Union challenges 2nd teacher pay freeze

By Del Lessard
Beacon Staff Writer

The teachers union filed a new labor grievance against the Okaloosa County School District Aug. 7 after noting that for the second year in a row, no "step" raise was given to teach- ers in their July 1 paychecks. Karen Perk, president of the Okaloosa County Education Association (OCEA), said the union had learned its lesson and filed the new pay grievance.

"The union recognized that the district had not made an additional step pay raise for the past two school years," Perk said, because their filing of a grievance last year was filed too late. In 2011 OCEA had filed a grievance over pay on Sept. 8, right days after 10-month teachers' paychecks on Aug. 31, 2011, did not contain a step pay raise, an average annual 3 per- cent pay hike based on each additional year of teaching experience in the school dis- trict. Earlier, on July 31, 2011, 12-month teachers in the school district also received checks without the hike.

The school board said it di- d not have the money for a raise last year. It hasn’t stated its intentions this year. OCEA argued that the annu- al step pay hikes were required under the three-year contract between teachers and the school district.

The school district however told OCEA officials Aug. 9 last year that it would not pay a 2011-12 step raise, and declared the issue to be impasse. School district officials said the amount of the raise was not the issue. Instead, it was the argument over the numbers of teachers and years of service.

"We will honor our obligation to make the raises if and when we can," said OCEA President Perk. "The board is holding teacher pay hostage and this is a breach of contract."

Resort drops plan for stores on golf course

By Del Lessard
Beacon Staff Writer

A proposal by the Bluewater Bay Resort to shorten its Magnolia nine-hole golf course and develop a combination of residential and commercial development on parts of two fairways has changed, and now is wholly res- idential, according to the resort’s general manager.

Meanwhile, a majority of Magnolia Plantation property owners have approved a one-time assessment of $200 each, money to be set aside in case the homeowners association needs legal assistance in dealing with the resort’s development plans.

In March, Bluewater Bay Resort Chairman Helmut Werner and General Manager Tom Hanks announced plans to shorten the Magnolia golf course and develop a combina- tion of residential and commer- cial on two fairways. Sixteen homes were proposed on Fairway 9, with a mixed com- mercial and residential develop- ment on Fairway 7, which fronts Highway 20. The Magnolia is the newest of the Magnolias at Bluewater Bay, and is located on the shores of the Okaloosa Sound.

"We have had a number of issues over the past year with the county and the city over water rights, and that has slowed progress," said Werner. "Right now, we are in the process of developing on the residential side, and the commercial side is on hold."

"We are not able to make the commercial happen at this time," Hanks said. "It’s too early."

"We will come back to this in the future," Werner said. "We certainly want to develop on the commercial side, we just have to wait on the rezoning."

"I will have to go to my board, get more input from them, and then come back to you," Hanks said.

Water quality declines, health official says

By Mike Griffith
Beacon Correspondent

Declines in water quality at area beaches was the top subject of discussion during the Okaloosa County Commission’s final pub- lic budget workshop, held Thursday in Fort Walton Beach. County public works director Doug Holstein and health depart- ment director Dr. Karen Chapman discussed the county’s stormwater runoff control pro- gram and its effect on water qual- ity at beaches and in local water- ways.

"Chapman told commissioners that because of budget con- straints, her department now plans to test water quality at county beaches only from February through October, rather than year-round, during fiscal year 2013, which begins Oct. 1. Chapman said the reduced testing will save money, and that

Black Bear Dunes Memorial Park is a 50-acre nature preserve that was created by the City of Niceville, the Okaloosa County Sheriff’s Office and the state of Florida’s Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. It is owned by the city and the county and is managed by the county’s parks and recreation department.

Summer in the “Sunshine State” features near-daily “30 percent chance” of thunderstorms. But lately the down- pours have been heavier than usual. In the seven days that ended Monday at 6 a.m., a total of 0.7 inches of rain was recorded in Niceville at the regional wastewater plant, eclipsing the 0.53 inches that fell during the entire month of July. Year to date, Niceville recorded a total of 47.72 inches of rain as of Monday, or more than 9 inches above normal. Above, shoppers did the best they could to stay dry during a thundershower at the Niceville Walmart parking lot Friday afternoon.

Future of Paradise at bottom, Eglins neighbor eyes rebranding

By Del Lessard
Beacon Staff Writer

Mayor Bruce Valparaiso said Saturday night when a mat- tress caught fire and caused $20,000 damage to a two-story apartment in Niceville.

"Thank God for smoke detectors and good firemen," said Tony Lohrman, assistant chief, Niceville Fire Department.

Lohrman said a smoke detector alerted the victim, who woke up and notified the fire department.

"But Arnold said the phrase makes the city sound like a real estate office," said Eglins, a resident of Paradise.

Summer in the "Sunshine State" features near-daily “30 percent chance” of thunderstorms. But lately the down- pours have been heavier than usual. In the seven days that ended Monday at 6 a.m., a total of 0.74 inches of rain was recorded in Niceville at the regional wastewater plant, eclipsing the 0.52 inches that fell during the entire month of July. Year to date, Niceville recorded a total of 47.72 inches of rain as of Monday, or more than 9 inches above normal. Above, shoppers did the best they could to stay dry during a thundershower at the Niceville Walmart parking lot Friday afternoon.

"This is a lot of rain. It’s not like a typical summer," said Pete Lohrman, Niceville native and Niceville High School alumnus.

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WATER

From page A-1

because most people don’t actu-
ally go swimming at local beaches
during the cooler months of
November through January, the
lack of water testing during that
time period should have little effect on
public health.

She also said she hoped the department was
dropping testing at Camp
Tompkins, east of Nautilus,
since that is not actually a public
county beach, but part of a camp
operated by the University of Florida and the 48th Club. The
health department is adding
two new test sites, she said, along
bayside roads near Okaloosa and
Alabaster island.

The woman warned commission-
ers that water quality at county
beach parks could steadily decline
since 2010, with fewer days each
year when people go to swim at
local beaches without risk of
contamination from nearby coli-
bacillus bacteria and other con-
taminants. She said such bacteria
could come from septic systems,
agricultural runoffs, and even
cheese in the bay.

Tompkins is the wrong direc-
tion for bay water quality,”
Chapman told commissioners
Thursday. She said the levels of
contamination from testing was
being gone up for the last several
years, and that the numbers of
“advisory days,” when the health
department posts signs warning
of potential water quality issues at
such a cost on beach, has also been
gone up.

For 28 years, since 2010, and the
last year that the water had complete
data, the percentage of water sam-
ple tests that were below state standards for
coliform bacteria remained at
36 percent taken at Rocky Bayou State
Park, from March 17 to March 18 at
Garnier Park, and from zero to 9
percent at James Lee Park, she said,
before going up to 60 percent at
the Gulf of Mexico closest to the
Niceville-Va Beach paint and McAlpin’s
Bridge.

During the same period, she
added, the Chapman, the number of
advisory days for county beach
areas has gone on a steady drop,
against at those beaches, went
from 65 percent at Rocky Bayou State
Park, from 35 to 96 at James Lee Park from
an average of 17 at James Lee Park.
Chapman also said that water quality readings may be influenced by
numerous factors, including “rain events” which
make it necessary to perform
levels of advisories at those
times.

One of the reasons, she
said, for not changing the
beach’s name is because
mean “Vale of Paradise,” a translation
that is already on city letterhead.
Chapman said Okaloosa County’s “evacuation rate” for
water contamination is currently
71 feet among Florida’s 34 coastal
counties, and that the evacuation
rate at Rocky Bayou State Park
ranks 4th among 308 beaches tested:
swimming at Fort Walton Beach.
The beach at Garnier Park in Fort
Walton Beach, Chapman said, was
number
1 in the state for exceed-
ance rates.

Some county commissioners
tackled Chapman’s state-
ments, saying she had been
over-emphasizing the actual
health implications of her test
results.

“Aren’t our beaches actually
safer than most other beaches in
the United States?” asked
Commissioner James Campbell
of Valparaiso.

“Why aren’t we doing the
same thing?” the mayor
asked, meaning she wasn’t
telling everyone in the county,
Gaston Park in Niceville.
Downstream? It’s too danger-
ous!”

“Stormwater runoff,”
Chapman replied, “is caused
by multiple sources of
contaminant source.”

We have to decide if we want
to clean up the beach, and if we
want to address stormwater.
This is an issue that should be
addressed both in the local and
state level.”

The other day I took
around a number of coastal beaches
have been in steady decline
since the 1980s, and that the number of
“advisory days” for county beach
areas has gone on a steady drop,
with all of them down dramatically.

The doctor said she was not
alarmed by Chapman’s state-
ments.

We have a lot of talented
people in our community,”
answered Arnold, citing a number of
people who had held high-level
positions at the state.

Arnold suggested that
commission members discuss the
matter further at a meeting next
month.

In other business at Monday’s
city commission meeting, the
commission agreed to sell or trade
basic cable television services
on a last-in-first-out basis. The
“polar attachment” fee for
portion of cable bills. The net result
will be a fee-increase reduction to
monthly cable bills, said City
dClerk Tammy Johnson.

The new rate boosts the
basic cable, channels 3, 4, 5,
3.75 to $31.50 to $32.85 per
month. The “polar attachment”
fee—charge to pay Gulf
cable per year to cover the
beach’s TV service will increase
$2.50 per month to 55 cents.

The lower pole attachment
fee was a result of an April agree-
ment with Gulf Power, reducing the pole attachment, fee, a long
battle, said Arnold.

Wayne Harris objected, saying “I
want to clean up the beach, and if we
want to address stormwater. This is
an issue that should be addressed
both in the local and state level.”

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ALARM

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The back yard of Norma Rethlake’s home on Armadillo Trail in Magnolia Plantation, Bluewater Bay, backs up to the seventh fairway of the Magnolia golf course, part of which the course owner, Bluewater Bay Resort, wants convert to homeless.

Each StoneStopper is shaped by ocean waves into smooth, ergonomic forms. The stopper’s stainless steel body and thick rubber plug seal perfectly and last forever.

Prepping for new crop of students

Teachers reported back to their schoolhouse classrooms Monday, a week before Okaloosa County public-school students start classes Aug. 20. Above, Lewis School fifth-grade teacher Evie Ratley couldn’t wait to begin prepping her new class and moving supplies in Friday. With eight years experience teaching in other states and overseas in Korea as a military wife, she begins her third year in the Valparaiso K-6 school.

Beacon photo by Del Lessard

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Beacon photo by Del Lessard

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Baywalk photo by Del Lessard

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Sewage field work remains in firm's hands

By Del Lessor

The Niceville-Valparaiso Regional Sewer Board voted this week to extend a contract to a contractor to maintain the utility’s sewer system.

The board had previously ended the annual spraying program it had with Gulf Star Contracting in the belief it could maintain the fields on its own. It had been using in-house maintenance personnel because the city and county utilities spend nearly $120,000 a year for maintenance.

Water treatment plant maintenance is included in the board member’s duties so it will be beneficial to continue the contract with Gulf Star through June 30. He said the utility’s own personnel haven’t been able to prove they can do it because they will be training on new equipment currently being installed at the plant under a $35.24 million upgrade. The upgrade is expected to come online in 2014.

Helms said he also needed to see what Gulf Star Air Force Base and the city have on the sewer board under an existing use fee of $8 per 1,000 gallons. That is the board in the past. The Department of Environmental Protection has required certain treatment of the sewage before it can be sent to the sewage field. The utility’s utility has a permit to handle nitrogen and other pollutants to the water and subsequently into the Okaloosa River.

The contract sends to the Okaloosa darter, a small minnow that could be on the endanger list. While that’s changed, Helms said he still needs to upgrade its treatment facility to stay in compliance and some of the materials from the discharge cannot be treated. In order to do that, he said, to merely multiply the fact by what was, what is, what details are what will be difficult. He said he will be making a cost analysis between contractor and in-house maintenance of the spraysfield.

Fires

The North Bay Fire Department responded to the following calls from July 30, 2012.

N. Lakeshore Drive ................Vehicle accident..........................08/11/12 .................15:13
Birkdale Circle.........................EMS call......................................08/11/12 .................04:02
Birkdale Circle.........................EMS call......................................08/12/12 .................03:25
Range Road ...........................EMS call......................................08/12/12 .................10:32
Calinda Lane ..........................Medical assist .............................08/07/12 .................13:24
West Parkwood Lane.............Unintentional transmission.........08/06/12 .................17:23
Winward Lane ...............Dispatched & canceled.......................7/21/12 ....................12:14
Gingko Avenue..............Unauthorized burning .........................7/14/12 ....................20:40
Winlake Court................Detector activation,no fire...................7/8/12.......................20:44
Oak Avenue...................False alarm..........................................7/2/12.......................12:25
Tasso Avenue ......................False alarm..........................................7/11/12.......................22:20
Tasso Avenue ......................False alarm..........................................7/11/12.......................19:01

Of July 2012.

Fuel

The information is from reports by the Okaloosa County Sheriff’s Office.

**Police Blotter**

The following information is obtained according to records of the Niceville and Valparaiso police departments, the Okaloosa County Sheriff’s Office, the North Bay Fire Department, and from local newspapers and other local government agencies.

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**Arrests**

Cynthia Susan Wilkinson, a restaurant employee, 46, of 365 West Palmetto Street, Niceville, was arrested by sheriff’s deputies July 27 on a violation of probation charge on the original charges of grand theft.

Branden Edward Zembsch, 21, of 700 N. 32nd St., Niceville, was arraigned by sheriff’s deputies July 20 on a violation of probation charge on the original charges of grand theft, burglary, grand theft auto, grand theft.

Seth Daniel Lovell, unemployed, 42, of 304 Evers St., Niceville, was arrested by sheriff’s deputies July 27 on a violation of probation charge on the original charges of grand theft.

Brandon Edward Zembsch, 21, of 700 N. 32nd St., Niceville, was arraigned by sheriff’s deputies July 20 on a violation of probation charge on the original charges of grand theft.

Bobby Nicole Thap, a business owner, 46, of 15708 Lucerne Ave., Niceville, was arrested by sheriff’s deputies July 27 on a violation of probation charge on the original charges of grand theft.

Laura Denise Tape, 24, of 400 Kiley Rd., E. Niceville, was arrested by sheriff’s deputies July 27 on charges of theft and provid- ing false information. Tape allegedly put a $500 Microsoft Surface on sale at the Sears store, 300 Mary Esther Blvd., Mary Esther, without paying, then gave a false name.

Scott arcade Bethel, unbeknownst to the public, 45, of 245 Roberts Drive, Niceville, was arrested by sheriff’s deputies July 27 on charges of theft and providing false information.

Under a $5.24 million upgrade.

Michael Robert Andrews, a 15-year-old Niceville boy, was arrested by sheriff’s deputies Thursday in Fort Walton Beach July 12 on charges of criminal mischief and resisting an officer without vio- lence.

Lori Marie Emmele, 36, of 1835 Tall St., Hollywood, was arrested by sheriff’s deputies at the Okaloosa County Jail July 27 on a charge of fraudulently using another person’s ID without con- sent. Emmele is allegedly part of a scheme to charge multiple fraud charges July 6 after attempting to cash a $10,000 check at a Niceville bank using someone else’s driver’s license. She allegedly obtained an affidavit of complaint stating she had bought a car from her victim June 25 but she did not have the money to use it and had allegedly had possession and/or used said vehicle in an unautho- rized fire.

Jeremy Phillips White, 21, of 4403 E. Niceville Drive, niceville, was arrested by sheriff’s deputies on Aug. 2 on a petit theft charge.

While allegedly entered a Destin convenience store July 27, picked up two 24-ounce cans of beer and walked out without paying.

Kathleen Deshawn Andrews, 25, of 11804 Evers Dr., Niceville, was arrested by Niceville police Aug. 3 on charges of theft, battery, resisting an officer with force, and resisting an officer without violence.

Michael Andrews, a 27-year-old Niceville man, was arrested by Niceville police Aug. 3 on charges of theft, malicious mischief, false imprisonment, resisting an officer with force, and resisting an officer without violence.

Kirk Daniel Oviatt, 30, of 11817 Laxton Ave. at the Regional Sewer Board voted this week to extend a contract to a contractor to maintain the utility’s sewer system.

The regional utility also received a clean audit report from its outside CPA firm. 18, 157 E. Niceville Ave. at the Board’s members said they still have some material weaknesses and no matter what or how much they control the utilities maintenance over its financial reports.

By Del Lessor

The Niceville-Valparaiso Regional Sewer Board voted this week to extend a contract to a contractor to maintain the utility’s sewer system.

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What do you think about the United States sending a $2.5 billion probe to Mars to determine whether life ever existed there?

By Mike Griffith

The East Niceville Fire Commission Monday discussed ways to avoid a possible tax hike during the fiscal year which will start Oct. 1.

Commissioners made it clear during Monday's meeting that they prefer to keep the fire district's property tax rate, which has risen dramatically since 2003, at its current rate, if they can do so while still paying necessary expenses for their fire department.

At the current millage rate of 2.37, property owners in the East Niceville Fire District, between the Niceville city limits and the shore of Rockey Bayou, pay $2.37 for each $1,000 of appraisal taxable value of their property, after homestead exemptions and other exceptions. For example, the owner of a home appraised at a taxable value of $200,000 currently pays $474 per year in property tax to the East Niceville fire district, in addition to other taxes collected by Okaloosa County, the school district, and others.

A final decision on fire dis- trict taxes will be made next month.

At a previous meeting held July 9, the East Niceville com- missioners authorized them- selves to hike the millage rate to 2.44, but said then that they preferred to keep the current rate if that can be done despite declines in property values and increased expenses in such areas as insur- ance. At a 2.44 millage rate, the property owner mentioned above would pay $480 in prop- erty tax to the East Niceville fire district.

No decisions were made dur- ing Monday’s meeting about the coming year’s budget, except for the passage of a motion to mod- ify the budget to include 27 line items rather than the current 22. This, said commission treasurer Ed Dunbar, will standardize the East Niceville budget to match the state budgeting format, mak- ing it easier to translate day-to- day budgeting with annual audits that use the state format.

For as next year’s spending, commission chairman Mike Marcolongo said he has studied the district’s finances and come up with additional cuts that can be made to such areas as opera- tional supplies, such as fuel, insur- ance, and the district’s equip- ment reserve fund, which should be enough to allow the district to operate for another year without a tax rate hike.

At last month’s meeting, it was estimated that the FY 2013 budget would have to cut out about $39,000 to match spending with expected revenue in FY 2013.

Dunbar, however, warns against cutting too deeply, say- ing, “I’d be willing to take a little tax increase, to have a little less cuts. We have liabilities that currently exist right now.”

Dunbar also suggested that if cuts are needed, they should include at least a partial reduc- tion of the fire chairman’s salary.

Commissioner John Root acknowledged Martin’s “That’s a crazy. We need the money here in the U.S., where there are homeless families and people going hungry.”

Joe Riley, 26, Navarre, fisherman

Wayne O’Donnell, 23, Niceville, firefighter

Ragan Wright, 11, Niceville, Plew Elementary School student

Janel Wright, 43, Niceville, retired

E. Niceville seeks to hold line on millage

The voice of Niceville, Bluewater Bay and Valparaiso since 1992

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Commissioner John Root acknowledged Martin’s...
From page A-1

Page A-6

Wednesday, August 15, 2012

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“Let Kiwanis Reel Old Glory to the sea”

There were no lines or queues for those who wanted to take part in the "Let Kiwanis Reel Old Glory to the sea" event on July 3 at the Almost Home Animal Shelter, where 1,000 flags had been previewed for Kiwanis members to be lowered into the water. The flags, which were purchased by Kiwanis members, were displayed at the shelter. The American Legion Post 78 also attended.

Almost Home Animal Shelter

2200 North John Sims Pkwy. Niceville, Florida 32578

850-734-4700

www.almosthomeanimalshelter.org

The Bay Beacon

Serving the Children of the World

Kiwanis Club

In past years OCEA and the school district have negotiated issues such as the annual step pay raise during the summer, resulting in teachers not getting past step pay raises in their first few paychecks. Peek said in this year past step pay raises have been approved, retroactively, as far as December.

School district officials are in negotiations with OCEA over a new three-year contract between teachers and the school district.

As of the Beacon’s press deadline, neither Peek, nor school district negotiator Mike Foxworthy returned calls asking if there were any changes in the current budget for teacher’s step pay raises.

The school district’s budget for the current school year won’t be finalized until a public hearing Sept. 10.

[Image 30x1049 to 870x1317]

[Image 31x38 to 235x227]

[Image 31x1427]
Cirque Chinois, the internationally touring shows is a record-setting performance. The performance is available for the largest series on Arts Center playbill among others.

Each of the 12 nationally touring shows appear at 7:30 p.m. for one performance only. Individual tickets are $45 each for Broadway events, and $35 each for Artist Series events. The 2012-13 Broadway and Artistic Season starts Sept. 26 with “Menopause the Musical”—a musical parody set to classic tunes from the ’60s, ’70s and 80s. The season continues Oct. 11 with “Broadway Rocks,” featuring the contemporary pop and rock musicals of Broadway. “Dramatique Live” will appear Nov. 7 with an explosion of energy and athleticism set to contemporary hip hop, R&B and classical Motown tunes, as well as brass marching bands. “Sheik the Musical” will appear Nov. 19, followed by “Nantucket Bowling” Nov. 28 starring Cindy Williams of “Laverne & Shirley” TV fame as Mother Supper. “Fiddler on the Roof” comes to the Mattie Kelly Arts Center stage Dec. 3, and direct from Beijing, the National Circus of the People’s Republic of China, performs “Cirque Chinois” Dec. 12.

On Jan. 12, “New York Towers” will perform. The groundbreaking musical “Hair” will appear Jan. 30. Parental discretion is advised for this show. “In the Mood” Feb. 2 will feature a 1940s musical with the String of Pearls Big Band Orchestra, vocalists and dancers. Ireland’s leading tenors will perform. The musical comedy “Rock of Ages” will appear April 1. All tickets sales include a $2 per ticket box office processing fee in addition to the ticket price.

From left, Emerald Coast Autism Center graduates Corbin Brunson, Tyler Parkinson and Megan Triplett.

Kiwanis donates school supplies
Judy Boudreaux and Bill Landheer, Kiwanis Club members, donated a $200 check and school supplies to Sharing and Caring, Niceville, Thursday, Aug. 9. Sharing and Caring has collected and filled about 300 backpacks in preparation for the 2012-2013 school year.
By John A. Boisjolie, senior director of volunteer services for the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra as well as in independent clinics. More information can be found at the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida, 678-2615.

Choir Auditions
The Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra is holding auditions for their annual Volunteer Choir on Saturday, October 20, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., in the choir room of Shalimar United Methodist Church. For more information, contact music director Kelly Arts Center at the NWF State College in Recital Hall on the Niceville campus. 2012-2013 season Wednesday, Aug. 29.

Choir orientation will be held Sunday, Sept. 23, 2-5 p.m. in the choir room of Shalimar United Methodist Church. For more information, contact music director Kelly Arts Center at the NWF State College in Recital Hall on the Niceville campus. 2012-2013 season Wednesday, Aug. 29.
NHS grad sets home run mark
Blasts 19 in summer league

By Kenneth Books

The 2009 Niceville High School graduate shattered New England Collegiate Baseball League records this summer, setting new marks for home runs with 19. He also established new ceilings in slugging average (.780), total bases (131) and extra base hits (29) for the Lacoma Muskrets, while batting .390. He was named the league’s all-star first baseman.

“I can hit,” Collins said. “I grew up as a shortstop and I’ve got too slow so they put me at third base.”

“Danny was one of our first signees for the 2012 team,” said Lacoma General Manager Noah Crane. “As a player he consistently batted the ball, which is the mark of a good hitter. He has power to all fields and has excellent strike zone awareness. He is a fierce competitor and puts in the work to make himself better. His success puts him in a leadership role and he handles that role well.”

Many young players have trouble adjusting to wooden bats after growing up with metal versions. Not so Collins. “It’s not that different from the new but they have these days, often that they can hit,” he said. “I’ve played several summers with a wood bat.”

Collins is scheduled to gradu- ate from Troy in 2013 with a sports management degree. Summer league goals have little to do with his major.

Collins is a Yankee fan who used to live in the Tampa area, where the Yankees train. Collins said he’s a Derek Jeter fan. “I grew up five minutes from the training field,” he said. “My dad had free tickets right behind the dugout.” Needless to say, Collins’ ultimate dream is “to play for the Yankees in the major leagues.”

But, he added, “I’ll play for anyone. I just want a chance to prove to someone that I can make it.”

Danny Collins, a 2009 graduate of Niceville High School, hammered out a record 19 home runs for the Lacoma Muskrets of the New England Collegiate Baseball League this summer.

“I’m hoping to be drafted by a major league organization after next spring,” he said. “If he dreams come true, he’s already a step ahead of many new professional baseball players. Not only is he comfortable with a wooden bat, but he’s executional a top level league. Often, the schedule—about 15 games for the home run league—requires Collins to play about 150 games between Troy University and the summer col-

What’s the key to becoming a good hitter? “It’s a lot of practice, I guess,” Collins said. “Hitting’s always been my strong point in baseball. I’ve had a lot of good hitting coaches. I’m a big student, and I like to listen to everyone’s take and take what I like from it and use it my advantage.”

Hitting can be taught, but power can’t. You either have it or you don’t. Collins has power and it’s been increasing as the seasons.

“His main problem fielding, Collins said, is concentration. “It’s lack of focus,” he said. “The coaches all say I’ve got the talent and I’ve got the arm. I tend to take a pitch-off, but I’ve got a lot better at it this past year. But I’ve always been told as long as you hit, you’ll play.”

A Yankee fan who used to live in the Tampa area, where the Yankees train. Collins said he’s a Derek Jeter fan. “I grew up five minutes from the training field,” he said. “My dad had free tickets right behind the dugout.” Needless to say, Collins’ ultimate dream is “to play for the Yankees in the major leagues.”

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Danny Collins, a 2009 graduate of Niceville High School, hard
Coast Aquatics swimmers excel in Knoxville

Finish in 10th place with 428 points

Special to the Beacon

Coast Aquatics swimmers excel in Knoxville, amassing 247 points for the Northwest Florida finish of any team from Aquatics team and the highest marked the highest for a Coast team held its own, scoring 428 meet host Pilot Aquatics. The Memphis Tiger Swimming and Nashville Aquatic Club, against national powers flying more than 30 athletes.

mergers from more than 50 teams Florida. More than 1,000 swim- Southeastern Swimming Long Swimming merged, sent 38 Barracudas and Emerald Coast swam. Lucy Rudman and Amelia Strom were both also close to achieving second swims in the breaststroke against finishing inside the top 24. For the guys, Matt Markwardt continues to climb the ladder in the breaststroke events and Chae Brechler and Justin Lewis hope to build on some of their 13-14 season and continue it into the Senior age group. Chase Turner has returned to top form in the backstroke and Wyatt Kartvedt added help in breast and fly events as well as competing on two relays.

West earns scholarship

Brittany Washington is the only team member. The scholarship is offered annually to a deserving FDD member. West played on the 400 free for the 11-12 girls. and an eighth-place finish in the 800 free. Emma Strom completed the top-16. Elizabeth Eppright completed the 100 fly, and Paris Binard and Heapy added a 15th place in the 50 free and 50 breast.

Kale had top-10 performances in any given age group. Matthew McDonald showed his versatility by being top-four in all seven events he competed in and won championships in the 50 free and 50 back. Nathaniel Rudman added five top-eight finishes, finishing as high as fifth place in the 400 free and 50 fly. Cameron Turner and Cole Pearson joined Rudman and Mathews for great relays, batting all the way to the finish in the Medley Relay.

On the girls side, Sydney Keith had top-10 performances in the 50 breast, 50 fly and 100 free. Nicole Wiedemann was 10th in the 100 back, Sydney Heapy added a 15th place in the 100 fly, and Paris Binard and Elizabeth Eppright completed two composite relays to finish in the top 16. Tatum Hackler notched a fifth-place finish in the 800 free and an eighth-place finish in the 400 free for the 11-12 girls.

Bikkan Thompson recorded lifetime bests in every event she swam. Lucy Rudman and Ashley Reynolds added lifetime best performances and rounded out two relays that fin- ished in the top 16. Sarah Markward, Evy Brechler and Stephanie Markward also registered lifetime- best times.

Dylan Hammond finished in sixth place in the 50 free to get the boys on the scoring column. First-timer Kasper Kazmazinski joined Hammond, Josh Wood and Jeffrey Sober to finish seventh and eighth in the relays. In the 13-14 girls. Emma Rudman had top eight performances in the 1,500 free, 400 IM and the 800 free. Emma Strom added a third-place finish in the 400 IM and a fifth-place finish in the 1,500 free. The girls also were a part of a medley relay with Kate Tunley and Sydney Dawson that finished 12th. Michael Bartley chose to come to Knoxville to represent Coast-Aquatics one more time, even though he moved prior to the meet. He finished third in the 50 fre.

Kellen Broadrick, Benson Koita and Nick Kartvedt joined Michael in relays that finished 9th in medley relay and 12th in free relay. Kate Miller was the only Coast senior swimmer to make it to finals, finishing 10th in the 200 breast and 12th in the 100 breast. Miley Brechler and Amelia Strom were both also close to achieving second swims in the breaststroke against finishing inside the top 24.

For the guys, Matt Markwardt continues to climb the ladder in the breaststroke events and Chae Brechler and Justin Lewis hope to build on some of their 13-14 season and continue it into the Senior age group. Chase Turner has returned to top form in the backstroke and Wyatt Kartvedt added help in breast and fly events as well as competing on two relays.

Symphony Chorale holds singer auditions in August

The Northwest Florida Symphony Chorale will hold auditions for the 2012-2013 sea- son on Wednesday, Aug. 15, beginning at 6 p.m. at Dyker Recital Hall on the Nicewell campus of Northwest Florida State College in the Mattie Kelly Arts Center.

The Northwest Florida State College’s Criminal Justice Department will offer four ses- sions of its popular Firearms Safety and Concealed Carry Course this fall. Each non-credit course is eight hours long and includes classroom discussion on legal issues related to firearms safety and gun possess- ion in Florida as well as live fire practice at the Firearms Training Facility on the Nicewell campus. The class is $156 and includes the use of college firearms (personal firearms are not permitted in the class or on campus) and college-supplied ammunition and eye/clothe protec- tion. It is open to the public, including those under age 18 if accompanied by a parent or guardian who also enrolls in the safety course. Successful com- pletion of the course satisfies state requirements for a firearms safety course and may be used as part of an application for a concealed carry permit.

The session dates include three one-day sessions on Saturday, Aug. 11, Friday, Oct. 26, and Saturday, Nov. 17 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. There is also a two-day session available Wednesday, Sept. 12, from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. (classroom portion) and Friday, Sept. 14, from 8 a.m. to noon (range portion).

Registration is now being accepted for all session dates. Individuals who are current or previous NWFSC students may enroll for the non-credit work-shop on-line through the col- lege’s RaiderNET with registrat- ion fees. NWFSC students should enroll in-person at any of the college’s seven area loca-
Brett M. Watson
Air Force Airman 1st Class Brett M. Watson has graduated from the Remotely Piloted Aerial Systems Maintenance Apprentice Course at Sheppard AFB, Wichita Falls, Texas. His course is designed to train airmen in aircraft maintenance fundamentals and weapons system familiarization, security instructions, technical order systems, maintenance management and documentation, aircraft and flight line safety. Training included use of hand tools, hardware, and equipment to perform aircraft ground handling, common, and inspection procedures; instruction and familiarization with particular aircraft airframe, electrical, hydraulic, optical, environmental, fuel, flight and loading controls, engines and related systems and components.

Watson is the son of Robin and Bruce Watson of Androbe Court, Niceville. He is a 2007 graduate of Niceville High School.

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Watson is the son of Robin and Bruce Watson of Androbe Court, Niceville. He is a 2007 graduate of Niceville High School.
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Cramming the van for kids

Sharing & Caring, Niceville, recently held a “Cram the Van” school supplies drive at the Niceville Walmart. More than 2,000 school supplies were donated, as was about $200 cash. Supplies will be donated Aug. 15 to area school children in need. For their participation, Sharing & Caring presented a plaque to Walmart. From left: Gloria Price, Tasha Stidham and Lynn Watson.