

Congratulations



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Class of 2018

Dade City News

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Volume VII • Issue 41

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May 24, 2018

Chief Velboom Retiring

City Manager Explains Process Going Forward

by Joe Potter

Raymond E. "Ray" Velboom will be retiring as chief of the Dade City Police Department at the end of the month.

"Ray has been the face of the department for 10 years and has provided 10 years of dedicated service as police chief of Dade City," City Manager Billy Poe said Friday.

Velboom will have more than 40 years of law enforcement experience when he closes the book on his career May 31.

He was hired March 25, 2008, after having retired from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement as a supervisor.

Velboom was chosen from among a field of 35 applicants. "Ray visited every part of the community and he made it a point on his way home at the end of the day to drive through different parts of the town just to keep a finger on what was going on and to see how the community was doing.

"His presence and his direction broke down a lot of walls



After a decade of service with the Dade City Police Department, Chief Ray Velboom will officially retire on May 31. *File photo*

Velboom • Continued on Page 5A

Adult Ed Students Receive High Honor

James Irvin Center Recognizes High Achievers

Story and photos by Emily Kochanski



Students were first pinned and then presented with awards and certificates from James Irvin staff and Dade City Commissioner Nicole Deese Newlon.

Going back to school can be tough, especially when already juggling a career and family. That's why adults who decide to further their education deserve to be recognized for all of their achievements.

The James Irvin Education Center held its first National Adult Education Honor Society induction ceremony on May 16. During the hour-long event, 36 of the Center's adult education students, some adults and others high school students, were honored.

"During a conference that I attended a while ago, they talked about adult ed students really wanting and needing recognition," said James Irvin's Assistant Principal Pamela Davis. "By

Honor • Continued on Page 5A

Capt. 'Bo' Harrison Will Get His Day

City Commissioners Designate June 1

by Joe Potter

Dade City Commissioners designated June 1 as Capt. Charles "Bo" Harrison Day, to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the veteran deputy sheriff's death.

Harrison was fatally shot on June 1, 2003, while conducting a surveillance detail near a Lacochee nightclub. He was a lieutenant at the time and was only a few days away from retirement. Harrison was posthumously promoted to



Willie Broner, left, Mayor Camille Hernandez, Hazel Wells, Pasco Sheriff's Office Cpl. Jessica Zeigler, PSO Lt. Jay Gadassi, Mayor Pro Tempore Eunice Penix, PSO Capt. Tait Sanborn and Commissioners James Shive and Scott Black gather Tuesday to honor the late PSO Capt. Charles 'Bo' Harrison. *Photo by Richard K. Riley*

Harrison • Continued on Page 5A

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Dade City Police Report

Lengthy Park Altercation Leads To Arrest

Jacob Aaron Johnson, 21, of 14710 10th St., was arrested by Dade City police on May 2 and charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and vehicular theft. Johnson came into contact with two unidentified victims, one male and one female, at a Dade City park where he reportedly started a disturbance. All parties left the scene in two vehicles. The defendant reportedly cut the victim's vehicle off near the defendant's address where he approached the victim's vehicle with a BB gun. Johnson allegedly proceeded to strike the victim in the back of the head repeatedly before driving away in the victim's car with the female victim's two-year-old child in the back seat.

Willie J. Mathis II, 44, of Brooksville, was arrested by Dade City police on May 8 and was charged with possession of methamphetamine and possession of less than 20 grams of marijuana. Mathis was reportedly sitting in his truck in Watson Park after hours where he was seen by police. A computer check revealed the defendant was driving with a suspended license. After Mathis consented to a search of the vehicle, a glass pipe containing a burnt white residue was found beneath the driver's seat. The residue field tested positive for methamphetamine. Following his arrest, a search of Mathis' person yielded a hand-rolled cigarette which field tested positive for marijuana and two plastic baggies containing a single peach colored

pill determined to be Suboxone and three yellow pills determined to be Alprazolam. Mathis did not have a prescription for either drug.

Breon J. Davis, 34, of 14619 State St., was arrested by Dade City police on April 6 on charges of domestic battery and burglary. The victim was sitting inside her car parked at Whitehouse and 10th avenues when she came into contact with the defendant. During an exchange of their mutual child, the defendant allegedly became angry, reached into the victim's vehicle and struck the victim once in the face with a closed fist, causing swelling to the victim's right eye and small lacerations on her upper and lower lips. Davis then fled on foot before being apprehended.

Aaron Lynn Larue, 28, of 15309 Lee Ave., was arrested by Dade City police on May 3 on a charge of retail theft. Larue was captured by video surveillance reportedly concealing multiple items valued at \$64 and passed all points of sale without paying. Post Miranda Larue confessed to stealing the merchandise with intent to sell for his drug habit.

Miguel Angel Perez, 20, of 15337 17th St., was arrested by Dade City police on May 3 on two active Pasco County warrants for violation of probation - burglary and possession of methamphetamine. Contact was made with Perez on Seventh Street, and he was apprehended after the warrant was confirmed.

A 16-year-old female was arrested by Dade City police on May 4 on a charge of domestic aggravated battery on a pregnant woman. A verbal altercation between the defendant and her sister turned physical when the

defendant allegedly struck the victim on the left side of her head with a closed fist. The victim is currently seven months pregnant and the defendant was aware of this information prior to the altercation. Both subjects reside in the same household.

Joel I. Velasco, 47, of Trilby, was arrested by Dade City police on May 7 on a charge of uttering uncurrent bills. He was booked into the Pasco County Jail.

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



Random Victim Stabbed In Car

Staff Report

Sherriff's deputies, along with Dade City Police Department, continue to investigate an odd incident that happened on Tuesday and resulted in the stabbing of the victim.



Roscoe James

Roscoe James, 42, of 37212 North Ave., was reportedly acting belligerent and jumping on cars at the intersection of Morningside Drive and Old Lakeland Highway before attacking the driver of a car and stabbing him multiple times. The driver was apparently chosen at random.

When police arrived James reportedly resisted arrest and battered the Dade City officer.

The driver of the car was airlifted to a regional hospital for treatment of his wounds.

The Pasco Sheriff's Office and Dade City police continue to investigate.

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Solar Ordinance Hotly Contested

Final Decision Due In Two Weeks In Dade City

by Joe Potter

The first of two public county commission hearings was held Tuesday on an ordinance that would amend the county's land development code (LDC) to allow a solar farm and electrical substation to be classified as a special exception use in certain areas.

Those areas include agricultural, agricultural-residential, commercial/light-manufacturing, light-general park and general industrial park districts.

Tuesday's meeting was held in New Port Richey; the second public hearing will be held June 5 at 1:30 p.m. in the Historic Courthouse in Dade City.

The ordinance could be adopted on its second reading after that public hearing.

The change to the LDC has been proposed because the Pasco County Planning Commission approved a request by Tampa Electric Company (TECO) on April 9 for a solar farm to be built on 350 acres of property on the east and west sides of Blanton Road, just north of Pasco-Hernando State College.

The planning commission is a group of volunteers who are appointed by the county. Their decisions on special

exceptions are final unless an appeal is filed within 30 days with the Pasco Board of County Commissioners.

Passage of the solar farm ordinance will not automatically mean TECO will be able to build its solar farm in east Pasco, County Attorney Jeffrey Steinsnyder said.

TECO will have to go through permitting processes and obtain site plan approvals before it could proceed with the project.

Denise Hernandez, Pasco County's zoning administrator/special projects manager, told county commissioners Tuesday the LDC does not specifically list where solar farms are permitted.

According to Hernandez, this prompted her to rely on Uncertain Classification rules in a section of the LDC to determine whether a solar farm is a 'special exception use' in the A-R (Agricultural-Residential) District.

Several people from the eastern part of the county traveled to the West Pasco Government Center to speak against the ordinance.

"I think this ordinance should be abandoned because it has too many flaws in it," Alma Coston said.

"It takes the authority out of the hands of the county commissioners and places it in the hands of the planning commission, so if they approve it, it is a done deal. You could have contaminated water. You don't know what kind of contaminants could

run off of these panels."

"I think one of the problems we have with this – and the definition of solar – is that different counties in Florida are wrestling with how to deal with it," Joel Coston said.

He said the proposed ordinance doesn't adequately address Pasco County because of the differences in topography from the gulf coast to the Brooksville Ridge, where the proposed solar farm would be located.

Richard Riley of Trilby told commissioners they should take more time before moving forward with the ordinance.

"This ordinance should be withdrawn or studied so the solar farm category can be specific and be put into the comp plan and debated publicly. The elected representatives of the county should be able to speak more on what is going to be taking place in the county," Riley said.

Nancy Hazelwood of Blanton said northeast Pasco County was the wrong place for the proposed solar farm. The county created the Northeast Pasco Rural Protection Overlay District a few years ago to prevent this type of development from occurring, she said.

"Solar is a great thing in the right place, but not in someone's back yard."

County commissioners should also be more involved in the process, Hazelwood said, adding, "This will go through the planning commission and not involve our

elected officials – you."

Assistant County Attorney David Goldstein reminded those attending the public hearing any decision by the planning commission can be appealed to the county commissioners who would then have the final say regarding the matter.

State Sen. Wilton Simpson (R-Trilby) and his wife, Katherine, own 252 acres of the 350 acres TECO plans to develop. Simpson represents District 10, which includes Citrus and Hernando counties, as well as part of Pasco County.

One of the speakers at Tuesday's public hearing suggested Simpson sell TECO some property on U.S. 98, where he currently operates an egg farm, so the solar farm could be built there.

Simpson previously said he would explore other options for Blanton Road if TECO's efforts to develop the solar farm there were thwarted.

"I am an entrepreneur and developer and I have plenty of opportunities to develop that property," Simpson said.

The acreage he owns is a prime spot for residential development because of several factors, Simpson said.

It is only three miles from Interstate 75, water and sewer utilities are nearby and could easily be connected, and it is close to PHSC.

Simpson said another option would be to develop the property agriculturally.

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Student Summer Haul Passes are available at the following locations:

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- Pasco County Clerk & Comptroller: West and East Pasco Government Centers
- Pasco-Hernando State College bookstores in Dade City, New Port Richey and Wesley Chapel

• PCPT Administrative Offices: 8620 Galen Wilson Boulevard, Port Richey

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East Pasco Events

May 25 – Survival Sewing – Learn the basics of sewing. Sewing machines and materials provided. Held at Hugh Embry Library, 14215 Fourth St., at 10 a.m. Call the library at (352) 567-3576 to register.

May 28 – Gulfside Thrift Shoppes Open on Memorial Day – To celebrate the holiday, the stores will be offering 25 percent off storewide at all six locations from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Proceeds from the Gulfside Hospice Thrift Shoppes support care for hospice patients in Pasco. Located at 37925 Sky Ridge Circle. Call (813) 782-7200 for information.

June 1 – First Friday – Stop by downtown Dade City starting at 5 p.m. for extended shop hours, specials, sales and live entertainment. Visit the Dade City Merchants Association for more information.

June 1 – Skate for Shoes – Support children in need throughout Pasco County at this benefit skating event. Held at Florida Hospital Center Ice, 3173 Cypress Ridge Blvd., Wesley Chapel, from 3-5 p.m. or 5:30-7:30 p.m. Admission is \$10. Bring a new pair of shoes to donate for free skate rental. Prizes will be raffled. This is an all ages event. Sponsored by Shoes 4 Schools and the Perfect 10 Charity.

June 2 – Rain Harvesting Workshop – Rain barrels can help reduce water pollution. Come to this UF/IFAS Pasco Extension workshop and learn how. Pre-Registration at Eventbrite and \$40 pre-payment required. No refunds available. Pasco County residents only. Held from 9-10:30 a.m. in the Stallings Building, 15029 14th St. Call (352) 518-0156 for information.

June 6 – Garden Detectives – The Dade City Garden Club, in coordination with Hugh Embry Library will offer its Nature Detectives workshop at 1 p.m. at the library, 14215 Fourth St. The program will be about bees and is for youth ages 6 to 12. There is no cost to participate. However, space and materials are limited, and registration is required. Stop by the library or call (352) 567-3576 for reservations.

June 9 – Rummage and Yard Sale – Stop by the Pioneer Florida Museum & Village, 15602 Pioneer Museum Road, from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. for the inaugural rummage and yard sale. Clean out those closets, garages and sheds and rent a space for \$20. Bring your own table or display. Limited six-foot tables are available to rent for \$7 each. Contact bminton053@gmail.com or visit pioneerfloridamuseum.org for information.

June 9 – Farmers Market – Held in the San Antonio City Park from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Offering fresh produce, hand-crafted wine, yard art, plants, jams and jellies, dog treats, honey and bee products, repurposed glass items, dried herbs and herbal products and baked goods. Hot dogs, popcorn, coffee and sodas available for purchase. Vendor spaces are available for \$25. Contact Winnie Burke at (352) 437-5161 or rotarysanantoniofl@gmail.com for information.

June 13 – Men’s Health Day – Men 18 years and older, receive free health screenings, community resources, light refreshments and more. Held 1-4 p.m. at Premier Community Healthcare Dade City Family Health Center, 14027 Fifth St. Call (352-) 518-2000 to reserve a spot.

June 16 – Garden Detectives – The Dade City Garden Club, in coordination with Hugh Embry Library will offer its Nature Detectives workshop at 10:30 a.m. at the library, 14215 Fourth St. The program will be about bees and is for youth ages 6 to 12. There is no cost to participate. However, space and materials are limited, and registration is required. Stop by the library or call (352) 567-3576 for reservations.

June 21 – Sippin’ with Sunrise – Support Sunrise of Pasco County Domestic and Sexual Violence Center by attending a wine tasting event at Covington Farm, 36222 Covington Road, from 6-8:30 p.m. Food, craft beer and vendors will also be featured. General admission is \$40 and \$75 for a pair. VIP tickets are \$55 and \$100 for a pair. Visit sunrisepasco.org or call (352) 521-3358 for tickets and information.

June 23 – Family Field Day – Color Me Abstract is hosting the second annual event at 10 a.m. at the Pioneer Florida Museum, 15602 Pioneer Museum Road. Bounce houses, face painting, music, water games, and more will be featured. Admission is free and includes food, prizes and giveaways. All are encouraged to bring donations to help support local charities Bright Hopes and Sunrise of Pasco County. Visit the Color Me Abstract Facebook page or www.icolormeabstract.com for information.

July 6 – First Friday – Stop by downtown Dade City starting at 5 p.m. for extended shop hours, specials, sales and live entertainment. Visit the Dade City Merchants Association for more information.

July 14 – Farmers Market – Held in the San Antonio City Park from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Offering fresh produce, hand-crafted wine, yard art, plants, jams and jellies, dog treats, honey and bee products, repurposed glass items, dried herbs and herbal products and baked goods. Hot dogs, popcorn, coffee and sodas available for purchase. Vendor spaces are available for \$25. Contact Winnie Burke at (352) 437-5161 or rotarysanantoniofl@gmail.com for information.

Aug. 3 – First Friday – Stop by downtown Dade City starting at 5 p.m. for extended shop hours, specials, sales and live entertainment. Visit the Dade City Merchants Association for more information.

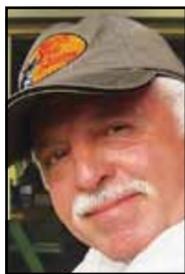
Aug. 11 – Farmers Market – Held in the San Antonio City Park from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Offering fresh produce, hand-crafted wine, yard art, plants, jams and jellies, dog treats, honey and bee products, repurposed glass items, dried herbs and herbal products and baked goods. Hot dogs, popcorn, coffee and sodas available for purchase. Vendor spaces are available for \$25. Contact Winnie Burke at (352) 437-5161 or rotarysanantoniofl@gmail.com for information.

Sept. 7 – First Friday – Stop by downtown Dade City starting at 5 p.m. for extended shop hours, specials, sales and live entertainment. Visit the Dade City Merchants Association for more information.

Email events to: Events@PascoNewsPubs.com or call (813) 783-1300 – one week BEFORE the Thursday publication date. Maximum 50 words. Subject to available room and editing.

For more events visit www.pasconewspubs.com

Commentary



First Things First

Greg First

Water, Water Everywhere

The month of May is usually one of the driest months of the year. You could pretty much plan ahead to do almost anything outdoors because the chances of rain were at a minimum. As a matter of fact, in 2017 the average was less than half of an inch of rain.

So far, this month has not followed that trend; in May of 2018 the total has already reached several inches with another week to go.

Don't get me wrong, I love rain.

Trying to mow the few weeds popping up here and there before the rains came was not a good idea. There was so much dust I even tried wearing a mask but it was so hot with that thing on I would rather just suffer for a day or two after the job was complete.

When my brother Gary and I were kids growing up here in east Pasco County we always looked forward to the rain. We made skim boards out of plywood and had competitions with some of our friends to see who could go the furthest in one of the many puddles you could find. Mom didn't have any problem with us playing in the rain but if there was any

thunder heard the party was over. When there wasn't any rain, probably in May, we made a slip and slide out of some plastic sheeting. A little bit of water from the hose or sprinkler and we were flying over the grass. We would go headfirst, feetfirst or just try and stand up to see how it would work out. I don't remember anybody really getting hurt. It was great fun.

If you are house hunting or looking for land this will be a good opportunity to drive around to spot any standing water where it shouldn't be. Again, growing up here I have seen homes being built where there were once ponds and lakes where we used to fish as kids. As the years went by those areas have quit retaining any water. Maybe it's because of all the homes being built and the water table dropping. Maybe it's because of some creative site plan work done by some anxious developers trying to get their site plan approved to build more homes.

Maybe it's the same ones who have been involved with the midnight gopher turtle relocation program. Here today and gone tomorrow. It costs a fortune to relocate them legally. In any event, remember to do your homework before spending a dime.

As the rains continue this will be a good test run for Pasco County and local municipalities to see if there are any impending drainage problems in need of attention. I have seen a few areas in the past that needed some work but feel, for the most part, everyone is doing what they can with the available resources.

The problem I see is as the concrete jungle advances on east Pasco it will be a constant battle to figure out where all the water will go.

The native wildlife is probably wondering the exact same thing.

Memorial Day 2018 Events

Dade City

Members of the American Legion Post #15 will put out flags in the Dade City Cemetery, 38151 Martin Luther King Blvd., to pay tribute to veterans who are no longer with us. Members of Pasco High School's JROTC program are helping to place the flags at gravesites.

Zephyrhills

There will be a Memorial Day ceremony in Oakside Cemetery, 5335 Eighth St., at 11 a.m. Speakers include Mayor Gene Whitfield and state Rep. Danny Burgess. Andy Magy, Commander of The Forty and Eight, will lead the ceremony and Chaplain Navy Chief Corpsman Jim Shultz will present the opening prayer and Pledge of Allegiance. The ceremony will also feature the VFW Post #8154 color guard.

San Antonio

The City of San Antonio and the Rotary Club of San Antonio will honor all deceased members of the United States military in front of City Hall, 32819 Pennsylvania Ave., at 10 a.m. For your comfort, please bring your lawn chair. Anyone having names of deceased veterans from San Antonio, St. Joseph, and St. Leo is asked to contact City Hall at (352) 588-2127.

AMVETS Post #550 will host lunch after a Memorial Day ceremony at 1 p.m. with hamburgers, hot dogs and BBQ chicken. Please bring a dish to pass. There is no cover charge and the public is invited. Pure Country Gold will be performing live music starting around 3 p.m. AMVETS is located at 4645 Airport Road. Visit their Facebook or call (813) 780-8180 for information.

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

Publisher

Chris Drews
cdrews@pasconewspubs.com

Editor

Keri McAlpine
keri@pasconewspubs.com

Reporters

Joe Potter
jpotter@pasconewspubs.com

Accounting

Linda Wood
lwood@pasconewspubs.com

Design

Edwin Pitts
pasconewspubs.design@gmail.com

Dave Walters

walters@pasconewspubs.com

Sales

Krista Black
kblack@pasconewspubs.com

Public Relations

Greg First
gfirst@pasconewspubs.com

Max Zimmerman
mzimmerman@pasconewspubs.com

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Honor • Continued from Page 1A

introducing this event, students are able to receive a type of recognition that some of them have never received during their academic careers. That's why it was important for us to hold this ceremony."

Friends, family and other invited guests erupted into cheers as they watched as their loved ones receive a pin, certificate and medal while making history as James Irvin's first Honor Society inductees. Light refreshments and a final word of congratulations followed the ceremony.

Melissa Murray has been attending James Irvin for only six months and will be graduating high school a year early thanks to the programs that the education center offers.

"I'm really proud of myself. I have



James Irvin Education Center Principal Cloty Davis, left, and Assistant Principal Pamela Davis were thrilled that their adult education students were finally earning the recognition they deserved.

been trying to get into the Honor Society at school for so long, but it's really hard," said Murray. "When I got the email saying that I had been invited into an Honor Society I was so excited. I cried."

The staff at James Irvin is hoping to have a greater number of inductees at next year's event, and maybe a bigger venue.

"I think the ceremony was a huge success. We had a great turnout of students, lots of supportive families and staff. We were also stoked to have Dade City Commissioner Nicole Deese Newlon attend," said Sabrina Adelson, the instructional coordinator for all online adult education programs in Pasco County. "We are looking forward to next year's event, as well as the many years to come. But next year we'll definitely need a bigger space."

Velboom • Continued from Page 1A

not only inside the city and the department but also in the community, specifically the African-American community," Poe said.

"I think that's probably one of his biggest contributions as police chief."

Poe isn't the only one recognizing Velboom's accomplishments as Dade City's police chief.

The American Society for Public Administration named Velboom as one of seven recipients of its certificate of recommendation as a Public Service Exemplar for the Tampa Bay region.

Velboom is "Dedicated to serving the public with the highest level of performance, integrity and pride," the May 4 certificate said.

Velboom filled the position vacated by Phillip Thompson, who had been police chief for 20 years before

retiring July 31, 2007.

Capt. David Duff, who had been second in command, served as acting chief until Velboom was hired.

Duff retired in January after 33 years of service with DCPD.

Sgt. James Walters, who has been helping Velboom with some of Duff's former responsibilities since January, was promoted to acting chief on Feb. 12.

Two other promotions also occurred at DCPD on Feb. 12: Sgt. William Rowe was named acting lieutenant over the operations department and officer Brian Uppercue was named acting lieutenant over administration.

Poe said this team will continue to lead DCPD until a new chief is chosen within the next three to four months, enough time to determine what is best for not only DCPD, but also the city as a whole.

Dade City's charter form of government allows the city manager to hire or fire department heads and city commission will vote on Poe's choice during a public meeting. Dade City commissioners have never rejected a city manager's choice for police chief.

The department has operated with a chief, captain and an administrative sergeant as its leadership team during the past 30 years, Poe said.

"We are looking at having a chief and two lieutenants," Poe said.

"I have not officially looked at everything but we have three officers that meet the qualifications to be chief."

"I think the administration team that is in place right now is doing a great job ... part of that is the entire department sees the big picture and is willing to do what it takes to make the agency a great agency."

Harrison • Continued from Page 1A

the rank of captain.

One of Harrison's lifelong friends, Willie Broner, said he and Harrison went to high school together.

"I want to thank Dade City for

recognizing such a great man. Bo served the community as a leader and a protector and he gave his life doing so," Broner said.

"He was my mentor and my friend," said Pasco Sheriff's Cpl. Jessica Zeigler.

"We called him 'BoBo' when we were going to school together," said Hazel Wells, who lived close to Harrison's childhood home on 11th Street.

Wells helped lead an effort in 2015 to

have the street renamed Capt. Charles "Bo" Harrison Street in his honor.

The state legislature renamed U.S. 301 from the Hernando to the Hillsborough county lines in Harrison's honor in 2004.



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Letter To The Editor...

Solar Project Presents Opportunity

There has been much publicity regarding the proposed TECO Mountain View solar project slated for 350 acres in east Pasco that was recently granted a special use exception by the Pasco County Planning Commission. As a life-long resident of the area and an adjoining landowner where my family has chosen to live, I was concerned when the initial proposal was made public to develop the property, albeit I was encouraged to see that there were no development plans similar to the ill-fated plan attempted by Wells Fargo in 2015.

After meeting and discussing with neighbors who had similar concerns, I contacted TECO to see if there was room for any modification and/or refinement to the proposed project. I was very pleased at the willingness of both Jimmy Adcock and Mark Ward at TECO to meet numerous times to discuss these concerns. After many meetings and phone conversations, TECO revised their plans prior to submission to Pasco County that include the following main adjustments:

To permanently preserve the southernmost 43 acres of the project where there is currently an eagle nest (previously there were no plans to develop this portion only so long as the eagle remained). This portion of the property has the vast majority of trees that are outside of any wetland areas and would otherwise be potentially removed if included in the project.

To exclude a 10-acre hayfield from the project's west boundary that further buffers the project

To only fence and buffer (planting 25 ft. deep) the paneled portion of the project (this step will preserve the current aesthetics of the unaffected properties that are being preserved).

To continue to meet individually with affected neighboring landowners (if the landowner wished) to discuss their preferred buffering. TECO has amended their plan to include an enhanced planted buffer with added depth and tighter spacing of trees in the buffer.

Because of these modifications, myself and approximately 30 other affected neighbors submitted a letter of support for the project to the planning commission prior to their April 9 meeting. In addition to the items listed above, the proposed project compares favorably to any other realistic alternative use of the land.

Economic Benefits:

Expanded tax base with no investment required by Pasco County.

No strain on infrastructure, which would be stressed if developed for residential use.

No investment in schools, roads, or

public services is needed.

Mitigates the risk associated with a volatile real estate market collapse and the effects of foreclosed or financially underwater homes have on surrounding property values.

TECO will be the owner of the entire property and project, unlike having potentially hundreds of individual property owners having to maintain the condition of their properties through varying economic conditions.

Environmental Benefits:

Approximately 30 percent of the 350 acres involved with the project will be preserved from development. This area includes most of the trees on the property and will continue to serve as a vital habitat for wildlife. (This area includes the permanent preservation of the 40 acres where the eagle is located and many of the mature trees located on the 350 acres.)

Aside from necessary irrigation needed to establish the landscaping buffer, there will be no water used on the project. This could potentially save more than 50,000,000 gallons of water per year compared to residential development.

TECO is planting a 25 ft. deep buffer more than three miles long. After establishment, the project's panels will be shielded from view from most, as well as for those traveling Blanton Road.

There are no lights associated with the project except for the planned substation at the top of Frazee Hill (which will be buffered), meaning that 97 percent of the property will be free of any nighttime 'light pollution'.

TECO has modified their plans and will only fence (behind the substantial landscaping) the portion of the project actually containing panels, leaving a large portion of the property as it currently is.

While I can understand that some would love to see the property remain pasture or developed into a larger acreage subdivision, economics prevent these options as it's hard to raise cattle profitably on \$1,000 per acre land, let alone \$20,000 per acre land: and the absorption rate (20 plus years) of a large acreage (1-5 acres lots) subdivision would be nearly impossible to result in a profitable investment for any developer.

Given these reasons as well as the need to provide clean renewable energy in a state that continues to add hundreds of thousands of people per year, many area landowners and residents, myself included, DO in fact support the proposed Mountain View Solar Project and encourage those with questions or concerns to try and work with TECO to see if their concerns may be addressed to a mutually beneficial outcome.

*Jeff Phillips
Dade City*

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Dade City News

Presents

PASCO HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2018



Valedictorian To Pursue Biomedical Engineering

by Keri McAlpine

While Rachel Mae Hillner is looking forward to attending college in the fall, it won't be as drastic of a change for her leaving the Pasco High School campus.

That's because for the past two years, this year's valedictorian has barely been at the campus in order to attend classes at Pasco-Hernando State College.

But, she would return for soccer games, her most prominent high school activity, and will even be playing when she attends the Florida Institute of Technology.

"I'm excited about that," she said about the college-level athletics.

Another reason she is looking forward to moving to the Melbourne-based school is for its easy access to the coast.

"It will be right on the beach, something I don't have over here," Hillner, 18, said.

Hillner plans to relax over the summer before focusing on school full-time to major in biomedical engineering. The curriculum might be a little more intense, but it's nothing Hillner isn't ready for.



2018 PHS Valedictorian Rachel Mae Hillner



2018 PHS Salutatorian Mary An Tran

Salutatorian Plans Pre-Med Course Load

by Keri McAlpine

When Mary An Tran discovered she was named salutatorian for the 2018 graduating class, she was quite surprised.

"I was dumbfounded actually, very surprised. I guess that's what happens when you don't come on campus," she said laughing.

Tran has been attending classes at Pasco-Hernando State College for the past two years, only returning to campus for meetings with counselors or to pick up documents.

That being said, she is ecstatic to finally graduate and move up to the next level.

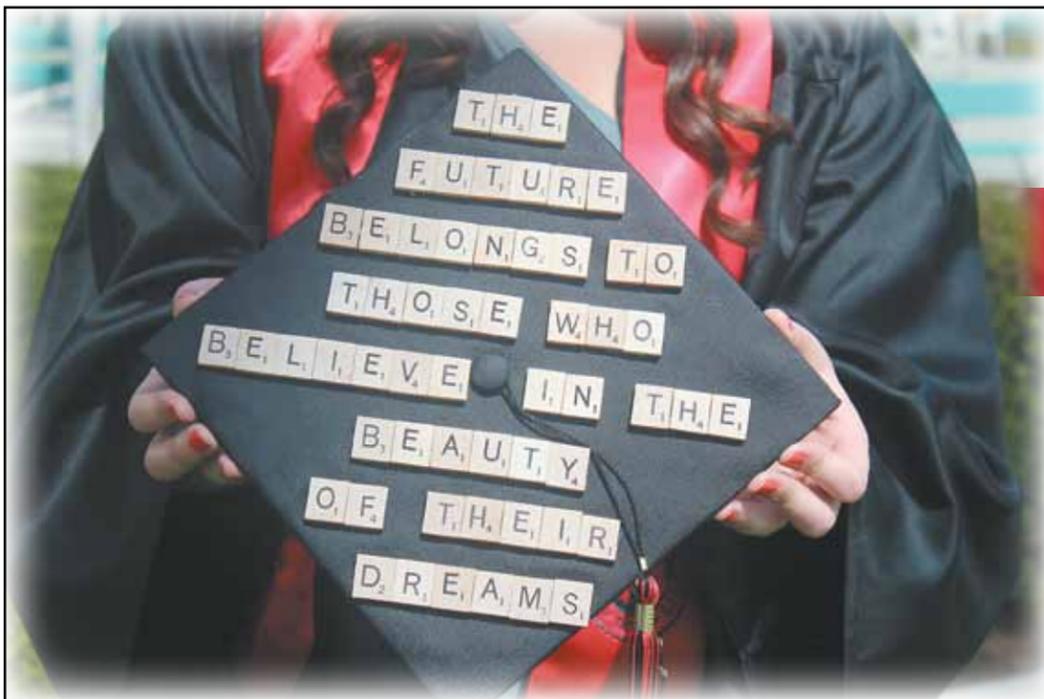
"It feels like a moment that should've happened years ago just because I really haven't taken a high school class in two years, so it feels delayed but it feels good," she said.

Tran, 18, will focus on working this summer to save gas money, as she will be commuting to the University of South Florida in the fall, where she plans to study as a pre-med student. She hopes to attend medical school after completing her undergraduate degree.

She has used her time at PHSC to take many of her pre-requisite classes to give her a head start in the program, but she's looking forward to a new challenge.

"Attending university will be a different environment - from the diversity of the people to the intensity of the classes - they'll challenge me more as a student. And there's more opportunities for research which is what I've been really interested in," she said.

Tran would like to thank her parents and everyone who believed in her and supported her throughout the years.



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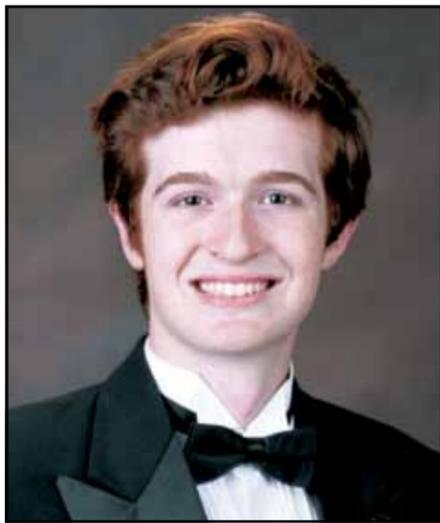


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PASCO HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2018

Pasco High School Graduation Ceremony will be Friday, May 25, 7:30 p.m., at W.F. Edwards Stadium



2018 Cambridge Program Valedictorian Andrew Hull

Top Cambridge Student Keen For Next Chapter In His Life

by Keri McAlpine

This year's valedictorian representing Pasco High School's Cambridge program is Andrew Hull. Even though he has spent the past couple of weeks studying for his AP exams and working on his graduation speech, Hull is excited to attend college in the fall.

He will be attending the University of Florida to study aerospace engineering in the honors program.

"I'm most excited to be surrounded by

other students with similar interests who will challenge me in the next four years," said Hull. "As well as to participate in the Undergraduate Research Program at UF."

While at PHS, Hull kept busy with sports and clubs, including the varsity swim team, science club, and National Honor Society throughout his four years. He described finishing up the high school chapter of his life as a "good feeling."

"Even though it's scary I'm excited for

the next step in my life," he said.

Hull will speak at graduation and while working on his speech, he said he wanted to "convey the vast opportunities that are open for all of us graduating and how we need to take hold of the future."

Hull, 18, is thankful for his teachers, friends, and family who have helped him along the way.

This summer, he said he wants to enjoy relaxing at home as much as possible, but might also pursue a local internship for engineering.

Pasco High School Cambridge Program Salutatorian Heading To University Of Florida

by Keri McAlpine

Even though she dominated on the field in varsity soccer and varsity tennis all four years at Pasco High School, Nathalie Sawczuk is ready to trade her Pirate gear and become a Gator.

"[High school] was a good time, but ... I'm ready to leave, I'm not gonna lie," Sawczuk said with a laugh. She is currently deciding between two possible majors for when she moves to Gainesville - engineering and biology pre-med.

Come fall, she's looking forward to

"meeting new people, just making new experiences and getting more familiar with the real world and getting ready for life."

Sawczuk, 18, had a close race for the Cambridge program's valedictorian, missing out by only a fraction of her GPA score. However, she is still excited to be named salutatorian of the Cambridge program and is honored to have the chance to address her graduating class.

Talking to her last week, she hadn't worked out the details of her speech for Friday's graduation ceremony. Some of her friends are telling her to make it a funny

speech, but she worries about executing humor.

In addition to her sports activities, Sawczuk also participated in Future Business Leaders of America, Interact club, science club and was in the National Honor Society.

Sawczuk thanks her parents for supporting her and her endeavors.

"They had to work hard to give me all the opportunities I have and I really appreciate them for that," she said.

This summer, she will be working a summer job to save up money for the fall.



2018 Cambridge Program Salutatorian Nathalie Sawczuk

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PASCO HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2018

**This is a tentative list of PHS Graduating Seniors at Dade City News press time. The actual student list of graduates may change by the time of actual graduation. Congratulations to all!*

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Paola Aboytes
Brianna Adeeb
Ashley Aguirre
Summer Anani
Brian Andruskiewicz
Brian Arango
Eliecer Artola
Jully Arvelo
Angel Ayala Vazquez
Madisyn Bak
Luis Barrera-Delgado
Nancy Bautista
Jayden Baxter
Odilia Baza
Antonio Beltran
Miguel Benitez
Domenique Benjamin
Jose Bernal
Genesis Berrios
Isaac Blake
Michaela Blomeley
Bailey Boyd
Taylor Boyd
Kristen Boyett
Christian Bragg
Kimberly Brannon
Caille Branscombe
Drevon Brockington
Kiara Broner
Garrett Brown
Haley Browning
Reannna Buitron
Delevalence Burgess
Frankkeishia Butler
Cedric Calhoun
Cara Calton, CL
Colin Cameron
Taylor Cameron, CL
Chase Campbell, CL
Malachi Campomizzi
Marisol Campos-Alvarado
Andrew Capehart
Luis Cardoso
Alex Carr
Trinity Carrillo
Lucia Castillo
Karla Castillo
Juan Chacon
Emily Chambers
Cheyenne Chandler
Jayna Chanea
Brent Charlick
Marisha Chasin
Celeste Chavez
Daja Cherry
Christopher Christian
Danielle Christian
Kyle Christie
Jesse Christmas
Ramiro Clemente
Allyson Cloversettle
Brendan College
Tania Contreras
Jericho Cooley
Angel Cordova Jimenez
Ali Cozzolino-Smith
Joseph Cozzolino
Camron Craig
Destin Crosson
Clyde Cross
Mia Cruz
Kaylee Cummings
Cade Darbyshire
Shadaivia Dawkins
Lucas Deblock
Victoria Delarue
Leonel Delgado
Victoria Delarue
Shelbie Denney
Carissa Denton
Emilee Denton
Tanner Dueker
Tyler Dueker
Alberto Diaz
Allison Dious
Gage Dixon
Travelle Dorvil
Brianna Duncan
Derek Dutton
Cara Dwyer
Daniel Ennis
Benjamin Estrada

Jonathan Estrada
Cameron Evans
Ciera Ferguson
Vicente Fernandez
Luby Fields
Clayton Finora
Gabriel Fleck
Sunny Floberg
Lafaye Floyd
Samorie Floyd
William Foote
Silas Franke
Kira Freijo
Carsten Fruehwirth
Dalton Garafolo
Amber Garcia
Charle Garcia
Damaris Garcia
Debby Garcia
Jasmine Garcia
Jesenia Garcia
Olivia Garcia
Selina Garcia
Paulo Garcia Rodriguez
Bibiana Garduno
Chelsey Garipey
Gabriella Garofalo
Killian Geraghty
Paola Gines Calderon
Michael Glynn
Linet Godinez
Ariana Gomez
Katelyn Gomez
Luis Gomez
Josi Gonzalez
Juan Gonzalez
Julian Gonzalez
Marcela Gonzalez
Brody Gordon
Benjamin Graham
Achauntice Grant
Mackenzie Green
Carrie Greene
Matthew Gregory
Rachel Groover
Mercedes Guadarrama
Karina Gutierrez
Linnea Haga
Fayelynn Haire
Bryce Hall
Kylie Hamacher
Jakayia Hambrick
Ronald Hambrick
Case Hamilton
Julia Hammond
Brittnee Hampton
Jaleel Hansberry
Dalton Harrelson
Katelyn Harris
Jessie Hart
Tory Harvey
Melissa Hause
Clint Hawk
Bobby Hawkins
Morgan Hawkins
Stanford Hay
Taylor Hays
Andrew Helms
Octaviana Helms
Chase Hemphill
Savannah Henson
Jaqueline Hernandez
Rogelio Hernandez
Stephanie Hernandez
Brianna Hicks
Rachel Hillner
Tam-An Hoang
Cayne Hollahan
Mara Holt
Benjamin Hooks
Trinity Howell
Madison Hoyle
Kacie Huber
Michael Hughes
Andrew Hull
Fletcher Jahn
Jasmin Jaimes
Jacob Jayne
Blake Jefferson
Madison Jender
Jillyan Jerkins
Jaylum Johnson
Drew Johnston
Thaddeus Jones

Madison Kaylor
Sydney Kaylor
Katelynn Kennedy
John Paul Ketola
Stephanie Kleiber
Hannah Knight
Sera Knowlton
Luke Kohlhof
Heidi Konow
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Chole Paquette
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Steven Paris
Bhavya Parvadia
Kayla Paxton
Annemarie Peacock
Trey Pearce
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Matthew Pennington
Brenda Perez
Miguel Perez

Ronnie Perez
Eleanor Peter
Nicholas Phillips
Ethan Pike
Jackson Pitts
Luis Portillo
Janet Presas
Robert Principato
Daniel Prouse
Gabriel Quigley
Garrett Quigley
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Darian Ramirez
Maria Ramirez
Charles Ramos
Daniel Reid
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Marissa Rodriguez
Veronica Rodriguez
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Ashlyn Rogers
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Kenial Rosario
Ruth Rose
Jacob Rosenberg
Sydney Rouser
Chelsea Rude
Shane Salyer
Tylan Sampson
Carlos Sanchez
Jose Sanchez
Christian Sandoval
Alexandra Santiago
Nathalie Sawczuk

Ethan Saylor
Michael Scagliarini
Ashlie Scheg
Breanna Scott
Briana Scott
Darryl Scott
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Rita Sequen
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Rachael Wymer
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Uncle Bobby,
and Lenny-pooh

Habitat Fundraiser Prevails Despite Rain

by Keri McAlpine

Despite some un-ideal weather conditions, volunteers for Habitat for Humanity of East and Central Pasco County held a successful BBQ chicken dinner fundraiser last Thursday.

“It was great. Even though we had basically a monsoon coming down it didn’t keep the people away. We had a great turnout and it was a lot of fun,” said Laurel Weightman, development director for the local Habitat.

This was the second year the dinner sale was held, sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of Dade City, which prepared and cooked all of the meals.

“We’re very grateful Kiwanis is

willing to sponsor this... and put in the time and effort required for this,” Weightman said.

In the end, about 460 meals were sold bringing in at least \$5,000 for Habitat, Weightman said. Funds raised will go into the organization’s pot for construction projects.

At any point during the fundraiser, about 12 to 15 volunteers were on site, mostly families working on their sweat equity hours for their Habitat homes. Before moving into a Habitat home, potential home-owners must contribute a total of 400 sweat equity hours.

“They had a great time and they didn’t mind the rain... so it turned out really well,” Weightman said.



Allen Morris of Lacoochee brings the Habitat for Humanity BBQ dinners to drive-through customers during the afternoon downpour on May 17. Photo by Richard K. Riley

Credit Union Awards Scholarships



Congratulations to Madison Hoyle, center left, and Nathalie Sawczuk, center right, who both were awarded a \$2,500 college scholarship from San Antonio Citizens Federal Credit Union. The recipients are 2018 graduates of Pasco High School and were announced at the school’s awards ceremony on May 18 at the Dr. Donald McBath Activity Center. The scholarships were presented by Patty Sarne, left, Senior Vice President and Stella Piersall, SACFCU Board Member. The selection committee received scholarship applications from five different high schools to choose the winners. This is the 11th year that the credit union has given \$5,000 in scholarships to two of their members graduating high school.

Photo Provided

City Receives Good Annual Audit \$6.47 Million Available For Future Needs

by Joe Potter

Dade City is fiscally strong according to a recently completed audit of its finances for fiscal year 2017.

Net assets increased by nearly \$1 million between Oct. 1, 2016, and Sept. 30, 2017, said Leslie Porter, the city’s finance director.

The city’s net assets, which consist of cash, capital and other items, now total \$46,255,304, and there is \$6.47 million in unrestricted funds available to meet the city’s ongoing obligations to citizens and creditors, Porter said.

Dade City was able to save \$270,000 by retiring two loans through the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, said the report prepared by Purvis, Gray & Company of Ocala.

The city received \$972,225 in Penny For Pasco funds, an increase of \$33,714 from the previous year.

Another plus for the city was establishing a retirement reserve fund to help offset fluctuations in retirement contributions.

Dade City incurred \$141,144 in expenses because of Hurricane Irma passing through the city on Sept. 11, the report said. The Federal Emergency Management Agency is expected to reimburse Dade City for storm damages in fiscal year 2018 or 2019.

Charges for services decreased during 2016-17, primarily because of decreased utility taxes, communication services taxes and fewer building permits, while program expenses increased primarily as a result of more money being spent on street improvement projects, the report said.

Volunteer Tax Preparers Needed

Be a part of Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), a free income tax preparation service for low to moderate income tax payers sponsored by the United Way and the IRS.

For tax year 2017, VITA served more than 8,500 Pasco residents including 2,100 from east Pasco providing free income tax returns resulting in more than \$7.5 million brought back into the Pasco economy in

the form of refunds and credits. No tax experience is required, training is provided, basic computer skills are required and bilingual/Spanish speakers are a plus. Time frame is January-April 15, 2019.

This year in east Pasco VITA had volunteer sites in Dade City, Saint Leo and Zephyrhills. To volunteer for this program, call (727) 835-2023 and a United Way representative will be in touch.

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