

THE SARASOTA

January 11, 2013

News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida

AN ISSUE OF FAIRNESS

NEW PLANNING PARADIGM PROPOSED

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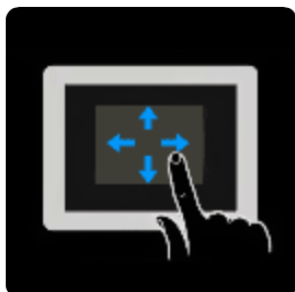
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Open/close the mini carousel of pages



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SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida

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Welcome

For a hard news junkie, this was a very good week.

The City Commission cheered local residents by deciding to allow an appeal of the Planning Board's decision on the proposed Walmart in the Ringling Shopping Center, and it took a significant step regarding how future growth might be managed.

The County Commission handled so many issues this week we tried to tackle the biggest ones and save others for next week. Not all of the topics were on the agendas, either. For example, new board Chairwoman Carolyn Mason broached the idea of a county domestic partnership registry and new Vice Chairman Charles Hines sought support for a policy regarding the removal of advisory board members for cause.

The School Board also made its biggest news this week by dealing with a non-agenda item: a request by preservationists that the National Register-listed, Paul Rudolph-designed Building 4 not be gutted as part of the rebuilding of Sarasota High School.

Thankfully, to balance out all the serious matters, our *This Week in Sarasota* partner, Matt Orr, delivered another one of his travel stories flavored with whimsical observations. I keep telling Matt he is going to give well-known novelist/essayist David Sedaris a run for his money.

Tyler Whitson has a great piece, too, on poet Tony Leuzzi's recent program at Bookstore 1 in Sarasota, and I certainly would be remiss if I did not encourage you to check out Otus Rufous' second installment about the birds' half of "the birds and the bees."

This is one week I definitely feel I can say every reader can find something to suit his or her taste.

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher



CONTENTS

AN ISSUE OF FAIRNESS



MILLIMETERS FROM DEATH



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

NEWS & COMMENTARY

AN ISSUE OF FAIRNESS

12

New County Commission chairwoman gets lots of questions in seeking consensus on county action regarding a domestic partnership registry — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

NEW PLANNING PARADIGM PROPOSED

16

Analysis: City Commission will weigh appeal of Walmart decision for Ringling Shopping Center site — *Stan Zimmerman*

NO BUTS OVER BUTTS

23

Sarasota court ruling means the county no longer will be able to enforce its no-smoking ordinance for its beaches and parks — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

MILLIMETERS FROM DEATH

30

A Sarasota Police Department officer draws guns on a Realtor and client on New Year's Eve, mistaking them for burglars — *Stan Zimmerman*

TOO INTENSE

32

The Sarasota County Commission unanimously denies two requests for variances to construct homes on Siesta Key lots that have been underwater in years past — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

NO OTHER TAKERS

38

Hines the sole county commissioner to indicate an interest in new policy regarding removal of advisory board members for cause — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

ON THE STUMP CIRCUIT

41

Sarasota's new police chief makes the round at meetings as she gets to know the residents of her new home — *Stan Zimmerman*

STANDING FIRM

45

The School Board will not revisit its decision on plans for renovating the interior of a Paul Rudolph building at Sarasota High — *Scott Proffitt*

GUM AND GARBAGE

49

St. Armands business owners are complaining about overflowing trash cans and City of Sarasota inattention to their sidewalks — *Stan Zimmerman*

TRIAL AND COMPLAINT

51

Trial date set in case involving runner's death on Siesta Key in January 2012 as her family brings a negligence suit against the Sheriff's Office — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

COVER PHOTOS: Front - Norman Schimmel; Sarasota Leisure - Norman Schimmel

CONTENTS



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



A TOE IN THE WATER

54

Visitors' parking passes trial run under way along South Washington Drive on St. Armands Key — *Stan Zimmerman*

NEWS BRIEFS

55

OPINION

EDITORIAL

62

Siesta Beach: America's No. 1 ashtray?

COMMENTARY

64

Observations offered on the Mugwumps' Tea Party — *David Staats*

SARASOTA LEISURE

A SIX-PACK INSPIRATION

69

A resort vacation can be just the answer to worries about a slowing metabolism and the need to be more health-conscious — *Matt Orr*

A POET'S POET

78

Tony Leuzzi shares his experiences from interviewing more than 20 American poets for his new book, *Passwords Primeval* — *Tyler Whitson*

ASK OTUS

82

For Part II on how birds 'do it,' let us take a look at the avian childhood; then, on to a snake question — *Otus Rufous*

A ROAR OF SUPPORT

88

Thunder by the Bay brings in tens of thousands of people as it raises funds for Suncoast Charities for Children — *Staff Reports*

ARTS BRIEFS

93

RELIGION BRIEFS

98

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

101

SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS

102

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AN ISSUE OF FAIRNESS

New County Commission chairwoman gets lots of questions in seeking consensus on county action regarding a domestic partnership registry — Rachel Brown Hackney

The Sarasota County Commission agreed this week to hold off on any move to establish a domestic partnership registry while awaiting action on a Florida Legislature bill regarding a statewide registry.

The purported bill, however, may not be introduced before 2014, according to former Sarasota City Commissioner Ken Shelin.

Having won approval of a domestic partnership registry in the City of Sarasota, Shelin has been working with County Commissioner Carolyn Mason since last fall on a similar measure for the county, as well as with the Venice City Council and North Port City Commission on ordinances in those municipalities. ([Full story here](#))



NEW PLANNING PARADIGM PROPOSED

Analysis: City Commission will weigh appeal of Walmart decision for Ringling Shopping Center site — Stan Zimmerman

Two issues fraught with acute neighborhood concern were resolved Monday, Jan. 7, by the Sarasota City Commission. After testimony and discussion, both were approved — a compromise will give Laurel Park two “workshops” on any nearby development before city approval, and Alta Vista will be able to challenge a new Walmart.

The two actions — one in the afternoon and the other in the evening session — foreshadow what might be a new planning scheme in the city. More than the concerns of Alta Vista and Laurel Park are at stake. “This could be the beginning of something big,” said Mayor Suzanne Atwell at the conclusion of the afternoon session. ([Full story here](#))



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NO BUTS OVER BUTTS

Sarasota court ruling means the county no longer will be able to enforce its no-smoking ordinance for its beaches and parks — Rachel Brown Hackney

New signage may be coming soon to Sarasota County parks — including Siesta Public Beach — encouraging people not to smoke but leaving them free from Sheriff's Office citations if they do so.

As a result of a December court decision involving the City of Sarasota, Sarasota County no longer will be able to enforce an ordinance that bans smoking outdoors on public property.

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has not been enforcing the prohibition since the court ruling was handed down, Sgt. Scott Osborne, chief of the office's Community Policing Station on Siesta Key, told *The Sarasota News Leader* on Jan. 9.

Osborne said the Sheriff's Office's counsel had advised deputies to write no more citations as a result of the judge's ruling. ([Full story here](#))



MILLIMETERS FROM DEATH

A Sarasota Police Department officer draws gun on a realtor and client on New Year's Eve, mistaking them for burglars — Stan Zimmerman

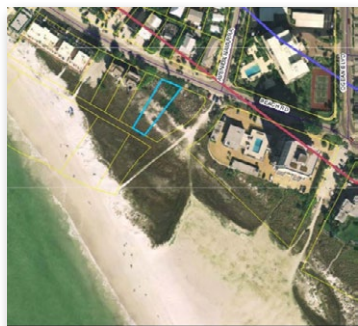
On Dec. 31, a local realtor and her client were confronted by a Sarasota police officer and forced at gunpoint to lie on a dirty concrete floor, they have reported. For at least five minutes, the pair was facedown on a gritty carport with a loaded pistol aimed at the tops of their heads.

Realtor Susan Christy says it happened about 1 p.m. at a home adjacent to the Publix grocery store on South Lime Avenue, west of South Shade Street. She and a client, who asked not to be identified, were inspecting a house for sale.

Christy says she understands how the female officer could have misinterpreted things initially.

"We parked in the [Publix] parking lot and walked over, so there was no car in the driveway," she said. "There was no 'For Sale' sign in the yard, and you couldn't see the [realty company] lockbox because the door was in the carport. They later said a neighbor called in a burglary," she added. ([Full story here](#))





TOO INTENSE

The Sarasota County Commission unanimously denies two requests for variances to construct homes on Siesta Key lots that have been underwater in years past — Rachel Brown Hackney

It took almost exactly two-and-a-half hours of presentations, public comments and rebuttals, but the Sarasota County Commission on Jan. 9 unanimously denied petitions by a couple seeking to build two three-story homes on Siesta Key lots that have been underwater at various times.

Commissioner Nora Patterson, who lives on the barrier island, made the motion in each case.

The action followed advice from County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh that the commission should not continue the public hearing in the wake of a suggestion made late in the discussion by the petitioners' attorney, William W. Merrill III, that the construction plans could be modified to appease one set of adjacent homeowners.

"This is not in a position that lends itself to continuance," DeMarsh told the commissioners. ([Full story here](#))



NO OTHER TAKERS

Hines is the sole county commissioner to indicate an interest in a new policy regarding removal of advisory board members for cause — Rachel Brown Hackney

With Robert Waechter having resigned on Jan. 6 from the Sarasota County Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) and the Tourist Development Council (TDC), no other Sarasota County commissioner joined Commissioner Charles Hines this week in voicing interest in a new policy regarding removal of advisory board members for cause.

Hines raised the issue during the Commission Reports part of the regular meeting on Jan. 8 without mentioning Waechter by name. Hines said he had received queries from several constituents about Waechter's continued service on the two advisory boards after Waechter was charged Dec. 14 with a third-degree felony.

According to a Sarasota County Sheriff's Office report, Waechter allegedly used personal identity information to purchase a prepaid VISA card in the name of Lourdes Ramirez, president of the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, to make campaign contributions to Democratic candidates Keith Fitzgerald and Liz Alpert in the 2012 campaign. ([Full story here](#))



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AN ISSUE OF FAIRNESS

Chairwoman Carolyn Mason presides over her first meeting of the Sarasota County Commission Jan. 8, after being elected to the position last month. Photo by Norman Schimmel

NEW COUNTY COMMISSION CHAIRWOMAN GETS LOTS OF QUESTIONS IN SEEKING CONSENSUS ON COUNTY ACTION REGARDING A DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP REGISTRY

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The Sarasota County Commission agreed this week to hold off on any move to establish a domestic partnership registry while awaiting action on a Florida Legislature bill regarding a statewide registry.

The purported bill, however, may not be introduced before 2014, according to former Sarasota City Commissioner Ken Shelin.

Having won approval of a domestic partnership registry in the City of Sarasota, Shelin has been working with County Commissioner Carolyn Mason since last fall on a similar measure for the county, as well as with the Venice City Council and North Port City Commission on ordinances in those municipalities.

The City of Sarasota registry began Nov. 6. Applicants may file their paperwork in the City

Hall Annex on the first floor in the newly re-named SRQ Media Studio.

Mason raised the issue during the Commission Reports part of her board's Jan. 8 regular meeting — her first as chairwoman — saying she was not certain Shelin had had the opportunity to talk with all her fellow board members about the proposal.

“I wanted to get consensus to have the administration look at this and get back to us on the feasibility of it,” Mason said.

As *The Sarasota News Leader* previously reported, Mason had promised to bring up the matter after the 2012 elections.

“Actually, I'd like the [County] Attorney's Office to look at it,” Commissioner Nora Patterson told Mason.

Her concern, Patterson said, is that the county not “get dragged into a bunch of lawsuits” over a registry that might not be recognized by other jurisdictions. “I just don’t want to end up in court on this,” Patterson added.

In asking for consensus, Mason said, she was making the assumption that County Administrator Randall Reid “was going to drag in the attorney,” prompting chuckles from other board members.

Commissioner Christine Robinson said she had reviewed the City of Sarasota’s ordinance establishing a domestic registry, “and I have some structural concerns ...”

Given her family law background, Robinson added, a few portions of the ordinance “made my eyes bug out ... I see some big issues —

not about subject matter,” but about using the ordinance as a model for a county registry.

Robinson pointed out that she had talked with Shelin and had asked him to provide answers to questions she had posed.

“We definitely need a legal analysis,” Commissioner Joe Barbetta said, adding he also wanted to be sure any county registry was revenue-neutral — that fees covered county costs.

Commissioner Charles Hines prompted more chuckles when he said, “There’s a problem with having so many attorneys on this board.”

Like Robinson, both Hines and Barbetta are attorneys. Patterson is married to an attorney.

Hines said he also had had questions for Shelin regarding how variations in domestic



It is uncertain whether the Florida Legislature will see a bill filed this year that would establish a statewide domestic partnership registry. iStock photo

partnership registries in different local government jurisdictions would be handled. He wanted to be certain, he added, that provisions of a county domestic partnership registry would reflect language of power of attorney documents accepted statewide for health care matters and other personal issues.

If this is something that the public wants, it really should be statewide, and it would match with other estate planning documents.

Charles Hines
Commissioner
Sarasota County

County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh asked the commissioners to recognize that “there are some complex legal issues here,” so “you do not set a short deadline” for a report from his office on establishment of a county registry.

Then Barbetta said he understood a bill pre-filed for the 2013 session of the Florida Legislature sought to establish a statewide domestic partnership registry.

State Rep. Ray Pilon, R-Sarasota, had told him about it, Barbetta added. “We’ll wind up being preempted out of this, probably,” Barbetta said.

When Mason again asked whether she had consensus to allow Reid and DeMarsh to supervise staff members in researching the issue of a county registry, Patterson said, “Maybe, before they invest hundreds of lawyer hours in this, we should see what happens in the legislative session.”

“I would agree,” Hines said. “If this is something that the public wants, it really should be statewide, and it would match with other estate planning documents.”

Regarding the bill Barbetta referenced, Shelin told the *News Leader*, “It’s my understanding that it has not been filed.” He added that he had had an email exchange on Jan. 7 informing him of that situation.

The legislator who had proposed such a bill “said he was going to wait a year,” Shelin pointed out.

That legislator, Shelin said, is Rep. Joe Saunders, D-Fort Lauderdale.

When Saunders was running for his House seat in 2012, the news media reported he is openly gay and in support of domestic partnership registries.

Shelin said he planned to speak with Mason later this week.

In the meantime, Shelin said, he had received enthusiastic support from the Venice City Council for his proposal of a domestic partnership registry for that municipality. He also is scheduled to appear before the North Port City Commission on Jan. 28 to discuss a registry for that city. He plans to talk individually with the North Port commissioners on Jan. 17, Shelin added.

“We really ought to have the whole county covered,” he said.

Mason told the *News Leader* after the Jan. 8 meeting that the commissioners “just need to decide whether we’re going to do it or not.”

She added, “I want to be fair to everybody” in the county. 



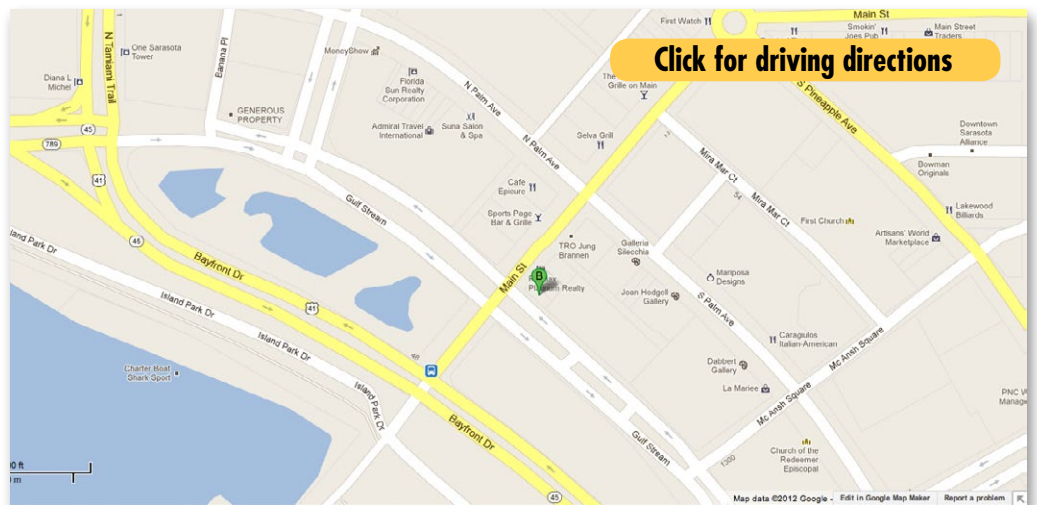
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NEW PLANNING PARADIGM PROPOSED

City residents opposed to a Walmart in the Ringling Shopping Center fill much of the Commission Chambers on Jan. 7. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ANALYSIS: CITY COMMISSION WILL WEIGH APPEAL OF WALMART DECISION FOR RINGLING SHOPPING CENTER SITE

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Two issues fraught with acute neighborhood concern were resolved Monday, Jan. 7, by the Sarasota City Commission. After testimony and discussion, both were approved — a compromise will give Laurel Park two “workshops” on any nearby development before city approval, and Alta Vista will be able to challenge a new Walmart.

The two actions — one in the afternoon and the other in the evening session — foreshadow what might be a new planning scheme in the city. More than the concerns of Alta Vista and Laurel Park are at stake. “This could be the beginning of something big,” said Mayor

Suzanne Atwell at the conclusion of the afternoon session.

LAUREL PARK’S HALF LOAF

Ten years ago, everything was booming in Sarasota except downtown. Developers complained red tape and politics stymied their every effort. A “pro from Dover” consultant named Andres Duany was hired to push “new urbanism.”

A new “form-based” zoning code was approved and new zoning categories were created to match the reworked “future land use map” that remains crucial to the city’s com-

prehensive plan. One of the features Duany pushed was called “administrative approval.”

Instead of “red tape and politics,” developers would have “certainty.” If their downtown projects met the requirements of the city’s zoning and building codes, they would get a building permit without the necessity of messy public hearings and City Commission votes, Duany pointed out.

One part of downtown ran scared from all this activity. Laurel Park is

a time-warp neighborhood from the 1920s, full of bungalows on small lots, cheek-by-cheek duplexes and now-rustic apartment buildings. The residents fought and received their own zoning category during the Duany frenzy, one that had nothing to do with “administrative approval” or “form-based codes.”

When the smoke cleared, the legal challenge was satisfied and the paperwork was all straight for the new downtown plan, Laurel Park was a true enclave — surrounded on all sides by downtown zoning and “administrative approval” cases.

Thus, when a towering condominium was proposed just across the street from the bungalows, there was no need to notify the neighbors because everything was handled “administratively.”

And because there was no neighborhood input, the condo representatives turned its backside to the old community. Trash pickup,

delivery trucks and moving vans were the face of the building for the neighbors.

Laurel Park residents started lobbying hard to get a voice in adjacent construction. At first they wanted a comprehensive plan change to require public hearings for new projects in an “overlay zone” next to the neighborhood.

The building and development community fought back, and city staffers constructed a compromise. If Laurel Park would agree to scrap its proposed

change to the comprehensive plan, the residents could have two “community workshops” with a developer seeking to put up a project next door.

The first workshop would come when the project was initially proposed: Nearby residents could offer suggestions to make the building more *sympatico*. The second would come just before the builder filed plans for the administrative review process.

On Monday afternoon, the proposed compromise went before the City Commission for an up-or-down vote after the commission took public testimony.

“We tried to obtain a voice in big projects next to our neighborhood,” said Laurel Park Association President Kate Lowman. “We requested an overlay with a public approval process and the Planning Board [involvement]. The city has proposed a compromise, which preserves the administrative approval process with two community meetings.”

“A community meeting is much better than a public hearing. It’s intended to foster communication back and forth. Maybe it should be considered in lieu of a review of site plans — for use citywide.”

Mike Taylor
Retired Planner
City of Sarasota



A tarred and feathered Walmart logo sits outside City Hall. Photo by Norman Schimmel

SETTING A PRECEDENT

Not everybody was wild about the compromise. Local realty mogul Michael Saunders said, “We worked long and diligently to create the system we have now. It creates a certainty of cost and time for developers.”

Saunders has a dog in the fight, as owner of what she called “a prime piece of property for development” on the neighborhood’s edge.

“What is before you is to create something to make this one section of your jurisdiction different from all the others,” said Saunders. “If this passes, there will be different rules and regulations for these properties. It creates an unlevel playing field.”

Then Mike Taylor showed up. He was a senior city planner who retired in October. He also is the author of many, many city planning documents. “A community meeting is much better than a public hearing. It’s intended to foster communication back and forth,” he said. “Maybe it should be considered in lieu of a review of site plans — for use citywide.”

After the public hearing ended, City Commissioner Shannon Snyder picked up on Taylor’s remark and ran with it. “We’ve stumbled across something that makes things cheaper, faster and better for the entire city,” he said. “This could be a model for the rest of the city.”

Right now “administrative approval” applies only to downtown zoning and certain areas of north Sarasota near Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way. “I think we’re onto something,” said Commissioner Paul Caragiulo.

Snyder piled on. “We’ve been grappling with expanding administrative review for the past

10 years and I think we’ve found it,” he said. “Have a couple of community meetings and a site plan review, but no Planning Board review. It’s nice to walk out with something better than what we had going in.”

“I will support this,” said Atwell. So did everybody else, and the compromise passed 5-0. Even Saunders thought the idea held promise.

“I can live with this,” she told *The Sarasota News Leader* after the vote. “I’d love to see how they clean up this draft.”

THE CURIOUSLY SIMILAR WALMART EXPERIENCE

The future of a new Walmart store in the old Ringling Shopping Center hung in the balance as well on Jan. 7. Neighbors asked the Sarasota City Commission for permission to appeal the 3-2 Planning Board vote approving the project. The decision to appeal required a “supermajority” vote of 4-1 or 5-0.

And the neighbors got it. Only City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo voted against the appeal proposal. It was a moment of drama — neighbors cheering the decision inside City Hall while protesters outside defaced an old Walmart logo with molasses and feathers.

On the face of it, the two neighborhoods — Laurel Park and Alta Vista — were staring at dissimilar problems. For Laurel Park, it was a matter of residential condominiums towering over their bungalows; for Alta Vista, it was a low-rise, big-box store planning to operate 24/7/365. But the Laurel Park proto-compromise is almost exactly the process Alta Vista actually experienced.

On Aug. 15 last year, Walmart executives met with Alta Vista and other Sarasota residents at the Payne Park Municipal Auditorium. The Walmart group unveiled plans for a 98,000-square-foot “small format Walmart supercenter with a full-service grocery.” The architect explained he “tried to incorporate some urban elements ... and added windows and awnings.”

The second “community meeting” was in reality a public hearing before the Sarasota Planning Board on Nov. 14, when the board reviewed the final plans. Presidents of both nearby neighborhood associations came forward to support the Walmart concept. “I think

the project would be a great thing,” said Alta Vista President Candy Spaulding. “I don’t want to see this project killed,” said Myron Nichol, president of the Gardens of Ringling Park.

City planners agreed. “Your expert planner says this is allowed,” said Walmart attorney Jim Porter.

At this second “community meeting” cum “public hearing,” the stars aligned. Walmart representatives, residents of the two adjacent neighborhoods, the city planning staff — all were happy — except two Planning Board members — unpaid citizen volunteers — who pointed to a gaping problem. Citing the zoning



(From left) City Commissioners Shannon Snyder, Willie Shaw, Terry Turner and Paul Caragiulo listen to comments on Jan. 7. Photo by Norman Schimmel

code, they said the project did not meet city zoning requirements.

For the specific area, the Walmart was too big, they pointed out. But they were outvoted by three other Planning Board members, and what should have been the final vote on the project was 3-2. Because no rezoning or variances were requested, the City Commission would not hear the item.

Had the Walmart saga incorporated the expanded “Laurel Park compromise” approach tacitly approved by three city commissioners on Monday afternoon, Alta Vista would have had only one recourse.

THE ‘NUCLEAR’ OPTION

As Alta Vista residents pondered the view that the Walmart project was not appropriate for the site, several neighbors decided to appeal the Planning Board decision. It cost them \$1,597. Residents put up some of the money; the neighborhood association put up some as well. All that guaranteed was Monday’s City Commission deliberation on whether to hear an appeal.

This is exactly the same process required by the Laurel Park compromise plan.


Walmart’s situation is unusual, however, because the company’s research — and city staff analysis — indicated the project was a perfect fit in the old Ringling Shopping Center. No rezoning or special exceptions or variances would be required. It was: “like replacing like.” Inside the downtown zone, only administrative approval was required for the project: no neighborhood notice; no signs posted on the property; nada.

The Ringling Shopping Center borders on the downtown zone, but it is not inside the line. Therefore, the process went by the existing rules requiring a Planning Board hearing, even for this like-replaces-like project. And it was at the Planning Board stage where the self-educated volunteers discovered what could be a lethal snag in Walmart’s plans.

Expanding administrative approval citywide would be a blessing for the development and construction communities. By cutting out the Planning Board and City Commission, it would place heavy reliance on the professional city staff. Professionals would work with professionals and add certainty to the process, supporters would say.

Certainly nobody in Alta Vista checked the zoning code to see if a 98,000-square-foot store was larger than the 15,000 square feet allowed in the zone. Only a pair of volunteer Planning Board members caught the discrepancy.

You could call catching a lethal discrepancy another example of “red tape.” And if during the actual appeal in early February, the City Commission votes the project down because of this “red tape,” critics can add the “political interference” charge, too.

However, the true fault — if there is a fault — lies not with the Planning Board volunteers but with the professional city staff who approved the project twice at the Development Review Committee level and once again before sending it to the Planning Board. This is the same staff entrusted with “administrative review” should the city decide to push the “Laurel Park Compromise” citywide. 



This may take a while.

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The Sarasota County Commission sits in session on Jan. 8, 2013 in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

SARASOTA COURT RULING MEANS THE COUNTY NO LONGER WILL BE ABLE TO ENFORCE ITS NO-SMOKING ORDINANCE FOR ITS BEACHES AND PARKS

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

New signage may be coming soon to Sarasota County parks — including Siesta Public Beach — encouraging people not to smoke but leaving them free from Sheriff's Office citations if they do so.

As a result of a December court decision involving the City of Sarasota, Sarasota County no longer will be able to enforce an ordinance that bans smoking outdoors on public property.

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has not

been enforcing the prohibition since the court ruling was handed down, Sgt. Scott Osborne, chief of the office's Community Policing Station on Siesta Key, told *The Sarasota News Leader* on Jan. 9.

Osborne said the Sheriff's Office's counsel had advised deputies to write no more citations as a result of the judge's ruling.

Still, Osborne said, the deputies' practice prior to that had been to warn people about the county ordinance for-

“*I wish the Legislature hadn't put us in this position.*”

Robert Fournier
City Attorney
City of Sarasota



bidding smoking on the beaches. Seldom did someone fail to comply with the warning, he added.

The fee for a citation was \$100, Osborne said.

After hearing the news about the December court ruling during the County Commission's regular meeting on Jan. 8, Commissioner Joe Barbetta said, "This is really disturbing to me. I can't believe this is happening ..."

The news prompted Commissioner Nora Patterson to make a motion to seek a change in the Florida State Statute regulating smoking to give local governments the ability to ban smoking in and around publicly owned lands. The motion passed unanimously.

The action came almost exactly three months after Barbetta made a motion during a regular meeting on Oct. 9 to request staff to work on an ordinance prohibiting smoking at all the county's public libraries. That motion also passed unanimously.

Barbetta said in October that his action had been prompted by the numerous public complaints he had received about smoking outside Selby Public Library in downtown Sarasota. He voiced frustration that parents and children entering and leaving the facility had to put up with smokers outside the doors. On top of that, he said, Sarasota Police Department officers had asked him why the county had not honored a commitment it had made to prohibit smoking outside public places.

On Dec. 6, County Administrator Randall Reid sent an email to all the commissioners, pointing out that he and staff were awaiting the outcome of a court hearing on the status of

the City of Sarasota's ordinance prohibiting outdoor smoking on its property.

The County Attorney's Office, Reid added, had suggested "we watch the outcome of [the city's case] before moving forward with our own ordinance as requested by the BCC."

THE RULING

During the Jan. 8 meeting, Reid distributed a memo to the commissioners outlining the court decision in the City of Sarasota case. The judge's Dec. 10 ruling found that "prohibiting the use of tobacco products in non-designated areas of city parks ... is unenforceable



Sarasota City Attorney Robert Fournier addresses the City Commission. Photo by Norman Schimmel

and in conflict with the state statute known as the ‘Clean Indoor Air Act.’”

The purpose of that law, which was passed in 1985 but did not go into effect until 2003, according to the Florida Department of Health, “is to protect people from the health hazards of secondhand tobacco smoke”

In her Dec. 10 ruling, Judge Maryann Boehm of the 12th Judicial Circuit Court in Sarasota pointed to the city’s claim that “it is unclear whether the Legislature intended to preempt

to the State the regulation of *all* smoking [indoors and outdoors] ...”

She added, “There is no case law directly on point that construes the preemption provision at issue in this case. The Defendant cites several favorable legal opinions rendered by the Florida Attorney General on the subject. Although such opinions have no binding precedential value, the Court finds their reasoning to be sound and is persuaded that [the statute] constitutes an express and unambiguous statement of the Legislature’s intent to pre-



Internationally renowned participants in the annual Siesta Key Crystal Classic Master Sand Sculpting Competition have told event founder Brian Wigelsworth they relish working in Siesta’s cigarette-free sand. In 2012, Canadian sculptors Abe Waterman and Peter Vogelaar drew crowds as they crafted second-place winner Fine Print. Photo by Norman Schimmel

empt the regulation of *all* smoking, wherever located, to the State.”

A July 21, 2011 opinion issued by the Florida Attorney General’s Office in a case involving the St. Johns River Water Management District — provided to the *News Leader* by the County Attorney’s Office — is one example of the opinions Boehm referenced. It says, “In sum: The Regulation of smoking is preempted to the state pursuant to [the Clean Indoor Air Act], and the ... District may not adopt a policy prohibiting smoking or tobacco use that is broader than the terms of [that statute].”

The Jan. 4 memo to the County Commission points out that the statute contains the following provision: “This part expressly preempts regulation of smoking to the state and supercedes any municipal or county ordinance on the subject; however, school districts may further restrict smoking by persons on school district property.”

“What gets me,” Barbetta said on Jan. 8, “is [the Legislature] carved out that exception for school district property, because, obviously, many children use libraries. ... It’s such a double standard. The legislators ought to be ashamed of themselves for doing this, that we can’t restrict smoking on public property when cigarettes ... kill. They cause cancer, and we have to sit here on a public safety and health issue. We’re powerless. I’m ... shocked that this is happening.”

He added, “I don’t know how the Legislature can pass the straight-face test on this one.”

“I agree completely with what Commissioner Barbetta said,” Patterson told her fellow board members. “A huge portion of the state’s budget is Medicaid,” she pointed out, “[and] a pretty good portion of ours, too, by the way.

Smoking increases medical expenses with people, especially as they grow older.”

Then Patterson asked County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh, “Does this mean the beach as well?”

“Yes, it does,” DeMarsh replied.

Even before Patterson put forth her motion, DeMarsh warned of a slim likelihood that the Legislature could be persuaded to amend the statute to give local governments more control over smoking.

With the meeting televised as usual, Reid took the opportunity to point out to county employees that they still would be prohibited from smoking, as the ruling did not have any bearing on employers’ regulation of workers’ tobacco usage.

Commissioner Charles Hines voiced concerns about people smoking at Little League games held in county parks. When he said it appeared the operator of a facility for a particular sporting event would be unable to ask someone to stop smoking next to children, DeMarsh replied that appeared to be the correct interpretation of the ruling.

“The legislators ought to be ashamed of themselves for doing this, that we can’t restrict smoking on public property when cigarettes ... kill. They cause cancer, and we have to sit here on a public safety and health issue. We’re powerless.”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County

However, DeMarsh said, the Baltimore Orioles would be able to continue to ban smoking during spring training games at Ed Smith Stadium in Sarasota, because members of the public pay admission fees to attend the games, even though the facility is county-owned.

“There are signs everywhere saying, ‘This is a non-smoking facility,’” Hines continued. As things have stood, Hines pointed out, if someone was asked to stop smoking at a children’s baseball game, and the person refused, a representative of the hosting entity could ask the person to leave and request that the Sheriff’s Office issue the person a trespass warning to prevent his returning to the facility while the game went on.

“I think I would like the opportunity to look at that particular fact pattern,” DeMarsh replied, “to see if there’s an ability of the user of the facility to do that or not” in the wake of the judge’s decision.

“Are you going to do that?” Patterson asked.

DeMarsh responded that he and his staff “will be glad to do that.”

“It’s an everyday occurrence,” Hines added of such smoking situations.

Reid also emphasized that staff would determine whether the county had any options involving smoking in parks or at the beaches.

RAMIFICATIONS AND REMEDIES

After the meeting, Reid pointed out to the *News Leader* that one of the criteria Dr. Stephen P. Leatherman of Florida International University — aka Dr. Beach — uses to deter-

mine his No. 1 beach in the nation each year and his Top Ten Beaches list is whether smoking is allowed at the facilities.

Leatherman named Siesta Key Public Beach No. 1 just before Memorial Day weekend in 2011. Visit Sarasota County officials have credited that designation with helping the county set recent records in tourist development tax collections.

In an interview, DeMarsh pointed out that if the City of Sarasota appealed the judge’s December decision, an appellate court might interpret the state statute differently.

Robert Fournier, the attorney for the City of Sarasota, told the *News Leader* in a telephone interview Jan. 9 that he did not foresee the City Commission pushing for an appeal.

He had thought the matter might come up during the City Commission’s meeting on Jan. 7, he added, but no member of his board mentioned it.

“I think it would be a waste of our money and our legal resources to try to appeal this,” Fournier said.

The city ordinance was adopted in June 2011, Fournier said. Before the vote, he added, he advised the City Commission “there was a fair chance something like this might happen,” based on the opinions issued by the Florida Attorney General’s Office.

The state law last was amended in 2011, Fournier pointed out. That was when the section giving school districts more latitude was added, he said.

The best options he saw for changing the law, he added, involved local governments working through the Florida League of Cities and the Florida Association of Counties to persuade the Legislature to change the law.

State Sen. Alan Hays, R-Umatilla, in Lake County, introduced a bill in the Florida Senate during the 2012 legislative term to allow municipalities and counties to regulate smoking on public property, Fournier said.


The Florida Senate website shows the bill passed the Health Regulation Committee unanimously on Jan. 13, 2012; it then died in the Community Affairs Committee.

"I think this is an issue the public should be made aware of," Fournier added, pointing out that some state parks prohibit smoking.

"Why would you tell a local government they couldn't do the same thing?" he added. "I think that's a bit ridiculous, myself."

Fournier also noted that an organization called the [Tobacco Prevention Network of Florida](#) has maintained that Florida State Government has had a history of preempting local anti-tobacco measures as a result of strong lobbying by the tobacco industry.

The Network's website says, "This grassroots organization was formed in 2010 to link local Tobacco Control groups throughout Florida and give them a voice at the state level."

Fournier said it seemed logical to him that local governments should be allowed to regulate tobacco use on public property. "I wish the Legislature hadn't put us in this position." 

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MILLIMETERS FROM DEATH

The Sarasota Police Department headquarters on Adams Lane is a short distance from where an unidentified officer mistook a Realtor and client for burglars. Photo by Norman Schimmel

A SARASOTA POLICE DEPARTMENT OFFICER DRAWS GUN ON A REALTOR AND CLIENT ON NEW YEAR'S EVE, MISTAKING THEM FOR BURGLARS

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

On Dec. 31, a local realtor and her client were confronted by a Sarasota police officer and forced at gunpoint to lie on a dirty concrete floor, they have reported. For at least five minutes, the pair was facedown on a gritty carport with a loaded pistol aimed at the tops of their heads.

Realtor Susan Christy says it happened about 1 p.m. at a home adjacent to the Publix grocery store on South Lime Avenue, west of South Shade Street.

She and a client, who asked not to be identified, were inspecting a house for sale.

Christy says she understands how the female officer could have misinterpreted things initially.

“We parked in the [Publix] parking lot and walked over, so there was no car in the driveway,” she said. “There was no ‘For Sale’ sign in the yard, and you couldn’t see the [realty company] lockbox because the door was in the carport. They later said a neighbor called in a burglary,” she added.

“*I figure we were facedown with a gun on us for five minutes.*”

Susan Christy
Realtor

Despite Christy's claim to be a realtor, the officer forced both her and her client down at gunpoint, then called for backup. "Get on the ground. Get on the ground," the officer shouted," said Christy. "I figure we were facedown with a gun on us for five minutes."

When the backup officers arrived, at least a few of them drew their guns, too, she added. "There was a point they let us sit up on the cold concrete," she said. "I was cool because I knew we had not done anything wrong."


"The whole thing was humiliating and aggravating," the client told *The Sarasota News Leader*. "I had left the house and was in the carport when [the officer] came at me with her gun drawn," he said. "She was really worked up. I was looking down the barrel at a very excited officer."

"I wanted to talk to her," said Christy.

She did not get the name of the officer, but she described the woman as being 5 feet, 4 inches tall and Caucasian, with her hair pulled back.

The client remembers Christy asking the female officer for an apology. "I'm not apologizing for doing my job," the client recalls the officer responding.

Neither Christy nor her client was interested in filing a complaint.

New Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino started work officially on New Year's Day, the day after the takedown on South Lime Avenue. DiPino already has been meeting with city residents to let them become acquainted with her leadership style. (See *On the stump circuit* in today's *News Leader*.) DiPino told a Newtown audience Tuesday evening, Jan. 8, "Starting right now, it is our job as police to put our hand out to you." 



Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino/Photo by Norman Schimmel



TOO INTENSE

County Commissioners Charles Hines and Nora Patterson consider documents and testimony during a meeting this week. Photo by Rachel Hackney

THE SARASOTA COUNTY COMMISSION UNANIMOUSLY DENIES TWO REQUESTS FOR VARIANCES TO CONSTRUCT HOMES ON SIESTA KEY LOTS THAT HAVE BEEN UNDERWATER IN YEARS PAST

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

It took almost exactly two-and-a-half hours of presentations, public comments and rebuttals, but the Sarasota County Commission on Jan. 9 unanimously denied petitions by a couple seeking to build two three-story homes on Siesta Key lots that have been underwater at various times.

Commissioner Nora Patterson, who lives on the barrier island, made the motion in each case.

The action followed advice from County

Attorney Stephen DeMarsh that the commission should not continue the public hearing in the wake of a suggestion made late in the discussion by the petitioners' attorney, William W. Merrill III, that the construction plans could be modified to appease one set of adjacent homeowners.



This thing, I think, was dead from the start.

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County



“This is not in a position that lends itself to continuance,” DeMarsh told the commissioners, adding his recommendation that they should vote “up or down” on each of the variance requests.

Just after 6 p.m. on Jan. 9, Patterson put forth the first motion, saying, “If I could roll the clock back, a *long* ways, a lot of the development that I think is in harm’s way ... probably wouldn’t have been approved today ...”

Patterson said any commission discussion about a variance request was “tough.” Referring to the property owners, Ronald and Sania Allen of Osprey, she added, “These folks did pay good money for [their property].”

The Allens were seeking permission to build the houses on lots they own at 162 and 168 Beach Road.

Patterson said she had “absolutely seen that whole area [under water] and [was] still ... worried what to do with that other section of Beach Road that’s falling in the water as we speak.”

Wind and wave action produced by Hurricane Sandy in late October damaged the north part of Beach Road so extensively that part of it

crumbled, necessitating emergency county repairs.

Because of the circumstances regarding the history of the Allens’ lots and that part of Siesta Key, Patterson said, “It’s really rough for me to even envision somebody wanting to build on those properties.”

In seconding the motion, Commissioner Christine Robinson said, “There’s so much wrong in this particular instance,” including adjacent property owners reporting they did not receive the required legal notice from the county about the petitions.

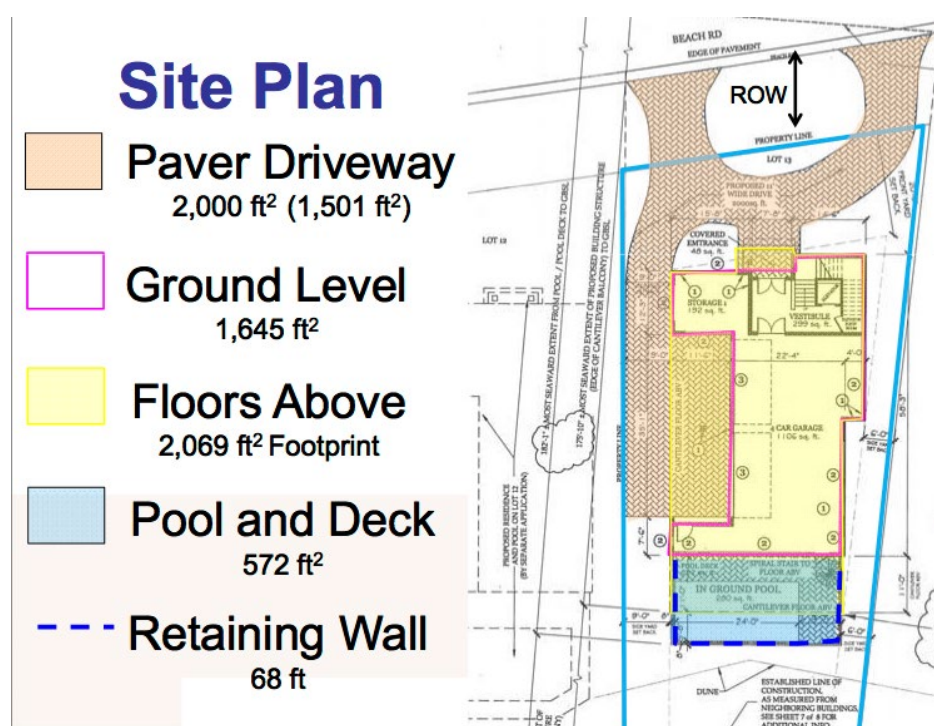
“Included in that is the intensity” of the construction the Allens proposed, she added. “There’s so much [with these requests], you couldn’t begin to unravel it ...”

Nonetheless, Robinson said, “Ultimately, there is a solution to this. I do believe that, but this isn’t it.”

Commissioner Joe Barbetta also weighed in: “The criteria [for granting variances] is pretty clear, and this one certainly doesn’t meet the minimum criteria necessary for the reasonable use of the property. ... This thing, I think, was dead from the start.”

Barbetta added that he was not surprised people had filled the Commission Chambers for discussion of that agenda item, based on the number of emails the commissioners had received over the past few weeks.

Howard Berna, environmental supervisor in the county’s Natural Resources Department, told the board he had received 85 emails about the variance requests, with only 11 of them supportive of the Allens.



A diagram shows the site plan for proposed construction at 168 Beach Road on Siesta Key. Image courtesy Sarasota County

THE REQUESTS

During his presentation, Berna said the Allens proposed building a 7,429-square-foot house on the 162 Beach Road parcel and a 7,679-square-foot house at 168 Beach Road.

Both properties, he pointed out, are completely seaward of the county's Gulf Beach Setback Line, and both consist entirely of dune habitat. Some Australian pine trees — considered an invasive species — are on the lots, Berna added, but the tallest ones are just waist high.

The foundation for the house at 162 Beach Road would have a footprint of 1,428 square feet, he pointed out, but because of the planned cantilevered design for the upper floors — with balconies — the upper two floors would have 2,300 square feet each. That house would have 45 feet of frontage on the Gulf of Mexico side of the property, he added.

The lot at 168 Beach Road is slightly larger, though it has only 40 feet on the Gulf side, Berna said. Its ground-level footprint would be 1,645 feet. The upper levels of that house would have 2,069 feet each.

Both houses would have pools and decks, as well as a retaining wall about 1 foot tall around the pool deck, Berna noted.

Referring to the lots, he added, "This area has been known to flood. ... These properties are relatively low elevation."

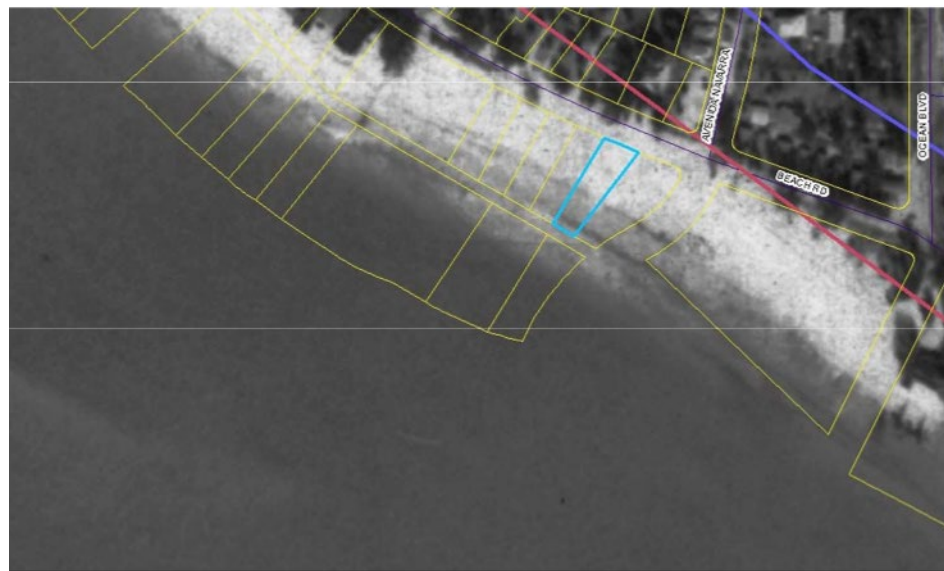
Using aerial photographs, Berna proceeded to show the commissioners views of the property from 1948 to the present. "It is a very interesting area because it has changed very dramatically," he added.

Some of the photos showed the property underwater. As recent as 2009, the vegetation that had grown up on the property had retreated, he pointed out. However, by 2012, the dune area had regenerated, he said.

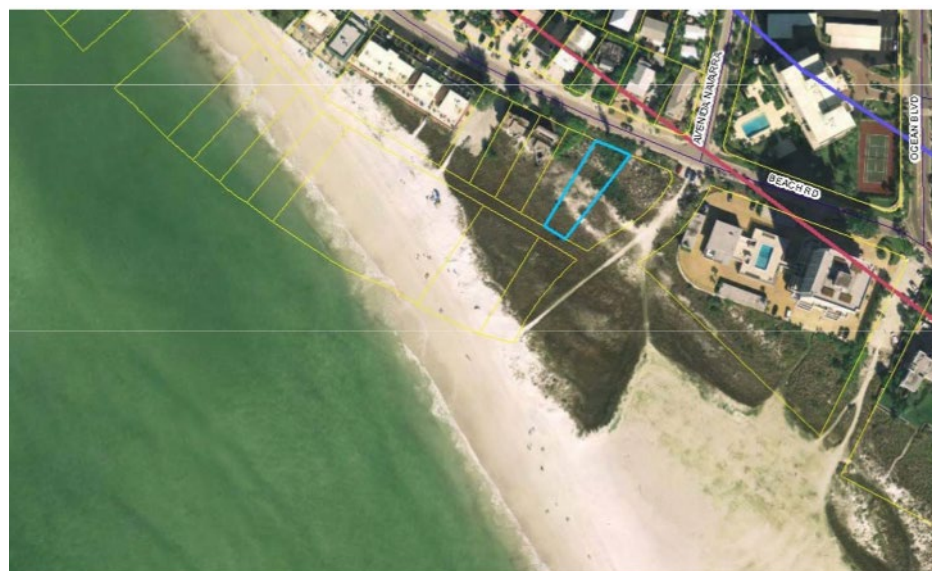
In 1992, Berna pointed out, the County Commission received a variance request for a single-family home on the combined lots; it denied the request in 1993.

MERRILL'S PRESENTATION

"Without this variance, there is no economically viable or reasonable use available on either one of the lots," Merrill, the Allens' at-



A county aerial map shows the area of the two Beach Road parcels (one outlined in blue) in 1948. Image courtesy Sarasota County



A county aerial map shows the area of the two Beach Road parcels in 2007. Image courtesy Sarasota County

torney, told the commission during his presentation.

The Allens paid \$5.4 million for the two parcels on May 29, 2009, Merrill said. Since 2008, the property taxes on the lots had increased by nearly 2,000 percent, he added — from \$595 per year to more than \$12,000 per year per lot.

When Patterson asked whether the Allens had talked with the county's property tax assessor about the fact they could not build on the lots unless they received variances, Merrill replied that they had.

"Did they go to the Value Adjustment Board," which hears appeals of tax assessments, Barbetta asked.

Merrill replied, "I do not believe they did."

"That's how you get [the taxes] reduced," Barbetta pointed out.

"The odd thing is," Patterson added, "[the county] purchased, not that long ago, one of these lots [near the Allens' parcels], and we didn't pay that much for it, so I don't know what's going on."

She said she believed the reason the county was able to pay a much lower price was because "Everyone knew [the land] was unbuildable."

"My client didn't know that [their land] was unbuildable," Merrill told her.

Denial of the variances, Merrill pointed out, would be "a categorical 'taking' and thus an unreasonable hardship."

When Robinson asked DeMarsh to elaborate on the hardship point, DeMarsh said that if



View toward Beach Road

A county staff photograph shows a view of Beach Road from a position on the 168 Beach Road lot. Image courtesy Sarasota County

the commission were to deny all use of the property, “it could be a compensable taking.”

However, DeMarsh pointed out, if the commission denied the requests before it that day, the Allens would not be prevented from making another petition for some type of construction on the property.

DeMarsh also noted that “the history here may support the concept that [the lots] should be treated as one parcel.”

Merrill pointed out that the lots were platted in 1926 as part of the Miramar Beach subdivision. Other than the Allens’ lots and two others — both vacant and both bought to allow residents of condominium complexes across Beach Road from the beach to have a Gulf view — every other lot, from Beach Access 3 to the Siesta Public Beach seaward of the Gulf Beach Setback Line and fronting on Beach Road, “has at least one or more residential structures on it.”

“We’re asking for the same thing the neighbors got,” he said.

Additionally, Merrill noted, 70 percent of the homes constructed on Beach Road since 1999 have pools.

Commissioner Charles Hines replied that the statement was misleading, because the commissioners had no way of knowing how many

of those pools were approved beyond the Gulf Beach Setback Line.

Merrill said he had not intended to be misleading.

“It’s been quite a few years since we’ve approved a pool seaward of [a] building” on that stretch of the island, Patterson told him.

When Merrill replied that the commission had done so just within the past year, Patterson and Robinson both pointed out that a judge overturned the decision.

“This isn’t a typical neighborhood dispute. ... This, to me, is about the principle of building big expensive things that your owners will want to protect ... on two small lots ... in an area that I know has been awash with seawater not once but over ... a period of years [and] I think there’s a fairly good likelihood [it] will be again.”

Nora Patterson
Commissioner
Sarasota County



Patterson added that she had opposed granting that variance in the first place.

Moreover, Patterson said, “Where a pool has been allowed, they’ve not been huge pools,” and they have not been seaward of the homes.”

She added, “It’s a tricky thing when you say you want what the neighbors got.”

Merrill also showed the board a graphic illustration with white blocks representing the two proposed houses, to compare them with neighboring buildings. He said the structures would be “consistent in this area.”

Patterson told Merrill the houses on his illustration “look awfully big next to the homes that go further in the other direction.”

When he replied, “I think part of that is the coloration,” because the blocks representing

the Allens' houses were lighter than the other structures, the audience broke into laughter, necessitating Chairwoman Carolyn Mason's asking for order.

Merrill also pointed out the houses would be built on concrete pilings, with the first level 19.4 feet above the ground, as required by Federal Emergency Management Agency regulations for new construction in floodplains.

LAST-MINUTE NEGOTIATIONS

During the public comments portion of the hearing, 12 people addressed the commission, but only one gave full support to the Allens' request.

One speaker — Sarasota attorney Morgan Bentley of Bentley & Bruning — told the commissioners he was representing the Terrace Condominium, whose board was “open to suggestions ...”

While he did not have the authority to offer specifics, Bentley said, he did mention that if the houses were shorter and further from the beach, the Terrace board might be willing to support the requests.

Merrill told the commissioners he had spoken with Bentley twice. The Al-


lens would be willing to consider what he had suggested, Merrill added.

When Hines asked whether Merrill was seeking a continuance of the requests for the variances, Merrill said he was, “so that we can try to work with the neighbors to amend this application.”

Patterson told him, “This isn't a typical neighborhood dispute. ... This, to me, is about the principle of building big expensive things that your owners will want to protect ... on two small lots ... in an area that I know has been awash with seawater not once but over ... a period of years [and] I think there's a fairly good likelihood they will be again.”

She continued, “All the properties on Casey Key that built really big stuff and came to us for seawalls — they didn't think 10 years later they were going to have seawater lapping at the foundations.”

Prior to discussion of the Allens' petition, the commission unanimously denied a request for construction of a seawall on Casey Key.

After Patterson made her motion to deny the second variance request, she added, “This is a classic example of wanting to build a lot in harm's way.” 

Impacts to Dune Habitat

- **Project results in greater than 4,500 square feet of impacts to dune habitat.**
- **Approximately 800 square feet of additional impacts in right-of-way.**
- **Petitioner has proffered a draft Dune Vegetative Enhancement Plan that includes removal of nuisance/invasives and planting of +/- 157 square feet of dune vegetation.**
- **Plantings do not compensate for proposed impacts.**

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A slide from a county staff presentation notes impacts to the vegetation on the 168 Beach Road parcel if construction is allowed. Chart courtesy Sarasota County



NO OTHER TAKERS

County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh/Photo by Norman Schimmel

HINES IS THE SOLE COUNTY COMMISSIONER TO INDICATE AN INTEREST IN A NEW POLICY REGARDING REMOVAL OF ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS FOR CAUSE

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

With Robert Waechter having resigned on Jan. 6 from the Sarasota County Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) and the Tourist Development Council (TDC), no other Sarasota County commissioner joined Commissioner Charles Hines this week in voicing interest in a new policy regarding removal of advisory board members for cause.

Hines raised the issue during the Commission Reports part of the regular meet-

ing on Jan. 8 without mentioning Waechter by name. Hines said he had received queries from several constituents about Waechter's continued service on the two advisory boards after Waechter was charged Dec. 14 with a third-degree felony.

According to a Sarasota County Sheriff's Office report, Waechter allegedly used personal identity information to purchase a prepaid VISA card in the name of Lourdes Ramirez, president of the Sara-

I would also say I'm coming up on my 21st year in Sarasota County, and I've actually never had this issue arise before. ... One of your potential actions is to say, 'Well, this has only happened once in 20-some years, so is that necessary?'

Stephen DeMarsh
County Attorney
Sarasota County



sota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, to make campaign contributions to Democratic candidates Keith Fitzgerald and Liz Alpert in the 2012 campaign.

Ramirez, a registered Republican, served with Waechter — a past chairman of the county Republican Party — for a number of years on the Siesta Key Association Board of Directors. As of the Jan. 3 SKA meeting, Waechter had not resigned from that board, SKA President Catherine Luckner said.

Waechter did withdraw his name from consideration for reappointment to the Sarasota Manatee Airport Authority, Frederick “Rick” Piccolo, president and CEO of the Airport Authority, told *The Sarasota News Leader* on Dec. 18.

“What’s our authority?” Hines asked County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh during the Jan. 8 commission meeting.

What process was available for the County Commission if it felt someone serving on an

advisory board should be removed, Hines added.

First, DeMarsh explained the County Commission has a number of advisory boards that were created by resolution and others that were created by ordinance. Among the latter are the TDC and the BZA, DeMarsh added.

With the other boards, he said, “rules of procedure indicate people serve at your pleasure, but they are appointed for a term.”

The ordinance creating the BZA, he continued, says people serving on that board “can be removed for cause.” Regarding the TDC, he added, “There’s silence in the ordinance and in the statutes about whether people can be removed for cause.”

In his staff’s review of case law, DeMarsh said, it appeared someone could be removed from a board for cause only after the County Commission gave that person notice and provided the person an opportunity to be heard.

“I don’t believe that there are standards that exist within any of your existing ordinances



Carolyn Mason is the new chairwoman of the Sarasota County Commission, while Charles Hines is the new vice chairman. Photo by Norman Schimmel

or resolutions indicating what cause would be,” DeMarsh pointed out.

Moreover, he said, he and his staff had not undertaken legal research to determine standards for such cause.

Still, generally, he said, he thought the commission could make a finding of cause “and it would be upheld.”

If the commission directed him to do so, DeMarsh added, he and his staff would research how such matters are handled in other jurisdictions.

“I would also say I’m coming up on my 21st year in Sarasota County,” DeMarsh pointed out, “and I’ve actually never had this issue arise before. ... One of your potential actions is to say, ‘Well, this has only happened once in 20-some years, so is [a new policy] necessary?’”

Nonetheless, he said, the County Commission had removed people from advisory boards in the past because of poor attendance records.

While he also did not mention Waechter by name, DeMarsh noted Waechter had submitted a letter of resignation and the commission already had instructed staff to fill the positions on the BZA and the TDC.

“I guess I’m glad to hear that this doesn’t come up very often,” Hines said, adding that he just wanted to inquire about whether a process for removal was available.

“Unfortunately, a situation like this will come up in the future,” Hines said, “and I just want-



Robert Waechter/Photo courtesy of Sheriff's Office

ed to see your insight, if there is a process ... that should it not work itself out,” the commission could act.

Hines added, “I don’t know if anyone else thinks we need to look any further.”


No one else offered a comment.

WAECHTER’S LETTER

In his resignation letter, Waechter wrote, “Over the past 35 plus years I have invested thousands of volunteer hours on multiple boards and community organizations. If I had to make a list I doubt I would recall them all.”

He added, “In all of that time, I don’t believe I have ever appeared before the Board of County Commissioners in my own behalf and I do not propose to do so now — despite the apparent willingness to forego due process and the rush to judgment by some in our community.

“Questions have been raised by a few individuals as to whether I should continue my service on two county boards: the Tourist Development Council; and the Board of Zoning Appeals.

“It has always been my intention that when my term on the Airport Authority expires, upon the appointment by the Governor of the new Board, to concurrently resign from the TDC as that appointment was initially predicated on my involvement with the airport as a representative of the tourism industry,” he wrote. 



ON THE STUMP CIRCUIT

“*I understand there have been problems in the community. Starting right now, it is our job as police to put our hand out to you. Please reach out your hand to us.*”

Bernadette DiPino
Police Chief
City of Sarasota

As her introduction drones on, Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino fiddles with her new business cards before speaking to the City Council of Neighborhood Associations. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

SARASOTA'S NEW POLICE CHIEF MAKES THE ROUND AT MEETINGS AS SHE GETS TO KNOW THE RESIDENTS OF HER NEW HOME

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

While she is a third-generation police officer, there is a little bit of politician in Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino. This week she has been on a whirlwind tour of civic organizations while settling in as the city's new chief.

She started the job Jan. 1, and on Saturday, Jan. 5, she was addressing grassroots leaders at the Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations.

"I have three priorities: visibility, to strictly enforce the law and professionalism," she said.

True to the word she gave panelists during the selection process last fall, she handed out new business cards with her cell phone number. "It's not for emergencies. That's 911. This is for telling me stuff you think I need to know," she said. "It's the phone that's in my purse."

The number is 780-2746.

Sporting a uniform tailored for her petite size plus bulletproof vest, she told the neighborhood leaders, "Communication is important to me. I want to be accessible to you. Ultimately, the buck stops with me."

She noted two initiatives under way involving the department. One is a strategy used in High Point, NC, to reduce crime by mass arrests of the city's vilest offenders, with an eye to making the case for their getting hard prison time. "Then we'll show the second-worst [set of offenders] the cases [we have] against

them, and [say], 'All will be forgiven if you go straight,'" she said.

The second initiative forces the department to react to activities of the local branch of the American Civil Liberties Union. "The ACLU is really targeting the SPD," she said.

She brought up the "occupation" of Gillespie Park by the homeless. "We're going to do some things there," she said.

NEXT STOP, NEWTOWN

The following Tuesday, Jan 8, she was at the District One town hall meeting at the Robert L. Taylor Recreation Center in north Sarasota. She started off with a self-deprecating joke. The punch line: "You don't look like a police chief."

Even in uniform with the patent leather utility belt, she looks like a pre-teen dressing in daddy's work clothes. But appearances deceive. She went from rookie to chief in 17 years, and she stayed a chief for a decade longer. A special weapons and tactics team leader, narcotics detective, undercover operator — there is little she has not done with distinction. Many, I am sure, have seriously underestimated Bernadette DiPino.

She started the job in Sarasota even before she was supposed to. While Jan. 1 was to be her first day, on New Year's Eve, she went on patrol. She was one of the first responders to a stabbing downtown, and then she was in Newtown as midnight neared.

"I heard a lot of gunfire," she said. "What's up with that?"

People celebrating Middle East style by discharging firearms in the air, she was told. She noted police officers in the area were taking shelter under concrete eaves to escape the danger of plunging bullets.

"That's unacceptable to me," she said. "We're going to put a stop to that."

Something else she "put a stop to" was the homeless takeover of Gillespie Park.

"Five days ago, I met with Ms. Orlando [a resident of the adjacent neighborhood] about the park," she said. "I put some presence in the



City Manager Tom Barwin introduces Bernadette DiPino (right) as the new Sarasota police chief on Oct. 16 at City Hall. Mayor Suzanne Atwell is at left. Photo by Norman Schimmel

park, and when I drove by while showing my parents the city, it looked like a new park.”

And she repeated her remarks to the CCNA about the High Point strategy. “We deal with the same people over and over,” she said. “We are looking at the most violent offenders in our community.”

Her main point was trust. “I understand there have been problems in the community. Starting right now, it is our job as police to put our hand out to you. Please reach out your hand to us.”

CIVILIAN REVIEW GETS RAVES

The Sarasota News Leader is the only news organization covering the monthly meetings of the city’s Police Complaint Committee. The civilian panel reviews old and cold cases of the Internal Affairs Division of the city’s police force. Florida is one of the very few states to make these investigations public once they are concluded, even if no disciplinary action is required and officers are cleared of misconduct.

In existence a little more than one year, it has had a bumpy ride. Initially, the civilians were concerned, and sometimes appalled, at how little punishment is meted out for bad police behavior. And the police were leery of any airing of their dirty laundry. But time has brought accommodation and even some understanding to both sides.

The public seems never to attend (although the meetings are open and advertised), and nobody comes to complain. But on Wednesday, Jan. 9, Bernadette DiPino showed up to listen. And she happened to come to a meeting when the case of a senior officer was aired.

Police Lt. Steven Breakstone eventually resigned following a series of charges, allegations and investigations.

As the civilians reviewed the old case of “abuse of position,” they learned a senior member of the department had been selling jewelry to other senior members while on duty. And those same senior officers had judged the case as members of the Disciplinary Action Board.


“The chief and captains bought jewelry, and then some sat on the disciplinary board,” said Lt. John LeBlanc, the head of Internal Investigations. “We do not make findings or recommend disciplinary action. That’s up to the chief.”

DiPino sat quietly in the front row of seats, an audience of one. At the end of the meeting, Chairman William Fuller asked if she would like to say a few words.

“I’ve heard about panels like this before. I wasn’t sure what to expect,” she said. “I’m quite impressed with this operation.”

“I feel good you are taking another look. I don’t have an issue continuing with this,” she added. “I have not approved having a disciplinary review board. Ultimately, it is my decision.”

DiPino comes from Ocean City, MD, where the rules are different.

“In Maryland, internal affairs are totally sealed. You wouldn’t even know what the penalty was,” she said. “This is a great open system, and I don’t have a problem with that. Even after the fact, it helps me gauge a citizen’s perspective on what is appropriate or not.” 



STANDING FIRM

The main Paul Rudolph building at Sarasota High School is shown soon after its completion in 1959. Photo courtesy Sarasota History Center

SCHOOL BOARD WILL NOT REVISIT ITS DECISION ON PLANS FOR RENOVATING THE INTERIOR OF A PAUL RUDOLPH BUILDING AT SARASOTA HIGH

By Scott Proffitt

Staff Writer

When three members of the Sarasota Architectural Foundation (SAF), a local nonprofit, spoke before the Sarasota County School Board during its first meeting of 2013, the Foundation members made it plain they were not happy with the board, and a majority of the board members made it clear they were not happy with the SAF members.

At issue was the imminent rehabilitation of one of the Paul Rudolph buildings at Sarasota High School, which is listed on the

National Register of Historic Places. The SAF has been actively involved for a number of years in the board's plans to renovate the building.

During the Jan. 8 School Board meeting, SAF President Janet Minker said, "The exterior elevations of the classroom building No. 4 appear

to meet the requirement for the 'appropriate rehabilitation' stipulation as authored by the Sarasota County School Board in their June 12, 2007 memorandum."

“The interior... has been reduced to a gutted empty shell, devoid of every one of its defining features.”

Janet Minker
President
Sarasota Architectural Foundation



She added, “The interior, on the other hand, has been reduced to a gutted empty shell, devoid of every one of its defining features. Most notable in its absence is the floating walkway that spans much of the building”

“I propose that the glass is half full,” said SAF member Elliot Himelfarb. “We still have an option that can address the stakeholders’ needs while at the same time preserving an irreplaceable architectural gem — specifically, a redesign of Building No. 4’s interior, starting with the objective of retaining the floating walkway and other defining details.”

“Normally we don’t make an answer to citizens speaking at our meetings,” Chairwoman Jane Goodwin told the SAF members following their public comments, “but we are going to make an exception tonight, because we have some School board members that would like to say something.”

The first to speak was board member Shirley Brown. “I voted to work with groups [who wanted to save the original Riverview High School building — also designed by Rudolph], and I voted to give them a chance, and while we tried to preserve the building, I don’t feel



A photo shows a closeup of one exterior feature of architect Paul Rudolph’s Building 4 at Sarasota High School. Image courtesy Sarasota County History Center



World-renowned architect Paul Rudolph designed Building 4 at Sarasota High School. Photo by Norman Schimmel



An architect's rendering released in the spring of 2012 showed a suggested design for part of Building 4's rehabilitated interior. Image courtesy Sarasota County School Board

we made a lot of progress ... and what it ended up doing is costing us more money.”

Brown continued, “Looking back, I feel I made a mistake on that vote. I was surprised at the changes that were made to the design ... but I know that when we try to solve everyone’s problems ... it ends up costing us money and causing other problems down the line. It cost us more money on Riverview because of the delays that we did ... that I voted on.”

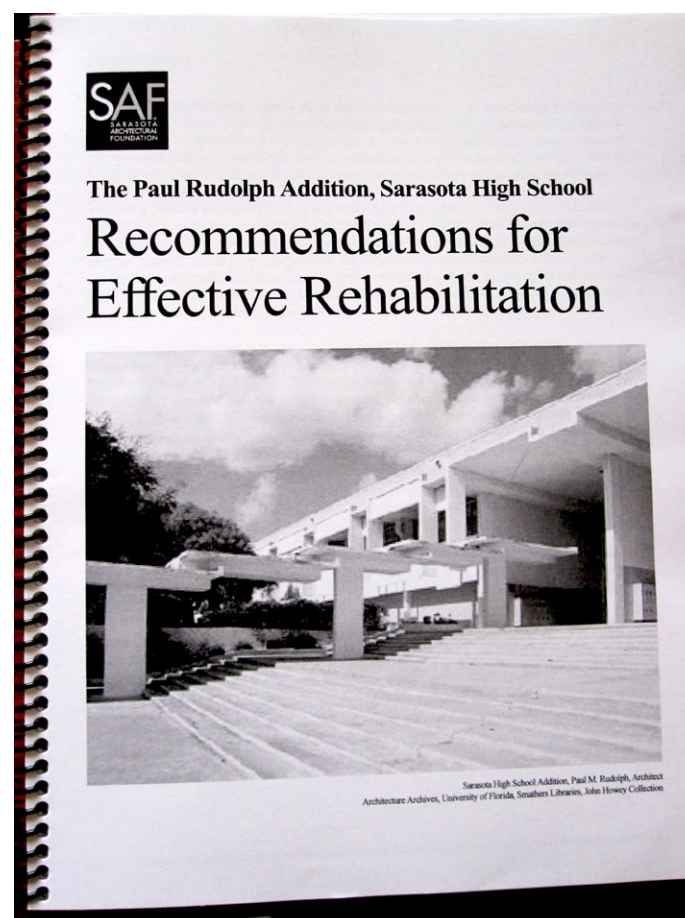
Brown added, “We have these continuing delays now on Sarasota High School. I went out on a limb for you over Riverview. ... I’m not going to do it this time.”

Board member Caroline Zucker continued in the same vein. “While you said that the glass is half full, I would just like to say that the glass is full, because we are keeping the Rudolph Building as it was proposed on the sheets that you all signed off on [following an early June charrette on the project]. We have done nothing different. ... We have worked with you in good faith. We have done exactly what we said we would do. ... We’ve spent an extra \$5 million to make the changes that were required.”

Zucker went on, “It is almost impossible to make everyone happy at this time”

Board member Carol Todd voiced a similar reluctance to revisit the matter: “I just don’t see where this is an issue that is worthy of conversation at this point in time, for me.”

Goodwin added, “I have reviewed with the architects the plans, and the one concern that I have personally was the floating hallway, because of security, and the ability of students to jump down or fall down or drop books down



A Sarasota Architectural Foundation publication addresses the coming renovations at Sarasota High School, focusing on original design work of Paul Rudolph, who was an eminent member of the Sarasota School of Architecture. Photo by Scott Proffitt

is of great concern to me. The thing that I am most concerned with is safety and security.”

Scott Lempe, the school district’s chief operating officer, told the board, “Compare it to Riverview High School. ... We demolished the buildings. At Sarasota High School, we start off by not demolishing the buildings. The Rudolph addition is staying there.”

“The bottom line is they are gutting the interior totally,” Minker told *The Sarasota News Leader* after the board meeting. “There are ways you can address some of the things they are doing. We want to honor some basic details that make [the Rudolph building] so special.”

Goodwin told the *News Leader* the demolition of the interior is expected to begin shortly. 



GUM AND GARBAGE

With season bringing more people to St. Armands, business owners are fretting about how fast garbage fills up cans on the circle. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ST. ARMANDS BUSINESS OWNERS ARE COMPLAINING ABOUT OVERFLOWING TRASH CANS AND CITY OF SARASOTA INATTENTION TO THEIR SIDEWALKS

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Trash is beginning to be a problem on St. Armands Circle. New cans promised by the city government have not appeared, and the old cans are overwhelmed almost every day, business owners say.

The issue came up Tuesday, Jan. 8, at the St. Armands Business Improvement District meeting.

“Every morning by the Starbucks, the trash is overflowing,” said Jackie Fletcher with J-Mar Cleaning Ser-

vices. “The guys on the truck say they pick up every day, but it can’t wait until mid-afternoon.”

Fletcher has a contract with the district to keep the shopping Mecca clean.

“The biggest problem is in front of the restaurants,” said the district’s chairman, Marty

Rappaport. “We’re still trying to get cans from three years ago.”

Todd Kucharski with the City of Sarasota’s Public Works Depart-

“Every morning by the Starbucks, the trash is overflowing.”

Jackie Fletcher
J-Mar Cleaning Services

ment said his pickup crews are servicing every park in the city daily. “We can’t give an exact time for them,” he added.

“Maybe you could put us on the beginning of the run?” asked Rappaport.

“What we’re looking for is a big-belly compactor like the one we put on Main Street at the ice cream shop. It’s a glorified garbage can that compacts [trash],” said Kucharski. “We’re looking to get that ordered.”

“The problem with the trash cans, some of the lids are missing, and some are smashed down,” said Diana Corrigan with the St. Armands Association. “So many of them are in poor repair and need to be replaced.”

Of special interest are the trash cans in the center of the circle. “Even when we don’t have special events, the trash cans in the park are always overflowing,” said Corrigan.

Then Rappaport pulled out his trump card: “I am about ready to go before the [City] Commission and complain about the services we are getting,” he said. “We are doing our part,


but the city is not. Every time we bring it up here, you say you’re going to take care of it, but nothing ever happens.”

GUM PATROL

Chewing gum may be the new cigarette butt, as noted during another discussion at the meeting. Gum discarded on sidewalks is not only a problem for sightseers’ shoe soles, but the blots on the sidewalk seemingly last forever.

“We can remove the gum,” said Fletcher, “but no way we can finish the circle with a razor. The gum has been there so long, and the sidewalks have not been well kept. It will take too much labor.”

“We figured if the city did it twice a year, and Jackie did it in between, that would be sufficient. But in the past couple of years, it’s only been done once [by city workers],” said Rappaport.

“I thought they would do it before the holidays, but it didn’t happen,” said Mary Tucker, the city’s purchasing director, of city staff. 





TRIAL AND COMPLAINT

A vehicle driven by an allegedly drunken driver struck runner Donna L. Chen on Siesta Key in the curve near St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church on Jan. 7, 2012. File photo

TRIAL DATE SET IN CRIMINAL CASE INVOLVING RUNNER'S DEATH ON SIESTA KEY IN JANUARY 2012 AS HER FAMILY BRINGS A NEGLIGENCE SUIT AGAINST THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The driver of the car that struck and killed a Siesta Key runner on Jan. 7, 2012 is expected to go on trial Sept. 9 on criminal charges stemming from the incident, Assistant State Attorney Amanda Gambert told *The Sarasota News Leader* in an email this week.

Because both she and Blake C. Talman's defense attorney had a number of trials already scheduled this year, Gambert wrote in an earlier email, she had not expected a date could be set before late summer.

In the meantime, the Sarasota County Attorney's Office is preparing an answer to a com-

plaint filed by the woman's family against the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office 12 days before the first anniversary of her death. The complaint seeks \$15,000 in damages.

Wellington C. Chen, husband of Donna L. Chen, who was 53 when she died last year, says in the complaint that Talman, whose 2000 Nissan Altima struck his wife on Midnight Pass Road, "was clearly intoxicated and had an open bottle of liquor in one hand and his car keys in his other hand" when deputies stopped him on Siesta Public Beach earlier the same day.

“At the time of the detention and/or questioning of [driver] Blake C. Talman” — who was a 22-year-old Bradenton resident at the time — the deputies “instructed Mr. Talman that he must leave [the beach] or he would be arrested,” the complaint continues. “By instructing Mr. Talman to leave while [he was] clearly intoxicated and with his car keys in his hand,” it says, deputies “knew, or through the exercise of reasonable care, should have known that Mr. Talman would proceed to his car in the nearby parking lot and drive away from the beach.”

The complaint adds, “In fact, after being instructed to leave the beach or be arrested, Mr. Talman walked to the parking lot, got into his car and drove away from the beach traveling on Midnight Pass Road.”

The complaint points out Donna Chen had two surviving minor children who “suffered lost parental companionship, instruction and guidance and mental pain and suffering from the date of injury,” while Wellington Chen “has suffered loss of the decedent’s companionship and protection and mental pain and suffering,” and he incurred medical and funeral expenses.

The attorney representing the family is Damian B. Mallard of the Mallard Law Firm in Sarasota.

As required by law, Mallard filed notice on April 25, 2012 of his intent to bring suit against the Sheriff’s Office. State law says a sheriff or sheriff’s office must have six months’ notice prior to being sued.

The Sheriff’s Office issued a statement after the complaint was filed on Dec. 27, saying, “It is Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office policy not to comment on pending litigation.”

SHERIFF’S OFFICE REPORTS

In response to questions from this reporter in January 2012, Wendy Rose, community affairs manager for the Sheriff’s Office, reported that on Jan. 7, 2012, deputies had conversations on three separate occasions with Talman and his companion, David J. Brewer, who was 24. Brewer was a passenger in the vehicle at the time it struck Chen, according to the Florida Highway Patrol report.

Deputies first encountered the two men with a third person, Michael E. Blakey of North Port, then 26, Rose said. When deputies ran checks for outstanding warrants on all three men after the first encounter, she added, the checks did not turn up anything. Sheriff’s Office research into Talman’s criminal history after Chen’s death showed he had a record of six felony and 23 misdemeanor charges, while



Blake Talman was treated at Sarasota Memorial Hospital after his arrest on Jan. 7, 2012. Photo courtesy Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office

Brewer had a record of four felony and 11 misdemeanor arrests.

Prior to the Chen incident, Sarasota County Clerk of Court records showed, Talman's most recent arrest had been in April 2011 for driving while his license was suspended.

Additionally, Rose wrote this reporter on Jan. 10, 2012, "When David Brewer first encountered our deputies, he called one of them by name and said the deputy had recently arrested him at [the] North Shell Road beach access for having an open container and remarked that he spent 24 days in jail because of it and didn't want trouble."

Deputies did end up arresting Blakey on a charge of Disorderly Intoxication, because he was being rude, Rose said. However, neither Talman nor Brewer displayed rude behavior, she pointed out in January 2012. Therefore, she said, deputies had no grounds to arrest them.

After the last encounter the deputies had with the two men, Rose said, the deputies watched Talman and Brewer walk toward the beach.

Sheriff's Office records show Blakey was arrested about 12:30 p.m. on Jan. 7. The High-


way Patrol report says Donna Chen was killed about 1:10 p.m.

Wellington Chen's complaint says that because of the Sheriff's Office's interactions with Talman, "a dangerous situation was created; to wit, a severely intoxicated person driving on the roads near Siesta Key beach, which dangerous situation did not exist prior to [the deputies'] interaction with Mr. Talman."

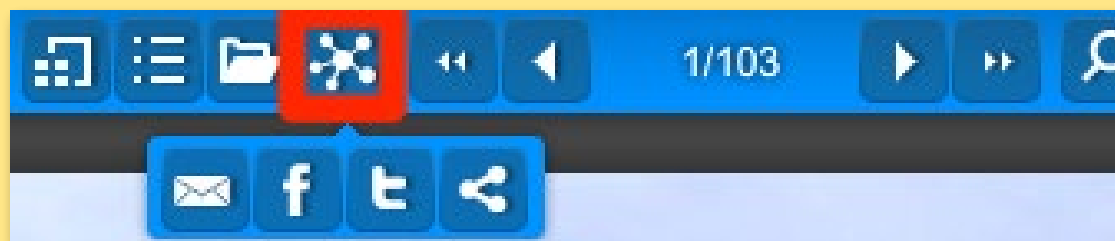
TALMAN OUT ON BOND


Talman, who was charged with DUI manslaughter, vehicular homicide, leaving the scene of an accident (a charge related to an incident prior to his vehicle's striking Chen) and DUI property damage, was released on \$118,000 bond on June 20.

He was ordered to remain under house arrest with a GPS system that allows law enforcement officers to track his location at all times. He also was ordered not to consume alcohol or use drugs.

Beyond those measures, Talman was ordered to wear a SCRAM device, which measures the amount of alcohol in a person's respiration, according to law enforcement officials. The tamper-resistant equipment fits around a defendant's ankle. 

QUICK TIP



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A TOE IN THE WATER

*Sarasota city parking officials still are trying to remedy parking problems on St. Armands Key.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

VISITORS' PARKING PASSES TRIAL RUN UNDER WAY ALONG SOUTH WASHINGTON DRIVE ON ST. ARMANDS KEY

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Big-city residents know them well — the little windshield stickers that say, “Resident,” and exempt the car from tickets for violating time restrictions.

Sarasota is sticking a little toe in that water for visitors along St. Armands’ South Washington Drive.

Parking Manager Mark Lyons told the Downtown Improvement District on Jan. 8 that he is testing the idea of a visitors’ sticker at the Kingston Arms Apartment Complex on St. Armands Key.

Kingston residents were hit hard when the City of Sarasota instituted uniform regulations for parking, because their guests could not escape parking tickets under the new regime. “It’s an impossible situation,” Jim Morrison, a resident of the complex, said in late October.

Although the city dropped its one-size-fits-all parking regulations, Kingston was still in a

bind. Situated on South Washington Drive, its parking area is often swamped by employees of St. Armands’ businesses.

“We’ve been testing for the last month or so,” Lyons said. The visitor passes allow cars to remain without tickets.

The venture is the first attempt by the city to use parking passes for specific groups. The drivers could be visitors, residents or workers in a specific area.

Lyons says, “We’ve been on a rollercoaster ride over parking for the past 18 months.”

The ride is not over. DID member Tom Man-nausa said he had seen, while walking around lower Main Street, “visitors didn’t know its three hours.”

“Just to clarify: It’s two hours downtown,” said Lyons of the current parking time limit. 



Registered Sarasota voters will cast their ballots for two city commissioners during the March 12 election. Photo from Americanspirit | Dreamstime

QUALIFYING PERIOD UNDER WAY FOR CITY COMMISSION CANDIDATES

The candidate qualifying period for the two at-large seats on the Sarasota City Commission began Jan. 7 and will continue through noon Friday, Jan. 11, the city has announced.

Candidates, including those who pre-qualified, must qualify during the specified time frame to have their names placed on the ballot for the Tuesday, March 12, election, a city news release says.

To qualify each person must do the following:

- Provide a petition with 25 signatures of registered voters within the city limits.
- Open a campaign account and appoint a treasurer.
- Sign a loyalty oath.

- Provide a financial disclosure statement.
- Submit a \$249.83 election assessment fee or file an affidavit of “undue burden.”

Early voting for the election will be held Saturday, March 2, through Saturday, March 9, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

If a runoff is required, it will take place on Tuesday, May 14, the news release says. Early voting would be held Saturday, May 4, through Saturday, May 11, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

All early voting will take place at the Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections office, 101 S. Washington Blvd.

For more information on early voting, call 861-8600 or visit www.SarasotaVotes.com.

NEW BUS DEPOT EXPECTED TO SAVE MONEY FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT

Sarasota County School Board Attorney Art Hardy reported to the board members at their Jan. 8 meeting that the North Port City Commission gave final approval Dec. 10 to the district's plans for a new school bus depot in that municipality.

Hardy appeared before the City Commission prior to the vote, he said, adding that he was able to overcome City of North Port concerns about loss of property taxes for the parcel where the facility will stand as well as questions about the responsibility for upkeep of the private roads that will lead to the depot.

The depot will be built on land owned by the school district. It is expected to be completed by the start of the next school year, according to staff reports.

Superintendent Lori White told the board, "We know that if we can reduce the windshield time and the distance our buses need to travel, we save on fuel and time, which converts to money, so this is something that will be convenient for the bus drivers that are providing transportation for North Port, but it will be also a money-saver."

Ken Marsh, director of long-range planning for the district, told *The Sarasota News Leader*, "It's a big deal because we'll be saving considerable operating dollars. It's all ready to go for August or shortly thereafter. The facility will handle 75 buses, two bays and a mechanic."

The bus depot will sit on 8 acres of a 50-acre parcel near Price Boulevard and Toledo Blade Boulevard.

Scott Proffitt

NATIONAL MENTORING MONTH BEING OBSERVED IN SARASOTA

President Barack Obama and retired Gen. Colin Powell are diligently promoting National Mentoring Month, as is the Harvard School of Public Health, Sarasota County School Board members heard during their regular meeting on Jan. 8.

The program has national as well as local import, and best of all it has nothing to do with the fiscal cliff.

The School Board on Jan. 8, issued a proclamation in support of National Mentoring Month and declared January Mentoring Month in Sarasota County.

The board also recognized several organizations in the community that actively train and recruit mentors, including Big Brothers and Big Sisters of the Suncoast, Jewish Family and

Community Services, Girls Inc. of Sarasota County and the YMCA. Kathy Chamberlain, director of the Sarasota Family YMCA's Mentor Program, told the board, "This is one of the most important programs we do."

"Our school district has over 500 mentors in our schools," said Tanice Knopp, coordinator of the Partnership and Alliances Linking Schools (PALS) program in the district.

Her office is actively involved in the mentoring program in Sarasota County.

Anyone who has as little as one hour a month to offer to children may contact any of the above organizations or the PALS office, palsoffice@sarasota.k12.fl.us. To reach Knopp, call 927-9000, Ext. 31500.

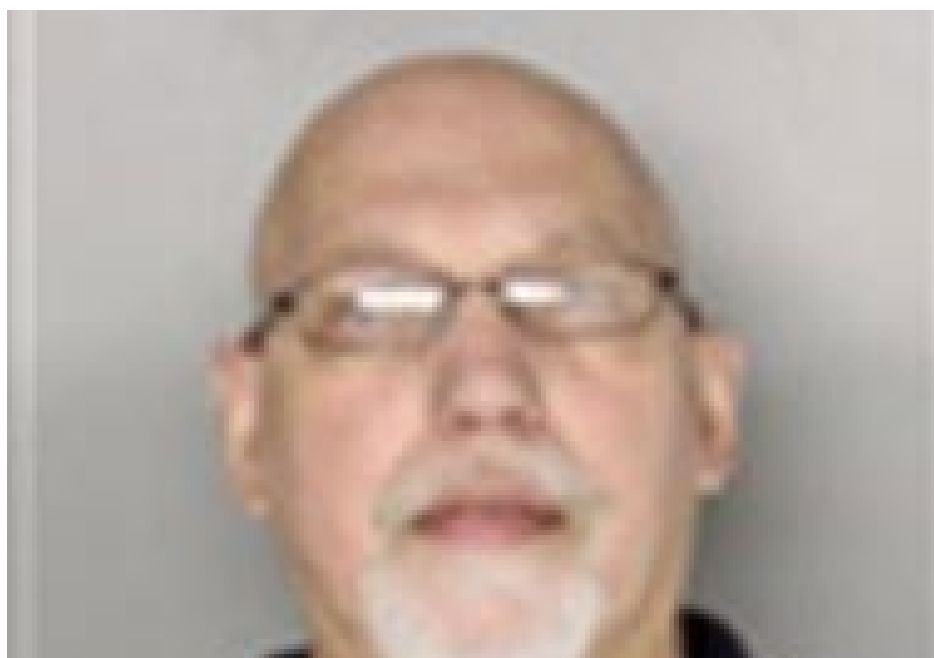
Scott Proffitt

FUGITIVE CAPTURED AFTER 24 YEARS ON THE RUN

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Fugitive Apprehension Unit, working in conjunction with the U.S. Marshals Florida Regional Fugitive Task Force, has located a sex offender who has been on the run for 24 years, the Sheriff's Office announced this week.

Richard Verboys, 60, was convicted in Sarasota County of Lewd and Lascivious Battery on a Child for sexually assaulting a 7-year-old girl, a Sheriff's Office report says. In 1988, he was sentenced to probation and court-ordered mental health counseling, but he fled the area a short time later, the report adds.

The Fugitive Apprehension Unit developed leads on his whereabouts and forwarded them to the U.S. Marshal Service Middle District of Pennsylvania Task Force, the report notes.



Richard Verboys/Contributed

The Marshal Service took him into custody Jan. 8 in Scranton.

Verboys was to be booked into the Lackawanna County Jail, where he would await extradition to Florida, the report adds.

TOOLS STOLEN FROM GOODWILL MANASOTA TRUCKS

Tools worth more than \$5,000 were reported stolen Jan. 8 from three Goodwill Industries Manasota maintenance trucks parked in the organization's facilities parking lot in Sarasota, Goodwill reported.

According to a Sarasota police report, the thieves cut through the parking lot fence, broke into each truck and helped themselves to the hand tools, a Goodwill news release says.

"We are a service-based industry and the shameful theft of these tools hits us hard. But it also strikes at the community we serve," said Bob Rosinsky, president of Goodwill Manasota, in the release. The organization's bottom line was more than just the cost of the tools, he added in the release. "We're all victims of this crime. These thieves are prey-

ing on the good will of the Sarasota-Manatee community by stealing from a nonprofit that helps thousands of disadvantaged people in our community."

Rosinsky continued in the release, "Unfortunately the tools that were stolen from our vehicles are not covered under insurance. We are looking at an increase in budget of more than \$5,000 to replenish the tools and repair the trucks. This was an unconscionable act."

Rosinsky said this is an "excellent time for the community to step up and show its goodwill. Your donations can undo the harm that this has caused."

For information about donating to Goodwill Manasota, call 355-2721 or visit www.ExperienceGoodwill.org.

BEGINNERS BOOT CAMP OFFERED AT VENICE COMMUNITY CENTER

The holidays are done, the relatives are gone and the decorations are put away until next season. If losing weight and getting in shape are among your resolutions for the New Year, the Venice Community Center (VCC), located at 326 South Nokomis Ave., “has the perfect program to help you achieve your goal,” a county news release says.

“Beginners Boot Camp is a fun way to lose those extra pounds you gained eating all those holiday treats,” the release adds.

“Let’s face it: The gym is not for everyone and some people don’t go because they are self-conscious,” said VCC Program Coordinator Dorian Mattox in the release. “These fun classes focus on a low-impact workout without peer pressure and are taught by a certified clinical exercise specialist.”

Basic Training: Beginners Boot Camp classes will be held over eight weeks; they began Jan. 8. All ages are welcome, including seniors. Classes are held both inside the VCC and, weather permitting, outside, the release notes.

Participants in the class can expect to increase muscle tone and definition; increase strength and endurance for recreational or everyday activities; increase energy and alertness; renew their self-confidence; and lower cholesterol, triglycerides, blood pressure and blood sugar levels, the release points out.

Registration is available online at www.sarasotabootcamp.com or by calling the Venice Community Center at 861-1380.

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

REGISTER NOW FOR THE 24TH ANNUAL GULF COAST SENIOR GAMES

Senior athletes from across the state will descend on the Gulf Coast Feb. 19-24 to compete in the 24th Annual Gulf Coast Senior Games, the county has announced.

The Gulf Coast Senior Games are held each year to promote health and wellness and to enhance the quality of life for Sarasota and Manatee counties’ mature population, a county news release says.

Among the events offered this year will be archery, basketball shooting, track and field, bocce, bowling, cribbage, table tennis, cycling, golf, horseshoes, pickleball, racquetball, running, shuffleboard, swimming and tennis. For a complete listing of events and times, visit www.scgov.net/parksandrecreation.

The deadline for registration for active adults age 50 and older is Feb. 1. The games are held

at venues throughout Sarasota and Manatee counties. Participants may register online at www.mymanatee.org/parks or download and fill out the official entry form and mail it to Gulf Coast Senior Games, 5502 33rd Avenue Drive W., Bradenton, FL 34209.

The entry fee of \$12 entitles each participant to an event T-shirt, the release says. An additional fee of \$3 is charged per participant per event. Some events have an additional facility fee, the release adds.

The Gulf Coast Senior Games is a local qualifier for the 2013 Florida Senior Games State Championships to be held in Polk County Dec. 7-15, the release points out.

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

OPEN HOUSES PLANNED ON DRAFT BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLAN

Sarasota County has scheduled three open-house-style meetings this month on its draft Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, the county has announced.

Each is designed to allow the public to view the plan and maps identifying existing facilities and high-priority areas for improvements, a county news release says.

Participants also will be able to ask questions and provide comments.

The first meeting was held Jan. 9. Others will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. at the following dates and locations:

- Monday, Jan. 14, Laurel Community Center, 509 Collins Road, Nokomis.
- Tuesday, Jan. 15, Venice Train Depot, 303 E. Venice Ave., Venice.

Dates and locations for north county meetings on the plan will be announced as well, the release notes.

“The draft Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan identifies a vision, mission and purpose for a bicycle and pedestrian network and provides a framework to promote and encourage safe and efficient bicycle and pedestrian travel within Sarasota County,” the release adds.

“It recognizes key partnerships and ongoing efforts to

increase the safety and education of bicyclists and pedestrians,” the release notes. “It includes facility design types and graphics, points out existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities and recommended connections, and identifies opportunities and deficiencies in the network for improvements,” the release adds. “The plan is an essential tool for the county to use when applying for grant funds from state, federal and nonprofit organizations.”

In addition to the open houses, the county has extended through Feb. 28 the opportunity for public input and comments on the draft plan via the county’s wiki site. A link to the wiki may be found online at the Sarasota County website, www.scgov.net, with the keyword “Pedestrian.”

After submitting a valid email address and agreeing to follow the civility code, users will be sent a password for this citizen feedback tool via email, the release points out.

Once the wiki has been closed and the open houses have been held, county staff will prepare a report summarizing the public feed-

back and present it and the draft plan to the County Commission this spring, the release says.

For additional information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 or email bikeped-plan@scgov.net.



A photo from the Sarasota County draft Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan shows a bike lane on a new section of county road. Image courtesy Sarasota County

TOURISM OFFICE INVITING PARTICIPATION ON STRATEGIC PLAN

Visit Sarasota County, the marketing arm for Sarasota County as a tourism destination, is inviting members of the public to join its staff at planning sessions that will be led by its strategic planning consultant, Bill Geist.

The process has been designed to gather information to aid in building the county's tourism plan for the next five years, a Visit Sarasota County news release says.

"We look to those most invested in our community to tell us what [are the] needs ... that can influence tourism in this region," the release adds.



Three sessions will be held around the county, to encourage participation:

- Wednesday, Jan. 16, 4 p.m., south Sarasota County.
- Thursday, Jan. 17, 8:30 a.m., mid-county.
- Friday, Jan. 18, 8:30 a.m., north county.

For meeting site details and other information, or to RSVP, contact Janis Holland at jholland@visitsarasota.org.

NEW COLLEGE WINS TOP TEN RANKING FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL SUCCESS

New College of Florida ranks ninth in the United States for the percentage of students who go on to graduate programs within a year of graduation, according to U.S. News & World Report, the college has announced.

U.S. News published the rankings online Jan. 2 in its ongoing series, *The Short List*, which explores the data collected for its annual Best Colleges issue, a New College news release says.

"It is increasingly clear that navigating and contributing to our ever more complex society requires not only a rigorous baccalaureate degree but further specialized study," said New College of Florida President Donal O'Shea in the release. "It is gratifying to see New College and its students leading the nation in recognizing this reality and the value of gaining immediate entry to graduate study."

On average, 27 percent of college graduates across the country pursue advanced degrees

within a year of graduation, the release notes. At New College, however, the rate is 55 percent, or double the national average, the release points out.

That placed New College on U.S. News' short list of *Top 10 Colleges That Lead to Grad School* — in a three-way tie for ninth place, the release says. The study looked at 377 colleges that provided data on alumni graduate school placement.

According to U.S. News & World Report, graduate school admission is significant because it improves students' career prospects, the release points out. Citing a 2012 study by Georgetown University, the magazine found that people with advanced degrees earn more money and experience lower unemployment rates throughout their careers.

View the U.S. News & World Report article and complete list at [this link](#).

SARASOTA MAN CHARGED IN STRING OF BURGLARIES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office arrested David Lewis, 25, of 6784 Jarvis Road, Sarasota, on Jan. 9 in connection with a string of crimes allegedly committed from Dec. 23 to Jan. 7, the office has announced.

Deputies investigating nine vehicle burglaries, primarily west of Interstate 75 in an area bordered by Sawyer, Bee Ridge and Proctor roads, identified Lewis as the suspect from a Walmart surveillance photo showing him use credit cards allegedly stolen in one of the crimes, a Sheriff's Office report says.

While deputies were searching for Lewis, the report says, his father showed them items Lewis had brought into the home, including two GPS units, a laptop computer, camera, cell phone, iPod and prepaid credit card — all identified as property stolen in the recent burglaries, the release points out.

Lewis was charged with one count of Fraudulent Use of a Credit Card, one count of Larceny and nine counts of Burglary. He was being held on \$46,120 bond. He has previously been arrested for burglary, drug possession and check fraud, the report notes.



David Lewis/Photo courtesy Sheriff's Office

All nine of the vehicles that he allegedly burglarized were unlocked, the report adds. "This is a crime of opportunity so citizens should take the extra step to protect themselves and lock their vehicles at all times," the release points out. **SNL**



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OPINION



SIESTA BEACH: AMERICA'S NO. 1 ASHTRAY?

EDITORIAL

Who knew that the City of Sarasota's full-court press against the homeless would result in Siesta Beach, last year's No. 1 Beach in America, becoming potentially a giant repository for thousands and thousands of carcinogenic cigarette butts? Apparently, that is exactly what has happened.

The city's ordinance, passed in June 2011, forbade tobacco use outdoors in city parks. It was widely recognized as a further attempt to make those parks less attractive to the homeless who gathered there.

But on Dec. 10, 2012, a judge in the 12th Judicial Circuit Court in

Sarasota ruled that the ordinance overstepped the city's authority, as the state had reserved to itself sole control of smoking regulation under the Clean Indoor Air Act, which took effect in 2003. As a consequence, all local regulation of smoking by municipal and county governments in Florida was invalidated.

Included in that sweeping change was Siesta Key Public Beach, on which the county banned smoking several years ago. Those flouting the ban were subject to a \$100 fine. But no more.

“*The smoking ban on Siesta Beach was a significant factor in catapulting it from a perennial Top Five ranking to the No. 1 spot.*”

Now beachgoers will be encouraged not to smoke, but they will be told they are free to do so if they wish, without fear of fines.

OPINION

Sadly, one of the criteria employed by Dr. Stephen P. Leatherman of Florida International University — aka Dr. Beach — in compiling his annual list of the top beaches in America, is whether smoking is allowed on the beaches being evaluated. The smoking ban on Siesta Beach, he reportedly has said, was a significant factor in catapulting it from a perennial Top Five ranking to the No. 1 spot.

The county is powerless to appeal the judge's decision unless the city appeals first. And the city attorney has indicated it is unlikely the city will do so. The only other recourse is to have the Florida Legislature amend the state law to provide local governments with more latitude in regulating smoking in public areas, as it did for local school districts in 2011. That, sadly, is a scant hope.

The state Legislature has distinguished itself in recent years as a body controlled almost entirely by lobbyists, particularly since term limits for legislators went into effect. And there are few lobbies more powerful than the tobacco lobby. It already has been suspected

of being behind the effort to limit the state law on smoking regulations from providing too much power to local governments.

In fact, a bill to allow local government regulation was introduced in the Florida Senate last year and passed the Health Regulation Committee unanimously. That likely alarmed the tobacco lobby, which went to work against the bill, ensuring its subsequent demise in the Community Affairs Committee.

Hectoring the Legislature to do the right thing might be an exercise in Sisyphean futility, but we are not excused from the effort. Local governments and citizens in Sarasota and across Florida must unite to bring pressure to bear on legislators to either ban smoking in all public spaces or extend to local governments the authority to do so.

Otherwise that pleasing crunch-crunch feeling when one walks barefoot on Siesta Beach will not be caused by almost pure crystalline quartz. It will be caused by thousands of discarded, disease-ridden cellulose butts.

Someone you know needs Planned Parenthood

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- Parent & teen education
- Annual GYN exams
- Birth control



OPINION

OBSERVATIONS OFFERED ON THE MUGWUMPS' TEA PARTY



By David Staats
Columnist

COMMENTARY

On Dec. 28,
Washington Post

political reporter Chris Cillizza wrote that the overall dismal performance of Tea Party-backed candidates in the 2012 elections “epitomized the tea party’s deep decline.” Other columnists writing in other newspapers made the same observation. They were right, of course.

Grassroots political movements are typically short-lived. They burn hot, and then they burn out. Like Shelley’s *Ozymandias*, they survive as historical footnotes, if at all.

Consider the Mugwumps. During the presidential election of 1884, a stampede of Republicans deserted GOP candidate James G. Blaine and threw their support to Democrat Grover Cleveland. They did so in the belief that Cleveland was a committed supporter of *good government* (a “goo goo” or “goody goody” in the parlance of the time), especially with respect to reform of the “spoils system” that allowed the incumbent party to repay its loyalists with government jobs whether or not the party loyalists were qualified to hold them.

The editor of the *New York Sun*, Charles A. Dana, called the GOP deserters “Mugwumps,” a distortion of an Algonquin title that might today be colloquially translated as “big shots.”

Today they might be called “country club Republicans.”

In the pages of his paper, Dana castigated the Mugwumps as hypocritical moralizers, wholly unfit for government service. Still, the party schism helped the Republicans lose the vote in New York State, which, in turn, cost Blaine the White House.

Blaine’s Mugwump electoral troubles were exacerbated by the remarks of an impassioned amateur. Days before the election, the Rev. Samuel D. Burchard, a Presbyterian minister, delivered a speech to a Republican rally in New York City. Blaine was in the audience.

“We are Republicans,” Burchard said, “and don’t propose to leave our party and identify ourselves with the party whose antecedents have been rum, Romanism, and rebellion. We are loyal to our flag.”

For several days thereafter, Blaine did nothing to disassociate himself from Burchard’s speech, a point upon which the Democrats immediately seized.

Burchard’s denigrating reference to “Romanism” was highly offensive to many Catholics, especially the recently enfranchised Irish and Italian immigrants. Some Irish voters also objected to the word “rum” as a possible slur: the stereotypical drunken Irishman. They

OPINION

expressed their unhappiness by voting overwhelmingly for Cleveland.

Blaine, whose mother was Irish and whose sisters had been raised Catholics, had expected to win the Catholic vote in New York City. Blaine's slowness to distance himself from Burchard made sure that did not happen.

With Blaine's defeat, the Mugwumps faded into predictable oblivion. Some joined the Democratic Party while others became Independents. Within a decade the Mugwumps had been largely forgotten.

More than a century and a quarter later, a number of Republicans and Independents coalesced in 2010 around conservative candidates for public office. These "Tea Party" grassroots activists were angry at, and energized by, what they perceived as the gross excesses of the Obama Administration and the Democratic-dominated House and Senate, including ever-climbing unemployment, hundreds of billions of dollars wasted on stimulating a non-responsive economy, soaring national debt and Obamacare.

The Tea Party movement did exceptionally well in the midterm elections. Republicans took control of the House of Representatives and increased their numbers in the Senate. Marco Rubio (R-FL) was one beneficiary. In some states new Republican governors took office and state legislatures reflected a more conservative bias. President Obama described the 2010 election results as a "shellacking" of his party.

Two years later, the Tea Party's shellacking of the Democrats was not repeated. The president was re-elected, defeating a seemingly distracted candidate who at times appeared not to have the stomach for the campaign. Worse, Mitt Romney had allowed himself to be defined by the Democrats as a rich man insulated by his vast wealth from the issues of importance to the average voter for whom he had no empathy. His slowness to counter those charges, and his stalling on releasing his income tax returns, simply added credibility to his portrayal by the Democrats.

In the 1960 presidential campaign, candidate John F. Kennedy had faced a similar challenge. He defused it quickly and with casual aplomb. It was suggested that the Kennedy family fortune was being spent buying votes. At a press conference, JFK read to reporters a message purportedly sent him by his father: "Dear Jack: Don't buy another vote. I'll be damned if I'll pay for a landslide."

Romney's tepid campaign was not helped by the fact that two Tea Party-endorsed candidates for the U.S. Senate made comments that offended many women. One struggled to define "legitimate rape"; the other pronounced that pregnancy as the result of rape "is something that God intended." Women voters flocked to the Democrats, whose party's charge that Republicans were "waging war on women" found considerable traction.

By 2012, the Tea Party had lost much of its original cohesion. Charles Krauthammer wrote in September 2010, that the Tea Party was "spontaneous and anarchic with no rec-

OPINION

ognized leadership or discernible organization.” How do you herd cats? You don’t.

Having achieved their 2010 goals, Tea Party activists wandered into the political sunset down the same road taken by their kindred predecessors: the Mugwumps, Teddy Roosevelt’s Bull Moose Party, Charles Lindberg’s America First and Strom Thurmond’s Dixiecrats — as well as by the more recent spoiler presidential campaigns of George Wallace, Ralph Nader and Ross Perot.

George Washington Plunkitt (1842-1924), a New York politician, sachem of the Tammany Hall political machine and skilled practitioner of the art of “honest graft,” understood better than most the inability of reform movements to sustain themselves and their works over time.

“The fact is,” Plunkitt said, “a reformer can’t last in politics. He can make a show for a while, but he always comes down like a rocket. Politics is as much a regular business as the grocery or dry-good or the drug business.

You got to be trained up to it or you’re sure to fail. Suppose a man who knew nothing about the grocery trade suddenly went into the business and tried to conduct it according to his own ideas? Wouldn’t he make a mess of it? He might make a splurge of it, as long as his money lasted, but his store would soon be empty. It’s just the same with a reformer. He hasn’t been brought up in the difficult business of politics and he makes a mess of it every time.” (William L. Riorden, *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall*, 1905. Reprint, New York: Signet Classics, 1963)

In his sonnet, Shelley wrote of finding in a desolate, sand-swept desert a crumbled statue of an ancient king. The inscription on the plinth read, “My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look upon my works, ye Mighty, and despair!”

Surrounded only by waste and decay, his works and memorial had long since been buried under the sand and forgotten, together with the name “Ozymandias” ... and that of “Mugwumps” and soon that of “Tea Party” as well.

““The hardest thing in life is to know which bridge to cross and which to burn.” — *David Russell*


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Valentine's Day 2013
February 14

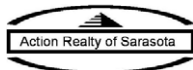
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A SIX-PACK INSPIRATION



Canyon Ranch in Miami boasts luxurious rooms. All photos contributed

A RESORT VACATION CAN BE JUST THE ANSWER TO WORRIES ABOUT A SLOWING METABOLISM AND THE NEED TO BE MORE HEALTH-CONSCIOUS

By Matt Orr

Contributing Writer

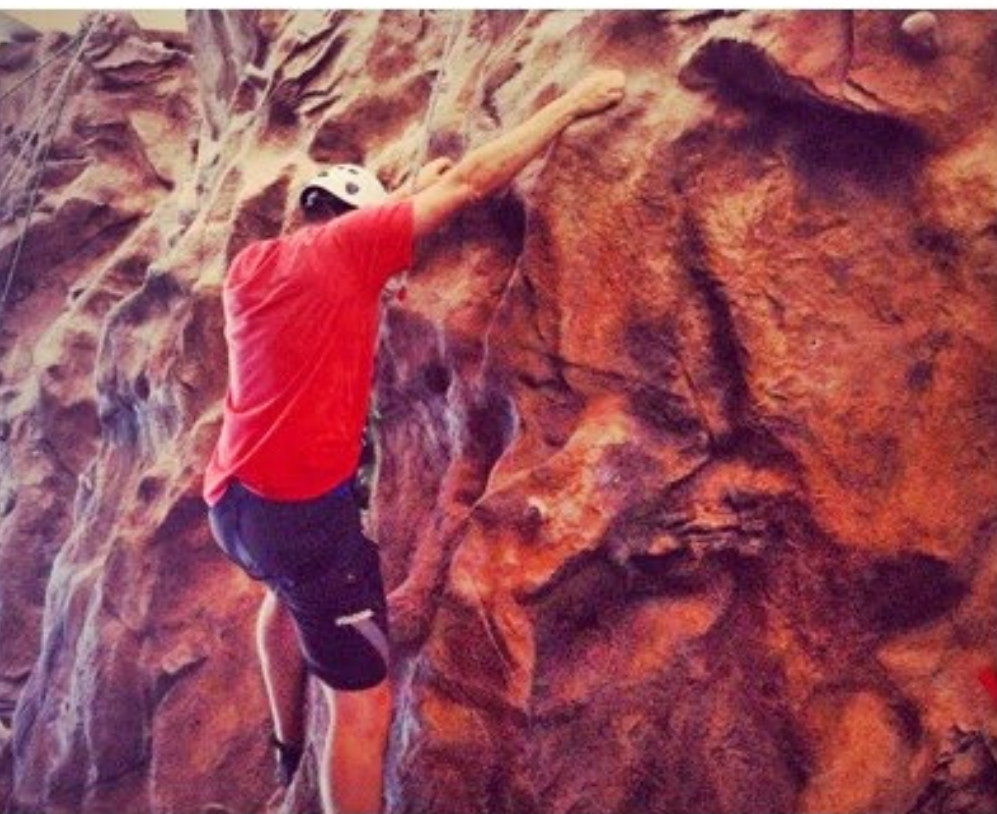
I have never had a six-pack, which sort of means I fail at being gay.

I have done all the things our instruction books tell us — low-carb diet, plenty of exercise, drinking lots of fresh water and circuit parties — but even in my 20s, I could not seem to get the abs.

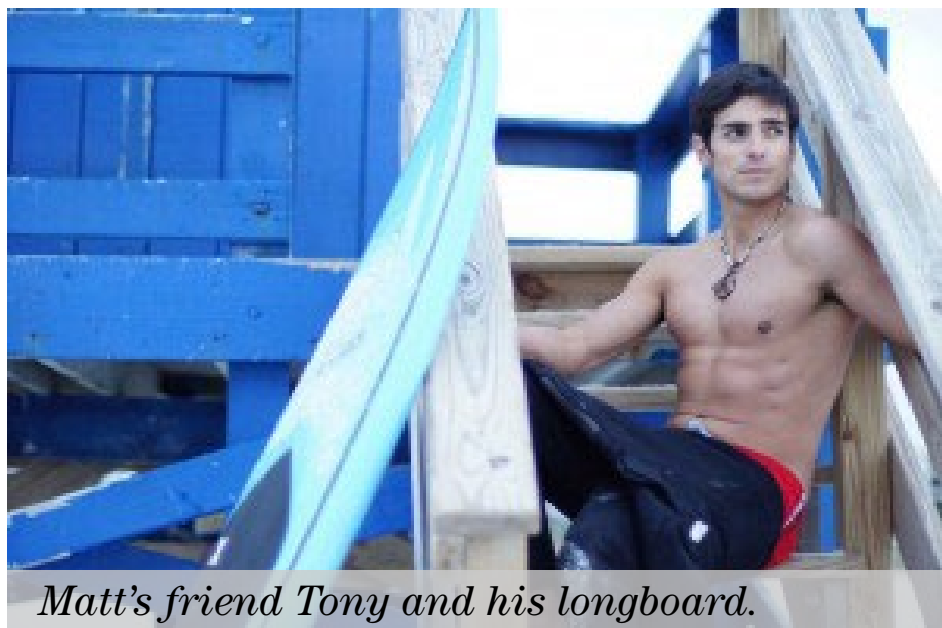
Trainer after trainer has given me the same dumb advice, such as “Just take a short break from wine,” “You can’t eat pizza every night and expect to get a flat belly” and “Matt, if you are paying me, I need you to actually attempt the sit-ups and not just lay there and pretend you can’t hear me.”

In my 20s, I could sport an easy four-pack by simply following a diet plan of breathing air and eating anything in front of my face. However, all that has ended. The days of shirtless circuit parties are a faded memory, and the thought of staying up past midnight on a regular basis is completely out of the question.

A few weeks ago I was paddleboarding with my Brazilian friend, Tony, who is in his 20s. He droned on and on about gaining a little weight in the belly. Although Tony is straight, I still had to use Jedi mind control when he was around to keep my arms from spontaneously streaking through the air and wrapping themselves around his torso.



Matt Orr works off some calories on the rock-climbing wall with the help of Canyon Ranch staff.



Matt's friend Tony and his longboard.

As Tony babbled on and on about his non-issue, I could not take my eyes off his perfect body. I thought back to times in my life when I was like him and I ignored the metabolism warnings of my elders. Where did time go? Where did my body go? Could I regain my higher rate of metabolism? My thoughts were interrupted by Tony's stern voice, "Matt, my eyes are up here," and we paddled home.

Aging is a problem. I am too young for surgery and too old to be boyish. Being a good Southern guy, I find the best approach to any problem regarding age is to simply run away and not talk about it. Therefore, I called my "therapists" at Admiral Travel, who readily listened to my desire to reverse the effects of time. After careful consideration and a little wine, I was prescribed a five-day trip to Canyon Ranch Health Spa in Miami.

'THE PRESCRIPTION'

Canyon Ranch is like Glenda the Good Witch for your inner Dorothy. It is a health resort located on South Beach, and it is designed to help you become exactly what you want to be, inside and out, utilizing fitness, fresh, unprocessed food and trainers.

Three weeks before my visit, I got a call from Canyon Ranch to discuss my fitness goals.

"I want a stomach so tight you could play quarters off of it," I told the fitness guru on the line as I finished leftover pumpkin pie from Christmas. He hesitated and asked my current dimensions. I told him and he kindly responded, "Losing that much weight in five days would be dangerous to your health, but we will put you on a track to a lifestyle to eventually get you there. Review the booklet of classes, menus and property info, and we will take great care of you."

Little did this man know, but I happen to have a Ph.D. in spas and food. I know my stuff, so I was out to explore.

Canyon Ranch is super nice, and the staff does a terrific job of setting the grand stage as you enter the lobby, affecting the attitude, "You will never feel fancier while sweating."

You do not just walk to a front desk and check in. Nope. You are escorted by the valet and offered fresh spring water infused with herbs as you are seated with your own, personal reception person.

My personal reception person was named Harmony, and she explained that Canyon Ranch was designed to help balance my mental and physical health.

"Your job is balance and your name is Harmony?" I asked.

She nodded, smiled with her beautiful white teeth and handed me the resort itinerary with her perfectly manicured hands.

Faint scents of refreshing botanicals filled the large room.

Harmony is attractive — from Miami — and she played the part of resort shaman like a pro. This is how she set the tone:

- There is *not* a resort fee and that is awesome.
- Many resorts offer up a mighty fine room rate to get you to book, but when you roll up to register, you realize that if you use anything outside the room, you will pay for it in a hidden resort fee. Here, the “no resort fee” covers access to the spa, the 70,000-square-foot fitness facility, the beach, all fitness classes (and there are dozens), Internet access, certain consultations, pools and spas.
- This is a “no stare” resort. As it turns out, the Canyon Ranch staff wants everyone to be super comfortable, so staring is not allowed. Baffled, I asked, “Can you give me an example of someone I would stare at so I can be cognizant about not doing it?”

As it also turns out, Canyon Ranch is a place where Hollywood stars go to unwind, so you

are not supposed to stare at anyone, which, frankly, was going to be hard for me. What if I was sitting across from Tatum Channing in the sauna? Do not stare? Humph. Good luck with that dumb rule, Canyon Ranch Spa.

- The rooms are actually apartments. Each has a living room, kitchen, balconies, a bedroom and a huge bathroom. It is like being at home, only way better and with room service.
- Much of the resort is cell-phone free. That is a big plus.

As for [the room](#): My luggage, a duffel bag filled with BPA-free products, and a light and bright sweeping ocean view made me stagger as I walked in the door. A comfy bathrobe and a healthful snack were waiting on the table with a note thanking me for being there.



The resort is right on the beach.

My normal “MO” when traveling in Miami is dinner at 10 p.m. and then a bar, but for that night, it was different. I was there for health, so healthy I would be. I put on the amazingly soft bathrobe and made a list of the classes I would take the next day. Then I downloaded a “workout mix,” which had [this song](#) that always gets me going, and



The Canyon Ranch complex is distinctive in the Miami Beach skyline.

sat around like Hugh Hefner with my robe on. I drank hot tea and did something I only do every couple of years: I opened the blackout curtains to let in the sunrise the next morning. Then I closed my eyes at exactly 10 p.m. to be fresh for the next day. I am not sure of the sheet thread count, but I would venture to say it was in the billions.

WORKING OFF THAT WEIGHT

Canyon Ranch has the largest [fitness](#) facility in Florida, boasting the 70,000 square feet I mentioned earlier. When I say “fitness facility,” I do not mean a simple little gym, either. Canyon Ranch is equipped with pools, weights, machines, rock-climbing walls, studios and jogging paths. I also would venture to say Canyon Ranch’s facility is sort of like the land of milk and honey for anyone who wants to sweat.

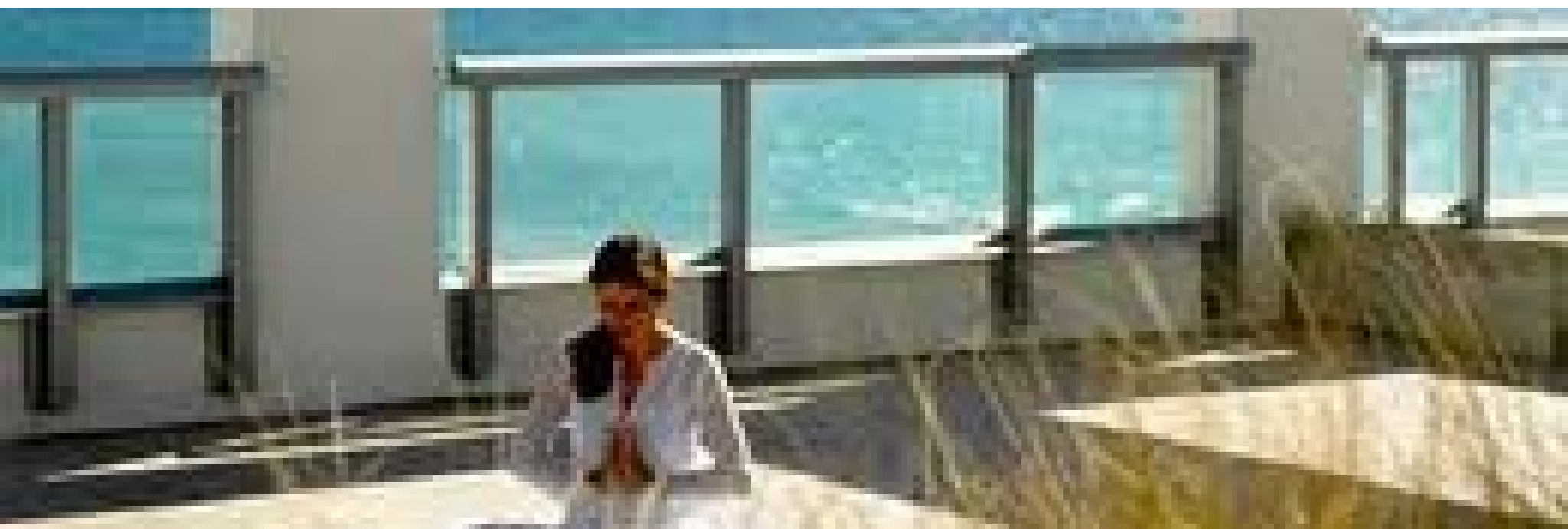
My day began with sunrise yoga on the beach, followed by a healthful glass of freshly squeezed juice. Feeling in the rhythm of fitness, I immediately bounded into a TRX class, then breakfast, water aerobics, a beach run, lunch, rock climbing, power aerobics, a nap, personal training and dinner. By the end of the day my legs were jelly and I could not stay awake past 9 p.m.

As for [the spa](#): As soon as the sun came up, I bounded from bed for Day 2 of sunrise yoga, but as soon as my overworked legs touched the ground, I found myself on the floor in a puddle of bathrobe (my new favorite thing to wear around the room).

It seems I pushed myself a little too far the previous day, but that is OK, because this was an excuse to hit the spa. I hobbled to that facility and made arrangements for massages, scrubs and other energy/healing techniques to make me a mental rock star.

All guests of Canyon Ranch have access to the spa pools and amenities, but massages are extra. The detox body wrap was my modality *de jour*. It had won me over with its advertisement, “Relax in the cocooning warmth of our dry flotation experience while your skin soaks up the benefits of the natural seaweeds, oils and lotions.” Once it was complete, I was encouraged to continue my state of well being in the pools.

The pools are what my wildest dreams are made of and, as I mentioned earlier, I happen to have my Ph.D. in “spa going,” so I am really good at this part of my trips.



Open-air yoga is just one of the amenities at Canyon Ranch.

The decor of the spa is an Egyptian/Roman sort of thing with water, slippers, heated lounges, tiles, steam, herbs, hot and cold treatments, aromatherapy, lots of rubbing and no staring.

I adhere to the school of thought that says most spa treatments (i.e., color therapy and aura readings) are borderline charlatanesque, but if I encounter a killer spa concierge who explains the mystique, well I am a baited fish and suddenly cured by the energies of crystals; that is exactly what happened with this spa.

My first stop was the Crystal Steam room, where you cleanse the body with the soothing powers of steam and infusions of aromatic essential oils and refracted colored light. In the

center of the room, there was a giant quartz crystal to send good vibes my way.

Next, I hit the rain showers, which consisted of my choice of various “rains” from regions around the world. I chose the “Atlantic Storm,” then closed my eyes while “lightning” flashed, crickets chirped and drops of both warm and cold rain fell on my skin. Can you say, “Swanky”?

Hydro spas, foot spas, and Laconian pools were all part of my blissful day of finding my balance, but The Igloo was a fun spa accouterment I had never seen. In a nutshell, the Igloo is used between all the steam treatments and relaxing heated chaise lounges. You walk into a dimly lit room small enough to be private but large enough to make you feel as though



The food is designed to be healthful but attractive at Canyon Ranch.

you own the place. There you enjoy cool air and three “Arctic Mist” experiences — menthol, mint and eucalyptus — as twinkling fiber optics flash around you. The mist cools the lungs, and consequently, your blood. The room itself is about 45 degrees, and let us just say to the fellas out there, having that much cold air hit your naked body at once can be a bit humbling, if you know what I mean. Thankfully there is no staring, right?

THE DINING EXPERIENCE

Because Canyon Ranch wants to make sure you are the best you that you can be, the staff teaches you to be conscious of what you eat. Speaking of [the food](#): The website boasts, “Food is more than calories and nutrients; it carries information that your cells need to communicate, perform their metabolic duties, detoxify and eliminate wastes. Understanding how you turn your food into the fuel that allows you to operate optimally makes wise (and delicious!) choices far easier.”

That is speaking my language. The food is mostly salt-free and seasoned with herbs. That can be a little bland; yet, it is understandable. Additionally, you can find nutritional information next to every menu item, so you know exactly how much you are eating. Nutritionists are on site to help you find your best balance in diet, too.

The food is locally sourced, sustainable and organic. Even the libations are swanky and organic.


THE INNER YOU

Canyon Ranch works to educate people about how their thoughts and health are linked.

From managing a transition in life to quitting smoking to learning how to deal with stress, there are classes to help you transcend to the next and better “you.” Additionally, the staff helps you map a future for yourself so you can prance around with this new and improved “you” all over creation.

The week flew by and so did five pounds (Yay).

On my way out of the resort Harmony grabbed my hand, gave me a sincere hug and asked how my stay was. I told her I had learned a lot and I was lighter, so it was time well spent. The freshly squeezed juice in the morning, daily sweating and healthful eating had turned my skin into a beacon of what skin should look like. I was relaxed and ready to go back to the real world.

My catty shallow side had come to terms with the whole “I’ll never be as pretty as Tony” thing because of the life coaches and my Day 1 Google search, “What country do the prettiest people live in?” When I read the result was “Brazil,” I knew I would always be in second place (let me have second for sake of the story, please) compared to the Brazilian Adonises. That allowed me to open up, breath and fully enjoy my stay at the age-reversing resort on the East Coast. 

Editor’s notes: [To see the current prices of Canyon Ranch Spa, click here](#) or phone Admiral Travel at 951-1801.

Matt Orr is a travel writer residing in whatever city he happens to be in that day. [His best travel deals can be found here](#) or by dialing his posse of traveling experts at [Admiral Travel](#).

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WE CARE PASSIONATELY ABOUT HELPING WOMEN, MEN, AND YOUNG PEOPLE
LEAD HEALTHY LIVES.

NO MATTER WHO THEY ARE. NO MATTER WHERE THEY LIVE. WE WILL DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO GET THEM THE CARE THEY NEED. BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT WHEN PEOPLE ARE TRULY CARED FOR, THEY WILL MAKE THEIR LIVES, THEIR FAMILIES – AND EVEN THE WORLD – BETTER AND HEALTHIER.
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A POET'S POET

Tony Leuzzi says that though many of the poets he contacted were happy to sit with him face-to-face for their interviews, others would speak with him only via phone or email; some simply refused to offer any comments. He also says one poet conversed with him on two occasions but refused to allow the conversation to be recorded or reproduced. All photos by Arielle Scherr

TONY LEUZZI SHARES HIS EXPERIENCES FROM INTERVIEWING MORE THAN 20 AMERICAN POETS FOR HIS NEW BOOK, *PASSWORDS PRIMEVAL*

By Tyler Whitson
Staff Writer

When Tony Leuzzi discussed his new book, *Passwords Primeval: 20 American Poets in Their Own Words*, with a small audience at Bookstore 1 in downtown Sarasota the evening of Jan. 2, the award-winning poet, author and tenured college professor made no attempt to hide his excitement.

The more deeply Leuzzi delved into the process of creating the book — a collection of interviews conducted over the course of five years with influential and acclaimed poets such as Gerald Stern, Patricia Smith, Martín Espada, Dara Weir and Jane Hirshfield — the more he revealed his passion for capturing the thoughts and viewpoints of his esteemed col-

leagues and how he had been influenced and inspired by them.

THE AUTHOR AND POET'S INTERVIEWS

"I'd like to become the Bill Moyers of poetry," Leuzzi lightheartedly confessed when *The Sarasota News Leader* asked him during the discussion if he sees himself undertaking a second set of interviews for publication at some point in the future.

"I love to do the process," he continued. "The question would be: Is there enough of an audience to buy [a second volume]?"

The answer, however, seems to be of secondary concern to Leuzzi, who said he continues

to conduct interviews with poets he admires regardless of whether other book prospects may be on the horizon.

Not surprisingly, this is the same independent, freelance process that eventually led to the formation of *Passwords Primeval*, which the prestigious publishing house Boa Editions released in November.

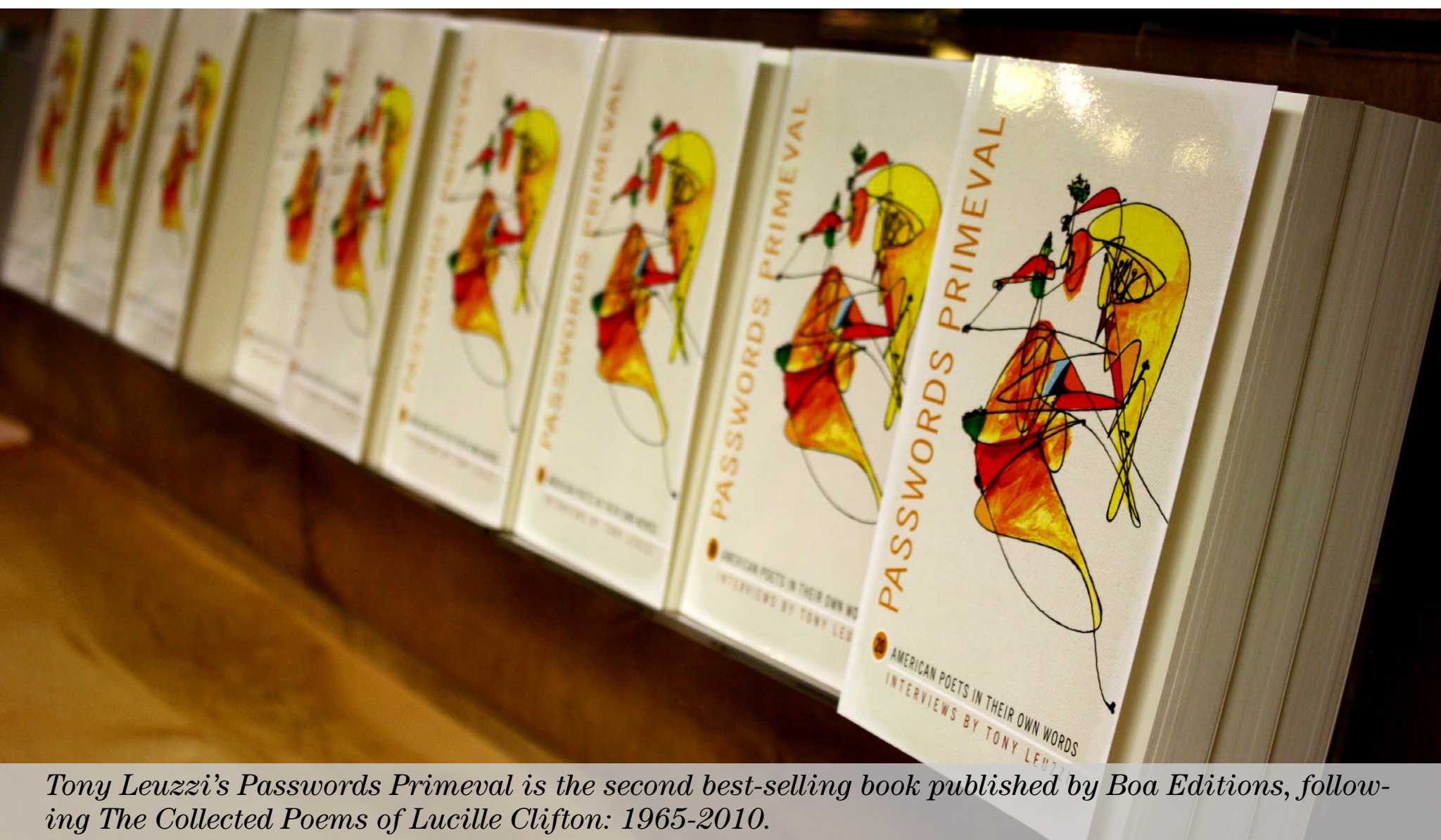
“I didn’t realize I had a book on my hands until I was about maybe nine or 10 interviews in,” Leuzzi explained.

When asked by the *News Leader* if there is an overall message readers might be able to pull from the book regarding a poet’s relationship with his or her work, Leuzzi responded that, thankfully, there is not. “I don’t want that to be the case,” he said. “I think that, for as many different poets as there are out there, there should be that many different relationships.”

Leuzzi explained that though he had conducted many interviews before the idea of a book occurred to him, he has always striven for as much plurality as possible in his work, preparing at length — sometimes even a year in advance — for each interview and tailoring it based on the poet’s work, ideas, aesthetics and even specific passages or texts.

“The book is essentially a metaphor for the kinds of poetry that are in America today,” Leuzzi said, qualifying that — despite his intentions — space and resource limitations dictated that the book “does not even adequately represent a fraction of what’s available.”

Leuzzi’s personalized approach, coupled with the expressed individuality of each featured poet’s work and approach, could easily have produced a result that would have been extremely difficult to tie together. In editing the



Tony Leuzzi's Passwords Primeval is the second best-selling book published by Boa Editions, following The Collected Poems of Lucille Clifton: 1965-2010.

interviews and writing his introduction, however, Leuzzi said he noticed many of the poets had done part of the work for him by frequently referring on their own volition to 18th century American poet Walt Whitman. This fortuitous realization, Leuzzi added, helped lead him to the title of the book, which is the pluralized form of a quote from Whitman's poem, *Song of Myself*.

INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR AND POET

After Leuzzi finished reading excerpts from *Passwords Primeval*, answering questions about its development and signing copies, he took a moment to discuss with the *News Leader* his thoughts on a passage he had read aloud — part of the transcription of his interview with Christian poet Scott Cairns.

During the interview, he said to Cairns, “You have a poem called *Bad Theology*. What would you call a bad theology?”

Cairns responded, “I guess any theology that presumes to have God in its pocket.” Cairns qualified that as “any theology that replaces the enormous, immeasurable real with very measurable and very calculated replacements,” adding that it “articulates as definitive and conclusive that which is unknowable and without end.”

Asked by the *News Leader* if he feels the notion of “bad theology” can be applied to secular or nonreligious poetry, Leuzzi responded in the affirmative. “Anything, any poet or avenue of inquiry that tries to, in some ways, reduce the mystery to a certainty, if it cannot be certain, is problematic,” he said.



After the evening's events concluded, Tony Leuzzi commented to *The Sarasota News Leader* on the atmosphere he felt during the discussion in Bookstore 1: 'I liked seeing that many of those people in the audience knew each other already.'

He elaborated on this concept with an aphorism that he offers his students at Monroe Community College: “A poem is a lot like a good question. The question is always more powerful than the answer you give it.”

Leuzzi offered an example: “Like when a child looks at his father and says, ‘Where do we go when we die?’ The answer to that is always going to be less than the question, which is enormous and wonderful,” he continued. “A good poem will preserve the mystery of the question, and I think that any kind of inquiry or path to inquiry should preserve the mystery that led to the inquiry in the first place.”

Leuzzi referred to attempts to reduce the answers to life’s great questions as “brutal.”

“In some ways,” he said, “what you’re doing is using the path of inquiry as a way to try and control or manipulate others to think or

do as you say or think or do. This happens in religion, obviously, but also in politics.”

UPCOMING LITERARY HAPPENINGS

For those unable to attend Leuzzi’s reading and discussion, opportunities are available in the near future to attend recurring or stand-alone literary events in the area.

On Sunday, Jan. 13, from 2 to 3 p.m., Bookstore 1 will be hosting a free “Poetry Local Mic” event, which will feature Debra Gingrich, Michelle Frau and Tom Lennox. Most Monday evenings, between 6 and 8 p.m., Pastry Art — also in downtown Sarasota — hosts a “Poetry Open Mic.” The next one will take place on Monday, Jan. 14.

As for Leuzzi, it is possible he will eventually return to Bookstore 1 for another reading, perhaps from a newly published book of poems, or perhaps even from a second volume of interviews. **SNL**



Bookstore 1 Proprietor Georgia Court told The Sarasota News Leader after Leuzzi’s presentation that she feels inviting authors to her store to perform readings or lead discussions ‘adds a tremendous amount to [the Sarasota] community.’



ASK OTUS

FOR PART II ON HOW BIRDS 'DO IT,' LET US TAKE A LOOK AT THE AVIAN CHILDHOOD; THEN, ON TO A SNAKE QUESTION

Dear Readers,

The best way to explain how birds “do it” is by choosing a particular bird and highlighting its life *ab ovo usque ad mala*.

I happened to be quite taken by a particular Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) chick that hatched late one spring. It was a bittersweet time in my life, when I had far too much time to observe nature rather than experience it. I was not “chosen” that spring. The world seemed

occupied only by happy couples courting, fishing, nest building and mating, and having a grand time of it.

I was actually kicked off my favorite oak branch by this proprietary owl couple intent on nesting in an abandoned woodpecker hole. The fact that this pair was my parents reclaiming their nest did not provide me much comfort. I moved my lonely, unloved, rejected little self to a smaller oak by the mangroves. It is more dangerous living by the mangroves because of the many snakes, rats, raccoons and other preying creatures also living there. On the plus side, the hunting and eating is good. The sweetest part is that my move occurred when Midnight Pass flowed and there lived and bred colony after colony of Great Egrets in the emerald aits amid the crystal clear waters of Little Sarasota Bay. I had a great view of them.



Ardea is inside the middle of the three turquoise eggs at this stage. Photo courtesy Rick Greenspun

One morning, an adorable white and ecru, fluffy, stubby — but partially bald — feathered tiny creature fought her way out of a shell and I was simply mesmerized. Within days of her hatching, I was convinced she was a she. I have noted, as most of you readers have, that be they chicks, pups or kits, at the outset, the females are more aggressively curious and outgoing than their male siblings.

I thought of naming this one “Blanche” because of the breed’s unusual overall impeccably white feathers. But I had recently seen *A Streetcar Named Desire* and so I decided on “Ardea.”

CHILDHOOD

Mama and Papa Great Egret are monogamous for the season and both will tirelessly share in

the brooding, feeding, cleaning and rearing of their offspring and the nest. They mated and raised chicks in the exact same nest last year and are now more experienced parents. A lot is purely instinctual, but much is also a matter of learning through experience. Experience teaches you things such as why it is wise to build the nest above the high-water mark and how to work one’s way around the nest and not step on an egg or chick, squashing it flat. You try it! It is not an easy maneuver.

Now, the nest is down to two eggs. It is not unusual to hear the anguished cries and wildly flapping wings of panicked birds in the dark of night. Then a deathly silence prevails for a few minutes until the frogs resume their singsong chirps. In this case, a raccoon has made off with an egg; Ardea’s parents were not able to defend their nest in the dark.



Ardea enjoys an outing with her parents at Turtle Beach. File photo

Ardea hatches after 23 days of incubation. Her sibling arrives two days later. They are born semi-altricial with wide-open eyes, and they can soon putter about the nest and execute a perfect poop that passes well over the rim of the nest and plops with a satisfying sound into the waters below it. Mama and Papa feed them with regurgitated food and then slowly introduce them to solids by “bill-grabbing.” This happens when a parent holds prey over the nestling and encourages it to reach out and snatch it up.

Then there is one!

Ardea has committed siblicide and her parents did nothing to prevent it. The chick's corpse lies by the nest and will putrefy until a rat or flies and their larvae consume it. It is too big

for a snake to swallow, and nature's cleaner-upper, the vulture, is not going anywhere near that ait, jam-packed with the razor-sharp long bills of Cormorants, Anhingas, Ibises and other Egret species all nesting there at the same time.

Why is nest siblicide common among many bird species? The common answer is, “It is survival of the fittest”: The elder chick perceives its less-developed younger sibling as competition for food and kills it. I have to question that theory as I have observed too many Great Egret or American Bald Eagle nests where all three or four chicks survived and fledged.

If we cannot ascribe “malice aforethought” or mature survival skills to these nestlings, what



An adult Great Egret holds prey over a nestling and encourages the baby bird to snatch it up. Photo courtesy Rick Greenspun.

might explain siblicide? Well, let us look to the nest itself. Despite the parents' constant meticulous attention to cleaning the nest and replacing dirty pieces of it with new materials, the nest is a putrid bacterial Petri dish of rotting fish scales, swarming flies and mosquitoes and even poop from the Anhinga family living right by it. At an early stage, many nestlings contract various ailments, particularly parasitic diseases.

Ardea's sibling, if diseased, would display signs of anorexia and unnatural jerky movements, thus demonstrating its increasing weakness and discombobulation. Her sibling would no longer be a recognizable bird, but something more like a foundering fish. It is the nature of animals to attack weak prey — it is easier and safer to attack something that is not going to fight back as hard as a healthy specimen will. It is also nature's way of swiftly weeding out those doomed to a slow death. JMHO (just my humble opinion)!

THE NEXT STAGE

Ardea fledged some six weeks after hatching. She spent her very early adolescence accompanying her parents to their favorite hunting grounds — bay and Gulf sides as well as around the lagoons and yards of homes and even public parking places. She watched them with the utmost concentration while imitating their hunting tricks, grooming routines and their defensive and offensive postures.

She also diligently practiced their vocalizations — a pity in a way, because the Great Egret's voice is similar to that of a speared bullfrog's and that discordant noise detracts from its ethereal beauty.

Otus

Dear Otus,

The other day I discovered a slender black snake about a foot long in my garage. At first I thought it was a "child" version of the much larger (three or four feet in length), harmless black snakes that have taken up residence on my property — and terrified both my son and daughter who are in their 40s. I was going to just pick it up and return it to the grass when I noticed a narrow red band around its neck. Could this be a snake whose venom would be detrimental to my health should it happen to bite me? Taking no chances, I gently directed the snake to the driveway with a soft broom. I believe you find snakes to be tasty morsels. Can you identify the one who trespassed in my garage?

Curious

P.S. I love your column!

Dear Curious,

All my feathers fluffed up when I read your letter. I love it when people give pertinent information and precisely detailed descriptions. You perfectly described a Ringneck (or Ringed-neck) Snake (*Diadophis punctatus*). It is a common snake around Florida, but, unfortunately, I have not eaten or seen one on south Siesta Key in close to four years.

I am delighted to learn that they are thriving elsewhere. Awfully tasty!

For more information and some really beautiful photos of Ringneck's underside, please see the [Online Guide to Florida Snakes](#). Dr. Kenneth Krysko is a celebrity herpetologist and renowned scholar at the University of Florida's Museum of Natural History in Gainesville. It was Dr. Krysko who positively identified the

Black and White (Argentine) Tegu pictured in the first Ask Otus feature, *The truth about tegus* (Aug. 23, 2012).

People put too much import on whether a snake is venomous or non-venomous. The minute they learn a snake is non-venomous, they get all brave and fuzzy-wuzzily affectionate over it. It is rather like saying, “Oh! It’s OK if my pet tiger bites me because he isn’t poisonous.” That is high hyperbole, of course, but I want to grab everyone’s attention here!

Snakes do bite, particularly when cornered, or, during mating season, when someone stands in their path to true love. Snakebites hurt. Bites become infected. Some snakes, such as your charming, tiny Ringneck and the non-venomous Florida Banded Water Snake, will spew a vile musky odor which causes skin irritations or worse — non-removable stains on your favorite shirt.

Snakebites can also be terribly embarrassing. When you arrive at the hospital emergency room, the intake staff will ask what kind of snake bit you and whether you brought it with

you for identification. If you neglected to have crammed the snake into your pocket, then the nurses, nurse’s aides and the doctors will ask you the same question and make you feel like a real dunce for not having done your due diligence and for having misplaced crucial evidence.

On the bright side, tetanus shots do not hurt like they used to, assuming you can convince the hospital caregivers that your snake was non-venomous.

Now, you were fortunate to see this tiny little creature and because of its size you recognized it as something quite different from our Black Racer. Just to show other readers how tiny this snake is, I have provided a photo of an ordinary sidewalk with a standard-sized sidewalk crack in it. You can even use the blade of grass on the right side of the photo as a form of measuring stick against the crack to see how tiny the snake is. The Ringneck still has room to maneuver inside that crack! Amazing little creature. BUT PLEASE DON’T TOUCH!

Thank you for writing. Thank you for being so kind to your little snake and not killing it. And thank you for being curious about Florida’s wondrous creatures.

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.



The Ringneck Snake is tiny, as evidenced by its comparison in size to this sidewalk crack. File photo



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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Staff Reports

A ROAR OF SUPPORT

An aerial view of downtown Sarasota shows an array of the 80 vendor tents for Thunder By The Bay. All photos by Norman Schimmel

THUNDER BY THE BAY BRINGS IN TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE AS IT RAISES FUNDS FOR SUNCOAST CHARITIES FOR CHILDREN

The 15th Annual Thunder By The Bay Motorcycle Festival brought tens of thousands of people into Sarasota Jan. 3-6, with activities aplenty to raise funds for a good cause.

Net proceeds benefit Suncoast Charities for Children, which serves children and adults with special needs and their families.


In 2012, the festival generated an economic impact of \$6.4 million for Sarasota County and filled 2,200 hotel room nights, according to a press release.

Although a dozen bands played on stages downtown both Saturday and Sunday, Jan. 5 and 6, one highlight of the festival this year

was the appearance by The Marshall Tucker Band, which performed on Jan. 6.

Festival Director Lucy Nicandri pointed out in the news release that Thunder By The Bay extended its schedule by a day this year to include the new "Kick Start" party on Jan. 3, featuring select whiskeys, wines and fine cigars at Michael's Tasting Room.

Another highlight was the 15-class bike show held Sunday on Palm Avenue.

For Sarasota residents, one of the best parts of the event may be the opportunity to check out all the varieties of motorcycles, some with awe-inspiring custom features. 



Allison Ryan sells official Thunder By The Bay souvenir shirts and accessories.



People enjoy checking out the wide variety of bikes as well as food and biker clothing and accessories for sale in downtown Sarasota. Downtown merchants also welcomed the visitors, of course.



Christine Lake presides over the Bika Chic booth.



Musical performances were just part of the activities over the weekend.



Motorcycles and pedestrians fill East Main Street.

*The Sarasota String Quartet will perform in Sarasota with the Sarasota Brass Quintet on Jan. 16.
Contributed photo*

SARASOTA STRING QUARTET AND BRASS QUINTET TO PERFORM

The Sarasota Concert Association will present the Sarasota String Quartet and the Sarasota Brass Quintet in a Munchtime Musicales concert on Jan. 16 at noon, in Holley Hall inside the Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center, 709 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota.

The concert is free and open to the public.

The Sarasota String Quartet and the Sarasota Brass Quintet are two popular ensembles comprising “outstanding musicians from the Sarasota Orchestra,” a news release says. “The String Quartet is known as one of Florida’s premier ensembles, the release adds, noting, “Its performances have been described as ‘a near perfect example of the kind of music-making that can be achieved by talented musicians who have worked together for a long time.’”

“The Sarasota Brass Quintet, founded in 1986, is one of Sarasota Orchestra’s best-known ensembles, celebrated for its entertaining programs that cover a broad diversity of musical styles,” the release points out.

The musicians of the Sarasota String Quartet have been performing with the Sarasota Orchestra for a combined total of nearly 60 years, according to the release. The musicians of the Sarasota Brass Quintet are highly accomplished musicians, as well, the release notes. Trumpeter Greg Knudsen has performed with many ensembles, including the New World Symphony and the Spoleto USA Festival Opera Orchestra. Tuba player Jay Hunsberger is on the faculties of the University of South Florida and Manatee Community College and has performed with prominent orchestras and ensembles around the country, the release adds.

Munchtime Musicales is a series of free concerts featuring performances by high-caliber, area-based artists. It is designed to offer a wide variety of musical genres, including classical, folk and jazz, featuring both vocal and instrumental performers, the release points out.

Seating is open; no reservations are taken. For more information about Munchtime Musicales, call 351-7467 or visit www.scasarasota.org.

RENOWNED ORGANIST TO PERFORM VIERNE'S SYMPHONIES

Nationally celebrated organist Christopher Houlihan will make a special appearance in Sarasota at the Church of the Redeemer on Sunday, Jan. 20, to perform six organ symphonies by Louis Vierne, the blind composer who was the organist at the Cathedral of Notre-Dame from 1900 to 1937, Redeemer has announced.

Houlihan performed these same symphonies in six major cities across the U.S. and Canada throughout 2012, a news release notes. His concerts have been hailed as “dazzling” (*Wall St. Journal*) and as giving a “glamorous sheen” to Vierne’s music (*New York Times*).

Houlihan performed the symphonies in prominent venues in New York, Denver, Chicago, Los Angeles, Dallas and Montreal, the release notes. The tour marked the 75th anniversary of the death of Vierne, who collapsed and died while performing at the organ in Notre Dame in 1937. “Houlihan’s appearance in Sarasota is a major coup for the area and is the result of impassioned lobbying” by Redeemer choir-master/organist Ann Stephenson-Moe, who approached his agent last year, the release points out.

“Sarasota has always had and continues to attract some of the most sophisticated concert-goers in the country — in the world, actually,” said Stephenson-Moe in the release. “I simply explained [to Houlihan’s agent] that Sarasota is the brightest jewel of Florida’s cultural coast, with audiences who would deeply appreciate Vierne’s music and Houlihan’s playing. With Sarasota’s growing reputation, it didn’t take much to convince him to add this seventh concert to the North American tour of



Organist Christopher Houlihan/Contributed photo

this very special six-symphony performance. Sarasota is in for an outstanding, world-class concert.”

The six Vierne symphonies to be performed are *Symphony No. 1 in D minor*, Opus 14 (composed in 1895); *Symphony No. 2 in E minor*, Opus 20 (composed in 1901); *Symphony No. 3 in F-sharp minor*, Opus 28 (composed in 1911); *Symphony No. 4 in G minor*, Opus 32 (composed in 1914); *Symphony No. 5 in A minor*, Opus 47 (composed 1923-24); and *Symphony No. 5 in B minor*, Opus 59 (composed 1930).

Houlihan will play on Redeemer’s massive 50-stop Nichols & Simpson pipe organ, the release points out.

The concert, which will begin at 3:30 p.m., will be presented in two parts, with an intermission at approximately 5:15 p.m., allowing the audience to enjoy an early dinner at any

number of nearby, downtown restaurants, the release adds.

The concert will resume at 7:30 p.m. and conclude at approximately 9 p.m.

Tickets are \$20 for general admission and \$10 for students. Advance purchase may be made

online at redeemersarasota.org or by calling the parish office at 955-4263.

The Church of the Redeemer is located in the heart of downtown Sarasota at 222 S. Palm Ave. Complimentary parking for this concert will be available from 2:45 to 9:30 p.m. at BMO Harris Bank Parking Garage on McAnsh Square.

CHILDREN'S BOOK AUTHOR TO PROMOTE ANIMAL RESCUE

Diane Rose-Solomon, a certified humane educational specialist, and author of *JJ The American Street Dog and How He Came to Live In Our House*, will appear at two fundraising events this month to promote animal adoptions, awareness and humane education, a news release says.

Rose-Solomon will read her new book and sign copies on Sunday, Jan. 20, from 1 to 3 p.m. at Nate's Place, 8437 Cooper Creek Blvd., Sarasota. On the same day, she will give another book reading from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. at the Humane Society at Lakewood Ranch, 7334 Trade Court in Lakewood Ranch.

Both events are free and open to the public; parents are encouraged to bring their children, the release says. A percentage of book sale profits from both events will go to animal rescue organizations.

JJ The American Street Dog and How He Came to Live In Our House is the first book in a series by Rose-Solomon. "The story addresses animal adoption issues, using colorful, whimsical illustrations to tell the story of Maya and her family," the release notes. Children ages 4 to 9 will identify with 6-year-old Maya, "who has wanted a dog for as long as she can remember," the release adds. When her uncle finds a homeless puppy named JJ,



*Diane Rose-Solomon with rescue dog Gonzo/
Contributed photo*

Maya begs to keep him. But her mom is not sure about that, the release notes.

In the end, Maya and her family learn that adopting a rescue pet can be a successful venture on many counts. JJ ends up with a loving home, and Maya gets the dog she has always wanted, the release says.

The book is available online at www.SOP-3Publishing.com.

SINGER JOHNNY MATHIS COMING TO SARASOTA

After selling more than 350 million records and racking up 73 songs on the Billboard charts, “Johnny Mathis has without a doubt solidified his place in the history books,” a news release points out.

The traditional male vocalist, who emerged from the pop jazz and adult contemporary scene of the late 1950s, will take the stage at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, on Jan. 16.

A three-time inductee into the Grammy Award Hall of Fame, Mathis counts among his top 10 hits *Chances Are*; *It's Not For Me To Say*; *The Twelfth of Never*; *Gina*; *What Will Mary Say*; and *Too Much, Too Little, Too Late*, the release notes.

Tickets are priced from \$30 to \$85. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit www.VanWezel.org



Celebrated singer Johnny Mathis will be at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall on Jan. 16. Contributed Photo

ULTIMATE ELVIS TRIBUTE ARTIST EVENT SET FOR JAN. 17

On Stage Touring LLC, in association with Elvis Presley Enterprises Inc., has announced that the nationally touring show *Elvis Lives* will be presented in Sarasota at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall at 8 p.m. on Jan. 17.

Elvis Lives, “which keeps on capturing the imaginations and interests of fans of all types, including Broadway, concert and Elvis aficionados, is an unforgettable multi-media and live musical journey across Elvis’ life featuring finalists from Elvis Presley Enterprises’ annual worldwide [Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist Contest](#), each representing Elvis during different stages in his career,” a news release says.

The Elvis tribute artists will be joined by a live band, backup singers and dancers and an Ann-Margret tribute artist, as well as iconic imagery made available from the Graceland archives, including a new exhibit of life-size images of Elvis’ stage-wear. The costumes will be on display in the lobby of the theater during the performance, the release adds. The Van Wezel is located at 777 N. Tamiami Trail.

Tickets are priced from \$10 to \$55. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit www.VanWezel.org.

ART SHOW TO BE A BENEFIT FOR PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

While many folks would hesitate to think of bars and art together, a news release notes, "In truth, they are a perfect mix. Bars and taverns have played an important role in the organization and development of many political and art movements throughout American history."

Artists frequented taverns in New York in the early 1950s, where they could meet each other and take part in weekly salons, the release adds.

Now [Mr. Beery's](#), a craft beer bar in Gulf Gate, and www.SarasotaVisualArt.com have combined ideas and resources to create D.U.I., Drawing Under the Influence, a unique open call art competition and casual exhibition to benefit the Sarasota Public School Elementary Art Programs, the release points out.

"It's pretty simple to enter," the release notes: All you have to do is buy a craft beer and draw on a supplied beer coaster any day through Feb. 1 at Mr. Beery's. "At the end of the competition, the beer coasters (now artworks) will be curated and critiqued by a panel of judges consisting of local art directors and artists," the release adds.


Prize money totaling \$1,000 will be awarded to the first-, second- and third-place winners and to the people's choice award winner.

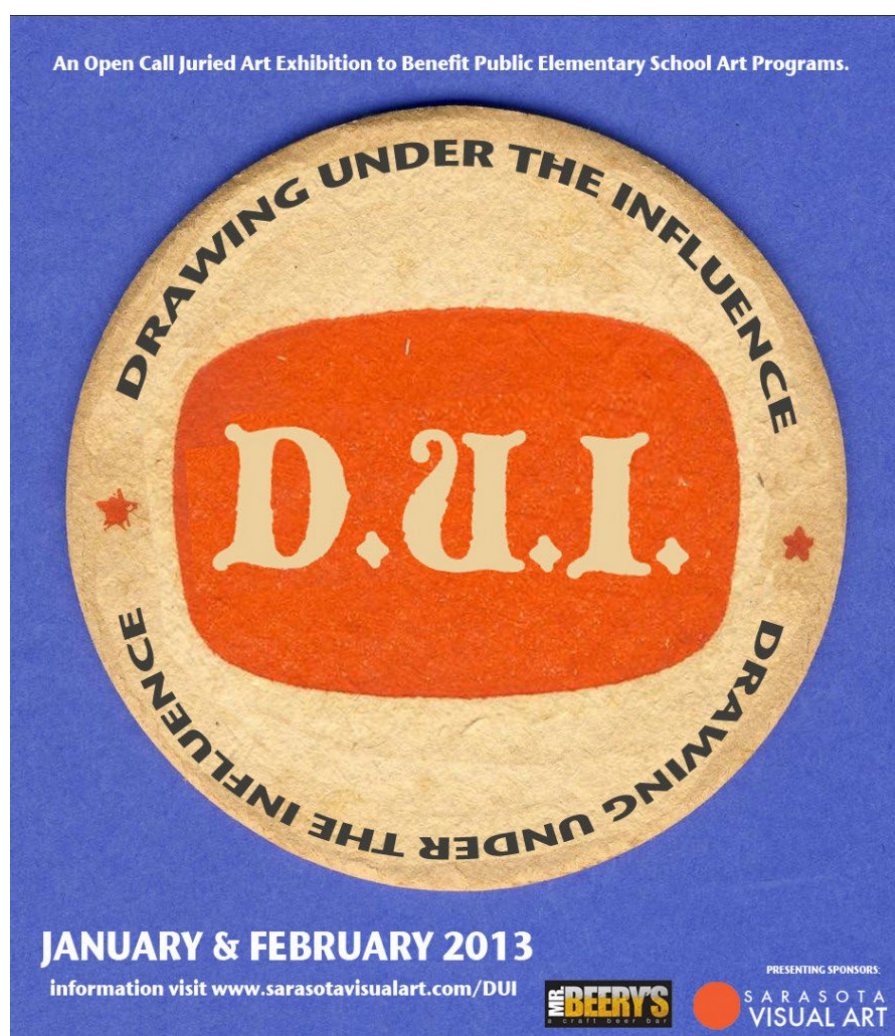
Every year, a portion of the proceeds will benefit a different Sarasota public elementary school art program. This year, the beneficiary will be Gulf Gate Elementary, the release says.

The submission rules follow:

- Entrant must create "bar coaster" on site at Mr. Beery's with supplied drawing materials from behind the bar.
- Entrant must purchase beverage for entry in competition.
- Artwork must be created on supplied standard 4-inch by 4-inch bar coaster.
- All artwork must be original and for sale.
- Entrant must complete a registration form supplied by Mr. Beery's.
- An entrant may submit work as many times as he wishes.

- Entrant must be 21 to enter.
- Any artwork that is deemed inappropriate will be eliminated.
- All unsold works will be returned upon request.

A reception to announce the winners will be held on Saturday, Feb. 9. The artwork will remain on display through Thursday, Feb. 28, the release adds. 





The Rev. Philbert Kalisa will speak at the Church of the Redeemer in Sarasota on Jan. 20. Contributed photo

RWANDA GENOCIDE RECONCILIATION WORKER TO SPEAK IN SARASOTA

The Rev. Philbert Kalisa, founder and director of REACH (Reconciliation Evangelism And Christian Healing) Rwanda, a nonprofit organization working to promote healing and reconciliation among Rwandan people in the aftermath of the African country's period of violence and trauma, will preach at the 7:30, 9 and 11 a.m. Masses at the Church of the Redeemer on Sunday, Jan. 20, the church has announced.

He will also speak during the 10:15 a.m. Rector's Class the same day, a news release says.

This will be the fourth time Kalisa has visited Redeemer, which has supported REACH Rwanda for several years via donations and other initiatives of its Missions and Outreach programs, a news release notes.

Estimates say that as many as 1 million Tutsi Rwandans were massacred by militant Hutus "within the shockingly brief period of 100 days in 1994," the release adds. The genocide was the subject of the 2004 Academy Award-nominated film *Hotel Rwanda*, starring Don Cheadle, Joaquin Phoenix and Nick Nolte.

"Father Philbert's organization works to reconcile family members of the victims with those who murdered their loved ones," explained the Rev. Fredrick Robinson, rector of Redeemer, in the release. "Through reconciliation comes understanding and from there we can work to forgive and heal not just our relationships with those who have done us harm, but we can work to heal the world."

REACH Rwanda was founded in 1996 by Kalisa, an ordained minister of the Anglican Church of Burundi. He was born in 1966 to

Rwandan parents who were exiled in a refugee camp in Burundi because of "the killings and other serious human rights violations against Tutsis which started in 1959," the release notes. He was ordained in 1989.

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

TEMPLE EMANU-EL'S FAMILY SHABBAT SERVICES CONTINUE

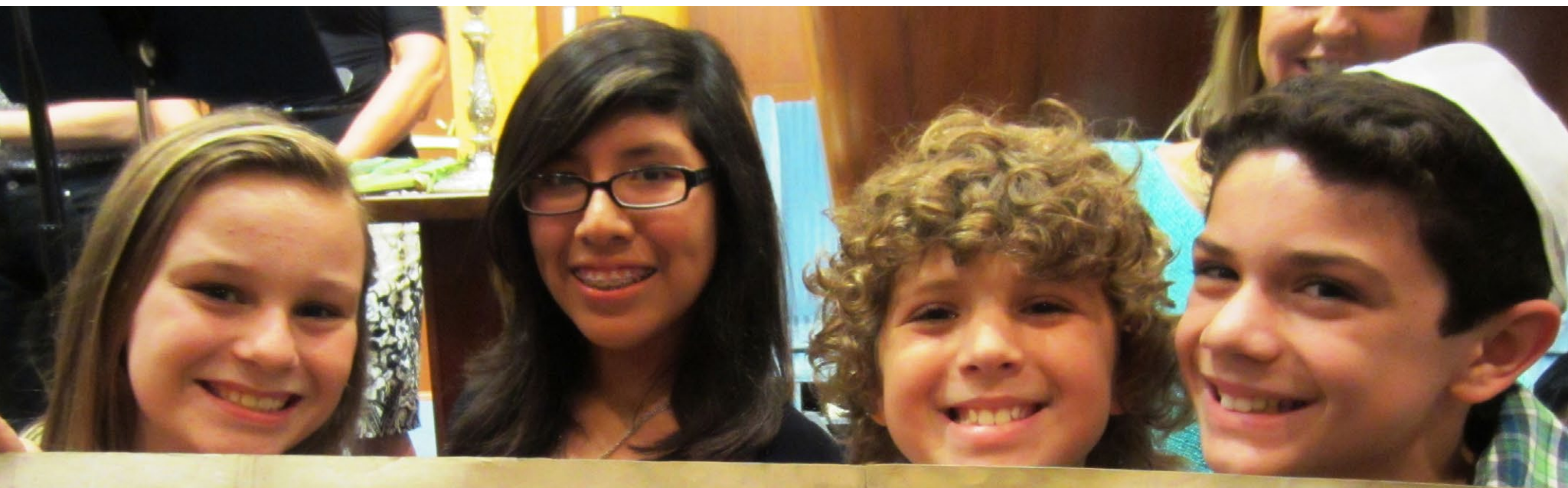
The first family Shabbat service of 2013 will be held at Temple Emanu-El, 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota, on Friday, Jan. 11, at 7 p.m., the Temple has announced.

"A joyous intergenerational worship experience, Temple Emanu-El's family Shabbat services feature lively music with the Family Shabbat Band; traditional prayers led by religious school students; a story based on the weekly Torah portion; and the opportunity for

every child to ascend the pulpit as the Torah is taken from the Ark and to parade with the holy scrolls through the sanctuary," a news release says.

A dessert reception, or *oneg*, follows the service.

Family Shabbat services are free and open to the community. For more information, call the Temple office at 371-2788.



Children enjoy participating in family Shabbat services at Temple Emanu-El. Contributed photo

PINK SMOKE OVER THE VATICAN DISCUSSION TO FOLLOW FILM

The Sarasota/Manatee Women's Interfaith Network will present *Pink Smoke Over the Vatican*, an international award-winning documentary, on Sunday, Jan. 13, at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Sarasota.

Bishop Bridget Mary Meehan and the Rev. Katy Zatsick, who serve as co-pastors of Moth-

er of Jesus Inclusive Catholic Community in Sarasota, will lead a discussion following the film.

The movie presentation will start at 2 p.m. The church is located at 3975 Fruitville Road.

Admission is \$2. Everyone is welcome, a news release says.

JEWISH HISTORY THROUGH SECULAR EYES TO BE EXPLORED

On Thursday, Jan. 17, at 7 p.m., the public is invited to hear Rabbi Adam Cholom, editor of Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine's magnum opus, *Jewish History through Secular Eyes*, explore the importance of this new work for the present and the future of the Jewish people, a news release says.

The event is being co-sponsored by The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee and the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism.

Refreshments will be served after the program. Those planning to attend are asked to RSVP by Jan. 14 to 929-7771.

The free event will take place at the Federation campus, 580 McIntosh Road, Sarasota. 

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF THE UPCOMING WEEK

11
JAN

Smokey Joe's Cafe

Through Jan. 12; times vary; Florida Studio Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave. Admission: \$19 to \$42. Information: 366-9000 or floridastudiotheatre.org.

11
JAN

Urban Cowboys

Jan. 11 through March 31; times vary; Florida Studio Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave. Admission: \$19 to \$36. Information: 366-9000 or floridastudiotheatre.org.

16
JAN

Johnny Mathis in concert

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

20
JAN

Christopher Houlihan performs Vierne's Six Symphonies

Jan. 20 at 3:30 p.m., Church of the Redeemer, 222 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Admission: \$20 (students: \$10). Tickets: 955-4263 or RedeemerSarasota.org.

22
JAN

Momix: Botanica

Jan. 22, 8 p.m.; Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall. Admission: \$10 to \$55. Tickets: 953-3368 or VanWezel.org.

25
JAN

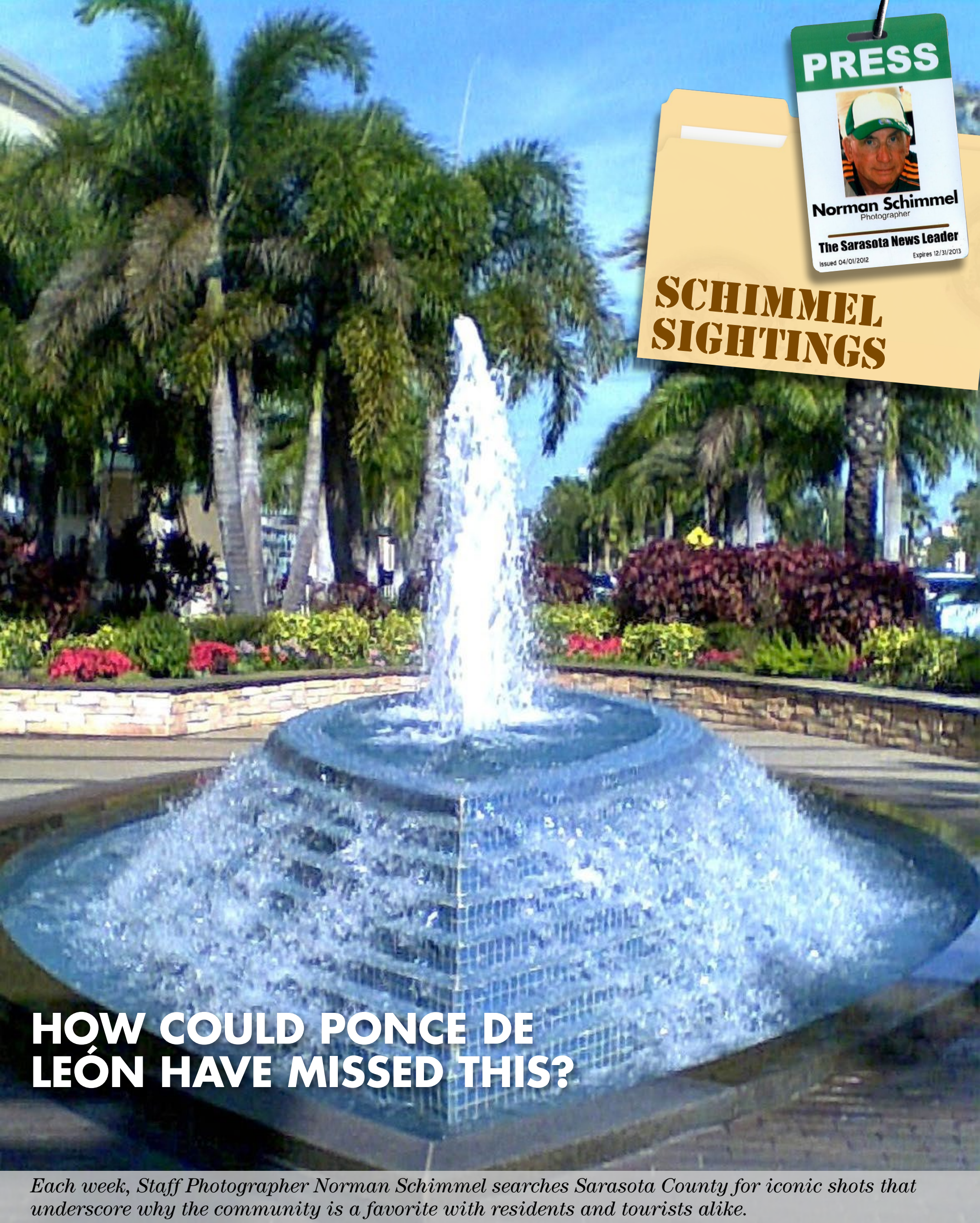
WSLR presents Hardin Burns and Rebekah Pulley

Jan. 25, 8 p.m.; Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court, Sarasota. Tickets: \$10 in advance or \$15 at the door; WSLR.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

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**SCHIMMEL
SIGHTINGS**

**HOW COULD PONCE DE
LEÓN HAVE MISSED THIS?**

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.