

# The Bay Beacon

14 Pages, 2 Sections, 5 Inserts

Wednesday, March 21, 2012

50¢

**UP  
COMING**

**Wednesday, 5:30 p.m.**



The **Saltwater Seminar Series** will provide tips and tricks to target and land a cobia, as they migrate along the Emerald Coast. A **free** buffet will be served, followed by the series at 6 p.m. at Northlight Marina. Info: saltwaterevents.com.

**Thursday, 4 p.m.**

The Valparaiso Community Library will have a **technology program** for students of all ages interested in attending college in the near future. Ron Walls, instructional technology specialist at NWFSC, will discuss how to access **college course content** using mobile devices. Info: 729-5406.

**Thursday, 7 a.m.-6 p.m.**

The **Auxiliary of Twin Cities Hospital** will hold a masquerade **\$5 jewelry sale** in the Wellness Center. All proceeds will benefit health-care related scholarship funds. The sale will also be held on Friday, from 7 a.m.-5 p.m. Info: 729-9481.

**Saturday, 10 a.m.-noon**

The Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida will host **"Outhouse Archaeology."** This program will engage kids by using authentic historic museum collections

with **hands-on activities.** Cost: \$7 per child, or \$5 per child for Museum family members. Chaperones are free. Info: 678-2615.

Calendar, B-2.

## Fire panel grills auditor on alleged embezzlement

By Del Lessard  
*Beacon Staff Writer*

North Bay Fire District commissioners March 13 asked the district's auditor why the alleged theft of \$80,000 from the district by its bookkeeper hadn't been detected earlier.

Commissioners were also introduced to the department's new administrative assistant, Christy Woissol, who was hired by the fire chief Feb. 27. She replaces Ralph Banegas, who was fired Jan. 30, and was arrested by

sheriff's deputies Feb. 29 on charges of stealing thousands from the fire district.

The district's outside auditor, Bruce Nunnally, of the accounting firm Carr, Riggs and Ingram, told the North Bay Fire Commission during a meeting March 13 at the firehouse on White Point Road, Bluewater Bay, that the annual audit of the district's financial affairs was about 90 percent complete.

Nunnally told commissioners that there were "no lingering

issues," and that he didn't expect any more "surprises." Nunnally was referring to his discovery in January, in the course of an audit for the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, that, according to Okaloosa County Sheriff's arrest



Ralph Banegas

reports, Banegas had stolen more than \$81,000 in tax monies from the district over a five-year period starting in June 2006.

North Bay Commissioner Steve Strait, treasurer, asked why the audit firm had not noticed Banegas' alleged thefts in previous annual audits.

Nunnally said that the yearly audit is primarily a review of the financial statements of the fire district, making sure the numbers add up. That part of the audit is comparable to science, he said,

while another part of the audit, inspecting a random sample of some of the financial transactions during the previous year, is more of an art.

The accountant likened the random sampling to poking a haystack in which a rodent may be hiding. Auditors have pitchforks that they thrust into the pile of straw, hoping to find a rodent, he said.

"We don't look at every trans-

**Please see GRILLS, page A-5**



Beacon photo by Del Lessard

### Paddling the bayou

Stand-up paddle boarder Misty Green, right, of Shalimar, demonstrates on Thursday how to paddle the 12-foot long boards on Boggy Bayou to novice paddler Corrie Anderson, of Mary Esther, at Lincoln Park.

## Valp. population drop shrinks state revenue

By Del Lessard  
*Beacon Staff Writer*

Between 2000 and 2010, Valparaiso's population shrank by 21.4 percent. City officials fear the decline may reduce the city's income more than its expenses.

The 2010 census showed 5,035 people living in Valparaiso, a decrease of 1,372 from 2000.

City officials attributed much of the decline to housing shifts on Eglin Air Force Base, part of which is inside the city limits, but makes no demand on its services. By the same token, officials expect a rebound as the Air Force housing changes are reversed.

The map used by the U.S. Census Bureau to count Valparaiso's population includes much of Eglin Air Force Base, from roughly the intersection of its two runways, eastward to the East Gate.

Valparaiso Mayor Bruce Arnold said the city's population decline was largely due to closure of a federal prison camp on Eglin, and the demolition of military dormitories to make way for new ones.

The minimum-security prison camp closed in December 2005 following damage from

Hurricane Ivan the previous year. The closure of the 900-inmate, 130-employee prison caused the relocation of staff members, and their families, who lived in gov-

ernment housing in the base Post Point area around the prison, which is also included in Valparaiso's limits. The prisoners themselves were never counted as Valparaiso residents.

Also, a loss to Valparaiso's 2010 census population was the closure of a large mobile-home park at Post Point during the previous decade. Eglin closed the mobile home park between June 2003 and June 2008, and has no plans to reopen it. The area was home to dozens of military members and their families who lived in private mobile homes on government land.

Valparaiso is likely to recoup some population as Eglin builds and fills new dormitories on the east end of the base. But the prison and mobile home park

**Please see REVENUE, page A-5**

## 'A' grade yields \$1.5M for school district

By Del Lessard  
*Beacon Staff Writer*

Besides any bragging rights, an A report card from the Florida Department of Education brings more money to teachers at top-ranked schools.

Rita Scallan, chief financial officer for the Okaloosa County School District, announced Feb. 22 that the school district received \$1,533,392, from its School Recognition Award allocation from the Department of

Education. The money is awarded annually to public schools that earn an A school report card during the past school year. This year's money was based on \$70 for each non-weighted, full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrolled at A schools during the previous school year.

Last year the state gave A schools \$75 per full-time equivalent student.

Even at the lower reward amount, the 28 district schools

that received an A brought in \$1,533,392 to the school district, according to Scallan. As in the past, the majority of schools have elected to use the report card money to give bonuses to teachers.

Release of the high school grades on Jan. 4, and last summer's release of school scores for elementary and middle schools, shows that all the schools serving the Twin Cities of Niceville and Valparaiso are A schools.

At \$70 per FTE, here's what reward money each school serving the Twin Cities receives:

- Niceville High, \$128,419.
- Destin Middle, \$46,189.
- Lewis K-8 School, \$46,099.
- Ruckel Middle, \$59,028.
- Bluewater Elementary, \$53,138.
- Edge Elementary, \$36,546.
- Plew Elementary, \$45,727.

Collegiate High School, a charter high school in the school district, received \$18,705.

Liza Jackson Preparatory School, another charter school for grades 1-8 received \$56,091.

Although Scallan provided Okaloosa County's A schools an estimated amount based on the \$70 per FTE back in October, the state didn't release a final figure of reward money for all A schools (elementary, middle and high schools) until after Feb. 4, the end of the appeal period for high schools to challenge their report card grade, she said.



Beacon photo by Del Lessard

Officials examine the wreckage of a small plane that crashed near Ruckel Airport Thursday, killing the pilot and a passenger.

## Plane crash kills 2 local men

By Del Lessard  
*Beacon Staff Writer*

Two men were killed Thursday when the small private plane they were crashed less than a mile north of the Ruckel Airport.

The plane apparently struck a tree then slammed into the top of a small hill about three-quarters of a mile north of the

Ruckel Airport in Niceville, ejecting the pilot and one passenger and causing a small brush fire.

Construction workers on the Mid-Bay Bridge connector road reported a possible plane crash and smoke rising from a wooded area on the Eglin reservation, about 150 yards north of the connector road.

Niceville Fire Department received the call at 1:15 p.m. March 15 and was the first on scene about 1:22 p.m., according to Niceville Fire Chief Tommy Mayville. Firefighters walked from the construction site of the Mid-Bay Bridge connector road about 150 yards into the woods to the crash site.

**Please see CRASH, page A-8**

## Work ahead of schedule on bridge

By Del Lessard  
*Beacon Staff Writer*

Working at night, AC Columbia, one of two construction contractors working on the last two phases of the Mid-Bay Bridge Connector Road, placed the last of 10 beams over Highway 85 North overnight Thursday and Friday. Just north of the Mullet Festival site, the bridge is the termination point of the 11-mile toll road that will whisk motorists to-and-from the Mid-Bay Bridge connecting Niceville and Destin.

James Van Steenburg, construction manager for the project, told the governing board of the Mid-Bay Bridge Authority (MBBA) Thursday that contractors are making significant progress, and are ahead of schedule on several of the bridges that will carry toll traffic over Eglin wetlands and streams including Turkey, Swift and Rocky



Beacon photo by Del Lessard

Ten beams were placed over Highway 85 as part of the connector road from the Mid-Bay Bridge.

creaks. The last two phases of the road are scheduled to be completed in early 2014.

Jim Vest, executive director of the MBBA, told the governing board members that toll revenue was up 3 percent

from last year, but the increase was primarily due to an extra "leap day" last month.

Vest also noted that the

**Please see BRIDGE, page A-7**

# Friends, family, military celebrate soldier's life

By Mike Griffith  
Beacon Correspondent

A memorial service Thursday at Niceville Church of Christ honored the life of Niceville native and Army Sgt. Joshua Born.

Joshua was among several American soldiers murdered in the wake of a controversy surrounding the accidental burnings of copies of the Quran by American forces, after the Qurans had been defaced by Taliban prisoners to pass handwritten messages to one another.

Joshua's father, Craig Born, told the Beacon that he is proud of his son and the life he led.

During an earlier assignment in Korea, Joshua had spent most of his off-duty time volunteering at a Korean orphanage, rather than partying with his fellow soldiers.

"That says something about the kind of person he was," Craig said of his son.

Among those attending the memorial service were friends and family members of Joshua, as well as representatives of local veteran's organizations, Niceville Mayor Randall Wise, U.S. Rep. Jeff Miller, and Col. Miguel Howe, deputy commander of the Army 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne).

"We have a choice about

how we live, and how we die," said Church of Christ pastor Joe Palmer in his eulogy.

Palmer said that unlike others who spend much of their lives on pointless or self-centered activity, Joshua chose to become a soldier, willingly putting his own life at risk for others. He quoted Jesus' Christ's statement, "I lay down my life—no one take it from me—I lay it down of my own accord," as an example of selfless sacrifice.

"We know Joshua because he was a soldier," Howe said. "He is our brother, and that makes us family. Your brothers in the Army remember, and will always remember Josh."



Beacon photo by Mike Griffith

Col. Miguel Howe, deputy commander of the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), greets Craig Born, father of Sgt. Joshua Born. Howe was among the speakers during the memorial service.

# Hughes to pay \$3,000 fine for ethics lapses

By Del Lessard  
Beacon Staff Writer

Former Okaloosa County Tax Collector Chris Hughes has agreed to pay a \$3,000 fine, and receive public censure and reprimand after an investigation by the Florida Commission on Ethics.

The original complaint was filed by a Fort Walton Beach resident on July 30, 2009. After finding the complaint legally sufficient, a preliminary investigation was ordered by the Ethics Commission.

The investigation was released July 13, 2011, and on Oct. 26 the commission found probable cause to believe Hughes had violated the Code of Ethics on three of the five allegations, as follows:

- By using county office equipment and resources during work hours for personal business.
- By using a county vehicle to travel to a funeral for the mother of an employee.

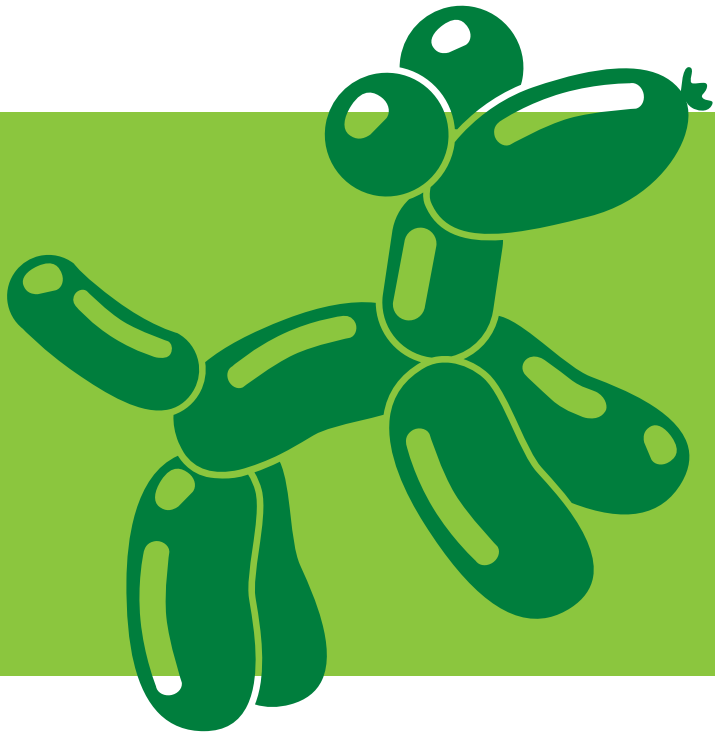
- By using county funds to reimburse an employee for costs associated with attending the funeral of the mother of a co-employee.

Hughes admitted the three allegations and agreed March 7 to a \$2,000 fine on the first allegation and \$500 fines on the next two.

The commission found no probable cause that Hughes had had county employees help him set up and clean for his cooking show during work hours or that he gave bonuses to employees who helped him with Salvation Ministries, the cooking show, or his cookbooks.

The Commission on Ethics will consider the stipulated agreement at a March 30 hearing in Tallahassee.

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Beacon photo by Del Lessard

The Niceville High School football stadium's underground drainage system collapsed, requiring an extensive repair job.

## NHS stadium gets \$40K repair

By Del Lessard  
Beacon Staff Writer

For weeks, motorists on John Sims Parkway have passed Niceville High School's Eagle Stadium and seen piles of dirt being built up, then spread around.

The construction activity is part of a near-\$40,000 renovation of the football field caused by a collapsed drainage system underground, according to Steve Bolton, the school district's maintenance program director. The

field was last renovated about 10 years ago, he said.

Underneath the playing field of the stadium, a drainage system with French drains was previously constructed to control water from a small stream that courses north-to-south under the stadium, as well as drainage of surface water off the field, he said. The drainage system had collapsed, causing sink holes and marshy sod on the football field on one end that gets too much water, and too-dry conditions on the rest of the field.

Money for the renovation comes from the district's capital outlay budget, said Bolton, not money from the classrooms.

The work started the third week in February and should be completed in May, he said, with plenty of time for NHS graduation ceremonies held outdoors in the stadium in early June.

Bolton said the work is being accomplished with a combination of in-house resources and school district personnel, as well as contractors. The drainage and irriga-

tion work was estimated to cost about \$20,000, he said, while the sprigging and building the crown on the field was estimated to cost \$18,500.

Rebuilding the 12-to-18-inch "crown" on the field should be accomplished this week (March 19-23), Bolton said, followed by installation of the irrigation system next week, then sprigging and sodding the field the following week. The field will then be watered and fertilized over the next four to six weeks, he said.

## Gaetz describes wins, losses in session

By Del Lessard  
Beacon Staff Writer

Speaking from Tallahassee where a special session of the Legislature had been called to redraw eight senate districts found unconstitutional by the supreme court, Sen. Don Gaetz, (R, Niceville), listed some of the accomplishments and failures of the 2012 regular legislative session.

"The good news is that unlike other large states, Florida balanced the budget without raising taxes for the second year in a row," said Gaetz. There were also no new state-mandated fees for the second year in a row, he added.

Gaetz, who is in line to become the Senate President next year, said he was pleased to get two education bills passed that he sponsored. The former Okaloosa County Schools Superintendent said he plans to build on both bills to enact more educational reforms as the senate's presiding officer starting with next year's Legislative session.

Senate Bill 1366, Gaetz said, requires "economic security reports" to be generated for parents of every seventh- through 12th-grader in the state. The reports will compare career fields and professions, telling students and their parents how likely they are to get jobs, and what they can expect to earn if they pursue different majors or careers.

"It lets people know what the

realities of the economy are," said Gaetz.

It also provides for a \$15 million incentive package to state colleges and universities based on how well their graduates succeed in getting well-paying jobs in their field of study after graduation. Gaetz said the incentives, and the reports to students and parents, are designed to encourage more students to pursue studies in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields.

Senate Bill 1368, the other education bill Gaetz highlighted, provides acceleration options for high school students who are able to master course material faster than the traditional semester or year-long classroom course. He said high schools in the state currently operate on the old assumption that everyone learns at the same pace and students are required to sit in classrooms for a set amount of time before being allowed to demonstrate their mastery of subject matter.

The bill also expands career technical opportunities to the middle school level, he said.

Gaetz said both education bills are thresholds for future education

reforms, a topic he intends to pursue when he returns next year as Senate President.

Gaetz also highlighted some funding he was able to get enacted for a number of projects of local interest, including:

—Inserting \$325,000 in start-up funds for the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math and Medicine) Academy for middle school students that the Okaloosa County School Board will open in the former Valparaiso Elementary School next school year.

—Additional funding to the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC), headquartered in Niceville, including \$100,000 for physician's medical services, as well as an estimated \$50,000 for the Niceville CAC. The later figure is based on funding of \$100 per child helped in each of the 25 CACs across the state.

—\$21 million for construction of an overpass across Highway 98 at Hurlburt Field.

There were also a few disappointments during this year's regular session, Gaetz said, including:

—Senate failure to pass an e-verify bill co-sponsored by Gaetz and Sen. John Thrasher of St. Augustine, and aimed at controlling the hiring of illegal aliens.

—Senate failure to pass a legislative ethics bill that would have prevented unqualified legislators from obtaining jobs at state universities and colleges funded by


appropriations from the legislature. The measure died in the Rules Committee by a 6-6 vote, he said.

—Gaetz said he was one of only three senators, including the Senate President, Mike Haridopolis, and Majority Leader, Andy Gardner, who voted against a bill that gives the University of Florida and Florida State University the authority to raise tuition "as much and as often as they want." He said the measure will have negative effects on Bright Futures scholarships and on pre-paid college tuition programs, and was the wrong thing to do while families continue to struggle to pay for their children's college education in the state's current economy.

On a personal note, the senator mentioned that as the first father-son, senator-representative team in the state's history, he and his son, Rep. Matt Gaetz (R, Fort Walton Beach), jointly sponsored House Bill 7055/Senate Bill 1312, ending the practice of state agencies implementing rules contrary to the direction of the governor and Legislature, and repealing hundreds of existing rules that stop job creation and intrude into citizens' personal lives. The regulatory relief bill is the only legislation the two men jointly sponsored, and the only one they are likely to sponsor together since, as Senate President in the next two years, the presiding officers normally do not sponsor legislation.



Sen. Don Gaetz





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Police Blotter

The following accounts of the activities of police are according to records of the Niceville and Valparaiso police departments...

Arrests

Alfonso Avalos, self employed, 54, of 308 McEwen Drive, Niceville, was arrested by Niceville police March 8 on a charge of domestic battery by strangulation.

Paul Matthew Weiszhaar, 34, of 113 Crystal Lake Estates, Valparaiso, was arrested by sheriff's deputies Feb. 29 on a violation of probation charge on the original charge of burglary.

John Paul Barnett, 30, of 1405 Cape Lane, Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies Feb. 27 on a charge of domestic violence after he allegedly slapped his mother on the forearm and struck her shoulder while she was trying to get him out of bed to go to school.

A 15-year-old Niceville boy, a student, was arrested by sheriff's deputies Feb. 27 on a charge of domestic violence after he allegedly slapped his mother on the forearm and struck her shoulder while she was trying to get him out of bed to go to school.

Travis Jamaal Tape, 19, of 400 Kelly Road, Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies Feb. 28 on a charge of disorderly conduct related to a fight that occurred at a mall store, 300 Mary Esther Blvd., Mary Esther, on Aug. 21.

Tape was also arrested the same day on a charge of grand theft. On June 7, 2011, Tape allegedly removed several pieces of furniture from a Mary Esther residence where he had been a tenant, including a dining room suite, a sofa, a love seat, a bedroom suite with new mattresses and box spring and two dressers, a video game system, paintings, a statue, pottery and other items.

Richard Ambrose Lowitz, a restaurant server, 40, of 4616 Range Road, Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies Feb. 26 on a violation of probation charge.

James Michael Hamill, 28, of 1012-B Pineview Blvd., Fort Walton Beach, was arrested by sheriff's deputies at a Niceville address, Feb. 26, on misdemeanor worthless check charges.

Tonia Renae Wysong, 33, of 500 Kelly Mill Road, Valparaiso,

was arrested by sheriff's deputies Feb. 24 on a Walton County warrant for violation of probation on original charges of possession of controlled substance and felony driving while license suspended or revoked.

Julious Dominick Whisler, 27, of 4274 Calinda Lane, Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies Feb. 29 on charges of driving while license suspended or revoked, habitual offender, and falsely identifying himself to a law enforcement officer.

Matthew Thomas Miller, 28, of 1523 Royal Palm Drive, Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies Feb. 29 on a charge of leaving the scene of an accident involving property damage, which allegedly occurred in Destin on Oct. 28.

William Devon Maddox, unemployed, 27, of 2044 Resort Drive, Navarre, was arrested by sheriff's deputies at an address in Niceville, Feb. 29, on a Santa Rosa County warrant for failure to appear on the original charge of driving while license suspended or revoked.

David Michael Thomas, 27, of 1015 Julia Ave., Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies March 5 on misdemeanor worthless check charges related to checks for \$55, \$76, and \$40.

Cris Alan Lyttle, a cook, 27, of 107 Bermuda Way, Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies March 9 on a misdemeanor probation violation.

Cory Evan Pellnitz, 50, of 5 Southwind Court, Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies March 1 on charges of illegal dumping and removing/altering/removing a hull ID number plate. Pellnitz was allegedly ordered by a deputy to remove a vessel found illegally dumped alongside Carmel Drive on Nov. 1. On Nov. 7, Pellnitz was at a county boat launch on Edrehi Avenue, Niceville, and told deputies he was just being helpful in moving a partially sunk vessel out of the way of other boaters, but denied any knowledge or affiliation with the abandoned boat. The hull registration numbers had been covered with black paint and the

VIN plate cut out.

Morgan-Elyse Gabrielle Revell, a sales associate, 21, of 370 Lincoln Ave., Valparaiso, was arrested by sheriff's deputies March 8 on a charge of failure to appear on the original charge of violation of financial responsibility.

Timothy John Regan, 40, of 28 Virginia Court, Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies March 10 on a charge of possession of drug paraphernalia.

Stacey Lov Rightman, 36, of 86 Live Oak St., Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies March 7 on a violation of probation charge on the original charges of passing worthless checks and providing false identification to a law enforcement officer.

Joel Vincent Valenti, 27, with an at-large address in Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies March 7 on charges of grand theft, two counts, and uttering a false bill or promissory note, three counts. On July 12 and July 13, Valenti allegedly cashed two checks totaling \$395 that he allegedly stole from a Fort Walton Beach victim and made out to himself.

Michael Steven Wojciechowski, a stocker, 21, of 611 27th St., Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies March 8 on charges of burglary and petit theft. On Dec. 9, Wojciechowski and another man were allegedly discovered searching through boxes inside an enclosed patio at a Destin home where a \$100 video recorder was reported stolen.

A 16-year-old Niceville boy, a student, was arrested by sheriff's deputies March 7 on a charge of domestic violence battery that allegedly occurred Jan. 9.

Kenneth Jon Panzarella, 39, of 9074 East River Drive, Navarre, and with a permanent address of 5131 Bent Tree Road, Milton, was arrested by Niceville police March 3 on a charge of retail theft. Panzarella is alleged to have driven around Kmart, 1140 E. John Sims Parkway, in an electric cart and placed items in his pocket, including a \$99 cell phone, a \$15 Alabama hat and a \$6 pair of flip-flops. As he was leaving the store, Panzarella was confronted by an employee but he ran, got in a vehicle and drove off. The stolen property was not located by deputies in Panzarella's vehicle.

DUI arrests

Robin Anthony Noah, 27, of 206 Mango Lane, Freeport, was

arrested by Niceville police for DUI on Highway 20 at Reynolds Drive, March 10 at 2:56 a.m. Noah was also cited for unlawful speed, 44 mph in a 35 mph zone.

Nicole Ann Fanning, 44, of 4091 Rocky Shores Drive, Niceville, was arrested by Niceville police for DUI at 1300 E. John Sims Parkway, March 7 at 5:03 p.m.

Steven Lee Cornelius, 31, of 442 Escanaba Ave., Valparaiso, subsequent to a traffic crash with \$1,150 damage but no injury to others, was arrested by sheriff's deputies for DUI on Highway 98 east of Airport Road, Destin, March 2 at 12:24 a.m.

Thi Wayne Knight, a cook, 32, of 100 Bay Drive, Apt. 509, Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies March 9 on a warrant from the Florida Highway Patrol on a charge of DUI. On Oct. 5, 2010, Thi was involved in a two-car crash on Highway 20 in Seminole in which he and the other driver were injured. A blood sample taken from Thi was sent to a state laboratory where it was determined that his blood alcohol level exceeded the legal limit.

John Raymond Feris Jr., 40, of 2 Cedar Ridge Way, Niceville, was arrested by Niceville police, subsequent to the crash of a motorcycle that police said Feris was chasing in his Mustang, on a charge of DUI on 1st Street, March 14 at 11:15 p.m. Police said Feris drove away from the crash without rendering aid to the injured motorcyclist, but returned to the scene on a bicycle. The motorcyclist told police he and Feris were racing each other when he crashed. The injured motorcyclist was taken to Ruckel Middle School then airlifted to Sacred Heart Medical Center in Pensacola.

Thefts

A Niceville resident from the 4200 block of Lost Horse Circle reported March 11 that someone stole her \$950 iPhone, which was last seen during a party at the residence on March 10.

A Niceville resident reported someone stole her phone after she left it on top of her vehicle at Northwest Florida State College March 8. The iPhone was valued at \$200.

A Niceville resident reported that unknown person(s) used his wife's PayPal account to make several fraudulent

Fire Department Reports

Niceville

The Niceville Fire Department responded to the following calls from March 12, 2012 through March 18, 2012.

- 0 Structure Fire 19 Emergency Medical Calls
0 Vehicle Fire 5 Vehicle Crash
0 Other Fire 0 Vehicle Crash with Extrication
0 Illegal Burn 7 Other Emergency Calls
0 False Alarms 3 Hazardous Conditions

Table with 4 columns: Street, Situation, Date, Time. Lists various emergency calls from March 12-18, 2012, including structure fires, vehicle crashes, EMS calls, and false alarms.

Weekly Safety Tip: Whether cooking with gas or electric, never place anything on the stove you don't want to heat. An electric coil reaches 800 degrees while a gas flame goes over 1000 degrees. Remember towels and pot holders ignite at 400 degrees. Please look at the Niceville Fire Department web page on Facebook.

North Bay

The North Bay Fire Department responded to the following calls from March 12, 2012 through March 18, 2012.

Table with 4 columns: Street, Situation, Date, Time. Lists emergency calls from March 12-18, 2012, including EMS incidents, false alarms, and various emergency calls.

Visit northbayfd.org for more information.

charges March 1-8. Because the items charged are being shipped to the victim's address, he believes someone might be waiting to steal the packages when they arrive.

A Valparaiso business owner

Please see BLOTTER, page A-5

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*What do you think about America's role in Afghanistan?*

*Location: Oak Creek shopping center*



*"We need to get out. We've done all we can over there. We can't fix everybody. We need to fix ourselves."*

Mary Ann Nichols, 67, Niceville, retired nurse



*"I think we should come home. The way they treat us, they don't appreciate us at all. As for that soldier who killed those people — I think he's innocent by reason of insanity, after all he has been through in four combat tours."*

Crawford Senn, 70, Crestview, retired federal investigator



*"We need to be there. We need to protect our interests around the world."*

Fred Littreal, 64, Fort Walton Beach, construction



*"I think we should take our troops out."*

Tessa Gyurica, 27, Bluewater Bay, mom



*"I think it's good that we're there trying to help the Afghan people, but we probably don't need as many people over there. We have enough stuff to worry about here."*

Max Martin, 20, Montgomery, Ala., student



*"I think it's coming to an end. We have a plan to be out by 2014, after a controlled withdrawal."*

Cindy Kenyon, 61, Niceville, nurse

What should we ask next week? Email your suggested question to: info@baybeacon.com Include "Suggested IP question" in the "subject" field.

**GRILLS**

From page A-1

action," Nunnally said.

In this case, Nunnally said, auditors spotted a check that "didn't look right," and that led to more investigating, including closer scrutiny of prior years, which uncovered the alleged thefts.

"What did you check that didn't get caught for six years?" commission Chairman Jim Miller asked the accountant. "If you hadn't stuck that fork in that check, Banegas would still be there," Miller said.

"I'm comfortable with the (audit) procedures," Nunnally responded.

"Well I'm not," countered Miller.

Commissioner Janet Santner asked why the checkbooks always seemed to balance even though tens of thousands of dollars were missing between 2006 and 2011.

Nunnally said that Banegas

started out with smaller checks, then "leveled off" after a couple of years. "The larger the disbursement, the more we pay attention," he said. "There was no instance of not being balanced," he said.

Fire district officials have told the Beacon that not only was Banegas placed in charge of preparing checks, he also was entrusted with keeping the district's books and balancing its checkbook. Until about 2008, he also was empowered to sign checks, according to the fire chief.

In the business world, it is preferred practice to "segregate" these duties, that is, spread them among different people so that no one person can long manipulate the figures undetected.

Commissioner Jim Boswell, assistant treasurer, asked whether the auditors checked the organization's internal controls over funds, to which Nunnally responded "yes."

Boswell asked if this was the first year that the auditor was aware that the fire chief, a check signer, used a signature stamp.

Banegas allegedly used the stamp without permission to sign fraudulent checks to himself, according to sheriff's arrest reports.

Nunnally said this was the first year he was aware of the signature stamp, but that use of such stamps is common and not usually a problem as long as they are controlled. "We felt it was positive control that Banegas didn't have signature authority," he added.

Santner asked the auditor if he recommended that the commission begin requiring two signatures on checks. Nunnally said two signatures might be useful for higher amounts, but that he would rather see that check signatures are scrutinized.

Santner also asked about the fire district's bank reconciliations, since the financial statements given to fire commissioners each month were prepared by Banegas. But Strait said that was not where the problem was, that as treasurer he checked balances with Banegas.

In other business, fire commissioners appointed Lee Wetzell,

one of three applicants, to finish the term of former commissioner Karen Banegas, wife of Ralph Banegas. Citing personal reasons, Mrs. Banegas resigned from the commission Jan. 31, the day after her husband was fired. The term ends in November 2014.

North Bay Fire Chief Joe Miller introduced Rowena Crissey, an employee of CJW LLC, a Fort Walton Beach company that will take over the duties of handling payroll and reconciling the district's banks statements. He said the fire district also converted its financial software from Peachtree to QuickBooks, software that is expected to produce more user-friendly reports for commissioners.

Chief Miller told the Beacon that he is in the process of applying to the fire district's insurer to recover monies lost to the alleged thefts.

The next meeting of the North Bay Fire Control District Commission is set for April 10, at 7 p.m., at the North Bay Fire Station, 1024 White Point Road.

**REVENUE**

From page A-1

losses are irreversible.

Arnold said that outside the military gates, the city population seems to be holding its own. A count of water meters shows only slight fluctuations, he said. While some older homes may be vacant due to the nationwide housing crash, that's been balanced by small, but

steady growth in new construction, he said.

Population figures are factored into state formulas used to calculate certain revenues cities receive from the state, including the local portion of state sales tax and state revenue-sharing funds.

City Clerk Tammy Johnson said that Valparaiso has taken a hit in both those revenue sources. In its 2011-12 budget,

the city expects \$379,016 from the sales tax, down from \$449,520 the previous year.

The drop in state revenue sharing funds due to declining population figures is moderated by a guaranteed amount in the formula, Johnson said. Nonetheless, Valparaiso's revenue sharing money dropped \$7,000 this year, she said.

It's unclear how much, if any, of the reduced state revenue was

due to other factors, such as the state's own budget woes and the economic slowdown hurting taxed economic activity.

The "good news" is that population estimates used by the state typically grow annually each of the 10 years between U.S. censuses. Johnson said the state calculated 5,061 people lived in Valparaiso in 2011, an increase of 25 from the 2010 census figure.

**BLOTTER**

From page A-4

foot roll of copper wire valued at \$300 from a business trailer.

A Valparaiso business owner, 133 N. John Sims Parkway, reported that on March 10 at least \$935 was discovered to be missing from the cash register, as well as the tools of an employee.

A Valparaiso resident reported that while checking her bank account statement online she discovered that sometime March 1-11 unknown person(s) made unauthorized fraudulent

charges of \$890 for purchases over the Internet using her debit/credit card.

A Niceville resident from the 4100 block of Beach Drive reported that unknown person(s) burglarized the home overnight March 2-3 while the family was at home. Reported stolen was an iPhone and three remotes for a video game system. The victim also found an entry door to a detached garage open, and \$5 cash missing from the center console of a car parked inside the garage.

**Criminal Mischief**

Niceville police responded to a call from the 600 block of

Crestview Avenue March 11, where a resident advised that two people broke a window on his trailer. The complainant later said he did not want to file a report.

The father of a deployed Niceville man reported that unknown person(s) had slashed the two rear tires of his son's 2012 Jeep. The father said he has been checking his son's house and vehicle while his son is deployed and discovered the vandalism March 10. He told police he would repair the damage, then move the vehicle to his own home until his son returns.

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# BEACONSPORTS



## Golf tournament to benefit Eagles

The Niceville Amateur Youth Baseball Traveling Eagles will hold its 11th annual golf tournament at Bluewater Bay Golf Course Friday, April 6.

Registration begins at noon, with a shotgun start at 1 p.m.

The entry fee is \$350 per team, or \$90 for individuals without a team. The fee includes cart, greens fees, food and prizes.

See [Travelingeagles.com](http://Travelingeagles.com), or call 685-1641 for more information.

## The week ahead

- Wednesday, March 21**  
NHS vs. Farragut, Tenn., baseball, TBA
- Friday, March 23**  
NHS vs. Pensacola Catholic, baseball, 6:30  
RBCS@Gulf Breeze, weightlifting, 4
- Friday-Saturday, March 23-24**  
NHS@FSU relays, track, noon
- Monday, March 26**  
NHS vs. Smiths Station, Ala., baseball, 6  
RBCS@Laurel Hill, softball, 6  
Ruckel@Pryor, tennis, 3  
Destin@Shoal River, tennis, 3  
Lewis vs. St. Mary, tennis, 3  
Lewis@Davidson, golf, 3  
Ruckel vs. Pryor, golf, 3  
Destin vs. Shoal River, golf, 3
- Tuesday, March 27**  
NHS vs. Westminster Academy, baseball, 6  
RBCS@Paxton, softball, 3:30  
RBCS vs. Pen Catholic, tennis, 3  
NHS@Northview, softball, 4:30  
RBCS@North Bay Haven, baseball, 4  
NHS vs. Choctaw, tennis, 2:30



## 10 Eagles sign letters of intent

Ten Niceville High School seniors recently signed athletic letters of intent to colleges. From left: Joe Quinn, football, Birmingham Southern College; Trey Barnes, football, Jacksonville University; Grant Howell, bowling, Bethel (Tenn.) University; Matt Newton, football, Florida Tech; Joey Collins, football, Mississippi College; Ashleigh Price, cross country and track, Arkansas State; Sebastian Schutte, football, Mississippi College; Steven Mayo, football, Huntingdon College (Montgomery, Ala.); Cory Eller, baseball, University of Alabama at Birmingham; and Malik Williams, football, Birmingham Southern.

Beacon photo by Kenneth Books



## Top runners

The first- and second-place Overall Females of the Seaside Half Marathon on March 4 were Lisa Lewis, left, first overall female (1:30:52), and Debby Vannoy, second overall (1:31:53), both from Niceville.



## Niceville pounds FWB, 16-1

Niceville High School pitcher Aja Brechtel delivers a breaking ball during the Eagles' 16-3 drubbing of Fort Walton Beach High School Thursday in a District 2-6A matchup. After three innings, the Eagles led 12-1 for their 16th victory against one defeat. In district competition, Niceville is 7-0.

Beacon photo by Jeff Gammons



## Mustangs win 2nd tourney in a row

The 14U Florida Mustangs won the USSSA Gulfport Mississippi Spring Super National Invitational Tournament March 4, tagging out three runners at home plate and converting two shoe-string catches into double plays in capturing the championship 4-3 over the Beyer Brothers Bulldogs DPB, who hail from Rockledge. The Mustangs beat the previously unbeaten East Cobb Pride 18-2 as a result of a final inning 13-run offensive explosion in the semi-final to advance to the championship game. From left: front, Matt French, Corey Armstrong, Grant Stewart, Jake Daffin, Jacob McDorman and manager Mike McDorman; Back, coach Bill West, Colton Hancock, Will West III, Colby Mullins, Andrew Howell, Blake Johnson, Wesley Brooks, and coach Ricky Howell. The Mustangs are now qualified to play in the Elite 32 at Disney World's Wide World of Sports later this summer.

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# BWB MSBU briefed by deputy and tax collector

By Mike Griffith  
Beacon Correspondent

During an informal meeting on March 13, the Bluewater Bay Municipal Services Benefit Unit (MSBU) board of directors heard briefings from Okaloosa County Tax Collector Ben Anderson and Deputy Sheriff Frank Taylor. The guest speakers were the main subjects of last Tuesday's meeting, as no formal business was conducted because of the lack of

a quorum of the five-member board of directors. Only two members, Dale Blanchard and Joan McCarthy, attended Tuesday's meeting.

Tax collector Anderson began by praising Bluewater Bay, which he called "unique" because of the careful planning of the community. He cited Bluewater Bay's golf courses, marina, walking and biking paths, and natural areas interspersed among residential neigh-

borhoods as features that enhance the local quality of life and he praised the MSBU for "maintaining the quality and integrity of the community" after the original developer left.

Since taking office, Anderson said he has reduced spending within the tax collector's office. He added that he has cut the number of employees from 80 to 75, and cut overall salaries by 11 percent. To save money for cus-

tomers, he has eliminated the former \$3.50 "convenience fee" that was charged to anyone who chose to pay their property taxes online.

Anderson said he is trying to improve the system for issuing drivers licenses. Now, new driver's licenses, he said, must meet strict federal Department of Homeland Security standards as reliable forms of personal identification. Only the new, "gold

star" driver's licenses will be accepted as proper ID for boarding airplanes as of 2015.

Taylor, the community policing officer for Bluewater Bay and other nearby communities, warned that spring break may bring extra traffic and more accidents to the area. He also said that various types of petty crime, such as thefts, may occur during spring break, as college students and other visitors come to Northwest

Florida. He urged local residents to take reasonable precautions, such as driving carefully and using extra following distance on local highways, locking homes and cars, being alert, and reporting any suspicious activity to police. Taylor also reminded people that it is not legal to fish in ponds or lakes along the Bluewater Bay golf courses during times when golf is being played.

## More tickets, fewer wrecks in 2011 Valp.

By Del Lessard  
Beacon Staff Writer

Valparaiso police gave out more traffic citations and arrests for DUIs in 2011 compared to 2010, while the city had fewer traffic accidents, according to annual statistics released by police.

There was little change in the number of arrests in Valparaiso in 2011 compared to the year prior.

The number of DUI arrests in Valparaiso doubled, from three in 2010 to six in 2011, while traffic citations rose slightly, from 582 to 600, a 3 percent increase over the same time frame. There were 65 traffic accidents last year, five fewer than in 2010.

There were 58 arrests in 2011, two fewer than the previous year. The total includes 34 misdemeanor arrests and 24 felony arrests, one fewer in each category.

Valparaiso Police Chief Joe Hart said the police department has 10 full-time employees, including himself, as well as three part-time officers and four full-time dispatchers. One full-time police officer slot was replaced by a part-time slot last year, he said, while there have been no new full-time hires. The police department continues to carry one unfunded police officer slot, from the entire 2011 fiscal year into the current 2012 fiscal year, he said.

With the slowdown in the economy, Hart said the number of officers in training has been reduced, with only two full-time officers in training at the beginning of 2012. It was typical to have three or four officers in training when the economy was booming, he said, when the small police department trained officers only to see them leave quickly to take higher paying jobs with other law enforcement agencies. Having officers in training generally limits traffic details such as DUIs, Hart said.

## BRIDGE

From page A-1

MBBA has begun looking at a marketing campaign to encourage travelers to use the 11-mile connector bridge toll road and to get familiar with toll-by-plate technology that will free motorists from stopping at the toll plaza when the road is completed.

A logo is in the works for the connector road, he said, and cash-payers on the bridge will begin receiving handouts this summer explaining the new tolling technology.

On a separate issue, Vest told the board, "We dodged the bullet again this year," escaping legislative consolidation of the local transportation authority under the Florida Turnpike Authority a second year in a row. The Florida Senate put consolidation of MBBA in two bills, he said. The House did not have consolidation in any of its transportation bills, he said, and the Senate bills were removed during conference.



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<b>Vicki Alexander</b>	<b>Michele Clark</b>	<b>Linda Burnett</b>	<b>Janeen Booker</b>	<b>Roger Bennett</b>	<b>Brittany Swain</b>	<b>Bill Harris</b>
						
<b>Laci LaFoy</b>	<b>Greg Paci</b>	<b>Adam Pennington</b>	<b>Eric Topel</b>	<b>Bill Bland</b>	<b>Debbie Lowmiller</b>	<b>Lois Traxler</b>



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**CRASH**

From page A-1

The plane wasn't on fire, he said, but the crash created a brush fire near where the fuselage came to rest on the top of a small hill in the wooded Eglin

reservation. The two passengers in the plane had been ejected from the plane and did not survive, he said. Firefighters used shovels and fire extinguishers to control the brush fire from spreading, he said.

The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office has tentatively

identified the victims as 59-year old Donald Marco of Niceville and 66-year old Stanley Bloyer of Fort Walton Beach.

The crashed aircraft included a panel with the word "experimental" written on the panel. That typically is an indi-

cation of a plane that was home-built from a kit.

Marco's small experimental plane crashed in woods on Eglin reservation. He and Bloyer were reportedly flying from Ruckel Airport to the Yellow River Airstrip in Holt, according to the sheriff's office.

Representatives of the Federal Aviation Administration and National Transportation Safety Board will be in charge of investigating the deadly crash.

Marco survived critical injuries from another plane crash in 2008. On June 9, 2008,

Marco was the lone passenger of a home-built aircraft that crashed at the north end of the Ruckel Airport. A Niceville High School student witnessed the crash and called 911 after trying to comfort the pilot who was upside down in the wreckage.



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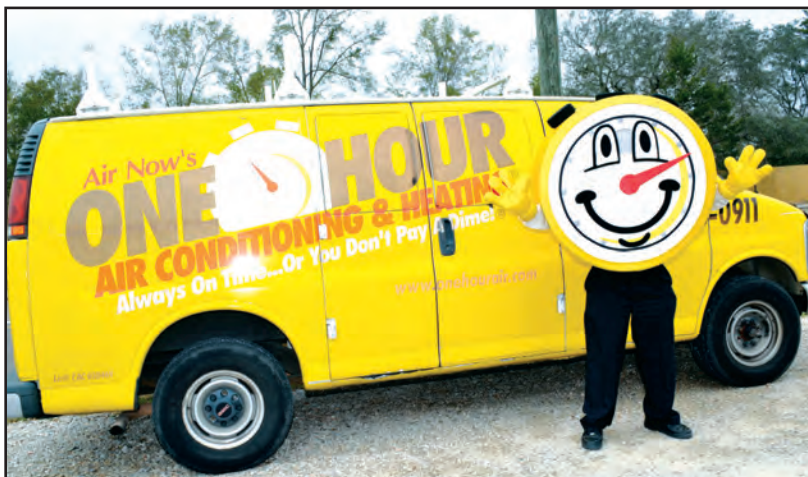
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Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) can be 4-5 times more polluted than outdoor air and the potential for it to be 100 times worse. IAQ services become more and more of value to your family's comfort and health. Depending on your filter, the average time to change it is approximately every 1-3 months. One Hour Air's Filter Club pro-

gram can help maintain cleaner air for your breathing environment.

Additional services for IAQ systems are also available including central air cleaners, ultra violet lights, HEPA filters, fresh air intakes and electronic air cleaners. If you have concerns regarding excess dust, dry air, allergens or airborne viruses and bacteria, One Hour Air's IAQ services can help.

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## Alternative spring break brings students to Niceville



Beacon photo by Tess Hollis

Students from Barry University, Miami Shores, volunteered in Niceville during their alternative spring break. The group of 13 students built artificial reefs on the shores of Choctawhatchee Bay. See full story, page B-3.



Courtesy photo

Jim Miller, of Niceville, was recently recognized by President Barack Obama and ShelterBox USA with a Presidential Volunteer Service Award. From left: Mark Dyer, ShelterBox USA Chairman of the Board, Jim Miller, and Tom Henderson, Founder of ShelterBox.

## Niceville area volunteer earns presidential award

Niceville area volunteer Jim Miller was recently recognized by President Barack Obama and ShelterBox USA with a Presidential Volunteer Service Award for his efforts during 2011 to provide shelter, warmth and dignity for survivors of natural and other disasters worldwide.

In the aftermath of disasters such as the Japan earthquake and tsunami in March 2011, many watched on the television wishing they could make a difference. Miller, a Niceville resident since 1990, knew ShelterBox, an international disaster relief charity, would be on the scene delivering its "green box" containing a family tent, water purification, a cook set and stove, along with other lifesaving supplies.

"The personal award is nice recognition, but being part of the ShelterBox organization

and knowing our fundraising activities are important to many people who have suffered from a disaster is more rewarding," Miller said.

Through Miller's efforts of raising awareness and funds for ShelterBox, the organization was able to provide more than 17,600 ShelterBoxes to families throughout the world in 2011, including the tornadoes in the southern U.S., drought and famine in East Africa, widespread flooding in the Philippines and the subsequent earthquakes in Turkey.

Miller said he gives ShelterBox presentations to increase awareness of the program.

"The generous community of Northwest Florida has been very responsive," he said. "In fact, the Rotary Clubs of this area are our biggest contributors."

A reception for Miller was held on Monday in the Community Room.

\*\*\*

### Whitney Denney of

Valparaiso was named Most Photogenic by her peers at the conclusion of the Miss Huntingdon pageant, held earlier this month at Huntingdon College, Montgomery, Ala. One of nine pageant contestants, she is a freshman sport studies major, and the daughter of Mark and Pam Denney of Valparaiso. She is a member of Chi Omega women's fraternity, the Huntingdon Cross Country Team and the Huntingdon Concert Choir.



Whitney Denney

### Who's News

E-mail items to info@baybeacon.com.

Valparaiso Commissioner Tom Miller was awarded with a service plaque on March 12, honoring him for his 16 years on the Valparaiso City Commission. Miller was elected in 1996, and lost his bid for re-election this year. Mayor Bruce Arnold presented Miller with the plaque that held four dollar coins. Each commissioner serves on the board for \$1 a year.



Tom Miller

### In the Service

Air Force Airman Hunter R. Johnson, of Niceville, graduated from basic military training at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas.

The airman completed an intensive, eight-week program that included training in military discipline and studies, Air Force core values, physical fit-

ness and basic warfare principles and skills.

Airmen who complete basic training earn four credits toward an associate in applied science degree through the Community College of the Air Force.

Hunter is the son of Susan and Russ Johnson of Niceville. He is a 2007 graduate of Niceville High School.

\*\*\*

Air Force Airman William F. Fogarty, of Niceville, graduated from basic military

training at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas.

The airman completed an intensive, eight-week program that included training in military discipline and studies, Air Force core values, physical fitness, and basic warfare principles and skills.

Airmen who complete basic training earn four credits toward an associate in applied science degree through the Community College of the Air Force.

William is the son of Rita Fogarty of Niceville.

He is a 2008 graduate of Niceville High School.

\*\*\*

U.S. Air Force Academy Cadet Captain First Class Dustin Hayhurst, of Freeport, was presented the Tomorrow's Leader Award by Aviation Week. An awards gala was held in Washington, D.C. Aviation Week's Laureate Awards are the aviation, aerospace and defense industry's premier honor, recognizing the exploration, innovation and heroism of current and future leaders. Hayhurst was born in Gelnhausen, Germany and has lived all over the U.S., but considers Freeport his home. Hayhurst was one of four armed services cadets honored as Tomorrow's Leaders by Aviation Week, and sponsor BAE Systems.



Dustin Hayhurst



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**2012**  
CALENDAR

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before 5 p.m. Wednesday.

**Niceville Library display**

Original paintings and artwork by Marla Armstrong will be on exhibit in the Niceville Public Library until March 31. Armstrong's work is influenced by art from the many areas of the globe she has traveled.

**Book sale bonanza**

The American Association of University Women, Niceville/Valparaiso Chapter, is requesting used book donations for its annual book sale at the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida, March 31, from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Proceeds will be used to provide scholarships to deserving women in the community. Donations will be accepted at the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida, 115

Westview Ave., Valparaiso, Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Info: 863-9622.

**OCCSW nominations**

The Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women is taking nominations from the community for the 2012 Women's Wall of Honor. The nominations are due April 15. For the nomination form and more information, visit [ocsw.org/wallofhonor.htm](http://ocsw.org/wallofhonor.htm). The form, a short paragraph (100 words or less) about the woman you wish to honor, her photo and a \$100 donation to the OCCSW should be submitted to the Okaloosa County Commission Status of Women, PO Box 681, Niceville, FL, 32588, or pay with Paypal. Info: Shirley Pigott, 651-3905.

**Republican Women**

Fort Walton Republican Women Federated will hold a meeting on March 21, at 11 a.m., at Carabba's Italian Grill, located in the parking lot of Silver Sands Outlet Mall, Destin. Retired Lt. Col. Samuel Lombardo will be the guest speaker. Lunch will include Caesar salad, ravioli, bread, a beverage and tiramisu. For reservations, contact Margaret Crozier at 837-5321. Cost is \$18 for members, and \$20 for guests.

**Cobia seminar**

The Saltwater Seminar Series will

provide tips and tricks to target and land a cobia, as they migrate along the Emerald Coast. The series will be held on March 21, at 6 p.m., at Northlight Marina. There will be a free buffet at 5:30 p.m. There is no charge to attend, and reservations are not needed. Info: [saltwaterevents.com](http://saltwaterevents.com), or Joe Z., 516-0709, or [joez@saltwater-events.com](mailto:joez@saltwater-events.com).

**Embroiderers' Guild**

The Sand Dunes Chapter of Embroiderers' Guild of America will hold a meeting on March 22, from 6-8:30 p.m., at Niceville United Methodist Church, room 400. The day meeting will be March 26, from 9:30 a.m.-noon, at Niceville United Methodist Church, room 703. Visitors are welcome.

**Senior Center activities**

There will be a presentation of "The Lighthouse Keeper's Daughter," a melodrama, on March 22, at 10 a.m., at the Valparaiso Senior Center. The drama will be presented by Nancy Litten, with full costume. If you are 60 and older, please come and enjoy. The Center is located at 268 Glenview Ave., and also serves lunch at 11 a.m., daily. Reservations can be made by calling 833-9291.

**Technology program**

The Valparaiso Community Library will have a technology program, March 22, at 4 p.m., for students of all ages interested in attending college in the near future. Ron Walls, instructional technology specialist at NWFSC, will present the program discussing how to access college course/content using mobile devices. The program is open to the general public at no cost. Info: 729-5406.

**Candidate forum**

The Okaloosa County Republican Club will host a forum for all district school board candidates on March 22, at the American Legion Hall, 105 Hollywood Blvd., Fort Walton Beach. A social hour will begin at 6:15 p.m., followed by dinner at 6:55 p.m. Cost: \$10.

**Masquerade jewelry sale**

The Auxiliary of Twin Cities Hospital will hold a masquerade \$5 jewelry sale in the Wellness Center on March 22, from 7 a.m.-6 p.m., and March 23, from 7 a.m.-5 p.m. All proceeds will benefit healthcare related scholarship funds. Info: Gift shop, 729-9481.

**Lenten meditation music**

St. Paul Lutheran Church, 1407 E. John Sims Parkway, will sponsor a Lenten meditation with the music of J.S. Bach on March 23, at 7 p.m. The program will include eight chorales for the season of Lent, presented by joint area choir organizations, along with chorale preludes for the organ played by Bonita Clark. Info: 678-1298.

**Archaeological dig**

The Emerald Coast Archaeology



**Lisa Miller shows Birds of Prey Saturday**

The E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center will present Lisa Miller and her birds of prey on March 24, at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Lisa will be showing and discussing several birds that are under her care. The E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center is located at 4645 State Highway 20 East, Freeport.

Society, in coordination with the Indian Temple Mound Museum and Okaloosachambersingers.org, or Dr. Marilyn Overturf, 682-9651.

**Master voice class**

Dr. Michael Hix, assistant professor of voice, and coordinator of choral/vocal studies at Troy University, Alabama, will conduct a master voice class March 31, from 10-11:30 a.m., at First Baptist Church of Niceville. The class will be co-sponsored by the Okaloosa Chamber Singers and the Choctaw Bay Music Club. The class is free to the public. Info: [okaloosachambersingers.org](http://okaloosachambersingers.org), or Dr. Marilyn Overturf, 682-9651.

**Volunteers needed**

Volunteers will be needed March 31, at 8:15 a.m., by the Florida Trail Association for maintenance on the trails at the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center, Freeport. Info: 585-9184, or [choctaw.floridatrail.org](mailto:choctaw.floridatrail.org).

**Zumba for prizes**

Shake it up at "The Cupid Shuffle/Zumba Dance Marathon" fundraiser, March 31, at the Emerald Coast Convention Center, Okaloosa Island. Two grand-prize winners will each receive one Southwest Airlines round-trip ticket to any destination that Southwest Airlines flies. Tickets are on sale at Bayou Book, Niceville.

**Dance contestant tickets**

are \$25 each, and spectator tickets are \$10 at the door. Must be 18 or older to dance.

Info: [nelliesyouthvillage.org](http://nelliesyouthvillage.org), or email Nellie Bogar at [njbogar@yahoo.com](mailto:njbogar@yahoo.com), or Valerie Bogar at [valerie0187@yahoo.com](mailto:valerie0187@yahoo.com).

**IDEAS competition**

Jacobs Technology 16th annual IDEAS Competition, Industry, Design, Engineering And Students, an engineering competition for high school and middle school students,

will be March 31, at Shoal River Middle School, Crestview. Registration, 8 a.m., competition begins at 9 a.m.

**Boating safety course**

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 1-4 will conduct a Coast Guard boating safety course, March 31, from 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., at the Coast Guard Station Destin, 2000 Miracle Strip Parkway. Registration is required by March 28. The cost is \$35 and includes the course, exam, FWC safe boating ID card, lunch, line-handling and knots demo, and tour of the station.



By law, anyone born after Jan. 1, 1988, who operates a vessel in Florida powered by 10 horsepower or more, must pass an approved boater safety course. Info: John Ryan, 623-980-8782, or [ryanjohnj@hotmail.com](mailto:ryanjohnj@hotmail.com).

**Spaghetti dinner**

The Choctaw Beach Community Center will hold a spaghetti dinner, March 31, from 4-6 p.m. Spaghetti, salad, drink and dessert for \$6. Choctaw Beach is located five miles east of Bluewater Bay and 13 miles west of Freeport on Highway 20. The community center is located on Wateroak Street. Info: 897-5590.

**'Romeo and Juliet'**

The Northwest Florida Ballet will present "Romeo and Juliet" at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center, March 31, 7:30 p.m., and April 1, 2:30 p.m. Tickets are \$25 for adults, and \$12.50 for children ages 12 and under. Tickets may be purchased on-line, [nfballet.org](http://nfballet.org), or by calling 664-7787.

**'We Bought a Zoo'**

The Valparaiso Community Library will show the movie "We Bought a Zoo," on April 5, at 1:30

p.m. Popcorn and drinks will be served, and family and friends are welcome.

**Service awards ceremony**

The Niceville/Valparaiso Rotary Club will recognize local public servants at its annual Vocational Service Award ceremony, April 5, at noon. Lunch will be served from noon-12:30 p.m., then each department head/supervisor will be asked to say a few words about their recipient before the awards presentation. The ceremony will be held at the Northwest Florida State College new Student Service Center.

**Audubon monthly meeting**

The Choctawhatchee Audubon Society will hold its monthly meeting on April 5, room 132 of the new Student Services Center at Northwest Florida State College. Cameron Jaggard, of the Pew Environmental Group, will discuss the threat of surface long-line fishing, and will present information on alternative fishing methods. Refreshments will begin at 6:30 p.m., and the program will start at 7 p.m. Info: Walt Spence, 582-7064.

**Golf tournament**

The Traveling Eagles youth baseball team will host its 11th Annual Golf Tournament on April 6, at Bluewater Bay Golf Course. Registration will begin at noon, with a shotgun start at 1 p.m. Entry fees are \$350 per team, or \$90 for individuals. The fee will include a cart, green fees, food and prizes. Info: [TravelingEagles.com](http://TravelingEagles.com), or 685-1641.

**Sunrise service**

There will be a Resurrection Sunrise Service, April 8, at 6 a.m., at Lincoln Park, Valparaiso. Bring lawn chairs and blankets. After the service, pancakes, sausage and juice will be provided for everyone by Trinity Presbyterian in their fellowship hall, 44 Southview Ave. Rain location will be inside the church.

**RMS Chorus performance**

The Ruckel Middle School Chorus will perform at its fourth annual "Sweet Sounds" choral event, April 10, at 6:30 p.m. Tickets will be sold at the door in the Ruckel Gymnasium lobby.

**Audubon annual retreat**

The Choctawhatchee Audubon Society will hold its annual retreat April 13-14, at the Shell Island Fish Camp near St. Marks. For reservations, contact Shell Island Fish Camp at 925-6226. Info: Margaret Benner, 678-6665.

**Pregnancy Center 5K**

The Pregnancy Center will hold a 5K run/walk, April 14, at 8:30 a.m., Old Spanish Trail Park, Crestview. Registration: \$15 by April 1, \$20 late entry/race day, \$10 kids' fun run. On-line registration: [active.com](http://active.com). Info: [schumann.lori@gmail.com](mailto:schumann.lori@gmail.com).



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**Niceville High School Auditorium**

**Registration 6:15 PM  
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# Students volunteer time, effort throughout community



Beacon photo by Tess Hollis

Marjorie Biendichle, a senior criminology major at Barry University, plays with several of the children at the Niceville Head Start Center.

By Tess Hollis  
Staff Writer

Instead of soaking up the sun on the Emerald Coast beaches like many spring breakers, 13 students from Barry University, Miami Shores, hit the shores of Choctawhatchee Bay in Niceville on March 6, to restore the shoreline.

The students were part of Barry University's Alternative Spring Break (ASB) program, a student-run organization that is dedicated to "making the world a better place" through its volunteer service.

During the week of March 9, the ASB students participated in several volunteer activities throughout the Niceville area, including shore restoration and volunteering at the local Head Start.

The first two days of their spring break, students worked in conjunction with the Choctawhatchee Bay Alliance (CBA) to create an artificial reef made of oyster shells along the shores of the bay.

Last year, the CBA started the O.Y.S.T.E.R. Shell Recycling Program, or "Offer

Your Shell to Enhance Restoration." The goal of the program is to collect oyster shells that would otherwise end up in a landfill, and reuse them to construct an oyster reef habitat.

According to the CBA website, "Oyster populations have declined in many places worldwide and Choctawhatchee Bay is no exception. By building reefs, we are providing a hard place for oyster spat (the sub-adult to adult growth period of an oyster) to settle and thrive, as well as providing a habitat for a variety of other important species."

"On the first day we were bagging the oyster shells in plastic netting," said co-adviser of the group, Christina Leano. "We tied the bags and loaded them into trucks, and the trucks dropped the shells in the area where we were going to put them. Then, we placed the bags into a boat, which brought people to the site where they created the artificial reef."

Although the reef work was labor-intensive, the students agreed it was well worth their time.

"We are helping our oceanic creatures, and we get to be closer to God's nature," said Chrystal Rincher, a freshman psychology major.

On March 7, the students switched from manual labor and took their volunteer efforts to Head Start in Niceville, to interact with children ages 3 through 5.

"It helps the children to see new faces," said Head Start Director Nadine Smith. "Some of these children don't have a male or female role model, so it helps to have these college students come in and work with the children. It gives them a positive role model to look up to."

Smith said the teachers at Head Start explained to the children what it meant to be a volunteer and a college student, in an effort to encourage the children to seek higher education and give back to their community.

"They've enjoyed having them here so much," Smith said. "It's important for the kids have this kind of interaction."

After their volunteer work concluded in Niceville, the ASB

group headed to Lakeland where they witnessed the Coalition of Immokalee farm workers of Florida take part in a six day fast at a local Publix. The workers were trying to get the grocery store to sign a Fair Food Agreement, under which Publix would pay an extra penny per pound for tomatoes.

"The No. 1 thing is that students need to know the difference between social justice and volunteer work," said Chelsea Baker, a junior social work major. "It's easy to say, 'it's not my problem,' but to our group this is our backyard and we need to do something to help."

Because the university is located in the Miami area, the students agreed that missing out on a traditional spring break was not an issue, since they are able to "go to the beach and party" any time they wish.

"There's a lot of bad things going on in our world," said Aaron Mohammed, a sophomore chemistry major. "Imagine if no one stood up to do anything about it. I figure I should be that one person to stand up and try to make a difference."

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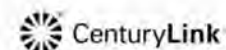
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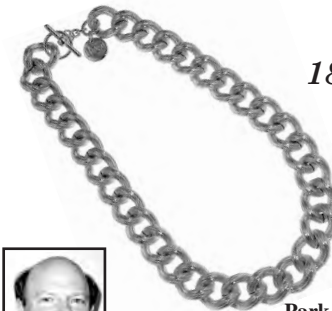
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## NWFSC accepting scholarship applications

Applications for scholarships in the Humanities, Fine and Performing Arts Division at Northwest Florida State College are now being accepted for dance, drama, instrument, technical theater, visual arts and voice.

For visual arts scholarships, portfolios and applications are due April 9-11. Portfolios will be evaluated on April 16 and 18.

For drama, instrument, technical theater and voice scholarships, applications are due March 30. Auditions will be held on April 21, and May 11. Applicants may choose which date works best for them to audition.

For dance scholarships, the applications will be due May 25. A two-day audition will be held May 21, and June 1.

Scholarships are awarded

each semester in varying amounts to be used for tuition by NWFSC, by those students with outstanding abilities in the arts. The general requirements to be eligible for fine and performing arts scholarships are maintaining satisfactory academic standing in general courses, and a 3.5 GPA in the scholarships' area of study; participation in ensembles or classes assigned by the divi-

sion director; working at least two Broadway shows per year; attending all scheduled classes; and complete a free application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Scholarship recipients must re-apply each spring semester. Applications are available at [nwfs.edu/Humanities/Scholarships](http://nwfs.edu/Humanities/Scholarships). For more information contact the Fine Arts office at 729-5382.

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Niceville's Newspaper

# RBCS announces Fine Arts Competition results

Rocky Bayou Christian School recently announced its results from the Florida Association of Christian College and Schools (FACCS) Fine Arts Competition, held on March 8 and 9, in Jacksonville.

More than 30 FACCS accredited high schools participated in the state level competition. RBCS won 48 places (16, first place, 23, second place, and nine, third place) overall.

The Debate Team, made up of seniors Bill Hudson and Josh Turner, won second place in the state.

The RBCS Symphonic Band and Concert Choir each placed second in the state.

The Chamber Choir, made up of members Wendy Kent, Darla Lyons, Carolyn Hudson, Savannah Linn, Jon Delgado, Michael Obrigewitch, Tanner Jennings and Adam Downing, won first place in its category.

The Women's Select Ensemble, made up of members Elizabeth Gadzinski, Shiloh Johns, Anna LaNeve, Kimberly McMahon, Rachel Mosley, Natalie Ouma, Jennifer Paskell, Christiana Serban, Alyssa Slagle, Jessical Vermillion, Casey Young and JoVonna Zuppa, earned third place in its category.

Individual winners in all categories are as follows:

**Academics:**

—English: Elizabeth Marshall, first; Savannah West,



Rocky Bayou Christian School winners of the Florida Association of Christian College and Schools Fine Arts Competition. From left: back, Savannah Linn, Tyler Maraist, Tanner Jenkins, Darla Lyon, Jon Delgado, Joe Townsend. Middle: Elizabeth Sober, Elizabeth Marshall, Grace Stoner, Michael Obrigewitch, Hannah Stoner, Neely Fawaz, Carolyn Hudson, Sarah Lynch, Haeln Yoo, Wendy Kent, Adam Downing, Thomas Hannay. Front: Bill Hudson, Jessica Sandlin, Steve Chambers, Asher Bechtold.

Courtesy photo

second.  
 —Algebra/Geometry: Ashley Lee, third.  
 —Biology: Amanda Hart, second.  
 —Physics: Neely Fawaz, first; Joey Wilson, second.  
 —World History/Geography: Noah Kerstein, third.  
 —U.S. History/Geography:

Josh Turner, second.  
 —Political Science, Economics: Carolyn Hudson, first; Christy Allen, third.  
 —Home Economics: Jessica Sandlin, second.  
 —Accounting: Terence Ouma, second.  
 —Music Theory: Joe Townsend, second.  
 —Science Fair, Physical:

Sarah Lynch, first; Connor Lynch, second.

**Art:**

—Calligraphy: Savannah Linn, second.  
 —Monochromatic Drawing: Haeln Yoo, first.  
 —Polychromatic Drawing: Haeln Yoo, first; Kelly Hanning, third.  
 —Oil Painting: Iris Lee, sec-

ond.  
 —Sculpture: Laura Herndon, second.  
 —Textiles: Jessica Sandlin, first.  
 —Printmaking: Elizabeth Marshall, first.  
 —Black and White Photography: Ashley Lee, second.  
 —Digital Media: Wan Shik

Kim, second; Neely Fawaz, third.

—Mixed Media: Wan Shik Kim, third.

—Woodworking: Jessica Sandlin, first.

**Bible:**

—Old Testament Bible Knowledge: Izabella Foreman, second.

—Expository Preaching: Adam Downing, second.

—Bible Memory: Asher Bechtold, first.

**Music:**

—Instrumental Brass Solo: Steven Wills, second.

—Instrumental Woodwind Solo: Elizabeth Sober, first.

—String Solo: Matthew Steele, third.

—Classical Guitar: Tyler Maraist, first.

—Classical Piano Solo: James Sung, second.

—Percussion Solo: Joe Townsend, first, perfect score.

—Small Group Ensemble: Woodwind trio, Elizabeth Sober, Hannah Stoner, Grace Stoner, first; Clarinet quintet, Hayley Burgess, Wendy Kent, Sarah Lynch, Yull Park and Julie Ritenour, second.

—Large Instrumental Ensemble: Percussion ensemble, Steven Chambers, Thomas Hannay and Joe Townsend, first.

**Speech and Drama:**

—Humorous Interpretation: Yull Park, third.

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## Niceville High recognizes science fair winners

Niceville High School recently announced its winners of the 35th Annual Robert Sheffield East Panhandle Regional Science and Engineering Fair that was held on Feb. 9.

The state finalists will participate in the next level April 3 through 6.

**First Place**

—Michael Sementilli, ninth grade, "Propeller energy"  
 —Kyle Saleeby, 11th grade, "On thin ice: Controlling, slowing the motion of a car on a slippery surface"  
 —Ashali Chimata, ninth grade, "I-solution"

—Nicole Escoffier and Madeline Hsiang, ninth grade, "A study of flouride protection against tooth structure loss from various cariogenic solutions"

**Second Place**

—Kelly Stukbauer, ninth grade, "Altering goldfish's gravity perception"  
 —Gabrielle Sorgnit, ninth grade, "Human reaction time and music tempo"  
 —Haley Baker, ninth grade, "The healthiest meat"  
 —John Thomas, ninth grade, "Which foundation is strongest during an earthquake"  
 —Brayton miles, ninth grade,

"Passive autotracking solar panel"  
 —Sophia Bergmann, ninth grade, "Work it microbes"

**Third place**

—Mykael Briley, ninth grade, "Does dissolving solids into water affect the freezing speed of water?"  
 —Blake Hartzog, ninth grade, "Can honey be used as a natural preservative?"

**Honorable Mention**

—Erin Muphey, ninth grade, "Is this cool or watt?"  
 —Joshua Weed, ninth grade, "Radiant barrier effects on home energy efficiency"

## Mid-Bay Rotary Club accepting scholarship applications

The Mid-Bay Rotary Club is now accepting scholarship applications. The club awards one or two scholarships each year to seniors at Niceville High School. Scholarships range from \$500 to \$1,000, depending on funding available.

The following are the guidelines for the application:  
 —Fill out the application elec-

tronically.

—Write a short paragraph about your "Service above Self."

—Write a short paragraph about your background, interests and goals.

—Submit application by April 1.

—Submit application data electronically to Frank McCarty, fjmccarty8@cox.net.

—Selected applicants will be requested to have a short interview with the Mid-Bay Rotary Club selection board before final selection.

Students can access the application form on the Niceville High School website, nicevillehighschool.org. For more information, contact Frank McCarty at 803-2809.

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Recreation Services Inc., located in Bluewater Bay, is offering a great membership special. Join either the Swim or Hard Court Tennis Membership from now until March 31, and receive a 50% discount on the enrollment fee! Membership includes 4 pools (1 heated) and 3 Tennis Courts. We also offer Water Aerobics, Facility rentals, RV/Boat Storage, swimming and tennis lessons.

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Recreation Services, Inc. office is located at 1050 Bay Drive (Bay Drive Pool). For more information call 897-3664.

The Swim and Hard Court Tennis Memberships are not exclusive to Bluewater Bay Residents. **EVERYONE** is welcome to join!

Weddings

Lee-Shepardson

Cheree Elizabeth Lee and Kenneth Michael Shepardson were married on Saturday, December 10, 2011, at the Rocky Bayou Country Club in Niceville. Cheree is the daughter of Robert and Joan Lee of Niceville. Kenneth is the son of Ken and Mary Shepardson of Niceville.

Both Cheree and Kenneth are 2007 graduates of Niceville High School.



Kenneth Michael Shepardson and Cheree Elizabeth Lee

Cheree graduated from Florida State University in 2011 with a bachelor of science degree in real estate and risk management/insurance.

Kenneth is attending the University of West Florida, and will graduate with a bachelor of science in information technology. The couple resides in Niceville.



Girl Scouting celebrates 100th birthday

Girl Scouts from Okaloosa County, including Troop 102, Niceville, and Troop 471, Eglin, celebrated, on March 10, the 100th year of Girl Scouting at Uptown Station. Girl Scouts and their families, along with alumnae, gathered for food

and fun. Fort Walton Beach Mayor Mike Anderson read a proclamation in honor of the 100th anniversary, and declared 2012 as the Year of the Girl. The official birthday of the Girl Scouts was March 12.

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# Lewis hosts academic tournament, Ruckel JV takes first place



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## Lewis Band earns Superior ratings at assessment

The Lewis Band earned All Superior ratings from the Florida Band Association judges at the yearly Music Performance Assessment held on March 9 at Pensacola High School. All Superior is the highest rating possible, and means the band was rated at an "A" level from each judge in both stage performance and sight reading. The Lewis Band director is Robert Colón.

Lewis School played host, on March 10, to the Okaloosa Middle School Academic Tournament.

Ten schools competed, and Ruckel Middle School took home first place in the junior varsity division.

The junior varsity team is coached by Vicki Washington, and is made up of members Meredith Freeman, Julia Freeman, Mandy Martin, Jake Vernon, Chris Halprin and John Hencinski.

Okaloosa Middle Schools, including Liza Jackson and St. Mary, host five tournaments each year. Each of the 10 schools alternate hosting every other year. The schools competed at the Lewis tournament, and all but one, Liza Jackson, had both junior varsity and varsity teams competing. The junior varsity teams are composed of fifth and sixth graders, and the varsity teams are composed of seventh and eighth graders.

Each team competes in a "round-robin" manner, whereby each team plays all of the other teams in its category. Each match consists of 20 toss-up bonus question pairs. Each question is worth 10 points.

The types of questions relate to the students' grade curriculum, and there are a variety of categories ranging from math, science, civics, social studies, language, literature and trivia.

Questions are read out loud, with four members of each team competing at the same time.



Courtesy photo

Ruckel Middle School's junior varsity academic team took home first place at the Okaloosa Middle School Academic Tournament. From left: back, Vicki Washington, junior varsity coach, Jack Vernon, John Hencinski, Chris Halprin. Front: Meredith Freeman, Mandy Martin, Julia Freeman.

Substitutions can be made at half-time. If a team member buzzes in, and answers the question correctly, then that team receives a bonus question which they can discuss.

To prepare for the tournament, Washington said the Ruckel team

practiced once a week, and practiced match-style answering questions. To prepare for the tournament, Washington said the team practiced once a week, and practiced match-style answering questions.

The following are the results:

### Varsity:

—First, Pryor (9-0); second, Destin (7-2); third, Shoal River (6-3).

### Junior Varsity:

—First, Ruckel (7-1); second, Pryor (6-2); third, St. Mary (6-2).



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## Mid-Bay Rotary Club refurbishes playground

Mid-Bay Rotarians and friends gathered at Fred Gannon State Park on Feb. 25, to assist with a children's playground refurbishment. From left: Dallas Cox, Park Service Specialist; Art Jean, Frank McCarty (kneeling), Alex Lucido, Tom Ockunzzi, Jim Dixon, Tom Johnson, Dave Rauch, District Governor Elect; Ashton Normand, Dave Swanick, Club President; Dave Greenman and Shelley Normand. Not pictured are Ron Moore, Dave Underwood and Jess Parnell.



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