 22: Wiregrass Ranch (2-1 win)

Jan. 25: District 9-2A quarterfinals Tampa Catholic (1-0 loss)

An influx of talented newcomers — including a group of eight freshman — bolstered a roster that previously lacked much soccer experience.

"Last year we didn't have as many players that were soccer players. We had people that came out to the team that had never played soccer before, so this year, more people came out to play that had played soccer previously," Richardson explained.

The most significant addition perhaps was junior goalkeeper Alina Vizza. She joined the team after not playing last year.

Vizza's contributions can be summed up in the team's goals allowed per game.

This year the team surrendered less than two goals per game, with three shutouts.

Compare that to last season, when the Coyotes gave up an average of 5.5 goals per game.

"She made a huge difference in our game," Richardson said. "She's tall. She knows how to

move in the right spot and cut the angles. She wants to win."

Freshman striker Emily Dominguez was another key addition. She finished the season as one of the team's top scorers with nine goals.

Meanwhile, the Coyotes returned some experienced playmakers in juniors Raegan Bourne (who led the team in with 12 goals and five assists) and Sophia Mitchell (nine goals).

The new-look squad brought a hard-nosed approach to each game.

"We're physical players," Richardson said. "We're tough, physical players. Our midfield is strong, physical."

An upbeat mindset and newfound confidence also helped throughout the season's course, players said.

Leavines put it this way: "Every week we always kept it positive no matter who we were playing, and, we never had an attitude

of, 'Oh, this team's going to beat us' or like, 'Oh, they're better than us.' We just kept it positive and knew that we had a chance every single time, and, to just play our hardest."

Added Dominguez: "It was like after our fifth game, and we kept winning, and all we could think about was winning, so we practiced hard...and it like improved us."

Losing just three seniors and all but one starter expected to return next season, Cypress Creek figures to be more than just a one-year wonder.

"The majority of our starting team will be back next year, which is good," Richardson said, "and I know that there's middle school girls that know how to play that are coming up, so it's exciting to know for the future that we're still going to have players for next year, and we're going to be a contender again."

"I think we shocked a lot of people, because last year we had three wins."

AATL football earns awards

By Kevin Weiss

kweiss@lakerlutznews.com

Accolades keep piling up for the back-to-back eight-man football state championship-winning Academy at the Lakes Wildcats.

Team members were well-represented on the 2018 Florida Christian Association of Private and Parochial Schools (FCAPPS) all-state, all-conference and miscellaneous award selections, which were recently announced.

A total of eight Academy players were recognized, including sophomore quarterback Jalen Brown, who won the FCAPPS Heisman Trophy Winner award, and senior linebacker Dylan Price, who was named FCAPPS Defensive Player of the Year.

The 6-foot-2, 180-pound Brown completed nearly 58 percent of his throws for 1,105 yards, 18 touchdowns and seven interceptions. He also rushed for 672 yards and 10 touchdowns on 93 carries.

Brown marks the Wildcats' second FCAPPS Heisman Trophy winner in as many years. He follows former Wildcats running back/linebacker Dylan Gonzalez, who won the 2017 Heisman award, after putting up big numbers on offense (1,125 yards, 28 total touchdowns) and defense (138 total tackles, 18 tackles for loss, 7.5

sacks, one interception) during his senior year.

The 5-foot-11, 175-pound Price, meanwhile, registered 99 total tackles, 17 sacks and four forced fumbles. (Also a running back, Price rushed for 566 yards and six touchdowns on 73 carries.)

Other Academy players receiving honors included: sophomore lineman Dwight Downing, junior defensive end Elijah Freedman, senior defensive back Jullian Jennings, sophomore lineman Andrew Kilfoyl, junior lineman Matthew Martin and senior tight end/defensive end Tioma Stepanets.

Additionally, Wildcats head coach Shawn Brown was named FCAPPS Coach of the Year, for the second straight year.

The 2018 Wildcats wrapped up a perfect 10-0 campaign after defeating Miami Citi Christian 36018 in the FCAPPS eight-man state championship game at Southeastern University in Lakeland; they also won the 2017 state title after beating Jacksonville Old Plank Christian Academy.

The team will enter the 2019 season on a 20-game win streak.

Academy at the Lakes will be formally recognized at the FCAPPS Players' Awards banquet on April 14 at noon, at Hillsborough Baptist School, 6021 Williams Road in Seffner.



FILE

The 2018 Academy at the Lakes Wildcats culminated a perfect 10-0 season by winning the FCAPPS (Florida Christian Association of Private and Parochial Schools) eight-man state championship in December. Eight players earned FCAPPS postseason awards, as well as head coach Shawn Brown, who was named the league's coach of the year.

Academy at the Lakes football FCAPPS honorees:

Head Coach Shawn Brown — FCAPPS Coach of the Year
Jalen Brown, sophomore — FCAPPS Heisman Trophy Winner/All-State Quarterback
Dwight Downing, sophomore — All-Conference Center
Elijah Freedman, junior — All-Conference Defensive End
Jullian Jennings, senior — All-State Defensive Back
Andrew Kilfoyl, sophomore — All-State Offensive Lineman
Matthew Martin, junior — FCAPPS Sportsmanship Award
Dylan Price, senior — FCAPPS Defensive Player of the Year/All-State Defensive End
Tioma Stepanets, senior — FCAPPS Spiritual Inspirational Award



ADULT SOFTBALL LEAGUE SIGN-UPS

Registration is open until Feb. 4 for the Pasco County Parks & Recreation Department/CAJS Enterprise 2019 Adult Softball Spring League.

The season begins the week of Feb. 11.

Coed games are played Mondays, church fellowship on Tuesdays, men's recreation on Wednesdays, seniors (over 50 years old) on Thursdays and men's competitive on Fridays.

All games are played in the evenings at Land O' Lakes Heritage Park, 5401 Land O' Lakes Blvd., Land O' Lakes.

The cost to enter a team is \$450, plus an additional \$25 for a National Softball Association (NSA) sanctioning fee. The price includes an 10-game regular season, plus playoffs.

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

"Adult Softball." Interested parties must first create an account and profile/username.

Sign-ups can also be done in person at the Land O' Lakes Recreation Complex, 3032 Collier Pkwy, Land O Lakes.

For information, visit CAJSenterprise.com, or email CAJSenterprise@yahoo.com.

SHOOTIN' FOR THE STARS

The Wesley Chapel Sunrise Rotary Club's fourth annual Shootin' for the Stars Clay Shoot is scheduled for Feb. 8 at Tampa Bay Sporting Clays, 10514 Ehren

Cutoff in Land O' Lakes.

Sign-in begins at 8 a.m., with the event starting promptly at 9 a.m.

The cost is \$125 per person, or \$400 for a foursome. Registration includes 50 rounds of sporting clay shot over seven stations, ammo, cart rental, lunch and cold beverages, individual challenges and more. Gun rentals are available.

Proceeds from the event will benefit underserved children and families at Quail Hollow Elementary.

To register, email pprzepis@kimseylaw.com.

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SUPER MARKETS

Dade City attracts thousands to 22nd Kumquat Festival

The Laker/Lutz News Staff Report

Thousands streamed to the 22nd annual Kumquat Festival in historic downtown Dade City on Jan. 26

In an open letter, John Moors, executive director of The Greater Dade City Chamber of Commerce, recapped the event, and offered a heartfelt expression of gratitude for the army of volunteers who helped to pull it off.

"Over 400 vendors and sponsors sold and promoted their wares and services," Moors said, in a news release.

"Our entertainment stage at the Historic Courthouse featured free live performances from wonderful local talent all day. Many of the shops and restaurants in Dade City, and the surrounding area, enjoyed their busiest day of the year," Moors added.

On behalf of the chamber, its board and its staff, Moors extended "heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers, sponsors (especially our headlining sponsor, AdventHealth Dade City), vendors and supporters."

The festival was supported by a \$60,000 marketing campaign and, in conjunction with the City of Dade City, Pasco County Tourism and Visit Florida — which all promoted Dade City and the area as a unique place to visit, Moors noted.

He credited Bobby Van Allen and Jason Sasser, the festival co-chairs, for leading the efforts of more than 200 volunteers.

Moors estimated that the event generated more than \$1 million in economic activity, based on calculations derived from the State of Florida Economic Impact Multipliers.



FRED BELLET

Members of the Mexican dance troupe, the Folkloric Toltecatl, featured 11 Mexican folklore dancers. They are from Dade City.



Zephyrhills winter resident Karen Bennett's face says it all, as she discovers the taste of a very tart Nagami-type kumquat.



Two-year-old Dixie Cross, of Brandon, discovered there's nothing quite like a hot dog, after having her face painted. Her mom, Jamis Cross was ready with a napkin.



At the corner of Third Street and Church Avenue, 3-year-old Holly Reffuse and her cousin, Lisa Yawns, of Dade City, were selling parking spaces in Yawn's yard during the Kumquat Festival. Cars would stop and they would be directed into their yard by Chris Yawns.



After waiting in a long line, Carolyn Bartow of Tampa, top center right, and her daughter, Alison Place, of Tampa, right, eat slices of Kumquat refrigerator pie, as Place's 3-year-old daughter, Nora, waits from her stroller for a taste. They headed north to Dade City instead of attending Tampa's Gasparilla, held the same day.



Three-year old Julia Mitchell can see ahead while perched on her dad, Dan Mitchell's shoulder, as he leads his family through the crowds at this year's Kumquat Festival.



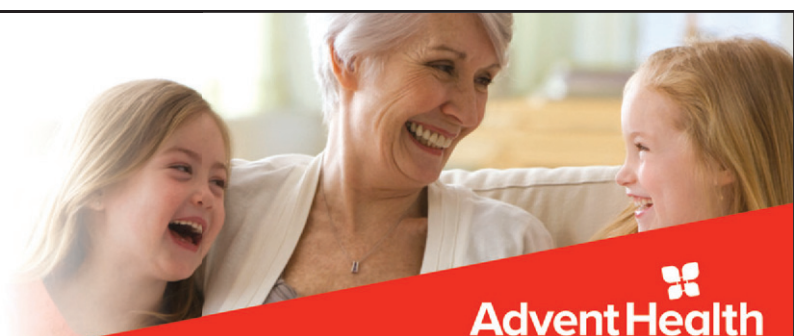
A 10-year old Treeing Walker Coon Hound, named Zissou, waits patiently by his master, Nicholas Moo's side, as Moo and his wife, Jenna, of Altamonte Springs, select bags of the Nagami-type kumquats to take home. It was the family's first visit to the Kumquat Festival.



Eighteen-month old Noah Creamer may be signaling mom, Lora Ross, of Wesley Chapel, to turn the stroller and make a right turn as they make their way through the crowded Dade City streets during the Kumquat Festival.

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ADOPTION FEES WAIVED

Pasco County Animal Services, 19640 Dogpatch Lane, in Land O' Lakes, presents "A Black Tie Affair," through Feb. 2.

Adoption fees will be waived for all cats and kittens that have black markings.

All adoptions include spay/neuter, microchip, vaccinations, and feline leukemia and HIV testing.

Pasco County residents are required to purchase licensing for a new pet.

For information, call (813) 929-1212.

LIVING WITH URBAN COYOTES

Coyotes are an important part of the landscape in Florida.

According to Florida Fish and Wildlife (FWC), the animals help maintain healthy ecosystems by managing populations of rodents, insects, and other small animals.

Coyotes are very intelligent and adaptable, and that is why more are being spotted throughout the United States in both rural and urban areas.

The Hillsborough County Pet Resource Center has teamed up with the FWC to provide information on how to coexist with coyotes.

DO:

- Keep trash cans secure and put them where coyotes can't get into them.
- Clean up pet food and fallen fruit around the outside of the house.
- Protect pets by keeping them in a yard with a fence at least 6 feet high.
- Walk dogs on a short leash.
- Close off crawl spaces under porches and sheds to remove places for them to rest/raise pups.

• Haze (deter) coyotes continuously if they are near to scare them off.

• Share tips with neighbors.

DON'T:

- feed coyotes - it is illegal and they will lose their fear of humans
- run if you see a coyote; stand your ground and haze them
- allow pets to roam freely
- walk pets during early morning or evening hours (dusk and dawn), when coyotes are usually the most active

Beware of unusual coyote behavior, which could indicate that the coyote has lost its fear of humans. This behavior could include approaching people, chasing joggers and bikers, or attacking leashed pets.

For information on how to haze a coyote, visit HumaneSociety.org/resources/coyote-hazing.

To report unusual activity, call the FWC at (863) 648-3200.

PET FOOD DISTRIBUTION

The Humane Society Tampa Bay offers free dog and cat food at the shelter for Tampa Bay citizens who are struggling to feed their pets.

Food distributions are made Tuesdays from noon to 3 p.m., and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Food is given on a first-come, first-served basis, and recipients must provide proof of residence.

For information about food distribution, call (813) 876-7138, ext. 0.

The Humane Society also has an Animeals program for homebound and elderly citizens who are unable to travel to the shelter.

Recipients must qualify to receive monthly supplies of dog and cat food.

For information about Animeals, call (904) 894-0139, or email lons@humanesocietytampa.org.

WoofStock 2019

The fifth annual WoofStock originally scheduled for March 9 at Land O' Lakes Heritage Park, 5401 Land O' Lakes Blvd., has been **cancelled**.

Another event is in the works for the same day. More information will be forthcoming.

ANIMAL SERVICES PARK WALK

Pasco County Animal Services (PCAS) will host a Park Walk on March 2 at 9 a.m., at Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park, 10500 Wilderness Park Blvd., in New Port Richey.

Adoptable dogs from the shelter will be available for adoption that day.

Participants can also bring their own dogs, too.

These rules must be followed:

- All dogs must be on a leash (no flex/retractable leashes).
- Those joining the walk also must clean up after their own pet. Waste bags will not be provided.
- Dogs are not allowed face-to-face contact.
- Bring water and bowls for your pet.
- One pet per handler at all times.
- Prong or electric collars are not permissible.

For information, call PCAS at (813) 929-1212.

STRUT YOUR MUTT

Beach House Assisted Living & Memory Care, 30070 State Road 56 in Wesley Chapel, will host its inaugural "Strut Your Mutt Doggie Fashion Show" March 16 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

All breeds welcome, big or small. Complimentary refreshments will be provided.

Dogs can enjoy the Bark Park, pet treats and doggie vendors.

For information or to RSVP, call (813) 508-6677, or visit EventBrite.com.

BARK IN THE PARK

Bark in the Park will take place along the Hillsborough River, in downtown Tampa, at Curtis Hixon Park, March 23 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

There will be food trucks, wine and craft beer, music, vendors, dog costume contests, a dog agility zone, adoptable dogs, a VIP tent with mimosas and sweets, a pop-up dog park, and a 1-mile Walk for the Animals along the river.

For information, visit BarkInTheParkTampa.com.

SHARE YOUR PET NEWS

If you have pet news about adoptions, walks or other events for pet owners and their pets, you can let us know by sending us an email. We just need the basics: who, what, when, where and why.

The information should be submitted two weeks prior to the desired publication date. We also need a contact name and number, in case we have questions.

There is no guarantee of publication, but we consider each item we receive.

If you'd like to make a submission, send it to news@lakerlutznews.com.

Readers can now find Pets of the Week and Local Wildlife photos on our website at LakerLutznews.com, under the Pets/Wildlife link.

Adopt A Friend FOR LIFE



Abbey wants to join a family

Abbey is a young, sweet girl that arrived as a stray last October. She is looking for a home with no other pups, but she will probably keep you quite busy playing in the yards or on walks. Abbey loves to spend time in the spree yards with the volunteers.



Edie likes to visit people

Edie is a beautiful 4-year-old pup that arrived as a stray last May. She always makes it a point to make stops during her walks to visit her favorite people and get a few minutes of pets from each person. Edie would not mind a meet-and-greet with an existing pet, and Animal Services will assist with the meeting if you bring your pup along. Edie is heartworm negative, up to date on all her vaccinations, microchipped, spay and ready to find her forever home.

If you would like to adopt Abbey or Edie, be sure to visit Pasco County Animal Services at 19640 Dogpatch Lane in Land O' Lakes. The adoption center is open Tuesday through Saturday, noon to 6:30 p.m. All adoption fees include spay/neuter, microchip and vaccines. For more information, email adoptionpartners@pascocountyfl.net.

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Monday-Friday 1 - 2 pm

Walk-Ins Welcome.

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Consult is add'l \$30 on request.

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- Feline Leukemia 2 yr \$25.00
- Feline Distemper Combo 3 yr \$30.00
- Rabies 3 yr \$30.00
- Canine Distemper Combo 3 yr \$30.00
- Bordetella/Kennel Cough \$18.00

DENTAL CLEANINGS:

Cats and Dogs <25lbs - \$160

Dogs 25-50lbs - \$180

Dogs >50lbs - \$205

Price includes: anesthesia, monitoring, scaling, polishing. Exam and blood work additional and required prior to anesthesia. Please call for details.

PLEASE HELP!

Due to a recent fire, we need a new facility to ensure the safety of our animals. Our shelter is run solely by volunteers, and the donations we receive from our wonderful community. We receive no government or county funding.

Please help by contributing to our Go Fund Me campaign at www.gofundme.com/humansocietyofpascocounty

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LOCAL WILDLIFE



A romp to start the day

Karen Whitenton, of Lutz, snapped this photo of a doe with her two fawns as they romped along the pond behind her house. It was early morning, and although the mother started to go back into the woods, the animals continued to run back and forth the entire length of the pond.

PET of the WEEK



The best decision yet

Titan is a mixed breed and a rescue from Pasco County Animal Services almost two years ago. He will smother you with kisses and needs to sit close (and sometimes on top of) his human family. Titan loves to go tubing and squeals with delight on boat rides around the lake. He also enjoys his afternoon naps and rides in the car with the windows down. Titan is an awesome companion to the three boys in the house – Devan, Rohan and Daniel, and loves playing with this canine friends, as well. Titan's proud owner is Alicia Locascio, of Land O' Lakes.

DID YOU KNOW?

Readers can now find Pets of the Week and Local Wildlife photos on our website at LakerLutznews.com, under the Pets/Wildlife link.



PUT YOUR PET IN THE SPOTLIGHT!

We are looking for photos and information on your favorite pet. Include in your short story your pet's name, age, breed, and anything else you would like to mention.

Don't forget to include the owner's name and city of residence!

Send photo and information to:

The LAKER/Lutz NEWS

Email to: mrathman@lakerlutznews.com, SUBJECT: Pet of the Week
Mail to: Pet of the Week, c/o The Laker, P.O. Box 479, Lutz, FL 33548



Suite No. 309, in Dade City.
 To register, go to the events calendar on the PascoEDC.com website.
 For more information about the entrepreneur center, call (352) 437-4861.

FLORIDA MEDICAL CLINIC FOUNDATION ASSISTS THOMAS PROMISE

The Florida Medical Clinic Foundation of Caring has awarded a \$15,000 grant to The Thomas Promise Foundation, according to a news release from the grant award recipient.
 "We are grateful for the support of the Foundation of Caring," said Joe Simmons, executive director of the Thomas Promise Foundation.
 Thomas Promise, based at 4542 Gall Blvd., in Zephyrhills, provides bags full of food, complete with six meals and snacks, to enable food insecure students from Pasco County schools to have food over the weekend. It helps more than 1,400 students at a total of 25 schools.



At the center of this photo are, from left, Pasco County Commissioner Jack Mariano, Wawa store manager Ana Karina Cespedes and Pasco County Commissioner Kathryn Starkey, among store associates and community members, getting ready for the ribbon cutting for Wawa's Odessa Store No. 5334.

WAWA OPENS IN ODESSA

A new Wawa location opened at 12048 State Road 54 in Odessa, with a ribbon cutting and grand opening celebration on the morning of Jan. 24. It is the first Wawa store in Odessa.
 Pasco County commissioners Jack Mariano and Kathryn Starkey attended the event, which featured giveaways and a hoagie-building competition between Pasco County Fire Rescue and the Pasco Sheriff Office with \$1,000 donation made to charity of each team's choosing.
 Store officials also announced a commitment to support hunger relief efforts with a portion of the first week's hoagie sales up to \$1,000, to benefit Feeding Tampa Bay.

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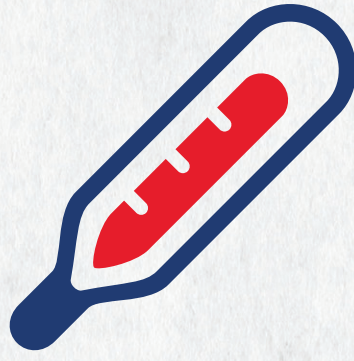
URGENT CARE

103 DEGREES



EMERGENCY CARE

107 DEGREES



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Carrollwood. And then there's the **St. Joseph's Hospital-North** emergency department, which is best saved for, well, emergencies. BayCare is always ready to care for you with **BayCareAnywhere** doctors available 24/7, local **BayCare Urgent Care** Centers open seven days a week with extended hours, and emergency care available at St. Joseph's Hospital-North. Learn where to get the right care: BayCareRightCareRightPlace.org



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Morton Plant North Bay Hospital • St. Anthony's Hospital • St. Joseph's Hospital • St. Joseph's Children's Hospital • St. Joseph's Women's Hospital
St. Joseph's Hospital-North • St. Joseph's Hospital-South • South Florida Baptist Hospital • Winter Haven Hospital • Winter Haven Women's Hospital*

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