



Charged! Former County Commissioner Anne Scott, and sitting Commissioners Ed Fielding and Sarah Heard charged with violating public records laws in the Lake Point case. Fielding and Scott charged with criminal misdemeanors. Heard charged with a non-criminal misdemeanor. All three charged on Nov. 28. pg 4

FREE

Martin County CURRENTS

Volume 7 Issue 6
December 2017

Christmas is here!

Lots of events on tap to celebrate the holidays. pg 23

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Santa's elf, Brooklyn, 5, who has graced Currents' cover three times, joins her grandmother, Mrs. Claus (Jan McDonald), and Santa during the Hobe Sound Christmas parade. Parade photos by James Brown will be in the January issue of Currents.



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• **DEC. 9 - Art for Living Calendar Signing**

From its Morning Walk on the Beach and Manatee Pocket paintings to its Simple Pleasures and Lemon Tree, Helping People Succeed has its 2018 Art for Living Calendar on sale now in Martin and St. Lucie counties. In addition, a calendar signing with all of the talented calendar artists will be at the Barnes & Noble Bookstore in Jensen Beach on Saturday, Dec. 9, from 1 - 3 p.m. Calendars will also be for sale at the Hobe Sound Christmas Parade on Dec. 2 outside the Edward Jones office.

• **FEB. 19-25 - Birdies for Children, Sponsored by The Honda Classic.**

To support Helping People Succeed, a drawing to win a 2018 Honda for each \$20 chance ticket to guess how many birdies will be made at the 2018 Honda Classic, Feb. 19-25. Online pledges: <http://www.thehondaclassic.com/hondaclassic-cares/bfc/donate/>.

• **FEB. 24 - Art Sale & Show**

To benefit Helping People Succeed, the Sandhill Cove Retirement Living facility, 1500 S.W. Capri St., Palm City, will sponsor an art sale and show from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Free admission.

• **MARCH 2018 - National Reading Month Book Drive**

A month-long book drive at the new Helping People Succeed office, 1601 N.E. Braille Place, Jensen Beach. For more information, call 772.320.0770.



• **MARCH 4 - Marathon of the Treasure Coast**

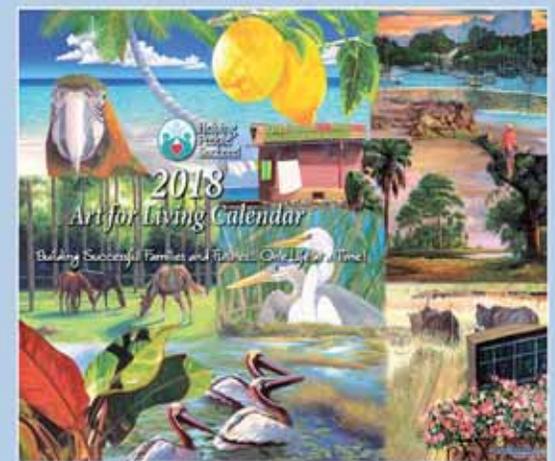
Helping People Succeed will take part and will be a beneficiary of the Marathon of the Treasure Coast, which begins at Memorial Park, 300 S.E. Ocean Blvd in Stuart.

• **APRIL 2018 - April Showers**

A month-long baby supply collection will help around 4,500 children served by Helping People Succeed under the age of five. Helping People Succeed, 1601 N.E. Braille Place, Jensen Beach.

• **MAY 2018 - The Great Give!**

The county-wide day to give online. The day is to be determined.



• **JUNE 9 - White Shirt Night**

One of the most popular events to support Helping People Succeed takes place at Taste Casual Dining in Hobe Sound with renowned local artists creating one-of-a-kind paintings on white T-shirts. Taste is at 11750 S.E. Dixie Highway, Hobe Sound, 6 - 8 p.m. \$50 per person. For a VIP "sneak" preview, arrive at 5 p.m. for \$100 per person admission. All proceeds benefit Helping People Succeed.



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Suzy Hutcheson
President and CEO, Helping People Succeed



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ANALYSIS: Is the four-story height limit jeopardized?

Why the sudden, intense public uproar in October that the county's cherished four-story height limit was threatened? Even the daily newspaper's coverage of the county commission's actions to amend Chapter 2 of the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan reported that the door had been opened to exceptions, although nothing was different about the county's long-established, time-tested rules governing building height.

Nothing.
Reflecting citizens' desire to eliminate the possibility of skyscraper canyons in Martin County, the four-story height limit on buildings was written into the county's code during the '60s and redefined in Martin County's Land Development Regulations (LDRs) adopted in the '70s – even prior to the 1982 adoption of the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan, which reaffirmed the policy.

Those decades-old LDR rules are responsible for the low skyline across the landscape – most notably at the county's shorelines – to which residents often point as a favorite example of “the Martin County difference.” Those same rules still exist in the LDRs today.

And despite claims otherwise, the LDRs cannot be changed without published public hearings before both the Local Planning Agency and the Board of County Commissioners.

CITIZEN INPUT

The cause of the public furor were email blasts originated by supporters of Maggy Hurchalla's 2013 rewrite of the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan, as well as from Hurchalla herself. She added the line in Chapter 2 that the Growth Management staff recom-

mended removing, a line that had never previously been part of the Comp Plan.

Hurchalla's unauthorized rewrites changed the Comp Plan. Previously, the rules to implement Comp Plan policies were found in the Land Development Regulations, which had to consider a myriad of zoning considerations, as well as state health department, environmental, water management and federal flood control rules as it implemented Comp Plan policy.

The rules also had to be consistent throughout all its chapters and comply with the Comp Plan.

The emails that played on residents' fears were dotted with distortions, incomplete facts and a lack of historical perspective – never mentioning that Hurchalla had just recently added these new rules to the Comp Plan.

Some residents, however, like Jane Landrum of Palm City, went to the county's Growth Management Department to get an explanation of the proposed amendments, an experience that Landrum compared to “sticking a pin in my eye.”

Many who heard her comments during the Oct. 24 county commission's public hearing on the changes nodded in agreement. She, along with others, so cherish the four-story height limit, she would rather risk lawsuits than change any words in the Comp Plan.

Landrum's frustration stemmed from the fact that the Comp Plan, the Land Development Regulations, and the county ordinances all are legal documents, not easily understood or explained in common terms, compounded by a county staff bound to remain politically neutral.

THE POLITICAL BACKSTORY

Hutchinson Island residents cheered at the recent grand opening of the new,

luxury Ocean Resort Hotel that replaced the hurricane-ravaged Holiday Inn on Ocean Drive. They had watched as the property had been sold, bought, sold and bought again over the previous 14 years when a new developer presented a final site plan April 22, 2014, to commissioners for approval.

If the same, identical plan had been presented this year, after Hurchalla's new Comp Plan rules became effective in 2016, the hotel would have been limited to two floors of rooms due to Hurchalla's rewrite of Chapter 2, combined with a change in the federal flood maps.

The restriction would have financially eliminated the possibility of redeveloping the hotel site, thus killing the project, or the owners would go to court under laws that protect landowners from government overreach. That's the situation that the county staff recognized and is the reason for the recommendation to remove some, but not all, of Hurchalla's additions.

Specifically, the Chapter 2 rewrite included a measurement, normally found only in the specifics of the Land Development Regulations, that would count the open area beneath buildings as the first floor – without any exception.

The open area was already counted as one floor in the Land Development Regulations, with one exception – the oceanside only of the barrier islands. The exemption in the county's LDRs were written decades

ago to protect the sand dunes.

With this exemption, owners would not be tempted to destroy the dunes in order to get their expensive ocean view, and the pilings under a building also protected them from storm surge.

The barrier island exemption in the LDRs never opened a “Pandora's Box” of skyscrapers on the island or anywhere else in Martin County. It has been a long-established, accepted exception.

Hurchalla's new rule was compounded by last year's change in the federal flood control maps, mandating an increase in the height of the lowest floor of waterfront buildings due to sea level rise. It would have squeezed the Ocean Resort Hotel's four floors of rooms into two floors, compounding the effect of Hurchalla's change to Chapter 2.

Martin County was sued multiple times over the past five years, not only by challenges to the Comp Plan rewrites, but also under the Bert Harris Act, draining millions of taxpayer dollars from the county's coffers.

The county staff, therefore, was compelled to eliminate an unnecessary risk by recommending some deletions, which were adopted by the county commission at its Oct. 24 meeting. At the same time, they preserved the four-story, 40-foot height limit in both documents, exactly as it was for decades – before the 2012 commission and Maggy Hurchalla “fixed” it. ■

– Barbara Clowdus

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Fielding and Scott arrested; Heard eludes criminal charges

The recent arrests of two county commissioners raised more questions than answered them. Why only two arrests when three commissioners had been implicated of serious public records violations in court proceedings in February?

The Feb. 9 ruling in the Lake Point civil case, upheld by Circuit Court Judge William Roby, had found that three commissioners, thus Martin County, had violated public records laws, awarding Lake Point \$502,000 in sanctions to reimburse their attorney fees and put the county under a permanent injunction for public records violations.

Lake Point, a state-permitted rock mine and water restoration project near Indiantown, had sought evidence through its public records requests for a breach-of-contract case against Martin County and the South Florida Water Management District. They asked for all emails on private email accounts between the 2012 county commissioners and former commissioner Maggy Hurchalla, whom Lake Point charged with tortious interference with those contracts.

Although Martin County Commissioner Sarah Heard's alleged violations of public records laws dominated nine pages of the 27-page arbitrator's report, Heard was charged Nov. 28 with only one count of a non-criminal misdemeanor – an infraction about equivalent to running a stop sign.

Punishable by a fine up to \$500, the charge was for failing to respond to a public records request. She said in 2013 that she was unable to provide public records to Lake Point due to a January 2013 hacking event that erased the previous eight years' of emails and contacts from her personal computer.

Neither the county's nor Lake Point's professional forensics IT consultants found evidence of a hacking event, according to the arbitrator's report.

FIELDING'S AND SCOTT'S CHARGES

In contrast, Commissioner Ed Fielding and former commissioner Anne Scott were indicted and arrested on two counts of failing to permit inspection or copying of public records in their custody, a criminal misdemeanor punishable by a fine and up to a year in jail.

Fielding had turned over one email from former commissioner Maggy Hurchalla eight months after Lake Point's initial public records request Feb. 8. In the Fielding email, Hurchalla gave allegedly secret instructions to the commissioner for terminating the county's interlocal agreement with the South Florida Water Management District regarding the Lake Point operation, according to court records.

Hurchalla signed the email "Deep Rockpit."

Subsequent court-ordered IT searches produced additional emails be-



Mugshots of former County Commissioner Anne Scott and sitting Commissioner Ed Fielding, criminally charged for not allowing inspection or copying public records in their custody, a misdemeanor, were taken at the Martin County jail Nov. 28.

tween Hurchalla and Fielding on his private email account, according to court testimony.

Scott, a former judge in Chicago and a former Jupiter Island commissioner, had failed to reveal to either county officials or to the court that she had more than one private email account, on which additional private emails about Lake Point between Hurchalla and Scott resided. That discovery in March 2016 resulted in overturning the previous court ruling in September 2015 that had found the county was not violating public records laws.

Circuit Court Judge Shields McManus, who issued the ruling, called Scott's newly revealed private emails conducting public business as "unlawful" action, ending Lake Point's appeal and opening the door to court-ordered arbitration, a legal proceeding similar to a private trial.

SEARCHING FOR HACKED EMAILS

The arbitrator's ruling that certain commissioners had violated public records laws led to Roby issuing a subpoena to Yahoo! in order to recover any emails still residing in Heard's private email account that were deleted four years previously; however, Heard was unable to recall her password or her back-up



County Commissioner Sarah Heard was charged Nov. 28 with a non-criminal misdemeanor for not complying with a public records request.



Only Stuart attorney Barbara Kibbey Wagner, left, was allowed in the courtroom Nov. 28 with County Commissioner Sarah Heard, in the background. The hearing was canceled, and the public was barred.

phone number, thus the process took nearly six months to uncover around 600 emails in Heard's hacked Yahoo! Account that matched search terms and were within a specific time frame relevant to Lake Point's public records request.

If a public official deliberately destroys or alters public records, he or she could be charged with a felony, according to Barbara Pedersen, president of the First Amendment Foundation.

The recovered emails and the metadata from Heard's account, including all logs, were copied to flash drives that went

to the state attorney to fulfill a search warrant, to Heard, and to Roby, who was to examine them to determine their relevancy to the Lake Point civil case.

Roby selected 55 emails as relevant, which were provided to Lake Point in October.

The arbitrator's ruling also touched off an investigation by the state attorney's office and the convening of a grand jury in October, which remains active as Currents goes to press.

THE ARRESTS ON NOV. 28

Fielding and Scott reported to the Martin County jail Tuesday evening to be booked, fingerprinted and had mug shots taken. They both were released on

their own recognizance.

Heard called in sick prior to the Nov. 28 Board of County Commissioners meeting, according to County Administrator Taryn Kryzda.

Heard had been scheduled to appear at a criminal court hearing at 2 p.m. in the Martin County courthouse the same day.

As it turned out, the normally public hearing was closed to all except Heard and her attorney, Barbara Kibbey Wagner, who was quoted in a local news story as having just been retained in the case earlier the same day.

Around noon, Wagner had filed paperwork that canceled the need for a hearing, waiving arraignment and pleading not guilty in writing to all charges on Heard's behalf. Wagner also asked for a jury trial when filing a request with the court clerk for a copy of the indictment or information.

The information, a formal document that begins a criminal proceeding in the courts, listed only the misdemeanor as Count One. No other counts were listed, thus no need for a jury currently exists.

Heard's attorney also requested all evidence in the case, including Heard's grand jury testimony, wire taps, all emails, or any other investigative reports in the case in her request for the court to allow sufficient time to obtain evidence, a routine request in criminal cases.

A source close to the investigation said that Heard and the prosecutor purportedly had reached a deal in advance, reducing the charges in return for Heard's cooperation. Then she apparently changed attorneys prior to the scheduled 2 p.m. hearing.

The state attorney's office said only that the case remains "under an active investigation," and would provide no additional details.

Even a criminal misdemeanor charge against a public official, such as filed against Fielding, could result in removal from office and the loss of county retirement and health benefits, as well as a fine and jail time, if convicted.

Charges for "deliberately destroying or altering public records can rise to a felony," said Pedersen, of the First Amendment Foundation.

Fielding, Scott and Heard have all been ordered to appear in court Dec. 28; however, Circuit Court Judge Curtis Disque issued a docket sounding for Dec. 18 to schedule future appearances and set trial dates. Lake Point's lawsuit against Hurchalla for allegedly interfering in its contracts with the county and the SFWMD goes to a jury trial Feb. 5.

Since Martin County settled Lake Point's lawsuit, the fees and costs of private attorneys retained by county commissioners will no longer be paid by the county. ■

County's deal with Lake Point more than just money

One detail in Martin County's multi-million-dollar settlement agreement Nov. 14 with Lake Point stood out from the rest. County Commissioner Ed Ciampi even called it a "tiny detail" that showed the meticulousness of the agreement to drop Lake Point's 2013 breach-of-contract lawsuit against Martin County.

The county would give Lake Point, a 2,200-acre rock mine and water restoration project near Indiantown, an additional \$320 to refund a fee that Lake Point had paid to the county nearly five years ago – the pivotal moment the county declared war on Lake Point.

A pittance in the face of the county's deal to pay \$12 million to Lake Point for land the county had not requested, that \$320 refund acknowledged in its own way that the 2012 Martin County Commission had refused to live up to the terms of the county's 2008 agreements with Lake Point and, in a separate agreement with the South Florida Water Man-

agement District, to turn the rock mine into a project of the district's St. Lucie River Watershed Protection Plan to divert and clean water from the C-44 canal.

Without a written admission of guilt, however, the "tiny detail" was important philosophically.

Lake Point had paid the county's fee to revoke Lake Point's housing development order, as agreed in advance, that would formally acknowledge Lake Point as a state-permitted, bona fide rock mine and water project exempt from the county's development rules; however, then-Commission Chair Sarah Heard ordered the county staff not to revoke the old housing development order.



Sarah Heard



Ed Fielding



Anne Scott



Maggy Hurchalla

In fact, the commission majority of Heard, Ed Fielding and Anne Scott ordered instead that the county staff in-

spect the rock mine for code violations under its former plan as a housing subdivision, which had been part of Lake Point's purchase of the 2007 property for \$47 million.

"I had to sit here for four years and watch it," said former Commission Chair Doug Smith. "It was an embarrassment to me. It was an embarrassment to the county."

After the county issued its code violations as a housing project, instead of a rock mine, Lake Point filed its first lawsuit in February 2013 for breach of contract against both Martin County and the South Florida Water Management District, which withdrew its support after the Martin County commissioners took code enforcement action against Lake Point.

ADDITIONAL SETTLEMENT TERMS

Also part of the county's settlement, Lake Point got a signed affidavit from Deputy County Administrator Don Donaldson, who at the time of the

continued on PAGE 6

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continued from PAGE 5

2013 code enforcement inspections was director of the county's Engineering Department. He verified that the county had been notified of each of Lake Point's mining permit applications with the Department of Environmental Protection, the Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water management District, and in no case did the county file any objections.

He also verified that no wetlands had ever been or were currently being destroyed on the Lake Point property as a result of the mining operation.

The alleged destruction of wetlands had been charged by former commissioner Maggy Hurchalla and others in comments before the Board of County Commissioners, claiming that 60 acres of wetlands were being destroyed on the Lake Point property.

Although both the county's Growth Management and Engineering departments debunked Hurchalla's claim at a BOCC meeting in 2013, the public comment at commission meetings continued to say otherwise.

Lake Point requested that Hurchalla recant her claims publicly and apologize, but she refused, according to court records. Lake Point filed suit against Hurchalla for allegedly interfering with their contracts by using false information to convince certain county commissioners that Lake Point was not a good project.

In secret emails to certain commissioners' private email accounts, Hurchalla provided instructions as to how to shut down the Lake Point operation, according to court records. In one email to Commissioner Ed Fielding, which Hurchalla signed "Deep Rockpit," she instructed commissioners not to cash Lake Point's checks for its environmental fee of around \$45,000 annually, since the fee was part of the agreement.

The county subsequently returned all the Lake Point checks it received for environmental fees between 2012 and 2016, as Hurchalla had instructed, according to county records, but kept Lake Point's hauling fees that have totaled around \$500,000 over the past four years, according to the county Budget Office.

As part of the settlement, Lake Point will no longer be required to pay environmental fees.

In addition, Lake Point's hauling fees will be capped at today's rate of 21 cents per cubic yard and will apply only when hauling outside of county lines. Hauling to Lake Okeechobee for repairs to the Hoover Dike also will be exempted from county hauling fees.

Lake Point will be paid \$1 million immediately, with another \$3 million shortly thereafter, as part of the county's \$12 million "purchase" of around 400 acres of its property valued by the county appraiser at \$1.8 million. The county will pay all closing costs on the land deal.

"It's not a purchase; it's part of a settlement," Ciampi said, when Heard objected to the land being purchased. "We're on the low side of it; we're being punished."

The county also will permit construction of an office building and a sand plant, and will immediately begin processing Lake Point's 2013 application to build a concrete batch plant on the property. The county had refused previously to review Lake Point's applications.

The concrete plant required a text amendment to the county's Land Development Regulations to amend the list of allowable uses on the property. At the public hearing, Deputy County Administrator Don Donaldson said that turpentine plants were allowed, thus a concrete plant would fit the designation.

THE APOLOGY

In addition to the \$12 million purchase of around 400 acres of Lake Point property, the \$320 refund, the promise to process applications, and the Donaldson sworn affidavit, Lake Point also received an apology for the "harsh words and inappropriate deeds of certain commissioners that unnecessarily tarnished the reputation of Lake Point and denigrated" the project.

'We're on the low side of it; we're being punished.'

-- County Commissioner Ed Ciampi

Prior to signing it, Smith read the entire apology letter aloud into the record, which included a paragraph affirming Lake Point's value to the county environmentally as a water restoration project and economically as a job provider, and reaffirming that the project meets all of the county's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan requirements.

Smith, Ciampi and Heard all called the settlement "the darkest day" in Martin County government, but for different reasons. Newly elected Ciampi called the previous commission's actions that led to the lawsuit under Heard's leadership "reckless government overreach" that will cost taxpayers millions of dollars unnecessarily.

Smith concurred, adding "the recklessness at which this was approached is the worse that it gets."

Heard cast the lone dissenting vote, calling the settlement "the most alarming proposal I've ever seen put before any board," she said. "We didn't do anything wrong."

The settlement does not end the case for former county commissioner Maggy Hurchalla, who opted against settlement due to the daily cost of \$1,111.11 to mediate, according to court testimony. She will face Lake Point in court Feb. 5, represented by attorney Virginia Sherlock.

A criminal investigation by the grand jury related to certain commissioners and former commissioners relating to Lake Point is underway. (This story was updated Dec. 12, 2017.) ■

--Barbara Cloudus

Commissioners express anger over settlement

After the South Florida Water Management District announced its settlement with Lake Point on August 23, followed by Circuit Court Judge William Roby's advice to the county to "get this case settled" during a Sept. 27 court hearing, the county commission's executive sessions doubled in number.

After the commission's last executive session Nov. 14, the settlement finally was announced.

The negotiated settlement would eliminated the need to go to trial, set for Feb. 5, said Edward de la Parte, the county's outside counsel, because a judge's ruling could result in appeals, sanctions, and more litigation "that could go on and on for years and years."

Commissioner Harold Jenkins – not part of Lake Point's earlier agreements or the 2012 commission controversy – said he had been "brought up to speed" by the county's attorneys and outside counsel in order to make a business decision.

"And that's what this has come down to," he added. "This is nothing more than protecting the county. It is a business decision."

The cost of outside attorneys, other costs, and sanctions in the county's fight against Lake Point has topped \$5 million, one and a half times the cost of the All Aboard Florida litigation.

Commissioner Ed Ciampi called the money spent on the Lake Point litigation an abomination.

"Everything about this case was avoidable," he said. "It was our government, our commission majority at the time, overreaching. I think it was an abuse of their powers....Everything today was avoidable, and that's what stings the most."

Martin County must borrow the money to pay its \$12 million settlement with Lake Point, with an interest rate determined by lenders' proposals.

The payment ordinarily would come from the county's emergency reserves, however, hurricanes Mathew and Irma have depleted those, according to County Administrator Taryn Kryzda.

"We have not yet received FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) funds for Mathew," she said, which are around \$7 million, "and we'll have another \$8 or \$9 million for Irma, and FEMA will reimburse only a portion of that."

Other revenue comprising the county's \$432 million budget is largely restricted for the county's Utilities Department and its constitutional officers – the Sheriff's Office, the Clerk of the Court and Comptroller, the Tax Collec-

tor's Office and the Property Appraiser – who all set their own budgets, in addition to other restricted revenues such as the Municipal Services District Funds that pay for fire-rescue, stormwater treatment, schools, etc.

The fiscal year ended Oct. 31, and it will take a few months before the county begins to accumulate its approximately \$140 million in ad valorem taxes for 2018, Kryzda explained, therefore it does not have the funds to pay the settlement.

By taking out a loan over 10 or 15 years, she added, the impact to the budget will be lessened.

Then-Commission Chair Doug Smith pointed out, though, that the settlement removes money from the general fund that could have paid for two fire stations, or the fire-rescue training facility, or to renovate the golf course.

"Those are not going to get done now," he said.

SFWMD 50-YEAR SETTLEMENT

The new agreement announced August 23 between Lake Point and SFWMD gave Lake Point the right not only to retain ownership of its property, but to earn revenue from its property as a rock mine, in a water supply operation, or through any other means, for up to 50 years.

In return, Lake Point will drop its breach of contract claim against the SFWMD, a party along with Martin County in Lake Point's contract lawsuit.

"I'm not sure that people understand that we were facing a \$63 million damages claim," Accardo said.

At the end of 50 years, or the end of mining, whichever comes first, the ownership of the lakes on the property will be transferred to the SFWMD, which will cover all costs of restoration of the project to convert the lakes to stormwater treatment areas.

In the original agreement, Lake Point would have been responsible for constructing the infrastructure, estimated by de la Parte to cost approximately \$40 million.

In the meantime, should any entity file

a lawsuit against Lake Point, the SFWMD agreed to join Lake Point's defense.

In Lake Point's original agreement, the mining operation would have deeded its property immediately to the SFWMD in return for the right to continue mining – or embark on any other revenue-producing venture – over the next 20 years. It also would have given Martin County 150 acres of its property for a park.

The new provision that the Lake Point operation may convey water from the C-44 canal for a price to water-starved utilities in Palm Beach and Broward counties has been guaranteed in the SFWMD settlement, and through the SFWMD interlocal agreement with Martin County.

The mining company had been pursuing options with both the SFWMD and American Water, the largest water utility in the U.S., when they were interrupted by the litigation.

The Lake Point property is the only land that connects the C-44 canal to the L-8 canal south of Lake Okeechobee and offers the potential of moving more water south. ■

--Barbara Cloudus

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Editorial: Give civility a chance in Martin County

Respect others. Don't interrupt. Say please and thank you. Listen and think before you speak. Tell the truth. Don't be a bully and don't tolerate bullies. My wife and I taught our kids these basic rules of good manners and civility. Hopefully, you did too.

So it should shock and disturb you to see people who should know better – our elected officials and other people in positions of authority – act in ways that we wouldn't tolerate from a child.

I've been watching this behavior, not only at the national level, but right here in Martin County. And regardless of where you fall on the political spectrum, this lack of civility should give all of us heartburn.

Instead of people honestly debating an issue, we get fake news and false assertions. Instead of people being transparent about their real agenda and then boldly defending it, we get misrepresentations of fact and clever conspiracy the-

ories. And when you dare to disagree and call them out, you are met with personal attacks.

We claim that "Character Counts" in Martin County. We say we're different here. That we still have a sense of community. But in terms of our conversations in Martin County – about growth, about our environment, about our economy – we're losing the concept that honorable, well-intentioned people can agree to disagree.

Bullying behavior has replaced rational, respectful conversations. Anyone who questions certain positions is demonized. They are labeled "the enemy." And even though the folks on opposite sides of the spectrum probably agree on 80% of the issues, that 20% creates a divide that people become too stubborn or afraid to cross.

Once upon a time, it was good training in citizenship to have students observe county commission meetings. All

too frequently, we now wince in pain at the rudeness shown to our elected officials, to staff and to the public. No one is safe from attack: Public speakers at these meetings are rude to Commissioners, and Commissioners are rude to staff and to each other.

The rudeness and bullying are a very real threat to the future of Martin County. In such a toxic environment where people don't feel their voices can be respectfully heard, it is nearly impossible to discover real problems or find solutions.

C'mon Martin County! We're better than this!

So here are "Rick's Rules for Civil Discourse," based on a study of elected officials and pre-school children:

- Tell the truth. It will take everyone by such surprise that you may just win the day.
- Listen more than you speak. We all

might learn something.

- Use facts. Facts are stronger, no matter how loudly you speak in misdirection, hyperbole or half-truths.

- Debate the issues, don't attack the opponent.

- Stand up for what is right. Neither a bully nor bullied be.

- Share your passion, not your fury.

- Solve real problems, not fake ones.

We've got plenty of the real kind.

We don't have to take it in stride that negativity is the dominant tone of our discussions. It's a strength that we can have more than one view on an issue in our community, and we deserve serious conversations about public matters of common concern.

In Martin County at least, we can put "civil" back in civil discourse.

– Rick Hartman
Chair of One Martin

Letters to the Editor:

Sewall's Point rejects septic-to-sewer conversion? Hypocritical.

As the former Mayor of the City of Pahokee, I can state with pride that our community made the conversion from septic to sewer over 50 years ago. That enlightened act helped to greatly reduce the nutrient runoff into our local waterways here in the Glades.

It goes without saying that Pahokee is not as affluent as the coastal beach communities, so pardon us if the idea of a wealthy community like Sewall's Point rejecting available money for septic conversions is viewed as a mixture of both comedic farce and disgusting behavior.

How can the residents of Martin County be taken seriously on our water quality issues when they refuse to accept any part of their responsibility? Blaming the farming communities is laughable as we have successfully been addressing our water quality issues for decades.

While we know the volume of the Lake Okeechobee discharges are an issue unto themselves – Lake Okeechobee did not experience the same guacamole-thick algal mats and fish kills that were experienced on the Treasure Coast in 2016. Neither did the Glades communities, the Everglades, Ft Myers, West Palm Beach or any other area that received Lake Okeechobee discharges.

While they did receive the same algae-laden water, they did not experience the extremely thick mats of toxic algae as Martin County, because they had taken care of their septic tanks.

It is utterly hypocritical and arrogant for Martin County residents to urge the

Florida Legislature to spend billions of tax dollars on building a reservoir in our community while on the same token rejecting money to eliminate their destructive septic tanks once and for all. We here in the Glades are committed to being part of the solution in fixing our region's water quality issues, but it is embarrassing for Martin County and disheartening to the rest of us that Sewall's Point continues to refuse to accept their part in this and become a part of the solution. Another reason that Martin County has lost credibility.

J.P. Sasser
Pahokee

Ending compensation for school board members makes sense

I was delighted to see (The Stuart New's) Opinion page give a "thumbs up" for ending compensation for school board members. I never put in more hours of work (including a high-pressure job on Wall Street) than when I was the chairman of the Board of Education in Wilton, Connecticut. But our board, like all Connecticut boards, and boards in most states, never received a dime of compensation. Our board, like all the parents in the town, volunteered to do whatever was best for the students.

I was horrified to learn that board members here, "working" only part time, made (not earned) more money – over \$35,000 in Indian River county – than many teachers!

It has been proposed that a constitutional amendment be passed in Florida that would end this compensation and

align Florida with 62 percent of other states who have no compensation. I certainly hope Florida can enact this common-sense amendment.

After all, does it make sense to pay people who meet perhaps every other week during the school year more than a teacher who works every day on the front lines of education?

Howard Sherman
Vero Beach

Martin County hurt by a citizen divide

Martin County is divided. A "shadow government" until recently had great influence over some politicians and about three years ago certain language was inserted into the Comprehensive Plan in their attempt to encumber new developers with rule ambiguities; these would most likely end up in very expensive litigation and therefore deter all but the deepest pockets.

That was by design.

With a new Martin County commission majority, not influenced by the "shadow," and with federal rules mandating close scrutiny of certain language, the expert administrators within MC Growth Management and Legal departments made some technical changes in what is called EAR.

On Oct. 24, at the Martin County Commission, the local Democratic Environmental Caucus did a well-orchestrated advocacy "don't mess with our award-winning Comp Plan." In the process, some speakers berated and insulted our hard-working unbiased and senior growth management staff who were accused of being in the pockets of developers.

Shame. This is fear-mongering and lies. It got so bad that our senior planner became quite upset at the meeting.

Go to martin.fl.us/MCTV, video on demand (4 hours, 34 minutes). See for yourself. Our fine county needs dedicated administrators who are impartial.

Civility, please. Spare the baseless accusations. Abuse of staff may discourage quality candidates from applying for jobs or encourages staff defections. Look to Riviera Beach for a good example of how well partisanship works in local government.

Carl Frost,
Indiantown

Martin County
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The corrupting influence of too much power



Barbara Clowdus

Unfiltered

The absolute power of the 2012 county commission with Commissioner Sarah Heard as chair seems to have confirmed the adage, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” She will not escape accountability, if not criminally, then most certainly at the ballot box.

Heard's chairmanship, supported by the 2012 election of Anne Scott, swung the power from a common-sense, managed-growth commission to Heard's anti-business, zero-growth agenda, contrary to our own Comprehensive Growth Management Plan that she flaunted, but secretly did not follow.

Heard's power revealed itself immediately at her first meeting as chair, Nov. 20, 2012, when she abolished the Community Redevelopment Agency board, killing all development and redevelopment plans within the urban services district, designed to prevent urban sprawl.

Heard also immediately began rewriting the Comp Plan with Maggy Hurchalla's pen, huge chunks already completed by Hurchalla for Heard's first meeting.

Although Hurchalla claimed she and

the new commission majority were merely “restoring” the 2009 changes from a state-mandated review – which had preserved ALL of the county's time-honored protections, by the way, as they complied with changes to state law – her changes went far beyond restoration into a massive rewrite that stomped on personal property rights.

As a result, they led the county – with taxpayers footing the bill – into at least seven lawsuits and court challenges.

All the while, Heard & Company were misapplying what most of us consider the most important tool in our arsenal in achieving the quality of life we treasure here, managing growth in a way that achieves the balance the Comp Plan promises.

The county settled many of those challenges to Hurchalla's rewrites out of court, including with the county's largest landowner, King Ranch, making their proposed developments largely exempt from the rules everyone else would be required to follow. A small business, such as Waterblasting Technologies would be ensnared in the new rules, thus would need to move out of the county to expand.

Heard & Company also voted against Comp Plan-compliant developments, such as Avalon, just south of Seabranche Boulevard on US 1 near Hobe Sound, although they knew they were inviting a lawsuit.

To settle that particular lawsuit, which the owner of the property claimed

would result in a \$6 million Bert Harris claim against the county, Heard & Company rewrote eight Comp Plan rules to allow what is now known as the Sheridan development to replace Avalon.

Among the rule changes, all done without any public hearing, was one to allow the 125-unit assisted living facility to sit just 35 feet from a wetlands, instead of the mandatory 75 feet. It also chopped down nearly all the old-growth pine trees lining US 1.

The previous plan – the one rejected by Heard & Company although it complied fully with the Comp Plan – kept a 50-foot buffer between the development and the highway, which would have protected the pines and screened the townhouse development behind it.

Obviously, violating setbacks from wetlands and rewriting Comp Plan rules in secret is okay when Heard wants to do it.

We saw this same cavalier attitude by Heard & Company toward Lake Point, which had made a \$48 million investment to purchase two parcels of land that the South Florida Water Management District had eyed for years. Those parcels are the only land connection between the C-44 canal on the north and the L-8 canal south that supplies drinking water to West Palm Beach.

Every step Lake Point took had been public and legal. Their exploratory plans to supply water to West Palm Beach and/or other cities for a price were con-

tingent on new permits and contracts, all of which would have been open to public scrutiny and public comment, short-circuited by Heard & Company, who led the county into yet one more lawsuit.

The \$12 million “purchase” of land the county does not want or need is the county's price of settlement and could be considered reimbursement of Lake Point's estimated costs over the past four and a half years. Martin County's own legal bills for outside attorneys – not including staff attorneys' time – exceeded \$5 million, thus estimating Lake Point's legal expenses at \$12 million is not that far-fetched.

We likely were lucky to end a case that could have cost taxpayers triple the amount we will pay, even as painful as \$12 million is to taxpayer pockets.

Although nothing about the Lake Point case is funny, we laughed at former commissioner Donna Melzer's email suggesting that some commissioners, the prosecutor and the members of this grand jury are corrupt and controlled by Lake Point ... considering she and her commission majority were investigated by a grand jury in 1997 for ethics violations, too.

Melzer pleaded the Fifth Amendment multiple times to avoid incriminating herself in 1997, perhaps proving the absolute-power adage. It also shows we're doomed to repeat history, apparently, if we don't learn from the past, something we forgot all too quickly. ■

Suicide awareness from Maine to Key West



Tom Fucigna Jr.

Guest Columnist

Suicide. Just saying the word can be difficult. Talking about it can be even harder.

Over 44,000 Americans take their own lives each year, and, as many of us know, suicide isn't something that just happens somewhere else. It impacts our schools, our communities and our families. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the US.

We need to talk about it. We need to connect. Here's a story about how two groups recently contributed to that cause in Hobe Sound.

Last month, 10 bicyclists completed a 40-day journey that began in Maine, to help promote suicide awareness and raise funds for a valuable resource – the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP).

The ride was organized by Curt

Wildemann, a retired police officer from Las Vegas, Nev. Curt was joined by his brother Mike, who drove a pickup truck and trailer as support, and nine other bicyclists who joined in, for days or weeks, along various parts of the route (<https://rideacrossamerica.us/>).

Curt and Mike dedicated this mission to their cousin, Mathew Burke, who took his own life at the age of 21. The team literally carried his memory, with his photograph on the back of their jerseys.

Their path covered back roads and cityscapes, from traversing the Outer Banks to touring the capital, Washington D.C. They stopped in towns along the way each night and camped on the floors of churches or other organizations. They rode many “rails to trails” bike routes on old railroad beds, and pedaled the East Coast Greenway, which delivered Mike, Curt and seven other bicyclists to Hobe Sound.

Hobe Sound Community Presbyterian Church was pleased to host the group on Sunday, Oct. 22. The cyclists rolled in, after riding 60 miles from Wabasso. They attended a welcome dinner at the church, showered, spent the night on air mats,

downed a hearty breakfast and then continued their journey south.

Curt provided an introduction to the group that inspired their trek.

AFSP was established 1987 by a group of families, each of whom had lost someone to suicide, with the goal of providing a nationwide community empowered by research, education and advocacy. AFSP now has local chapters in all 50 states, and they facilitate “Out of the Darkness” awareness walks and other events in communities nationwide.

AFSP funds scientific research, offers educational programs, educates the public about mood disorders and suicide prevention, promotes policies and legislation that impact suicide and prevention, and provides programs and resources for survivors of suicide loss and people at risk.

There is no single cause to suicide, but it most often occurs when stressors exceed the coping abilities of someone suffering from a mental health condition. Ninety percent of people who die by suicide have mental disorders. Depression, seasonal mood disorder, bipolar disorder, and alcohol or drug abuse

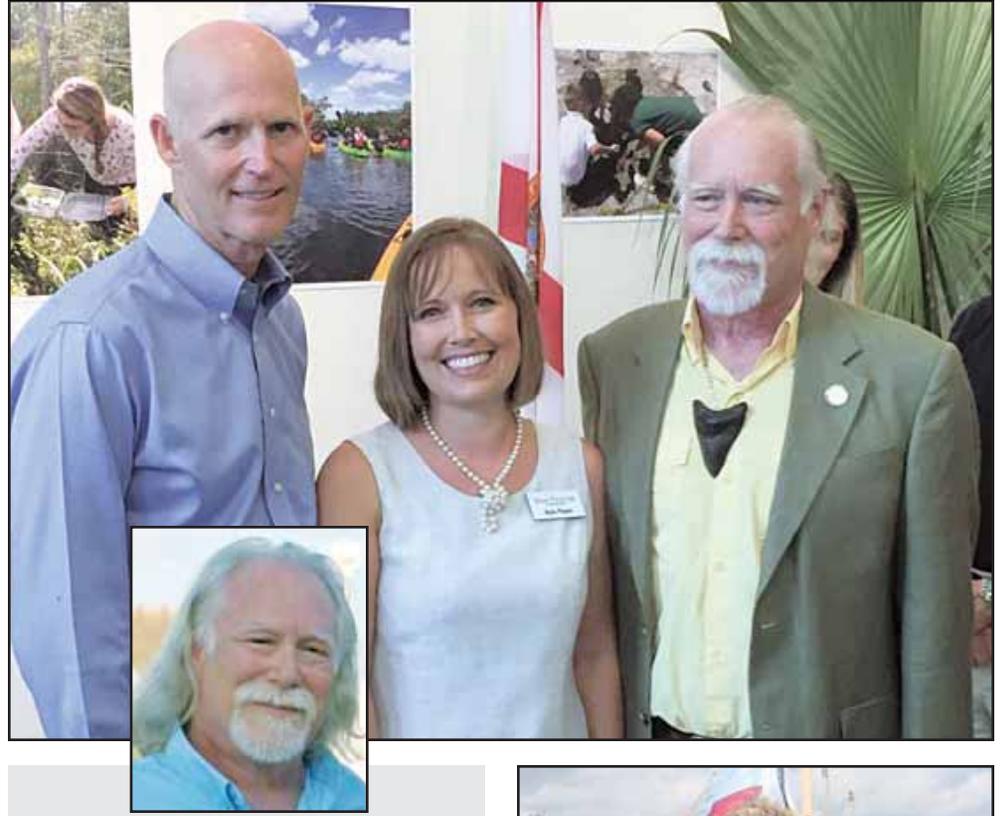
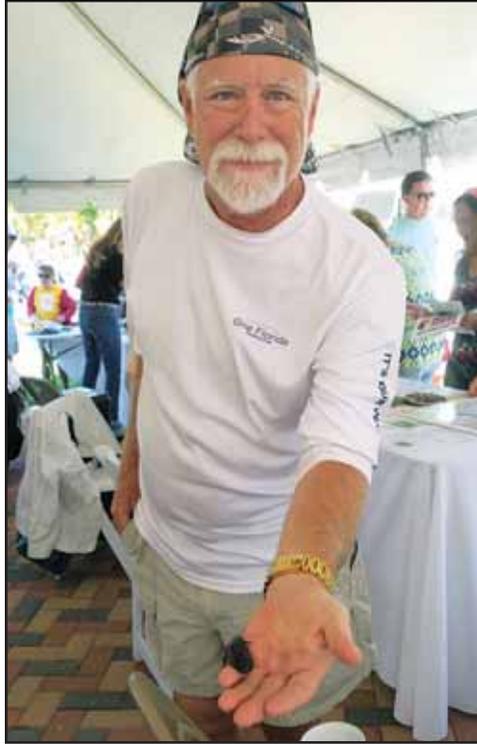
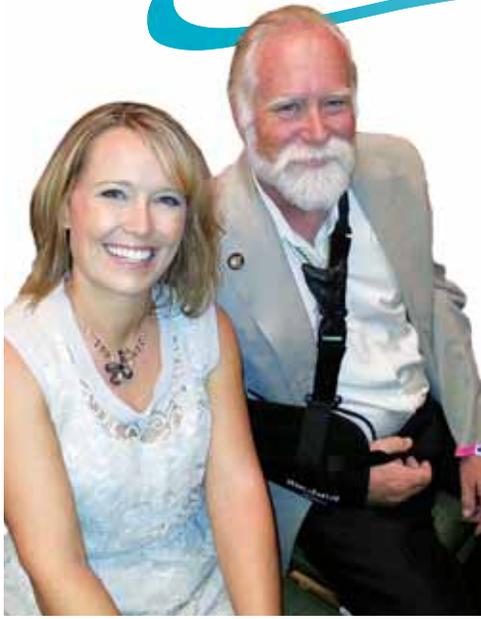
can increase suicide risk. There are biological and psychological treatments that can help address these underlying health issues, and teaching health care professionals to recognize and treat potential contributing mental disorders and other risk factors is an effective way to reduce suicide rates.

Our congregation has been affected by the tragedy of suicide, and our hearts go out to anyone who knows this pain. We are proud to be able to support such a worthy mission.

One of the visiting bicyclists said that arriving at our little white church on the Zeus Park circle had been like riding into a peaceful “oasis” after a day spent battling headwinds. Surely, that's something we all can use.

Our church serves as a meeting place for a variety of civic and support groups, and we are a church for everyone. We invite you to visit any Sunday at 10:30 AM. (www.hscpc.org)

You can learn much more, contribute to AFSP's mission, and obtain support, at <https://afsp.org>. Please, visit their website, and help to continue this vital conversation. ■



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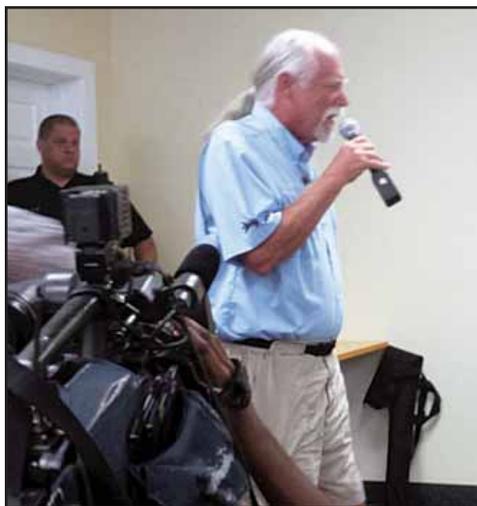
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Capt. Don Voss

August 7, 1947 - September 10, 2017

After the Vietnam War broke his body, Capt. Don Voss was advised by his Ohio doctors to learn to SCUBA dive to rehabilitate his body. After his first trip to the Keys, he was hooked. He told friends that spending time in the ocean also rehabilitated his soul. He moved to Big Pine Key in 1992, relocating to Ft. Pierce in 1998. He spent the rest of his life dedicated to saving our reefs, our ocean, our lagoons, our rivers, and our springs. Since he refused to demonize sugar farmers, believing instead that they needed a seat at the same table as environmentalists, he often was targeted by critics. He did not care what others said, however, only what they did to clean and protect our water.



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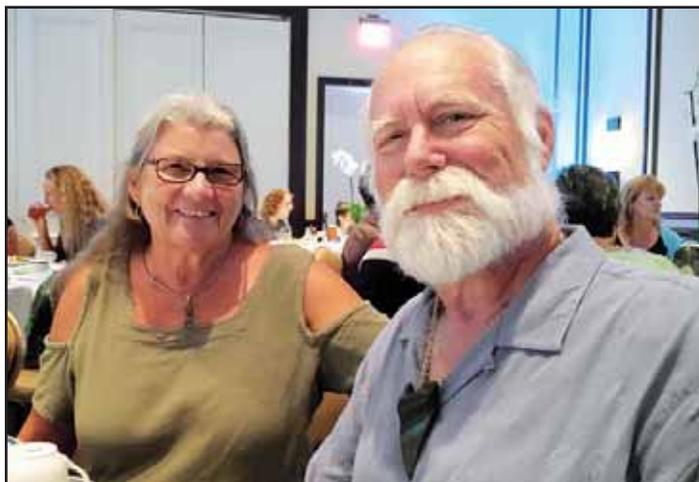
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Nyla bids farewell to mentor Capt. Don Voss



Nyla Pipes

One Florida Foundation

Environmentalist. Hero. Friend. Colleague. Ham. Mentor. Motivator. Persuader. Even, instigator. So many words describe Don Voss, and yet none of them seem worthy.

We met at a rally in 2013 and our common interest in clean water drew us together. We formed One Florida Foundation shortly after meeting. Our shared tenacity and ability to work with difficult people (we agreed we were both difficult at times) made our partnership an unlikely force to be reckoned with. People would often speculate on our friendship, sometimes asking, "How in the world do you two work together?"

The answer is simple. We worked together because we challenged one another. We forced each other to think, and we didn't walk away unless we came to agreement on the issue at hand. We practiced the art of compromise. We knew our water needed us to do this. We felt we had to set the example. Don Voss used to say proudly, "If WE can work together..." with a smirk, waving his hand between the two of us for emphasis, "then ANYONE can!"

Don wasn't wrong. We had a lot of differences. We came from different generations, different schools of thought. He was politically my opposite. He often said things that made me uncomfortable, sometimes because they were off-color, but usually because the things he said were so bold. Blunt, even. (And at times downright rude?)

I like to think we learned from one another. When he'd make me uncomfortable, I adopted a coping mechanism ... I'd ask him (tell him,) to get in the channel, Captain! He'd chuckle, flip his long hair, and say, "Oh, too much?" in a teasing voice that reminded me not to take everything so seriously.

Advocating for clean water isn't always easy. Advocating for clean water in Florida, where political gamesmanship

should be declared an Olympic sport, is incredibly challenging. There were times over the past four years that I would get mad, or overwhelmed, and decide I was done!

Don would calmly say, "That's fine. The critters don't matter. Drinking water doesn't matter. Go ahead, walk away. I can do this on my own." I'd get mad at him, tell him I didn't need his passive-aggressive guilt trips, and then I'd pull myself together and get back to work. After all, this man had been working on environmental issues for decades. Who was I to quit so easily?

Don Voss had a list of awards he'd received over the years, including a Jefferson Award, an award from Loggerhead Marinelife Center, and a designation as Oceana's World Ocean Hero. To say he was humble might be stretching the truth; Don was proud of his work, but what he was most proud of was the impact he knew he made. It made him feel good to give back, to make a difference.

As a purple heart recipient from the Vietnam War who had been given a second chance at life, he felt fighting for the environment was the best use of his time.

Don Voss was social. He enjoyed the process and was happy whether he was cleaning up trash, or speaking before committees in Tallahassee. He was especially happy when we got to dress up and attend a gala or party of any kind. He'd put on his madras plaid sport coat, consult with me on whether the event was worthy of his largest shark tooth necklace, and off we'd go, supporting causes we believe in. I like to picture Don in that sport coat – the one he wore to Tallahassee that the Governor would always comment on – living it up at his eternal party.

As for me and One Florida Foundation, I will carry on. Our water is too important, and Don taught me that no challenge in life is too large. I've been blessed to have such a dear friend and mentor, and I will always hear him encouraging me as I move forward. Thank you, Don. I've so enjoyed the journey. ■

Nyla Pipes is a founder of One Florida Foundation, which addresses water issues throughout the state.



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Pumpkins, goblins and the sheriff, oh my!

No need to travel north to enjoy the sights and sounds of autumn, with Halloween putting an exclamation point on the end of October. Pumpkin patches and carved pumpkins dotted the countryside and doorsteps. Lots of fall festivals, including the fabulous Palm City Fall Fest. The Pine School hosted a unique pumpkin carving contest. The businesses of downtown Stuart opened their doors to hobgoblins, schools had their own character parades, and many churches and the Martin County Sheriff's Office hosted Halloween "Trunk or Treat" events. Autumn in Martin County is the best!



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Air show soars on work of many volunteers

For three days each November, the Stuart Air Show inspires youngsters, thrills all of us and impacts the lives of countless others – all through volunteerism and widespread community support of more than four dozen sponsoring businesses.

Because it takes place at county-owned Witham Field in Stuart, however, many of the tens of thousands of attendees assume the air show is organized and sponsored by Martin County. No, it's brought to citizens and visitors by a team of hundreds, including: seven members of the Stuart Air Show Board of Directors, a committee of nearly 30, and a volunteer army of more than 700 volunteers.

What began decades ago as a family-oriented fundraiser for the Road to Victory Military Museum now also benefits nearly a dozen other non-profits as well, including the Martin County Community Foundation, the Special Olympics, United Way of Martin County, the Civil Air Patrol, Boy Scouts of America, among others.

It also awards scholarships to local high school students, and provides fund-raising opportunities for more than a dozen local non-profit organizations and community groups.

Navigators are board president Michael Roberts, a 30-year construction and restoration specialist, along with other board members Amy Bottegai, Desiree Bonnie, Chuck Cleaver, Doug Davis, Peter Dayton,

and Nick Blount. Executive director is Susan Cunnane.

Although Roberts' business is general contracting, he says his passion lies in the preservation and restoration of historical buildings and WWII history. He serves and honors veterans as board president of the Road to Victory Military Museum and as a founding member of Southeast Florida Honor Flight program. You'll see him at Memorial and Veterans Day parades, at WWII battle re-enactments and air shows across the country.

The economic impact on local businesses is significant as even parking lots throughout Stuart fill up to watch the practice runs of nationally known performers. It's not all up in the sky, however, since historical and modern aircraft and vehicles dot Witham's tarmacs.

If you missed this year's air show, be sure to set aside the first weekend in November 2018 for the next one. It will be an event you'll long remember. ■



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Looking at Florida history with 'old', new eyes



**Maya
Ellenson**
*Art
Kaleidoscope*

Great French novelist Marcel Proust said, "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes." If you happen to visit the oldest city of the United States, St. Augustine, you can embrace both: bask in its natural and historical landscape and at the same time get new insight into Florida's complex past.

But, as they say, it's nothing new under the sky, and whatever one thinks is new is always rooted in what went before.

My recent trip to St. Augustine allowed me to feel the real pulse of Florida's rich history. As you meander through steeped-in-history streets and sights of the city, you get to discern how myth and reality, the key pillars of any culture, reflect each other. You cannot miss the sight of Castillo de San Marcos, the oldest fort of the United States. You can actually touch the fortress' walls, feel its masonry's coquina texture, chosen to ensure fire resistance. Everything is so solidly real.



"Ponce de León
in Florida" by
Thomas Moran,
1878

Ponce de Leon Fountain of Youth
Archaeological Park

Flagler College in St. Augustine (1878)

And there, Flagler College comes into view. Its mind-blowing architecture in Spanish Renaissance style with an exquisite interior of stained glass and mosaics designed by Tiffany may long haunt you after you leave.

Caution! Now we are entering Ponce de León's Fountain of Youth Archaeological Park. It's a delicate zone where a myth and reality may either clash into a

controversy over semantics, historical inaccuracies, or start a dialogue with each other to an area of understanding.

The park is truly scenic with its lush vegetation and peacocks fanning colorful feathers as they prance. They may even usher you unintentionally to the Fountain of Youth, a miraculous wellspring that could reverse the process of aging.

That's what history and the legend foretells. Spanish explorer and Conquistador Ponce de León came ashore of what is now Florida in 1513 after he had lost his position of Puerto Rico governor and received The Patent of Charter from Ferdinand to search for a new wealthy island, called Bemini. Instead, he discovered a peninsula.

Enchanted by its verdant beauty, he gave it a melodious name, La Florida. The explorer could have chosen this name because it was the time of Easter Feast, or Pascua Florida (Flowery Easter). And here comes the legend: Ponce de León was duped into his expedition by Taino Indians, telling him that those uncharted islands kept two treasures: gold and the fountain of eternal youth.

The legend has been dismissed by most of modern historians for the lack of evidence. Yet an archetypal fountain of youth can be found in multiple cultures throughout the world. While it's always gratifying to peruse serious historical studies, it's also wise to remember that a myth is a cross-discipline category, studied in psychology, philosophy, semiotics, and so forth, and, of course, myth is a subject matter of the visual arts and literature.

According to Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious. Who but the dominant figure of American romanticism, Washington Irving, comes to mind when we try to understand what fountain of youth lore is really projecting. In his book published in 1831, Spanish Voyages of Discovery, Irving dedicated a whole chapter to Ponce de León's voyage to Florida. There, Irving weaves his fab-

ric of stylized history, permeated with romantic irony. Shaped into a concept by the German poet, Friedrich Schlegel, romantic irony is a mode of consciousness that is "pointing to infinity." In other words, romantic irony is a gateway to panoramic vision.

Washington Irving isn't concocting a myth, as some critics bigotedly blast, but playfully soars above it. Both the author and reader know that there

was no actual fountain of youth. Nonetheless, the author ironically declares, referring to Ponce de León: "Here was the dream of the alchemist realized!"

In Irving's narrative, the fable transforms into a paradox. It is in the nature of paradox to transcend the chasm between a myth and reality, for ultimately it all comes to a universal truth: Conquistadors may invade entire continents, but they always fail to conquer death.

Romantic irony penetrates the world of art as well. Thomas Moran's illustrious painting "Ponce de León in Florida" (1878) defies historical facts with a deeply panoramic discourse. Rendered in somber tones, the painting spawns alternatives to what bare facts state. According to chronicles, the Spanish Conquistador was no angel. He became a governor of Puerto Rico after he had brutally slaughtered and enslaved Indians in the Caribbean. His Florida epics ended with an arrow, wounding him in a skirmish with Calusa Indians.

Nevertheless, the painting depicts a peaceful dialogue of the Conquistador and the Timucua people. Lavish tropical verdure almost engulfs the figures, depicted deeply in the foreground. In this pristine forest, peace is a possibility. The dialogue continues in the mysterious interplay of shade and light, with no finality there.

Canadian poet Margaret Atwood said, "Myths cannot be translated as they did in their ancient soil. We can only find our own meaning in our own time." As we celebrate Thanksgiving, let's try to look at history and the myths behind them panoramically. Sometimes, in order to get a new vision, we need to review the visions of the past. ■

Russian-American Maya Ellenson, who holds M.A. and PhD degrees in Russian language and literature from Moscow State University, has lived in Martin County for eight years. A free-lance writer, she has a particular interest in world culture and art.

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Supplementing pompano harvests with fish farms



Rich Vidulich
Pompano Reporter

Anglers ask, "Any good choices out there?" Apparently not when you look at the effects of pollution, erosion, and subsequent unnatural beach re-nourishment on our declining estuary and decisively horrible ocean conditions! Is there hope ahead?

We think so, and the answer is surprising.

The development of aquaculture, more commonly known as fish farms, have been historically out of reach and often ignored. Not so anymore, my dear fellow anglers! In the face of stories about alligators swimming with bathers at Bath Tub Reef Beach, cottonmouth snakes supplanting our estuary's eels, breakouts of MRSA after swimming at Hutchinson Island beaches, and enteric bacteria closing beaches as far south as Boynton Beach, no one can argue that the massive Lake Okeechobee discharges, coupled with polluted stormwater runoff, are creating unsafe conditions for fishing in our waterways.

Currently, county governments up and down the Treasure Coast are contracting to refill those beaches with offshore, bacteria-laden sand. Martin County spent millions less than two years ago to "save" Bath Tub Reef Beach, yet storms left 20-foot escarpments behind. Just maybe we should let nature take its course.

Or maybe a better, more diverse particulate sand could be found by mineral geologists, as have the Outer Banks. Over the past 20 years, this strategy alone resulted in a shelf life of their beach sand of 3.2 years, versus less than two years! Obviously, beaches are important, and if we are going to bear the cost of renourishment, why not pay a little more initially to double a beach's shelf life?

My wonderful friend, Capt. George LaBonte, boating editor for Florida Sportsmen and producer of their fishing shows, recently shared with me some valuable ecological data. He boarded a friend's plane three weeks ago to fly over the Hoover Dike around Lake Okeechobee, traversing north over the Kissimmee River. The evidence below him was stunning.

An "overgrown" human population has stunted the state by improperly dealing with an insurmountable abundance of water. The river, from its entry into the Lake, north through Orlando, has no visual river banks, according to Capt. LaBonte. With an average of 30 miles wide and deep for the length of the Kissimmee, this massive river drains only through two meager spillways into Lake O, carrying all the pollution from the over-populated areas north.

Perhaps the Farmer's Almanac's prediction of a dry winter, if accurate, will



Jupiter Beach no longer an ideal place to find either sandfleas or pompano.

allow the discharges to stop and for Santa to bring us clean water for Christmas!

We also can hope for a better future with the recent advances in aquaculture. The latest technology shows more merit than most of us are aware. After many previous pompano aquaculture failures, one Florida company has successfully emerged. Oceanus Seafood may become central to feeding Floridians the seafood they really crave – tripletail and pompano, inarguably the signature fish of gourmet chefs.

Founder Jon Milchman, a 15-year fly fishing guide from the Keys, said he changed course in 2010. "The last straw came after The Deepwater Horizon exploded and dumped 5 million gallons of raw crude into the Gulf of Mexico," said Milchman. "I watched species decline and algal blooms kill the sea grasses."

He said his only course, he felt, "was to start in a new direction."

The booming population growth and never-ending pollution of our food sources prompted Jon to create a supply-related solution to relieve the pressure on our fisheries. Aquaculture. For more info on his facility, his methodology and quality control, just google Oceanus Seafood. Good stuff and a good read.

To find out why so many pompano farms fail, I interviewed a pompanologist, a word you won't find in online dictionaries or Wikipedia, but they do exist.

My fellow surf angler, Brian Hicks, has been a pompano aquaculture consultant for years. He graduated from Nova Southeastern University in 1998 with a doctor of philosophy degree in ocean science. Can you imagine a 250-page read called, "Experiments to Maximize Growth in Captive Florida Pompano"! That was his doctoral thesis.

Instead of tackling the deep read, though, I went to his home to talk to him. So what does he know?

Way too much! Why so many failures in "growing" pompano? The technology is there, but it takes millions of dollars for the start-up investment, followed by meticulous monitoring. Controlled climate, under feeding, overfeeding, preci-



Not many pompano will be found in the dirty waves off Hobe Sound Beach these days.

sion filtration, salinity, precise water temps and parasites and infections all impact success.

There is no one leading issue for most failures. The parasites incorporated in diverse feeds is a major issue, though. The fish meal must be menhaden oil, rich with very little soy. Soy doesn't build muscle and provide the fat that a pomp needs to thrive.

Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute in Ft. Pierce successfully raises pompano (and many other fish) but cannot release them into the wild. They've grown too used to their rich food source and their pristine conditions to survive our



Piles of storm-churned seaweed still litter nearby beaches.

swellings of nutrients, particularly plankton, vital to fish survival.

There is so much to learn, and I am thankful to Brian Hicks for helping me explore these ideas. I'm also thankful to those who enjoy my column and wish all a happy holiday season! ■

Rich Vidulich, a commercial pompano surf fisherman who traverses the beaches of Martin County and points north for his "golden nuggets," lives in Jupiter. Send comments or questions to Pompano@MartinCountyCurrents.com.

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Block party for a neighborhood to come

Two days after breaking ground for its newest community, Habitat for Humanity of Martin County threw a party! The not-for-profit, ecumenical Christian housing ministry hosted its first “Rock the Block for Pettway Park” fundraiser Nov. 10 at St. Christopher's Catholic Church parish hall in Hobe Sound.

Attended by about 100 people, the event was “unbelievable,” said Margot Graff, Habitat executive director. “There is such great community spirit.”

An estimated \$100,000 was raised in gifts and pledges, she added.

With the décor crafted to resemble a streetscape, the largest Habitat fundraiser to date featured all the hallmarks of a neighborhood block party – except for barbecue grills and barking dogs, said Graff.

“We’ve never done anything before quite like this,” she said. “But there’s so much excitement for Pettway Park that, in this case, we really wanted to do something special right in Hobe Sound.

Habitat first broke ground on Nov. 8 for 18 homes at Pettway Park, one block north of Pettway Street and one block east of U.S. 1, with about 50 attending the groundbreaking, according to Graff.

Among the dignitaries at the event were Stuart Mayor Troy McDonald; Martin County Commissioners Harold Jenkins and Sarah Heard; and Assistant County Administrator George Stokus.

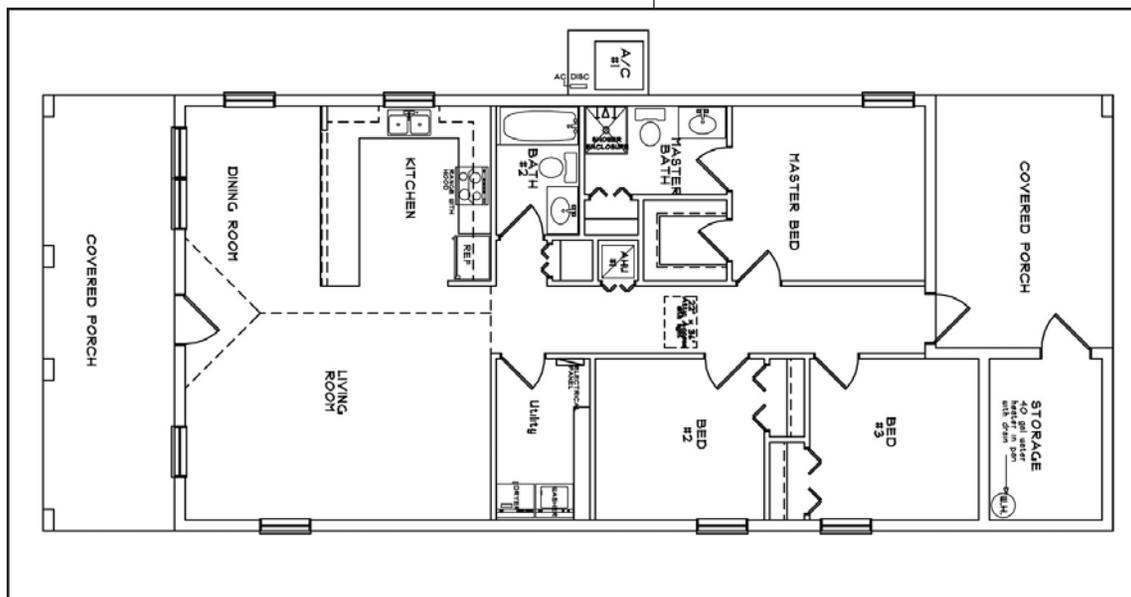
The project is a collaboration among

Habitat, Hobe Sound Community Chest, the Martin County Commission and the Martin County Community Development Department, which manages the county's seven Community Redevelopment Areas.

Pettway Park falls within the Hobe Sound CRA, which focuses on creating walkable, livable communities.



Drawings of the front and interior plan for 18 Habitat for Humanity homes in Pettway Park in Hobe Sound.



Designed to be one of the largest communities in Martin County to date, the Pettway Park project is a milestone for Habitat because it will help expand the footprint of affordable housing in the area, Graff said, long an objective of Hobe Sound's CRA redevelopment plan.

Construction of homes will not start until late in 2018, however, after the roads and infrastructure, including sewer lines, are completed. New houses will begin to be permitted when that work is finished, Graff said.

The one-story, three-bedroom, two-bath houses will have a master bedroom, two smaller bedrooms and two covered porches, along with a kitchen, living room and dining room. Pettway Park will feature on-street parking and added community services, according to Michael Readling, director of development for Habitat.

Until construction of Pettway Park gets underway, Habitat will be visible in the Gomez/Pettway area with its “A Brush With Kindness” program, Graff said. Volunteers will work with existing homeowners to perform minor exterior repairs such as replacing rotten trim, fixing windows and doors, pressure washing and painting.

The Rock the Block event, catered by Rock Star with live music by Relapse

Band, featured a live auction led by Stephen Leighton at the Friday night event. Sponsors included Seaside National Bank & Trust, Homes by JMC Consulting, Inc., Nis Air, Palm City Palms & Tropicals, Inc., Braden & Braden A.I.A. P.A., Joyful Printing and Design, Inc., Hobe Sound Community Chest and Martin County.

The next fundraiser is the annual Mr. Studfinder charity auction, tentatively planned for March.

HOMEOWNERS BUILD HOMES

Through volunteer labor and donations of money and materials, Habitat builds and rehabilitates simple, houses with the help of the homeowner families themselves.

Habitat houses are sold to families at no profit and financed with affordable loans. The homeowners' monthly mortgage payments are used to build more Habitat houses.

In addition to a down payment and the monthly mortgage payments, homeowners invest a minimum of 300 hours of their own labor – “sweat equity” – into building their Habitat house and the houses of others.

When an applicant is approved for a home, they immediately become a “Habitat homeowner.” They work alongside the volunteers and partner with them in the building of their home.

Habitat's funding comes from financial and in-kind contributions from businesses, churches, foundations, community groups and individuals. Funds also come from homeowner mortgage payments and fundraising events. Grants are funded through the federal, state, county and city governments.

Habitat's first and largest community, Carter Park in Indiantown, recently completed 21 of its planned 40 homes since opening in 2013. In Rio, the Habitat project will include 28 homes, seven



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Decorations at the "Rock the Park" block party included 18 doors representing the new Habitat homes to be built in Pettway Park, beginning in 2018.

of which will be work-live units inside the CRA's mixed-use overlay.

Habitat for Humanity has built 126 homes in Martin County over 31 years and only one fell short of honoring mortgage obligations, according to

Habitat records.

For more information about Habitat, call 772-223-9940 or go to www.HabitatMartin.org.

— Jeff Alexander

Special to Martin County Currents

Habitat impacts community, county

A 2017 study by the REALTOR® Association of Martin County, which designated the local Habitat as its charity of choice, examined the overall socio-economic impact the nonprofit makes in a community.

One factor showed that throughout 2015 (the most recent figures available) Martin County Sheriff's Office recorded 98 percent fewer calls from Carter Park compared to a similar neighboring Indiantown community.

Habitat is not a giveaway program. In addition to a down payment and the monthly mortgage payments, homeowners invest a minimum of 300 hours of their own labor — sweat equity — into building their Habitat house and the houses of others.

Habitat's funding comes from financial and in-kind contributions from businesses, churches, foundations, community groups and individuals. Funds also come from homeowner mortgage payments and fundraising events. Grants are funded through the federal, state, county and city government.

Other facts about Habitat in Martin County:

- Habitat homes' increase in assessed taxable value for Martin County totals \$113.4 million.
- Taxes and fees paid by Habitat to Martin County over 31 years totals \$1,635,512.
- Total annual volunteer labor hours donated to Habitat is 22,350.
- Average savings per Habitat home, thanks to volunteer hours, is \$25,933.
- Habitat homeowners must spend 300 hours of "sweat equity" on their home build.
- Habitat homeowners save \$455 per month by paying a Habitat mortgage instead of renting.
- The homeowners' monthly mortgage payments are used to build more Habitat houses.
- Habitat's funding comes from financial and in-kind contributions from businesses, churches, foundations, community groups and individuals, in addition to grants from federal, state, county and city governments.



Ike Crumpler and Steve Leighton, who emceed the auction of a Prince purple guitar, ham it up for the camera.



Mary and Bob "Mac" McCormack, Hobe Sound Community Chest board president, at Habitat's Rock the Block for Pettway Park fundraising event. The Community Chest committed \$50,000 to the construction of the first home in Pettway Park.



Habitat homes line the street in Carter Park at Indiantown.

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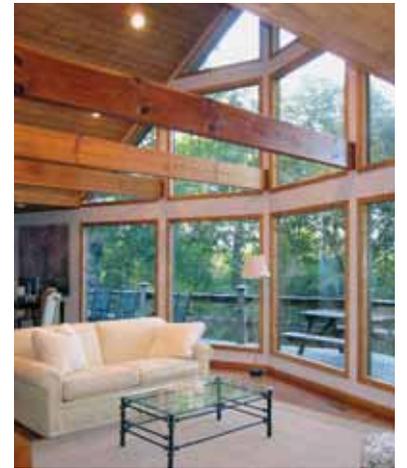
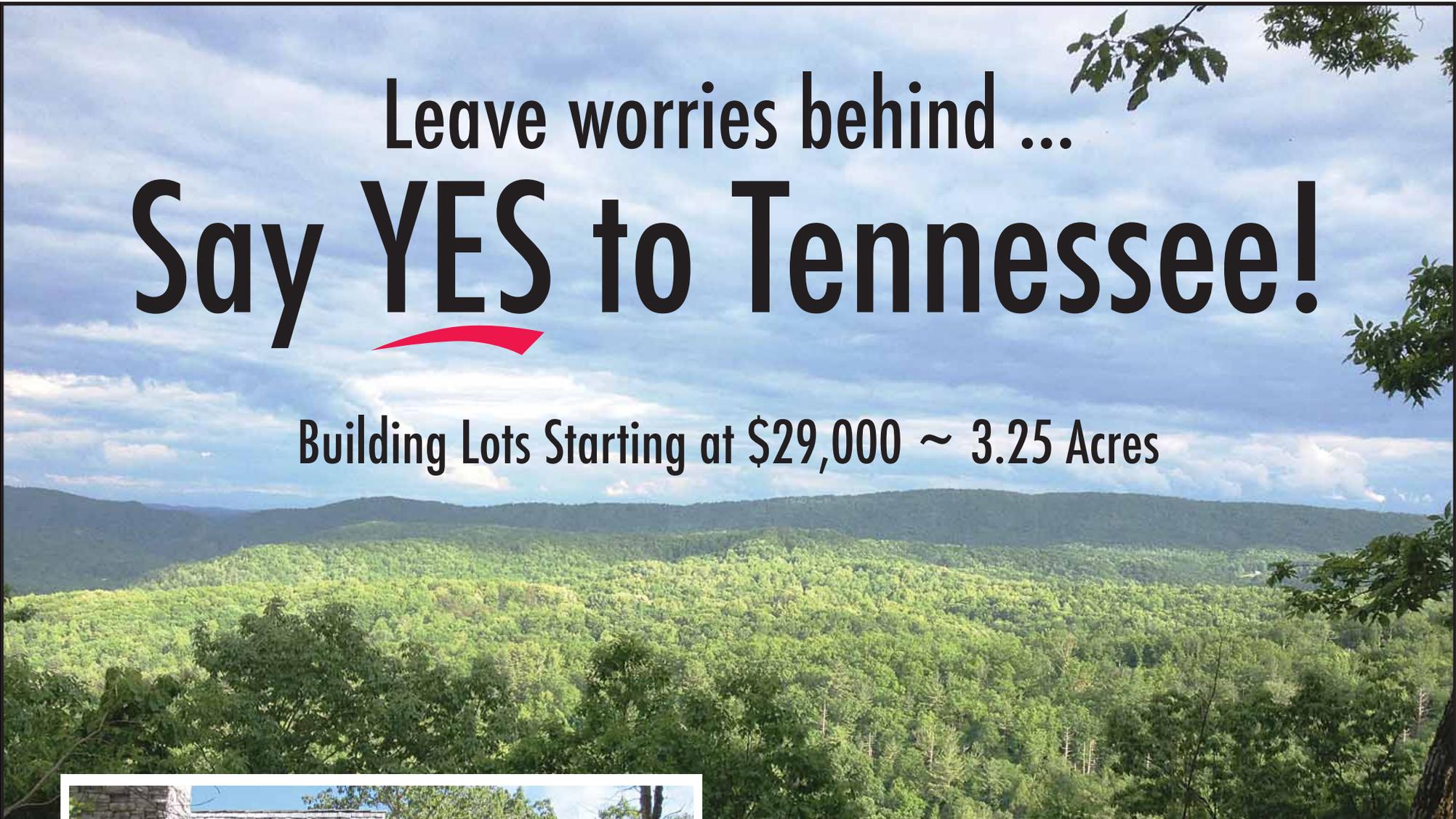
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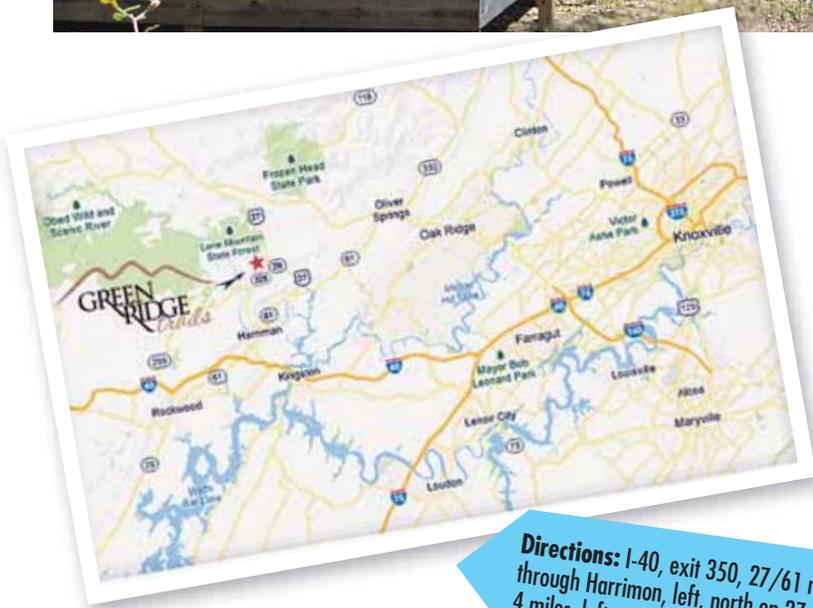
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Indiantown begins path forward as new village

Some candidates just could not wait any longer. Within one week after the Nov. 7 vote created the Village of Indiantown, residents began campaigning for the Indiantown Village Council, although they cannot file officially until Jan. 8 through noon on Jan. 12.

Cabinetmaker Guyton Stone posted on Facebook, "After talking to my junior adviser (my 11-year-old son) I've decided that I will run for Council!"

Guyton was active in the incorporation effort and has distinguished himself as a member of the Indiantown Chamber and as a member of the Hobe Sound Chamber's President's Council. He has been a volunteer youth coach and now serves on the Neighborhood Advisory Committee for the Community Redevelopment Area of Indiantown.

He is not alone. Craig Bauzenberger, Jr., a retiree living at Indianwood has long taken leadership positions in Indiantown, currently serving as chair of the NAC for the Indiantown CRA, and on several other boards. He calls volunteerism "my new full-time job," and has also announced his candidacy.

Numerous other residents are favored also to file in January, many of whom were active in the Indiantown Independence movement.

The matriarch often affectionately called the mayor of Indiantown, Thelma Waters, said she definitely is not filing for a council seat; however, she's concerned that so few residents took part in the referendum, and that only 2,300 of Indiantown's 6,000 residents are registered to vote.

"Somehow, we've got to change that," she said. "I've been part of voter registration drives here over and over again for years, but for some reason, we just don't seem to get anyplace with that."

In the two months prior to the September closing of the registration books, only 17 residents newly registered to vote, according to the elections office,

"Voting has always been important," she added, "but now it's really important to Indiantown."

ORGANIZERS OVERCAME OUTSIDERS

It took a village to become the Village of Indiantown, a rural hamlet 20 miles west of the City of Stuart. Organizers of its "independence" movement – more than 30 Indiantown leaders representing a broad spectrum of Indiantown life – overcame the last-ditch efforts of former commissioners Maggy Hurchalla, Donna Melzer and Anne Scott to derail the incorporation effort through emails laced with inaccuracies, exaggerations and intimidation.

Yet they prevailed.

Nearly forty percent of the 2,297 registered voters living within Indiantown's urban services boundary voted Nov. 7. The final vote favored incorporation, 576-337, and the Village of Indiantown was born.

Indiantown's civic leaders – from natives to Hispanic immigrants to snowbirds to local business owners – banded together, pooled resources, and commissioned feasibility studies following the



Indiantown Independence supporters, from left, Brian Powers, Kevin Powers, Scott Watson, and David Powers.

Martin County Commission's cold shoulder in 2016 toward a new business that offered the hope of new jobs.

Indiantown had lost 250 jobs with the declining production of an orange juice plant, and was facing the loss of another 100 jobs with the closing of the Cogeneration (electrical) plant, when EcoGen, a biomass facility, submitted an application to the county.

Few county residents were surprised that Indiantown began investigating incorporation, following in the path of Hobe Sound, which had already conducted its own feasibility study. Indiantown organizers latched onto the work and the professional consultant Hobe Sound had already commissioned to begin its own incorporation push.

The state's newest municipality, and the only one founded in Martin County over the past 57 years, will begin governing itself March 21 following its first municipal election March 13.

"This is the first day of the rest of our lives," said Bauzenberger, shortly after the Martin County elections office announced the results Nov. 7.

"We know how to do this," said Brian Powers, one of the prominent faces of the incorporation effort. "We already have a great plan for Indiantown – just look at our Community Redevelopment Plan. We've been trying to get it done for the past 16, 17 years, and if we incorporate, then we know we can finally get it done – without waiting another 15 years to do it."

The village's population of around 6,000 residents, less than four percent of Martin County's total population, will be governed by a five-member Village Council.

They will hire a city manager, but they do not plan to create offices for all village functions. Instead, they will use the state's revenue-sharing funds to operate the first year, and will contract police and fire-rescue services with the county with the taxes residents already pay for those services.

After the first year, Indiantown will begin retaining the taxes that currently provide 16 percent of the county's general fund. At the end of five years, the new town is projected to have a surplus of nearly \$15 million, according to their feasibility study.

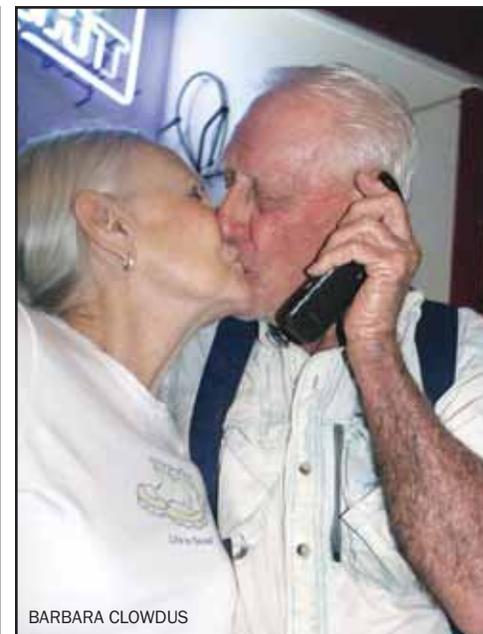
Kevin Powers, also an Indiantown In-

dependence organizer, said incorporation will bring great benefit to the community.

"It means everything for the voters who turned out in support of smaller government, closer to the people," Powers said. "It's an opportunity for Indiantown to make the decisions that are in the best interest of Indiantown."

The Indiantown Village Council election will be March 13. The three candidates with the most votes will serve until 2022, and the remaining two until 2020. After that, all terms will be four years, according to the charter approved by the Legislature.

"This is when the real work begins," said David Powers, an Indiantown na-



BARBARA CLOWDUS

Indiantown Independence supporters Clyde and Nancy Dawson, owners of the Indiantown Airport, get caught up in the jubilation of Indiantown's victory.

tive and businessman who was active in the incorporation effort alongside his brothers, Kevin and Brian Powers. Since his residence is outside the new village's boundaries, he is ineligible to run for a council seat.

"I'm glad about that," he chuckled. "I'm glad to let someone else do the work." ■

--Barbara Clowdus

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Registering to vote is first step for Indiantown

Only about one third of Indiantown residents are registered to vote. In order to vote in the March 13 election for the five members of the Indiantown Village Council, a resident must be a registered voter by Feb. 12.

If you are 18 years old, a U.S. citizen, and a permanent resident of Florida, you may register to vote.

You can register online at <https://registertovoteflorida.gov/> or you may register to vote in person at the the Indiantown post office, the tax collectors office in Indiantown, at the Elizabeth Lahti Library, or at the Supervisor of Elections office at 135 SE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. in Stuart

Once your registration has been processed, a voter information card will be mailed to you.

You are not entitled to register to vote if you have been adjudicated mentally incapacitated with regard to voting



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QUICK FACTS

What is RegisterToVoteFlorida.gov? Florida's online voter registration system allows eligible Florida residents to register to vote or update an existing registration record through a secure website, RegisterToVoteFlorida.gov. The Florida Legislature required the state to create an online voter registration system by Oct. 1, 2017.

Florida joins approximately 35 other states plus the District of Columbia in offering online voter registration as an option to their residents. RegisterToVoteFlorida.gov offers Florida residents a secure and convenient online option to register to vote or update a voter registration record.

The website is ADA compliant, includes accessibility features for persons with disabilities, and is available in English and Spanish.

Who can use RegisterToVote-

Florida.gov? If you are a Florida resident and otherwise eligible, you can use RegisterToVoteFlorida.gov to register to vote, or to update your existing voter registration record. Using RegisterToVoteFlorida.gov is simple, quick, and easy. The website can be used in two ways:

To submit an online voter registration application to register to vote or to update a registration record, To prefill a voter registration application form that you can print, sign, and deliver to your county Supervisor of Elections.

The site can be accessed using standard internet browsers, including Internet Explorer, Firefox, and Chrome. The site is compatible with mobile devices.

To get started, visit RegisterToVoteFlorida.gov. Once on the site, simply follow the on-screen directions.

For questions about how to register to vote, residents may call the election office at 772-288-5637 or email at elections@martinvotes.com. ■

Inscríbese para Votar

Si usted 18 años de edad, es ciudadano estadounidense y tiene domicilio legal en el estado de Florida, puede inscribirse y recibirán por correo su tarjeta de información de votante al cumplir los dieciocho años.

Puede comenzar el proceso del registro ahora usando nuestro formulario de inscripción en línea conveniente.

Puede inscribirse para votar en persona en la oficina del Supervisor de Elecciones, 135 SE Martin Luther King Blvd. en Stuart; en la oficina de 16550 SW Warfield Blvd. en Indiantown; en la Elizabeth Lahti biblioteca, y en la oficina postal.

Una vez completada, la solicitud de inscripción de votante puede ser enviada por correo o entregada personalmente a la oficina del Supervisor de Elecciones. El solicitante recibirá una tarjeta de información de votante en un período aproximado de 2 semanas después de que la solicitud sea procesada.

Usted NO está habilitado para inscribirse como votante si ha sido declarado mentalmente incapacitado para votar en este o en cualquier otro estado y sus derechos electorales no han sido restituidos conforme a la ley, o, si ha sido condenado por cualquier tipo de delito cometido en cualquier tribunal de registro y sus derechos no han sido restituidos conforme a la ley.

Por favor tenga en cuenta la siguiente información si decide inscribirse por correo:

LEY AYUDE A AMERICA A VOTAR (HAVA) de 2002

Como consecuencia de la promulgación de la Ley Ayude a América a Votar (HAVA) de 2002 por parte del Congreso de los Estados Unidos, la legislación de Florida (97.0535, Estatutos de Florida) ahora presenta nuevos requisitos para aquellas personas que deseen inscribirse por correo. A partir del 1 de Enero de 2003, si usted es un nuevo votante del Condado de Martin, y se ha inscripto por correo y no ha votado en ninguna elección Federal realizada en este condado, usted debe presentar una identificación válida con foto actual o una copia actual de una factura por servicios, estado de cuenta bancaria, recibo de sueldo o cualquier otro documento del gobierno que indique su nombre y dirección. Si desea emitir su voto por correo usted debe enviar, junto con su boleta, la misma documentación arriba señalada.

Para ser eximido de las condiciones arriba detalladas usted debe cumplir con uno de los siguientes requisitos:

- tener 65 o más años de edad al momento de la inscripción;
- tener una discapacidad física;
- ser miembro activo, cónyuge de un miembro activo o dependiente de un miembro activo de los servicios uniformados o de la marina mercante, que se encuentre fuera del condado en la fecha del día de elecciones;
- residir en el exterior de los Esta-

dos Unidos pero estar habilitado para votar en Florida

DATOS DE INTERÉS

¿Qué es RegisterToVoteFlorida.gov? La inscripción como votante en línea de Florida les permite a los residentes de Florida elegibles inscribirse para votar o actualizar un registro de inscripción mediante un sitio web seguro: RegisterToVoteFlorida.gov.

La Legislatura de Florida le exigió al Estado crear un sistema de inscripción como votante en línea que pueda usarse antes del 1 de octubre de 2017. Florida se une a aproximadamente otros 35 estados además del Distrito de Columbia que ofrecen la inscripción como votante en línea como opción para sus residentes.

RegisterToVoteFlorida.gov les ofrece a los residentes de Florida una opción en línea segura y conveniente para inscribirse para votar o actualizar un registro de inscripción como votante. El sitio web cumple con la ADA, incluye características de accesibilidad para personas con discapacidades, y se encuentra disponible en inglés y español.

¿Quién puede usar RegisterToVote-

Florida.gov? Si usted es residente de Florida o de otro modo es elegible, puede usar RegisterToVoteFlorida.gov con el fin de inscribirse para votar o para actualizar su registro de inscripción como votante. Para mayor información sobre los requisitos para inscribirse para votar en Florida, visite nuestro sitio web para inscribirse para votar o actualizar su información. ¿Cómo se usa RegisterToVoteFlorida.gov?

Usar RegisterToVoteFlorida.gov es sencillo, rápido y fácil. El sitio web se puede usar de dos maneras: Con el fin de subministrar una solicitud de inscripción como votante o para actualizar un registro de inscripción.

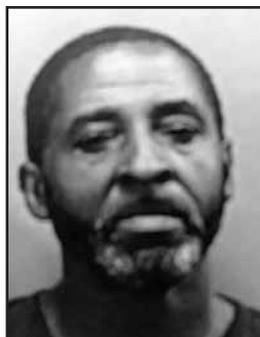
Con el fin de completar un formulario de solicitud de inscripción como votante que usted pueda imprimir, firmar y entregarle al Supervisor Electoral de su condado.

Es posible acceder al sitio a través de navegadores web estándar, incluidos Internet Explorer, Firefox y Chrome. El sitio es compatible con dispositivos móviles. Para comenzar, visite: RegisterToVoteFlorida.gov. Una vez que ingrese al sitio, simplemente siga las instrucciones que aparezcan en pantalla. 772-288-5637. ■

VOTE  2018
MAKE YOUR MARK

Questions remain following iTown shooting death

A few days after the Oct. 27 shooting of Jerry Richardson, 46, in the Booker Park community of Indiantown, a sheriff prayed with Richardson's neighbors, friends and brother who had gathered in stunned disbelief and grief to seek the answer to one question, why?



Jerry Richardson, 46, shot to death Oct. 26 in Indiantown

"I pray for wisdom," said Martin County Sheriff William Snyder, as he addressed a room filled to capacity, "... the wisdom of Solomon."

For the next 90 minutes, Snyder attempted to answer their question, covering a range of topics, including race, police training, mental health, the role of police officers in the community and a promise to investigate thoroughly the shooting that left Richardson lying in the dirt with fatal wounds and a deputy in shock.

"Of all the shootings I have ever been on," the sheriff said, "I don't remember anybody that was as affected as him."

Richardson had been carrying a machete on his body – accounts vary as to whether it was strapped to wrist, waist or across his shoulder – when he was confronted by Deputy John Welliever, who had left his car minutes earlier to patrol on foot.

He reportedly called in at 11:14 p.m. that he was leaving his car, then called in again at 11:17 to report shots fired.

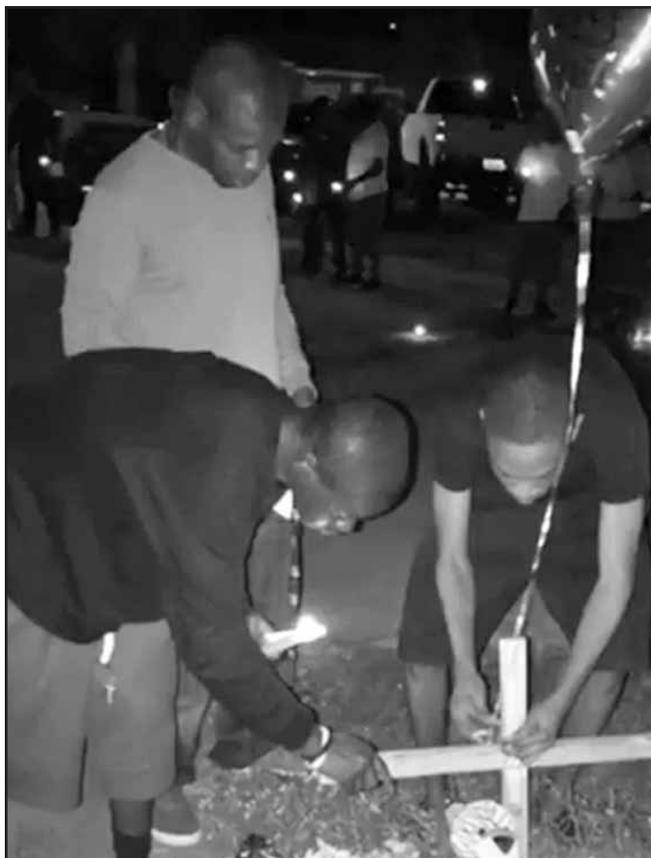
The sheriff concluded the officer acted in self-defense, shooting Richardson at "extremely close range," he said. It is a conclusion rejected by Richardson's family and friends, who repeatedly call Richardson "a gentle soul" who should not have been violently killed.

It is a sentiment often heard in the Indiantown community, even outside of Booker Park, where Richardson had lived and cut hair for decades.

Jean Gaskins Wright of Indiantown described Richardson as someone she and her daughter often encountered as they walked or rode their bikes.

"We always looked forward to seeing him because he always greeted us with 'Alright,'" she said. "As a matter of fact, since we never knew his name, we nicknamed him 'Alright.' It was always a pleasure to see him and greet each other."

Wright posted her thoughts on Facebook shortly after the shooting, adding that it was not her place to judge the people or the circumstances of the shooting, only that Richardson "will be missed by many."



A candlelight vigil Dec. 4 and a makeshift cross mark the spot in Booker Park that Jerry Richardson, 46, died in a police shooting Oct. 27.

She was correct in her observation, as dozens in the community gathered again Dec. 4.

"This will not be swept under the rug," said Kimberly Alldaysuchalady Jackson-Bryce, of Indiantown. She and Richardson's brother, James, organized a candlelight vigil at the spot Richardson died, near a store at S.W. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and S.W. Charleston Street.

Then they all walked together to a prayer service led by James Richardson at the Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church, which was attended also by officials of Stuart chapter of the NAACP.

"That is what's most heartbreaking," said Jackson-Bryce. "It has become so commonplace in the bigger cities, but we never saw this coming in Indiantown ... And not to someone as soft spoken as Jerry."

Snyder reported that the deputy feared for his life and believed that there was no alternative to the use of deadly force. Six shots were fired, two hitting Richardson in the shoulder, three in his chest.

The deputy has been interviewed by the state attorney's office and other sheriff's detectives, according to Snyder, yet to his community, Richardson's case remains unresolved.

A new deputy has taken Welliever's place, and the community policing program that has been a hallmark of Snyder's department remains in place. Jackson-Bryce says that although she believes the program has value and can work, but more diversity training is



James Richardson, the brother of Jerry Richardson, implores Richardson's community not to forget the life of his brother and to continue their quest for answers to the police shooting during a prayer service Dec. 4 at the Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Indiantown.

needed to eliminate situations where police seem to antagonize residents for

tion hardest to answer. ■

no apparent cause and to replace fear with trust.

Community policing, returning police officers to walking and riding bikes in their neighborhoods, has often been credited with reducing crime simply by bringing police and residents closer together, giving them better opportunities to know the people they are protecting, thus fostering respect and cooperation.

"But the Sheriff openly admitted that there is a fear when it comes to the black male," she added. "So how can you protect and serve what you fear?"

That is the ques-

--Barbara Cloudus

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Now until Dec. 31 Winter Wonderland Light Show

Watch thousands of lights at the Winter Wonderland Light Show at the Port St. Lucie Community Center at 2195 S.E. Airoso Blvd. from 7 to 9 p.m. every night until Dec. 31. For more information, call 772-878-2277. You also can watch more than 100,000 lights on palm trees synchronized to holiday music at the Holiday Lights Spectacular in Marina Square on Melody Lane in downtown Fort Pierce. The lights and music run 6 to 9 p.m. every day until Jan. 7. For more information, call 772-466-3880 or go to mainstreetfortpiece.org.

Saturday, Dec. 9 World's Greatest Indoor Flea Market & Bake Sale

The Rio Civic Club will host an Indoor Flea Market and Bake Sale from 8 a.m. to noon Saturday, Dec. 9 in historic Rio at the Rio Civic Center, 1255 NE Dixie Highway. You will find jewelry, antiques, collectibles, household items, baby clothes and more. Breakfast and lunch, as well as homemade baked goods, will be sold. For more information, or to reserve a table (\$15) to sell your own items, call (772) 232-2182. Proceeds support area student scholarships and community projects.

Saturday, Dec. 9 Model Railroaders Open House

The Martin County Model Railroaders are holding their annual Open House, Saturday, Dec. 9, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. at the Martin County Fairgrounds 2616 S.E. Dixie Highway, Stuart, Building E. FREE. Christmas trains, operating layouts for N, HO, O, and G Gauge. Plus, new this year, see the World's Smallest Nano Train. Trains for kids to run, door prizes, free stuff. For more information, Gary Hawken, 772-692-9017, garyhawken@att.net. Or go to www.martincountymodelrailroaders.org. The club is located at the Martin County Fairgrounds at 2616 SE Dixie Hwy, Stuart, FL 34996.



Saturday, Dec. 9 Martin County Boat Parade

The 37th Annual Martin County Boat Parade will begin on the east side of the Jensen Beach Causeway at 6pm and proceed to Sandsprit Park and into the Manatee Pocket, ending at the Twisted Tuna around 7:45pm to announce the winners. The judges boat, sponsored by Chapman School of Seamanship, will be located near the Crossroads. The public is invited to enjoy viewing the parade boats at restaurants, parks and other locations along the route. The public is invited to walk along the docks and view the boats and crews. The best viewing for the parade will be at the Stuart Causeway.

Weekend, Dec. 9-10 Grand Miracle Drive-through Nativity Story

The New Hope Fellowship Church in Palm City will feature its 10th annual Grand Miracle Presentation on Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 9 and 10, from 6 to 8 p.m. The outdoor drive-through Nativity story will be dramatized with five individual outdoor sets that will include a live cast of more than 40 actors, animals, lighting, music and narration. Hayrides will also be available. The indoor walk-through Galilean village will include live performances, authentic food, a petting farm, handcrafted items and food for purchase along with many demonstrations and interactive activities for families to participate in. Some of the activities include basket weaving, wood and metal crafting, grinding wheat and making pottery. Try on a costume and have your picture taken with a baby goat or sheep. The event is free to the public. New Hope Fellowship is at 3900 S.W. Citrus Blvd. in Palm City. For more information, contact Diane Rudd at 772-283-8343 or go to www.pcnhf.com.



Saturday, Dec. 16 Indian River County Boat Parade

If you miss the Martin County Boat Parade, you can catch the Indian River County Boat Parade on Saturday, Dec. 16. Boats will assemble at 5:30 and will start at 6 in the Intracoastal waterway between the two bridges and finish at the Vero Beach City Marina. The Captains meeting will be Friday, Dec. 15 at 5:30pm at Quail Valley River Club. Viewing stations include: Royal Palm Point and Vero Beach City Marina. Bring lawn chairs and blankets for seating.

Now through Dec. 30 Winter Wonderland at the Coastal Center

This holiday season the Florida Oceanographic Coastal Center will be transformed into a winter wonderland every evening with palm trees aglow and the whole center shining with holiday lighting. The special event will run in the evenings until Dec. 30, excluding Christmas Eve. Nightly admission: Adults - \$15; Adult Member - \$12; Children (3-12) - \$8; Children Member - \$6; Children under 3 - Free. For more info, visit www.floridaocean.org.



Weekends through Jan. 6 Clydesdale Carriage Tours of Stuart

Listen to the jingle of bells and the clip-clop of Clydesdales during private horse-drawn carriage tours through downtown Stuart and along Flagler Park and the St. Lucie River. Rides from 5 to 11 p.m. Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays through Jan. 6. The rides last around 30 minutes, and riders board the carriages east of Haney Circle. Riders also can be picked up from most downtown locations by appointment. Rates are \$60 for the first two passengers, \$10 for each additional passenger, \$6 for each additional child ages 3 to 11 and free for kids younger than 3 with paid adult. For more information or to make reservations, call 772-285-3480 or go to horsecarriage.com.

Sunday, Dec. 17 Swing Sisters Holiday Show

Sunday, December 17 at 2 p.m.
\$15 Members | \$20 Club & Non-Members
A The Swing Sisters lend their world-class vocals to classic girl group songs and your favorite holiday music. This dynamic trio offers the timeless harmonies of the classic singing sister acts of the '40s, making it every bit as unforgettable as the great acts of the Swing era whose style and spirit they so faithfully evoke. Clap, dance and sing-along to your favorite holiday standards with The Swing Sisters. Sponsored by Stuart Lodge and VIP America Home Health Care.

Tuesday, Dec. 19 3 Redneck Tenors at the Lyric Theatre

Not your typical Christmas show, yet definitely family friendly, 3 Redneck Tenors will perform at The Lyric Theatre on Tuesday, Dec. 19, at 7pm and Wednesday, Dec. 20 at 4 p.m. The holiday special features classically-trained Broadway and opera stars performing classic, pop, and "deep-fried" holiday tunes, including "White Christmas," "O Holy Night," "Jingle Bells," "Silent Night," and more. The Lyric Theatre 286.7827.

Weekend, Dec. 15-17 It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play

A holiday classic, "It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play" by Joe Landry, based on the beloved Frank Capra movie will be Dec. 15 at 8 p.m., Dec. 16; at 3 p.m and Dec. 17 at 3 p.m. at the A.C.T. Studio Theatre, Cedar Pointe Plaza, 2399 S.E. Ocean Blvd., Stuart. All tickets are \$25 each. 772-932-8880; actstudiotheatre.com.



Friday, Dec. 15 Holidays Around the World at Children's Museum

Bring your mittens to play in the (man-made) snow and compete in a snowball challenge at Holidays around the World at the Children's Museum at 1707 N.E. Indian River Drive in Jensen Beach. The event is 4:30 to 8 p.m. Dec. 15 and also features holiday music, Santa Claus, crafts, games and milk and cookies. Admission is \$5 per person. Museum members get in free and have VIP access starting at 4 p.m. For more information, call 772-225-7575 or go to www.childrensmuseumtc.org.



Weekends through Dec. 30

Two Incredible Synchronized Light Shows

Stroll through botanical gardens decorated with holiday lights at Heathcote Botanical Gardens at 210 Savannah Road in Fort Pierce and McKee Botanical Garden at 350 U.S. 1 in Vero Beach. Heathcote's Garden of Lights is 5:30 to 9 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays through Dec. 30 and features five acres of gardens illuminated with thousands of lights handcrafted into colorful and seasonal displays, plus refreshments and music. Admission is \$3-\$8, depending on age and garden membership, and is free for kids younger than 6. For more information, call 772-464-4672 or go to www.heathcotebotanicalgardens.org. Holidays at McKee will be from 6 to 8 p.m. Dec. 21-23 and McKee's Nights of Lights from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Dec. 28-30 featuring palms and pathways adorned with thousands of lights and festive holiday decorations, plus a vintage band organ and a model train display. Admission is \$8-\$12, depending on age, and is free for garden members and kids younger than 3. For more information, call 772-794-0601 or go to www.mckee garden.org.

Weekend, Dec. 16-17

HOPE! a Christmas Cantata

The First Presbyterian Church of Stuart will present its 2017 Christmas Cantata entitled, "HOPE!" on Saturday, Dec. 16, at 3 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 17, at 10 a.m. "HOPE!" is a new gospel presentation for choir and orchestra written by composer Joel Raney, which tells the story of Christ's birth in a contemporary gospel style with plenty of familiar carols infused with gospel, soul, and even a touch of the blues. The choir will be directed and accompanied by Dr. Linda Beckman at the piano and enhanced with a chamber orchestra playing Ed Hogan's dynamic instrumentation. Admission is free for both performances; free-will offerings will be accepted. First Presbyterian Church of Stuart is at 1715 N.W. Pine Lake Drive in North River Shores (772) 692.0500.

Thursday, Dec. 21

CRAFT-A-PALOOZA at the River Center

Let's get crafty on Thursday, Dec. 21 from 10 a.m to noon at the River Center classroom for some FREE holiday arts and crafts, games, activities, music, and fun. This is a free event and no RSVP is required to attend or participate. Our crafts are designed for children ages 3-10. Make sure you don't miss out on this exciting holiday break event! River Center | 561-743-7123 | RiverCenter@lrecc.org

Weekend, Jan. 18-21

Greek Fest in Hobe Sound

The ever-popular Greek Fest at St. John's Orthodox Greek Church on Federal Highway in Hobe Sound will be Jan. 18-21, 2018, featuring vendors, folk dance performances, Greek food, games and rides for the kids, raffle and much more. Admission: \$3 adults, kids 12 and under free. Hours: Thursday 11am-8pm, Friday 11am-10pm, Saturday 11am-10pm, Sunday 11am-6pm. Be Greek for a day. OPA!



The Apollo School Foundation is Pleased to Announce the 2018 Winter Speaker Series

Thursday, January 18, 2018

– William F. "Rick" Crary
*Lights, Camera, Action! When
Hobe Sound was Picture City*

Mr. Crary is a local attorney, historian and author of *A Treasure We Call Home*. He will share his research on the legendary Lewis J. Selznick's dream of Hollywood East and stories from his family's three generations in Martin County.

Thursday, February 15, 2018

– Tim Luke

Have Gavel, Will Travel!

A Hobe Sound resident, Mr. Luke co-owns his own appraisal, auction and events business. As a nationally known master appraiser, auctioneer and author, he has appeared on the HGTV show, *Cash in the Attic*, as well as the ever-popular *Antiques Roadshow*. He will share tales from his experiences in the exciting world of art and collectibles.

Thursday, March 15, 2018

– Nathaniel P. Reed

Travels on the Green Highway

Mr. Reed has dedicated most of his life to environmental issues and the protection of South Florida's valuable ecosystems. He recently authored *Travels on the Green Highway, An Environmentalist's Journal*, which documents a remarkable era when Mr. Reed played a role in laying the groundwork of the nation's environmental foundation.

Thursday, April 19, 2018

– Suzanne Diamond Martin

Growing Up in Hobe Sound

An authentic Florida native, Sue was born in Stuart – at Martin Memorial Hospital – and has been enjoying small-town experiences and sharing memories for nearly seven decades. Living across the street from what is now known as Apollo School, and growing up in the company of her parents, owners of Diamond Transfer and Garage, and siblings, Sue has a unique perspective of the community of Hobe Sound and its generations of residents.

Speeches will be given from 7-8 p.m.

at the Apollo School,

9141 S.E. Apollo Street, Hobe Sound.

Light refreshments will be served.

Cost - \$10 per person per event.

Seating is limited.

For tickets:

www.apolloschool.org

Speakers and times may be subject to change.

This Veterans Day, we honor the brave men and women who have served our country in uniform.

Freedom is powerful. It's a gift. A treasure.

The most significant, important gifts in life are always worth fighting for. And often, they come with a great price. They are not free. Somewhere along the way, someone paid dearly for the liberties we enjoy so freely today. But sometimes, we forget. It's easy to take them for granted ...

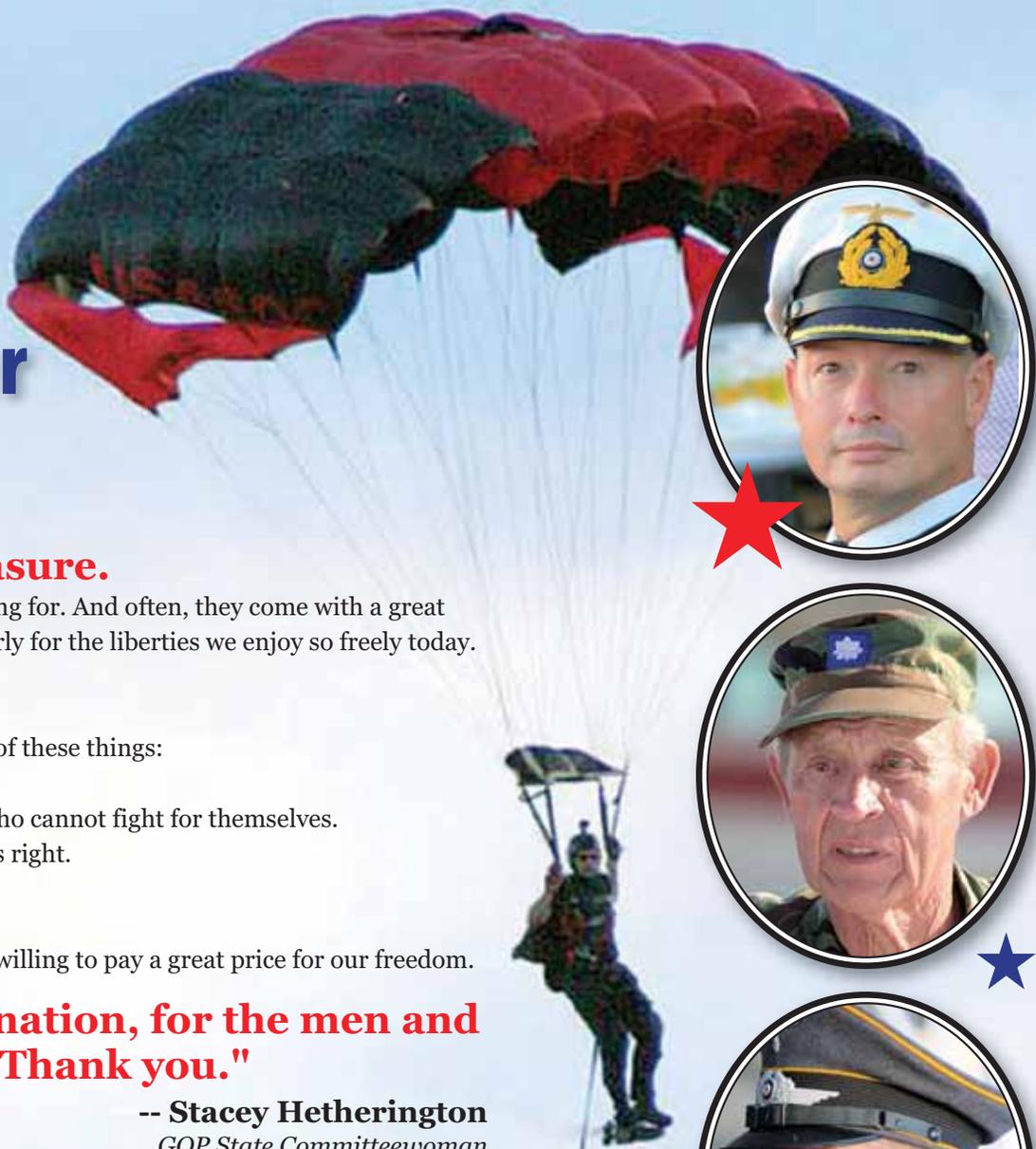
There's great power and strength in the loyalty of service, because of these things:

- There's power in unity and standing strong together.
- There's power in fighting on behalf of our nation and for those who cannot fight for themselves.
- There's power in rising up in courage, pursuing victory for what is right.
- There's power in knowing that God Himself fights on our behalf.

Remembering Veterans Day and thankful that so many have been willing to pay a great price for our freedom.

For all those who have protected our nation, for the men and women in uniform, together we say, "Thank you."

-- Stacey Hetherington
GOP State Committeewoman



Photos taken during the Air Show and Veterans Day Parade by James Brown.