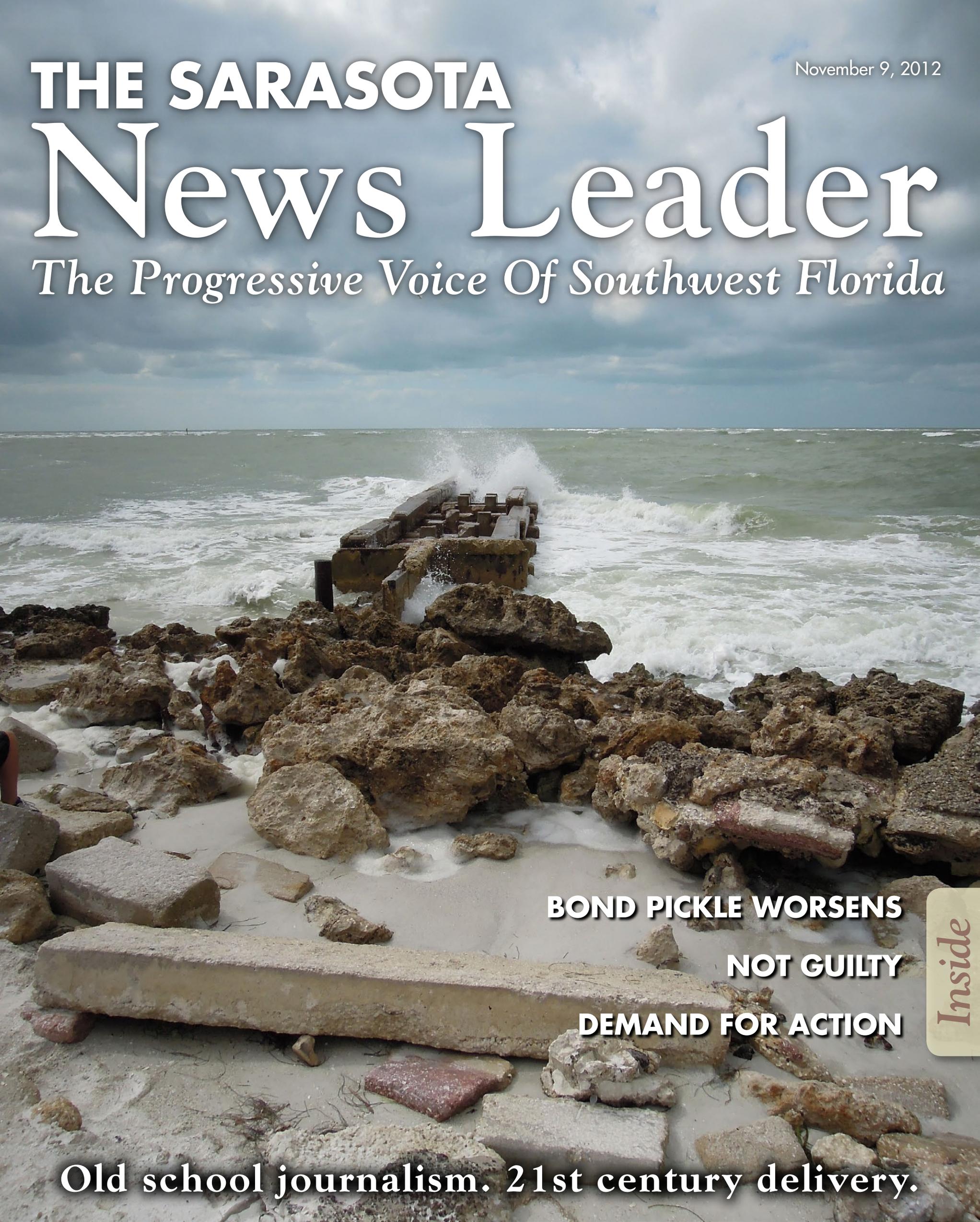


THE SARASOTA

November 9, 2012

News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida



BOND PICKLE WORSENS

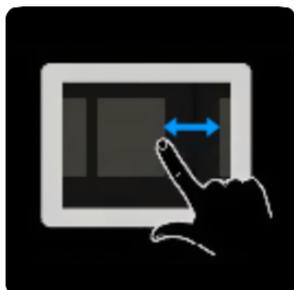
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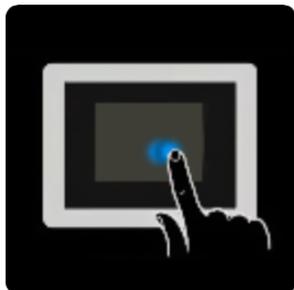
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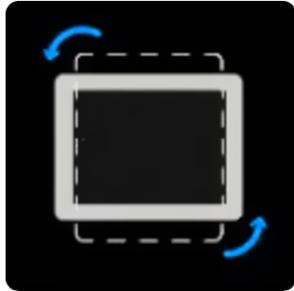
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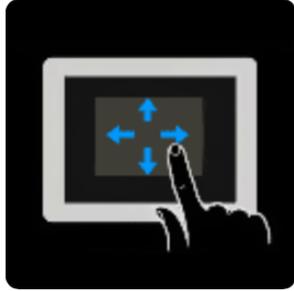
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A.K.A. HELP

SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher
Rachel@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor
Cooper@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Stan Zimmerman

City Editor
Stan@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Norman Schimmel

Contributing Photographer
NSchimmel@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

David Staats

Contributing Writer
DStaats@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Fran Palmeri

Contributing Writer
FPalmeri@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Harriet Cuthbert

Contributing Writer
HCuthbert@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Elinor Rogosin

A&E Writer
ERogosin@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Scott Proffitt

Staff Writer
SProffitt@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Tyler Whitson

Contributing Writer
TWhitson@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Vicki Chatley

Copy Editor
Vicki@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Cleve Posey

Production Manager / Graphic Designer
Cleve@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Robert S. Hackney

General Manager
Robert@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Advertising Sales

Sales@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Trish Ivey

Advertising Account Executive
Trish@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Subscription Services

Subs@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Press Releases & News Tips

News@SarasotaNewsLeader.com



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The Sarasota News Leader is a publication of:

New Sheriff Publishing, Inc. • Post Office Box 5099 • Sarasota, FL 34277-5099



Welcome

Although the elections have been the focal point this week, we figured by the time you saw this latest issue, you would be a bit weary of all the postmortems and ready to turn your attention to other topics.

That is not to say we have excluded election coverage. Cooper Levey-Baker, Stan Zimmerman and our Editorial Board offer some takes on the results from Nov. 6.

However, we have tried to provide you with a lot of diversity beyond the elections — from Sarasota City Commission action on Nov. 5 — no dearth of topics there! — to reports on the latest County Commission action regarding the Siesta Public Beach improvements project, a roadside mowing audit and even the Florida House.

For further diversion, several of our staff members visited the 2012 Chalk Festival. Norm Schimmel began taking photos of works in progress last week, and Scott Proffitt has wrapped it all up with a report on how founder Denise Kowal manages to pull everything together.

We also had the good fortune of getting an invitation to the Audubon Florida Assembly held in Sarasota late last month. Tyler Whitson covered the event with his usual verve, and even though he had been told a special guest was coming, he still was surprised when no less than the U.S. secretary of the interior showed up to accept an award.

On a different note, I have the great pleasure of welcoming one new staff member on board: Trish Ivey, who was the very capable sales manager at the *Pelican Press* for a number of years. Trish has joined the *News Leader* as an account executive. If you know her, you know why people who work with her love her

Our staff still may be relatively small at this point, but each of them brings tremendous heart and talent to everything they do.

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher



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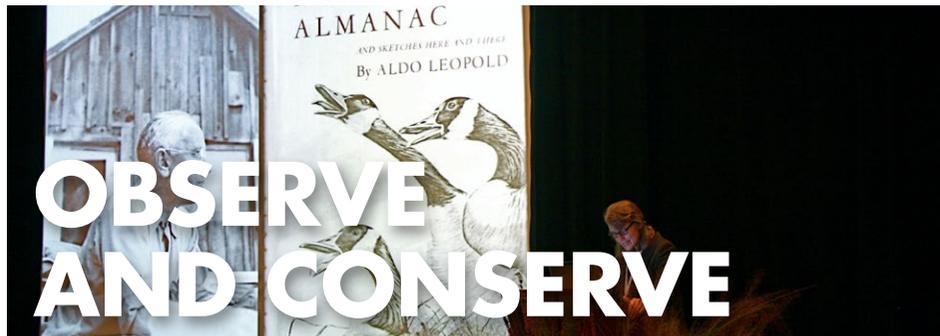


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BOND PICKLE WORSENS

Three city charter amendments flunk voters' test — Stan Zimmerman

Sarasota City Auditor and Clerk Pam Nadalini hoped voters would eliminate problems caused by her inability to obtain a surety bond as required by the city charter. On Nov. 6 voters faced a so-called “housekeeping amendment” to the city charter. It contained 17 different items, one of which was tailor-made to cure Nadalini’s no-bond problem.

The charter change proposal would allow insurance to take the place of a bond. Bonds, of course, are different from insurance. However, under a legal fiction dubbed “functional equivalence” — created by City Attorney Bob Fournier — the city commissioners would have had a fig leaf to hide behind when questioned about why their auditor and clerk did not have a bond to protect the city as required by the charter.

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Bartolotta cleared of wrongdoing in regard to missing city emails, months after his resignation — Stan Zimmerman

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She railed against the Sylint Group, the local cyber-sleuth firm that uncovered anecdotally a raft of problems in the city’s Information Technology Department, including allegations of illegal actions by the former city manager and current deputy city manager. City Manager Bob Bartolotta resigned amid the furor.

Only City Commissioner Terry Turner refused to follow the commission stampede to chase Bartolotta out the door in January. Turner called the rush to judgment on Bartolotta “a witch hunt.” ([Full story here](#))



DEMAND FOR ACTION

County Commission, Siesta organizations asking for answers on costs and phasing for the public beach improvements as soon as possible — Rachel Brown Hackney

Adding his frustrations to those voiced just a couple of hours earlier at the monthly Siesta Key Village Association meeting, Sarasota County Commissioner Joe Barbetta demanded to know during his board's regular meeting on Nov. 6 why "everybody's frozen in place" on the Siesta Public Beach improvements project.

Moreover, the county's chief engineer reported to the County Commission at that meeting in Venice that an open-house meeting on the project scheduled for Nov. 13 on Siesta Key might have to be postponed.

Barbetta pointed out that when the board last saw the plans for the improvements, in June, the board had asked staff to move ahead expeditiously with completing the design work and proposing funding options, including use of bond revenue, because construction costs and interest rates were low and jobs were needed. ([Full story here](#))



'A TERRIFIC MILESTONE'

With the Siesta Public Beach stormwater project out for bids, county staff feels a water district grant for the work should remain secure — Rachel Brown Hackney

While wrangling continues over the timeline for renovations of the Siesta Public Beach, one previously stalled part of the project is moving forward: the construction of the new stormwater system.

Just as project engineer Curtis Smith had predicted for members of the Siesta Key Association on Sept. 6, the \$1.5 million project went out for bid this month, with all responses requested by 2:30 p.m. Nov. 28.

"It's a terrific milestone to reach," he told *The Sarasota News Leader* on Nov. 5.

The Sarasota County eProcure website also has set a mandatory pre-bid meeting for 1 p.m. on Nov. 9 at the Sarasota County Operations Center, 1001 Sarasota Center Blvd., to make sure representatives of firms interested in the project are fully aware of its scope. ([Full story here](#))



NO CHILD'S PLAY HERE

Siesta Key's third annual Crystal Classic has 24 of the world's renowned master sand sculptors at work on the island's No. 1 beach — Rachel Brown Hackney

It really is the stuff of dreams: Not only do you get to play in the sand, but you get to travel all over the world to do it *and* you earn accolades from thousands upon thousands of admirers for your efforts.

How do you get to do this? You become a master sand sculptor.

Twenty-four of those gifted artists will be in competition this weekend in Sarasota County for the third annual [Siesta Key Master Sand Sculpting Competition](#) on the public beach.

They have been hard at work all week — except for a “rain delay” during thunderstorms on Tuesday.

From countries as diverse as The Netherlands, Singapore, Germany, Canada, England, Portugal and the United States, they will vie for prize money and bragging rights for the best works of art created from that 99-percent quartz sand that makes Siesta the perfect location for such an event. ([Full story here](#))



GOING NOWHERE

City finds engineering firm in default on effort to build micro-tunnel under Hudson Bayou for new lift station — Stan Zimmerman

The “Mess at Mound” is a molar-grinding problem for neighbors living south of Hudson Bayou. Time and again, sewage spills into the bayou and immediately into the bay from City of Sarasota utility stations.

After the neighbors found out the stations were squatting on non-city land, and they counted up the environmental fines and penalties the city was incurring as a result of its failing system, the political stars suddenly seemed to align for a multi-million dollar, “state-of-the art” lift station and innovative tunnel to be built under the bayou to move the effluent.

Under the plan, Osprey Avenue would be closed (and later partially closed) at Mound Street while engineers constructed the station and punched the tunnel directly under the bayou bridge.

Four years after the engineering began, the project is a shambles. ([Full story here](#))

A close-up photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a black top, holding a large sandwich. The sandwich is made with a crusty, golden-brown roll and is filled with lettuce, tomato, onion, and a dark meat patty. The woman's hands are visible on either side of the sandwich, holding it steady. The background is a plain, light color.

This may take a while.

Some things are just hard to resist. Like *The Sarasota News Leader*. It's a feast of in-depth local news, delightful and entertaining features, and — thanks to its partnership with *This Week In Sarasota* — access to the best community calendar available.

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BOND PICKLE WORSENS

Three proposed City of Sarasota Charter amendments failed this week at the polls. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THREE CITY CHARTER AMENDMENTS FLUNK VOTERS' TEST

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

Sarasota City Auditor and Clerk Pam Nadalini hoped voters would eliminate problems caused by her inability to obtain a surety bond as required by the city charter. On Nov. 6 voters faced a so-called “housekeeping amendment” to the city charter. It contained 17 different items, one of which was tailor-made to cure Nadalini’s no-bond problem.

The charter change proposal would allow insurance to take the place of a bond. Bonds, of course, are different from insurance. However, under a legal fiction dubbed “functional equivalence” — created by City Attorney Bob Fournier — the city commissioners would have had a fig leaf to hide behind when questioned about why their auditor and clerk did

not have a bond to protect the city as required by the charter.

The fig leaf option is no longer. By the greatest margin of any amendment vote on Nov. 6, city citizens rejected the “housekeeping” proposal, with 62 percent voting against it. Because the proposal contained Nadalini’s “bond fix,” it will be very hard for the city attorney to wield “functional equivalence.”

The same voters — by a 45 percent to 55 percent margin — also rejected a plan to split Nadalini’s office. Only the auditor’s position would have remained a charter position. All other functions of the office would have transferred to the city manager’s purview.

The amendment got off to an inauspicious start. It was conceived in secret by an organization now under investigation by the Florida Elections Commission. It also had a legal flaw that was rectified at the last minute, and it was put on the ballot by hired signature gatherers working piecemeal, paid per signature. It was dubbed “the strong city manager amendment.”

The vote margin was similar to that seen in earlier attempts to change the city charter to create a “strong mayor” and eliminate the city-manager form of government.

The third amendment that failed should give pause to city commissioners willing to open city coffers to corporations wanting to open up a large firm here. Cities and counties all over Florida have “economic development co-

ordinators” with hands full of cash to throw at corporations — sometimes with tax exemptions as well. Sarasota is now looking for its second such coordinator, and economic development is a current political buzzword.

However, city voters by the same 45/55 margin refused to strike out of the charter a demand for a higher minimum wage than required by state law for larger companies receiving city assistance. In other words, the city will give the company a financial break, but in return, the company must pony up higher minimum wages.

The measure was put into the city charter five years ago with the intention of halting development of a Walmart supercenter on the southeast corner of Washington Boulevard



City Attorney Robert Fournier and City Auditor and Clerk Pam Nadalini listen to public comments during a City Commission meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel

and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way. It stipulated that if a company received \$100,000 or more in government subsidies and employed more than 50 people, it would have to pay \$10.70 per hour or more.

At the time, Florida's minimum wage was \$7.25.

After passage of the amendment, Walmart withdrew its plans.

Three business-oriented city charter amendments were approved by voters. A measure prohibiting the city from investing in derivative financial products was approved 56/44. Another measure banning use of "certificates of participation" unless approved in a general referendum was also approved 54 percent to 46 percent. And a measure requiring a Sarasota City Commission supermajority approval of any contracts (including leases and franchise and pension plans) for a duration of longer than 10 years was approved 56 percent to 44 percent.

The fourth amendment approved by voters would extend the time citizens have to fulfill the requirements for a successful petition drive. The measure would double the amount of time, pushing it to 180 days from 90, to get the minimum of 3,295 signatures of registered city voters, a figure based on the percentage of the number of total city voters.

OBSERVATIONS

Roughly 20,000 city voters turned out for the presidential election, showing that the battle for the top elected position in the United States brings the greatest number of voters to

the city polls every four years. And the four-page ballot was the longest in city and county history.

While some precincts reported lines at the 7 a.m. opening time, none reported lines at the 7 p.m. closing (unlike Lee and Miami-Dade counties, where people who arrived before 7 p.m. were still waiting at 10 p.m. to vote). Early voting helped to smooth the flow.

The voting on the city charter amendments may indicate better than any candidate polling how clearly voters understood their choices. Cynics might say that by the time voters got to the end of their long ballots, they would be marking "yes-yes-yes" or "no-no-no." Yet, city voters rejected three of seven measures, and those certainly were the most complicated of the seven issues.

Despite the summary language on the ballot, it was clear something about each of those rejected amendments gave voters pause. By margins of more than 2,000 votes — not an insignificant number — citizens opposed them.

The margin of loss for the "housekeeping" amendment was 4,600 votes; not a single precinct in the city supported it. For the "breakup the clerk" amendment, only three of 18 precincts supported it; in precinct 115 in north Sarasota, nearly twice as many people voted against it as supported it.

The point is that city voters in the November 2012 election were not blindly filling in their ovals as they reached the end of the ballot. Their decisions clearly were measured.





NOT GUILTY

City Manager Tom Barwin (left) and Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown attend a recent Sarasota Tiger Bay Club meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel

BARTOLOTTA CLEARED OF WRONGDOING IN REGARD TO MISSING CITY EMAILS, MONTHS AFTER HIS RESIGNATION

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

It is easy to read the future if you have the letter. Sarasota Mayor Suzanne Atwell played that game Nov. 5 during the “Commissioner Reports” section of the regular City Commission meeting.

She railed against the Sylint Group, the local cyber-sleuth firm that uncovered anecdotally a raft of problems in the city’s Information Technology Department, including allegations of illegal actions by the former city manager and current deputy city manager. City Manager Bob Bartolotta resigned amid the furor.

Only City Commissioner Terry Turner refused to follow the commission stampede to chase

Bartolotta out the door in January. Turner called the rush to judgment on Bartolotta “a witch hunt.”

A great furor arose last January over the allegations about improprieties at City Hall, and Atwell called upon the investigatory powers of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) to divide the sheep from the wolves.

In the meantime, Sylint’s final report — from CEO John Jorgensen — was expected at the end of October, but once again, the company is running behind schedule.

“I’m very frustrated and angry,” Atwell said Monday, Nov. 5. “This has been about a year,

us sitting here at the mercy of Mr. Jorgensen. The cancer isn't on the city, it is [on] the reckless accusations of our workers."

"Reckless" is just one of the words commissioners have used in the past 10 months. One IT employee remains on administrative leave in the aftermath of the scandal, and she is receiving full pay and benefits.

"It's time to exonerate those most egregiously affected by this. It is time to end this," Atwell said.

Who would know better than she, after receiving a letter from the FDLE the previous Friday, Nov. 2. FDLE Special Agent in Charge John Burke wrote that the investigation requested by Atwell is "completed" and "FDLE believes that no probable cause exists to support a viable criminal charge and no further action is warranted."

The city released the letter the following day to the press and public. Marlon Brown, dep-



Then-City Manager Robert Bartolotta addresses the people gathered for the dedication of the Palm Avenue parking garage in February 2010. Photo by Norman Schimmel

uty city manager, was also cleared. Jorgensen had earlier strongly suggested that emails involved in federal investigations of the city had been compromised, and a former state senator had suggested that hundreds of emails had been deleted. Had any of these allegations been well-founded, it is doubtful Burke would have pulled the investigatory plug.

So who were the wolves and who were sheep? Was Bartolotta railroaded out of town on trumped-up charges? The only obvious gainer from all this was City Auditor and

Clerk Pam Nadalini, whose office absorbed the Information Technology Department after commissioners wrenched it away from Bartolotta.

The big loser is the taxpayer. The cost of the whole episode exceeds \$500,000, including Bartolotta's severance package, the IT employee's paid leave and Jorgensen's Sylint contract.



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DEMAND FOR ACTION



The historic pavilion at Siesta Public Beach is to undergo renovations as part of the improvements at the site. Photo by Norman Schimmel

COUNTY COMMISSION, SIESTA ORGANIZATIONS ASKING FOR ANSWERS ON COSTS AND PHASING FOR THE PUBLIC BEACH IMPROVEMENTS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

Adding his frustrations to those voiced just a couple of hours earlier at the monthly Siesta Key Village Association meeting, Sarasota County Commissioner Joe Barbetta demanded to know during his board's regular meeting on Nov. 6 why "everybody's frozen in place" on the Siesta Public Beach improvements project.

Moreover, the county's chief engineer reported to the County Commission at that meeting in Venice that an open-house meeting on the project scheduled for Nov. 13 on Siesta Key might have to be postponed.

Barbetta pointed out that when the board last saw the plans for the improvements, in June, the board had asked staff to move ahead expeditiously with completing the design work and proposing funding options, including use of bond revenue, because construction costs and interest rates were low and jobs were needed.

"Time is of the essence," Barbetta said. "The economy's starting to come back. Interest rates are going to go up. Construction costs are going to go up, and we're losing the window of opportunity."

When Barbetta laid the blame for delays at the feet of county staff, the county Chief engineer

James K. Harriott Jr. responded that staff was not making any changes to the project.

However, Harriott said, “We wanted to make sure we were designing the right thing. ... There’s a \$20 million project and there’s options that get you up to about \$25 million. We want to make sure we’re designing the right items.”

County Administrator Randall Reid told the commissioners staff was working on an update for them, which would include information about how using bond revenue to pay for the beach improvements would impact other projects the county needs to fund.

Program manager Carolyn Eastwood, in the Public Works Department, told *The Sarasota News Leader* on Nov. 6 that she anticipated the report’s being completed by the end of this week. Reid confirmed that for the commissioners before the conclusion of the Nov. 6 regular meeting.

Commissioners over the past months have voiced worries about trying to pay for an accelerated schedule of work at the beach at the same time they come up with the estimated \$30 million to replace tower infrastructure and buy new radios for a modern emergency communications system.

In the meantime, a Nov. 13 open house on the beach project, which had been scheduled at St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church on Siesta Key, might have to be postponed, Harriott said.

That meeting was planned months ago, Harriott added, but “it may be delayed a week or two until we can get these [funding] options back to you, so that you can see the different pieces of the project.”

“If you want the public to attend, you usually have to give a little notice,” Commissioner Nora Patterson told Harriott.

“Yes, ma’am,” he replied.

Barbetta voiced frustration over the changing numbers for the cost of the project. “It’s a moving target,” he said. “We need to finish what we approved and then worry about the bonding ...”

Harriott replied that the design the commissioners saw in June cost between \$26 million and \$27 million.

“I’ve never heard that number,” Barbetta said.

“You have \$20 million budgeted [for the improvements],” Harriott told him, adding that staff was working to get the number back down to that level.

Patterson also expressed surprise at the higher figure, saying she had heard an estimate of \$21 million to \$22 million. “I never heard the \$26 [million] or I probably would have gone into shock,” she added.

Commission Chairwoman Christine Robinson said, “I’m a little bit concerned now that that number’s out there.” Turning to Reid, she

“*The economy’s starting to come back. Interest rates are going to go up. Construction costs are going to go up, and we’re losing the window of opportunity.*”

Joe Barbetta
Sarasota County
Commissioner

added, “We really need to make sure our [web page](#) on this project is up-to-date.”

“It seems like staff is making decisions on options,” Barbetta said, “kind of guessing on the pricing.”

However, he added, no one would have an idea about the actual cost until the project was put out for bid.

Robinson also asked Reid to prepare for the board a timeline showing the steps the commissioners had taken in the past in regard to the project, as well as a projected timeline going forward. “It would help to get this mapped out exactly,” she added.

Barbetta and Commissioner Jon Thaxton concurred with Robinson’s request.

Barbetta reiterated, “I thought our instructions were pretty clear a while ago: Proceed with the design we had voted on and approved many, many months ago. ... This shouldn’t be a design on the fly. ... This is probably why the numbers have gone from \$16 million to \$22 million, back to \$20 million, \$18 million, \$14 million.”

Harriott replied that staff was trying to get the cost back down to the \$16.7 million level the board last had approved.

“This is costing us money every day that we delay [the project],” Barbetta said. “Every day.”

Proposed Construction Sequencing for Continuous Construction



In 2011, staff presented the County Commission a possible three-phase plan for accelerating the completion of the Siesta Public Beach improvements. Graphic courtesy Sarasota County

THE SKVA DISCUSSION

During the SKVA regular monthly meeting on the morning of Nov. 6, Siesta architect Mark Smith — who also is chairman of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce — told the members he had met recently with staff of Kimley-Horn and Associates of Sarasota, the consulting firm hired by the county to work on the design of the beach improvements.

He reminded everyone that he had been asking for the past few months to take a look at the breakdown of costs according to the design laid out for the County Commission in September 2011.

Kimley-Horn staff finally had provided those numbers to him, Smith said, so he could review them from the standpoint of his expertise as an architect.

Smith has been working with the Siesta Key Association and the Siesta Key Condominium Council as a representative in that process, he pointed out.

“There are elements [of the plan] that, in my opinion, appear to be in line ... and there’s others that aren’t,” he said.

In an interview with the *News Leader* after the meeting, Smith said the items that seemed most questionable were the estimates for both the pervious paving and impervious paving for the parking lots. The cost of redoing one lot had gone up 50 percent between the time the plan was at the 30-percent design phase and the more recent, 60-percent phase, while the other estimated cost had risen 61 percent.

That extra expense totaled about \$2.5 million, he told the *News Leader*, “so it’s a sizable chunk of change.”

Another item that had aroused his curiosity was an estimated cost of \$91,000 for landscaping around the maintenance building on the site. “They want to put in mature trees,” he said, adding that was understandable though not inexpensive.

The civil engineering cost for the maintenance building was pegged at \$436,000, he pointed out — another seemingly large expense.

Smith explained to the SKVA members that the Kimley-Horn consultants had promised to get back to him with answers about his specific questions.

“This process, quite frankly, has been stalled,” he added, “and it’s been stalled on the staff level.”

Further, Smith said, he planned to tell the commissioners during a public session that “the problem I see as a professional is that the county hires consultants — architects and engineers — but [the commissioners] don’t have them make [presentations on projects] to the Board of County Commissioners.” Instead, he said, staff makes those presentations, which leads to misinterpretation and miscommunication.

If the consultants were allowed to make the presentations about projects, Smith said, the commissioners would be able to question them directly about their work.

Noting that he hoped to have the answers back soon from Kimley-Horn, Smith added, “Hopefully, [the improvements] will happen in our lifetime.”



'A TERRIFIC MILESTONE'



A new stormwater plan for Siesta Public Beach is designed to safeguard against any future closures to swimming because of unhealthful water conditions. Photo by Norman Schimmel

WITH THE SIESTA PUBLIC BEACH STORMWATER PROJECT OUT FOR BIDS, COUNTY STAFF FEELS A WATER DISTRICT GRANT FOR THE WORK SHOULD REMAIN SECURE

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

While wrangling continues over the timeline for renovations of the Siesta Public Beach, one previously stalled part of the project is moving forward: the construction of the new stormwater system.

Just as project engineer Curtis Smith had predicted for members of the Siesta Key Association on Sept. 6, the \$1.5 million project went out for bid this month, with all responses requested by 2:30 p.m. Nov. 28.

“It’s a terrific milestone to reach,” he told *The Sarasota News Leader* on Nov. 5.

The Sarasota County eProcure website also has set a mandatory pre-bid meeting for 1 p.m. on Nov. 9 at the Sarasota County Operations Center, 1001 Sarasota Center Blvd., to make sure representatives of firms interested in the project are fully aware of its scope.

The eProcure website explains the project as follows: “[It] is an expansion of existing stormwater management facilities proposed to improve downstream water quality in the Gulf of Mexico along Siesta Public Beach. The work includes construction of roadway manhole retrofits, removal of an existing stormwater vault, construction of a wet retention pond

and appurtenant conveyance structures, installation of an in-ground disk filtration vault, a stormwater pump station, an ultraviolet disinfection unit and a stormwater outfall pipeline terminating in the Gulf of Mexico. The outfall pipeline is to be installed by a combination of open trench cut through coastal uplands, jack and bore beneath coastal wetlands, and horizontal directional drilling to the pipeline's terminus in the Gulf."

The initiative has been proposed for a number of years as a means of preventing any future closures of the Siesta Public Beach to swimming as a result of unacceptably high bacterial counts. However, complaints by [Gulf & Bay Club](#) residents about the proposed location of the new stormwater retention pond necessitated county staff's redesigning the site plans for the project.

That also necessitated county staff's re-submitting permit applications to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

While those applications were in the works, County Commissioner Nora Patterson — who represents Siesta Key on the county board — and SKA representatives fretted about the possibility the Southwest Florida Water Management District would decide to withdraw a grant of up to \$975,000 that it earlier had committed to the project.

During the Sept. 6 SKA meeting, Smith assured members that county staff was keeping

SWFWMD representatives advised of progress on the stormwater permitting process. County project team members felt comfortable, he said, that the water district would keep the funds available as long as its staff received regular updates on the status of the effort.

Program Manager Carolyn Eastwood, of the county's Public Works Department, told the *News Leader* Nov. 6, "The grant funding is still secure at this point."

She added that when county staff last met with SWFWMD representatives several weeks ago, the water district group had affirmed it would advocate that the SWFWMD board keep the grant funding in place if the County Commission stayed on track to award the bid in February.

The grant is scheduled to expire in late March, Eastwood said.

When the water district gave the county the grant, the understanding was that the county would be reimbursed for half its expenses on the project, up to \$975,000, after the work was completed, Smith has explained to the *News Leader*.

During the September SKA meeting, Smith also pointed out that the contractor would have plenty to do in terms of preparation for construction, if the bid were awarded by February as staff hoped. Therefore, the project would not interfere with seasonal visitors and parking at the beach in 2013.



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NO CHILD'S PLAY HERE



The Two of Us offered a romantic note in the 2011 Crystal Classic competition. Photo by Norman Schimmel

SIESTA KEY'S THIRD ANNUAL CRYSTAL CLASSIC HAS 24 OF THE WORLD'S RENOWNED MASTER SAND SCULPTORS AT WORK ON THE ISLAND'S NO. 1 BEACH

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

It really is the stuff of dreams: Not only do you get to play in the sand, but you get to travel all over the world to do it *and* you earn accolades from thousands upon thousands of admirers for your efforts.

How do you get to do this? You become a master sand sculptor.

Twenty-four of those gifted artists will be in competition this weekend in Sarasota County for the third annual [Siesta Key Master Sand Sculpting Competition](#) on the public beach.

They have been hard at work all week — except for a “rain delay” during thunderstorms on Tuesday.

From countries as diverse as The Netherlands, Singapore, Germany, Canada, England, Portugal and the United States, they will vie for prize money and bragging rights for the best works of art created from that 99-percent quartz sand that makes Siesta the perfect location for such an event.

The allure of that sand was what inspired Siesta's own master sand sculptor, Brian Wigelsworth, to work for years to establish the Crys-

tal Classic. Having traveled the world himself for competitions, he knew his fellow sculptors would relish the opportunity to dig their hands into the beautiful fine sand with which he began his carving career.

Wigelsworth takes pains to point out that the creations of these sand masters are works of fine art. Some of the “statues” stand 10 feet tall or higher, and the intricacy of the sculpting can be likened to that of any marble work that graces a public plaza.

One only has to gaze upon the sculptures to understand the delicacy and determination that makes these massive designs possible. Indeed, the sculptors come equipped with

artists’ tools to craft such lifelike features as horses’ manes that seem to fly in the gulf breeze and the spiked teeth of a giant sea monster which seems ready and willing to snap its jaws at you if you dare to venture too close to it.

Not only does the Crystal Classic give Sarasota County residents and tourists alike the opportunity to see these magnificent works of art, the proceeds from the \$5 admission fee people pay go toward Mote Marine Laboratory’s acclaimed sea turtle research and conservation programs.

“I was at Mote last night,” Crystal Classic Co-Chairwoman Cheryl Gaddie told *The Sara-*



Something Fishy took a second place trophy in 2011. Photo by Norman Schimmel

sota News Leader on Nov. 2. “They have such an impressive program,” she said of Mote’s initiatives to help sea turtles. “It’s so moving. ... It’s an honor to actually be able to contribute to that.”

BEHIND THE SCENES

This year, for the first time in the event’s history, the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce has been shouldering the responsibilities for the Crystal Classic. Maria Bankemper, incoming chairwoman of the chamber, has been working side-by-side with Gaddie as the other co-chairwoman for this event.

Bankemper is general manager and principal of MPL Lodgings, the owner and operator of the Best Western Plus Siesta Key Hotel on South Tamiami Trail. Gaddie owns CG Designs, an award-winning interior design firm.

While managing their work, they have been marshaling their team of volunteers and chamber employees to make sure every detail on the planning end has been addressed. They do not want the sand sculptors to worry about anything but the details in those towering designs, they say.

“Nobody has any idea how hard volunteers work to make these events happen,” Gaddie told the *News Leader*. At the same time, she pointed out, she cannot say enough good things about the help the team has received from businesses and residents, as well as the Siesta Key Association and the Siesta Key Village Association.

“It’s very much appreciated,” Gaddie said, “and very much community spirit. ... It’s amazing how people can come together.”

During the regular meeting of the SKVA members on Nov. 6, Gaddie thanked everyone for their support but made it clear more volunteers are welcome. People still can sign up on Mote’s [website](#).

With rain pouring down, she predicted — accurately, as it turned out — that the skies would clear by early afternoon so the sculpting that began earlier in the week could continue.

The event’s hours are set from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday through Sunday.

The awards will be presented Sunday afternoon, Nov. 11, she noted. Wigelsworth told the *News Leader* the categories are Judges’ Choice, Sculptors’ Choice, People’s Choice and the Mote Award.

During the Nov. 1 SKA meeting, chamber Chairman Mark Smith pointed out that the improved transportation plans this year should make it easier for people to come to the key to see the sculptures.

Visitors are encouraged to park at [Phillippi Estate Park](#), 5500 S. Tamiami Trail, then take shuttle buses to Siesta. The buses will run from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 10, and Sunday, Nov. 11. The cost is \$5 per vehicle per day.

“We have artists from all over the world and beautiful sand and they show us what they can do with it.”

Cheryl Gaddie
Co-chairwoman
Crystal Classic

The buses will come onto the key by the north bridge, stop in Siesta Village, then proceed to the public beach. They will leave the island by the Stickney Point Bridge, Smith said, "It will be a lot more efficient. We'll have a lot more buses" than in the past, he added.

ROUNDING OUT THE ACTIVITIES

Along with the opportunity to see the work of the master sand sculptors, visitors may enjoy "Quick Sand Contests," which will pit two master sculptors against each other in 10-minute duels to sculpt representations of whatever word they get before the timer begins.

Their piles of sand for these events, the website notes, are formed by 5-gallon buckets

mounted on a lazy susan, "which enables the sculptors to sculpt 'in-the-round' making it possible for the audience to see the progress."

The winner is chosen by the audience's response through applause.

Winners of each of these Quick Sand rounds on Friday and Saturday will advance to the finals at 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 11.

Yet another feature of the event will be the Crystal Classic Amateur Competition, with registration at 9 a.m. on Saturday, Nov. 10. It is free with paid admission.

The sculpting will begin at 10 a.m., with a lunch break from noon to 12:30 p.m. The event



To raise even more funds for Mote Marine Laboratory's sea turtle research, master sand sculptors at the 2011 Crystal Classic created designs for holiday cards. People paid a small fee to have their photos taken beside those sculptures. Photo by Norman Schimmel

will end at 2:30 p.m., with winners announced at 4 p.m.

Only 20 plots are available, the website notes, so interested persons should arrive early.

The categories are as follows:

- Turtle Bale: (family or friends) — up to four members per team.
- Hatchlings: one or two children under 10 years of age. (Parents are permitted to coach from the sidelines.)
- Loggerheads: one or two children 11 to 17 years of age.

- Leatherbacks: one or two adults 18 years of age and older.

Although she joked about how little sleep she'd had in the previous week, Gaddie said on Nov. 2, "We have artists from all over the world and beautiful sand and they show us what they can do with it. ... I'm very, very, very excited."

For details about the 2012 event and photos of past winners, visit thecrystalclassic.org



Nightmares was the first-place winner in 2011. Photo by Norman Schimmel



GOING NOWHERE

Traffic flow near downtown Sarasota has been impeded for more than a year as work has stopped and started on a new lift station for Hudson Bayou. Photo by Norman Schimmel

CITY FINDS ENGINEERING FIRM IN DEFAULT ON EFFORT TO BUILD MICRO-TUNNEL UNDER HUDSON BAYOU FOR NEW LIFT STATION

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The “mess at mound” is a molar-grinding problem for neighbors living south of Hudson Bayou. Time and again, sewage spills into the bayou and immediately into the bay from City of Sarasota utility stations.

After the neighbors found out the stations were squatting on non-city land, and they counted up the environmental fines and penalties the city was incurring as a result of its failing system, the political stars suddenly seemed to align for a multi-million dollar,

“state-of-the art” lift station and innovative tunnel to be built under the bayou to move the effluent.

Under the plan, Osprey Avenue would be closed (and later partially closed) at Mound Street while engineers constructed the station and punched the tunnel directly under the bayou bridge.

Four years after the engineering began, the project is a shambles.

Construction law attorney Alan Tannenbaum, with the Sara-

“ *We expect to recoup expenses.* ”

Alan Tannenbaum
Attorney

sota and Clearwater firm Tannenbaum Scro Hanewich & Alpert, asked the city commissioners on Monday, Nov. 5, "Is this a problem with design or construction or both? We found fault on both the contractor and the engineering firm."

City Manager Tom Barwin said city staff had worked hard to get the engineering firm of AE-COM Technology Corp. to produce a workable plan. But on Friday, Nov. 2, the company failed to produce such a plan and was found in default.

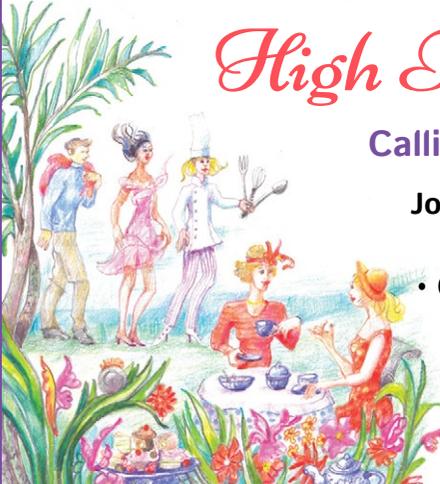
Tannenbaum said, "We will terminate the contract and the city will search for a new engineering firm. The [construction] contractor is expected to submit a significant change order for the down time and another when the project gears back up with good engineering."

Tannenbaum congratulated City Attorney Bob Fournier and his staff for doing an "excellent job drafting the contract." He said, "We expect to recoup expenses."

In the meantime, Interim Utilities Director Bill Hallisey said the city would be working with the contractor to reopen Osprey Avenue to two-way traffic at Mound.

"We've got some utility components disconnected, and they need to be re-established," he said. "We need to get the area looking more presentable."

When asked how much longer it would take to finish the lift station job, which dates back to 2008, Hallisey replied, "Maybe 18 months, two years."

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ANOTHER BUCHANAN VICTORY



*U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan delivers his acceptance speech at the Hyatt Regency Sarasota on Nov. 6.
Contributed photo*

WITHOUT OBAMA COATTAILS TO HELP HIM, DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGER KEITH FITZGERALD MUSTERS ONLY 46 PERCENT OF THE VOTE

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan, R.-Longboat Key, won a fourth term in Congress Tuesday, besting Democratic opponent Keith Fitzgerald 54 percent to 46 percent in the Sarasota Republican's toughest re-election bid yet.

Shortly after handily defending his seat amid the 2010 tea party wave, Buchanan was hit with a wave of allegations that he had illegally reimbursed car dealership employees for donations made to his 2006 and 2008 campaigns. The Federal Election Commission sued Sam Kazran, a former Buchanan business partner, over the reimbursements, but Kazran quickly fingered Buchanan as the one who orchestrated the scheme.

That move sparked a range of ethics complaints and investigations, as well as a heavy dose of negative headlines — leading many national Democrats to believe Fitzgerald had a real shot at unseating Buchanan this year. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee ran ads early in the campaign slamming Buchanan for his alleged misdeeds, and Fitzgerald bested Buchanan in fundraising for most of the year.

Buchanan eventually faced investigations by the U.S. Department of Justice, as well as the Office of Congressional Ethics. While the Justice Department declined to take action, the Ethics office found “substantial reason to be-

lieve that Representative Buchanan attempted to influence the testimony of a witness in a proceeding before the FEC” and recommended that the House Committee on Ethics investigate further.

Buchanan also faces a civil lawsuit filed by Kazran, and he generated sharp criticism from the Fitzgerald campaign when he failed to appear at a scheduled deposition in that case. Fitzgerald said Buchanan’s no-show demonstrated “contempt for the legal process.”

Fitzgerald further criticized Buchanan for his vote in support of the U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan budget, which would have converted Medicare into a voucher program for future beneficiaries, and for voting with the Republican majority 94 percent of the time. A former state representative who won a surprise victory in an unfriendly district in 2006, Fitzgerald played up his reputation as a moderate who could work productively alongside Republicans.

Also working in Fitzgerald’s favor? Redistricting. The Florida Legislature redrew Buchanan’s district this spring, in effect watering down its strong GOP lean.

But, ultimately, all that mattered little. Buchanan won handily, taking 53 percent of

the vote in Sarasota County and 55 percent in the more conservative Manatee County.

One factor that may have affected those Sarasota County votes: Barack Obama. Obama nearly won Sarasota County in his 2008 Florida victory, but he lost the county this year by 15,481 votes — Mitt Romney nearly matched George W. Bush’s 2004 margin of 16,250. The Manatee County gap also came close to 2004’s numbers. In a race decided by 25,364 votes, that Obama decline clearly played a role.

And so Buchanan heads back to Washington, where the most recent Congress was the least productive in decades, producing legislation at a slower rate than even the “do nothing” Congress of the 1940s.

In an August Gallup poll, just 10 percent of

Americans said they approved of Congress’ job performance, the lowest number the firm had recorded in 38 years. But despite that widespread frustration, the next Congress’ makeup will remain largely the same: a conservative GOP majority in the House and Democratic control in the Senate.

The situation brings to mind an old restaurant joke: The food at this place is terrible — and such small portions!



Keith Fitzgerald addresses supporters at Marina Jack after the election returns have been announced on Nov. 6. Photo by Robert Hackney



A CLEAN SWEEP



Sarasota County Commissioner Christine Robinson celebrates her election to the commission Tuesday night as Sarasota County Republican Party Chairman Joe Gruters joins her on the stage. Contributed photo

REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES TAKE THE FLORIDA HOUSE RACES, THOUGH DEMOCRATS WILL HAVE A STRONGER PRESENCE IN TALLAHASSEE

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

Republican incumbents swept each local state House race this Tuesday, Nov. 6, and will be heading back to Tallahassee to join what is now a slightly diminished GOP majority.

State Rep. Jim Boyd defeated attorney Adam Tebrugge by a 56 percent to 44 percent count, while state Rep. Ray Pilon, who unseated Democratic state Rep. Keith Fitzgerald in 2010, took 53 percent of the vote in his contest against attorney Liz Alpert. Republican state Rep. Greg Steube, meanwhile, took almost three quarters of the vote in his race against the independent Bob McCann.

All three will return to Tallahassee for the Legislature's spring session, when they will be part of a majority Republican coalition not quite as omnipotent as during the past two years. Redistricting improved the competitiveness of many state races, and the Republicans lost the two-thirds supermajority they had wielded since 2010's tea party-backed victories.

The change is slight, but it could force greater compromise on controversial bills, which have grown in number over the past two years.

Among them, the Legislature has passed bills to suppress voter turnout, gut longtime



growth management rules and require women to undergo medically unnecessary ultrasounds when seeking abortions. Lawmakers also tried to privatize state prisons and eliminate county programs that help combat worker wage theft.

Will the 2013 Legislature perhaps be less stridently conservative? We shall see.



Sarasota County Commissioner Christine Robinson celebrates her victory with her sister, Kelly Strenkoski, of Wesley Chapel. Contributed photo



Assistant State Attorney Ed Brodsky addresses the crowd at the Hyatt Regency Sarasota after his victory over Democratic challenger John Torraco. Contributed photo



A TONGUE-LASHING

A sport utility vehicle on Webber Street passes by overgrown grass in the median. File photo

SARASOTA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS BEMOAN MOWING SITUATION AROUND THE COUNTY AND LAY BLAME ON STAFF

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

For about 35 minutes this week, the Sarasota County commissioners aired frustrations about the handling of the roadside mowing contracts over the past several years, with Commissioner Joe Barbetta saying, “The county looks like hell.”

The discussion was prompted by the release of an audit of the county’s mowing contract with one vendor, Bloomings Landscape & Turf Management, going back to October 2011. The audit was undertaken by the Office of the Clerk of Circuit Court at the request of County Administrator Randall Reid.

As he brought up the matter during the board’s Nov. 6 regular meeting in Venice, Reid noted that he had found the document “very insightful,” especially in regard to concerns about the functioning of the county’s Operations and Maintenance Center and the monitoring of contracts.

He added, “I have tried to openly address” how the centralization of services has created problems for departments.

Moreover, Reid said, “There is not a question, in our opinion, of our owing anything additional to Bloomings,” though an effort is un-

derway to determine whether the firm was overpaid.

The firm's contract with the county was terminated in early May, after its employees stopped mowing county roadsides, with company officials saying they could not handle the scope of work under the contract for the amount of money they had bid.

A LONG HISTORY

Barbetta pointed out that the mowing problems had been going on for four or five years.

"There is just a level of borderline arrogant incompetence on the part of some county staff members," he added. "I hate to say it. I hate

to use that term, but that's what I feel. I know our job as commissioners is not to micromanage, and we try not to do that."

Commissioner Carolyn Mason asked Reid "to let staff know that we as elected officials ... work for the citizens in this county. They are our employers, and they deserve a lot better than what has been coming out of this mowing contract."

Barbetta added, "I'm really concerned about the morale ... in the Public Works Department," which he characterized as "not healthy."

When mowing contractors who had been in business for years had tried to report prob-

| Contractor Invoice | 1 Supported by Formal Inspections | 2 Refuted Not Performed or in Excess of Cycles Permitted by the Mowing Agreement | Unable to Determine | | | | Invoice Amount | Authorized for Payment |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| | | | 3 Differences Between Contractor Logs of Work Performed and Invoices | 4 Performed but Failed Formal Inspections | 5 Not Included in Formal Inspections | 6 Excess Cycles (Unclear) | | |
| February 2012 North | \$ 65.91 | \$ 22,279.80 | \$ 0.00 | \$ 0.25 | \$ 28,774.70 | \$ 0.00 | \$ 51,120.66 | \$ 51,120.66 |
| February 2012 Central | 328.60 | 13,138.74 | 0.00 | 1,176.82 | 25,272.69 | 0.00 | 39,916.85 | 39,916.85 |
| February 2012 South | 0.00 | 40,995.06 | (1,236.36) | 0.00 | 62,253.92 | 0.00 | 102,012.62 | 102,012.62 |
| March 2012 North | 4,895.05 | 1,308.01 | 5,541.46 | 879.17 | 43,403.73 | 0.00 | 56,027.42 | 56,027.42 |
| March 2012 Central | 15,028.78 | 1,749.98 | 316.91 | 2,772.11 | 35,158.77 | 0.00 | 55,026.55 | 55,026.55 |
| March 2012 South | 5,025.20 | 1,890.56 | 0.00 | 320.42 | 103,601.26 | 0.00 | 110,837.44 | 110,837.44 |
| April 2012 North | 9,799.59 | 28,205.33 | (1.56) | 849.84 | 25,898.68 | 416.73 | 65,168.61 | 65,170.18 |
| April 2012 Central | 5,953.20 | 25,630.27 | (0.07) | 2,162.42 | 17,461.18 | 4,231.00 | 55,438.00 | 25,133.38 |
| April 2012 South | 42,407.89 | 53,058.73 | 0.00 | 1,999.02 | 3,222.35 | 10,285.73 | 110,973.72 | 48,867.56 |
| May 2012 North | 0.00 | 0.00 | 3,972.78 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 3,972.78 | 3,972.78 |
| May 2012 Central | 0.00 | 0.00 | 4,492.05 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 4,492.05 | 0.00 |
| May 2012 South | 0.00 | 0.00 | 11,802.15 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 11,802.15 | 0.00 |
| Totals | \$ 83,504.22 | \$ 188,256.48 | \$ 24,887.36 | \$ 10,160.05 | \$ 345,047.28 | \$ 14,933.46 | \$ 666,788.85 | \$ 558,085.44 |

A table in the report on the audit conducted by the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court shows an analysis of invoices from Bloomings. The report notes that the table "excludes any amounts that should be assessed against the Contractor for reporting failures and re-inspection fees." Table courtesy Sarasota County

lems that they had seen to the commissioners, Barbetta said, "Certain employees blamed them for the problems instead of taking the personal responsibility."

Regarding Reid's demotion during the summer of Dave Cash, who works in operational management, Barbetta said, "I respectfully disagree. ... Dave Cash is not the person ultimately responsible. He was one employee who was put in an awkward position to try to solve a huge problem. It's never been resolved. ... It will never change until a major shakeup occurs."

Barbetta pointed to the county's library system and its Emergency Management Department as two operations functioning very well, calling them "second to none. ... Why? Because of the managers."

Commissioner Jon Thaxton said that while he typically was not on Barbetta's side in these types of issues, in this case, "I think he's spot on. ... Mr. Reid, this has been going on for many, many years."

Whenever private individuals tried to alert the commissioners to a problem, Thaxton said, "It was always dismissed. There was always an excuse. ... Now as it turns out the outside contractors were correct more than they were incorrect."

What was especially troubling to him, Thaxton said, was that "this board should not be questioning staff's professional recommendations. That is a model that's destined to fail. We have to have complete trust in our staff."

This board should not be questioning staff's professional recommendations. That is a model that's destined to fail. We have to have complete trust in our staff.

Jon Thaxton
Commissioner
Sarasota County

Thaxton also concurred with Barbetta that Cash "was not the problem."

Reid said he had been putting faith in staff members' accounts of what had happened in the past. He reiterated that he was taking an intensive look at the county's Operations and Maintenance Center, noting that 13,000 work orders remained unresolved.

He also pointed out that new staff members who recently had come to work for the county would be handling oversight in problem areas.

Commissioner Nora Patterson said she was unsure whether she agreed with Barbetta and Thaxton. "I don't know whether [staff members] are responsible or whether the system's responsible, but we definitely need a new system for

who's responsible for what."

"My concern," she continued, "is getting this stuff mowed at the moment."

Patterson added that she forwards emails to Reid and other staff whenever constituents write in about areas that are overgrown. "I won't necessarily get an answer [from staff]," she said.

"Right," Chairwoman Christine Robinson said.

"I want an answer," Patterson continued. Although she appreciated the fact that the county Communications Department was sending out regular emails about the mowing sched-

ules for the county, “the [areas] people are complaining about aren’t on the list.”

Then she told Reid she felt sorry for him. “I know you didn’t bargain to walk into this mess. I don’t think any of us realized it was quite the mess it was. ... All I’m saying is, ‘Help!’ I almost don’t care how you do it.”

“I’ll do it legally, but I understand,” Reid responded, prompting a bit of laughter amid the tension.

CHANGES DURING THE RECESSION

Reid told the board the privatization of the county’s roadside mowing responsibilities was one factor underlying the problems. “Unfortunately, we’ve basically eliminated our own in-house capabilities,” he said, because of budget cutbacks necessitated by the recession.

He added that such a situation was one he had not encountered in previous positions.

“I actually agree that there should be some in-house capacity,” Patterson said. The county should have “enough staff on hand in order to be able to pick up slack as needed,” she added.

“We did have capacity several years ago,” Barbetta said, “and Public Works management, I believe, chose to sell the equipment.”

Reid responded that he was not aware of any Public Works employee having taken responsibility on his own “to initiate sale of equipment.”

“I sat here in 2007, when we had to wrestle with those [budget] reductions,” Patterson said. When staff suggested the commission cut back on mowing to save money, she add-

ed, “The board said, ‘No!’ Don’t take the money from [the mowing contracts] ... and we were really quite passionate about it.”

Reid also pointed out that while county staff tried to make sure vendors were fully aware of the scope of contracts, vendors sometimes took on work only to realize later that they could not handle the responsibilities.

The commissioners ultimately agreed to discuss the issue at length during an upcoming retreat. Reid concurred that would be preferable to reviewing the matter further during a regular meeting.

THE AUDIT

Dated Oct. 29, the audit says its objectives were the following:

- Determine whether the county had adequate processes in place to monitor Bloomings’ compliance with the mowing agreement.
- Determine whether the county’s process to authorize payments to the contractor was adequate.
- Determine whether the county owes or is owed any amounts related to the agreement.

The audit points out that on Oct. 1, 2011, the county issued an invitation for bids for mowing and related services. A bid protest delayed the award from about mid-November 2011 until Jan. 10. Because of that lag time, grass and vegetation had grown higher than normal, so county personnel gave Bloomings a “ramp-up” period during which it suspended formal inspections and the assessment of re-inspection fees. That ramp-up period lasted until March 19.

Effective May 7, the audit says, the contractor stopped performing under the agreement and was formally notified of termination of the contract on May 11, effective May 14.

Among its findings, the audit cited a blurring of lines of responsibility among county staff for overseeing the contract compliance; work orders for additional services that were approved by county staff without any formal amendment to the contract; waiving of re-inspection fees for a period without any amendment to the contract; and documents submitted by the contractor that “were inconsistent, inaccurate, and did not provide adequate information on the work performed.”

The document says one of the auditors interviewed Jim Oppy in the Field Services office on Oct. 12, noting that Oppy “was part of the team that put the bid documents together ...”

It adds, “This was a fairly large contract that was mainly overseen at a high level by Jim Harriott and Dave Cash.”

Harriott was head of the Public Works Department until Reid promoted him to chief county engineer during the summer.

Regarding one of the auditor’s interviews with Harriott on Oct. 11, the document says, “Mr. Harriott stated that management of the contract remained with Dave Cash and Jim Oppy.”

During an auditor’s interview with Cash on Oct. 5,

the document says Cash “stated that before the contract was awarded, Terry Lewis, former Interim County Administrator, told Dave Cash he would be ‘joined at the hip’ to Jim Harriott.”

It adds that Cash had told Oppy “to take a step back because the day-to-day operations were under Jim Harriott,” though it notes Cash said he “felt responsible for the contract and stayed involved.”

Further, the document says Cash told the auditor “there were no written directives outlining who is responsible for what aspects of managing contract compliance.”

It notes Cash said that on April 6, executives with Bloomings “admitted that they underbid.” Cash said he told them any extra service proposals would have to be submitted in writing; then, the county would determine whether those services could be purchased or done in-house.

Bloomings continued to mow through April and to complain about financial hardship, Cash added.

When Bloomings executives later sought county agreement to a reduced workload and higher compensation, the audit says, “The County rejected this proposal.”

Bloomings stopped work on May 5.



Commissioner Joe Barbetta works on material before a budget workshop in August. Photo by Norman Schimmel



FILLING THE GAP



Sarasota County Commissioners Jon Thaxton and Christine Robinson peruse agenda material during a recent meeting in Sarasota. File photo

SARASOTA COUNTY COMMISSION ENDORSES WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND ASKS STAKEHOLDERS TO STAY ON TRACK IN MEETING TARGETED TIMELINES

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

After her board unanimously endorsed a community workforce initiative on Nov. 7, Sarasota County Commission Chairwoman Christine Robinson asked for another report by the end of the year on the timelines the committee members are expected to put in place for their plans of action.

Robinson acknowledged she had no authority to make the request, but she said she wanted to make sure the effort under way did not stall.

“I have an 8-, 7- and 4-year old,” she said. “This is going to affect them.”

Robinson also was the commissioner who took the lead during an Aug. 29 joint meeting with the Sarasota County School Board to seek concrete steps to address the skills gap among area workers that Sarasota and Manatee county manufacturers had detailed in a survey commissioned by the Bradenton organization CareerEdge.

As a result of the commission’s vote that day, stakeholders were back before the commission on Nov. 7, as requested, to discuss their progress.

The Sarasota News Leader reported in its Nov. 2 issue that the Sarasota County Technical Institute already had taken one step in response to the survey: Sarasota County Schools officials have created a new program to certify 100 precision machinists within five years, with the first 25 students to enroll in August 2013.

SCTI Director Todd Bowden told the County Commission on Nov. 7 that manufacturers were looking for just the type of workers the program would produce.

When Robinson asked how much of an impact those 100 graduates would have on filling industry needs, Jennifer Schmidt, president of the Sarasota-Manatee Manufacturers Association, replied, “I wouldn’t say [they would] put a small dent in solving the [skills gap] crisis.

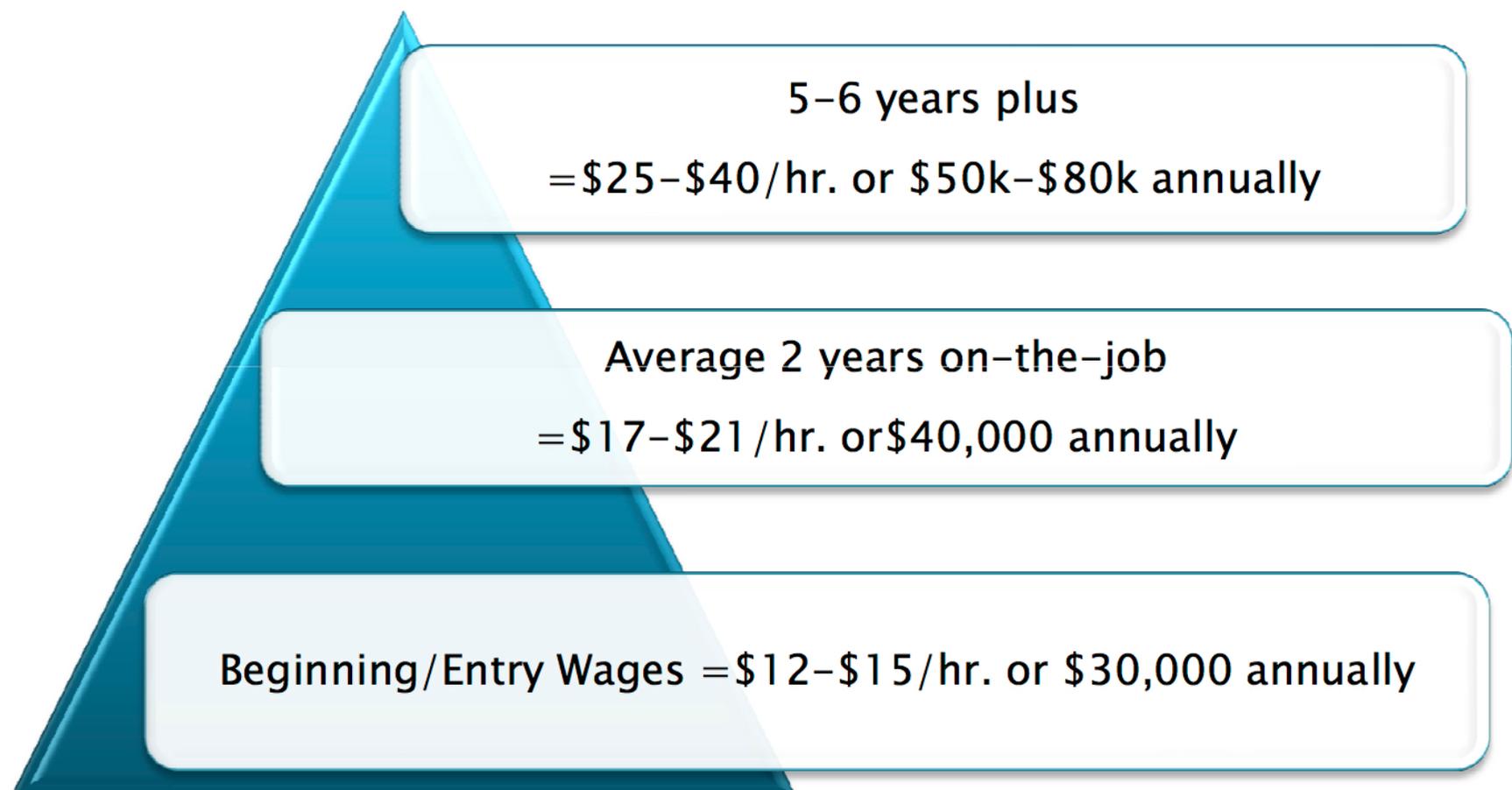
... It will be a significant step in the right direction.”

Schmidt pointed out that the CareerEdge survey showed manufacturers in the two counties had multiple openings for 50 different types of job titles, and all of those positions were built upon the foundation the SCTI program would provide.

That was why the collaboration with manufacturers in addressing the skills gap was so important, Schmidt said.

Moreover, she pointed out, after a year of training in the SCTI program and continued on-the-job learning, people who would start out at the middle skills job level making \$12 to \$15 per hour would move up within five or

Earning Potential for Middle Skill Workers



A slide in a presentation to the County Commission on Nov. 7 shows the earnings potential for middle-skills workers. Graphic courtesy CareerEdge

six years to annual salaries ranging between \$50,000 and \$80,000 per year.

UNDERSTANDING THE GAP

Schmidt explained that a common misconception about manufacturing is that it has two levels of workers: highly skilled employees with college degrees, such as engineers; and low-skill workers, such as those with high school diplomas and/or “very, very basic, minor certifications.”

Too few jobs exist for either type of employee in modern manufacturing firms, she explained.

“The missing link,” Schmidt said, is the employee with middle-level skills, such as the precision machinists, skilled welders and boat fabricators. “There are far more jobs available than workers qualified to fill them. This is the skill gap.”

In response to a question from Commissioner Nora Patterson, Schmidt said the middle-level jobs skills easily are transferable among manufacturers.

After five years, Schmidt said, “You’re even more desirable [to another manufacturer] and you’re even hotter in the job market, quite honestly.”

STEPS FORWARD

Mireya C. Eavey, executive director of CareerEdge, told the commissioners that her organization had investors who wanted to make

sure their funding was being used in a timely fashion to assist with the workforce initiative. In the short-term, she said, representatives of manufacturing companies in the two counties would focus on deciding what other training programs were needed in the community.

Schmidt added, “Manufacturers are a deadline, fast-action, ‘let’s-move-on-this’ type of group. ... To keep everyone at the table, there will be deadlines and they will be met.”

Bowden also noted that the school district would be recruiting high school students for the new SCTI program. In the future, he said, district staff would work on making middle school students aware of it as well.

“I believe once you get the word out among the students, you’ll have a waiting list after

you get the 25 [for the first slots],” Commissioner Carolyn Mason told him.

Eavey asked the commissioners for their endorsement of the plans of action, because that would give the manufacturers, the school district and other stakeholders the

credibility they needed in the community to make the initiatives work.

“I believe, to accomplish this, you need champions,” Eavey said.

Yet another aspect of the effort that would benefit from the endorsement, she noted, would be the goal to make it a model for other communities.

“Manufacturers are a deadline, fast-action, ‘let’s-move-on-this’ type of group. ... To keep everyone at the table, there will be deadlines and they will be met.”

Jennifer Schmidt
President
Sarasota-Manatee
Manufacturers Association

Schmidt earlier had pointed out that the skills gap was not just a local problem but a regional and national one.

Mason made the motion for the endorsement and, at Commissioner Joe Barbetta's request, included a stipulation that County Administrator Randall Reid continue to work with the stakeholders on behalf of the commission.

In an interview with the *News Leader* last week, Eavey credited Reid for much of the success in the stakeholder committee's developing plans of action within the 90-day time frame Robinson had specified in August.

"This is a long time coming," Commissioner Joe Barbetta said of the initiative.

Commissioner Jon Thaxton also acknowledged the collaboration of the Greater Sara-

sota Chamber of Commerce with the committee's work.

He added, "I particularly want to extend thanks personally to the School Board. ... [This] wouldn't have happened without your cooperation."

Before the presentation began, Robinson welcomed School Board members Shirley Brown and Jane Goodwin, who were in the audience at the meeting in the Administration Center in downtown Sarasota.

Barbetta also acknowledged the support of the Gulf Coast Community Foundation.

Mason told Eavey, Schmidt and Bowden, "I want to encourage you guys to keep forging these partnerships because this is the way to make things happen in any community."



VENDORS MAY REGISTER WITH EPROCURE



Staff of the Sarasota County Procurement Department is urging vendors to register with eProcure to do business with the county online.

A total of 1,185 vendors currently are signed up, a county news release says.

eProcure is a free website for county solicitations, policies, procedures and forms. Vendors who register with the site can participate in solicitation opportunities of \$3,000 or higher. "Registered vendors receive courtesy notifications about solicitations that potentially match their vendor profile," the release says.

Vendors can submit required and optional forms, such as "Local Preference," when they

register, instead of completing a form each time they submit a solicitation, the release adds.

Vendors may access eProcure from the county's website at www.scgov.net by clicking eProcure under Online Services.

Vendors who register are required to submit a "No Lobby Affidavit" and an "Immigration Status Affidavit" as part of their vendor profile before responding to a solicitation.

For more information, visit www.scgov.net or contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000.

FLORIDA HOUSE 2.0

"Creating a Future by Design"

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Demonstration
House &
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Convening &
Meeting
Space

Functional Space

- Meeting space mid-County
- Advanced Technology
- Neutral convening place
- Revenue Stream

Community
Think Tank

Research

- Decision support
- Data & White Papers
- Grants
- Consulting

A slide in a Nov. 6 Florida House presentation to the County Commission shows the three-pronged approach to making the facility self-supporting. Image courtesy Sarasota County

COUNTY COMMISSION AWARDS \$100,000 GRANT TO THE FLORIDA HOUSE TO AID WITH REMODELING AND NEW STRATEGIES TO ENABLE IT TO SUPPORT ITSELF

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

After learning that Sarasota County's new lease with the Florida House could be terminated at any time over its five-year life, County Commissioner Nora Patterson joined three other members of the commission in approving a \$100,000 capital improvements grant to the Beneva Road learning center.

Commission Chairwoman Christine Robinson cast the lone "No" vote after hearing a Nov. 6 presentation on plans for developing a revenue stream to make the facility self-supporting.

At the outset of the discussion during the board's regular meeting in Venice, Rob Lewis, the county's director of planning and development services, had responded to a question from Robinson, noting the funds would have to be found from county sources. Nothing was budgeted for this, he said.

In response to a later question from Robinson, John Lambie, one of the founders of the Florida House, said the institute's board of directors did not have a formal business plan, though it was working on the framework for one.

“How the place generates revenue remains to be seen,” Lambie said.

Although the board members are “a very impressive group by the way,” Robinson said, “quite frankly, that \$100,000 could be spent on our ball fields right now, which are in dire, dire need in some cases.”

Robinson added, “I just can’t justify spending the money on the Florida House when we’ve got kids playing on fields that are unsafe.”

Commissioner Joe Barbetta made the motion to allocate the funds to the Florida House.

“The Florida House needs to be finished,” Barbetta said, “... so I think the money’s well spent.”

He reiterated a point he has made several times over the past months: The county has assets it needs to sell, which would make funds available for projects such as this one — “to invest in our own properties.”

Commissioner Jon Thaxton seconded the motion. “I tend to look at track records, and when I look at this organization’s track record and the return on investment ... I look at this one as being a relatively safe bet, especially compared to some of the other ventures that we embark on.”

Additionally, he said, “I tend to look more toward those business plans with ongoing operations as opposed to one-time capital expenses.”

Renovation Outside

“Creating A Future by Design”



Enclose porch to increase seating

SBEP Paver Project & Entryway

Signs and Wayfinding

Porch roof and air conditioning



Lambie assured the commissioners the grant funds would be used as a capital investment in the property, not for staff or operations.

“As our revenue ramps up, so will our ability to hire staff,” he added.

In response to questions from Patterson about the lease, Lambie pointed out, “It expects us not to come back to you for more assistance.”

The county had agreed to pay \$6,000 for overhead in the current fiscal year, he added. “After that,” he said, “it’s ours.”

A Nov. 6 memo to the County Commission from Lewis points out that the Florida House, located at 4454 Beneva Road in Sarasota, “was established in 1992 for the purpose of developing a learning center demonstrating water conservation. The mission statement of the Florida House Institute is to facilitate continuous improvement to your home, your neighborhood, and our community by cooperative partnership and collaboration.”

The memo continues, “Through broad collaboration, the Florida House became the first ‘Green Building’ open to the public in the United States, and provided opportunities for educating and creating new markets for energy and water conservation, recycling. It was also the first demonstration of the Florida Yard ... [to] help residents create a Florida landscape with minimal negative environmental impact.”

The original facility drew 10,000 visitors a year, Lambie pointed out, and was “better known around the country than it is here.”

During his presentation, Lambie noted that the commission gave the Florida House its new five-year lease in July. Within three days of that action, he said, the Florida House board members had won funding support from the Gulf Coast Community Foundation and they had begun working on strategic planning.

“The difficulty in creating a self-sustaining entity has been holding the Florida House basically in limbo the last four years,” he said.

I look at this one as being a relatively safe bet, especially compared to some of the other ventures that we embark on.

Jon Thaxton
Commissioner
Sarasota County

NEW STRATEGIES

The board had developed a three-pronged approach to enable the Florida House to generate enough revenue on its own.

First, he said, the board wanted to build upon the facility’s past by putting a new focus on retrofitting buildings. A Kellogg Foundation study, he noted, had found that \$650 billion “was a rough [estimate] for improvements that would pay for themselves nationally” through retrofitting.

The retrofitting demonstration goal is part of an effort to help people understand “they can make their buildings better as they perform general maintenance,” he pointed out.

Second, the board members wanted to remodel the Florida House to create neutral public area where meetings could be live-streamed,

as they had heard considerable demand in the county for such a space.

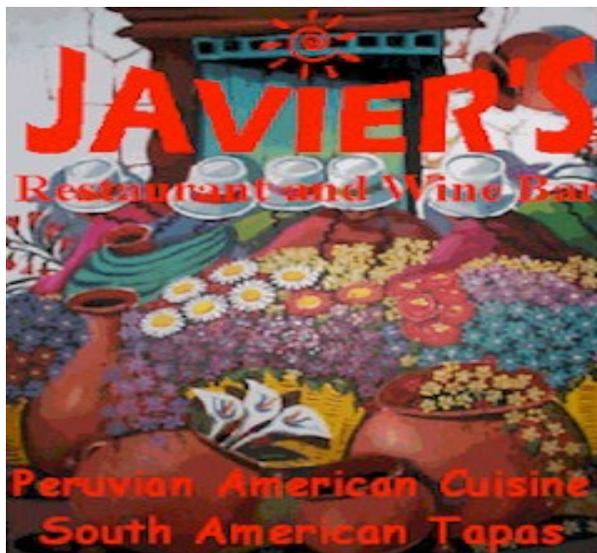
They also want to remodel the kitchen so it can be used for cooking classes that can be streamed live on video, and they want to transform part of the landscaping. “We found a huge market for cooking that goes sort of hand-in-glove with edible landscaping,” he noted.

Third, a think tank would be developed to leverage the network of expertise associated with the Florida House, making it available not just in the county but on a national level.

A letter from the board to the County Commission says, “Florida House is ready to draw on [its] state and national partners, including Collaborative Labs and Placematters (Denver CO) to match state of the art programming to local needs.”

Although the board had considered charging admission for the demonstration features of the house, Lambie said, “I think the place probably needs to be open to the public.”

“We hope the next time we talk to you, you’re asking us for help instead of the other way around,” Lambie told the commissioners.



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CALMING THE STORM

Space was left between some of the parking boxes on St. Armands to help pedestrians cross the street more easily. Photo by Norman Schimmel

CITY'S PARKING MANAGER GETS LEEWAY TO LOOSEN RESTRICTIONS RECENTLY IMPOSED ON ST. ARMANDS, IN RESPONSE TO MERCHANTS' PLEAS

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

Regular readers have watched this storm for weeks now, gathering spite and strength from the parking brouhaha along St. Armands Key.

Yes, this is another parking fiasco, created when the City Commission “fixed” the last parking fiasco, which was created when it tried to remedy an earlier parking fiasco. The cycle has seemed unbroken.

The new storm broke upon the Sarasota City Commission on Monday evening, Nov. 5, the day before Election Day.

Regular readers are familiar with the woes: St. Armands customers driven away; piles of letters of complaint; statements such as “I’m

never coming back”; residents who cannot park outside their residences because of visitors using the spaces. Call it a world of worries in paradise.

This started when the City Commission — under pressure — yanked the parking meters out of downtown Sarasota last year. The commission then established a one-size-fits-all parking policy for the entire city.

“This board was handed this problem and has stayed in crisis mode,” said City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo on Nov. 5. “These are pretty scary numbers. It takes 2,700 citations monthly to break even on parking enforcement.”

A couple of changes drove St. Armands merchants and residents especially crazy. A series of boxes were painted next to the curbs, but they were discontinuous boxes so pedestrians could lurk between cars before racing to the center of the circle, to avoid getting struck by other vehicles looking for boxes.

Park “outside the box,” with a front tire on the line, and you get busted.

These are not just regular boxes, either. They are “giganto-boxes”; Humvee-sized boxes; M60 tank-sized boxes. With a windsock, you could land a helicopter in one.

This says nothing, though, about the ability of visiting tourists to parallel-park their cars within the boxes. The tourists cannot see the lines outside their vehicles, so they have no idea until they get out of their Hummer or Escalade whether they indeed have settled in the box.

A second seismic shift for St. Armands was an extension of the parking enforcement hours to 8 p.m. If a visitor showed up at 4 p.m., she had only until 7 p.m. to move her car. The previous cutoff was 6 p.m. Would she stay to shop, dance and dine? Probably not.

“We need to look at whether we need to be in the parking business.”

Shannon Snyder
City Commissioner



A sport utility vehicle is clearly over the line of this box on St. Armands. Photo by Norman Schimmel

The third shock was the imposition of parking time limits on Saturdays, a first for the circle.

With tourist season rapidly approaching, merchants have been screaming with increasing volume to get city attention.

Meanwhile, downtown Sarasota merchants have been waiting for a resolution on St. Armands before they create their own “parking cyclone.”

“We need to look at whether we need to be in the parking business,” said City Commissioner Shannon Snyder. “If downtown needs parking, they need to figure out their own solution. We have to be tough enough at some point to say, ‘Help Yourself.’”

City Parking Manager Mark Lyons is the man in the middle. He dares not violate the ev-

er-changing City Commission policies, but real people with real parking problems have put him under increasing pressure every day to change something, anything.

The commissioners on Nov. 5 gave Lyons the flexibility to banish the St. Armands boxes and dial back the enforcement regulations to those in place at this time last year: no Saturday restrictions and no extension to 8 p.m. He said he would come back for their approval of his proposed changes at the earliest possible meeting.

What was to be a uniform parking policy city-wide now has the makings of its first special exception for St. Armands — and the “flip-flop machine” is still ticking.



COUNTY GOVERNMENT OFFICES TO CLOSE FOR VETERANS DAY



All Sarasota County and City of Sarasota government offices, including the Federal Building, the city’s Public Works Department, libraries, recreation centers and the Sarasota County History Center, will be closed Monday, Nov. 12, in observance of Veterans Day.

The following Sarasota County Parks and Recreation facilities will be open:

- Arlington Park, noon to 5 p.m.
- Payne Park, 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.

The Knight Trail Park Pistol and Rifle Range and the Englewood Sports Complex will be closed.

Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) bus service, including paratransit service, will oper-

ate on the regular schedule on Veterans Day. However, the Veterans Bus will not run on Nov. 12, the county has announced.

County and city garbage collection will not be affected for residential customers, city and county news releases say.

Both the landfill at 4000 Knights Trail Road and the Citizens’ Convenience Center at 4010 Knights Trail Road in Nokomis will be open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Nov. 12. The landfill administration office will be closed, the county news release says.

The Chemical Collection Center at 8750 Bee Ridge Road, the ReUzIt Shop and the Jackson Road Chemical Collection Center will be closed.



MEETING THE CHALLENGE

James Niffenegger/Photo by Scott Proffitt

NUMEROUS AGENCIES AND INDIVIDUALS COLLABORATED THIS YEAR TO PROVIDE SCHOOL NECESSITIES TO STUDENTS WHO COULD NOT AFFORD THEM

By Scott Proffitt
Staff Writer

“We have over a thousand homeless students in Sarasota County,” said Caroline Zucker, the outgoing chairwoman of the Sarasota County School Board, during the Nov. 6 regular meeting at The Landings.

Gary Leatherman, the school district’s communications director reported, “The number of students eligible for free or reduced-cost lunches is expected to exceed more than 50 percent of the student population.”

But there are people, lots of people, trying to do something to help. And the School Board asked many of them to come forward and be recognized during the meeting.

On its behalf and the behalf of the community, the School Board members offered gratitude to the people present that night from more than 23 groups or agencies that had offered assistance. Twenty-one individuals joined those agencies in providing sup-

““ We have over a thousand homeless students in Sarasota County.

Caroline Zucker
Chairwoman
School Board



plies — including such basic items as paper, pencils and backpacks — to students in need at the start of the school year.

Altogether, 1,489 backpacks and other much-needed gear were donated, with a total value approaching \$150,000.

Among the groups recognized were Abundant Life Church; APAC Construction; Banana Republic; Sarasota Rotary; Christ United Church; Church of the Palms; Church of the Trinity; Costco; Florida Department of Revenue; Islamic Society of Sarasota Bradenton; Publix; Sarasota Architectural Salvage; Siesta Key Chapel; St. Mark's, St. Patrick's and Saint Paul churches; the Venice Moose Lodge; Walmart and the Sarasota Family YMCA.

One individual singled out for praise was Pine View School 10th-grader James Niffenegger.

“It all started when I was helping with the school supplies sale at Pine View,” he said, “and I asked what they would do with the extra supplies. [The materials] couldn't be given

away, so I decided to do [something] on my own.”

“The principal and teachers at Alta Vista [Elementary School] were really thankful. It felt really good,” he added.

James told the School Board he wants to donate supplies again next year. Anyone who would like to help or contribute may reach him at James.Niffenegger@aol.com.

School Board member Shirley Brown added that people also may contribute to his or other causes through the Education Foundation of Sarasota County.

“It's a tax-exempt organization, and you can specify for your donation to go to James' project if you want,” Brown said.

“This should be a source of tremendous pride to all who donated and to the entire community,” said Zucker.



Individuals and representatives of local organizations receive thanks from the School Board during the Nov. 6 meeting. Photo by Scott Proffitt



Booker High School's Junior ROTC unit participates in the 2011 Veterans Day Parade. Photo by Norman Schimmel

VETERANS DAY EVENTS PLANNED IN SARASOTA AND VENICE

Veterans Day ceremonies will be held in Sarasota and Venice on Sunday, Nov. 11.

A parade will march down Main Street in Sarasota before a ceremony is held at Chaplain J.D. Hamel Park, a county news release says.

The Sarasota parade will begin at 10 a.m. at Main Street and Osprey Avenue. It will head west along Main Street to Hamel Park on Gulfstream Avenue.

Among the marching units will be representatives of veterans' service organizations, law enforcement agencies and fire departments and their color guards, marching bands and Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps units from the local high schools, as well as members of civic organizations, a City of Sarasota news release notes.

Historical military equipment also will be on view.

The guest speaker for the ceremony will be retired U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. George Hardy, a highly decorated veteran and most notably the youngest Tuskegee Airman.

Hardy was commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant in September 1944. He flew 21 combat missions over Germany, 45 combat missions over Korea and 70 combat missions during the Vietnam War, the news release says. He was honored with the Distinguished Flying Cross with valor, the Air Medal with 11 Oak Leaf Clusters and the Commendation Medal with one Oak Leaf Cluster.

The events are being coordinated by the Sarasota Patriotic Observance Committee and the Venice Area Veterans Council, in coordination with Sarasota County's Veterans Benefits Unit.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000, or visit www.scgov.net.

SIESTA BEACH PARK DESIGN TO BE SUBJECT OF NOV. 13 MEETING

A day after Sarasota County commissioners questioned whether a public meeting on the proposed Siesta Beach Park improvements would be held on Nov. 13 as announced earlier, county officials issued a press release saying the open house still was on the schedule.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta raised the matter during the board's Nov. 7 meeting in Sarasota. A day earlier, county Chief Engineer James K. Harriott Jr. told the commissioners the open house might have to be postponed because of continuing staff work on the design, which is at the 60 percent mark.

A county news release sent out on Nov. 8 says the public meeting will be held on Tuesday, Nov. 13, at St. Michael the Archangel Church, 5394 Midnight Pass Road on Siesta Key. No formal presentation will be provided, the release notes. Members of the public are invited to come at any time during the event, which will run from 5 to 7 p.m., the release adds.

County staff and representatives of Kimley-Horn and Associates Inc., the design and engineering firm working as a consultant to the county on the project, will answer questions about the design plan, "which includes

new and enhanced amenities at the world-class Siesta Beach, designated by Dr. Beach as the No. 1 Beach in America in 2011," the news release says.

The project has been designed to increase and improve parking and pedestrian access, upgrade and expand recreational opportunities and facilities and rehabilitate the historic pavilion built in the 1950s.

Among the possible amenities and improvements the commission will consider for the beach park are the following, according to the release:

- A pedestrian esplanade connecting the park from east to west
- An expanded and renovated parking lot
- Improved Beach Road access
- Modern and expanded restrooms
- Two new concession areas, including an elevated one
- New multiuse shelters

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000.

INCREASED RED TIDE LEVELS DETECTED AT BIRD KEY PARK

The latest beach water samples — collected on Nov. 5 by the Sarasota County Health Department and analyzed by Mote Marine Laboratory for the micro-algae that causes Florida red tide (*Karenia brevis*) — shows a marked increase at Bird Key Park, just west of the Ringling Causeway, says a county news release issued on Nov. 7.

Local health officials have placed signage in the area advising the public that red tide is present, the release adds.

"We are fortunate that red tide has remained at low levels at other area Gulf beaches," Sarasota County Health Department Environmental Administrator Tom Higginbotham says in the release. "People with asthma or chron-

ic respiratory impairments may experience heightened symptoms associated with red tide when winds are blowing onshore, especially in the area around the Ringling Causeway.”

Since Bird Key Park is a “dog-beach,” county health officials also are advising pet owners about the risks red tide poses to animals brought to the beach. Like people, pets can experience respiratory irritation from airborne red tide toxins and can become sick from ingesting them, the news release notes.

When walking dogs along the shore, pet owners should not allow the dogs to play with any dead fish or foam that may accumulate during or after a red tide. If the pet swims in an area

with red tide, wash it as soon as possible. Most dogs lick themselves after swimming and will consume any toxins on their fur, the release points out.

Beachgoers are encouraged to check the Mote Beach Conditions Report before they go to the beach because conditions can change daily. The Mote Marine Laboratory’s Beach Conditions Report is updated at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. daily. Reports may be viewed online at www.mote.org/beaches. Residents and visitors also may register to receive email reports about specific beaches. For telephone updates, call 941-BEACHES and press 1 for Sarasota County beaches.

JEWISH FEDERATION TO HOST ‘ISRAEL AT 65’ CELEBRATION

The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee (JFSM) is presenting a 15-month celebration of the 65th anniversary of the state of Israel, beginning this month.

The organization’s executive director, Howard Tevlowitz, says in a news release that JFSM aims “to highlight the educational, cultural, technological and medical contributions that Israel and her people have made to our world in the last 65 years. These events will provide opportunities for people in Sarasota and Manatee counties to join together and demonstrate their solidarity with Israel. It’s also an excellent opportunity to strengthen our relationships with the community at large. We very much want to build on the friendships we made during our first interfaith mission to Israel earlier this year.” Tevlowitz adds that an interfaith committee, co-chaired by Patti Wertheimer and Gail Cox, has been working

“diligently all summer to plan events that are open to the entire community and have something to offer for all ages.”

Two programs have been scheduled before the end of the year:

- The Israel Defense Forces Quartet will perform at the kick-off event on Nov. 11 at 2 p.m. in the Beatrice Friedman Theater. The event is free; seating is limited.
- Brigitte Gabriel, a leading expert on global Islamic terrorism, will return to Sarasota on Dec. 12. Gabriel lectures nationally and internationally about terrorism and current affairs and is the author of two New York Times best-selling books, *Because They Hate: A Survivor of Islamic Terror Warns America* and *They Must Be Stopped: Why We Must Defeat Radical Islam and How We Can Do It*.

EVENTS PLANNED FOR 37TH ANNUAL GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT

The Tobacco Free Partnership of Sarasota County, in collaboration with Tobacco Free Florida, will host two local events in conjunction with the 37th annual Great American Smokeout on Thursday, Nov. 15, to encourage people of all ages to be tobacco-free for 24 hours.

The scheduled events are as follows:

- A Tools to Quit Smoking class for adults from 10 a.m. to noon at the Sarasota County Health Department, 2200 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota.
- A “Turn in Your Cigs” event from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at New College of Florida, 5800 Bayshore Road, Sarasota. This event will be held in Hamilton Center. Smokers may turn in their cigarettes to receive a free “quit kit” with giveaways, tips to quit smoking and information on smoking cessation resources.

Sponsored by the American Cancer Society, the nationwide Great American Smokeout is a public health event that challenges people to plan in advance and quit smoking that day, or to use the day to make a plan to quit the habit, a county news release says.

“The Great American Smokeout provides an opportunity to educate people about the many resources available to help them successfully quit, while encouraging them to make a long-term plan to quit for good,” said Sarasota County Health Department Tobacco Prevention Specialist Hilary Woodcum in the news release.

The city of North Port will recognize Thursday, Nov. 15, as Great American Smokeout Day through a proclamation to be presented during the North Port City Commission meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 13, the release adds. The city also will participate in the 37th annual Great American Smokeout by offering cessation information to employees at North Port City Hall, 4970 City Hall Blvd., North Port.

The Sarasota County Health Department offers support to local businesses interested in tobacco-free policy implementation. Information regarding tobacco cessation programs for employees also is available, the release adds. For more information about these services, contact Ro Mohamed of the Sarasota County Health Department at 861-2998.

PROGRAM TO ENCOURAGE GIRLS TO PURSUE CAREERS IN SCIENCE

The Sarasota County Library System has partnered with the Venice branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) to present “Girls, Gadgetry and Galvanizing Genius,” a free program designed to encourage girls ages 9-12 to explore careers in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math.

The program will be held 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 17, at Jacaranda Library, 4143 Woodmere Park Blvd., Venice.

“This event is an exciting way for the Sarasota County Library System and the area schools to work together, partnering with the AAUW on a special Books-to-Action project just for tween girls,” said Sheila Kaufer, Youth Services librarian, in the news release.

U.S. Department of Labor workforce projections for 2018 show that nine of the 10 fastest-growing occupations that require at least a bachelor’s degree will also require significant

scientific or mathematical training, the news release notes. "Many science and engineering occupations are predicted to grow faster than the average rate for all occupations, and some of the largest increases will be in engineering and computer-related fields, where women currently hold one-quarter or fewer positions," the release says.

Advanced registration is required at www.sclibs.net by selecting "Calendar/Programs" from the left margin menu, then "Girls, Gadgets and Galvanizing Genius." The event is limited to 25 girls.

For more program information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000 or visit www.sclibs.net.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE TARGETING TRUANCY IN COUNTY SCHOOLS

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has launched a special effort to reduce truancy and keep track of students who have missed an excessive amount of school.

The Sheriff's Office created an initiative called Operation Bueller at the start of the 2012-2013 school year, the office has announced. "Operation Bueller is a phased response plan using an intelligence-led approach that is designed to offer long-term solutions to the local truancy problem," the release says.

Initially, members of the Intelligence Unit worked with the Department of Juvenile Justice and school truancy officers to focus on juvenile probationers and ensure these students attend school, the release adds. Youth Services deputies make sure probationers attend school each day, and if they are absent, the deputies find them to learn why.

"The intent of the truancy initiative is to express the importance of school attendance

and advise students and their parents that law enforcement is interested in their welfare and whereabouts," said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release. "We continuously work with the community to address the root causes of crime, and the goal of this collaborative effort is to steer these young people toward getting an education so they can be more successful in life."

Parents whose children have excessive absences are directed to resources for help, including YMCA Family Management Services. Children who do not go to school can be referred to Truancy Court, and parents who do not make their children attend school on a regular basis commit a second-degree misdemeanor, the news release says.

To watch a video that takes viewers on a recent Truancy Sweep and further explains the purpose of this initiative visit the Sheriff's Office's YouTube Channel www.youtube.com/user/SarasotaSheriff.

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EXTENSION SERVICE GIVES DONATED RAIN BARRELS TO SCHOOLS

Thirty-one Sarasota County schools with garden programs have received rain barrels from the University of Florida/Extension Sarasota County office, the county has announced.

The beverage distribution company Redi-2-DrinQ Group had donated 50 barrels to the office, the release adds.

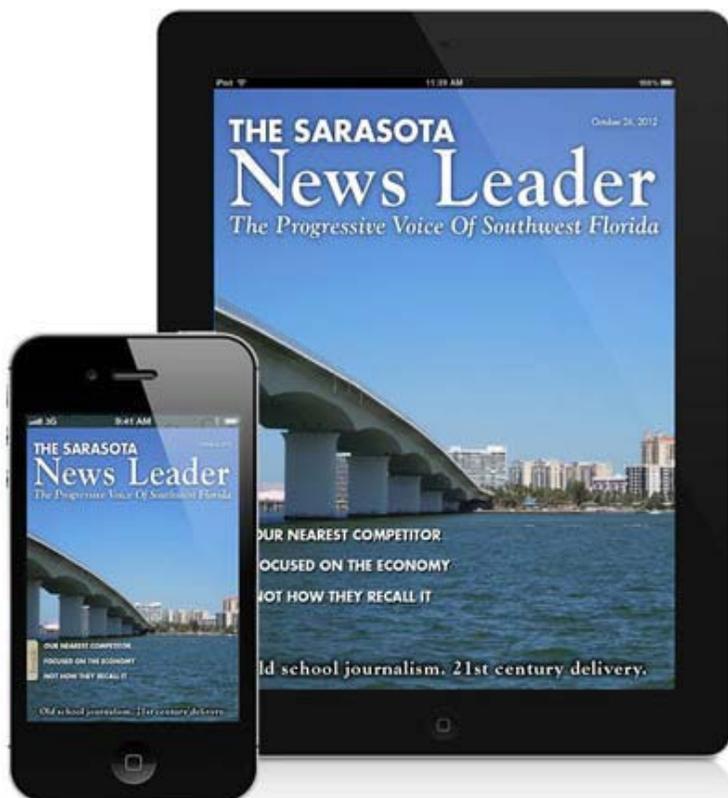
“Rain barrels reduce stormwater runoff and conserve water by collecting rainwater that can be used for plants and gardens,” the release notes. The donated barrels are wrapped with a banner featuring the nine principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping: Right Plant, Right Place; Water Efficiently; Fertilize Appropriately; Mulch; Attract Wildlife; Manage Yard Pests Responsibly; Recycle; Reduce Stormwater Runoff; and Protect the Waterfront. The barrels provide educational school yard demonstrations that help schools conserve resources, the release says.

The elementary schools that received the barrels were Alta Vista, Brentwood, Emma E. Booker, Gocio, Southside, Garden, Glenallen and Taylor Ranch. The middle school recipients were McIntosh and Oak Park South. The high schools were Riverview, Suncoast Polytechnical, Pine View and Venice.

The Extension office offers monthly workshops during which residents can learn how the rain barrels conserve water, save money and reduce stormwater runoff, the release points out. The workshops provide practical tips on constructing and installing rain barrels. The next class will be held from 10 to 11 a.m. Nov. 17 at [Twin Lakes Park](#), 6700 Clark Road, Sarasota.

Sarasota County government offers rain barrels for \$37, including tax.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000, or visit www.scgov.net.



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OPINION



THE WHEELS OF DEMOCRACY TURN YET AGAIN

EDITORIAL After months of relentless campaigning by the candidates, after billions of dollars spent on advertising and other campaign tactics, after millions of words — too many disingenuously framed and delivered — the American people had their say.

They endured bad weather, hours-long waits to vote, intrusive new voter ID requirements and ballots chockablock full of extraneous initiatives. They cast their ballots, and their votes were counted.

The loser acknowledged the will of the people by standing before them, on national television, to concede the race and congratulate the winner, conferring the time-honored *imprimatur* of legitimacy by the defeated upon the victor.

That victor, Barack Hussein Obama, accepted both the approbation of a majority of American voters and the best wishes of his erstwhile opponent in a speech he hoped would set the tone for his second term as President of the United States.

The grand experiment embarked upon more than two centuries ago by our Founding Fathers had been tested once again and found still sound. The wheels of democracy — a tad creaky, to be sure — turned once more. And the world breathed a sigh of relief.

For all our military adventurism of the past decade, all of our avowed “spreading of democracy,” nothing this country can do better demonstrates American values and ideals more capably than a presidential election. It is the brightest beacon of hope we shine on those in the world who would see the darkness of authoritarianism end.

OPINION

AMENDMENTS REFLECT THE ABNEGATION OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

EDITORIAL The Florida Legislature placed 11 constitutional amendments on the ballot. Legislators took advantage of loopholes that allowed them to make the lengthy “explanations” of those initiatives meandering and obfuscatory. And most represented a delegation of legislative responsibilities to the citizens.

The City of Sarasota placed seven charter amendments on the ballot. When one considers that a so-called “housekeeping” amendment actually contained 17 different proposals, voters were being asked to make 23 alterations to the constitutional document of the city. And too many of those proposals were prompted by the reluctance of city commissioners to do their jobs.

The most charitable characterization of this situation would be “legislative shenanigans.” Neither the Legislature nor the City Commission wished to make tough decisions, so each foisted those decisions onto the voters, as if doing so were some great act of democracy in action. But there was a dark side to all of these initiatives.

In the case of the Legislature, the sheep’s clothing of giving citizens a voice disguised a sinister wolf: an ill-conceived power grab by legislators bent on upending Florida’s constitutional government.

“Neither the Legislature nor the City Commission wished to make tough decisions, so each foisted those decisions onto the voters, as if doing so were some great act of democracy in action.”

Amendment 5 sought to irreparably weaken an independent judiciary by giving the Legislature unprecedented oversight, thereby compromising — if not eliminating outright — the constitutional system of checks and balances that had existed before.

Amendment 6 sought to deprive Florida women of a right conferred by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1973, and further weaken for all Floridians a cherished right of privacy that is enshrined in our state constitution.

Amendment 8 sought to end the centuries-old separation of church and state, while also setting in motion the destruction of our public school system, in favor of private, sectarian schools that would impair our children as they sought to compete in a global economy.

Fortunately, Florida voters recognized these initiatives for what they were — assaults on the very fabric of our democratic way of life — and soundly rebuked the Legislature at the polls.

Likewise, the City Commission in Sarasota sought to deceive voters into supporting certain initiatives that would not have led

to more sound government for the city, although some of the other initiatives were well-reasoned and, ultimately, supported by the voters.

The City Commission embedded in the “housekeeping”

OPINION

amendment a proposal to end a long-standing protection for taxpayers — the requirement for charter officials and the finance director to be personally bonded. Given that the current city auditor and clerk has been deemed unfit by insurance underwriters for such a bond since taking office more than two years ago, the amendment was an attempt to circumvent an historical protection to perpetuate what essentially is an ongoing criminal conspiracy.

As if to counter that situation, Commissioner Terry Turner and his allies sought to sever the Office of City Auditor and Clerk, creating a new city auditor as a charter official and relegating the clerk to a subordinate role under the city manager. Never mind that Turner has done nothing to challenge the current city auditor and clerk's inability to comply with the city charter. And one could speculate that Turner had a candidate in mind for this new city auditor, someone who might then be beholden to him for his patronage.

Fortunately, the voters of the City of Sarasota saw through this tangled wreckage of legislative ineptitude and soundly rejected both amendments.

Perhaps the voters realize that their real task is to seek out two qualified, engaged citizens who will stand for election in the City Commission race next spring, and commit to working in concert to actually do something effectual for the betterment of the city. We can only hope that one of the three remaining commissioners has the integrity and intestinal fortitude to work with these as yet unidenti-

fied new commissioners to assure the three votes needed to get the city off dead center.

Sadly, thanks to shameless gerrymandering, the effects of which were only too apparent in the outcome of legislative races on Election Day, Florida voters have little hope of soon ending the reckless ways of an errant Legislature. We can only hope that, perhaps as early as 2014, even Republicans will recoil at the dysfunctional abyss in Tallahassee that masquerades as our legislative body and join with Democrats and Independents to restore sanity and good government to the Legislature.

If they continue to endure the abnegation — and perfidy — of local and state elected officials, the voters surely will abdicate any right they have to a voice in their own governance.



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 Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com, with "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line. Letters actually printed will be selected based on space available, subject matter and other factors. We reserve the right to edit any letters submitted for length, grammar, spelling, etc. All letters submitted become the property of *The Sarasota News Leader*.

OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

My friend Ruth Weinberg's daughter went to hear Vice President Joe Biden speak at the Municipal Auditorium [Oct. 31] and then went to lunch with a friend at Station 400. In walked Biden. At the time, Ruth's daughter was talking on the phone to Ruth, and when Biden came in, she asked if he'd like to talk to her mother and he did — so Ruth had the thrill of talking with him by phone.

Ruth wrote me that night: "What a friendly nice guy. I told him about my being a [New York State] Government Retiree, having worked in the NYS Legislature, etc., and he told me he went to Syracuse University and I told him that my brother went there also."

Sonia Pressman Fuentes
Sarasota



Vice President Joe Biden talks to Ruth Weinberg on the cellphone of her daughter, Diana, at Station 400. Contributed photo



Vice President Joe Biden poses for a photo with Sarasota supporters Diana and Anita at Station 400 on Lemon Avenue, where he surprised diners after his appearance at the Municipal Auditorium on Oct. 31. Contributed photo

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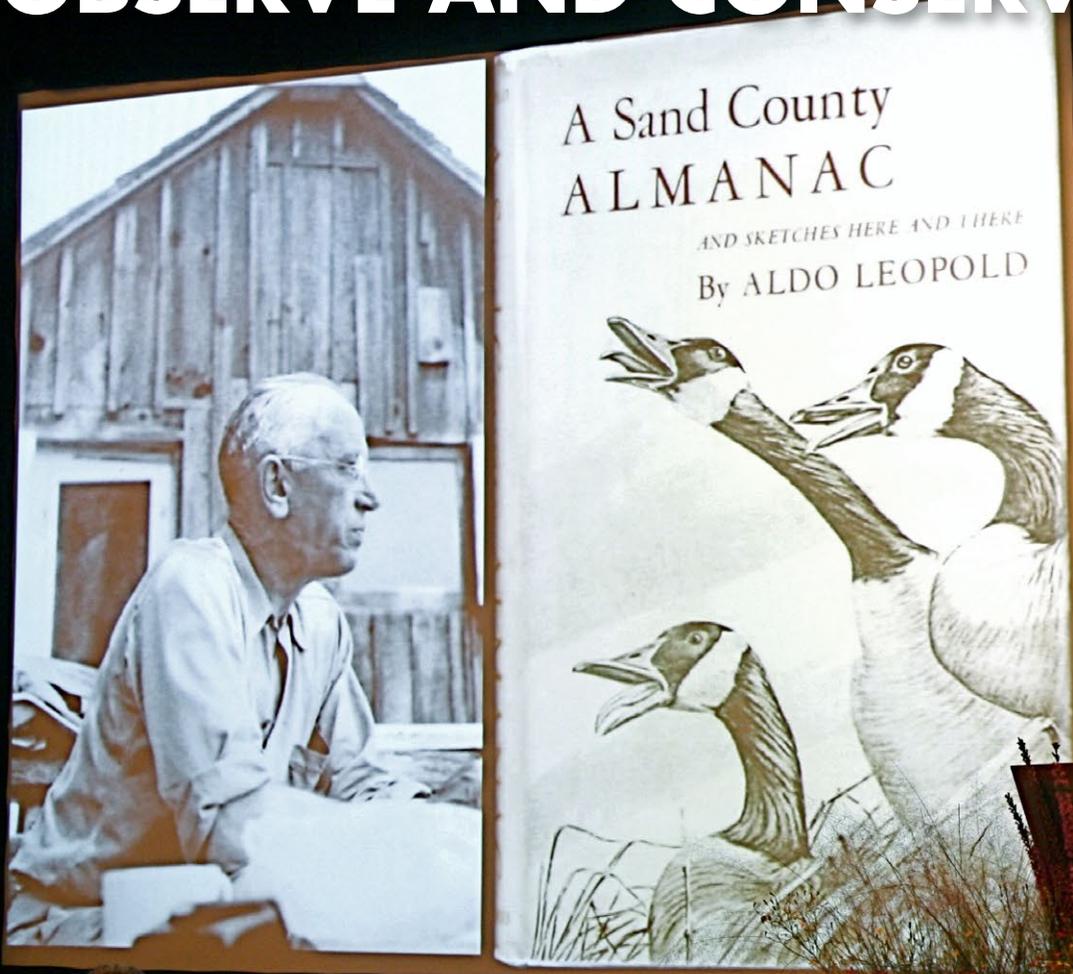


Inside

OBSERVE AND CONSERVE

ASK OTUS

OBSERVE AND CONSERVE



Cynthia Barnett believes that water conservation issues do not receive the attention they require in the modern media landscape. She expressed a belief that this can be changed, but that it must begin at an individual or grassroots level. Photos by Tyler Whitson and Arielle Scherr

AUDUBON FLORIDA 2012 ASSEMBLY ATTENDEES TOUR SARASOTA'S SPECIAL PLACES AND LEARN WHY THEY NEED TO BE PROTECTED

By Tyler Whitson
Contributing Writer

Every year that passes sees an increase in the importance of water conservation in Florida, not only to sustain human development but also to preserve and protect the landscapes and wildlife that are essential to maintaining a balance throughout the state's fragile ecosystem.

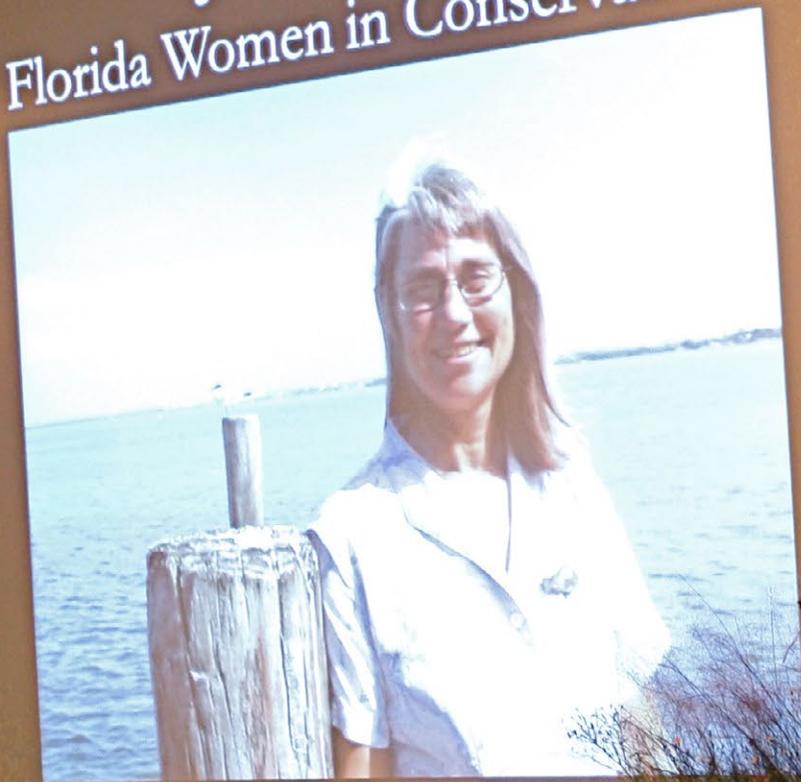
While the past few years have seen a number of major steps forward in the development of projects taking these concerns into account, citizens, environmental groups and legislators must remain persistent in their ongoing mission to push the conservation agenda forward and into the future.

This was the message of cautious optimism summed up by the official title, "Conserve Water to Sustain Life," presented by activists, journalists and politicians to attendees at Audubon Florida's 2012 Assembly, the majority of which took place at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Sarasota Oct. 26-27.

The conference, which is held in a different location in Florida toward the end of every year, gives the organization's staff, members and supporters an opportunity to establish an agenda for the upcoming year, discuss the progress that has been made toward achieving the goals of the previous year, take educational field trips, participate in workshops and in-



Julie Morris
Florida Women in Conservation



Julie Morris, New College of Florida's assistant vice president of academic affairs, has an extensive history of environmental service. It includes being the first formally elected chair of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and serving as chair of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council.

formative talks and recognize those who have championed conservation priorities.

Among those honored at the conference's awards banquet on the evening of Friday, Oct. 26, was U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, who was invited as a surprise guest to receive the "Champion of the Everglades" award for his role in the creation of the Everglades Headwater National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area.

He also was recognized for the part he has played in the ongoing effort to place bridges along the Tamiami Trail to allow inland water flow and for his work to put measures in place to keep invasive snake species such as the Burmese python from infiltrating the Everglades' ecosystem.

After delivering his formal acceptance speech, Salazar, in an interview with *The Sarasota News Leader*, encouraged passionate activists to remain diligent in their mission to pressure legislators to view protection of the Everglades as a continuous priority.

"Sing out as loud as you can about the importance of the Everglades," he said. "It's a world heritage site and the most important ecosystem restoration project in the United States and the world, and everyone needs to know how important it is. If the people speak, the leaders will follow."

Also honored during the ceremony were New College of Florida's assistant vice president of academic affairs, Julie Morris, who received the "Florida Women in Conservation" award, and former Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary Director Ed Carlson — recently retired — who received the prestigious "Guy Bradley" award, named after a legendary pioneering conserva-

tionist and Audubon game warden who died in the early 20th century while attempting to arrest plume bird poachers.

As a token of gratitude for Carlson's years of service as a game warden at the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, Audubon Florida unveiled a large portrait of the man wearing his official uniform. Audubon Florida had commissioned the painting with plans to display it to visitors at the sanctuary.

Many others were recognized during the assembly for their dedication to the field of conservation. However, that was a small part of the weekend's activities, which consisted mostly of educational endeavors full of powerful reminders that the road to sustainability is a long and arduous one.

Keynote speaker and journalist Cynthia Barnett, who wrote the books, *Mirage: Florida and the Vanishing Water of the Eastern U.S.* and *A Blue Revolution: Unmaking America's Water Crisis*, drove this point home with a talk that emphasized the urgent need for legislation to minimize wasteful water practices in Florida. Barnett stressed not only the seriousness of the consequences that will result if that is not accomplished in a timely manner, but also the effects that can already be witnessed.

"Parts of Florida are seeing lakes go dry and wells seize up," she said.

Barnett expressed concern that Florida's legislators are not treating water conservation as the serious issue that it is.

"I know 2012 has been particularly frustrating for all of you," she told the crowd, "as Florida lawmakers have cut conservation spending

Ed Carlson Guy Bradley Award



In accepting the “Guy Bradley” award, Ed Carlson was joined onstage by his former staff from the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. He told the audience that, despite his retirement from being a game warden, he will remain a member of Corkscrew’s board of directors for the rest of his life.

more deeply than any other sector of government.”

To put the issue into perspective, Barnett compared the current water crisis to the Oklahoma dust storms caused by droughts, which put water at the forefront of the minds of voters and politicians at the beginning of the 20th century.

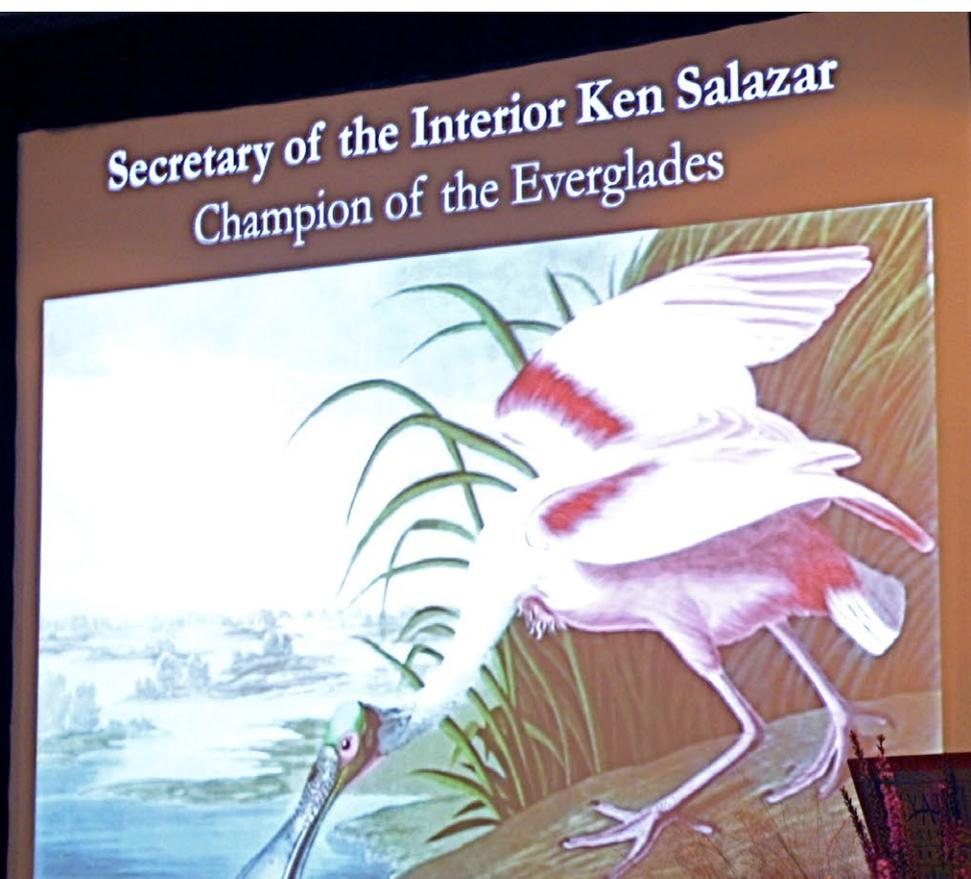
“Today’s freshwater troubles are equally urgent, but ... they do not billow across the nation in black clouds,” she said. “Our illusion of water abundance keeps these problems hidden from most Americans and from most Floridians.”

Changing the way the people view water, Barnett explained, is the first and most important step toward comprehensive implementation of sustainable water practices in the future. “Neither politics, nor federal and state government, nor costly technical fixes are going to be enough on their own to save our freshwater for future generations and ecosystems,”

she explained. “All of those answers have a place, but to me one solution stands out above all of these others ... and this is the idea of a water ethic in our country and in our state.”

Barnett cited the powerful shift in American views about littering and recycling over the past generation as a basis for what could someday constitute a comparable water ethic, with people not only implementing ethical water practices on their own, but also pressuring their legislators to enforce strict regulations on corporations and other people and entities that would not otherwise comply.

In terms of such a water ethic, it seems Sarasota is already leading the way in the state. Audubon Florida Executive Director Eric Draper explained, in an interview with the *News Leader*, that was an important factor in the decision to host the assembly here. “Sarasota was chosen in part for its reputation for being a community that has worked hard to conserve water,” he said. “It’s known for hav-



U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar is regarded by Audubon Florida as an indispensable ally in the ongoing quest to restore and conserve the Everglades.

ing some of the best water conservation practices in the state.”

The scenic landscapes and unique wildlife that the Sarasota area boasts in abundance were an important part of this decision as well. Those with an adventurous spirit — and a penchant for early rising — were given the opportunity on the first morning of the assembly to go on official field trips to picturesque and ecologically diverse locations in the area, including the Myakka River State Park, the Celery Fields and South Lido Beach. These trips gave visitors an opportunity to appreciate the area’s flora and fauna firsthand and helped add salience to the presentations they would see throughout the weekend.

Of particular importance to Audubon Florida was the field trip to the **Celery Fields**, which consists of more than 300 acres and features at least 216 species of birds. This property, owned by Sarasota County, is a prime example of the importance of land and water conservation because, aside from being home to such a diversity of birds and other fauna, it

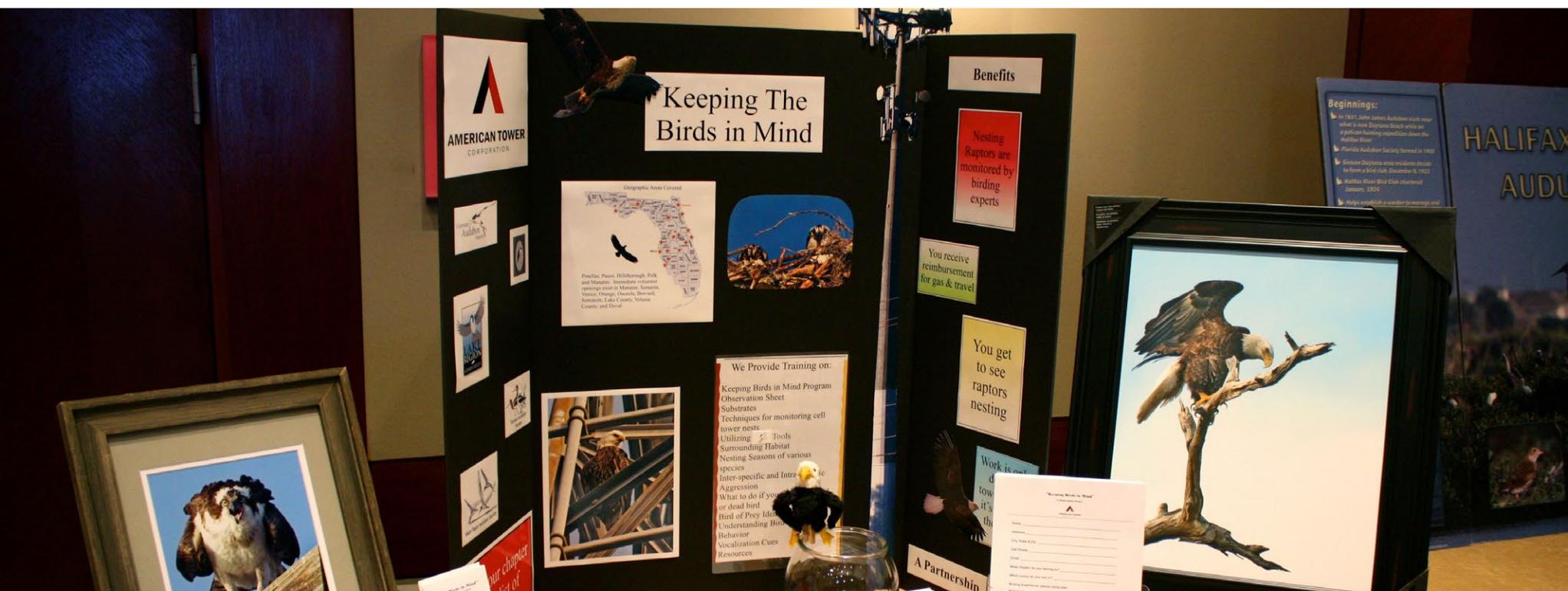
is used as the county’s primary stormwater collection zone.

Sarasota Audubon has collaborated with the county in restoring more than 80 acres of the site to a wetland habitat for the fauna, and it has a campaign under way to raise funds to construct a nature center on the property, to add the functions of education and recreation to the spot’s list of features.

Setting the Audubon Florida 2012 Assembly in Sarasota benefitted not only the local chapter — by raising awareness statewide of the Celery Fields project — but also the conference itself, which saw an unexpected spike in attendance.

“I want to credit Sarasota with the fact that we have more people coming to the assembly than we’ve ever had before, and I think it has something to do with the location,” Draper said, prior to the official start of the assembly.

“People want to come to Sarasota!”



Audubon Florida has always reserved special concern for the conservation of birds. All of the field trips offered during the assembly featured birdwatching and placed a heavy emphasis on the importance of maintaining Florida’s diverse array of bird species.



I like to take my time.

Sure, it's a temptation to rush. Each issue of *The Sarasota News Leader* is brimfull of in-depth coverage of all the news and goings-on in Sarasota County. And it has delightful and informative feature stories. Thanks to its partnership with *This Week In Sarasota*, I always know what the most exciting happenings are each week. Plus, it is simply so beautiful, with photography that takes my breath away.

There is so much there, I don't know where to begin. So it is hard to resist the urge to read it all at once. But I know better. Take your time and indulge in all that it has to offer.

You have a whole week.

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ASK OTUS

RED-SHOULDERED HAWKS CAN PROVE TO BE DELIGHTFULLY CURIOUS AND MELODIC NEIGHBORS – THOUGH BEWARE DURING NESTING SEASON

Dear Otus,

Although I cannot convince them to pose for a photo, we apparently have at least one pair of Red-Shouldered Hawks in our neighborhood. Occasionally we have heard cries that sounded as though they might be coming from baby hawks. We are curious: How often do hawks nest here in the Sunshine State?

I also have an interesting story to tell you ...

A week ago today, just before dusk, Eric was using our outdoor pool shower. One of “our” hawks swooped down and landed on our fence. It watched Eric for a few minutes and suddenly proceeded to preen while Eric finished bathing. Eric quietly came and fetched me so I could see it. We did try, very quietly, to get a photo but as soon as I raised the camera, off it flew! Eric chuckled over the fact that it seemed to get a notion to undertake some personal hygiene while watching him do the same.

Alexis

Dear Alexis,

What delightful encounters you are having with your adolescent Red-Shouldered Hawks (*Buteo lineatus*). Don't worry about not getting a photo; birds are “flighty” creatures and



Have You Seen Me ?

Otus is still on the lookout for bobcats and kittens. If you manage to get a photo or two, please send them along. File photo

it is quite difficult capturing them on camera. I sometimes think people are so busy photographing their good times that they forget to relax and actually enjoy them.

Your hawk and Eric certainly had a good time together, without a camera!

You captured in words the fact that birds can be as curious and observant as humans. Particularly when they are youngsters, they love to explore their new world. Eastern Screech

Owls have actually been documented following people about in broad daylight because something about the person or his activity has aroused their curiosity. Then birds grow up and find other interests, such as sex, and their interest in humans wanes.

This time of year, the cries you hear are not from baby hawks. You will have to wait until spring for that. Red-Shouldered around here will mate and nest between April and June.



*Red-Shouldered Hawks rarely deign to stay still long enough for someone to snap their photograph.
File photo*



A young Red-Shouldered Hawk seems wary while 'enjoying' its perch. File photo



This Red-Shouldered Hawk has snared itself a tasty nibble. File photo

And in the case of the immature hawks hanging around your yard, you will have to wait another year until they can breed.

But it will be their parents who return to your nesting site, which they use over and over again. At that point, the young ones will move out of your neighborhood and find their own territory. And, oof ... when Red-Shouldered actually nest in your backyard, you are going to get an earful from them as well as from the Blue Jays and Mockingbirds around your neighborhood: These species do not “play well” together!

Wear a hat when gardening and pruning your orange jasmine bushes because hawk parents are fiercely territorial and will swoop down and try to chase you away from their nesting site.

There is a Red-Shouldered Hawks’ nest at Urfer Family Park, and every spring the staff members have to close the little bridge path by the birds’ nesting tree.

Aggressive creatures, yes, but their calls are some of the most beautiful I have ever heard. Have you noticed how some of our prettiest birds, Egrets and Herons, for example, emit harsh frog-like cries, while so many of our raptors have the most melodic calls, hauntingly sweet?

As a rule, Red-Shouldered hawks are monogamous. Nevertheless, come spring, the male still courts the female by performing incredible aerial dances. This is to show her that he has still got “it,” basically the skills to success-

fully hunt and feed her and the chicks while she nests. He will soar high above and then dive like a comet, only at the last second to swoop in a spiral and soar high again. If she is impressed by his sky-dancing and his impeccably groomed appearance, she will accept him as her mate.

I am ever so pleased that your Red-Shouldered Hawk instructed Eric on proper hygiene and grooming. It is important that he be impeccably groomed and thus acceptable and pleasing to your eyes when he begins his courtship. Come spring, when romance is in the air, please write me again and let me know how Eric is doing with his mousing techniques and his high-altitude barrel rolls. I love a good romance!

Otus

P.S.: Dear Readers,

Kindly ignore everything I wrote above about photos not being important! When it comes to our beloved Siesta Key bobcats, photos are paramount and I look forward to receiving your photos of recent sightings.

Otus

ABOUT OTUS

Otus Rufous, an Eastern Screech-Owl, was born on Siesta Key and is a full-time resident there. An avid hunter, accomplished vocalist and genuine night owl, Otus is a keen observer of our local wildlife and knows many of nature’s secrets. Otus will answer your questions about our amazing wildlife, but only if you Ask Otus. So please send your questions and photos to askotus@sarasotanewsleader.com. Thank you.



CHALK ONE UP FOR SARASOTA

A clown beckons the onlookers. Photo by Norman Schimmel

IN ITS FIFTH YEAR, SARASOTA CHALK FESTIVAL COMES INTO ITS OWN AS AN INTERNATIONAL VENUE AND MAJOR ATTRACTION

By Scott Proffitt

Staff Writer

It was not her choice or her fault. She was just walking by on her way to take care of about a dozen things. Someone stopped her to ask something.

Then another person came to a halt in front of her, and suddenly she was boxed in by people with multiple queries — so I decided to join them.

By the time I had asked a couple of questions of Denise Kowal, the founder of the Sarasota Chalk Festival, we had been interrupted about six times.

Many people would have been harried or frazzled, or at least asked me to come back some

other time when perhaps they were not in the throes of setting up an international art show, steering 500 or so volunteers and interacting with a diverse group of folks from tenants to daughters-in-law. However, Kowal juggled all of this with a charm and aplomb that must at least partially account for her success on so many fronts.

Not that success has come easily for the Sarasota Chalk Festival, which is in its fifth year. Only in the past two years has the event matured and reached a firm foundation, with artists from around the world eagerly coming to Sarasota to participate in it. That is the same time frame over which it appears the City of

Sarasota finally has realized this art show very likely is one of the most significant events the community hosts.

Last year, Kowal says, more than 200,000 people came to look at the chalk art. The festival's economic impact on the county last year was believed to have approached \$10 million, Kowal adds. This year, she hopes the number is even bigger.

Kurt Wenner, who invented three-dimensional pastel drawings, was one of many world-class artists returning to the 2012 show.

Artwork titled, "High Wire," by Anthony Capetto, drew yet another star — world-renowned aerialist Nik Wallenda, who walked across the wire to the acclaim of his street audience.

Kowal has incorporated another project into the festival this year which she calls Vertical Art. It has taken its place as a fixture in downtown Sarasota, just like the oak trees and the brick pavers and the roundabouts. If you wander into the parking garage on Palm Avenue, gaze over the multi-story buildings in Burns

Square or drive down Central Avenue, you will see examples of it — from murals to graffiti-like paintings.

The festival is not just a matter of art and artists. With tens of thousands of people at a minimum coming to the event, merchants and restaurants downtown have been welcoming more business. Before the festival even began, The Tortoise and The Pearl, a shop owned by John and Dido Allaman, was busy.

"Without a doubt it's the best art festival in Sarasota," John said of Kowal's creation.

"The participation far exceeds anything else ever dreamed of," he added.

Then he became even busier and could not talk to me anymore.

I wandered on down to the Burns Court Café, where I asked about ordering something off the regular menu, instead of the abbreviated Chalk Festival menu. That place was busy, too, and one of the owners, Cynthia Cassinelli, politely informed me — as she rushed about — that the regular menu was not available during the festival.



The artwork by Truman Adams features a 3D effect, with a clown holding a lion in one hand. Photo by Norman Schimmel

“We’ll have about 5,000 people a day in here, so we have to make some modifications to the menu for this time,” she said with a smile and her thanks for my understanding.

I seemed to be the only person not busy, because even the several thousand people milling about Burns Square were occupied, watch-

ing the artists several days before the festival even began.

I think it is safe to say the Sarasota Chalk Festival not only is here to stay, but that it has achieved the level of success art event organizers in Sarasota dream of seeing.



Associates of the Chalk Festival have contributed other examples of art to downtown Sarasota. Photo by Scott Proffitt



Without a doubt it's the best art festival in Sarasota.

John Allaman
Co-owner
Tortoise and The Pearl



On Halloween, Chalk Festival artists are intent on completing their artwork by the weekend. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Another work in progress on Oct. 31 offers a different take on a lion tamer. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Circus City USA was the theme of the 2012 Chalk Festival. Photo by Scott Proffitt



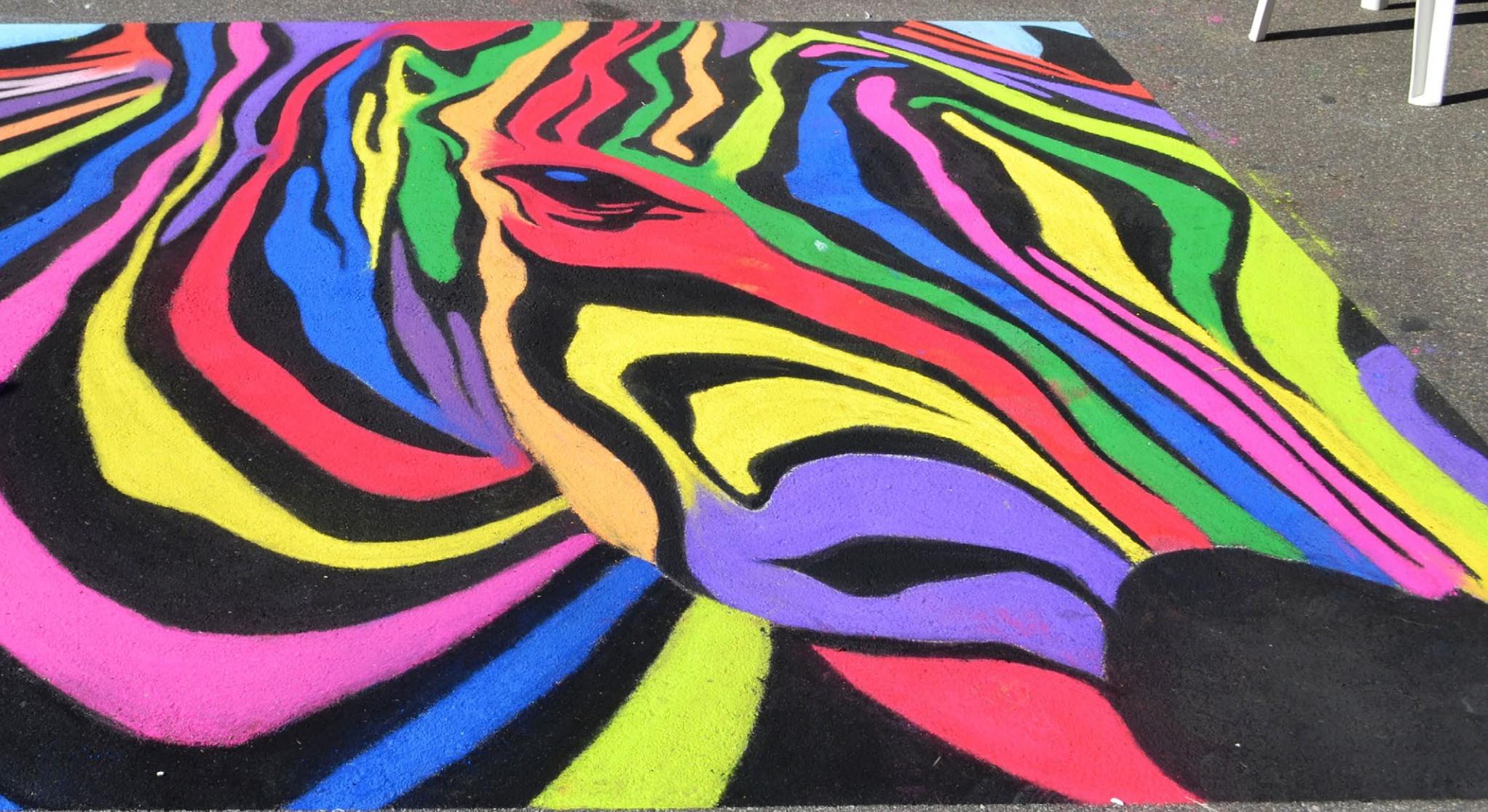
The artwork depicted a wide range of circus characters. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Artists work side-by-side on their pavement performance art. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Internationally renowned chalk artist Kurt Wenner (standing, in gray shirt and blue jeans) and his crew work on one of the major features of the 2012 festival. Photo by Norman Schimmel



As befitting a festival with a circus theme, this zebra is far more colorful than it would be with the usual black-and-white stripes. Photo by Norman Schimmel



This chalk art welcomes the crowd to the 'Greatest Festival on Earth.' Photo by Norman Schimmel



This work came with its own 'short story' below the drawing. Photo by Peter van Roekens



SARASOTA'S HISTORIAN

Jeff LaHurd has had a passion for local history since he was a child, and he has been writing about it most of his life. Photo by Scott Proffitt

JEFF LAHURD HAS BEEN TELLING THE TALE OF THIS TOWN FOR 22 YEARS, PARTLY THROUGH THE PUBLICATION OF 15 BOOKS

By Scott Proffitt
Staff Writer

If you drive east on Bahia Vista Street until you can go no further, just after you cross Cattlemen Road you might notice small signs for the History Center. Take a right on Packinghouse Road and you will see a one-story, nondescript building that resembles a bomb shelter. Its address is 6062 Porter Way.

Ironically, inside this mundane structure you will find some of

the greatest historical treasures in our community.

“ *Mr. LaHurd has been called a stand-up historian, a local treasure and a walking encyclopedia of Sarasota history. ... When you meet him, his modest manner conceals a man with a lifetime of information, and a willingness to share it.*

Larry Kelleher
Staff Member
Sarasota County History Center



In fact, on many days, one of them will greet you when you walk through the door. His name is Jeff LaHurd, and his title is Sarasota County history specialist.

LaHurd has just finished his 15th book on the history of this area. The building in

which he works is the Sarasota County History Center, a perfect setting for a man who has maintained a passion for local history that began in childhood and has grown only stronger over the years.

“Mr. LaHurd has been called a stand-up historian, a local treasure and a walking encyclopedia of Sarasota history,” said Larry Kelleher, a staff member of the History Center. “His knowledge and eagerness to impart it make him a favorite choice on the local speaker cir-

cuit. When you meet him, his modest manner conceals a man with a lifetime of information and a willingness to share it.”

The History Center and its archives contain a panoply of Sarasota history — obituaries, bound newspapers, historic photographs, government records and archaeological treasures. One display room alone is devoted to books and other items from the library of Pulitzer Prize winner and longtime local author MacKinlay Kantor.



Jeff LaHurd undertakes much of his work at the Sarasota County History Center. Photo by Scott Proffitt

LaHurd is surrounded by history and loving every minute of it. “It’s like getting paid to play golf,” he said.

Asked about the large number of books he has written, LaHurd replied with a shrug. “I started in 1990 and they just kept coming.”

His first book was *Quintessential Sarasota*. Since then he has written about topics as diverse as the Lido Casino and Major League Baseball’s spring training experiences in the city of Sarasota.

Among LaHurd’s more recent books is *Owen Burns — The Man Who Bought and Built Sarasota*. A contemporary of John Ringling, Burns and the circus entrepreneur were responsible for much of the construction and development of the area in the 1920s.

LaHurd also has written about another famous father of the city: *John Hamilton Gillespie — The Scot who saved Sarasota*.

LaHurd concedes he cares little for publicity or promotion. Instead, he prefers to devote his time to research and writing. It is worth noting that his books are available at local bookstores, and if you visit him at the History Center, he will happily sign them.

His latest book, *The Rise of Sarasota: Ken Thompson and the Rebirth of Paradise*, is being released this month. A book signing has been scheduled at Bookstore 1, among the very few independent bookstores left in Sarasota that carries new titles. The event will

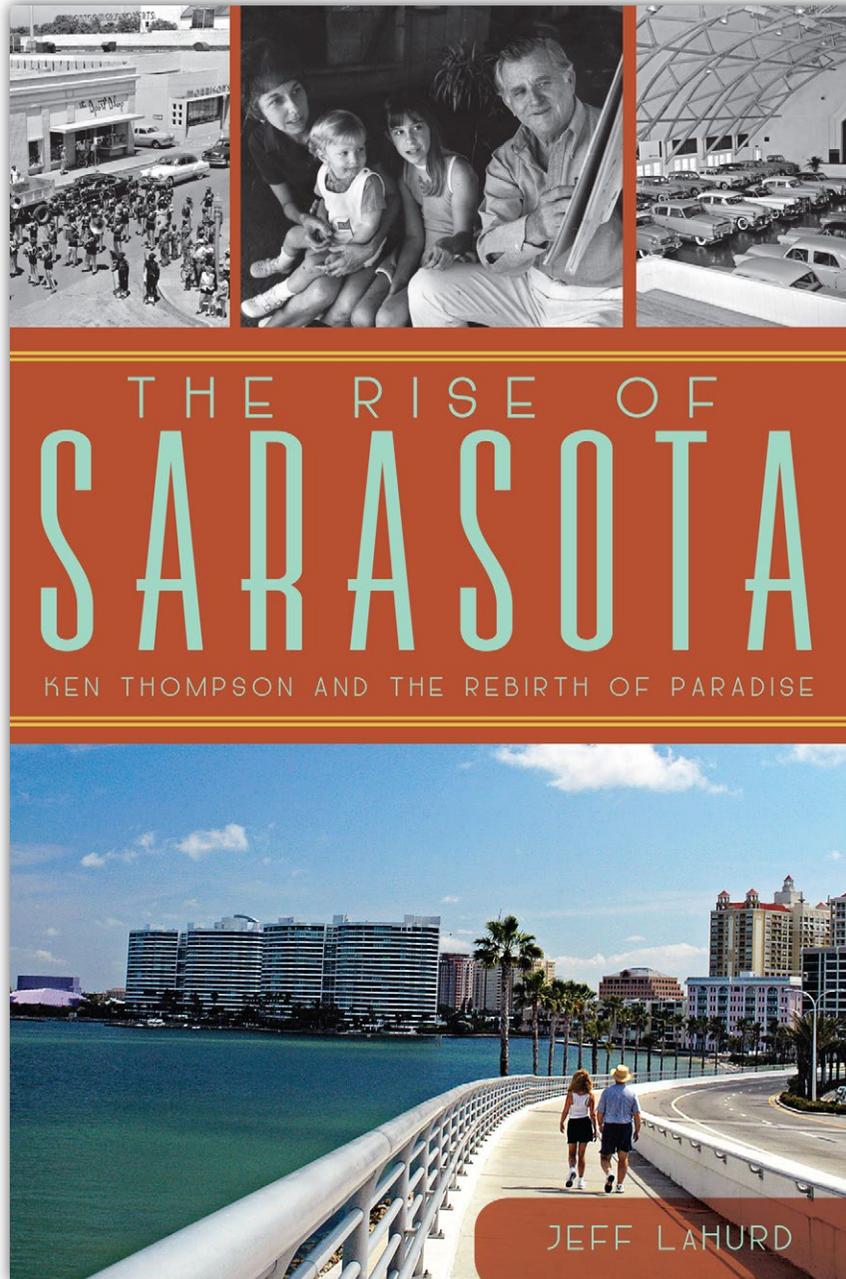
be held Nov. 12 from 5 to 7 p.m. Bookstore 1 is located at 1359 Main St.

As for the book itself: Thompson was the city manager of Sarasota for almost 40 years. He was considered a strong, competent manager whom many people liked and admired, though, of course, some did not. The story of Thompson’s life encompasses a dynamic post-recession period of Sarasota history.

LaHurd seems unsure about what he will tackle next. “I have to finish this one before I can think about it,” he said.

Although he has told the stories of many famous men and women

in the community’s history, LaHurd has more than a few admirers who say his passion for the history of this area has benefited Sarasota County perhaps even more than the endeavors of some of those about whom he has written.



Jeff LaHurd is preparing to release his latest book. Contributed photo





Siesta Seen

THE SIESTA ISLES PRESIDENT AND THE SIESTA KEY ASSOCIATION VICE PRESIDENT WIN PLAUDITS FOR THEIR EFFORTS TO IMPROVE LIFE ON THE ISLAND



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

After he finished his report as a board member during the Nov. 6 Siesta Key Association meeting, Deet Jonker said he wanted to take a few minutes to make everyone aware of something good that had happened.

As SKA attendees are well aware, Jonker pointed out, the curve on Midnight Pass Road in the vicinity of St. Michael the Archangel Church “has been a big issue for many, many years, especially since that major accident ...”



With three fences moved, trees taken down and brush cleared near the Shadow Lawn Way intersection, residents of Siesta Isles have a clearer line of sight as they turn onto Midnight Pass Road. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

Jonker was referring to the tragic death of runner Donna Chen in that curve in early January, when she was struck by an allegedly drunken driver.

Jonker noted that the curve particularly has been a source of consternation for residents of Siesta Isles, who exit their neighborhood just past it. The two streets they use are Shadow Lawn Way and [Glebe Lane](#), he added.

With the Florida Department of Transportation this spring having turned down community residents' — and the SKA's — requests to lower the speed limit along that curve, the president of the Siesta Isles homeowners association “took the bull by the horn,” Jonker said, and began working on improving the line of sight for residents as they prepare to pull out onto Midnight Pass Road.

The president, Tony Romanus, told me this week he continues to be frustrated by the situation with the varied speed limits along that portion of Midnight Pass Road. In the area near St. Boniface Episcopal Church — west of the curve — the speed limit is 35 mph, but it goes up to 40 mph before the curve.

If you want to turn left onto Midnight Pass Road from Shadow Lawn, Romanus said, “You’ve got to make a commitment to move pretty fast.”

Although FDOT refused to lower the speed limit to 35 mph all along that stretch, he said, he received a call from a traffic engineer soon after he sent his letter to the department in April, requesting the change.

“We talked a few times,” he said. Then, they met at the intersection of Shadow Lawn and Midnight Pass Road.

He had suspected the line-of-sight issue was worse on Shadow Lawn than on Glebe, Romanus said, but the opposite was true, “because of the proximity to the curve.”

A fence in front of a home at that intersection contributed to the problems for drivers, he added.

Ultimately, Romanus worked with FDOT, Sarasota County officials, representatives of Florida Power & Light, the priest and his staff at St. Michael's and homeowners to ameliorate the situation.

Three homeowners agreed to move their fences — with the Siesta Isles HOA picking up the cost. Two of those residents were on opposite sides of Shadow Lawn, while the third was on Glebe. The fences were repositioned the second week of October, Romanus noted.

Msgr. Joseph Stearns, the pastor of St. Michael's, and his staff agreed to help out by permitting the removal of five palm trees in the FDOT right of way by the church. They were “very, very helpful,” Romanus added of Stearns and Stearns' assistant.

Some brush also had to be cleared, Romanus said.

Additionally, FPL agreed to cut back trees that were close to its power lines along the curve.

Siesta Seen

“FDOT and the county were both instrumental” in the whole process, Romanus noted, especially in terms of communications about various aspects of the work.

“I’m sometimes a little skeptical of government folks,” he told me, but in this case, “they were outstanding.”

Even with the improvements, Romanus and other Siesta Isles residents have not given

up on getting the speed limit lowered in the curve.

Still, Jonker told the SKA members, “There is a much bigger line of sight around that curve ...”

He added, “It shows what one individual with the right people can accomplish”



The Florida Department of Transportation has said its staff has seen no data indicating the need to lower the speed limit in the area of a curve by St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church on Midnight Pass Road. File photo

Siesta Seen

PASSING THE GRABBER

During the Nov. 1 SKA meeting, President Catherine Luckner surprised Vice President Peter van Roekens with his own Adopt A Road sign, in a manner of speaking.

She could not get the real thing, she said, but she framed a photograph of the one that denotes the SKA's collaboration with the Siesta Key Village Association on the quarterly road cleanup effort on the key.

Referring to van Roekens, Luckner said, "He is passing what we call 'the grabber' (instead of the gavel) to Michael Shay," another SKA board member.

"And this is a big deal," she pointed out.

"I was going to bring a trash basket with some samples of things that we actually get very entertained by [from the cleanup efforts],"



Siesta Key Association President Catherine Luckner (second from left) presents Vice President Peter van Roekens his own version of an Adopt A Road sign as SKA Director Beverly Arias (left) looks on. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

Luckner said, “but I figured [they are] better left to memory.”

“Michael has done yeoman’s work” with the initiative, Van Roekens added.

When van Roekens was SKA president in 2003, Luckner said, the organization first applied with the SKVA to adopt a road on the island.

Van Roekens took a couple of moments to talk about the good working relationship between the SKA and the SKVA for the quarterly effort to spruce up the landscape.

“I saw [the Adopt A Road program] as a key way to start working together on issues,” Van Roekens said. Many situations do arise where the two groups can collaborate, he pointed out.

Van Roekens has been making arrangements for the past several years for the volunteers to carry on the work.

In fact, the next cleanup is set for Saturday, Nov. 17. Anyone interested in helping may come to [Village Café](#) for breakfast at 8 a.m. The cleanup will begin at 9 a.m.

The breakfast is free, Shay noted, but “we request heavy tipping.”

The volunteers work along Ocean Boulevard as well as Higel Avenue and Siesta Drive up to the north Siesta Bridge.

As he officially stepped down from overseeing the program, Van Roekens did take one more moment to remind Shay that Kay Kouvatso, co-owner of Village Café, needs advance notice about the date of each cleanup.

Van Roekens already had talked with her about Nov. 17, he added.

SELF-DEFENSE CLASS OFFERED FOR WOMEN



The Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office and Sarasota County Technical Institute (SCTI) Adult & Community Enrichment (ACE) program have teamed up to offer Women’s Self Defense classes for the 2012 Fall Session.

The 9-hour course, taught by experienced sheriff’s deputies, is designed to teach women basic self-defense concepts, a Sheriff’s Office news release says. Students should wear comfortable clothing since the class contains hands-on practical application of defensive techniques.

The class will be held on Wednesdays from 6 to 9 p.m. for three weeks. The course begins on Nov. 14th but will skip a week because of the Thanksgiving holiday; it will continue Nov. 28 and Dec. 5.

The classes will be held at the Criminal Justice Academy on the SCTI campus, 4748 Beneva Road, Sarasota. The cost is \$99.

For more information or registration, call the ACE office at 361-6590 or visit the website www.ace-sarasota.com and click on “Courses” then “Awareness” and “Crime Prevention.”



Katherine Powell as Little Nemo, Adriana Fernandez as the Princess and Natalie Almeter as Flip are in the cast of Little Nemo in Slumberland. Photo by Rod Millington

OPERA TO PRESENT THE WORLD PREMIERE OF 'LITTLE NEMO'

Sarasota Youth Opera will present the world premiere of *Little Nemo in Slumberland* Nov. 10-11.

Commissioned by the Sarasota Opera Association, the production features music by Daron Hagen and a libretto by J.D. McClatchy.

The principal children's roles will be performed by members of the Sarasota Youth Opera program, while members of the Sarasota Opera Apprentice and Studio Artists Program have been cast in the primary adult roles, a news release notes.

In addition, singers and performers from Booker High School, The Out-of-Door Academy and Sailor Circus will be in the cast, with a total of 107 Sarasota young people on the stage of the Sarasota Opera House at one point or another, the news release says.

Little Nemo in Slumberland, which is based on Winsor McCay's early 20th-century comic strip of the same name, is a 60-minute, two-act opera with magic as its focus. The story recounts the adventures of a boy over the course of two nights as he goes on a quest to save Slumberland from the evil Emperor Sol, who wants it to be bright all night and all day.

Along the way, Nemo encounters a crystal enchantress, menacing giants, dizzying changes of scale and a palace that turns upside down, the news release says.

Two performances will be offered: Saturday, Nov. 10, at 5:30 p.m., and Sunday, Nov. 11, at 12:30 p.m. Tickets are available for purchase online at www.sarasotaopera.org or by calling the box office at 328-1300.

FLORIDA STUDIO THEATRE BOPPING WITH THE WANDERERS

Florida Studio Theatre's Goldstein Cabaret is paying tribute to the dreamy harmonies and boyish innocence of pop music's past with *Let's Twist Again: with the Wanderers*, the new '50s- and '60s-style revue.

Let's Twist Again: with the Wanderers highlights the music of teen heartthrobs such as Dion & the Belmonts, Frankie Valli and The Beach Boys through its evolution into sounds from the Kinks, The Lovin' Spoonful and The Doors.

"We created *Let's Twist Again* by starting with the joyous sounds of the doo wop guy groups," said director Richard Hopkins. "Then we studied the a cappella guy groups that doo wop sprang from ... and specifically those guys

in the neighborhood who would stand on the street corner and make up close harmonies to pass the time. *Let's Twist Again* transcends the '50s and rolls into the next three decades. The influence of those early 'guy groups' is in our music to this day, more than half a century after it evolved."

Let's Twist Again: with the Wanderers, developed by Hopkins and Jim Prosser, with additional assistance from Rebecca Hopkins, features an all-male cast of performers who sing, dance and doo-wop their way through a multitude of popular songs. Among the featured numbers are *At the Hop*, *Barbara Ann*, *Do you Believe in Magic*, *You've Lost that Lovin' Feelin'* and *Light My Fire*.



The cast of *Twist Again: with the Wanderers* performs hits from the 1950s and 1960s. Contributed

The cast includes returning Florida Studio Theatre actor Eric Collins as well as some new faces. Collins is reprising his role from the 2010 production of *The Wanderers*. Also in the cast is José Restrepo, a Broadway actor who appeared in *Grease*, *Evita* and *Skippyjon Jones*; Brett Rigby, who has appeared in numerous New York, regional and national shows as well as on television, including a two-year run on *Guiding Light*; and Teddy Tinson, a New York-based actor and fashion designer/stylist.

Let's Twist Again: with the Wanderers will continue through Jan. 13, 2013. The cabaret opens one hour before curtain for dining; patrons may enjoy a full dinner menu, bar and other refreshments.

Single tickets, which are \$19 to \$36, may be purchased from the FST box office in person, by calling 366-9000 or going online at www.floridstudiotheatre.org.

GRIGGS TO EXHIBIT WORKS AT SARASOTA CRAFT SHOW

Sarasota-based artist Su Griggs has been selected as an exhibitor at the Sarasota Craft Show, set for Nov. 30 through Dec. 2.

Griggs, whose hand-painted ceramic figures have been displayed around the country, calls herself “a storyteller in clay and paint,” a news release notes

“Her works are both figurative and transcendent: the icons of a personal mythology,” the release points out.

“I try to give voice to our innermost being through the language of art,” Griggs says in the release. “My work expresses the energy of human emotion — both positive and negative. Whether it be joy, love, hope and strength, or sadness, emptiness or loss, I try to capture that essence of spirit and communicate it to the viewer. Each piece is an expression of our basic humanity.”

Griggs chooses to express the intangible range of human feeling through figurative art. “The figure is very approachable,” she says in the

release. “Even so, it can express the infinitely complex world of the inner psyche.”

Griggs will be among 165 fine artists and craftspeople with works exhibited at the Sarasota Craft Show at Robarts Arena. The event, now in its 20th year, features works in ceramics, decorative fiber, glass, jewelry, leather, metal, mixed-media, paper, wearable art and wood.

Tickets are \$9 per day for regular admission; \$8, for seniors; \$5, for students; and \$12, for a three-day pass. Children under 10 will be admitted free.

The hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday, Nov. 30, and Saturday, Dec. 1; and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 2. Robarts Arena is located at 3000 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota. All parking is free.

For more information about the event, call 800-834-9437 or visit www.sarasotacraftshow.com.



Dreamer by Su Griggs/Contributed by Su Griggs



Deconstruction by Su Griggs/Contributed by Su Griggs



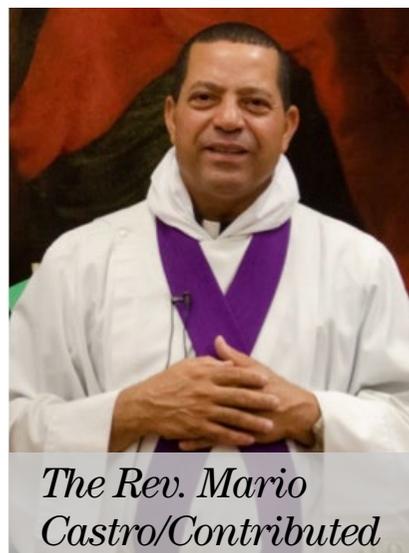
The Church of the Redeemer is located on South Palm Avenue in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE REV. MARIO CASTRO LEADS HISPANIC MISSION AT REDEEMER

The Church of the Redeemer in Sarasota has added the Rev. Mario Castro to its full-time clergy staff.

Castro is leading the church's Hispanic mission, which has the largest Hispanic congregation within the Diocese of Southwest Florida, a news release says. He replaces the Rev. Richard Lampert, who retired from Redeemer earlier this year.

Castro began with Redeemer on a part-time basis in November 2011. He resides in Tampa with his wife and family and commutes to Sarasota five to six days a week to work on behalf of and connect with his growing Hispanic congregation, the news release notes.



The Rev. Mario Castro/Contributed

Each Sunday at Redeemer, Castro conducts a mass entirely in Spanish at 1 p.m., which is followed by a fellowship coffee hour held in Gillespie Hall for the congregation.

“We are delighted to have Father Castro join us at Redeemer,” said the church's rector, the Rev. Fredrick A. Robinson in the news release.

“He brings a wonderful energy to our efforts to reach Hispanics in our community. As well, Father Castro is working with the Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida to establish ministries in Arcadia and Palmetto.”

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

KABBALAH COURSE TO START ON NOV. 10

A course titled, “Kabbalah and an introduction to reading Zohar,” will start on Nov. 10 at the South Gate Community Center.

It will be led by Dr. Arnie Binderman, who has a master’s degree in Judaic studies and is a doctoral student at Spertus College of Judaic Studies, according to a news release.

The course will focus on understanding mystical thinking and its development and meaning to Judaism, as well as how to understand its codes. Participants will read portions of the

Zohar together and gain an understanding of its meaning, the news release adds.

This is the first in what will be an ongoing series presented by the Congregation Kol HaNeshama, with future dates to be announced, the release notes.

After the Nov. 10 session, participants are welcome to stay as guests for the Reconstructionist Sabbath Service and luncheon to be held at the South Gate Community Center, 3145 South Gate Circle (sometimes known as South Tuttle Circle or Siesta Circle), Sarasota.

YOUTH EVENSONG TO FEATURE SARASOTA YOUNG VOICES

The Church of the Redeemer, 222 S. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota, welcomes the public to Youth Evensong at 5:15 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 18.

This service will honor and celebrate Sarasota’s young people and feature a collaborative performance with Redeemer’s Canterbury Girls’ Choir, the Sarasota Young Voices choir and members of the Sarasota Youth Philharmonic, a news release says.

Evensong is free, with offerings accepted.

The anthem will be Baldassare Galuppi’s *Dixit Dominus*; Malcolm Archer’s *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* also will be performed.

“Youth choirs throughout our community provide the opportunity for young people to receive not just a religious education but a broad exposure to choral literature, language and context for a lifelong appreciation of and involvement in history and the art,” said Redeemer organist/choirmaster Dr. Ann Stephenson-Moe in the news release.

“Evensong is an Anglican tradition originating in the 16th century and is enjoyed by many music lovers regardless of their religious affiliation,” she added in the release. “Our annual Youth Evensong is Redeemer’s expression of profound gratitude for the youth of our parish and the community, as well as for the blessings of music.”

The Sarasota Young Voices choir includes boys and girls from Sarasota and Manatee counties performing under the direction of Geneviève Beauchamp. The all-girls Canterbury Choir includes students from Sarasota middle and high schools as well as St. Stephen’s Episcopal School in Bradenton.

In addition to learning to read music, the Canterbury girls become acquainted with classical choral literature and learn to sing in Latin, French, Spanish, German and Russian, the news release notes. Throughout the year during Sunday morning masses at Redeemer, this special choir sings anthems specifically written for female voices.

For more information, visit www.redeemersarasota.org, or call 955-4263.

VETERANS' SUNDAY TO BE MARKED AT CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

On Sunday, Nov. 11, the Church of the Redeemer in downtown Sarasota will honor veterans of American wars as part of the church's annual Veterans' Sunday recognition.

During the 7, 9, and 11 a.m. morning Masses, veterans in the congregation and military personnel in service throughout the world will be acknowledged and thanked during a special sermon delivered by the Redeemer's associate rector, the Rev. Richard C. Marsden, a news release says. A commissioned officer with the rank of captain in the U.S. Army (1974-1982), Marsden has served the United States as a helicopter pilot, flight section leader and staff officer, the release adds.

At 10:15 a.m., Redeemer will hold a special event to connect veterans with hundreds of the church's Sunday School students. The children will have an opportunity to meet veterans and listen to the experiences of those

who have served the United States from World War II to the present, the news release notes.

Veterans' Sunday also will kick off Redeemer's annual participation in the Support Our Troops project, sponsored by the Military Officers Association of Sarasota. Redeemer is accepting donations for care packages, which the church will send to deployed military personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan just in time for the holidays. Suggested donation items include toiletries, non-perishable snacks, socks, DVDs, books and phone cards; Redeemer plans to send 250 boxes overseas in time for soldiers to receive them by Christmas, the news release says.

Donated items may be dropped off at the parish office, 222 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Call 955-4263 for more information or visit www.redeemersarasota.com.



A group of Revolutionary War re-enactors gathers before the start of the Sarasota Veterans Day Parade in 2011. Photo by Norman Schimmel



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF THE UPCOMING WEEK

09
NOV

3rd Annual Crystal Classic Master Sand Sculpting Competition
Nov. 9-12, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Siesta Public Beach; \$5 daily admission; thecrystalclassic.org

10
NOV

Little Nemo in Slumberland
Nov. 10 at 5:30 p.m. and Nov. 11 at 12:30 p.m.; Sarasota Opera, 61 N. Pineapple Ave., Sarasota. Admission: \$15 to \$30; 366-8450 or SarasotaOpera.org

10
NOV

Sarasota Medieval Fair
Nov. 10-11 and 17-18, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sarasota Fairgrounds, 3000 Ringling Blvd, Sarasota. Admission: adults, \$16.95 daily; children, \$8.95. Information: sarasotamedievalfair.com

11
NOV

Dulcimer virtuoso David Massengill
Nov. 11, 7 p.m. (potluck dinner precedes performance at 6 p.m.), Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court, Sarasota. Admission: \$8, advance; \$10, at door; benefits the PEACenter. Bring a dish to share and utensils. Information: 894-6469 or wslr.org/wslr-events

16
NOV

Mannheim Steamroller Christmas
Nov. 16, 8 p.m., Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall. Admission: \$30 to \$85; 953-3368 or VanWezel.org

To get all the details on these and other great activities — food, nightlife, music, art, theater, children's events, learning opportunities and more — go to Sarasota's No. 1 source for local events, hot spots, fun activities and hidden gems:



thisweekin
SARASOTA.com
SARASOTA'S MASTER CALENDAR

PRESS



Norman Schimmel
Photographer

The Sarasota News Leader

Issued 04/01/2012

Expires 12/31/2013

SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS



REMEMBERING THEM; HONORING THEM

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.