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Martin County **CURRENTS**

Volume 4 Issue 5 • December 2014

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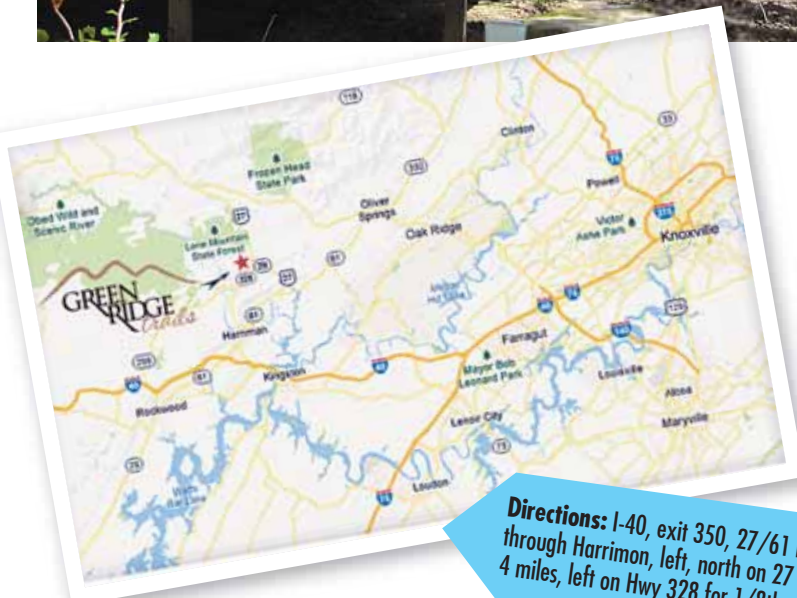


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Martin County CURRENTS

Features

6

Struggling in
Martin County

12

Not just another
environmental group

10

Incorporating
not easy task

15

Zeus Park modular
really gone?

Columnists

George Kleine
The Right Bite ... 21
Maya Ellenson
Art Kaleidoscope ... 20
Rich Vidulich
Pompano Reporter ... 22
Suzanne Briley
Hopsotch ... 23

20
Magic of Jensen
Beach art cottages

Barbara Clowdus
Unfiltered ... 9
Calendar ... 17-19

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ETHICS COMMISSION INVESTIGATING

The state Ethics Commission still is investigating two ethics complaints

filed during the summer against Martin County Commissioner Sarah Heard by Palm City businessman John McAuliffe.

The complaints include charges that she allegedly falsified expense reports, did not report ownership of an airplane, undervalued her property in Martin County and omitted out-of-state properties on her financial disclosure form, and accepted gifts from the 1,000 Friends of Florida prior to voting on a case in their favor.

"The Ethics Commission requested transcripts of the behind-closed-door sessions of the two county commission meetings when the commission discussed the court sanctions of the 1,000 Friends of Florida and Martin County Conservation Alliance," McAuliffe said. "The commission forgave most of the attorney's fees and court-ordered sanctions for their frivolous lawsuit against the county. The Ethics Commission is looking at this as a possible Sunshine violation, as well as a violation of ethics law."

Three commissioners were members of the Martin County Conservation Alliance, Heard, Fielding and Commissioner Anne Scott, yet none recused themselves from the vote, which ultimately forgave about \$30,000 in attorney fees.

In addition, the commissioner discussions were held in executive session, which McAuliffe says the Ethics Commission also will look at as a possible violation of Sunshine laws. The county attorney, Michael Durham, advised the commissioners at the time that an executive session was appropriate, because the case was still listed as an open case on the court docket, even though the litigation itself had ended. Commissioner Doug Smith refused to participate in the two closed-door sessions.

No word has been received as yet regarding the ethics complaint filed against McAuliffe on Oct. 7 by Donna Melzer, president of the Martin County Conservation Alliance, for filing his Martin County Residents for Tax Fairness Political Action Committee's reports three days late, thus purportedly denying voters an opportunity to examine the names of contributors prior to the election, according to Melzer. The PAC's fines were paid to the Martin County Elections Office for filing a late report. ■



ALL ABOARD FLORIDA

Nearly 10,000 comments had been received by the Federal Railroad

Administration regarding the All Aboard Florida high-speed rail project between Miami and Orlando on the last day of the comment period, Dec. 3, and almost 40,000 people had signed Florida Not All Aboard petitions. The comments will be categorized by subject and compared with findings in the draft report.

Each Treasure Coast county, including Martin County, prepared its own independent report, and all came to the same conclusion: That the draft statement was incomplete, inconsistent and used incorrect data. All three counties, St. Lucie, Martin and Indian River, asked that a supplemental environmental impact statement be provided to them, prior to the release of the final EIS that will outline the mitigation procedures required of All Aboard Florida to offset impacts.

"This draft EIS addresses only 30 percent of the plan, at the crossings," said Terry Rauth, Martin County's assistant county engineer who headed the effort to study the EIS released on Sept. 19. "We really need to be able to look at a 90-percent (completion) plan to know its full impact."

The 522-page draft did not include the cities of Stuart, Ft. Pierce or Vero Beach, and it considered the impacts to only two roads per county. It also did not include any bridge inspection reports of the FEC single-track bridge across the St. Lucie among its more than 1,300 supplemental documents.

Also missing from the draft statement was the U.S. Coast Guard report regarding the impact of boat traffic on the St. Lucie, and estimates have been as much as 45-50 minutes per hour to accommodate two passenger trains and one freight train.

continued on PAGE 4

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COVER PHOTO: Brooklyn Tragos, great-granddaughter of Hobe Sound's own Mrs. Claus, Jan MacDonald, is showing her holiday spirit. If you recognize her, it's because she looks just like her great-grandma....and her photo was featured on the cover of the Martin County Currents December issue last year, too!

continued from PAGE 3

Martin County staff posted on its full report on the county website, as did the staff of Indian River and St. Lucie counties.

Martin County Commissioners voted at their Dec. 2 meeting to accept the invitation by St. Lucie County officials to meet, together with Indian River County, some time in January to unite in their opposition.

Federal railroad officials would not estimate the time they will require to complete their study. ■

STATE AG DEPT SLAMS COUNTY'S NEW RULES ON SEPTIC TANKS

The strong message sent from the Florida Agriculture Department to the

Martin County Commission on Dec. 1 regarding its rewrite of the sanitary sewer element of the county's comp plan echoed Commissioner John Haddox's complaints during the county's public hearing on the amendments Oct. 21.

The rewrites to restrict the size of septic tanks will unnecessarily damage the agricultural community, violates the state's Right to Farm Act, and will allow more pollution of rivers by banning sewer line extensions into rural areas, particularly at the headwaters of the Lochachatchee River.

"We're trying to protect our lagoons and our rivers, which I'm 100 percent for," Haddox said, "but if there is a way we can compromise, and we can help our agricultural community ... through technology we may be able to accomplish what we're trying to do—if it's really about water."

Haddox called for more research, which he felt was lacking in the county staff's report, which had been geared only to getting "three favorable votes" from the commission. "The technology is out there," he said. "The data and analysis is out there, and the LPA (Local Planning Agency) didn't get the data...I believe we can do a better job on this."

Haddox was joined only by Commissioner Doug Smith in voting to hold off on transmitting the amendments without revision to the Department of Economic Opportunity for review.

An Agricultural Department senior management analyst, Stormie Knight, recommended that the Department of Economic Opportunity reject the amendment dealing with onsite treatment and disposal of sewage (proposed policy amendments 10.2A.8 and 10.1C.9).

"... We are perplexed," Knight said. "The tandem of policies that limit the size of OSTDS (onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems) to less than 2,000 gpd while at the same time prohibiting the extension of central sewer services to rural areas will have the effect of increasing the number of septic systems in a vulnerable region of the state where the Department of Environmental Protection and the state Legislature are pursuing programs to de-

crease the number of OSTDS and expand central sewer systems."

In addition to pointing out the danger to state water resources, Knight also said that parts of the proposed amendments "will arbitrarily restrict agricultural land uses and the Right to Farm Act," including farm worker housing, restroom and food preparation facilities, and agricultural product processing facilities.

In addition to increasing the pollution of watersheds by prohibiting the extension of regional wastewater collection facilities associated with central sewer infrastructure within the secondary urban service area, Knight added that "Martin County is unreasonably adversely affecting and limiting agricultural operation."

Martin commissioners rewrote Chapter 10 of the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan at the direction of former County Commissioner Maggy Hurchalla.

The new Chapter 10, however, does not address septic tanks leaking sewage into groundwater or affecting water quality in the county's waterways. Instead, it will effectively end the chance of creating agri-tourism opportunities for small farmers, according to Carl Frost, of Kai Kai Farms in Indiantown.

The rewrites also eliminate the Expressway Oriented Transient Commercial Service Center zoning at I-95 intersections and banned package plants, which would support hotels or research facilities at those locations. Final public hearing is Tuesday, Dec. 16, at 1:30 p.m. in commission chambers.

"This is not about water," Haddox concluded. "This is about (limiting) growth." ■

POSEY-MURPHY BILL PASSES

The U.S. House of Representatives recently passed legislation to

reauthorize funding for the National Estuary Program, which included a bipartisan bill authored by Congressmen Bill Posey (FL-08) and Patrick Murphy (FL-18) to help the Indian River Lagoon.

The Estuary Urgent Needs Priority Program Act prioritizes funds within the National Estuary Program to meet urgent needs across the nation's estuaries, including the ongoing crisis on the Treasure Coast.

Calling the legislation a "common sense plan," it will help make available additional funding to estuaries that are experiencing challenging ecological problems, such as what the Indian River Lagoon suffered in 2013.

For his environmental advocacy, Rep. Murphy was recognized by Audubon Florida with the 2014 Champion of the Everglades award for his efforts to raise the profile of the plight facing the Indian River Lagoon and the St. Lucie Estuary.

The award is given annually in celebration of bold action to protect and restore America's Everglades and was presented to Murphy during the recent

annual Audubon Assembly. Murphy has partnered with Audubon Florida on many serious issues facing the Treasure Coast and Palm Beaches, including pushing for swift approval of the Central Everglades Planning Project to move more water south of Lake Okeechobee.

"While I am humbled to accept this award, it does not just belong to me; it belongs to our entire community," Murphy said. "Without your help and your dedication to fighting for the Everglades, it would not have been possible to make such progress in the past year to improve the health of our local waterways, moving forward critical Everglades restoration projects that will benefit the entire system." ■

DRAFT INLET MANAGEMENT PLAN

Martin County issued a press release Dec. 2 announcing that

the county staff had received a copy of the draft Inlet Management Plan for the St. Lucie Inlet from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and they were not pleased with the results.

"Martin County staff has identified issues with some of the sand volume calculations, limitations where sand can be collected and timing for sand placement on beaches," the release read.

"Some of the requirements appear to be unrealistic for the County to achieve without creating an unnecessary burden on taxpayers. The draft also includes other provisions that may be unattainable based on the unpredictability of Mother Nature. The draft language, if left as is, may also expose Martin County to potential litigation and will put at risk future grant opportunities."

Part of the negotiated agreement with Jupiter Island is that they, along with other stakeholders, have a voice in formulating an updated Inlet Management Plan. The draft plan will be reviewed by Jupiter Island officials, along with officials from the City of Stuart, Sailfish Point, Sewall's Point and Martin County, followed by meetings among stakeholders, according to the release.

Comments and questions will be shared with FDEP officials, with the goal of finalizing the management plan during the first quarter of 2015.

The Town of Jupiter Island had threatened a lawsuit against the county for what they considered the county's "mismanagement" of the St. Lucie Inlet, which had cost their property owners millions of dollars to replenish lost sand that protected their homes and property.

Their interlocal agreement was signed shortly after the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) issued Martin County a permit for periodic maintenance dredging of the St. Lucie Inlet, to which Jupiter Island and Sailfish Point had filed objections that began the three-step process mandated by state

statute whenever a disagreement arises among local government entities.

Although the major issue regarding the inlet—a dedicated funding source to ensure dredging every three years, or as needed, was not addressed in the agreement—the two governments will work collaboratively regarding future FDEP permits and the development of the new Inlet Management Plan.

The agreement also specifies twice-per-year monitoring of sand accumulation in the inlet for bypassing to beaches to the north and south as well as the method for determining what volume of sand goes on the beaches. ■

INTERNATIONAL CHOCOLATE COMPETITION

Castronovo Chocolate on Colorado Avenue in Stuart, Florida's first

bean-to-bar American craft chocolate factory, will enter a dark milk chocolate bar, one of two overall winners in America's semi-finals, into an international competition against European semi-finalists in London recently.

"It's been described as winning an Oscar in the chocolate world," says owner Denise Castronovo, an entrepreneur who previously founded an ecological consulting business to map rainforest threats. With chocolate manufacturing, Castronovo says she found a way to conserve rainforests by creating demand for chocolate made from the rare cacao varieties discovered in these remote areas of the world.

The difference between Castronovo's chocolate factory and chocolatiers is that Castronovo imports heirloom cacao beans and manufactures the chocolate it uses in its products. Castronovo Chocolate is one of the few chocolate manufacturers in the country operated by a woman. The factory is at 555 Colorado Ave, Stuart, FL. ■

NEW PRESIDENT OF TREASURED LANDS

Barbara Birdsey, acclaimed philanthropist and animal advocate,

has been named president of Treasured Lands, which she founded in 2008 to provide conservation education and land preservation projects in Martin County.

Its projects include public tours of Barley Barber Swamp, a 400-acre nature preserve owned by FPL in Indiantown; preserving and managing Simpson Island in the Indian River Lagoon; and providing scholarships that help underprivileged children learn more about environmental stewardship.

Birdsey, a Jupiter Island resident,

said she intends to expand the land trust's geographical reach for conserving property beyond the borders of Martin County—focusing particularly on parcels that play key roles in helping restore and clean area waterways.

"The terrible treatment of our waterways really galvanized the public demand for sustained solutions to this environmentally and economically crippling problem," said Birdsey. "We believe targeted land conservation—for flow-way restoration, watershed protection and wetland connectivity—plays a vital step toward preventing pollution and environmental degradation over the short- and long-term."

In addition to reaching out to conservationists and landowners in Okeechobee and St. Lucie counties, Birdsey said Treasured Lands also will continue its commitment to environmental education.

Birdsey founded Pegasus Foundation, based in Hobe Sound, an international nonprofit committed to animal protection, environmental preservation and public education, the Orenda Wildlife Land Trust in Massachusetts and helped co-found the Cape Cod Stranding Network to organize response efforts to whale beaching.

Recently, Birdsey received the Ansel B. Chaplin Award for outstanding efforts to preserve open space on Cape Cod. The board of directors of Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trust gave Birdsey the award, named after its founding president. Her additional board experience includes Hobe Sound

Animal Protection League, Save the Manatee Club, Humane Society Wildlife Land Trust, Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound, Advisory Board to the Wild Dolphin Project and South Florida Wildlife Leadership Council. ■

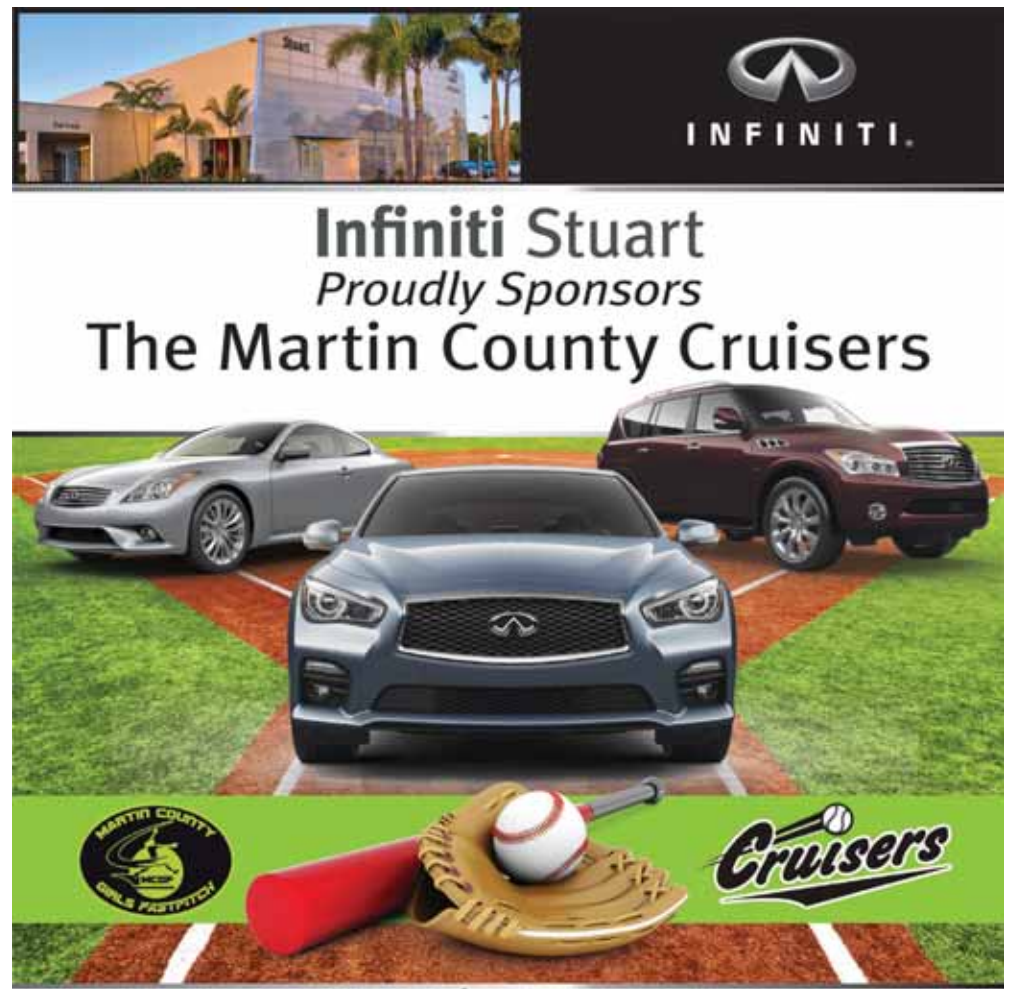
A NEW NOAA STORM SURGE MAP

The hurricane center recently launched an interactive map

that will allow residents along the East and Gulf coasts to evaluate their vulnerability to storm surge, by showing how far inland the water can reach during a variety of hurricane scenarios.

According to the hurricane center, storm surge is responsible for about half of all tropical weather-related deaths in the U.S., and officials say roughly 22 million U.S. residents are vulnerable to storm surge.

Hurricane Center Director Rick Knabb says the map should prompt coastal residents to determine whether they live in evacuation zones and to make emergency plans. Copy and paste into your browser to link to the interactive map: <http://noaa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/StorytellingTextLegend/index.html?appid=b1a20ab5eec149058bafc059635a82ee> ■



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Young adults struggling with low pay, high housing costs

By Lisa Djahed, Special to Martin County Currents

No wonder we love Martin County with its idyllic beaches and sleepy, hometown feel. In many ways, it's a great place to relax and retire, but what if you are not a member of the over-55 crowd? Is Martin County still an idyllic place for young adults to live?

Ask that question of Joshua Felder, 25, a United States military veteran, who travels out of state to work:

"I grew up here. Martin County is my home town, but I can't afford to live and work here. After I got out of the military I returned home, and I helped open a new local restaurant, a great company, but the hours and pay were limited, so I got a second job, and even with a second job, I was still in debt, up to my eyeballs. So I took a job that I now travel for. For those of us under 55 years of age, Martin County is a financial black hole."

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, at 16.4%, Florida has one of the highest underemployment rates in the country. Underemployment is defined as those workers who are highly skilled but working in low-paying jobs; highly skilled workers who work in low-skill jobs; and part-time workers who would prefer to work full time.

Stephanie Sage, another Martin County native, struggles with finding well-paying jobs. "I'm in school to finish my degree," she says, "but I still have to work. The jobs that are out there don't pay a wage that you can actually live on."

In my recent survey of those workers ages 24-32 who live in Stuart, low pay was cited as the number-one barrier to

living and working in Martin County. Job opportunities are limited. With 29% of the job market in professional services such as health, education, and business,

higher-paying jobs.

"Even with a specialized, trained skilled set," Felder adds, "you can't find a job in this county."

LOOKING FOR A JOB IN MARTIN COUNTY



Martin County native Stephanie Sayres laments the need to work two jobs to make ends meet.

STEPHANIE SAGE

Stephanie recently completed the coursework to earn her associate's degree in human services and psychology from Indian River State College. She has excellent references from previous employers, media companies,

other small businesses and insurance, where she held a variety of administrative positions that have given her exceptional data entry and clerical skills. She now is seeking a full-time position in the social service sector, so she may continue to learn and grow within her chosen field. To receive her resume and references, please send an email with your request to jobs@martincountycurrents.com.



Army veteran Joshua Felder, who was raised in Martin County, wants to return home to live, but cannot find suitable employment.

JOSHUA FELDER

Joshua is one of those military veterans who cannot return home to Martin County, because the jobs are limited. He is a US Marine Corps veteran whose deployments gave him experience in logistics and em-

barkation as a Logistics and Event Liaison. His specialized skills include personnel and facilities management, proficiency in light tracking software, heavy equipment ground guiding, record keeping, and U.S. Customs screening. To receive Joshua's resume and references, please send an email with your request to jobs@martincountycurrents.com.

up almost 54% of the entire market, are available, albeit with low pay and limited hours. According to the U.S. Census Bureau:

- More than 41% of all jobs in Martin County pay \$25,000 a year or less.
- 20% of all households in Martin County earn less than \$25,000 a year.
- 32% of all households earn less than \$35,000 annually.

The underemployed workers of Martin County must face the high cost of rental housing, the number-one concern cited by survey respondents. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, "Declining wages, in turn, have put housing out of reach for many workers: a household would need more than one full-time minimum wage worker to afford a two-bedroom rental apartment at fair market rent."

Felder says, "It is hard to think about, but with wages being what they are and the cost of housing, I don't know if I'll ever be able to afford to live in Martin County." He cannot live in his own home town, the place where he was raised.

PUSHED OUT OF RENTAL MARKET

In my survey, 70% of those responding said their current wages are not in line with their housing costs. In fact, 29% of those responding estimated their housing and utility costs accounted for more than 71% of their income.

Median rent for available units in Martin County runs \$887 per month. A median full-time salary level for those in the service sector is \$29,162. Citing

SERVICE SECTOR JOBS

On the other hand, job opportunities for those in the service sector, which make

Martin County families no exception to grim statistics

A United Way report released in mid-November shows nearly half of all residents in Indian River, St. Lucie and Martin counties are struggling to make ends meet. A 2012 joint research study between Rutgers University and the United Way of Florida is a county-by-county breakdown of residents who live above the federal poverty level, are employed, but are struggling.

A family of four with an annual income of \$23,850 is considered to be living in poverty, according to federal guidelines, but the United Way report shines a light on those who are Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained and Employed.

The ALICE threshold factors in the cost of living and includes retired seniors who were previously in the workforce. **When ALICE households are combined with households that fall below the federal poverty level, 44 percent in Indian River County, 46 percent in St. Lucie**

County and 45 percent in Martin County are struggling to afford the basic necessities of housing, child care, food, health care and transportation, according to the report. MARTIN COUNTY IN 2012

Population: 148,817;
Households: 60,783;
Median Household Income: \$44,821

STRUGGLING HOUSEHOLDS

Poverty Households: 7,487 (12 percent)
ALICE Households: 20,029 (33 percent)
Above ALICE Households: 33,267 (55 percent)

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS in MARTIN COUNTY

Economic Viability Dashboard evaluates community conditions on a scale of 1 (worst) to 100 (best).

Housing Affordability: poor (37)

Job Opportunities: poor (46)

Community Support: good (61)

UNDEREMPLOYED in MARTIN COUNTY

The most recent statistics available for Martin County come from the U.S. Census Bureau in 2010, revealing the effects of too many residents who are underemployed.

- **More than 41% of all jobs in Martin County pay \$25,000 a year or less.**
- **20% of all households in Martin County earn less than \$25,000 a year.**
- **32% of all households earn less than \$35,000 annually.**

It's no surprise then to find also a large number of Martin County residents who live in poverty. Federal poverty levels in 2010 were defined as \$10,830 in annual income for one person; \$22,050 for a family of four; revised in 2012 to \$23,850 for a family of four.

Consider then these additional statistics, knowing that these numbers are real people.

- In 2010, 11.5% of Martin County residents (about 16,534 people) lived in poverty.

In 2012, the poverty level of Martin County households increased to 12 percent. Down only slightly from 2009, when 14.6% of Martin County residents (about 20,410 people) lived in poverty.

- At the height of the recession in 2008, 11.3% of Martin County residents (about 15,700 people) lived at or below federal poverty guidelines. In 2007, 8.2% of Martin County residents (about 11,400 people) lived at or below below the poverty level.

The Florida Center for Investigative Reporting analyzed data relating to poverty rates, homeless students and subsidized meals for all school districts before the financial crisis began up to and through the 2010-11 school year.

Their analysis showed that the Martin County School District experienced the largest increase in student poverty in Florida, showing a 73% jump between 2008 and 2011.

anonymity, one survey respondent lamented, "They don't pay us worth a damn. When we find a job, it is part time, then you have to work multiple jobs to get to a full-time pay." In fact, according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, a single person living in Martin County needs to make \$17.81 per hour (full time) to be able to afford a two-bedroom apartment locally.

A 2012 study entitled, "Affordability Foreclosed: The Rental Housing Challenge," a report commissioned by the Community Foundation for Palm Beach and Martin Counties, states that "households paying in excess of 30% of their monthly income on housing costs are considered cost-burdened... The analysis shows that 90%, collectively, of renters in both counties earning less than \$35,000 annually are cost-burdened."

Due to the economic forces over the last decade, demand for affordable housing has gone up while the supply of affordable housing has either diminished or remained stagnant – resulting in a rental environment where, as the Community Foundation study states, "competition for affordable rental housing will likely intensify." The report further states:

...the affordable rental housing shortfall is unlikely to improve any time soon. In fact, the growing demand for rental housing, at all income levels, will likely further diminish the supply of affordable rental housing in Palm Beach and Martin Counties. Rental housing affordability will also be impacted by persistently high unemployment and stagnant growth in household income in the coming years.

In fact, according Anne Ray of the Shimborg Center for Housing Studies at the University of Florida, "the supply of affordable housing has not kept up with the need. In 2011, there were just 39 affordable and available rental units for every 100 very low-income households."

HOUSE OF HOPE REACHES OUT

"It used to be we would provide immediate assistance to those facing a short-term crisis; now the situation is more chronic, more endemic and requires a longer-term commitment, both on our side, and our clients," said Diane Tomasik of the House of Hope in Martin County.

House of Hope, a leading local non-profit, provides services to those in need, be it counseling, food, clothing, or rent and utility assistance. Tomasik explains further:

"With so many in the service sector, and with our season so defined, the summer months can be especially difficult. Since 2008 the make-up of our client based has changed dramatically. Those needing longer-term assistance are more often former professional workers that have been downsized who need job retraining. It's not just the working poor we serve, but the professionals who find themselves poor due to

low wages or limited opportunities."

The task of creating a job and housing environment that can not only sustain younger professionals but help them get established and thrive falls squarely on the work of local government and local organizations, including the Martin County Board of County Commissioners, the City of Stuart Commission, the Economic Development Council and the Business Development Board – four entities not necessarily known for the alignment of their missions, nor for their ability to work cooperatively.

"Martin County is not Jupiter and I wish our local representatives would stop treating it that way," Felder says. "I know they don't want us to be West Palm Beach and I respect that, but there has to be some progress forward."

This Army veteran is not asking for a government hand out or even for more subsidized housing. He wants to support himself, and he wants Martin County to do a better job of addressing the issues of its under-55 residents. They can start by ensuring residents have better choices in employment opportunities and in housing options.

"You can't stop all development," he says. "There has to be a balance." ■

Lisa Djahed, a Stuart resident, is a free-lance writer and author of The Foolish Stepmom, available on Amazon.com.



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Editorial: Who's guilty here of rewriting history?

Judging by recent emails on Martin County's website, Stuart attorney Ginny Sherlock seemed to confirm yet again what many residents and county staff claim: Sherlock is Martin County's unelected "sixth commissioner," wielding far too much sway over the commission majority and showing contempt toward county staff if they disagree with her.

Residents have become somewhat injured to Sherlock's stream of consciousness emails to county commissioners and staff telling them what to think and what to do, but her public countermand last month of the county's communications coordinator, Gabriella Ferraro, went too far.

Her response to Ms. Ferraro also revealed the effectiveness of Sherlock's strategy regarding all her stances: Repeat what you want others to believe long enough, often enough, by enough disciples and the facts become irrelevant—even to newspaper reporters.

Ms. Ferraro, who demonstrated great energy and creativity in her efforts to inform the public as to the critical need for funding road repairs and how, exactly, the proposed one-cent sales tax revenue would be spent, contacted a Stuart News reporter following that reporter's story about the proposed sales tax initiative.

She corrected the reporter's factual errors in "Martin woos voters amid distrust," published Oct. 26, and asked po-

lately for an immediate retraction and correction.

The reporter had attributed the public's apparent lukewarm reception of levying another sales tax on themselves, because the public had not been fully informed as to how the funds would be spent: "... three years later (after the previous sales tax referendum had passed) the Board decided to use funds for the non-essential sailfish splash..."

Ms. Ferraro informed the reporter that her information and assessment were incorrect.

"The 1/2 cent was to be used for conservation lands and projects in the parks master plan—the waterpark was in that plan—we had a CIP sheet for years (more than 10 years)," Ferraro wrote. "There were public hearings and public debate, etc. To call it 'non-essential' is editorializing, and to report that some feel the project was 'disingenuous' is not providing your readers with balanced information—in fact, the project went through an open, public process; it was a matter of public debate for years."

Yes, Ms. Ferraro was absolutely accurate.

What is missing is the fact that the extremist, then-minority faction (now the majority faction) voted against a water park, where residents of all ages could play, presumably because their hidden agenda is to ensure that Martin County will be only a bedroom commu-

nity forever; therefore, we should buy up all the land possible for conservation, regardless of the consequences to taxpayers and residents.

Sherlock, who apparently read the email in the county's online database from Ferraro, wrote her own email to the reporter, copying it to county staff, so it too would show up in the database. She concurred with the reporter's story about Sailfish Splash, that it was "non-essential" and a "disingenuous" use of sales tax funds, something we've heard often from Sherlock in commission chambers.

"There was talk for many years of building an 'aquatics center,'" Sherlock wrote, "but there was never any plan to build an 'amusement park' with the sales tax funds."

An amusement park? Apparently, she needs to check her definitions. Two slides and a lazy river do not an amusement park make. An amusement park would offer perhaps 20 or so water slides, a go-cart track, a miniature golf course, climbing walls, a roller coaster, and/or a Ferris wheel. Has she never been to an amusement park?

What we got from levying a half-cent sales tax on ourselves was a family-friendly aquatics center, as well as more conservation land, more ball parks, and the renovation of Tuckahoe Mansion--and no one project exceeded the \$10,000 limit set by referendum language.

Sherlock also dismisses the fact that

Sailfish Splash has been profitable every year, already accumulating more than \$250,000 in reserves and generating millions in economic impact by hosting state swim meets and other events, because she's not interested in economic impact, she told the reporter. She also insisted that Sailfish Splash is the reason behind the public's mistrust of county government—highly unlikely considering its widespread popularity.

It's even worth considering that had some additional amenities been offered as part of our most recent sales tax referendum in addition to road repairs—as the City of Stuart did for its residents—the one-cent sales tax referendum more likely would have passed. Within Stuart's city limits, all five districts voted in favor of the sales tax—in spite of having had a fire-assessment fee levied on every household just a few months prior.

Sherlock concluded her email: "I do not believe it is necessary or appropriate for Scripps to 'correct' a story that contained no factual errors. While County administrators may disagree with the facts, they cannot re-write history to change them."

By rewriting history herself, Sherlock ensured that no corrections would be published. She put one county staffer back in her place, and also showed how adept she is in manipulating "facts" until the truth becomes irrelevant—even to a newspaper reporter. ■

Letters to Editor

Martin County, stop blaming others for your pollutants

For years, it has been fashionable to blame agribusiness for our pollution problems, particularly in the Glades region around Lake Okeechobee. Over the last 20 years, laws were put in place to force agriculture to clean up their act. In my opinion, they are not only meeting but exceeding their obligations to the environment.

Over the past 30 years, we have experienced a huge population growth in Florida. The installation of hundreds of thousands of septic tanks in Martin County are having a very large, very negative effect on our environment. Agriculture would not have been allowed to get away with this. When you have abnormal weather conditions such as we have experienced with all the recent above-average rainfall, all of this becomes obvious. The rain water is "flushing" out the system.

The Glades cities of Belle Glade, Pahokee and South Bay have had sewer systems for years. We do not pump our

waste into Lake Okeechobee. By the way, the farmers are not back-pumping into Lake O as reported in the press.

They were required by law to stop. So while we may contribute to a few algae blooms along the way, the toxic fecal matter in the Indian River is literally coming from Martin County's own back yards.

Infrastructure money is critical to correcting the problem. As the facts come out, hopefully that money should be available so we can head off a health crisis due in large part to human waste. Let's pray we get the money easier than we got Everglade's restoration funding.

So my brothers and sisters on the East Coast, the communities around Lake Okeechobee will accept some responsibility for some of the agricultural pollutants -- and I include the cow patties from the Kissimmee River Basin -- but we have been working very hard for decades to clean it up with great success. We are still are working on it, so please give us a little credit!

Now it is your turn to step up to the plate and start accepting your roll in this critical issue and what you need to do to correct the problem. We are not reinventing the wheel here. If you re-

member the Florida Keys were faced with the same issue years ago. Guess what? They fixed it.

J.P. Sasser

Former Mayor of Pahokee

Dog show brought the community together

Thinking about the Zeus Bark Dog Show, it would be good to focus on it as a very successful community event. It sure pulled us together with children taking part, and three dogs were adopted during a short period by local people. Anita from Flash Beach Grill adopted a dog in honor of the show, and Susan Howell adopted two dogs!

Harry MacArthur from Harry and the Natives said he loved it because it was our community! We received gifts, which supplied our door prizes, from Three Brothers Brunch, Old Dixie Grill North Cafe, Flash Beach Grille, Taste restaurant, Cottage Cache, (which is now in Tequesta), Sweet Treats, Enchanted Treasures, Juno Shoe Girl, and The Sea Urchin, and I know there were others I probably missed.

And so many LOCAL VOLUNTEERS pitched in, I won't be able to name them all! Special thanks to Karen

Kerwi, Nancy Policastro, Marie Scholl, Jan Reyneri, Cindy Fucigna, Debbie Spoelstra, all of whom did a fine job, and I couldn't have done it without them.

A special thanks goes to the judges, and to Rich, Jan and Jef Otten, who brought us DancenSound that really added so much fun to the day.

The community really came together. The fun was dogs, old people, children and the blessing of the animals! Until next year!

Suzanne Briley
Hobe Sound

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Honor Flight cracks open door to memories



Barbara Clowdus

Unfiltered

Occasionally, we hear about Honor Flights, those all-volunteer flights to transport World War II veterans to the nation's memorial built in their honor. We think, "That's a nice gesture," and we drop some spare dollars in firefighters' boots when the time comes. Then we go on our way...until someone invites you to be an official "guardian" of a World War II vet for a day. Everything changes after that.

My companion on the Honor Flight last May was Navy Seabee John Pereira, 87, of Stuart, a humble man, somewhat flummoxed by the sudden adulation of hundreds of people at every juncture of the trip. He had not expected to see Martin County's first responders stand at attention and salute, to stop traffic with lights flashing at every crossroads for our buses, or to be on board a plane that taxied under a streaming water arch from fire hoses. With blue eyes wide and slightly bemused, he watched silently the hoopla orchestrated on his and 84 of his fellow veterans' behalf.

At every stop, dozens of strangers' hands thrust toward him, accompanied

by these words, "Thank you for your service." His first instinctive response, "It was my pleasure," fell short from his mouth. No, it had not been a pleasure, exactly. He was part of the Okinawa invasion, which many military experts consider the bloodiest battle of the war.

Instead, he said: "I wouldn't have changed a minute of it. Someone upstairs must have been looking out for me, 'cause I came out of it without a scratch."

But the swarm of people decked out in red, white and blue who lined terminal corridors with flags waving, bands playing '40s tunes, singers serenading, dancers jiving to the Lindy hop, banners, streamers and balloons floating overhead, all swallowed his words. He stopped trying to explain.

He told me how deeply grateful he felt to the U.S. military for beginning his education and for the G.I. Bill that allowed him to continue, thus becoming an engineer with Grumman, giving him a fine career and bringing him to Stuart. His reluctance to receive what he considered misplaced adulation is similar to what I see in my grandson, a third-year Air Force Academy cadet in Colorado Springs, on his flights home to south Florida when he's wearing his uniform. Strangers thank him for his service.

"I haven't done anything to deserve their gratitude," he tells me, because he's getting a fine education, and I think of John Pereira's own uneasiness. Neither man seems to understand fully that be-

cause he was/is willing to give up the "typical" youthful experience, to answer whatever call came/comes to him and to endure discomfort and danger—because he's willing to do what needs to be done—the rest of us won't have to. Yes, they deserve our thanks and their education.

While John Pereira was still a teen, he'd learned as many craftsman skills he could possibly wrest from his older Seabees, the Navy's Construction Battalion of carpenters, masons, plumbers, and electricians who built the infrastructure for troops, even under fire. They fought shoulder to shoulder with Marines and frequently swam ashore first, under the cover of night before a landing, to provide shoreline reconnaissance. On heavily bombarded Okinawa, the attacks came also from Kamikaze pilots on horrid suicide missions, seared into a soldier's memory.

The Okinawa base commander, Marine Corps Col. Melvin J. Maas, said in his departing remarks to the Seabees who had occupied the Japanese island at the time the war ended: "Your courageous, tireless and magnificent work will be remembered as long as there is American history." John Pereira was among them. Seventy years later, he brings that history alive.

He had experienced the intensity of a battlefield, endured horrific conditions, then came home and jumped back into everyday life, almost as if nothing extraordinary had happened. He did the

job that needed to be done, and he did not talk about it. Perhaps being surrounded on the Honor Flight by other veterans of the same era allowed him to open a door slightly to a few of those memories, some which he shared. What he told me will remain with me forever.

Although he'd not known what to expect from this trip, he'd been determined to go. A broken rib suffered in a fall two weeks prior to our departure did not deter him. He refused even to reveal his injury to the Martin County firefighters and volunteers, suffering instead in silence—until I rolled his wheelchair into a road rut.

"Ow!" he snapped. "Who taught you how to drive this thing anyway?" That's when I learned of his broken rib as I found the bottom of nearly every pothole in Washington, but the unintentional torture seemed not to impede his total immersion in the tightly scheduled, precisely choreographed tour and events of the day.

"I will never forget this," he told me more than once, marveling that guardians bought their own plane tickets and that the Southeast Florida Honor Flight volunteers based in Martin County worked so hard, exhibiting such professionalism, skill and attention to detail in their selfless service to veterans.

Only one suggestion he might make for future Honor Flights: They should consider adding to their pre-flight guardian training a short course on proper wheelchair navigation. ■

Melissa Meeker: I did what needed to be done



Nancy Smith

Guest Columnist

Not the governor's office, not the trustees, no outside influence coerced Melissa Meeker to abruptly quit the South Florida Water Management District in May 2013, the former executive director insists.

"Yes, I know all the things said about me at the time," Meeker told me during a break in a recent water reuse workshop in New Orleans. "But the real pressure came from within myself. . . It was hard to go into an agency and do what I did and be there for a long period of time. I did what needed to be done."

What Meeker did from May 2011 when Gov. Rick Scott hand-picked her for the job until her resignation two years later was shepherd the district through a traumatic period that included a \$100 million state-imposed budget cut and 134 layoffs.

"We were there to change the internal philosophy and culture from one of entitlement to a sense of passion for the job, giving them a vision they could work with," she explained.

By all accounts, Meeker did that. She effected change at the 1,600-employee agency. She also helped craft a new \$880 million Everglades restoration plan—one that would resolve a lingering legal fight over what litigants called "Florida's failure to meet water quality standards."

Asked what the hardest part of the job was, she replied without hesitation: "Telling people who had been there their whole careers it was time to move on."

Meeker has moved on to become the executive director of the WaterReuse Research Foundation in Washington, D.C. The foundation is an educational, non-profit public benefit corporation, a centralized organization for the water and wastewater community to advance the science of water reuse, recycling, reclamation, and desalination.

"Living in D.C. is amazing," she said, "but a challenge. For instance, we had a wonderful \$240,000 house in Stuart. Anywhere around Washington, you can't get a double-wide for that. . . This is a totally different thing than I've ever done before, but I'm having a blast," she added. "I've been all over the world, to Singapore and Australia, and I'm going to Hawaii next month."

The WaterReuse Research Foundation workshop was to educate media covering the environment and water issues, and the highlight of the two-day event was a Sunday night gala for 175 guests,

featuring food and beverages produced with recycled wastewater -- all prepared New Orleans-style.

Asked to define the main challenge of the new job, Meeker said, "Where water reuse is now is sort of like where the district (SFWMD) was when I went into that job. It's ... we have a great story to tell here, but we're working out what that story is and then we're going to take it to the next level."

"Water reuse," she said, "is sustainability. People talk about sustainability but they never include water in that. But the thing is, there's no new water coming into the atmosphere. This is it. We have to work to protect it."

She said drought-prone states like California and Texas are already doing a lot to treat wastewater to such an extreme, it's being made potable. The technology is here and now. "Some large farmers in Florida are irrigating with treated wastewater," she explained, "but mostly, it's being sent into deep wells and then wastewater becomes wasted water."

Meeker is a Tampa-born marine biologist who was examining an outbreak of algae blooms and sick fish in the Indian River lagoon in 1998 when she was appointed to run the Port St. Lucie office of the Department of Environmental Protection. She made it her job that year to get state money for river cleanup proj-

ects and at age 29 recruited officials to figure out how best to spend it.

She was a Charlie Crist-appointed SFWMD board member in 2010, and in 2011, when former district executive director Carol Wehle resigned in a cloud of scandal, Scott tapped her for the job. Just before Meeker handed in her resignation, the Palm Beach Post linked her to a decision that allowed billboards on water management district land -- and to a former board member and Meeker's ex-business partner who stood to benefit financially.

"The knives were out for Melissa," said contractor Gray Ramos, who was familiar with the atmosphere within the district office during Meeker's tenure. "Believe that stuff at your own peril. I think she probably said in the end, 'I don't need this' and really she doesn't."

Florida Audubon Executive Director Eric Draper had only praise for the outgoing executive director in 2013.

"Melissa Meeker has ably advanced Gov. Scott's agenda with the water quality plan and reducing the district's budget," he said in a written statement. "She held one of the toughest jobs in Florida and deserves our gratitude." ■

Nancy Smith was editor of The Stuart News for 28 years and is now executive editor at Sunshine State News in Tallahassee.

Much to consider when creating new cities

Newsprint turned a rumor into “fact” as quickly as ink dried on the pages of a local weekly newspaper when it recently reported local efforts to incorporate Palm City—not now a city in spite of its name. The article described a municipal incorporation initiative for Palm City that is apparently underway by the Palm City Chamber of Commerce and endorsed by Martin County Commissioner John Haddox. Both the chamber and the commissioner responded to the story with surprise, and in the case of the commissioner, with some outrage.

“I told the reporter that I had heard incorporation rumors around Palm City on occasion, but that was all,” said Haddox, “so we’d have to speak only hypothetically, and he agreed.”

Haddox represents the Palm City area on the Board of County Commissioners, and in the article as written, he was widely quoted as saying he supports incorporation, encourages unrestrained commercial development of Citrus Boulevard, and even would serve as The City of Palm City’s administrator.

“Every response I gave was prefaced with ‘hypothetically speaking,’” he added. “(The reporter) and I wound up having a pretty long, friendly conversation, but the comments he chose to print were taken out of context....I was joking, and what he wrote were the things I said off the cuff. I cannot tell you how irritated I was when I read what was written.”

Also surprised at the “facts” released in the story was Niki Norton, president of the Palm City Chamber of Commerce, who was quoted as saying that the Chamber had formed a committee to pursue incorporation.

“We simply formed a fact-finding committee,” Norton says, “in response to what seemed to be more talk than usual and to answer some questions from our residents about becoming a city again, as Palm City once was.”

The inquiries surfaced during some of the Palm City Chamber’s monthly town hall meetings, she added, during which state and county officials routinely address community concerns, such as the widening of Martin Highway, updates on the Mapp Road project, and All Aboard Florida.

“Now, after this, I’m sure I’m going to be asked publicly at the next town hall meeting about incorporation,” she added, “but really there’s just not much to say.”

Palm City, with a population of around 25,000 residents, was first incorporated in 1921 as a part of Palm Beach County. Palm City remained a municipality when it became part of the new

county of Martin in 1925, but the city became insolvent during the Great Depression. Abolished by the legislature in 1937, it took nearly 30 years, until 1963, to pay off the town’s debts through a special taxing district.

“It didn’t work out previously,” Norton said, “so there’s a lot to consider here. It’s not an easy process that just happens overnight, and it depends entirely on citizen involvement. Incorporation is not something a chamber can decide, or that a group of business owners can decide to do. It’s a decision that can be made only by the citizens who live here.”

The first step to incorporation begins with an “Incorporation Steering Committee,” the members of which will organize and conduct a feasibility study. If their decision after the study is to proceed, the study must be submitted to the



John Haddox, Martin County Commissioner, District 5



Niki Norton, President, Palm City Chamber President

state legislature, along with a proposed charter, to demonstrate that the new municipality will be financially viable, well organized, and has addressed the impact of Florida’s growth management laws.

(New municipalities must create

their own comprehensive plan instead of following the county’s, which is required to address future development, parks and recreation areas, protection of natural resources, and affordable housing requirements.)

The feasibility study also must list all the current services being provided within the proposed incorporation area, such as water, sewer, solid waste, transportation, public works, law enforcement, fire and rescue, zoning, street lighting, library, etc., along with the cost of each. A five-year operational plan that includes proposed staffing, building ac-

quisition and construction, debt issuance and budgets also must be provided.

The steering committee must settle first on appropriate boundaries that generally meet the state’s density and population requirements and select a name. They may compare incorporation with any possible benefits of choosing annexation instead with the nearest city, in this case, the City of Stuart. Signed petitions are not required, however, a petition usually is circulated among residents at this point to demonstrate general support for either annexation or incorporation.

The final step to incorporate after state legislative approval is to win a voter referendum of the residents living in the proposed city. (Referendums are not required for annexation.) Failures of local referendums usually are attributed to residents’ fear of additional ad valorem taxes levied by a new city; however, in some instances, property taxes are reduced, as happened with the incorporation of Wellington in Palm Beach County in 1995 and Weston in Broward County in 1991, both with median incomes that double or triple the state average, according to a report by Florida Atlantic University Professor Russel M. Lazega.

Their property taxes exceeded what had been received in county services prior to incorporation, so their residents paid lower property taxes. They’ve maintained low millage rates by adopting an efficient city government, but still are able to maintain their top rankings as one of the best places to live in Florida, according to Money magazine.

Weston’s model for city government has been particularly successful, incorporating originally with only three employees, expanding over the past 23 years to 15. They contract all municipal services with private companies, which bid for contracts, and its county government, thus eliminating a human resources department and most entitlements.

OTHER NEW CITIES?

Over the past two years, incorporation has become a common theme in other unincorporated neighborhoods of the county, in addition to Palm City.

“Incorporation supporters have likened the incorporation wave to the Boston Tea Party—a stand against taxation without representation,” said Prof. Lazega in his report, about Florida’s increase in cities over the past two decades. “They are angered by what they view as bloated and unresponsive county government and want greater control over how their taxes are spent.”

Requirements for Incorporation

1. The area must be compact, contiguous (both sides of a river are considered contiguous), and its residents are generally amenable to incorporation.
2. The designated area must have a minimum of 5,000 residents with a minimum population density of at least 1.5 persons per acre.
3. Its nearest point must be at least two miles from the boundary of any existing municipality in
4. the county.
5. The state legislature must approve its proposed charter that describes its boundaries, the form of

government (among at least six different options), and clearly defines the responsibilities for its legislative and executive functions.

6. A feasibility study to demonstrate community support and financial viability also must be submitted with the proposed charter.

These criteria are considered, however, to be general guidelines only. The state legislature can adopt a special-act charter for incorporation that waives some criteria, as in the case of Weeki Wachi, which incorporated with a population of eight residents.

Community activist Art Matson of Indiantown confirmed that some tension exists between county government and Indiantown residents.

"We talked about (incorporation) before the crash (in 2008), when it looked as though we were going to grow," said Art Matson of Indiantown, which has a population of just over 5,000 people and significant tax revenue generators such as FPL and NextEra energy plants, large farms, cattle ranches, the county's largest rock mining operation, and the Florida Gas Transmission storage facilities. The 20-mile natural separation between Indiantown and the nearest municipality, the City of Stuart, adds to what many residents consider the most logical choice for a new city.

"People aren't talking too much about it right now," Matson added with a grin, "but that probably would have been different if Indiantown had not finally gotten the county to approve putting a roof over our rodeo grounds, or if they (county commission) start messing around with the boundaries of our CRA."

Some members of the county commission have indicated over the past two years their intention to reduce the size of most of its CRAs, which receive a portion of the property taxes from rising property values to invest in redevelopment projects within the CRA—or to abolish the program entirely. Soon after, rumors of incorporation began to surface frequently among residents of the af-

ected communities, particularly among residents of Jensen Beach, Rio and Hobe Sound, in addition to Palm City.

Jensen Beach shares a boundary with Ocean Breeze, an already-incorporated municipality, making it ineligible for incorporation; however, Ocean Breeze could annex Jensen Beach, but according to long-time residents, previous efforts to merge could not get beyond disagreements regarding the new name.

Rio, with about 1,000 residents, has struggled to generate funds for redevelopment and is considered too small for incorporation; however, the City of Stuart could annex the area because of the shared boundary with the St. Lucie River, if Rio residents requested it and the city approved it.

In Hobe Sound, the general disgruntlement over CRA issues peaked over the past 12 months with the unexpected permitting of a modular home in Zeus Park that did not meet the long-established, but never codified, architectural design standards of the Hobe Sound CRA.

"But we would never attempt something like that (incorporation) without the blessing of Jupiter Island," said one Hobe Sound resident, recognizing that the area's businesses are dependent primarily on Jupiter Island's and Loblolly's wealthy populations. "If they do not support it, I'm sure we just would not pursue it out of respect for our neighbors." ■

--Barbara Clowdus



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We dare to ask that all Floridians speak with one voice and say, "We value our water because it feeds our economy and sustains life. We commit to finding a way to restore balance, so that all of our needs are met." – Nyla Pipes

When Sewall's Point Commissioner Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch addressed a Water Resources Advisory Committee meeting in West Palm Beach late last year, she pointed to Nyla Pipes, waiting also to address the WRAC members.

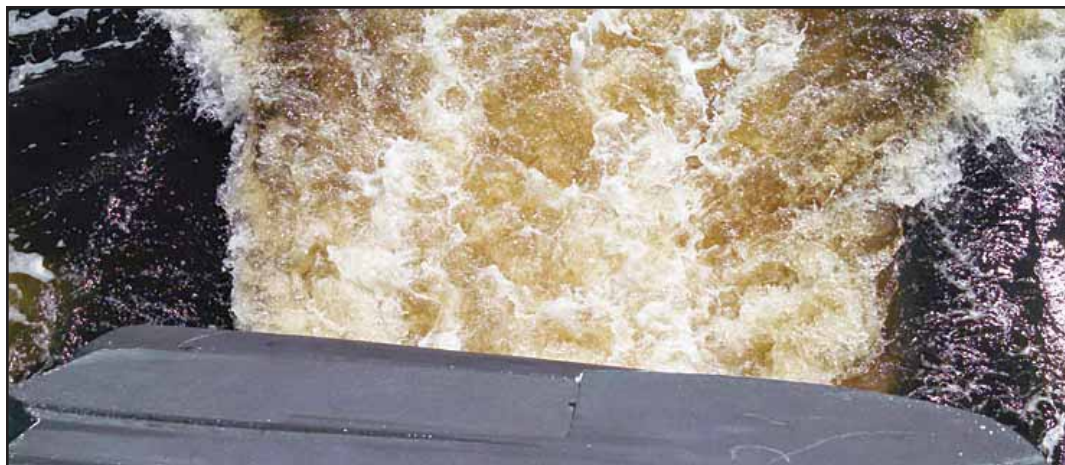
"This is the face of the future," Lippisch said. "Our young people, like Nyla Pipes, are taking up the fight for our rivers."

As it did for many others along the Treasure Coast, the Summer of 2013 brought Pipes directly into the fray among thousands of other residents at protest rallies at the St. Lucie locks, at the beaches, at the bridges—all the way to the halls of power in Washington, D.C.—to express their unabashed indignation regarding the Lake Okeechobee discharges of polluted water into the compromised estuaries of the St. Lucie River and the Indian River Lagoon.

"At every rally, I heard the same thing over and over, about 'the little guys' fighting against 'the big guys,' over the past 40-plus years," she says, "and I thought to myself, gosh, 40 years? What in the world is taking so long?"

She began investigating the delay, which meant getting into her car and driving all over the state, from Tallahassee to Clewiston to Ft. Lauderdale to talk with government agencies, environmental groups, and business and political leaders to find that the issues are complex and multi-layered.

"It also became incredibly apparent to me that everyone's water was in terrible condition," she says, "and that there is a lot of finger-pointing going on, without taking on much personal responsibility. A problem this large,



Even without discharges from Lake Okeechobee this year, the water of the Indian River Lagoon shown in this boat wake turns brown from rainwater runoff and discharges from the C-23, C-24, C-44 and C-25 canals that all empty into the lagoon.



The pollution everyone on the Treasure Coast remembers most vividly came during the summer of 2013 when Lake Okeechobee discharges hit the St. Lucie and Indian River estuaries, turning the water dark brown, sending a plume of pollution into the Atlantic, as far south as the Jupiter Island beaches. Photo: Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch

which crosses county lines from Apalachicola Bay to Florida Bay, affects us all, and it will take all of us working together to fix it."

Along the way, she met and got to know Capt. Don Voss of Ft. Pierce, who frequently was featured in news coverage during last summer's protest rallies as the goggled, "algae-covered" Muck Monster.

"As the Muck Monster, I wasn't even allowed in the WRAC meeting," Voss recalled. "They feared that I'd be too scary for the kids." He chuckled, because, as it turned out, he became the unofficial babysitter that day for all the parents who didn't want to bring their children inside.

"That's okay," he said. "I had a good time, and they'll remember the Muck Monster."

And that's the point. Make an im-

pression so people will remember the message—dirty water is unacceptable, and humans are accountable.

Voss, a severely wounded Vietnam veteran from the brutal TET offensive and an Ohio native, first came to the Florida Keys more than 40 years ago to learn to snorkel, then to dive, in order to restore his strength and mobility. He was smitten by Florida's underwater world as his body was being restored. He returned to Ohio to attend college, followed by graduate school, became a certified dive instructor, a businessman and entrepreneur, returning to Florida often.

After getting his Master Captain's license, he and his wife retired to Ft. Pierce, where he started chartering boats. He also became a fixture in environmental causes, including the found-



Capt. Don Voss addresses the Congressional Hearing organized last fall by Rep. Patrick Murphy in Washington D.C.

ing of the Marine Clean-up Initiative to remove offshore debris, which has expanded to cleaning the river and its tributaries, the Indian River Lagoon and four ocean inlets with the help of nearly 400 dedicated divers. The group now has taken on the daunting task of removing the

invasive lionfish, which recently moved into the Indian River Lagoon and has no natural predators.

Through some long conversations after constantly bumping into each other at various river rallies, Voss and Pipes discovered their philosophies about restoring the state's waters were closely aligned.

"We believe there is a different way to fight for clean water," Pipes says, "one that, ironically, includes less fighting and more working hand in hand."

When Pipes, big in heart but diminutive in size, met a U.S. Sugar official for the first time, she shook his hand, but then didn't let go of it, as she added: "I look forward to working with you to solve our water issues." Then she smiled, a 1000-kilowatt smile.

It's that in-your-face-but-polite presence that gets Pipes into the offices of political and business leaders to hear her pitch for cleaning up the pollution, but also has led to stinging criticism by environmental groups for being willing to work cooperatively.

"But how else do we get to the point where we are all taking responsibility for solutions that work for everyone?" she says. "We must talk to each other. It's not easy. It takes work, but to be successful, we will have to be honest. We will have to build trust. We will have to treat each other with respect."

It was Pipes' all-inclusive, honest approach toward the state's water issues—from springs restoration, to the Lagoon,



One Florida Foundation Directors Nyla Pipes, Steven Edmonds and Capt. Don Voss meet with Florida House Rep. Ray Pilon, far left, from Sarasota, an area plagued by red tide and several cases of vibrio vulnificus (flesh-eating bacteria), which have been identified in west coast waters.



Nyla Pipes meets with the Florida Secretary of Agriculture Adam Putnam to begin a dialogue about water restoration in the state's agricultural areas.

to the Everglades—that first caught the attention of Voss, already an environmental icon and a man well known for his directness—some call it bluntness—that sometimes even causes Pipes to raise her eyebrows in surprise.

"I'll think, 'I can't believe he really said that,' but that's okay," she says, "because honesty is not what hurts your cause. People know that they can rely on what Captain Don tells them. It's the truth and that's what's important."

The third founder of the One Florida Foundation, Steve Edmonds, also an activist at the river rallies and a business consultant, first met Voss when they were members of the planning group for the Sugarland Rally in Clewiston. Shortly thereafter came plans for a group of "river warriors" to attend U.S. congressional hearings, traveling by bus to Washington, D.C. In spite of the myriad fund-raisers being held in St. Lucie and Martin counties at the time, no funds were available to help pay for the trip.

"We had to start all over and raise money again," Pipes says. "We did it, but it was not until the night before the bus left that we raised enough to do it."

When they all returned home from Washington, the three decided that among all the local environmental causes and river groups, few were taking on projects that would directly improve waterways or were addressing the big picture of clean water throughout the state or making an effort to get all parties to the table to talk—the first step in forging effective plans.

"As hard as it is to understand, our differences is what makes our efforts work so well," Voss says of the three activists who decided to create One Florida Foundation Inc., but differences among all the various stakeholders should not impede solutions.

"Let's face it, we all have a negative impact upon our waters," Pipes adds. "Human beings are consumers upon this earth; we use what is here, and in doing so, we both deplete and pollute our resources. What we ask is that every single Floridian become educated and take responsibility for their part, big or small." ■

--Barbara Clowdus



Vivianna Pipes, Nyla's daughter, attended the Phipps Park rally with her mother.



**Capt.
Don Voss**

One Florida

Captain Don Voss, a founder of One Florida Foundation Inc., along with Nyla Pipes and Steven Edmonds, has been an avid conservationist for more than 40 years. He will be a regular contributor to Martin County Currents' special section, "Water Worlds." Advertising on these pages will benefit the foundation.

During the last 14 years, I have led Marine Cleanup Initiative Inc., a group of nearly 600 volunteer divers and boating counterparts, kayaks and paddleboards, to remove more than 435,000 pounds of marine debris from our lagoon. Our organization has received more than 70 proclamations, dozens of letters of support from ex-Presidents to mayors, and countless awards for our service to the community and environment for the 96 miles of the estuary we patrol and clean.

Personally, I have been honored with numerous awards, most recently being named 2014 Jefferson Award winner for Public Service and Volunteering.

I would like to explain the One Florida Foundation philosophy for ending the Lake Okeechobee discharges, represented by the initials, STOZE, which is not a PLAN, an Alternate PLAN, or a concept. Rather, it is a collaboration of ideas/concerns of stakeholders and has been compiled/reported by One Florida Foundation Inc.

WHAT IS STOZE?

S – Store water where storage is available: farm it, clean it, retain it, slow it.

T – Dredge the T-shaped navigation channels of Lake Okeechobee using federal funds and the Army Corps of Engineers.

O – Orlando and the upper basin drainage area needs to hold and use a large portion of their own stormwater.

Z – Restore the oxbows of the Kissimmee River to their original, natural zigzag formations to slow and clean river water.

E – Bring water quality (phosphorus and nitrogen) to a workable PPB (parts per billion) number, select the best route south, and send water to the Everglades.

(A detailed copy of STOZE is available at:
www.facebook.com/groups/176955925833292/files/.)

2014- DID LAKE O DISCHARGES STOP?

In 2014, federal and state agencies tried some new interpretations of the Lake Okeechobee Regulations Schedule (LORS, which dictates Lake levels) to address issues with the discharges from 2013, during which 1.6 million acre feet of water were discharged from Lake O—equivalent to three feet of the Lake's depth.

• 1.6 million acre feet equates to a 36-

inch change in depth in the Lake.

• In 2014, no water was discharged from Lake Okeechobee

• A breakdown of South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) data indicates that 56% of that water in 2013 came from the Orlando and Kissimmee basin, thus—had that water been retained in the Orlando area—it would have decreased the depth of Lake O by 18 inches (800,000 acre feet of water).

• 800,000 AF equates to an 18-inch change in the depth of Lake O.

Lake Okeechobee itself presents a very good place to retain water if the level is not too great. The Lake has two controlling factors: Sufficient water must be retained for agricultural needs AND it must provide 7-foot navigation channels from the Kissimmee, and connecting with the east-west route (from the Caloosahatchee River on the west to the C-44 Canal on the east), also called the T-Channel. Lake O has certainly 3 feet of muck lining the bottom of the Lake.

Dredging Lake Okeechobee's navigation channels would allow more water to be stored at lower Lake levels (thus protecting the integrity of its dike).

Water farming, water retention and water storage north of the Lake would act as a backup when agricultural demands require more water. This would allow a double-check system to cover instances of too much or not enough water.

At the beginning of the 2013 season, the level of Lake O was 13' 9". At the beginning of the 2014 season, the level of Lake O was 13' 0." That 9-inch change of depth translates to a difference of 400,000 acre feet of water.

• 400,000 AF equates to a 9-inch change in the depth of Lake O.

The federal government, through the Army Corps of Engineers, could step in and provide a very cost-effective project by using their turbidity-free suction dredging machine and clear the navigation channels of Lake O so the water could be held at 12' 0" at the beginning of all rainy seasons. Remember:

• 400,000 AF equates to a 9-inch change in the depth of Lake O

The Herbert Hoover Dike falls into concerns of breaching after reaching a depth of 16' 0," when a 1% chance of breaching mandates releases under LORS. If we start the rainy season at a depth of 12 feet, we can keep an additional two million acre feet of water within the Lake.

• 2 Million AF—the difference between 12' 0" to 16' 0" equates to a four-foot change in depth of Lake O.

All of our local municipalities held their own water in 2014; thus the only discharges that made an impact to our estuary were from local canals, as no water was discharged from Lake O.

Without even considering the mitigating effects of additional water farming, retention areas or upper basin areas retaining some greater part of the 800,000 AF released in 2013, we have potentially accounted for a possible 2 Million AF (reduction in water discharges).

Rain can be cruel, however, and fill many basins at the same time, thus it is important for all areas to prepare to handle their own water, barring the 100-year storms. A mid-range goal of 600,000 AF



Capt. Don Voss in costume as that Dirty Water Dude, aka Muck Monster, aka Water Wookiee. He'll answer to all of them. He also appears in Ft. Pierce events as the Tropical Santa Claus and the Oyster Dude, all to spread the word about fixing our damaged waterways.

retained in the upper basin would result in a 13.5" change in the Lake.

• 600,000 AF equates to a 13.5 inch change in the depth of Lake O

CLEANING THE WATER

The Everglades Coalition obviously agrees with our STOZE Report in regards to cleaning the water from the source and along the Kissimmee. They have been provided with a \$10,000,000 gift from an anonymous donor in order to offer a cash prize to whomever can reduce the phosphorus levels of water entering Lake O's north end from the Kissimmee River to 100 PPB. Most estimates are that the phosphorus in the Kissimmee range as high as 400 PPB.

One Florida Foundation calculates that water entering Lake O at 100 PPB can be reduced to 50 PPB by the time it reaches the Herbert Hoover Dike, and that a spillway of 5000 AF per day, sent through the 55,000 acres of land to be purchased as a flow way, could potentially be reduced to 10PPB by the time it reached Rt. 41.

• 5,000 AF x 176 days = 880,000 AF equates to 18+ inch change in depth of Lake O.

• If we reduce the volume of water going into Lake O to eliminate discharges;

• If we clean the water from the source and as it goes;

• Then we can send clean water south to the Everglades.

Did we eliminate the discharges? Government agencies worked together to test elements of STOZE, or similar ideas, and found there is indeed "wiggle room" in LORS. The key issues—the volume of water and water quality—are vital considerations to getting water moving south and ending the discharges. ■

Gearing up for Hobe Sound Christmas parade

One of the most exciting hometown events of the holiday season, the 29th Annual Hobe Sound Chamber Christmas Parade on Saturday, Dec. 6, will take a sentimental turn this year with long-time executive director of the Hobe Sound Early Childhood Learning Center, Mary King, taking the lead as parade marshal.

"So many people in Hobe Sound know Mary," said Lillian Johnson, the Chamber volunteer who has coordinated the parade for more than 20 years. "A lot of our kids have gone through that school. She's so well loved and respected that it just seemed to be a natural."

King has been executive director of the center since 1993. Educated in Ohio, she left a career in banking to come to what was then a day care center.

"Hobe Sound Early Learning Center gets in your blood," she says of her long tenure. "Our reward is the heartfelt gratitude the parents express as they see how well prepared their children are, and how the children shine as they enter school after their experience with us." Lots of cheers will be waiting for her from former and current students and parents on parade day.

The parade, which will travel north on Dixie Highway to Bridge Road be-

fore turning west to pass before the judges stand, begins at 1 p.m. Johnson will again be stationed in the judge's stand to ensure the announcer knows the names of those marching in front.

"I would never want to be a judge," she says. "There just are so many really wonderful floats, I'd just never be able to choose the best one."

The Presenting Sponsor this year is again Treasure Coast Irrigation/Rood Landscape. Jupiter Medical Center is a Supporting Sponsor. Other sponsors include Bridge Boat & RV Storage and Hobe Sound Soccer Club, all of which help cover the expenses associated with being a host to parade participants.

Johnson warns people not to call the Chamber office now to see if they can march in the parade. All the slots have been filled for weeks....over-filled, actually. She wound up taking 75 entries, she said, with a goal of only 60.

"It's hard to tell people no," she adds, "but I only agreed to add those who are really dedicated to Hobe Sound, who volunteer all year to help the Chamber. How could I turn them down?"

Hobe Sound Art Stroll

An expanded Art Stroll is an unexpected highlight for visitors and locals alike, who come early to find a place to park their chairs along Dixie Highway to watch the parade, then spend a couple of hours browsing the shops and the tents of arts and crafts vendors along the Dixie Highway service road.



Mary King,
Parade Marshal



Santa Claus always is a parade highlight, and this year is no exception; however, rumor is that he's much skinnier this year. Maybe he had to jog from the North Pole.

This year, an added feature are the new shops on Mars Avenue that will be open to visitors for the duration of the parade and after for those much-treasured holi-

day gifts. The Art Stroll will be open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

For more information about the parade, call 772.546.4724. ■

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Going, going, gone...but is it gone for good?

The most hopeful solution to keeping an unwanted modular home from returning to the Zeus Park neighborhood of Hobe Sound is for the county to purchase the property from Stewart and Jane Greenberg of Palm City with funds currently earmarked for Hobe Sound Community Redevelopment projects, according to County Attorney Michael Durham.

That is, if the most recent court ruling in Greenbergs' favor is not reversed by a higher court.

"We're trying to negotiate the possibility of securing this piece of property for the CRA," Durham told the Board of County Commissioners during its Oct. 28 meeting, assuring them that "there is some conversation in the community" to support that direction, as well as having sufficient funds available in the Hobe Sound CRA.

The idea of purchasing the Greenbergs' property has not yet been presented to the Hobe Sound CRA, according to Angela Hoffman, president of Hobe Sound's Neighborhood Advisory Committee.

"I'm not surprised that that is the direction that the county's going in," Hoffman said, "and I'm sure that when they're closer to putting together some kind of proposal, they will be presenting it to the NAC."

Durham was seeking the county commission's approval of expending \$5,000 to cover the cost of filing the writ of certiorari, in addition to an estimated \$15,000 in staff time. No new evidence will be presented, he added, but will allow only a review of the lower court's decision (which reversed the county's code enforcement action against the homeowners) by the appellate court.

The commission approved the expenditure, primarily to allow the county attorney time to negotiate a possible purchase of the property. The writ was filed with the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals in mid-November.

"I want to caution you, if that's the trail we're going to go down, we need to be honest with those folks in Hobe Sound," said Commissioner Doug Smith, reminding the attorney that a similar situation arose in Rio about two years ago in which the county commission ap-



As soon as this modular home arrived in Hobe Sound's Zeus Park in October 2013, the neighbors wanted it gone.

proved the Rio CRA's purchase of property that was later withdrawn by the commission.

The contested modular home, built to hurricane standards and protected under federal Fair Housing regulations against discriminatory actions, was rolled into Zeus Park, an historic community of site-built homes, in October 2013 and erected on dry-stacked concrete blocks. The county's Building Department had approved the engineered design as a legal alternative to a permanent foundation and issued a permit earlier in the month.

Neighbors immediately lodged complaints with the county that the home did not meet CRA design guidelines that other Zeus Park homes had been required to meet prior to receiving building permits. They also were particularly incensed at the Building Department's interpretation of a permanent foundation. Following a community meeting, they formed the Olympia Plat Legal Defense Fund, retained attorney Virginia Sherlock, and challenged the issuance of the permit, which stopped the home's installation.

Growth Management Director Nicki van Vonno determined in November 2013 that the county Building Department's permit was invalid, that the dry-stacked concrete block foundation did not meet the county's code as a permanent foundation—thus the building did not meet the definition of a modular home—and ordered the home to be removed within 30 days.

The Greenbergs challenged the county's code enforcement action, which was heard by Code Enforcement Special



On July 30 of this summer, the house was detached from the straps anchoring it to the ground, and it was pulled away.

Magistrate Paul Nicoletti in January 2014. He upheld van Vonno's interpretation of the county's building code, which would allow only stem-wall or monolithic concrete slab foundations, and invalidating the building permit. The Greenbergs filed an appeal in circuit court in March.

In the meantime, code enforcement fines were accumulating, and on July 30, the home was removed from the property as unceremoniously as it had arrived.

"They pretty much had to move it, I guess, to protect their investment," said one neighbor, who took photos of the significant event, "but who knows whether or not it will be back?"

The three-judge Circuit Court panel overruled the special magistrate, 3-0, on Oct. 15, criticizing van Vonno's newly written definition of a permanent foun-



Some Hobe Sound residents now are hopeful that the county will purchase the empty lot, owned by Stewart and Jane Greenberg of Palm City.

dation that was applied after the fact and without the input of a professional engineer, as well as her authority to interpret the building code.

Durham reported to the commission that the Greenbergs' building permit has since expired, that the moratorium the county issued on modular home installations last year was still in effect, and that the county's Community Development Department's initiative to develop a form-based code for the Zeus Park neighborhood was well underway, all in addition to the possibility that the lower court's ruling could possibly be overturned.

"We don't know what will develop..." Durham said, "but it may be valuable to slow the Greenbergs down from moving forward until we get this resolved." ■

--Barbara Cloudus

Going to the dogs with first Zeus BARK Dog Show

We seldom consider the need to care for the pets of those who are seriously ill, until we're confronted with it first hand. The hospice care of her late husband, Ed Briley, brought the reality of that special bond many people have with their dog to the attention of Suzanne Briley.

"I'd not really thought about it before Ed entered hospice," Briley says, "and I started

thinking about other people who can no longer take care of their pets. What a heart-break to no longer be able to care for them yourself; how heart-wrenching to not be able to see them, or not to know what's going to happen to them after you're gone."

When Briley learned about the pet program at Treasure Coast Hospice, Pet Peace of Mind,

Piper MacArthur and Truffles



Under a bright sun, the judges patiently watched and judged 10 categories of entries. Harry MacArthur made astute observations that went to the dogs.



Bobbi Kaufman, of Hobe Sound, brought her assortment of "Aussies," all rescue dogs.



Diane Naylor, owner of Cottage Cache in Tequesta, with her best friend.

and their partnership with the Treasure Coast Humane Society that helps keep patients and their pets together by training and sending volunteers to care for the pet, she became determined to help.

"I thought to myself, I need to have a fundraiser for this wonderful program," she says. "Why not a dog show in Zeus Park, but we'll call it the Zeus BARK Dog Show!"

It was a perfect fit, because Briley had been thinking about hosting a com-



Rev. Marta Burke, First United Methodist Church, blessed each dog, but could not resist hugging Oscar, belonging to Alison Ledbetter.



Vendors provided an opportunity to browse as dog owners waited for their turn in the "ring."

trees would provide shade, but the organizers settled on J.V. Park instead, a large park with open sports fields and rest rooms. Then she discovered more obstacles still lay ahead.

"I had no idea how difficult it was to get through the county permitting

munity dog show anyway, and the needs of the Pet Peace of Mind program gave her the inspiration to organize the event. Her enthusiasm spilled into her first contacts with Treasure Coast Hospice, her friends and neighbors in Zeus Park, and members of the Treasure Coast Humane Society, who gathered around her dining room table in Hobe Sound last May. She aimed for a date in late April. The dog show did not become reality until mid-November.

"I found out right away that it was harder to arrange than I had thought," she said. "I found out first that nothing could be held in Zeus Park because of the deed restrictions put on the land by the owners when it was donated to the county. I don't think we're even allowed to use it, legally, to line up for our parades."

Briley was disappointed because the park is close to her home, and its old oak

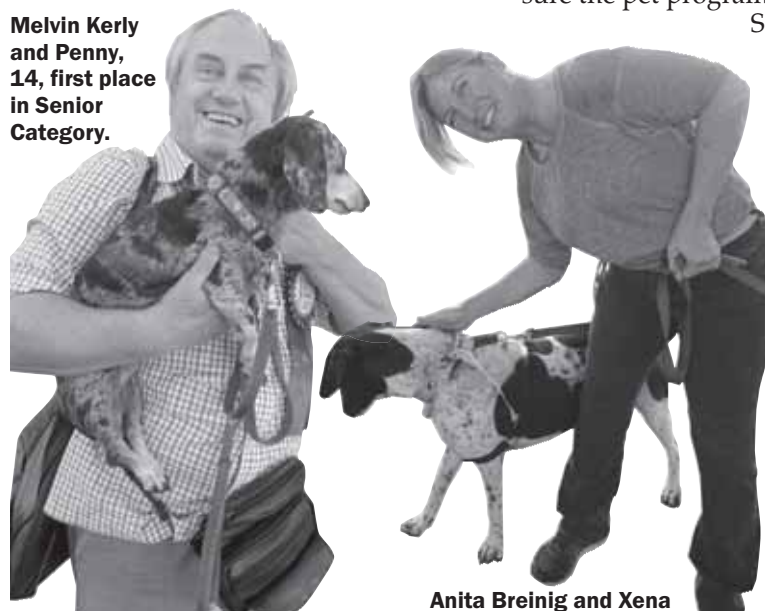
process," she says, "and I even had to buy a million-dollar insurance policy myself. You'd think that a public event on a public park would be covered under the county's liability insurance, but apparently it's not. Such a shame, since events like this are so important to building a sense of community. We need more of them, not fewer, which is what happens because of the cost to non-profits to get permits and insurance."

Briley succeeded in getting the event organized, along with the dedicated help of Terry Clarke, of Treasure Coast Hospice, and Jeanne Pierce, of Hobe Sound, to bring together around 250 people and their dogs on a perfect afternoon in Hobe Sound, along with half a dozen vendors, four volunteer judges (Dan Mackin, Sally Schwartz, Jim Stewart, Sara Blydenstein) with the inimitable Harry MacArthur emceeding the event, and to raise some money to ensure the pet program and the Humane

Society's pet therapy program continue to grow. The dog show was dedicated to the memory of Ed Briley.

"We brought the community together, we raised a little money," she said, "and we had great fun doing it! People are already talking about doing it again next year." ■

--Barbara Clowdus



Anita Breinig and Xena

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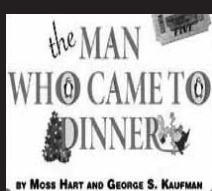
Due to icy conditions, an interstate bus is forced to stop for the night in a small Kansas town. One by one, the bus passengers are introduced. Bo Decker is a young ranch owner from Montana who has just fallen head-over-heels for a nightclub singer named Cherie. He has whisked her onto a bus with the assumption that the young lady will marry him. Cherie is not exactly cooperating. At the bus stop, she informs the local sheriff, Will Masters, that she is being held against her will. What unfolds during the course of the evening is Bo's macho attempt at luring her into marriage, followed by a humbling fistfight with the sheriff.

MARCH 6-22



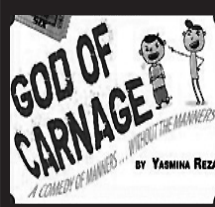
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Weekend, Dec. 4-7 Singing Christmas Tree

Hobe Sound Ministries will present the 18th annual Singing Christmas Tree featuring 75 singers in a lighted Christmas tree of thousands of lights, a 25-piece orchestra, a children's choir and a drama cast of 50 on Thursday through Sunday, Dec. 4-7, at 7 p.m. each evening. In addition to live instrumentation and singing, the production includes flying angels, kings and shepherds, holy family, and the message and lights of the season. Admission is free, a free-will offering will be taken. Hobe Sound Ministries is at 11295 Gomez Ave at Hobe Sound Bible College. Call 772-546-5696 or visit www.hobesoundsingingtree.com.

Weekend, Dec. 5-7 Stuart Parade & VNA Winter Wonderland



Festivities get underway at 7 p.m. with the annual Stuart Christmas Parade with the theme, "Rockin' in a Winter Won-

derland," which will culminate near the entrance to Memorial Park. The Visiting Nurse Association of Florida is sponsoring the parade and its inaugural Winter Wonderland 2014 at Memorial Park mixing the magic of Christmastime in Central Park, the homespun traditions of a small-town yuletide and the cheer of a spirited holiday party. In addition to food, wine and beer, visitors will see holiday lighting displays throughout the park; live holiday music by Fresh Catch and local high school choirs and choral groups; and attractions such as Snowzilla Jr. Slide, an inflatable slide three stories high; an inflatable Snow Globe Bounce House that claims to be the "world's largest"; and a Santa's Workshop and Gingerbread House Building construction clinic, as well as a Live Nativity scene. Entry is free, and for \$10, attendees enjoy unlimited access to attractions.

Friday, Dec. 5

Treasure Coast Questers on Ballet History

The history of ballet in the United States with emphasis on the Nutcracker Ballet will be presented by Marsha Ismailoff Mark, dancer, teacher and choreographer, and will feature guest artist, Charlotte Ray Hamer, former dancer with the New York City Ballet, on Friday, Dec. 5. The Treasure Coast Questers, a chapter in the non-profit international Questers organization, researches and studies antiques, raising funds to help preserve and restore historic buildings and landmarks on the Treasure Coast. For more information, call 772-545-2888.



Saturday, Dec. 6 Indiantown Christmas Parade & Tree Lighting

If the charm of country living appeals more to your senses than glitz and glimmer, be sure to come watch the Indiantown Christmas Parade on Saturday, Dec. 6, beginning at 5:30 p.m. at Big Mound Park, adjacent to the Family Worship Center on Citrus Blvd. Swamp buggies decked out in holiday trimmings, floats with a focus on animals, and what seems like a hundred golf carts, each imaginatively decorated—often with a decided touch of humor, too—will travel down Osceola Drive to the Post Family Park, adjacent to the Elisabeth Lahti Library for the tree lighting ceremony and performances by local children's choirs. It's the friendliest, most-welcoming crowd in Martin County, and always chocked full of children!

Saturday, Dec. 6 Hobe Sound Christmas Stroll & Parade

Come to Hobe Sound early on Saturday, Dec. 6, for the largest-ever Hobe Sound Christmas Stroll, which opens at 10 a.m. and stays open during the Christmas parade until 3 p.m. The downtown's historic shops on Dixie Highway have new shopkeepers who will open their doors, and along the sidewalks will be dozens of arts and crafts vendors. Then stay for one of the best, hometown Christmas parades on the Treasure Coast, which starts at 1 p.m. For more information about the Stroll, call 772-545-3411 or email susan-janes@bellsouth.net. For info about the parade, call the Hobe Sound Chamber of Commerce at 772.546.4762.

Saturday, Dec. 6 Stuart Christmas Boat Parade



The Marine Industries Association of the Treasure Coast's seasonal gift to the community, a Christmas Boat Parade will be Saturday, Dec. 6, beginning at 6 p.m., along with a festival in Sandsprit Park that opens at 5 p.m. Viewing stations include Flagler Park and City Docks (also the staging area), Martin Memorial Hospital, Sandsprit Park and Manatee Pocket. For more info, call 772.692.7599.



Sunday, Dec. 7 Latke Fest

Martin County's first-ever Latke Fest will be Sunday, Dec. 7, from noon to 2 p.m. at the Temple Beit HaYam in Stuart. "Latkes are an important part of the Hanukkah celebration, but you don't have to be Jewish to love latkes," said Rabbi Matthew Durbin. "All are welcome to join us for this fun, family-friendly celebration." The event will be at Temple Beit HaYam's Lester Family Social Hall at 951 SE Monterey Commons Blvd. Latke Fest celebrates the potato pancake traditionally prepared during Hanukkah. In addition to latkes, festivities include music, refreshments, gelt, dreidel games, and a Hanukkah bazaar. The cost is \$18 per person or \$40 per family. For more information or to register, visit www.tbhfl.org or contact Joni Winnick at 772-286-1531.

continued on PAGE 18

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Sunday, Dec. 7 Live Nativity Scene

The real story of Christmas is brought to life with a live nativity scene at the First Presbyterian Church of Tequesta, 482 Tequesta Drive, at 7 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 7. For info, call 561-746-5161, or go to www.tequestapres.org.

Sunday, Dec. 7 Holiday Home Tour

The Woman's Club of Stuart presents its 6th Holiday Home Tour on Sunday, Dec. 7, beginning at noon until 5 p.m. Six homes in Stuart beautifully decorated for the holidays will be toured, with a reception following the tour at the Woman's Club of Stuart, 729 East Ocean Blvd. Tickets are \$35-\$60. For more info, call 772-288-3227, or go to www.womansclubofstuart.com.



Weekend, Dec. 5-7 Treasure Coast Community Singers

The weather outside may not be frightful, but all will be delightful at the Treasure Coast Community Singers annual holiday concert, "Christmas is the Best Time of the Year." The performances will be Friday, Dec. 5, at 7pm, and Saturday, Dec. 6, and Sunday, Dec. 7, at 3pm both days at the North Stuart Baptist Church, 1950 NW Federal Highway in Stuart. The TCCS Youth Chorus will perform three holiday tunes, and the adult chorus will include two songs from the film "White Christmas." Tickets are \$10-\$15. Call 772-224-8807, or go to www.tccsingers.com.



Weekend, Dec. 5-6 The Nutcracker at the Lyric

The season would not be complete without a performance of "The Nutcracker Suite" by the Florida Arts & Dance Company taking the stage at 2 p.m. Friday, Dec. 5, and Saturday, Dec. 6, at the Lyric Theatre, 59 S.W. Flagler Ave. in downtown Stuart. Tickets range from \$18-25. Call 772-288-4150 or go to www.fladance.org.

Monday, Dec. 8 Jazz in the Sanctuary - Christmas Concert

The Jim van Voorheis Trio, featuring Mia Batalini & Mark Green, will present a Jazz Christmas Concert in the sanctuary of St. Mary's Episcopal Church on Monday, Dec. 8, at 7 p.m. The church is at 623 S. East Ocean Blvd. in Stuart. Donations only. For more info, call 772-287-3244.

Friday, Saturday Dec. 5-6 Mistletoe Madness at the Fish House Art Center in Port Salerno



Bring your unwrapped, new toys for donation to Toys for Tots at the Fish House Art Center, home to Art Gumbo Gallery, working artist studios, and the Grove Dock Bar, which will host "Mistletoe Madness" on Friday, Dec. 5, from 5-9pm and Saturday, Dec. 6, from noon to 8pm. The celebration will feature holiday specials on both days and South Fork High School carolers on Saturday at 6pm, as well as drawings for prizes from each studio. New this year is an art wreath auction to benefit SafeSpace of Martin County, and anyone may donate a wreath of non-traditional or unique materials for the auction. (Drop them off Nov. 28 or Nov. 29 at the Fish House.) Come hear live music and watch the Christmas boat parade Saturday night from the Grove Dock Bar. The Fish House is on the Manatee pocket at 4745 SE DeSoto Ave. in Port Salerno. For wreath guidelines, call 732.804.4715.

Sunday, Dec. 7 Kane Cabaret: Jazz Interpretations

The Kane Cabaret, the popular Sunday afternoon concert series will present jazz interpretations from "The Great American Songbook" by the Robert Prester Jazz Trio on Sunday, Dec. 7, at 2 p.m. in the Frances Langford Theatre and Auditorium at the Kane Center, 900 Salerno Road. Doors open at 1 p.m. Get tickets by calling 772-223-7807, or online at www.kanecenter.org. Individual ticket prices are \$15 for Kane members and \$20 for non-members.

Tuesday, Dec. 9 Santa Paws Holiday Pooch Plunge

Now that the water is too cold for humans, before the pools are drained and disinfected for the winter, Sailfish Splash Waterpark will host its first-ever Santa Paws Holiday Pooch Plunge for your furry best friend on Tuesday, Dec. 9. Registration begins at 10:30 a.m.



Dogs will get a chance to wade, slosh and frolic in the park's interactive splash playground. The event will benefit the Humane Society of the Treasure Coast and the House of

Hope. Admission is a \$10 donation to the Treasure Coast Humane Society or a new unwrapped gift for a local child. You'll need proof of your dog's current rabies vaccination as well. All dogs of all sizes are welcome (but no cats!) for sessions at 11 a.m., 12 p.m., 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. Dog photo shoot with Santa, food trucks, face painting, a 50/50 raffle, music are included. For more information, call 772-219-1800, Ext. 282.

Weekend, Dec. 11-14 StarStruck presents Hello Dolly!

The exciting Broadway musical, Hello Dolly! has arrived at StarStruck Theatre. A winner of 10 Tony Awards, Hello Dolly has become one of America's most-enduring musical theater hits, enjoying three Broadway revivals and international success and a 1969 film that was nominated for seven Academy Awards. For more info, go to www.starstruckfl.com.



Weekend, Dec. 12-14 Live Nativity at Redeemer Lutheran

Take a journey to Bethlehem with a live nativity at the Redeemer Lutheran Church and School at 2450 SE Ocean Blvd., in Stuart, from 6-8 p.m. on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, Dec 12, 13, 14. For more information, call 772-286-0911.

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Saturday, Dec. 13 Rio Indoor Flea 'n Green Market and Bake Sale

Flea market aficionados don't want to miss this huge indoor flea market, green market and bake sale at the Rio Civic Center on Saturday, Dec. 13, from 8 a.m. to noon. You can have breakfast or lunch while you're shopping, too. Sell your stuff by taking a table for only \$12. Proceeds fund student scholarships and community projects. For more info, call 772.692.1163.

Saturday, Dec. 13 Stuart Concert Band at the Blake

A great way to enjoy the holidays without spending a dime! The Stuart Community Concert Band will perform two concerts of holiday favorites on Saturday, Dec. 13, the first at 11 a.m., the second at 2 p.m. in the John F. Armstrong Wing of Blake Library, 2351 S.E. Monterey Road, Stuart. Concerts are free. Go to stuartcommunityconcertband.org.

Weekend, Dec 12-13 Drive-Through Nativity Story

Grand Miracle Presentation: Drive-through Nativity Story at the New Hope Fellowship Church, 3900 SW Citrus Blvd. in Palm City, also includes a walk-through Galilean village, authentic food, petting farm, handcrafted items, demonstrations and interactive activities. The nativity will be open from 6:30-8:30 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 12-13. Free admission. 772-283-8343.

Dec. 16 Christmas Lessons & Carols

The St. Luke's Episcopal Church invites the community to its annual, traditional service of Lessons and Carols on Tuesday, Dec. 16, at 5 p.m. featuring



the St. Luke's Choir, Hand Bell Choir, soloists and instrumentalists from the community singing and playing carols

from around the world. A reception will follow at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 5150 SE Railway Ave., Stuart, corner of Cove and A1A. For more information, call 772-286-5455.

Tuesday, Dec. 16 MCHS OPUS 2015 & Concert Choir Holiday Concert in Stuart

The much-anticipated Opus 2015 & Concert Choir Holiday performance will be Tuesday, Dec. 16, at 7 p.m. at the Martin County High School's Wanda H. Yarboro Performing Arts Center at 2801 S. Kanner Highway in Stuart. Tickets are \$15. Call 772-248-2139, or email: soldbytina14@gmail.com.

Thursday, Dec. 18 Oyster Reef Ecology Lab at the River Center



Take a break from holiday festivities to attend the Loxahatchee River Center's Oyster Reef Ecology Lab. The program includes habitat assessment using samples taken directly from the Loxahatchee River. This is a first-hand look at food web connections in relation to the Loxahatchee River estuary on Thursday, Dec. 18, from 2-3:30 p.m. The cost is \$5. All adults are welcome. Space is limited and reservations

are required by contacting the River Center at 561.743.7123 or education@loxahatcheeriver.org.

Sunday, Dec. 28 Christmas Bird Count

A deeply satisfying event, coordinated by the Hobe Sound Nature Center, is to participate in the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, Dec. 28, beginning at 6 a.m. All levels of birders are needed to survey areas from Juno Beach to Hobe Sound. Any amount of time is appreciated. For more information, contact email: hobesoundnaturecenter@gmail.com, or go to hobesoundnaturecenter.com.

Saturday, Jan. 24, 2015 9th Annual Port Salerno Seafood Festival

Mark your calendars now for the most popular seafood festival on the Treasure Coast, where many Port Salerno fishermen will cook their own catch. The proceeds from the Port Salerno Commercial Fishing Dock Authority event benefits numerous local charities, and includes music, food booths, arts and craft vendors, and two stages set up at opposite ends of the festival, one at Pirate's Loft and the other at the Twisted Tuna parking lots. One day only, Saturday, Jan. 24, from 10 am to 8 pm.

Weekend, Jan 9-11, 2015 41st Annual Stuart Boat Show

The show runs January 9, 10 and 11 and is located along the scenic St. Lucie River and SR 707/Old Dixie Highway at the foot of the Roosevelt Bridge. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. In addition to a mind-boggling display of the latest in boats, equipment and trends, the Marine Industries Association is offering free clinics to those with paid admission, including: Bahamas Bound: Destination Abacos—Captains Chris and Alyse Caldwell discuss everything from supplies to available forms of communications, and customs and immigration issues to get there and back. United States Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 59 "Suddenly in Command" course to address emergencies when the captain of your boat suddenly becomes incapacitated. The Great Loop provides information about the 7,000-mile, year-long journey to cruise the waterways of eastern North America. Two seminars a day for kids and their parents, Hook the Future Kid's Fishing Clinic will be offered on Saturday and Sunday during the boat show. Cruising the Florida Keys will help you plot your course for these far away islands that are really just next door. All About Anchors will eliminate anchor horror stories. General boat show admission is \$12 for adults, \$10 for seniors and veterans, and \$5 for children under 12 years old. Free parking with water taxi and shuttle service is available throughout the downtown area. The Stuart Boat Show is owned by the Marine Industries Association of the Treasure Coast and is produced and managed by AllSports Productions, Inc. To exhibit, or for more information, call 954-522-5515 or visit: www.allsportsproductions.net.



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NIKI NORTON,
President

Magic lights up the Art Cottages of Jensen Beach

If you ask me what makes the Art Cottages of Jensen Beach unique, I would say ... their genial flow of camaraderie and positive energy among artists that spawns an irresistible ambiance, or what Alexander Pope called "the genius of the place."

In Jensen Beach's historic downtown on Jensen Beach Boulevard, turning and strolling down Maple Avenue toward the Art Cottages, feels like you've suddenly entered a fairyland with charmingly landscaped, candy-like studios and galleries, where even the doors appear to smile.

And the first cheerful door that amiably lures me in belongs to noted watercolorist Barbara Lapham. In her little studio, visitors can fully appreciate the magic of her watercolors as they peruse a wide selection of paintings, infused with a floating light that penetrates everything she paints: landscapes, people and birds.

"Watercolor is my only medium," Lapham says, as she tosses me a radiant smile. "I love its ethereal texture."

She spent almost 10 years in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, she says, where she sold hundreds of paintings of local people and scenes; however, in Florida, where she moved from San Diego a few years ago, she paints Florida birds. The dazzling images of snowy egrets, ibis, pelicans, herons and other feathered friends are depicted against lavishly sculpted foliage, intertwining the artist's exquisite technique with fluid and poignant lyricism.

As it's time to leave, she ushers me to the "Backstreet Gallery" of her colleague, fused-glass artist Lisa vom Orde, whose elaborate fantasies can be best described as "frozen music," which is Goethe's famous metaphor for architecture. In perfect sync with Florida's natural color scheme and atmosphere, her compositions could embellish any interior or exterior design, being a work of high art in itself; however, the Jensen Beach Art Colony is not just about featuring visual arts, but largely about cultivating the synergy among the artists and gallery owners.

Local Way Art Gallery, owned by Paige Lyons, implements this fresh holistic paradigm with a deeply caring stance, says Ellen Lyons, curator of the gallery. "All you see here is a pure effort of love," she points out. "Love for art and artists who need exposure, as they don't own their own studios."



Maya Ellenson
Art Kaleidoscope



Backstreet Gallery artist Lisa vom Orde's fused glass artistry produces one of a kind vases and sinks.



"White Rabbit" by Jason Mathias.



Valerie Johnson's intricately beaded necklace and earrings.

On its walls, Dustin Pappa's vibrant "Sunset" and "Turtle Tummy" shine next to Jill Stuart's Surf Art, and the marine painting, "White Marlin," by noted Florida artist Jason Mathias, whose innovative and virtuoso marine art has already become appreciated internationally.

Mathias creates underwater scenarios of epic proportions, recreating three-dimensional images of deep water fish on the canvas. He realistically conveys the fluid motion of water with its shimmering light and an atmospheric perspective with all its tonalities and changing moods.

"Only in recent times have we been able to go beneath the surface due to advancing technology," he has written.



Watercolorist Barbara Lapham at work in her Jensen Beach Art Cottage.



Wood block of the Indian River by Bonney Clewes Schermerhorn. Photos: Maya Ellenson



"Conversation," a watercolor by Barbara Lapham.



Local Way Art Gallery displays the works of a variety of artists.

"Therefore, underwater paintings have only been around for the past 80 years or so. This is why we don't see any underwater paintings from any of the past great master painters." But we certainly see them now, emerging from both the Atlantic Ocean and from Jason Mathias' staggering art. The Local Way Gallery also features Valerie Johnson's one-of-a-kind beaded jewelry, Wally Newton's photography, Janet Merritt's silver jewelry and a host of other interesting works. To support the community arts, the gallery will host a "Holiday Shopping and Light" event Dec. 13 to sell handmade gifts for the holiday season, offering a balanced confluence among business, art and the public, otherwise the whole model may easily crumble.

Already threatened is the Marsh Rabbit Gallery, founded in 2004 as a venue for local artists, which now faces a gloomy future. Bonney Clewes Schermerhorn, its founder and a talented artist, recognized for her stunning wood block prints, shared her pessimistic vi-

sion of the Marsh Rabbit's future.

"If we have to close, it will be devastating for all the artists who've been featured here," she said, with a decided note of sadness in her voice. "No gallery can make it if people don't care about the art because ... it's always a two-way street."

In spite of the cornucopia of genres and media, a predominant leitmotif flows like an artery through the Art Cottages of Jensen Beach—a reverence for Florida's natural beauty. These talented artists breath new life into the environmental consciousness we need for living mindfully on the land we inhabit.

In tribute to "the genius of the place" that shapes the Art Cottage's fascinating aura, I return to Barbara Lapham's studio and purchase a beautiful giclée, the Blue Heron, immersed in a lush and mysterious marsh. I am not sure whether Florida's birds can fly overseas to Moscow, but this print is positively up to such a long journey. My Russian friend, Margo, will absolutely love it. ■

Russian-American Maya Ellenson, who holds M.A. and PhD degrees in Russian language and literature from Moscow State University, has lived in Martin County for eight years. A free-lance writer, she has a particular interest in world culture and art.

Stalking new prey in the low-calorie kitchen

I am a hunter. I stalk my prey with a relentless perseverance. I know the paths; I read the "signs" and look for the tell-tale markings. I hunt good, tasty, low-calorie, nutritious foods that will fill me up without filling me out. More important, I am hunting for foods that won't disappoint me.

I have a private joke when shopping. I see labels that say "no fat," "no calories," "no sugar," no this and no that. I laugh and think of that Mick Jagger tune, "I Can't Get No Satisfaction." I know most of these so-called "diet foods" have little to recommend.

In my hunt I search for robust flavor, richness of texture and depth of taste. In short: I AM HUNTING GOOD FOOD. What I have learned is that the best way to find what I am hunting for is to create it myself, which is much easier than even I thought it would be.

As you would (or should) before any hunt, you need to make sure you have the right equipment. My research tells me that you need not spend money on a lot of "new" or specialized stuff. Start with a good, heavy nonstick skillet (like the one you almost surely have), heavy enough to be free of hot spots and with a heat-proof handle. It should also be oven proof, so a recipe can start on the stove top and finish in a hot oven or under a broiler.

A few good sharp knives (good being the operative word). Throw away the junky ones. They'll only betray you and leave you hurt. (I guess knives are like lovers in that respect.) You don't need expensive knives, just sturdy ones that can be sharpened easily. A large "chef's knife," a sharp filet knife, a good short paring knife, and a serrated bread knife will fill out your knife drawer.

You need a kitchen scale; a reliable scale is a dieter's best friend, especially as you try to teach yourself about portion control. It will help you measure your ingredients as you follow, develop and personalize recipes. A wire whisk or two will help whip up some excellent dressings, sauces and desserts.

Do you have a food processor? You should. It doesn't have to be one of those big cumbersome ones, though they can be pretty cool. I use a one-cup model more often than my big, full-quart work horse. Round out your arsenal with at least two thermometers—one instant-read digital and one analog dial number.

Then you need to know where to look for ingredients, what kind to look for and what to do with them when you get them. Some of the basics include a good balsamic vinegar, extra virgin olive oil, some flavorful fruit juices (not juice cocktails) or extracts.

A good staple for a "fat free pantry" is evaporated skim milk. This can be used in place of heavy cream to add richness to gravies and sauces. It will enrich desserts and can be whipped like cream. (Yes, it can!)

A selection of fresh herbs and spices is a powerful weapon to "flavorize" any



Chicken Kiev in the skillet, breaded with panko crumbs.



George Kleine

The Right Bite

recipe. Get rid of your old spices (not the aftershave stuff) they do more harm to flavor than good.

Here is a revised recipe for a delicious, low-fat, low-calorie, high-flavor dinner entrée:

Instead of frying chicken in a heavy battered coat, the boneless-skinless chicken is lightly coated with EGG WHITES (fresh or packaged egg product), then breaded with bread crumbs. Starting it on the stove top boosts the texture and increases the "fried" taste. Finishing in the oven reduces the oil needed. This method and the recipe's fat reduction allows for the addition of some cheese to boost the flavor factor.

"NOT YOUR MOM'S CHICKEN KIEV"

Pre-Heat oven to 400 degrees
4 Boneless, Skinless Chicken Breasts
4 Slices Muenster or Monterrey Jack Cheese
½ Cup Panko Bread Crumbs (Japanese-style bread crumbs)
1 tsp. Poultry Seasoning (like Bell's)
2Tbs. Grated Parmesan/Romano Cheese
3Tbs. Finely Chopped FRESH Parsley
Salt and Pepper to taste (1/2 tsp each is a good start)
2 Large egg Whites or Egg Product (like Egg Beaters)
One-half Tlbs. Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Make a slit in each chicken breast, nearly through to the opposite side, open the breast and lay it flat on the cutting board. Place 1 cheese slice on each breast and fold back to close. (Make sure cheese is completely inside chicken).

With whisk beat egg whites until slightly foamy. Mix Panko, grated cheeses and seasoning together on a flat plate.

Firmly hold the breasts closed as one by one you dip them in the egg white



Low-calorie Chicken Kiev on the plate, ready to serve.

and roll each in the Panko mixture pressing lightly to adhere the coating. Using an oven proof skillet heat the oil over high heat until hot but not smoking. Carefully place the chicken in the skillet and brown on one side about 2 minutes do NOT turn chicken.

Place skillet in hot oven and bake approx 20 minutes until chicken is no longer pink and reads 160 on thermometer.

Garnish with lemon wedge. Serve with steamed carrots and a tossed salad with fat-free dressing I like to use bal-

samic vinegar straight from the bottle.

ENJOY the 250 calories instead of the 650+ in chicken Kiev. That is at least a brisk two-hour walk you won't have to take. ■

George Kleine, a professional chef, writer and entrepreneur in Hobe Sound, recently lost a few tons of extra weight. He won't say how many pounds, but enough to make him an expert on healthy cooking and eating. Send your questions, comments and recipes to TheRightBite@MartinCountyCurrents.com.

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GEORGE KLEINE,
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Cooler temps offer early-bird pompano catches

Could we have a more beautiful autumn! Radiant sunshine refreshed by breezy nor'easters! The historical cycle hits the refresh button on the climate, eclipsing the tired attitude of waiting for a tropical depression to spark a migration. The result? Quality fishing that has blown away many anglers' lowered expectations for the month.

The diversity of the October action presented a multitude of species that were caught, released and or savored on the grill! In early October, our ocean was covered with bait, along with the finale of the snook and tarpon saga. Cast nets were sailing to capture finger mullet, menhaden and red minnows. Heavy tapered bait rods were bending in nearly every spot from Ft. Pierce to south of the Juno Pier. Even those who quietly walked the beaches for exercise and serenity had something new to talk about.

I particularly enjoyed the surf fly fishermen quietly employing their masterful skills on the monsters of silver foil--tarpon, or poon, as some call them. The ocean was poetic and yet powered by these majestic trophies.

In mid month, the glass minnows were corralled by Spanish mackerel, bluefish, ladyfish and jacks. The surf



Rich Vidulich
Pompano Reporter

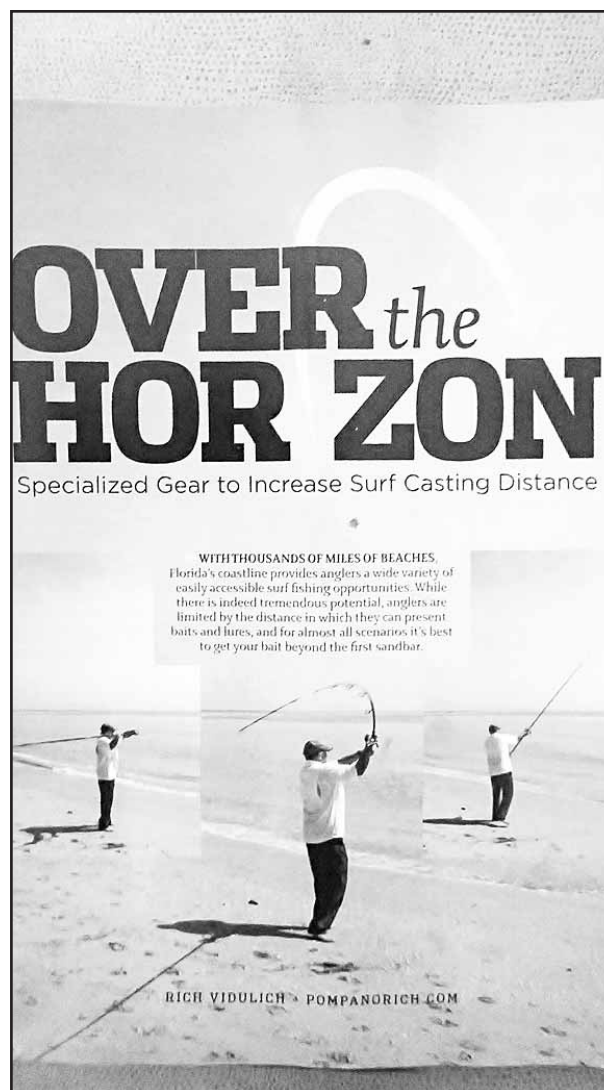
break just boiled with minor explosions of outrageous volumes of easy-to-catch fish. On the last week of October, the action was pretty standard every morning. Early starts provided snacking macks and bluefish.

Approximately an hour after sunrise, the pompano would bite till about 9:30 a.m. The afternoon would provide more wide silvers around 4 p.m. Most of this bite was enjoyed in the Juno Beach through Jupiter Inlet area. Hobe Sound waters were badly tarnished by the outgoing St. Lucie tides. Dark brown with river tannens dampened the previously cleaned seashore. The south current flowed past Blowing Rocks up to the Jupiter Inlet jetty, and the only fish residing in this mess were bluefish and catfish.

Now, a super-charged cold front is starting to gale! Perfect! We've had four days of flat seas and too much clarity in most regions. So what will phase two deliver? More refreshing (evening 50s) low-humidity, breathable air.

Sea temps will drop a few degrees and the coastline will be enhanced by northeast swells. Early front predictions are tough to judge. The Stuart through Vero bite has been lackluster for weeks. Will these regions energize with migratories this round? Will the Palm Beach County migratories move south with cooler sea temps? Will the water quality be too silty for shoreline catches? I am optimistic that the results will be proportionally good, but feel it may take time for the ocean to heal to the point that our troughs will be fishy again.

There were some really unpredictable catches this last week of October. To catch a mutton snapper on a sand flea is not rare, but to catch a keeper size (16 inches total length) IS rare. Ray Salinger caught a 17-inch and I caught a 19-inch mutton. Both were caught on a pompano



Specialized Gear to Increase Surf Casting Distance

WITH THOUSANDS OF MILES OF BEACHES, Florida's coastline provides anglers a wide variety of easily accessible surf fishing opportunities. While there is indeed tremendous potential, anglers are limited by the distance in which they can present baits and lures, and for almost all scenarios it's best to get your bait beyond the first sandbar.

RICH VIDULICH • POMPANORICH.COM

Rich Vidulich is featured in this month's Florida Sportfishing magazine, on stands now.

rig with a 3/4 inch white/pink attractor armed with an inch-long, blanched sand flea. So what's the story here?

Turns out an angler was jigging off the Jupiter break and snared a keeper Florida lobster. He re-cast and had another one. He just felt unusually fortunate that day, but what really occurred was a lobster crawl. Big mutttons feast on hatchling sea turtles and dine on lobster! My friend, Jeff, caught and re-

leased two big permits (20 and 25 lbs) in Jensen Beach that same day--both on blanched fleas and white floats--both the by-product of a better ocean and a real 1990s style autumn.

The current maintenance of Lake Okeechobee water levels is encouraging. The St. Lucie estuary has cleared up, and the fish are slowly returning. It's early November, and piles of Span-



Carl Kortier with a handsome permit in the Jensen Beach surf.

ish mackerel are around the Stuart Causeway. Major schools of jack crevalles are busting up and down the entire river. Beautiful incoming tidal blue water is well inside Ft. Pierce Inlet.

It is entirely possible that this next nor'easter may not damage our shoreline water or change the river clarity. As river and sea temps drop, so too will the suspended sediments drop. Naturally they will rise and create turbid river conditions on any major north or south wind, and the dynamics are the same as always. But the salinity is rising, and it's so very precious to all of us to enjoy a start to a rejuvenated lagoon. We who care should all thank the elements for issuing the gift of sea life! Let us stand tall as we always have, and support that old golden chant, NO MORE DISCHARGES!

On a sidenote: If you are interested in the latest improvements in surf rods, check out this month's issue of Florida Sport Fishing magazine, in which I contributed to the article, "Over The Horizon," starting on page 45. The piece debates specialized gear to increase surf-casting distance.

Happy Thanksgiving and tight lines to all! ■

Rich Vidulich, a commercial pompano surf fisherman who traverses the beaches of Martin County and points north for his "golden nuggets," lives in Jupiter. Send comments or questions to Pompano@MartinCountyCurrents.com.

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Ray Salinger with his fishing buddy, L.J., along with their fine catches.

Poetry offers solace, shelter from fearful days

Perhaps it is time for us to look back over the times when FEAR has invaded our lives. Sort of like the Ebola virus and it's dire threat is causing us great fear now. As the media whips up daily frenzied reporting of doom and gloom perhaps it is time for us to realize as we live only one short life it would be a very good thing if we put all the fear into a better perspective in order see where we have been.

During my lifetime, I remember my parents and their after-struggle from the great depression. Then came WW2, (Florida's coast was threatened by German submarines) the Atomic bomb, Polio, (my friend became afflicted and we could never, never leave the house.) After that we endured the Korean war (another pal was killed) Cold war (planes flying over south Florida and my house en route to Cuba,) Vietnam war, Iraqi and Afghanistan wars, Bird flu, Swine flu, Mad Cow disease and most likely I have forgotten others!

As far as I can see and understand it may be better to focus on something else. More uplifting. Happier. Perhaps, shut off the news and spend more time giving a bit of kindness to someone else or better still, spending a lot more time in nature and contemplation.

During past events I have found a great peace in reading and writing poetry.

Some Favorites: Some, humorous and some thought provoking.

PIED BEAUTY

By Gerard Manley Hopkins, 1886

"Glory be to God for dappled things, for



Suzanne
Briley

Hopscotch

skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;

For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim; Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;

Landscape plotted and pieced-fold, fallow, and plough; and all trades, their gear and tackle trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange; Whatever is fickle. Freckled with swift, slow, sweet, sour; adazzle, dim His fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:

For all creation Praise Him."

UNTITLED

by Anna Hert

"For he dreamed beneath the moon, and slept beneath the sun,
And he lived a life of going to do and died with nothing done."

HAIKU (an ancient type of poetry)

By Lisa Jefferson

Hedges, tall and brown
Line streets, up and down, bone piles
Of branch, lost & found.

Three slices of bread
Tossed together all fall in
Same trajectory.

TODAY

By Eleanor M. Cousins-Brown

(Eleanor was 9 when she wrote this poem and was moved to do so after studying about World War II. She is now 14 and lives in England.)

September 1, 1941

London Underground, during the bombing of WW2

"TODAY,

I can hear, the muttering of strangers, like the sharp, whispering wind, whining in my ear.

TODAY,

I can smell my scruffy, old brown blanket, like a torn, dry leaf, familiar and comforting my only home.

TODAY,

I can feel the freezing, hard stone tiles, like the steel blade of a knife, pressing against my weak pajamas.

TODAY,

I can see the dim shape of my friend, like a ghost, so worn out, simply fading away.

Today,

inside, I feel trapped, petrified and oh so weak, like a baby animal, sitting in a hard cage, all alone on it's way to the zoo.

Today,

I sense fear. The true meaning of this horrific war, like a parachutist, my parachute broken, not knowing when or where I will land."

HARES

By William Ed Briley

"Happy hares hopped humoursly and harmlessly across hay- housed hillside

until horrific hellish hounds, hailed by hollering horsemen,

hurriedly and hoarsely howled in horrendous horror and hot haste.

Hares, hounds, horses hurled hastily across hills and hedges

until holes and havens helped havens to hide and heave heavenward happily;

We're hidden, we're home! ahhhhh!

BLUE REMEMBERED HILLS

By Chimanda Adichi

"Into my heart on air that kills, from yon country blows
What are those blue remembered hills?
What spires are those?
That is the land of lost content
I see it shining plain
The highways where I went,
and cannot come again." ■

Suzanne Briley, who lives in Hobe Sound, is an artist, author, entrepreneur, environmentalist and world traveler. She may be contacted at hopsotch@hscurrents.com.



The Business of Character Award was accepted by Martin Health System representatives, from left, Kathy Skrzypczak, Chuck Cleaver, Christina Romanovsky, Debbie Perez, Rachel Terlizzi, Mark Robitaille, and Angie Metcalf. They are pictured with Holly Laiben of CHARACTER COUNTS!, and Chad Hastings of Lesser, Lesser, Landy & Smith. Photo: Bob Dobbens

Martin Health tapped for award

The Business of Character Award from United Way of Martin County's CHARACTER COUNTS! Program went to Martin Health System on Oct. 29 at the Business Development Board of Martin County's annual awards luncheon in recognition of its Project Search internship program. The award was accepted by Mark Robitaille, president and CEO of Martin Health System.

Project Search exemplifies compassion, teamwork and collaboration by helping high school students with disabilities obtain real world experience and employment. The internship program is in collaboration with Helping People Succeed, ARC of Martin County, and the Martin County School District.

Also recognized at the luncheon for their commitment to serving Martin County with character were finalists Harbor Community Bank and Salerno Bay Health & Rehab. Other businesses nominated for the award were Gold's Gym; Kaleidominds Marketing; Manatee Pocket Yacht Sales; Physicians Immediate Care; Piper's Landing Yacht and Country Club; Proctor, Crook, Crowder and Fogal; R3 Recycling; Sign Store & More; and Zweben Law Firm. ■



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