



Main Street Zephyrhills

Zephyrhills

# FREE PRESS

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## Parade Opens Fair

*Public Outcry From  
2017 Absence Brings  
Back Traditon*

Story and photos by **Emily Kochanski**

All of Pasco loves a good celebration and Dade City reinstituted an old favorite on Monday. After a year of missing the beat, the Pasco County Fair parade rolled down Seventh Avenue once again.

“Last year, schools were not out for the first time ever on President’s Day,” said Clark Converse, the fair’s general manager. “We feared no participation; nobody to watch the parade or to be in the parade.”

Once again, days lost to Hurricane Irma cost the district this year’s

**Parade • Continued on Page 5A**



The Egypt Shriners zipped through the streets in their speedy go-karts and jalopies.

## Three Vie For Compton’s Seat

*Wilkeson, Two Newcomers  
Want A Voice On City Council*

by **Dave Walters**

The ballot has been set for the April 10 City Council election. Former Zephyrhills City Councilwoman Jodi Wilkeson is making a bid to return to council with opposition from political newcomers Devin Alexander and Corey Sommers. Each candidate is seeking to win Seat 3 and filed their signed petitions prior to the Tuesday noon deadline.

Businesswoman Anna Bailey, who announced earlier that she would also be a challenger in the Seat 3 race, did not file her petition, making her ineligible for this election.



**Devin Alexander**



**Corey Sommers**



**Jodi Wilkeson**

Wilkeson, Alexander and Sommers are seeking the soon-to-be-vacated seat currently held by Kent Compton. After more

**Council • Continued on Page 3A**

## Pasco County Fair Schedule

**THURSDAY, FEB. 22**

**6:00 p.m.** - The Freemans & The Kingsmen, Gospel Music – Dan Cannon Auditorium (free)

**7:00 p.m.** - Youth Steer Sale – Barthle Livestock Pavilion

**FRIDAY, FEB. 23**

**6:00 p.m.** - Youth Hog Exhibitor Showmanship – Barthle Livestock Pavilion

**6:00 & 9:30 p.m.** - Fearless Flores Thrill Show

**7:00 p.m.** - Pasco Showcase of Talent – Dan Cannon Auditorium

**8:00 p.m.** - Pasco County Fair Championship Rodeo “Tough Enough to Wear Pink Night” for Breast Cancer Awareness – Rodeo Arena (Free with Gate Admission)

**SATURDAY, FEB. 24**

**8:00 a.m.** - Youth Hog Show – Barthle Livestock Pavilion

**9:30 a.m.** - Goat Show – Ag Tent Area

**10:00 a.m.** - Gates & Exhibits Open

**10:00 a.m.** - Wade Shows Midway Opens

**Noon** - Miss Pasco Princess & Mister Pasco Prince (Baby Contest) – Dan

**Schedule • Continued on Page 4A**



Zephyrhills High School Jazz Band director Russell Schmidt guides the group during Friday’s performance at the local Moose Lodge.

## Jazzing It Up ZHS Band Gets Moose Lodge Crowd Dancing

Story and photo by **Dave Walters**

An anxious crowd at the Zephyrhills Moose Lodge waited for the Zephyrhills High School Jazz Band to hit their first note for their show Friday night.

With each song, the 29-member group, led by Russell Schmidt, heard stronger and stronger applause from the audience who danced, clapped, and in some cases, sang along during the 90-minute show.

“These are such talented kids,” said

**Jazz • Continued on Page 6A**

### INSIDE:

Pg. 3A - AMVETS Commander Visits  
Pg. 6A - Nuptials Fill Valentines Day

Pg. 7A - Education Takes On Poverty  
Pg. 8A - Project Patriotism Retires Flags

Pg. 1B - Lady Bulldogs Fall To Pasco  
Pg. 1B - Samaritan Scramble Tees Off

Pg. 3B - Earle, Marshman In Hall Of Fame  
Pg. 4B - Saddle Up For Charity

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Zephyrhills Arrests

‘Relationship Issues’ Lead To Assault Charge

**Aaron Lee Mahon**, 27, of 4845 Fifth St., was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Feb. 6 and charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. A police officer reportedly saw Mahon drive his vehicle toward a woman as she was walking away causing her to have to dive out of the way to avoid being struck. The victim was Mahon’s girlfriend and the couple was reportedly previously involved in a verbal argument. Post Miranda, Mahon told police he argued with the woman regarding “relationship issues.”

**Richard Duaine Whitehead**, 40, of 40227 Trotter Lane, Dade City, was apprehended by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 29 on a Pasco County warrant charging him with failure to redeliver leased property. He was booked into the Pasco County Jail upon confirmation of the warrant.

**Daniel Santos Morales**, 34, of 5611 First St., was apprehended by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 30 after he arrived at the Zephyrhills Police Department, 6118 Eighth Street, to verify if he had a warrant. He was booked into the Pasco County Jail after it was confirmed there was a Pasco County warrant for his arrest on a charge of failure to appear – no driver’s license.

**Deidre Suzanne Mullins Sanders**, 44, of 4847 20th St., was apprehended by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 30 on a Pasco County warrant charging her with failure to appear – driving under the influence. She was booked into the Pasco County Jail upon confirmation of the warrant.

**Gilberto Francisco Longa Dominguez**, 24, of 38549 Scottsdale Ave., was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 31 for allegedly driving while his license was suspended or revoked and on a Pasco County warrant charging him with failure to appear – criminal driving while license suspended. He was booked into the Pasco County Jail upon confirmation of the warrant.

**Angela Christina Ingram**, 25, transient, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Feb. 9 and charged with child neglect, resisting law enforcement with violence, possession of less than 20 grams of marijuana and obstruction of justice. She was also apprehended on a Polk County warrant charging her with failure to appear – battery on law enforcement officer and a Pasco County warrant charging her with criminal mischief. Police responded to the water park on Fourth Street regarding an unattended toddler. A witness who was holding the toddler said the child had been unattended for approximately 45 minutes. The child appeared to be about 15 months old. When Ingram approached the scene approximately 15 minutes after police arrived, she allegedly obstructed the investigation by refusing to provide her name or date of birth to police. Ingram then spontaneously said she had a warrant. She allegedly resisted with violence when an officer placed her under arrest for child neglect. After being placed in a police car, Ingram

allegedly began kicking its windows. A search of Ingram’s jacket led to the discovery of 4.66 grams of a leafy green substance that field-tested positive as marijuana.

**Linda Bellis Wright**, 63, of 8599 Boyt Road, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Feb. 6 and charged with driving under the influence. A vehicle Wright was driving was stopped for driving erratically. Wright was reportedly observed to have constricted pupils and slow reflexes consistent with being on narcotics. Wright told police she had taken a 30mg Oxy-codone pill about four hours prior to being stopped and she had a prescription for the medication. She reportedly performed poorly on field sobriety evaluations.

**Nathaniel Lee Semidey**, 21, of 35960 Life Court, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Feb. 7 and charged with possession of cocaine and possession of less than 20 grams of marijuana. Semidey was stopped for allegedly disregarding a stop sign. A hand search of the vehicle led to the discovery of two small clear plastic bags containing trace amounts of confirmed cocaine. Also, a clear plastic bag under the driver’s seat allegedly contained 3.5 grams of confirmed marijuana. Post Miranda, Semidey reportedly admitted the recovered narcotics belonged to him.

**James Collins Hearn**, 46, of 38101 Willingham Drive, Dade City, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Feb. 8 and charged with possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia. Police stopped a vehicle Hearn was driving because its tag light wasn’t working and he wasn’t wearing a seatbelt. The smell of marijuana could be detected when police approached the vehicle. Hearn told police he previously smoked some marijuana and there might be a water bong or a roach inside the vehicle. A blue bag was found under the driver’s seat when the vehicle was searched. The bag allegedly contained 1 gram of a substance positively identified as meth. A digital scale with residue on it was also found inside the vehicle.

**Renee Paula Ramos**, 21, and **Felicity Shawnee Bates**, 23, both of Tampa, were arrested by Zephyrhills police on Feb. 10 and charged with possession of marijuana with intent to distribute and possession of paraphernalia. Ramos was also charged with allowing an unauthorized person to drive. Bates was also charged with driving while license suspended or revoked with knowledge. Police stopped a 2004 Nissan for allegedly disregarding a stop sign. The driver and passenger were seen switching places in the vehicle. An officer reportedly smelled the odor of marijuana coming from the vehicle when it was approached. Ramos admitted knowing Bates didn’t have a valid driver’s license and that she shouldn’t be driving. They were

both placed under arrest. A gold backpack was found in the back seat allegedly containing two mason jars and a plastic bag containing 46.6 grams of a substance positively identified as marijuana. A blue container with a digital scale with residue as well as \$260 in small denomination bills were also found inside the vehicle. The baggie containing the marijuana was reportedly labeled with Ramos’ full name. Post Miranda, Ramos admitted the marijuana and other recovered contraband were hers and admitted to allowing Bates to drive.

**Edward Geraldo Reed-Mathis**, 29, of 4603 Fifth St., was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Feb. 5 and charged with possession of more than 20 grams of marijuana and possession of cocaine. Police stopped Reed-Mathis because a tail lamp and the tag lights on a Jeep he was driving weren’t working properly. A strong odor of marijuana could reportedly be detected when police approached the Jeep. A cloth shopping bag found in the passenger side back seat of the Jeep allegedly contained a glass jar containing 50.5 grams of a substance positively identified as marijuana and a black plastic bag containing 0.5 grams of a substance positively identified as crack cocaine. Post Miranda, Reed-Mathis reportedly acknowledged the marijuana was his but denied knowledge of the cocaine.

**Zebadiah Keith Lanier Jr.**, 18, of 7615 Jeno St., and **Elijah Santiago**, 19, of Tampa, were both arrested by Zephyrhills police on Feb. 6 and charged with possession of more than 20 grams of marijuana. Police stopped a vehicle Lanier was driving for going 44 mph in a 30-mph zone. A strong odor of marijuana could be detected when police approached the vehicle. Both men were removed from the vehicle and it was then searched. A red backpack was found in the trunk allegedly containing 63.7 grams of confirmed marijuana that was packaged in three separate plastic bags.

**Jake Paul Kessey Kazmerski**, 22, of 4345 Fifth St., was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Feb. 7 and charged with possession of more than 20 grams of marijuana. Police stopped a pickup truck Kazmerski was driving for allegedly disregarding a stop sign. Also, Kazmerski was allegedly not wearing a safety belt. Police reportedly observed Kazmerski throw two clear plastic bags out the driver’s side window before stopping. An odor of marijuana could reportedly be detected coming from within the vehicle when police approached it. Two plastic bags containing 56 grams of confirmed marijuana were recovered approximately 200 feet south of the vehicle. Post Miranda, Kazmerski reportedly admitted being in possession of the marijuana and having thrown it out of the window of his vehicle.

*The information provided in the Zephyrhills Police report is taken from public record. All parties are considered innocent until proven guilty.*

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# Tax Collector Announces Middle School Essay Contest

Pasco County Tax Collector Mike Fasano, as part of Clerk & Comptroller Paula O’Neill’s annual Constitutional Officers Essay Contest, recently announced that his office is accepting entries in the month-long challenge.

The competition begins March 1 and runs through the final day of March. The essay contest is for Pasco County’s middle school students in grades 6 through 8. Students of Pasco’s public/charter, private, parochial, non-public and home schools are all welcome to participate.

In 500 words or less students will answer the question: “Which taxes impact you the most: local, state or federal? Why?” Entries will be judged by a panel of directors from the Pasco County Tax Collector’s Office. Entries will be reviewed on how well the student communicates their response to the question as well as overall essay structure, appearance and readability.

“We have had a wonderful response to the contest in previous years,” said

Fasano. “I have no doubt that we will receive some excellent essays again this year. Pasco County has some of the state’s best and brightest students.”

The student who writes the winning entry will receive a \$300 gift card to Best Buy as their prize.

Students in public/charter schools are asked to submit their essays to their principal, who will forward them to the tax collector’s office. Students in private, parochial, non-public or home schools may send their essays directly to Greg Giordano, Assistant Tax Collector, Pasco County Tax Collector’s Office, P.O. Box 276, Dade City, FL 33526 or via e-mail at ggiordano@pascotaxes.com.

Contact Giordano at (727) 847-8179 with any questions about the contest.

Entries will be accepted until 5 p.m. on March 31. Each entry should include the student’s name, school, grade and contact information. The winner of the essay contest will be notified by telephone no later than April 20.

## Council • Continued from Page 1A

than a decade in office, Compton has opted not to run for re-election and is instead running for election for Pasco County Judge Group 7 in the upcoming August primary election.

Councilman Charlie Proctor will have his Seat 5 post challenged by William Seville.

Mayor Gene Whitfield hosted the Mayor’s Caucus on Tuesday evening declaring each of the candidates had successfully submitted the proper paperwork to run for their respective offices.

Absentee ballots will be mailed to



Charlie Proctor William Seville

voters by the Pasco County Supervisor of Elections office 35 days before the election and voters may vote early at the Zephyrhills City Hall Annex on Ninth Street starting March 9.



Several members of AMVETS Post #550 are shown with Marion Polk, center, AMVETS’ national commander, during a visit last week. Linwood Shorey, commander of AMVETS Post #550, is to Polk’s left. Florida’s district commander, Terry Corson, is third from right in the back row.

# AMVETS Commander Visits Post #550 Hosts Coast Guard Veteran

Story and photo by Joe Potter

Marion Polk was in Zephyrhills last week during a visit to several area AMVETS posts in the area.

Terry Corson, Florida’s district commander, accompanied Polk during his visit to AMVETS Post #550.

Polk retired from the United States Coast Guard as a Chief Petty Officer in 1989 after 20 years of service. The Alexandria, La., native was primarily involved in the interdiction of illegal narcotics while he was with the Coast Guard.

One of the most memorable operations he participated in led to the seizure of a shrimp boat and a semi-tractor and trailer loaded with many bales of marijuana. Several people were arrested in the raid that was carried out in the marina in downtown Panama City. Polk said the Coast Guard received help from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency on that drug bust.

He then worked as a probation officer for 16 years in Louisiana before again retiring. He “cuffed and stuffed a lot of people for not paying child support” while he was a probation officer.

Polk was elected in September as national commander of the oldest and largest Congressionally charged veteran’s organization. As national commander, he oversees 250,000 AMVETS members with assistance from District Commanders in all 50 states.

He emphasized AMVETS fights for the rights of all veterans, not just those who are members of AMVETS.

Linwood Shorey, commander of the local post, said any honorably discharged member of any branch of the armed forces of the United States could be a member of AMVETS.

Polk, 68, said his family has more than 80 years of active duty service with the Coast Guard. One of his grandsons is currently serving in the Coast Guard.

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East Pasco Events

**Feb. 24 – Yard and Bake Sale –** Majestic Oaks and Emerald Pointe mobile home parks will hold their annual two-park yard and bake sales from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Refreshments will be available. The parks are located across from each other on Chancey Road, east of State Route 39. There will be many sellers in both parks.

**Feb. 24 – Hittin’ the Road for Hospice –**The sixth annual motorcycle poker run will go across Pasco County, beginning in New Port Richey at 5817 S.R. 54 and end in Zephyrhills at 4149 New River Road. Registration is open now at [www.HittinTheRoadForHospice.org](http://www.HittinTheRoadForHospice.org). Also visit the website for a list of poker run stops. Day of registration will also be available at an increased price.

**Feb. 24 – Parkwide Yard Sale –** Florida Estates Park, located east of U.S. 301 on the south side of County Road 54, from 8 a.m.-1 p.m. A bake sale and canteen will also be available at the clubhouse on Connecticut Street.

**Feb. 27 – Get Ready for Spring Break Using Essential Oils –** This free presentation will be held from 3-4:30 p.m. at Living Food Bakery & Café, 38201 10th Ave. Call Marti at (813) 399-4467 or Deanna at (813) 479-7724 for information.

**Feb. 27 – Big Brothers Big Sisters Orientation –** Find out what it means to be a Big Brother or Big Sister and get a head start in the process. Held from 5:30- 7 p.m. at Wesley Chapel Honda, 27750 Wesley Chapel Blvd. Contact (813) 997-6881 or [debk@bbbstampabay.org](mailto:debk@bbbstampabay.org) for information.

**March 2 – Allegany County, N.Y. Picnic –** It’s time for the 62nd annual picnic, to be held at the First United Methodist Church, 38635 Fifth Ave. and 10th Street. Doors will open at noon, with plenty of parking available. Bring a dish to pass, and your own table setting and beverage. Coffee will be available. Plan on having a great day and visiting with friends and relatives from Allegany County. A 50/50 and door prizes will be featured. Call Dick at (716) 387-7725 or Lance at (518) 235-8707 for information.

**March 3 – Pig Roast –** The VFW Post #8154 will be holding a pig roast at 3954 Paul S Buchman Hwy. Gates open at noon and dinner will be served at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$8 for admission and food and \$4 for admission only. Live music will be featured from 1-5 p.m. Call (813) 782-7194 for information.

**March 3 – Yard Sale –** Richland Baptist Church is hosting their annual yard sale from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. at the church, 40443 Stewart Road. Stop by to shop for furniture, household items, tools, clothing and more. Chili dogs and baked goods will also be for sale for lunch. Call (352) 567-2990 for information or to make a donation.

**March 3 – Spring Bazaar –** The Country Aire Village Spring Bazaar will be held from 7 a.m.-12 p.m. in the south clubhouse. CAV is located east of Zephyrhills at the corner of County Road 54 and 23rd Street.

**March 5 – Soup and Pie Dinner –** The Ladies of Cairo Court #97 Ladies Oriental Shrine are hosting a soup and pie dinner from 3-6:30 p.m. at the Masonic Hall, 5950 12th St. Donations will be accepted to benefit the Shriners Hospital For Children. Call (813) 469-0439 for information.

**March 6 – Kicking Toxins Out of Your Home –** This free class will focus on using essential oils to kick toxins out of your home. Held from 3-4:30 p.m. at The Living Food Bakery & Café, 38201 10th Ave. All are welcome, and a free prize will be given away. Call (813) 399-4467 or (813) 479-7724 for information.

**March 7 – Marion/Florida Snowbird Picnic –** The annual Marion, Mich./Florida Snowbird Picnic will be held at the Country Aire Village Clubhouse starting at 10 a.m. A potluck dinner will be served at noon. Bring your favorite dish to share and your own table service. Coffee and ice tea will be provided. Everyone from Marion and the surrounding area is welcome to attend. Country Aire Village is located on the corner of County Road 54 and 23rd Street east of Zephyrhills.

**March 10 – Midwest Country Concert –** David Church, and his wife, Terri Lisa, will take you back in time to relive the greatest days of music. Held at the Lion’s Club, 5827 Dean Dairy road, from 4-5:30 p.m. Tickets are \$18 in advance or \$15 at the door. Call (740) 974-9885 or (731) 707-0155 for information.

**March 10 – Propagating from Seeds 101 –** Attractive and productive gardens are attainable on a budget. Attend a free Pasco Extension seminar to learn tricks of the trade to germinate seeds and raise the seedling to beautiful plants. Registration required at Eventbrite. Held from 10-11 a.m. at the Zephyrhills Library, 5347 Eighth St. Contact the UF/IFAS Pasco County Extension Office at (352) 518-0156 for information.

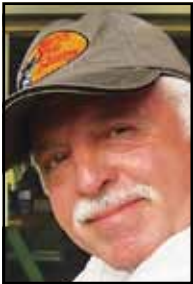
**March 10 – Founders Day –** The 108th Founders Day parade and heritage festival will be held from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. in historic downtown. The parade will begin at 10 a.m. with the theme Moonshine, Turpentine and Timber. Live music, local art, vendors, carnival games, a petting zoo, and more will be featured. Visit [www.mainstreetzephyrhills.org](http://www.mainstreetzephyrhills.org) for a full schedule, map and more information.

**March 11 – Founders Day Music Festival –** Beginning at 10 a.m. at the Zephyrhills event center at 5200 Airport Road. Multiple bands will perform on stage. Cost is \$5 per person with children 10 and younger admitted for free. Food and beverage vendors will be on site. Beer and wine will be available for purchase.

**March 13 – Healthy Animals Using Essential Oils –** Learn how to keep your animals healthy or restore them to health in this free class held from 3-4:30 p.m. at The Living Food Bakery & Café, 38201 10th Ave. All are welcome. A free prize will be given away. Call (813) 399-4467 or (813) 479-7724 for information.

**March 17 – Paulie Palooza –** The seventh annual Paulie Palooza music festival will be held at the Zephyrhills Community Event Venue, 5200 Airport Road. Admission is a \$5 to Gulfside Hospice, Food will be available for purchase. A car show, raffles and live music performed by local bands will be featured. Guests are encouraged to bring their own lawn chair. Vendor and sponsor opportunities are still available. Contact Carla Armstrong at (727) 845-5707 or [carla.armstrong@ghppc.org](mailto:carla.armstrong@ghppc.org), or visit [ghppc.org](http://ghppc.org) for information.

Commentary



First Things First

Greg First



A Stop Sign Means ‘Stop’

Maybe it’s just me but it seems this time of year that everybody doesn’t go by the same set of driving rules. At a four-way stop it’s my understanding that everyone must come to a stop before proceeding. In the last week I have seen more than once someone stopping at a four-way and then when they enter the intersection the person behind them follows them right through the stop sign.

Attention, this is not the way we do it here in east Pasco County. Everyone must come to a stop. If not maybe a ticket will remind you about the rules. How hard is it to figure out?

Here is something else I have noticed. Someone traveling on a two-lane road that is one way decides to make a left hand turn from the right lane in front of traffic next to them. This has caused many fender benders. It really does not have to be confusing.

Have you ever tried to make a left hand turn trying to get onto busy U.S. 301 when all you can see is a line of traffic with no end in sight? Every now and then some good soul will let you out but they are

few and far between. If you have lived in this area for a long time you probably plan your day by making right hand turns. Ultimately when you get done doing all of your errands you can probably cross at a traffic light and return to where you started. You have to be creative in the winter months. It’s a much easier drive around here in the off-season.

And lastly, who really has the right of way at the drive-thru at fast food restaurants where there are two lines for ordering? I saw a guy get out of his car the other day and about got in a fight because he insisted it was his turn to move forward. When he saw two or three cell phones aimed at him he retreated.

All I have to say is to check your order before leaving the window. It’s a bummer to get home with a kids meal and an order you did not want when you had planned on having a feast. It happens all the time.

This time of year there is always something to talk about. It’s fun to look at license plates just to see where drivers are from. In the event of a mishap the standard answer around here is usually, “Well no wonder, look where they’re from.”

Just remember when you are in their neck of the woods that karma can come back and bite you. When you’re out traveling the highways and byways and something stupid happens just smile and keep on trucking. It’s not the response they were hoping to get.

Schedule • Continued from Page 1A

Cannon Auditorium  
**2:00, 6:00 & 9:30 p.m.** - Fearless Flores Thrill Show  
**2:30 p.m.** - Pasco County Fair Championship Rodeo, Military Tribute – Rodeo Arena (Free with Gate Admission)  
**4:45 p.m.** - Youth Hog Exhibitor’s Awards Presentation – Barthle Livestock Pavilion  
**5:00 p.m.** - Youth Hog Sale – Barthle Livestock Pavilion  
**7:00 p.m.** - Pasco County Fair Karaoke Contest – Dan Cannon Auditorium  
**8:00 p.m.** - Ranch Rodeo – Rodeo Arena  
**8:10 p.m.** - Viva Pasco Fair Vegas – (Vegas Style Show & Giveaways) – Back Porch Theater  
**9:00 & 10:10 p.m.** - Billy “Elvis” Lindsey

**Noon** - Main Gates & Exhibits Open  
**1:00 p.m.** -Youth Dairy Show – Barthle Livestock Pavilion  
**1:00 p.m.** - Bay Area Bandits Mounted Shooters – Rodeo Arena  
**1:30, 4:00 & 6:00 p.m.** - Fearless Flores Thrill Show  
**2:00 p.m.** - Youth Plant Sale – Joe Herrmann Greenhouse  
**2:00 p.m.** - Fairgrounds Showdown Live Boxing – Dan Cannon Auditorium (Free with Gate Admission)  
**6:00 p.m.** - Gates Close

**Each day –** Unlimited Midway Ride Special (\$25 Wristband, Gate Admission is Additional); Danny Grant, Cowboy Circus & The Living Tree; Sylvia Fletcher, Comedy Ventriloquist; Robinson’s Racing Pigs & Paddling Porkers; Dan, Dan, The Farmer Man Rainmaking Comedy Show; Purgatory Ironworks Blacksmith

**SUNDAY, FEB. 26**  
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Mobile comedian Dan-Dan the Farmer Man delivered some laughs with his unique rainmaking machine.



Members of TECO were ready to set sail on their impressively designed vessel.

Parade • Continued from Page 1A

President’s Day, but school or no school folks demanded the parade return.

“We got a lot of flak, a lot of negative

feedback from the community,” Converse said. “People were mad. They were blowing up Facebook and our phones.”

Needless to say, he was just as thrilled

to reinstate the parade as members of the community were to see it.

This year’s parade featured a quirky and colorful variety of floats, music provided by the Pasco High School marching band, and FOX 13’s own Charley Belcher leading the parade as it’s grand marshal.

“Charley actually emceed one of the Fair’s pageants one year,” Converse said. “He’s been a good friend to us. He went to Hudson High School, so he’s a true Pasco resident.”

Although Pasco County schools were in session again this year, children and parents still arrived in droves to take

in the parade, happy to see it cruising through Dade City once again.

“I used to be in this parade as a teenager; marching in the band and various other activities,” said Michelle Grant. “Though its absence last year didn’t impact me directly, I still feel that this is a tradition that we’ve had for many years and I’d like to see it continue.”

The parade marked the opening of the annual Pasco County Fair, which will run through Sunday. If you enjoyed the parade, then don’t miss your chance to go out to the fairgrounds and participate in another popular Pasco tradition.



Serving as grand marshal, FOX News icon and local star Charley Belcher led this year’s parade through the streets of Dade City.

2018 Pasco County Fair Parade Winners

Here are the winners from Monday’s “Jam Packed with Excitement” parade.

Float Best Depicting The 2018 Fair Theme – Zephyrhills High School FFA

Best Civic Float – Calvary Assembly of God

Best Commercial Float – Tampa Electric Company

Best Marching Unit – Zephyrhills High School JROTC Drum Corp

Best Mounted Unit – Pasco County Sheriff’s Posse, featuring Commissioner Ron Oakley

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# Nuptials Fill Valentine’s Day

## Two Dozen Exchange Vows At Historic Courthouse

by Emily Kochanski

On Feb. 14, the love in the air in Dade City was almost overwhelming as the 10th annual Valentine’s Day wedding ceremony got underway. This year, a whopping 24 couples gathered on the steps of the historic courthouse to exchange “I do’s.”

“Seeing the couples together and very much in love, it’s just the best,” said Julie Eccles, who coordinated the event alongside other members of Clerk and Comptroller Paula O’Neil’s office.

The couples were given the traditional wedding day treatment, complete with free pictures, cake, and even carriage rides around the block. The nuptials were officiated by Circuit Judge Kemba Lewis.

While it’s not the full-blown ceremony that many couples dream of, the simple event marked the perfect day for many

newlyweds.

“We couldn’t really pick which kind of venue that we wanted, but then this popped up on Facebook and looked like fun,” said Tina Barton, who arrived with her husband-to-be Faustino Dominguez.

“Some people have the most grandiose wedding chapel, the fanciest dress, and spend \$50,000 on your wedding,” said Dominguez. “Maybe this ceremony doesn’t have all the ritzy glitz, but I’ve never been so in love in my life. That’s how I know that this is just fine for me.”

“I was talking with my son and he said, ‘you’re getting married with a whole bunch of people that you don’t know,’” laughed Barton. “I just said, ‘yeah, but how cool is that?’”

The collective “I do’s” and first kisses as man and wife made for a truly memorable ceremony. Each couple was expected to receive their official certificate of



The couples pose with a kiss on the courtyard steps where Sixth Judicial Circuit Judge Kemba Lewis and Pasco County Clerk Paula O’Neil officiated. Photo by Richard K. Riley

marriage by mail in the days following the event.

Now, Mr. and Mrs. Dominguez, along with all the other newlyweds, are hoping to make the honeymoon just as unique as their wedding day.

“This is going to be a great story to tell our grandchildren,” said Barton.

### Jazz • Continued from Page 1A

event coordinator Larry Robertson. “We are blessed to have them here. I know how good they are.”

The event, which is one of the few shows the Jazz Band has outside the walls of ZHS, served as a fundraiser for the group. They played some jazz standards as well as hits from Neil Diamond and the Beatles.

“We’re happy to support them,” Robertson said.

Schmidt and his elite musicians appreciate the support and the opportunity

to play in front of such a responsive crowd.

“It’s a neat experience for the kids,” Schmidt said. “Playing in front of a crowd like this is great. If any of them want to have a life as a professional musician, this is a chance for them to get some on-the-job training.”

While the fundraising aspect is a bonus, Schmidt sees the concert as so much more. “The fundraising is a secondary part of it,” Schmidt said. “The first part is for the kids to get an experience performing.”



Trumpet players Emily Jennings and Ellie Wilkinson play during the band’s performance at Zephyrhills Moose Lodge 2276.

The ZHS Jazz Band has hosted concerts at the high school, but the turnout was sparse at best.

“Being able to play in jazz band and be playing music for people who get up and dance is great,” said band member Tony Clark.

Being able to stand up on stage and know all eyes and ears are on your performance is a rush for musician Andrew Smiles.

“It’s more thrilling than anything,” Smiles said. “There are so many people

watching us and we’re on the spot. It gives us the adrenaline to push through and play our best.”

Putting on a show in their community provides a special thrill.

“I think what is unique about our jazz band is we can go out in the community and play,” said band member Amanda Cook. “I know a lot of jazz bands who just have a class and that’s it. We get to go out and entertain our community and they show us support.”



Zephyrhills High School Jazz Band senior Tony Clark performs during Friday night’s group performance at the Zephyrhills Moose Lodge.



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# Education Program Takes On Poverty

## Taking Stock In Children Pays Off For At-Risk Students

by Keri McAlpine

Every year only a handful of students are selected to benefit from the services offered by Take Stock in Children, but they are the ones who need it most.

The Pasco County headquarters of the statewide non-profit targets a specific group of students to provide them with the tools to succeed.

Otherwise, they might fall through the cracks, according to Rosanne Heyser, executive director of Take Stock in Children, which is part of the Pasco Education Foundation.

Selected students must have the desire to go to college and learn, commit to the TSIC program, hold a specific grade point average, be income eligible and benefit from the extra guidance, and mentorship, which may be lacking in their home life.

“The ones who are most in need may not have any other resources out there,” Heyser said. “Many don’t have the guidance at home. Sometimes we’re the only ones looking at their report cards and helping them through this process.”

Starting in 8th grade, students can be eligible for sponsorships through TSIC, which are provided through various means including donations from individuals, companies or clubs, or other resources. Every dollar raised through donors is matched by the state department of education and goes toward a Florida Prepaid scholarship for up to four years of college tuition.

Heyser praised the Noon Rotary Club of Zephyrhills for being “amazingly supportive” by taking on at least seven students from Zephyrhills High School.

Every year, the students they’ve sponsored attend a meeting to let the club know how they have been progressing.

“They’ve always been kind of our rock in the Zephyrhills area for not only providing the donations needed for the scholarships, but also the mentors,” Heyser said.

The first student the club sponsored was Alyssa Sullivan, who graduated from ZHS in 2012. Sullivan went on to graduate

from University of South Florida debt free and is currently working for a Zephyrhills finance company.

“And doing extremely well,” Heyser said of Sullivan. “She’s one of the classic examples. She had no home support at all and the Take Stock in Children ‘village,’ if you will, along with the Rotary Club became her support system, her mentor, and her donor.

“It paid off because now she’s a productive member of the Zephyrhills community,” Heyser said.

Unfortunately, the Noon Rotary Club does not currently have the funding to support another student, but Heyser said the past students still visit the club to keep them in the loop and that hopefully Rotary will be able to sponsor students in the future.

The program monitors grades, attendance and behavior, in and out of the classroom. Students sign an agreement with TSIC to participate in the program and attend mandatory workshops and events. The workshops teach them valuable life skills like how to apply for college or personal financing.

“Our mission statement is to break the cycle of poverty through education,” Heyser said.

Since forming the Pasco County office, more than 700 students serviced have successfully completed the program.

A mentor is assigned to each student who they meet with regularly. A college readiness coach and career readiness resources are made available to the students as they get closer to their senior year.

Throughout the program, a handful of people including TSIC personnel and volunteers, family members and school administration are committed to the child’s success.

“We’re all on the same page to get the student successfully out of high school and, even more, make sure they’re going to be successful in college,” Heyser said.

Many mentors meet during the students’ lunch period to take advantage of the free time; however, scheduling is flexible for varying schedules. By next fall TSIC will have a group of 35 to 40 new students, which means a need for more mentors.

Visit [www.takestockpasco.org](http://www.takestockpasco.org) to learn more about the organization and about becoming a mentor.

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# Project Patriotism Retires Flag

## ***Junior ROTC Carries Out Ceremonial Service***

*by Keri McAlpine*

Members of Zephyrhills High School's Junior ROTC program held a flag retirement ceremony on Friday afternoon as part of their Project Patriotism.

Dozens and dozens of flags were collected last year when the project was formed by the students. A ceremonial burn to retire the flags was held last year, but there were



**C/CPT Kyle Hulbert and Batallion Commander Krys Smith, right, place a flag in the burn barrel Feb. 16 at Veteran's Park.**



**JROTC members wait for the flag retirement ceremony to begin last Friday.**

**Photos Provided**

still many left over. Friday was the first burn of this school year, and witnesses saw at least 100 more flags burned in a formal ceremony put on by the students.

Junior and C/CPT Kyle Hulbert organized the event and selected Veteran's Park as the ceremony site.

"It's important to honor the integrity of the flag and symbolism it holds for our country by doing it in a humbling and sobering way such as this and just giving honor to the flag," Hulbert said.

In addition to the JROTC members, members of the community attended the ceremony as well as a representative from the office of State Rep. Danny Burgess (38th Dist.) and Bob Hatfield representing U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL 12th).

Hulbert and Battalion Commander Krys Smith received a police escort from the Zephyrhills Police Department from the school to the park at 22nd Street

and Third Avenue.

A saber arch was greeting them when they arrived as they carried the flags to the ceremony site.

Opening remarks were made as well as an invocation and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Cadets were called forward two at a time to present flags into a burning barrel. Community members were invited to stay as the cadets burned the remaining flags until they finished the task.

If you are interested in turning in an American flag to Project Patriotism, contact Zephyrhills High School at (813) 794-6100 to reach out to one of the JROTC instructors. Flags can also be mailed in to: 6335 12th St., Zephyrhills, FL 33542.

The official flag code suggests to retire a flag when it's not serviceable, so it could be up to personal preference as to when it needs to be retired.

# Women Build More Than Homes

## *Comradery, Confidence Returns Next Month*

*by Keri McAlpine*

The Women Build is a way for women to come together, support each other, learn some new skills and support the organization.

“Our experience is once they get involved with the Women Build they get excited and start volunteering with other events, which are free,” said Jere Ferguson of Habitat for Humanity of East & Central Pasco County. “It is an event that allows women to come together, learn new skills, support each other and have fun while they’re doing it.”

All women are welcome during Habitat for Humanity's annual Women Build two-day event.

The next Women Build will be held March 16 and 17 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at

38414 Roosevelt Ave., in Dade City.

Novices should not shy away as leaders will teach them everything they need to know and all equipment, tools and safety gear will be provided. Partner families who are earning their required volunteer hours with Habitat will be on site to assist.

Ferguson said a great percentage of the community affected by affordable housing is made up of women, especially single moms, making it even more important for women to work together at builds.

There is a registration fee of \$50 required for one day of participation, which helps raise money for Habitat's house building projects. The fee includes a T-shirt, a goodie bag, lunch and a light breakfast.

There are only 50 slots available for each day of the build and pre-registration



**Habitat construction days always begin with a fellowship circle and the phrase, 'Not a Hand Out, but a Hand Up.'** *Photo by Joe Potter*

**Photo by Joe Potter**

is required by visiting [habitatpasco.org](http://habitatpasco.org) or the link can be found on the Habitat for Humanity of East and Central Pasco's Facebook page. As of Tuesday, Ferguson said about half of the slots for each day were filled.

"It's one of our most popular events. We've never had a [Women Build] that wasn't sold out or a huge success," he said. "They should be ready to have some fun and have an exciting and purposeful day."

National Women Build week is in May, and the local Habitat will have a Women Build event to celebrate that on May 12. Since it is usually very hot by May they always plan the two-day fundraising Women Build earlier in the year.

Depending on public interest, the May Women Build may be extended to two days as well. Also, depending on public interest, another Women Build date might be added in April.

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