

**THE SARASOTA**

Vol. 2, No. 14 — December 20, 2013

# News Leader

*The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida*



**A BOLD BOULEVARD PLAN**

**ON THE RISE**

**MOVING FORWARD**

*Inside*

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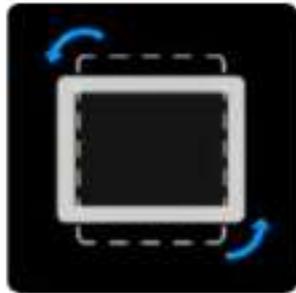
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# A.K.A. HELP

# SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

*The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida*

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# Welcome

Nothing like a holiday looming to get the adrenaline pumping in the members of a news staff!

With early deadlines this week to enable everyone to take some time off, we have been very busy elves ourselves, pulling together copy and getting layouts completed. This issue has plenty of hard news, I assure you, but we have some fun with the features as well, including an article about a special visit contributor Harriet Cuthbert paid to the Marietta Museum of Art & Whimsy.

Speaking of the *Sarasota Leisure* section: While we have been pretty steadfast about confining our coverage within Sarasota County's borders, Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel convinced me that an event in Fort Myers called the "Teddy Bear Toss" was worth a story. After all, Sarasota people were present for it, including Copy Editor Vicki Chatley. Norm was right. It is a heartwarming article for the season.

And in the spirit of working to meet our early deadlines, I will stop here except to wish all of you, from all of us, the merriest of holiday seasons!

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

Editor and Publisher



*The Sarasota News Leader held its Christmas party on Dec. 16 with staff members and their families. Posing for the official "masthead" photo were (front row, from left) Norman Schimmel, Harriet Cuthbert, Rachel Hackney, Fran Palmeri and Vicki Chatley; (back row, from left) Roger Drouin, Cooper Levey-Baker, Stan Zimmerman and Robert Hackney. Editorial Cartoonist John Riley, Production Manager Cleve Posey and A&E Writer Elinor Rogosin were unable to join us. Photo by Rachel Levey-Baker*



## A BOLD BOULEVARD PLAN



## ON THE RISE

 [Click Any \*Headline\* To Go Directly To That Article](#) 

# NEWS & COMMENTARY

## A BOLD BOULEVARD PLAN

As the next big step for the Fruitville Initiative area, a new kind of road is in the works — *Roger Drouin*

9

## ON THE RISE

The state's most recent projections of taxable value in Sarasota County show growth of 5.4 percent in the 2015 fiscal year, an increase of more than 1 percent over an earlier estimate — *Roger Drouin*

15

## MOVING FORWARD

A city evaluation panel agrees the Rosemary Square proposal is worth serious consideration — *Stan Zimmerman*

19

## 'DAS CAPITOL'

The County Commission ponders how to best lobby Tallahassee — *Cooper Levey-Baker*

23

## ON THE LOOKOUT FOR MORE CRANES

Revised details are revealed about the hotel project next to the Palm Avenue garage and a project with increased density in the Rosemary District remains on the fast track — *Stan Zimmerman*

26

## A TUNNEL, NOT A SIPHON

The firm analyzing how Lift Station 87 should be built recommends a lower depth for pipe under Hudson Bayou and estimates a project cost of \$4.2 million — *Stan Zimmerman*

32

## THE CHALLENGES OF MARBUT'S PLAN

County employees working on the community's new homelessness initiatives say some of the measures will take a long time to come to fruition — *Stan Zimmerman*

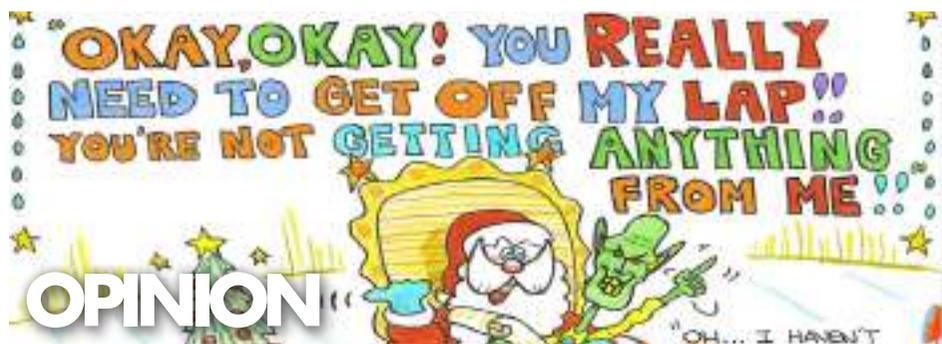
35



### PHOTO CREDITS

Front cover: *Selby Bromeliad Tree* - Robert Hackney

Sarasota Leisure: *A Festive Five Points Park* - Rachel Hackney



 **Click Any *Headline* To Go Directly To That Article** 

## DEALING WITH 'DESIGNER DRUGS'

38

A public hearing has been set for Feb. 12 on a new Sarasota County ordinance to combat the sale and use of synthetic forms of marijuana and other substances — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

## FRIENDS, INDEED

43

The Friends of Gulf Gate Library give the county a 25,000-square-foot parcel that can be used for parking for the new library — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

## LET THERE BE COLORS OF LIGHT

47

Downtown Improvement District members get a look at prospective new lights for Five Points Park — *Stan Zimmerman*

## NEWS BRIEFS

52

## CRIME BLOTTER

64

# OPINION

## EDITORIAL

68

Fox News wants a *VERY* White Christmas

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

70

*News Leader* lauded for puppy mill ordinance coverage



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## SARASOTA LEISURE

<b>COOKIES IN A COOL SETTING</b>	<b>72</b>
Museum of Art & Whimsy proves the perfect place for a holiday cookie party — <i>Harriet Cuthbert</i>	
<b>TEDDY BEARS HIT THE ICE</b>	<b>78</b>
Teddy Bear Toss provides holiday gifts for needy children — <i>Vicky Chatley</i>	
<b>FESTIVE FLORAL ADORNMENT</b>	<b>84</b>
Being in Florida for the holidays means a vast array of natural decorating options are available — <i>Rick Wielgorecki</i>	
<b>SIESTA SEEN</b>	<b>86</b>
Complaints about construction along Higel Avenue prompt a county review; the Eat Here Siesta Key parking problem may be resolved soon; and a selection committee has settled on finalists for the Siesta Chamber executive director position — <i>Rachel Brown Hackney</i>	
<b>A&amp;E BRIEFS</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>RELIGION BRIEFS</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>COMMUNITY CALENDAR</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS</b>	<b>110</b>



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## A BOLD BOULEVARD PLAN

*An aerial view shows Fruitville Road west of Interstate 75, with Richardson Road to the north. Image from Google Maps*

### AS THE NEXT BIG STEP FOR THE FRUITVILLE INITIATIVE AREA, A NEW KIND OF ROAD IS IN THE WORKS

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

The Fruitville Initiative aims to make a village out of cow pasture east of Interstate 75.

Now in the third of four phases, the plan lays out a proposal for rezoning that would result in a “gateway village” featuring employment centers and shops. If the project comes to fruition, proponents say the large-scale New Urbanist development

would bring jobs, additional property tax value and new vibrancy to the southern edge of the growing I-75 corridor that has seen newer development already — including the Shoppes at University Center and the

Nathan Benderson Park rowing facility. The University Town Center mall and the proposed project The Venue at Lakewood Ranch townhomes will add to that growth.

“ *It caught FDOT’s attention.* ”

Jonathan Paul  
Interim Director of Transportation  
Sarasota County

“You have five huge land development projects going on, and that’s a great opportunity to do something truly special,” said John Krotec, former chairman of the [Fruitville 210 Community Alliance](#).

As the next big step for the Fruitville Initiative area, county planners, along with backers of the gateway concept, are working on a transportation plan. It presents two big changes: It would connect the Fruitville Initiative area to Lakewood Ranch to the north; and it would result in a multi-way boulevard through the heart of the 300-plus acres of the Initiative area.

For the latter change, Fruitville Road would be remade into a strikingly different corridor.

“Visually, it has a tendency to slow traffic down, making it safe for people who will be working and shopping out there.”

John Krotec  
Former Chairman  
Fruitville 210 Community Alliance

“Visually, it has a tendency to slow traffic down, making it safe for people who will be working and shopping out there,” said Krotec, who has seen early designs for the new corridor.

This type of road is called a multiway boulevard.



An illustration shows planned downtown revitalization in Bothell, WA, including a multiway boulevard. Image courtesy Sarasota County

New Urbanism planners say these corridors — such as Shattuck Avenue in Berkeley, CA, and Octavia Boulevard in San Francisco — accommodate a lot of traffic, encourage walking and still allow for parking in front of buildings. The roadways are also designed to also allow links from the main route to an adjacent grid of streets.

The boulevard in Sarasota would feature primary traffic lanes with wide sidewalks and medians on both sides, said Jonathan Paul, interim director of transportation for Sarasota County. The medians would incorporate on-street parking sections as dividers to separate the main traffic artery from side lanes.

The boulevard, with a decreased speed limit from 45 mph to 30 mph, would transform Fruitville Road into a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

Another big plus of the design would be the on-street parking in front of commercial buildings, Paul pointed out.

### **‘KEY TO THE VISION’**

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration would have to approve the plan for Fruitville Road because the route is located in close proximity to the interstate.



*New Urbanists say Shattuck Avenue in Berkeley, CA, accommodates a lot of traffic and encourages walking, and it still allows for parking in front of buildings. Image courtesy Sarasota County*



*Octavia Boulevard in San Francisco is another example of a multiway boulevard. A median divides the main roadway from on-street parking and a bicycle lane. Image courtesy Sarasota County*



*Octavia Boulevard in San Francisco includes trees in the center median as well as alongside the road. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

In a meeting scheduled for Jan. 13 in Washington, D.C., officials from the state and federal transportation agencies will go over the project.

FDOT officials have shown early interest in the multiway boulevard.

“It caught FDOT’s attention,” Paul told *The Sarasota News Leader*. “They may consider it.”

The upcoming meeting will be critical in determining how county planners move forward with the boulevard concept.

“The key to the vision is what the FDOT and the federal government will allow to happen on Fruitville,” Paul said.

Federal highway officials could ask for more details, or they might say “No” to the project, Paul noted.

If federal officials give the project a preliminary green light, the next steps would be estimating the cost of infrastructure and then looking at “what kind of creative funding we can come up with.”

Specific revenue sources have not been identified.

County officials say one possible option is the creation of a community development district

or other means for directing some of the additional revenue from the increased tax base in the area — after it is developed — toward the cost of the boulevard and other infrastructure improvements.

## A NEWER CONCEPT

As with roundabouts, a multiway boulevard might take a little getting used to, for local motorists as well as visitors.

“They are easy enough to drive once you’ve done it once or twice,” Paul said. “But it definitely is a different design.”

Krotec, who envisions high-tech, high-wage job centers in the Fruitville Initiative area, said the planned boulevard could make that part of the county unique in appearance.

“It is the true special gateway into Sarasota,” Krotec pointed out. “We don’t really want to see any ‘big boxes’ going in there. We don’t want to see your usual interchange in Florida.”

Krotec also believes the county’s overall transportation plan would divert traffic from homes on nearby Richardson Road.

“Our main concern was how to maintain the rural character of east Richardson Road and keep the busier roadways close to the interstate,” Krotec added. 



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## ON THE RISE

*New homes under construction around the county mean more property tax revenue. File photo*

### **THE STATE'S MOST RECENT PROJECTIONS OF TAXABLE VALUE IN SARASOTA COUNTY SHOW GROWTH OF 5.4 PERCENT IN THE 2015 FISCAL YEAR, AN INCREASE OF MORE THAN 1 PERCENT OVER AN EARLIER ESTIMATE**

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

The state's most recent estimates of taxable property values in Sarasota County show four years of consecutive growth.

On Dec. 13, the state projected an increase of 5.4 percent in Fiscal Year 2015. Earlier this summer, the estimate was for a 4.1-percent rise.

If the latest projections hold true, they will mark a recent milestone for Sarasota County. "We haven't had an increase of

over 5 percent since 2008," said Sarasota County Fiscal Consultant Karen Fratangelo.

The state's Department of Revenue also predicts real estate value upswings of 5.6 percent, 5.9 percent and 5.8 percent for Fiscal Years 2016, 2017 and 2018, respectively.

**“We haven't had an increase of over 5 percent since 2008.”**

Karen Fratangelo  
Fiscal Consultant  
Sarasota County



The increases would take some pressure off local projections for general fund shortfalls. Based on the estimates released Dec. 13, a previously

projected 2016 general fund deficit of \$22.5 million would be reduced to \$18.6 million.

The county has been using funds from its economic uncertainty reserve to balance the budget since the Great Recession put property values on a slide.

Regardless of the new data, Commissioner Christine Robinson said she wants to see the county budget kept conservative, and that includes trying to trim expenses.

“The past two years we spent more in reserves than we did during the entire recession,” noted Robinson, known as a fiscal conservative.

Robinson said key decisions during upcoming budget workshops will determine the future financial health of the county during the economic upturn. “We still need to be very careful,” Robinson pointed out.

## THE ADMINISTRATOR’S BUDGET

For Robinson, one good indication is the action taken by Interim County Administrator Tom Harmer to “conserve money whenever possible.”

“It’s a message that is different than the previous administration,” Robinson said.

Harmer will be presenting a preliminary budget to the County Commission in June. “During the [County Commission] retreat [on Dec. 5], he called it ‘the administrator’s budget,’” Robinson noted. “He is taking ownership for that budget.”

In an interview this week with *The Sarasota News Leader*, Harmer listed a few of the ways county staffers are trying to keep expenses down, including closely reviewing employee travel; re-considering filling some vacant

General Fund Outlook						
General Fund - Projected Revenues & Expenses						
	Amend. BUDGET FY13	Prop. BUDGET FY14	PROJECTED FY15	PROJECTED FY16	PROJECTED FY17	PROJECTED FY18
Revenue	\$237,600,525	\$214,845,589	\$220,208,090	\$227,543,603	\$235,559,048	\$244,070,117
Budgeted Fund Balance	\$35,980,681	\$46,998,659	\$45,976,705	\$17,638,586	\$18,323,061	\$19,024,190
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>\$273,581,206</b>	<b>\$261,844,248</b>	<b>\$266,184,795</b>	<b>\$245,182,189</b>	<b>\$253,882,109</b>	<b>\$263,094,306</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$273,581,206</b>	<b>\$261,844,248</b>	<b>\$269,135,851</b>	<b>\$275,646,381</b>	<b>\$278,608,738</b>	<b>\$284,506,851</b>
<i>Fund Balance Calculation: Amount budgeted (above) less projected over-collections &amp; under-spending</i>						
Over-Collections (3%)	\$6,254,421	\$5,695,407	\$5,856,282	\$6,076,348	\$6,316,811	\$6,572,143
Under-Spending (6%)	\$11,686,170	\$12,121,301	\$12,565,554	\$13,010,795	\$13,456,581	\$13,902,361
<b>Estimated Fund Balance Usage</b>	<b>\$18,040,090</b>	<b>\$29,181,951</b>	<b>\$27,554,869</b>			
<b>Shortfall</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>(\$2,951,056)</b>	<b>(\$30,464,192)</b>	<b>(\$24,726,629)</b>	<b>(\$21,412,544)</b>
<i>Shortfall line is the amount that cannot be funded using the assumed revenues &amp; expenditures. The shortfall is only created after the Economic Uncertainty Fund is depleted, but the Hurricane/Disaster Reserve always remains fully funded. Does not include Sarasota CRA extension (payments end in FY16). Not reflective of the one time \$8M available cash due to reserve policy change (90 to 75 Days).</i>						

A chart prepared by the county’s Office of Financial Management for a September budget workshop showed projections for future general fund deficits based on state property value estimates at the time. Image courtesy Sarasota County

positions and looking for ways to have departments collaborate; and analyzing internal computer technology charges.

“We are not waiting until 2016,” Harmer said about addressing the projected general fund shortfall.

The County Commission will hold its first budget workshops in February for the Fiscal Year 2015 spending plan.

Fratangelo noted that the Department of Revenue projections are just that. “It’s just an estimate for the out years,” she said. “We don’t get the actual values from the Property Appraiser’s Office until June [of each year].”

For Fiscal Year 2014, property values rose 4.2 percent. The five years before that, the values decreased. 



*Tom Harmer is the interim county administrator. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

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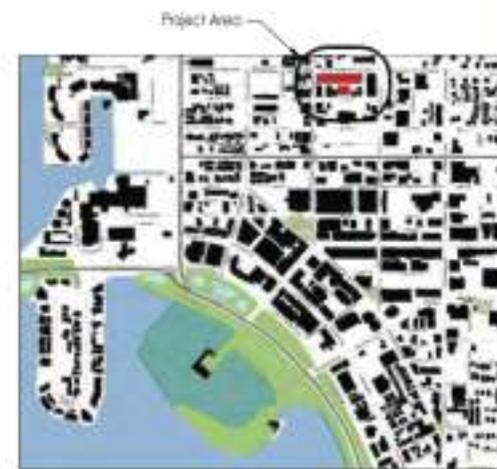
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# MOVING FORWARD



ROSEMARY SQUARE  
TYPICAL LOWER LEVEL  
CONCEPTUAL PLAN

*A conceptual plan shows how the lower level of the Rosemary Square complex could be organized. Image courtesy City of Sarasota*

## A CITY EVALUATION PANEL AGREES THE ROSEMARY SQUARE PROPOSAL IS WORTH SERIOUS CONSIDERATION

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

A nine-member evaluation committee agreed unanimously on Tuesday, Dec. 17, to send a Rosemary District redevelopment proposal to the next stage on the way to city approval.

Rosemary Square is a proposed mixed-use project involving about 40 rental units and 36,000 square feet of retail, office and art gallery space. A second phase would

add a multi-level parking structure and either a boutique cinema or a theater for live performances.

Reaching agreement on the second step took about two hours, as the development team presented its plans and then defended them. The team was responding to a city “Invitation to Negotiate” over six

“ This could be a game-changer for the Rosemary.”

Courtney Mendez  
Planner  
City of Sarasota



contiguous city-owned lots along the Boulevard of the Arts. In one of his first acts in office, City Manager Tom Barwin proposed that the property — the site of a former community garden — be offered as a “catalyst project” to kick-start development of the Rosemary District.

Only one team rose to the occasion, a congregation of locals including Dr. Mark Kauffman and his daughter, Mindy; architect Jonathan Parks, who has his own firm; builder Michael Beaumier; and planner Joel Freedman. No other proposals were received.

That did not make the sole offering the automatic winner. The panel had the ability to reject it and seek more bids or suggestions. But some panelists thought the plan was worthy of moving to the next step, where city representatives will hammer out additional details.

“This is on the City Commission’s strategic plan,” said Planner Ryan Chapdelain of the proposal. “They are well aware of what we’re doing here. We need to work out some of the basic obligations first — infrastructure and finances.”

The development team basically wants to give the city 43 new parking spaces in return for the deed to the land. With parking spaces having a current value between \$25,000 and \$30,000 apiece, that makes the offer worth a little more than \$1 million.

However, the development team would also like for the city to lay a large sewer line down the boulevard and for the county to install a new stormwater drainage pipe at the same time. Engineers estimate that would cost \$175,000.

Before the committee members got bogged down in details, the developers’ lawyer,



*Rosemary Square developers make their points in a presentation to a nine-member evaluation committee. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

Brenda Patten, reminded them, “Your job today is not to accept the proposal. It is simply to accept the top-ranked proposals and then go into negotiations to identify key issues and focus on them.”

Kauffman refined the issue further: “You’re not recommending a proposal. You’re saying it’s worth considering.”

City Purchasing Manager Mary Tucker, who issued the original Invitation to Negotiate, set the stage for the decision. “Is this proposal acceptable to go on to negotiations?” she asked. “When the negotiating team basically works out a purchase and sales agreement, that will go to the City Commission. If they say ‘Yes,’ it comes back for a redevelopment and parking agreement. Do you feel this is acceptable to move to the negotiation team?”

At this stage, no formal votes or motions were required. There was general consensus to let the proposal proceed to the next step and

then organize a negotiating team to cut a deal with the development team.

Tucker asked city Parking Manager Mark Lyons, Senior Planners Steve Stancel and Ryan Chapdelain and Downtown Development Director Norm Gollub to join her in serving on the negotiating team.

In January, the two groups will try to work out a satisfactory purchase and sale agreement for the property and provision of infrastructure. The deal will return to the evaluation committee, which then may — or may not — recommend it go to the City Commission for approval.

If the City Commission approves the agreement after it has been ironed out, then the two sides will come back together to work out the final redevelopment and parking plan.

“This could be a game-changer for the Rosemary,” said Courtney Mendez, a senior city planner and member of the evaluation committee. “But we need to flesh out some of the details.” 



*The Rosemary Square project would be built on the site of a former community garden on Boulevard of the Arts in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



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# 'DAS CAPITOL'



*The historic Florida Capitol stands in front of the newer legislative building. Image from iStockphoto*

## THE COUNTY COMMISSION PONDERES HOW TO BEST LOBBY TALLAHASSEE

By Cooper Levey-Baker

*Associate Editor*

How best to be heard in Tallahassee? That was one of the topics of conversation during the Sarasota County Commission's recent retreat, when board members suggested a variety of ways to switch up their lobbying strategy to make sure their priorities get addressed.

Commissioner Christine Robinson added the discussion to the Dec. 5 retreat agenda as part of a larger conversation about the commission's participation in a variety of organizations. She serves on the Florida Association of Counties' Public Safety committee and also acts as a district representative for the organization. FAC — as the association is known — lobbies state lawmakers on the issues

that affect county governments around the state.

At least that's what it's supposed to do.

Robinson said the conversation during FAC meetings is based on who shows up, and that smaller, rural counties such as Hardee often have an outsized voice in the organization. Their elected officials show up in force, she pointed out. Telling her fellow commissioners that Sarasota is in sync with FAC "97 percent of the time," Robinson nevertheless said she felt like she was in a "David and Goliath position" during FAC meetings.

**“I've actually made it a point not to go to Tallahassee because of the way they operate.”**

Joe Barbetta  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County



In addition to their work with FAC, many

other counties' leaders travel en masse to Tallahassee to press legislators, Robinson noted, a strategy she suggested Sarasota should ape. Rob Lewis, the county's director of community and intergovernmental relations, said a "Sarasota Day" might be effective, if it remains tied to just two or three genuinely important positions the county needs to emphasize.

The county has made no secret of the fact that its top priority for the 2014 legislative session, which begins March 4, is to be left alone. County leaders specifically want to make sure the state Legislature does not override the county's ordinances on pain clinics, fertilizer use, scrap metal sales and smoking on county properties, such as the beaches.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta sharply criticized the Tallahassee legislative process, saying all the decisions are made by a small coterie of committee chairs and lobbyists. Any visits to the capitol by Sarasota board members would be just a "show," he said. "We all know how business is done up there."

The county "got beat up" by the Legislature for its pill mill, scrap metal and smoking rules, he

pointed out. "Three really good ordinances, and then Tallahassee decides 'We don't like them,' and they just preempted us. So that just leaves a bad taste in my mouth." Barbetta said even the county's local delegation didn't "come to bat for us."

"I've actually made it a point not to go to Tallahassee because of the way they operate," he added.

The board took no particular action to adjust its lobbying efforts during its retreat; Lewis told the commissioners he would come back to them with any specific requests for personal visits during the 2014 session. He tells *The Sarasota News Leader* the message he heard is that the county's efforts should be "very targeted and very strategic" going forward.

"We're not changing our efforts; we're not changing our priorities," he says. "It was really a discussion about how to best use the time of the commissioners."

Barbetta said the one way to get legislators' attention is obvious: Just hire another lobbyist. "We need to have strong lobbyists," he told his colleagues. "It's unfortunate, but that's how it works." 



*The County Commission sits in session in May. File photo*

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Hotel Sarasota



## ON THE LOOKOUT FOR MORE CRANES

*The developers of the new hotel on Palm Avenue, next to the parking garage, showed members of the Development Review Committee a more complete rendering of their project. The view is how the structure will appear to someone on Cocoanut Avenue. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

### **REVISED DETAILS ARE REVEALED ABOUT THE HOTEL PROJECT NEXT TO THE PALM AVENUE GARAGE AND A PROJECT WITH INCREASED DENSITY IN THE ROSEMARY DISTRICT REMAINS ON THE FAST TRACK**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

Construction cranes could be figuratively winging their way to town this summer.

The City of Sarasota Development Review Committee (DRC) on Wednesday, Dec. 18, gave a “sign-off” to the Sarasota Gulfstream hotel and condominium complex. The 18-story building will be located on the northwest corner of U.S. 41 and the John Ringling Causeway, the former site of a Holiday Inn and Denny’s restaurant.

The sign-off is tantamount to “administrative site plan approval” and is a major milestone in the development process. Senior city

Planner Courtney Mendez says the official letter should be drafted in a week. The next step is approval of building plans.

Last month, the Jewel condominium project on lower Main Street received its first building permit, and a hotel complex planned for the northern corner of Ringling Boulevard and Palm Avenue also won its initial approval last month to start construction. The building is expected to be an Aloft hotel, with European business-class accommodations.

Meanwhile, plans for a fourth hotel were before the Development Review Committee

Wednesday. The Hotel Sarasota is a 10-story project planned for the northeast corner of Palm Avenue and Coconut Avenue, next to the Palm Avenue parking garage. After developer Angus Rogers and his team made a pre-application presentation to the DRC, they heard staff comments designed to smooth the way for a formal presentation later.

The DRC is composed of senior city staffers involved in development, representing the offices for planning and zoning, neighborhoods, construction, landscaping, utilities, the Police Department and the county Fire Department. The aim is to create a one-stop shop for developers to unveil early glimpses of

proposed construction, get feedback and then move forward with their formal applications.

The Hotel Sarasota was formerly referred to as the Floridays project and was proposed as an eight-story building. Architect Jonathan Parks said he considers the structure “more important than the Ritz, which stands by itself. This one is downtown, with its front door on Coconut.”

The facility plans to use the adjacent Palm Avenue garage for parking, and it will feature an outdoor café on the Palm Avenue side. Rogers purchased the land from the city on Oct. 12, 2012, for \$2.5 million.



*Attorney Bill Merrill displays the first visual of a proposed high-density residential project in the Rosemary District. He is seeking to triple the number of units per acre allowed. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

All went well for the plan Wednesday except for a comment by Larry Murphy with the Building Department. He suggested the development team look at the flood elevation chapter of the Florida Building Code. “I don’t think your first floor elevation is correct,” he said. “It’s off by 1 foot.”

That is exactly the reason the DRC was created, to catch flaws early before more complex plans compound a simple error. The development team will meet with city staffers after the first of the year to refine their initial site plan application.

## FIRST GLIMPSE OF NEW ROSEMARY DENSITY PLAN

A lawyer at the DRC meeting gave a sneak peek of plans for a new residential development in the Rosemary District. Bill Merrill briefed the DRC on the proposal to ask the city to triple the existing density for a housing complex.

The project would apparently straddle May Lane between Florida and Cocomanut Avenues. At one point, Joel Freedman, the developer’s representative, suggested the team might



*Hotel Sarasota will go up on this parcel next to the Palm Avenue parking garage. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

come back to the city for a vacation of the street. “We’d own it and maintain it,” he said. “This would tie [the property] together as we move forward.”

The site is zoned “Downtown Edge,” with a density of 25 units per acre and a height limit of five stories.

Merrill is suggesting a change to the Future Land Use Map with a text amendment to allow 75 units per acre through use of an “overlay district,” akin to what was attempted downtown several years ago. The district would be have Fruitville Road as its southern boundary with 10th Street as the northern border, Orange Avenue as the eastern perimeter and then Cocoanut as the western boundary.

City planners have already put this on a fast track at the instruction of the City Commission. Changing the map requires an amendment to the city’s comprehensive plan, for which updates follow an annual cycle. Merrill’s proposal has been placed in the current cycle.

To meet one of the requirements, the team already has scheduled a community workshop for Jan. 7. Time and location have not been announced yet. Merrill has already briefed the city commissioners.

## **BAY HAVEN’S NEW ‘CAFETORIUM’**

Huh? Yes, the “cafetorium” is the newest wrinkle in school design. Bay Haven School of Basics Plus on U.S. 41 will replace its



*The sign for The Jewel stood this summer behind barriers surrounding construction along Main Street. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

60-year-old cafeteria and kitchen this summer. The Sarasota County School Board will start Phase One by creating a new parking lot and temporarily relocating the playground.

Serious work then will get under way to erect a new building to house the kitchen and cafeteria with a stage at one end to create a “cafetorium.” Afterward, the old cafeteria will be demolished and the playground moved to a permanent location.

In addition to creating a new chow-hall-cum-performance-space, the School Board will reorient the student drop-off and pick-up areas to eliminate the serious traffic tie-ups in the neighborhood during the opening and closing of school days.

None of this requires a building permit, but school district officials will keep city staff apprised and comply with all appropriate building codes, they said at the DRC meeting. Project Manager Ernie DuBose hopes all the work will be finished by October 2015. 



*The Sarasota Gulfstream project will go up next to One Watergate on Gulfstream Avenue. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



# This may take a while.

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# A TUNNEL, NOT A SIPHON

*Pipes were stored in Luke Wood park after the contractor for the Lift Station 87 project walked off the job last year. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## THE FIRM ANALYZING HOW LIFT STATION 87 SHOULD BE BUILT RECOMMENDS A LOWER DEPTH FOR PIPE UNDER HUDSON BAYOU AND ESTIMATES A PROJECT COST OF \$4.2 MILLION

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

After \$1.1 million worth of study, the official recommendations are in regarding how to proceed with Lift Station 87 on the northern side of Hudson Bayou at Osprey Avenue.

Project Manager Robert Garland with the engineering and design firm of McKim & Creed is recommending another microtunnel under the bayou, running about 7 feet deeper than the depth called for in the previous plan.

For the past three months, Garland has

conducted a rigorous examination of the underground strata where a pipe carrying one-third of the city's sewage must lie. His back-up idea was a horseshoe-shaped siphon. The tunnel is as much as \$1 million cheaper than the siphon system, and it requires vastly less maintenance.

“Phase One was about ‘Can it work?’ and ‘How can it work?’ ... I already have a list of deficiencies and improvements.”

Robert Garland  
Project Manager  
McKim & Creed



He presented his findings at a public meeting Wednesday evening, Dec. 18, at the Waldemere Fire Station, concluding Phase One of McKim & Creed's contract with the city.

The new lift station is required under a consent order with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, following substantial sewage spills into the bayou from Lift Station 7. After discovering Lift Station 7 was built on private property, the city opted to build Lift Station 87 in Luke Wood Park, south of U.S. 41 where the Tamiami Trail and U.S. 301 split.

However, work halted when the contractor walked off the project. AECOM Technology Corp. was hired by the city to develop a plan to install a sewer pipe under the bayou to feed Lift Station 87. The microtunneling technique failed, resulting in the discharge of a fluid into the bayou. Lawsuits are on-going.

One of Garland's tasks was to figure out why the previous attempt to tunnel under the bayou did not work, before another effort is made. He used standard soil and rock borings along the alignment. Then he did a bathometric survey of the bayou,

looking at water depth and sediment consistency, and he probed for hard rock underneath. He also undertook a geophysical survey, looking for anomalies in the rock under the bayou — either voids or concentrations of material harder than limestone. Lastly, he did “sonic refraction” testing around the abutments of the Osprey Avenue bridge.

His findings held some surprises. Kimberlie Staheli, president of Staheli Trenchless Consultants and a nationally recognized expert in microtunneling, evaluated the attempt made by the first contractor. She found wildly excessive pressures were placed on the drilling rig because the cutting head was insufficiently lubricated.

But as Garland found out in a subsequent investigation, that might have been a positive result, because the drill was headed straight into the abutment of the Osprey Avenue bridge. “We need to be 15 feet under the bridge to miss the abutment,” he said.



*Residents might have been confused about whether work was getting under way early this week on the Lift Station 87 project. Instead, City of Sarasota employees were dealing with a broken water main near the intersection of U.S. 41 and U.S. 301 in downtown Sarasota — close to the site of the lift station project. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

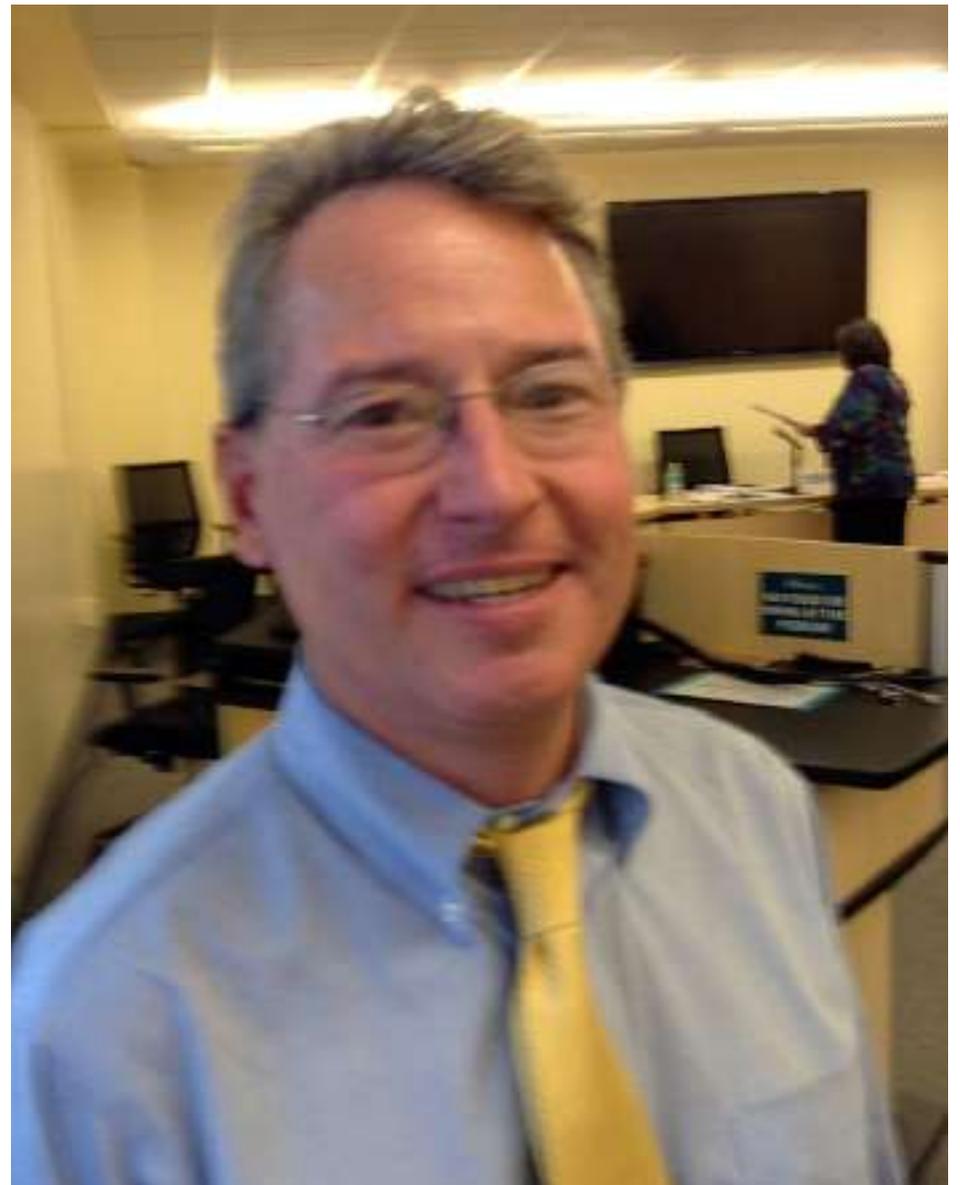
This means the already excavated pits containing the pumps must be lowered. “We’re going to have to go down about 7 feet deeper,” he added. The capacity of the already purchased pumps can cope with operating 7 feet below their original design grade, noted Garland.

Lowering the existing “influent structures,” as they are called, and boring the microtunnel at an appropriate depth is estimated to cost \$4.2 million, Garland said. The “double-bore inverted siphon” system estimate was \$4.6 million to \$5.2 million — plus the siphon design would necessitate quarterly maintenance of odor-control devices because siphons operate with atmospheric pressure and must be open to the air. The microtunnel is self-flushing and powered by gravity.

Garland excluded what he called “common costs,” which would be incurred by either system. For example, reclaimed water will be offered to residents along Alta Vista and Pomelo streets for use in their yards, Osprey Avenue will be resurfaced, sidewalks will be restored and other smaller projects will be accomplished.

“Phase One was about ‘Can it work?’ and ‘How can it work?’” said Garland. The next phase is designing the system and figuring out the full-cost estimates. “I already have a list of deficiencies and improvements,” he added.

Assuming the city is satisfied with McKim & Creed’s work after Phase Two, the company could oversee the actual construction.



*Robert Garland is vice president of McKim & Creed. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

A report last year by Andrew Robinson of Boregis Ltd. of the United Kingdom did a top-to-bottom review of the AECOM effort as part of an ongoing lawsuit between the company and the city over the failed \$12.5 million project. The report found AECOM had no experience in microtunneling. Instead, the company relied on the expertise of a Palmetto company, Huxted Tunneling. 

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# THE CHALLENGES OF MARBUT'S PLAN

*Homeless people gather outside Selby Library in the spring. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **COUNTY EMPLOYEES WORKING ON THE COMMUNITY'S NEW HOMELESSNESS INITIATIVES SAY SOME OF THE MEASURES WILL TAKE A LONG TIME TO COME TO FRUITION**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

When homelessness consultant Robert Marbut returns to Sarasota next month, he will find some facets of his 12-point plan starting up. Other points may take years. "This is not a system we can change overnight," said Sarasota County Homeless Coordinator Wayne Applebee this week.

Applebee himself is one of the elements of the plan already in operation, as is Nancy DeLoach, who has been working as the

homeless public policy coordinator for the county for the past eight weeks. And the city recently approved hiring an administrative assistant for Applebee. The opening is being advertised on the county website. It closes Dec. 27. All three positions are good for the next two years.

“*We need to work on affordable housing. [Homelessness consultant Robert Marbut heard this everywhere he went.]*”

Wayne Applebee  
Homeless Coordinator  
Sarasota County



Another of Marbut's points received professional attention this week when Sean Lee arrived Dec. 19 for a two-day visit. Marbut recommended Lee to

help integrate the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) throughout the myriad of social service agencies that address homeless issues.

Marbut explained that HMIS is not a record-keeping database, noted Applebee. “It should be the backbone of case management.”

Several funders and other possible funders want to see much more extensive use of HMIS. “There is high interest in the outcomes,” said Applebee. Plus, federal funding is dependent on use of HMIS.

Applebee was speaking at the monthly Focus Group on Homelessness led by Liz Nolan, the manager of the Selby Public Library in downtown Sarasota. The group has been meeting since 2009; it is one of the few to actively solicit homeless people to attend its sessions and participate in discussion. Oddly, for the first time in several months, no homeless were in attendance.

As for Marbut’s brick-and-mortar suggestions, the two “emergency rooms” for homeless families with children — one in North County and a second in southern Sarasota County — are



*Wayne Applebee and Nancy DeLoach are the county’s top administrators for homelessness and vagrancy. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

still in the exploratory phase. Applebee said the Gulfcoast Community Foundation “has taken the lead” on a South County “entry portal.” The shelters would be open 24/7 but able to serve as housing only for a short period, days at best. Clients would then be referred to other housing units operating under this system.

The most contentious issue is placement of a 200-bed (or more) homeless shelter in the City of Sarasota. City and county staffers met Wednesday morning to discuss hiring a firm for environmental studies of the top three sites recommended by Marbut. Applebee said the studies would take six to eight weeks to complete. “This will help identify a site we might be interested in,” he added.

A protocol needs to be developed for public safety in and around the proposed shelter, said Applebee. “It might be run like the courthouse, with the Sheriff’s Office responsible for the inside and the city police responsible for the outside,” he said.

Another Marbut recommendation would unify city and county ordinances used to regulate behavior and often applied to homeless and vagrant people. Applebee is asking representatives of the five relevant jurisdictions to meet next month for a kick-off discussion of that element of the Marbut plan. He is also asking a representative of the American Civil Liberties Union to participate. However, many of the proposed new regulations cannot be enforced until a shelter is in full operation.

Applebee admitted the most intractable problem will be affordable housing. Once rehabilitated and employed, the formerly homeless still have to find places to live. Sarasota has already gone through one public drama over affordable housing; that took place before the property bubble burst. And even now, with property values down significantly, it is still difficult for people earning low wages to find homes.

“Affordable housing,” said Applebee, “is the piece that holds the other 11 together. We need to work on affordable housing. Marbut heard this everywhere he went.” 



*In late summer, a group of homeless people gathered under shade trees near City Hall in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

# DEALING WITH 'DESIGNER DRUGS'



Area convenience stores are selling synthetic drugs near candy displays, Sarasota County staff says. Image courtesy Sarasota County

## A PUBLIC HEARING HAS BEEN SET FOR FEB. 12 ON A NEW SARASOTA COUNTY ORDINANCE TO COMBAT THE SALE AND USE OF SYNTHETIC FORMS OF MARIJUANA AND OTHER SUBSTANCES

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

Because state laws cannot be passed fast enough to match the rate at which chemists modify substances to create potentially dangerous synthetic drugs, the Sarasota County Commission has scheduled a public hearing on the morning of Feb. 12 regarding a proposed county ordinance to control a new array of such drugs.

The board voted unanimously on Dec. 11 to advertise the public hearing. “It’s hard to stay

“ *If you see [such a drug] for sale [in a convenience store], turn around and walk out and encourage the community not to shop there until it stops [selling the drug] ... We can also vote with our pocketbooks.*

Charles Hines  
Vice Chairman  
Sarasota County Commission



in front of the curve on this [issue]” from a legislative standpoint, noted Commissioner Christine Robinson, who serves on the county’s Criminal Justice Commission (CJC).

That board in late August identified the

abuse of synthetic drugs — referred to as “designer drugs” — as “a pressing community issue,” according to a staff memo prepared for the commission on Dec. 11.

Chairwoman Carolyn Mason seconded the motion Robinson made to approve advertisement of the hearing, adding that a couple of months earlier, a homeless man walked up to her in church and said, “You’ve got to do something about this synthetic marijuana stuff that’s going on in the community.”

Mason told her colleagues and staff, “That says something loud and clear, to me, and I’m happy to see this ordinance [proposed].”

Synthetic marijuana is not the only designer drug that would be targeted by the new law, Mel Thomas, a planner in the county’s Health

and Human Services Department, explained in a presentation during the commission meeting. Along with synthetic cannabinoids, the other two primary “families” are synthetic or substitute Cathinones — commonly known as bath salts — and Kratom.

Of the latter, Thomas pointed out that the team working on the proposed ordinance — including representatives of the Sarasota County Sheriff’s and State Attorney’s offices — recently received some pushback from community residents opposed to Kratom’s inclusion in the new law. Thomas explained that Kratom is on the watch list of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, and research the county team undertook found the synthetic drug frequently mentioned as the perceived successor to the synthetic cannabinoids (marijuana) and Cathinones.

## Who do you think the customer is? Who’s the pitch designed to reach?



*A sample of packaging reflects the marketing approach used with synthetic drugs. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

Additionally, she told the commissioners, the substance is banned by the U.S. Army and Navy, and — most important — “No one knows the short- and long-term effects of Kratom on those who choose to use it.”

Where its effects are best known, she noted, it is a controlled or illegal substance.

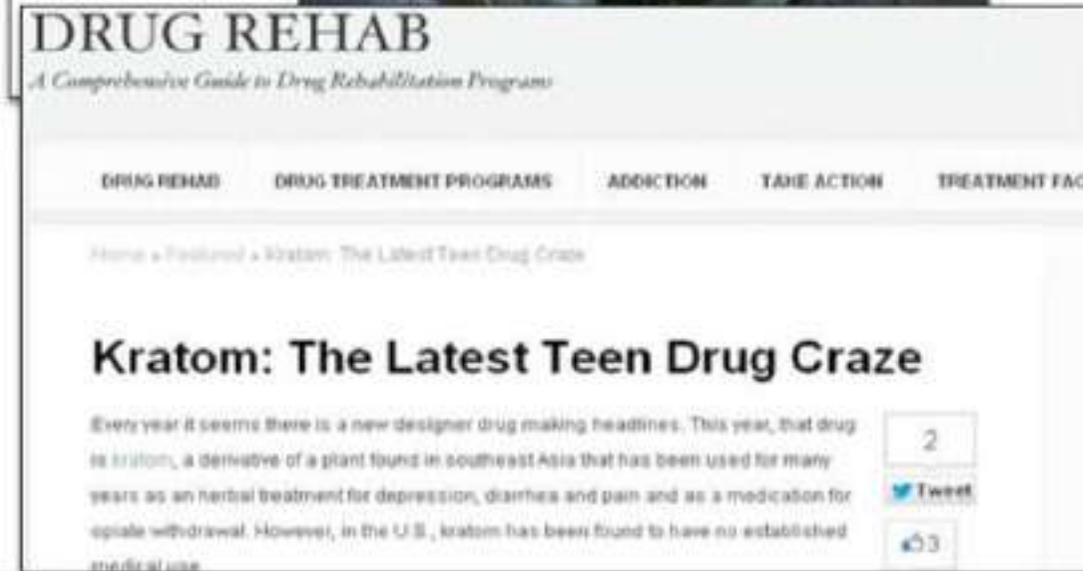
Thomas showed the board a map with 20 “smoke shops” pinpointed in a 50-mile radius of Sarasota that sell Kratom.

Among points of concern regarding synthetic cannabinoids, Thomas said the 2012 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey found 21.7 percent of Sarasota County high school students

had admitted to using them, compared to 13 percent of all Florida high school students.

Citing yet another study, Thomas said the Drug Abuse Warning Network reported that bath salts were involved in nearly 23,000 emergency room visits across the nation in 2011.

Thomas also explained that a quantitative validation had been undertaken of 945 voluntary surveys completed by people through the Sarasota County Community Alliance’s Behavioral Health Stakeholders Consortium. That analysis shows one out of five drug users have tried synthetic drugs, with 60 percent



The synthetic drug Kratom has come under greater scrutiny, county staff says. Image courtesy Sarasota County

reporting negative reactions and indicating such substances should be banned.

Further, she said local law enforcement officers have cited “remarkable strength” among users of the synthetic drugs whom they have encountered. She added that board members might recall a recent incident in which police officers and firefighters dealt with four homeless men and women outside Selby Public Library in downtown Sarasota. The homeless people were found to have smoked a homemade spice mixture laced with formaldehyde, she pointed out. It took five of the first responders to subdue one man, she said.

A few weeks later, Thomas continued, deputies arrested a man who admitted to having used synthetic marijuana before battering his

six-month-old daughter and spraying her with a window cleaning solution.

The suspect, Christopher P. Rounds, 25, of Cape Coral, was charged on Oct. 27 with Cruelty Toward Child: Aggravated Child Abuse and Disturbing the Peace. He remains in the Sarasota County Jail under total bond of \$352,000, according to the Sheriff’s Office website.

Thomas told the commissioners one of the most popular synthetic cannabinoids, known as K2, is made by dissolving various compounds in harsh chemicals such as acetone, phosphoric acid or formaldehyde and then spraying the solution onto “harmless herbal mixtures.” The product chemically is similar to PCP or methamphetamine, she noted.

- **Factors to be considered in enforcement:**
  - **Product name**
  - **Packaging**
  - **Appearance and quantity resemble a controlled substance**
  - **Non-identification of active ingredients**
  - **Product placement for distribution**

## TACKLING THE VARIETIES

During her presentation, Thomas provided the board images of designer drugs in convenience store display cases. They generally are in close proximity to candy, she added. “The seductive packaging, mislabeling and easy availability, coupled with the perception that they’re considered a legal alternative to marijuana and controlled substances, lead to the perception that these substances are safe,” Thomas said.

The packaging features “eye-popping colors,” and the drugs come in forms such as “candy-coated tablets,” she continued. The substances are “designed for popping, drinking, smoking, injecting, snorting, brewing and chewing.”

Among their retail names are “Dreamcatcher,” “Chill” and “Jack Rabbit,” she pointed out. Her “favorite,” Thomas said, is one called “Opie Ate It Natural Pills.”

“It’s obvious these designer drugs are made specifically to be abused and, as such, are marketed with that in mind,” she added. “They are not tested for safety,” she stressed, so users have “no way of knowing exactly what they’re putting in their bodies” or how addictive the substances may be.

Thomas explained that members of the county team that crafted the proposed ordinance reviewed similar laws in Pinellas, Hillsborough, Broward, DeSoto and Pasco counties, as well as state statutes. The summary of the work was shared with and vetted by representatives of multiple community

organizations that work with people often affected by drug abuse, she pointed out.

One major concern in crafting an ordinance, Thomas noted, is the fact that research has shown that as soon as specific substances are outlawed, chemists change the makeup of the drugs to get around the regulations. Therefore, the Sarasota County team’s approach in writing the proposed ordinance was to focus on pharmacology and paraphernalia.

Law enforcement officers would be able to use discretion in charging users with civil or misdemeanor criminal counts, Thomas explained.

A business with repeated citations for selling the drugs would have its certificate of occupancy revoked, she said.

Commissioner Robinson pointed out that because the Florida Legislature, by statute, can sit for only 60 days each year, it has been unable to pass laws capable of dealing with the multitude of factors related to creation and use of designer drugs.

After the commissioners unanimously agreed to advertise the proposed ordinance, Vice Chairman Charles Hines said, “It’s sad that these laws have to be passed,” adding, “Smoke shops are not the only businesses selling the substances” — as Thomas had pointed out.

His message to members of the public, Hines continued, is “If you see [such a drug] for sale [in a convenience store], turn around and walk out and encourage the community not to shop there until it stops [selling the drug] ... We can also vote with our pocketbooks.” 

# FRIENDS, INDEED



*Construction of the new Gulf Gate Library continues, with an opening still planned for the fall of 2014, according to county staff. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## THE FRIENDS OF GULF GATE LIBRARY GIVE THE COUNTY A 25,000-SQUARE-FOOT PARCEL THAT CAN BE USED FOR PARKING FOR THE NEW LIBRARY

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

For a long time, members of the Friends of Gulf Gate Library had their eye on a 25,000-square-foot parcel across the street from their facility on Curtiss Avenue in Sarasota.

Finally, on Dec. 31, 2012, the Friends signed papers to make the property their own.

And last week — on Dec. 11 — they turned it

over to Sarasota County with the specification that it be used for parking and other purposes related to the new library under construction at the corner of Curtiss Avenue and Gulf Gate Drive.

“*This is just an example of what [the Friends groups] do for us. It’s a small example. They work tirelessly to help fill in some of those gaps that occur, especially during the bad economic times, and a gift like this raises the bar for other Friends [organizations], quite honestly.*”

Christine Robinson  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County



In the spirit of the board’s final regular meeting before the holidays, Friends of Gulf Gate Library President Deanie Erb told the commissioners she had a gift

for them. “The Friends of Gulf Gate Library would like to give you personally a piece of your new property.”

With laughter resonating through the Commission Chambers in the County Administration Center on Ringling Boulevard in Sarasota, Erb walked to the dais to present each commissioner a tin can the color of gold, with a red ribbon on top. “You might not want to open it right now,” she cautioned them. “I don’t know how often they vacuum in here.”

“It’s dirt and grass,” board Chairwoman Carolyn Mason explained to audience members with another laugh. “We’ll just put this in our showcase.”

In an interview with *The Sarasota News Leader* this week, Erb said, “I think everybody

really appreciated my can of dirt. It was authentic ... They have the real thing [from the parcel].”

She added, “That was my idea. ... We just wanted them to have a look at what they were getting.”

With her board members in the audience, Erb told the commissioners, “This comes from the bottom of our hearts.”

In her remarks, Erb credited Jone Weist, who has been treasurer of the Friends of Gulf Gate Library since 2011, with making the property purchase a reality. “She really persevered. She stalked the owner of the property,” Erb said. “And we are just now very happy that we can turn that property over to Sarasota County.”



*The lot at 7115 Curtiss Avenue is being used for parking by construction workers at the site of the new library. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Christine Pearson, a member of the county's Real Estate Services staff, pointed out that the parcel is valued at \$275,000. All due diligence was completed before the Dec. 11 meeting, Pearson added, and everything was found to be satisfactory, including an environmental audit.

The property is located at 7115 Curtiss Ave. According to the agreement with the Friends of Gulf Gate Library, the site must be used for library-related activities including, but not limited to, public parking, gardens, accessory structures, a stormwater facility, lighting, fencing, landscaping, utilities, sidewalks and decorative features.

A Dec. 11 staff memo noted, "The Friends purchased the Property with funds raised in support of their mission through donations, membership dues, tributes and memorials, proceeds from The Friends Bookstore and special events."

"I think this is such a fine example of how government can really only do so much efficiently," Vice Chairman Charles Hines pointed out of the gift. "It's nice to have these partnerships [with organizations comprising volunteers]."

"This is just an example of what [the Friends groups] do for us. It's a small example," Commissioner Christine Robinson added. "They work tirelessly to help fill in some of those gaps that occur, especially during the bad economic times, and a gift like this raises the bar for other Friends [organizations], quite honestly."

"I can only say, 'Yea!' to the power of partnerships," Mason told Erb. "So thank you."

In comments about the work of the county's library Friends groups, Sarabeth Kalajian, the county's director of libraries and historical resources, said, "The Friends of Gulf Gate



*An aerial view shows the parcel (0111-01-031) the Friends of Gulf Gate Library gave Sarasota County. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

Library epitomize the significance of this collaboration to serve our citizens.”

The Gulf Gate organization has contributed to the purchase of books and media for the collection; sponsored enrichment programs for children, young adults and adults; and, especially, has been working to acquire equipment to enable the visually impaired to enjoy the library’s resources, Kalajian continued.

Along with the gift of the parcel, the group has committed to providing furniture and décor for the teens’ and children’s centers in the new library, furnishings for the two gardens and equipment for the meeting room, Kalajian added. The Gulf Gate organization’s members, she noted, “couldn’t [be] better friends.”

The new parking area will be “a tremendous asset” when the library is completed, Kalajian pointed out.

Jim Mitchell, manager of the Gulf Gate Library, told the *News Leader* this week, the property “will be very helpful with one of the perennial

problems we have at Gulf Gate Library, which is parking.”

Kalajian pointed out that Gulf Gate Library was the busiest of the nine in the county system before the facility was torn down to make way for the new building. The library has been operating out of temporary quarters in Westfield Sarasota Square Mall since late February.

In making the motion to accept the parcel, Commissioner Nora Patterson spoke of the board’s “very grateful acceptance.”

“It’s incredible,” she added of the gift.

“[The commissioners] were just so generous in their thanks,” Erb told the *News Leader* on Dec. 17. Referring to her Friends of the Library board members, she said, “That meant a lot to all of us.”

Erb also pointed out that the closing for the transfer of the property to the county went without a hitch on Dec. 13. 



*The new Gulf Gate Library will be two stories, with parking on that property as well. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

# LET THERE BE COLORS OF LIGHT



*Red and green lights could be used for the holidays.*

## DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT MEMBERS GET A LOOK AT PROSPECTIVE NEW LIGHTS FOR FIVE POINTS PARK

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

With all the calumny about city boards meeting out of the sunshine, the Downtown Improvement District (DID) board members took the daring step of meeting in the dark of night on Thursday, Dec. 12.

All five appeared in Sarasota's Five Points Park for a legally advertised workshop to look at lights proposed for the park's 28 trees.

Candela Controls Inc. of Winter Garden set up white lights and computer-controlled colored lights. The color system is estimated to cost \$136,005, while the white-only lights were bid at \$91,672.

Bill Ellis of Candela ran the demonstration. Among the observers were residents of downtown condominiums that overlook the park.

The use of new white lights would mirror the \$14,800 project to install white lights on 22 trees along Main Street. The DID loaned downtown merchants the money to get the lights up in mid-November for the holiday season.

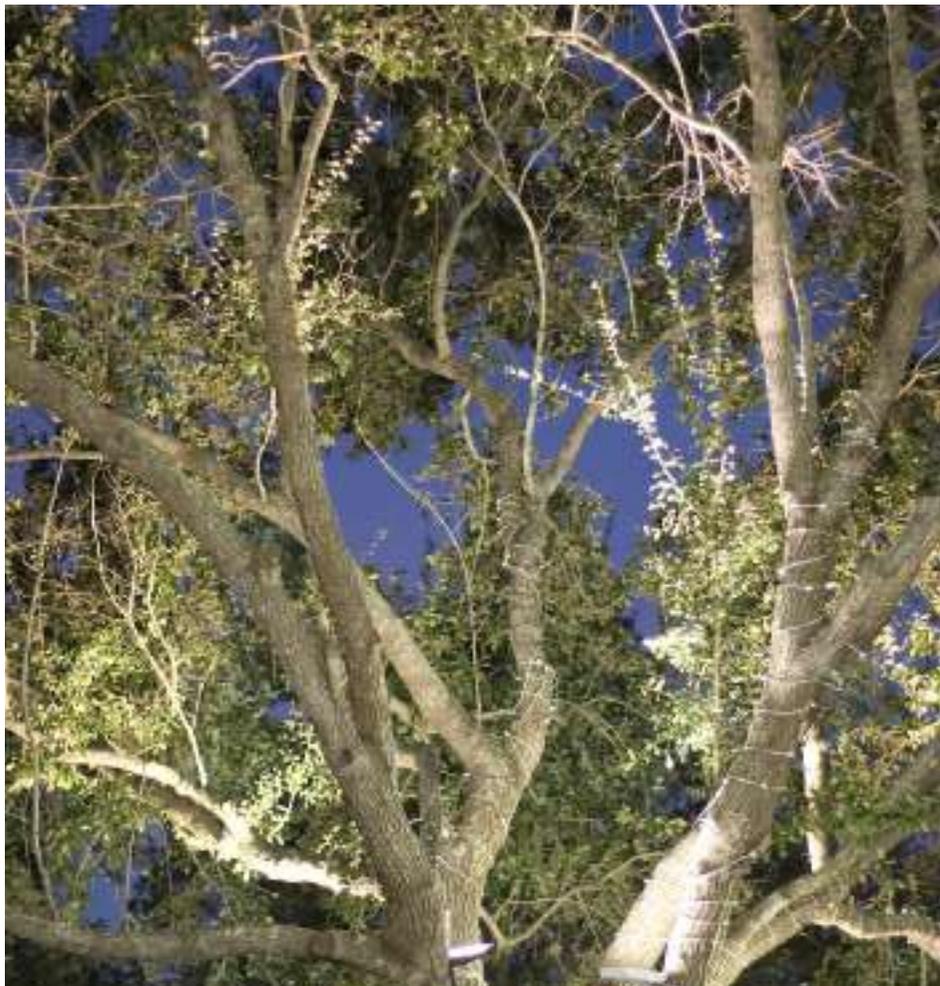
The colored-light system utilizes a red-green-blue palate to create any color desired. Ellis said the computer could be programmed for an entire year, so it would change the lights on



*Blue lights would denote autism awareness in April.*



*Pink would denote Breast Cancer Awareness Month.*



*White-only lights would be less expensive, the Downtown Improvement District board members are told.*



*The red highlights in the tree show up against a red background at the Plaza at Five Points.*



*The system can produce two shades at once.*

a schedule. "July Fourth: red, white and blue. Pink for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. You tell us," he told the group gathered near the tree that was the focus of the demonstration. "And you can decide when to shut them off and turn them on as the days get longer and shorter."

The DID has a checkered history of success for Five Points Park lighting. It spent \$80,000 for computer-controlled color-changing lights in the park, but virtually all of them failed as animals nibbled the wires and tree growth

broke the circuitry. The money was from a combination of sources.

The new Five Points Park lighting plan also calls for the DID to seek money elsewhere. "We should try to get the two condos [facing the park], the opera and the city to participate," said DID member Dr. Mark Kauffman on Nov. 12.

Candela representatives are aware of the past problems. The firm offers both maintenance and extended warranties for up to five years.

*All photos are by Rachel Hackney.* 



*Members of the Downtown Improvement District board mingle with downtown condo residents to compare the color-changing lights and the less expensive all-white lights.*



*Volunteers package donated food into boxes for the Mayors Feed the Hungry collection at Ed Smith Stadium on Nov. 22. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **MAYORS FEED THE HUNGRY PROGRAM STILL NEEDS THE PUBLIC'S HELP**

The donations collected in Sarasota and Manatee counties before Thanksgiving for the Mayors Feed the Hungry Program — a record 50 tons — has already been distributed, the program has announced.

“We are grateful to everyone who helped out. People on the Suncoast made a tremendous difference in the lives of thousands of their hungry neighbors,” says Joel Swallow, the campaign chairman, in a news release.

In spite of the record donations, “there’s also a record need this year,” the release adds.

“The need isn’t limited to Thanksgiving. We feed everyone who’s hungry, and this year we have thousands of schoolchildren on the list,” adds Swallow in the release.

“Donations are still desperately needed for the remainder of the holiday season,” the release points out. “It’s a great opportunity if you or your company is looking for an end-of-year donation.”

Food donations will be accepted at most city halls in the county, the release points out, or people may contribute cash at [www.mayors-feedthehungry.org](http://www.mayors-feedthehungry.org).

The Mayors Feed the Hungry Program is an all-volunteer group that began in 1987 in the City of Sarasota, the release notes. It has since grown to include the mayors of most cities and towns in Sarasota and Manatee counties, as well as the leaders of both county governments.

## CITY OF SARASOTA ANNOUNCES HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

City of Sarasota administration offices will be closed the following days during the 2013 holiday season, the city has announced:

- Tuesday, Dec. 24, in observance of Christmas Eve.
- Wednesday, Dec. 25, in observance of Christmas Day.
- Wednesday, Jan. 1, in observance of New Year's Day.

“There will be *no impact* to garbage, recycling and yard waste collection,” a city news release says.

[Bobby Jones Golf Club](#), which will be open every day, will host the [Sixth Annual Reindeer](#)

[Games](#) on Christmas Day, the release notes. The rate for 18 holes with a riding cart is \$26.75. Walk-ins are welcome. “The golf complex will close at 11 a.m. Christmas Day so staff can spend time with their families,” the release adds.

The [Lido Pool](#) will be closed Christmas Day only.

The [Robert L. Taylor Community Complex](#) will be closed Christmas Day and New Year's Day with holiday hours on the following days:

- Tuesday, Dec. 24: 6 to 10 a.m.
- Tuesday, Dec. 31: 6 a.m. to 1 p.m.



*The Robert Taylor Community Complex in Sarasota is among city facilities that will be observing special hours during the holidays. File photo*

## SARASOTA COUNTY OFFICES TO CLOSE FOR CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY

Most Sarasota County government offices and facilities will be closed Tuesday, Dec. 24, and Wednesday, Dec. 25, in observance of the Christmas holiday, the county has announced.

That includes libraries, the History Center, recreation centers, Arlington Pool, Payne Park and Knights Trail Park, a news release points out.

The Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (formerly known as the Sarasota County Health Department), which is a state agency, will also be closed Dec. 24 and 25. While only Christmas Day is an official state holiday, Gov. Rick Scott has directed that state offices close Tuesday, Dec. 24, “in recognition and sincere thanks for the dedication of state employees in service to the citizens of Florida,” the release adds.

No Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) bus service will be offered on Dec. 25. Regular bus service will operate on Dec. 24, the release continues.

Residents who live in unincorporated areas of the county will not have yard waste, recyclables or garbage collection on Dec. 25. Residents whose regular collection days are Wednesday, Thursday or Friday will have their collection day for yard waste, recyclables and garbage moved to the next day of the week, the release notes. For example, residents with a regular collection day of Wednesday can expect their trash to be collected on Thursday. Because collection times vary, residents should place refuse materials at the curb by 6 a.m. the day of pickup, the release points out.



*The Sarasota County Administration Center is located on Ringling Boulevard in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

Sarasota County’s chemical collection centers at 8750 Bee Ridge Road in Sarasota and 250 S. Jackson Road in Venice will be closed Dec. 23-25. The Citizens Convenience Center at 4010 Knights Trail Road in Nokomis will be closed Dec. 25. All three centers will be open Dec. 26, the release adds.

The landfill at 4000 Knights Trail Road in Sarasota will be closed Dec. 25, but it will be open Dec. 26. The landfill administration offices will be closed Dec. 24 and 25.

For more information, visit [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net) or contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000.

## SARASOTA COUNTY CIVICS 101 ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR SPRING

Sarasota County Neighborhood Services is accepting applications for the spring session of its popular Civics 101 program, the county has announced.

“Civics 101 offers residents a behind-the-scenes look at the everyday operations of their local government,” a county news release explains. “Participants will have an opportunity to see county government operations firsthand, including the Sarasota County Commission, Public Works, the Office of Financial Management, Emergency Management, Communications and more.”

The deadline to submit applications is Jan. 9, the release notes. Applications are available on the county’s website at [www.scgov.net/neighborhoodservices](http://www.scgov.net/neighborhoodservices).

The spring session of Civics 101 begins on Jan. 23, with classes taking place in various locations around the county every Thursday morning from 9 a.m. to noon, the release points out. Participation is free. New residents, business professionals, retirees and teens “are encouraged to apply for the 10-week program,” the release adds. Twenty-five applicants are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.

“Civics 101 is one of our most popular programs and frequently has a waiting list,” says Civics 101 Coordinator Kaitlyn Johnston in the release. “In addition to learning how and why the county provides services to the community, participants make new friendships that last beyond the classes.”

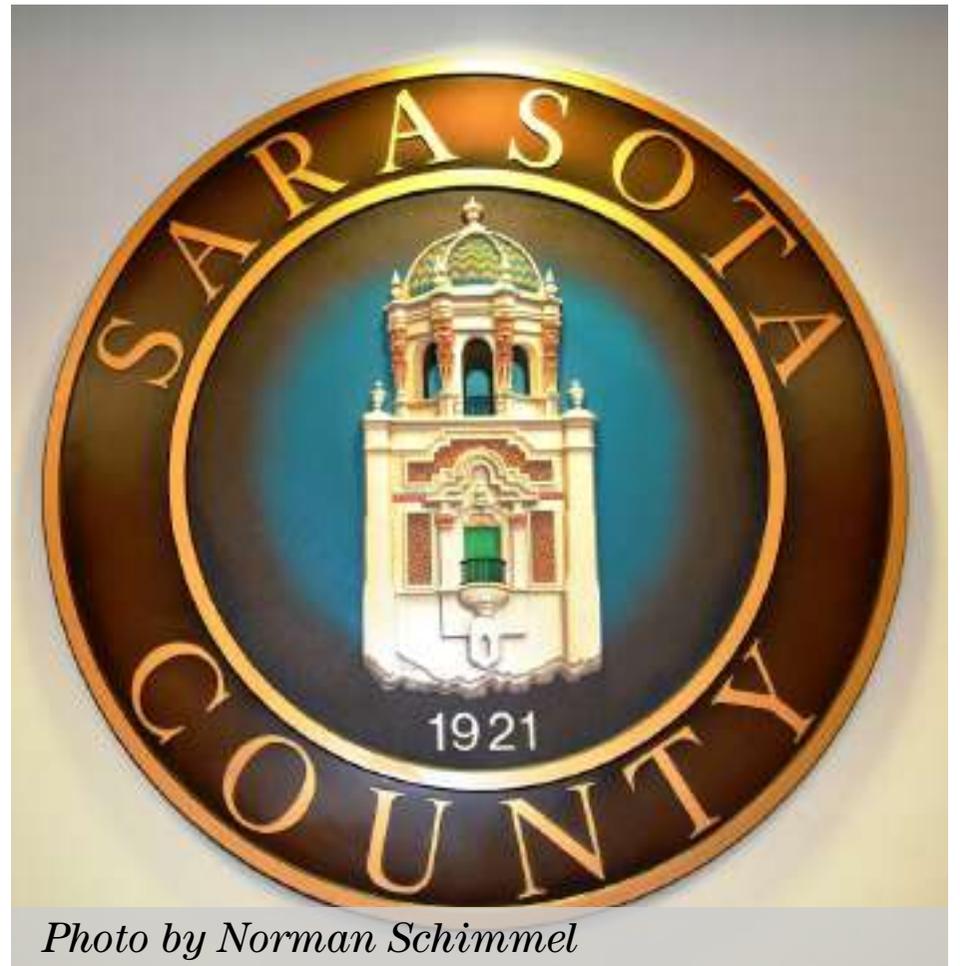


*Instruction about the initiatives of Sarasota County’s Public Works Department — such as the Honore Avenue Extension — are among the ‘lessons’ Civics 101 program participants pursue. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

Staff members from county departments provide presentations, conduct tours of facilities and answer questions from the participants, the release adds. Among new activities in the program this spring will be a guided tour of Phillippi Estate Park as well as the Sarasota County jail.

Civics 101 has been offered by Sarasota County government since 2000; it holds sessions twice each year. The most recent graduating class was the largest in the program's history, with 28 people, the release says.

For more information, contact the County's Call Center at 861-5000 or e-mail [kjohnsto@scgov.net](mailto:kjohnsto@scgov.net).



*Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **DOWNTOWN EMPLOYEE PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM BEGINS JAN. 6**

The Sarasota City Commission has approved moving forward with an affordable employee parking permit program in January, while deferring paid parking in the Palm Avenue Garage, the city has announced.

Parking in the Palm Avenue Garage will remain free and open to the public, including downtown employees, a news release points out.

Beginning Monday, Jan. 6, an employee of a business in the downtown area will be required to display a parking permit on his or her vehicle in the following surface parking lots: State Street, First Street, Burns Square, Orange Avenue, Cocoanut Avenue and Gulfstream Avenue.

The third level of the Second Street Garage near Whole Foods also will be included in this parking permit program, the release notes.

Permits are \$10 per month and are available for purchase at the Parking Operations Division (POD) located at City Hall, 1565 First St. in Sarasota. POD hours are 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

“The permits are very affordable at just \$10,” says Parking Manager Mark Lyons in the release. “We want to encourage employees to use the permit program and park without worrying about time restrictions and hunting for open spaces on the street.”

Permits will be issued in the form of rearview mirror hang tags, the release adds. To receive permits, employees must provide employer authorization on company letterhead, including a signature, stating the employee's work status. Employers may purchase permits for current employees up to three months in advance, the release points out.

The permits are not valid on weekends or after 6 p.m.

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS HONORED FOR ART IN CALENDAR

The Sarasota County Commission on Dec. 11 honored 13 elementary school artists whose illustrations appear on the county's annual student-illustrated calendar.

The theme of the calendar this year is *Be Floridian*, a county news release notes. Its purpose "is to encourage students and all Sarasota County residents to get involved in improving the county's environment by reducing fertilizer use and stormwater runoff into local bays," the release adds.

The calendar contains suggested actions that youngsters and adults can do to *Be Floridian*

"and get outside and enjoy local natural resources," the release points out.

"The *Be Floridian* campaign is all about protecting our fun — boating, fishing, swimming and all the other water activities that make living here so great," says Rob Wright, who coordinates the county's calendar contest through its Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship Team (NEST) program, in the release.

"The popular annual calendar features each winning illustration, along with a thought for the month to encourage simple



This illustration was created by 10-year-old Kimmy Couch, a fifth-grader at Glenallen Elementary School. Couch's art highlights the 'thought of the month' — creating a low-maintenance plant buffer zone around water bodies. Image courtesy Sarasota County

landscape techniques that reduce the amount of chemicals that enter local waterways,” the release notes.

The contest is open to any elementary student in a public or private Sarasota County school — including charter schools — and elementary-age home-schooled students.

Each winner’s school will receive a supply of calendars, and free calendars will be available in the downtown Administration Center,

located at 1660 Ringling Blvd. in Sarasota; at the R.L. Anderson Administration Center in Venice; and at county libraries as long as supplies last.

To get a free copy of the 2014 *Be Floridian* calendar, or to learn more about the NEST program, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000 and ask for Rob Wright.

For more information, visit [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net).

## **FOUNDERS GARDEN CLUB MAKES DONATION TO MEALS ON WHEELS**

Meals on Wheels accepted 400 gifts and 200 tray favors (mini decorated boxwood trees) from the Founders Garden Club of Sarasota at the group’s annual Tree Decorating Workshop and lunch at Spanish Point, the club has announced.

The event was held on Dec. 10.

On hand to accept the donations was Terry McGannon, executive director of the Sarasota chapter of Meals on Wheels.

Mimi Hernandez is the club president. Gina Gregoria is the club’s community projects chairwoman, who spearheaded the effort to gather and wrap gifts, a news release says.



*(From left) Mimi Hernandez, Terry McGannon, Irene Page and Gina Gregoria celebrate the contribution to Meals on Wheels. Contributed photo*

## SBEP ACCEPTING BAY PARTNER GRANT APPLICATIONS FOR 2014

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) is accepting applications for the 2014 Bay Partner Grants Program with a deadline of March 3, the organization has announced.

“The purpose of the annual program is to promote environmental education, community involvement and stewardship to improve the overall quality of Sarasota Bay and its tributaries,” a news release points out. Organizations can receive up to \$3,000 for projects that benefit Sarasota Bay. SBEP has awarded \$232,000 in grants to more than 113 organizations since 2003, the release adds.

Schools, businesses, nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, churches and civic groups in Sarasota and Manatee counties are eligible for the funds, the release notes. The watershed boundaries are from Anna Maria Sound to the Venice Inlet, encompassing all of the barrier islands as well.

Some of the prior initiatives that have received grants have focused on wildlife gardens and landscaping featuring Florida native plants, micro-irrigation projects, land contouring to create bioswales, production of signs that promote bay stewardship and educational programs.

Bay Partner Grant applications must be received at the SBEP offices by 4 p.m. on Friday, March 3, to be eligible. An application can be emailed as a Word document or PDF file to Sara Kane at [sara@sarasotabay.org](mailto:sara@sarasotabay.org). To learn more about the grant program online, visit the *Get Involved* page on the SBEP website at [sarasotabay.org](http://sarasotabay.org). The website also lists the nine grant projects that were funded for 2013.

Inquires are welcome at 955-8085 or [sara@sarasotabay.org](mailto:sara@sarasotabay.org).



*A variety of vessels dots Sarasota Bay on a cloudy morning in November. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## GIVING CIRCLES AT THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION MAKE FIRST GRANTS

Two of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County's giving circles recently made their first grants to area organizations, the Foundation has announced.

"A giving circle is a group of individuals who combine their resources into a pooled fund and decide together what charities or community projects to invest in, multiplying the impact of their individual support," a news release explains. "Giving circles also include social, educational and engagement aspects to increase members' understanding of philanthropy and community issues and provide a platform for making friends and contacts outside their usual circles."

Five giving circles with more than 60 members are housed at the Community Foundation,

the release points out. The Community Foundation provides "back office" support services for the giving circles, including handling the set-up, charitable tax receipts and management and disbursements of funds.

In November, members of the Athena Progressive Giving Circle presented a check for \$10,000 to Jewish Family & Children's Service to support its Operation Military Assistance Program (OMAP) for female veterans and their families. This grant also triggered \$1,000 in matching funds from The Patterson Foundation as part of its Unified Legacy of Valor Opportunity, the release says.

"OMAP offers not only financial assistance but also school readiness for children and household improvement needs, using a



(From left) Operation Military Assistance Program staff members Lisa Christy, Michelle Hammond and Tywanda Williams gather with Athena Progressive Giving Circle members Charlotte Perret, Dorothy O'Brien and Wendy Surkis. Contributed photo

two-generational approach to lift the entire family,” the release adds. “The Athena members who met with OMAP program staff reported that they were impressed with the solid record of OMAP and were enthusiastic about providing the program with resources needed to enhance current offerings.”

In early December, the Women Giving Together Giving Circle made a grant to Second Chance, Last Opportunity (SCLO), a community-based 501(c)(3) grassroots organization that has been offering life management skills classes to at-risk teens and their low income and/or homeless families since 1995, the release continues. The grant of \$2,350 was enhanced by an additional \$1,000 in matching funds from the Community Foundation, provided as part of the Association of Fundraising

Professionals’ Giving Matters Giving Circle Initiative launched in the spring, the release says.

The total grant of \$3,350 will support the Sisters Circle program of SCLO, a seven-week initiative through which women meet, share their experiences and develop a support network. The weekly sessions include counseling, enrichment activities, goal setting, communication skills, problem solving guidance and more. “The goal is for participants to gain skills and a new positive outlook on life to help positively impact the women’s attitude, behavior within the family and work prospects,” the release points out.

For more information about giving circles, call Dannie Sherrill at the Community Foundation: 556-7176.



*Community Foundation President and CEO Roxie Jerde (third from right) and Director of Development and Donor Relations Dannie Sherrill (far right) gather with Second Chance, Last Opportunity CEO April Glasco (fifth from right) and Women Giving Together giving circle members Jaclyn Ohman, Jane Hunder, Joan Paru, Doris Berkey, Sue Seiter, Sheila Baynes, Linda DeMello and Joan Corcoran. Contributed photo*

## JOHN DUMBAUGH RECEIVES LEGACY AWARD FROM HABITAT

Sarasota attorney John D. Dumbaugh of the law firm of Syprett Meshad has been recognized with the Legacy Award by Habitat for Humanity Sarasota, the nonprofit organization has announced.

Dumbaugh received the award during Habitat's Dec. 8 annual banquet, held at Church of the Psalms. Habitat Executive Vice President Fred Scheerle presented the award to Dumbaugh in honor of Dumbaugh's 20-plus years of service to the organization, which includes providing pro bono legal services to new homeowners and serving as a board member and recording secretary, a news release says.

"It's been a privilege for me to work with Habitat for Humanity Sarasota to help fulfill the dream of homeownership for members of our community who have had limited options or resources for housing," says Dumbaugh in the release.

In addition to providing new homeowners with title and closing services, Dumbaugh has assisted Habitat with legal aspects of several subdivision developments, including Lime Lake, Jordan's Crossing and Beacon Place, as well as in the acquisition of properties and other matters, the release notes.

"In 1991, I heard a speech about the Habitat mission and the local chapter, then called Manasota Habitat for Humanity. As a real estate attorney, I knew I could make a valuable contribution to Habitat's vision for



*John D. Dumbaugh/Contributed photo*

growth," adds Dumbaugh in the release. "It's been a wonderful opportunity to be of service, and I am deeply honored to receive the Legacy Award."

Dumbaugh is Florida Bar Board certified in real estate law; he has practiced real estate and estate law in Florida since 1974, the release notes. He joined Syprett, Meshad in 1982 and became a partner in 1984.



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## SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS INVITES SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent is accepting applications for scholarships to be awarded in 2014 by the Florida State Association of Supervisors of Elections (FSASE), Dent's office has announced.

The FSASE will award three \$1,200 scholarships to college/university juniors or seniors enrolled or accepted as full-time students in an accredited Florida university or college, a news release points out. To be eligible, an applicant must be a political science, public or business administration, or journalism/mass communications major, must have lived in Florida for at least the preceding two years and must be registered to vote.

Additional eligibility requirements are listed on the application and in the scholarship guidelines, which are available online at [www.sarasotavotes.com](http://www.sarasotavotes.com).

Applications may also be picked up at the Supervisor of Elections office, located at 101 S. Washington Blvd. in Sarasota.

Completed applications must be received by the Supervisor of Elections, PO Box 4194, Sarasota, FL 34230-4194, by March 17, the release adds.

For more information, call 861-8606.

“Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.” — *Robert Louis Stevenson*

**The Church of the Redeemer**

222 S. Palm Ave., in downtown Sarasota

Warmly Invites the Community to Join in

**The Celebration of the Birth of Christ**

*Christmas Eve*

**Family Mass - 4 pm**

Music & Carols begin at 3:30 pm

**Choral Mass (with incense) - 6:30 pm**

Brass Quartet, Organ & Carols begin at 6 pm

**Midnight Mass (with incense) - 10:30 pm**

Brass Quartet, Organ & Carols begin at 9:30 pm

*Christmas Day*

**Holy Communion at 7:30 am**

**Choral Mass at 10 am**

**Mass in Spanish at 1 pm**

Complimentary parking for Christmas Eve available at BMO Harris Bank Parking Garage, McAnsh Square Christmas Eve beginning at 3 p.m.

Child Care Available During 4pm Family Mass.  
[www.redeemersarasota.org](http://www.redeemersarasota.org) / call 941.955.4263





*The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is warning the public about another telephone scam. Image courtesy of [Stock.xchnng](#)*

## **SHERIFF'S OFFICE WARNING THE PUBLIC ABOUT A TELEPHONE SCAM**

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is warning people about a telephone scam that attempts to extort money from innocent individuals whom the caller claims are wanted by law enforcement officials.

The office recently has received two reports of a caller claiming to be with the Sheriff's Office Warrants Division who tells the victim he is wanted but the matter can be cleared up if the victim loads the amount of the fine onto a "green dot card" and provides it to the caller, a news release says.

Neither person complied with the caller; both reported it to law enforcement representatives, the release adds.

"It is important to note that the majority of warrants cannot be satisfied without appearing in person at either the jail or in court," the release points out. The Warrants Division

does not collect fine amounts; all money is paid to the Clerk of Court; and wanted individuals would never be asked to meet with a deputy to exchange funds, the release notes.

"As legitimate as some of these phone scams may sound, the callers are criminals who want to separate citizens from their hard-earned money," said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release. "In every case, just hang up, think about what was said and then report the call."

Anyone who may have been the victim of this or a similar scam should contact the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office non-emergency number, 316-1201.

For more information about scams and fraud visit the Federal Trade Commission website or click here: [www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0076-telemarketing-scams](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0076-telemarketing-scams).

## UNDERCOVER PROSTITUTION STING RESULTS IN ARRESTS OF EIGHT MEN

The Sarasota Police Department Street Crimes Unit, in conjunction with the department's Narcotics Unit, arrested eight men during a prostitution "John" Operation on Saturday, Dec. 14, the department has announced.

"This was an undercover operation targeting the prostitution problem plaguing the North Tamiami Trail neighborhood," a news release says. The operation was conducted at three different locations in that area, targeting individuals soliciting prostitutes, the release adds.

The following men were arrested:

- Ronald L. Biron, 32, of 59 E. Second St., Moorestown, NJ.
- David H. Kraft, 46, of 4300 18th St. West, Bradenton.
- Donald R. Keller, 53, of 6004 Ninth Ave. West, Bradenton.
- John A. Dill, 59, of 1000 Walker St., Lot 161, Holly Hill.
- Jason R. Hamilton, 35, of 3124 Olympic St., Sarasota.
- Patrick Molines, 62, of 3365 Shelly Drive, Green Cove Springs.
- Victor Mendoza-Rodriguez, 48, of 7816 43rd Ave. West, Bradenton.
- Juan I. Ortega-Infante, 26, of 5007 Five Acre Road, Plant City.



*Ronald Biron/Contributed photo*



*John A. Dill/Contributed photo*

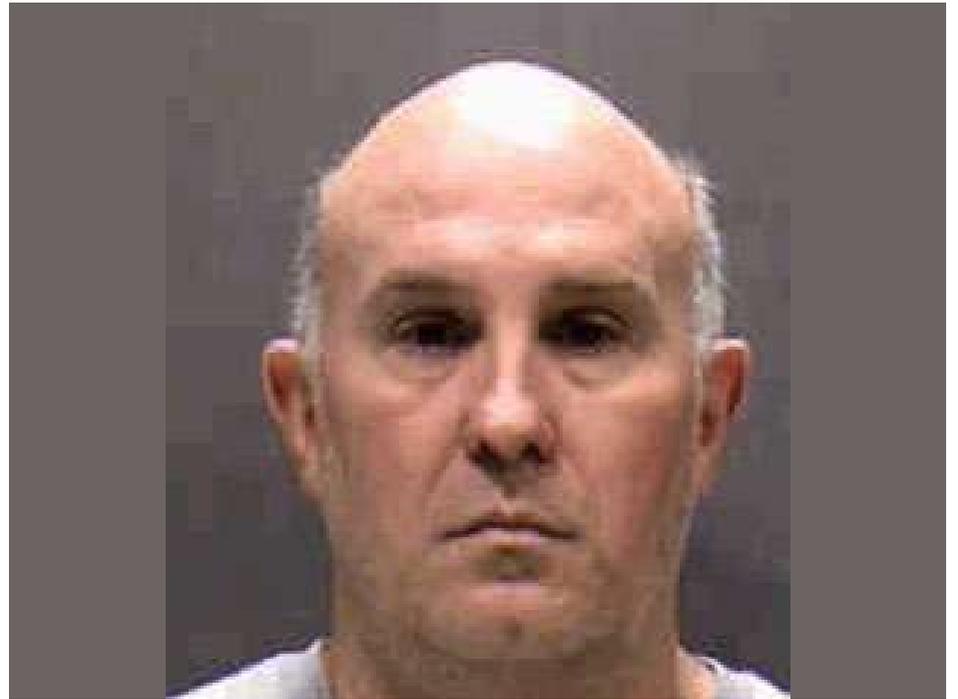


Simply put, Crime Stoppers relies upon the cooperation between the police the media and the community to provide a flow of information about crime and criminals. All submitted tips are secure and anonymous.

**(941) 366-TIPS (8477) • [SarasotaCrimeStoppers.com](http://SarasotaCrimeStoppers.com)**



*Jason R. Hamilton/Contributed photo*



*Donald Keller/Contributed photo*



*David H. Kraft/Contributed photo*



*Patrick Molines/Contributed photo*



*Victor Mendoza-Rodriguez/Contributed photo*



*Juan Ortega-Infante/Contributed photo*

## 60-YEAR-OLD CHARGED IN TWO SEPARATE SEX CRIME CASES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested a 60-year-old Sarasota man in connection with two separate cases of sex crimes against young girls that occurred more than 10 years apart, the office has announced.

Detectives arrested Dennis McGurk of 2835 Williamsburg St. this week after victims reported he touched them inappropriately when they were between 10 and 13 years of age, a news release says. One victim, now 26, said the crimes occurred in 1998. She filed a criminal complaint in 2001, but the case was not prosecuted, the release notes. When the second victim, now 16, came forward last month to report being sexually battered in 2011, "detectives located the original case and noted the manner and circumstances in which the victims were touched by McGurk are markedly similar, even though the two [victims] have never met," the release adds.

In the report on the case involving the 26-year-old, the deputy wrote that when she interviewed the victim in November, she "found her to have remarkable recall of the [earlier] events ... [including] how the interview room was arranged at the time. Additionally, [the victim] was able to draw a sketch of the McGurk home, down to the



*Dennis McGurk/Contributed photo*

location of the linen closet, even though she hadn't been inside that home for 13 years."

That victim underwent six years of therapy after the incidents occurred, she told the deputy, according to the report.

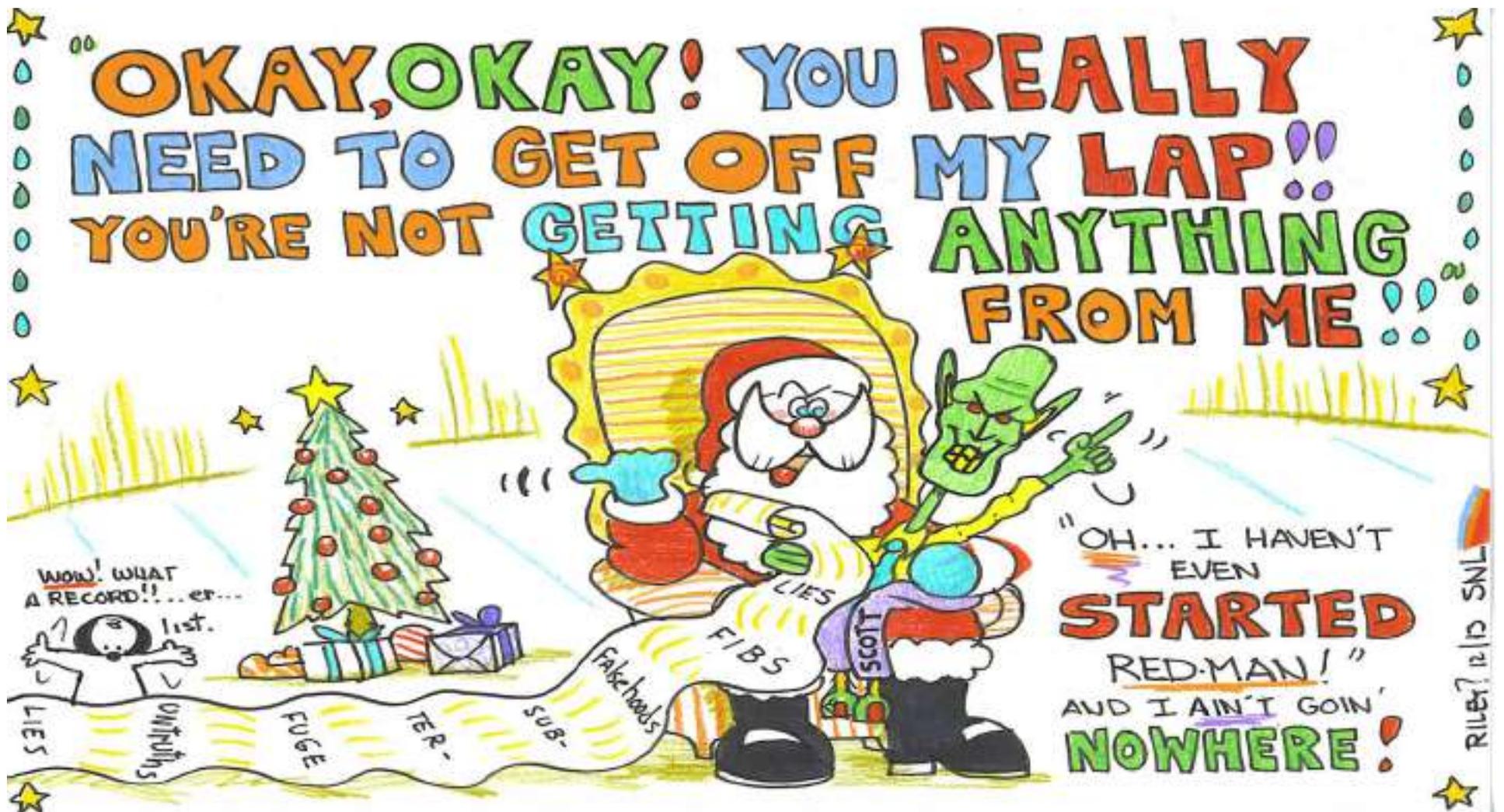
McGurk is charged with one count of Lewd or Lascivious Battery, for which he is being held on \$200,000 bond, and one count of Sexual Battery on a Child Less than 12 Years Old, for which he is being held without bond.

### Someone you know needs Planned Parenthood

- Lifesaving cancer screenings
- Parent & teen education
- Annual GYN exams
- Birth control



# OPINION



## FOX NEWS WANTS A VERY WHITE CHRISTMAS

### EDITORIAL

Recently, Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly convened one of her typical inquisition-style panels to “debate” a topic, in this case a recent article by Aisha Harris on her [Slate.com](http://Slate.com) blog.

Harris, an African-American, observed that growing up with the ubiquitous images of a white Santa Claus was confusing to her, especially since most black families — like hers — had a black Santa.

She could not escape the feeling that, somehow, the black Santa that she and her friends wanted to visit them on Christmas Eve just was not the real thing.

While she never said that Santa Claus should be black rather than white — she actually suggested, tongue-in-cheek, that Santa should

be a black-and-white penguin — her plaintive concerns about her childhood angst were just too much for Megyn Kelly.

Kelly upbraided Harris on air, lambasting her for implying that Santa Claus should be black, not white.

Kelly quickly offered a disclaimer to any alarmed racist white kids who might have been viewing her show: “And by the way, for all you kids watching at home, Santa just is white. But this person is maybe just arguing that we should also have a black Santa. But, you know, Santa is what he is, and just so you know, we’re just debating this because someone wrote about it, kids.”

Kelly then directed her caustic ire at Harris: “Just because it makes you feel uncomfortable

# OPINION

doesn't mean it has to change. You know, I mean, Jesus was a white man, too. He was a historical figure; that's a verifiable fact — as is Santa. I want you kids watching to know that."

Following this tirade, Kelly found herself the subject of significant scorn, first for arguing about the skin color of a fictional character and, second, for insisting that Jesus was white.

The modern fictional Santa Claus is widely regarded as having been modeled after St. Nicholas, an early leader in the Christian Church who lived in what would be modern-day Turkey. And his skin most definitely would have been much darker than the pinky-white shade used in popular depictions of Santa Claus.

Moreover, Jesus is regarded by most anthropologists as a person having dark skin as well, as would have been expected of Semitic people two millennia ago. That Renaissance artists preferred to use as their models only white European males with fair skin and wispy facial hair cannot alter that reality.

But Fox News — and Megyn Kelly — apparently only recognize the Euro-centrist version

of Jesus, not the anthropological one. So "Jesus was a white man, too" ... according to Kelly.

After several days of ridicule, Kelly proclaimed on air that everyone had misunderstood her, that she was only being whimsical in describing both Santa Claus and Jesus as white. Apparently, according to Kelly, the rest of the media have no sense of humor and took her pronouncements literally. It was a very "Emily Litella" moment.

*The modern fictional Santa Claus is widely regarded as being modeled after St. Nicholas, an early leader in the Christian Church who lived in what would be modern-day Turkey.*

What is ironic is that Fox News is the principal propagandist for the fictional "War on Christmas." According to the network's news personalities, an international cabal of

non-Christians wants to deprive Christians of worshiping Jesus ... and, presumably, Santa Claus.

Yet Kelly's hot-headed criticism of Harris, whom she accused — incorrectly — of claiming Santa was black, was the antithesis of the inclusiveness one normally associates with the Christmas season.

If there really is a "War on Christmas," the principal combatants must be Fox News, for, based on Megyn Kelly's harsh rant, their view of Christmas does not include the angel-sent proclamation, "On earth peace, good will toward men." 



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# OPINION



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### NEWS LEADER LAUDED FOR PUPPY MILL ORDINANCE COVERAGE

To the Editor:

As a journalist and a 20-year member of Sarasota County's Animal Welfare Advisory Council, I thank you for [County Editor Roger Drouin's excellent coverage of the recent County Commission meeting](#) discussing the consideration of enacting an ordinance banning the local sale of puppy mill dogs ([Dec. 13 issue](#)).

If you (or the county attorney) would like to review the full verbiage of such bans currently working in 39 other areas — including nine in Florida — here is a link to those documents: <http://best-friends.org/Resources/No-Kill-Resources/Puppy-mill-initiatives/Fighting-Puppy-Mills/Jurisdictions-with-retail-pet-sale-bans/>.

*Charmaine Engelsman-Robins  
Sarasota*



#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*The Sarasota News Leader* welcomes letters to the editor from its readers. Letters should be no more than 300 words in length, and include the name, street address and telephone number of the writer. Letters should be emailed to

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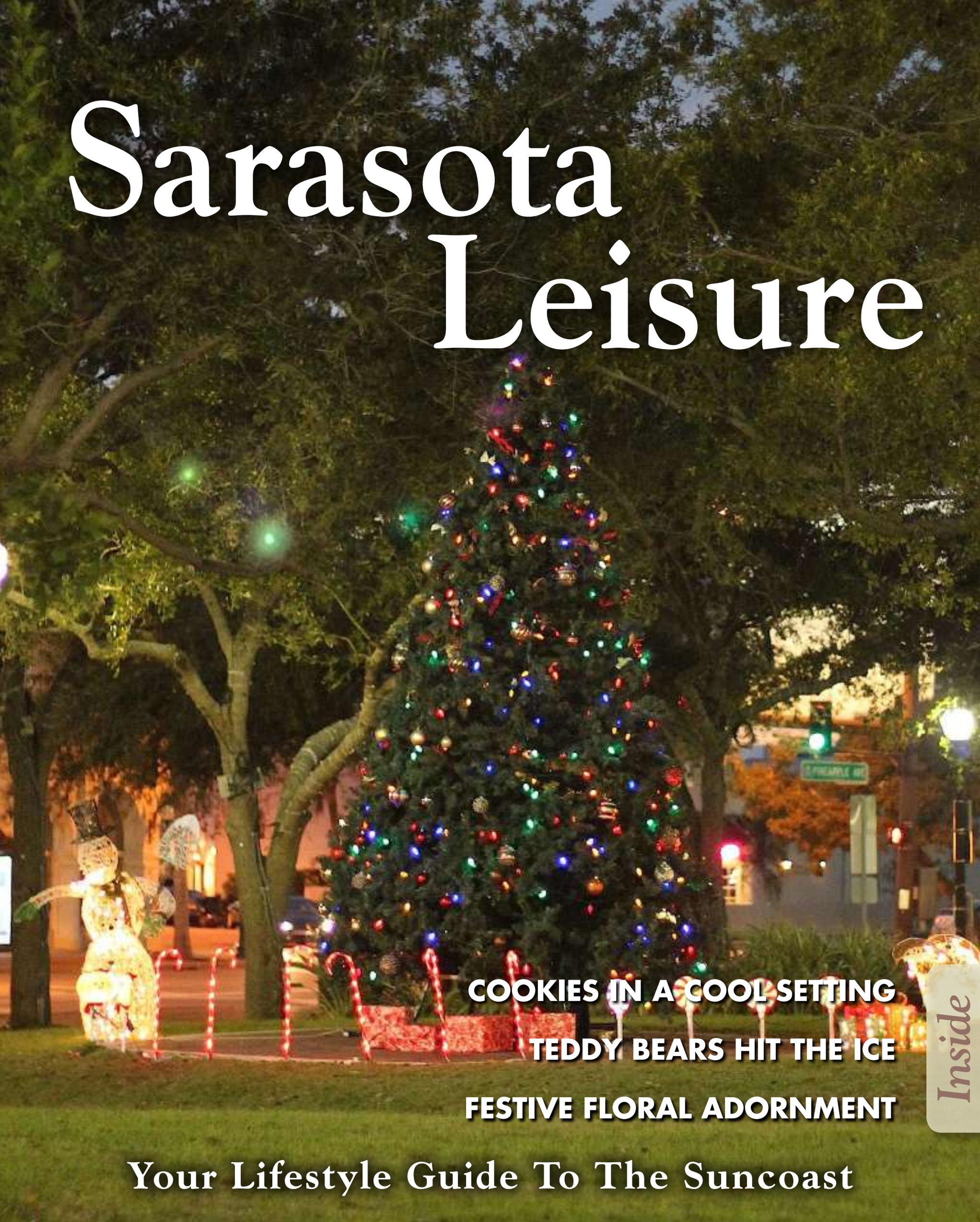
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# Sarasota Leisure



**COOKIES IN A COOL SETTING**

**TEDDY BEARS HIT THE ICE**

**FESTIVE FLORAL ADORNMENT**

**Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast**

*Inside*



## COOKIES IN A COOL SETTING

*The Marietta Museum of Art & Whimsy is on the North Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### **MUSEUM OF ART & WHIMSY PROVES THE PERFECT PLACE FOR A HOLIDAY COOKIE PARTY**

**By Harriet Cuthbert**  
*Contributing Writer*

I attended Mary's Cookie Party recently and I had a marvelous time.

Mary is Marietta Lee, owner, primary decorator and curator of the [Marietta Museum of Art & Whimsy](#) on the North Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, which was the location of the party. The invitation came to those of us who volunteer at the Sarasota Visitors Center — one more joy added to the list of many in our work — and it said, "Bring cookies to share and cans to donate to the All Faiths Food Bank." This was a fairly simple and potentially satisfying request.

It was a stunning Sarasota day for the party. As soon as I stepped out of my car, holding onto my home-baked snickerdoodles and my food donation, I was "greeted" by three huge yellow giraffes. They were metal sculptures, and their sunshine color immediately put a smile on my face and set the tone for Mary's party.

We walked in through the front entrance of the museum, where one of Mary's friendly helpers placed our food donations under a beautifully decorated tree and then ushered us to the outdoor area in back. I will confess

right now that I attended Mary's holiday cookie party two years ago and wrote about it in the former *Pelican Press*. But coming back was — to borrow an expression — “*déjà vu* all over again,” and I loved every minute of it.

Mary Lee is a phenomenon who has the eye of a professional landscaper and art lover. She seems to know exactly where to place everything to its best advantage. Walking through her museum, we were welcomed on the patio by the mellow sounds of a pianist, who put us in the mood for a memorable afternoon.

I approached the wonderfully festive long table laden with our cookies and saw people of all ages smiling as they took plates on which to pile their favorites. Huge oak trees shielded us from the sun, and tables and chairs were spread out to make us even more comfortable.



*Flamingos welcome guests to the Cookie Party. Photo by Harriet Cuthbert*



*Many of the museum's creatures were adorned with holiday 'attire.' Photo by Harriet Cuthbert*



*What a spread! Photo by Harriet Cuthbert*



*The flamingo is among the many 'creatures' at the museum. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*The Lee Family Arch welcomes visitors. Image from museum [website](#)*

The easy-going, well-mannered crowd reminded me of a long-ago era, before the Internet and the iPad consumed our lives.

Flamingos, blazing in orange and pink and in all shapes and sizes, were everywhere. Were they Mary's representation of good karma or just some beautiful and welcoming addition to her garden?

Meandering through the magnificent grounds later, I encountered a dolphin smiling at its baby. Then I spied Santa peeking through a large plant, sitting atop his wagon full of toys. I next saw a crowd in front of some large, neon-pink objects that could be pigs. OMG, they were pigs — with wings, of course: "If pigs could fly." How in the world did Mary find these pigs? But then again, how does she find anything?

Did I mention that the landscaping in her garden is of prize-winning quality? Everything was in bloom for our party; every plant was



*If pigs could fly ... Photo by Harriet Cuthbert*



*A bathysphere is just one more intriguing feature on the museum grounds. Photo by Harriet Cuthbert*



*Who can resist pink winged pigs? Photo by Harriet Cuthbert*

beautifully pruned, and we could tell the work was all done with love.

I thought I had seen everything, counting the flying pigs, but, no, something even more amazing appeared around the bend of the path. It was a huge round yellow steel ball with a small window and a thin pipe on top. This was close to how I imagine a UFO would look. The sign said it is a bathysphere. What?? Google says the bathysphere is a deep-sea diving vehicle, invented in 1928 by Otis Barton for his friend, William Beebe, to study under-sea wildlife. And here it sits, in Mary's garden.

My stroll was just ending when it led me to a huge "rocket" with the letters "USA" emblazoned on it. What a perfect ending to a most memorable afternoon. If I know Mary, she is probably contemplating signing up for a trip to outer space. There must be some fabulous collectibles waiting up there for her.

Happy holidays, and have a cookie on me. 



*A 'rocket' appears ready for blast-off. Photo by Harriet Cuthbert*

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# TEDDY BEARS HIT THE ICE



*(From left) Jill Riondet, Patti Schimmel and Vicki Chatley of Sarasota cuddle their bears before the game begins. All photos by Norman Schimmel*

## TEDDY BEAR TOSS PROVIDES HOLIDAY GIFTS FOR NEEDY CHILDREN

By Vicki Chatley

*Contributing Writer*

FORT MYERS — Awesome! It's the perfect word to describe the scene when an avalanche of teddy bears descended from the stands to the ice at Germain Arena in Estero during a hockey game between the Florida Everblades and the Colorado Eagles on Dec. 7. The scoring of the first goal by the home team at 6:51 of the first period was the signal for fans to begin the Teddy Bear Toss.

And toss, they did. More than 6,100 cuddly, stuffed animals were donated by those in attendance for future distribution to needy children. The game was delayed almost 10 minutes as cheerleaders, the team mascot

Swampy and other staff members gathered the toys. The benches cleared when players from both teams, including goalies in their pads, joined the effort to clear the ice.

Bears were not the only representatives of the animal kingdom. There were zebras, dogs, lions, monkeys, alligators — you name it. Some were small enough to be easily held by a baby; others were large enough to require their own seat in the arena.

All will be given to low-income children, including those hospitalized over the holiday season. Everblades players will participate in the distribution.



*One couple juggles multiple bears before heading to their seats.*

Sad to say, not all members of the audience had the arm strength or accuracy of Peyton Manning — including this writer, whose teddy bear landed somewhere in the first few seating rows, whence it was helped over the glass by another fan. A more thoughtful companion joined others who carried their donations down to the ice.

This annual event is sponsored by Iberia Bank. The Teddy Bear Toss is also held by other [ECHL](#) hockey teams.

The Everblades are an affiliate of the Tampa Bay Lightning and the Carolina Hurricanes.

The home team Everblades won the game 4-2, adding to an enjoyable evening.

*All photos are by Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel* 



*Fans brought bears of all sizes.*



*The game gets under way on clear ice.*



*With the Everblades' first score, the bears go flying onto the ice.*



*Players help scoop up the bears.*



*Trucks come onto the ice to collect the bears*



*Loaded pickup truck beds are a clear indication of fans' generosity.*



*One bear that did not make it over the glass gets to watch the rest of the game.*



## FESTIVE FLORAL ADORNMENT

*The geranium has proven itself a hearty plant. Photo by Rick Wielgorecki*

### **BEING IN FLORIDA FOR THE HOLIDAYS MEANS A VAST ARRAY OF NATURAL DECORATING OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE**

**By Rick Wielgorecki**  
*Contributing Writer*

This festive time of year brings out the desire in all of us to decorate. Though red and green dominate, all the colors of the spectrum are evident in the holiday environment. And while those living in wintry northern climes are limited to chiaroscuro landscapes composed of whites, blacks and grays, those of us in Florida can celebrate by decorating our landscapes with wonderful winter annuals!

Only a few years ago, the undisputed kings of cool season annuals were the impatiens. With heavy blooming and a host of chromatic choices, they provided a blast of color second to none. But powdery mildew fungus devastated homeowners and nurserymen alike, reducing their cultivars to so much shriveled tissue in the winter of 2011.

Thankfully, there are many alternatives to the impatiens. After a close look, it appears that the geranium has ascended the throne as the preferred choice for winter color in our neck of the woods (see Plant of the Month below).

There is a host of other flowers that can thrive in the cool and dry winter weather. Most are available in a variety of colors to suit any gardener's holiday color scheme. Some of the ones I have enjoyed over the years follow:

- Petunias defy cold spells and run nicely along the ground or cascade from hanging baskets.
- Snapdragons include some varieties that can attain 30 inches in height and attract butterflies and hummingbirds.

- Salvia comes in blue, red and purple and includes varieties that are actually annuals; I have grown them for several years.
- Pansies come in especially vivid colors, including a deep purple that is breathtaking, especially when combined with bright yellow.
- Chrysanthemums are familiar to almost everyone. They come in every color imaginable. When sheared after blooming, they can go perennial.
- New Guinea impatiens resist the fatal fungus and have a darker leaf, blooming less frequently than standard impatiens but producing a flower that is identical.
- Begonias can be spectacular in sun or shade but require vigilance against slugs and snails.
- Celosia has a feathery bloom that provides an unusual texture in the flowerbed.
- Dianthus provide small blooms with pink edges for variety.

## PLANT OF THE MONTH

The hearty geranium comes in red, pink, white, purple and many other colors. It prefers cool and dry weather and lots of sun, but it will bloom less profusely in shaded environs.

Under a light canopy, it can survive the summer and may bloom year-round. Good drainage is a must for it.

With thousands being employed in beds statewide, it has assumed the “royal mantle” and reigns as the dominant annual for our cool season.

*Rick Wielgorecki may be contacted at 362-0600 or [wielgo@hotmail.com](mailto:wielgo@hotmail.com).* 



*Impatiens once reigned as the dominant flower among winter annuals in Florida. Photo by Magnus Manske via Wikimedia Commons*



# *Siesta Seen*

## **COMPLAINTS ABOUT CONSTRUCTION ALONG HIGEL AVENUE PROMPT A COUNTY REVIEW; THE EAT HERE SIESTA KEY PARKING PROBLEM MAY BE RESOLVED SOON; AND A SELECTION COMMITTEE HAS SETTLED ON FINALISTS FOR THE SIESTA CHAMBER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR POSITION**



By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

Call it the Case of the Culvert Complaint.

On Nov. 25, a Siesta Key resident emailed Commissioner Nora Patterson — who lives on the island — to complain that the resident at 5025 Higel Ave. “has been somehow given permission to dig a ditch about 6 [feet] into

the right of way and make a wall ... on County property.”

The resident pointed out that the swale previously in that location also served as parking space. She added, “[T]his subdivision has numerous culverts, but they included the swale and covered or enclosed pipes.”



*A closeup shows too much shell has been added to a swale at 5025 Higel Ave. on Siesta Key. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*



*Mexican petunias grow in the swale on the property of the adjacent homeowner. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

# *Siesta Seen*

“As you know, we have no streetlights hereabouts,” the writer continued. “If someone went off the road they would drop down into a hole and have a terrible accident, [slamming] up against the wall which the county has allowed to be created. I would think that, since the county allowed this hole to be dug and this wall to be built, and in [essence] the county owns the wall, [it] would be liable when, as has happened in the past, some drunk or otherwise impaired driver comes roaring down the road, gets lost, and slams into the hole which has been permitted.”

The writer went on, “Even with the gentle swale, a car rolled into my driveway after missing the road some years ago ...

Please look into this for me.”

Patterson quickly emailed county staff, requesting a review of the situation, including whether it constituted an encroachment on county right of way.

As Patterson had copied the resident on her response to staff, the resident responded to Patterson with the conviction that the situation did constitute an encroachment, explaining that the swale was created to allow water to flow past the residences and into the canal at the south end of Higel Avenue. Over the years, the woman pointed out, culverts had been closed, allowing a backup of water to the north in heavy rain events. “This



*The swale is adjacent to Higel Avenue. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

# Siesta Seen

is not a problem until the street is inundated,” the woman wrote, but when flooding occurs, traffic has difficulty navigating that part of the road.

Assistant County Administrator Mark Cunningham wrote Patterson back on Nov. 26 — the Tuesday before Thanksgiving — to say staff was looking into the issue and would “provide a timely response.”

Then, in the next posting on the topic in the county’s public email folder — dated Dec. 6 — Patterson contacted Cunningham again, saying she had received another complaint from the same resident. “From what I can understand [the resident at 5025 Higel ... in the

last couple of days has filled in the remainder of the ditch that was half obliterated earlier by the low wall that staff permitted, filled in the south culvert with rocks, and provided no culvert at all on the north side of the new circular driveway that has just been installed.”

The woman resident who complained earlier feared the work had been done without a county permit, Patterson added.

Regarding a staff comment Patterson apparently received about Mexican petunias in the complainant’s swale, Patterson pointed out that the complainant had written to tell her those “plants still allow the flow of drainage to take place,” but the drainage had been



*Siesta residents are accustomed to flooding on sections of the right of way along Higel Avenue during heavy rain events. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

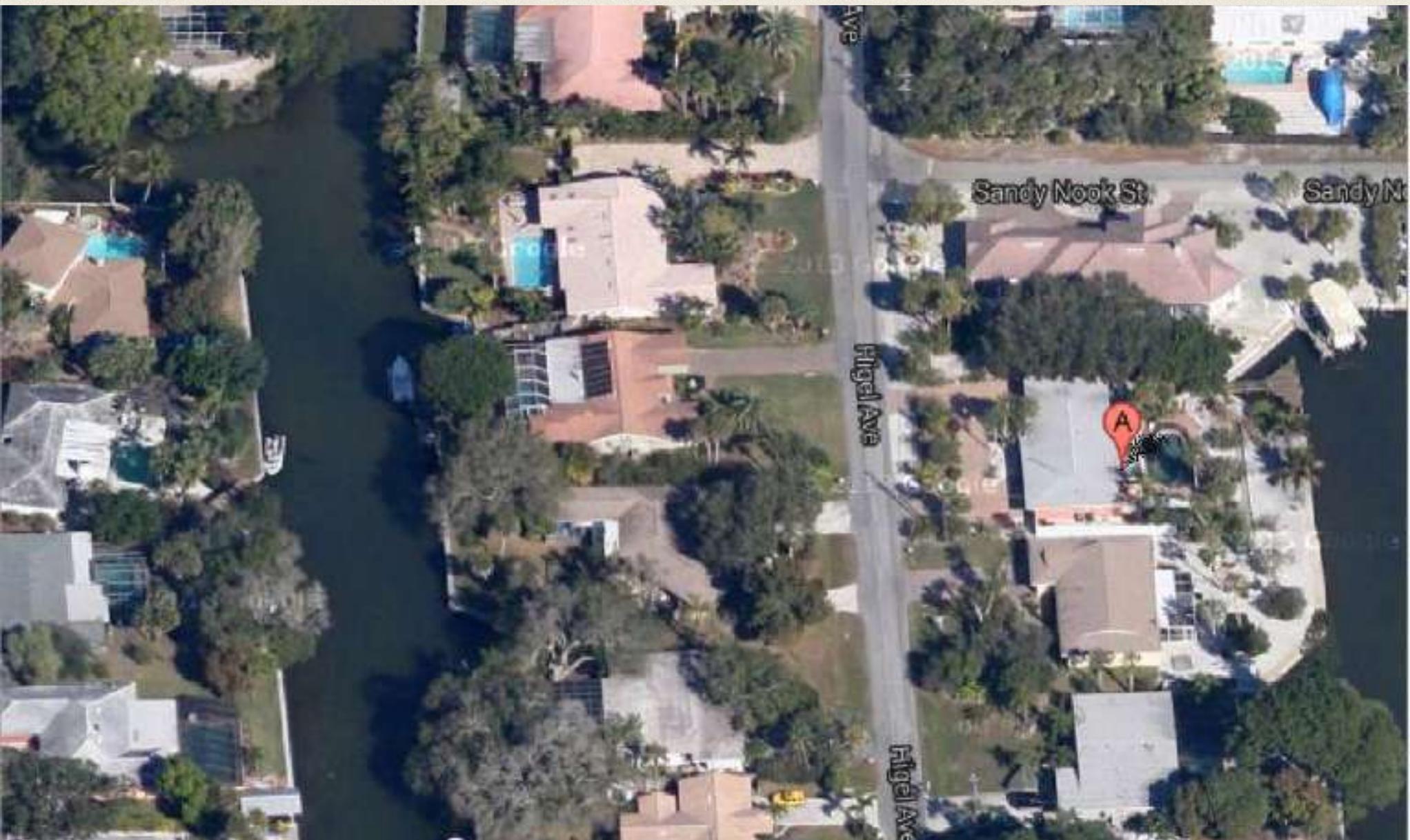
stopped at the edge of her own property by three things: the lack of a culvert under the north leg of the neighbor's newly installed circular driveway; the use of rocks to fill in the south culvert; "and the filling in of what was left of the swale after the little wall was built across the front of the property on 5025 Higel so that ... no drainage swale actually remains."

Patterson continued, "I cannot vouch for any of the above and have not personally seen the property. I am concerned, however, that if we do in fact allow people to fill in swales and culverts, that will be problematic at a later date.

"Could you have someone familiar with the situation ... perhaps check what has been done ... to add to the obliteration of the remainder of the swale [the complainant] felt existed prior to the low wall being put in with consent of the county. Also please comment as to whether the work done now and [earlier] was permitted" and, if not, whether the property owner should have sought a permit.

On Dec. 17, Jon D. Mast, the county's land development manager, emailed Cunningham to report on his findings about the situation.

First, Mast pointed out that the Land Development Office issued a right of way use



*An aerial view shows the location of 5025 Higel Ave. on north Siesta Key. Image from Google Maps*

# Siesta Seen

permit on Oct. 24 for 5025 Higel Ave. for the installation of “two rows of bricks to hold soil and mulch from spilling into the right-of-way” as stated in the permit description.

Mast explained that in regard to the wall in the right of way, the work completed on the site is in keeping with the permit “and serves the purpose in keeping the ditch free from yard and landscaping debris.”

He supplied photos (some of which accompany this article) to illustrate his points. Referencing them in the memo, Mast noted, “As you can see this is not a hindrance to drainage or traffic along Higel Ave. and it is reasonable to permit this in the County [right of way]. The swale on this yard is at the highest point of the road and is therefore the shallowest swale in this immediate location.”

He added that the complainant was correct in pointing out that the swale had been over-filled with shell and that the culvert had been blocked. “The owner has been instructed to remove an adequate amount of shell and to clean the entire culvert under the driveway on the south side of the property.”

As for the driveway, Mast wrote that it was “in place” at the time the right of way permit application was made and issued. “There is no permitting requirement for a driveway in Sarasota County,” he added. “If a request had been issued for a culvert permit, it would have been denied as the swale is too shallow to accommodate culverts.”

Mast further noted that Higel Avenue, along with much of Siesta Key, lacks adequate

drainage. “Many times this is perpetuated by homeowners gradually filling in their ditches (with dirt or landscaping) and adequate drainage conveyances are non-existent. This issue has been given plenty of attention this past summer due to the unusual amount of rainfall. If there is any violation it is with the homeowners that install planting in the County ROW without a permit. These violations only continue to exacerbate the drainage issues on Siesta Key and elsewhere in the County.”

Mast’s recommendation was for the culvert and swale to be cleared appropriately before county staff gives its final approval for work allowed under the permit issued to the resident at 5025 Higel Ave.

County spokesman Curt Preisser further pointed out in a Dec. 17 email, “Please bear in mind this update has not been sent to the [county commissioners] yet and they could give staff additional direction.”

## EAT HERE’S PARKING ISSUE

Regular readers may recall a July [story](#) in which I explained that county Zoning and Code Enforcement staff had been made aware that Eat Here Siesta Key is not in compliance with the parking plan the county zoning administrator approved before the restaurant opened in December 2012.

The plan created by Siesta architect Mark Smith, at the direction of property owner John Davidson, showed 52 spaces available for Eat Here patrons on Avenida Madera in Siesta

# Siesta Seen

Village, but only 48 were needed to comply with a revised parking ordinance crafted for the Village in 2009. The plan noted that all of the businesses utilizing those spaces in the daytime close at 5 p.m., and the restaurant does not open until after they close. However, the Coldwell Banker Residential Real Estate office on the corner of Avenida Madera and Ocean Boulevard actually stays open until 8:30 p.m. seven nights a week.

After months of trying to work out a solution, Smith told me this week he feels he has one. He and Brad Bailey, the county zoning administrator, are scheduled to meet on Dec. 20 to

go over the details. "I'm hopeful that this will finally be resolved," Smith said on Dec. 17.

Although he has discussed the proposal with Bailey over the phone, Smith pointed out, Friday will mark the first time the two men can review them in person.

## REPLACING KEVIN

People who know Mark Smith also know he wears many figurative hats in Siesta Village. While I had him on the phone talking about Eat Here Siesta Key, he also gave me an update on the effort to hire a new executive director of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce.



*Eat Here Siesta Key's lack of compliance with the Siesta Village zoning code because of its parking plan could be resolved this week. File photo*

# Siesta Seen

Kevin Cooper, who previously held that post, began work Dec. 2 as vice president for public policy for the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce. Cooper also has oversight of the organization's [Sarasota Tomorrow](#) initiative.

The Siesta Chamber received 31 applications from all over the United States, said Smith, who is chairman of the selection committee. Interviews in recent days have narrowed the field to seven, he noted, adding he hopes the committee members soon will reach a consensus on whom to hire.

Along with Smith, the committee members are Maria Bankemper, general manager of Best Western Plus Siesta Key Gateway hotel and chairwoman of the Siesta Chamber; Russell Matthes, co-owner of the Daiquiri Deck and Daiquiri Deck Raw Bar restaurants and past president of the Siesta Key Village Association; Bob Stein, publisher of *Siesta Sand*; and Alana Tomasso, the chamber's chairwoman-elect, who is with Cunningham Property Management.

## **SPEAKING OF THE CHAMBER ...**

The Siesta Key Chamber staff is reminding everyone that it is accepting nominations for the 2013 Business of the Year Awards until Friday, Dec. 20.

"Every year the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce recognizes two outstanding member businesses and one member businessperson for his or her personal achievements



*Mark Smith is chairing the committee seeking a new executive director for the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce. File photo*

and contributions," a news release says. "Additionally, the Shining Star Award is presented to an exceptional employee nominated by their employer, or an employer nominated by one or more of their employees."

Completed nomination forms must be received no later than 5 p.m. Dec. 20. The release says, "You can download a nomination form by clicking [here](#), or pick one up in person by visiting the Chamber office."

The Chamber headquarters is located in Davidson Plaza on Ocean Boulevard in Siesta Village.

The awards will be presented at the Chamber's Annual Meeting and Business Awards Luncheon on Tuesday, Jan. 28, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. 

# A&E BRIEFS



## **JAZZ AT TWO THIS MONTH CONCLUDES WITH GILLESPIE AND MILLER**

The Jazz Club of Sarasota's *Jazz at Two* 2013-2014 concert series presents the Valerie Gillespie Ensemble on Dec. 20 and the Dan Miller Quartet on Dec. 27 to finish out the month, the club has announced.

Founded in 2001, the *Jazz at Two* series showcases the region's top jazz performers on Fridays from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota, located at 3975 Fruitville Road in Sarasota, a news release explains. Tickets are \$7 for Jazz Club members and \$12 for non-members. A portion of the ticket sales is directed to the Jazz Club's scholarship program.

Gillespie has been playing saxophone professionally since she was 14, and she has performed with such luminaries as Chick Corea, Bobby McFerrin, Rosemary Clooney, George Burns, Ben Vereen and Ray Charles, the release notes. Gillespie has also toured with the Xavier Cugat Orchestra throughout the U.S. and abroad. Her ensemble, consisting of Gillespie on sax and vocals, Jeff Phillips on keyboard and Dave Rudolph on drums, "is known for its energetic, crowd-pleasing blend of vocal and instrumental styles,"

which draws in audiences with a wide variety of familiar tunes, the release adds.

The Dan Miller Quartet, featuring Miller on trumpet, Patricia Dean on vocals and drums, Don Mopsick on bass and Jerry Stawski on piano, brings together four of Southwest Florida's most accomplished musicians, the release continues. Miller and Stawski, who are colleagues in the Naples Philharmonic Jazz Orchestra, have worked and performed with such masters as Woody Herman, Wynton Marsalis, Harry Connick Jr., Michael Feinstein and Mike Manieri, the release says. Mopsick "has been in demand throughout the state since he moved to Orlando in 1983," it adds.

Dave Walrath, president of the Jazz Club of Sarasota, is especially pleased with the exceptional talent and experience of the performers. "These are all top-flight musicians who have worked with some of the best in the business and we're proud to be able to showcase them to our *Jazz at Two* audiences," he points out in the release.

For more information about the Jazz Club of Sarasota, call 366-1552 or visit [www.jazzclubsarasota.com](http://www.jazzclubsarasota.com).

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## **PERLMAN PROGRAM WINTER RESIDENCY MARKING 10TH YEAR**

The Perlman Music Program/Suncoast (PMP/Suncoast) will celebrate the 10th anniversary of The Perlman Music Program Sarasota Winter Residency Dec. 23 through Jan. 3, the program has announced.

The intensive, 17-day program was founded by Toby Perlman, wife of internationally acclaimed concert violinist and conductor Itzhak Perlman, a news release notes. It offers "unparalleled musical training for students"

ages 12 to more than 20 who play the violin, viola, cello and bass. With a faculty including Itzhak Perlman "and some of the most gifted musical talents of our time, the PMP Sarasota Winter Residency offers an artistic and personal experience that changes students' lives forever," the release adds.

The Perlman Music Program Sarasota Winter Residency is hosted in partnership with the University of South Florida,

Sarasota-Manatee. The public is invited to attend approximately 20 free events, including orchestra and chorus rehearsals, master classes and works-in-progress recitals, the release points out. New this year will be an open rehearsal and performance with the PMP/Suncoast Super Strings — young violinists from Sarasota and Manatee counties who will join the PMP student orchestra in performing a Vivaldi violin concerto under the direction of Itzhak Perlman on Jan. 2.

Q&A sessions with Perlman, PMP students and faculty follow many of the sessions, the release adds. Most of the events take place in a heated outdoor performance tent on the grounds of the USF Sarasota-Manatee campus, located at 8350 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Audience members are encouraged to show up 15 minutes prior to an event to ensure seating. PMP/Suncoast also offers an online e-ticket program for a \$5 service charge per ticket. E-tickets, which enable

entrance 30 minutes prior to the start of an event, are available at [www.PMPSuncoast.org](http://www.PMPSuncoast.org) or by calling 955-4942.

The Sarasota Winter Residency will culminate with the 10th Annual Celebration Concert at the Sarasota Opera House on Saturday, Jan. 4, at 5 p.m. Tickets are \$40, \$60, \$80; they may be reserved at the Opera House's box office at 366-8450, Ext. 1.

“We’re energized by this monumental anniversary,” says Elizabeth Power, executive director of PMP/Suncoast, in the release. “It’s amazing how fast the years have gone by — and how much we’ve accomplished in those years,” she adds. “We’re deeply touched by how the community has embraced us and taken our programs into their hearts.”

For more information about this event or The Perlman Music Program/Suncoast, visit [www.PMPSuncoast.org](http://www.PMPSuncoast.org) or call 955-4942.



*Itzhak Perlman works with a student orchestra during the Perlman Music Program/Suncoast. Contributed photo by Barbara Banks*

## FSU/ASOLO CONSERVATORY TO PRESENT JOE ORTON'S *LOOT*

The Florida State University/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training will present the regional premiere of *Loot*, Joe Orton's "scurrilous send-up of mid-century British notions of decency," Dec. 31 through Jan. 19 in the Cook Theatre in the FSU Center for the Performing Arts, located at 5555 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, the Conservatory has announced.

Tickets are \$29 for evening shows and \$28 for matinees, a news release says. Students receive 50 percent off with advance ticket purchase. Tickets may be purchased in advance at the Asolo Repertory Theatre's box office at the FSU Center for Performing Arts: 351-8000.

On Tuesday, Dec. 31, 7:30 p.m., audience members are invited to attend a production of *Loot* and pay whatever they can afford. These special tickets are available on the day of performance only.

"*Loot* reveals the dark side of London in the swinging '60s," the release continues. "Poor Mrs. McLeavy is dead. On the day of her funeral, Hal, her teenage son, and Dennis, a perpetually randy undertaker, rob a bank next to the McLeavy's seedy hotel — and do their best to hide the loot while Mr. McLeavy loudly grieves."

"Ah, but Truscott of 'The Yard' is on the case," the release notes. His corrupt partner,



(From left) Brian Owen, Paul Herbig and Olivia Williamson in the FSU/Asolo Conservatory's production of *Loot*. Contributed photo by Frank Atura

Meadows, is, too, in theory, the release says. “The lads turn to Fay, Mrs. McLeavy’s nurse, a devoted Catholic (supposedly), but willing to stash the cash if some of it goes her way. But where? Hang on. Mrs. McLeavy’s coffin. She’s lying in state in the hotel parlor. Simply put the money inside and her body someplace else, temporarily. She surely wouldn’t mind.”

The release adds, “Hilarity, anarchy, chaos, sexual confusion and lost glass eyes ensue. It is, after all, a Joe Orton play.”

The director of this Asolo Conservatory production, Jonathan Epstein, points out in the release, “If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then satire must surely be the cruellest form of insult, and Orton’s satirical humor is cruel, sincere and mesmerizing.”

## POPULAR DEMAND EXTENDS RUN OF FST’S SPAMALOT

As a result of popular demand, Florida Studio Theatre (FST) has announced an extension of the musical *Monty Python’s Spamalot*, with book and lyrics by Eric Idle and music by Eric Idle and John Du Prez.

The show will run through Jan. 19.

“Lovingly ripped off from the classic film *Monty Python and The Holy Grail*, this outrageous parody tells the tale of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table and has been

called ‘The best new musical to open’ by The New York Times,” an FST news release points out. “While embarking on their quest for the Holy Grail, the knights encounter flying cows, killer rabbits and taunting Frenchmen,” the release adds.

Tickets may be purchased through Jan. 19 online at [FloridaStudioTheatre.org](http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org), by phone at 366-9000 or by visiting the box office at 1241 N. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota.



(From left) Carl Michael Wilson, Tripp Fountain, Kevin Loreque, Jacob Hoffman and John Scacchetti in *Monty Python’s Spamalot*. Contributed photo by Maria Lyle.

Bruce Jordan returned to FST to direct this show after previously handling the hit comedies *The Underpants*, *Perfect Wedding* and *Shear Madness*, the theatre announced in November.

“My favorite part about *Spamalot* is not only does it have a lot of funny scenes,” Jordan said in the release, “it also has lots of tune-ful music. In its own way it’s like the musical comedies I was brought up on. A fun book and a strong score. ... Some people have said that Monty Python is to comedy what the Beatles were to music. I see that. I understand how

they began and how they have shaped much of the comedy that follows them.”

Among the 16-person cast are returning FST company members Patrick Noonan, Gill Brady and Priscilla Fernandez, along with new company members Kevin Loreque and Jacob Hoffman, the release adds. Among Noonan’s past FST productions are *Occupant* and *Irma Vep*. Brady previously appeared in *The Underpants* and *Our Son’s Wedding*, while Fernandez was in the *South Beach Babylon* production.

Single tickets for *Spamalot* range from \$18 to \$45.



Patrick Noonan and Priscilla Fernandez in Monty Python’s *Spamalot*. Contributed photo by Maria Lyle.

## AMY GRANT TO JOIN VINCE GILL AT THE VAN WEZEL

The husband-and-wife combo of Amy Grant and Vince Gill — “two of the most beloved voices in popular music” — will unite on stage March 21 at 8 p.m. at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall in Sarasota, the Van Wezel has announced.

“Except for their cherished Christmas tours,” this will be the first time Grant and Gill have worked the road together as co-headliners, a news release points out. They will perform alongside each other for the entire show, “playing and singing from each other’s extensive catalog of hits,” the release adds.

Their four-piece band will feature “steel guitar wizard Paul Franklin” (co-spotlighted with Gill on the album *Bakersfield*) and, from Grant’s own backup group, drummer Greg Morrow, keyboardist Tony Harrell and bass guitarist Mike Brignardello, the release continues.

Together, Grant and Gill have sold more than 56 million albums and won a total of 26 Grammys, the release points out. Grant is in the Gospel Music Hall of Fame, and Gill a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Tickets are priced from \$60 to \$85. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit [www.VanWezel.org](http://www.VanWezel.org).



Amy Grant performs in West Wendover, NV. Photo by Scott Catron via Wikimedia Commons

## CHALK FESTIVAL OPENS SHOP TO BENEFIT FUTURE EVENTS

The Sarasota Chalk Festival opened Chalk Line, its new fundraising venture, on Dec. 13 during the Burns Square Christmas walk, the organization has announced.

Chalk Line, located at 529 S. Pineapple Ave., features works by artists who participate in the festival and its Going Vertical programs, along with props made by volunteers and merchandise from the events, a news release says. Proceeds will benefit the Avenida de Colores 501(c)(3) cultural arts organization that produces the festival.

“In addition to original artwork, we have a vast array of items people are interested in, such as printed posters, hand-painted circus banners and mermaid tails. We even have

interest in Snowflake the Elephant, so we tried to squeeze her into the gallery,” Denise Kowal, founder and chairwoman of the non-profit, said in the release.

Snowflake, along with the male elephant from 2012 and the Statue of Liberty from 2013 are for sale or rent but not on display, the release notes.

The festival features a new look each year to support a chosen theme, the release continues. It has more than 300 volunteers who “dedicate their time and skills to make it happen.”

In 2011, the festival became the first international street painting event in the U.S.A when it celebrated the theme *Pavement Art Through the Ages*, the release points out.



The theme of the 2013 Chalk Festival was *Legacy of Valor*. Photo by Norman Schimmel

The new shop space previously was home to Clothesline Gallery & Boutique, which produced shows by local artists and sold creative merchandise, the release adds. It is owned by Kowal's son, Austin Kowal.

"I decided to direct my energy to expanding the Clothesline printing and design portion of the business and help other art-minded businesses," Austin notes in the release.

Details and hours of operation can be found on the events page at [www.chalkfestival.org](http://www.chalkfestival.org).

## **ASOLO REP TO PRESENT *PHILADELPHIA, HERE I COME!***

*Philadelphia, Here I Come!* directed by Academy Award nominee and two-time Tony Award winner Frank Galati, will run from Jan. 10 through April 12 at the Asolo Repertory Theatre in Sarasota, the theatre has announced.

Previews will be held Jan. 7-9.

Hailed as one of the best playwrights in the English language, Brian Friel wrote this play about "the humorous and touching story of a young man embarking on a new life,

struggling to find the strength to leave," a news release explains. As 25-year-old Gareth "Gar" O'Donnell prepares to move from Ballybeg, Ireland, to Philadelphia to pursue his American dream, "he is plagued by his relationship with his uncommunicative and emotionally unavailable father."

Gar must also say goodbye to Kate Doogan — his great love, whom he "regrettably let slip through his fingers," the release adds. "Above all, he is challenged by one simple question — does he truly want to leave his home?"

# **ASOLO REP**ERTORY THEATRE

PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MICHAEL DONALD EDWARDS • MANAGING DIRECTOR LINDA DIGABRIELE



*Philadelphia, Here I Come!* Will open Jan. 10 at the Asolo Repertory Theatre. Contributed image

*Philadelphia, Here I Come!* examines “the dynamic relationship between Public Gar and Private Gar — played on stage by two different actors,” the release explains. “Friel brilliantly pours life into Gar’s subconscious in the form of Private Gar, whose character serves as the vehicle for his counterpart’s secret insecurities, hopes and dreams.

“This brilliant, touching and funny story is about an Irish boy named Gareth who has immense difficulty expressing himself but must say goodbye to everything and everyone he knows and loves,” says Michael Donald Edwards, producing artistic director of Asolo Rep, in the release.

“Director Frank Galati injects music and merriment into the production with traditional Irish folk tunes and classical pieces that add

to the poetic and theatrical nature of the play,” the release continues.

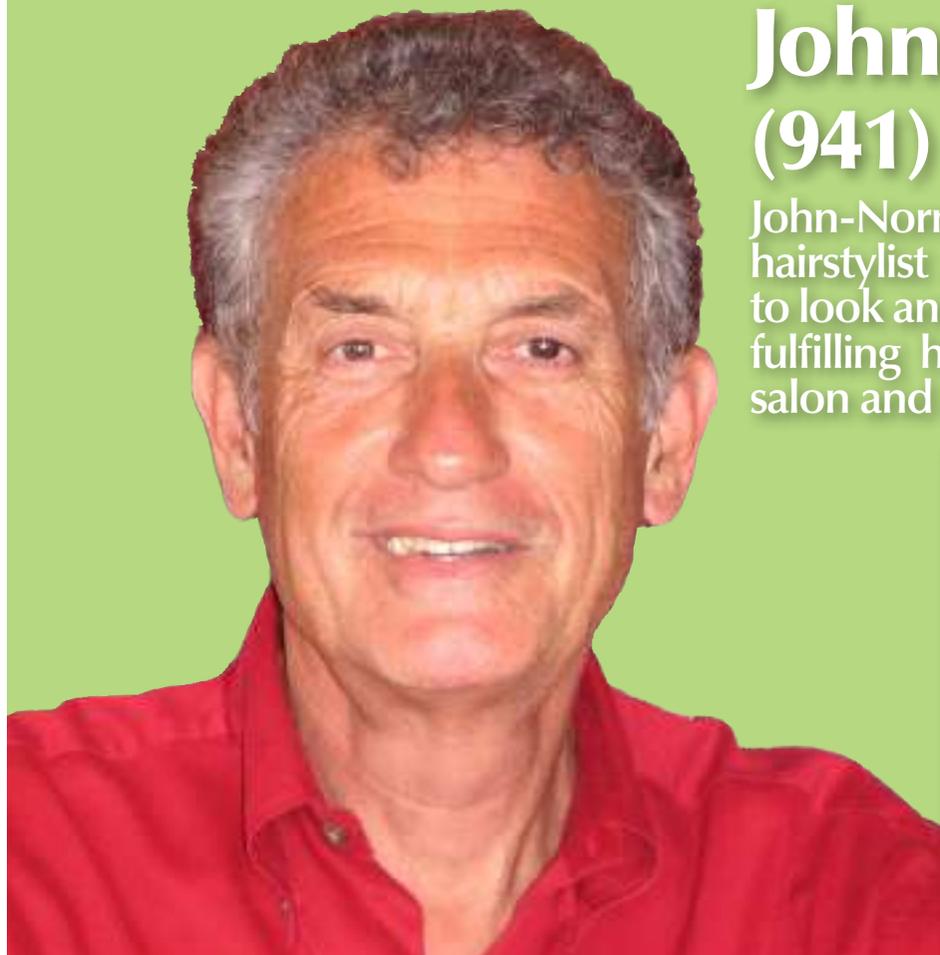
*Philadelphia, Here I Come!* continues the second season of Asolo Rep’s five-year American Character Project, “which explores this country’s social, cultural and historical facets,” the release adds. Since its 1966 Broadway premiere and subsequent Tony nominations for best play, best actor and more, “this timeless story of voyaging outside of what is familiar and safe continues to impact audiences worldwide.”

Tickets for *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* start at \$21. To purchase them, call 351-8000, visit [www.asolorep.org](http://www.asolorep.org), or visit the box office in the lobby of the theatre. Asolo Repertory Theatre is located at 5555 N. Tamiami Trail in the Florida State University Center for the Performing Arts. 

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*The Church of the Redeemer will present choral performances on Dec. 22. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## REDEEMER ANNOUNCES CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERVICES

The Church of the Redeemer, located at 222 S. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota, invites the community to join its congregation in worship on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Three Masses will be offered each day, a news release says.

### Christmas Eve Masses

On Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, Redeemer's afternoon Family Mass (Rite II) will begin at 4 p.m. It will be preceded by a festive half-hour of traditional Christmas carols, beginning at 3:30 p.m., including favorites such as *Silent Night* and *Joy to the World*, sung by the congregation and choirs, the release notes.

The Family Mass includes a "live Nativity" scene with children playing roles as shepherds, lambs, stars and angels. Baby Jesus will

be represented by the parish's newest infant, Liv Ferguson, with her parents, Sara and Nick Ferguson, acting as Mary and Joseph, the release notes. "The Nativity re-enactment is a re-telling of the Incarnation narrative from the Gospel of St. Luke."

St. Nicholas will make a surprise visit, as well, to receive a special blessing from the Very Rev. Fredrick Robinson, rector of Redeemer, the release adds.

Babysitting for toddlers and infants will be provided.

The early evening service will be a Choral Mass (Rite II with incense), which will begin at 6:30 p.m. This will be preceded at 6 p.m. by half an hour of singing of traditional Christmas carols, accompanied by organ and brass quartet.

Beginning at 9:30 p.m., “a joyous musical celebration of organ and brass quartet will welcome the congregation,” the release continues. At 10 p.m., the choir of Redeemer will sing anthems and carols for 30 minutes, heralding the Midnight Mass, which is a High Solemn Mass (Rite I with incense) beginning at 10:30 p.m.

### Christmas Day Masses

On Christmas Day, Dec. 25, Redeemer will offer Holy Communion at 7:30 a.m., Choral

Mass at 10 a.m. and a Mass in Spanish at 1 p.m.

Complimentary parking will be available at the BMO Harris Bank parking garage on McAnsh Square on Christmas Eve beginning at 3 p.m. and continuing through 1 a.m. on Christmas Day morning.

For more information about the Church of the Redeemer, visit [www.redeemersarasota.org](http://www.redeemersarasota.org) or call 955-4263.

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## FORMER ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY PREACHES AT ORDINATION

The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey of Clifton, preached during the Ordination to the Sacred Order of Priests of Charleston David Wilson, Jason Andrew Murbarger and David Stuart Bumsted, on Monday, Dec. 9, at the Church of the Redeemer in Sarasota.

The Right Rev. Dabney Smith, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida, was

the principal celebrant for the ordination, a news release says.

Bumsted, who is from Orlando, was ordained by the Right Rev. Gregory Brewer, bishop of the Diocese of Central Florida. Wilson and Murbarger were ordained by the Right Rev. Daniel Hayden Martins, bishop of the Diocese of Springfield, IL, where Wilson spent time



*(From left) David Stuart Bumsted, Jason Andrew Murbarger and Charleston David Wilson were ordained to the Sacred Order of Priests at the Church of the Redeemer in Sarasota on Dec. 9. Contributed photo*

last spring as a candidate for Holy Orders, the release notes.

Presenting for Wilson was the Right Rev. Edward L. Salmon Jr., president and dean of [Nashotah House](#) and the 13th bishop (retired) of the Diocese of South Carolina, the release adds.

“It was a great honor for our parish to host Lord Carey and the bishops as these three young men begin the work of their calling as priests,” said the Very Rev. Fredrick A. Robinson, rector of the Church of the Redeemer, in the release.

Wilson will join Redeemer in January, assisting Robinson in the areas of evangelism and parish development, the release continues. Bumsted joined Redeemer in the fall as the parish youth minister. Murbarger will continue his work with Trinity Episcopal Church

in Vero Beach, where he is also the chaplain at Saint Edward’s School, the release notes.

Carey traveled from England to Sarasota the previous week to preach at the church over the weekend and to talk with parishioners in smaller groups, the release says.

In 1991, Carey became the 103rd Archbishop of Canterbury, serving 70 million Anglicans around the world. He retired in 2002 and was made a life peer as Lord Carey of Clifton. He is the chancellor of the University of Gloucestershire and president of the London School of Theology, the release adds. He also serves on the Foundation Board of the World Economic Forum and is a co-chairman of the Council of 100.

The Church of the Redeemer is located at 222 S. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota. For more information, visit [www.redeemersarasota.org](http://www.redeemersarasota.org) or call 955-4263.



*(From left) The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey of Clifton; the Right Rev. Gregory Brewer, bishop of the Diocese of Central Florida; the Right Rev. Daniel Hayden Martins; and the Right Rev. Dabney Smith, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida, who was the principal celebrant, were all participants in the Ordination. Contributed photo*

## TEMPLE EMANU-EL TEENS ENJOY CHALLAH-DAY

Temple Emanu-El teenagers enjoyed a *Challah-Day* on Dec. 15 as they gathered to bake challah — the specially prepared bread traditionally eaten on the Jewish Sabbath — with Rabbi Elaine Rose Glickman.

After an interactive and lively session of measuring, pouring, mixing and kneading, participants met with Rabbi Brenner Glickman to learn about Shabbat and explore what a day of rest and holiness means to teenagers today, a news release explains. “The teens then returned to the kitchen — and their now-risen loaves of dough — to braid the challah and take home a fresh challah to share with their families.”

For more information about learning to bake challah at Temple Emanu-El, call 379-1997. 



*Temple Emanu-El teens Allison Kramer and Rachel Towe kneaded their challah dough. Contributed photo*



*Temple Emanu-El teens Rachel Towe and Josh Yunis show off their braided challah. Contributed photo*



Temple Emanu-El teens Hunter McDowall and Alena Barwick shaped their dough into a ball. Contributed photo



# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**20+**  
DECEMBER

**Selby Gardens presents *Lights in Bloom***

Dec. 20-23 and 27-30, 6 to 9 p.m., 900 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Admission: \$14 for members/\$17 for others. Information: 366-5731 or [Selby.org](http://Selby.org).

**20+**  
DECEMBER

***Above the planet through a microscope, works by Carla Poindexter***

Through Dec. 28; times vary; Allyn Gallup Contemporary Art Gallery, 1288 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free admission. Information: 366-2454 or [AllynGallup.com](http://AllynGallup.com).

**20+**  
DECEMBER

**Dabbert Gallery presents *Sculpture: Metal, Marble & More***

Through Dec. 30; times vary. 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free admission. Information: 955-1315 or [DabbertGallery.com](http://DabbertGallery.com).

**20+**  
DECEMBER

**FST presents *Monty Python's Spamalot***

Through Jan. 19; times vary; Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$18 to 49. Information: 366-9000 or [FloridaStudioTheatre.org](http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org).

**28**  
DECEMBER

**WSLR presents *Grandpa's Cough Medicine in concert***

Dec. 28, 8 p.m., Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court, Sarasota. Tickets: \$8 in advance; \$10 at door. Information: 894-6469 or [WSLR.org](http://WSLR.org).

**02+**  
JANUARY

**Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe presents *The Whipping Man***

Jan. 2 to Feb. 2; times vary; 1646 10th Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$29.50. Information: 366-1505 or [wbttsrq.org](http://wbttsrq.org).

**06**  
JANUARY

**Sarasota Concert Association presents *Mark-André Hamelin***

Jan. 6, 8 p.m., Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$40 to 70. Information: 351-7467 or [SCASarasota.org](http://SCASarasota.org).

**YOUR LIFESTYLE GUIDE TO THE SUNCOAST**

**'IT'S CHRISTMASTIME  
IN THE CITY'**

**PRESS**



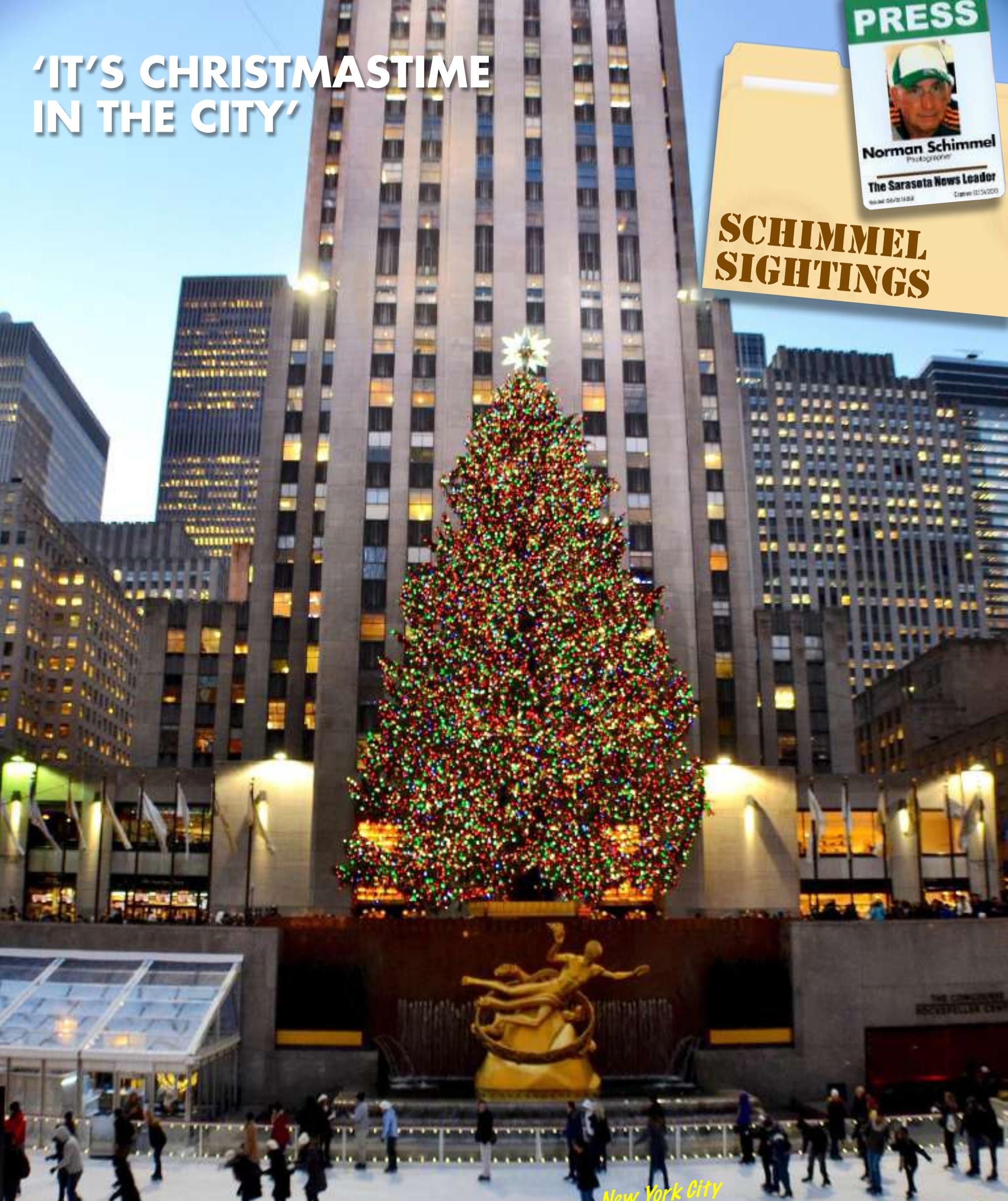
**Norman Schimmel**  
Photographer

**The Sarasota News Leader**

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**SCHIMMEL  
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*Each week, Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel searches **Sarasota County** for iconic shots that underscore why the community is a favorite with residents and tourists alike.*