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Local Scout Gains Eagle Status

Simon Caldwell's Project Honored Purple Heart Vets

by Joe Potter



Simon Caldwell recently achieved a rank that only five percent of Boy Scouts achieve, that of Eagle Scout. He attained his award primarily through a service project that benefitted the Zephyrhills community.

Caldwell said when he began his Eagle Scout project two years ago it was because he thought there was too much coldness in today's society. People didn't make eye contact with or speak to strangers they saw on the street.

"Even now, in many cases, you don't know who your neighbors are," he said.

This perspective changed as he began talking to people about his goal to help provide the benches for the Military Order of the Purple Heart Memorial in Zephyr Park.

Photo provided

Caldwell • Continued on Page 6A

Walk Seeks To Fight Hunger Thomas Promise Sets Sights On Annual Event

by Dave Walters

In an effort to raise awareness and funds, the Thomas Promise Foundation will host its inaugural Hunger Walk on Feb. 11 at Zephyrhills High School.

The event, structured as a fun, family festival, will feature games, food and entertainment.

This is the largest community outreach effort that the hunger-fighting crusade has put together, said Amanda Keith, marketing director for the foundation.

"We wanted to establish an event for the Thomas Promise that will serve a symbol for helping end hunger in east Pasco," Keith said. "The west side of the county has a large hunger walk. We wanted to be the initiator on this side. A lot brainstorming went into allowing us to move forward."

Once they started moving forward, the momentum hasn't stopped as teams and sponsors have jumped on board.

Thomas Promise will use the money from the daylong walk to fund its weekend backpack program that helps

Walk • Continued on Page 3A

Winter Car Show Is Warming Up

It's A Fun-Filled Swap Meet, Flea Market

by Keri McAlpine

The Zephyrhills Auto Events at Festival Park returns this month for the winter installment of the automobile extravaganza. According to the organizers, the event is better than ever and bigger than its fall counterpart. Given the increase in local population due to snowbirds, festival organizer Joann Pearson said the winter auto fest is more, more, more.



Mint condition was not a prerequisite for cars in at the Zephyrhills Auto Events fall show, swap meet and auto auction at Festival Park.

Photo by Dave Walters

Auto • Continued on Page 6A

This Year's Fair Parade Cancelled

Loss Of Participants, Logistics Cited As Major Hurdles

by Keri McAlpine



The annual Pasco County Fair parade through downtown Dade City will not be a part of the festivities this year partly because of declining participation.

Photo by Richard K. Riley

To the dismay of the Pasco County Fair directors and residents, this year's 70th annual fair will not be accompanied by a parade on opening day.

After running into some initial hurdles, the board originally vowed to do whatever it took to keep the parade floats afloat. However, at their Jan. 12 meeting, new circumstances arose that backed them into a corner they could not get out of.

Fair general manager Clark Converse said the board "agonized" over the decision and there was no easy answer.

Overall, there were two major factors at work.

First, according to Converse, participation for the fair's parade,

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Zephyrhills Arrests

With Friends Like That Who Needs Enemies?

Daniel Austin Royce Arrington, 19, of 39245 Village Chase, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 20 on a charge of home invasion robbery. Arrington allegedly entered the victim's residence on Apollo Street. Once inside, he reportedly demanded money and physically took the victim's wallet containing cash, debit cards and the victim's driver's license. The victim and a witness said two black males who were masked with black bandanas and armed with long guns entered the residence with Arrington, also demanding money. The victim said he knew Arrington as a friend. Arrington was also identified by the victim's girlfriend. Arrington was positively identified when police showed him a photo pack. Post Miranda, Arrington allegedly admitted to participating in the robbery and advised he intended to obtain some marijuana the victim allegedly had through intimidation. He was booked into the Pasco County Jail and was released after posting \$50,000 bail.



Yarborough said he thought the DVI was no longer active. He was booked into the Pasco County Jail.

Jacie Raquel Lopez, 42, of 5041 17th St., was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 7 on a charge of driving under the influence – property damage. Contact was made with Lopez at Seventh Street and Fourth Avenue regarding a car having struck a tree and a road sign. Lopez was reportedly observed to have bloodshot eyes and her speech was stuttering and mumbled. Lopez told police she had consumed two “shots” previously. She reportedly performed poorly when attempting field sobriety evaluations. She allegedly refused to provide a breath sample so her blood alcohol level could be determined.



Liran Brito, 40, of 5331 Satsuma Drive, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 16 on a charge of domestic battery. Brito and the victim were reportedly arguing over personal matters. She went into a room where she and Brito's four children were located. Brito allegedly followed her and kicked a bucket of Legos across the room. The bucket of Legos landed between the victim's legs. Brito then allegedly slapped a lamp off of an end table and stood in the victim's face and attempted to hit her in the face with a closed fist. She told police she blocked his right fist three times with her left arm. The victim had visible injuries that were



consistent with her account of what had occurred. Brito said he threw the Legos and broke the lamp but denied hitting the victim. He was booked into the Pasco County Jail.

Eugene Eloy Calonge, 36, of 39340 Greenmeadow Drive, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 14 on charges of simple domestic battery and possession of marijuana – less than 20 grams. The victim told police her husband became angry because she threw out some aluminum cans while she was cleaning the house. She added that he intended to recycle the cans. Calonge allegedly slapped her across the face and put her in a headlock. She told police he released her after she bit his arm. As he released her, he allegedly scratched her arm in two places. The victim had visible injuries that were consistent with her account of what had transpired. Calonge told police the victim had bit him on the arm but police did not observe any marks where he said he had been bit. He could not give an account of why his wife was scratched up. When asked if he had anything on his person that police should know about, Calonge said he might have marijuana in his pocket. A plastic baggie containing 19.7 grams of marijuana was reportedly found in one of the cargo pockets of his shorts. He was booked into the Pasco County Jail.



Jacobsen allegedly took two items, valued at \$47.86, while at Walmart, 7631 Gall Blvd. He allegedly passed all points of sale without paying for the items and was escorted back into the store by loss prevention personnel. Post Miranda, he reportedly admitted to the theft. A records check indicated that Jacobsen was on felony probation – special consideration violent offender. He was booked into the Pasco County Jail.

Robert Hugh Baur, 59, of 5147 Court St., was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 11 on charges of driving while license permanently revoked and operating a vehicle with no registration. Baur was stopped while driving a white Cadillac bearing a license plate assigned to a motor home. He was booked into the Pasco County Jail.



Jeffery Scot Rafferty, 41, of 5731 Eighth St., was apprehended by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 14 on Hernando County warrants charging him with two counts of violation of probation – robbery with no gun or deadly weapon. Contact was made with Rafferty at the Eighth Street address and he was booked into the Pasco County Jail after the warrants were confirmed.



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

Jessie Ellis Yarborough Jr., 34, of 5435 17th St., was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 11 on a charge of violation of a domestic violence injunction. Police responded to the address regarding a domestic disturbance. A records check disclosed an active DVI had been filed against Yarborough on Dec. 9, 2016. He is prohibited from having contact with the victim or being within 500 feet of the victim's address. Post Miranda,



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27 YEARS IN THE SAME LOCATION

Girl Scouts Enjoy Cookie Palooza

Event Kicks Off Annual Fundraising Effort

Story and photos by Joe Potter

More than 50 Girl Scouts who had a sleepover at Shepard's Park on Jan. 20 were joined by 25 more Girl Scouts the next day for Cookie Palooza.

The annual event kicks off the Girl Scout cookies sales season.

The girls engaged in various activities during the Jan. 21 event that was held from 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Community service manager Tricia Smith said the scouts also talked about goal setting and made business cards.

"They had safety tips and they made a mock cookie booth where they practiced sales to customers and they got to see prizes they can win through cookie sales," she said.

Each of the Girl Scouts received a Cookie Palooza patch for participating in the event.

"It was a good event," said Smith.



Izzabelle Rice, the 2017 Cookie Captain, clowns around during Cookie Palooza.



Victoria Stromburg is shown with some of the Girl Scouts at the Jan. 21 event.



Adult volunteers who helped at Cookie Palooza were, from left, Magnolia Hand, Crystal Crist, Ann Hudon, Christine Claytor, Shannon Makinster, Suzanne Smith and Tricia Smith.



Tabitha Crist, Kyndra Claytor and Novalyse Humphrey were among the Girl Scouts participating in the Cookie Palooza.

Walk • Continued from Page 1A

provide food to more than 1,000 students in Pasco County.

The program strives to help eliminate the food insecurity and hunger that many local children face on weekends when school meals are unavailable.

Hunger in Pasco County is the driving force behind the foundation as staggering statistics show there are more than 68,000 families in Pasco struggling to put food on the table.

Aiming to become an annual event, the Hunger Walk is free to the public and will offer a variety of activities for children including music, bounce houses, face painting, local artists and a dance studio performance.

According to Keith, community members can sign up as individuals or create a team, and gather contributions to support the walk. Those who sign up can set goals for the amount they hope to raise, and enjoy some friendly competition by monitoring their progress through walk. thethomaspromise.org.

Awards will be given for walking participants and teams across a variety of categories.

Thomas Promise Foundation continues to welcome businesses as vendors and sponsors for the event.

Florida Hospital has stepped up as the event's signature sponsor.

"The community has been very receptive," Keith

said. "School organizations and groups are ready to do their part we are all really excited by, not only the volume of support, but the enthusiasm as well."

Keith noted that if anyone would like to roll up their sleeves and pitch-in, there are volunteer opportunities as well.

The foundation has plans to extend its reach in the future.

"We hope to expand to serve all 84 Pasco County Schools, and create a replicable model for other counties to follow," she said. "We hope to reach this goal by partnering with the Pasco community and business sponsors."

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East Pasco Events

Feb. 3 – Diabetes and Wound Care – Emilio Dominguez, MD, an infectious disease physician, will give a presentation on the importance of diabetics properly and promptly seeking wound care to avoid serious complications. The presentation will take place from 11 a.m.-12 p.m. at the Creation Health Wellness Center's Education Room, 38233 Daughtery Road. Dr. Dominguez and a team of physicians started FHZ's Center for Wound Healing in 2001. The Center promotes patient-centered and team-based care. This program is free but call (813) 779-6476 to reserve a space.

Feb. 4 – Leisure Days Annual Quilt Show – The quilters at Leisure Days RV Resorts announce that the clubhouse will be open to visitors for the 12th annual quilt show from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. at 34533 Leisure Days Drive. Along with quilts created by the individual quilters, there are wall hangings and specialty quilts from family treasures to antique quilts, and other quilted items that will be on display. You are encouraged to car pool as parking is limited. A \$3 donation at the door will allow you time to view quilts created by our members. Call (813) 788-2631 for information.

Feb. 5 – Skydive City Chili Cook Off – Skydive City challenges one and all to clear your palate and bring on the goods. The annual Chili Cook-Off displays a dozen or so fine chilis from our local skydiving chefs. Judges may be bribed, prizes will be plentiful and the food will be awesome. Get your recipes tried and tested and bring it on out. This free event will be held from 6-8 p.m. at 4241 Skydive Lane. Call (800) 888-JUMP or visit www.skydivcity.com for information.

Feb. 6 – Jefferson County, New York Picnic – The Jefferson County 65th annual picnic will be held at the Lions Club on Dean Dairy Road in Zephyrhills from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. We again will have a buffet so please bring your favorite dish to pass and your own beverage. Our entertainment this year will be country singers Christine and Willie. We will have door prizes, raffles and a 50/50. Cost at door is \$3. Contact Cheryl at (803) 420-6629 or davischeryl45@gmail.com for information.

Feb. 8 – Bingo and Specialty Pizza – Florida Hospital Zephyrhills (FHZ) invites you to play a few games of Bingo from 2-3 p.m. in the Creation Cafe at 7050 Gall Blvd. Guest speaker David Force, a hospital employee and one of the founders of FHZ's Community Garden on Dairy Road, will give an overview of the project, opportunities for planting and expansion plans. Fruit specialty pizzas prepared by the cafe staff will be provided along with beverages. Prizes will be presented to Bingo winners. There is no charge to attend but reservations are required. Call (877) 534-3108 to reserve a spot.

Feb. 9 – Spring Cleaning and Life Organization – This program will bring direction and clarity to your life. Facilitated by life coach Veronique Polo, MBA/CLC. Held from 1-2 p.m. at the Creation Health Wellness Center, 38233 Daughtery Road. This program is free but reservations are required. Call (813) 779-6476 for information and to reserve a space.

Feb. 10 – Robotic Partial Knee Surgery – Join us as Dr. Randolph Knight, Orthopedic Surgeon, shares how MAKOplasty can be an effective treatment option for partial knee replacement. Held at Creation Health Wellness Center's Education Room, 38233 Daughtery Road from 12-1 p.m. Reservations are required. Call (877) 534-3108 or register online or call (844) 504-9378 for information.

Feb. 10 – Yard and Bake Sale – Tropical Park will host their annual Park Yard and Bake Sale at the clubhouse from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. A dessert bar will also be available along with a raffle on Longaberger Baskets and a Juke Box Radio. The park is located on State Road 54 west and Lane Road in Zephyrhills. Contact Carol Witham at teachingnh@aol.com for information.

Feb. 10 – Country Concert – Enjoy an evening of great country music with international recording artist Debbie Myers, with special guest Freddy "Tommy" Thompson on steel guitar and vocals. Held at 7 p.m. at Gem Estates in Zephyrhills. Tickets are available for \$10 by calling Lee at (813) 780-1012 or Tes at (517) 914-4718 for information.

For more events visit www.pasconewspublications.com

Commentary



First Things First

Greg First

I Just Won \$2 Million

I must be one lucky guy. I just found out that I would be the recipient of two million dollars. All I have to do according to the e-mail is to give them my full name, address, date of birth, Social Security number and the routing number of my bank account. They in turn will deposit the full amount of money once they verify the information is correct. Apparently, unknown to me I was entered by a friend into an international lottery. The e-mail says that even though I didn't win the big prize I still managed to win the lesser prize of two million dollars. I wonder if I am the only one that is this lucky. The only thing I really have to do is click on the link and that will start the whole process of me fattening up my bank account.

I do understand that many people get sucked into scams every day but this guy is not going to be one of them. The amount of money that I could have won, the cruises that I missed and the opportunities to live like the rich and famous are not appealing to me in any way.

I learned from parents that came up the hard way that nothing is free. I also learned that anything is possible and the sky is the limit. If you work hard and set goals you can do or be whatever you want. I try and follow their example every day.

It seems like in today's world people

are getting scammed on a regular basis. How many times have you read about people winning free cruises and then spending hundreds if not thousands on stuff that was not covered in the free offer? It is not uncommon to read about people taking money out of a bank account to help in investigations set up by scammers pretending to be federal employees. It is also not uncommon right here where we live to have repair companies that you call to charge large amounts of money to come and not even fix or complete the repair job. To me reputation is everything. To scammers it doesn't mean a thing.

In our service area we have two awesome places to check to see if they have gotten any negative feedback on people that you may want to do business with; the Greater Zephyrhills Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Dade City Chamber of Commerce do a great job. They can provide a list of members in many areas that can help you in just about anything you are planning to do. This is the place in the community where friendliness, courtesy and knowledge should be at the forefront. In east Pasco County I think that is the case.

Finally it is the responsibility of each and every one of us to check things out. If something seems too good to be true then it is probably worth investigation.

If you see a link on social media you are not sure about then don't click on it. If you get a private message that says, "I got a bunch of money and saw your name of the list" don't believe it and if you get an e-mail saying you are now a millionaire don't believe that one either.

There are many ways in this life to be rich and they aren't all measured by how much money you have.

I think you know what I am talking about.

It's A Snowbird Palooza!

Third Annual Event Set for Feb. 11

Calling all area Snowbirds and mature adults for a day of activities and entertainment at the third annual Snowbird Palooza in charming Zephyrhills. Located at Zephyr Park, this senior friendly, fun filled event includes great exhibitors, keynote speakers at noon, free coffee and donut social and free health checks. Fun activities will be scheduled throughout the event from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. including Bingo, strolling entertainment and live entertainment.

Snowbird Palooza supports the Pasco Education Foundation for local schools,

so please bring new hygiene products or school supplies to help underprivileged kids in the local area. Event Sponsors Include: Pasco Education Foundation, Morgan Exteriors and Iernea's Heating and Cooling.

Snowbird Palooza is dog friendly and encourages our guests to spend all day, so lawn chairs are permitted however seating options are provided.

Zephyr Park is located at 3816 Fifth Ave. Parking and entry are free.

Visit Simpleeventsfl.com for more information.

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Commentary

The Greatest Show Worth Its Weight In Smiles



The Rest Of The Story

Dave Walters

I sat in my seat at Amalie Arena on Saturday night with a look of amazement on my face. I looked to my immediate left and my five-year-old granddaughter Mia had the same look.

We were watching the "Greatest Show on Earth."

Growing up in Pennsylvania, going to the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus was out of the question. Ticket prices were a bit much for us and a trip from Allentown to Philadelphia for one

show wasn't worth it for my dad. I'm not saying I never saw a circus, but I never saw the "The Circus." I saw the parades on TV news when Ringling rolled into Philly and all I could do was wish.

But my wish finally came true mainly because if I didn't go now, I would never see "The Greatest Show on Earth." I made sure I shared this opportunity with Mia and my other granddaughter Kira, along with my son David and his fiancé Tanya, plus my friend Reggie Roberts and his family. Ironically, my grandchildren saw the show when it was in town last year.

It saddened me to hear that this is the final year for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. The entertainment that wowed ladies and gentlemen and children of all ages for 147 years had come

to Tampa for the last time.

The circus will shut down in May. Feld Entertainment, based in Palmetto, announced the decision last month, citing high costs and declining ticket sales. This comes not long after elephants were phased out of their shows.

Last weekend's show had an extreme theme and took us on a ride captained by Kristen Michelle Wilson, the circus' first female ringmaster.

I watched the show and I was blown away. I truly understand why it's billed as the greatest. I saw tigers trained better than my golden retrievers. There were stunts on the high wire that you could barely watch. I saw a woman shot across the arena from a cannon.

I can't forget that crazy guy on and

in the steel wheel that spun at neck-breaking speeds. There were incredibly trained poodles that had people laughing and cheering with every cool trick. The aerialists were amazing as were the dancers.

There was so much more and I was thrilled to have witnessed it.

I thought if this was great to see through my 51-year-old eyes, how awesome must this have been for my Mia and Kira?

Wearing their clown noses we got before the show, they clapped, screamed, waved and laughed throughout the production. Seeing their reaction was probably the most amazing thing I saw all night.

It breaks my heart that "The Greatest Show on Earth" will end its run.

From all of us, Thank You.

Parade • Continued from Page 1A

as well as Dade City's Christmas parade, have drastically declined throughout the years. The county fair parade has gone from about 80 to last year's 34 parade entries and the Christmas parade's usual 100 or so entries has shrunk to about 60 a year.

That fact alone has been a concern of the parade committee, Converse said. The amount of work that goes into the parade compared to the loss of participation has become "frustrating" for organizers.

The second major factor can be blamed on the two days lost to closure in the fall because of hurricane warnings. Because of that, schools will not close for President's Day this year, when the parade is normally scheduled. This change has severely affected not just the planning but also the execution of the parade.

With school in session, school buses won't be available to transport bands from around the county for the march through downtown. Converse added that with school in session, participation and spectator attendance would

naturally shrink.

Line-ups for the fair parade normally start at Cox Elementary and end at Pasco Elementary School, but with school in session the parade times would need to correlate with the schools' dismissal.

In general, the school conflict added other safety and traffic and congestion concerns that ended up being too much.

Converse said the planning committee had the permits for road closures finalized prior to the schools President's Day decision, which makes the planned parade route moot. New permits with the city and county would take at least 60 to 90 days to acquire, Converse said, which was already impossible when he found out the need for them.

"We hadn't thought of the conflict with dismissal times with the schools," Converse said glumly. "There's too many negatives and not enough positives. We understand the community is extremely disappointed in us. We are extremely disappointed it can't happen."

He added that the fair board considered every option to make it possible but none were deemed feasible.

Since the decision was announced via Facebook, board members and even School Superintendent Kurt Browning have received criticism.

Converse said Browning is not responsible in any way for the rules involving hurricane days and the days that are set aside for mandatory testing toward the end of the school calendar.

And just because the fair is cancelled this year, Converse said there is hope for next year, and that he and the board will do what they can to bring a vibrant, well-attended parade back.

On a positive note, Converse said this year's 70th Pasco County Fair will be full of new and exciting attractions, as well as the classics. A full calendar of events has already been placed on www.pascocountyfair.com.

This year's fair will take place from Feb. 20 through Feb. 26.



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Auto • Continued from Page 1A

“Because a lot of the winter people are down and there’s a circuit of shows that the vendors go to, so there will be more vendors and more spectators,” Pearson said.

Pearson expects about 1,100 vendor spaces will be filled, and that the festival will welcome somewhere around 20,000 people between it’s four days from Feb. 16-19.

“It’s a family style outing with cars and all kinds of different auto related items,” Pearson said.

No matter how it is referred to – a swap meet, automotive flea market, auto jumble – it is a big draw for auto enthusiasts.

Vendor spaces are 10 feet wide by 30 feet long and will be filled to the brim with all kinds of classic and souped-up wheels.

Pearson and her husband Craig have hosted car swap meets for more than 25 years, and have been preparing for this weekend since their last event wrapped up in October. About half of the people who participate in the fall event return for the winter fest, making for plenty of

new eye candy and car parts.

Pearson said car lovers drive from as far as Canada, California and Connecticut to participate in what she calls “four days of car bliss.”

Hundreds of cars will be up for sale and auction between the classic car auction and car corral. In the car corral, individual owners are responsible for selling their whips. The car auction will take place Feb. 18 and will be led by Sun Coast Auto Auctions. Pearson said if they auction receives enough entries, an additional auction will precede the main sell-off on Feb. 17.

The auction will see cars cross the block in any of the following categories: Muscle Car, Street Rod, Classic Car, Antique, Luxury, Exotic, Race Car, Sports Car, Specialty Truck and Motorcycle.

The swap meet and car corral take place all four days for people looking for a specific car part, or others who may not even know what they want until they see it.

Don’t forget to check out the valve-cover races, where participants will be entered into a people’s choice competition for best-decorated valve cover before putting it to the test on the track.



Some vendors had items at the swap meet last year that sported a throwback vintage look.

Photo by Dave Walters

Even if cars aren’t your thing, Pearson said there are always vendors selling vintage t-shirts and other memorabilia. There will also be daily door prizes and trivia questions, food vendors, and the first 200 spectators that attend each day will receive a free collector cap.

Festival Park is located just off of U.S.

301, at 2738 Gall Blvd. Gate admission is \$10 per day per person, except on Sunday when admission will be \$5. Parking is free.

Hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Visit zephyrhillsautoevents.com or call (813) 312-4009 for information on the Zephyrhills Auto Events.

Caldwell • Continued from Page 1A

When he started his project at age 17 he said nobody even knew his name.

“I told them my mission. Instead of raising \$4,500, I raised \$9,000,” he said. “The whole community lit up and people were calling me and asking how they could help me. It was shocking to me that people were coming up to me and saying they were proud of me.”

The MOPH plans to use the additional funds to make some other improvements at the site in the park.

Meeting some people who influenced him was another benefit of his journey towards becoming an Eagle Scout, Caldwell said. Two of them – U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis, R-FL (12), and state Rep. Danny Burgess, R-FL (38) – impressed him as honorable men who care a lot about U.S. veterans and he credits them for helping him

choose to honor MOPH.

A vandal destroyed one of the benches in 2016 and plans are in the works to replace it, Caldwell said.

On Jan. 15, Earl McMillan, commander Chapter #705 of the MOPH, presented him his Eagle Scout badge and pin.

Caldwell has been involved in scouting for about 12 years, first becoming a Cub Scout at age 6 while he was living in Massachusetts. He earned Cub Scouting’s highest rank, the Arrow of Light, after moving to Florida when he was 9 years old. Caldwell joined the Boy Scouts soon afterward and quickly determined his goal was to be an Eagle Scout. He joined Troop 72 when he and his parents, James Edward “Ed” and Regina Caldwell, moved to Zephyrhills two years ago. He has earned 29

merit badges, including last month’s Eagle badge.

“I worked toward it with all that I could. I don’t like leaving a job half done,” Caldwell said.

“At the end of the day, the Eagle pin goes on your uniform. It’s an accolade,” he said. “But it represents service to your community. I’m proud to call members of the Military Order of the Purple Heart my friends.”

Caldwell has earned some college credits through being an Advanced Placement Honor student at Zephyrhills High School. He has been a member of the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program for four years and plans on enlisting in the U.S. Navy after he graduates from ZHS on May 25. His career goal is to be involved in nuclear engineering as it is the most academically challenging area in the Navy.



Ashlee Harrison, Reclamation Ecologist
South Pasture Mine, Hardee County

As an ecologist, I am part of a dedicated team that oversees the reclamation of Mosaic’s mined lands. Before phosphate operations begin, I work with scientists, engineers and environmental specialists to carefully plan for reclaimed land uses. Last year, those plans included planting more than 2 million trees — and reclaiming land for wildlife habitats, parks, agriculture and other productive uses. There’s a reason Mosaic is so passionate about reclamation; we know our kids and grandkids will enjoy these lands for generations to come.

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Little Everglades Going Big

Tours, Hot Air Balloons To Showcase Ranch

by Keri McAlpine

Sprawling across 2,050 acres of fields and farmland, Little Everglades Ranch is an oasis of green grass fields and a perfect place for entertaining events.

Iconic for once hosting steeplechase horse races, the ranch is now embarking on a new venture: Ranch Days.

Event organizer Kevin Campbell said he and his wife Andy have wanted to put on a big event like this for years, and on Feb. 11 and 12 their hard work will be realized.

This is the first 'home-grown' production put on by the ranch since the steeplechase was shut down when the recession hit in 2008. Since then, the property has been host to numerous events including high school cross country championships and extreme sport runs, such as the Savage Race.

With Ranch Days, Campbell hopes to bring something new to the plate.

Even though the ranch comprises thousands of acres, most events use less

than a quarter of that. Because of that, Campbell has organized five different ways for visitors to explore the property and it's mysterious appeal.

"People have always asked us when they come out ... if we give tours," Campbell said. "So part of this event, of why we're doing this event, is to give people a chance to see the ranch."

With that in mind, a Zephyrhills Boy Scout troop will be leading hiking tours across the property, a tram will scoot across the multiple fields, and a 12-seat swamp buggy will delve into the wetlands to go even deeper into the ranch.

Campbell said one of the more exciting tour vehicles will be provided by a larc, a Vietnam era boat and land cruiser, which was originally used to transport equipment off of ships that couldn't dock in Vietnam. It's duck-tour like presence will provide an exciting adventure for participants on the ground and in a lake across the property.

The last, and most uplifting, tour vehicle will be two hot air balloons which, weather permitting, will offer tethered rides so visitors can get an aerial view of the ranch.

On the night of Feb. 11, Campbell hopes to welcome an additional three hot air balloons to participate in a 'hot air balloon glow.'

"They're going to fire up their balloons which makes the balloon illuminate, it's like a light bulb up inside of there. And it will just be real pretty up in the evening sky," Campbell said.

All of the tours will be offered for a fee and the two-day event will also feature a slew of free musical entertainment and live shows. Where the finish line used to be for the steeplechase on the 1.25-mile long grass track, "exciting exhibitions"



Little Everglades Ranch boasts more than 2,000 acres to its name. Attendees of Ranch Days will be able to get a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the ranch. *Photos Provided*



A Vietnam era larc vessel will be on hand at Ranch Days to provide visitors with tours of the property on land and in the water.

will be performing both days.

Tino Wallenda will perform high-wire walking, Lady Kitty will bring some feathered friends for a birds of prey presentation, and Jim Mendenhall, famous for his involvement with the San Antonio Rattlesnake Festival, will present indigenous snakes. More recently added to the schedule is a chainsaw artist, who will be doing live woodcarvings.

"There will always be something going on with those four shows," Campbell said. "We're hoping people take advantage of the great entertainment we're providing. We feel it's a real value for families ... if they come with full tummies, they can literally come out here and spend hours for 10 bucks looking at all the great entertainment we have and enjoy all the stuff we're putting out there."

As far as live music goes, Campbell said that is top notch as well. About a dozen regional artists will perform on two opposing stages throughout the day, playing some of the best country,

bluegrass and Americana in the area.


A kids area and a free junior Savage Race course will be available for the younger crowd.

Food, beverage and craft vendors will also be set up on the property for visitors to enjoy.


The ranch was recently put in a conservancy with the Southwest Florida Water Management District, meaning it can never be developed.

"It will always remain a working ranch and a nature preserve and an events facility," Campbell said. "The ranch is also such a beautiful place to do this at, I'm really hoping people take advantage of that."

The entrance for Ranch Days at Little Everglades Ranch is located at U.S. 301 and Gould Road, just north of Dade City. Entry into the event is free with \$10 parking. Hours are 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Feb. 11 and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Feb. 12. Visit RanchDays.com for a full schedule, list of activities and other information.



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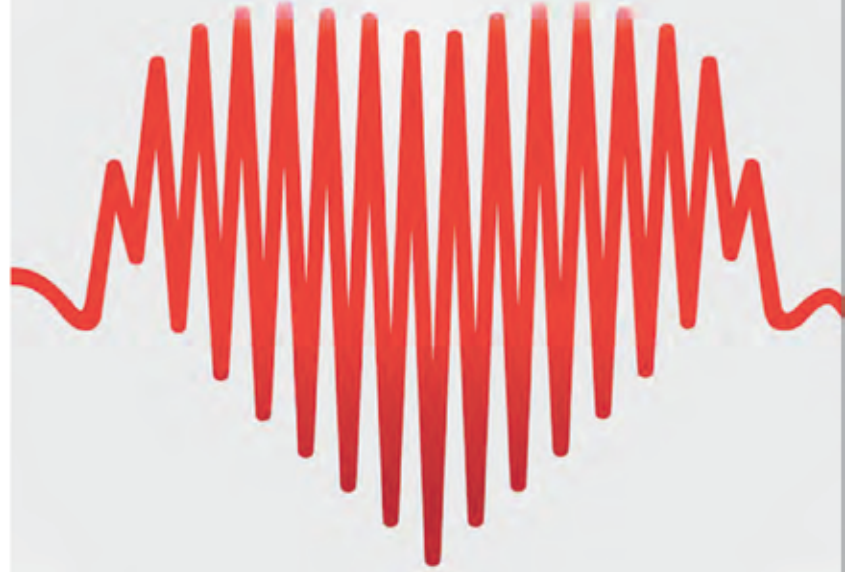
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