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Closing Of Senior Center Explained

Contract With Church Expired Last Month

by Max Zimmerman

Elderly patrons are getting some answers regarding the abrupt Dec. 31 closing of the Zephyrhills Senior Center but a solution remains in limbo.

According to Diane Cunningham of Pasco County Senior Services, the closure came when the contract with St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church expired.

"The partnership ... with St. Elizabeth's allowed Senior Services to use the space ... at no cost to the county," Cunningham said in a Friday email. "Due to financial concerns, St. Elizabeth's informed us that they could no longer support the program at their facility."

The lease agreement with St. Elizabeth's was renewable yearly unless one of the parties wanted the arrangement to end. Cunningham said the church informed the county in December that they were not renewing the arrangement.

She said typically there were 25 to

Seniors • Continued on Page 3A

Beltin' Blues And Smokin' Qs

Car Show Expanded For Pigz In Z'Hills

by Keri McAlpine

Although holiday feasting is over, there is one more event for locals to indulge in that should not be missed.

The Pigz in Z'Hills BBQ & Blues Festival invites hungry visitors and fans of blues music to attend the eighth annual event, scheduled for Jan. 20. Gates open at 10 a.m. and festivities will be held throughout the day until 6 p.m.

"At this point everything's in place and we feel really great about this event ... it will be an amazing day," said Melonie Monson, executive director for the Greater Zephyrhills Chamber of Commerce, which hosts the event every year. "We're working on the final preparations."

Headliners The Legendary JC's will perform in addition to Chuck Riley's All-



The Chuck Riley All Star Band will return for another helping, joined by other blues connoisseurs at this year's Pigz in Z'Hills BBQ and Blues Festival. Photo by Dave Walters

Pigz • Continued on Page 6A

Ryman Helps Out Police Sergeant

Construction Company Repairs Damage From Bullet Holes

Story and photos by Dave Walters



Kyle Ryman, left, and ZFP Sgt. Nathan Gardner listen to councilmembers during Monday's city council meeting.

Ryman Construction's community spirit has been unflagging through the years, but never as much as it was Monday when the City of Zephyrhills honored the company for its repair of a police officer's home.

Zephyrhills police sergeant Nathan Gardner and his family woke up to gunfire Nov. 14, and what they heard were shots coming into their home as well as Gardner's police cruiser. Fortunately, no one was hit.

Ryman Construction came to the home in early December

Ryman • Continued on Page 6A

Novice To Take On Proctor

William Seville Aims To Oust Three-Term Councilman

by Dave Walters

There will be one contested race for Zephyrhills City Council in the April 10 election as incumbent Charlie Proctor challenge will be by resident William Seville for the District 5 seat.

Seville, 20, loves politics and history and would be part of both with a victory

in his first race. Employed at the Golden Corral in Zephyrhills, Seville has resided in the city since 2012 and graduated from Zephyrhills High School in 2015.

Proctor, who is running for his fourth term, has faced challengers in two of his three past elections.

"There's nothing like the victory of winning," Proctor said of the thrill of election night. "I never take an opponent lightly. William seems like a bright young man. He goes to school and he works real hard."

"I have to give him credit for caring enough to throw his hat in the ring. It's



Charlie Proctor



William Seville

not easy to throw your name out there to the public for the first time."

Seville said it's the love of his community that convinced him to put his name on the ballot.

Seville • Continued on Page 6A

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Zephyrhills Arrests

Woman Faces Drug And Theft Charges

Alysha Diane Cheek, 22, of 38848 James Court, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Dec. 21 and charged with possession of methamphetamine, possession of paraphernalia and retail theft. Police responded to Walmart, 7631 Gall Blvd., regarding a shoplifting complaint. Cheek allegedly took an item valued at \$3.88 and placed it in her purse. She then allegedly passed all points of sale without paying for the item. Loss prevention personnel detained her until police arrived. A glass pipe, two needles and plastic baggies were found during a search following her arrest. The glass pipe tested positive for trace amounts of methamphetamine and the syringes tested positive for oxycodone.



Ana Marie Nowlin, 50, of Crystal Springs, was apprehended by Zephyrhills police on Dec. 12 on Pasco County warrants charging her with failure to appear – petit theft and FTA – resisting a law enforcement officer without violence. She was booked into the Pasco County Jail upon confirmation of the warrants.



Bonnie Britt Vanderschouw, 41, of 5349 Fourth St., was apprehended by Zephyrhills police on Dec. 15 on a Pasco County warrant charging her with failure to appear – larceny/petit theft 2nd degree. She was booked into the Pasco County Jail upon confirmation of the warrant.



Steven David Mitchell, 57, of 38744 Calumet Ave., was apprehended by Zephyrhills police on Dec. 16 for allegedly violating probation. Police contacted Mitchell at 4:39 a.m. at 13th Avenue and 14th Street. A records check disclosed he was on active felony probation out of Pasco County for possession of methamphetamine. One of his conditions of probation was to not be out between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.



Paul George Metzger, 39, of 39501 Meadowood Loop, was apprehended by Zephyrhills police on Dec. 17 on a Hillsborough County warrant charging him with violation of probation – driving under the influence. He was booked into the Pasco County Jail upon confirmation of the warrant.



Jessica Lauren Buch, 30, of 38343 A Ave., was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Dec. 21 and charged with domestic battery. Buch allegedly smacked a man in the side of the face after during an argument over Buch drinking alcohol in excess. Buch was reportedly eight weeks pregnant with the victim's child at the time. She and the victim reside together as a family. Post Miranda, Buch told police she hit the victim after he called her a vulgar name. Two witnesses corroborated the victim's account of what transpired.



Emanuel Joseph Lauria, 56, of Port St. Lucy, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Dec. 21 and charged with simple battery. Lauria allegedly grabbed the victim's face several times and tried to kiss her when she went to her mother's home on Fourth Street to check on her mother's

wellbeing. The victim reportedly pushed Lauria away each time. He allegedly did not know the victim's mother was in the house and he suggested they should go into the back bedroom and have sex. Lauria then allegedly grabbed her by the buttock when she bent over to pick something up off the ground while trying to go to her mother's bedroom. Lauria was reportedly intoxicated at the time of the alleged incident. A witness corroborated the victim's account that Lauria was making sexual advances toward the victim. Post Miranda, Lauria denied making any sexual advances toward the victim. He said he playfully swiped his hand across her buttocks but he did not mean anything by doing it.

Jamie Theodore Ankers, 44, of 36243 Lake Chase Drive, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Dec. 22 and charged with domestic battery and simple battery. Ankers was allegedly involved in a verbal altercation with his daughter that turned physical when he grabbed her by the shirt collar and shoved her to the ground. He then allegedly grabbed his daughter's girlfriend by the shoulders and shoved her up against a refrigerator. Both victims reportedly had visible injuries that were consistent with their statements. Post Miranda, Ankers reportedly admitted to having shoved his daughter and grabbing her girlfriend.



Cortney Deandra Turner, 31, of 3916 Sixth Ave., was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Dec. 24 and charged with resisting law enforcement without violence. Police stopped a vehicle Turner was driving because of a seatbelt violation. She allegedly fled on foot and was apprehended a short time later. She was released on her own recognizance.

Michael Douglas Boyette, 57, of 5524 11th St., was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Dec. 25 and charged with obstruction of a law enforcement officer. A verbal warning was issued earlier in the evening for setting off fireworks. Police again observed fireworks being set off in the backyard of the residence. Boyette allegedly crossed his arms and said, "What are you going to do about it," when told police saw the fireworks being set off. He was advised the homeowner would be issued a city ordinance violation. Boyette, who was the homeowner, allegedly refused multiple requests to identify himself, saying he did not have to do so because he was on his own property. He was booked into the Pasco County Jail after allegedly continuing to obstruct the investigation and becoming combative.



Michael Phillip Bracknell, 52, of 5811 19th St., was apprehended by Zephyrhills police on Dec. 23 on a Pasco County warrant charging him with failure to appear – expired motor vehicle registration – less than six months. He was booked into the Pasco County Jail upon confirmation of the warrant.



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

Paul Michael Stevenson, 37, of Ft. Lauderdale, was apprehended by Zephyrhills police on Dec. 8 on a Hillsborough County warrant charging him with violation of probation – driving under the influence. He was booked into the Pasco County Jail upon confirmation of the warrant.



Andrew Michael Baxter, 29, of Valrico, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Dec. 11 and charged with driving while license suspended or revoked. Police stopped a Chevrolet pickup Baxter was driving because one of its taillights was not operating properly. Baxter spontaneously said his driver's license was suspended. This was verified through a records check and Baxter was released on his own recognizance.

Harold Bravo Ocasio, 37, of 4830 Cottage St., was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Dec. 10 and charged with no valid driver's license. A records check indicated Ocasio had never been issued a driver's license. He was reportedly uncooperative and appeared to be inebriated when he was stopped so he was booked into the Pasco County Jail.



Hiram Eugene Braxton, 63, transient, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Dec. 12 and charged with petit theft. Police reportedly found Braxton to be in possession of a shopping cart from Tractor Supply, 7431 Gall Blvd. He allegedly told police the store gave him permission several days earlier to borrow the cart. Store management denied doing so and the cart is valued at \$126.



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Connecticut Man Dies In Skydiving Accident

FAA Investigating Cause Of 'Hard Landing'

Staff Report

Officials have identified the man who died Sunday afternoon from injuries he sustained after experiencing a "hard landing" at Skydive City.

Joshua Butzke, 25, of Connecticut, jumped with a group of people from an airplane at 13,500 feet.

He deployed his parachute at 3,500 feet, but it began spinning when he was between 1,000 and 800 feet above the ground, causing him to sustain devastating injuries when he landed.

Butzke was declared dead at Florida Hospital Zephyrhills at 5:12 p.m.

He became a licensed skydiver in

2017 and was reportedly on his 85th jump. He was on his second day at Skydive City and reportedly jumped there 13 times during those two days.

The Federal Aviation Administration advised they were going to begin an investigation of Sunday's fatality on Wednesday according to David "TK" Hayes, Skydive City's operations manager.

This is the second death to occur at the popular attraction at 4241 Skydive Lane in less than seven weeks.

Kurt A. Tracy, 36, of Massachusetts, died Nov. 13 after his parachute failed to open while he was participating in a tracking maneuver.

Seniors • Continued from Page 1A

30 registered seniors a day that attended the center at 5855 16th St. for meals and activities.

Until a new Zephyrhills location is determined Cunningham suggests those folks can visit the Dade City Senior Center, as it is the closest one to Zephyrhills.

Facebook visitors to the Zephyrhills Free Press page voiced an obvious concern.

"Very sad to hear this! Many of our seniors cannot safely travel all the way to Dade City," Kim Pullen wrote. "With the majority senior population in Zhills it's an absolute shame."

The county offers one solution to the transportation problem.

"Pasco County Public Transportation offers Para-Transit for disabled and elderly

to anyone who qualifies," Cunningham said. "There is an application process that the senior must go through before qualification is determined. We had a few seniors who were already qualified for the Para-Transit and they will continue to use Para-Transit to get to Dade City."

But a permanent solution will depend on a no-cost agreement, which could take an unknown amount of time.

"Negotiating a space for us to render services can sometimes be a slow process," Cunningham said. "We are looking for a similar public-private partnership as we had with St. Elizabeth's where the space is offered at no cost to the county."

Contact the Senior Services Division's administrative office at (352) 521-5174 for further information.

City Hosting Citizen Academy

First Of Three Meetings Scheduled For Tonight

by Keri McAlpine

After receiving requests and suggestions for public safety forums, the city has scheduled three separate public events to educate attendees on different city matters.

The meetings will allow the city to explain different matters to allow the public to become more educated and engaged with current and future matters involving the city, said City Manager Steve Spina.

The first meeting is scheduled for tonight at 6 p.m. at the library, 5347 Eighth St., and will cover government finances and local government budgeting. This first "citizen academy" will acquaint residents with how the

budget works, different dollar amounts and all the different funds encompassing the city, Spina said.

A Jan. 29 meeting will explore all city departments. Representatives from each department will introduce themselves and explain what it is they do, how they do it and how their department is funded. This meeting will also take place at 6 p.m. at the downtown library.

The third and final meeting is scheduled for Feb. 13 at 6 p.m. at Alice Hall in Zephyr Park, 38116 Fifth Ave. This citizen academy will function as a public safety meeting, and will feature representatives from the police and fire departments as well as code enforcement.

Call the city at (813) 780-0000 for information or with questions.

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East Pasco Events

Jan. 12 – Ireland’s Piano Man – Entertainment at the Gem Estates clubhouse will begin at 7 p.m. and will feature Cahal Dunne, a composer, pianist, comedian and story teller. Music ranging from Irish to Broadway to country will be performed. Tickets are \$10. Call Lee at (813) 780-1012 or Tes at (517) 914-4718 for information and tickets.

Jan. 13 – Rummage and Bake Sale – Ramblewood Community, 3853 Gall Blvd., is hosting a community rummage and bake sale from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Call (813) 469-9684 for information.

Jan. 13 – Yard Sale – Cornerstone Community Church, 8527 Old Lakeland Hwy. will be hosting a yard sale open to the community from 8 a.m.-12 p.m.

Jan. 13 – Bakery Open House – Living Food Bakery & Café, 38201 10th Ave., is hosting an open house from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. with a live music performance after beginning at 5 p.m. Call Marti at (813) 399-4467 for information.

Jan. 13 – Raising Cane – Stop by the Pioneer Florida Museum, 15602 Pioneer Museum Road, for a sweet and spicy event from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission is \$5 per person. Children 5 and under are free. Locals are invited to compete in a people’s choice chili cook off. Also featured will be a pancake breakfast, syrup tasting, iron skillet tossing and more. Visit pioneerfloridamuseum.org for information and a list of events.

Jan. 14 – Scholarship Dinner – A scholarship dinner will be held at Zephyr Lodge #198, 5950 12th St., from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Jan. 14. Tickets are \$7 for the meal that will include beef tips and noodles.

Jan. 16 – Win the Fat Battle – Tips to help you get on track for good weight loss. Held from 11 a.m.-12 p.m. and again from 5:30-6:30 p.m. at the Creation Health & Wellness Center, 38233 Daughtery Road. Call (813) 779-6476 for information and reservations.

Jan. 18 – Robotic Partial Knee Surgery Presentation – Orthopedic Surgeon Dr. Randolph Knight will give a presentation from 1-2 p.m. in the Cypress Room at Florida Hospital

Zephyrhills, 7050 Gall Blvd. Dr. Knight will talk about how partial knee replacements can now be done with minimally invasive Mako Robotic-Arm Assisted Surgery which is often an outpatient procedure. Attendees must register by calling (877) 534-3108. Light refreshments will be provided.

Jan. 18-20 – Peter Pan Auditions – Auditions for Arts In Motion’s latest production, Peter Pan, are open to kids in grades K-12. All kids who register will be assigned a role with a limit of 50 kids. A mandatory pre-casting rehearsal and parent meeting will be held Jan. 18 from 6-8:30 p.m. Open auditions will be held Jan. 19 and 20 by appointment at Zephyrhills Alliance Church, 6251 Fort King Road. Visit ArtsInMotion.org or call (352) 834-1246 for information.

Jan. 19 – Basic Budgeting – Attend this free presentation to learn about simple solutions for keeping track of your bills and income flow. Held from 12-1 p.m. at the Creation Health Wellness Center, 38233 Daughtery Road. Call (813) 779-6476 for information.

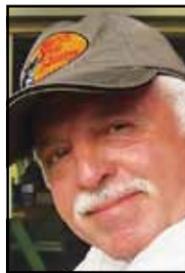
Jan. 20 – Pigz in Z’Hillz BBQ & Blues Festival – The annual event, presented by the Greater Zephyrhills Chamber of Commerce, will be held from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. at 5200 Airport Road. Stop by for live blues music, delicious BBQ, a kids fun zone, car show, vendors and aviation show. Admission is free with \$10 parking. No coolers or pets allowed. There is limited seating so bring lawn chairs. Call (813) 782-1913 for information.

Jan. 23 – Second Annual Battle of the Parks – The four-person golf scramble will be held at the Links of Lake Bernadette, 5430 Links Lane in Zephyrhills. Sponsored by Florida Hospital Zephyrhills, the winning team will receive a travelling trophy. Cost is \$35 per player including golf, cart and lunch. Call (813) 788-7888 or visit www.linksoflakebernadette.com for information.

Jan. 23 – Essential Oils for Pets – This free presentation will be held from 3-4:30 p.m. at Living Food Bakery & Café, 38201 10th Ave. Call Marti at (813) 399-4467 or Deanna at (813) 479-7724 for information.

For more events visit www.pasconewspubs.com

Commentary



First Things First

Greg First

The Loss Of A Friend

It seems like this is happening more now than ever. Jenny and I got the news that a very good friend of ours was in the hospital and not doing too well. This has happened a couple of times in the past few years but the dedicated hospital workers along with some Divine intervention always seemed to come to the rescue. Before you knew it she was discharged and seemed to be back in pretty good shape. I am an eternal optimist so anything that appears to be positive is a really good thing. Our breakfast gang (the guys) got word she was doing a little better so we all breathed a sigh of relief. But a few days later we got a call that our friend had gone to be with the Lord.

Sharon Miller was one of those gals who always had a smile on her face. She would light up the room and always seemed to be in good spirits. Jenny and I have known her and her husband, Jerry, for many years. They would come to our house when our kids were still

in school and attend some milestone events. I remember when they would come over on Halloween night and sit outside as somewhere near 1,000 trick-or-treaters would pay our neighborhood a visit. It was great fun.

One year when their grandkids came down from Tennessee for a visit we all went out on our pontoon boat down the Homosassa River and played in the crystal clear springs. Oh, and then there was the time their grandson earned a Boy Scout badge by catching, cleaning, cooking and eating a fish he caught right off our dock.

Years ago about once a month Jenny and I, along with Jerry and Sharon and our friends Gordon and Judy Hyde, would have a dinner night and visit restaurants as far away as Orlando and always had a great time. As time went on our outings became less frequent because of scheduling conflicts. We did manage to get together at the Abbey Restaurant in Saint Leo a couple of months ago. As usual, it was a memorable night.

Jerry and Sharon always attended church every Saturday night. They did a lot of traveling together and I think one of their goals was to visit every single state in this country. They met that goal. They were inseparable and a real life love story.

As we sit back and remember the good times we had we will smile. And we will smile about the great memories we have made over the years with our firefighter friend and his wife, Sharon, a nurse. Two lifesavers that have made this world a much better and safer place for all of us to live. Jerry, our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family.

Letter To The Editor...

Dear Editor,

After reading Joe Potter’s article about the raid of Canadian MedStores in the *East Pasco Senior News* dated Dec. 21, 2017 and a similar article in the *Zephyrhills Free Press* last month, I feel compelled to share my personal experience with Mr. Hepscher with you.

I have known Bill Hepscher and his family for over 10 years. Bill was a member of the Rotary Club of Zephyrhills Daybreak for years, and what your article does not mention is that Bill was a volunteer at many of our Club’s fundraising events and Canadian MedStores helped support local nonprofit organizations, youth scholarships and our international project in Haiti. Bill was operating a lawful business for 15 years in our community, when given no warning,

his stores were raided by Federal Law enforcement agents who treated his employees like criminals. Imagine their shock and the tremendous negative financial impact this event must be having on them and their customers.

I am appalled at the lack of inter-agency communication between the feds and our local law enforcement, and the fact that Mr. Hepscher appears to have received no warning from the FDA. Perhaps it’s just me, but this situation smacks of governmental overreach and the influence of Big Pharma on high-level federal officials. I intend to reach out to Congressman Gus Bilirakis in support of Bill, and I hope others will do the same.

Jodi Wilkeson, Zephyrhills
President, Rotary Club
of Zephyrhills Daybreak

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Shadowy Slavery Hits Close To Home

County Updates Human Trafficking Scourge

Story and photos by Emily Kochanski

Human trafficking is a devastating issue spreading across the globe, with 550 cases reported in the state of Florida alone in 2016. On Jan. 5, the Pasco County Commission on Human Trafficking held a press conference to educate local residents on this ever-expanding crime.

The conference was held at 10 a.m. at the Pasco County Utilities Administration Building in Land O'Lakes. Guest speakers included Shakra Anderson, regional director from U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson's office; U.S. Congressman Gus Bilirakis; Sheriff Chris Nocco of the Pasco County Sheriff's Office; and State Rep. Danny Burgess.

Pasco County Commissioner Ron

Oakley opened the conference with an alarming statement.

"According to the National Human Trafficking hotline in 2016, Florida ranked third in the nation with reported cases," announced Oakley.

Human trafficking can consist of forced labor exploitation, forced marriage, forced sexual exploitation, and other criminal acts. One by one, each of the guest speakers took to the podium and explained how Pasco County, and the state of Florida as a whole, is working to combat these ruthless acts.

"This is a very serious issue, and it is a priority of mine and the Congress," said Bilirakis. "We have been tackling this problem in the House of Representatives and in the Senate. As a matter of fact, I'm trying to get a bill on the floor as soon as possible ... it has to do with holding these



Regional Director Shakra Anderson explained the Stop Enabling Sex Trafficking Act of 2017 (or SESTA) and its power to combat websites that 'knowingly provide a platform for sex trafficking.'

websites on the internet accountable."

"There are highly profitable websites that actually facilitate sex trafficking," Anderson said. "Their operators know full well how their sites are being used and are hiding behind a decades-old liability shield in federal law to immunize themselves from prosecution."

While Congress is doing its part to combat illicit websites and put an end to human trafficking, there is much that the citizens of Pasco County can be doing as well to protect their friends, families, and neighbors.

"Human trafficking is a problem, but it starts right here in your own community," said Nocco. "Go onto a website and learn about human trafficking and learn about what to tell your kids about it ... It starts in your home. Get engaged, talk to your

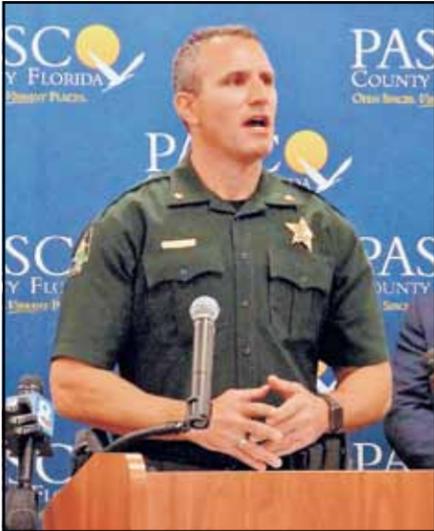
kids about this."

"Even though children may live in a loving household and even though we've been blessed to provide them with security, [human trafficking] can happen to anyone, and so we all must be prepared," Burgess said.

Oakley said it best during his closing remarks: "Awareness is the key, and we are all a part of it."

An act of human trafficking can strike alarmingly close to home and it is important for Pasco residents to be familiar with the telltale signs of these crimes.

To gain more information about human trafficking, visit www.humantraffickinghotline.org. To report a suspected act of Human Trafficking, call the hotline at 1-888-373-7888.



'Take action. Go out, talk to people about this, be a part of the community, and be involved,' instructed Pasco County Sheriff Chris Nocco. 'Report something that doesn't seem right.'



Commissioner Ron Oakley opened and closed the conference with important data regarding the increasing amount of human trafficking in the state of Florida.



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Ryman • Continued from Page 1A

to inspect the damage and went on to repair the areas where bullets entered the house. They also replaced a door, windows and vinyl siding at no cost to the officer.

City Manager Steve Spina presented Kyle Ryman with a plaque recognizing the company's compassionate assistance.

"It is an extremely gracious and generous gesture to the officer, his family and the Zephyrhills Police Department," Spina said to Ryman. "We are extremely grateful for your generosity."

"It's community partners like Ryman Construction that make this community great."

The investigation into the shooting is ongoing in a cooperative effort between the Pasco County Sheriff's Office and the Zephyrhills Police Department. It centers on the search for two suspects who fired several rounds into the officer's cruiser parked in his driveway as well as his house.

Gardner and his family were on hand for the recognition ceremony.

Council president Alan Knight told Gardner and his family that the entire city was upset with what happened to him and his family.



Kyle Ryman, right, accepts a recognition plaque from Zephyrhills City Manager Steve Spina during Monday's city council meeting.

"It really got to me," Knight said, "I am proud of the way you handled it."

Seville • Continued from Page 1A

"I love how this town has something to offer for everyone, from the beautiful downtown district to the Friday night football games," Seville said. "I quickly fell in love with the charm and beauty that Zephyrhills has to offer."

Seville may be new to the political scene but isn't intimidated by the task.

"Although I am a political newcomer; I can catch on quickly," he said. "I've always been able to handle a tough situation and hope to not only learn from the best on the council, but gain a lot of experience as I go along. Serving on council gives me a chance to give back to a community – that is well worth it."

Proctor knows that being a policymaker for the city where he started his auto detailing business and raised his family is one of the most coveted responsibilities he has.

"I don't take running the city lightly," Proctor said. "I take it very seriously. I enjoy helping people."

Seville believes that it's time for new faces in city council.

"I believe that the fantastic work that our current councilmen have done should be continued," Seville said. "But with new faces that can bring new ideas."

Pigz • Continued from Page 1A

Star Band, Someday Honey, Doug South, and Ed Wright Duo.

While the live music floats throughout the crowd, attendees will be able to enjoy freshly cooked chicken, pork, ribs and brisket from professional and talented local BBQ connoisseurs.

The majority of the barbecue entries are professionals, who will qualify for future cook-offs if they win in one of the four meat categories a week from Saturday. The Florida BBQ Association sanctions the BBQ cook-off, and about 60 judges will attend to provide their expertise.

The remaining "backyard" competitors will be awarded a percentage of a \$10,000 purse and bragging rights.

This year there will be 53 BBQ teams attending, with more than 20 selling their delicious products.

If the lines for the award-winning grub are too long, there will be other concession vendors on site to pass some time, as well as retail and businesses to explore. Monson said there are still openings for expo booths for any interested businesses.

This is the second year the festival will be held at the community event venue at 5200 Airport Road. Monson said the venue was a huge help last year as the electric, water and any other utilities are installed on site and provided by the city.

"Last year the new venue made everything go amazingly smooth. We were thrilled with the layout and [we're] going to keep the layout pretty much the same as what we had last year," Monson said.

As many as 12,000 people showed up for last year's festival, and the Chamber is expecting the same kind of crowd this year.

Entry is free with \$10 parking, and a fly-in option is available for private pilots. All parking earnings will go to local youth and education programs, according to the Chamber. Last year, parking fees allowed the Chamber to donate \$15,000 to the community. This year, Monson hopes to exceed that and is shooting for \$20,000 to give back to the kids.

This is also Monson's second official year organizing Pigz in Z'Hills, although she was involved in its planning before she took on her current position at the Chamber.

"Last year I was a little nervous coming to this point. This year I'm excited for it to get here and have a great event happen," Monson said.

If blues music and BBQ is just not your thing, there is plenty more to keep

visitors entertained.

The car show has been expanded to include trucks and motorcycles to and will be held alongside the aviation showcase and numerous vendors will be on hand. Shuttles will be going from the festival to these shows for easy access to the aero center.

A kids' zone will keep the little ones occupied with bounce houses, a rock wall, bungee jump, face painting and other crafts and projects. The Military History Museum, located just across the street at 39444 South Ave., will also be open and welcoming visitors.

No coolers or pets are allowed on festival grounds. Seating is limited so feel free to bring lawn chairs. Visit zephyrhillschamber.org or call (813) 782-1913 for more information.

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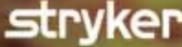
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Garden Club Will Honor Greg First

Tree Will Recognize His Service To Community

by Joe Potter

Greg First is humbled a tree will be planted later this month to recognize his contributions to Zephyrhills.

The Garden Gate Garden Club will plant the tree at Zephyr Park on Jan. 19 at 2 p.m., according to club member Voni Giese.

Arbor Day is celebrated on Jan. 19 in Florida.

The location where the tree will be planted in the park has not yet been determined and Giese doesn't know what type of tree it will be, but it has already been selected.

"I donated a tree at Zephyr Park about 20 years ago to be planted in honor of my mom," First said. "Now it has come full circle."

First was born in the Cleveland suburb of Bedford, but his family moved here when he was very young. "I have lived in Zephyrhills most of my life," First said.

"Every tree is something beautiful that is given to us from God."

Much like the famed "Lorax," First calls himself "a voice for the voiceless," when it comes to advocating for better treatment of trees. He has written several newspaper columns about trees during the time he has been associated with Pasco News Publications, parent company of the *Zephyrhills Free Press*, *Dade City News* and *East Pasco Senior News*.

First is especially concerned about the way utility companies trim trees that are close to their power lines.

According to First, this practice causes the trees to be weakened and limbs continue to fall on power lines during inclement weather.

First has been very active in Zephyrhills, most notably the announcer for the Bulldogs' football team for 30 years.

He served as past president of the Greater Zephyrhills Chamber of Commerce on three different occasions and is a former member of the Rotary Club.

He was marketing director at Dade City Hospital when it was owned by Humana, and then for Florida Blood Services – now One Blood – that is based in Lakeland. At one time First served on the board of directors of East Pasco Meals On Wheels.

First has been the master of ceremonies for many parades in both Zephyrhills and Dade City in the past several years and will serve as the master of ceremonies for the Pasco County Fair Parade when it is held Feb. 19.

He owns and operates First RV & Trailer Supply at 4302 Gall Blvd. First previously owned Canopy Records, a small Zephyrhills record store back in the '70s and also has experience in radio. He did the morning show for WPAS-AM 1400 when Carolyn Kelly owned the station.

He and his wife of 27 years, Jenny, live in Dade City.

While he was attending ZHS and she was attending Pasco High School when they started dating. That wasn't looked upon very kindly back in the '70s, First said, laughing. "I had a prenuptial agreement that I was going to move to Dade City if we got married, but I have always



Greg First with his wife, Jenny, at his induction as the local AMVETS commander in 2012.

considered Zephyrhills my home," he said. "It has worked out okay."

He is a pilot, an advanced scuba diver, a third-degree black belt and enjoys playing tennis.

First has two married stepchildren and one grandchild, with another on the way soon.



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11:15 a.m. Live Entertainment – The Crackerbilly's, The Sara Rose Band and The Hired Gun Band

The Barking Dogs will perform throughout the day near the sugar mill

12:30 p.m. Southern Syrup-Makers Association
Annual meeting will be held in the Mabel Jordan Barn. Public welcome.

4:30 p.m. Chili Awards Presentation

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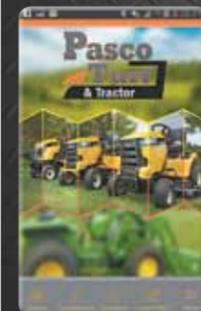
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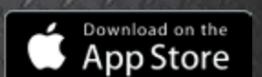
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Stay Warm With Chili

Raising Cane Event Includes Professional Cooks

Story and photos by Keri McAlpine

This weekend take your taste buds for a ride at the Pioneer Florida Museum & Village where a range of flavors will be offered at the annual Raising Cane event.

Last year's successful installment of the event introduced a chili cook-off to its normal festivities. This year, even more competitors will battle it out for a professional sanctioned chili cook-off as well as a local people's choice competition.

Event organizer Brenda Minton said the cook-off drew in larger crowds last year and they are expecting a similar crowd on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

As of Monday, 10 local chefs will compete for the people's choice award and 17 professionals will compete in a separate cook-off, sanctioned by the International Chili Society. Cook-off categories include chili, chili verde, and salsa with award ceremonies beginning at 4:30 p.m.

For \$5, visitors will receive a tasting



Multiple bands and musicians will provide entertainment throughout the day at the Raising Cane event at the Pioneer Florida Museum on Saturday.



Last year was the introduction of the chili cook-off as part of the Raising Cane festivities, letting local gastronomic engineers sport their craft for communal review.

cup to test out the local competitors' concoctions and vote for their favorites. Samples of the professional entries will be available on a 'chef-by-chef' basis.

"It's a low-cost family friendly event. It's something you can put your cell phones away and come out and have a good time with your family," said museum Executive Director Stephanie Black.

This year, a competitive spin will be added to the cook-off with city managers from Zephyrhills and Dade City battling it out for bragging rights and a trophy to be held in the respective city hall until next year.

Zephyrhills City Manager Steve Spina is looking forward to the face-off.

"My chili will knock their socks off. Especially because my cooking partner is Mike Barns, famous throughout this area for his culinary skills," Spina said. "We're excited."

His Dade City competitor, City Manager Billy Poe, was not available by press time for comment.

"If you live in Dade City or

Zephyrhills and you're not going to make chili and compete ... come in and vote for your town," Minton said.

That covers the spicy side, but the sweet side of the event is not to be ignored.

Starting off the day will be a \$3 pancake breakfast at 9 a.m., featuring both maple and sugar cane syrups, prepared by the Kiwanis Club of Dade City. Minton said although it is not as sweet as maple syrup, most visitors choose the cane syrup for the meal and bottles of the nectar always sell out before the end of the day.

Witness sugar cane grinding first hand, participate in a blind taste test of more than a dozen varieties of cane syrup, and enjoy live music from various local bands on Saturday. Barrel train rides and other kids activities are also scheduled throughout the day.

Entry to the event is \$5. The museum is located at 15602 Pioneer Museum Road. Visit www.pioneerfloridamuseum.org for more information and a full schedule of events.

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