

THE SARASOTA

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News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida

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SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida

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Welcome

After last week's rush of stories, I was worried we would have little left to offer this week. Silly me.

In fact, we had so much going on, it was more difficult than usual to decide the order in which to present our stories. That is a problem we much prefer, of course, to feeling we have little of interest to grab your attention.

And while I used to be torn about how big a play to give a topic you might have read about in another publication, I finally worked myself out of that frenzy. We prefer to think that our reporters give you a better — and definitely a more thorough — take on current events than you will find elsewhere. Thanks

also to the gifts of our wonderful production manager, Cleve Posey, we believe firmly that you will not find those stories presented in a more eye-catching fashion anywhere else. (In fact, when I was speaking with a county staff member for the first time this week, she mentioned she was aware of the *News Leader* and especially commented on the looks of it. More kudos for Cleve.)

Back to this week's issue: From the latest community discussion on how to handle the homelessness issues to City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo's run for the County Commission to a malodorous sludge problem to fraudulent flipping's effects on a Sarasota neighborhood to the latest on Warm Mineral Springs, we truly have ranged widely. Throw in some politics and the hurricane season, and you will not want for variety.

Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor and Publisher





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SIGN OF SUPPORT

Paul Sutton, chairman of the Community Alliance Homeless Committee, addresses residents and local leaders on Wednesday in the County Commission Chambers on Ringling Boulevard. Photo by Roger Drouin

A NEW COMMITTEE VOTES TO RECOMMEND THE HIRING OF HOMELESS CONSULTANT DR. ROBERT MARBUT, WITH CITY MANAGER TOM BARWIN SAYING THAT WOULD CLEAR THE WAY FOR 'ACTION MODE'

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

Conversation at the July 31 meeting of the Community Alliance of Sarasota County's new Homeless Committee ranged from how many shelters are needed in the county to whether a temporary homeless facility should be allowed on the border of Gillespie Park to the need for affordable housing and a working wage. The breadth of the discussion showed the complexity and challenges revolving around Sarasota's growing homeless population.

The main item of business, however, was

whether to hire Dr. Robert Marbut as a consultant to help local officials as they work on all those issues.

Marbut is an expert who has tackled homelessness for three decades. He visited Sarasota for two days earlier last month, going on tours and participating in meetings — including a forum sponsored by the Gulf Coast Community Foundation and the Community Foundation of Sarasota County. During his brief stay, it was evi-

“ *I think we need him.* ”

Tom Pfaff
Chaplin
Sarasota Ministerial Association

dent Marbut had earned the respect of local leaders.

On Wednesday, residents, nonprofit service providers, homeless advocates and local officials attending the committee session agreed that Marbut should be paid \$16,500 for four months of consulting services in the county. By a show of hands, nearly all of the 50-plus people in the County Commission Chambers on Ringling Boulevard in Sarasota indicated their support.

With additional costs for travel, the total expense for Marbut's consulting assistance will be about \$40,000.

"I'm glad they are recommending Dr. Marbut, but we're not going to wait [to seek solutions]," said Paul Sutton, a retired Sarasota Police Department captain and chairman of the Homeless Committee.

Sutton added that the Salvation Army, for example, just implemented a Front Porch program, partnering with the Sarasota Police Department to provide space at the Salvation Army facility in the Rosemary District to enable homeless people to gather safely.

Many of the folks utilizing that program previously spread out on sidewalks along Central Avenue or Five Points Park, Sutton said. The



Homeless people gather along Central Avenue earlier this year. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Salvation Army's space is sheltered, too, making it especially welcoming during spells of inclement weather.

The Salvation Army is also relocating people enrolled in programs such as drug rehabilitation, so other persons needing emergency shelter do not have to wait for it. Further, temporary emergency housing designed for families will open later this month, an initiative Marbut proposed during his visit to Sarasota.

Sutton pointed out that the issue of homeless children in the community has gone unaddressed for too long. That is one reason local officials are trying to work quickly with the

Salvation Army to open the emergency family housing.

"If there is a family of four without a home, they don't want to wait for four months to see the results of a study," Sutton said.

With the committee Wednesday having endorsed the hiring of Marbut, the City and County commissions will likely act soon on the recommendation. The County Commission will return Aug. 20 from its summer recess.

After conversing on July 24, County Administrator Randall Reid and City Manager Tom Barwin decided to collaborate in preparing a



People sat on the sidewalk bordering Five Points Park when the city had the park fenced off for improvements in May. Photo by Norman Schimmel

joint agreement to hire Marbut, who lives in San Antonio, TX. Sarasota County staff then sent an email to town officials in Longboat Key, Venice and North Port, asking if they would be open to joining the process and contributing funding.

For the past six months, Barwin has been a proponent of bringing Marbut in to work on Sarasota's homelessness issues.

"I think we are ready to pull the trigger," he said in an interview with *The Sarasota News*

Leader the day before the committee meeting. Hiring the consultant would clear the way for officials to move into "action mode," Barwin added.

In the meantime, Sutton said he would call Marbut and let him know there was an "overwhelming vote to bring him here."

The committee is scheduled to continue meeting monthly. The next session will be held at 10 a.m. Aug. 15 at the Sarasota County Administration Center on Ringling Boulevard.



Valerie Guillory sits on a bench at her homeless shelter near Gillespie Park. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

SERVICE PROVIDERS WEIGH IN

Tom Pfaff, a chaplain with the Sarasota Ministerial Association, spoke in favor Wednesday of hiring Marbut as a consultant.

Pfaff had traveled to Pinellas County to tour Safe Harbor, a homeless transformation facility operated by the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office. Marbut was instrumental in that center's opening several years ago.

"I left there absolutely amazed to see that all seven of Dr. Marbut's guiding principles were instilled in people working there," Pfaff told those attending the committee meeting. "I left that facility knowing in my heart that man can bring a community together and give us a continuum of care. I think we need him."

David Klimut, special projects developer for the Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness, said he thinks Marbut can foster more welcoming situations for homeless people who use local services.

"It will be a better client experience and will lead to better results in the long run," Klimut noted.

Resident Ira McNut, who said he was living with his father, talked about how he almost became homeless recently. McNut added that bringing in an objective outsider would be the best way to launch an initiative to improve the homeless situation across the county.

There was one speaker, however, who thought Marbut might not be needed at this point.


Dr. David Sutton, director of programs/facilities at the Salvation Army, agreed that Marbut's "expertise in our opinion is unquestioned." However, Sutton added, Marbut acknowledged that Sarasota leaders are already addressing many of the most important issues. Therefore, it might be premature to pay for his consulting services. The priority should be making sure local homeless advocates are all collaborating.

"Can we bring everyone together?" David Sutton asked. "I think we can."

CONTROVERSIAL PLANS

Valerie Guillory, of the nonprofit Trinity Without Borders, also spoke at the meeting. Guillory said she had talked with Marbut about her controversial plans to provide temporary shelter for the homeless on a 4-acre parcel off U.S. 301 near Gillespie Park. Guillory was interested in gaining his advice, to help her operate the shelter more smoothly.

Opponents of Guillory's plan have voiced the view that a permanent facility run by an established nonprofit would be a better option. Nonetheless, Guillory remains committed to her plan, she said, even if city officials have not welcomed it with open arms. She hopes to keep operating the facility — with or without Marbut's assistance and with or without local support.

"I don't care who tries to run me out of this town, my mission is in my heart," Guillory added, referring to critics. 



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A RUN FOR COUNTY COMMISSION

*Paul Caragiulo has put his hat in the ring to move from the City to the County Commission dais.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

CITY COMMISSIONER PAUL CARAGIULO PLANS TO SEEK THE DISTRICT 2 SEAT OCCUPIED BY COUNTY COMMISSIONER JOE BARBETTA

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo will be a candidate for the Sarasota County Commission in 2014, aiming at the seat being vacated by his friend, Joe Barbetta, who is limited to two terms.

Caragiulo will open his campaign account next week to legally raise and spend money. Candidate qualification will not begin until next year. He will face Pete Theisen in the Republican primary a year from now.

No other candidates have announced they are running for the seat.

While he has been pondering the move for a while, Caragiulo said his decision jelled earlier this month after the budget workshops and passage of the Laurel Park Overlay District. He voted against both the proposed millage rate and the overlay plan but was in the minority.

“I’m a hard-core conservationist type. I’m not going to do anything to threaten my urban experience in my home, and I want to be able to drive 30 minutes east and go bird watching. There is room for everybody in this.

Paul Caragiulo
Commissioner
City of Sarasota



Afterwards he sat down with Barbetta. “I didn’t want to go head-to-head [in a campaign] with people with an awful lot of money, people with a different set of values,” Caragiulo told *The Sarasota News Leader*. “Talking it through, he didn’t think that was the case.”

It is likely Barbetta will be a political “rain-maker” for Caragiulo, opening doors to fund-raisers and influential people. “Joe has been an enormous part of my short public service,” Caragiulo added. “I talk with him nearly every day. I bounce ideas off him.”

Barbetta told the *News Leader*, “It will be a tough race, [but] he’s bright, highly ethical and has a great work ethic. ... He’s not afraid to tackle problems.”

Barbetta added of Caragiulo, “He understands economic development, and he understands we need to grow our tax base.”

Caragiulo was elected to the Sarasota City Commission in 2011.

He is 38 years old; married, with two daughters. With his brothers, he manages three restaurants in town.

ON THE FATE OF THE CRA

Two former city commissioners already sit on the Sarasota County Commission. Both Nora Patterson and Carolyn Mason are two-term veterans of the city board, but both have expressed skepticism in the past in regard to continuing the Community Redevelopment Agency. The county now contributes about \$4 million into the city’s downtown, ostensibly to fight blight.

The county is already budgeting that \$4 million annual contribution into its general fund for the fiscal years after the CRA’s 2016 expiration date. Patterson leaves the board in 2014, also term-limited out. Mason’s second term ends in 2016. It is unclear when the county will address the issue of whether to extend the CRA. If Caragiulo is elected in November 2014, he could be casting a vote on the issue.

“I think the preservation of [the CRA] is pretty set. I have confidence in that group,” he said. “What we don’t know is about [the county share of] the increment. We do know the issue



Paul Caragiulo (middle right) listens to remarks during a City Commission meeting in 2012. Photo by Norman Schimmel



City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo and a Sarasota Police Department officer compare noise readings on St. Armands Circle in December 2012. Photo by Norman Schimmel

is going to come up in South County. Englewood and North Port are interested [in establishing one or more CRAs].”

THE URBAN SERVICE BOUNDARY

Land development is a major responsibility of the County Commission. There has been agitation to amend the county comprehensive plan, and especially the component called the [2050 Plan](#).

Developers want the latter’s restrictions eased. Opponents see any easing as a broken promise.

“I’ve spent a couple of days thinking only about this,” said Caragiulo. “It’s a comprehensive plan; it’s a living document. Even if 2050 is working, doesn’t mean you don’t look it at.”

“I’m a hard-core conservationist type. I’m not going to do anything to threaten my urban experience in my home, and I want to be able to drive 30 minutes east and go bird watching. There is room for everybody in this.”

“Land use can get complicated,” he noted. “You have the power side and the practical side and the compromise angle.”

LESSONS FROM ‘THE NOISE’

Caragiulo’s singular initiative on the City Commission has been a reexamination of the so-called Noise Ordinance. Starting last year he called together downtown stakeholders — musicians and residents alike — to evaluate the city’s attempt to regulate recorded and live music, especially in the evening.

“It had to be done,” he said. “It was exhausting, but I would do it again.”

One result has been a study conducted by the Sarasota Police Department of enforcement over the past 90 days. That study is in the City Attorney’s Office; it should be ready for discussion at the City Commission’s Aug. 19 meeting.


Caragiulo did not use city staffers for research or evaluation. “I tried to absorb as much of the process by myself, and not send staff on a goose chase.”

His lesson from the experience? “Control the information from the beginning. Make sure you have a consistent message so people can’t put words in your mouth. And make sure everybody is paying attention to the details,” he said.

TOP ISSUE NOW

“I cannot imagine any issue more pressing than doing something about the homeless,” Caragiulo told the *News Leader*. “There are things we can do.”

He took a caravan of diverse stakeholders to see the Safe Harbor homeless facility in Pinellas County. “The county has some responsibility to help the homeless,” he said. “It’s not that complicated. You need to show people it can work.”

“We’ve been looking at this like a disaster deployment,” he added. “What we need to address is the housing issue. I’m optimistic. We have to start the process somewhere.” 



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IN THE WAKE OF FRAUD

Mold grows on the front of the home at 1762 Southpointe Drive. The 'mega-home' was once owned by Rich Bobka, who was indicted on 34 counts of home-flipping fraud. Later, his brother, George Cavallo, owned the house. All photos by Roger Drouin

CONVICTED OF FRAUD, FLIPPERS ARE GONE FROM ONE QUIET NEIGHBORHOOD WEST OF U.S. 41, BUT THEY LEFT BEHIND BARREN AND DESOLATE REMINDERS OF THEIR PAST

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

Marilyn Gerkin's neighborhood has been hit hard. But it is not just the economic slump that has impacted this west-of-the-Trail Sarasota County neighborhood.

The streets in this quiet area of canal-front homes are still reeling from the direct aftermath of one of Southwest Florida's largest home-flipping fraud rings. Four of the houses that sit vacant were once owned by some of the masterminds of the flipping

ring known as the Bobka/Adams fraud conspiracy.

"This used to be a nice neighborhood," Gerkin said.

The convicted flippers are gone, but they left behind barren and desolate reminders of their past.



Right now there is a lot of uncertainty.

Josh Sankes
Resident
North Holiday Drive



Residents here, such as Gerkin, point to now empty homes — which once belonged to people convicted of illegally and vastly in-



The balcony at 1762 Southpointe Drive is host to a straggling vine.



Rich Bobka once owned the home at 1762 Southpointe Drive.

flating the value of more than 100 waterfront homes in Sarasota — as a hurdle to restoring this neighborhood to its former ambiance. At least four of the people convicted in the fraud case resided in waterfront homes on these streets.

The ripples have spread widely, with at least a dozen more houses — not owned by the people convicted in the case — either the property of banks or of other persons and sitting empty.

According to court records, Rich Bobka and Craig Adams provided lenders false information to obtain loans. Between 1997 and 2008, Adams, Bobka and their associates completed more than 150 fraudulent real estate deals, borrowing more than \$200 million from area banks.

The “mega-home” at 1762 Southpointe Drive is the largest neighborhood reminder of a decade of fraud that was plotted, in part, from

this small community west of the Tamiami Trail. A year after Bobka was indicted on 34 counts of fraudulent home-flipping, the spacious waterfront house he once owned sits vacant, with mold growing along the façade and vines covering its balcony.

According to Sarasota County property records, several years before he was convicted, Bobka — identified as one of the two ringleaders of the fraud conspiracy — transferred the property to Paula Hornberger and his brother, George Cavallo. In 2012, Cavallo and Hornberger were both convicted of participating in fraudulent deals with Bobka and Adams.

One street south, at 7767 N. Holiday Drive, Bobka’s father, George Bobka Sr., owned and lived in a canal-front home that sits vacant. It has been covered with a blue tarp for at least a year, Gerkin said. The father pleaded guilty to participating in fraudulent deals with his sons and other members of the conspiracy.



The home at 7767 N. Holiday Drive has been covered with a tarp for at least a year. It was once inhabited and owned by George Bobka Sr., father of Rich Bobka.



Neighbors say the interior of the home at 7767 N. Holiday Drive has likely deteriorated as a result of a roof that has been leaking for a year.



The driveway entrance at 7767 N. Holiday Drive has become so overgrown, neighbors have tried to trim it back.

Bank of America foreclosed on the house at 7767 N. Holiday Drive in April of this year, according to Sarasota County court records. The property is slated for a Sept. 6 sale at auction, according to the Sarasota County Clerk of Circuit Court & County Comptroller Office.

Joseph Dirocco, who was sentenced to a two-year prison sentence in October 2012, still owns a home at 7748 Holiday Drive and 7736 Holiday Drive, according to county property records. Dirocco is a Sarasota businessman who also pleaded guilty to the illegal deals linked to Rich Bobka and George Cavallo. Dirocco lived in one of the homes.

In 2007, Dirocco was charged with lying about his income to obtain a mortgage for 7736

Holiday Drive. At the time, Dirocco said his monthly income was \$25,000, when “In, truth and fact as the defendant then and there well knew, he had a monthly income substantially less than \$25,000,” according to paperwork filed in U.S. District Court in Tampa in December 2010.

‘THAT’S HOW BAD IT IS’

Making matters worse, a new marina at the site of the old Hidden Harbor Marina has been planned for more than 11 years, yet the development, plagued by delays, remains unfinished. The marina is less than half a block from Gerkin’s house.

For Gerkin, that project and houses such as the empty one at 7767 N. Holiday Drive, cov-



The marina at North Holiday Drive and U.S. 41 has been in the works for 11 years, but it is still not completed.

ered with the blue tarp, are an impediment to the neighborhood's turnaround — even as the rest of the Sarasota area's real estate market rebounds.

“I joke that someone can put up a sign at the end of the street that reads: ‘House for Sale. Your Choice,’” Gerkin said last week during an interview with *The Sarasota News Leader*. “That’s how bad it is.”

Gerkin added that she is frustrated and just wants to see her neighborhood filled with well-kept, occupied homes — not dotted with For Sale signs.

“We have some people on the street who really do care, and we just want it to look nice,” Gerkin said.

Gerkin notes that other neighborhoods throughout the county were hit first by the real estate crash then, more recently, by price inflation. But her community is unique because of its ties to fraud from the recent boom times.

“The area was in the heart of the Adams/Bobka flipping scandal, and we have watched the value of our neighborhood decline, even though the taxes are quite high,” Gerkin wrote in a July 22 email to county commissioners.

Gerkin has called the county's Code Enforcement Office a few times after some of the yards in front of her neighborhood's vacant properties have become overgrown. She said county officials have been helpful, but there is only so much Code Enforcement can do.

A LOT OF UNCERTAINTY

It took some time for the full depth of the Bobka/Adams conspiracy to come to light.

Josh Sankes said when he and his wife moved into his home on North Holiday Drive in 2010, he knew the area had seen some turnover, because he had found several short-sale listings. However, he saw no indications at the time that some of the former residents had been involved in a massive home-flipping conspiracy.

Even when Sankes began to hear stories, he did not dwell on them.


“I didn’t really think much of it,” Sankes said. “There were all these rumors, but I didn’t understand the whole thing until I read about it in the paper,” he added.

There is no neighborhood association for North Holiday Drive. But since some of the empty homes have new owners, Sankes and Gerkin have talked about re-establishing one that was active about 10 years ago. Sankes, who has two young children, would like to see more families move in.

“Right now there is a lot of uncertainty,” Sankes said. “I think once some of these houses get sold, it will be a different story.”

“We are trying to make it a nice place for families to live,” Sankes pointed out, “a normal, nice neighborhood.”

But for the time being, Sankes said he is just waiting for new owners to move into the vacant houses.

“Living on the water, you don’t expect this,” he added. 

This may take a while.

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'IT STINKS'

Molly Bowen talks about the problems with sludge on her father's property. All photos by Cooper Levey-Baker

THE DAUGHTER OF A PROPERTY OWNER ALONG THE MYAKKA RIVER VOICES CONTINUED DISMAY OVER SLUDGE ON THE SITE AS THE COMPANY THAT DID THE DUMPING CALLS A HALT TO IT

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Molly Bowen plants a shin-high butterfly-print rain boot into the long, winding driveway that leads up to her father's Myakka City property: "Squirch." The sole sinks down into the dark gray muck that has collected. Below the top layer of shimmering slime sits the driveway's normally light brown sand, visible in the footprint left behind when Bowen lifts up her boot.

She shows me more as we tour the 3.5-acre

plot. The Myakka River, which has flooded over its banks after days and days of rain, rushes by in a big loop around the Bowen land. There's plenty more of that muck, as well as pools of foamy stagnant water. I can't smell anything amiss, but Bowen says today's scent is "very mild" compared to what it was a couple of weeks ago. The stench is so bad it gives her headaches, she says, and while she planned to spend the summer out

“ This is not normal decaying river leaves. ”

Molly Bowen

here amid the peaceful trees alongside the river, she can't imagine doing that now.

"Personally, my sense of smell is almost shot, so I don't really have much of a sense of smell," says Terry Mackintosh, who owns the property just upriver from Bowen's. "My wife, though, she said it really stank." The muck on Mackintosh's land showed up after a flood that slowly drained away. "It was just black," he says of the residue.

"This is not normal decaying river leaves," points out Bowen, gesturing to the muck. But what is it?

Months ago, Bowen reached out to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, as well as to the Manatee County Natural Resources Department, to complain about the

stuff, which, she charged, was originating from a "biosolids application site" just upriver. The EPA defines biosolids as "the nutrient-rich organic materials" left over after treating sewage, sludge that can be "safely recycled and applied as fertilizer to sustainably improve and maintain productive soils and stimulate plant growth."

Since the late 1990s, the Terra Ceia "Residual Management" company Appalachian Material Service has dumped such sludge on 891 acres located along M & J Road in Myakka City, just across the street from the river. Responding to Bowen's complaints about the muck on her property, both the state Department of Environmental Protection and Manatee County inspected the site and found *bupkus* — nothing wrong.



The sludge is easily visible, in a variety of states.

According to a report written by Manatee County Senior Environmental Specialist Scott Browning, he observed a “silt/muck layer” and “floating scum/debris” on the Bowen property, but he told Bowen no elevated levels of nitrogen, phosphorous or fecal coliform had been detected in the river. The report says there were “several other possible sources/causes upstream in the river” that could be responsible for the muck.

Browning also investigated the sludge site and found “no evidence” that biosolids were “flowing off of the property.”

“We didn’t find any evidence at all that any biosolids were making their way into the river,” Browning tells *The Sarasota News Leader*. There was “no clear source” for the Bowen muck.

Department of Environmental Protection Biosolids Inspector Craig Little also visited the site, on both April 30 and May 23. A field report from his April 30 trip includes a reference to a “Mild Odor,” which he notes came “from Biosolids out of the city of Oldsmar.” The May 23 field report indicates no such concerns.

Appalachian “voluntarily purchased two 55 gallon drums of Malodor Odor Counteractant to help reduce any potential future odor complaints,” Department External Affairs Manager Ana Gibbs explains in an email.

Sludge permit holders are required to keep detailed logs of what they’re dumping, as well as the “results of all soil and ground water monitoring,” according to the most recent permit issued to Appalachian. Gibbs says the process ensures that testing is done before the biosol-



ids are deposited: “We don’t want it to reach the groundwater, so what we require is they measure it up front.” Department staff then inspects those logs to make sure companies are complying.

But that permit is a moot point. Appalachian abruptly announced it was abandoning its MJ Ranch site in June. According to a letter the company sent to the Department of Environmental Protection, the last load of sludge was “received” June 5, and the site will be fully dismantled by the end of August.

“We were totally in compliance,” an Appalachian representative tells the *News Leader*. She declined to give her name. “We’ve been on that ranch for a long time, and we’ve never had any problems,” the employee adds, but the property owners’ “phones were blowing up” with complaints, and the company decided to stop the dumping.

That’s not what the landowners say, though. Terry Schrader, whose family has owned the ranch since 1978, says complaints have been minimal: “We had one lady who called because she was concerned, but I have not fielded any telephone or any kind of written complaints from anyone out there.”


Schrader, who runs a real estate company in San Antonio, FL, says it was Appalachian’s decision to stop the project. “We’ve had a great relationship with them over the course of time,” he notes. His family’s property now covers 3,300 acres.

Browning says the Appalachian permit was the last of its kind in Manatee County. New state rules approved in 2010 created “slightly more strict” setback requirements that some companies have decided they don’t want to



meet. “The state-of-the-art with biosolids is to dry it and create a product that can become fertilizer,” says Browning. That’s what Manatee County does, using landfill gases to fire the kiln that dries the sludge. That’s an “expensive process,” Browning acknowledges, but biosolids can also be safely deposited in lined landfills.

Appalachian may have ceased its Myakka City operation, but Bowen still wants to know what’s sitting on her father’s property. He’s 79 years old and has planned to leave the property to Bowen and her sons. However, with conditions as they are today, she won’t let her kids or grandkids near it.

“It’s nasty,” she says. “It’s not right. It gives you a headache, an instant headache. You feel like you’ve got to have a mask on.” Gibbs points out there are no reasons to be worried about human health near the river, but Bowen’s not convinced: “It stinks to me.” 



JUSTICE FOR SOME

A TIGER BAY CLUB PANEL DEBATES THE TRIBULATIONS OF THE NON-WEALTHY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN THEIR ENCOUNTERS WITH THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Thursday's Sarasota Tiger Bay Club program asked, "Is money the key to the courthouse?" The answer from the panel: Pretty much, yep.

Public Defender Larry Eger, who moderated the panel, steered the talk away from criminal litigation and toward the civil side, managing a discussion that touched on everything from high filing fees for court action to pro bono help for the poor. But one refrain was

common: We are not adequately funding our courts.

Money for organizations that provide legal assistance to low-income folks facing issues such as foreclosure and divorce has dropped

significantly in recent years, said Legal Aid of Manasota Executive Director Linda Harra-dine. Legal Aid is one such group, a 501(c) (3) organization dedi-cated to providing pro

“*Money's not the solution for everything, but one of the key solutions for all of this is better funding.*”

John Patterson
Attorney

”

bono help to indigent clients. The nonprofit logged more than 5,700 free hours on behalf of clients last year, helping in cases involving domestic violence, guardianship, veterans facing homelessness and more.

Legal Aid relies heavily on the Florida Bar Foundation, a nonprofit that receives its funding principally through interest earned on trust accounts, but panelist and Foundation President John Patterson of Sarasota said his organization has taken a big hit in recent years. Income is way down from where it was in 2007, when it was around \$70 million.

“I believe our funding to Legal Aid of Manasota is about half of what it was at the peak,” he added, and the situation “has placed a huge



Public Defender Larry Eger. Photo courtesy of Florida Studio Theatre



The historic Sarasota County Courthouse is part of the Justice Center in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel


strain on organizations all over the state.” Patterson said Legal Aid helps the “working poor,” not just “welfare mothers,” and Harra-dine outlined how the ceiling for help from her group is a \$30,000 income for a family of four. Some of Legal Aid’s clients can’t even read, she pointed out; they need help just understanding the documents they are required to file.

Panelist and Circuit Court Judge Lee Haworth praised area lawyers for their volunteer work, especially in housing litigation. “We had this tsunami of foreclosures hit us,” he said. “We saw a number of people who needed representation because of the way the banks were processing these cases.”

Haworth also brought up the issue of skyrocketing filing fees: \$400 for any civil action, \$1,900 for a foreclosure, etc. He added that he’s heard cases of people who want to divorce but can’t afford it, and landlords who pay unwanted tenants to leave rather than pony up for an eviction proceeding.

And those expenses are just to file the paperwork. Add on top of that lawyers’ fees — Patterson said his firm’s average hourly rate runs between \$200 and \$450 — and payments to expert witnesses and court reporters, and the bill can quickly mushroom. Patterson noted that a typical lawyer’s bill for a civil trial would be \$20,000 to \$25,000.

Patterson criticized Gov. Rick Scott, as well as Congress, for refusing to better fund legal aid programs. “Money’s not the solution for everything, but one of the key solutions for all of this is better funding,” he said, arguing that the \$400 million Congress sets aside is little more than “a drop in the bucket.”

“We don’t want to fund the court system,” Eger put it bluntly. “We put it on the backs of those who can’t afford it.” Toward the end of the program, he acknowledged the panel hadn’t produced any “profound” solutions, but he made it clear the current system isn’t working: “The ones who can afford it least are paying for it.” 



John Patterson. Photo courtesy of Livingston, Patterson, Strickland & Siegel P.A.



Judge Lee Haworth. Photo courtesy of the 12th Judicial Circuit



DEPARTMENT CHECK-UP

Wastewater treatment is among the responsibilities of the county's Environmental Utilities Department. Images courtesy Sarasota County

THE 90-DAY REVIEW OF THE COUNTY'S BELEAGUERED ENVIRONMENTAL UTILITIES DEPARTMENT WILL RESULT IN THE PRESENTATION OF A REPORT TO THE COUNTY COMMISSION

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

Over the next three months a national consulting firm will undertake a review of Sarasota County's beleaguered Environmental Utilities Department.

A countywide procurement scandal came to light in 2011 after a utilities manager was charged with receiving illegal gifts from a contractor awarded millions in bids for sewer repair work for the county.

"Unfortunately this is one of the areas

where the procurement problems came up," County Administrator Randall Reid said in an interview with *The Sarasota News Leader* this week.

The department was again thrust into controversy and the media spotlight after a billing mix-up in which customers were charged for backflow valve inspections that were never conducted. The refunds due were then sent to the wrong customers.

“ I expect changes. That is the whole point of doing this.

Randall Reid
Administrator
Sarasota County



After the two fiascos, several of the department's managers resigned — including the utilities director.

Reid hopes the review and a resulting report will help guide new managers that will soon be hired by the county.

“We are recruiting for those vacancies,” Reid said. “We want to give the new people some kind of game plan.”

The goal for the review, he added, is to provide “a guide for future managers” in the Environmental Utilities Department.

After 90 days, consulting firm Management Partners, working with county officials, will wrap up the review and present a report to the county commissioners, said Reid, who called for the utilities department review. The review will cost \$98,000.

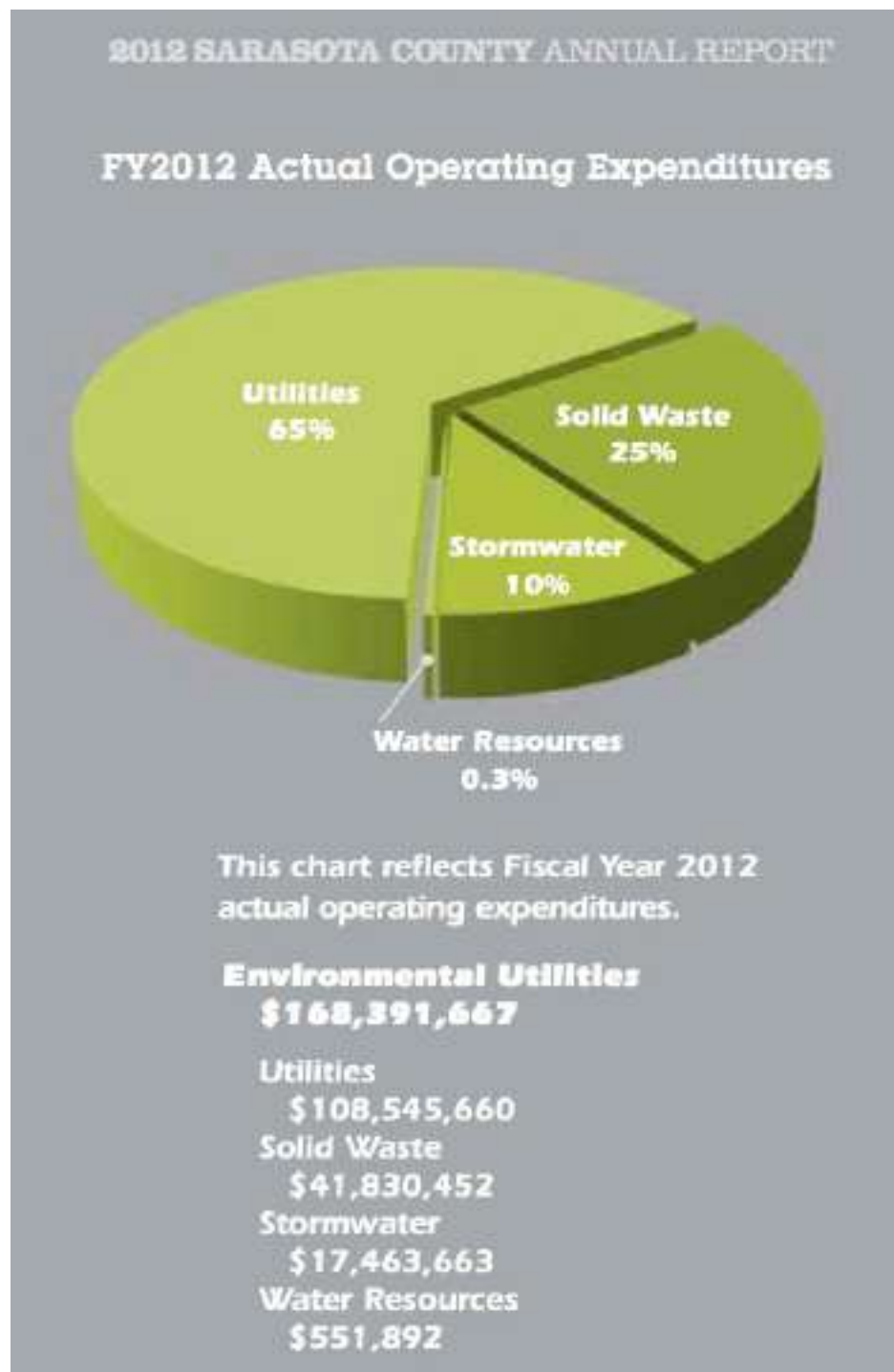
The issue of the backflow valves “increased the urgency” of an outside review of the department, noted Reid.

A COMPLICATED OPERATION

Reid described the review of one of the county's biggest divisions — a department that is a complicated operation, intense in capital facilities — as a good step.

The review will include an analysis of the county's water and sewer systems as well as the Stormwater and Solid Waste divisions in the department, which has a budget of \$168 million. Environmental Utilities has more than 200 employees.

Sarasota County has about 80,000 water connections, 65,000 sewer connections and 3,000 reuse connections. It began water service in 1975 and operates eight wastewater treatment plants.



A chart shows how the Environmental Utilities budget was broken down for the 2012 fiscal year. Image courtesy Sarasota County

“I expect changes,” Reid said. “That is the whole point of doing this.”

For example, the review could call for improvements to the department's Information Technology issues. Those would cost money initially, but they could lead to efficiencies in the department's billing division in the long run, Reid said.


In addition to billing, the review will study inspection services, repairs and maintenance efforts, the management structure within the department and staffing levels.

It will also gather information about the age and condition of pipes and other infrastructure throughout the county.

Additionally, the review could shed some light on the possible acquisition of Dolomite Utilities Corp., a private water and sewer company. County commissioners have discussed the potential acquisition of Dolomite.

“Over the past decade, there has been an effort by the county to acquire private systems and incorporate those” into the county’s utility systems, Reid pointed out.

“Dolomite is the last opportunity to do that,” Reid said.

The acquisition would require the transition of 16 staff positions from the private company to the county, but it would also expand the county’s customer base. 



County Administrator Randall Reid. Photo by Norman Schimmel

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THE PRESIDENT OF THE FLORIDA CHAPTER OF THE ACLU UNDERSCORES CONCERNS ABOUT THE LACK OF SERIOUS OVERSIGHT REGARDING THE NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY'S ACTIONS

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Early on in his Tuesday evening talk to the Democratic Club of Sarasota, retired Col. Mike Phenegar, the president of the ACLU of Florida, held up a T-shirt emblazoned with a statement summing up his message: "One nation under surveillance."

Billed as a discussion of "surveillance, privacy and civil liberties," Phenegar's talk was sparked by the revelations of Edward

Snowden, the former Booz Allen Hamilton contractor whose leaks about the activities of the National Security Agency have



This is a system that is broken.

Mike Phenegar
President
ACLU of Florida



(Above) The National Security Agency complex stands mostly dark at night. Photo courtesy National Security Agency

caused outrage around the globe. Documents released by Snowden to *The Guardian* have revealed that the NSA works with American tech giants such as Google, Facebook and Apple to harvest information on users, and that it is collecting huge amounts of data on phone calls placed within the U.S., among many other programs.

Pheneger, who spent three decades as a U.S. Army intelligence officer, said Snowden's leaks came as no surprise to him. He outlined in detail how the NSA goes about its business, but he also touched on the use of surveillance cameras to track individuals across entire cities, the government's ability to follow people through their cellphones and the widespread use of drones, which can range in size from a 737 to what he called a "nano-drone."

But even more problematic than the specifics of the programs Pheneger outlined is what he called the total lack of serious oversight. He described a system in which the members of Congress most knowledgeable about the NSA's actions are legally barred from discussing them, and an executive branch that relies on "state secrets" loopholes to ward off legal scrutiny.

"This is a system that is broken," he said, warning attendees to be "damn skeptical" about the federal government's claims about spying.

Even with Snowden's leaks, we still know very little about how the NSA works and how the executive branch interprets legislation covering national security, such as the 2001 USA PATRIOT Act, Pheneger argued. "You can't find out what's going on," he said, discussing how ACLU legal action has been stifled.



Mike Phenegar chats with a Democratic Club member on Tuesday evening. Photo by Cooper Levey-Baker

Luckily, he added, we have the "interesting" Fourth Amendment, which protects Americans against "unreasonable searches and seizures."


The NSA revelations have scrambled traditional party politics in Congress, so bogged down these days by shortsighted obstructionism and absurd gamesmanship. Libertarian-minded liberals and conservatives alike have expressed concern over the information contained in Snowden's leaks.

Republican Rep. Justin Amash, from Michigan, last week introduced an amendment in the U.S. House intended to squash the NSA's collection of American phone records. While the amendment was narrowly defeated in a 217-205 vote, the list of lawmakers supporting the measure included some strange bedfellows. How often do you see liberal firebrand Alan Grayson and our Republican Rep. Vern Buchanan on the same side of a vote?

Buchanan's staff did not respond to a request for comment on his Amash vote, but the congressman did proudly note on Twitter the next day that he "voted to restrict the National Security Agency from collecting phone records from American citizens NOT under investigation." Compare that to 2008, when Buchanan voted in favor of the FISA Amendments Act, harshly criticized by Pheneger for simply legalizing "a lot of the things President George W. Bush was doing." The Act, which updated many of the provisions in the original 1978 FISA surveillance law, "immunized" telecommunications companies working with the government, shielding them from lawsuits.

The politics of civil liberties may indeed be shifting. The Pew Research Center for the

People & the Press released results of a survey last week showing 56 percent of Americans believe the courts are not providing "adequate limits" on information being collected.

"I think Congress needs to have full hearing on what's going on," Pheneger told *The Sarasota News Leader* when asked his thoughts on the Amash amendment and the potential for congressional intervention. "We need to have ways we can have effective judicial oversight of what's going on. When all the government lawyers talk to one another and say everything is OK, that's a narrow view of what's going on. It would be nice to bring other lawyers in that might have a slightly different view of the world, that actually think the Fourth Amendment means what it says." 



The National Security Agency headquarters is in Fort Meade, MD. Image courtesy National Security Agency, via Wikimedia Commons

A NEW PROSPECT FOR SPRINGS



The advertisement for a short-term operator of Warm Mineral Springs notes the winning bidder will have the right to hold exercise classes in the water. Image courtesy City of North Port

MOTE MARINE INDICATES AN INTEREST IN THE LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT OF WARM MINERAL SPRINGS; SHORT-TERM MANAGEMENT BIDS ARE DUE AUG. 9

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

By 3 p.m. on Aug. 9, the City of North Port's management should know how many firms are interested in taking short-term control of Warm Mineral Springs.

That is the deadline the city's Purchasing Department has set for responses to its advertisement for bids, Assistant City Manager Daniel Schult told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week.

In the meantime, Sarasota County Manager Randall Reid has been

exploring the potential long-term management of the resort with a research and tourism entity as well known to county residents as the resort itself: Mote Marine.

Reid notified the County Commission by email on July 29 that he had had several discussions about the possibility with Kumar Mahadevan, the recently retired CEO of Mote, who remains on staff with the Sarasota County-based research facility as its president emeritus.

“ I believe that involving local experts like Mote is a step in the right direction. ”

Christine Robinson
Commissioner
Sarasota County



Mahadevan initiated the conversations, Reid pointed out in the email.

Those discussions also have included [Little Salt Spring](#), the South County historical site whose purchase Sarasota County is negotiating with the University of Miami.

“Ideally both facilities (with the agreement of North Port) could be managed by Mote as the synergy between the two would work well and enhance tourism,” Reid noted in his email. “Mote is familiar with research, marketing, concessions operations, tourism and interpre-

tation ... and could adjust plans to cooperate with adjacent property uses, health related tourism or enhanced preservation,” he added.

In an interview with the *News Leader* on July 29, Reid said he thought the prospect of Mote’s taking on the long-term operations of both Warm Mineral Springs and Little Salt Spring “is a great option.”

He added in the email that Mote has Sarasota and Charlotte county facilities.

He also was quick to point out that the county is not working unilaterally on this. His email



An aerial map shows the area of Warm Mineral Springs under consideration for a short-term lease. Image courtesy City of North Port

says he has invited North Port City Manager Jonathan Lewis to attend a meeting, tentatively set for Aug. 26 at Mote, to discuss the potential with Mote executives.

Additionally, Reid notified the County Commission in his email, he spoke last week with Thom Stork of The Florida Aquarium, who had called to convey the interest of the Tampa facility's staff in having continued access to Little Salt Spring for research purposes, if the county does purchase the site.

Stork is the Aquarium's president and CEO.

Stork also indicated the Aquarium would be willing to operate Little Salt Spring, Reid noted. "[B]ut when told of my discussion with Mote and their more local emphasis [Stork] indicated [the staff] would be happy to work with or thru Mote."



Kuman Mahadevan is president emeritus of Mote Marine. Photo courtesy of Mote Marine

Q: Will season pass holders receive refunds?

A: Yes. Cypress Lending, the previous operator of the WMS, has provided the county with funds to reimburse annual pass holders for the unused portion of their pass. On or about Aug. 1, 2013 Sarasota County Parks and Recreation will send by US Mail each pass holder a check for the unused balance of the annual pass. There is no need to return the pass to the county.

Q: Who do I contact regarding the processing of my refund?

A: Tricia Wisner, Parks and Recreation. Email: pwisner@scgov.net Phone: 941-861-5515

Q: Can I use my existing pass when WMS reopens?

A: Sorry, no. Previous passes will not be valid for use when WMS opens under new management.

Q: Can I get a refund for the balance remaining on my 10-day pass?

The 10-day pass was valid only while WMS was being operated by Cypress Lending and a refund will not be provided. For more information please contact Cypress Lending at 239-449-1811.

Neither Mote nor The Florida Aquarium presented itself “as bringing significant capital improvement dollars to these projects,” Reid pointed out in his email.

Contacted on vacation this week, County Commissioner Christine Robinson told the *News Leader*, “I believe that involving local experts like Mote is a step in the right direction. Local experts will be sensitive to heritage and environmental concerns particular to our area, which is important for both springs.”

Robinson has been the point person for the County Commission regarding the future of Warm Mineral Springs. She represents South County interests on the board.

THE BACKGROUND

Warm Mineral Springs closed on June 30 after its co-owners — the City of North Port and Sarasota County — failed to reach an agreement about its future in time to negotiate a new management contract. June 30 was the last day of the management agreement with Cypress Lending, which sold the resort to the local governments in December 2010.

Although the city and county boards agreed in July 2012 to seek an Invitation to Negotiate for the long-term management of the resort, the election of two new members on the North Port City Commission last November also led to a new majority on that board which was opposed to development. Mayor Linda Yates and Commissioners Cheryl Cook and Rhonda DiFranco have said they would prefer to see Warm Mineral Springs operated more like a park.



Thom Stork is CEO of The Florida Aquarium in Tampa. Image courtesy of The Florida Aquarium

After months of disagreements — and one facilitated meeting of the boards in April, under the guidelines of the state’s conflict resolution statute — the City and County commissions finally approved an interlocal agreement in June that will govern the short-term operation of the resort.

SHORT-TERM PROPOSALS

Schult, the North Port assistant city manager, told the *News Leader* on July 29 that about 55 people showed up for his 1 p.m. tour that day of the facilities on the Springs’ property. Nonetheless, the gathering was not mandatory for those interested in submitting bids to serve as a short-term operator.

And not all of those people were potential bidders, he pointed out. The majority were North Port residents and other community representatives interested in the latest information about the resort, he added.

Asked whether he could guess how many in the group might have been potential bidders, Schult responded, “I couldn’t even begin to tell you.”

After the tour, he fielded a number of questions, he said.

The bid had been advertised “for a little over a week” by July 29, he noted, so members of the public knew they could get a look at its current state.

From July 1 through July 29, the county’s Call Center received 287 inquiries about Warm Mineral Springs’ status, Curt Preisser, a county spokesman, told the *News Leader* on July 29. Most of those were recorded in the first week to 10 days after the closing, he pointed out. “It has settled down significantly since then,” Preisser added.

According to the interlocal agreement with the county, the city had 60 days to make “good faith efforts” to undertake the competitive bidding process from the time its commission approved that document — June 24.

Once the City Commission settles on a recommendation, the County Commission has 30 days to vote on that.



Warm Mineral Springs is being patrolled by security officers until a new management firm can be hired. Photo by Ebyabe via Wikimedia Commons

Although the City Commission is not scheduled to meet again until Sept. 9, Schult told the *News Leader*, it does have the option of calling a special meeting to discuss the bid decision forwarded by the city's Purchasing Department.

The advertisement points out that Warm Mineral springs "has been an important water source for thousands of years. ... The property to be licensed is approximately 21.7 acres ..."

It continues, "The focal point of this site is a spring-fed natural pool and the structures that have served as an operating spa since 1959 and which reportedly draw more than 80,000 annual visitors. The property is primarily used as a swimming/soaking location with an emphasis on the reputed healing nature of the water."

The existing facilities, the bid advertisement notes, include the spring and outdoor area; a restaurant with approximately 1,250 square feet; a spa with about 1,340 square feet — including a number of manicure stations; three massage therapy rooms; five aesthetician/acupuncture rooms; two meeting rooms with space of about 1,250 square feet and 450 square feet, respectively; restrooms and showers; and a gift shop encompassing approximately 1,080 square feet.

The terms of the agreement would not exceed 12 months, the advertisement says, though the city and county could renew it for a term to be decided.

The minimum rent for any prospective operator would be 10 percent of all monthly gross revenues, including, but not limited to, any

revenue the licensee received from any sub-contractors or other agreements directly related to use of the premises.

It further specifies that the minimum hours of operation would be eight hours a day from November through May and nine hours a day from June through October, unless otherwise determined by the City of North Port and Sarasota County.

INSPECTION

While awaiting the bid deadline, City of North Port staff also is evaluating responses to a request for quotes for an independent party to survey the facilities to determine the condition of the structures and offer recommendations about repairs that should be made.

Responses to that request were due by July 26.

That advertisement notes, "The inspection should identify if additional in-depth analysis should be completed" for the roof; the septic and plumbing systems; electrical service and panel grounding; windows; and the cooking suppression systems and other related safety devices. It also seeks information about the presence of asbestos, lead in the paint and any other environmental hazards.

The final report, it adds, should include a written estimate of the cost of replacing or repairing items that will be needed in the long-term utilization of the resort.

Under an agreement with the County Commission, the city took the lead on handling the inspection process.

As Preisser, the county spokesman, noted, "It is moving along." 



HIGHER AND HIGHER

Construction is under way on an Orange Avenue house in late July. Photo by Rachel Hackney

TOURISM FIGURES, THE NUMBER OF PERMITS ISSUED FOR HOME CONSTRUCTION AND HOUSING SALES COMBINE FOR A BRIGHT COUNTY FINANCIAL REPORT

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

A line snakes outside [Yoder's](#) Amish restaurant on the last Saturday morning in July.

Families of six and eight gather around tables on a Sunday night at [Patrick's](#) in downtown Sarasota.

Visitors in bright pink “scootercars” from [Siesta Sports Rentals](#) join the string of traffic on Siesta Key’s Midnight Pass Road.

The signs of a strong summer season in Sarasota County have been verified by the latest Tourist Development Tax (TDT) figures from the county Tax Collector’s Office: The county has pulled in \$10,999,671 through May — the

latest records available and a 4.9 percent increase compared to the same period for the 2012 fiscal year.

Siesta Key continues to lead the way, with its businesses having collected \$3,444,095.42 in TDT tax revenue through May, accounting for 31.31 percent of the total.

The city of Sarasota is in second place, with 29.5 percent of the revenue.

June was also an excellent month for anyone in the community who runs a tourism-related business, Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County, told *The Sarasota News*

Leader on July 31 — “especially since last year was record-breaking and we beat last year.” As predicted, she added, the Pan-Am Masters Swimming Championship “gave us a real boost,” along with the heavy marketing her staff did this year in the Northeast.

According to the preliminary data, the county saw 6.6 percent more tourists in June this year than it did in the same month in 2012. The hotel/motel occupancy rate was up 4.4 percent, room rates were 5.6 percent higher, the revenue per available room was up 11.6 percent, and the number of room nights increased 5.5 percent.

As for the tourists themselves: The county saw a 12.1 percent surge in people heading here from Europe. The total from the Midwest was 9.4 percent higher in June, year-over-year,

and that figure was followed closely by a 9 percent increase in Canadian tourists.

During the July 2 meeting of the [Siesta Key Village Association](#), Sgt. Scott Osborne, leader of the Sheriff’s Office’s Community Policing Station on Siesta Key, remarked on how busy the public beach has been. “It’s not slowing down like a typical summer,” he said. “More and more people are coming.”

After that meeting, Russell Matthes, co-owner of the [Daiquiri Deck Raw Bars](#) on Siesta, St. Armands and the island of Venice, told the *News Leader* his summer business was up about 5 percent over 2012 at that point. He and Bob Kirscher, co-owner of [The Broken Egg](#) restaurants on Siesta and Clark Road and in Lakewood Ranch, had compared notes earlier, with Kirscher reporting similar news, Matthes added.



A Premier Sotheby's sign indicates a home for sale just outside downtown Sarasota. Photo by Rachel Hackney

On July 31, Matthes told the *News Leader* the upward trend was continuing for his restaurants on St. Armands and in Siesta Village. The Daiquiri Deck Raw Bar in Venice opened late last year, so no year-over-year comparisons are available for it. Nonetheless, Matthes said, the customer numbers have been very good at the Venice location, too.

Siesta Village is seeing “a lot of pedestrian traffic,” Matthes continued, in spite of the frequent thunderstorms this summer. “As long as it doesn’t rain too early,” he said, people at the beach head into Siesta Village instead of off to the malls.

Mike Lewis, co-owner of Siesta Sports Rentals, told the *News Leader* on July 31 that he expected the numbers for his business to come close to those for 2012, and “Last sum-

mer was absolutely outstanding.” His storefront is located in a shopping center just south of the Stickney Point Road intersection on Siesta Key.

BEYOND TOURISM

Bustling tourism has not been the only good news for the county this fiscal year, as the July economic report indicates.

The number of permits Sarasota County issued for single-family home construction increased from May to June, and the total value of the projects remained higher, according to figures from the county’s Office of Financial Planning.

In May, the county issued 86 permits for projects costing \$18,666,000. That compared to 59 permits in May 2012 with an estimated value of \$9,776,000 — a 90.9 percent increase in value.

SARASOTA COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX

COLLECTIONS BY LOCATION

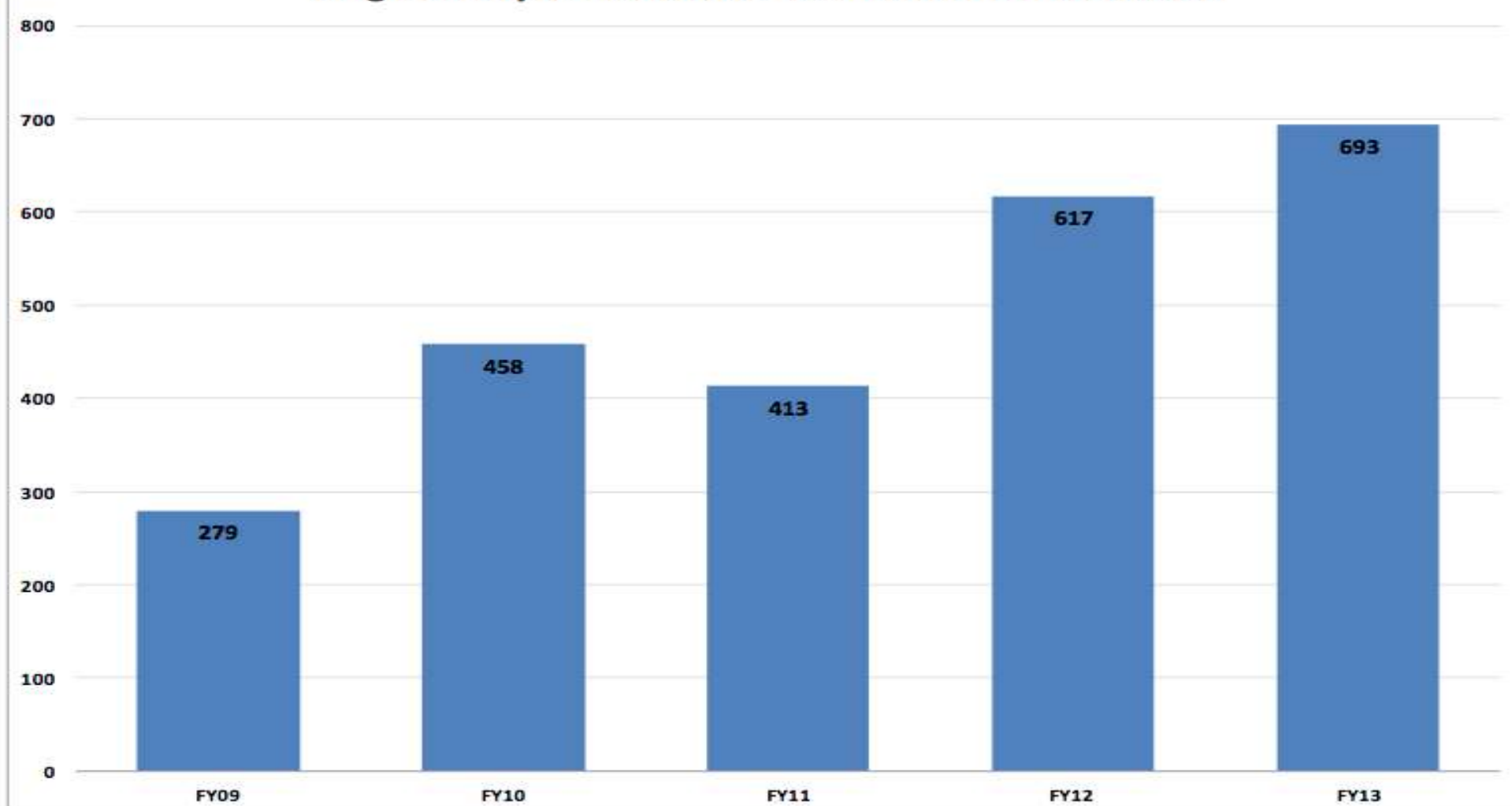
*Collections through 6/30/2013

	CONSOLIDATED	LONGBOAT KEY	NORTH PORT	SARASOTA	SARASOTA COUNTY	SIESTA KEY	VENICE	TOTAL
October 2012	17,626.07	76,791.25	3,012.57	268,830.11	109,777.68	184,087.77	43,630.74	703,756.19
November 2012	16,439.46	90,295.49	2,602.41	300,559.35	118,567.31	198,096.61	38,676.99	765,237.62
December 2012	40,229.88	125,766.71	4,973.23	326,805.95	168,532.07	281,456.17	60,572.16	1,008,336.17
January 2013	119,172.83	160,780.75	7,100.79	379,245.24	308,585.72	448,964.02	199,074.94	1,622,924.29
February 2013	73,004.95	202,834.75	6,889.39	500,958.33	329,305.45	698,976.53	135,965.95	1,947,935.35
March 2013	62,249.26	310,559.76	15,397.02	707,228.22	480,198.54	944,137.90	172,938.03	2,692,708.73
April 2013	31,092.69	159,858.22	4,851.91	431,595.15	210,820.24	393,304.77	64,682.44	1,296,205.42
May 2013	16,641.49	119,386.46	3,843.84	329,979.77	157,770.79	295,071.65	37,873.30	962,567.30
June 2013								
July 2013								
August 2013								
September 2013								
Grand Totals	378,456.63	1,246,273.39	48,671.16	3,245,202.12	1,883,557.80	3,444,095.42	753,414.55	10,999,671.07
Percentage of Total (%)	3.44%	11.33%	0.44%	29.50%	17.12%	31.31%	6.85%	100.00%

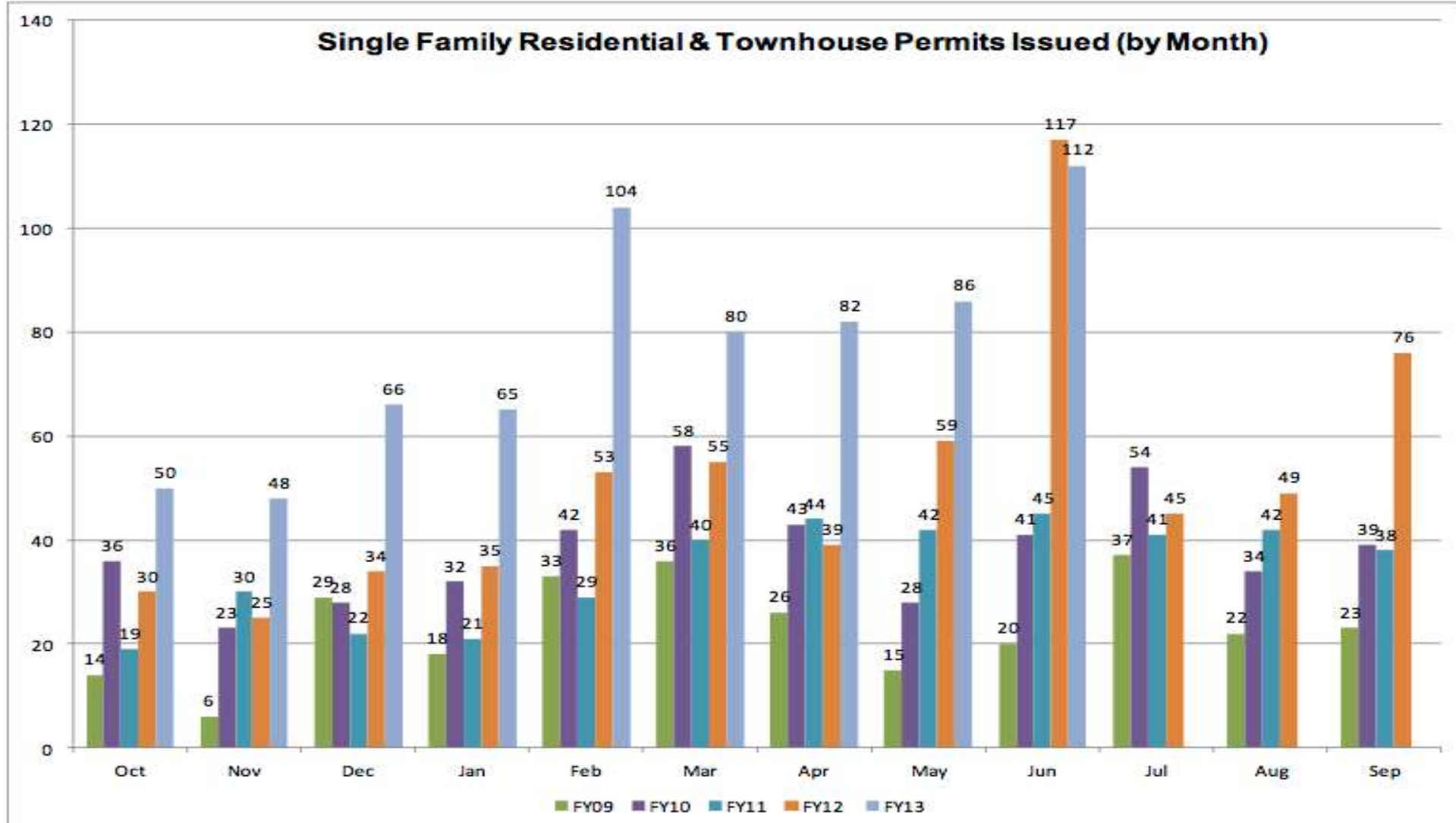
So far, Siesta Key businesses are leading the way in Tourist Development Tax collections for the 2013 fiscal year. Image courtesy Sarasota County Tax Collector’s office

PDS Charts – Permitting (*June 2013 Data*)

Single Family Residential & Townhouse Permits Issued



Single Family Residential & Townhouse Permits Issued (by Month)



County charts compare numbers for permits issued for single-family and townhouse residential construction. Images courtesy Sarasota County Planning and Development Services

In June of this year — the latest month for which numbers have been posted — the number of permits issued was 112, down slightly from the June 2012 figure of 117. However, the construction value was put at \$19,011,000, up 25.5 percent year-over-year.

As for home sales: The May 2013 figures — again, the latest available — showed 1,020 houses sold, up 19.4 percent from the May 2012 total of 854. The average number of days on the market was down to 153 from 176, comparing May 2013 to May 2012, and the median price was up 15.9 percent, at \$212,856.

For April of this year, the Sarasota Association of Realtors reported a total of 1,017 home sales, up 14.8 percent from the April 2012 fig-

ure of 886. The average number of days on the market for April was 152, compared to 184 in April 2012, and the median price was \$207,477, a 14.9 percent hike year-over-year.

And yet more good news: Retail sales in the county through June of this year were rounded up at \$959,570,000, 7.1 percent higher than the June 2012 figure of \$895,910,000.

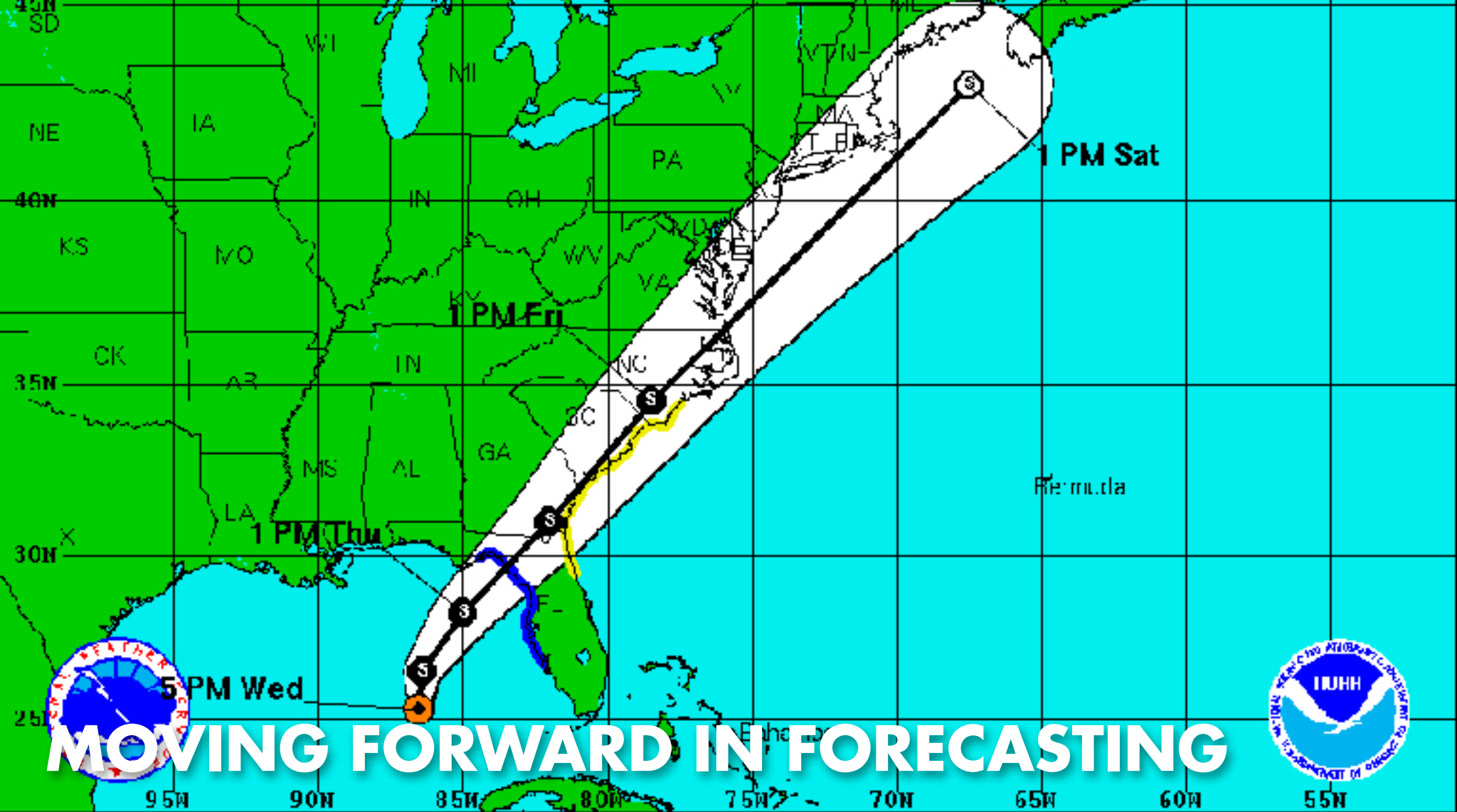
The July economic report also shows that ad valorem tax collections through June added up to \$128,237,686, or 102 percent of the projected total for that point — \$126,102,339. Impact fee collections are up as well year-to-date: \$6,107,315 compared to the budgeted figure of \$5,289,598.

The county’s fiscal year will end on Sept. 30. 

Visitor Origin Markets

Visitor Origins	Fiscal Year-to-Date			June 2013				
	(Oct. – June)							
	FY 2012	FY 2013	%	2012		2013		%
	# of Visitors	# of Visitors	# of Vis. '12/'13	Share of Mkt (%)	# of Visitors	Share of Mkt (%)	# of Visitors	# of Vis. '12/'13
Florida	144,285	155,450	+7.7	31.1%	26,780	30.3%	27,820	+3.9
Southeast	68,477	71,030	+3.7	14.0	12,050	13.4	12,300	+2.1
Northeast	157,895	165,850	+5.0	14.4	12,400	14.6	13,400	+8.1
Midwest	181,181	188,050	+3.8	19.3	16,620	19.8	18,180	+9.4
Canada	41,228	43,710	+6.0	4.4	3,790	4.5	4,130	+9.0
Europe	65,219	72,600	+11.3	9.7	8,350	10.2	9,360	+12.1
Markets of Opportunity	41,115	43,610	+6.1	7.1	6,110	7.2	6,610	+8.2
Total	699,400	740,300	+5.8	100.0	86,100	100.0	91,800	+6.6

A chart shows preliminary data about the increase in the number of tourists Sarasota County has seen so far this year. Image courtesy Visit Sarasota County



The National Hurricane Center issued this image on June 5, indicating the probable path of Tropical Storm Andrea. Image courtesy of the National Hurricane Center

THE NATIONAL HURRICANE CENTER EXPANDS ITS WINDOW FROM THREE TO FIVE DAYS FOR PREDICTING WHEN AN AREA OF DISTURBED WEATHER MIGHT BECOME A TROPICAL STORM

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The National Hurricane Center on Aug. 1 extended from three days to five its prediction window for when an area of disturbed weather might form into a tropical system.

That extension from 48 to 120 hours is a huge step for the center, the first change in its “cyclone activity” forecasting in more than 30 years.

This modification capitalizes on the various tools and products the center uses for hurricane forecasting. It expands greatly the forecasting models for weaker systems that could

develop into a tropical depression or tropical storm, using both text and graphic formats.


Regular visitors of the National Hurricane Center site at www.nhc.noaa.gov are familiar with the map showing Atlantic tropical cyclone activity, with three color-coded circles designating — respectively — low, medium or high potential for tropical system formation.

A yellow circle shows the area of interest, denoting a less-than-30 percent chance, while orange signals a 30- to 50-percent (medium) level of probability, and a red circle indicates a 50/50 or greater chance of cyclonic activity.

The expansion of the forecast is a result of the National Hurricane Center's refinement of meteorological modeling over the past three years. It now has enough confidence in its work to go public with the expanded outlook.

A companion effort — not quite ready yet for “prime-time” — would expand the path and intensity predictions for tropical storms and hurricanes from the current five days to six or maybe even seven in the future.

As always the National Hurricane Center reminds people these are predictions and that tropical storm systems have demonstrated wild and unpredictable changes of direction and intensity.

Any survivor of 2004's Hurricane Charley in Florida recalls how it intensified from Category 2 to 4 in hours, and how it took an unpredicted hard right turn into Pine Island Sound instead of staying offshore up to Tampa Bay. 



This June 3 outlook shows the beginnings of Tropical Storm Andrea, which, on June 5, put Sarasota under a tropical storm warning. Image from the National Hurricane Center

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MAINTAINING A POSITIVE TREND

“ *We don't want 'cops' here. We want professionals that are going to be tolerant, well trained, well educated, that mirror this community.*

Tom Knight
Sheriff
Sarasota County

”

Administrative staff for the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office works in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Rachel Hackney



(From left) Sheriff Tom Knight, Col. Steve Burns and Maj. Kurt Hoffman address the County Commission during a June 21 budget workshop. File photo

IN HIS EFFORTS TO KEEP THE CRIME RATE GOING DOWN, SHERIFF TOM KNIGHT IS WORKING WITH THE COUNTY COMMISSION ON HIS STAFFING CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

Expanding on brief statistics he reported to the Sarasota County Commission last month, Sheriff Tom Knight has announced crime was down 10 percent in the county for the first half of 2013.

As he has in appearances before the commission over the past year, Knight credits “proactive policing, actionable intelligence on prolific offenders and crime prevention partnerships with the community” for the reduction, a news release notes.

Major crimes, known as Part 1 Offenses in the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting Index,

decreased 13 percent from January to June, while violent crime fell 10 percent, resulting in part to declines in the following categories, the Sheriff’s Office reported:

- Murder, down 75 percent.
- Burglary, down 21 percent.
- Grand theft, down 11 percent.
- Robbery, down 28 percent.
- Auto theft, down 14 percent.

The decrease for the first six months of this year follows an overall decline of more than

16 percent in 2012 and a 21 percent drop in crime since Knight took office in 2009, the report notes.

To maintain those trends, Knight told the County Commission in late June, he needs to continue hiring highly qualified people. That was why he commissioned a workforce study, he said: to help the commissioners understand the demographics with which he will have to work — through budgets they will approve — over the next several years.

And those demographics show that, with a higher cost of living and an older population in the county, many of his recruits will have to come from other places. That also will mean paying them enough to entice them to relocate.

“We’re very proud of [the lower crime rate],” Knight told the commissioners on June 18.

“The county is your vision,” he added. “My job is to keep your vision intact through proper planning ... I truly believe we live in the great-

Law Enforcement Deputy And Their Reason For Resigning 2009 - 2012

Year	No reason	Personal	Other Agency	Retired	Type of work	Dissatisfaction
2009	2	2	1	2	0	0
2010	0	1	0	2	1	0
2011	0	0	0	1	0	1
2012	3	0	0	1	0	0
Total	5	3	1	6	1	1

Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Human Resources Bureau 2012

Corrections Deputy And Their Reason For Resigning 2009 - 2012

Year	No reason	Personal	Other agency	Medical	Military	Relocation
2009	2	1	1	0	0	0
2010	0	1	2	1	0	0
2011	1	0	0	0	2	0
2012	3	0	3	0	0	1
Total	6	2	6	1	2	1

Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Human Resources Bureau 2012

A chart shows reasons law enforcement and corrections officers gave for leaving the Sheriff's Office over the past four years. Image courtesy Sarasota County Sheriff's Office

est county in Florida. ... Everybody wants to be here; everybody wants to vacation here.”

Knight pointed out that the Sheriff’s Office “doesn’t just hire cops. We don’t want ‘cops’ here. We want professionals that are going to be tolerant, well trained, well educated, that mirror this community.”

Knight said he hired Carl Hawkins, who retired after 35 years with the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office, to undertake the workforce study. Hawkins is a professor at the University of South Florida.

Knight’s primary concern, Hawkins said, is hiring good deputies now and over the next 10 to 15 years. To enable him to undertake the study, Hawkins continued, “There was

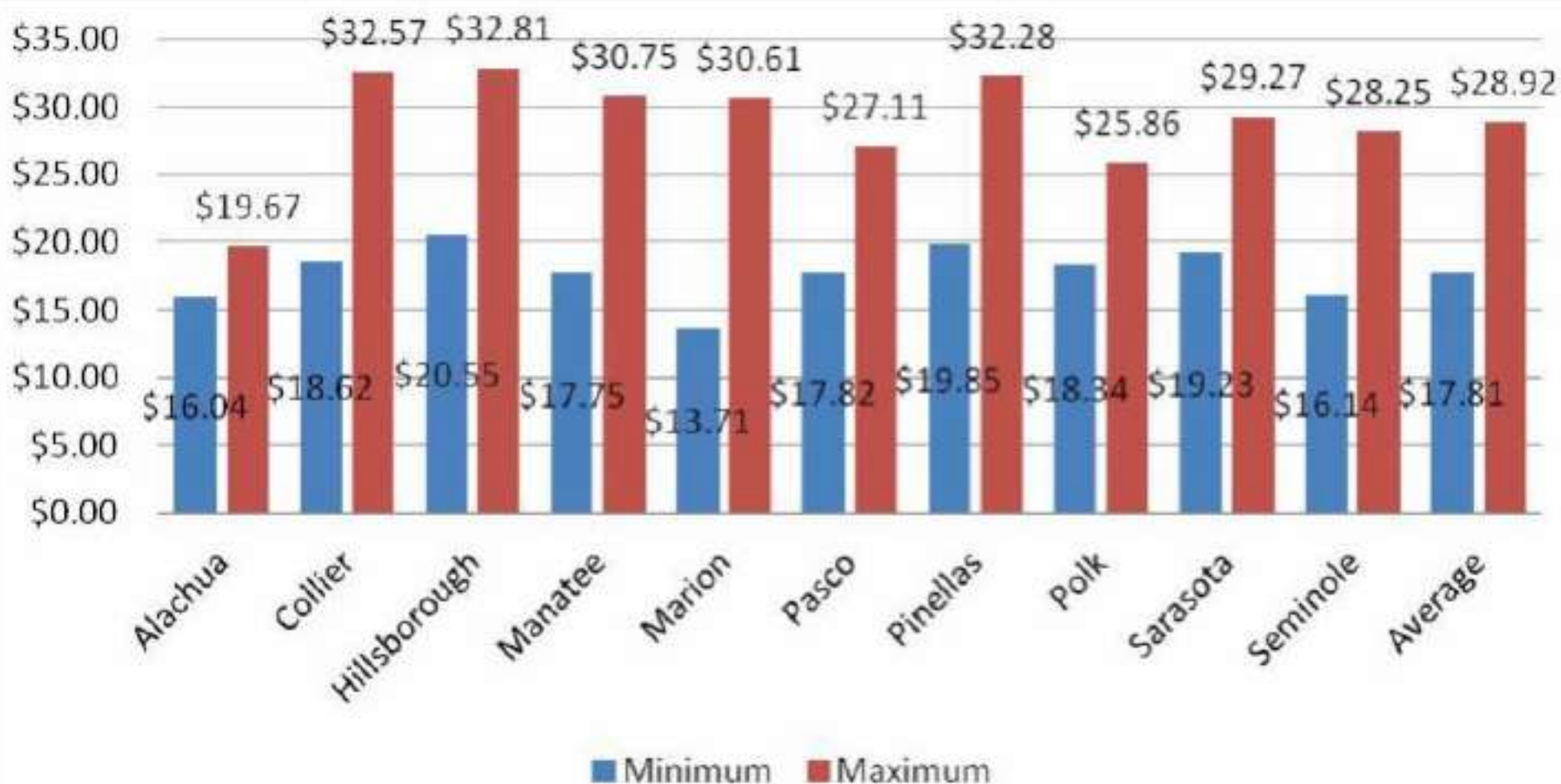
not anything I [asked] for that I didn’t receive and quickly. ... [Knight] opened up his department.”

COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS

Hawkins pointed out that, with 386,000 residents, Sarasota County is the 14th most populous in the state. According to 2011 statistics — the latest available when Hawkins undertook his research — its median age is 53.1, compared to 41.1 for the state and 37.3 for the United States.

For other comparisons, Hawkins noted that the median age in Hillsborough County is 36.4; in Manatee, 45.8; and in Charlotte County, 56.1.

Law Enforcement Deputy Minimum - Maximum Pay Per Hour



2012 Survey results of ten Florida Sheriff's Offices

A chart compares pay of deputies in several Florida counties. Image courtesy Sarasota County Sheriff's Office

I N D E X O F F E N S E S	OFFENSES	This Month	Month Last Year	Percent Change	This Year To Date	Last Year To Date	Percent Change
	Murder & Non-Neg. Manslaughter	0	1	-100.00%	2	8	-75.00%
	Forcible Sex Offenses						
	Forcible Rape	2	3	-33.33%	10	14	-28.57%
	Forcible Sodomy	0	0	0.00%	0	3	-100.00%
	Forcible Fondling	1	1	0.00%	6	8	-25.00%
	Robbery	8	7	14.29%	50	69	-27.54%
	Aggravated Assault	27	32	-15.63%	192	187	2.67%
	Total Violent Crimes	38	44	-13.64%	260	289	-10.03%
	Burglary	118	154	-23.38%	663	837	-20.79%
	Larceny	367	413	-11.14%	2,186	2,451	-10.81%
	Motor Vehicle Theft	17	20	-15.00%	112	130	-13.85%
	Total Nonviolent Crimes	502	587	-14.48%	2,961	3,418	-13.37%
	TOTAL INDEX OFFENSES	540	631	-14.42%	3,221	3,707	-13.11%
P A R T I I	Negligent Manslaughter	0	0	0.00%	1	0	N/A
	Kidnapping	2	2	0.00%	7	9	-22.22%
	Arson	0	0	0.00%	0	4	-100.00%
	Simple Assault	144	142	1.41%	888	867	2.42%
	Bribery	0	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%
	Embezzlement	0	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%
	Fraud	39	34	14.71%	237	234	1.28%
	Total Part II Offenses	185	178	3.93%	1,133	1,114	1.71%
	TOTAL FOR SARASOTA COUNTY	725	809	-10.38%	4,354	4,821	-9.69%
Definitions are available for the above categories, upon request. The above listed crimes have been determined by using primary and secondary UCR codes.							
<u>CALLS FOR SERVICE</u>							
	TOTAL CALLS FOR SERVICE	7,218	7,596	-4.98%	44,026	46,527	-5.38%
<u>ARRESTS</u>							
	DUI ARRESTS	72	84	-14.29%	329	472	-30.30%
	TOTAL ARRESTS	874	840	4.05%	4,925	5,291	-6.92%
The Total Arrests have been provided by the Booking Section. If there are any questions in regards to these figures, please contact that Section.							
<u>TRAFFIC CITATIONS</u>							
	TRAFFIC CITATIONS	3,063	3,024	1.29%	17,094	18,747	-8.82%
Traffic Citations include civil and criminal traffic citations issued and have been received from the Sarasota County Clerk's Office.							
<u>WARRANTS</u>							
	Felony Warrants Received	259	210	23.33%	1,563	1,618	-3.40%
	Misdemeanor Warrants Received	126	117	7.69%	1009	884	14.14%
	Traffic Warrants Received	105	96	9.38%	848	838	1.19%
	Juvenile Warrants Received	5	14	-64.29%	99	103	-3.88%
	Out of County Warrants Received	1	0	100.00%	1	1	0.00%
	Total Warrants Received	496	437	13.50%	3,520	3,444	2.21%
	Felony Warrants Executed	232	238	-2.52%	1,498	1,635	-8.38%
	Misdemeanor Warrants Executed	118	136	-13.24%	856	859	-0.35%
	Traffic Warrants Executed	99	109	-9.17%	613	690	-11.16%
	Juvenile Warrants Executed	9	10	-10.00%	89	90	-1.11%
	Returned/Recalled/Purged	67	190	-64.74%	697	1,401	-50.25%
	Out of County Warrants Executed	1	0	100.00%	4	4	0.00%
	Total Warrants Cleared	526	683	-22.99%	3,757	4,679	-19.71%
	Warrants on File at close of Month	13,960	13,662	2.18%	N/A	N/A	N/A
The Warrants Totals have been provided by the Warrants Section. If there are any questions in regards to these figures, please contact that Section.							

A chart shows the total number of crimes handled by the Sheriff's Office for the first half of this year. Image courtesy Sarasota County Sheriff's Office

Forty percent of Sarasota County residents are 60 or older, while 26.9 percent are ages 45 to 49.

That age factor, Hawkins continued, “makes it a challenge to find good employees” for the Sheriff’s Office in Sarasota County. The department looks for candidates in the 21 to 41 age range, he pointed out. Military retirees in the 35 to 38 age range also are typically good candidates, he added.

Sarasota County residents are also well educated, Hawkins continued. However, while 94 percent of those ages 25 to 34 have high school degrees or the equivalent, only 19 percent of them have bachelor’s degrees from colleges.

Still, Hawkins said, “It’s not uncommon to see the kids today take longer to graduate,” which might explain the latter finding.

Regarding the cost of living, Hawkins noted that Fort Lauderdale and Miami have the highest indices in the state, according to 2012 figures for 12 Florida reporting areas. Sarasota County and Bradenton both had a composite index of 99.5, fourth highest in the state. Tampa ranked the lowest on the index, at 93, the figures show.

Housing expenses are a key factor in determining that ranking, he pointed out; yet, that is an important consideration in recruiting candidates for the Sheriff’s Office. “It’s going to cost [Knight] a little bit more” to convince someone to take a job in the Sarasota County department compared to positions in other counties with lower costs of living, Hawkins said.

One positive factor about the Sheriff’s Office’s target demographic for future recruitment, Hawkins continued, is that its members will be mostly “Millennials” — people born in this century. That means they will be “very tech-savvy,” Hawkins noted. “When they were in preschool, they were surfing the Internet.”

On the flip side of that, however, Hawkins said, Millennials comprise only 17 percent of Sarasota County’s population, compared to 28 percent, for example, in Hillsborough County.

Another positive factor for the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office in terms of recruitment, Hawkins continued, is that it has a low attrition rate — 4.9 percent — putting it near the bottom of rankings in the state.

By comparison, the attrition rate for the Manatee County Sheriff’s Office is 6.7 percent, he said. Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office’s rate is 4.8 percent, while Pinellas County’s is 6.5 percent.

From 2009 to 2013, the Sarasota Sheriff’s Office lost about 30 deputies per year, including those in Corrections, Hawkins pointed out. “A lot of ’em went for retirement,” he said. Some were terminated, and some left the Corrections staff for law enforcement positions in other counties because Knight had no openings for them.

However, Knight has used cross training options and reimbursement for training to lure some people back to the department, Hawkins added.

One big concern, Hawkins continued, is that Knight will be losing about 35 high-ranking officers to retirement over the next five years.

“[T]hat is something that is a challenge,” he pointed out.

To prepare for that, Hawkins said, Knight is sending most of his sergeants to command school to prepare them for higher-ranking positions.

Regarding salaries, Hawkins explained to the County Commission that he sent a survey out to counties around the state in December and began getting answers in January to compile his data.

The annual pay of a Sarasota County deputy ranges from \$28,520 to \$72,821, according to Hawkins’ report. The average minimum, he said, is \$40,000, while the average statewide is \$38,300. However, Hillsborough County, for example, pays \$44,881 a year as an average minimum, and Collier County pays \$41,645.

A negative factor, he noted, is that the maximum Sarasota County salary for a deputy is \$60,889, which is about \$2,000 less than the average for other departments.

Over the next three to five years, Hawkins continued, Knight will be talking with the County Commission about adjusting salary steps for his deputies.

For lieutenants, the beginning salary is on the low range of the comparison scale, he said, though the top salary level is among the higher ones in the counties surveyed.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

One other topic Knight broached with the County Commission during the presentation was the need for more manpower in coming years to assist with events at Nathan Benderson Park, located off University Parkway, and the increased number of people who will be shopping at the new mall and other businesses under construction in that area.

Knight said he already was leaning toward the idea of having a specially trained group of officers based in that part of the county, just as he has officers on Siesta Key who are well versed in the ordinances that apply to situations at Siesta Public Beach, for example.

If Benderson Park wins the 2017 World Rowing Championships bid, Knight continued, his officers also will see more and more residents coming from other countries to train and compete at the facility in the future.

“We’re certainly going to travel to some of these other [rowing] venues,” Knight added, to get a sense of what can be expected in dealing with international rowing teams. Maj. Kevin Kenney, who traveled with the county delegation to Washington, D.C., this spring to lobby for federal support of the Benderson bid for the 2017 event, already has been talking with representatives of the U.S. Olympic Committee, for example, Knight added.

“For me, it isn’t about keeping it safe,” Knight said. “It’s about keeping things from happening ...” 

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MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

The Sarasota Orchestra stays so busy, the only period repairs can be undertaken at its performance hall are in August. Image courtesy of Sarasota Orchestra

THE CITY COMMISSION AND SARASOTA ORCHESTRA SMOOTH OUT DETAILS FOR REPAIRS TO THE BEATRICE FRIEDMAN SYMPHONY CENTER

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

It was a meeting that should never have happened. An unready Sarasota Orchestra — caught in a time-bind of its own making — created the need for a special meeting of the City Commission this week so it could ask for exemptions to local and state regulations governing its need to maintain its building on city land.

When the dust had settled — after some last-minute footwork involving a letter of credit and a general contractor — the need for the special meeting was “moot,” as City Manager Tom Barwin put it. The solitary signature required on a permit — from a general contractor to whom the orchestra already had

access — was the last note for this confused cantata.

THE ONE-MONTH WINDOW

The Sarasota Orchestra comprises a hard-working crowd. It runs a steady 11-month season, not only with concerts and music festivals but also with educational programs and outreach and cooperative projects with other artistic organizations. Only in August can the musicians relax.

And that is also the only time of the year when major maintenance can be performed on the orchestra’s hall, the Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center. But for the past six years, the



The Sarasota Orchestra performs many of its concerts in Holley Hall at the Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center in Sarasota. Image courtesy Sarasota Orchestra

management put off maintenance because of the economic downturn. Now the orchestra is ready to make up for lost time and tackle almost \$500,000 in deferred repairs.

But the center sits on leased city land, and the lease — like virtually any lease of city property — demands certain standards so the city does not get caught holding the bill. It requires a performance bond or a letter of credit to cover the entire cost of the construction activity. And it requires adherence to the state building code, which in this case necessitated that a state-certified general contractor sign the building permit application.

On those particular points last week, the orchestra was deficient. A special meeting of the City Commission was called for Wednesday, July 31, to consider how to get the organization out of its quandary. Should the lease be modified? Should the financial requirements be changed? And what about that state statute requiring a general contractor?

From a legal point of view, if the city relaxed the standards for the orchestra, would other city leaseholders demand the same treatment? That question vexed City Attorney Bob Fournier.

THE UNTANGLING

It took only an hour on July 31 for the orchestra representatives and the City Commission to find a common sheet of music, so to speak. Joe McKenna, the chief executive officer of the orchestra, had met with city staffers — including Barwin — on July 23. At that time, the bonding was insufficient and the general contractor requirement was unmet.

“The Sarasota Orchestra will not put itself or the city in an awkward position,” said McKenna on July 31. He had arranged for a bigger line of credit, which eliminated the bonding



Joseph McKenna. Photo courtesy of Sarasota Orchestra


problem. But the “general contractor” issue still loomed.

“If this was a private concern, would they need a general contractor?” asked Mayor Shannon Snyder. “Do they need a general contractor?” he repeated.

“The lease says any work requires a general contractor,” replied Commissioner Paul Caragiulo. “This is a building code issue.”

“As required by the state building code,” said the mayor.

It appeared the orchestra was stymied until McKenna told the commissioners, “Well, one of our contractors is a general contractor.” Tada. Big finish.

Lights dawned. If McKenna could get his general contractor to sign the building permit application, the final hurdle would be removed — along with the entire reason for the special meeting of the City Commission. Thus came the coda to the confusion. And all was well. 

Once again, Southside Elementary School has received an A rating from the state. Photo by Norman Schimmel

MOST SARASOTA ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS GRADED A OR B

Ninety percent of the Sarasota County School District elementary and middle schools graded received an A or B for the 2012-13 school year, according to the school grades released July 26 by the Florida Department of Education.

The percentage includes traditional and charter schools, a district news release notes.

Educators had predicted grades would decline this year compared to last year because the performance levels required by both students and schools to achieve the same grade have increased substantially, the release points out. "State education officials have said the decline is a necessary part of a transition plan to raise expectations for achievement and better prepare students for work and college," it adds.

Twenty-one of the 39 Sarasota County Schools graded received an A for the 2012-2013 school year, compared to 34 last year. Fourteen schools received a B, and four schools received a C. The district had no D or F schools.

"With 54 percent of its schools receiving an A, Sarasota County had nearly twice as many A schools as the state average," the release notes.

Statewide, the number of A schools declined from 48 percent in 2012 to 29 percent in 2013, the release says. "In addition, the statewide number of C, D and F schools increased substantially," the release continues.

School grades for most high schools and combination schools that have a ninth grade will not be released until a new high school accountability component is calculated, the release adds. Fifty percent of a high school grade for 2012-2013 will be based on FCAT performance and 50 percent will be based on new components, including graduation rate, participation and performance in advanced courses, and college readiness, the release says.

High school grades are scheduled to be released later this year.

School No.	School Name		2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
0021	Pine View	COMBO	PENDING	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
0293	Oak Park School	COMBO	NG	F	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1211	Laurel Nokomis School	COMBO	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	C	B
1281	Phoenix Academy	COMBO	NG	NG	NG	D	C	C	C	C	F	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1311	Oak Park South	COMBO	NG	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
0012	Alta Vista Elementary	E	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	C	C	C	D
0301	Ashton Elementary	E	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	A
1241	Atwater Elementary	E	B	A	A	C	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
0071	Bay Haven Basics Plus	E	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	A
0101	Brentwood Elementary	E	B	A	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	C	A	A
1271	Cranberry Elementary	E	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	A	A	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
0501	Emma E. Booker Elementary	E	C	C	C	C	B	C	B	B	C	B	B	C	C	D	D
0121	Englewood Elementary	E	A	A	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	B	B
0131	Fruitville Elementary	E	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	C	A	B
0381	Garden Elementary	E	B	A	B	B	A	A	A	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	B
0461	Glenallen Elementary	E	B	A	A	B	A	A	A	B	B	B	A	A	C	A	C
0261	Gocio Elementary	E	C	B	A	A	A	A	A	B	B	B	C	C	B	A	C
0271	Gulf Gate Elementary	E	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	A	A
0471	Lakeview Elementary	E	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B
1341	Lamarque Elementary	E	B	A	B	A	A	A	A	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
0171	Phillippi Shores Elementary	E	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	C	C	B
0191	Southside Elementary	E	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	A	B	A	B
1282	Tatum Ridge Elementary	E	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
0491	Taylor Ranch Elementary	E	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	C	B
1231	Toledo Blade Elementary	E	B	A	A	B	A	A	A	A	B	A	A	A	C	A	C
0201	Tuttle Elementary	E	A	A*	A	A	A	A	A	B	B	A	A	A	C	C	C
0211	Venice Elementary	E	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	B	B
0291	Wilkinson Elementary	E	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	A	A	A	A	A	C	C
0085	Booker High	H	PENDING	B	B	A	D	C	D	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
1251	North Port High School	H	PENDING	A	B	B	C	B	C	C	C	C	C	NA	NA	NA	NA
0181	Riverview High	H	PENDING	A	B	B	B	A	B	A	B	A	A	A	A	C	C
1391	Suncoast Polytechnical	H	PENDING	A	A	B	A										
0051	Sarasota High	H	PENDING	A	B	B	C	C	B	B	B	C	B	B	A	C	C
0221	Venice High	H	PENDING	B	B	A	C	A	B	A	C	B	B	A	C	C	C
0084	Booker Middle	M	C	C	B	C	C	C	C	B	C	C	C	B	C	C	C
0111	Brookside Middle	M	A	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	C	A	A	A	B	C	B
1261	Heron Creek Middle	M	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	C	B	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
0141	McIntosh Middle	M	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	B	A	A	A	C	B
0031	Sarasota Middle	M	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	C	A
0451	Venice Middle	M	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	A	A	A	C	C	B
1291	Woodland Middle	M	A	A	A	A	A										
	Charter Schools																
0074	Sarasota Military Academy	H	PENDING	A	B	A	C	B	B	B	B	C	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
0110	Sky Academy	M	B	A	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
0081	Suncoast School for Innovative Studies	COMBO	C	B	A	C	A	B	B	C	B	C	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
0083	Sarasota School for Arts and Sciences	M	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	B	A	A	B	NA	NA
0090	Island Village Montessori	COMBO	A	A	A	A	B	A	A	A	A	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
0100	Sarasota Suncoast Academy	E	A	A	A	A	A	A	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
0102	Student Leadership Academy	M	A	A	A	A	B	A	A	A	C	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
0103	Imagine at North Port	COMBO	B	A	A	A	C	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
0106	Imagine at Palmer Ranch	COMBO	A	A	B	B	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Sarasota County schools' grades are shown from 1999 to 2013. Image courtesy Sarasota County Schools

GOODWILL TO LAUNCH ITS SUMMER FOOD DRIVE AUG. 4

Goodwill Manasota will kick off its summer food drive this month to benefit the Food Bank of Manatee and All Faiths Food Bank.

From Aug. 4-10, the public is encouraged to donate non-perishable food items to any Goodwill location in Sarasota, Manatee, Hard-ee and DeSoto counties, a news release says.

“Donations to food banks typically slow down in the summer months, despite the increased need tied to school vacation,” noted Bob Rosinsky, president & CEO of Goodwill Manasota, in the release. “These two local food companies are committed to our neighbors, and we will do whatever we can to help support them. Together, we can make a difference to reduce hunger in our community.”

The Food Bank of Manatee and All Faiths Food Bank serve approximately 150,000 people each week, the release points out. Donated food will help both food banks combat summertime hunger.

“Our 15-year partnership with Goodwill is invaluable to us,” said Sandra Frank, CEO of

All Faiths Food Bank, in the release. “Last year alone, they helped collect close to 40,000 pounds of food, allowing us to provide more than 33,000 meals to Sarasota and DeSoto county residents in need.”

Maribeth Phillips, CEO of Food Bank of Manatee, added in the release, “We are so fortunate to have great partners like Goodwill Manasota, who continue to find ways to assist the Manatee and Sarasota communities in our mission to prevent hunger. Many families and children are counting on us to help them get through the summer, and we cannot let them down.”

“We understand the need for action and are proud to be helping the food banks with this donation drive,” noted Rosinsky in the release. “It is important to help our local community during such extraordinary times. We hope this gift will make a difference.”

Food donations may be made at any Goodwill Manasota location. Visit www.Experience-Goodwill.org for a list.



Goodwill Manasota has numerous locations where people can donate non-perishable foods. Image courtesy of Goodwill Manasota

SARASOTA COUNTY CIVICS 101 PROGRAM ACCEPTING FALL APPLICATIONS

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

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

“Civics 101 is one of our most popular programs and frequently has a waiting list,” said Community Outreach Specialist Kaitlyn Johnston in the release. “Without fail, people who graduate from the program say two things: They had no idea the county offered so many different services and they’ve never had so much fun.”

Staff members from county departments provide presentations, conduct tours of facilities and answer questions from the participants, the release notes. Among the new activities this fall will be a guided tour of the Sarasota County jail and a mock hurricane drill, during which the Civics 101 students “will have to make key decisions under pressure while sitting in the Sarasota County Emergency Operations Center,” the release adds.

Civics 101 has been offered by Sarasota County government since 2000; sessions are conducted twice each year.

The most recent graduating class members became so involved that they adopted Ibis Road



Sarasota County Emergency Management Chief Ed McCrane (right) addresses staff members in the Emergency Operations Center in preparation for a possible strike by Tropical Storm Isaac last summer. Photo by Norman Schimmel

as part of the Keep Sarasota County Beautiful program,” the release says. Some graduates have continued their education by volunteering, including serving on advisory boards.

The fall session of Civics 101 will begin on Sept. 3, with classes taking place in various locations around the county every Tuesday evening from 6 to 9 p.m. Participation is free. New residents, retirees, business professionals and teens are encouraged to apply for the 10-week program. Twenty-five applicants are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. The deadline to submit applications is Aug. 16.

Applications are available on the county’s website at scgov.net/neighborhoodservices.

For more information, contact the County’s Call Center at 861-5000 or e-mail kjohnsto@scgov.net.

SAF WELCOMES THE PUBLIC TO A TOUR OF THE COONEY HOUSE

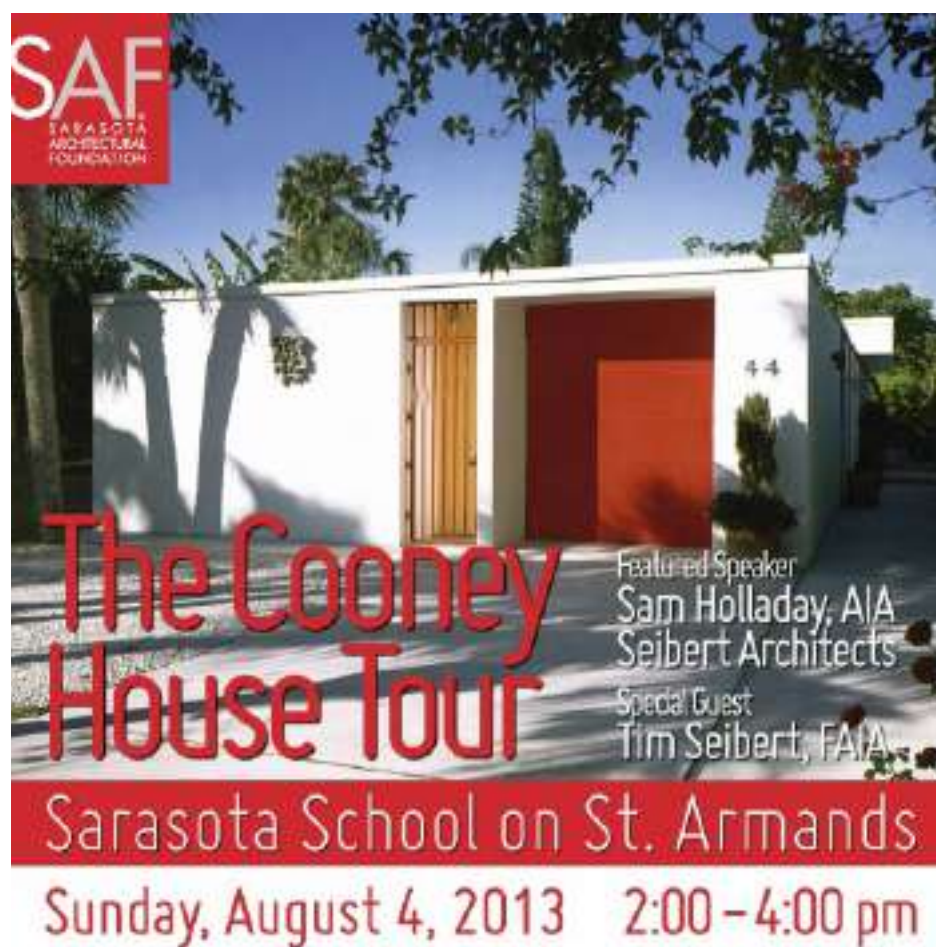
The Sarasota Architectural Foundation (SAF) will host a tour of the Cooney House on St. Armands on Aug. 4, the organization has announced.

“The Cooney House is an outstanding example of the Sarasota School of Architecture, designed by [Seibert Architects](#) in 1966 and winner of the 2001 ‘Test of Time’ award from the Florida chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA),” a news release says. “The award honors works that, by the timelessness of their design, have influenced a particular building variety.”

Seibert Architects’ “clear concept, meticulous detail and workmanship, using ordinary materials, distinguish the house, which was built on a 50-foot lot on St. Armands Key,” the release adds. “The pavilion living area, with its 10-foot ceiling and full-height glass walls, offers a visual extension to the outdoors. The remainder of the house turns inward, providing more intimate spaces. This modernist, regional architecture is about the enclosure of space and capture of light, adapting to Florida’s landscape and climate.”

The featured speaker for the tour will be Sam Holladay, a principal of Seibert Architects, the oldest continuing architectural practice in Sarasota, the release notes. A special guest will be Edward J. “Tim” Seibert, who founded Seibert Architects in 1955; he began his career working for renowned architects Paul Rudolph and Philip Hiss in Sarasota, the release continues.

Tours will be conducted between 2 and 4 p.m. on Aug. 4. Holliday will offer remarks at 3 p.m., the release says. Complimentary refreshments will be served.



The house is located at 44 S. Washington Drive.

Admission is \$10 for SAF members; \$15 for non-members; and \$5 for students with IDs. Click [here](#) to RSVP and pay online. Admission also may be paid at the door by cash, check or credit card. Free public parking is available off St. Armands Circle, about two blocks from the Cooney House, at Madison Drive and North Adams Drive and at South Adams Drive and Monroe Drive.

For more information, call 364-2199 or email info@saf-srq.org.

When: Sunday, August 4, 2013
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Location: [44 South Washington Dr.](#)
[Sarasota, FL 34236](#)

Public: \$15.00 (USD)
SAF Member: \$10.00 (USD)
Student with ID: \$5.00 (USD)

20 GRADUATE FROM STAR LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

It was standing room only as 20 local high school students graduated in late July from the [STAR Leadership Training program](#).

Family members and community leaders gathered at the offices of the [Community Foundation of Sarasota County](#) to celebrate the event, a news release says.

Among the 20 graduates was Sam Winegar, a sophomore at Pine View School in Osprey. He was elected by his classmates to be the leader of the STAR class' service project, which they design and implement themselves, a news release notes.

"I learned that anything you can do makes a difference and sometimes a bigger difference than you thought you'd make," said Sam in the release regarding efforts to raise funds and awareness for [First Step of Sarasota](#).

"We are really honored that the students selected to work with us," added Kelly French of First Step in the release.

The class collected almost \$900 for the organization. "The students said they raised a 'little' money. It's a nice surprise," French noted in the release.

Sam and the other STAR graduates will go on to serve on nonprofit and county boards, the release continues. "I'm really looking forward

to helping serve my community," said Sam. "I can't think of a single thing that the skills I learned in STAR wouldn't help me with."

The STAR Leadership Training Program is an intensive 75-hour leadership program designed for high school students. STAR students learn skills such as team building, communication, problem solving and civic engagement. The STAR Leadership class is offered three times a year — in the spring, summer and fall — the release adds.

The graduates of the latest class are as follows: Carter Akins, Sarasota Military Academy; Skylar Bartolotta, Imagine School; David Bracciano, Cardinal Mooney High School; Emily Brown, Cardinal Mooney; Christian Cole, Booker High School; Larry Destine, Suncoast Polytechnical High School; Maya Green, North Port High School; Maria Hidalgo, Pine View; Daniel Kemp, Pine View; Paige Levanti, Riverview High School; Andrew Marquette, a home-school student; Roberto Mercado, Pine View; Laina Moran, Cardinal Mooney; Jonson Ocean, Booker; Jean Marc Regnier, Cardinal Mooney; Ethan Schmucker, Venice High School; Greg Short, Cardinal Mooney; Alex Sobczak, Cardinal Mooney; Marina Walter, Riverview; and Samuel Winegar, Pine View.



The Community Foundation of Sarasota County has its offices on Fruitville Road in Sarasota. Image courtesy Community Foundation

SHERIFF'S OFFICE AVIATION UNIT HONORED AT CONFERENCE

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Aviation Unit won third-place honors in the FLIR Vision Awards presented at the 2013 Airborne Law Enforcement Association annual conference in Orlando, the office has announced.

The FLIR Vision Awards are given annually to airborne law enforcement teams with the best videos of rescue, apprehension or surveillance missions, a news release says.

The Sheriff's Office video was chosen from more than 40 entries; it showed the pursuit and capture of five suspects in a jewelry store robbery on Nov. 6, 2012, the release notes. In the video, the suspects can be seen scattering near the [PGT Industries](#) headquarters and Interstate 75 "after they bailed from their vehicle," the release adds.

The Air-1 crew safely guided deputies toward the suspects, who were hiding in a lake, and warned officers of potential hazards, including alligators, the release points out.

The crew that night was Deputy/Pilot Dave Bouffard and Deputy/Pilot Brent Wineka. The Aviation Unit includes a total of four pilots and seven tactical flight officers, the release says.

As part of the award, a \$1,000 donation is made on behalf of the aviation unit to the charitable organization of its choice. In the Sheriff's Office unit's case, that is the Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranches.

To view the award-winning video visit the Sheriff's Office's YouTube channel or [click here](#).



Deputy/Pilot David Bouffard (left) and Deputy/Pilot Brent Wineka display their awards. Contributed photo

SHERIFF'S LIEUTENANT GRADUATES FROM COMMAND OFFICERS COURSE

Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight has announced that Lt. Brian Meinberg has graduated from the 67th Command Officers Development Course sponsored by the Southern Police Institute's Department of Justice Administration at the University of Louisville.

Meinberg attended the 400-hour training program at the Broward Public Safety Institute in Fort Lauderdale in five, two-week segments over a five-month period, a news release says. "Participants learn to develop solutions to specific problems; plan, implement and eval-

uate management strategies; and understand federal requirements for personnel issues," the release notes.

"Continuing education programs are a vital part of our agency's succession planning," said Knight in the release. "Future leaders must understand and initiate management best practices as they progress in their careers."

Meinberg, who has worked for the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office since 2004, is assigned to the Corrections Operations Bureau.



(From left) Col. Steve Burns, Lt. Brian Meinberg and Maj. Jim Lilly. Contributed photo

TWO CITY OFFICERS GRADUATE FROM SOUTHERN POLICE INSTITUTE

Sarasota Police Department Lt. James Reiser and Sgt. Bryan Graham recently graduated from the 67th Command Officers Development Course held by the Southern Police Institute, the department has announced.

The ceremony was held in Fort Lauderdale.

The Southern Police Institute is a division of the Department of Justice Administration at the University of Louisville, a news release says.

Reiser and Graham will use their training to enhance their leadership skills, the release notes. Additionally, they “made lifelong law enforcement contacts” with whom to network, the release adds. Being able to reach

out to their fellow SPI alumni will be invaluable as they seek innovative community policing practices to apply in the city, the release points out.

Support Service Bureau Capt. Corinne Stanish said in the release, “I attended the course last year and can attest the curriculum is tough and being away from work and family for so long was a challenge, but it was worth it in the end.”

“Since the creation of the Southern Police Institute in 1951, its program of instruction has been grounded in the belief that law enforcement is a demanding activity requiring the highest level of professional preparation,” the release points out.



(From left) Lt. Pat Ledwith, Lt. James Reiser, Sgt. Bryan Graham and Capt. Corinne Stannish. Contributed photo

SALVATION ARMY SCHEDULES TOWN HALL MEETING ON AUG. 7

The Salvation Army of Sarasota is inviting local residents, community leaders and media representatives to participate in a town hall meeting on Wednesday, Aug. 7, at 7 p.m. to discuss how best to serve those who are struggling in the area.

As a result of a quarterly analysis, a news release says, the Salvation Army is working “to identify ways to increase the effectiveness of compassion.” The release adds, “These suggestions will help the Salvation Army formu-

late new options so we may move forward with strategic planning and implementation of these plans.”

Nonetheless, Maj. Ethan Frizzell, the area commander, points out in the release, “The only thing changing at the Salvation Army is how we change.”

For more information or to submit a question in advance of the Aug. 7 meeting, call 364-8845, Ext. 221.

CONSTRUCTION UNDER WAY ON U.S. 41 AT WALDEMERE

The Florida Department of Transportation is alerting the public that pedestrian crosswalk improvements at the intersection of U.S. 41 and Waldemere Street in Sarasota will mean daytime lane closures.

Motorists should expect to see those closures for the next four to six weeks, FDOT

announced last week in its regular transportation update.

“Motorists and pedestrians are reminded to use caution and watch for construction workers at the intersection,” the news release says.


VENICE SUMMER ARTS AND CRAFTS SHOW TO BE HELD AUG. 10

“The temperature may be hot outside, but the deals on some of the area’s finest arts and crafts will be pretty cool at the Summer Arts and Crafts Show,” set for Saturday, Aug. 10, at the Venice Community Center (VCC), 326 S. Nokomis Ave. in Venice, Sarasota County has announced.

The show hours will be 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Vendors from across the region will offer a variety of arts and crafts in more than 10,000 square feet of air-conditioned space, a news release says. “Shoppers will find unique handcrafted jewelry, quilts, paintings, handbags and many other items,” the release adds. Parking and admission are free.

“It’s a very popular event every year because of the quality of the merchandise, the uniqueness of the items and people being able to shop in such a comfortable environment,” said Dorian Mattox, Sarasota County Parks and Recreation specialist, in the release. “You get great deals, great food from The Venice Community Center partners and one of the largest selections of premium arts and crafts in the region.”

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000 (TTY 7-1-1) or visit www.scgov.net. 



Guns and drugs from recent arrests are shown on a table in the Sarasota Police Department. Contributed photo

POLICE DEPARTMENT MAKES TWO WEAPONS ARRESTS

The Sarasota Police Department arrested two men on concealed weapons charges last week, the department has announced.

One of the suspects also had illegal drugs in his possession, a news release notes.

About 11:15 p.m. on Tuesday, July 23, officers stopped a vehicle in the area of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way and Maple Avenue in Sarasota because the windows appeared to be tinted a darker shade than allowed by law and a rear tag light was not working, making it difficult to read the license plate, the report says.

It was the only vehicle on the road at the time, the report continues, and the officers noted they could detect “a strong and constant odor of marijuana” that seemed to be emanating from the vehicle.

The driver, Lloyd Eldridge, 19, of 1158 44th St., Sarasota, told officers he had just smoked a marijuana cigarette inside the car and that he had thrown it out the window before they stopped him, the report says. Because of that, the officers advised Eldridge they were going to search the vehicle, the report notes. He told them he understood, but there was nothing

for them to see. “[Eldridge’s hands were] also shaking very badly,” the report says.

During the search, officers discovered two handguns (a Glock 9mm with an extended 30-round magazine and a .22 revolver), 77.6 grams of marijuana, 4.2 grams of crystal meth and \$279, the report adds.

Eldridge was arrested and charged with two counts of Carrying a Concealed Firearm, Possession of Marijuana with the Intent to Deliver, Possession of Methamphetamine and Persons Engaged in Criminal Offenses Possessing a Firearm — all felony counts.

In the second incident, officers reported observing two vehicles driving east in a reckless manner on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way. They said that as they attempted to catch up to the vehicles, they saw both swerve between the westbound and eastbound lanes, the re-

port notes. Then the vehicles passed Central Avenue “(where a large apartment community is, along with heavy pedestrian traffic ...)” at high rates of speed, the report adds.

After the driver of one vehicle, Michael R. Griffin Jr., 21, of 30506 14th St. West in Bradenton, stopped, officers asked him and a passenger, Isiah White, to exit the vehicle, the report continues. During a search, officers found a fully loaded .380 caliber pistol in Griffin’s right sweater pocket, the report adds.

Griffin was arrested and charged with Carrying a Concealed Firearm, a felony. He was also charged with Reckless Driving and Driving with a Suspended License, both misdemeanor counts.

White was released to his 25-year-old sister at the scene, the report adds.



Lloyd Eldridge/Contributed photo



Michael Griffin/Contributed photo

HELP SOUGHT IN IDENTIFYING SUSPECTS IN SALON BURGLARY

Detectives with the Sarasota Police Department are looking for two suspects caught on camera burglarizing a Sarasota salon.

The incident occurred on Thursday, July 25, at approximately 1:24 a.m. at the Roots Couture Salon, located at 527 S. Pineapple Ave., according to a news release.

On video, one suspect is seen walking up to a door at the salon, wearing a type of fedora and a jacket, the release notes. The suspect peers in the door, looks around, lights a cigarette and then walks away, the release adds.

The second suspect walks up to the same door; he is wearing a light-colored hoodie. This suspect appears to pick the lock; then, he enters the business, the release continues. In the video, he appears to use his sleeves to cover his hands as he goes into the salon, the police report says. A short time later, the first suspect is seen walking back into camera

view, not wearing a jacket. Then he walks into the business as well.

About 2:13 a.m., both suspects are seen walking out the door, with their heads lowered. The suspect in the hoodie appears to be carrying liquor bottles, the release notes. The suspects close the door behind them as they leave.

The salon owner reported the theft of assorted makeup — eye shadow, powder, lip cream and foundation — plus two bottles of cherry vodka, cigarettes and an iPod with a charger, the release notes.

Anyone with information is encouraged to call Detective Darrell Nixon at 954-7078, leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers by calling 366-TIPS (8477), go online at <http://www.sarasotacrimestoppers.com/> or send a text message by texting TIP109 plus a message to CRIMES (274637).



SHERIFF'S OFFICE REPORTS RESULTS OF JULY 'SATURATION PATROLS'

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has announced that its deputies made 14 DUI arrests and issued 174 citations for traffic offenses during "saturation patrols" on five nights in July.

Other DUI arrests were recorded for the month, a news release points out.

The office "conducts monthly saturation patrols to remove dangerous, uninsured or impaired drivers from local roadways to keep motorists safe," the release says.

"Because of our commitment to keep the public aware of these ongoing education and enforcement efforts, results are provided at the

end of each month and dates for the following month's activity are announced," the release adds.

This month, saturation patrols will be conducted on Aug. 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31.

As Sheriff's Office staff previously has explained, saturation patrols are conducted instead of what people refer to as "DUI Checkpoints," the release says. The patrols include a number of Patrol and Traffic unit deputies "working targeted zones at the same time to monitor driving activity." Those patrols take place in different parts of the county, the release adds.

LIDO BEACH RESORT EMPLOYEE CHARGED WITH THEFT FROM GUEST

Sarasota Police Department detectives have charged Ramon Colon-Estrada, 27, of 3587 Chinaberry Lane, Sarasota, with Felony Grand Theft after he allegedly stole items worth about \$10,000 from an Ohio woman.

Colon-Estrada was working at the Lido Beach Resort in Sarasota at the time of the incident, a news release says.

On July 13, Brenda Myers checked into the resort, the report says. At noon that day, she noticed one of her bags was missing, the report adds; she thought another member of her party had left it at the front desk, but it was not there, the report notes. The bag contained a camera, an iPad and miscellaneous jewelry. Myers reported the incident to hotel management and an officer took a report, according to the news release.

On July 18, the hotel manager and Myers reviewed video from the parking garage, where Myers had left her car upon arrival at the resort, the report says.




Ramon Colon-Estrada/Contributed photo

The video shows Colon-Estrada parking near Myers' vehicle about 7:15 a.m., the report notes. He was arriving for his 8 a.m. shift. The video also shows Colon-Estrada walking past Myers' vehicle before walking back to his own.

Colon-Estrada then backtracked and walked between Myers' vehicle and another one, the report says. Colon-Estrada moved out of view of the camera before heading back to his vehicle, the report adds.

Colon-Estrada next was seen moving his vehicle and stopping it near Myers' vehicle — again out of camera view — for approximately 40 seconds. He then drove to the top of the parking garage and parked his vehicle before reporting for his 8 a.m. shift, the report notes.

Detectives contacted Colon-Estrada, who agreed to come to the Sarasota Police Department to be interviewed, the report says. 



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

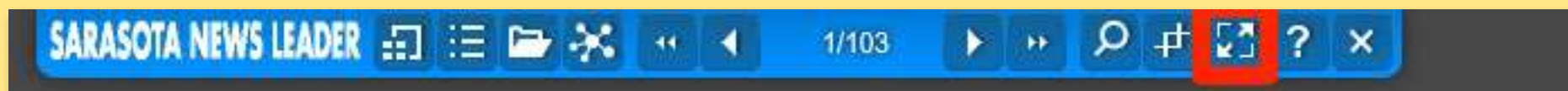
Call: (941) 366-TIPS (8477)


Click: SarasotaCrimeStoppers.com

Text: Text "TIP109" plus your message to CRIMES (274637)

All submitted tips are secure and anonymous

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OPINION



WHEN GREED BECOMES A THREAT TO PUBLIC SAFETY

EDITORIAL

Early on the morning of Oct. 28, 2007, fire broke out in a beach cottage at Ocean Isle Beach in North Carolina. Sleeping in the house were 13 college students — 12 from the University of South Carolina and one from Clemson University. Seven of those students died that morning. Several of the six who escaped were hospitalized.

It is the nightmare of every parent, naturally ... the concern that one's child could perish in such a senseless way. But it also is a concern magnified in beach communities, where owner-investors seek to cram as many beds into a property as possible, so it can be rented by large, extended families who are willing to pay mega fees that run into the thousands of dollars a week.

Sadly, Siesta Key, as one of the premier beach destinations in the country, is no exception. A perusal of the popular website VRBO.com (for Vacation Rentals By Owner) lists a number of properties that boast five or more bedrooms. And the granddaddy of them all is a massive 12-bedroom house that claims to accommodate up to 40 occupants.

That property — located at 6537 Sabal Drive on Siesta Key — is at the center of a protracted battle between Sarasota County Code Enforcement and the owner (or owners), who refuse to engage in any dialogue with county officials. As a result, the county filed suit in the 12th Judicial Circuit Court on July 17, seeking injunctive relief and the payment of fines incurred by the many violations of zoning rules and Federal Emergency Management Agency regulations on that property.

OPINION

Apparently, the current dwelling replaced an older home sometime after 2010. Because of federal regulations for new construction in a flood zone, the house had to be built on pilings to raise it above the expected surge level for a 100-year storm. Ground-level areas must have walls made of a breakaway material as well as flow-through panels that allow high water to pass in and out without damaging the support structure of the dwelling. In addition, no use of the ground level is allowed other than as a garage or storage facility. No occupiable space is permitted on that level.

The house in question came to the attention of county Code Enforcement officials when a renter from out of state found the property too dangerous for her family members to occupy upon their arrival in November 2012. Once she had arranged alternative lodging for them, she notified Code Enforcement and fire officials and gave them access to the property.

Those officials found the entire ground level enclosed with solid masonry walls, with the required flow-through vents bricked over. There were no windows at all on the first level, and only one door to the outside — at the far end of the house. The complete downstairs area was divided into bedrooms and a bathroom. About half of the claimed 40 occupants would be billeted in a bricked enclosure

“Despite the convenience and obvious conviviality that can result from assembling a party of dozens of friends or family under one roof, the risks of cramming so many people into a single space outweighs those benefits.”

with only one point of exit in the event of an emergency.

No required building permits had been obtained for the construction work, so the county had no way of knowing if the work

had been done by unlicensed contractors, another potential violation.

In November 2012, Code Enforcement Officer John Lally issued a Notice of Violation/Notice to Obtain Permits, which was served on The Daniels Law Firm of Sarasota, the registered agent of Siesta Resorts LLC, the company county records showed to be the owner of the property.

During subsequent hearings before a Sarasota County Special Magistrate, no one from The Daniels Law Firm or Siesta Resorts appeared to answer the charges. Several orders were then entered by the special magistrate, with timelines for bringing the property into compliance with local, state and federal regulations, and threatening fines if compliance was not forthcoming.

However, by May of this year, no word had been heard from either the Daniels firm or Siesta Resorts, so the magistrate began entering orders levying fines that would continue until the appropriate corrections to the property were made. As of the end of July, those fines had exceeded \$26,000.

OPINION

Although the owner, or owners, of the property would not communicate with the county about the violations, they continued to rent the property, accommodating at least seven parties since the first Notice of Violation was served. Perhaps with rental rates of \$4,500 per week, they figured they still were coming out ahead on the county's cumulative fines of \$3,500 per week.

When it appeared nothing would coax the owners or their attorneys to even acknowledge the property's shortcomings, the county filed a lawsuit to force compliance with the codes.

However, despite taking that action on July 17, the county was unable to properly "serve" the defendants until July 25. The defendants have 20 days from that date of service to file their answer to the county's complaint.


This entire situation concerns us greatly. First, despite the convenience and obvious conviviality that can result from assembling a party of dozens of friends or family under one roof, the risk of cramming so many people into a single space outweighs those benefits. Were the house subject to the same standards as hotels — required to have fire alarms, sprinkler systems, adequate exits and an emergency escape plan — there would be less concern.

But this house does not even comply with the minimum requirements of the county for safe ingress and egress. The entire ground level of the structure is an illegal accommodation, violating FEMA rules against occupancy in that

area. Even on the upper floor there is only one exit, which could be blocked in the event of fire, trapping the occupants.

Worse, the malingering intransigence of the owners is potentially putting innocent lives at risk. While this matter drags through the courts — and one can only assume by the deft elusion so far of the property's owners and their erstwhile pettifogs that the case will test the cunctative limits of our judicial system — the specter of tragic conflagration grows nearer.

No one would deny a property owner the right to maximize the honest return on his or her investment. What no one wants, however, is for the nation's television cameras to be trained on Siesta Beach as 40 charred bodies are brought out of the smoldering ruins.

It is far past time for the owners of the house at 6537 Sabal Drive — whoever they might be — to do the right thing and put their house in order. 



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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Sarasota Leisure

SIESTA SEEN
COMMUNITY CALENDAR
SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS

Inside

Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast



BOLLARD INSTALLATION IS UNDER WAY; MORE BEACH-NESTING BIRD HATCHLINGS HAVE BEEN REPORTED, IN SPITE OF BUFFER VANDALISM; A PUBLIC MEETING IS SCHEDULED ON LOW-SPEED VEHICLES ON THE KEY



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Although I reported a couple of weeks ago that Sarasota County staff planned to start installing the bollards with LED illumination at seven Siesta Village crosswalks this week, one never knows whether something will interfere with a tentative timetable.

I am very pleased to say that Peter van Roekens — the Siesta Key Association officer who started the initiative in January 2012 to provide better lighting in the Village — called me on July 30 to say the installation is proceeding.

“I’m very happy now,” van Roekens told me.

Along with Siesta Village Association representatives Russell Matthes and Mark Smith —



County tourism figures show plenty of visitors are enjoying Siesta Public Beach this summer, including this youngster. Photo courtesy of Peter van Roekens



A pelican skims the Gulf of Mexico on Siesta Key. Photo courtesy of Peter van Roekens

Siesta Seen

as well as county staff — van Roekens participated in a couple of lighting demonstrations last summer in an effort to determine what equipment would work best to make pedestrians more visible to drivers on Ocean Boulevard.

All 14 bollards should be in by late August, according to the county's timetable.

THE BLINKING LIGHTS

Yet another one of van Roekens' projects is closer to seeing fruition, too, I learned this week.

Ryan Montague, the Sarasota County staff member in the Traffic/Mobility Office who also handled the bollards project, said he is hopeful the County Commission will approve the installation of four new pedestrian crosswalk lights and signs at the Beach Way and Avenida Del Mare intersections on Beach Road.

Tom Maroney, general manager of business operations in the Public Works Department, explained in a July 3 email to Commissioner Nora Patterson that "the rectangular rapid flashing beacon pedestrian sign (RRFB)," like those the Florida Department of Transportation installed last year at pedestrian crosswalks on Midnight Pass Road, has become very popular. Alternating, or "wig-wag," flashing lights are mounted below each sign.

Those are the types of signs and lights Siesta Isles residents have sought at the Beach Way and Avenida Del Mare crosswalks, to replace constantly blinking lights that drivers have been ignoring for a long time, endangering pedestrians.



The County Commission will be asked late this summer to approve the installation of new crosswalk lights to replace constantly blinking ones at the Beach Way and Avenida Del Mare intersections on Beach Road. File photo

Siesta Seen

Montague said on July 30 that the County Commission will have to approve the purchase and installation of the signs when it returns in August from its summer recess. Once the board votes, it should take about two weeks to order the materials and about another week to get everything put in place — call it a month, he added.

“They know it’s a pretty important issue to those folks on Siesta Key,” he pointed out of the commissioners.

Montague did not have a cost estimate handy when I spoke with him, but he thought it would be in the vicinity of \$13,000. I will not hold him to that.

By the way, as I was finishing up this column, I found a July 30 email exchange between Montague’s boss, Chief County Engineer James K.

Harriott, and Patterson regarding those “wig-wag” lights.

When Patterson asked what he meant by “wig-wag,” Harriott explained that it is a type of strobe light, adding, “I learned today that the term ‘wig wag’ is common in law enforcement and describes the alternating flashing lights seen on emergency vehicles.”

He further pointed out, “[The lights] will flash on demand when activated by a pedestrian at the crosswalk. The flashing is brighter and more noticeable, and with the lights being on activation, they receive more attention from drivers.”

Van Roekens also let me know that county staff is working on lighting for the pedestrian crosswalks on Midnight Pass Road south of the Stickney Point Road intersection.

MORE HELP FOR BABY BIRDS

Although information about Siesta’s [beach-nesting birds](#) was pretty grim a couple of weeks ago, Sarasota Audubon volunteers Bob and Catherine Luckner sent me an update this week with some cheering news.

After major destruction was reported in the area of Least Tern and Snowy Plover nests near Beach Accesses 3 and 4 last month, the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office, state officials, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission [FWC] staff and new volunteers all have joined forces to provide more protection, Catherine wrote in a July 30 email.



Snowy plover chicks are so tiny, many visitors to Siesta Public Beach find them difficult to see. Photo courtesy of Rick Greenspun and Sarasota Audubon

Siesta Seen

Additionally, Sarasota County Natural Resources Department staff has been working hard with owners of Beach Road property near a conservation easement to clear up another matter I reported on recently — the illegal widening of a path to the beach near Access 10.

She wrote, “We had a [recent] meeting with a large contingent of these [state and county] folks and have new impetus for reporting ALL violations directly to the State by phone and email to well document the need for enhanced monitoring and intervention well ahead [of] and during a nesting period.”

Luckner added, “We are now directed from FWC to report daily any and all violations of these buffered areas to [the] state FWC reporting line. This will begin to build a base of support for intervention and management of the Siesta Key areas for nesting imperiled species.”

Regarding the status of nesting season: As of July 30, Luckner continued, volunteers in the previous 10 days had found four Least Tern chicks alive and being fed by adult Least Terns near the vegetated dune areas of Accesses 3 and 4. After wanton destruction of the nesting sites in that area in late July, Audubon volunteers had mourned the loss of a number of Least Tern chicks as well as a Snowy Plover nest with eggs close to hatching.

Additionally, Luckner noted, two Snowy Plover chicks “are alive and thriving” — at that point, about 14 days old.

Further, the other two chicks I had reported on — which are about five weeks old — “are ... almost ready to fledge!” Luckner wrote. That means they will be able to fly on their own, the point at which volunteers can breathe a sigh of relief, because the baby birds will have much better odds of survival.

“They enjoy active feeding and the protection of the Conservation Foundation property,” Luckner noted, referring to the property owned by the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast. “We have volunteers dawn to dusk!”

As for that destruction at Accesses 3 and 4: Luckner pointed out that volunteers still are waiting on FWC officials to send a formal letter to the man witnesses identified as the one who dragged lawn chairs through the buffered nesting areas.

Luckner added that they have not been able to learn why FWC has failed to take formal action, “as we have virtually everything documented [to support] a violation of the buffer, which is illegal (with or without loss of live chicks). [The man] evaded the FWC Officer who went twice to see him. He finally was reached by phone by the FWC Officer and never would admit to what he’d done; however, he said he knew the buffers were important.”

The Siesta beach-nesting bird team members “are requesting, at minimum, a formal letter documenting the event, the evidence collected and the intervention effort of the FWC officer to reach this individual,” she continued.

Siesta Seen

Luckner's husband, Bob, is the coordinator of the Audubon volunteers on the island.

"We know now ANY footprint [in] the buffer constitutes a legal violation and also criminal mischief if the physical property of the buffer is damaged," she pointed out.

In addition to that extensive destruction, she reported, a person continues to walk a large dog daily "on a long lead" in the area of Accesses 3 and 4.

A Sarasota County ordinance makes it illegal to have a dog on the beach, because beach-nesting birds will abandon nests —

even eggs about to hatch — if they feel threatened by dogs.

THE CONSERVATION EASEMENT PATH MATTER

On a related matter, Luckner told me her husband had "to be very firm" with the new owner of the condominium complex at 612 Beach Road, on the land side of the conservation easement area near Access 10.

As I reported earlier in the *News Leader*, county staff advised the owner and his legal representative that the path to the beach can be no wider than 4 feet. A *News Leader* staff



The path through the conservation easement near Beach Accesses 9 and 10 is required to be no more than 4 feet wide. News Leader measurements found it to be as much as 9 feet wide in places. Photo by Robert Hackney

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member measured the path several weeks ago at 9 feet in width in a number of places.

After investigating Audubon volunteers' reports of the pathway's condition in mid-June, Matt Osterhoudt, manager of conservation and environmental permitting in the Sarasota County Natural Resources Department, told the *News Leader* county staff members had confirmed the violation. They had requested a meeting with the property owner and his attorney, Osterhoudt noted, to discuss how best to resolve the situation. Osterhoudt said the

path would have to be re-vegetated to restore it to the 4-foot width.

On July 17, Osterhoudt told me he had met with the property owners, "and they certainly appear willing to work with us."

He added that they were preparing a restoration plan, which he expected to receive before the end of July. However, Luckner said the Audubon group was continuing to have some difficulty with the property owner and planned to register a complaint with the Flor-



A three-story condominium complex is under construction at 610-612 Beach Road. Photo by Robert Hackney

Siesta Seen

ida Department of Environmental Protection regarding the owner's hiring of a person with a tractor to mow in the dunes and sea oats, to widen the path illegally, as that "demonstrates a lack of his compliance [with] DEP regulations for the coastal environments."

Bob Luckner had reiterated in a July 17 email to the property owner that the latter had asked "to be informed when we discovered a nest and to have a point contact to find out the status of Beach Nesting birds on [his] property. It is our policy to contact homeowners before buffering private property and now that we know how to reach you we commit to do that. I should be your contact if you have questions."

Bob Luckner added in his email, "I would ask you to consider the buffers as a way to warn you, your guests and others of the presence of Beach Nesting Birds and the fact that there is a significant penalty for disturbing Beach Nesting Birds."

Further, Bob Luckner advised the man to watch the video of the April 2011 County Commission meeting when the board approved the construction variance for the property: "Your attorney, William Merrill, committed to the [County Commission] as a condition of your permit, that all buffering for Beach Nesting birds was henceforth pre-approved and that you would not use a tractor to rake, remove vegetation or grade the sand [hand raking is permitted] in the [conservation easement] or along the existing path."

YOUR THOUGHTS ON GOLF CARTS

During an early May County Commission discussion of a petition to allow golf carts to travel regularly on a portion of South Midnight Pass Road, the board members asked Paula Wiggins, the county's transportation planning manager, to organize public meetings on Siesta Key to determine the prevailing opinion about the use on the island of those vehicles and others that move at low speeds.


The board is expected to address the issue again after receiving that public feedback.

Wiggins told me on July 30 that she has scheduled a public meeting at Siesta Key Chapel from 5 to 7 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 20, to hear residents' views.

She expects county staff to start distributing flyers about the meeting by Aug. 5, she said.

Additionally, Wiggins told me, the county's Information Technology and Communications staffs are preparing an online survey that people may take on the matter.

Wiggins is also working with the Siesta Key Association to help get out the word about the meeting and the survey, she added.

Further, staff will determine whether the County Commission would like to see a second meeting scheduled after seasonal people begin to return to the key this fall, Wiggins said. 



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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Hermitage artists will participate in an open house and performances for the public on Aug. 9. Contributed photo

2013 STARS TO SHINE AT HERMITAGE BEACH READING, OPEN HOUSE

The Hermitage Artist Retreat is inviting the public to a free open house and beach performances on Friday, Aug. 9, at 6 p.m. The event will begin with tours of the historic Hermitage House and open studios featuring visual artists Rocky Bridges and Beverly Williams, a news release says. At 7 p.m., beach readings will commence with writers Kristen Rodriguez and Melanie Webb. Composer and acoustic guitarist Ramiro Malagon will perform his music as well.

These artists in residence are the 2013 STARS: Each won a State Teacher Artist Residency

(STAR) through a partnership between the Hermitage and the Florida Alliance for Arts Education (FAAE), headquartered in Orlando, the release notes. The competition is open to all public school arts teachers in the state. "Their prize is time and space during their summer break to live and work as artists on the beachfront campus of the Hermitage Artist Retreat," the release adds.

The Hermitage campus is located at 6660 Manasota Key Road, on Manasota Key in Englewood. Attendees should bring their beach chairs and refreshments to enjoy during the performances, the release notes.

“This will be our last beach event of the summer,” said Bruce E. Rodgers, executive director of the Hermitage, in the release. “As always our STARs are a talented group of artists who happen to have ‘day’ jobs educating our children. ... You’ll be impressed by their talents and thankful that such a devoted group is sharing their talents with the children that pass through their classrooms,” he added in the release.

“The Hermitage is very proud of this program that supports Florida arts educators,” Rodgers continued.

As in the past, this year’s STARs teach children from the kindergarten level through high school in various counties around the state. Rocky Bridges teaches sculpture, painting, drawing and art history to 12th-graders at Harrison School for the Arts in Lakeland; Beverly Williams teaches visual arts for grades 6, 7 and 8 at Union Academy Magnet Middle School in Bartow, the release notes. Both schools are in Polk County.

From Broward County, STAR Ramiro Malagon teaches music in grades K-5 at Discovery Elementary in Sunrise, while STAR Kristen

Rodriguez is a media specialist for grades K-5 at West Hollywood Elementary School in Hollywood.

Duval County had a winner with Melanie Webb, who teaches creative writing to ninth-graders as well as junior fiction and critical theory to students in grades 9, 11 and 12 at Douglas Anderson School of the Arts in Jacksonville.

“One incentive in creating this program was to recharge the creative energy of artist/teachers in our state who will return to their classrooms with a renewed sense of their artistry to give back to their students,” the release points out. Malagon confirmed the goal: “The Hermitage has provided me with an inspirational beautiful environment, where I have deeply connected to my musical and spiritual side by creating compositions, practicing and performing as an instrumentalist. I am looking forward to sharing this wonderful experience with my students and colleagues.”

For more information about the STARs program or the Hermitage Artist Retreat, call 475-2098 or visit the website at www.HermitageArtistRetreat.org.

WEBBER’S HIT NEARING END OF ITS RUN ON VENICE STAGE

Venice Theatre’s Summer Stock performances of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s hit musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor® Dreamcoat* will conclude on Sunday, Aug. 4, on the Main-Stage, the theater is reminding potential patrons.

Presented by the theater’s Summer Stock troupe — which is in its seventh year — the show is directed by Brad Wages and choreographed by Michelle Kasanofsky, a release notes.

Summer Stock is a theatre “boot camp” for senior-high and college-age performers interested in pursuing professional careers in theater, the release points out.

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor® Dreamcoat is a contemporary retelling of the familiar biblical story of Joseph and his coat of many colors, the release explains. “Joseph, Jacob’s favorite son, is a boy blessed with prophetic dreams. Sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, Joseph experiences a series of ad-

ventures during which his spirit and humanity are challenged,” the release continues. “After thwarting the advances of his owner’s wife, he finds himself misrepresented and thrown into prison. However, due to his ability to interpret dreams, Joseph becomes second in command to Pharaoh and ultimately is reunited with his family.”

Wages says in the release, “All of this action is portrayed in an entertaining, fast-paced and nontraditional style.”

Set to a cornucopia of musical arrangement styles — from Broadway to country, Calypso to rock ‘n’ roll, “this Old Testament tale has become a favorite of school, community and professional theatres around the world,” the release notes. Webber and Tim Rice originally wrote the musical as a 20-minute pop cantata for St. Paul’s Junior School in England in 1968, the release explains. “After many ama-

teur and professional productions, with new material being added over the years, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor® Dreamcoat* opened on Broadway in 1982 and ran for 747 performances,” the release continues. It was nominated for seven Tony Awards. In London, the musical has won four Laurence Olivier Awards.

Venice Theatre is located at 140 W. Tampa Ave. on the island in Venice. Summer box office hours are Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and one hour before performances.

Tickets for *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor® Dreamcoat* are \$25 for adults, \$15 for college students and \$10 for children. They are on sale at the box office at 140 W. Tampa Ave., by phone at 488-1115 or online at www.venicestage.com.



Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor® Dreamcoat will continue through Aug. 4 at Venice Theatre. Contributed photo

VENICE THEATRE'S SUMMER CABARET FESTIVAL CONTINUES

Venice Theatre's inaugural Summer Cabaret Festival will continue through Aug. 25, with performances on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. in the 90-seat Pinkerton Theatre (coined "Pinky's Cabaret" for this event).

Altogether, 12 different acts have been signed to perform during the festival.

Venice Theatre's producing director, Allan Kollar, says he is excited to present the art of cabaret in its purest form. He explains in a news release, "We're going back to the basics with a variety of music and comedy in a nightclub setting. I put out a call for proposals and am very pleased with the response. The area's hottest talent is going to participate."

Kollar anticipates making the festival an annual event, he adds in the release.

Single tickets for each show are \$15. Money-saving passes are available to encourage patrons to enjoy as much of the festival as



possible, the release notes. The Pick 4 Pass is \$56, and the Pick 8 Pass is \$100. More information is available by visiting www.venicestage.com, by calling 488-1115 or stopping at the box office at 140 W. Tampa Ave. on the island in Venice. Summer box office hours are Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and one hour before show time.

The following performances are among those remaining on the schedule:

- Saturday, Aug. 3: Melissa Cripps, *An Evening of Class(ics)* — songs from Ella, Judy, Rosemary, Barbra, Bette, Liza and more.
- Sunday, Aug. 4: Bill Schustik, *A Troubadour's Cabaret* — a musical venture into the soul of America.
- Thursday, Aug. 8: Dorian & The Furniture — mellow rock from Venice Theatre's resident sound designer.
- Friday, Aug. 9: Kim Kollar, Bobbi Eschenbach & Michelle Kasanofsky, *Mercer Magic* — Johnny Mercer tunes, including *Come Rain or Come Shine*, *Moon River* and *Accentuate the Positive*.
- Saturday, Aug. 10: Diana Vytell, *Live, Laugh, Love* — songs by Webber, Sondheim, Rodgers & Hart, LeGrand and more.

PROGRAMS OFFERED ON MODERN ART AND ART NOUVEAU

Art Center Sarasota will offer programs in August focusing on modern American art, the center has announced.

The following topics will be addressed, a news release says:

- Aug. 8: *The Armory Show: American Moderns and European Fauvists, Cubists, & Futurists.*

- Aug. 15: *Women and The Armory Show: The Gender of Modernism.*
- Aug. 21: *From Bauhaus to Our House: The Relentlessly Rational Intellectuals and the International Style.*

The 1913 Armory Show, held at the 69th Regiment Armory at Lexington Avenue and 25th Street in New York City, was the first large



An upcoming program at Jacaranda Trace will focus on Art Nouveau, including its distinctive style of furniture. Contributed photo

exhibition of modern art in the United States, the news release notes. “For the first time, Americans saw examples of avant-garde European art: Fauvism, Cubism and Futurism. The public sensation and the polemical critical responses to the show represented a watershed in the history of art.”

An enormous success, the show led to the founding of the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum, the release points out.

Two decades later, America not only became the capital of the art world, “but also the home of the International Style of Architecture,” it adds.

The lectures will be from 6 to 8 p.m. Admission is \$10 at the door.

Art Center Sarasota is located at 707 N. Tami-ami Trail in Sarasota. For more information, call 365-2032 or visit www.artsarasota.org.

A related program, *Art Nouveau*, will be held from 2 to 3 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 22, at Jacaranda Trace in Venice.

“Art Nouveau was an international style of art, interior design and architecture that peaked in popularity around 1880-1914,” the release adds. It was characterized by highly stylized, curvilinear nature motifs, the release notes.

Admission for that program also will be \$10 at the door.

Jacaranda Trace is on the second floor of the Cadbury Commons Building, located at 3600 William Penn Way in Venice.



A sign outside the Armory in New York City advertises the 1913 modern art show. Contributed photo

GALLUP GALLERY TO PRESENT SOME WONDERFUL ABSTRACTIONS

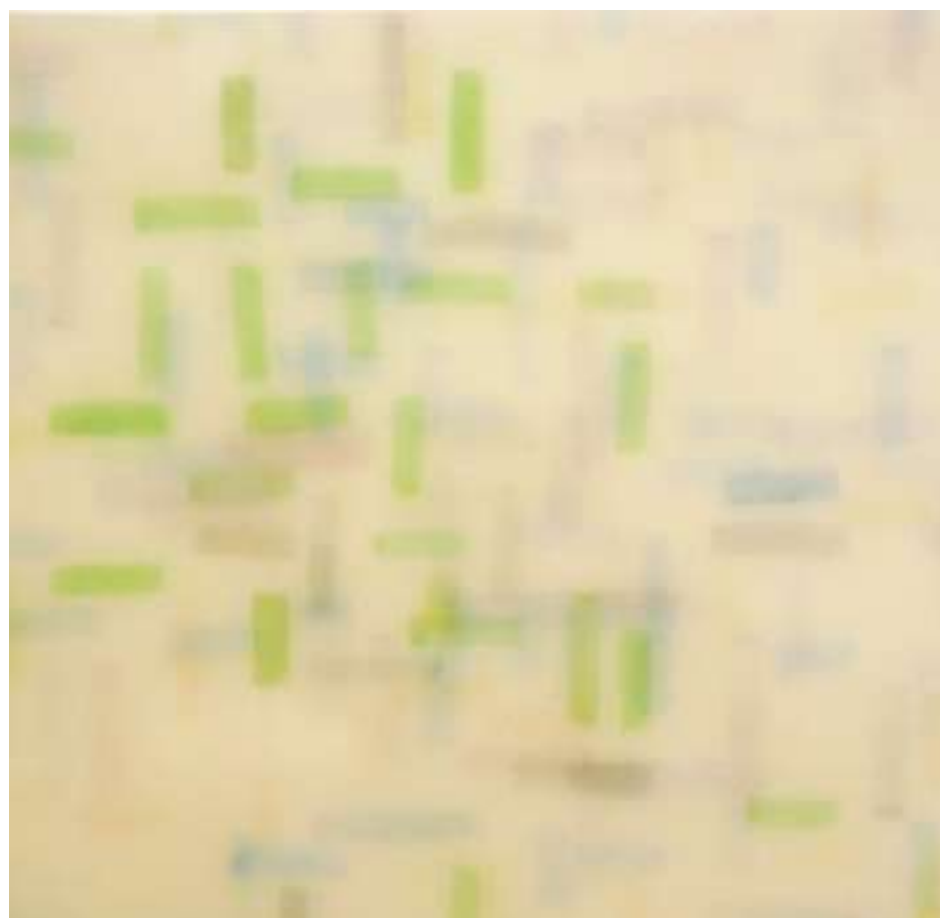
Allyn Gallup Contemporary Art gallery will present *Some Wonderful Abstractions* Aug. 15 through Oct. 5, featuring paintings and works on paper by Luisa Basnuevo, Michael Kessler, Juri Morioka, Gustavo Ramos Rivera, Yolanda Sanchez, Richard Schemm, Mike Solomon and Valerie Stuart, the gallery has announced.

The exhibit also will feature a survey of paintings by Bianca Pratorius, with selections from three bodies of work created over 15 years, and sculpture by Mary-Ann Prack, a news release says.

Basnuevo, of Miami, was born in Cuba, the release continues. Her paintings have been exhibited in museums and galleries in the United States and abroad, including the Southeastern Center of Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, NC, and the Musée de Luxembourg in Paris. Her work is in public and corporate collections throughout Florida, including those of the Miami Art Museum, the Ringling Museum, and the Polk Museum of Art in Lakeland, the release continues.

Kessler, of Santa Fe, “makes nature-based paintings that merge geometric elements with biomorphism,” the release adds. “Influenced by the paintings of Brice Marden and Elizabeth Murray, as well as by the music of Phillip Glass and Steve Reich, his works are characterized by large fields of diaphanous color that are activated by organic linear structures that have been visually and physically woven into a grid structure,” which consists of thick slabs of paint, the release notes. Kessler’s work is shown and collected around the country.

Morioka, of New York City, was born in Tokyo; she came to the United States as a high school



*A Frank O'Hara Summer by Mike Solomon.
Contributed photo*

exchange student and earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in painting at Parsons School of Design in 1990. She says of her work, “I always approach the canvas directly, without any preceding sketches or studies. I paint in the manner of Zen, moving my brushes along with my mind’s rhythm, relying solely on instinct and intuition. Outside of conscious thought, I search for harmony and form in the play of color and shapes, and a composition gradually emerges.”

Ramos Rivera, of San Francisco, is an abstract painter “whose work is celebrated for its intense emotional content and its unique, personal symbology,” the release points out. “Rivera’s paintings combine the palette and iconography of the indigenous cultural heritage of his native Mexico with classic techniques of post-war American abstraction. In his paintings, Rivera constructs layers of in-



What Makes You Think You Can Say That by Bianca Pratorius. Contributed photo



Val11 by Valerie Stuart. Contributed photo

tense translucent color fields upon which he lays simple hieroglyphic markings of rich impasto,” which seem at once archaic and contemporary, the release adds.

Sánchez, also of Miami, was born in Cuba and emigrated to the United States in 1960. She obtained a doctorate in clinical psychology in 1979 and has practiced and taught psychology at the graduate level for more than 30 years, the release notes. “Prompted by a personal crisis in her mid-30s, Sánchez decided to give voice to her creativity and returned to school.” She is a Fulbright scholar, having completed her fellowship as a painter in Spain. Sánchez “conducts ‘research’ in the natural landscape — largely influenced by color, texture and light — and paints in her studio,” the release continues. “Her work is never a direct translation of what she sees, but rather is an expression of a felt experience, a memory of or desire for the experience.”


Schemm, of Traverse City, MI, took an early interest in cabinetmaking and came to focus on “beautiful wood finishes” and “beautiful paintings,” the release says. “His work has been praised for its attention to detail and keen use of color.” His work has been exhibited widely over the past 30 years.

Solomon, of East Hampton, NY, “makes sculpture and paintings that combine the conceptual with the abstract,” the release continues. “In an essay,” the release adds, “art critic Helen Harrison wrote, ‘His art embodies fundamental qualities that he perceives in nature, for which he creates aesthetic analogies. Without imitating those qualities he captures their essence, pins it down and offers it as a gift to those who take the time to receive it.’”

Through the use of color, brush strokes and fresco applications Stuart, of Sun Valley, ID, “creates haunting atmospheric imagery from natural sources such as landscapes, seascapes, skyscapes, flowers and plants,” the release notes. “She plays with color and form to create a dream-like experience that invites the viewers to bring their personal interpretations into the piece.”

Pratorius, also of Miami, was born in Cologne, Germany, in 1969. She completed a three-year program at the Holzfachschule Koeln, focusing on furniture building and design. “Her work is featured internationally in many private and corporate collections, including the Neiman Marcus Collection (in a number of stores) and the Millenium Partners Collection, permanently displayed in the Four Seasons Hotel in Miami, the release points out. “The unifying thread through my work has been pattern and repetition, which I explore through simple yet labor-intensive processes,” she says in the release.

During the 1980s, Prack, of Jefferson, NC, “concentrated on developing hand-built ceramics as a sculpture medium,” exhibiting her work in a broad range of indoor and outdoor venues, the release continues. Though she uses ceramics as a material, the release adds, she does not follow the potter’s vessel concept “but blazes her own path with clay as a pure sculpture medium; hand-building each piece using stoneware clay slabs; carved line work/textures; and glazes, colors, or stains with a painter’s approach to surface treatments.”

The gallery is at 1288 N. Palm Ave. in Sarasota. For more information, call 366-2454 or visit www.allyngallup.com. 



Anu by Mary-Ann Prack. Contributed photo



Temple Emanu-El is located on McIntosh Road in Sarasota. File photo

YOUR MONTHLY JEWISH MOMENT CONCLUDES ON AUG. 6

Temple Emanu-El's summer learning program, *Your Monthly Jewish Moment*, will conclude on Tuesday, Aug. 6, at 10:30 a.m. at Temple Emanu-El, 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota, the Temple has announced.

Focusing on current events and subjects of Jewish interest, these monthly discussions are facilitated by Peter Wells, retired executive director of the Jewish Federation of Dayton and a former consultant to *Moment Magazine*, a news release says. "*Your Monthly Jewish Mo-*

ment is an opportunity to explore hot topics, learn and share views in an intellectual, enriching atmosphere," the release adds. All are welcome.

Your Monthly Jewish Moment is free of charge to Temple Emanu-El members, with an \$18 donation requested from guests. The program is sponsored by the synagogue's Adult Education Committee.

For more information, contact Peter Wells at 359-8235 or chaver39@yahoo.com.



(From left) Barney Sack, Jo Arora, Fred Raymes, Susan Friedman (Congregation for Humanistic Judaism president) and Len Rosen (CHJ vice president). Contributed photo

CONGREGATION SUPPORTS BOOKER MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

The [Congregation for Humanistic Judaism](#) (CHJ) recently recognized its dedicated group of Backpack Kids Program volunteers, who make sure students at Booker Middle School in Sarasota have sufficient food every weekend of the school year.

This is the fourth year of CHJ's involvement in the effort, a news release says. The mission of the All Faiths Food Bank program "is to help alleviate child hunger in Sarasota and DeSoto counties," a food bank report says; it pro-

vides nutritional support for youngsters who receive free or reduced-price meals at school.

CHJ has raised enough money to see students through the 2013-14 school year, the release adds. Renee Crammes is the volunteer coordinator.

CHJ members not only fund the Booker Middle project, they also show up at All Faiths Food Bank to pack the items and make sure they are delivered on time, the release notes.

Take Your Time You Have All Week

Enjoy The News Leader Anytime - Day or Night

SCREENING OF *THE LEMON TREE* OFFERED ON AUG. 11

Temple Emanu-El, located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota, will conclude its popular summer film series with a screening of *The Lemon Tree* on Sunday, Aug. 11, at 2 p.m., the Temple has announced.

“An Israeli film about a lush 50-year-old grove of lemon trees that was the life and livelihood of an Arab woman — and that now stands across from the home of Israel’s defense minister and his family — *The Lemon Tree* will be screened on the Temple’s state-of-the-art projection system,” the release adds.

The cost is \$5. Popcorn and lemonade will be served, the release notes.

For more information, contact Eunice Cohen at eunice.cohen@comcast.net. 

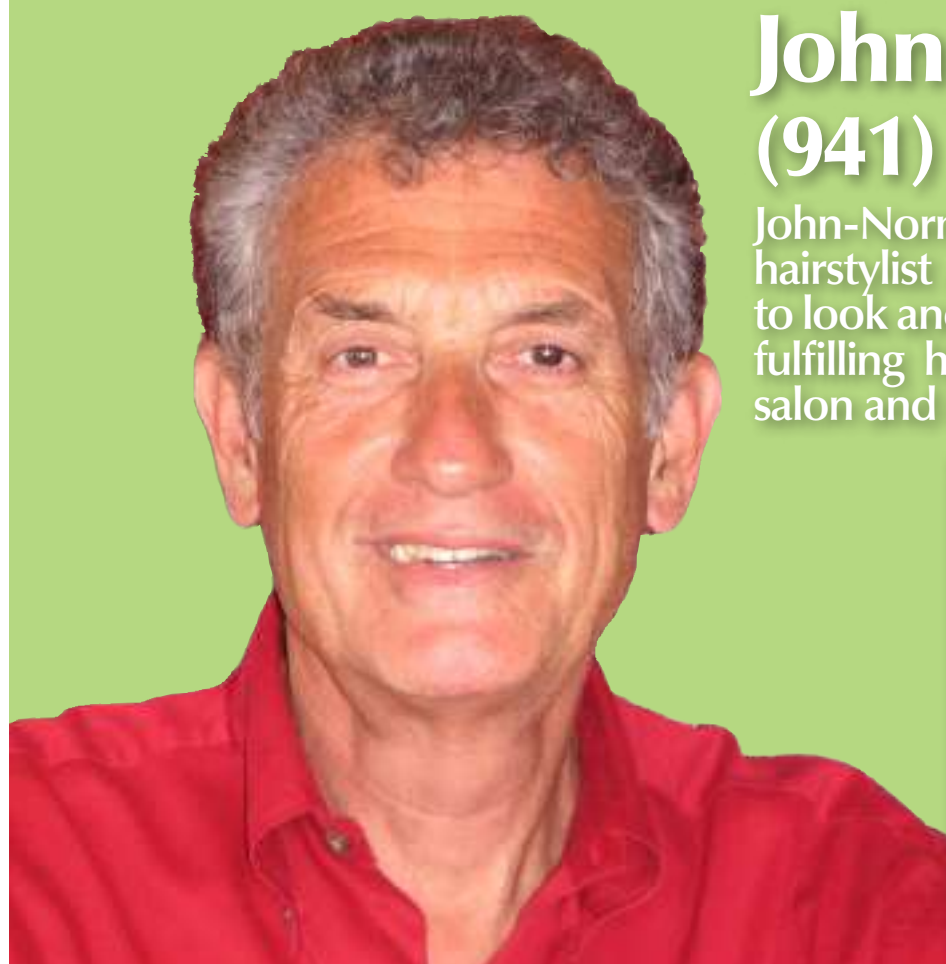


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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

02+
AUGUST

Banyan Theater presents *Heroes*

Through Aug. 4 (times vary), Jane B. Cook Theatre, FSU Center for the Performing Arts, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail. Tickets: \$28.50. Information: 351-2808 or BanyanTheaterCompany.com.

02+
AUGUST

Florida Studio Theatre presents *The Underpants*

Through Aug. 11 (times vary), Keating Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave. Tickets: \$18 to \$42. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org.

02+
AUGUST

FST Summer Improv

Through Aug. 24, 8:30 p.m., John C. Court Cabaret, 1241 N. Palm Ave. Tickets: \$12. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org.

02+
AUGUST

Dabbert Gallery presents *Summer Showcase*

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

08+
AUGUST

Banyan Theater presents *Time Stands Still*

Aug. 8-25 (times vary), Jane B. Cook Theatre, FSU Center for the Performing Arts, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail. Tickets: \$28.50. Information: 351-2808 or BanyanTheaterCompany.com.

11
AUGUST

WSLR presents the fifth annual Very Merry Jerry Day, featuring Florida Mountain Boys, Ship of Fools, Kettle of Fish and Schmitz Bros. Band

Aug. 11, 3:30 to 9 p.m., 525 Kumquat Court, Sarasota. Tickets: \$10. Information: 894-6469 or WSLR.org.

16
AUGUST

Friday Fest at the Van Wezel, featuring Impulse

Aug. 16, 5 p.m., Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 N. Tamiami Trail. Admission: Free. Information: 953-3368 or VanWezel.org.

SKY DANCERS

PRESS



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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.