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Zephyrhills Police Chief David Shears, with his wife Kimberly and daughters Savannah and Delaney, waves to the crowd at Amalie Arena on Tuesday night as he was recognized by the Tampa Bay Lightning for his 25 years of dedicated service to Zephyrhills.

Lightning Honor Shears

Story and photos by Dave Walters

In front of a crowd just shy of 19,000 Tampa Bay Lightning fans in Amalie Arena, Police Chief David Shears was honored for his 25 years of dedicated service to the people of Zephyrhills.

Shears, his wife Kimberly and twin daughters Savannah and Delaney, were the guests of the Lightning on the ice

Shears • Continued on Page 8A

Annual Fundraiser Aims High For Hope

New Route Among Changes To Zephyrhills Relay For Life

by Keri McAlpine

This year's Relay for Life in Zephyrhills is likely setting some new traditions and parting ways with some of the more familiar relay practices.

The city's event to benefit the American Cancer Society will be held on March 31 along Fifth Avenue as opposed to its usual home spot at the Zephyrhills High School track. This year's event lead, Emily Buckler, said for the most part, the change has been positively received by participants and downtown business owners.

"It is quite interesting. We're trying to get the logistics worked out from working it from the high school [to



Cancer survivors take the opening lap of last year's Relay For Life at Zephyrhills High School. Photo by Dave Walters

Relay • Continued on Page 6A

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Mary Ritchie was one of the lucky winners of the teapot and rose centerpieces at the March 16 Ladies Who Lunch.

Hot Tea Wards Off Big Chill

Ladies Who Lunch Event Welcomes 250 Guests

Story and photos by Keri McAlpine

Teapots of all sizes, short, tall, stout and slender were seen everywhere at Florida Hospital Zephyrhills' March 16 Ladies Who Lunch event. A giant white awning in the grass spread above 25 tables decorated in their spring best with bright pink and green settings. The teapots were filled with pink roses as more than 250 ladies gathered around for a classic tea party, with a healthy twist.

Ladies Who Lunch began as a way to discuss women's health in an informative, yet festive, way. Held at the East Pasco Seventh-day Adventist Church on Dairy Road, the annual event began at 9

a.m. with physician presentations and complimentary health screenings.

The screenings included cholesterol checks, leg and vein screenings and blood pressure checks. Chair massages were offered as a relaxing extra.

Florida Hospital Physicians who presented were: Dr. Tobin M. John on Signs and Symptoms of a Heart Attack; Dr. John A. Ferlita, FACOG, on Incontinence; Dr. Marian A. Sampson, FACOG, on Paps, Mammograms and Pelvic Exams; and Dr. Jayapriya Raj on Understanding Diabetes.

When all presentations concluded, everyone headed out into the cold air

Ladies • Continued on Page 7A

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Zephyrhills Arrests

It Wasn't His First Wrong Turn In Life

Daniel Hernandez, 25, of 37743 Colinda Drive, Dade City, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on March 11 on charges of trafficking in methamphetamine, possession of a controlled substance without prescription with intent to sell (two counts), possession of marijuana with intent to sell and possession of paraphernalia. Hernandez was stopped for driving the wrong way on Seventh Street, which is a one-way street. A strong odor of marijuana could be detected emanating from inside the vehicle. Hernandez was seated in the rear driver side passenger seat. A search of the interior of the vehicle revealed an open lock box containing 15 grams of methamphetamine, 20.9 grams of marijuana, 15 Alprazolam 0.5 mg tablets and two oxycodone HCL tablets. A glass pipe containing residue was also found. All recovered contraband reportedly field tested positive or was confirmed via drugs.com. Post Miranda, Hernandez admitted the drugs belonged to him and that he had been in the process of selling when the traffic stop took place. He was booked into the Pasco County Jail.



Adolphus Leslie Brown, 62, transient, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on March 11 on a charge of grand theft. Brown allegedly drove a battery powered scooter owned by Walmart off the store's property at 7631 Gall Blvd. after he had been shopping at the store at 2:15 p.m. The scooter is valued at \$1,800 and Brown did not have permission to remove it from the property. Loss prevention personnel told police they knew Brown had taken the scooter intentionally because he shops at the store daily and always uses a scooter. An officer contacted Brown and he returned the scooter at 4 p.m. He claimed a female employee had given him permission to take the scooter but he couldn't provide her name or describe her. He was booked into the Pasco County Jail.

Bryan John Loucks, 58, of 37500 Geiger Road, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on March 8 at 6 p.m. on charges of possession of methamphetamine and possession of paraphernalia. Police responded to Walmart regarding an alleged narcotics sale that was occurring in the parking lot regarding an alleged drug sale that was occurring in the parking lot of the business located at 7631 Gall Blvd. Loucks was asked if he had anything on his person and he began taking items out of his pockets. A small clear plastic baggie containing a crystal-like substance reportedly fell from his hand. The substance field tested positive as methamphetamine. He also had a glass bubble pipe that tested positive for methamphetamine. Post Miranda, Loucks denied all allegations. He was booked into the Pasco County Jail.



Records check confirmed Lamoureux had previously been trespassed from Walmart. The owner of the vehicle arrived and gave police permission to search it. A clear plastic baggie, containing a white crystal-like substance, was found under the driver's seat. It field tested positive for methamphetamine. Also, a red bookbag that was in the van contained a vial of septocaine/epinephrine. Post Miranda, Lamoureux admitted he owned the bookbag but denied owning the vial. He was booked into the Pasco County Jail.

Angelica Marie Nason, 24, of 12107 Patrick St., Dade City, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on March 7 on a charge of fraudulent use of a credit card. The alleged offenses occurred at various locations throughout Zephyrhills between Feb. 24 and March 1, 2017. The victim reported a case of possible credit card fraud to police on Feb. 16. She told police she had received a credit card bill for charges she did not make, adding she was out of the state at the time the charges were made in Florida. The victim said she received a bill on Feb. 24 for a telephone and phone lines that had been opened fraudulently. The victim told police Nason had previously been arrested on a similar charge against her and that she suspected Nason was also involved in these frauds as well. Records showed the phone account was opened in Nason's name and her address was used for billing purposes. Police were able to observe surveillance footage of Nason fraudulently using the victim's credit card. She was booked into the Pasco County Jail.

Jennifer M. Deane, 27, of Des Plaines, Ill., was apprehended by Zephyrhills police on March 5 on two active Pinellas County felony warrants charging her with failure to appear. She was booked into the Pasco County Jail.



Tashara Vonshay Giles, 25, of 39337 Redhill Drive, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on March 10 on a charge of driving while license suspended or revoked. Police stopped Giles because the registration had expired on the vehicle that she was driving. A records check disclosed that Giles' license had been suspended on July 11, 2016, for failure to pay traffic fines. She was later released on her own recognizance.

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



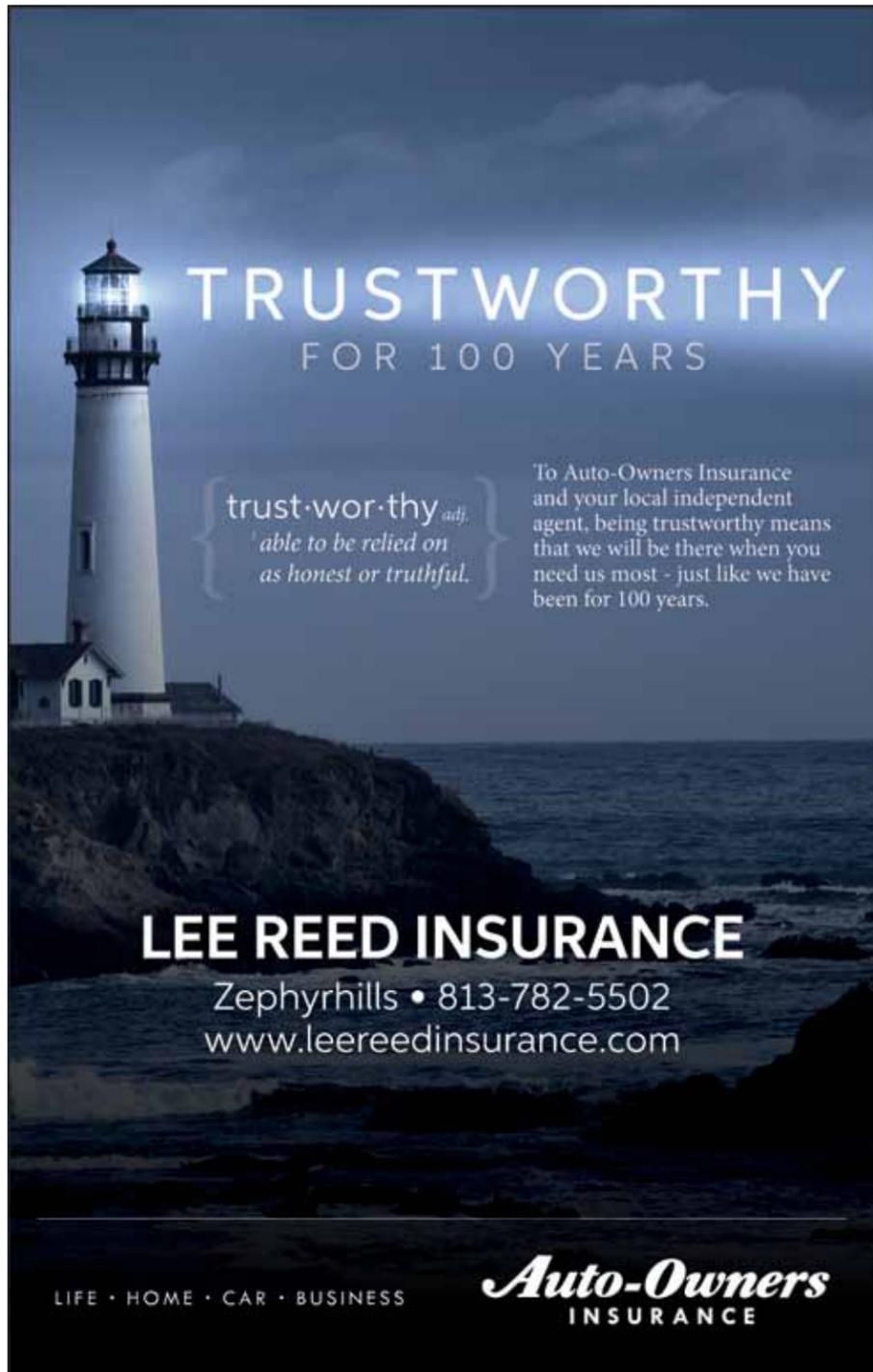
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Joseph Vaughan Lamoureux, 20, of 37500 Geiger Road, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on March 8 at 6 p.m. on charges of possession of methamphetamine, possession of a legend drug and trespass after warning. Lamoureux was reportedly in the driver's seat of a van that was parked at Walmart, 7631 Gall Blvd. A store employee called police regarding a trespassing complaint and a possible narcotics sale. A re-

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27 YEARS IN THE SAME LOCATION

Festival Has Flavor Of Its Own

No Fee To Enter Your Pie In Bake-Off Contests

by Keri McAlpine

Who doesn't love pie? Trick question – everybody loves pie. And if they don't, give it another try by heading to the third annual Zephyrhills Pie Festival.

This year's flaky fest is set for Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. at its usual location in Zephyr Park on Fifth Avenue. Organizer Sonya Bradley, from Simply Events, said this year's pie festivities will be bigger and tastier than ever.

Held in conjunction with the City of Zephyrhills, there are more activities this year including a kid's zone with bounce houses. The festival will feature the familiar \$10 all you can eat pie buffet, pie eating contest and apron decorating contest. If none of those are appealing, there's always the option of taking a whipped cream pie and smashing it in someone's face for some sweet satisfaction.

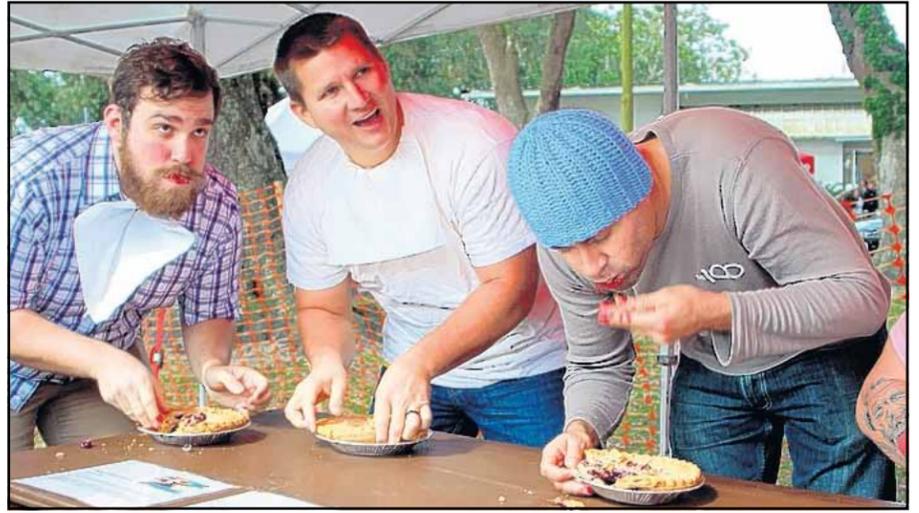
The biggest activity at the event is usually the community bake-off, which

has at least 40 entries this year, Bradley said. And, to accommodate interested bakers, this year's contest is free to enter and all pies are due at the judging table by noon.

Winners will receive cash prizes and gift certificates, with all leftover pies from the bake-off going towards the pie buffet. Proceeds from the pie buffet will go to the Zephyrhills High School cheerleading team. The apron-decorating contest is also free for bakers to bring their best-dressed apron from home to the festival for judging.

There will be pie-eating contests all day long, which will be held for different age groups multiple times during the event.

Local bakeries and other pie and food vendors will set up shop to sell slices or whole pies for anyone who prefers their pastry on the go. The kids' area will supply arts and crafts, bounce houses and a new addition – the berry shoot – where kids launch berries at different targets. The berry launch was started at the Largo



Zack Regan, Wade Cato and Ruben Tirado starting the pie eating contest at last year's Pie Festival at Zephyr Park.

Photo by Dave Walters

Pie Festival, and was a hit, Bradley said.

She said the Zephyrhills Pie Festival is unique compared to its sister event in Largo because of the family involvement. Too often she has seen people attend the festival and not participate in the activities, which are where all the fun is in the first place.

"We get whole families to participate

in these activities. People making pie from the same family, making aprons and people doing the pie eating contest. There's plenty of stuff to do," Bradley said. "Once you get involved I feel like you have 10 times more fun."

Visit www.simplyeventsfl.com for more information and a schedule for this year's Pie Festival.

County Performance Numbers Improved For 2016 Fiscal Year

Pasco Undergoing Rapid Change This Year

Staff Report

Pasco County last week publicly released its annual performance report for fiscal year 2016.

The yearly snapshot updates the status and results of action plans and initiatives outlined in the county's FY 2016 Business Plan.

The report indicates that, while property values have yet to rise to the heady days of 2008, the median home sales price increased by 6.7%.

Elsewhere, the unemployment rate fell to 4.8%; personal income grew by 5.5%; and Pasco County realized a 7.2% increase in taxable assessed value.

The perked-up economy has allowed Pasco to keep the millage rate the same.

"The changes and improvements we have been making over the past few years are paying off," said Marc Bellas, organizational performance management director for Pasco. "The improvements we're seeing in the quality of services we provide are reflected in the numbers – 93% of customer comment cards received in 2016 are positive."

Highlights of the FY 2016 report include an eye-popping 1.66 million online visits to Pasco County

Libraries. Traditional library visits numbered 802,545.

Sadly, countywide 911 calls rose from 210,487 in FY 2015, to 242,967 last year; Pasco Fire Rescue service calls were up from 61,704 to 66,676. According to the report, the average Fire Rescue response time was 7 minutes, 21 seconds. Countywide EMS calls numbered 49,655.

Animal services reported 2,532 furry friends were adopted in FY2016 – 346 more than the previous year. Nearly 540 of those animals were ones reunited with their owners.

The county recorded public transportation ridership at 824,291.

The FY 2016 Annual Performance Report is available online by visiting www.pascocountyfl.net/annualreport.

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East Pasco Events

March 23 – Journaling Through Grief – A workshop offered by Gulfside Center for Hospice Care in Zephyrhills. This is an experiential workshop using a variety of writing techniques and exercises designed to express and work through the grieving process. Held at 2 p.m. at 5760 Dean Dairy Road. The workshop is free and open to the public. Limited seating is available. Call (727) 247-7510 to RSVP.

March 25 – Pie Festival – Eat pie at the Zephyrhills Pie Festival, presented by the City of Zephyrhills. Entry and parking are free. Held 11 a.m.-6 p.m. at Zephyr Park, 38116 Fifth Ave. Pay \$10 for the unlimited pie buffet. Festival will also feature kids area, entertainment, crafter village, pie eating and baking competitions, scavenger hunts and more. Call Simply Events at (727) 674-1464 for information.

March 25 – Community Yard Sale – Southport Springs, 3509 Southport Springs Pkwy., is holding a community-wide yard sale from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Call (813) 782-3800 for information.

March 25 – Wine Festival – Florida Estates Winery will host a Wine Festival from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. The event will include vendors offering many unique gifts, live entertainment and an opportunity to sample the winery's offerings and meet our winemaker for an educational tasting. We are pet friendly. Call (813) 996-2113 for information. Located four miles west of I-75 or eight miles east of U.S. 41 at 25241 S.R. 52 near Land O'Lakes.

March 26 – United States Marine Corps Band – A performance featuring the United States Marine Corps Band will be held at 3 p.m. in front of the Historic Courthouse in downtown Dade City. Bring a chair or blanket and the whole family to enjoy this unique experience. Call (352) 567-3769 for information.

March 31 – Relay for Life of Zephyrhills – This year's Relay for Life festival will be held from 6 p.m. to midnight at Main Street Zephyrhills, 38454 Fifth Ave. downtown. Relay for Life is the signature fundraising event for the American Cancer Society's programs of research, education, advocacy and service programs that can reduce cancer deaths and cancer incidence, and improve the quality of life for those touched by cancer. Visit www.relayforlife.org/zephyrhillsfl for information or to register. Call (404) 329-5113 with questions or to get involved.

April 1 – Pasco Master Gardener Plant Sale – The Pasco Master Gardeners will hold a plant show from 8:30 a.m.-12 p.m. in front of the Extension Office at 36702 S.R. 52 in Dade City. A greenhouse inventory clearance will be held with cultural information included with each plant. Educational material and Master Gardeners will be available to answer your gardening and lawn care questions. A free seminar on "Butterflies and their Blooms" will be held at 9 a.m. in Clayton Hall

April 1 – Prelude to Easter Concert – The Florida Hospital Zephyrhills Chorale will present "A Prelude to Easter" starting at 5 p.m. at the East Pasco Seventh-day Adventist Church, 7333 Dairy Road. This free, community concert is an annual spring event led by conductor Marvin Robertson, PhD. FHZ Chorale members volunteer their time and are comprised of hospital

employees and non-employees who have a gift for and love of music. The concert features Teresa Ancaya on piano and Keith Rasmussen on organ and as part of the brass ensemble. Reservations are not taken.

April 4 – Movie Screening and Community Seminar – Gulfside Regional Hospice & Pasco Palliative Care will be hosting a screening of the movie "Still Alice" and a discussion on Alzheimer's Disease at 2 p.m. at the New River Branch Library, 34043 S.R. 54. The event is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served. Call Anna Davis at (727) 992-8042 for information and to RSVP.

April 5 – PHSC Open House – Pasco Hernando State College's Dade City campus, located at 36727 Blanton Road, will host an open house from 5-7 p.m. in conference center A240. The open house is designed for 2017 and 2018 high school graduates who are undecided on college plans and any potential students seeking higher education opportunities. Attendees will learn about certificate, associate, and bachelor degree programs as well as financial aid, scholarships and opportunities for involvement in more than 50 student clubs and organizations. Campus tours will be conducted. Visit phsc.edu/openhouse or call 1 (855) NOW-PHSC for information.

April 5 – Presentation on Tampa History – American House Zephyrhills, 38130 Pretty Pond Road, will be hosting a fun and informative presentation by author Joshua McMorrow-Hernandez, a Tampa native and historian who grew up in Busch Gardens Tampa Bay. Come hear the presentation and get your name in a raffle for a prize. Tours of American House will be available after. Call (813) 400-2263 for information and RSVP by April 3.

April 8 – Birdies and Blackjack – The Zephyrhills Bulldog Booster Club presents a golf tournament and casino night event, Mardi Gras style. Held at Silverado Golf & Country Club, 36841 Clubhouse Drive, with a 9 a.m. shotgun golf tournament. A trick shot artist will be on hand for entertainment. Park three poker challenges with payouts for top three finishers. Casino Night starts at 6 p.m. with a slew of classic casino games, music, food and raffles. Don't forget to dress up for the masquerade contest with prizes for winners. Contact Randy at (216) 780-4485 or zhsathleticboosterclub@gmail.com for tickets or information. Must be 21 to participate at Casino Night.

April 8 – Hittin' the Road for Hospice – This year's annual motorcycle poker run is set. Riders will be cruising across Pasco County. The run starts at Harley-Davidson of New Port Richey, 5817 S.R. 54. Check-in, registration, and breakfast at 8 a.m. and last bike out at 10 a.m. Post-run celebration starts at 1 p.m. at the Fraternal Order of the Eagles Zephyrhills #3752, at 4149 New River Road. Visit www.HittinTheRoadForHospice.org to register.

April 8 – Spring Arts and Craft Fair – The Lighthouse Crafters of Southport Springs will be holding their annual arts and crafts fair from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. at the clubhouse located just off Chancey Road. Vendors will be displaying beautiful handmade items and a bake sale and Chinese auction will also be featured. Call Linda at (813) 778-1359 for information.

For more events visit www.pasconewspubs.com

Commentary



First Things First

Greg First

Follow The Bouncing Ball

I was at breakfast last Thursday with the gang at the Sugar Shack in Zephyrhills and Jim Pittman, a financial guy and good friend, joined us and asked if we filled out our brackets. That's when the light came on and I realized I was way behind schedule. I would have thought that Alexa, Siri or one of my cyber friends would have reminded me.

I ended up jumping in on the Capital One NCAA March Madness Bracket Challenge and spent a few hours determining my choices, finishing with 20 minutes before the opening tip-off. Actually if you pick all the favorites you will probably be disappointed; you have got to pick some long shots. So part of the formula is the SWAG formula (Scientific Wild-Ass Guess). I have used that method before and at times it works really well.

I didn't catch many NCAA basketball games during the season but during March Madness I am pretty much glued to my big screen TV, laptop or iPhone. It all depends on where I am.

It all started last Thursday and Friday at my store in Zephyrhills and continued in Homosassa on Friday night and Saturday. Saturday was also Shrimpapalooza – Mardi Gras Homosassa Style and I wouldn't miss that for anything. There was a whole bunch of beads being handed out and I ran into more people I know from east Pasco County than I could have imagined. One thing is for sure – what happens in Homosassa stays in Homosassa.

Anyway back to basketball. I was back home in Dade City when the second round ended late on Sunday. After reviewing my bracket I found out that 11 of my teams made it to the Sweet 16 and I couldn't be happier. Now I can take a break and start all over today, March 23, and watch as the field narrows. As my friend Terry Linville said, "It starts getting really tough now." I got to say some of these games have been real nail biters and my heart rate has increased on many of them. Hey, it's like a cardio exercise program. Isn't that the goal? I mean to get your heart rate up?

I guess now I can't complain having all those channels with nothing to watch. I am having a blast and burning up the remote. Now as we get closer to the Final Four and ultimately a champion this might be the time I step out of my comfort zone and head to one of my favorite sports bars. Then I can act like a complete out of control fan with others just like me. Then my wife Jenny and my dog Pooh can settle down and try to get back to normal if that is possible at my house. This only happens once a year and it is contagious. It's called March Madness. Have you caught it yet?

Letter To The Editor...

Greg [First],

My wife and I totally agree with your article about the time change in this week's [3.16.17] *Zephyrhills Free Press* issue. We have been trying for years to get Danny Burgess, and Will Weatherford before him, to do something about it, but no success.

How do we get the Legislature's attention? The only method that appears to work is to get a whole bunch of people to show up at a town hall meeting of our local rep and make noise. Suggestions?

Steve Reel
Zephyrhills

Local Man Dies After Truck Rolls

Staff Report

John Wayne Light, 50, of Zephyrhills, died in a single-vehicle crash Saturday, the Florida Highway Patrol said.

Light was driving a 2002 Ford pickup south on Old Lakeland Highway at 10:35 p.m. when he

failed to negotiate a curve.

The truck went off the shoulder of the road, overturned, ripped through a barbed wire fence, and finally came to rest on its left side in a pasture.

Light died from his injuries after being transported to an area hospital, the FHP said.

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Dade City News • East Pasco Senior News • Zephyrhills Free Press

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Paulie Palooza Draws A Crowd

New Venue Works Well For Hospice Fundraiser

Story and photos by Joe Potter

Attendance was good at the fifth annual Paulie Palooza music festival held last Saturday.

Paul Correia held his first 'palooza' in 2012 shortly after his father passed away while under the care of Gulfside Center for Hospice Care on Dean Dairy Road.

"We are blessed to know him," Linda Ward, president and C.E.O. of Gulfside Regional Hospice & Pasco Palliative Care, said regarding Correia. "Out of all the charities that help us, he is one of the best."

Several bands played at the seven-hour event, held for the first time at the new city venue just west of the municipal airport.

They included Cold Iron, The Dade City Connection, David Teague, Backwater's Own, The Jase Randall Band, Ralph's RV and White RV.

"I think it was a terrific venue for a terrific cause," said Cal Dickinson of Dade City as he watched one of the bands performing. Dickinson said his mother had spent her last days with Gulfside Hospice. He has attended every Paulie Palooza event that has been held.

This year's event at 5200 Airport Road also featured a car show, a silent auction, local vendors, food and drawings, said Kristy Churchill, Gulfside's community relations coordinator.

"It's a great place to have an event," Doug Bale of Dade City said as he was leaving for the day. "We support hospice. It's a great concept."

Bale added that he thought Paulie Palooza, which had previously been held at Skydive City, "can really grow now that they have this great venue."

Correia said he was "committed" to the new community venue as the site of future Paloozas. (He works at Sun State



One of several bands that played at the new Zephyrhills community event venue during Paulie Palooza held last Saturday.

Aluminum, the company that constructed the stage at the new venue.)

Paulie Palooza "was pretty darn good," said Carol Wilson of Zephyrhills, and the bands "were very good."

The amount that was raised to benefit Gulfside Regional Hospice was not available at press time.

All proceeds go to support hospice patient care in Pasco County through Gulfside Hospice.

"I understand the people in hospice. I'm blessed," Correia said.

Paulie Palooza has raised more than \$20,000 for Gulfside since its inception.

A CSX Railroad train blocked the crossing at Fifth Avenue for about four hours because of mechanical issues. This had an impact on attendance at the event before the tracks were cleared around 1:30 p.m. People who called were told of an alternate route they could take to get to the event.

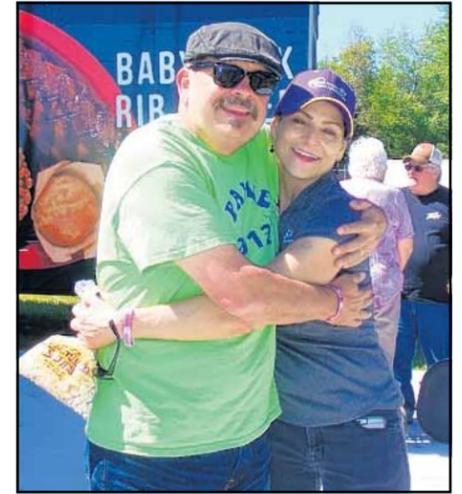
Between 150 and 200 people had received wristbands to attend the event by about 1:30 p.m. said Ashley Thibedeau, Gulfside's special events coordinator.

More people came to the event after the tracks reopened.

Correia plans to hold another musical event that includes six bands on May 13 at Rhythm & Brews, 4711 Gall Blvd.



Several people seated under a large tent last Saturday so they could watch and listen to bands playing during Paulie Palooza.



Linda Ward, president and CEO of Gulfside Regional Hospice & Pasco Palliative Care, with Paul Correia.



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Local Business Expo Raises Charitable Funds

Story and photo by Joe Potter

More than 30 vendors set up last Saturday for an inaugural local business expo that was held at Zephyrhills First Nazarene Church.

The variety of vendors inside Erickson Auditorium ranged from Realtors to debt elimination specialists and from party planners to educators.

The event was organized by Pastor Nick Deford who got the idea from a local businessman who wished there were more ways to connect with customers and clients, especially when the snowbirds were in town.

Brenda Blumenthal and Tonia Reva stood by, ready to help organize the birthday, anniversary or retirement party of your dreams. Their new Zephyrhills-based business is appropriately called Once Upon A Party.

Faithful Friends, which is marking its 10th year in business, also had a booth



Sonia Bond, Gena Taylor and Madelyn Dombree represented Caldwell Banker F.I. Grey & Son Residential, Inc. at Saturday's business expo.

at the expo. Faithful Friends will soon be announcing some exciting news about an expansion to the services it can offer to its clients.

Another Zephyrhills business, Stitch By Donna, offered purses, quilts and other quality items stitched by Donna S. Weber.

Premier Community HealthCare, Atomic Cat Interactive, Divine Vision Studios, Lifequest Enterprises and Sylvan Learning Center were among the other vendors who were represented at the expo.

If decorated pots were your fancy, you needed to look no farther than the Hand

Painted Clay Pots table staffed by Peggy and Kevin Wheeler and Brenda Pierce of Plant City. Pierce orders the pots and hand paints them herself. She said it is a form of relaxation for her.

Caldwell Banker F.I. Grey & Son Residential, Inc., recently opened an office in Lutz that serves the Pasco County area. They were represented by Sonia Bond, Gena Taylor and Madelyn Dombree.

Indoor and outdoor spaces were available and ranged in price from \$25 to \$40. Proceeds from the business expo will go towards a "Back to School, Back to Work" fund that will provide childcare for single parents planning on returning to school or work. Children will be taken care of by the church's day care program, free of cost.

The four-hour expo on 12th Street included food trucks that lined up in the church parking lot.

Editor Keri McAlpine contributed to this article.

Relay • Continued from Page 1A

downtown]. That's been a lot of fun trying to figure that out, but we're as ready as we can be," said Buckler, a second-grade teacher at West Zephyrhills Elementary.

According to Buckler, the public would often think the relay was a closed event for high school students when held at the school's track, and she hopes the downtown location will make it more inviting and attract more participants and donations.

Another first for the Zephyrhills relay is something other local relays have adopted, including the Dade City fundraiser held earlier in March. Switching the hours of the walk-a-thon from an overnight affair into a six-hour event has both pros and cons.

Technically, the relay cannot hold an overnight event this year because of the downtown location. While passionate participants are happy with any scenario, Buckley said it is a change from the original goal of the nationwide events.

"The overnight aspect represented the struggle that a typical cancer patient would go through ... the sunrise represents the end of your journey or getting a remission diagnosis and things like that. There was a whole meaning behind doing it overnight," Buckley admitted. "But, at this point we're celebrating to remember - remember our loved ones we've lost."

Although this is Buckler's first year heading up the fundraiser, she has participated in Relay for Life for the past decade.

Last year's event raised about \$42,000 for cancer patients and research; this year organizers have set a goal for \$52,000. As of Friday, about 20 teams and close to 100 individuals had raised more than \$17,000. Buckler said this year's goal might be "lofty" considering the major changes being made this year, but that any amount raised will go towards a good cause.

"We appreciate any amount," she said. "Every dollar

counts," she said.

The walking track will go up and down Fifth Avenue, circling around the center median from about 10th Street to the main stage, which will be set up at Time Square.

This year's Survivor Dinner, for all cancer patients and their caregivers, will be held at the Zephyrhills Woman's Club, 38545 Fifth Ave., at 6 p.m. after the survivors take the first lap around the track. Survivors are encouraged to register for the dinner at www.relayforlife.org/zephyrhillsfl or register on site the day of the event.

The luminaria ceremony will be held at 9 p.m. with candle-lit paper bags lining the downtown streets.

"We remember our loved ones with a slide show and a silent lap at that time. It's pretty somber, but at the time inspiring. It's meaningful," Buckler said.

Visit the Zephyrhills Relay for Life website to get involved by signing up your own team or making a donation.

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Close to 300 people attended the tea-party themed event, which focused on women's health and comradery.

Ladies • Continued from Page 1A

and sunshine to enjoy their tea party. Everyone wore their spring best, but had to top it off with a jacket because of last week's cold front.

FHZ Community Relations Manager Jane Freeman said the weather most likely stopped some women from showing up to the sold-out event.

"Some people wanted to stay home this morning and snuggle up in their bath robes and have hot chocolate, but we had a nice turnout. The sessions were full, we were excited about that," Freeman said.

The program emcee was Dr. Raj, who has a personal bond with tea time from her time living in England from 2002-2004.

Tampa news anchor Courtney Robinson was the luncheon's keynote speaker again, and addressed the audience about the strength of women. Robinson acknowledged that every woman present has probably had to face some diversity in their lives, and how overcoming that is not only empowering for themselves, but for all women whether they realize it or not.

She thanked "the women in my life who held my hand and even if they didn't know I was watching show me the way ... it was in those moments, when she [her mother] didn't know I was watching that I learned the most," Robinson said.

Women were encouraged to fill out name cards on the table with their contact information, with the hope of fostering a new friendship at the event.

"What we're hoping is that ladies really connect and make a new friend whether they're a snowbird or a full-time resident, because we believe that having friends and making a connection with someone else, having a friend to talk to, is really a good part of your



Tampa news anchor Courtney Robinson was the keynote speaker at Ladies Who Lunch and spoke to the crowd about the strength and impact of women on others.

health regimen and your health habits," Freeman said.

Mary Ritchie attended last year's luncheon and brought her friend Lois Gallant with her this year. At each table, one lucky person had a winning ticket under their place setting making them the winner of the teapot and rose centerpieces. Ritchie was the lucky winner of their table's teapot.

"I was invited by this lady that won the teapot! I was jealous. She has it now and I don't," Gallant said jokingly. "I thought it was nice. It's wonderful; beautiful ... I was just happy my blood pressure was right on."

Ritchie said she enjoyed the event as well, however thought last year's had more presentations and interactive options.

Even so, she said she very much enjoyed the luncheon and tea for two with her friend.

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Rank has its privileges as Zephyrhills Police Chief David Shears sits in the driver's seat of a Zamboni at Amalie Arena before Tuesday nights' Tampa Bay Lightning game against the Arizona Coyotes.

Shears • Continued from Page 1A

prior to Tuesday night's game against the Arizona Coyotes where the chief was recognized by a massive ovation from the Lightning faithful.

As the public address announcer read Shears' biography highlighting his service, photos were projected onto the screen above center ice as the humble chief waved to the crowd. Along with Shears' long list of public service, he was also recognized for being a two-time cancer survivor, which brought a rousing roar from the crowd.

"This is phenomenal," said Shears, who is contemplating whether to retire later this year. "This is out of this world. I've been just doing my job for 25 years and all of a sudden they call for me to come down on the ice.

"Being able to survive cancer twice

and being able to be here tonight is amazing. It's emotional. It really is."

The chief's father, Robert Shears, was the proudest man in Amalie Arena as his son was recognized.

"It's one of the best things I've seen in my lifetime," the elder Shears said. "Everybody in this place stood up and cheered. It's absolutely great."

Also expressing appreciation for Shears' dedicated service was Dave Andreychuk, Tampa Bay Lightning Vice President of Corporate and Community Affairs.

"We are humbled by the fact that your commitment to your civil service never wavered while you were undergoing treatment for cancer. That you are a two-time cancer survivor is a testament to your perseverance and courage," Andreychuk said in a letter presented to Shears.

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