



Niki Norton



Edward "Butch"
Olsen



Harold "Harry"
Markey



Dan Crow



Troy McDonald



Stacey Hetherington

**County
Commission
candidates
beginning to get
serious about
campaigning. pg 5**

FREE

Martin County CURRENTS

Volume 8 Issue 1
February 2018

Jury taps Lake Point for win

The rock mine and water restoration project was awarded \$4.4 million in its case against Maggy Hurchalla. pg 23

One Florida introduces
new columnist ... pg 10

Faith and art combine
in Hobe Sound ... pg 15

Indiantown Village
candidates announced ... pg 20

The Lake Point Restoration project near Indiantown is the "missing" link between the C-44 canal to its north and the L-8 canal in Palm Beach County at its southern end, designed to move polluted water out of the C-44 canal to clean it.

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County commissioners vote to continue Brightline fight

After listening to a non-agenda update on the county's legal battles with the All Aboard Florida/Brightline passenger rail train, Martin County Board of County Commissioners voted unanimously Jan. 9 to continue the fight.

Around \$100,000 remains in the previous allocation of funds for litigation, according to County Attorney Sarah Woods. She told commissioners at the meeting that a new lawsuit will focus on the failure of the US Department of Transportation to abide by NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) by issuing bonds without a "record of decision" in its review of what the legal staff believes is a flawed environmental impact statement.

In addition, the bonds were allocated from highway project funds, which Woods and the county's outside legal counsel, attorney Steven Ryan of Washington DC, told commissioners was improper.

The lawsuit was filed in mid-February in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., against the U.S. Department of Transportation, the seventh lawsuit filed by Martin and Indian River counties over the past five years.

Ryan and Brent Hanlon, president of Citizens Against Rail Expansion FL, described during a town hall in Stuart's Lyric Theatre in mid-January that they had high hopes for success, if not to stop the train and its proposed 32 daily trips through Martin County, but for possibly moving the route into western Martin County.

They both noted the efforts by a few

state legislators to pass the state's first safety regulations on passenger rail, and commended Indian River and Martin counties for providing the only government funding for the fight.

"It's expensive," said Hanlon, who made a pitch for contributions by the audience to help pay for the myriad costs involved, including attorneys, lobbyists, public relations and other costs. The attorneys, including the staffs of Indian River's and Martin's legal departments, divide tasks among themselves, saving money and eliminating duplication of effort.

Ryan said they'd like to file multiple suits; however, they choose instead to take narrow "rifle shots" by using funds where they'll most likely get results.

One thing the organization is not doing is giving up their position in return for a stop in Stuart or elsewhere along the Treasure Coast.

"A stop is not a goal," Ryan said. "I think we can stop this, or we can change it – to go west."

Go to the county's website, www.martin.fl.us and type in Brightline for the most recent updates, or go to the CARE-FL website, www.saveourfl.com, where individual contributions also can be made.

DANGEROUS CROSSINGS

Four railroad crossings in Martin County are getting scrutiny by the Florida Department of Transportation due to "skewed design concerns," ac-

cording to Martin County officials.

The crossings are at Osprey Street in Hobe Sound; Broward Street in Port Salerno; Monterey Road in Stuart; and the State Road 707 crossing at Dixie Highway in Rio.

In a prepared statement, Brightline said the railroad's crossing upgrades "exceed the highest safety standards, and additional regulations aren't needed to ensure compliance is met."

Three people were hit, and two of them killed, by Brightline trains last

month; however, all warning equipment at all three locations was working properly. The individuals, one on a bicycle, had tried to beat the train, according to investigators.

Limited service on the \$3.1 billion project began Jan. 13 between Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. Brightline expects to expand service to Miami this year. The railroad said they expect Phase 2 construction from West Palm Beach to Orlando to be completed by January 2021. ■

County considering a fire assessment fee on all property

After the failure of the sales tax referendum last summer, the replacement of two aging fire stations – one on Hutchinson Island and the other in Hobe Sound – as well as replacing critical equipment, had to be scrapped from the county budget.

Now, the county commission is considering an alternative – a countywide annual fire services fee levied on every property, including those that currently pay no property taxes.

The once-a-year assessment likely would be around the same as the monthly fee that residents pay for cable TV and Internet service, according to Martin County Fire Rescue Chief Bill Shobel.

"After I point that out to residents," he said during the Hobe Sound Cham-

ber's Government Affairs January meeting, "they understand and feel much better about it."

County commissioners voted unanimously on Jan. 23 to commission a study to determine a structure for the fire assessment fee, which can be assessed only for fire suppression, hazmat response and disaster preparedness. By state law, the fee cannot be used for rescue services.

The City of Stuart implemented an annual fire assessment fee in 2014, over the angry protests of city residents that packed city commission meetings.

All Stuart property owners pay a base \$108 per parcel, according to former city manager Paul Nicoletti, because an analysis by the city showed that about

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Martin County CURRENTS

PUBLISHER -- Barbara Clowdus
WEBSITE -- Sonic Fish, LLC

PRINTER -- Southeast Offset, Inc.
GRAPHIC DESIGN -- Simone Fong

A monthly newspaper, Martin County Currents LLC is distributed free throughout the county. All opinions are those of its authors, and letters to the editor are encouraged. Contact information: Martin County Currents LLC, Stuart, FL 34997. www.MartinCountyCurrents.com. editor@martincountycurrents.com. 772.245.6564.

FREE ELECTRONIC SUBSCRIPTIONS

Go to www.MartinCountyCurrents.com and click on "Subscriptions." Look for distributed copies at all Martin County public libraries; Chambers of Commerce at Indiantown, Stuart, Hobe Sound, Palm City and Jensen Beach; and at diners, grocery stores, pharmacies and in lobbies and waiting rooms throughout Martin County.

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half the property owners pay less than \$100 in property taxes. Some pay nothing, he added. The fee was a way to recover costs from all residents and property owners who benefit from having the service.

In addition to the base rate, the city adopted a "tiered system" of incremental increases determined by property values. More valuable properties pay a larger fee.

Shobel said he prefers a fee based more on other factors, including square footage rather than value, because the

response to a property fire likely would be the same regardless of the property's value.

"But there are a lot of factors to consider," he added. "It's complicated, which is why a study by an expert in the field needs to be undertaken."

The county expects to spend from \$50,000-\$75,000 for a consultant, depending on the proposals received, whose report will be due prior to budget hearings in April. Prior to adoption, a public hearing will be announced. ■

CRC asks public to comment on 37 proposed amendments

The work of the state's Constitution Revision Commission began with public hearings last May, and it will end with more public hearings beginning in March. The CRC will conclude its work in May.

More than 700 people attended the first public hearing on the proposed changes to the Florida Constitution at Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale on Feb. 6.

Among the proposals are six that were either proposed or co-sponsored by three local appointees to the CRC, Carolyn Timmann, Sherry Plymale, and Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch, all of whom were appointed by Senate President Joe Negron to the 37-member commission.

Two proposals by Timmann, Clerk

of the Circuit Court and Comptroller for Martin County, were the first among the 103 commissioner proposals for constitutional amendments to make it through the initial committee hearings to the calendar for a hearing by the full commission.

Proposal 9 would establish a state Department of Veterans Affairs, headed by the governor and the Cabinet, and the other is Proposal 13, which prohibits change to responsibilities of a county's constitutional officers, ensuring they can be chosen only through the election process. Both proposals were unanimously approved during committee reviews.

The CRC, which meets over a 12-month period once every 20 years, first

considered 782 public proposals, which have now been reduced to 37. Three of those rejected by review committees had been proposed by Thurlow-Lippisch, all relating to environmental protection.

One of hers, Proposal 91, which prohibits offshore drilling for oil and gas in specified waters, passed committee review with few objections and will be considered by the full commission. Many of those attending the Feb. 6 public hearing spoke in favor of the proposal.

Plymale, along with Timmann as a co-sponsor, wrote Proposal 11 to ensure that primary elections are open to all registered voters regardless of party affiliation or whether one or more write-in candidates had filed for the general election ballot.

Plymale also introduced Proposal 83, sponsored by Nicole Washington, to define and create a State College System and its governance, which received lively debate during committee hearings.

Often called the "most powerful group of citizens" in the state, the CRC's proposed constitutional amendments will receive no legislative, judicial or legal review prior to being placed on the November 2018 ballot.

"Whatever we decide goes directly to the voters," Timmann told members of the Martin County Republican Club last fall, "and we make our decisions based on what we hear from the public."

All three CRC commissioners have spoken to Martin County groups, and all have urged residents to either attend personally or to send emails to the commissioners. Speakers are allowed two minutes, and the audience may raise green or red placards to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the speaker.

Hot-button topics thus far include a proposal that would narrow citizens' right to privacy, which courts have invoked to protect abortion rights. Although the proposal was cut during committee review, many speakers said they feared it would be revived by the full commission, which is allowed.

After the last of the five public hearings, scheduled March 13 in St. Petersburg, the commission's Rules and Administration Committee will begin setting a calendar for floor sessions that will start sometime in March. The proposals, as well as videos of previous hearings, can be viewed at the CRC website, www.flrc.gov.

Proposals on the floor must receive at least a majority vote to advance to the commission's Style and Drafting Committee, on which Timmann also serves. The final proposals will return to the full commission, where they must receive at least 22 votes to be placed on the ballot.

Proposed amendments will need support from at least 60 percent of the voters to be enacted.

Scheduled hearings are Feb. 19 at Eastern Florida State College in Melbourne; Feb. 20, University of North Florida in Jacksonville; Feb. 27, University of West Florida in Pensacola; and March 13, University of South Florida-St. Petersburg.

The meetings also are streamed live on The Florida Channel, which Tim-

mann encourages residents to watch if they're unable to attend. Thurlow-Lippisch admitted that the hours of commentary, often repetitive, can at times make her head ring.

"At the same time, I also feel honored to be serving (on this commission)," she said, "and, you know what? Over time, people's voices actually bubble to the top. The voice of the people is being heard." ■

Fair winds back for Jordan's golf course

Transforming 226 acres of nearly flat land, ditched and drained, into a golf course with bunkers and stormwater treatment areas disguised as water hazards requires more than imagination. The project, adjacent to the Hobe Sound Polo Club and the Atlantic Ridge State Park, east of I-95 and north of Bridge Road, requires tons of earthwork.

Some of that dirt recently wound up near the south fork of the St. Lucie River due to "a significant construction error," according to the South Florida Water Management District. The spill was immediately corrected.

"So far the contractor has done everything the district required in the enforcement," said SFWMD spokesperson Randy Smith. "Sodding, additional turbidity barriers and ditch plugging, which prevents any runoff from the construction site, have been added."

The SFWMD had cited the course's contractor, The Club LLC of Vero Beach, for violating state water quality standards Feb. 2 after residents spotted turbid water approaching the south fork of the St. Lucie River. Fines and costs totaled \$8,000.

An inspection report shows that the contractor had followed proper practices, including silt barriers; however the SFWMD said that the release of a "large slug of dirt" likely could have been prevented by adding additional turbidity barriers prior to beginning ditch dredging.

"The turbidity will settle and be diluted," Smith added, "and washed out when we get some rain."

According to Golf Weekly, basketball legend Michael Jordan is the principal owner and makes weekly visits to the site of his emerging private course, named Grove XXIII. The Roman numerals represent Jordan's own Number 23 during his basketball days with the Chicago Bulls.

A Bobby Weed design, the par-72 layout includes plans for tees ranging from 5,445 yards up to 7,470, with bunkers deep into the fairway landing areas. In Weed's press release, he describes the course:

"The two nines wrap around each other while traversing the site in opposing directions. This dynamic layout ensures that golfers will feel the breeze from every quarter...knowing the caliber of the membership and Michael's passion for golf, we are designing a forward-thinking, progressive layout."

The challenging golf course begins with earthwork that rises to the same standard. ■

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Hetherington newest candidate to enter county commission race

The 2018 election season launched in Martin County last fall promises to offer residents a variety of candidates with disparate backgrounds. The most recent candidate to file is Stacey Hetherington, a Republican who entered the race Feb. 8 for the District 2 County Commission seat held now by Ed Fielding.

Fielding is currently under indictment, charged criminally with two misdemeanors for violating public records laws during his last term as county commissioner. The case is set for trial in December 2018. He has not yet filed for re-election to a possible third term.

Stacey Hetherington previously ran for Fielding's seat in the 2014 race, losing by a narrow margin. A mother of two young sons, she is a third-generation Floridian, born and raised in Indiantown. A Realtor with Engels & Volkers in Stuart, she holds a degree in public relations and is currently seeking a second bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Florida. She president of the Realtors Association of Martin County

Also targeting Ed Fielding's District 2 seat on the county commission is former Stuart Mayor Troy McDonald. First elected to the City Commission in 2011, McDonald is founder and president of Duces Tecum Process Serving in Stuart. Serving in his capacity to represent the City of Stuart, he also chairs the Metropolitan Planning Organization and is the current chair of the Business Development Board of Martin County.

Ron Rose of Stuart, the executive director of the Jensen Beach Chamber of Commerce, has withdrawn his candidacy for the Stuart City Commission seat being vacated by Troy McDonald. No other candidate has filed for the Group III seat as yet.

The most crowded field in the County Commission race is for the District 4 seat currently held by Sarah Heard, also under criminal indictment for two misdemeanors for violating public records laws, set for trial in December 2018. In a recent videotaped interview, Heard said she intends to run again for office in the 2018 election; however, she has not yet filed.

The candidates include Niki Norton, Harold "Harry" Markey, Edward "Butch" Olsen Jr., and Dan Crow. Catherine Winters, of Port Salerno and its representative on the Community Redevelopment Agency Board, had expressed interest in entering the District 4 race. She announced in January her decision not to file, citing the number



Stacey Hetherington



Edward "Butch" Olsen



Harold "Harry" Markey



Dan Crow



Troy McDonald



Niki Norton

"of good candidates" already in the race as her reason.

Niki Norton, an architect licensed in seven states, is founder and president of n2 Architecture + Design in Stuart. Former president of the Palm City Chamber of Commerce, she has served on Martin County's Historic Preservation Board for eight years. She also has served the board of the YMCA Treasure Coast, Treasure Coast Builder's Association (TCBA), United States Green Building Council (USGBC), and the Florida Green Building Coalition (FGBC). She and her husband have a blended family of five children.

Harold "Harry" Markey retired in October as General Services Director for Martin County, after working for the county for 29 years. He was named the Preservationist of the Year in 2016 by the Historic Preservation Board of Martin County for his work in saving historic buildings that had been slated for demolition. He says he wants to use his expertise and understanding of county operations and infrastructure needs to address the infrastructure maintenance backlog, improve communication and foster compromise on the board.

Edward "Butch" Olsen Jr., born and raised in Martin County, is a third generation fisherman and president of the Port Salerno Commercial Fishing Dock Authority. He also is president of the Port Salerno Seafood Festival Board, vice president of the Marine Industries Association of the Treasure Coast, and vice chair of the Port Salerno Neighborhood Advisory Committee. He also serves on numerous marine organizations, as well as on Martin County's Agriculture and Natural Resources Advisory Committee.

Dan Crow, a newcomer to political office, has served as a legislative intern in Tallahassee. He is a regional adminis-

trator for the Visiting Nurse Association of Florida and a member of the Palm City Chamber of Commerce. He says he wants to improve the health of the Indian River Lagoon and focus on more conscientious budgeting.

Three candidates for two seats on the Martin County School Board also filed. Challenging incumbent **Rebecca Negron** for the District 3 seat is retired Bessey Creek Elementary School Principal **Victoria Defenthaler** of Hobe Sound. In addition, **Christia Li Roberts** filed for re-election to the District 1 seat.

Toby Overdorf, of Palm City, remains unopposed in his bid for the Florida House being vacated by Rep. Gayle Harrell, Republican, District 83. Overdorf, an environmental consultant, holds an environmental master of business administration degree from Florida Atlantic University. He is the Martin County Republican Executive Committee Chairman. ■

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Pineland Prairie, Harmony Ranch begin public hearings

Martin County residents will have an opportunity to comment on new standards for future development in Martin County beginning Feb. 28. Applications for changes to the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan, the Future Land Use Map and zoning code changes have been submitted for the Pineland Prairie development in Palm City and for Harmony Ranch, near South Fork High School.

The Harmony project of 2,658.52 acres across all four quadrants of the Bridge Road intersection with Pratt-Whitney Road west of the Turnpike does not include a development plan with this application. Presented by project manager Tom Kenny, the application instead will focus primarily on its justification for increasing housing capacity in Martin County, per current Comp Plan rules. The land currently is zoned for agriculture and is used for cattle grazing.

In contrast, the Pineland Prairie application includes a village-type development plan for its 3,411 acres near Palm City, which will require a unique land use designation, the Mixed Use Village. The MUV land use category is intended to establish a compact, mixed-use village comprising interconnected traditional neighborhoods linked to adjacent agriculture and a pristine natural area.

The MUV will include 80 percent open space, including a pristine area designated as a perpetual preserve, a workplace location in Martin County on the portion of the property already zoned as industrial and the only portion of the property that currently lies within the urban services district.

It plans a variety of housing options, civic uses, and an interconnected trail system to access the preserve area. The agricultural area will be a minimum of

150 acres (within the open space), the "traditional neighborhood" will be 711 acres with a maximum of 4,200 housing units (a density of 1.23 persons per acre) and a maximum of 290,000 sq. ft. of commercial/retail/office space.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Pineland Prairie's application will go before the Local Planning Agency in county commission chambers in the county Administration Building on Monterey Road on Feb. 28 at 6 p.m. – an hour earlier than the usual start time.

Due to the complexity of the application, although public comment has been generally positive, according to Growth Management Director Nicki vanVonne, an additional meeting was scheduled before the LPA on March 1, also at 6 p.m. in commission chambers to ensure the review is completed in a timely manner.

It will go before the Board of County Commissioners for the first of two public hearings on April 24. If approved to be transmitted to the state for its review, the application will be presented to the BOCC for its final adoption hearing July 24.

The Harmony Ranches application will be presented to the LPA on March 14 at 6 p.m. in the commission chambers, and if a second day is needed, March 15 also has been reserved to be heard by the LPA at 6 p.m.

It also will go before the BOCC for a public hearing on April 24, with the final adoption hearing on July 24. Both applications will likely have pre-set times when presented to the BOCC, and all hearings before the Local Planning Agency and the Board of County Commissioners will be live-streamed on MCTV. ■

Athlete Layne Chesney launches Olympic-style recovery

Layne Chesney, a 14-year-old softball player from St. Lucie County, survived the initial third-degree burns that enveloped 95 percent of her body on New Year's Eve after a gas can exploded in her hands. The toughest journey for this young athlete lies ahead.

She's still in a Miami area hospital in an induced coma following cadaver skin grafts over her chest, abdomen, arms,



Layne Chesney, 14

legs and back, according to her family's Facebook posts. She has dozens of surgeries in front of her, months in physical therapy, and possibly another year in the hospital for this St. Lucie County teen. She also will face emotional hurdles that few can imagine.

Many Martin County residents know Layne because she played for the Jensen Beach Wildcats Extreme softball team

and was an outstanding athlete. She's learned to say a few words through her trachea, according to her mother, Leigh Chesney, and she took her first few steps right before the skin graft surgery. Friends of the Chesney family set up a GoFundMe page to assist them with the expenses incurred in caring for their daughter, and ask that residents donate generously. ■

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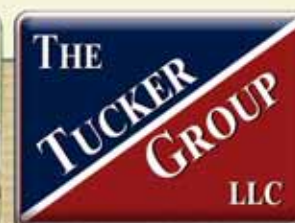
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Jury rules in favor of Lake Point after 8-day trial

Maggy Hurchalla, a former county commissioner and environmental activist, was found liable Wednesday, Feb. 14, for interfering with already-signed contracts. After eight days of testimony, the six-member Martin County Circuit Court jury awarded Lake Point Restoration \$4,391,708 – the exact amount an expert economist had determined the mining company was still owed for lost profits.

Hurchalla also will be required to pay Lake Point's court costs, which currently exceed \$1 million, according to company officials. Lake Point, however, did not seek reimbursement of its attorney fees.

Martin County and the South Florida Water Management District recently settled Lake Point's suit for breach of contract, leaving only Lake Point's case for tortious interference against Hurchalla going to trial. Martin County settled for a \$12 million payout in cash, and the SFWMD settled for concessions valued at \$6 million.

For the past five years, Hurchalla has sworn she was just an ordinary citizen voicing her concerns to Martin County commissioners that Lake Point had destroyed wetlands on its western Martin County property.

Lake Point denied her allegations, requesting a retraction and an apology. After she refused, Lake Point accused Hurchalla of using a misrepresentation of facts and improper methods to persuade three county commissioners to interfere in its state-permitted, 2,200-acre rock mine and water restoration project near Indiantown, and that her actions had damaged the mine's business.

After only 90 minutes of deliberation, the jury -- comprising ordinary Martin County residents, three men and three women -- agreed with Lake Point that Hurchalla should be held responsible for damaging the business. Hurchalla vowed to appeal.

Central to the case was Hurchalla's emails to commissioners' private email accounts to criticize the Lake Point project, which became the subject of another lawsuit Lake Point won for the county's violations of public records laws.

Commissioners Sarah Heard and Ed Fielding have been charged with two counts of criminal misdemeanors, and former commissioner Anne Scott has been charged with four counts of criminal misdemeanors for alleged violations of state public records laws.

Loeb had sought their private communications with Hurchalla to use as evidence revealing Hurchalla's motives.

The commissioners all signed sworn and notarized affidavits that they could



The view of the judge from the defense table with attorney Virginia Sherlock, on left, defendant Maggy Hurchalla, and attorney Dan Melzer, on right, was blocked by a giant TV screen that dominated the courtroom.

not answer Lake Point's questions in the Hurchalla trial without criminally incriminating themselves, thus they took Fifth Amendment protections to avoid testifying.

Lake Point was previously awarded \$502,000 for the county's violation of public records laws based on the alleged actions of those commissioners; however, the arbitration, the verdict, and the court ruling upholding the arbitrator's report were not permitted as evidence in Hurchalla's case.

In her closing arguments of the eight-day trial, Hurchalla's attorney, Virginia Sherlock, told jurors that the right to complain to government officials is protected speech.

"The 'right to gripe', to petition your government, is found right next to the right to free speech," Sherlock said.

In her emails, Hurchalla had told commissioners the Lake Point project had been fast-tracked with inadequate studies, was not following the county's rules, had no benefit to Martin County, and that all wetlands had been destroyed.

Trial testimony demonstrated, however, that the areas on a conceptual drawing and on a Google map Hurchalla claimed had been wetlands, that had "suddenly disappeared" -- now a parking lot on the Lake Point project -- were not actually wetlands. Environmental engineer Ed Weinberg, a soil scientist who investigated the area on foot, testified he took soil samples in 2009 and found the sites lacked wetland soil.

Hurchalla's expert witness, ecologist Greg Braun, disagreed, saying he had identified the missing wetlands by using Google Maps and aerial photos; however, he also admitted he had never walked the property, required for accurate evaluations.

Lake Point attorney Ethan Loeb sug-

gested to the jury that Hurchalla had an underlying motive for telling Braun not to visit Lake Point.

"Ms. Hurchalla and her attorneys visited," Loeb said. "He could have come with them. I suggest to you that the reason they did not want him to come out (to Lake Point) is that she knew he would have discovered that they were not wetlands."

Loeb listed numerous Martin County staff, state and federal scientists and engineers who had testified or had verified in writing that no wetlands had been destroyed at Lake Point.

"Ms. Hurchalla says all of these witnesses got it wrong," Loeb said, "and she is the only one who got it right."

Sherlock countered that Lake Point's Army Corps of Engineers permit stated that 60 acres of agricultural wetlands would be either excavated or filled to create the public works project.

"A wetland is a wetland," she said. "Maggy Hurchalla did not lie."

The permit specified "agricultural wetlands," however, which are not considered by Martin County rules or the state of Florida as a wetland to be delineated and protected. Loeb reminded jurors of Weinberg's explanation, comparing them to rice paddies. Although the soil is wet, he said, it is plowed regularly and farmed.

Loeb also stacked all the scientific studies that had been performed on the Lake Point water restoration project, and after dropping the last one on the desk, the stack was more than 12 inches tall. They verified that Lake Point would complement the effectiveness of the C-44 reservoir by around 20 to 25 percent, according to court testimony, and would remove some of the polluted water that currently impacts the St. Lucie River estuary.

The interlocal agreement between

Martin County and the SFWMD guaranteed Lake Point the right to mine rock or perform other revenue-generating activities for 20 years, after which the property would be donated to the state -- only if Lake Point obtained federal and state permits as a rock mine and Martin County rescinded the development order and vacated the unity of title on Lake Point Ranches, the equestrian housing development under construction when Lake Point purchased the property in 2008.

The commission majority directed county staff during a January 2013 commission meeting not to process Lake Point's applications, although Lake Point had been awarded state and federal permits to mine rock and had paid \$320 in application fees.

Without those, Lake Point's progress was blocked, Loeb said to the jury.

Since the property had not been transferred, the county ordered code enforcement action on Lake Point, not as a rock mine as it had been operating since February 2012, but as a housing development. A "cease and desist" order for work on the public works project was issued by county staff, which prompted Lake Point's lawsuit.

The commissioners' videotaped depositions, played for the jury, showed none of those targeted by Hurchalla had read the agreements, or the DEP and Corps permits, or had visited the Lake Point site. "They depended only on what one woman told them," Loeb said, pointing to Hurchalla.

Jurors also learned it was SFWMD that had asked Lake Point in 2010, during the major drought that caused West Palm Beach to nearly run out of water in 2011, if its project could be accelerated in order to possibly supply drinking water from the C-44 canal, convey it across their property to clean it, move it to the L-8 canal, then to the city's reservoir, according to court testimony.

An article in the Palm Beach Post about the proposed plan appeared to prompt Hurchalla's secret campaign with commissioners to end the Lake Point contract and to write a new one that she said "would benefit Martin County."

Only a handful of emails back and forth to Hurchalla were recovered. Loeb read aloud one email retrieved from Fielding's personal computer and signed Deep Rockpit, in which Hurchalla said: "Don't worry about the environment. Don't worry about the money. Just cancel the contract."

Loeb added, "Don't be tricked that this is about the environment." ■

--Barbara Clowdus

Editorial: One important lesson from Lake Point

If you are outraged or celebrating the verdict in Lake Point's case against Maggy Hurchalla, remember that the jury listened to both sides. Whether or not the ruling holds on appeal, a multitude of lessons still can be learned.

One in particular, however, may be overlooked, and that is the vital role that the county attorney contributes to our quality of life by keep litigation costs low in order to spend tax money elsewhere.

County Attorney Sarah Woods accounts directly to the Board of County Commissioners. Only they can hire or fire her.

Woods has demonstrated repeatedly during numerous commission meetings that when advising the commissioners, even when she knows they may want to take a different course, even though she knows her job could be at stake, she sticks to the law.

Had she been county attorney in 2012, we doubt seriously the county would have so easily continued down the path that led to the Lake Point lawsuit in the first place.

But she became county attorney in 2016 and inherited the Lake Point case after the county had already spent in excess of \$5 million of tax money defending themselves. She presented the cold, hard facts to the commissioners that led to a settlement, getting Martin

County taxpayers out from under a ruling for a possible \$66 million judgment for damages.

After Lake Point's settlement with the South Florida Water Management District, however, that damages claim was reduced to \$22 million. Lake Point settled for a mere – by comparison – \$12 million cash payout from Martin County.

Seeing the results now of Lake Point's winning case against Hurchalla, it's clear that Woods and the four commissioners who agreed with her advice to settle the Lake Point lawsuit, including Ed Fielding, saved Martin County taxpayers at least \$10 million – plus the millions going to outside litigators to defend the county's untenable position.

Do not think for one second that it was easy advice to give at the time. Martin County had been waging war against Lake Point for nearly five years. Reputations – and future elections – were at stake.

One commissioner wanted to go all the way to prove in a court of law that Lake Point had been wronged, and another commissioner wanted to go to court to prove that the county had been right. Either direction would result in costing taxpayers millions of dollars.

After careful research, Woods concluded that Martin County would be ill-advised to continue in court, likely for years, and would be acting more responsibly to taxpayers by agreeing to accept

Lake Point's settlement offer to end their case now.

County employees reported that they heard the verbal assault Woods suffered behind closed doors by a screaming Commissioner Sarah Heard, who maintained then – and still maintains today – that the county did not breach any contract pertaining to Lake Point. Hers was the sole vote to continue litigation.

In addition to ending the lawsuit, a settlement would mean that the county would no longer be paying Heard's personal attorney fees to defend her against the state's criminal misdemeanors that allege she violated state public records laws in the Lake Point case.

Just a few weeks later, after the county commission had approved the steps to seek a proposal from lending institutions for the \$12 million they did not have in the budget, Senior Assistant County Attorney Krista Storey was subjected to the same behind-closed-doors screaming tirade that Heard had launched against Woods previously, according to county employees.

Storey had discovered during a January county commission meeting that Heard had refused – and was still refusing – to sign a document required by lending institutions verifying that no Sunshine Laws had been violated by the commissioner pertaining to that loan.

No lending institution would loan

Martin County \$12 million without the sworn affidavit from each commissioner, according to the county's financial consultant, which Storey reported to the commission board.

When asked the consequences of Heard's refusal, Storey responded that Martin County likely would miss the deadline to pay Lake Point, as the county would have to search for other lending institutions with higher interest rates due to their perceived risk of a future lawsuit.

In addition, if Martin County missed the legal deadline for paying Lake Point, the county would lose its \$3 million deposit already paid on top of paying the higher interest rate and on top of the \$12 million settlement. The board adjourned briefly, and after Heard's tirade, Storey presented Heard's signed document that satisfied the consultant.

Krista Storey, like Sarah Woods, is an unsung Martin County hero, saving taxpayers millions in this one case alone. The scary fact is that they both are set to retire soon.

In their upcoming search, commissioners should remember one lesson from Lake Point: Find a county attorney like either Sarah Woods or Krista Storey willing to stand up for the truth – even if it's not what the commissioners want to hear – willing to say, “Don't go down this path.” ■

Letters to the Editor:

Commissioners not 'victims' of Lake Point

Nearly every day I find myself shaking my head at the number of good people who have been swayed by the online emails that portray County Commissioners Ed Fielding, Sarah Heard and former commissioner Anne Scott as “victims.” They are not victims. In fact, it is just the other way around. They duped and victimized Martin County taxpayers for four years, pretending they were looking out for the environment, when in fact they actually were looking out for themselves.

Now that they might be held accountable by both the court and the voters for their unscrupulous conduct, lack of transparency and fiscal irresponsibility that cost taxpayers millions of dollars, an extremist group has launched a finely choreographed assault on every person not in their camp, including the Circuit Court, the State Attorney's office, the County Commission majority, and even the 15 or so fellow citizens who served as Grand Jurors.

Remember, it was the Grand Jury who wrote the criminal indictments served on Mr. Fielding, Ms. Scott, on most recently against Ms. Heard. Their conduct already was scrutinized by a civil court, and they were found to be flagrantly violating the law, which resulted in Martin County taxpayers hav-

ing to pay the Lake Point rock mine more than \$500,000 in sanctions for commissioners who did not follow the state's public records laws. Now a Circuit Court jury has awarded Lake Point more than \$4 million in damages in its case against Maggy Hurchalla.

I applaud Commissioners Ed Ciampi, Harold Jenkins and Doug Smith for ending the taxpayer bloodbath by settling the Lake Point case before it went to court before a judge who had already urged Martin County to settle the case.

The settlement also stopped the flow of funds to outside attorneys, which had topped \$5 million, and ended the funding of Ms. Heard's and Mr. Fielding's private attorneys. This taxpayer is grateful for that.

*James Brown
Hobe Sound*

A witch hunt? It's likely not

Picture a scenario where legitimate requests for public records were made (in this case, Commissioners' emails). The records were not produced. A duly appointed arbitrator concluded that this lack of production was a little fishy, a State Attorney and, later, a Circuit Court Judge subpoenaed these records from different sources (commissioners' personal computers, the county's servers

and Yahoo servers). The records were produced in response to these subpoenas. The records were reviewed by a Grand Jury (that's people just like you and me, folks). The Grand Jury criminally indicted two sitting commissioners and one former commissioner for violating public records laws, and those indicted were arrested. Makes sense.

Then, from the dais during a January Martin County Commission meeting, one of the indicted and arrested Commissioners reveals, miraculously, that – contrary to the findings of the legal process outlined above – the indicted parties are pure as the driven snow and are victims of a “witch hunt.”

According to her, the entire scenario is the vile creation of three sitting Commissioners who were bought and paid for with campaign contributions. (So I guess it really wasn't their fault.)

This in spite of the fact that two of the so-called offending Commissioners weren't even on the commission when the underlying project was before them, and the other cast the same vote of approval as the indicted Commissioners. Mysteriously, none of those three Commissioners has been indicted for, accused of, or even implicated in connection with any violation of the law.

Beware of the perpetrator who casts him/herself as the “victim.” A false narrative, once created, is easy for folks to repeat it until it becomes, somehow, ac-

ceptable. In the words of Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts.”

Witch hunt? Maybe not.

*Dave Keiper
Stuart*

Not time for new school board building

At its December Board of Directors meeting, the Martin County Taxpayers Association voted to express its opinion on a new Administration Building for the School District. We believe that until and unless all schools are brought up to standard, i.e. Jensen Beach Elementary and others, and capacity is in place at all levels of our school, that it is premature to discuss building new facilities for the School administration. Student education and safety is, has always been and will always remain the top priority and only reason to even have a school administration building. We suggest that if there is a real space need that the School Board look at existing office space for lease or possible lease purchase. We also suggest that the School District look at sharing space with the County, eliminating duplication, and saving taxpayer dollars best spent on classrooms. Thank you!

*Thomas G. Kenny, III, President
Martin County Taxpayers Association*

Time to take serious look at doing our part



Melanie Peterson

Guest Columnist

The St. Lucie River and Estuary in Martin County and the Indian River Lagoon are replete with natural beauty and recreational opportunities to be enjoyed by residents and visitors year-round. Unless, of course, it was during one of the 184 times the Florida Department of Health had to issue "No Swimming" advisories for beaches and other swimming spots in Martin County since 2002. The culprit — unsafe levels of bacteria in the water that can make people sick. Shedding some light on the cause are two recent

peer-reviewed papers by Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute, which point to the source of this beach-closing bacteria as septic system pollution.

Special interest groups and activists from the Treasure Coast are quick to look west to Lake Okeechobee or to agriculture lands south of the lake to place blame for their water quality concerns. In reality, the contamination depriving the public of access to the St. Lucie Estuary and Indian River Lagoon is right in their own backyards — human waste contamination from septic tanks.

One of the South Florida Water Management District's core missions is to protect the health and safety of the environment and the public. That is why we have invested billions of dollars in restoring the water quality of the Everglades, protecting the northern estuaries and improving our flood control system that protects 8.1 million residents. We have

done, and are continuing to do, our part.

The time is long overdue for residents and communities to do their part by addressing the significant threat to public safety posed by septic system pollution. There are still thousands of septic tanks within the urban services boundary in Martin County. Section 381.00655 of Florida Statutes requires that property owners with septic tanks, even if they are functioning properly, hook up to nearby available sewer lines within a year of being notified by the utility. Local governments are not enforcing this law or encouraging property owners, who are unwittingly polluting their own waterways, to connect to the available sewer service. Even more outrageous, communities like Sewall's Point are now voluntarily choosing not to be part of the solution.

Meanwhile, these same communi-

ties, who are not investing a penny of their own money to stop polluting their own waterways, are asking others across South Florida to follow the law and spend billions of taxpayer dollars for projects to protect the St. Lucie Estuary. It is time for local governments to step up and do their part to address their local septic tanks that spew pollution into the estuary every day, making it unsafe for the public and harmful to plants and wildlife. When pointing fingers at the source of the problem, they need look no further than in their own backyards to make a difference for Florida's future and make the most immediate impact on the water quality challenges of the present. ■

*Melanie Peterson
South Florida Water
Management District
Governing Board Member*

In face of tragedy, Americans show their heart



Nancy Smith

Guest Columnist

The shooting deaths of 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland last Wednesday has inspired in its aftermath far more than a political outcry for a conversation on gun control.

It has exposed the sheer, incomparable heart of the American people.

Seems to me the vast outpouring of emotional expression and acts of goodness and compassion can easily be overlooked amid overwhelming grief and political rancor.

But have a look at a handful of the uplifting snippets that didn't make the big headlines after Valentine's Day yet still say so much about who we are and how we come together in our darkest hours:

-- The morning after the shooting, composer Neal Morse wrote and published an acoustic song and produced an impromptu video of himself performing it. It's entitled "What If It Was Your Child?" Go to YouTube and listen to the video.

-- Elementary school students from Bangor, Me. sent 17 teddy bears, one for each grave and each with a victim's name emblazoned on it. At last check, the teddies were still en route.

-- A group called Lutheran Church Charities (LCC) K-9 Comfort Dogs has deployed as many as 10 therapy or com-



fort dogs (all golden retrievers) to Florida from North Carolina, Tennessee and elsewhere to ease victims of Wednesday's shooting. It's not the first time this group of goldens has helped people recover from shooting tragedies. The dogs showed up on the one-year anniversary of the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando. And nearly 20 dogs traveled to Las Vegas after last fall's mass shooting. The Illinois-based charity has a "staff" of about 100 dogs -- all golden retrievers.

-- The women of Sigma Delta Tau and the FSU Student Government Association came together to host a vigil in honor of those affected by the tragedy. Marjory Stoneman Douglas High sends more than 50 students to FSU every year. Sophia Giannone, president of the sorority, explained the event was about "what the community can do to try to pick up the pieces."

-- The Florida Panthers wore special

patches with "MSD" etched on them and decals of the school's mascot on the back of their helmets. Before the game Saturday night against the Flames, Scotiabank Saddledome in Calgary observed a moment of silence. Before the team's next home game in

Sunrise, the Panthers have a blood drive for the victims scheduled.

-- Orlando's News 6 has partnered with the group Public Good to help people find reputable organizations pitching in to help. Says the TV station, it's part of a team effort with five organizations: Broward Health Foundation, Cure Violence, Everytown for Gun Safety, the National Center for the Victims of Crime, and the American Red Cross.

-- A group of businessmen in Des Moines will meet Tuesday to discuss sending a work crew -- strictly volunteers -- to Douglas High School to remove all trace of damage done by gun shots and repaint the areas of the building suspected shooter Nikolas Cruz affected. It will be an offer made to the School Board.

-- A parents organization in Dallas has started "Tell Us What We Can Do," a movement to grant the wishes of Parkland victims' families -- in fact, all fami-

lies of children whose lives were ended in a school by a terrorist. "We're just getting organized," group leader Kay Stropp told Sunshine State News. "We thought these families in Florida each would have different needs at this time, things that could help ease them through, knowing there are fellow Americans out here pulling for them. That's the role we want to fill."

Despite these and countless other outpourings of kindness, there is a difference in Americans' reaction to Parkland compared to other shooting tragedies.

It's determined outrage. It's anger and frustration that no gun-control law -- not even common-sense government interference -- was there to stop a determined shooter giving out all the signals he was capable of such an atrocious act.

This time, even some clergy are admitting prayer vigils and a nation's sympathy would not be enough.

Jim Kast-Keat, pastor of Riverside Church in New York, put it this way: "Too often we find ourselves calling ourselves into our holy huddles, filled with our thoughts and prayers, while the world goes to hell around us. As cheesy as it might sound, I want people to stop going to church and I want them to start being the church. I want them to stop praying with their thoughts and start praying with their bodies and their votes and their voices." ■

Nancy Smith, former editor of The Stuart News for 28 years, is the Executive Editor of Sunshine State News. Nancy Smith@nsmith@sunshinestatenews.com

Florida, our ever-changing, ever-challenging state



**Clay
Humphries**

*One Florida
Foundation*

Florida. The word that means “full of flowers” was chosen by Ponce de Leon as the name of our state when he first began exploring it in 1513. Along with de Leon came the first development, the first cattle of our nation, and Florida’s first mapping. Not much else really happened for some time, at least not much that pertains to the reasons I write this, not much until 1822, when Florida became part of an organized territory, followed in 1845 as the 27th U.S. state.

Florida was now being turned from swamps into drained, dry areas for growing business. Almost all of the drainage due to canals, ditches or dikes was done by people who were trying to make this state livable, not realizing the consequences that would later be thrust upon us so negatively and so dramatically. In trying to create our state, we accidentally started to destroy it.

1870s – Mostly inhabited in the 1840s only by native Americans, outlaws and a



The red area indicates the Miccosukee Tribe reservation. Alligator Alley crosses the perpetual easement granted by the state, and south of Tamiami Trail is another portion of their reservation. Both are strategic locations that monitor the amount of phosphorous in water that flows into Everglades National Park.

few brave settlers, it wasn’t until around the 1870s that our story really starts to develop as Florida’s first industry started to form: Agriculture, in the form of cattle and citrus, became the main source of income for most settlers. By 1872, citrus brought by Spaniards and wild cattle left behind

hundreds of years previously by explorers were recognized as a sustainable food source and income. Eighty percent of the settlers were farmers.

1920s – Other economic markets grew, including logging, mining, fishing, sponge diving and, of course, farming continued to flourish. By 1900 the population of Florida was 231,209. Henry Flagler launched his railroad in the 1920s, sparking the Florida land boom that also increased the population to 1,263,540 by 1925. These new settlers introduced real estate, tourism, trade banking, and even the retirement-destination business to the Florida economy.

In 1926 the “Miami Hurricane” slowed the land boom; however, it was the “Okeechobee Hurricane” in 1928, killing an estimated 3,000 inhabitants as it leveled the small farming towns of Belle Glade and Pahokee, that stopped it all together. The governor of Florida at the time reduced the “official” death count to 2,000 in an attempt to save the state’s tourism industry.

At the time, Florida residents who lived in Naples and other cities on the southwest coast had to travel north to Tampa, then across the state to Daytona, before traveling south to arrive eventually in Miami. To create an east-west connection, a 76-mile, two-lane road through the Everglades, the Tamiami Trail, was completed in 1928. During rainy season, it often was impassable due to the flow of water across the roadway.

1930s – The New Deal of 1933 brought federal programs, public work projects, financial reforms and regulation in response to the Great Depression, which ultimately changed the physical and environmental landscape of Florida. The WPA (Work Progress

Administration) built new roads and schools, as well as some of the first sewer systems in the state. Also, the first system of levees were built around Lake Okeechobee, almost completely enclosing the lake aside from a gap left to the south at Fisheating Creek. What is now the Herbert Hoover Dike originally started construction in 1932 as a safeguard to prevent any more mass casualties due to a storm. Despite the Great Depression, college students on spring break found Ft. Lauderdale.

1940s – Entering the decade, the population of Florida had reached 1.5 million. The addition of military bases, the interstate highway and air conditioning resulted in a 46 percent growth in population, pushing the state’s occupancy number to 2.8 million people by 1950. Florida was the 20th

most populated state in the country.

These new residents demanded that something be done about those pesky salt marsh mosquitoes, which reproduce in mud or wet sand. To achieve their goal, the state tackled the problem in what biologists refer to as “source reduction.” Large areas of coastal land were ditched or diked to remove the moist sand or mud. The result helped residents, and it also helped the livestock industry by reducing the stress on cattle. Mosquito swarms had caused weight loss and decreased milk production in cattle, at times even causing their deaths from blood loss or asphyxiation. The industry grew with cattle nearing 2 million. The warm climate offered year-round grazing for livestock, as well as year-round crop production for the farming industry.

In 1947, after years of drought, the state was deluged by rainfall averaging 100 inches along the lower east coast, almost twice the norm. Much of the ground was saturated when two hurricanes hit the state late in the year, and flooding throughout the region was devastating. Florida asked the federal government for help, and in 1948, the U.S. Congress adopted legislation creating the Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project, the largest civil works project in the country. Construction began the next year and continued over 20 years as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built the massive flood control plumbing system stretching from just south of Orlando to Florida Bay. In 1949, the Florida Legislature created the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District, the predecessor to the South Florida Water Management District, to manage the C&SF Project.

1950s – The Cuban revolution brought Fidel Castro to power in 1959,

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and the stream of Cuban immigrants became a torrent. The increase in people brought increased pressure on the Southern Florida Flood Control District (now the SFWMD) to stop south Florida's prevalent street and home flooding, which resulted in more drainage ditches. To keep the Tamiami Trail open to car traffic, engineers raised the roadbed, turning it into a dam, blocking the natural water flow into the Everglades, in spite of its huge culverts, which immediately plugged with muck.

1960s – More roads were built, including the two-lane Everglades Parkway, a toll road connecting Naples to near Ft. Lauderdale, which opened in 1968. During its four years of construction across the Everglades parallel to the Tamiami Trail, it was called the most controversial roadway ever built in Florida. The American Automobile Association dubbed it "Alligator Alley," deeming it useless to cars.

1970s – Florida's population had swollen to 6.791 million at the beginning of this decade, heavily concentrated now in Dade County, near the southern end of the Everglades basin. With the completion of Disney World in 1971, thousands more new residents and tourists flocked to the northern Everglades basin near Orlando.

1980s – The state's residents now numbered 9.747 million, with an estimated 250,000 college students visiting Ft. Lauderdale for spring break. A number of deadly high-speed crashes on the now heavily traveled Alligator Alley resulted in the road being made part of the I-75 extension, constructed between 1986 and 1992. The roadway was rebuilt as a four-lane interstate that incorporated many bridges and culverts in the design to allow natural Everglades water flow and wildlife to pass underneath – a lesson learned from construction of the Tamiami Trail. In 1982, because the land represented only a fraction of the Miccosukee tribe's ancestral territory, the government granted the tribe a perpetual lease on 189,000 acres on the adjacent water conservation area, also known as the Water Conservation Area 3A South. The deal called for the state to protect the land in its natural state, without pollution.

1990s – The population had increased to 13.030 million. Water quality rules for the Miccosukee's 127 square miles of land, adopted in 1997, set for the first time anywhere in the state, the now legal standard for phosphorus at 10 parts per billion. The Miccosukee also have formal legal standing – a position they had to sue to obtain – to step in if they see the state violating the consent decree. The citrus industry adopted Best Management Practices throughout Florida to control the amount of pesticides and fertilizer in stormwater runoff, which negatively impact the state's waterways with excess phosphorus and nitrogen.

2000s – The population reached 16 million, and by 2010, it had reached 18.84 million. More than 500,000

spring breakers visited our state in 2013, and by 2015, the state's population reached 20,271,272. The Florida population is 20,612,439 (latest US Census Bureau data), making Florida the third largest state in the US by population, after California and Texas.

That's a lot of people to feed. As the population grew, however, the percentage of the population who identify themselves as agricultural producers shrank.

CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

Over 80% of the agricultural producers in the state participate in Best Management Practices to help protect the environment, and soon BMPs will become mandatory for all of Florida's agricultural operations. In 2015, Florida ranked second in the nation for vegetable production and had a total of 9.45 million acres either farmed or ranched. Amazingly, with less and less land available to produce crops and cattle, Florida farmers and ranchers have become more efficient at these practices. Cattle still number just under 2 million (1,700,000 cows/ calves) and vegetables are being produced in larger volumes with less land to grow them. Though, that's not the big issue that agriculture faces today.

Public misconceptions about farming is the major challenge. We have become less and less connected to how our food is produced, reflected particularly in the agricultural job market. In 2017 the percentage of people engaged in agricultural production in the United States dropped from 2% to 1%. With this number falling, more and more food must be imported, leading to higher food costs, a greater green house gas consumption to transport food, greater exposure to unregulated pesticides used in other countries, and a lower number of jobs domestically.

Reach out to your local Farm Bureau Federation (not to be confused with Farm Bureau Insurance) and ask if any local ranchers or producers offer tours to the public, such as Kai-Kai Farms in Indiantown. It's the best way to understand how our food is produced, to understand the importance of locally grown food, and to see for yourself all the produce that can all too quickly become endangered. Human survival depends on protection of both our water AND our food sources.

Clayton Humphries, the 7th generation of his family to be involved in cattle in Florida, currently manages his family's 1800-acre ranch in St. Lucie County, where he practices wildlife management programs, improves cow-calf operations and is expanding its organic farming operations. Clay, recently appointed to the board of One Florida Foundation, also serves on the St. Lucie County Farm Bureau board and is the president of its Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee. Clay is passionate about environmental management and politics, as well as working with his local 4-H and Future Farmers of America.

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Calling all citizens to support two major environmental bills



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One Florida Foundation

With the 2018 legislative session well under way, it's important to support bills brought forward by our elected officials that will have a positive impact on our waterways. House Bill 339 and its companion bill Senate Bill 786, are two such bills. Filed in October by Representative Gayle Harrell, Representative Rene Plasencia, and Senator Debbie Mayfield, these bills will fund important projects dedicated to the conservation and management of the Indian River Lagoon.

Specifically, these bills ensure that \$50 million annually will be appropriated for the Land Acquisition Trust Fund created by Amendment 1 in 2014. From the Land Acquisition Trust Fund, the Department of Environmental Protection will use the funds to create grants for projects included in the Indian River Lagoon Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan, coordinating with either the St. Johns River or the South Florida water management districts, depending on the location of the proposed project.

Preference will be given for projects such as ecosystem monitoring and habitat restoration; management and reduction of stormwater, freshwater, and agricultural discharges; and septic system conversion to central sewer, provided there is a 50-percent local match from a city or county along the lagoon.

Additionally, the Department of Environmental Protection would be required to submit a report detailing the funded projects each year to the Governor, President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House. The measure will ensure accountability for how our tax dollars are spent.

If we want to see water quality improved in the Indian River lagoon, we are going to have to finish projects that help! We must reduce pollution and nutrient inputs to our estuaries and the tributaries that feed them. We know that leaky septic systems and aged, overwhelmed sewers are a prominent source of nitrogen and phosphorous pollution along the Indian River Lagoon. The state must partner with each community along the lagoon to improve our sewage infrastructure.

We must also reduce freshwater inputs to keep salinity balanced for plants and animals living in the lagoon. These projects might come in the form of

stormwater retention areas, or cleansing marshes prior to runoff reaching the lagoon. We need projects that restore water quality, healthy sediments, and promote natural habitats where fish can spawn, native plants can spread, and biodiversity can thrive. These projects might come in the form of muck removal and replanting of seagrasses. We must also rebuild our shorelines with oyster reef restoration projects and living shoreline projects to promote a healthy lifecycle for the lagoon.

Much work remains to improve our water quality in the Indian River Lagoon, and each project comes with a price tag. This proposed legislation would help by ensuring dedicated funding on an annual basis to be used specifically for the Indian River Lagoon. To read more about the work this legislation would fund, go to:

https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/ccmp_update_2008_final.pdf

To learn more about the work of the Indian River Lagoon National Estuaries Program, go to:

http://www.irlcouncil.com/uploads/7/9/2/7/79276172/2016annrept_final.pdf

Among the pressing issues facing Florida now is not only paying for the impact of Hurricane Irma, but how to better prepare for the next hurricane. Improving our sewage infrastructure so we do not pollute our estuaries and ocean and creating living shorelines to withstand hurricane force winds and combat erosion would go a long way in making our state more resilient.

House Bill 339 was referred to the Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee, the Natural Resources and Public Lands Subcommittee, and Appropriations Committee for review. Senate Bill 786 was referred to Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee, the Appropriations Subcommittee on the Environment and Natural Resources, and to Appropriations.

Sending an email in support of these bills to each of the members of these committees would be helpful. You can find their information at:

<https://www.flsenate.gov/Committees>

And at: <https://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Committees/committees.aspx>

Additionally, if you are in Tallahassee this legislative session, tell your Senators and Representatives that you support House Bill 339 and Senate Bill 786. ■

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

EAA reservoir meeting deadlines, expectations

Depending on whom you ask, progress on the Everglades Agricultural Area southern reservoir is exceeding all of its government-mandated goals to reduce Lake Okeechobee discharges to the estuaries – or it's falling way short of expectations.

The staff of the South Florida Water Management District, after considering five options, presented its final choice to the Governing Board on Feb. 8, which will vote on that choice in March, just prior to the SFWMD's final report to the Army Corps of Engineers' Assistant Secretary for Civil Works.

The corps requires the district to submit a Post Authorization Change Report as the next increment of the congressionally approved Central Everglades Planning Project (CERP), which had included the EAA reservoir in its original plans and authorizing \$400 million for its construction.

The proposed 10,100-acre, 23 foot-deep reservoir with a 6,500-acre stormwater treatment area provides good benefits, according to Matt Morrison, the district's head of federal policy and coordination. As proposed, the reservoir, which combined elements of the previous plans, will cut the volume of Lake O discharges by about 56 percent and the number of discharge events by 63 percent, as long as the other CERP components also are constructed.

The project will send more than 120 billion gallons of water (300,000 acre-feet) south to the Everglades to meet a directive of the 2017 state law to cut discharges to both the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers and increase flows of clean water to the Everglades National Park and Florida Bay.

Senate President Joe Negron, who authored Senate Bill 10 to construct the reservoir with state funding (with the federal match coming at a later date) said he was pleased with the SFWMD's progress.

"I am grateful that the District is keeping up the momentum and meeting deadlines in a timely manner," he said in a Feb. 8 press release.

Critics of the SFWMD proposal, including the Everglades Foundation and many of the environmental organizations it sponsors, question the small size of the reservoir and whether it actually has sufficient area to clean the water adequately.

They have called for the state to terminate its 10-year leases on state-owned land near the proposed site in order to expand the reservoir's footprint to build a much larger reservoir and larger STAs, which also would push the cost to more than \$2 billion, more than is currently approved.

THE ALTERNATIVE PLAN

The district's proposed "Alternative

C240A" would meet state water quality standards, Morrison said, by utilizing a new 6,500-acre Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) in combination with existing STAs and Flow Equalization Basins (FEBs), such as the A-1 FEB.

"We have said throughout this process that we will work with willing sellers through purchases or swaps to acquire adjacent land within the project's footprint," said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Dan O'Keefe. "By identifying, working with and subsequently closing on a deal with this willing seller to purchase their parcel, the District can use that land as part of the cost-effective and implementable plan that will benefit the northern estuaries and the entire Everglades."

The SFWMD Governing Board approved at its Feb. 8 meeting the purchase of 9.97 acres from a private owner west of the state-owned A-2 parcel in the EAA – the first "willing seller" who agreed to a sale of private farmland. This is one of two parcels specifically identified by Senate Bill 10 for purchase.

District officials are in the process of negotiations with the owner of additional lands within the proposed project footprint, which were specifically identified in state law, according to a SFWMD press release.

In addition to providing an average annual flow that exceeds the original goals of the Central Everglades Planning Project, the approved project will cost approximately \$1.34 billion, under the \$1.8 billion cost estimate approved by the Legislature in 2017.

The state legislation calls for the district and the Army Corps of Engineers to split the cost 50-50, and assumes that the \$400 million previously approved for the reservoir in the 2000 CERP plan will be part of the federal funding, although to date, the federal government has funded only about one-third of CERP's costs.

The original plan for CERP was that it would be completed by 2015. Of its approved 68 projects, only one has been completed due to the lack of federal funding.

As part of the "optimization" of the new reservoir plan, district engineers made it "multipurpose," meaning water would be available to area farms, another point of contention with environmentalists, who want all the water to be directed to the Everglades.

A timeline established by the state law calls for the reservoir project to be submitted to Congress late this year and for federal approval by the end of 2019. The project can be designed and built in seven to nine years, according to SFWMD Executive Director Ernie Marks.

For modeling data and more information, visit www.sfwmd.gov/eaareservoir. ■

--Barbara Cloudus

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3-D printing: Take an idea and turn it into reality

Anthony DiChiara makes dreams come true. He turns ideas – even if just a sketch – into a three-dimensional object you can hold, touch, and see in real time.

His company, 3D-Printing-Expert.com of Stuart, specializes in just such a concept, which fulfills the growing demand by inventors, investors and manufacturers to provide a cost-effective, real look at a proposed product.

“We help deliver 3D prototypes to companies and inventors,” DiChiara said. “It gives the inventor an idea ahead of time, before manufacturing, to see what their product is going to look like and how it will function.”

It's an opportunity to adjust the design, if necessary, because an idea on paper does not always function as first anticipated. In that case, the cost savings to the inventor is significant, since manufacturing molds alone can cost thousands of dollars, according to DiChiara.

The path from idea to final product starts with a client's sketch, from which DiChiara creates a 3D design for client approval. DiChiara then uses the approved design to create a Computer Assisted Design (CAD) to send as a prototype for manufacturers in the United States, Asia or China to get production quotes.



Anthony DiChiara stands next to a poster that lists all the services his 3-D printing company provides.

The three-dimensional object is created when a computer sends the digital configurations of the CAD design to a special type of printer, which outputs the design, layer upon layer, to form a real object on a flat-bed build platform.

Liquid plastic, rubber – or even metal – is then pumped by high pressure into the high-heat cavity, where it cools and hardens to the configuration of the new part. The products DiChiara created with this process includes fishing gear, a high-tech tape measure, an electronic monitoring bracelet, boat engine hoses, flip flops, an emergency room breathing device, bowl place mats for children, a high-end cooler and a water purification machine.

Local “dreamers” who brought their ideas to life at 3D-Printing-Expert Inc., include Deborah Farnung, who designed “Rippleball,” a swimming pool game with net stands and other game components, and a hand-held herb processor and scale called “The Gale,” invented by Josh Camitta.

One of the more unusual products that DiChiara talks about is a high-tech horseshoe for professional races, which allows the horse to run faster while maintaining control.

“Mud usually gets caught in a lot of horseshoes,” DiChiara explains, “so this one throws the mud off fast as the horse runs.”

Founded by DiChiara in 2013, the Stuart-based company will provide CAD (computer-assisted design) and 3D rapid prototyping individually, as well.

Their range of services has broadened their client base beyond Stuart to the Treasure Coast, Palm Beach County, and Florida. Even a few clients outside of the state depend on 3D-Printing-Expert, which DiChiara attributes to his personal service and exceptional value his company provides.

When DiChiara launched his company, his focus was solely on health products, he said, prompting its original name, Health Xtra. As requests mounted for designing invention prototypes, he changed the name and added services including product design, manufacturing drawings, product licensing, product consulting, and manufacturing pricing.

DiChiara recently took his business one step further by adding a 3D scanner, which can help a client visualize and develop his or her own 3D CAD design by scanning a current product. The design is manipulated to attain the client's vision for an altogether new invention.

“A 3D scan can streamline the process,” DiChiara said, “getting a client's invention to a real product and on to the manufacturer even faster, and that's our ultimate goal.”

For more information go to www.3d-printing-expert.com

--Jeff Alexander

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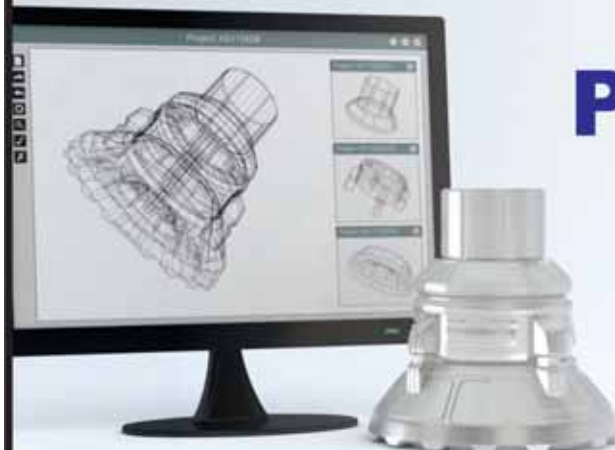
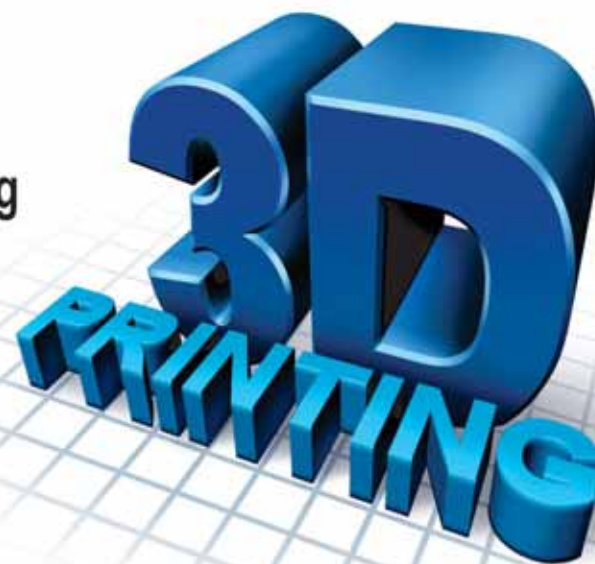
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Flowing Rivers of Faith

A cultural dialogue between art and faith in Hobe Sound

Art and faith have been interwoven for eons of times, for their unity is archetypal. In fact, there was no separation between the two. Would it be possible to draw a demarcation line between the religious and art components of the world's greatest cathedrals, as St. Peter's Basilica, Hagia Sophia, or to split Bach's polyphonic music into secular and spiritual ingredients? Not at all. These awe-inspiring creations are monumentally whole.

In them, an invisible realm of the Divine is translated into a sublime language of art and music. The one doesn't exist without the other.

Hobe Sound artist, concert pianist and activist Suzanne Briley, with her rich English background, tossed an ambitious idea to bring to Hobe Sound the classical synergy between art and faith, inspired by English culture and music.

"I always admired the Three Choir Festival in England," she says, "which is the oldest non-competitive classical music festival in the world. In 2015 it celebrated its 300th anniversary, having become an organic part of English cultural life. It would be wonderful to raise awareness of the connectedness between faith and art in our community as well."

Naturally, a culture doesn't occur overnight. Someone needs to start the ball rolling. The idea found a fertile ground in the First United Methodist Church's senior pastor, Rev. Dr. Marta Burke, started breathing life into it by reaching out to local churches for sponsorship and cooperation, which she received generously. After creative brainstorming a beautiful concept emerged: The Flowing Rivers of Faith.

Deeply intelligent, graceful and charismatic, Pastor Marta believes that the project has a plenty of potential to grow into something bigger than just an annual event.

"I am really excited with our ecumenical quest," she says. "Bringing together the diverse Faith communities of Hobe Sound through the universal language of beauty allows us to truly appreciate the divine, expressed gracefully in visual arts and music."

"When faith and the arts initiate a dialogue," she adds, "they empower each other and, moreover, they uplift the spirit and enrich our lives."

South Florida may not have the oldest festivals in the world, but it undoubtedly boasts collectives of talented artists and musicians who agreed to perform and participate in the Flowing Rivers of Faith Weekend, Feb. 23-25, at three Hobe Sound churches.

On Feb. 23, the Chapel Choir of Hobe Sound Bible College will feature special



The Flowing Rivers of Faith weekend will culminate Sunday, Feb. 25, at the First United Methodist Church of Hobe Sound, 10100 SE Federal Hwy, from 3 to 6 pm. The festival is free and will include an Art Extravaganza in the church courtyard, special art activities for children, music performances in the sanctuary, and the unveiling of the 23rd Hobe Sound mural by Nadia Utto.

guests, The the three Heath brothers, Nicholas, Clayton, & Christian. Heath Brothers are a band of gifted young singers with powerful voices, stunning harmony, and elaborate acapella arrangements.

Internationally recognized The Ebony Choral of the Palm Beaches represent remarkable singers who perform with equal virtuosity – gospel music, Negro spirituals and classical compositions, having participated in numerous musical festivals worldwide. In fact, at the International Festival of Choral Music in Verona, Italy, they received a Second Place Silver Award.

Landmark Arts mural #23 by Nadia Utto, dedicated to the event, will be unveiled Feb. 25 in the courtyard of the Methodist Church. Young members of the student ministry, "Authentik Youth," will assist Utto in completing the mural.

Its subject matter is abstract and yet very suggestive: a river of colorful ribbons, flowing together in unity.

"The flowing river of ribbons symbolizes our creative essence," Utto says, "being the fabric of our existence on all levels."

At the same venue various local artists will showcase their work as part of the Sunday Arts Extravaganza sprinkled with music. Special programs will be offered to children, like Rock Painting among some other art-related pastimes.

Dona Omanoff, photographer and graphic designer, used a blue segment of the mural painting to design a logo for the Flowing Rivers of Faith Weekend to underscore the unity between art and faith.

"What I like about this logo," Omanoff says, "is that . . . it suggests continuance and ongoing development. I used it as a letterhead in our press release to emphasize the message".

The great German poet Goethe once wrote: "A man should hear a little music, read a little poetry, and see a fine picture every day of his life, in order that worldly cares may not obliterate the sense of the beautiful which God has implanted in the human soul."

It takes just a little music and art to turn a beautifully orchestrated train of art events into a cultural tradition. ■

--Maya Ellenson

Special to Martin County Currents

Flowing Rivers of Faith Weekend

All events are free and everyone is welcome.

February 23, 24 & 25

Friday 6 to 9 pm

Hobe Sound Bible Church

11298 SE Gomez Avenue

Chapel Choir with special guests:
The Heath Brothers

Saturday 7 to 9 pm

Saint Christopher Catholic Church

12001 S.E. Federal Hwy

The Ebony Chorale of the Palm Beaches

Sunday, Feb. 25, 3 to 6 pm

First United Methodist Church

10100 SE Federal Hwy

"Art Extravaganza" in Courtyard
Music Performances & Special
Guests in the Sanctuary
Unveiling of the 23rd HOBE SOUND
MURAL
Art Activities for Children

Hobe Sound Chamber moves into new home



PHOTO: BARBARA CLOWDUS.

of the building, across from the Winn-Dixie Plaza. Don't worry, an elevator gives visitors easy access. The office has multiple rooms including the John Fielier Memorial Meeting room, available to members for conference meetings that will easily fit 20 attendees around its center table. For more information, contact the Chamber at 772-546-4724. Welcoming visitors are, from left, Jane Tierney, Ike Crumpler, Executive Director Angela Hoffman, Mary Palczar, Jan Otten, James Brown, Linda and Eric Wolfe.



The Hobe Sound Chamber of Commerce can finally boast of having plenty of elbow room now with a new home in the Hobe Sound Centre building on Bridge Road. Formerly known as the Manfusco building, the chamber moved from Dixie Highway to the second floor

Hurdles to overcome for the Town of Hobe Sound

One of the major challenges facing the group hoping to incorporate a new Town of Hobe Sound is apathy. The final decision will be in the hands of only those residents living within the proposed boundaries to vote either yes or no, and, frankly, many do not understand the sense of urgency.

Thus, to be successful in their August vote, organizers may need to take a more contentious stand than just “Elect your neighbor, not a stranger.”

Thus far, however, they have been polite, making a point to say little about the previous commission's actions that affected Hobe Sound so directly.

Make no mistake about it, though. Hobe Sound got the heel of what many consider now a corrupt county government willing even to break the law to further their own agenda.

“We had hopes of creating a positive working relationship between the county and the new town,” said Mike Ennis, president of the Protecting Hobe Sound organization, which now numbers 30 Hobe Sound residents. “We chose to take the high road and did not criticize or complain about the commission's actions toward Hobe Sound.”

The Hobe Sound incorporation organization, which launched three years ago with five members, meets regularly and has held more than 35 informational meetings for the public thus far. It also has an active Facebook page, in addition to a website that posts the feasibility study, the charter and maps – but no rallying cry, as did Indiantown.

Its residents voted in November to incorporate as the Village of Indiantown.

THE INDIANTOWN DIFFERENCE

“When Indiantown went to the legislature, the entire Indiantown community was upset at the loss of EcoGen,” Ennis said. The biomass facility would have provided new jobs to Indiantown residents and a new crop for farmers at a time that Indiantown had suffered a loss of more than 300 jobs, primarily due to the decline of the citrus industry.

“For them, the issue was economics, pure and simple,” he said. “Indiantown had been held back economically by the county's policies, and they could show that.”

Indiantown's population, although less than four percent of the county's, provides around 16 percent of the county's tax revenues. By keeping a portion of that tax revenue instead of send-

ing it all to the county, coupled with the state's revenue-sharing funds, the Village of Indiantown's feasibility study showed that it could easily be self-sustaining.

Hobe Sound's feasibility study, currently being examined by the state legislature, also shows that it will be easily self-sustaining, based on an annual tax base that exceeds \$1 billion in taxable property. Although, unlike Indiantown, it has no manufacturing firms, the new Town of Hobe Sound also would have a surplus beginning with the first year and a projected \$10 million surplus at the end of five years – without imposing a single new tax of its own, Ennis said.

They can do it by not creating its own police, fire and road departments. The county will continue to provide those services with taxes already being paid by Hobe Sound residents.

Being feasible, however, seems not enough reason for many to take the leap to having more control, so perhaps it's time to talk about some of the other issues the town has faced.

MORE THAN JUST FEASIBLE

Currently, two sitting Martin County commissioners, Ed Fielding and Sarah Heard, and Hobe Sound's previous district commissioner, Anne Scott, are all under multiple criminal indictments for violating the state's ethics and Sunshine laws -- essentially abusing their power as commissioners.

A civil court has already ruled that the county violated the Sunshine and public records laws as a direct result of the actions of Heard, Fielding and Scott and ordered the county to pay \$502,000 in sanctions..

Their determination to force a zero-growth policy in Hobe Sound has been particularly damaging to its small businesses and to its residents. Although never previously a town, the 100-year-old downtown area was laid out decades ago and still has undeveloped lots, even as new shopping centers and strip malls spring up outside of their town, threatening to undermine their desire to ever have a vibrant, healthy downtown with unique restaurants, public gathering places and small shops.

The commission majority went so far as to threaten a family-owned restaurant, Flash Beach Grille, with a \$1,000-a-day code enforcement fine for not following a Preserve Area Management Plan on their property, which the county had never recorded, thus preventing their expansion.

The restaurant owner requested a waiver for the PAMP since the county had not recorded it. The 40-foot easement was in a commercial area, bound on both sides by parking lots, stripped of all native vegetation and was not contiguous to any other natural area.

The county commission majority of Fielding, Heard and Scott denied their request. A lawsuit was required to force the county to lift the fine, to allow construction of its tiki roof and to tie all PAMPs to property deeds in the future so property owners could not be blindsided.

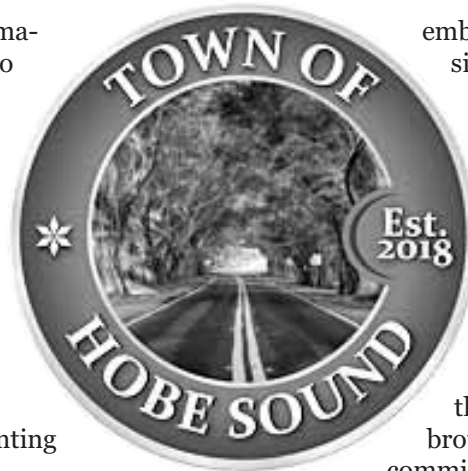
The same commission majority refused to reimburse Hobe Sound more than \$1 million in TIF (Tax Incremental Financing) funds – paid by Hobe Sound residents to be spent only in Hobe Sound – which had been misappropriated to the county's general fund as the result of the county's property appraiser's error. It was never reimbursed and was barely even acknowledged.

They killed a fully funded CRA project that Hobe Sound had been planning for 14 years, which included a retrofit of the town's main corridor to improve pedestrian, auto and bicycle safety. It also would have strengthened its small-town businesses, attracted others and helped prevent sprawl.

They also denied a mandatory rezoning of a project on US 1 entering Hobe Sound that met county code and exceeded the requirements of the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan. To settle the Bert Harris lawsuit that followed their unlawful action, they violated eight of their own Comp Plan rules – writing amendments specific to this one development behind closed doors with no public hearing – to allow The Sheridan assisted living facility to take the place of town homes, leveling the natural buffer of old pine-tree growth that would have shielded it from US 1.

IT'S ABOUT PROTECTION

Since Hobe Sound residents ousted their district representative in 2016 and have



embraced a new commission majority, they may now face yet another threat – retaliation.

“We had felt it was important to start our town out on the right foot with the county,” said Ennis, as to why no one rallied to raise awareness of these and other issues brought on by a county commission out of touch with the residents of Hobe Sound.

“Although some actions by some county commissioners had tipped the scale for us to proceed with incorporation,” Ennis added, “our primary motivation was to preserve and protect Hobe Sound. It still is – more now than ever.”

For more information, go to www.townofhobesound.com. Stay updated at the Town of Hobe Sound Facebook page, as well. ■

--Barbara Clowdus

Hobe Sound Events

3RD SATURDAY GOURMET TRUCK EVENT

Saturday, Feb. 17
5 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Near Juno Shoe Girl
11766 SE Dixie Highway

Join your friends and neighbors to experience great food, craft vendors and good music in downtown Hobe Sound. TGourmet food trucks offer a wide variety of delicious cuisine as you share an evening under the stars with lots of Hobe Sound Locals. The shops and art gallery along Dixie Highway will be open to welcome you, and it's a great family night out together with the kids!

HOBE SOUND CHAMBER BREAKFAST

Thursday, March
8 a.m. to 8:15 a.m.
Hobe Sound Bible College/Academy
11295 SE Gomez Avenue
Hobe Sound, FL 33455

Once again breakfast will be served at the Hobe Sound Bible College, Schmul Dining Center. Sponsored by Dr. Lisa Grassam Smith, Grassam Spine and Wellness Center, with guest speaker Bob Perry, Voices for Children

Amazing Things a testament to perseverance



**Maya
Ellenson**
*Art
Kaleidoscope*

It's a beautiful morning in Hobe Sound. The Winn-Dixie Plaza is dipped in sunlight. Visitors can

hardly miss an eye-catching mural with a nature's scene on the building where the Village Bike Shop on Bridge Road can be found.

In the sunshine, the mural looks ablaze. There's something magical about wall paintings, for they always atone for architectural monotony.

As I'm musing over the beauty surrounding me, a text pops onto my phone's screen.

"I got the new building. We're in," says Anne Leavitt's message.

"Where exactly?" I texted her back.

"On SE Bridge Road. Upstairs from Village Bike Shop," she responded.

"Wow, I am right here," I replied. "Can we talk?"

I felt deeply thrilled. Finally, after almost a year of being "homeless," the Amazing Things home of the Florida Chapter of Children Across America, a non-profit and all-volunteer organization established by Leavitt a few years ago, got a new home in Hobe Sound.

"Don't you find it pretty auspicious that you moved to another building, discernible for a beautiful mural on it?" I asked Anne as we met for a chat.

"Yes, I do," replied Anne with a smile that glowed, as my thoughts drifted briefly to the beautiful Amazing Things rainbow mural painted across her former location that spilled onto the parking lot.

She showed me around the building's space that will offer several rooms for a diversity of activities.

"I am really happy with this new location," she said. "As parents shop around downtown Hobe Sound, their kids can learn something new in our center. Here we'll have space for dances and yoga, and in this room we'll have classes for reading, art and guitar for both kids and adults.

"Now, as a community center, we boast enough room for potluck lunches and plenty of fun," she added. "As always, we're all-inclusive and welcome anyone who wants to join and help us in any way. Togetherness, that's what makes us thrive."

Art albums were already perched on the shelves when I got my first tour as Anne and her crew were getting ready for their opening in January.

My path first crossed Anne Leavitt's ambitious vision when I was writing



Director Anne Leavitt stands proudly in front of the Amazing Things sign for her new location on Bridge Road in Hobe Sound.

about the rainbow mural being painted by Nadia Utto on the side of Amazing Things when the business was on Federal Highway. Of course, murals cannot relocate, but ideas seep through the walls. They're like a movable feast, I think. You take them with you, no matter where you go.

"Sadly, we could not bring the mural of a rainbow with us, but you're right," Anne told me. "Rainbows

have always been instilled with rich symbolism. For us, a rainbow epitomizes the whole philosophy of

'Amazing Things.' Every child is endowed with innate aptitudes. In the beginning they're only

primal seeds, but to let it all evolve, children, just like rainbows, need a proper atmosphere."

Leavitt's mission is to create a "fertile and loving ambience" for educating and developing a child.

"I want to encourage our children to become the best versions of themselves," she added.

Leavitt gave up the previous location due to rising rent and costs, however, she continued Amazing Things by offering yoga, reading dancing, art and music in small classes at various locations.

In addition to what she considers those "basic" classes, Leavitt now will offer social education to help children make right choices, helping them to understand the importance of wellness, soberness and good education as they tackle everyday challenges.

"The program is called 'Hooked,'" she added, "helping to overcome obstacles kids experience daily."

She also will teach her students how to debate, telling me that the ability to communicate clearly with others is vital for success.

Although when I met Leavitt last March, when she needed to move from the big building on US 1 without knowing where she was going, I was impressed by

her determination. She told me, "I still have a key," and I found her enthusiasm contagious. She seemed much more than a manager. She possessed all the traits of a genuine leader and an inspiring presence, so I asked her secret.

"Perseverance and clarity of vision," she responded immediately. "These are two magnetic powers that allow me to translate ideas into reality. And I am not

alone. We're artists collective, surrounded by a loving and supportive community."

She expressed profuse thanks to those in the community who had helped Amazing Things, either financially or professionally, particularly the bands who played jazz for Bluesy Tuesdays at Harry and the Natives.

"Music for a good cause generates substantial tips for a right cause," she said.

Prominent American author Deepak Chopra once observed: "I think we need the feminine qualities of leadership, which include attention to aesthetics and the environment, nurturing, affection, intuition and the qualities that make people feel safe and cared for."

To me, Anne Leavitt personifies exactly this gentle, yet powerful, mode of leadership. And just like murals that stir something deep within ourselves, what Anne Leavitt offers at Amazing Things touches and exalts a child's soul.

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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AS WE PRACTICE THE 8 FORMS OF TAI CHI
MOVING FOR BETTER BALANCE**

Tai Chi
UNDER THE TREES

Every Saturday • 8am

Zeus Park • East side

Hobe Sound

Just south of St. Christopher Catholic Church off of US 1, turn at the light just south of Bridge Road. The park is an open area. We will be on the east side, under the trees in the breeze.



Tips on fishing at the edge of polluted waters



**Rich
Vidulich**
*Pompano
Reporter*

The newest chapter in my book, "Fishing the Borders of Pollution," is the polite answer to our enviro-political plates. As long as we can eat it, and it doesn't have lesions, should we assume it's safe? Will our restaurants become the "first responders" who reveal unhealthy fish and crustaceans on our plates?

Okay, those are rhetorical questions, I know. So let's just be happy and catch pomps, mackerel and bluefish in great abundance, and don't overlook the boney-colored water, considering it as dirty water.

I've observed others and capitalized myself recently by capturing the handsome "silvers" in admittedly compromised saline H₂O. Previous expectations are suppressed, and the pollution overlookance (new word) may be the future we must employ, recognizing the proposition that the estuary has



Nelson Paula read the waters and hauled in a 4.5 pound delectable Carolina pompano on a big white float!

low- and high-definition when it comes to answering the question, "where the hell do I fish?"

Successful interior anglers have learned the lagoon's optics and decipher the water's clues.

So how do I know without casting out where to fish? Do I bucket jump the beaches where they were catching according to two-day-old reports?

Or do I learn how to recognize beaches north and south where the pomps have relocated to find new food sources? Do I recognize the ocean is too clean and spike in proximal to reef structures? Maybe one should consider (as so many have) that white and white/pink floats are highly proficient in clear water?

Do consider wind changes, as I have so often expressed in previous winter columns. A pre-frontal theory is an idea that should not be overlooked. Hutchinson Island catches increase just hours before the gray gale bands arrive, and then what?



My favorite Christmas present was a custom-made pompano tree topper from a Virginia friend who knows me well!

Most anglers leave the beaches and await the polluted uprising. Mature pros, however, head to the northern regions of the island and await the arrival of schooled-up silver ghosts! The success of fishing the migratory feed is dependable, but is also highly dependent on barometer, moon positioning and wind force.

For me the number-one visual is blue water – a 50- to 100-yard water color change. Aqua white-creamy water is what Prince chimed about when he declared, "She's got the look!" (Wow, a solid year for the Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame fishing analogy! Do I get fish points folks?)

And the bait of choice? With the extreme local shortages of sand fleas due to compacted, renourished beaches that can't harbor sea life, what is the answer? First and foremost, it's blanched sand fleas. The pompano are very large, so if in your mind the flea is too large, no worries. Pomps extend their mouths to gather these big baits. Best size is one inch. Got half-inch? Put two on the hook.

The smaller the hook, the less of the shiny shaft will show underwater. Silver will attract Spanish mackerel cutoffs on the retrieve. Don't forget that floats are buoyant and jig fish to the bait.

The key food source off the beach

are calico crabs. They are abundant. Pomps, snook, redfish and tarpon love crabs, but the crabs will eat your bait quickly. You'll need to bait up every five minutes.

So, go on. Get out there. Don't waste the New Year! ■

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.

Floridians Fighting Falls Gala raised funds, friends to prevent falls

The Center for Disease Control lists falls at the very top of their list for risk of death and/or disability for seniors. They are the primary cause of death in persons over 65 years of age.

A fundraiser for the leading local organization battling that statistic, Floridians Fighting Falls, was held

Thursday, Feb. 8, at the Pittenger Center at St. Mary's Episcopal Church on Ocean Blvd. in Stuart.

A 501(c)(3) charitable organization, FFF is dedicated to helping seniors avoid and reduce the dangers of falls by working with individuals and groups to reduce that risk. Among its many programs is "Tai Chi Moving for Better Balance," a referral service to agencies that can offer assistance to at-risk seniors, seminars, and educational materials.

Their outreach and educational efforts reach hundreds of local seniors and their families.

The Second Annual Gala FFF Fundraiser Dinner and Auction, was sponsored by Nightingale Private

Care, Martin Health System and others, and included a gourmet buffet dinner with music by emcee "D.J. Jef" of Dancensound Music Service. The auction included a skin care package by Skin Serenity Spa of Hobe Sound and a phenomenal golf trip to St. Andrews in Scotland. Yes. Scotland.

For more information, about FFF, go to www.fightingfalls.com. ■

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iTown taking the steep path from referendum to village

Shortly after the euphoria settled following the vote that created the Village of Indiantown, the 30 or organizers met to celebrate. Among themselves, they asked, what's next?

The president of the Indiantown Independence working group, Scott Watson, owner of Indiantown Marina, said they realized then that the new town had a lot of work to do, just to get ready for its first council meeting March 21.

"We decided we needed a 'transition' team," he said, "and the group wanted those of us who had had some previous government experience to be that team."

Scott, as president of the group, was a natural choice. He also currently serves on the Local Planning Agency for Martin County. Kevin Powers, born and raised in Indiantown and an Indiantown businessman, also was a natural choice, Watson said, because he had served on the Governing Board of the South Florida Water Management District for eight years. Powers wife, Marsha Powers, a member of the Martin County school board, is serving as an alternate member.

The group also tapped Tom Kenny, project manager for the Caulkins Water Farm, who had served as a Martin County commissioner in the early '80s during the creation of the county's first Comprehensive Growth Management Plan.

"So we had our transition team," Watson said, "but it didn't take us long to figure out that we needed more help; we needed someone who had more 'hands-on' experience with city government."

The recently retired Stuart city manager, Paul Nicoletti, was willing to help. "I am honored to do this," he said; however, the funds going to the town from the state could not be spent by Indiantown until after the Village Council was formed after the election and at its first council meeting March 21.

The group requested that the county hire Nicoletti to assist, which the county commission agreed to do, pledging a total of \$50,000 to cover the start-up costs. Nicoletti also made arrangements with the City of Stuart to get four hours' time on loan each week for Teresa Lamar-Sarno, special assistant to the Stuart city manager, to work on the draft of the village's own Comprehensive Growth Management Plan.

Bonnie Landry, who has Community Redevelopment Agency and Metropolitan Planning Agency experience, also will assist with drafting the Indiantown Comp Plan. Landry and Lamar-Sarno will be joined by committee members Roger Balmer, Champ Hardee, Bob Howe, Mitch Hutchcraft, Tom Kenny, Kevin



Paul Nicoletti

Powers, and Scott Watson. Thus far, they've completed a draft of the first four chapters, according to Nicoletti, which are posted on the villages website, www.Indiantown.org.

Until the Village Council adopts a new comp plan, the Village must operate according to the rules of the county's existing Comp Plan.

In other developments, Martin County Clerk of Court Carolyn Timmann has made temporary office space available for the new Village Council staff at the Martin County Administration Annex on Warfield Boulevard, which will be furnished and IT services provided through the existing contract with the county.

Nicoletti also sent letters to contractors who provide building inspection services. Those who respond will be referred to the new interim village manager, who must be appointed by the Village Council.

Nicoletti has been working with Timmann to see that a clerk will be present for the first Village Council meeting.

Among the first resolutions the Village Council will make – after the council members elect its first mayor and vice mayor – will be the appointment of both an interim village manager, and giving him or her authorization to hire a village clerk and open a bank account.

They also will need to enter a contract with a financial consultant, who will set up their village accounting system, and a half a dozen other tasks that will need to be tackled at the first meeting.

All the council candidates will go through a training session conducted by Nicoletti to cover the basics of running a government meeting using Robert's Rules of Orders and include the requirements of the Florida's Sunshine Laws. Following the election March 13, he will meet again for a second training with the five new council members.

Invitations to the first meeting will be extended to all the mayors of the Treasure Coast Regional League of Cities, as well as the county commission and the leaders of the Seminole Tribe.

Nicoletti brought many of Stuart's practices to the fledgling village, from the outline of the agenda, to its comprehensive plan, to the services of some of its personnel.

He also brought them the idea of a code of conduct based on civility.

"The power lies not in individual council members," he said. "The power lies in the group acting as a whole, so public comment should be to the board, not to individual council members...and they should be civil."

Nothing is in effect, however, until the first Village Council votes to approve it. ■

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Village Council candidates reflect Indiantown life

Outsideers predicted that few candidates likely would file for seats on the Indiantown Village Council.

"They were wrong," said Anthony Dowling, who has been the quite visible face of the Indiantown Independence movement over the past year and is himself a Village Council candidate.

"Of course, that's nothing new," he added, during a recent Indiantown Neighborhood Advisory Committee meeting. "Those people always seem to underestimate Indiantown."

Ten candidates filed for five council seats in January, one seat for every 1,000 residents, as specified in the village charter. The election is March 13 and the first council meeting will be March 21.

The candidates reflect a cross-section of the Indiantown population: Six candidates describe themselves as

life-long residents of Indiantown; two are immigrants who came to the United States to pursue the American dream,

finding it in Indiantown; two are retirees who settled at the Indianwood Golf and Country Club and became activists in their new community; and two are entrepreneurs who own their own businesses.

the Indiantown NAC.

"Casting a vote to incorporate Indiantown was one of my most exciting moments since becoming an American," he says in his biography. "Now, the genuine, good-hearted and fiercely independent people of Indiantown will finally have direct, accountable representation. As a candidate for the Village Council, that's exactly what I intend to provide."

Maria Rosado – A real estate professional raised in Indiantown, Rosado married her high school sweetheart, also raised in Indiantown and a Navy veteran. After pursuing her education at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, Rosado and her husband returned "to the only place we considered home, Indiantown," she said in her biography.

"This is where we began laying the foundation for our married life," she added, "and building our flourishing careers."

Guy Parker – An outgoing personality suits Parker well for his role as an Indiantown Chamber of Commerce volunteer "ambassador." This New Yorker from Syracuse, who holds a bachelor's degree from Syracuse University, settled with his wife at the Indianwood Golf and Country Club in 2006. He became immediately active in his adopted community as a member of the Indiantown NAC, on the Boys and Girls Club advisory committee, and as an appointee to the Metropolitan Planning Organization. He also was an active member of the Indiantown Independence working group.

Ardis Jackson – According to the Martin County Elections Office, Indiantown resident Ardis Jackson also is a qualified candidate for one of the five Indiantown Village Council seats, but did not respond to multiple emailed requests for biographical information.

Janet Hernandez – A lifetime resident of Indiantown, Hernandez holds a bachelor's degree from Florida Atlantic University and is office manager and administrative assistant to the priest at Holy Cross Catholic Church and manages the Holy Cross Service



Janet Hernandez



Susan Gibbs Thomas



Carlos Alvarez



Craig Bauzenberger Sr.



Jackie Clarke



Guyton "Ricky" Stone



Maria Rosado



Guy R. Parker



Anthony Dowling

THE CANDIDATES INCLUDE:

Susan Gibbs Thomas – A fourth-generation employee at Warfield Elementary School in Indiantown, Thomas has lived in Indiantown for 40 years, 30 years of which she held management positions for various industries, she says. A community activist and the mother of two sons, her interests have included leadership roles in Little League, Jaycees, 4-H, and Pop Warner football, as well as volunteering for the Indiantown Rodeo, parades, and for her church.

"It all comes together for such a time as this," she says in her biographical sketch, "to be able to truly represent Indiantown's residents knowledgeably, advocate for their concerns and desires, preserve our history and safeguard our future."

Guyton "Ricky" Stone – An accomplished custom cabinetmaker with his own manufacturing firm in Indiantown and the first candidate to announce, Stone points proudly to his Jamaican roots, as well as to his American citizenship and his growing family, as the foundation for his attainment of the "American dream." Active in both the Indiantown and Hobe Sound chambers of commerce, Stone has also been involved in youth sports and served on

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Center in Indiantown. She also is the church's volunteer coordinator, according to her biography.

"When elected, my focus will be on controlled growth, prosperity for the Village and the people of Indiantown," she said. "Citizens' issues over neglected neighborhoods, parks and infrastructure will be a primary concern that will be addressed."

Anthony Dowling – Often the public face of Indiantown Independence, Dowling used his communication skills to set up a social media site for the working group to keep Indiantown residents informed. The youngest of five children of Barbara and Andy Dowling of Indiantown, he served in the U.S. Army for more than seven years and earned his bachelor's degree from Florida's A&M University.

Currently employed by McNicholas & Associates in Stuart, Dowling is an active volunteer on the Indiantown Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC), is a current appointee to the Metropolitan Planning Organization, and volunteers

for the Indiantown Boys and Girls Club and the Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Martin County.

Jackie Clarke – An Indiantown native, an IRSC graduate and employee of the Florida Department of Health in the Stuart and Indiantown offices, Clarke founded the non-profit Indiantown Community Outreach in 2000, which sponsors an annual Back to School Bash, an annual Breast Health Walk-a-Thon, domestic violence education campaigns and community health fairs. Married for 35 years, she is the mother of three, grandmother of two, and has served on the board of Indiantown Non-Profit Housing, chaired the Indiantown Lions Club, and volunteered with the Boys and Girls Club. As a result of her work, she has been recognized with numerous awards from various organizations, including the Soroptomists International's "Woman of Distinction" award and by the NAACP for "Outstanding Community Service." In her biography, she credits her Christian faith, her relationship with God and her family for her strength.

Craig F. Bauzenberger Sr. – Since moving to Indiantown's Indianwood Golf & Country Club from New Jersey nearly eight years ago, Bauzenberger and his wife, Ande, have immersed themselves in serving the Indiantown community, earning a wide reputation for dependability and selflessness. An active member of the Indiantown Independence working group, Bauzenberger serves as current chair of the Indiantown NAC and is the Indiantown representative on the board of the Community Redevelopment Agency of Martin County. He also was elected to the board of the Indiantown/Western Martin County Chamber of Commerce and was appointed to the Rural Indiantown Revitalization Advisory Board and to Martin County's Affordable Housing Advisory Committee. He serves the Indiantown YMCA and is vice president of the Indiantown Civic Club.

"I am excited to see ongoing plans for growth and development," he writes in his biographical sketch, "and agree with one and all that care needs to be taken going forward."

Carlos Alvarez – Relatively new to the Indiantown community, Alvarez moved to Indiantown with his wife of 26

years, Paolo, in 2015 after purchasing the Rines IGA Supermarket and shopping center. A Cuban immigrant, he settled in the Miami area in the late-'80s, followed by a move to Connecticut where they raised a family and established a number of businesses, including a newspaper. He currently is founder and publisher of the Indiantown News.

Connecticut Gov. Jodi Rell appointed Alvarez to the Small Business Advisory Council in January 2009, which was abolished three weeks later due to budget cuts. At the time, Alvarez was manager/CEO of the Hartford-based First Option Realty, according to the governor's press release. While in Connecticut, he also chaired the Latino Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, served on the board of the Spanish American Merchants Association, as well as various other boards and associations.

He said in his biographical sketch that he is motivated by helping others, feeling successful "only when he sees how he has helped others to succeed."

The election is limited to only those registered voters who live within the boundaries of the newly incorporated Village of Indiantown. The last day for Indiantown residents to register to vote is Feb. 12. ■

First forum for Village Council candidates at Indianwood



The first candidate forum introducing candidates for the Indiantown Village Council to their constituents was moderated by Brian Powers, a member of the Indiantown Independence working group, at the Indianwood Golf & Country Club. The community room was packed with interested citizens preparing for the historic election March 13.





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Five-week CARES class

Want to know more about how local government works, behind-the-scenes? Then consider registering for the next five-week Martin CARES (Citizens Academy and Resource Education Series) session. All classes start at 8 a.m. over five Thursdays. Students will take field trips to various Martin County facilities such as parks and beaches, the historic one-room schoolhouse, a local senior center, the Emergency Operations Center and the airport. Citizens will also visit recently completed infrastructure and water quality projects, will hear from departments under the County Commission and Martin County's constitutional officers. **FREE.** Coach transportation, snacks and lunches are provided. Registration is required as seating is limited. Call 772-220-7129.

Through April 10 Cohelach exhibit

An exhibit by local, award-winning wildlife artist Guy Cohelach, which opened Feb. 2 at the Court House Cultural Center, 80 S.E. Ocean Blvd., Stuart, runs through April 10. Donation of \$5 per person requested. For hours, call 772-287-6676 or visit MartinArts.org.



Thursday, Feb. 22 Brown Headed Nuthatch Reintroduction Program

Jim Cox from Tall Timbers Research Station in Tallahassee will give his plan for re-introducing Brown Headed Nuthatches into Jonathan Dickinson State Park in south Martin County at 6 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 22. This will be at the park's Kimbell Education Center, 16450 S.E. Federal Highway, Hobe Sound, four miles from the park's entrance. Park entry is free for this event. Sponsored by the Friends of Jonathan Dickinson State Park. Registration is requested. For more information, call 561-745-5551 or email libby.reinert@dep.state.fl.us.

Thursday, Feb. 22

Van Dellen lecture on Whitman, Frost

Robert Van Dellen, a retired college president from Michigan and seasonal Treasure Coast resident, will give the second of his three literature-related talks this month. He will discuss "Two Great American Poetic Voices: Walt Whitman & Robert Frost" on Thursday, Feb. 22. His third lecture, on March 29, will be "Touching Our Souls: The Poetry of Mary Oliver and Maya Angelou." Each event is from 6-8 p.m. at the Elliott Museum, 825 N.E. Ocean Blvd., Stuart. A cash bar for beer, wine, sodas and munchies will be available. Members attend for free; museum admission for non-members. RSVP to 772-225-1961 or rsvp@elliottmuseum.org. Seating is limited.

Friday, Feb. 23

Night Explorers at the Nature Center

Night Explorers will be from 6:30-8:30 p.m., Friday, Feb. 23 starting at the nature center. After a brief classroom orientation, naturalists will lead the group outside along the nature trail to look at the nighttime sky through telescopes. If weather conditions are not conducive to viewing planets, stars and constellations, the program will be limited to classroom activities. Reservations are required. Both are **FREE.** Call 772-546-2067 or go to www.hobesoundnaturecenter.com.

Friday, Feb. 23

A Journey Through America's Everglades

A benefit lecture luncheon for the Elliott Museum of Stuart will be Friday, Feb. 23, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Mac Stone, conservation photographer/lecturer, author of "Everglades, America's Wetlands," will give a talk. Cost: \$100. RSVP: 772-225-1961 or RSVP@elliottmuseum.org.

Friday, Feb. 23

Dinner Dance at Kane Center

A Dinner Dance: A Benefit for the Adult Day Club will be 5 to 7 p.m., Friday, Feb. 23 at the Kane Center, 900 S.E. Salerno Road, Stuart. Cost: \$15; \$80 for a table of eight. Featured is a three-course dinner prepared by the Kane's Executive Chef Christopher Collier. Dance music will be provided by Daryl Magill. For tickets, go to www.kanecenter.org.

Friday, Feb. 23

United Way's inaugural Tikis on the Terrace

Party Polynesian-style at United Way's inaugural Tikis on the Terrace presented by All About Achieving Learning Centers. The event is 6-10 p.m., Friday, Feb. 23, at Tuckahoe Terrace at the Mansion at Tuckahoe, 1707 N.E. Indian River Drive, Jensen Beach. Guests will Luau for Literacy to raise money for Martin County's education initiatives. Tickets are \$100. Tickets include tropical-inspired fare, open bar and traditional Polynesian dancers. Visit www.UnitedWayMartin.org/Tiki to purchase tickets.

Friday, Feb. 23

Alzheimer's Caregiver Symposium

The Sixth Annual Caregiver Symposium will be Friday, Feb. 23, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., breakfast and lunch included, at the Kane Center, 900 S.E. Salerno Road with former Wisconsin Gov. Martin J. Schreiber as the keynote speaker. He will share lessons from his more than 10-year journey as a caregiver for his wife, Elaine, who lives with Alzheimer's. An expert panel will share their knowledge and tools, not only to cope, but to find joy along the roller coaster ride that is care giving. Also speaking is Tino Negri, a certified Alzheimer's educator, presenting "Joy in the Journey," strategies to accentuate the positive and tapping into the power of music to help engage those living with the disease. RSVP by Feb. 19 to www.alz.org/seflorida or call 800-272-3900. Respite care will be provided and must be reserved in advanced. Go to www.alz.org/seflorida or call 800-2723900.

Saturday, Feb. 24

Art Show and Sale at Sandhill Cove



The fifth annual Art Show and Sale at Sandhill Cove retirement community, 1500 S.W. Capri St., Palm City is 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 24. In case of severe inclement weather, the event will be Sunday, Feb. 25. Professional local artists are invited to display a selection of their artwork to sell in a covered, air-conditioned setting. Students of art teacher Kelly Arnold will display their work. Featured in the show will be watercolor and acrylic paintings, photography, mixed media, pottery, jewelry and crafts. A portion of the proceeds from the artists' sales will be donated to Helping People Succeed. There will be a Kids Zone with activities for children including rock painting, face painting, balloon animals, and two children's authors reading their books. A People's Choice Awards contest will provide everyone an opportunity to vote for their favorite artist. For more information, go to www.sandhillcove.com or contact Jill Burton, marketing director, 772-220-1090.

Saturday, Feb. 24

Emeralds & Platinum Fashion Show & Luncheon

Women of St. Luke's Episcopal Church of Port Salerno will have its 20th annual fashion show/luncheon with the theme this year being Emeralds & Platinum. It will be 11 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 24 at Miles Grant Country Club, 5101 S.E. Miles Grant Road, Stuart. Fashions by Her Majesty, Patchington, So Unique Boutique and Marcello menswear. Tickets: \$35. RSVP to 772-219-7350.

Sunday, Feb. 25

Gracie Allen and George Burns: Together Again Tribute

A famous comedy team of the 20th century is reuniting - thanks to actors Betsy Wickard and Peter Salzer. They will portray George Burns and Gracie Allen, with humor and songs, at the Kane Center, 900 S.E. Salerno Road, Stuart at 2 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 25. Tickets: \$15, members; \$20 for Kane Club and non-members. Go to www.kanecenter.org.

Tuesday, Feb. 27

Crazy About Patsy Cline

Jazz singer Maggie Worsdale plays tribute to the late Patsy Cline, the first female country-western singer to headline in Las Vegas. Worsdale's rendition highlights Cline's rise to stardom and her top-rated songs, including "I Fall to Pieces," "Sweet Dreams," "Crazy" and "I'll Sail my Ship Alone." The show is at 4 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 27, at the Kane Center, 900 S.E. Salerno Road, Stuart. Tickets: \$15, members; \$20 for Kane Club and non-members. Go to www.kanecenter.org.



Friday, March 2

The Owls That Call Florida Home

Join the Loxahatchee River Center for its March presentation, a lecture provided by Rebecca Reid, Education Director at Busch Wildlife Sanctuary, talking about the five different owl species that call Florida home. Prior to the lecture a light lunch will be served. Make sure to RSVP today!

Saturday, March 3

Creative Placemaking Workshop in Old Palm City

An important and exciting project will happen Saturday, March 3, from 1-4:30 p.m. in the Old Palm City neighborhood that will combine art, science and the community. "Ripple...as a drop of water becomes a river" is a unique combination of stormwater treatment, artistic elements and community engagement to reconnect the Old Palm City neighborhood with the St. Lucie River at three distinct sites along SW 28th and 29th streets. Ripple is part of only a handful of projects across the United States to receive grant funding from the National Endowment for the Arts. A project of the Community Redevelopment Agency. For more info, to the Martin County website, www.martin.fl.us and search for Old Palm City CRA.

Saturday, March 3

Polo Classic for Molly's House



ternationally known polo players for a day of competition and fun, including a polo clinic, best hat contest, dressage presentation, special VIP party, car show and the traditional halftime champagne divot stomp. Proceeds from the Polo Classic support the mission of Molly's House in keeping families together by providing short-term, affordable accommodations for the families of hospitalized loved ones and hospital outpatients. Guests can enjoy the VIP experience at the Polo Classic, which includes complimentary champagne or wine and a delicious paella lunch under a private tent. VIP tickets are available for \$100 per person. Reserved field-side admission is \$50 per carload and includes a space for tailgating where guests are encouraged to bring their own food and drinks. Guests can also enjoy the ultimate Polo experience with Premier VIP Seating. Reserved tables for eight people offer a covered front-line view of the polo field, along with two complimentary bottles of champagne, paella and a complimentary full bar. The premier VIP tables for eight are available for \$900. Tickets are available for purchase at Molly's House, 430 S.E. Osceola St. in Stuart and online at MollysHouse.org. The gates of the Port Mayaca Polo Club open at 11:30 a.m. Activities begin at noon and the awards presentation is at 3 p.m. MollysHouse.org.

Stomp divots, sip champagne and enjoy an exciting day of polo at the Port Mayaca Polo Club in Okeechobee on Saturday, March 3. The Polo Classic draws in-

Saturday, March 10

Night on the Loxahatchee

Time for the River Center's annual Night on the Loxahatchee event on Saturday, March from 7 to 9:30 p.m. Discover and explore what lies beneath the water's depths at our "Myths and Legends of the Deep" themed event. Enjoy unique cuisine and beverages from local businesses Food Shack, Oceana Coffee and African Tradition Wines. Make sure to check out a special presentation by wildlife photographer Michael Patrick O'Neill as he discusses blackwater photography. Join us on our mission to discover what is real and what is legend. For more information, go to www.lrdrivercenter.org.



Saturday, March 10

The Marathon of the Treasure Coast Rock 'n Run Festival

The Boston-qualifying marathon, celebrating its fifth year, offers race opportunities for all levels of runners and activities for onlookers, staged throughout Stuart, Hutchinson Island and Jensen Beach. For the ultimate adventure, check out the TC Challenge event, or earn a medal from anywhere in the world with the Virtual Race. A special beat to the rhythm of the weekend is the Rock'n Run Festival featuring top-notch live entertainment to keep everyone's blood pumping, on and off the course. A unique feature of the race are the charities supported by its proceeds. For registration, schedules, times, and locations, visit www.treasurecoastmarathon.com.

Monday, March 12

Apollo School's Picture City Culture Club

The Apollo School Foundation of Hobe Sound invites the public to the inaugural meeting of the Picture City Culture Club, "your ticket to lifelong learning" In addition to being a traditional book club, the Picture City Culture Club also plans to schedule additional cultural activities periodically. The first meeting will be at the Apollo School site, 9141 S.E. Apollo Street, Hobe Sound, on Monday, March 12, at 6:30 p.m. During the introductory meeting, the first book will be assigned, which will be discussed in May. (The meetings are the 2nd Monday of every other month for book discussion.) The club is free and open to the public.

Tuesday & Wednesday, March 13-14

History of Port Salerno

Find out how this community between Stuart and Hobe Sound came to be in the "History of Port Salerno" at 10 a.m., March 13, and 7 p.m., March 14. Long-time Port Salerno resident John Hennessee discusses the history of this community, established in 1894 and known as Mulford. Hennessee will talk about Port Salerno, covering such subjects as growing pineapples, commercial fishing, and rum-running. The topic will be presented twice, first at 10 a.m., followed by an evening discussion one day later at 7 p.m. Material presented is identical in both sessions. Tickets: \$15 per person; sold on a space-available basis. The House of Refuge, with seating for 32, is at 301 S. E. MacArthur Blvd., Stuart. Visit HouseofrefugeFL.org or call 772-225-1875.

Wednesday, March 14

Friends for Fred (Rieger)

Fred and Terry Rieger are known throughout Martin County for their generous hearts and commitment to the community. Now their friends are asking that some of that love and caring be returned to them, as Fred battles cancer. Come to an open house Wednesday, March 14, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. at Diamonds by Terry, 3868 SE Dixie Hwy, Stuart, for live music, sweets, toasts, and drawings. For more info, call 772.225.6491.



Saturday, March 24

A Florida Highwayman: LIVE

A presentation of the "Living History" series for students and residents, A Florida Highwayman: LIVE will be Saturday, March 24, from 11 a.m. to 3 pm in the art gallery of the Kimbell Center of the Jonathan Dickinson State Park. A "live" painting session and presentation by R.L Lewis, noted artist and Florida Artist Hall of Fame inductee, will paint as his son, Rob, talks about his father's life story. Artwork will be on sale, as well as his autobiography. Another Highwayman, Curtis Arnett, and will be on hand to sell his artwork. The program is presented by the Friends of Jonathan Dickinson State Park and Prof. Robert Farley of IRSC, and is free with regular park admission.



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Stuart Boat Show speaks to the need for a healthy river

Martin County is known for its exceptional art shows and genuine seafood festivals that fill up the months of January and February each year. Kicking off that festival season here, however, is the Stuart Boat Show, by the Marine Industries Association of the Treasure Coast, with new boats, previously owned boats, vendors, seminars and lots of seaworthy camaraderie. Kids – of all ages – love these up-close, personal looks at all sizes and manner of cruisers and yachts. Recognized in 2016 by the Southeast Tourism Society as a top-20 event in the Southeast, the mid-January event reminded us yet again how much we depend on access to a healthy St. Lucie River. Even if you don't own a boat, circle mid-January 2019 at the foot of the Roosevelt Bridge as THE place to go for a great family-oriented event.