

THE SARASOTA

No. 37 — May 31, 2013

News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida

**A NEW STRATEGY FOR THE HOMELESS
TRUMPING THE 'COMP PLAN'
BELTWAY RIVALRY IN SARASOTA?**

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The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida

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Welcome

A slow week following a holiday weekend? Not for us!

As promised, we have quite a few stories from the County Commission's meetings last week that deserve an airing — including a thought-provoking proposal about how to handle the community's homeless issues.

Additionally, the story of a split County Commission vote over a right of way on north Siesta Key is one you can find noteworthy regardless of where you live.

Nonetheless, you need have no fear it is “all county, all the way through” the news section this week.

City Editor Stan Zimmerman attended the special City Commission meeting about creating a “form-based code” for Sarasota. (If you do not know what that is, Stan does an excellent job of explaining it.) He also takes a look at city election data provided by one of our fellow media organizations, and he has an update on the Downtown Improvement District's months-long ordeal involving the color-changing lights in Five Points Park.

Beyond the news pages, I highly recommend Stan's commentary on Memorial Day. It is a powerful essay.

Thanks to Fran Palmeri, Otus and our own copy editor, Vicki Chatley, the *Sarasota Leisure* section once again offers plenty of variety — and more excellent wildlife photos. (How does Otus manage to handle a camera so well???)

Fran has been generous with her lovely essays and photos since the old days of the *Pelican Press*. It is always a gift to see her name pop up in my inbox.

And while Vicki is a superb copy editor, she is equally deft — not to mention delightful — with her writing, as you will see in her article about Savor Sarasota.

Summer may be officially upon us, but the news never seems to slow down.

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher





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A NEW STRATEGY FOR THE HOMELESS

A homeless person sleeps in Five Points Park. Photo by Norman Schimmel

A RETIRED 30-YEAR VETERAN OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT PROPOSES A PROGRAM TO HELP THE HOMELESS MODELED ON A SUCCESSFUL SEVEN-YEAR-OLD INITIATIVE TO HELP PUBLICLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

A 30-year veteran of the Sarasota Police Department believes an effective initiative to help the community's homeless could be modeled on a county program that has aided drug- and alcohol-addicted people since 2006.

That county program — the CART Initiative — has led to a 75 percent reduction in the number of such people on the city's streets since it went into effect, Paul Sutton, who recently retired from

the Police Department, said during the Sarasota County Commission's regular meeting on May 22.

Sutton was part of a three-person presentation about the work of the Community Alliance of Sarasota County. He is its second vice chairman.

The Alliance is an organization comprising about 62 nonprofit entities "to advance communication, collaboration and advo-

“*There are miracles occurring in Sarasota, and it's got to be one of the best-kept secrets in the world.*”

Paul Sutton
Second Vice Chairman
Community Alliance of Sarasota County

cacy of the health and human services needs of all citizens in Sarasota County through ... integrated, effective and efficient delivery systems,” its mission statement says.

County Administrator Randall Reid has asked it to assist his staff and City of Sarasota staff in developing an effective approach to handling the county’s homelessness issues.

In 2004, Sutton pointed out, city police found about 1,000 people a year “who were so impaired in public that they couldn’t care for themselves.”

Although public impairment is not a crime, he continued, the only place officers could take such people at the time was the Sarasota County Jail, which “became a revolving door.”

Four to six hours after they had sobered up, Sutton said, the people were back on the streets. “They were still addicted to alcohol and drugs,” he added. They often became victims of crimes and they themselves committed petty crimes to support their addictions.

Then, on Aug. 1, 2006, the CART Initiative began. According to an overview on the University of South Florida College of Behavioral and Community Sciences [website](#), the Sarasota County Community Alternatives Residential Treatment Initiative includes three phases:

- Medically supervised detoxification and substance abuse evaluation as an alternative to jail, provided by [First Step of Sarasota](#).



Homeless people gathered under the shade of oaks in Five Points Park earlier this year. Photo by Norman Schimmel

- A **VIP-ER** (Voluntary Interim Placement-Enhanced Recovery) program supervised by the Salvation Army in Sarasota, which involves substance abuse treatment, job training, family counseling and psychiatric intervention for those unable to pay for treatment.
- Transitional housing to allow graduates of the first and second phases to live in a supportive atmosphere for up to two years to assist with long-term recovery.

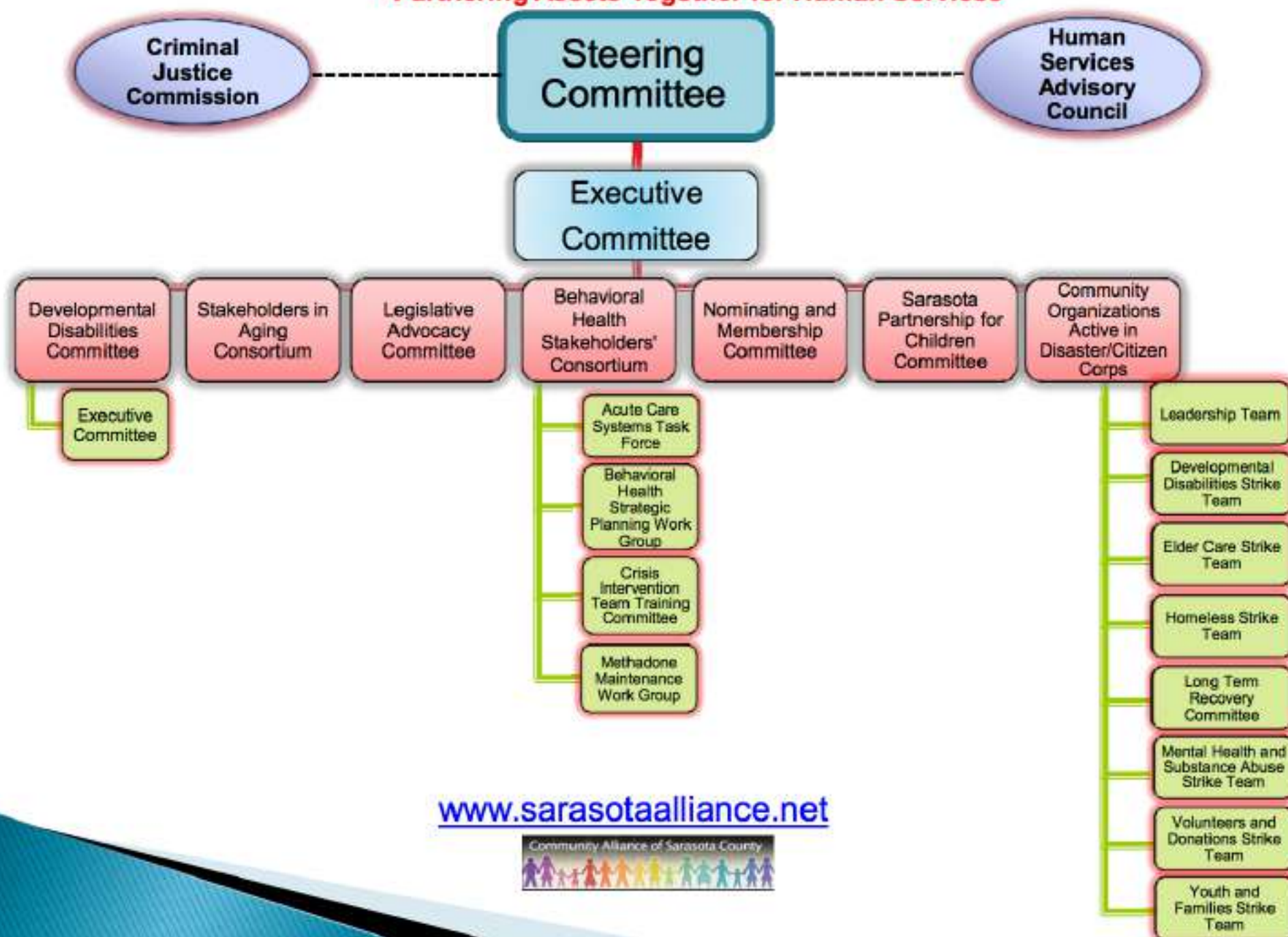
As a result of the CART Initiative, Sutton told the commissioners, statistics collected in recent years showed police officers are finding only about 250 impaired people a year on the streets.

Between Aug. 1, 2006 and March 31 of this year, Sutton continued, 6,829 people had been voluntarily admitted to the First Step program.

The completion rate for the VIP-ER program is 73 percent, he added. "Now, that's an amazing thing, when you talk about people who've

Community Alliance of Sarasota County

"Partnering Assets Together for Human Services"



A chart shows the coordination of organizations under the umbrella of the Community Alliance of Sarasota County. Image courtesy Sarasota County

been addicted to alcohol or drugs on a long-term basis,” he pointed out.

Of all those graduates of the VIP-ER program who could be located 12 months later, he said, 67 percent remained sober. The national average for similar programs is about 10 percent, he noted. “There are miracles occurring in Sarasota, and it’s got to be one of the best-kept secrets in the world.”

He offered more statistics from the VIP-ER program: 71 percent of graduates who needed to get a GED had been able to do so; 69 percent remained in stable housing; and 66 percent were employed, in training or in school.

A CITY-COUNTY APPROACH

Commissioner Nora Patterson brought up the homelessness discussion City Manager Tom Barwin had broached when the City and County commissions held a joint meeting on Feb. 5 to consider numerous topics. Barwin sought county collaboration on the hiring of

a couple of caseworkers to try to help people find the services they needed from community agencies, she noted. “I have a feeling there are a lot of caseworkers out there that are working for the various agencies and, I thought, coordinating,” Patterson added. “Is this something you guys are discussing?”

Benny Weaver, senior vice president for development at The Loveland Center and chairman of the Community Alliance, responded, “There’s never been a truly collaborative effort of all parties to see exactly what are the situations that we can have an impact on.”

Discussions began last week — after city and county staff asked the Alliance for its help — about how to resolve that, Weaver added.

With about 1,200 homeless in Sarasota County, he continued, “We also know that there’s a certain percentage of those — I don’t care what you do, what services you provide — they’re as happy as a tick on a dog: ‘Don’t bother me; leave me alone.’ So you’ve got to set that seg-



The Sarasota County Commission sits in session earlier this year. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ment aside and figure out how we're going to address those Paul's very familiar with."

Referring to the CART Initiative, Sutton added that before it was launched, each of the agencies involved had its own programs. "When we put them together, we got results that we never saw individually."

Sutton also pointed out that the type of position Barwin had proposed was one that would be "pointing people in the correct direction."

"We don't have a lot more in the way of resources to assist with that," Patterson replied, which was why, she added, she was hoping the existing agencies already were working together.

"And they are," Sutton told her. Still, he continued, "I think we need to take a more all-encompassing approach."

Police officers routinely meet people with mental health issues who do not qualify for commitment under the state's Baker Act, because they do not appear suicidal or homicidal, Sutton pointed out. For the officers to have the ability to call someone who can help them direct the person to the proper agency for assistance would be very helpful, he said.

As an example, Sutton talked about a woman he had found on the street who was clothed in garbage bags and sitting in a wheelchair. "She would defecate in a bag and attach it to the wheelchair," he continued. Although he felt she did not qualify for involuntary psychiatric commitment under the Baker Act, he used it to get her off the street, he added. When she was released a couple of days later, she went back to living on the street, he noted, which prompted calls from residents about her sitting in front of their homes.



Capt. Paul Sutton attends a reception prior to his retirement from the Sarasota Police Department. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

"We're not helping that individual as much as we could right now," Sutton said, "and the neighborhood is suffering as a result of that."

He added, "Because the problem is so wide and so varied, you have to have a multi-agency, coordinated response, and that's what the Community Alliance has proven that they could do with the CART Initiative. And given the same chance, I think they may be able to do something with the homeless initiative as well."

BEST PRACTICES

Commissioner Christine Robinson said she wanted to make certain such an initiative would look for efficiencies.

Sutton told her the Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness already has a Homeless Management Information System. "That helps track services" as well as resources, he added. The Partnership would be one of many vital

members of the new homelessness initiative, he pointed out.

“Each one of us knows some group that’s doing something, but we’re not really sure exactly what they do,” Weaver said. Part of the vision for the county and city, he continued, is having someone totally independent who can learn what services are available and “what are really the unmet needs.”

Robinson said she had been upset because Barwin did not seem to understand the county already spends about \$4.8 million a year on contracts with human services agencies.

Pauline Tracy, the county’s human services manager, had provided the commissioners documentation showing research she had undertaken regarding such spending by counties with population levels comparable to Sarasota County’s. Only Palm Beach County provided more funding to its health department in the 2012 fiscal year — \$3,447,244 — than Sarasota County did — \$3,313,368.

Additionally, the only other county besides Sarasota that funded non-mandated substance abuse services was St. Lucie, which spent \$44,757 compared to Sarasota County’s \$1,428,844.

“I think [the homeless issues are not] going to be solved overnight, but understanding what everybody has available to them, getting everybody to start connecting the dots together is a great way to go,” Robinson told Weaver. However, “I’m not convinced we need to hire people to do that.”

“I compare it to a family,” Weaver replied. “If you’ve got a problem in a family, nobody else in the family wants to deal with it. A lot of the times you have to go outside the family and bring in a totally independent person ... to come to some resolution ...”


He added that he did not foresee hiring anyone for a long commitment to the new initiative.

When Robinson asked whether he felt a short-term consultant could provide the necessary help, he said that was correct — somebody independent who could say, “Here’s what I would recommend.”

Kathryn Shea, CEO and president of The Florida Center and first vice chairwoman of the Alliance, said she also felt the Alliance needs to seek out best practices for handling homelessness issues across the nation. “Sarasota is not unique,” she added. “We’re just not used to it here.”

Shea also said the Alliance had agreed to make the response to homeless issues “a top priority.”

Commission Chairwoman Carolyn Mason then asked whether the community’s StepUp plan, a 10-year initiative to end homelessness in Sarasota County, would be part of the process. Sutton told her, “StepUp has to be part of the plan ...”

He added, “There are a lot of people out there that are making tremendous efforts to help the homeless. Those are partners that you bring into the collaboration to try to search for solutions.” 



A map shows the Calle de Costa Rica right of way in red. Image courtesy Sarasota County

THE COUNTY COMMISSION SPLITS 3-2 IN APPROVING THE VACATION OF A RIGHT OF WAY ON SIESTA KEY THAT HAS CANAL ACCESS

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

In 1924, according to Sarasota County records, a 1.88-acre, 60-foot wide piece of land was dedicated as county right of way for a road later named Calle de Costa Rica in the Sarasota Beach subdivision of north Siesta Key.

In 1957, Calle de Costa Rica was connected to Higel Avenue, but by 1969, that link had disappeared, according to county maps.

With the land specifically having been dedicated for right of way — and no county plans

in site for a new extension of the road to Higel — the County Commission voted 3-2 on May 21 to vacate the right of way and turn over the land to William and Katherine Baumann of 601 Avenida de Mayo.

The Baumanns own a house to the east of the right of way.

Chairwoman Carolyn Mason joined Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Charles Hines in making the decision.

“We’re giving up a public right today.”

Christine Robinson
Commissioner
Sarasota County

“Honestly, in my wildest dreams, I never thought the commis-

sion would approve this,” Commissioner Nora Patterson said in joining Commissioner Christine Robinson on the losing side of the vote. “I am *really* startled.”

“*We’ve had it. ... I don’t know that there’s a need to hear additional public input ...*”

Charles Hines
Vice Chairman
County Commission

Robinson cited county Parks Policy 1.1.13 in her opposition to the action, because the property in question provides access to a Siesta canal. That policy section of the county’s Comprehensive Plan says, “The County shall not vacate road segments on waterfronts along any creek, river, lake, bay, or gulf access point and shall encourage right-of-way use of these areas for coastal beach and bay access.”

Hines pointed to the documentation provided by the Baumanns’ representatives during a presentation to the commission. “I think it was meant to be a road, clearly, and it’s not going to be used

as a road, and, therefore, we should vacate it.”

“Mr. Hines is spot on,” Barbetta said. The right of way provided no access to the canal until the 1950s, he added. “Our comp plan was [approved] in the ’70s.”

“So we don’t apply [the Comprehensive Plan] to any of the plats that were done before the comp plan?” Robinson queried Barbetta.



*A photo shows the top of the bank of the canal at the access area on the right of way, looking north.
Photo courtesy Sarasota County*





A map shows the 12 area waterways with paddling trails. Image courtesy Sarasota County

“Depends on the dedication,” he responded.

“We’re giving up a public right today,” Robinson told him.

“What we’re giving up is right of way for public road,” Barbetta said.

THE REQUEST

Diane Kennedy, a title agent in the Real Property Division of the county’s Public Works Department, explained to the board that the Baumanns filed the street vacation petition in 2012. “According to the petitioners and to the best of anyone’s knowledge, this right-of-way has never been maintained by Sarasota County and this is the primary reason for filing the petition,” says a May 21 memo from Kennedy to the County Commission.

County records show the Baumanns bought their 7,110-square-foot parcel in November 2011. To the west, the property is owned by

DCA Fidu Inc. Trust Estate, represented by Michael J. Silvers, who sold it to the trust in March 2009 after purchasing it in June 1995, according to county tax records.

Kennedy’s memo says Silvers was notified of the Baumanns’ petition “and has not raised an objection.”

He did tell the County Commission during the May 21 public hearing that he uses the right of way as a driveway; that use has been in effect since the house was built, he added. (A *Sarasota News Leader* search of county property tax records could not determine when the house was constructed on the parcel.)

Referring to the Calle de Costa Rica right of way, Kennedy said a county staff inspection showed someone appeared to be using it to access the canal, as mangroves have been trimmed in one area on the bank.

Utility Requirements:

1. Florida Power & Light Company will require a permanent utility easement to access and maintain existing facilities.
2. Comcast Cablevision will require a permanent utility easement to access and maintain existing facilities.
3. Verizon Florida, LLC, will require a permanent utility easement for existing and future utility installation and maintenance.
4. Sarasota County Utilities will require a 20’ permanent utility easement centered along an 8” water main which runs diagonally across the subject right-of-way.
5. Stormwater will require a public flowage easement over the east one-half of the subject right-of-way.

A PowerPoint slide shows the work that has to be done regarding utility easements on the Calle de Costa Rica right of way. Image courtesy Sarasota County

When Patterson asked whether that was legal access, Kennedy responded, “Yes. Yes,” though several people made the point later that it is illegal to trim mangroves.

Kennedy noted the canal gives canoeists and kayakers access to the Roberts Bay Paddling Trail, which is identified as a blueway, or paddling route, in the county’s master trail plan. Both Brian Lichterman, the agent working on behalf of the Baumanns, and the couple’s attorney, David Levin of Icard Merrill in Sarasota, later disputed that fact. They provided a county map showing the distance of that canal access from the Roberts Bay Paddling Trail, which the map indicates is in the vicinity of Venice.

“It’s a future improvement in connectivity,” Kennedy said of the Calle de Costa Rica site.

A public canoe or kayak access to the canal is available about a quarter of a mile east of the site, Lichterman said.

When Hines asked for confirmation of that, Matt Osterhoudt, manager of the Natural Resources Department, responded that that alternate site is a stormwater spillway. Such areas “are commonly used [for water access],” he added, but they are not appropriate for that usage.

Kennedy also pointed out that the right of way provides easements to Comcast Cablevision, Verizon and Florida Power & Light Co. If the commission chose to vacate the property, she said, staff would need additional time to handle the paperwork regarding those easements.

Staff memos and testimony on May 21 indicate both the Baumanns and Silvers are will-



Commissioner Christine Robinson. File photo

ing to grant new easements, as required with the right of way vacation.

Nonetheless, the staff recommendation was for the commission not to approve the petition, Kennedy said, citing the Parks Policy Robinson later referenced as well as the existence of a county water main in the right of way.

Lichterman, president of Vision Planning & Design of Sarasota, told the commission, “The original intent of the right of way by the county is no longer needed.”

If the county vacated the right of way, he continued, the property could be put on the tax rolls, where it would generate income.

Furthermore, Lichterman said, the property has become “almost a littering site,” with discarded bottles, foam cups and even car bat-

teries. The Baumanns had to call the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office on Feb. 16, he added, because they spotted a suspicious vehicle parked on the site.

"This area has been long neglected and is essentially a garbage dump in the neighborhood," he said, even though the Baumanns have tried to keep it clean.

Kennedy told the commissioners county staff recently had been maintaining the property.

If the county vacated the right of way, Lichterman continued, the Baumanns and DCA Fidu Trust Estate would plant mangrove seedlings along the shoreline to stabilize it, and the Baumanns have proposed a bio-swale to cleanse water that sheets off Avenida de Mayo during heavy rain events. Those actions would lead to improved water quality in the canal, he noted.

DIGGING INTO THE FACTS

Patterson pointed out that much of the water access on Siesta Key — where, she emphasized, she has lived for more than 40 years — is available at "the butt ends of roads."

Levin insisted, "This is a unique situation. ... There are many subdivisions where the roads are dedicated to end at the water," he said. In this case, Calle de Costa Rica was intended to be a north-south travel way "and there was no canal" when the subdivision was platted.

Patterson replied that with "several similar situations on the key," she had assumed one

day "little bridges" could be constructed to connect some of them to the roads.

When Robinson asked County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh to weigh in on the Parks Policy in the Comprehensive Plan, DeMarsh told the board, "You, as the commission, would have the prerogative, if you choose, to decline to vacate this right of way consistent with state law and, I believe, the Comprehensive Plan policy."

Robinson made a motion to deny the Baumanns' request for the county to vacate the right of way. Patterson seconded it.

"I'm glad these comp plan policies are in place, to tell the truth," Patterson said. "I think water access, for people who can't afford to live on the water, is extremely important."

However, Hines said he could not support the motion. "I think to encourage the public to use this [property] makes us have the responsibility to maintain that," which the county had not been doing until after the Baumanns submitted their petition, he pointed out.

After the motion failed on a 3-2 vote, Hines made a new motion to approve the vacation of the right of way and allow staff about 60 days to handle the utilities easements.

When DeMarsh asked whether he wanted to continue the public hearing, Hines said, "No. We've had it. ... I don't know that there's a need to hear additional public input ..."

No member of the public other than Silvers had spoken during the hearing. 



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BELTWAY RIVALRY IN SARASOTA?



Members of the Washington Nationals stand outside their dugout for the opening ceremonies of a game with the Orioles at Ed Smith Stadium in March 2012. Photo by Norman Schimmel

SARASOTA COUNTY IS EXPLORING WHETHER IT CAN LURE THE WASHINGTON NATIONALS TO TOWN FOR SHARED SPRING TRAINING WITH THE ORIOLES

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

If the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Chicago White Sox do it at Camelback Ranch in Arizona, can the Baltimore Orioles and the Washington Nationals do it in Sarasota?

It is a possibility — the sharing of Major League Baseball Spring Training facilities — that Sarasota County Commissioner Joe Barbetta wants to explore.

One thing is clear: The Nationals have informed Brevard County officials they will not be returning to Space Coast Stadium once their facility lease ends in 2017. That was the report in ballparkdigest.com on May 16.

Barbetta already had talked with County Administrator Randall Reid a few weeks before that news appeared, having read rumors that

the Nationals were shopping for a new Spring Training home.

After reading the May 16 article, Barbetta emailed Reid: "If there is an opportunity here for possible 'shared use' or something along that line, coupled with some additional alternatives, should we be pursuing this opportunity? I'd be happy to help in any way. As you know, Fort Myers has two teams and was also a consideration for the Nationals. Obviously the O's would have to participate in any discussion along these lines, along with the County Attorney."

“We’re interested in increasing the economic impact from sports tourism here ...

Randall Reid
Administrator
Sarasota County

“It may be a pie in the sky idea,” Barbetta told *The Sarasota News Leader*. Nonetheless, he said he felt it was worth pursuing.

Manatee County has practice fields available, Barbetta pointed out, that would make the scenario possible.

As he had in the email, he emphasized to the *News Leader* that the Orioles would have to give their consent to sharing the use of Ed Smith Stadium for games. At no time has he considered the prospect of the county’s trying to build a new stadium, he added.



The Orioles' mascot, Bird, stands beneath the 'chandelier' in Ed Smith Stadium. Photo by Norman Schimmel

The *News Leader* tried twice this week to obtain a comment from the Orioles' home office in Baltimore with no results.

Reid told the *News Leader*, "We're interested in increasing the economic impact from sports tourism here ... and a second [Major League Baseball] team would be an outstanding way of doing that."

The Nationals present a particularly alluring option, thanks to their well-known Beltway Rivalry with the Orioles.

Brief discussion at the May 16 meeting of the Sarasota County Tourist Development Council (TDC) pointed to the prospects of creating an even greater flow of visitors from the Washington, D.C./Baltimore metropolitan area if Sarasota hosted both teams for Spring Training.

Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County, has noted in past presentations to the TDC that her staff's marketing in the Baltimore area — part of the county's agreement with the Orioles when the team relocated to Sarasota — has brought in a significant number of visitors.

This year, the Orioles set a franchise record by drawing 120,455 fans for their 17 home games,




County Administrator Randall Reid. Photo by Norman Schimmel

the team announced after its final Spring Training game on March 29.

That figure also represented a new Spring Training season attendance record for Sarasota, which has hosted such games since 1924.

"We would not want to do anything to upset that longstanding relationship" with the Orioles, Reid told the *News Leader*.

Referring to his mid-May email to Reid, Barbetta said, "I just didn't want [the potential for landing the Nationals] to fall between the cracks." 

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POLISH YOUR CRYSTAL BALL

Laurel Park homeowners in downtown Sarasota have been especially wary of neighboring development. Photo by Norman Schimmel

CITY COMMISSION EMBARKS ON A VISIONARY ZONING EXERCISE

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The Sarasota city commissioners Wednesday afternoon, May 29, set off on a three-year “voyage” into planning the future of the city.

While a formal decision will be made next month, they agreed by consensus to open up a “design studio” where planners can work with stakeholders to create a form-based zoning code for the city.

Huh?

REMEMBER EUCLID?

Euclid was the Greek who invented geometry and caused problems for countless teenagers. His name was also applied to a cut-and-dried system of dividing up a city into never-shall-

they-mingle districts. Euclidian zoning meant residential areas of the city would never be bothered by an industry building a plant next door — or even a coffee shop.

Residential meant residential. Industrial meant industrial. Commercial — you get the idea.

Outside of the downtown area, Sarasota uses Euclidian zoning, which causes some problems, because various types of land use are not distinctly Euclidian. When Ron Burks wanted to rezone 9 acres on School Avenue to build residential towers with commercial use mixed into the development, you might say Euclid was aghast; so were the neighbors.

One of Sarasota's biggest neighbor-versus-development conflicts ensued. And while Burks emerged victorious in the zoning battle, the economy turned against further development and he shelved his plans.

The property — still a row of one-story warehouses — retains Burks' desired "downtown edge" zoning, but it reflects a milestone in Sarasota battles regarding how to change land-use designations.

LEGACY DEFECTS

Sarasota's current zoning code was established in 1974, and it is showing its age. "It's never been overhauled," said Tim Litchet, the

We are seeing increased polarization, increased incompatibilities, longer and longer meetings, an increasing number of variances.

Karin Murphy
President

Karin Murphy Planning & Consulting Inc.

director of the Neighborhood and Development Services office. "And there are internal conflicts."

Nowhere was this more visible than with the recent decision to deny Walmart the ability to build a 24-hour

"supercenter" on the site of the former Ringling Shopping Center. Only a stone's throw from Burks' proposed project, the proposal received the blessing of the city's zoning staff and won in a 3-2 vote taken by the Planning Board.

Neighbors launched an appeal, and by a 3-2 vote, the City Commission decided to deny Walmart's proposal.



Numerous Alta Vista neighborhood residents attended City Commission meetings to oppose the construction of a Walmart on the site of the former Ringling Shopping Center. Photo by Norman Schimmel

“We are seeing increased polarization, increased incompatibilities, longer and longer meetings, an increasing number of variances,” said Karin Murphy. She is a professional planner who worked for years in Sarasota’s Planning Department; she also has been an independent consultant assisting in the City of Bradenton’s conversion to a form-based code.

FORM-BASED CODES

“Form-based codes emphasize the physical character of development and de-emphasize land development regulations,” said Litchet. “[This] places a greater emphasis on design. And it can be customized to the community.”

To use an extreme example, if a developer wanted to build a steel mill in the center of a residential neighborhood, Euclid would say, “Over my dead body.” A form-based coder

would ask, “What’s in it for the neighbors? Will it be pretty, and quiet and create some jobs?”

In other words, form-based codes abandon the old and comfortable world of Euclid in favor of one whose focus is, How will this fit in? Because this transition is in its earliest, most primordial stage, nobody knows what procedures will be required or what regulations will be enforced in Sarasota. In many respects, this is like a leap off the diving board before looking for water in the pool — except other communities have done it and have seemed to survive.

Litchet proposes Murphy and University of Miami Architecture Professor Andrew Georgiadis create an on-site design studio to work through the myriad of details to craft a form-based code for the City of Sarasota. It could take three years.



The new City Commission has agreed informally to proceed with an initiative that could result in the creation of a new zoning code for Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

AND NOW?

How is this going to work? That is unclear. It may take a path similar to Bradenton's re-coding experience, during which people were asked to step forward and write their own codes. They were then sent out to take physical measurements of their city at critical areas.


"Why does a certain stretch of sidewalk feel so comfortable?" asked Georgiadis. In other words, the beginning seems a bottom-up exercise.

The first step, said Murphy, is to synthesize Sarasota's existing codes and other materials to produce what she called "base maps." Then she and Georgiadis and city planning and zoning staffers will begin to create what she called "a studio environment."

Where, when and how all this will occur remain undecided. The city commissioners were

meeting in a workshop session Wednesday, meaning no official decision could be taken. They agreed by unanimous consensus to proceed with the "studio environment" instead of making a call for consultants nationwide with a request for proposals.

It was the solution promoted by staff, but it will cost an estimated \$750,000 over the next three years for Murphy, Georgiadis and city staffers to see it through to conclusion. Along the way will be any number of public meetings. Murphy wants to include virtually all of the city's advisory boards; organized neighborhoods will be players, too, as will all of the city's departments — from utilities to police.

Murphy also said, "It's important to talk to the development community. We'll have a community discussion on what we want [the city] to look like to fit into their vision. It's best to be proactive." 

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CITY ELECTION ANALYSIS



Jacob Ogles, an editor with SRQ Magazine, conducts an after-action analysis of the 2013 voting in the City of Sarasota. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

‘THE YEAR OF THE YOUTH VOTE’ SUCCUMBS TO ‘GEEZER POWER’

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

All the political omens in early 2013 pointed to an upsurge in participation by younger voters in the city election for two at-large commissioners. The young are the most underrepresented of all the city’s demographic groups.

There was a resonating issue — the noise ordinance — that drew the attention of 20- and 30-year-olds. There was a concerted effort to use social media for the first time, skipping the despised “dead-tree” and top-40 media. There was money from off-the-books electioneering organizations and one public employee union. And

there was a candidate — Richard Dorfman — ready, willing and able to use it all.

It was a gamble, because historically young people do not vote in Sarasota city elections. But if they could be induced to vote, they would provide an untapped and substantial fraction of the totals. However, the effort this year was a total failure.

“*There was momentum for Dorfman at the end, but it didn’t catch up with Chapman’s absentee lead. He won on Election Day, and tied in early voting, but lost big on the absentees.*”

Jacob Ogles
Editor
SRQ Magazine



In both the primary election in March and the final election in May, more people 90 and older voted than people in their 20s and 30s. In March, 202 people 90 and older voted, while 154 people be-

tween 18 and 29 cast a ballot. The older voters were eight times more likely to vote (with a 21 percent turnout) than the younger ones (2.7 percent) in the March election, and six times more likely in the May balloting.

The numbers are compelling. A total of 5,824 registered voters were 29 or younger, compared to the 235 voters older than 90. But when the results were counted, the oldsters — whom Dorfman derided in the campaign as “white-haired old ladies” — led the charge that resulted in his defeat. Of the 7,085 people who voted in May, 5,040 were 60 or older.

These were just a few of the findings discussed by SRQ Editor Jacob Ogles at his bi-

ennial, belated morning-after election analysis on May 30.

CONSENSUS, CONSENSUS

One striking result of the May runoff election was the popularity of so-called “bullet voting.” While Sarasota’s system allows voters to pick two candidates from among the three finalists to fill the two seats up for election, the two votes are not mandatory. People can vote for just one candidate. In May, they did so by the thousands.

Of the 7,085 who voted on May 14, a total of 2,321 voted only “with a bullet,” casting their ballots for a single candidate. It took a team of



A graphic shows the election results precinct by precinct. The big sticker in each reflects the big winner, and the smaller one indicates who was No. 2 in each of the 18 precincts. Susan Chapman won in five of the north and east precincts. Suzanne Atwell led in the rest. Richard Dorfman placed second in five. Graphic courtesy of SRQ Magazine

interns at SRQ Magazine several days to wade through the election returns to separate the “bullets” from persons casting two votes for first and second choices.

Ogles said the bullet votes — representing the wishes of about one-third of all voters — turned out to be “statistically insignificant” because they split equally between third-place finisher Dorfman and the second-place candidate Susan Chapman. She received 990 bullet votes; he received 963.

However, had the 2,321 bullet voters also marked their ballots for a second choice, that could have changed the outcome of the election. Fewer than 300 votes separated Chapman and Dorfman at the end.

Chapman’s real strength was in the absentee votes. She picked up 1,918 of those, while Dorfman garnered 1,435. Although Dorfman out-pollled Chapman on Election Day (1,425 to Chapman’s 1,387), that was not enough to offset the nearly 500-vote margin for Chapman from the absentees.

“There was momentum for Dorfman at the end, but it didn’t catch up with Chapman’s absentee lead. He won on Election Day, and tied in early voting, but lost big on the absentees,” said Ogles.

Virtually across the board, Atwell was the top vote getter. In all 18 precincts, she was either No. 1 or No. 2. And she was on top in Districts Two and Three, where most of the city’s ballots are cast. Chapman took District One on the north side of town. Between them, they captured the two at-large seats. Dorfman was the odd man out.


Atwell broke a hex on incumbent re-election in the city. During the past three election cycles, no incumbent had been re-elected until



Richard Dorfman. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

Atwell scored her victory. She campaigned as a centrist and consensus builder, and Ogles said that was a winning combination. “The way this election [system] works, it rewards consensus builders,” he said.

Ogles noted a pattern in the May voting that might have some significance in 2015 when city voters go back to the polls to elect (or re-elect) district commissioners. “Dorfman did well downtown, and the south trail showed a preference for Dorfman,” said Ogles. “The neighborhoods showed strong support for Chapman.”

One candidate has already announced for the 2015 race to represent District One. Danny Preston pre-qualified as a candidate on April 3. 



MORE TOURISTS, MORE DOLLARS

Children play in the surf at Siesta Public Beach in late March. Photo by Rachel Hackney

BUILDING ON THE INCREASES RECORDED IN THE 2012 FISCAL YEAR, TOURISM IN SARASOTA COUNTY REMAINED STRONG THROUGH THE HEIGHT OF THE 2013 SEASON

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Just how good was tourism in Sarasota County for the 2012 fiscal year?

Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenue surpassed \$13 million for the first time, according to the annual report prepared by the Sarasota County Tax Collector's Office.

TDT revenue totaled \$13,923,125 for the 2012 fiscal year, which ended on Sept. 30, the report says. The figure was a 21 percent increase over the FY 2011 amount, though the tax rate did increase from 4.5 percent to 5 percent on May 1, 2011, the report notes.

With that hike factored out, the amount still was up 13 percent, the report notes. Additionally, collections were higher for every month compared to the previous fiscal year's totals except for April 2012, when the revenue was virtually flat compared to the April 2011 figure.

For the fourth year in a row, Tax Collector Barbara Ford-Coates told the Sarasota County Tourist Development Council (TDC) on May 16, condos generated more TDT revenue than hotels and motels combined. Condos accounted for 46.72 percent of the funds, while hotel and motel room rentals brought in 43.5 percent.

According to the latest statistics from Visit Sarasota County — provided to the TDC and the County Commission earlier this month — the community also saw tourism growth during the height of the 2013 season.

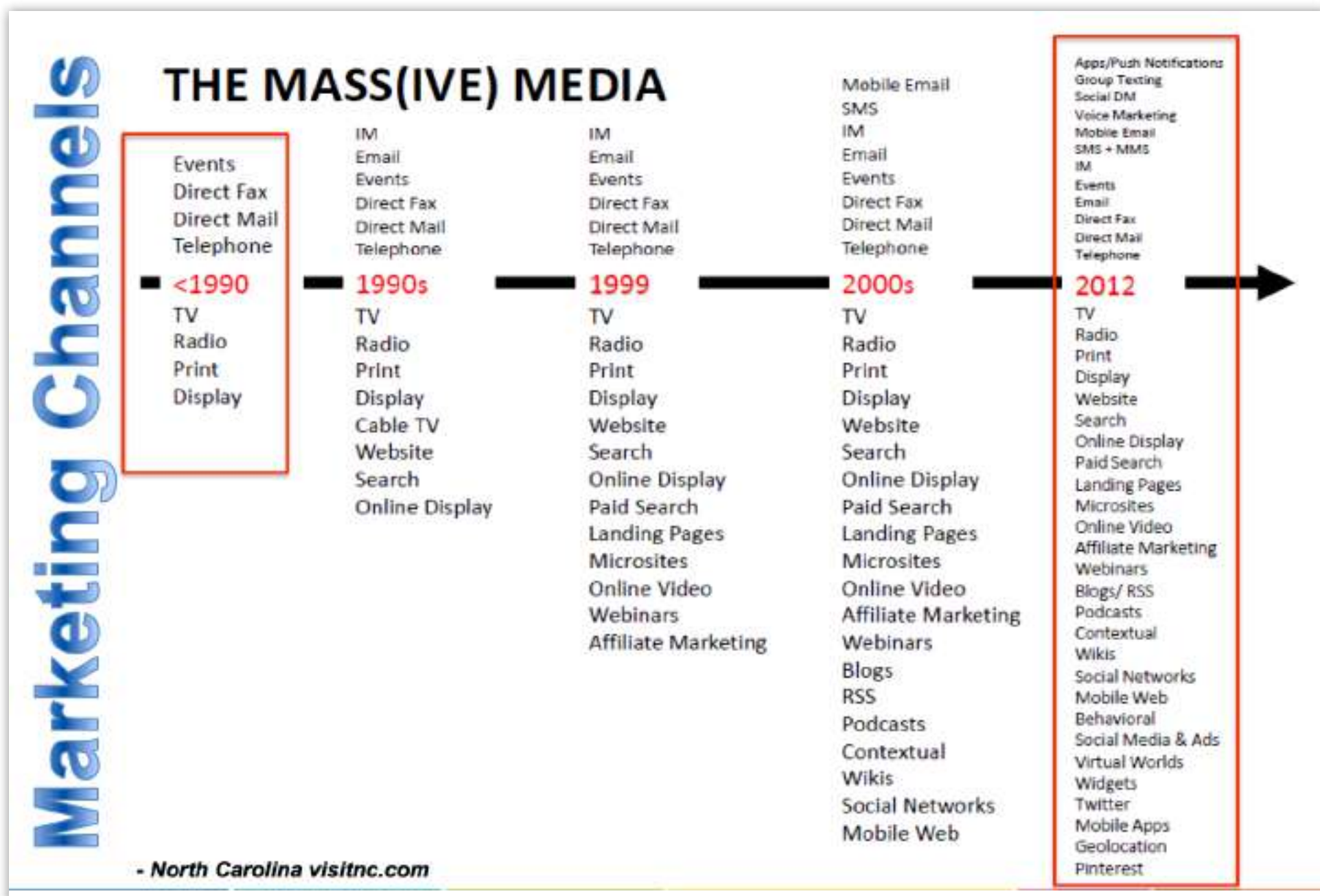
TDT collections were up 5 percent in January over the same month in 2012 and 2 percent in February over the same month a year ago. The number of visitors from January through March increased 5.1 percent and the tourists' direct spending for those months was up 9.9 percent.

In April, Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County, told the County Commission on

May 21, the number of visitors was up 1.9 percent — even though Easter fell in late March.

Moreover, she said, “Our European business remains strong.” Sarasota County is seeing more visitors from the United Kingdom, she pointed out, than the state as a whole is reporting.

For the fiscal year to date — which began Oct. 1, 2012 — 11,941 United Kingdom residents have visited the website Visit Sarasota County established for them: www.sarasota.org.uk, according to statistics Haley provided in her second quarter FY 2013 report to the TDC. The goal was 3,000 visits for the year.

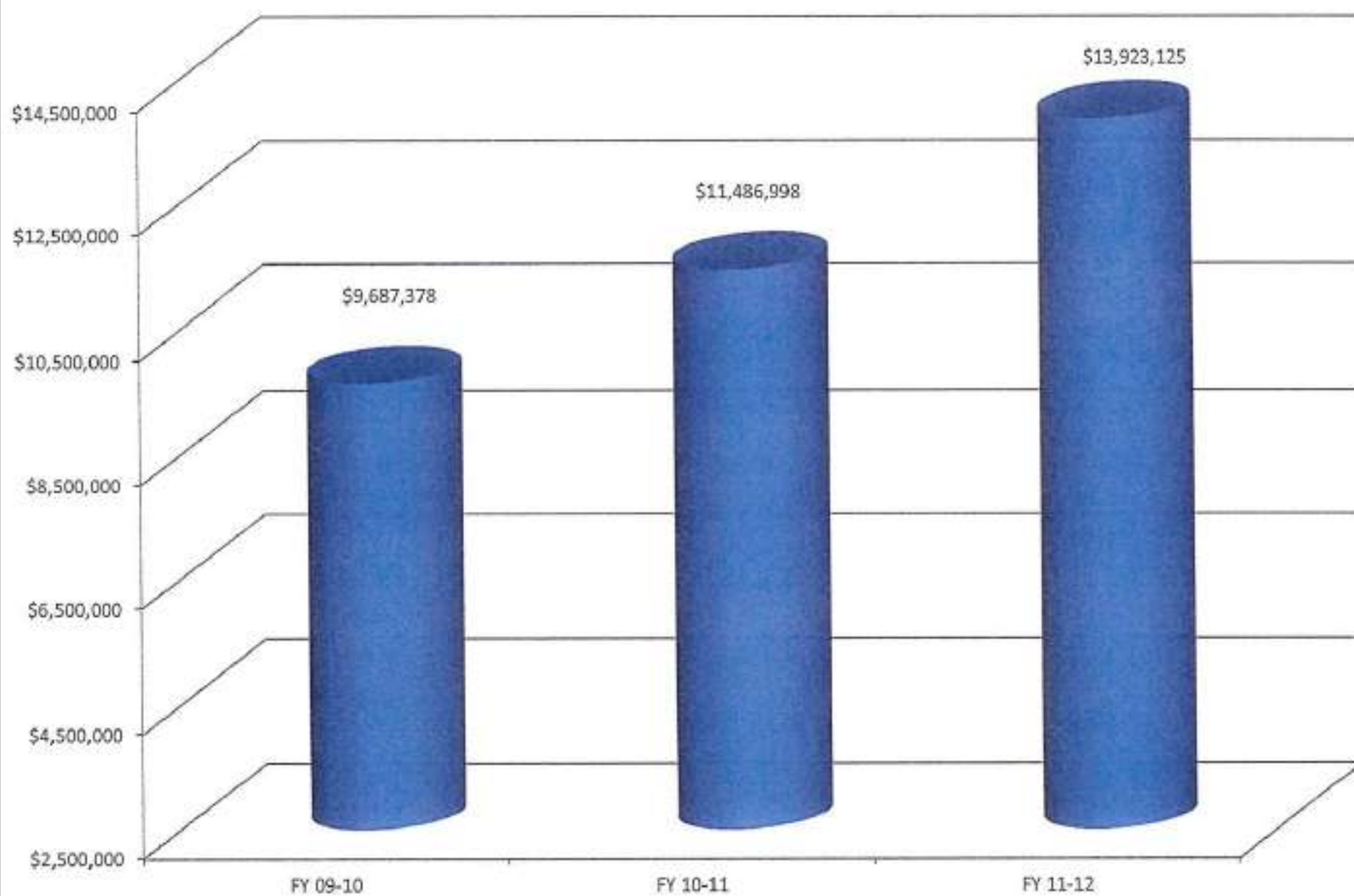


A chart from the North Carolina tourism office shows how marketing strategies for visitors have changed through the years. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Among other statistics:

- The hotel/motel/condo occupancy rate was higher by 5.6 percent in January compared to the same month in 2012, while it notched a 2 percent increase in February. However, the March occupancy rate was down 0.8 percent compared to the figure for March 2012. Still, the March 2012 rate was 94.7 percent, with the March 2013 figure at 93.9 percent.
- Daily room rates increased in a range from 3.7 percent in January to 6.9 percent in March, compared to the same months in 2012. The average room cost per day in January 2012 was \$142.34; it was \$147.61 in January this year. For March, the rate was \$198.15, compared to \$185.38 in March 2012.
- The Midwest continued to be the leader — as it has in the past — among points of origin for visitors to Sarasota County for the first three months of this year. According to the Visit Sarasota County report, 29.7 percent of tourists said they were from the Midwest, with 29.1 percent from the Northeast.

SARASOTA COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX
Comparison of Collections FY10 - FY12



A chart compares Tourist Development Tax collections over the past three fiscal years. Image courtesy Sarasota County Tax Collector's Office

- The percentage of first-time visitors was 36.9 percent for January through March of this year, compared to 33.9 percent in the same period of 2012.

In her remarks to the County Commission on May 21, Haley noted the “huge changes in the media” used to promote the area over recent years. Instead of the past reliance on television and radio, she pointed out, the trend is toward great diversity among social media outlets.

Haley said research undertaken by Visit Sarasota County showed one-third of visitors used social media “as part of the decision-making process.”

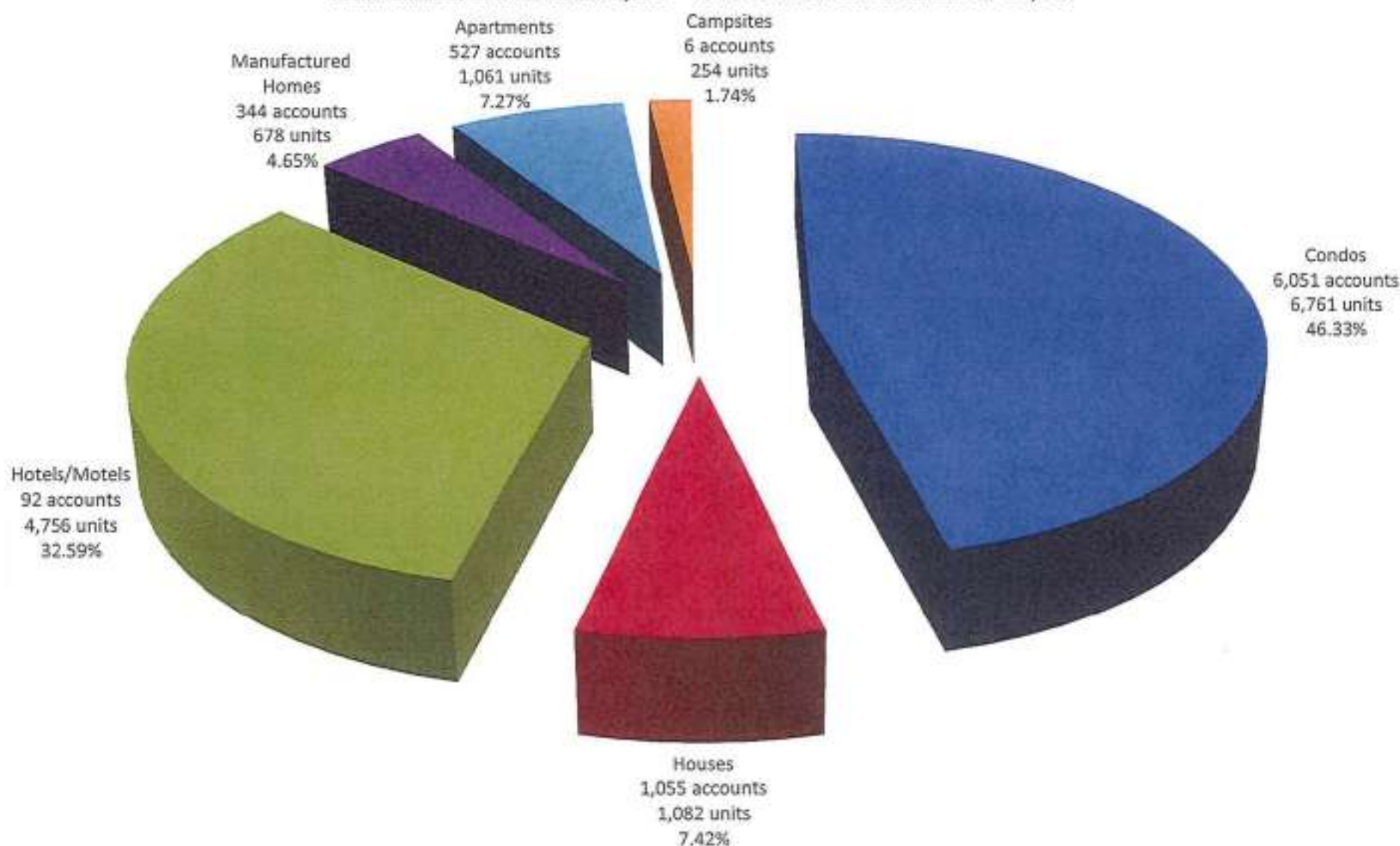


Tourist Development Council Vice Chairman John Ryan addresses the County Commission on May 21. Photo by Norman Schimmel

SARASOTA COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX

Number of Accounts and Rental Units by Type - 12/31/12

Total Number of Accounts: 8,075 • Total Number of Rental Units: 14,592



A pie chart shows the sources for Tourist Development Tax collections in the 2012 fiscal year. Image courtesy Sarasota County Tax Collector's Office

In his annual report to the County Commission, Jim Shirley, executive director of the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County, pointed out the arts also had “a spectacular season.”

His report showed that 1,248,906 people attended local arts programs during the 2012 fiscal year that were supported by county grants. The portion of that attendance made up by tourists was 42 percent, he added.

MAKING THE MOST OF THE VISITS


Following the annual reports, Commissioner Joe Barbetta asked that the TDC and the Arts and Cultural Alliance find a way to track the number of visitors to the county who eventually buy local homes or relocate their businesses to the area. “I think we’re missing that

connectivity of things that we’re not measuring,” he said.

He suggested the groups work through the Sarasota Association of Realtors to collect the information. Realtors could ask a simple question of buyers, he continued: “How did you hear about Sarasota?”

“I think the Realtors would be amenable to it,” Barbetta added.

“Excellent suggestion,” responded John Ryan, vice chairman of the TDC. Ryan is president and CEO of the Venice Area Chamber of Commerce.

Commissioner Nora Patterson said the TDC, which she chairs, would send a letter to the Association of Realtors to ask that its members compile the statistics. 



A Sarasota Ballet production was among the arts and cultural programs that received funding from the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County in the 2012 fiscal year. Photo courtesy Sarasota County



WELCOMING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Permanent shade structures have been installed over three new seating sections at the YMCA's Selby Aquatic Center. Photo courtesy of Sarasota County

HOSTING THE 2013 PAN-AMERICAN MASTERS SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIP COULD BRING UP TO \$5 MILLION INTO SARASOTA COUNTY'S ECONOMY AND LURE NEW RESIDENTS

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

With thousands of participants coming in from all over North America, the 2013 Pan-American Masters Swimming Championship is expected to have a \$5 million economic impact on Sarasota County, the chairman of the organizing committee told the county's Tourist Development Council (TDC) this month.

The event will be held June 1-13, primarily at the Sarasota Family YMCA Selby Aquatic

Center, located at 8301 Potter Park Drive (just south of Westfield Sarasota Square Mall). One open swim event will be held at Siesta Public Beach.

“*These are the kind of people you want to have coming in here looking at real estate ... because they're in a position to buy.*”

Carl Weinrich
Chairman
Pan-American Masters Championship
Organizing Committee



And because 49 percent of the participants are from outside the United States, “it’s an opportunity for us to showcase Sarasota to a whole new group of people,” Carl Weinrich pointed out to the TDC members at their

regular meeting on May 16. The event's official program says many competitors are coming from South and Central America, the Caribbean and Canada.

Weinrich is the former president and CEO of the Sarasota Family YMCA.

U.S. Masters Swimming, based in Sarasota, has collaborated with the YMCA and other area organizations to host the competition for the first time in the United States.

Referring to the scheduling of the Championship, Weinrich added, "It is a great time of year to have something like that," with high season officially over and fewer tourists traditionally in the community.

Altogether, Weinrich pointed out, 1,697 participants are expected from 24 countries; 145

of those will be competing in synchronized swimming.

Most of the Masters are not only adults but also professional people in their careers, Weinrich noted; many are doctors and lawyers. "These are the kind of people you want to have coming in here looking at real estate ... because they're in a position to buy," he added.

When he addressed the TDC this month, Weinrich said 1,648 hotel rooms and condominiums had been reserved. Those figures do not include room rentals on Siesta Key, he noted. The committee will collect those numbers after the event is over, he said, adding that he understood many people on Siesta are renting facilities for periods from two to four weeks. A number of participants are extending their stays to enjoy some vacation time after the competition, Weinrich pointed out.



Eight Olympic-style starting blocks have been added at the pool. Photo courtesy Sarasota County



A map shows the sites of the events for the Pan-Am competitions. Image courtesy Sarasota County

BETTER FACILITIES

To prepare for the Pan-Am competition, he continued, the organizing committee made use of a \$350,000 grant from the Sarasota County Commission and the \$370,000 it raised to match those funds to undertake a number of improvements at the YMCA’s aquatic center. Among those, he continued, are 850 additional seats in four new sections, three of which are covered by permanent shade structures. Previously, the facility had seating for 650, he said.

The pool, which is 15 years old, was refurbished, he added, and Olympic-style starting blocks — “the newest, hottest thing going” — were installed; they are just like those used during the 2012 Summer Olympics in London.

The eight blocks cost \$3,500 apiece, he noted.

A plate on the back of each block allows a swimmer to come off it just like sprinters do, he pointed out.

Moreover, Weinrich said, the lanes were re-striped and stainless steel dividers have been purchased to enable crews to divide the pool into three areas, “which allows us to run meets much faster.” That new feature also “gives us a big advantage in bidding [for] those meets,” he added.

“We are now doing about 10 events a year,” he said of U.S. Masters Swimming. Those are having an annual economic impact on the county of about \$3 million, Weinrich told the TDC.

Workers gutted the interior of the locker rooms, he continued, tripling the number of


SCHEDULE OF EVENTS / ITINERARIO DES EVENTOS

DAY	SYNCHRONIZED SWIMMING	SWIMMING	OPEN WATER
Sat., June 1	Duet competition (tech/free) Tech team competition		
Sun., June 2	Trio competition (tech/free) Combo routine swim through with music Free team competition		
Mon., June 3	Solo competition (tech/free)	Warm-up 4-6 p.m.	
Tues., June 4		Warm-up 4-6 p.m.	
Wed., June 5		800 freestyle	
Thurs., June 6		400 IM, Opening ceremony, 50 freestyle	
Fri., June 7		200 backstroke, 100 freestyle	
Sat., June 8		100 backstroke, 50 butterfly, 200 freestyle	
Sun., June 9		200 freestyle relay (men's, women's, mixed), 200 medley relay (men's, women's, mixed), Pan Am 2013 Social at Ringling Museum	
Mon., June 10		200 breaststroke, 100 butterfly, 50 backstroke	
Tues., June 11		200 IM, 50 breaststroke, 200 butterfly	
Wed., June 12		100 breaststroke, 400 freestyle	
Thurs., June 13			5K and 10K open water swim
día	NADÓ SINCROHIZADO	NATACIÓN	AGUAS ABIERTAS
Sábado, June 1	Competición Duet (Técnico/Libre) Competición de Equipo Técnico		
Domingo, 2 de junio	Competición Trio (Técnico/Libre) Natación Rutina con Música Competición Equipo (Libre)		
Lunes, 3 de junio	Competición Solo (Técnico/Libre)	Entrenamiento 4-6 p.m.	
Martes, 4 de junio		Entrenamiento 4-6 p.m.	
Miércoles, 5 de junio		800 Libre	
Jueves, 6 de junio		400 IM, Ceremonia inaugural, 50 Libre	
Viernes, 7 de junio		200 Espalda, 100 Libre	
Sábado, 8 de junio		100 Espalda, 50 Mariposa, 200 Libre	
Domingo, 9 de junio		Relieve (Que se determine)	
Lunes, 10 de junio		300 Pecho, 100 Mariposa, 50 Espalda	
Martes, 11 de junio		200 IM, 50 Pecho, 200 Mariposa	
Miércoles, 12 de junio		100 Pecho, 400 Libre	
Jueves, 13 de junio			5K Natación de Aguas Abiertas 10K Natación de Aguas Abiertas

U.S. Masters Swimming has announced the complete schedule for the 2013 Pan-American Masters Championship. Image courtesy Sarasota County

showers and installing new flooring, tile and LED lighting.

“We really tore it apart and put it back together,” Weinrich said of that part of the complex.

Thanks to the improvements at the Selby Aquatic Center, he continued, the national head of the YMCA was expected to come to Sarasota the following week to talk about the possibility of his organization’s holding its Masters competition in Sarasota for the next two years. 



LOVELY LOUSY LIGHTS

The lights were mostly working in part of the oaks in Five Points Park in late April. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT CHOOSES TO SEEK BIDS FOR THE BEST WAY TO GET THE LIGHT SHOW WORKING PROPERLY AGAIN IN FIVE POINTS PARK

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

One by one, they have gone dark. Vandalism and theft are among the reasons, but the true blame rests on the growing trees at Five Points Park.

In early January 2011, variable-color lights were installed in 28 trees in the park at a cost of \$81,000. The Selby Foundation chipped in \$31,000, the city added \$25,000 and the Downtown

Improvement District (DID) chipped in another \$25,000. For a while the ever-changing lights were lovely, but as the tree limbs grew, the wires snapped. Squirrels found the wires handy to gnaw on as well.

“*We have a legal obligation to do this, so let’s get the bids.*”

Dr. Mark Kauffman
Board Member
Downtown Improvement District

With the warranty running out in nine months and the repair bills skyrocketing, the DID governing board Tuesday, May 28, struggled to find a way

forward. “I think we should pause and not do anything,” said DID Chairman Ernie Ritz. “I cannot see the DID paying \$100,000 over the next three years. This is a lot of money.”

While the DID selected a winner for the original light project from among five bidders, the contract with Synergy Lighting was sole-source, because only Bradenton-based Synergy held the rights to sell and maintain the patented system developed by the Dutch electronics giant Phillips.

Unlike Christmas tree lights, each strand of the Phillips system uses a specialized “controller box” that can be adjusted to vary the

operations. For a special reception at the Sarasota Opera House across the street, for example, the DID reprogrammed the lights to show the colors of the Italian flag.

Two weeks ago, the DID board instructed its operations manager, John Moran, to come back with options to keep the lights working after the warranty runs out. On Tuesday, Moran presented his list. The first three, with rising levels of cost, carried no guarantee, and they required the DID to pay for any parts needing replacement.

Prices for the “no guarantee” proposals ranged from \$22,000 to \$44,000.



A photo shows a broken wire in one of light strands adorning an oak in Five Points Park. Photo courtesy of the Downtown Improvement District

The final and most expensive option — from Synergy — included “guaranteed replacement of parts at no additional charge,” with a cost of \$55,000 per year.

But before any maintenance contract can be put into effect, the system must be made fully operational again — at an expense ranging between \$22,000 and \$28,000.


In other words, it will cost more to keep the lights running after the warranty expires than it cost to buy and install the lights initially.

Synergy President Matt Gregg was in the DID audience Tuesday. “My advice would be to remove the color system while it still has some asset value. You could put in something static, non-growing, and replace it with white lights,” he said. “But you’ll still have to maintain the white lights.”

Gregg added that his annual maintenance contract offer with “guarantees” covered the total failure of the colored light system. “If Hurricane Zelda blew through and destroyed all the lights, I would have to replace them out of my own pocket. So I have to build my bid accordingly,” he said.

DID board member Dr. Mark Kauffman said he would prefer a contract with guarantees, but he wanted other bids as well. “We have a legal obligation to do this, so let’s get the bids,” he said.

Kauffman’s motion to that effect passed 3-1, with William Pettey and Eileen Hampshire joining him in the majority. Ritz was in the minority. Board member Tom Mannausa was absent.

Moran will consult with the city’s Purchasing Department to determine how the bid process should be conducted. 



NO GREATER GIFTS



MEMORIAL DAY PARADE OFFERS A TIME TO REMEMBER

Staff Reports

Hundreds lined the streets in downtown Sarasota on Monday, May 27, waving American flags and waving to the marchers in the traditional Memorial Day Parade.

The theme of the parade and the ceremony that followed it was *Never Forget*.

From military vehicles with veterans to groups of law enforcement officers to JROTC units to high school bands, the parade participants provided those in the crowd with an opportunity to reflect on all the men and women who had made the ultimate sacrifice for their nation.

All photos are by Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel. 

Fast Facts

- Memorial Day is a day of remembering the men and women who died while serving in the United States Armed Forces.
- Originated after the American Civil War to commemorate the Union and Confederate soldiers who died in the Civil War.
- On May 26, 1966 President Johnson signed a presidential proclamation naming Waterloo, New York as the birthplace of Memorial Day.
- One of the longest-standing traditions is the running of the Indianapolis 500, an auto race which has been held in conjunction with Memorial Day since 1911.

Source: Wikipedia





The Riverview High School JROTC group organizes itself for the parade.



School Board member Caroline Zucker (far left) accompanies the Mighty Sailor Band of Sarasota High School on the parade route.





Sarasota Military Academy cadets salute as an SMA representative plays Taps.



(From left) City Commissioners Susan Chapman and Willie Shaw, Mayor Shannon Snyder and City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo join with County Commissioner Joe Barbetta, county Chairwoman Carolyn Mason and City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell to prepare for marching in the parade.





Members of the Sarasota Police Department and the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office — including Sheriff Tom Knight and Police Chief Bernadette DiPino — join forces for the festivities.



Chief Mike Tobias (second from right, front row) marches with members of the Sarasota County Fire Department.



LIFEGUARD HOURS EXTENDED FOR COUNTY BEACHES

Sarasota County's Beach Lifeguard operational hours have been extended on all guarded beaches from 10 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. daily, the county has announced.

Those hours will run through Labor Day weekend, a county news release notes.

Sarasota County's guarded beaches are Lido, Siesta, Nokomis, North Jetty, Venice and Manasota.

For more information contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000 (TTY 7-1-1).

(Above) The brightly colored lifeguard stations on Siesta Key Public Beach are easy to spot. File photo

COUNTY COMMISSION TO CONSIDER A DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP REGISTRY

The Sarasota County Commission will hear a presentation on the morning of June 5 regarding a proposal for the creation of a county-wide domestic partnership registry.

Ken Shelin, a former Sarasota city commissioner and an advocate of such registries, told *The Sarasota News Leader* he expects the presentation to follow approval of the board's consent agenda.

"[It] will likely occur around 10 AM," he advised supporters in a May 23 email.

"We have had notable success getting registries created in the City of Sarasota and the City of Venice," he pointed out in the email. "Progress has also been made in North Port, but more needs to be done there."

Although a bill introduced in the Florida Senate to create a statewide domestic partnership registry received one favorable vote in committee this year, "[the bill] never got to the floor of the Senate and was never discussed in a House committee," Shelin continued. "Since the state legislative session ... is already over, nothing further can be accomplished this year."

It took five years for a bill to get a positive reaction in committee, he added. The bill was introduced again this year by Sen. Eleanor Sobel of Hollywood, a Democrat. The committee that heard it was one she chaired, the Children, Families and Elder Affairs Committee.

Shelin is encouraging fellow advocates of a countywide registry to wear red shirts to the



Ken Shelin/Contributed photo

County Commission meeting as a sign of their support.

"We filled the City of Sarasota Commission chambers a year ago on May 21st and kicked off a powerful start to the successful effort in the City of Sarasota," he pointed out.

The County Commission meeting will be held in the Administration Center located at 1660 Ringling Blvd. in downtown Sarasota.

Rachel Brown Hackney

NEW COLLEGE GRADUATES LARGEST CLASS IN ITS HISTORY

The largest graduating class in the history of New College of Florida — 197 students — received Bachelor of Arts degrees in a sunset ceremony Friday evening, May 24, on the great lawn along the college's scenic bayfront, New College has announced.

“With this year's commencement, New College also reached a milestone of 5,000 graduates since its founding,” a news release notes. “The first graduating class, in 1967, comprised just 47 students,” the release adds. This was the college's 47th commencement.

This year's graduates received not only diplomas, but also a challenge to advance fairness and diversity, from keynote speaker Charles E. Williams, Circuit Court judge of the 12th Circuit of Florida.

“We must look around at every gathering — including this one — and constantly ask ourselves the question, does this gathering truly represent the diversity of the community, the

state, the nation, or the world — that we live in?” Williams said. “Are we doing all we can to be inclusive to all who may seem different? To welcome new ideas, and a new way of looking at the world?”

The graduating class — the first under President Donal O'Shea — also heard from biology Professor Leo Demski, who is retiring from teaching, and from student Brittani “Brie” Mc-Lemore, selected by her classmates to provide the student address.

This year's class included six Fulbright scholars, who will travel to Germany, Sweden, Taiwan and the Czech Republic to teach or continue their studies, as well as six students who will serve as teaching assistants in France under awards from the French Embassy, and a State Department Critical Language scholar who will study in Morocco, the release points out. More than half of the graduating class is expected to enter programs for a master's degree or doctorate within a year.



New College of Florida is located on Bay Shore Road in Sarasota. Image courtesy of New College



The Bayfront Campus is home to the two historic Charles Ringling mansions, Cook and College halls. Image courtesy of New College

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION CEO ELECTED HEAD OF STATE ORGANIZATION

Community Foundation of Sarasota County President and CEO Roxie Jerde was recently elected chairwoman of Florida Philanthropic Network's Community Foundations of Florida group by members of FPN's Community Foundations of Florida Leadership Team, the Community Foundation has announced.

Community Foundations of Florida is an organization of Florida Philanthropic Network's 25 community foundation members, a news release says. They work together to promote philanthropy throughout the state.

These foundations "hold more than \$1.54 billion in charitable assets and give \$115 million each year to support the vital work of non-profits in our communities," the release adds. "Each Florida community foundation is a non-profit, tax-exempt charitable organization created by and for the people of a particular area," it adds.


The chair can be elected for two, one-year terms, the release notes. The Community Foundations of Florida Leadership Team provides overall direction and guidance on the programs and other services that FPN provides to its community foundation members.

"We're pleased to welcome Roxie Jerde as chair of Florida Philanthropic Network's Community Foundations of Florida network," said David Biemesderfer, President and CEO of Florida Philanthropic Network, in the release. "She has been a well-known community foundation leader nationally for many years, and in her two years at the Community Foundation of Sarasota County she has quickly earned the respect and admiration of her community foundation colleagues statewide. We look



Roxie Jerde is president and CEO of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County. Photo courtesy of the Community Foundation

forward to the thoughtful and innovative leadership she will bring to our community foundation network," he added in the release.

In March 2011, Jerde moved to Sarasota from Kansas City, where she served as senior vice president for donor relations and education at the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, "one of the largest community foundations in the nation and widely regarded as a thought leader in philanthropy," the release notes. 



Up to 800 pieces of mail were reported stolen over Memorial Day weekend from the post office drop box on Siesta Drive. Photo by Rachel Hackney

MAIL STOLEN FROM SIESTA DRIVE POST OFFICE

The Sarasota Police Department is working with the United States Postal Service in a case involving the theft of up to 800 pieces of mail from an external mail drop in front of the Siesta Drive (Southgate) post office, the department announced this week.

The drop box was pried open over the Memorial Day Weekend, a news release says.

Anyone who placed mail in the that box outside the post office in the 2000 block of Siesta Drive and anyone who has information regarding this crime is asked to contact Postal Inspector Doug Smith by calling 813-281-5256.

The investigation is ongoing in this case, the release adds.

REMINDERS OFFERED FOR PREVENTING VEHICLE BURGLARIES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is reminding residents to help crack down on vehicle burglaries — a crime of opportunity that can be stopped in a few simple steps.

It takes less than a minute for a thief to break a car window and snatch a purse or valuable electronics that are left in plain view, a news release notes. It takes even less time to reach into a vehicle that has been left unlocked and steal the cash in the console or other belongings.

The top five common sense tips to prevent vehicle burglaries follow:

1. Keep windows closed and doors locked. The majority of local vehicle burglaries involve unlocked cars, and the crime would not happen if the door did not open.
2. Hide your valuables. Stash your things out of sight, preferably in a locked trunk. Even

criminals know to check the glove box, under a towel or beneath the seat.

3. If you have an SUV or another model with an open cargo area, get a retractable fitted cover to keep items hidden.
4. Stow your items before you park. Experienced thieves stake out parking lots to watch for people putting items in their trunks.
5. Trust your instincts. Avoid parking in unlit or overly concealed areas. If you see someone suspicious, tell security or contact local law enforcement.

“The best defense is to not have valuables in your vehicle, so plan ahead,” the release points out. “Think about where you are going, what items you absolutely need and what you could leave at the office or at home.”



Deputies advise people parking at Siesta Public Beach to be especially cautious about locking their vehicles and stowing any valuables in the trunks. Photo by Rachel Hackney

ARRESTS MADE DURING NARCOTICS OPERATION

On May 21, four people were arrested during a warrant sweep and four more were arrested during a subsequent undercover operation in the area of Shenandoah Park, the Sarasota Police Department has announced.

The Sarasota Police Tactical Narcotics Unit was assisted by the Strategic Unit, Street Crimes Unit and members of the Patrol Division during the operation, according to a news release.

Shenandoah Park area is located east of North Washington Boulevard, between Seventh and Ninth streets in the city of Sarasota.

With the help of community partners, “the Narcotics Unit was able to target criminal activity, make arrests and create a safer neighborhood for the Shenandoah Park area residents,” the release says. “We urge the public to call the Sarasota Police Department to report suspicious incidents and criminal activity,” the release adds. The non-emergency number is 316-1201.

The following is a list of persons arrested during the May 21 operation:

- Roxanne Callahan, 34, of 632 N. East Ave., Sarasota, was charged with Sale of Cocaine within 1,000 Feet of a Park.
- Vaughn Herrera, 19, of 2105 Fifth St., Sarasota, was charged with Sale of Cocaine within 1,000 Feet of a Park.
- Gabriel Galvin, 24, of 2054 Fourth St., Sarasota, was charged with Sale of Cocaine within 1,000 Feet of a Park.
- Alan Placencia, 16, of 2174 Buffalo St., Sarasota, was charged with Sale of Cocaine within 1,000 Feet of a Park; Possession of Cocaine; and Smuggling Contraband.
- Pedro Milo, 64, of 1777 18th St., Sarasota, was charged with Solicitation of Prostitution.
- Jovany Ortiz, 18, of 912 N. East Ave., Sarasota, was charged with Obstruction of Justice.
- Stephen Moy, 37, of 2448 Wood St., Sarasota, was charged with the Purchase of Cocaine.

“An insincere and evil friend is more to be feared than a wild beast; a wild beast may wound your body, but an evil friend will wound your mind.” — *Buddha*

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WE CARE PASSIONATELY ABOUT HELPING WOMEN, MEN, AND YOUNG PEOPLE
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OPINION



COUNTY COMMISSION PLAYS SANTA CLAUS TO RICH MICHIGAN SNOWBIRDS

EDITORIAL

Most of us have had the experience of a friend or relative who, because of procrastination or lack of funds, could not offer a gift for a significant occasion. And we, being helpful, would add the person's name to the card that accompanied our gift. Only later would we discover that the "add-on" had represented himself as the principal gift giver, and that we were the supplemental givers ... a most irritating development.

That must be how the taxpayers of Sarasota County now feel. The

Sarasota County Commission gave a generous gift to the owners of a luxurious home on Siesta Key, only the givers actually were the taxpayers. But the taxpayers will not receive so much as a thank-you note from the obviously pleased property owners for their gift of free land.

“As pointed out by Commissioner Christine Robinson, the county's comprehensive plan stipulates that “the County shall not vacate road segments on waterfronts along any creek, river, lake, bay or gulf access point and shall encourage right-of-way use of these areas for coastal beach and bay access.”

The “gift” in question was the abandonment by the county of a public right of way at the terminus of Calle de Costa Rica, where it remained undeveloped north of Avenida de Mayo on Siesta Key. The landowners to the east — William and

OPINION

Katherine Baumann of Lake Orion, MI — petitioned the County Commission to vacate the right of way, since the county was not maintaining it.

The request made a lot of sense. The Baumanns' house, at 601 Avenida de Mayo, has more than 5,600 square feet of building area shoehorned into a postage stamp-sized lot of only 7,110 square feet. Their view to the north was their tiny portion of a canal. To the east, only a few feet away, was the wall of their neighbor's house. But to the west was an expansive swath of undeveloped land 60 feet wide — 20 percent wider than their own lot. If only that property were theirs, their lot would more than double in size. So they hired an agent and an attorney to petition the county for the abandonment of the right of way to them ... an innocuous way of asking the land be given as a gift.

During a meeting of the County Commission on May 21, Commissioners Charles Hines and Joe Barbetta, joined one hopes reluctantly by Commission Chairwoman Carolyn Mason, voted to give the right of way to the Baumanns. The only concession by the Baumanns was the preservation of existing easements for utilities. With a simple voice vote, the County Commission increased the Baumanns' tiny lot from 7,110 square feet to more than 15,000 square feet ... for free.

This was an abysmal stewardship by the County Commission of the people's assets for several reasons.

First, as pointed out by Commissioner Christine Robinson, the county's comprehensive plan stipulates that "the County shall not vacate road segments on waterfronts along any creek, river, lake, bay or gulf access point and shall encourage right-of-way use of these areas for coastal beach and bay access."

Regardless of the county's neglect of this parcel, it represented a significant water access point for the public. Once identified, it should have been developed to a minimum standard to serve that purpose. Particularly on Siesta Key, with its miles and miles of waterfront, public access points are proportionately scarce.

Barbetta used the rather fatuous argument that the platting of the right of way preceded the comprehensive plan; therefore, the comprehensive plan did not apply. We feel certain there are many other landowners who found themselves bound by the enactment of the comprehensive plan back in the 1970s who would have been delighted to exempt themselves because the land was there before the plan. Of course, that is not the way land-use planning works: The preparation and passage of a comprehensive plan is a means to bring order out of chaos, to protect all landowners from the deleterious effects of pell-mell over-

OPINION

development. But Barbetta is an attorney, so he should already have known that.

In fact, Barbetta and fellow attorney Hines resorted to arcane legal rationalizations to justify handing over a plum piece of real estate to a Michigan couple without considering the public's access needs or the county's purse.

Which brings us to our second concern — the loss of the people's asset without compensation.

Before the Great Recession, the property bought by the Baumanns in 2011 for \$820,000 was appraised by the county property appraiser at \$1.23 million. Thanks to the collapse of the Sarasota real estate market, the Baumanns have been the recipients of a generous reduction in taxable value of their property; it is down more than 44 percent from its peak value in 2006.


If the abandoned right of way had been offered for sale in 2006, it would have been listed at approximately \$800,000, based on the asking price of other vacant waterfront lots on Avenida de Mayo at the time. As it was, the value of the land based on the property appraiser's assessment would have been more than \$575,000. After the reductions following the decline in real estate values, the property would be appraised at only about \$280,000 today.

Hines argued that this land now would be on the tax books and would provide tax revenue. He glibly overlooked the loss of an opportu-

nity to convert a public asset worth at least \$280,000 into cash for the strapped county finances.

Also never mentioned during deliberations would have been how much the county might expect to pay for such a parcel if it was attempting to acquire land for waterfront access by the public. When the county is a land buyer, the sky is the limit among sellers. It would not be difficult to imagine that a similar 60-foot by 135-foot parcel with waterfront access would cost the county half a million dollars or more.

We cannot say we are surprised by the actions of either Hines or Barbetta. They have shown themselves consistently to be advocates of the "haves" in Sarasota County and neglectors of the "have nots." Instead, our surprise is that Mason chose to support their blatant giveaway, rather than side with Robinson and Commissioner Nora Patterson, who rightly objected to the loss of public waterfront access.

This "gift" from the Sarasota County taxpayers has cost the public dearly. The people have lost a valuable potential access point for canoeists and kayakers and other similar waterfront activities. The people have had their property purloined by their elected representatives to further enrich a wealthy landowner who resides in another state, and whose Siesta Key vacation home is worth several times the value of the average Sarasota County house. The people have been injured by this breach of the public trust, and their indignation would be justified. 

OPINION

IF THE DEAD COULD TALK



By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

COMMENTARY

Monday, May 27, was a celebration of the dead for the living, the dead who died in military uniforms — sometimes in combat; sometimes in training; sometimes in sickness; sometimes by accident. All were sons and daughters taken too soon.

If you visit a military cemetery in the United States — and you should; one is nearby — you will mostly see the graves of veterans; the survivors: We do not celebrate them on Memorial Day. We have another holiday in November for them.

To visit the graves of those we celebrate on Memorial Day, you must go abroad — to France or Belgium, the Philippines or Italy or Tunisia — to find their graves close by where they fell. Only one place holds naval graves of similar import: Pearl Harbor. Fighting sailors too often sleep in the abysmal, anonymous deep.

Monday's Sarasota parade was a grand display of patriotism, an hour-long pageant of music and marching, revolutionary poseurs and living veterans on their last legs, old machinery and new convertibles — with many people “uncovering” as Old Glory paraded in review before them time and again, and more than a few who had no idea what to do with their baseball caps when our flag passed by.

We were all there for ... what? To share the shattering loss of a son? To embrace mothers

who sacrificed their offspring to presidential ambition? To soothe the endless ache of a teen deprived of a noble dad? To wish a classmate had not fallen on a grenade to save his mates?

Do the dead care? Do they look down from some American Valhalla and say, “Thank you, Sarasota, for recognizing our sacrifice, our mistakes, our blunders, our sickness, our heroism.” Is this a day for celebration?

THE UNKNOWN GRAVES

More than a century ago, the United States mobilized to fight Spain to liberate Cuba. It was a popular war, and thousands of men enlisted. A large number would die in the swamps of Louisiana, producing the majority of deaths in the Spanish-American War: deaths by disease.

Far fewer would deploy to Cuba, but more than a thousand would die to conquer Santiago de Cuba. And suddenly the war was over. Spain gave up, and the United States became an imperial power, taking over Puerto Rico and the Philippine archipelago, plus Guam.

Thus came the first of the unknown graves. There is no American national cemetery in Cuba, and in the Philippines the graves are more recent, from World War II. As we look at America's subsequent wars, we find the black MIA (missing in action) flag still flying over the Vietnam conflict. And we can only hope that all the subsequent military activities

OPINION

— with their very, very long list of American uniformed personnel who died — saw all the bodies recovered.

We are not creating cemeteries overseas anymore, because we dare not. The graves of our warriors are safe in Normandy, row by row. Bloody sand in Fallujah and Kandahar marks the passing of American veterans in those places. Their bodies came back to Dover, DE, and then went home.

A 'SPORT' FOR THE YOUNG

For the high school or college graduates today, the economy is a total mess. When nearly half of college graduates cannot get a job, even the rigor of the military looks attractive. As Sara-

sota's high school ROTC corps trooped front and center in the parade, from squad leader to company commander, the thought was clear: "I know where they're hiring."

The U.S. Government has signed them up through the ages.

If you walk the crosses and do the math in Normandy, the Philippines or Italy, the dates of death minus the dates of birth equal teenagers — the same cohort that trooped down Sarasota's Main Street. War is a young man's game. Is this a parade to show us those we may never see again?

With the end of the draft, the number of families with a son or daughter serving in the mil-



The next generation of military leaders stands at attention: Hotel Company, Naval Officer Candidate School, Newport, RI. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Navy

OPINION

itary is a tiny percentage of the population. The burden increasingly falls on the poor. Today's enlisted ranks are sprinkled with immigrants who hope to earn their citizenship with an honorable discharge, or even earn it while staying a professional soldier, sailor, Marine or airman.

The "all-volunteer Army" has become the job of last resort for many, but not for all.

I come from a family of survivors. My dad was a combat engineer in the Battle of the Bulge; my maternal grandfather was a doughboy in the trenches of World War I. I was a paratrooper in Cold War Germany. And our son tonight is an officer candidate in Newport, RI.

Yes, I have an uncle who went down as a sailor in the Pacific and a high-school amigo who fell on a grenade, whom we buried in the prairie one Christmas long ago. Were all of you waving flags for them on the parade route? Celebrating their deaths?

Memorial Day in Sarasota has become a prequel to the Fourth of July. If you videotaped the parades, who could tell them apart? Of course there is the somber ceremony at J.D. Hamel Park on the bayfront; I, too, spoke there once and read a poem about the poppies in Flanders.

But this is starting to look a lot like Christmas, a holiday divorced from its roots. Just as the Magi's gifts became a multi-billion-dollar excuse for excess, so has Memorial Day become just a day off from work, along with "Let's take the kids to see a parade." Never mind the stark white crosses and subdued bronze plaques over the bodies of America's finest who gave their lives for their fellows.

"Raise your hand if you knew a veteran who died in the service." Once upon a time, no matter where you were, hands would go up at that remark.

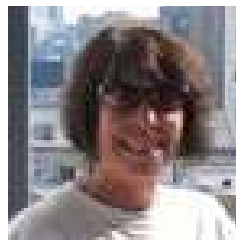
But today, nobody knows, and I wonder if anybody cares. 



Dead at 20, he was the high-school class clown. He died a hero, with medals to prove that. Photo by Mike O'Brien

OPINION

MY FRIEND, BRIAN



By Harriet Cuthbert
Contributing Writer

COMMENTARY


What is a friend? This is a question that can never be answered with one definition. To call someone your friend is to offer a personal interpretation of what you value in another person. Brian Trench was my dear friend.

I only interacted with him in his position at the post office at Davidson's Drugs in Siesta Village, but the little physical distance between us as he stood behind his counter, did not matter at all. Brian had a phenomenal memory and enjoyed connecting with people and chatting about whatever stories they shared with him. He had the art of listening down pat.

My friendship with Brian blossomed in the same way as many others did. It began with the usual small talk, grew to cover family stories, and finally evolved into the sharing of personal information between two good friends.

I could not go into the drugstore without running down to say a quick hello to him. I absolutely had to tell him what little gifts we were mailing off to my granddaughter, and I waited for his smile and good wishes. He enjoyed looking at our family photos and always wished me well in my writing and travels.

I miss Brian so much. In his own quiet way, with his warm smile and dry sense of humor, Brian was a unique and wonderful friend. He never asked for anything in return — just a friendly greeting and a little small talk were all he ever needed.

Editor's note: Brian Trench passed away on May 17 after a long career as the Siesta Village "postmaster." Memorial donations may be made to Tidewell Hospice, 5955 Rand Blvd., Sarasota, FL 34238 or to Sarasota Orchestra, 709 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, FL 34236 Attn: Development Office. 



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Sarasota News Leader welcomes letters to the editor from its readers. Letters should be no more than 300 words in length, and include the name, street address and telephone number of the writer. Letters should be emailed to Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com, with "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line. Letters actually printed will be selected based on space available, subject matter and other factors. We reserve the right to edit any letters submitted for length, grammar, spelling, etc. All letters submitted become the property of *The Sarasota News Leader*.

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MMMM, MMMM, GOOD!

Libby's Bar + Grill, located in Southside Village, is one of the Savor Sarasota participants. Photo courtesy of Libby's

DELICIOUS DINING AWAITS AT SAVOR SARASOTA RESTAURANTS

By Vicki Chatley
Contributing Writer

Longing for something different to spice up mealtime? Then you are in luck! From June 1-14 you can explore the tasty delights being served by Savor Sarasota.

More than 40 local restaurants have partnered with Visit Sarasota County to offer specially priced three-course meals. This is the perfect time to treat your taste buds to grilled ginger-Teriyaki shrimp at Ziti, the Nuevo Latino cuisine featured by Selva Grill or perhaps the French menu at 62 Bistrot. Looking for something a little less adventuresome? Then you might want to head to one of the participating culinary establishments offering seafood or American menus.

Many interesting dishes also appear among the first course and dessert selections. "Crispy Maine Lobster Tail" with chipotle dipping sauce at Roessler's Restaurant is one. Or you may be tempted by the red velvet cheesecake at Libby's Café & Bar.

No matter what flavor you prefer, this is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy the excellent cuisine served by acclaimed local restaurants at an affordable price, \$15 person for a three-course lunch and \$29 per person for a three-course dinner.

According to the Savor Sarasota website, "Sarasota has one of the highest concentrations of Zagat®-rated restaurants in Florida,"

and many of those that received high marks from satisfied patrons are among the participants in Savor Sarasota Restaurant Week. They include Roy's Hawaiian Fusion, Café L'Europe, Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar, Michael's On East, Mozaic and Hyde Park Prime Steak House, to name just a few.

Lynn Hobeck Bates, communications manager for Visit Sarasota, provided background information during a telephone call with *The Sarasota News Leader*. Now in its eighth year, Savor Sarasota began as a one-week venture in June that provided a "great opportunity to get people in the door during the slow season," Hobeck Bates commented. It was successful and garnered "lots of attention," and has expanded to two weeks.

Sarasota is not the only community offering this program, she noted. "It's a trend in culinary" promotion.

"Every restaurant serves dinner, but not all have lunch," Hobeck Bates explained. And every restaurant "must be a dining partner" with Visit Sarasota.

The restaurants are located from Lakewood Ranch to Venice, in downtown Sarasota and on the waterfront, as well as on Siesta and Longboat keys and St. Armands Circle.

My sister — lucky woman! — had an opportunity to attend a preview tasting for Savor Sarasota. After sampling the delicious offerings from the various restaurants, she imme-



Fleming's and Roy's are located at the intersection of U.S. 41 and Siesta Drive. Photo by Rachel Hackney

diately made reservations for a family birthday dinner. Reservations are suggested; not only will local residents be taking advantage of this opportunity, but there are more than 1,600 visitors in Sarasota for the Pan-American Masters swimming championship who will be dining out. (See the related article in this issue.)

The [Savor Sarasota website](#) has a complete list of participating restaurants (and chefs) with their phone numbers and additional information. On Wednesday, May 29, the special menus had been posted by many, but not all establishments. Hobeck Bates expects the remainder will be online by the beginning of Savor Sarasota on June 1.

Bon appetit! 



Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County, and Jeff Maultsby, the county's director of business and economic development, greeted participants in a Savor Sarasota preview on May 16. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Summer never tasted so good!

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WHAT'S COOKING

STORIES

TALK TO US

HAPPENINGS

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WHAT'S COOKING

Award-Winning Savor Sarasota Restaurants

REVERIE

LEARN TO LET NATURE COME TO YOU

Story and Photos

By Fran Palmeri

Contributing Writer




I am on a nature walk. The others go ahead and cross the creek. I take a breather and stay behind a bit.

The scene unfolds. A Little Blue Heron fishes at my feet, hardly noticing me.

Mottled Ducks cruise by, setting up shock waves of greens and golds and reds.

Off in the distance, a Limpkin appears, a shy creature not given to human company.

Too soon the group returns. The reverie is broken. The actors disappear. 

(Above) A Limpkin appears on the path.



A Florida Mottled Duck swims serenely.



A Little Blue Heron is looking for food.



ASK 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.

TALK OF A MYSTERY BIRD ON SIESTA LEADS TO SOME SLEUTHING

Dear Readers,

As you know, there is nothing I enjoy more than a fine mystery or a good game. Guessing games are among my favorites, although I do wish it were “Two Hundred Questions” rather than a mere 20.

Even with a photo, bird identifications can be a bit tricky; without a photo, quite challenging.

Over the past few weeks, while dozing on my bowered oak branch, I have overheard descriptions of yet another never-before-seen bird species on Siesta Key.

It all began with two women walking back from the picnic and BBQ area by the bay's inlet saying, “Have you ever seen such a beautiful bird?” Well, flattery gets me every time and everywhere, particularly in my feathers, which all fluff up to the point where I could be mistaken for a Great-horned Owl! Then, I heard, “I've never seen a bird with a blue beak before.” I quickly checked my reflection in a nearby window and intently as I peered at it, sadly, I could find no traces of blue.

This is a scene that is still playing itself out: fisherfolk and picnic-goers — both adults and children — all wondering aloud what blue-beaked bird seen in the inlets at the bay, on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico and at frog ponds could possibly be more beautiful than an Eastern Screech-owl (That's me!).

I shall begin my research with the blue beak. A couple of weeks ago, I nearly made a feathered onager of myself in mistaking our Florida Wood Stork for the roc, that fabled bird of the Arabian Nights. I am not making that mistake again! I have narrowed this one down to the fabulous phoenix. In [Greek mythology](#), a phoenix is a long-lived bird that is cyclically regenerated or reborn. Associated with the sun (meaning this bird is diurnal), a phoenix obtains new life by arising from the ashes of its predecessor (probably a species of grilled chicken, as in *poulet rôti*, genus *Purdue*).

If you look carefully at the photo of the Phoenix I have included, so precisely detailed and beautifully illustrated by Friedrich Johann Justin Bertuch (1747-1822) for *Bilderbuch für Kinder*, the first thing that leaps out at you is its blue beak. The second is the ground on which it stands, i.e., a shoreline, or possibly Siesta Key's Point of Rocks. Third, you can see the flames rising from the gas BBQ grills behind the bird. QED, a Phoenix! I ran this well-researched identification past the Sarasota Audubon Society and received the following response: “Dear Otus, Guess again!”

Well, it is back to the drawing board, and once again I would like to give readers a few tips on how to proceed in identifying a bird so I do not have to. Essentially, quoting Sherlock Homes, “Eliminate the impossible and deter-

mine the truth from what remains, however improbable.”

Habitat, behavior, size, shape, color and season (i.e., breeding or non-breeding): These are the criteria you need to consider. You cannot go by “blue beak” alone or you will end up with the fabled phoenix and make a featherless fool of yourself; but keep the blue beak in mind as a final identification clue. By the way, the correct term for a bird’s beak is “bill.” I know people are not very fond of bills, but

I assure you that this is a bill of a different color!

Now, let us sequentially filter the little information we have:

1) **Habitat** (and time of day). The bird wades on the shores of the bay, Gulf and ponds while fishing in shallow waters. This eliminates waterfowl who dabble and dive for fish in deeper waters, such as the male Ruddy Duck, whose bill is a lovely blue during breeding season, as well as the Common Loon, whose beak has



A phoenix drawn by Friedrich Johann Justin Bertuch, completed for Bilderbuch für Kinder. Photo from Wikimedia Commons

a gray-blue tinge. All passerines (small songbirds) and all seabirds — Gulls, Terns, Pelicans, Cormorants and Anhingas — are out of the picture. This is obviously a shore bird and a diurnal one, as it is mostly spotted in the morning, late afternoon and early evening. That eliminates nocturnal shore birds such as the Black-crowned Night Heron. (Yes, they are quite common on Siesta Key, yet rarely seen!) So, we are down to an Egret or another species of Heron.

2) **Behavior.** This bird is comfortable enough around people to continue fishing and dining without being scared. Obviously, it is a bird we are used to seeing around here; one indifferent or inured to people's presence. However, it does not intrude upon people's activities. That fact most likely eliminates the Great Blue

Heron and the Great Egret, as they do not hesitate to hang around fisherfolk or people at the grills while putting on their forlorn, but highly effective, "I've never been fed in my whole life" act.

3) **Size.** The bird is large enough to be noticed while it is wading and fishing, and it allows itself to be seen. This eliminates the small shy, difficult-to-spot Green Heron.

4) **Shape.** No clue, but the beak must be large enough for people to notice it; so we are still down to Egrets and Herons.

Now we turn to another clue, "Beautiful." That eliminates the Yellow-crowned Night Heron, often seen mornings and evenings fishing our shores — and a bird sporting a pale bluish-gray bill. But people would not exclaim,



The dragonfly's presence is helpful in understanding the size of the Tricolored Heron. File photo

“I’ve just seen the most beautiful bird!” Rather, they would comment that they had seen an odd bird, somewhat stocky; and perhaps they would go as far as to elaborate and say it had a yellow head and a feather in its cap.

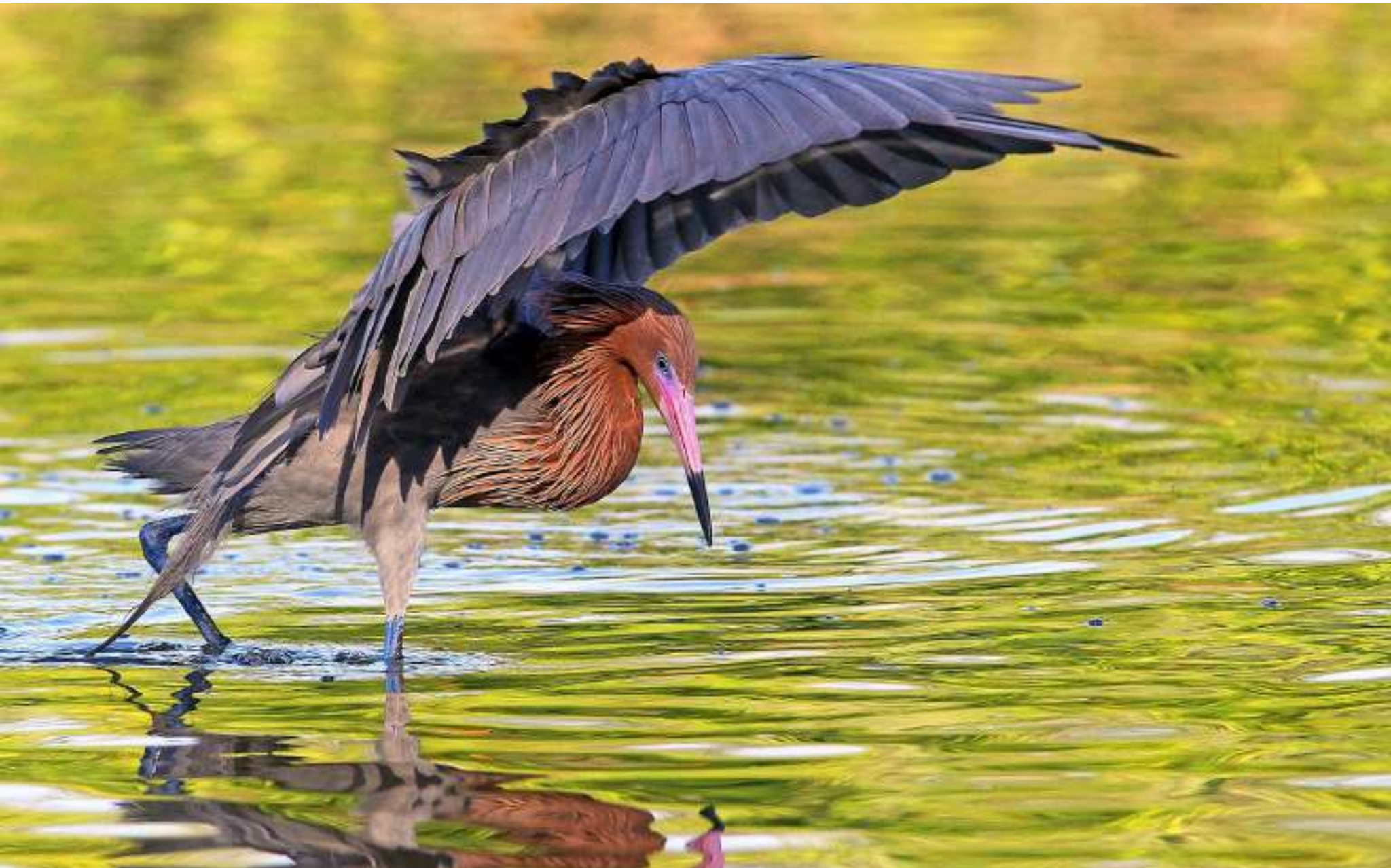
5) **Color.** Blue beak. And it simply has to be a blue that jumps out at you! It cannot be dark navy or pale Alice blue. Hmmm ... There is no such thing! Ibis have red bills. The Great Egret and Great Blue Heron have bills of black to yellow to orange; the Snowy Egret’s is black. The Tricolored Heron’s bill is yellow and black and the Little Blue Heron’s is a pale slate with black.

In breeding season, the rare Reddish Egret, (which actually does grace our Siesta shores) displays a pink and black-tipped bill. It is a

pink so shockingly vibrant that you would think this bird had broken into a manicurist’s polish supplies and liberally painted itself!

OMG! Eureka! Mystery bird solved! Why is a bird beautiful, but not outstandingly so, in November and beautiful and vividly blue- (or pink-) billed by April and May?

6) **Season!** We are now near the end of the mating, breeding and brooding season for shorebirds, when all birds are still arrayed in their spectacular displays. Bills and legs gradually displayed vibrant colors; graceful airy aigrettes sprouted from birds’ backs; and distinctive head plumes emerged — anything to make the birds more pleasing to a potential mate.



A Reddish Egret hunts for a snack. Photo courtesy of Rick Greenspun



And for tips on how to attract the Reddish Egret of your dreams, here are some [excellent ones](#) on pink nail polish, *très chic* and *au courant*. Well, they must be hot if all three are currently out of stock!

Thus, we are now left with only two possibilities — the Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*) or the Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*). In breeding season, both birds' bills are a lovely Maya blue, close to an azure blue. This Maya blue pigment was used extensively in the artwork of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. Maya blue is highly resistant to degradation. Works created with this color remain bright after 500 years of exposure to sunlight and rain. This is not true of these herons' blue bills.

That striking blue will fade and change after breeding season — which means that by mid-autumn you might not be able to recognize them again!

My guess is the Tricolored Heron. John James Audubon was very taken by this bird's beauty and grace. Now, many of you readers are not going to plunk yourselves down with a copy of his *Ornithological Biography*, so I shall take a snippet from it so you can see how, through his poetic prose, he manages to pack in a wallop-full of information — from the bird's

diet and hunting methods to its napping and roosting habits — while also conveying to us its airy gracefulness:

“I never see this interesting Heron, without calling it the Lady of the Waters. Watch its motions, as it leisurely walks over the pure sand beaches of the coast of Florida, arrayed in the full beauty of its spring plumage. Its pendent crest exhibits its glossy tints, its train falls gracefully over a well defined tail, and the tempered hues of its back and wings contrast with those of its lower parts. Its measured steps are so light that they leave no impression on the sand ... See, it has spied a small fly lurking on a blade of grass, it silently runs a few steps, and with the sharp point of its bill it has already secured the prey. The minnow just escaped from the pursuit of some larger fish has almost rushed upon the beach for safety; but the quick eye of the Heron has observed its motions, and in an instant it is swallowed alive. Among the herbage yet dripping with dew the beautiful bird picks its steps. Not a snail can escape its keen search, and as it moves around the muddy pool, it secures each water lizard that occurs. Now the sun’s rays have dried up the dews, the flowers begin to droop, the woodland choristers have ended their morning concert, and like them, the Heron, fatigued with its exertions, seeks a place of repose under the boughs of the nearest bush, where it may in safety await the coolness of the evening. Then for a short while it again searches for food. Little difficulty does it experience in this; and at length, with the last glimpse of day, it opens its wings, and flies off towards its well-known roosting-place, where it spends the night contented and happy. “



A Tricolored Heron looks for lunch. File photo

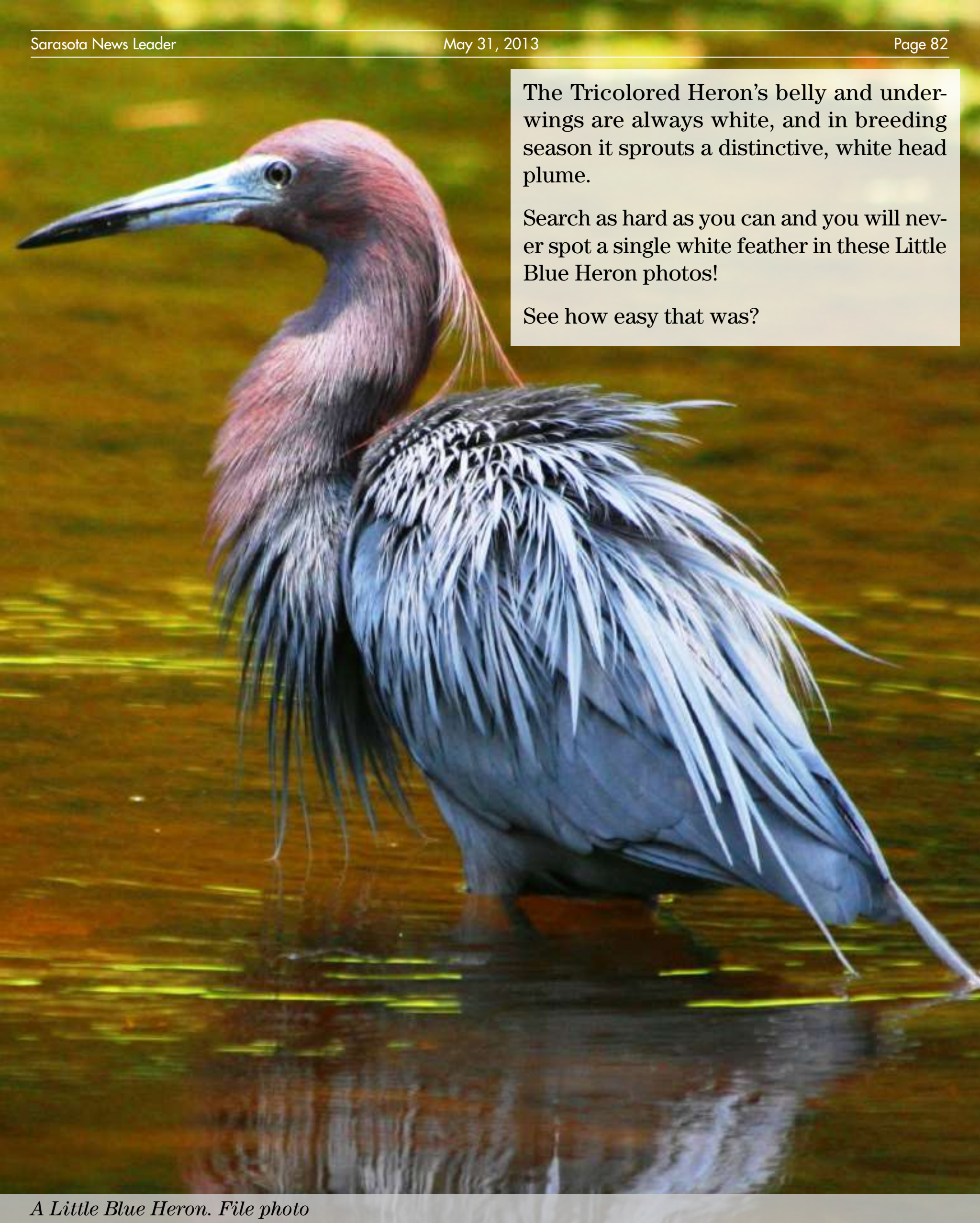


A Tricolored Heron in flight. File photo

How do you distinguish between two Herons which at first glance appear so similar? It is sooo simple! I am presenting you with photos of the adult herons, taken during breeding and non-breeding season, so you can see for yourselves how to tell them apart.



A Little Blue Heron in flight. File photo

A photograph of a Little Blue Heron in its breeding plumage. The bird has a long, sharp, blue beak and a head with a mix of blue and white feathers. Its neck is covered in long, wispy blue and white feathers. The body is covered in long, flowing blue and white feathers that give it a shaggy appearance. It is standing in shallow water, and its reflection is visible in the water below.

The Tricolored Heron's belly and underwings are always white, and in breeding season it sprouts a distinctive, white head plume.

Search as hard as you can and you will never spot a single white feather in these Little Blue Heron photos!

See how easy that was?



Well, now that you know everything you need to know about identifying birds, kindly name today's mystery bird!

Uh oh! I notice that our mystery bird is laughing at you. Perhaps I should present a helpful clue: It is NOT a Great Egret!



Our beloved *Ardea Alba* (“alba” means “white” in Latin) has black legs, and these black legs stay black; they never change from black, whatever the season.

Otus 



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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THE HIGHWAY PATROL IS SEEKING THE VEHICLE THAT STRUCK A PEDICAB AND INJURED THREE PEOPLE BEFORE FLEEING THE SCENE; HURRICANE SEASON ADVICE ISSUED; NAPOLI'S TO BE TRANSFORMED



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

After a hit-and-run incident in the early morning hours of May 18 sent a Sun Ride Pedicab driver and two female passengers to the hospital, the Florida Highway Patrol has been asking the public's help in locating the vehicle involved.

On May 24, the FHP issued a statement saying it had identified the vehicle as a 2004 or 2005 midnight blue Scion TC.

An email I received from Glen Cappetta, owner of Sun Ride Pedicab, said FHP staff told him, "This vehicle has extensive damage from



*A Sun Ride Pedicab driver chats with a man alongside one of the free golf cart taxis on Siesta Key.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Siesta Seen

the center of the hood around the right front fender (quarter panel) and door area along with a missing mirror assembly and front air dam.”

Cappetta added, “My driver Randy and his two (2) passengers were all transported to Sarasota Memorial hospital with minor lacerations, serious road rash, and bumps and bruises. Fortunately, no serious injuries were sustained by the 3 victims, but the medical bills are starting to add up.”

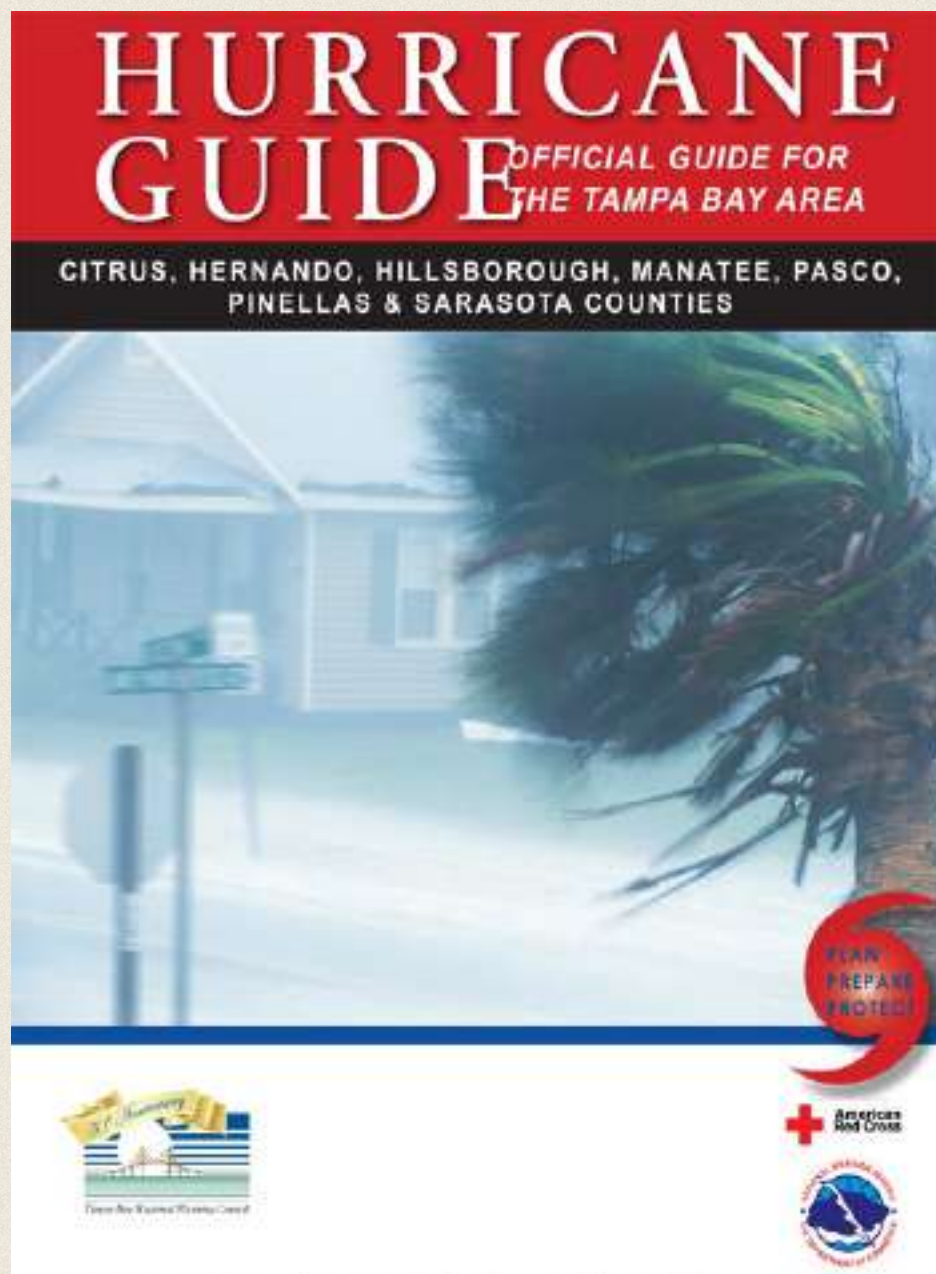
Another email I received on May 28 said the driver is still unable to return to work because of injuries.

The incident happened about 2:15 a.m. on May 18 in the 6300 block of Midnight Pass Road on Siesta Key. Although I tried calling the FHP both on Tuesday and Wednesday this week, I had no luck getting a copy of the accident report; a staff person told me a supervisor had not cleared it for release yet. I was the second person who had called on Wednesday morning, she added.

Anyone with information about a vehicle that matches the description released by the Highway Patrol should contact FHP at 492-5850 or Cappetta at 343-3400. You also can leave a message on the Sun Ride [Facebook page](#).

HURRICANE SEASON

Avid weather watchers — especially those of us on the Gulf and Atlantic coasts — know only too well the significance of June 1: Hurricane season officially begins.



The Sarasota County Hurricane Guide is free. Image courtesy of Sarasota County

If you never have had the pleasure of watching the county’s emergency management chief, Ed McCrane, talk about preparations for storm season, you should make a point of doing so. Although I have seen his programs over the past several years, I never cease to enjoy them.

He had another rapt audience on May 2 when he addressed about 20 Siesta Key Association members. The man has an excellent sense of humor, which helps keep everyone’s attention for the serious points.

Siesta Seen

“I hope the Indian spirit thing is real,” he said at the outset of his May 2 remarks.

He was referring to one theory about why Sarasota County mostly has been spared. Seminole Indians reportedly used to travel to our part of the coast in ages past to bury their dead, and those spirits ward away hurricanes. I imagine that story won even more believers when Hurricane Charley took its sudden hard right turn into Port Charlotte in 2004, after forecasters had been certain it would come ashore at Sarasota or Tampa.

“Charley was the closest call in recent memory,” McCrane pointed out, though he had slides in his PowerPoint presentation to show hurricane damage Sarasota suffered in the 20th century, including 1921, when a storm that struck Tarpon Springs wreaked havoc on Sarasota’s bayfront.

Since recordkeeping began in 1851, he added, about 150 storms have come through “Hurricane Alley,” which includes Florida.

McCrane also showed the damage Hurricane Andrew did to Homestead in 1992. “You would have thought a bomb had gone off,” he said.

In the aftermath of Andrew, state building code changes dramatically improved the integrity of structures and their ability to withstand high winds, he continued.

However — especially for those who live on or near the water — storm surge remains a major concern. Using a county graphic, he illustrated how much of Sarasota County would be underwater if a Category 5 hurricane struck. “God forbid we ever have this,” McCrane said, “because this is the worst-case scenario.”

He cautioned, though, that even minor storms could create problems with storm surge.



A graphic from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shows the general location of 'hurricane alley.' Image courtesy of NOAA

Siesta Seen

People on Siesta Key last summer saw that even a tropical storm off the coast could produce ill effects, as Debby flooded some neighborhoods.

McCrane emphasized that 1 cubic yard of water weighs 1,700 pounds, which is another reason storm surge is such a concern.

Everyone's TRIM — or county tax — notice has the evacuation zone printed on it for each specific property, he noted. "Run from the water; hide from the wind" is what emergency management officials advise, he added.

Although Siesta has some high-ground areas, McCrane noted, bridges do not always survive storms. That is why people should evacuate low-lying areas when such an order is issued, he pointed out, adding that people who stay behind and live through a major storm almost always say, "I'll never do that again."

He advised everyone, "Make sure you know where your safe room is ... but we ask people not to take that chance. ... A hurricane is just a bunch of tornadoes twisting around."

Moreover, McCrane stressed that when winds reach the 45-50 mph level and someone calls 911, asking to be rescued, "Nobody's coming." Winds that high are too serious a threat to emergency responders' safety, he said. Although he has worked in emergency operations centers when first responders have chafed at the restraint — with call after call for help stacking up — standing regulations do not permit them to take the risk.

McCrane also asked that when people evacuate an area, they let someone in their family know what their plans are. When news reports mention people unaccounted for after a natural disaster, he noted, many of the missing are simply folks who fled an area but never bothered to notify anyone. Therefore, emergency response teams have no way of knowing whether they have been killed.

McCrane also drew some chuckles when he talked of people who had "ridden out" storms in their homes and then refused to open their doors to first responders checking for survivors. In such cases, he said, the emergen-

FREE IPHONE AND IPAD APPS FOR HURRICANE SEASON



WeatherCaster



American Red Cross



The Weather Channel



Forecast.io (webapp)

Siesta Seen

cy crews have no choice but to break down doors and enter those homes, to be certain all inside are OK.

Each year, Sarasota County issues its [Hurricane Guide](#). McCrane encouraged anyone with questions about preparations he should make — including the recommended assembling of storm kits — to check the guide. Information also is available on the county's [website](#).

A NEW STORE

It has been no secret for a while now that Napoli's restaurant, located at 5242 Ocean Blvd., is slated to be transformed into new retail space with apartments/condos on three upper floors.

Mark Smith, of Smith Architects on the key, is the architect of record for the project.

According to the Sarasota County Building Department, Smith is working for Jim Syrett and M. Jay Lancer, who jointly own the 5,147-square-foot parcel. Smith has applied for a special exception to permit three "transient accommodation units in the Commercial General/[Siesta Key Overlay District] district."

The owners have proposed remodeling the restaurant/bar and building a Federal Emergency Management Agency-compliant, flood-proof structure "with the less intensive use of retail on the ground floor," the permit documentation adds.

The open area on the front of the building also would be enclosed.



The owners of Napoli's restaurant in Siesta Village plan to turn it into retail space with apartments or condos on three upper floors. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

No word yet on the timeline for the project — or when the special exception request will be heard. Stay tuned.

HOPE FOR MORE STAFF

In perusing the County Commission email recently, I found a note from Tom Polk, director of planning and development services, to Commissioner Nora Patterson — who lives on Siesta — regarding some code enforcement issues.

One special item of interest: Polk wrote, “As part of the upcoming 2014 budget discussions in June, Planning and Development Services will be requesting the [commission’s] consideration of additional staffing levels for the Code Enforcement division. We look forward to working with the community to enhance our codes and processes.”

More Code Enforcement staff is what Siesta organizations have been seeking since last year. The island’s primary Code Enforcement officer, John Lally, has pointed out on many an occasion that violations of the noise ordinance are not the only problems he handles. Illegal home rentals, parking issues, signs that do not conform to the zoning code — the list goes on.

AND SPEAKING OF NOISE ...


Regular readers will remember that when Code Enforcement Officer Kevin Burns addressed the Siesta Key Association in early March — during a discussion of noise prob-



The design of the exterior of the Terrace East condominium complex in Siesta Village has boosted the level of sound coming from Blasé Café across the street, research shows. File photo

lems — he mentioned that the positioning of speakers in Blasé Café and the design of the Terrace East condominium complex across the street had contributed to significant noise problems for the Terrace East residents.

As a result of research he had undertaken, Burns said he was working with Blasé Café owner Rami Nehme to adjust the location of the speakers.

Polk’s May 7 email to Patterson included the following news: “As part of multiple inspections of [Blasé Café] during the month of April, the speakers were found to be facing the correct direction and the officer also made inspections to ensure that entertainment was completed by 10 p.m. Violations were not found on inspections by Code Enforcement or the Sheriff’s Office.” 



The Hermitage Artist Retreat is located in Englewood. Photo courtesy of The Hermitage

NEW STARS RECEIVE HERMITAGE SUMMER RESIDENCIES

The Hermitage Artist Retreat, along with its partner, the Florida Alliance for Arts Education (FAAE), has announced the winners of the 2013 State Teachers Artist Residency (STAR) program.

Rocky Bridges, a Polk County visual artist; Ramiro Malagon, a Broward County composer; Kristen Rodriguez, a Broward County writer; Melanie Webb, a Duval County writer; and Beverly Williams, a Polk County visual artist, are all Florida arts educators who will spend four weeks of their summer vacations as artists-in-residence at the Hermitage, a news release says.

“This is our third summer hosting Florida artists who work during the year as arts educa-

tors,” Bruce E. Rodgers, executive director of the Hermitage, noted in the release. “These are our only residencies that have an application process, administered by FAAE. It’s open to all Florida arts teachers and we are very proud to say it’s been a very successful program, which has brought us some very talented Florida artists who also happen to be teaching our children.”

Rocky Bridges teaches sculpture, painting, drawing and art history to 12th-graders at Harrison School for the Arts in Polk County. “He discovered the world of visual art at an early age, stimulated by being able to combine art categories such as painting and drawing, sculpture and photography, even sometimes including poetry,” the release adds.



Ramiro Malagon teaches music in grades K-5 at Discovery Elementary in Broward County. "His artistic passion includes guitar, both contemporary and classical, along with composition," the release says. "He began playing at age 12, and continued with formal training at the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music."

Kristen Rodriguez is a media specialist for grades K-5 at West Hollywood Elementary School in Broward County. More than a teacher and librarian, "Rodriguez sees herself as an orator, writer, filmmaker, editor and role model who can help inspire life-long learning," the release continues. Her specific area of interest is historic fiction, it adds; she has already had one play presented by the Renaissance reenactment group, the Adrian Empire. Her goal over the summer is to complete a full-length play.

At Douglas Anderson School of the Arts in Duval County, Melanie Webb teaches creative writing to ninth-graders and junior fiction and critical theory to students in grades 9, 11 and 12, the release continues. She believes, and tries to compel her students to see, writing is a force "that inspires one to look more closely, think more clearly, elaborate more fully and consider more openly," the release adds. She is looking forward to her time at the Hermitage to use her artistic energy to develop several short stories and at least one poem, the release notes.

Beverly Williams teaches visual arts in grades 6, 7 and 8 at Union Academy Magnet Middle School in Polk County. "She considers herself a pastel artist but would like to explore a new body of work this summer called *Vignettes of Life*," the release says. The collection she envisions incorporates found objects with sym-



Beverly Williams/Contributed photo

bolic meanings; the setting is a circus stage, the release notes.

The STARs will be at the Hermitage from Monday, July 15, until Sunday, Aug. 11, Rodgers continued. "All have expressed interest in networking with other artists and some have even mentioned the opportunity to collaborate with their peers," he added.

A free public program has already been scheduled for Friday, Aug. 9.

BACK FOR THE SUMMER: FST IMPROV

FST Improv will return for another summer season, kicking off on Saturday, June 8, at 8:30 p.m. in the John C. Court Cabaret, Florida Studio Theatre has announced.

It will continue through Aug. 24.

“Come help the FST Improv troupe create characters and sketches on the spot,” a news release says. “Not even the performers know what to expect — until it happens!”

Florida Studio Theatre has been home to the improv troupe for over a decade, the release notes. “This season brings back some oldies, but still goodies,” the release adds: founding members Christine Alexander, Tim Beasley and director Rebecca Hopkins.

“Improv is my life,” said Alexander in the release. “I love switching up our shows and becoming one with the funny forces of Sarasota. We are constantly learning from our audience and I think that they also learn a little about us.”

“FST Improv has two new members, Patrick A. Jackson and Jake Mills, ready to send you home in stitches,” the release continues. “The troupe’s veterans were so welcoming and warm — like a big hug from your grandmother after she had been out in the sun too long,” Mills remarked in the release. “They are all so inspiring and I always try to land a funny joke the way they do.”

“Every few minutes there is an opportunity for the audience to participate by giving us the subject of the scene,” Hopkins noted in the release. “It’s the only show in town where you get to decide what happens next — again, and again and again — all from the comfort and safety of your seat (unless we pick you to come up on stage).”

Tickets, which are \$12 per person, may be purchased from the FST box office in person, by phone at 366-9000 or online at www.FloridaStudioTheatre.org. FST is located in historic downtown Sarasota at 1241 N. Palm Ave.



The FST Improv Troupe will be performing in June. Photo by Maria Lyle, courtesy of Florida Studio Theatre

GRANT AWARDED FOR FREE JAZZ CONCERTS IN VENICE

The Gulf Coast Community Foundation recently awarded the Jazz Club of Sarasota a \$3,000 grant to fund the organization's free Joy of Jazz series held four times a year in Centennial Park in downtown Venice, the Jazz Club has announced.

"The series has been a popular fixture of the area arts and cultural scene for six years, attracting hundreds of area music fans for each concert," a news release notes.

"We're honored to be awarded this grant," says Bill Beckman, a Jazz Club of Sarasota board member and producer of the series, in the release. "These funds help us support local musicians and also offer family-friendly, free entertainment to residents and visitors. It's a perfect way to spend a weekend afternoon, enjoying the great melodies, rich harmonies and soulful rhythms of jazz," he adds in the release.



Kitt and Mike Moran were among the performers in Joy of Jazz concerts in the past season. Contributed photo

The 2012 Joy of Jazz series featured Ron Kraemer & the Hurricanes, David Pruyn and The Paramount Swing 6, the Venice High School Jazz Lab and Kitt and Mike Moran.

“The Gulf Coast Community Foundation has consistently shown its commitment to supporting our region’s wealth of great jazz artists through the Joy of Jazz series,” notes Beck-

man in the release. “The Jazz Club of Sarasota shares that commitment by keeping jazz thriving in our area and adding to our reputation as a leading jazz destination.”

For more information about the Jazz Club of Sarasota, call 941-366-1552, or visit www.jazz-clubsarasota.org.

SARASOTA CHORUS OF THE KEYS AWARDS TWO SCHOLARSHIPS

The Sarasota Chorus of the Keys, the city’s oldest continuous arts organization, has awarded to two local high school students the Sheridan E. Brown Memorial Barbershop Scholarships, totaling \$3,000, the organization has announced.

The scholarship program was started in the late 1970s to help graduating seniors with their college expenses in the field of music, a news release points out.

Winners of this year’s scholarships are as follows:

- Andrew Pluta, who attended Pine View School and is planning on attending the State College of Florida (SCF), the release says. He has been in many vocal and instrumental groups at Pine View and in the community, and he plans to join several vocal groups at SCF. His scholarship was in the amount of \$1,000.

- The winner of a \$2,000 scholarship was Jordan Sanders, who is graduating from Braden River High in Manatee County. Jordan was in many school and community music activities as both a vocalist and an instrumentalist, the release continues. He will attend Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he plans to major in songwriting and minor in music management.

“We are delighted to give this award to these two outstanding local students,” said John Hegener, chairman of the Chorus Scholarship Committee, in the release. “This is just another example of how the Chorus gives back to this community in meaningful ways and furthers the art of singing. These two boys have very bright futures and we look forward to seeing all they accomplish.”

For more information please visit www.ChorusoftheKeys.org. 

The Sarasota News Leader

No-Nonsense Reporting



Chazzan Cliff Abramson and Rabbi Geoff Huntting attend a dinner for new members. Contributed photo

TEMPLE SINAI HONORED FOR OUTSTANDING OUTREACH PROGRAM

Temple Sinai has been named one of eight winners of the [2013 Union for Reform Judaism Belin Outreach and Membership Awards](#).

The awards have been designed to encourage and honor Reform synagogues with outstanding outreach and membership programs that actively welcome and integrate those new to Judaism, a news release says.

The eight winners were awarded \$1,000 each through the generosity of David Belin, the first chairman of the Joint Commission on Outreach and Membership for the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), the release adds. Nine other congregations received honorable mentions for their exceptional programs. All winners and honorable mention honorees will be recognized at the [Union for Reform Judaism](#)

[Biennial](#) in San Diego in December, the release notes.

Temple Sinai received the award for its Gift Membership Program, the release continues. This initiative targets families with school-age children and leverages a one-year complimentary temple membership with social connections and involvement in Jewish learning to engage both the children and the parents, the release points out.

Each Gift Member family is hosted by a temple family for the year, and special events are held for the families as well as just the parents.

Fifteen families accepted Gift Memberships this year, the release says. As a result of this outreach program's success, the temple's board of trustees has decided that all Jewish

families enrolled in The Gan, the temple's preschool, will be offered complimentary temple memberships, the release adds.

"We realize that the earlier a family gets involved in the congregational life of a temple, the sooner they begin to build lasting relationships," said Marc Rosen, vice president of membership, in the release. "Our Gift Membership program is the little nudge that many young families need to help them make the decision to become valued members of our Temple Sinai family."

"For the past 18 years, the Belin Awards have encouraged Reform congregations to find innovative ways to welcome and engage those who might find a home in our congregations, bringing new life to our communities," said URJ Senior Vice President Rabbi Jonah Pesner in the release. "The winners exemplify the Jewish *mitzvot* of *ahavat ger*, loving the stranger and *keruv*, drawing near those who are far."

For more information, visit <http://urj.org/cong/outreach/belin/>.

TEMPLE EMANU-EL'S BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS CELEBRATES PETS

Temple members and community guests brought their beloved pets to Temple Emanu-El for the synagogue's fifth annual Blessing of the Animals on May 18.

The only event of its kind in the Sarasota-Manatee Jewish community, Temple Emanu-El's Blessing of the Animals welcomed 38 dogs and three hamsters for a morning of thanking God for the gift of animal companionship, a news release says. Pets and humans alike enjoyed water, snacks and socializing before listening to a talk given by Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman about animals in Jewish tradition.

Each pet then received an individual blessing from Glickman and had a family pet portrait taken by photographer Alice Cotman.

"It was a wonderful event and will long be remembered," commented Joy Finnimore, who brought her dog, Lady, for a blessing, the release notes.

Blessing of the Animals was co-chaired by Alice Cotman, Rabbi Elaine Rose Glickman and Kim Sheintal.

For more information about Temple Emanu-El programs, call 379-1997. 



Rabbis Brenner and Elaine Glickman, Alice Cotman, and Kim Sheintal led Temple Emanu-El's Blessing of the Animals. Contributed photo



Brenda Sax brought Boomer to be blessed by Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman at Temple Emanu-El on May 18. Contributed photo



Joy Finnimore's dog Lady received a blessing from Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman at Temple Ema-nu-El's "Blessing of the Animals" on May 18. Contributed photo



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

31
MAY

WSLR presents David Smash CD Release Party

May 31, 8 p.m., Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court. Admission: \$5. Information: 894-6469 or WSLR.org.

31+
MAY

Noah Racey's Pulse

Through June 16 (times vary), FSU Performing Arts Center, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail. Tickets: \$20 to \$72 Information: 351-8000 or Asolo.org.

31+
MAY

Florida Studio Theatre presents The World Goes 'Round

Through June 23 (times vary), Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave. Tickets: \$18 to \$42 Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org.

31+
MAY

Landscapes, Mindscapes and Dreamscapes

Through July 20, Allyn Gallup Contemporary Art Gallery, 1288 N. Palm Ave. Free admission. Information: 366-2454 or AllynGallup.com.

07+
JUNE

Dabbert Gallery presents Summer Showcase

June 7 through Sept. 30, 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Admission: free. Information: 955-1315 or DabbertGallery.com.

08
JUNE

Double Author Event for Young Teens

June 8, 11 a.m., Ransom Riggs, author of *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*, and Tahereh Mafi, author of *Shatter Me* and her new book, *Unravel Me*, will be at Bookstore1Sarasota, 1359 Main St., for a dual signing. Only books purchased from Bookstore1 are eligible for signing. For more info: www.bookstore1sarasota.com or 365-7900.

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

**LET'S SEE ... WAS IT LEFT AT
THE BIG ROCK, OR RIGHT?**



SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS



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.