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Martin County

CURRENTS

Volume 5 Issue 2 • April/May 2015

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Pitchford's Landing still targeted after 8 years

pg 8



... to this someday?



Hobe Sound seems livelier these days with new stores and even new murals. pg 17



UF Water Institute report gives clear direction: We need more storage, lots more money. pg 15



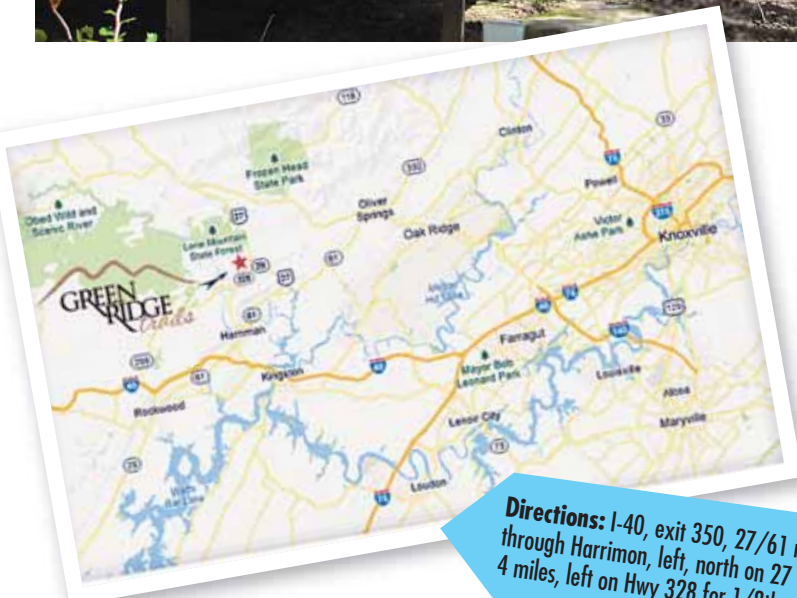
Finally, the Pacific Legal Foundation gets Martin County to compromise over rules. pg 5

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Probable cause found in ethics complaint against Comm. Heard



Florida politicians have learned well that when you're in trouble with the Florida Commission on Ethics in Tallahassee to be sure to get a good Tallahassee attorney, which is exactly what Martin County Commissioner Sarah Heard did regarding recent allegations of ethics violations.

She was to appear at an Ethics Commission hearing April 17 to face numerous allegations of violating Florida's ethics laws over her past nine years in office filed by Palm City businessman John McAuliffe.

Heard was not required to appear after Tallahassee attorney R.W. Evans successfully negotiated a pre-probable cause stipulated agreement between Heard and Ethics Commission advocate Melody Hadley, also a Tallahassee attorney, stipulating that Heard would pay a \$2,400 fine for her violations.

Charges that Heard allegedly falsified expense reports and other charges were dropped as part of the negotiated agreement, according to a letter from the commission to McAuliffe.

Documentation that showed deeds in Heard's name for properties out of state that had been omitted from her financial disclosure forms were included in McAuliffe's complaint, as well as Heard's alleged failure to disclose her part ownership of a small plane kept at Witham Field. The agreement stipulated that, if accepted by the panel of judges, no "probable cause" would be found regarding those complaints.

"What I submitted to the Ethics Commission was documentation that showed she had undervalued her assets by well over \$2 million each year over the past nine years," McAuliffe added, "which I felt showed a pattern of deception on her part, but the commission said they only go back five years."

The first two complaints were filed in June and July of 2014 amid allegations that McAuliffe's motivation was political due to an August election that would determine the outcome of Heard's bid for a fourth term as county commissioner.

She won the election after accusing McAuliffe of using "dirty tactics that are nothing more than politically motivated. This complaint is bogus," she declared during candidate forums in July. "My ethics are unimpeachable."

According to state ethics rules, once a complaint is filed, three procedural stages take place to determine if a possible ethics law violation has occurred: If the complaint is found not to be legally sufficient, the commission will order the complaint dismissed. None of the ethics complaints filed by McAuliffe were dismissed.

If not dismissed, the second stage of the proceedings involves an investigation by commission staff as to whether there is probable cause to believe that a violation has occurred. If no violation has occurred, the complaint is dismissed. If probable cause has been found, as in this case, the accused has the right to request a public hearing (trial) to present evidence that would counter the complaint, which Heard declined.

The commission's findings, report and final disposition of the case will eventually be released to the public. ■

Sherlock clients ordered to pay \$265,000 in legal fees in Naked Lady Ranch case

Part of Stuart attorney Virginia Sherlock's courtroom signature is filling the gallery with her supporters, known also as "Sherlock's posse," as she so often sends them after whatever county issue she currently is tackling.

This time, however, Sherlock and her law partner, Howard Heims, sat at a table alone as they spent two days examining hundreds of invoices in Martin County Circuit Court on March 26 and 27. Finally, Judge George Shahood ended the Naked Lady Ranch's five-year-battle with the Littman Sherlock & Heims P.A. Firm representing a handful of the community's 100 residents in Palm City Farms, by ordering

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Sherlock's clients, to pay nearly every invoice for legal fees and costs incurred by the non-profit corporation to have its contracts with residents upheld.

The small, gated community of million dollar-plus homes on the waterfront in Palm City Farms with a private landing strip, individual hangars for private planes, as well as equestrian facilities, requires that homeowners become corporation board members when they purchase their homes on either five-acre or 10-acre lots, thus they share in the costs to ensure the community's facilities meet residents' standards until they sell their property.

A 2010 assessment to cover the costs of paving the Naked Lady airstrip, for landscaping and to obtain a bank loan to cover unpaid homeowner assessments, prompted some homeowners to resign from the corporation, although they wished to continue to live in the community and pay a share of facility maintenance costs only. Their resignations were rejected as violations of their contract with Naked Lady.

They retained Sherlock in a quest to prove that the corporation was actually a voluntary homeowners association that would allow resignations, because it was not regulated under Chapter 720 of the Florida statutes for HOAs, although Martin County Circuit Judge Larry Schack had ruled in 1995 that the Naked Lady Ranch was not a voluntary association. ■



The owners of Flash Beach Grille restaurant on Bridge Road in Hobe Sound, Robert and Anita Breinig, now can concentrate on growing their business—as they also grow some native vegetation—as part of a legal settlement with the county.

Martin County makes concessions to meet Flash Beach Grille's needs

Finally, Robert and Anita Breinig can now concentrate primarily on creating fresh seafood dishes (and a mean cheesecake or two) for their Flash Beach Grille restaurant on Bridge Road in Hobe Sound—without the threat that they could lose their life's investment at any time.

And after spending close to \$100,000 in staff time, according to inside sources, Martin County Attorney Michael Durham also can scratch one of more than 60 lawsuits against the county off his list of things to do.

The settlement in March orchestrated by the Pacific Legal Foundation between the county and the Breinigs will allow the Breinigs to expand their business and utilize much of the 40 ft x 70 ft plot at the center of the controversy with a reconfigured preserve plan that will accommodate the Breinigs' needs. The county also gave the Breinigs a \$1,000 credit at the Palm City Natives landscaping company to assist with the purchase, delivery and planting of vegetation to restore the less-than-half acre plot to a native habitat within the next six months.

More than two decades ago, the original owner of the Breinigs' land traded 16 percent of the plot in exchange for a county permit to build a hot dog stand. At the time, according to Durham, county officials were not required to record the preserve-area agreements, so no official record was tied to the deed. Subsequent landowners received code enforcement fines for not maintaining the preserve area, which also were not recorded with the deed.

Although the county's Growth Management Department identified more than 1,000 undersized PAMPs in the county, only about 100 of them had not been recorded, Durham said. Of those, about 22 are within Community Redevelopment Areas, largely commercial, isolated from any other natural area by parking lots or buildings, and targeted for revitalization, which prompted Commissioner John Haddox to propose that all undersized PAMPs within CRAs be exempted from the preserve area requirements of the county's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan. His proposal was defeated in a 3-2 commission vote in October 2013.

The Breinigs say they were unaware of the preserve area restriction until 2013, when they applied for a liquor license, triggering code enforcement fines and an order to move all equipment off the strip of preserve land, plant and restore it and establish a buffer area, or face fines of up to \$1,000 per day. No code enforcement fines ultimately were levied.

"We still lost part of our property," says Anita Breinig, "but the county adjusted to it where it won't hinder our building plan."

Martin County officials contended that a preserve area is not the same as a conservation easement, marriage license or deed. "Like any setback or height restric-

tion," Durham said, "it doesn't need to be recorded, but instead of battling that out, we just came to an agreement."

Pacific Legal attorneys Mark Miller and Christina Martin of West Palm Beach, defenders of individual property rights and unlawful takings by over-reaching government regulations, were prepared to ask the Martin County Circuit Court to decide the issue, possibly clearing the way later for redress by all county landowners with unrecorded preserve areas if the judge ruled in their favor. The Breinigs declined to pursue a court case.

"All we had ever wanted was to be able to operate our business," Anita said, "and with this compromise by the county, we could do that. It's time to move on." ■

Customs supporters still harbor hope

Supporters of the state's first marine-aviation U.S. Customs facility at Witham Field in Stuart have not given up, in spite of a 3-2 county commission vote that killed the fully funded project on March 17.

And in spite of what Commissioner Anne Scott called "an avalanche" of emails and phone messages calling for her to rescind that vote at the commission's March 21 meeting, she refused to change her mind, citing her concerns over the potentially deleterious impact on the marine industry and the county economy by the All Aboard Florida passenger rail project.

"If you are so concerned about this bad impact on the marine industry," responded Commissioner Doug Smith, "why would you not support a project that could potentially benefit them directly, as well as be a boon to our restaurants and other businesses?"

Over the past year, Scott had voted both in favor of and against the proposed international air-marine facility, but when the bid contract came in \$200,000 higher than was estimated four years ago, Scott said she portended failure, although the state pledged an additional \$200,000 to cover the increase in construction costs. The Airport Enterprise Fund would supplement the grants to cover all operating costs, and an additional \$200,000 from a consortium of marine and aviation businesses was pledged for the first year, promising an additional \$150,000 in private funding over the next two years to cover any start-up cost shortfall.

The Marine Aviation Alliance has asked for an extension to the deadline to accept the state Department of Transportation grants, and the contractor, Jacquin & Sons of Ft. Pierce, who submitted the lowest bid, offered to hold his bid for an additional 90 days beyond the April 8 bid deadline.

Commissioner John Haddox also sent a personal letter to customs facility supporters, which is printed in full on Page 7. ■

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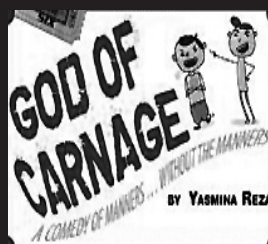
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GOP sets foot down on tax increases

"No more taxes" was the message sent loudly and clearly to the Martin County Commission at its April 14 meeting by the Republican Executive Committee of Martin County.

Don Pickard, president of the county's GOP, addressed the commissioners saying that its membership had voted "overwhelmingly" in favor of a moratorium on raising taxes, including a sales tax of any size, as outlined in a resolution read in its entirety by State Republican Committeeman Eric Miller. The resolution came in response to previous commission discussions regarding the possibility of conducting a mail-in ballot initiative this summer to increase revenue through a sales tax to address the county's growing \$250 million infrastructure backlog.

County Administrator Taryn Kryzda reported to the commission that the backlog was the result of a combination of factors, including the state-mandated reduction in ad valorem taxes due to the 2008 recession, coupled with the corresponding loss in property values, reducing the flow of tax revenue to a trickle. Also, a sharp decline in impact fees coupled with a reduction in fuel tax revenues—the result of more efficient vehicles on the road—has nearly eliminated the only dedicated source of revenue maintain roads. Between 2008 and 2010, the county reduced its annual budget by \$63 million, so more cuts will likely result in a loss of county services, Kryzda said.

Miller said "and will be strongly opposed by the Republican Party of Martin County."

Haddox had said previously that although the sales tax referendum was defeated by only 72 votes last fall, that voters were expecting commissioners "to do our part first to cut expenditures wherever and however we can before we go back to them and ask for another sales tax." ■

Challenge of new septic rules in April

Administrative law Judge Christine van Wyk, who heard the challenges to the previous Comp Plan amendments to Chapters 1, 2 and 4 written by Maggy Hurchalla, on Sept. 29-Oct. 1, will be back in Stuart April 28-29 to hear nine farmers' most recent challenges to the county's proposed changes to the septic element of the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan.

The Martin Land Company, which owns land at the interchange of I-95 and Bridge Road, joined the farmers in the challenge of the Chapter 10 rewrites that also eliminated the Expressway Transit Oriented Commercial Service Center zoning at

all interstate interchanges for hotels, science research facilities, or gas stations.

The farmers contend that eliminating all septic tanks except one 2,000-gallon tank, regardless of how large the parcel of land, would result in devastating impacts to citrus groves, cattle ranches, packing and processing plants, and other agricultural endeavors.

The Growth Management Department expects that the recommended order for the Chapters 1, 2 and 4 being prepared now by Judge van Wyk will be filed prior to her next visit to Martin County in April. ■

Depending on lawsuits to stop AAF

Support for All Aboard Florida's passenger-rail project seems to be growing throughout the state except in the Treasure Coast counties of Martin, St. Lucie and Indian River, where the opposition still exceeds supporters.

Martin County protests, including Commissioner John Haddox, saw the level of support from other parts of the state Monday, April 20, in Tallahassee, where they sat through a four-hour hearing before the Florida Development Finance Corp., a quasi-governmental agency that must approve AAF's application to sell \$1.75 billion in Private Activity Bonds. The bond sale was already approved by the U.S. Dept. of Transportation last summer, but Indian River County filed a lawsuit to reverse the approval, because the Environmental Impact Study had not yet been completed.

The impact study is also required prior to approval of a Federal Railroad Administration's Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Fund loan for the 235-mile project between Miami and Orlando. Since the study's release, more than 10,000 complaints have been filed with the FRA on engineering plans that were only about 30 percent complete.

With AAF plans now about 90 percent complete, some issues in the local area were addressed. The addition of a second track through Martin County along the FEC rail corridor, will no longer take parking spaces from the City of Stuart, and it will not eliminate the left-hand turn lane onto Dixie Highway at Confusion Corner; however, one of the most contentious issues—closing the St. Lucie bridge for train traffic—has not yet been resolved.

The county dedicated \$1.4 million to cover the cost of independent impact studies and to retain attorney Steve Ryan, of Washington D.C., who is prepared to challenge an apparently improper transfer of federal highway funds to the Federal Railroad Administration. No lawsuit has yet been filed from Martin County, but Ryan is ready. ■



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Editorial: Call to state attorney general to look at budget, disregard of citizens' due process

The Florida Attorney General should investigate the Martin County Commission for misfeasance and three particular commissioners for malfeasance for abusing their power, ignoring state statutes, including Sunshine laws, and trampling residents' due process rights. Some actions are so egregious, Commissioners Ed Fielding, Sarah Heard and Anne Scott need to be held accountable and removed from office.

We cannot allege misfeasance for their decision April 21 to kill the 10-year-old redevelopment projects on Bridge Road in Hobe Sound and on Mapp Road in Palm City, although their votes confirm a pattern of decision-making that assures unfettered power.

Their votes, unquestionably arrogant, short-sighted and inept, killed these two projects that could have stimulated the economy, improved stormwater treatment, and expanded a tax base—within the urban services boundary—once the projects had been completed. As distasteful, fiscally imprudent and out of touch as their decision was, however, it does not demonstrate misfeasance.

Misfeasance can be alleged, though, for the 15 years of misdirected TIF funds taken from the county's seven Community Redevelopment Areas—for which the Stuart CRA had to threaten court action to receive—not so much because those funds were to be spent only and entirely within the boundaries of each CRA district from which they came, but because spending taxpayers' restricted funds comes with rules, even when done mistakenly. They chose to ignore those rules.

Now the commission plans to "pool" TIF funds from the seven CRAs, so they can spend \$6 million on one large project they chose, which seems to violate more state rules that TIF funds may be spent only in the districts that generate them.

Fielding also ordered Community Development Director Kevin Freeman on Tuesday to "condense" all CRAs. The reason? Not for the "efficiencies" that Fielding claims it seems, but more likely

so the CRA districts will siphon less money from the general fund, but primarily to limit CRA zoning, which takes precedence over all other zoning rules.

The new CRA direction was first discussed during a strategic planning "workshop" Feb. 10, away from commission chambers and public comment, posted on the county's website as an audio recording made with no microphones and no identifying names. Commissioners ultimately approved a list of one-liners cloaked in government jargon—the county's Strategic Plan for 2015—at a recent commission meeting, but with no explanations or details.

How different from the City of Stuart's strategic planning session, which was a public meeting at 9 a.m. on a Saturday morning in the Flagler Place auditorium with microphones and ample seating for a crowd. Now that's transparency, not the translucency far preferred by the county, and shows respect for residents.

Residents in unincorporated areas also deserve respect, about to be denied to the predominantly black Gomez community, which will be severed soon from the Hobe Sound CRA without even a stop sign to show for their part in 15 years of TIF contributions, just one more short-sighted companion to the commission majority's March vote to kill the customs facility.

A disconcerting comment then by Anne Scott, overshadowed by her convoluted reasoning to place blame on All Aboard Florida's devastating impact, which she used again to kill Hobe Sound's project, was this: "Fortunately, we now have a more scrupulous county commission..."

What? Only if Heard's two career fines for ethics violations are overlooked, and only if we overlook the commission majority's conflicts of interest in a vote benefiting their friends and benefactors, and only if we overlook their translucent budget and spending practices.

The millions in unbudgeted funds

spent for outside attorneys over the past two and a half years never make it into the county attorney's budget, which increased by only \$60,000 last year. Thus the funds to pay unbudgeted legal fees came from a publicly approved county budget without proper, approved allocation, although they had been an anticipated expense. Perhaps the reasoning is: If no one talks about them publicly, they won't really exist.

Contracts with outside attorneys also seem not to have been publicly vetted per county rules, until Commissioner Doug Smith insisted that the process be followed to engage attorney Steve Ryan, who will lead Martin County's opposition to All Aboard Florida.

The unbudgeted funds to pay all the attorneys prior to retaining Ryan were pulled from an assortment of county accounts, in addition to the emergency reserves for hurricane recovery the public was told, including: \$1,687 from the Economic Element account; \$17,000 from the Fire/EMS account; \$50,000 from the Other County Capital Projects account. Capital Projects?

A forensic accountant should examine the county's books for improprieties, perhaps most important, for the use of taxpayer money to pay Heard's attorney to protect her from an attempt to retrieve public records from her personal computer, which she says disappeared after her Yahoo email account was "hacked." Her attorney contends they are not public records. A judge will decide, but she had better be prepared to repay the county nearly one million in misspent taxpayer funds.

The county's spiraling litigation costs are not reported, neither was another lawsuit filed in January by 10 Martin County farmers challenging the rewrites of the Comp Plan. Their legal petition was omitted from the County Attorney's report in March, as was the Department of Economic Security's review calling the legal action needless in light of the county's unwillingness to resolve farmers' issues.

"Planning through litigation is not a model for success," stated the DEO letter to Heard. We agree.

Fielding bragged publicly that he was sure the county would be sued, rather cavalier toward taxpayers, as well as farmers, for sure, but the most egregious conduct of our commission majority that warrants investigation is the Pitchford's Landing project. If constructed, it would increase desperately needed ad valorem tax revenues, stimulate the economy with new construction dollars, dramatically improve the aesthetics of Jensen Beach, and remove dozens of decades-old septic tanks along the Indian River Lagoon.

Heard, Fielding and Scott have often said publicly the project was "awful," and needs to be foreclosed upon; to be shut down, insisting on breach proceedings without grounds, probably causing casual observers to believe the commissioners were facing a subversive force that had to be quashed to protect the innocents.

Oddly, the county's Growth Management Department required that the Pitchford project's engineers and planners follow the new Comp Plan rules yet to be codified, resulting in 11 staff-required changes to the Pitchford's Final Site Plan that must meet the most recent Comp Plan rules, and also match exactly the original Master Site Plan approved eight years ago. How is that possible? It's not.

When Pitchford's Landing comes soon before the county commission for its final presentation in this Virginia Sherlock-inspired toxic environment, enabled and encouraged by the commission-majority bloc, how can its owners be ensured they'll receive due process—their constitutionally guaranteed right to be heard before "a neutral and impartial decision-maker." They cannot.

When Heard, Fielding and Scott revealed their prejudices, took part in deriding the project themselves, and passed judgment on it long ago, they abdicated their positions as county commissioners. They need to go. ■

Haddox Letter to Customs supporters provides hope

Dear Concerned Taxpayer,

Let me express both my sincere gratitude for your clear and consistent support for the Customs facility proposed for Witham Field, as well as my regret over the recent setback it suffered.

Of all the projects to come before the Martin County Commission during my time on the board, none has enjoyed more broad-based community support, presented so little risk to taxpayer dollars and withstood more scrutiny and skepticism than the Customs proposal. It was overwhelmingly studied and vetted. That made its failure to move forward all the more disappointing.

Although Martin County's unemployment rate has steadily improved over the last four years, it still hovers

around 5.5 percent. I would like to see that drop even lower.

The marine industry is our biggest employer with more than 4,000 jobs and a direct annual impact to Martin County's economy of nearly \$700 million. Witham Field is a big job generator, employing more than 1,000 people and providing nearly \$300 million annually to our local economy. Of course, the tourism industry, which would be benefited by Customs, touches virtually every aspect of our economy and makes our beloved quality of life possible.

Right now, Martin County is saddled with an infrastructure backlog that stands at more than \$230 million and grows daily. Even with a mix of budget cuts, ad valorem tax increases and fee-based services – the latter two of which I

oppose – we will barely dent this debt. That is why as policymakers I firmly believe is it our responsibility to support sound, sustainable initiatives that improve our economy.

Customs is one such initiative. It is a low risk, low cost way to serve our citizens and boost our local economy.

Throughout my time in office I have worked to bridge disunity and broker agreement. The effort behind Customs, led by citizens such as you, embodied this commitment. I was especially grateful for the members of the marine and aviation industries who were willing to invest private capital to ensure the success of the facility. Customs could have stood as a test case to measure the success of future public-private partnerships between Martin County

and established local businesses.

Despite the most recent defeat of Customs, I continue to hold out hope that this facility will again come forward and get another chance to gain commission approval. In the meantime, please stay engaged on this important issue and feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have. Thank you.



Sincerely,
John Haddox
Martin County
Commissioner,
District 5

The Pitchford's Landing project fights to survive

Eight years later, not much has changed. An intense determination by a core group of Jensen Beach residents to shut down the Pitchford's Landing subdivision, approved by the county commission in 2007, continues today.

After being sued personally for defamation and tortious interference with a business relationship when some Jensen Beach residents apparently crossed the line of fair play, according to court records, by distributing slick drawings and creating a fake website that altered the heights of buildings and exaggerated the scope of the Pitchford's Landing project, the residents counter-sued project owners, Bill and Nancy Reily of Jensen Beach, charging that the Reily suit was a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation, better known as a SLAPP suit.

One of the residents' attorneys, Howard Heims of Stuart, was quoted Dec. 3, 2006, as saying: "We're going to have to teach (Bill Reilly) a lesson," he said. "We thought we already had, but he hasn't gotten it yet. The battle is just beginning here." And there seems to be no end in sight.

The suit and countersuit dragged on for three years before eventually being settled, as the Jensen Group, which they were called then, failed in five additional lawsuits against Martin County and the Reilys to get the courts to overturn the county's decision.

Those residents who sued Martin County and the Reilys simply changed

their venues—as did their attorney Virginia Sherlock—choosing every televised Martin County Commission meeting and using public emails to distribute their message that the project will harm the Indian River Lagoon, although it will remove dozens of 60-year-old septic tanks on the property, stabilize and improve the shoreline, and bring thousands in much-needed tax revenue to the county's coffers.

THE COMPLAINTS CONTINUE

"At virtually every meeting, commissioners have been asked to let residents know what's going on with Pitchford's," writes Virginia Sherlock in one of a dozen emails about Pitchford's posted on the county's website. "At virtually every meeting, your requests are met with silence from your elected representatives."

Commissioners did not remain silent. The long-term toxicity aimed at the Pitchford's project seems to have spread to the commission itself.

In the summer of 2013, Commissioner Anne Scott called for the county attorney and his staff to initiate foreclosure proceedings on the property, insisting that the county take possession on the basis of unpaid code enforcement fines and for noncompliance with



The architect for the project is Mitch Kunik of Affiniti Architects, who has designed homes in Seaside, Fla., and whose father lived in Jensen Beach for many years.



The property adjacent to the Pitchford's project, Conchy Joe's restaurant, is protected by a seawall. The building and an asphalt parking lot sit at the edge of the seawall with a private pier over the Indian River Lagoon. The county-approved seawall at Pitchford's was challenged by The Jensen Group, then upheld in court, only to have the state Department of Environmental Protection revoke the seawall permit.

county rules regarding its shoreline protection zone, following a week of particularly vitriolic public comment.

As it turned out, no outstanding

fines existed and the project—which will redevelop an existing 150-space RV and trailer park (plus six cottages) into a Key West-style subdivision of 44 single-family homes and seven two-story buildings with 39 condominium units on Indian River Drive—had complied with all county directives, according to Growth Management Department staff.

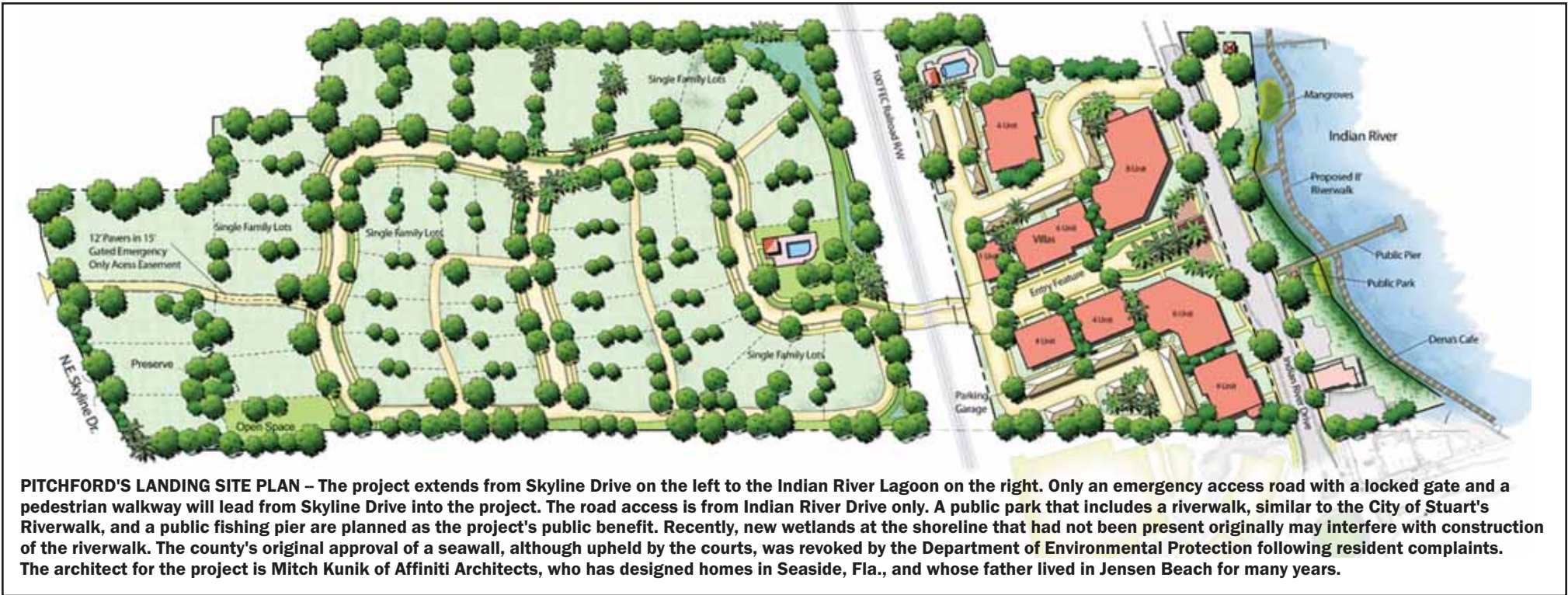
Scott also requested that Growth Management provide "regular" reports on the status of the Pitchford's project, and insisted on personal tours of the site in March 2014, as did Commissioners Fielding, Haddox and Heard.

By June 2014, Scott had called for the county attorney to investigate breach proceedings of Pitchford Landing's agreements, again with the intent of revoking its development order, and again following a series of complaints by the same residents, including emails and comments by their former attorney, Virginia Sherlock. When they're not attacking Pitchford's, they criticize



The rear of Bluesy's Happy Snapper Cafe at Pitchford's faces the Indian River Lagoon. A load of shell rock was delivered without the county engineer's permission to what is a parking lot on the Pitchford's plan, a violation of county rules that resulted in a \$1,300 fine. Tables and chairs for guests also had to be removed, because the area is within the shoreline protection zone.

Photo: Barbara Clowdus



PITCHFORD'S LANDING SITE PLAN – The project extends from Skyline Drive on the left to the Indian River Lagoon on the right. Only an emergency access road with a locked gate and a pedestrian walkway will lead from Skyline Drive into the project. The road access is from Indian River Drive only. A public park that includes a riverwalk, similar to the City of Stuart's Riverwalk, and a public fishing pier are planned as the project's public benefit. Recently, new wetlands at the shoreline that had not been present originally may interfere with construction of the riverwalk. The county's original approval of a seawall, although upheld by the courts, was revoked by the Department of Environmental Protection following resident complaints. The architect for the project is Mitch Kunik of Affiniti Architects, who has designed homes in Seaside, Fla., and whose father lived in Jensen Beach for many years.

county staff and commissioners.

"I do not know why the County Attorney, your commissioners, and staff have kept residents in the dark about what's going on with Pitchford's," Sherlock writes in a public email. "I do not know why commissioners refuse to require compliance with the directive (to investigate breach proceedings) that was given nearly five months ago."

Attorney Krista Storey, of the

county's legal staff, reported the results of the investigation April 7 of Pitchford's alleged contract breaches, including some apparently unfounded allegations of an illegal dump that had required multiple site investigations by county staff from more than one department. Storey reported that the Pitchford's project was in full compliance within "the four corners of Pitchford's PUD (Planned Unit Development zoning re-

quirements)" and were in compliance with its Preserve Area Management Plan, and all development timetable extensions were in order. The next development deadline that must be met by the project is August 2015.

The Reilys have gone "above and beyond what is required" to restore the shoreline along the Indian River Lagoon, Storey added. The planting area passed inspection, and the final pay-

ment of the restoration bond had been received; she said, therefore, no grounds were present to warrant breach proceedings against Pitchford's.

HOW MUCH INFORMATION?

Scott's directive to staff for weekly reports of Pitchford's status are now being provided and include descriptions of any activity of any kind by any member of the

continued on PAGE 10

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After the Pitchford's Landing public riverwalk and public fishing pier are completed, Jensen Beach residents and visitors will be able to stroll next door to Conchy Joe's restaurant, which owns a private pier.

continued from PAGE 9

county staff—or apparently by anyone else anywhere else. Growth Management Director Nicki Van Vonno told commissioners April 14 that she had seen a *Stuart News* dining review of the Bluezy's Happy Snapper restaurant east of Indian River Drive, across from the RV park.

The restaurant leases the building included in the Pitchford's Landing master site plan, which will be renovated as part of the redevelopment, but the business itself is not owned by the Reilys.

"If I were to see the word 'Pitchford' in a crossword puzzle," said Commissioner Anne Scott in response to Van Vonno's request for the detail desired by the commissioners, "I would report it."

Elected to the commission in 2012, Scott described the project as having "a checkered past," thus the intense scrutiny was "appropriate." The reports by county staff, however, seem to paint a different portrait—a project that it is in compliance with all county rules, which corrected a tenant's infraction quickly and paid his fine promptly, and has met all filing deadlines.

The Reilys purchased the property in 2005, which lies between Indian River and Skyline drives, one of the highest elevations in the county, with a panoramic view of the Jensen Beach causeway crossing the Indian River Lagoon. Amid the

Jensen Beach Group's protests in 2006, the county commission voted to delay the project's public hearing for a year, asking Reily to respond to residents' concerns. Twice the project was scaled back until the final version, approved by the Local Planning Agency, as well as the county commission, reduced the original 137 units to 83, and designed with two-story condominiums in place of three stories.

Local columnist Rich Campbell of *The Stuart News* wrote several columns about the Pitchford's project, from first criticizing the project's intensity to the most recent in August 2013 telling commissioners that if Reily meets the county's legal requirements, they should approve the final site plan so the project can proceed.

"Denial would be an injustice to Reily, a Martin County resident—not an out-of-town investor—who has worked doggedly to obtain county approval, responded to concerns raised by local residents, and scaled back the project," Campbell said.

"A denial also would be an act of hypocrisy by the slow-growth commission majority, which opposes development outside the urban services boundary, but repeatedly says it is amenable to infill development," he added. "However, if someone can't put a 4.7-unit-per-acre development inside the urban services boundary, then what can be built in Martin County?" ■



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Recruiting youngsters for long-term advocacy

Drive, commitment, and passion are the words often used to describe advocacy, but just as important are strength and energy. When I ask myself why I do this, the answer comes easily: I do it for the future of our children and for our community. As a mom, I am acutely aware that our youth expect us to pave the way, but we also need them later to pick up the torch and carry on.

One Florida Foundation commits much of its work to enrolling children in river activities so they will be armed with a love for the water; to teach them the tools to advocate for it; to encourage them to think critically and creatively; and to empower them to know that solutions are within their grasp. The young man or woman who ultimately solves the problem of how to rid our water supply of microbeads may be a 10-year-old learning to kayak today!

Unfortunately, few children get outdoors and bond with our water. Some sociologists tell us that one of our challenges as humans is something called "nature deficit disorder," the lack of a



Nyla Pipes

One Florida Foundation

relationship to the natural environment, and recent declines in the number of visits to national parks seems to verify this. Reasons cited include: the difficulty for working families to spend time outside, spending days off doing household chores; an increasing dependence on electronic media for entertainment; and an increasing fear among parents, con-



Nyla Pipes, far right, and Capt. Don Voss, center, with a group of Treasure Coast students at the Clean Water Rally in Tallahassee in March.

veyed to their children, that danger lurks in the woods or in the water.

In Florida, children often do not bond with the water because of either the lack of opportunity to spend time around the water and/or from fear—fear of drowning, since many do not know how to swim; fear of the animals that live in the water; or fear that the water is not safe from disease.

To help children overcome fear, One Florida has been working with a group of kids from Sword Outreach Ministries, who over the past six months "adopted" a portion of Moore's Creek and Linear Park in the heart of Fort Pierce. We showed them how to visit City Hall and convince City of Fort Pierce officials to add kayak launches at Linear Park, where signs also will soon be posted to announce the kids' efforts. We are conducting quarterly cleanups of this stretch of waterway, in conjunction with the Sword Outreach Ministries, and already we've seen vast improvements in reducing litter and increasing community pride.

Some of the high school-aged kids from Sword accompanied us to the Clean Water Rally in Tallahassee in February, a first rally for a cause for most of these teens. We met with legislators, and encouraged these youngsters to talk to our representatives, who, we explained, were there to make decisions as to how the state is run.

The first meeting, they mostly observed. By the second meeting, they became more comfortable, and by the third, well, let's just say, there was no stopping them! They talked about where they lived. They talked about the chal-

lenges facing their neighborhoods. They especially talked about how they had all just learned to kayak, and they were worried about our water!

The kids also rode up to the 22nd floor of the Capitol building to the observation deck, which was a huge hit, as none of them had ever ridden in an elevator more than four stories. They couldn't believe that we could see Georgia! Additionally, we visited the Museum of Florida History, with a display on the Civil Rights Movement.

They drew parallels between those rallies and the one we had just attended, and it really opened up the conversation about how their involvement in the process could affect change for our water, just as others had effected social change.

It is critical that we remember to invest in our youth along with our own water advocacy. Working with kids, teaching them how to love our water, and giving them the skills to do so with confidence is very important. Sharing our knowledge on how the government works, and that they have a say in the decisions made will build a strong voice for our water for generations.

Please feel free to contact us and join in our efforts! We have regular family friendly events, and welcome all people, as the future belongs to all of us. We can be found on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and our website is www.one-floridafoundation.org ■

Nyla Pipes is a founder of One Florida Foundation, which addresses water issues throughout the state.



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Sugar land purchase not the only option on table

Here on the Treasure Coast, much excitement arose from the University of Florida Water Institute's report about dealing with Lake Okeechobee water, most specifically, the Page-102 statement that "...the Florida legislature should consider the sugar land purchase."

One can see how that would be encouraging to flow way advocates, but the report lacked the emphatic "You must do it" response that would have given legislators and clean-water advocates throughout the state clear direction. Instead, the report emphasized the value of the land, the short time left on the contract and the property's swap value as primary reasons the purchase "should be considered" for added water storage.

The flow-way concept—recreating the Everglades' original sheet-flow of water from Lake Okeechobee to Florida Bay—has floated around for 20 years, continuing to evolve until today's call to build a 26,800-acre concrete reservoir south of the Lake where previously the flow way was to be built, recognizing that a true slow-flow of water from the Lake will no longer be adequate to clean it to meet required standards.

U.S. Sugar signed off on a sales contract with the state for that land. All that keeps it from being a completed deal is the money to buy it; however, over the past 19 years, under different contracts, other parcels were offered for purchase. At the time, the



**Capt.
Don Voss**

*One Florida
Foundation*

South Florida Water Management District and the state were heavily criticized for siphoning money from restoration projects to purchase land, and indeed much-needed restoration was put on a back burner until recently. Obviously, it was a lesson the SFWMD has not forgotten.

No money was put aside for additional land purchases until Amendment #1 was passed, and now we have residents from all over the state who are as passionate about getting their water issues resolved as those on the Treasure Coast—all fighting for the same pot with not nearly enough to go around.

We need to take a deep breath here and proceed with some accurate facts. A reservoir of 26,800 acres built to comply to current standards would hold 3 feet of water or 120,000 acre feet, unless it is substantially reinforced at an estimated cost of \$2 billion. Even then, only about 400,000 acre feet could be stored, or about 25% of the needed storage.

TCPalm also states that after October 2015, this land is lost forever, which may

not be the case if one follows the option that Nathaniel Reed proposed last fall during a Rivers Coalition meeting in Stuart to purchase another parcel of agricultural land further east and under option until 2020; therefore, the statement that this 26,800-acre piece is the "last opportunity to buy such a parcel" to protect the estuary and save the Everglades is incorrect.

But we need to learn from our mistakes. We waited until the 11th hour to seek statewide support for the purchase of the 26,800-acre parcel of sugar land, assuming we could use the funds made available by passage of Amendment #1. We know now that its specific purchase should have been included in the amendment language if we believed it was so critical. We cannot wait until 2019 to begin seeking support and making plans to purchase the next large parcel by the time that option expires in 2020.

We believe the Governor, the Commissioner of Agriculture and the Speaker of the House, who all have said they want current restoration projects finished as their first priority, will consider a land purchase as their next priority. Why not? The Governor and the CEO of the Everglades Foundation and author of "Buy the Land and Send it South," Eric Eikenberg, stood together in West Palm Beach declaring they were working together to save the Everglades.

We have to trust that Eikenberg and Gov. Scott are on the same page about

water and the Everglades, and what better time than when the Governor surely will be considering what he wants his legacy to be for Eikenberg to engineer the purchase of an even larger piece of agricultural land, if he starts now.

The rest of the University of Florida Water Institute's Report gave prominence to: 1. Reducing the flow of water into Lake Okeechobee. 2. Cleaning the water at the source and as it flows. 3. Sending that clean water south. These recommendations underscore the same objectives as proposed by One Florida Foundation over the last 18 months. We will continue to seek solutions that follow these principles and research any new ideas offered, as time is short. We have seen that procrastination and lack of resolve are not friends of our goal of clean water.

We also should set a goal to eliminate septic tanks at least near all our springs and waterways by 2030 to fall in line with the completion of federal and state Everglades restoration projects already planned—a goal as critical to clean water as any land purchase. ■

Capt. Don Voss, nationally recognized for his environmental initiatives to improve the water quality of the Indian River Lagoon, will be a regular contributor to Martin County Currents. All advertising on these pages will benefit One Florida Foundation, dedicated to addressing water issues throughout the state.

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*Source: University of Florida Water Institute Independent Technical Review, March 2015

Increased funding, increased storage critical to save waterways, the Glades

The Florida Senate-authorized study by the University of Florida Water Institute concludes that current plans, including all those of the Central Everglades Restoration Project, are not enough to save the estuaries and the degradation of the Indian River Lagoon possibly from reaching “a tipping point” from which they cannot return.

Their conclusion, which came first on Page 10 and was reiterated throughout the 143-page document, calls for “enormous increases” in storage and treatment of water than what is planned north and south of Lake Okeechobee, translating also into “accelerated funding” from federal and state sources.

The panel of independent experts also concluded that the current Basin Management Action Plans to reduce levels of phosphorous and nitrogen will fall far short of state and federal mandates, unless more aggressive standards are set, and/or more stormwater treatment areas are built within “priority basins.”

The UF scientists studied all current Everglades restoration plans and additional projects of the South Florida Water Management District, including its Flow Equalization Basins and water farming projects, designed to reduce high-volume freshwater flows to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries and to move more water from Lake Okeechobee to the Everglades.

If all the federal and state water restoration projects currently planned were accelerated in funding and construction—which they are not—the lake-triggered discharges to the estuaries would be reduced by less than 55 percent, according to the report, and the increased flow of clean water to the Everglades would be less than 75 percent of what is needed.

An estimated one million acre-feet of additional storage and treatment should be added to drainage basins around the lake, north and south, the report said, and other options need also to be immediately considered, including deep-water injection wells, even if on a

temporary basis to mitigate high-water discharges from the lake.

The major hurdle to implementing the report's findings is funding, according to legislators, even with recent passage of Amendment 1 that dedicates a third of the documentary tax stamps for conservation land maintenance and acquisition, which this year will provide \$750 million, and more than \$20 billion in funds over the next 20 years.

The Florida Forever fund (for land acquisition) does not include the purchase of state-optional agricultural lands owned by U.S. Sugar, which many voters assumed would be included for purchase after passage of Amendment 1 would replenish the Florida Forever fund. (The option to purchase about 50,000 acres of the total acreage negotiated by former Gov. Charlie Crist in 2010 expires Oct. 12, 2015, leaving another 158,000 acres owned by U.S. Sugar under option until 2020, according to the South Florida Water Management District.)

The funding for the sugar land purchase, therefore, would need to be added to the state debt, estimated to be from \$350 million to \$700 million; however, no funding exists to construct a reservoir on the largest parcel of about 27,000 acres, estimated at a cost of more than \$2 billion and requiring 20 years to complete. The shallow-water reservoir would add approximately 100,000 acre feet of storage, according to water managers.

THE OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

The technical review panel also identified options for more effective protection of the estuaries and restoration of the Everglades, and confirmed the Army Corps of Engineers' Reconnaissance Re-

port of 1994 and the South Florida Water Management District's 2009 “River of Grass” report conclusions that a return to the original, slow-moving flow of water south of the lake to the Everglades is no longer geologically or hydrologically feasible.

The report summary, however, concluded: “The path forward requires significant long-term investment in the infrastructure of the South Florida hydrologic system.”

Options to be considered, according to the report, include the purchase of U.S. Sugar lands under option or other agricultural lands from willing sellers; use knowledge gained from the three injection-well pilot project to construct a system of large injection wells to permanently dispose of excess flows from Lake Okeechobee in the deep Boulder Zone; use the Holey Land and Rotenberger Wildlife Management Areas for

increased water storage; to consider construction of deep reservoirs (12 feet), rather than shallow reservoirs (four feet) in order to reduce the amount of land required for purchase; create new storage and conveyance along the western boundary of the EAA, where Lake Okeechobee water is cleaner and excess treatment capacity possibly exists in STA 5/6; create more Stormwater Treatment Areas in “priority basins;” and accelerate the Army Corps of Engineers dam safety study of the Hoover Dike to determine if higher lake levels can safely be attained.

The full report may be downloaded from the Florida Senate website. Click on the Water and Conservation Button to see a list of reports, or go to: <http://www.flsenate.gov/UserContent/Topics/WLC/UF-WaterInstituteFinalReportMarch2015.pdf>. ■

--Barbara Clowdus



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BrightStar Care honors local couple

BrightStar Care owners, Jack and Diane Nicol of Hobe Sound, recently received the Clinical Excellence Award at the BrightStar Care national conference in Phoenix.

BrightStar Care, a national franchise with more than 260 locations, provides medical and non-medical care to private clients within their own homes, as well as supplemental care staff to corporate clients.

The Nicols were recognized "for going above and beyond" in their clinical practice, receiving a perfect Joint Commission survey score in adult and elder homocare and childcare, as well as supplemental healthcare staffing to area hospitals and nursing homes.

BrightStar Care of Jupiter employs a Registered Nurse to create individualized plans of care, makes supervisory visits, verifies caregiver competency and trains staff.

"When we first meet a family, they are upset and don't know what direction to turn to in order to receive quality home care for their loved one," said Jack Nicol. "It is a testament to what we do when at the end of the day they are hugging us and saying how much of a difference we made, and continue to make, in their lives." ■



Hobe Sound residents Jack and Diane Nicol, owners of BrightStar of Jupiter, were recently honored by BrightStar International.

Palm City company expands market



With the assistance of the Business Development Board of Martin County, a local company marketed its products internationally in January at Europe's leading showcase for turf professionals and buyers, BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition in England.

Custom Agronomics in Palm City, formulators of liquid nutrients, specialty chemistries, wetting agents and surfactants for professional turf management, agriculture and lawn and garden applications, exhibited its products at the convention, made possible through a grant of \$3,100 from Enterprise Florida.

The exhibition drew more than 9,000 turf managers, golf club owners, managers and industry decision-makers from throughout Europe, according to organizers. The grant included opportunities for continuing education classes offered at the show.

"The BDBMC helped to facilitate the application for Custom Agronomics," said Tim Dougher, executive director of the BDB, "a perfect opportunity for a local company to expand into international markets." Dougher said. ■

Ferreira fo finish fishing pier soon

If you noticed the new aluminum-decked fishing pier being erected in place of the old U.S. 1 bridge over the Loxahatchee River in Jupiter, you are looking at the work of Martin County builder, Ferreira Construction of Stuart.

When completed this summer, the \$1 million fishing pier, just north of Burt Reynolds Park, will be 225 feet long, 13 feet wide and approximately eight feet above the mean water level, according to the Palm Beach County Department of Transportation.

The concrete from the 1927 bridge will be used to build an artificial reef, according to officials. ■

J.McLaughlin opens in Hobe Sound



J.McLaughlin, a store that offers classic American clothing and accessories for women and men, chose Hobe Sound to open its 96th shop. The 1,263 square-foot store is at 11770 South East Dixie Highway, in the former C.Orrico building next to Juno Shoe Girl in historic downtown Hobe Sound.

Jay McLaughlin, Co-Founder of J.McLaughlin, said the decision was made as the result of a series of highly successful trunk shows held at the same location, but the new store will be all signature J.McLaughlin, down to the paint colors.

Two brothers, Jay and Kevin McLaughlin, who launched J.McLaughlin in 1977, intended to create a new American sportswear brand that offered two key components: classic clothes with current relevance and a retail environment that had a neighborhood feel, according to the company's press release.

Since the J.McLaughlin brand values tradition, its stores offer a warm residential feel, exemplary customer service and a company culture of "being good neighbors," making them prime candidates for membership in the Hobe Sound Chamber of Commerce. If chamber Membership Director Jan Otten has not yet knocked on their door, she will be soon! For more information, visit: www.jmclaughlin.com. ■

WM tapped for 'Ethics in Business'



Waste Management was again recognized by the Ethisphere Institute, an independent center of research promoting best practices in corporate ethics and governance, as a 2015 World's Most Ethical Company.

This is the eighth time Waste Management will be honored as an organization that "continue to raise the bar on ethical leadership and corporate behavior," according to a press release.

The World's Most Ethical Companies designation recognizes organizations that foster a culture of ethics and transparency at each level of the company.

"As North America's leading environmental solutions provider," said David Steiner, president and chief executive officer of Waste Management, "we strive every day to provide excellent service to our customers, contribute to communities where we live and work, and minimize our environmental impact. We're extremely proud of our strong grounding and firm commitment to doing the right things and making the right decisions, day in and day out."

Waste Management is the only company in the Environmental Services industry being honored this year.

Scores are generated in five key categories: ethics and compliance program (35%), corporate citizenship and responsibility (20%), culture of ethics (20%), governance (15%) and leadership, innovation and reputation (10%). The full list of the 2015 World's Most Ethical Companies can be found at

<http://ethisphere.com/worlds-most-ethical/wme-honorees>, as well as more information about Ethisphere. ■

New service keeps eye on homes

A new service for snowbirds or residents on vacation is being offered by retired law enforcement professionals, Roger Myers and Mike Driscoll, who created the All Secure HomeWatch Service.



The duo offers a combined 65 years of law enforcement service to absentee homeowners from throughout Martin County and surrounding counties.

Myers, a retired FBI Special Agent, and Driscoll, a retired Special Agent with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, decided that their backgrounds added a much-needed perspective to their personalized exterior and interior checks of properties.

"Our clients can rely on us to watch their homes with the same level of integrity and dedication as we had in our professional law enforcement careers," Myers said. "You will have the comfort of knowing your home will be periodically checked by the All Secure team, who are completely reliable, trustworthy and responsible."

Myers and Driscoll both are residents of Martin County, own their own homes and boats, and are active in the community, including with the Hibiscus Children's Center, Molly's House and the Stuart Air Show. For more information, visit www.allsecurehomewatch.com, call 772-692-5710, or email info@allsecurehomewatch.com. ■

Chez Bim's Boutique opens doors



Jet Girard, owner of Chez Bim's Boutique, hid Easter eggs among her "little treasures" as part of her new shop's recent open house in Hobe Sound's historic district. Photo: Barbara Clowdus

One of the newest additions to Hobe Sound's eclectic mix of shops in its historic district is Chez Bim's Boutique, which faces the Old Post Office Alley. A walkway opens in the courtyard adjacent to the Sea Urchin gift shop on Mars, so even though Chez Bim's is tucked away out of the limelight, it's also easy to find and has plenty of parking right outside its door.

Inside is a dizzying array of "little treasures," which is how owner Jet Girard describes her assortment of gifts, home décor and other "finds," who recently hosted an open house and ribbon cutting that included an old-fashioned egg hunt within her shop.

Her treasures run the gamut from delicate porcelain china tea sets to a wood-and-brass chandelier, from whimsical porch decorations that sway in the wind to that perfect, hand-crafted couch pillow.

"I just cannot believe how much 'stuff' is in that store," says customer Amy Rickette, of Hobe Sound. "The longer you're in there, the more you see, but you cannot see

everything at one time....which means you have to make a trip back again to see what you missed the first time. It's so much fun; I just love it!"

The shop is at 11764 SE Dixie Highway, Unit # 8, in Hobe Sound. You may also call 860.299.6352 or email danandjet@gmail.com. ■



The murals at Hobe Sound are rich in detail; this one of 20 can be found at Bluewater Landscaping.

Hobe Sound no longer a sleepy spot

A little vibrancy has come to Hobe Sound at long last.

Part of the reason that residents and visitors are beginning to think of Hobe Sound as a destination—in addition to its Festival of the Arts and Christmas parade—are the quaint new shops that have opened over the past 12 months or so in the historic St. Onge Building at the corner of Mars Street and Old Dixie, including an antique shop, a coastal décor and furniture shop, three gift shops, and a resort-inspired, moderately priced clothing and accessories studio.

The new shops joined an already established shoe, clothing and accessories shop that was the first small business to move into the historic St. Onge building about two years ago, transforming and renovating parts of it—spreading out even more into a transformed former greenhouse and recently taking over another of its retail spaces. In addition to some other long-established shops on A1A, including a jewelry store and a florist shop, a large art and gift gallery has opened, as well as a fine arts gallery in the Mancuso building on Bridge Road.

Indeed, Festival of the Arts visitors often are heard saying that they had no idea that Hobe Sound had a "downtown" or a historic district, but it definitely is more than just a drive through to Jupiter Island.

"It's encouraging to finally see some retail shops open up along A1A and to see them doing so well," said Angela Hoffman, executive director of the Hobe Sound Chamber of Commerce and also chair of the Hobe Sound Neighborhood Advisory Committee that makes recommendations to the Martin County Commission for revitalization projects. Other stores are also opening on Bridge Road, adding to the mix and broadening Hobe Sound's appeal to shoppers.

"We've been wanting to get some attention for Hobe Sound and the great things that are happening here in our downtown," Hoffman said, "but it's really difficult when you cannot even get permission to put up banners on pole lights to draw people off US 1 to our historic district."

The first Saturday of the month during the cool winter months, the Chamber of Commerce sponsors the Hobe Sound Art Stroll, beginning at the corner of A1A and Bridge Road at Taste Restaurant—which has its own indoor art gallery. Visitors are treated to specials from shopkeepers, lots of food vendors, arts and crafts booths, special prize drawings, and live music.

The Hobe Sound Chamber, in partnership with Landmark Arts and the Hobe Sound Bible College/Academy, also launched guided tours of Hobe Sound's murals, which include 20 completed works and a still-unfinished mural on an inside patio wall at Taste. Tour participants are encouraged to add their own painterly touches—paints, brushes and directions provided—to Taste's mural.

The murals, most of which were created under the auspices of Landmark Arts of Hobe Sound and directed by artist Nadia Utto, and the tour itself, will be featured on a video created by MCTV for broadcast on the government information channel and for use by the county's new Tourism Department, currently developing a county-wide branding and marketing strategy.

A little known fact about the murals is that some of them were painted by renowned artist Dan Mackin, including on the side of the little Pettway Store on Old Dixie, and others were a community-wide project with a dozen or more well-known area artists contributing their time and talent. Some businesses also have commissioned murals for the sides of their buildings, adding artistry that builds community.

Within each mural there is a hidden element, Utto says, such as bumble bees or Mickey Mouse ears, which adds an element of surprise to the tour, which is conducted on an air-conditioned tour bus, ending at Taste, where dessert and coffee is served as part of the \$22 cost of the ticket.

"I live in Hobe Sound," said a recent tour participant, "and I drive by these murals all the time, but I didn't really see them until I took the tour. There's so much detail, so much more than we realize until we stop to really look at them. That's when you appreciate them and how beautiful they really are." ■

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Painting as the chasing of atmosphere and light

South Florida impressionist, Doreen Lepore, takes us on a beautiful journey to south Florida scenery, somehow capturing all its enchanting fragrance and atmosphere in her works, although she was born and raised in New York. She enjoys the immediacy of painting outdoors, or just sketching en plein air, any time she is in the mood. If the intended size does not allow her to paint outdoors, she brings back home her visions, sketches and squiggles to revive them in full-size compositions in her Hobe Sound studio.

Her artwork has been featured and juried at various Florida art galleries and exhibitions, including at the Elliot Museum on Hutchinson Island and earning "Best of the Best" at the A.E. Backus Museum in Fort Pierce. In Florida, where artists can walk barefoot almost all year around, the feel of nature is far more intimate than in the North with its predominantly indoor lifestyle. This skin-to-skin immediacy in interacting with the land is the driving force of Doreen Lepore's impressionist art, imparting to each painting a gentle lyricism and soft poetic tone.

Artist James McNeill Whistler once wrote, "As music is the poetry of sound, so is painting the poetry of sight," and



**Maya
Ellenson**

*Art
Kaleidoscope*



Japanese Bridge, Pastel

Doreen Lepore's art undeniably reveals a poetry of colors through her one-of-a-kind painterly technique and artistic vision. You'll not find bright, aggressive colors or straightforward sunshine. Her colors are balanced and delicate, and the pictorial beauty yields gracefully to an inner music of content, which is all about Florida and its precious environment we



Grazin in pastel.



Seabreeze, oil



Artist Doreen Lepore in her Hobe Sound studio.



Through the Oaks, Pastel

with cows at Adams Ranch in Fort Pierce exude serenity and an almost magical fusion with Mother Nature.

The artist works also in watercolor and charcoal, and her oil paintings, rich in texture and the balanced interplay of shade and light, feature Hobe Sound and beyond landscapes in an ever-changing kaleidoscope of sunlight, which transforms everything it penetrates.

Lepore's paintings give us insight into what makes American impressionism different from its French counterpart, from which we learned much, but by which we never became consumed.

Likely it's the free space between the artist and the land with no shadows of the past, as in Europe, that sets American impressionists apart.

The greatest challenge the first settlers had to face was the wilderness itself, as the founder of the White Mountain School of painters, Benjamin Champney, described the father of American impressionism, George Inness: "He learned much abroad, it is true, but his knowledge thus gained he has used in truthfully illustrating our own scenery....His example is a good one to follow, by all students coming home from foreign study, not to paint French pictures, but to trust to what nature can afford them here."

Florida offers more to artists than the generic Sunshine State with gorgeous beaches, for her multilayered landscapes contain a myriad of unique overtones to be loved and cherished, and that such a genuine and talented artist as Doreen Lepore can truly bring to light. ■



**Bougainvillea in
Vintage Vase**

love and need to protect.

An active member of Plein Air Florida and supporter of park painting, Lepore in many ways continues a purely American archetype of connecting landscape painting with environmental awareness, the paradigm that sparked the conservation movement in the second half of the 19th century. She says she feels especially attuned to impressionism and California Tonalism, which emphasizes the atmosphere, rather than focusing on descriptive detail.

As she ushers me to view her beautiful pastel painting, "Banks of Loxahatchee," which was featured in the "Fine Art Connoisseur" magazine August 2014 issue, she tells me: "Park painting is not just about aesthetics, but caring for the land we live on." Rendered in muted pastel tones, the painting is suggestive of more that is yet to be discovered and to be learned, and about the whole of Florida's landscape. This effect of retrospective awareness as a result of contemplating her art imparts to her landscapes both a subtle and an intriguing magnetism.

"When I paint the local scenery, I am fully immersed and present in the setting," she tells me. "Impressionism is all about chasing the light, for it's the light that weaves the tapestry of atmosphere and determines the mood and tonality of each piece."

Her other pastel pieces, "Through the Oaks," "Spring March," "Japanese Bridge," and others, are rendered in charmingly harmonious midtones and close values to enhance the shifting aura of nature's scenes. Her pastoral scenes

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.

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Answering a son's question leads to new book

Gillian Rothwell Rose calls her book "a love story," but it's about more than her mother's all-consuming love for her father that excluded their three daughters from sharing his life, his death, and even his burial. *The Poison Glen* tells a family's story of poverty, of war, of triumph and tragedy, written on a page of English history itself.

The book began about 17 years ago, after one of Rose's three sons asked a question about her family that she could not answer.

"I don't even remember now what his question was," she says, "... but that's when I realized that I didn't really know anything about my grandparents, or even my own parents. I had left them behind when I left England at 18 to sail to America, and I guess I just didn't look back."

Although many in Hobe Sound know Gillian Rose because she and her husband, Terry, own the Old Dixie Cafe North on US 1 in Hobe Sound, where *The Poison Glen* is sold, few realize that Rose's roots grew first in England. Her accent, now buried under decades of life as a U.S. citizen, emerges primarily when she talks about "me mum and me dad."

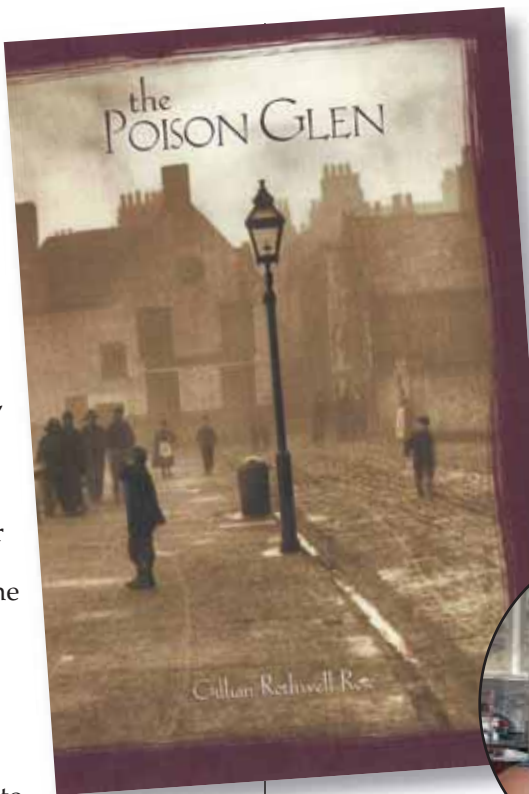
Gillian Rothwell was born and raised in Wigan, England, where her parents still lived when she called her mother to an-

swer her son's question.

"I guess I also was feeling very guilty for not knowing more about my family," she says, "but then, once you get started and you learn about these people you don't know ... the more you want to know."

Shortly after Rose's quest began, her father became seriously ill, but her mother forbade her or her sisters to come home to see him, even though he lay dying. Rose found herself resenting somewhat that she would lose the last opportunity to talk to a father who had been a kind but aloof presence throughout her childhood. Time ran out, and his death cemented her resolve.

She spent seven years researching and writing her family's story. With the help of a history museum in Wigan, Rose learned details about that part of the



world in the early 1800s that breathed life into her family's account.

"This book could not have happened without the help of the History Shop in Wigan," she says. The documents they sent provided the background to her mother's anecdotes that be-



came the heart of her book as she traced the Oxleys' and the Scanlons' and the Jacksons' and Rothwells' journey from more than 200 years ago to today. The book, which wends its way among historical events, imagined dialogue and actual family ex-

perience, is compelling, because the stories were told as they had been lived.

Rose recounted her grandmother's forced inscription into labor at the Trencherfield Cotton Mill at age six, and you can feel the anguish of those outside the Maypole Coal Mine after an explosion: "We can 'ear men down 'ere." You live through her family's soul-wrenching experiences in the Boer Wars in South Africa, as well as the two World Wars that devastated her homeland. You witness great loves, a stoic determination to triumph, and the indomitable spirit stamped on this family's DNA.

After Rose finished writing, potential publishers asked about her "next" book. "I told them that this is the only book I intend to write," she says, so her manuscript sat unpublished for 10 years, until she met Suzanne Briley of Hobe Sound, who put Rose on the path of self-publishing. The first print run sold out within weeks, and it's now on its second press run. (It's also available as an ebook at Barnes and Noble, as well as at Amazon.com.)

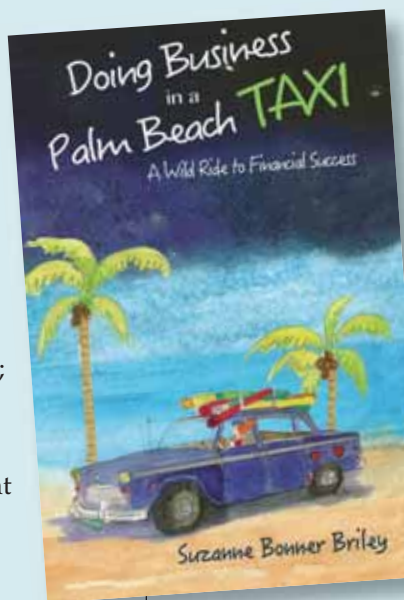
"I'm glad I wrote the book," she says, "but I think most of all, even more than having a family record for my sons, who might read the book someday, I feel a little softer towards my mother, now that I know more about the life she lived." ■

A light-hearted look at serious business

Those who know Suzanne Briley know she's a multi-talented, spiritual woman in perpetual motion: an award-winning artist who founded the Barn Artists in Hobe Sound; an advocate of the Alzheimer's Association; an environmentalist; a concert pianist; an avid gardener; a Currents columnist; and a successful entrepreneur who "retired" to Hobe Sound after selling her multi-million-dollar garment business in the '90s, launching it with only \$50 in the '70s when women still were not permitted to have their own credit cards.

Now she can add "published author" to her credits after writing and publishing *Doing Business in a Palm Beach Taxi* that chronicles an upbringing that fostered independence suited to entrepreneurship, her struggle as a divorced mother of two, and the day-to-day obstacles as a woman navigating a man's world.

"After I appeared as a guest on ABC's 'Good Morning America' with David Hartmann interviewing self-made millionaires," Briley recalls, "a New York literary agent called me and



suggested that I should write a book. He even came to our factory in West Palm Beach to see everything that I'd described, even our little blue taxicab that, at times, had



been my only office, as well as our primary mode for hauling rolls of fabrics from Miami—tied to its roof, no less—and for making deliveries to the posh Palm Beach shops that were our primary customers."

Briley was too busy at the time to write the book, but the agent planted a seed that continued to grow. It blossomed last fall when her "project" finally came to fruition with the advice and support of her many friends. She decided to self-publish, she said, "because I just wanted to see my book

printed, to see that it was finally DONE. If I waited around for an answer from a book publisher, I knew I might not live long enough to see my book sitting on my bookshelf."

What shines through brilliantly in this, at times side-splittingly funny 173-page journal, is the personality that sets Briley apart from those who want success to those who achieve success: A dogged determination not to settle for what was handed to her. Even before she knew she would become a business owner, she sought ways to increase her income: finishing a degree, seeking better employment, making important connections, devising new avenues for creating additional revenue streams, and tapping into the talents of family and friends to reach her goal of financial independence.

Eventually, she was making heart-shaped pillows from scraps of red velvet and lace for Valentine's Day that her mother convinced her could be sold to the posh shops on Worth Avenue—the humble beginnings of a fascinating, wild ride into a successful career in business, ending with a little book that is a perfect summer read on a porch swing.

The book is available for purchase at the Sea Urchin gift shop on Mars Street, the Elite Salon and Gallery on US 1, and on Amazon.com, which named it an "Editor's Pick." ■

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English country wedding makes fond memories



**Suzanne
Briley**

Hopscotch

It was at the end of summer in my English village of Sherborne. The day was golden, shedding light on the old stone church in the Cotswolds, painting rose gold on the ancient bell tower. A tinge of autumnal color touched the leaves on the great beech and chestnut trees along the silver Windrush River, and I could see the shadow of a quiet swan swimming along its banks, a reflective white color shimmering in the water. Surely, a happy day!

There was much excitement as guests began to arrive, driving down the long lane from the village to the church and along the curving drive.

Wedding guests walked to the church in such finery! Large frilly hats like swirling puddings, fans, feathers, veils and glittering dresses of silver and gold. Handsome men dressed in top hats, black tie and tails. Some wore kilts!

It was 5 o'clock in the afternoon, and the sun was sailing behind distant trees to present a magical story for the day's end. A few clouds were underlined with dark purple.

The vicar was all smiles in his blue frock, collar and robe. The church was filled with white roses, lillies and lime green bells of Ireland flowers.

In England all weddings are public events and can be attended by anyone, without an invitation. Interesting o me!

A large bell of flowers were hanging from the round arch, entrance to the church, streaming with more white lillies, roses and dark green ivy. Quite beautiful! The same type of flowers appeared as small crowns for the young bride and groom to be married there.

A lovely scent filled the little church with overwhelming and delightful fra-



grances, reminding me of all that is wonderful about a summer's country wedding in an 800-old church. The bells rang out, sounding across the valley and children, babies and parents appeared, laughing. A happy busy-ness and anticipation of a special event to soon take place filled the air.

Soon the lovely bride, covered in a swirl of white lace and net, stood at the door, and before her entry, three small boys—one, a ring bearer, with shining yellow hair—waited as her attendants. Dressed in creamy, silk blouses with peter pan collars, they wore pantaloons to their knees. Their waists were banded in lime green silk cumberbunds. Little silk knee stockings and white satin shoes completed their dress. Each one carried a large circular ring hoop covered with white flowers on green velvet twine.

Behind the attendants were three dogs, prancing down the carpeted aisle. A white Whippet, a malty colored brown one and a tiny Selihan terrier. All



three dogs were wearing roses around their necks. It was a magical moment.

The groom and his handsome father, a Scotsman of noble descent, stood smiling and waiting at the altar. The choir of Gloucester cathedral sang English hymns. Vows were repeated. The "Owl and the Pussycat" were read, and at last for this happy occasion, they were pronounced man and wife. Cheers! Hats flew in the air and the joyous music of Widor's "Toccata from the Fifth Symphony" played on the church organ, filling the church with sound as friend, family and villagers departed.

The bells once again rang out across the meadows and fields of golden wheat and bright red poppies, quiet river and five thousand acres of National Trust land surrounding the village. A bagpiper played tunes of Scotland as the bride, a farmer's daughter, and groom exited the church under an array of pitchforks held high by four men in white coats standing at attention.



Petals of roses tossed and applause added to the festivity.

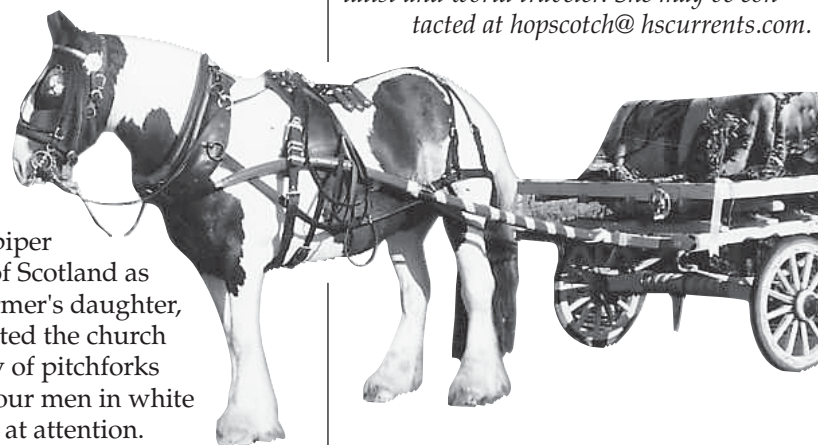
An old gypsy cart stood waiting. It was a shiny dark green with wide wooden wheels, and a wonderful little brown and white horse stood by, patiently, his mane shining silver-white in the fading sun. A small ladder led the bride up the stairs to sit on floppy velvet cushions, groom beside her. Bright red Hawthorne berries of the season decorated the cart in high style.

Sir Mark Palmer, an eccentric cousin of the queen, was the driver of the cart used for this splendid affair. He was dressed in a dark suit, silver threads and red shoes. His wife, Lady Catherine, stood nearby in a dress designed to look like wall paper. Black with large pink and red roses, green shoes and a bright yellow hat with large black feather. A sight to behold!

The little horse trotted back along the lane with dogs, children and happy friends following, back to Dairy Farm, home of the bride where a large white marquee covered a field, and happy champagne toasts, speeches, music and merriment lasted the night. At dawn, the happy couple sped away for a honeymoon in Spain, Rome and Portugal.

It was a wedding I will always remember! ■

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



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Lake O discharges chases river pomps out to surf



**Rich
Vidulich**
*Pompano
Reporter*

Springtime and Mother Nature bring us what we once anticipated eagerly. Rain! The Kissimmee River, a once-convoluted environmental trail of islands and pockets, now channels the sky-pure water into a dead-end reservoir—Lake Okeechobee—picking up developmental run off and cattle and agricultural deposits on its way to degradation.

Naturally the water has the intense momentum to go south. We know the story a thousand times over! The south is nothing more than a corporate cul de sac with a rim canal and a berm! Unnaturally, if the corporation has too much rain south of them, they are well armed, unlike us, to do something about it! They pump it into the people's reservoir, adding to the east and west deplorable outfalls—now the only permitted way to relieve the pressure on an under-fortified dike.

Amendment 1 was a special non-partisan Floridian outcry to allow us to begin remedying this problem, but the unfortunate results have been obvious! The people own the lake, but we are not able to finance the politicians to fight the Giants and win. In baseball jargon, we are the bums and the bums are ill represented in this once-great Florida.

We should relish the roots of why we moved to "La Florida," and understand why so many of us want a small piece of ole Florida back. We shouldn't allow a bunch of corporate sandspurs to destroy our Nature! Ponce de Leon came to Florida to find waters that would heal people and more. The water must be healed, not sacrificed!

Somehow, with all odds against the ocean, the "Spring Pompano Run" has begun! What are the odds that the combination of a late March nor'easter and a deluge of polluted water could combine to produce a surf bite? No analytical logs could predict a low-salinity flush out of the estuary as a pompano run, but it happened! The river discharges emptied large volumes of fresh water on the outgoing tides and every river pompano, sheepshead, bluefish and muddy catfish



Rege Kobert has a good day at Juno Beach.



Rich Vidulich shows river pompano with a yellowish tint to its scales.



A gleeful Jeff Daugherty on Hobe Sound Beach.

fled for a breathable environment.

As a result, Hobe Sound, Blowing Rocks Preserve, Jupiter and Juno Beach all harbored schools of river pomps. River pompano are not the pretty ocean-going silver nuggets we're used to, but they are every bit as delicious. So what's the difference! River pompano migrate in late August from the northern most reaches of our estuary. They school up in regions surrounding Eau Gallie and move south with

the incremental nor'easters, accompanied by a drop in water temperature. They don't empty out the inlets unless harsh river conditions become harmful. These fish are a dirty yellow color with a muddy appearance. A life in the estuary and their skin becomes stained. They only migrate in the river and can persevere in the toughest of climates.

Truly, this first run of river fish was not the official "Spring Run," but a lucky week for beach anglers nonetheless. April will be the "reel deal" for sure. The first signal to look for is the calico crab migration. March and April is calico spawn month, and if you drag one in, they do make great bait! Just crush one and slide the leg out of the body with the meat on the knuckle. The entire leg can be used if the crab is no wider than six inches. Larger crabs legs are too large to swallow so break the leg in half and always hook thru the knuckle meat, and work the hook in between the first joint.

This presentation is a feast for big pompano, large whittings, and permit. How do you know that they are here? Simple. You'll be losing baits in two minutes or less. They will chew your floats to smithereens, feast on clams, fleas, shrimp and artificial scented strips

like "Fish Bites." Not fussy at all. But PUHLEEZE do not kill a crab carrying an orange roe sac. It's against nature AND against the law.

I'm happy to acknowledge two new shops selling my Pompano Fluorocarbon Rigs: The Snook Nook in Jensen Beach and the Treasure Coast Boat Rental in Ft. Pierce, join the Stuart Angler in Stuart and Reel Life Bait and Tackle in Hobe Sound. I'm looking forward to meeting my fellow anglers at The Florida Sportsman Expo on April

11-12 at the Ft. Pierce Civic Center. My booth number is No. 1, so stop by and say hello. Happy April to all and let's line the beaches with pompano. NOW IS THE TIME! Tightlines. ■

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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Until they're all sold Photography Exhibit at Alice's to Benefit House of Hope

An "Images of Hope" exhibit by local photographers at Alice's Restaurant in Stuart is raising money for House of Hope in the fight against hunger and hardship in Martin County. Check out the pieces submitted by the members of the Treasure Coast Photography Group displayed on the restaurant's walls inside. Alice's Restaurant is at 2781 S.E. Ocean Blvd., in the Cedar Pointe Plaza, in Stuart.

Until May 3 The Man Who Came to Dinner

This show is an award winning comedy that is not only nostalgic in its depiction of life around 1935, but is funny, full of wit, and we get to celebrate Christmas in April at the Barn Theatre in Stuart. Brian Pecci, an accomplished well-known actor, has taken on the role of Sheridan Whiteside. He is surrounded by a remarkable cast, and the stage set is stunning. Tickets can be purchased by calling the Barn Theatre box office at 772-287-4884 or via the Barn website at www.barn-theatre.com.



Elliott Museum Volunteer Kurt Spence puts the finishing touches on the Museum's hand-carved circus which he restored, as LaVaine Wrigley, Elliott Museum Collections Manager watches. The Circus was in storage until recently. Other volunteers built the base and stand for its display.

Now on Display Bob Wyatt's Model Circus at the Elliott

The Elliott Museum offers visitors a treat for fans of the circus: an amazingly detailed and captivating collection of miniature renderings of the circus, including colorful railroad cars, sideshow acts, animals, attendees of all ages, and more. The Bob Wyatt Model Circus was lovingly restored for many weeks by Elliott Museum volunteer Kurt Spence. Last year, the circus parade was on display, but now the full circus is located on the museum's second floor. Visit this unique display at the Elliott Museum, 825 Northeast Ocean Boulevard, Stuart. For more information, call 772.225.1961 or visit www.elliottmuseumfl.org.

Friday, April 24 Lionfish Clinic & Hunt to Benefit Artificial Reef Program

Attend a lionfish clinic at the Loxahatchee River Center on Friday, April 24, from 6-8 p.m. to learn everything you need to know about lionfish, including how to capture them and prepare them for cooking, and how they are harming the ecosystem. The hunt begins Saturday, April 25, at 8am, followed by a dock party from 12-4pm. Fun for all ages that will benefit the Martin County Artificial Reef Program. The Loxahatchee River Center, 805 US 1, in Jupiter. For more information, go to www.mclionfish.com.



Weekend, April 25-26 18th Annual Downtown Stuart Craft Festival

Over the years, this festival has grown to be one of the most anticipated festivals in this area. The show is set up along Osceola Street in Stuart's historic downtown, bringing together some of the best crafters in the nation with paintings, wooden sculptures, ceramics, one-of-a-kind jewelry, handmade baskets and much, much more. An expansive Green Market complements the weekend with plants, orchids, tangy BBQ sauces, and homemade soaps. The festival starts at 10 a.m. on Saturday until 6 p.m. on Sunday. For more information, go to www.artfestival.com.

Weekend, April 25-26 Dr. Dolittle Jr. at the Maltz Jupiter Theatre

A treat you'll long remember: Dr. Dolittle Jr. features 33 local children in grades 3 - 5 who have been preparing for the Maltz Jupiter Theatre production since August. Directed by Conservatory instructor Lea Roy, Dr. Dolittle Jr. is based on the popular stories by Hugh Lofting and Twentieth Century Fox film. The musical tells the classic tale of a wacky but kind doctor who can talk to animals, taking audiences on a journey from a small English village to the far corners of the world. Join the fun as Dr. Dolittle trots, crawls and flies to the far corners of the world in search of the Great Pink Sea Snail - the oldest and wisest of all creatures on earth. Showtimes are 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 25, and 2 p.m. on Sunday, April 26. Tickets are \$25 for adults; \$20 for children. For tickets, call the Theatre's box office at (561) 575-2223 or visit www.jupitertheatre.org.

Wednesday, April 29 Outstanding Volunteers Ceremony

The Martin County School District will honor its 2014-15 Outstanding Volunteers and Business Partners of the Year at a recognition ceremony Wednesday, April 29, at 6:30 pm at Stuart Middle School, including senior, adult, and youth, as well as each school's business partners. Stuart Middle School is at 575 Georgia Avenue in Stuart, and the event, open to the public, will be in the cafeteria.

Thursday-Sunday, April 30-May 3 13, the Musical at StarStruck



A hilarious, coming-of-age musical about discovering that "cool" is sometimes where we least expect it. With an unforgettable rock score from TONY Award-winning composer Jason Robert Brown, 13 is a musical about fitting in - and standing out! StarStruck's award-winning Academy stars bring this PG-rated rock score to life on the StarStruck stage at 2101 S. Kanner Highway in Stuart. Performances are at 7 p.m. on weeknights and at 3 p.m. on Sunday. For tickets, call 772.283.7787.

Saturday, May 2 2015 Relay for Life in Hobe Sound

The American Cancer Society Relay For Life is the world's largest fundraising event to end cancer, uniting communities across the globe to celebrate those who have battled cancer, remember loved ones lost, and take action to finish the fight once and for all. The Hobe Sound Relay for Life event will be at South Fork High School on Saturday, May 2, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. The chair is Kim Waser-Nash. To participate, contact Ralph Perrone at 562.650.0128 or ralph.perrone@cancer.org.

Saturday, May 2 Beach Cleanup at Stuart Beach

Keep Martin Beautiful will host a clean up of Stuart Beach on Saturday, May 2, beginning at 8 a.m. For more information, or to make a suggestion of other community clean-up events you'd like to see happen, contact KMB at events@keepmartinbeautiful.org or call 772.781.1222.

Saturday, May 8 32nd Annual Golf Tournament at Hobe Sound

One of the most popular events in Hobe Sound, the 32nd Annual Golf Tournament presented by Metz Construction Co., will be Saturday, May 8, at the Hobe Sound Golf Club. Eagle sponsors include Mr. and Mrs. Gary Uber and Senator and Mrs. Joe Negron. Braman Motorcars of Jupiter and David and Becky Nagy of Cruise One are the Hole-in-One Sponsors. The four-player scramble starts at 1 p.m. \$150 per player, or \$600 per foursome. RSVP online at www.hobesound.org.

Weekend, May 14-16 Stuart Sailfish Regatta

This high-speed thrills weekend kicks off with a pre-racer party at Chillin' the Most restaurant, 4304 NE Ocean Blvd in Jensen Beach with music, raffles and the start of



a full-throttle weekend of hydroplanes, race boats, and powerboats! The races will once again be held on the Stuart Causeway on an oval racecourse on the northern side of the bridge. The Stuart Causeway will again be closed with the approval of Seawalls Point town officials offering incredible viewing from the bridge. Visitors to this year's event can expect a new and improved layout overall and additional food, beverage and customer services. Since the race is sanctioned by the American Power Boat Association, some of the nation's top-tier racers will be competing. For tickets and more information, go to: stUARTsailfishregatta.com.

Sunday, May 10 Hobe Sound Nature Center Turtle Walks

The season for the Hobe Sound Nature Center's careful watch of turtles leaving the sea to lay their eggs on Hobe Sound beach will begin again on May 10 at 9 p.m. The watches often last until midnight, and there's no guarantee a nesting turtle will be sighted. But if you'd like to experience this amazing phenomenon, you'd better sign up now. Registrations are required, since groups are limited to 30 at a time, and they fill up fast. A \$5 per attendee donation will be requested. For more information, contact the nature center, or go to: www.hobesoundnaturecenter.com.

Saturday, May 16 Let's Talk Technology

To share with the public what STEM opportunities are available locally and to communicate the importance of STEM education throughout the school district, S.P.A.M. Team 180 will host a technology fair, "Let's Talk Technology," on Saturday, May 16, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at IRSC's Wolf Technology Center on Salerno Road. The event will include demonstrations, career opportunities and exhibits. Exhibitors are being sought from the engineering community, the medical community and various robotics and mechanical vendors and manufacturers in the area to have displays, as well as to solicit resumes. "This is an exciting project for S.P.A.M. that we hope to see as an annual event," says Stuart engineer Susan O'Rourke. "It is the goal of FIRST to 'change the world' and this is an excellent opportunity for us to lead the conversation in our community." To volunteer, to be an exhibitor or for more information, email FrcTeam180@gmail.com or seorourke@comcast.net.

Monday, May 25 2015 Paddlefest & SUP Race



Come out and enjoy Memorial Day on the Lagoon at Sandsprit Park for the 3rd Annual Paddlefest & SUP Race. Race registration is at 7:30

a.m., and admission for non-racers is \$5, with proceeds to benefit a host of local charities. The day will include lots of vendors, music, food, demonstrations, and after the awards presentation at 11:30 a.m., the biggest group clean-up of the lagoon ever organized! For more information, go to the Paddlefest Facebook page.



Celebrating our historic past

Historic Preservation Month in Martin County will kick off Monday, May 1, at 5 p.m. at the Stuart Heritage Museum—the restored Stuart Feed Store built in 1901—on Flagler Avenue just east of Stuart City Hall. No admission charge, and lots of very short remarks from some of our favorite politicians and friends of historic preservation—an important element in this community's unique character.

Also on Monday, beginning at 6 p.m. at the Hoke Library in Jensen Beach, celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Friends of the Martin County Library System, is a free lecture by noted historian Alice Luckhardt on "Jensen Pioneers—Raw, Wild and Unspoiled." There will also be a Florida Frontier story time for the young folks. The Hoke is at 1150 NW Jack Williams Way, right off Jensen Beach Blvd., only a block east of US 1 in Jensen Beach. For more info, call 772-629-5282.

Many special events have been planned throughout the month, including:

- Tours of the historic Seminole Inn, built in 1926 by S. Davies Warfield, restored by the Wall family and filled with rich murals that tell the stories of the Seminole families that settled the area first, which will be lead by Jonnie Wall Flewelling and Iris Wall at 10 a.m. and at 2 p.m., on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. The inn is at 15885 SW Warfield Blvd. in Indiantown. For more information, call 772.597.3777.
- Free tours of the historic and fascinating Tuckahoe Mansion (built in 1938) in Indian RiverSide Park in Jensen Beach every Wednesday through May at 10 a.m. and at 11 a.m.
- Free tours of the Captain Sewall House (built in 1889), also at Indian RiverSide Park adjacent to the Tuckahoe Mansion at noon and at 2 p.m., featuring historian Sandra Thurlow, who will present "The Captain Sewall House, Its History in Pictures." Bruce and Barbara Osborn will portray Captain and Mrs. Sewall in period costume.

Other special events include a plaque dedication at the Apollo School (built in 1924) in Hobe Sound, only surviving two-room schoolhouse in Martin County, 9141 SE Apollo Street, on Saturday, May 9; an archaeological tour of Mount Elizabeth on which the Tuckahoe Mansion stands sponsored by the Southeast Florida Archaeological Society (meet at the pavilion adjacent to the Mansion at Tuckahoe) on Saturday, May 16, at 10 a.m., after which the public may attend from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. an open house at the historic Salerno Colored School (built in 1930) in Monrovia, across the street from the Stuart Middle School. It is a one-room schoolhouse built during the era of segregation and is at 4455 SE Murray Street in New Monrovia Park.

The complete calendar of events will be available at the Stuart Heritage Museum, and will include special lectures by Nathaniel Osborne on the history of the Indian River Lagoon, by John Hennessee on the commercial fishing industry of Port Salerno, and Fred Burky on the history of Martin County's once prodigious flower business, among many other events talks, open houses, and events, capped by the naming of the esteemed "Historic Preservationists of the Year" during a reception at the Lyric Theatre.

Coming to an end May 31 Rock N' Riverwalk Free Concerts

If you've been promising yourself you're going to get to downtown Stuart for their free Riverwalk concerts, you'd better do it soon. They will come to end for the season on May 31. Live bands play a variety of genres each Sunday from 1-4 p.m. on the Riverwalk stage next to Stuart City Hall.



Firefighter/paramedic Brautle Garcia, ELC board member Will Laughlin, ELC Executive Director Jacki Jackson, Lisa Holland of Team Holland and firefighter/paramedic Cameron May get ready for Touch-a-Truck.

Saturday, May 30 Touch-a-Truck at Martin County Fairgrounds

The perfect family fundraiser will likely be Touch-a-Truck to benefit the Early Learning Coalition of Indian River, Martin and Okeechobee counties. Set for Saturday, May 30, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Martin County Fairgrounds, proceeds will benefit the non-profit's Building Blocks for Educational Success. This interactive experience allows youngsters to climb on, learn about and discover their favorite big trucks - and what an exciting collection it will be—an engine truck from the Martin County Fire Department; a City of Stuart bucket truck, a side loader, a brush truck and Sammy the Sailfish; a Martin County Sheriff Office Black Humvee, patrol car and, possibly, bear cat truck and helicopter; a limo from Leighton Transportation; Stuart Police Department patrol cars and a crime scene vehicle; from the Coast Guard, "Coastie"; a tow truck from Reliable Towing; a garbage truck from Waste Management and, possibly, a school bus, a tug and some construction vehicles. Vehicle drivers and operators will be on hand to educate the public about their vehicles and answer any questions. Admission is \$5 per person and you'll be able to buy lunch or snacks from one of the many food trucks that will be at the Fairgrounds. Booth space will be available for non-profits who would like to participate by offering a craft suitable for children and present information about their organization. Sponsorships are available. Contact Lisa Holland of Team Holland for more information at 772-631-6611 or lisa@teamholland.info.

Sunday, June 7 Don't miss the boat!

The voyage for children K-5 for Vacation Bible School begins Sunday, June 7, and ends on Thursday, June 11. St. Luke's Episcopal Church on Salerno Road presents Oceans of Love Vacation Bible School. "Get on board with the St. Luke's Adventure Cruise Line as we sail the high seas and meet people whose lives changed course because of God's love," says Susan Auld, one of the organizers. "Days will be packed with an exciting mix of songs, stories, crafts, games, delicious snacks." Kids also will plant a "personal garden" to take home. St. Luke's Episcopal Church located is at 5150 Railway Avenue in Port Salerno. \$5 per family, and registration is being accepted now at the church office, Monday - Friday 9 am - 12 noon, or call 772.286.5455 during office hours.

Historic Preservation Month coming in May!

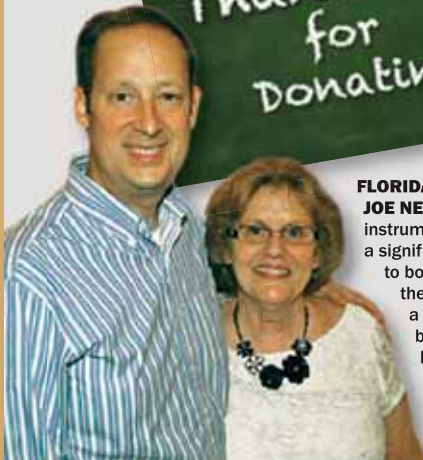
A Celebration of Martin County's Historic Past

Apollo School

Since its construction in the feverish days of Florida's land boom, the Apollo School has been an important part of the social fabric of Hobe Sound.



Thank You
for
Donating



FLORIDA SENATOR JOE NEGRON was instrumental in obtaining a significant state grant to boost renovation of the Apollo School, a 15-year effort led by Apollo School Foundation President Kathy Spurgeon, a former Apollo School student.



Developer Malcolm Meacham created the Olympia Improvement Company in the ambitious days of the 1920s Florida land boom for the purpose of establishing a master-planned resort on Jupiter Island, as well as a city on the mainland. Roads named for Greek gods were built in a radial pattern around the newly created Zeus Park in 1924. By 1925 the Olympia School (in which you now stand) and approximately 20 other mission-style buildings had been built, each designed by prominent New York City architectural firm Treanor and Fatio. On May 12, 1925, the School Board of Palm Beach County authorized "a school at Olympia with Mrs. Pauline Towles as the appointed teacher." The building had electricity, indoor plumbing and large windows for natural light, all of which were unusual for semi-rural schools in Florida at the time.

The Picture City Company purchased the interests of the Olympia Improvement Company in the summer of 1925, which coincided with the most intense period of wildly escalating real estate prices during the fevered land boom. In October 1925 the newly created Martin County agreed to manage the building to educate white children and rededicated the site "The Picture City School."

Heavily promoted plans to build a major center for the burgeoning motion picture industry came to a halt with the crash of the Florida real estate market in 1926.



Following construction of a new school, the former school building, which had been used only occasionally, gradually fell into disrepair. The original cupola had disappeared, perhaps a casualty of one of Florida's storms, as well as its signature arched windows.



In the early 1930s, the remnants of the Olympia development that surrounded the school were purchased from the defunct Picture City Company by the newly formed Hobe Sound Company. During the 1930s, the renamed "Hobe Sound White School" was serviced only by a single teacher who taught all grades and handled administrative duties, a result of declining tax revenues in the wake of the land boom collapse and the Great Depression. The school's Parent Teacher Association built a modest playground in 1939 and the federal government's Works Progress Administration provided funds for a new roof.

The building was used by the town in many capacities, from a neighborhood meeting hall and theater to a place of worship by Olympia Community Church, until a dedicated church (Hobe Sound Community Presbyterian Church) was built in 1936.

In the summer of 1942 the building served as a canteen for military members stationed at nearby Camp Murphy. Many of the lots surrounding the school had remained empty until the area began to grow along with Florida's population in the days following World War II.

By 1962 the town's growing population and school desegregation meant that the two-room building could not serve all of Hobe Sound's children. A new Hobe Sound Elementary School was built a short distance away on Gomez Avenue.



Since 1999, community volunteers have worked to raise money to refurbish the building. The Apollo School Foundation purchased the building in 2000 and continues to raise funds to restore it. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2002, the Apollo School Foundation held an open house in 2013 to celebrate the completion of a major portion of the renovation.

In January 2015, the first cultural event, a speakers series entitled, "Local Reflections," was launched to feature cultural, ecological and historical perspectives on people, places, and events in Hobe Sound and surrounding areas.

