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Looking Forward To Being 'Dave'

A Quarter-Century Of Service Ends For Shears

by Dave Walters

After 25 years on the job at the Zephyrhills Police Department, retired police chief Dave Shears walks away with his head held high knowing he dedicated his life to protecting the people of Zephyrhills.

On the eve of his retirement Tuesday, Shears sat back, took a few deep breaths, and opened up about his career, his two battles with cancer, the dedication of his family and the knowledge he left the department better than he found it.

Shears went through the Police Academy in 1992 sponsored by the City of New Port Richey Police Department, but upon completion he opted to look for a position on the Zephyrhills Police Department under the guidance of long-time chief Bill Eiland.

Zephyrhills was a town that reminded him of the small town where he came from up in Michigan. He described it as

Shears • Continued on Page 6A

Seniors Prep For Journey Ahead



Story and photos by Dave Walters

In an innovative speech, Zephyrhills High School Valedictorian Julian Ortega Del Torro and Salutatorian Sarah First told their fellow members of the Class of 2017 that their actions and not labels will define them.

The competitive nature of the valedictorian and the salutatorian continued right into the graduation ceremony showing unity at the top of the Class of 2017 as Del Torro and First delivered a collaborative speech.

"When people try to give you a title or put you in a category, remember you're so much more," First said.

Decorated caps shared assorted messages and revealed destination for the next chapter in the lives of the Zephyrhills High School Class of 2017.

Graduation • Continued on Page 8A

Military Museum Remembers D-Day

Valuable History Lesson On Display

Story and photos by Keri McAlpine

On June 6, 1944, the Normandy Landings took place at the height of World War II when about 156,000 American, British and Canadian soldiers stormed 50 miles of beaches on the coast of France. With more than 70 years since the day, local history buffs and memorabilia collectors come together every year to remind Zephyrhills of those soldiers and their sacrifice.

The Museum of Military History is hosting its annual D-Day Memorial event Saturday during the museum's usual hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. In addition to the museum's resident displays of the home front, Vietnam and Navy history, volunteers for the commemoration will set up some special World War II and D-Day displays.



Greg Benton, center, shows some helmets in his World War II collection to other history buffs at last year's D-Day memorial event held at the Zephyrhills Museum of Military History.

D-Day • Continued on Page 5A

Service At Oakside Honors The Fallen

History Shared With Hundreds At Cemetery

Story and photos by Joe Potter

Nearly 350 people turned out in scorching heat at Oakside Cemetery on Monday to remember the 1.3 million servicemen and servicewomen who gave their lives in service to their country over the last 241 years.

State Rep. Danny Burgess was the featured speaker for the 40-minute Memorial Day program. Burgess, a Republican who represents Florida's 38th House District, provided that grim statistic.



Two people who had lost a child in combat pinned carnations to a wreath on Monday.

Service • Continued on Page 3A

INSIDE: Pg. 4A - Retired K9 Passes Away, Remembered Fondly
Pg. 7A - Main Street Moves Into Jeffries House

Pg. 1B - Track Star Chooses Embry Riddle
Pg. 1B - Elks Extends Warmth To Families

Pg. 1B - Library Summer Reading Program Returns
Pg. 3B - A Helping Rock Marks First Anniversary

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Zephyrhills Arrests

In Person Or Online, Unwanted Attention Is Stalking

Stephen George Dion Jr., 38, of 6546 Northlake Drive, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on May 15 on a charge of domestic stalking. The victim told police Dion had been sending her unwanted emails and purposefully making Facebook posts about her embarrassing private personal information. Dion allegedly threatened to post additional embarrassing information and to show up at her location to give her a Mother's Day "gift." The victim said she was emotionally distraught, feared checking her social media and emails, and feared for her safety and for the safety of her children. Police had recently contacted Dion regarding stalking the victim during which Dion was advised to not contact her. The victim previously agreed to not prosecute Dion after he reportedly told police he would not contact her again. Post Miranda, Dion admitted to emailing and posting personal information on social media.

Earl Anthony Florer, 33, of 20426 Peachtree Lane, Dade City, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on May 21 on a charge of grand theft. Florer allegedly took the victim's cell phone from the lobby of McGee's Tires, 7010 Gall Blvd., on May 19. He later allegedly dropped the cell phone off at the Dade City Police Department. Florer reportedly contacted police on May 20 and spontaneously admitted having taken the cell phone. Post Miranda, on May 21, Florer reportedly admitted to having taken the phone.

Xavier Elijah Lee Britt, 26, of 39339 Greenmeadow Drive, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on May 20 on charges of possession of marijuana with intent to sell within 1,000 feet of a church, possession of controlled substance without a prescription, dealing in stolen property, possession of paraphernalia and driving while license suspended or revoked with knowledge. Police also arrested **Pedro Antonio Valdes**, 26, of the same address, on charges of possession

of marijuana with intent to sell within 1,000 feet of a church, possession of controlled substance without a prescription, dealing in stolen property and possession of paraphernalia. Police stopped a car Britt was driving for a window tint violation at the intersection of Fifth Avenue and Sixth Street, within 1,000 feet of the First Baptist Church of Zephyrhills. A strong odor of marijuana could be detected coming from the vehicle. Britt reportedly told police he did not think his license was valid as he had not paid for a ticket he had received. A computer check disclosed Britt's license had been suspended on May 15. A hand search of the vehicle revealed a black duffel bag on the floor directly in front of where Valdes had been sitting in the rear passenger seat. The bag allegedly contained seven large plastic bags containing what field-tested positive as 1.495 grams of marijuana. A small plastic jar containing 13 Oxycodone HCL 30mg tablets was also found within the duffel bag along with a

digital scale with marijuana residue. A stolen Springfield XD9 9mm pistol was also found inside the duffel bag. Post Miranda, Valdes reportedly said the duffel bag was his. Both men were booked into the Pasco County Jail.

Martin Galvan Uribe Jr., 22, of 3744 Lanier Drive, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on May 19 on a charge of domestic battery by strangulation. The victim told police she and Uribe became involved in an argument as they were travelling in his vehicle. He allegedly got angry and put his hands around her neck and strangled her. The victim said she used her feet to open the vehicle's passenger door to try and escape and Uribe allegedly slammed her head into the center console. The victim reportedly had visible marks around her neck that were consistent with strangulation and her right ear was bloody and swollen. She said she and Uribe are in a romantic relationship and they had previously resided together. Post Miranda, Uribe reportedly said he had put his hands around the victim's neck to keep her from jumping out of the vehicle. When informed of the victim's injuries, Uribe reportedly denied strangling her or slamming her head on the console.

Elizabeth Dee Marie Maldonado, 37, of 6649 Midland St., was arrested by Zephyrhills police on May 15 on a charge of abuse battery of disabled adult. Police were dispatched to 5505 Eighth St. regarding a

disturbance. Upon arrival, the victim told police her daughter, who temporarily resides with her, jumped on her back and punched her in the nose with a closed fist during a verbal confrontation. The victim had injuries consistent with her account of what had transpired. A witness provided testimony confirming the victim's statement. Maldonado reportedly told police she was aware of her mother's disabled status but denied post Miranda intentionally striking her mother.

Timothy Rozelle Farr, 33, of 5255 18th St., was arrested by Zephyrhills police on May 18 on a charge of domestic battery on a person 65 years of age or older. The arrest report said that Farr restrained his wife's arms against her will and threw her to the ground on the night of April 30 or the early morning of May 1. Farr's wife is 80 years old and he has reportedly been married to her for three years.

William Harold Todd, 35, of 4630 Sixth St., was apprehended by Zephyrhills police on May 20 on a Pasco County warrant charging him with failure to appear - expired driver's license for more 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.



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27 YEARS IN THE SAME LOCATION

Service • Continued from Page 1A

Joseph Warren, a physician and preeminent member of the Massachusetts government, was the first veteran to die in combat before the United States had been founded, Burgess said.

Warren was serving as a volunteer soldier – a rank he insisted upon taking while his appointment to the office of general was pending – when he was mortally wounded during the Battle of Bunker Hill.

Warren is remembered for sending Paul Revere on his famous midnight ride to warn that the British were coming.

Burgess said British commander-in-chief Gen. Thomas Gage considered Warren's death of equal value to the death of 500 men.

"We need to seize every opportunity that life gives us because they fought for us," Burgess said of those who died in combat.

Ben Youmans of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #8154, a Vietnam War veteran, spoke of the first American soldier he had saw killed in Vietnam.

U.S. Army Specialist First Class Bill Frey was killed in action on April 3, 1968, while trying to rescue a wounded soldier. He was a two-time recipient of the Silver Star and had also received a Purple Heart medal.

Frey died less than six weeks before he was scheduled to be sent home from Vietnam. He was 20 years old.

Youmans said he knew Frey and he was one of the men who helped to identify him before his body was flown home for burial.

Youmans' voice broke occasionally as he read excerpts from "Letters From 'Nam," a book comprised of a collection of letters Frey had written to his family and friends.

"They never had a fraternity like this in college," Frey wrote in one of his letters. "These are men that you can depend on."

Representatives from several local veteran's organizations, including the Marine Corps League and its auxiliary, AMVETS and the American Legion participated in the event by pinning carnations on a memorial wreath. The carnations represented veterans who had died in combat.

Three Gold Star family members whose children had been killed in action also affixed carnations to the wreath.

Cadets from the Zephyrhills High School Reserve Officer Training Corps presented and later retired the colors.

An honor guard from VFW Post #8154 presented a 21-gun salute near the end of the program.

The program is held each year at Oaks Cemetery where veterans of the Civil War, Spanish American War, World Wars I and II, Korea, and Vietnam are interred.

Workers for the City of Zephyrhills and Duke Energy were praised during the program for work they had done since last year's event was held. City workers helped to



Andrew Nagy pins a carnation to the wreath at Oaks Cemetery on Monday. Nagy is a member of the 40/8 Honor Society of American Legion Post #118.

make the lettering on many faded headstones more legible so people could tell who was buried there. Duke Energy erected a power pole and ran an underground power line to the site where the ceremony is held.

This made it possible for a speaker system to be used at the event for the first time this year.



State Rep. Danny Burgess was the featured speaker during Monday's Memorial Day program.



Rod Rehrig, Dave Croussore, Glenn A. Shaw, Dan Paiz, Kenny Rogers, Marcus Harman, Gilbert Shepard, and Dave Marshall were honor guard members during the ceremony. Cliff Standish, second from right, was the bugler.



Zephyrhills Mayor Gene Whitfield thanked city workers and Duke Energy for their contributions to the ceremony.

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East Pasco Events

June 1 – Ergonomics and the Sitting Epidemic – Learn how posture and daily activity impacts your health. Held from 1-2 p.m. at Florida Hospital Zephyrhills' Creation Health Wellness Center, 38233 Daughtery Road. Free to the public, but reservations are required. Call (813) 779-6476 to reserve a space.

June 3 – YMCA Summerpalooza Party – The entire community is invited to join the local YMCA to celebrate the start of a summer full of family fun. The free party will be held from 1-4 p.m. at the East Pasco Family YMCA, located at 37301 Chapel Hill Loop. Call (813) 780-9622 for information. The free summer bash will feature a pool party, family fun games, arts & crafts, healthy refreshments, music, prizes and more.

June 5 – Square Dance Lessons – This 10-week program will be held from 7:30-9 p.m., at Strawberry Square, 4401 Boot Bay Road in Plant City. Meet new friends, stimulate your brain, improve your mobility. Casual dress, partner not needed, great wooden floor. Cost is \$3 per lesson and interested dancers must attend in first couple of weeks in order to not fall behind. Call (813-752-0491) or email Keith at keithuns@yahoo.com or Marty at mvanwart@tampabay.rr.com for information.

June 7 – Parenting Presentation – This presentation, titled 'Helping Your Kids Find a Life Purpose Part II' will be held from 5:30-6:30 p.m. at Florida Hospital Zephyrhills' Creation Health Wellness Center, 38233 Daughtery Road. Help your child discover their unique path and purpose. The program is free, but reservations are required. Call (813) 779-6476 for information.

June 8 – Bingo in the Creation Café – June Bingo in Florida Hospital Zephyrhills' Creation Café at 7050 Gall Blvd. will include one of America's favorite treats: chocolate chip cookies. The fun takes place from 2-3 p.m. and includes a presentation by Diane Reith, RN, on the many services provided to patients by the hospital's case management department. There will also be a few games of Bingo for prizes and refreshments. Call (877) 534-3108 and make a reservation.

June 10 – Attracting Pollinators to your Garden – This seminar will discuss what elements are needed in the home garden to attract butterflies and hummingbirds. If you have wanted to create a habitat for these pollinators, then come to this seminar and learn how. Held from 10-11 a.m. at The Zephyrhills Library, 5347 Eighth St.

June 13 – Getting Ready for Retirement – Scott Taylor, a University of Florida extension instructor, will give you planning tips for your retirement. Held from 5:15-6:15 p.m. at Florida Hospital Zephyrhills' Creation Health Wellness Center, 38233 Daughtery Road. Program is free, but reservations are required. Call (813) 779-6476 for information.

June 15 – One Event: Two Responses – We have a choice when it comes to responding to events. Learn how you can retrain yourself so that stress is minimized. Held from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at Florida Hospital Zephyrhills' Creation Health Wellness Center, 38233 Daughtery Road. Program is free, but reservations are required. Call (813) 779-6476 for information.

June 17 – BoHo Bazaar – Come join Rhythm & Brews every third Saturday of the month all summer long for this free event. Held from 12-4 p.m. at 4711 Gall Blvd. We host local artists, crafters and all around cool people. Door prizes and food vendors will be on site. Have a cold pint and enjoy local bands playing outside. Individuals are encouraged to bring farm fresh items for trade. This is a Hippy Hollow community event promoting artist visions and commerce through good will and energy exchange. Call (813) 395-6957 for information.

June 23 – Eight Secrets to Weight Loss – Are you curious about how to shed pounds? Best kept secrets are shared. Held from 1-2 p.m. at Florida Hospital Zephyrhills' Creation Health Wellness Center, 38233 Daughtery Road. Reservations required by calling (813) 779-6476 for this free program.

June 24 – Zephyrhills SummerFest – This family friendly event celebrates summer, families and our great country. Held from 4-9 p.m. at Zephyr Park, 38116 Fifth Ave. Bring your lawn chairs and a blanket. Event will feature watermelon eating and dance contests, a kids area, local food vendors and fireworks over the lake. Family and pet friendly. Entry and parking is free. Proceeds benefit the Samaritan Project of Zephyrhills.

June 26 – Summer Smoothie Demo – Sample a patriotic and nutritious smoothie. Held from 2-3 p.m. at Florida Hospital Zephyrhills' Creation Health Wellness Center, 38233 Daughtery Road. Program is free, but reservations are required. Call (813) 779-6476 for information.

For more events visit www.pasconewspubs.com

Commentary



First Things First

Greg First

Listen First, Then Decide

I was reflecting this Memorial Day about the sacrifices made by so many to keep our country free. Some lost their lives defending the values many of us take for granted. My case in point is several schools that some of our kids are attending or planning to go to seem to have a one-sided view about the way things should be. I hope you take a long look before choosing some of these. I am not going to give specific examples but there are a whole bunch of them.

I have been doing my best to avoid watching any of the cable news channels. You know the ones I am talking about. The ones that are spewing fake news faster than the little girl from "The Exorcist" could spin her head around. But to tell you the truth, all of the news isn't completely false.

It is sad to watch some of our colleges and universities when an invited speaker comes or attempts to come to their campus and what seems like the majority of the students throw a temper

tantrum. They won't even tolerate hearing what a person has to say before they embarrass, hurl insults or rudely walk out. This is not a good reflection on the students, faculty or mentors of our future leaders. I was always taught to hear both sides of the story then make my own decision. Things certainly have changed. I don't need someone making my decisions for me.

Recently, during some commencement programs, a few select speakers such as former politicians, celebrities, faculty, the media and people that can influence our students, got in front of these young learners and knocked our government, our country, our way of life and the freedoms we have. Who then is really to blame? I understand we have freedoms and they are protected. I also understand most of us were taught by some pretty wise generations before us to show respect, humility and always try to contribute in a positive way to make things better.

When we decide to stop listening to other points of view, to not tolerate anyone who thinks differently, to protest even though many don't even know why, and to not have an open mind then we are on a track that may not have a happy ending. Many communist countries can tell you all about it. The people in those countries don't have a whole lot of options: it is one way or you can suffer the consequences. I don't think our founding fathers or those who have given their life for our freedoms would have wanted it that way. I don't think any of us would want to switch places with them. I know for sure, I don't.

Retired K9 Passes Away, Remembered Fondly

by Dave Walters

The Zephyrhills Police Department announced the passing of retired K9 Janko, 14, on Sunday morning at the home of his handler, Sergeant Billy Adams.

Janko served as Adams' partner up to his retirement in 2014.

"Billy knew that dog had his back," said retired police chief David Shears. "All he had to do is pop that back door button and that dog was ready. He was truly the best K9 in Pasco County. We're happy he got to enjoy the retired life with Billy."

Shears got to know Janko well during his tenure with ZPD. He has three teeth-mark scars on his right leg to prove it.

"It was my mistake," Shears said. "I have my Janko tattoos. I will remember him well."



Janko with his handler and lifetime friend Sgt. Billy Adams. Photo Provided

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Commentary



The Rest Of The Story

Dave Walters

Preparation Takes The Panic Out Of Hurricane Season

We didn't have much of a winter or spring season, but there's one season that will show up whether we want it to or not – hurricane season.

That's right, today, June 1 is the start of the Atlantic hurricane season.

It's time to stress out for the next six months every time the weatherman points to a system coming off the coast of Africa or a spaghetti model that shows 30

different paths a storm could take.

Instead of stressing, prepare yourself, your family and your home.

It's been nearly 13 years since a major hurricane rolled through Pasco County. Remember the names Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne?

Don't forget Tropical Storm Hermine, which tore up parts of west Pasco, Hernando and Marion counties last year.

We had become accustomed to keeping our cars gassed up, our cupboards stocked, our generators checked. We don't want to know what it was like to be without power for days, to spend hours waiting to fill up a gas can, to spend even more time on highways trying to evacuate ahead of a

threatening storm.

When we're warned, we need to be ready.

If there is a threat, and nothing happens, look at it as a blessing and not just a false alarm. For years, storms have brushed by us to the east or the west, leaving us with nothing more than rain and wind.

How long will this lucky streak keep going? There is no way to predict it. Weathermen and meteorologists have been trying to predict it for decades.

You need to decide now how seriously you will take the potential threat and what you want to do about it.

So, this is a reminder for everyone who has become complacent, who is sure that a

storm won't hit east Pasco this season; we hope you're right.

We encourage everyone to take basic preparations in case you're wrong.

Familiarize yourself with evacuation routes and have a plan for where you'll stay.

Put together a disaster supply kit that includes flashlights, batteries, cash, first aid supplies and copies of vital paperwork.

Check your house to make sure your roof and gutters are secure. Trim or remove damaged trees and limbs in your yard.

We might get lucky. We certainly have before.

But if we aren't, it's better to be prepared than to wish we had been.

D-Day • Continued from Page 1A

Re-enactors come from across Florida for the event, usually dressed in American, British or German garb. Snacks and refreshments will be provided, as guests are welcome to interact with those in costume and ask questions while perusing the displays.

"It's educational, number one, if you want your kids to be educated a little bit on something that they're probably not teaching in school" families should attend, said museum volunteer John Bolender.

Authentic weapons are likely to be on hand or on display, but the Zephyrhills museum's usual weapon demonstration will probably not take place, according to Bolender.

An airplane outside of the museum that sits in the grass also has ties to D-Day, a reconstructed original C-46

served heroically in all of the airborne drops the night before the invasion.

Bolender said the event typically welcomes around 150 people, depending on conflicting weekend events.

The museum itself is a piece of history, standing as the last remaining barracks building of the World War II 10th Fighter squadron. Troops stationed in Zephyrhills flew out of the airport on their way to fight in D-Day, according to Bolender. The museum served as the infirmary during wartime.

The museum, adjacent to the Zephyrhills Municipal Airport, is completely run by a group of about nine core volunteers. Outside of the D-Day event, the museum is open only on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Call Bolender at (813) 355-7277 for information on the D-Day event.



Meg Durshimer sits with her personal collection of World War II propaganda at the Military Museum last year in remembrance of D-Day. Her collection focused on home front propaganda and featured matchbooks, flour sacks and posters.



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Shears • Continued from Page 1A

Mayberry. It appealed to him. He interviewed for the job with Eiland and Capt. Bob Howell and said to them if he they believed in him, he would stay with the department for his career. It may sound like just an empty promise to get a job, but Shears was a man of his word.

Flash forward 25 years and that promise was fulfilled.

"I know they heard that a million times. I think they believed me," Shears recalled. "The greatest moment I had as a police officer was the moment I received my badge and living up to my end of the bargain to Bob Howell and Chief Eiland.

"It's a hell of commitment. If they hired me and took that chance, they must have seen something in me. I deserved to give them something back. A handshake and a man's word is all you need. I think they could feel I was honest and sincere."

Eiland was educating his young officers and they didn't realize it until later in their career.

As a young officer, Shears resided in an apartment on Bruce B. Downs Boulevard. Eiland requested that Shears live in the city so he could be closer if needed.

"I never understood why at that point. He didn't have to tell me. I figured it

out," Shears explained. "If you live in the community you serve in, you are going to take more pride and make sure you get the bad guys off the street because your family is here, you kids are here. It becomes personal for you if bad guys are in your city committing crimes."

For more than a quarter century, Shears made the residents of Zephyrhills his number one priority.

"If you don't take care of the people, you won't be in your job very long," Shears said. "The important thing is the people know who you are, you are transparent and show you do the right thing. They have to trust what you are doing in that position."

There have been five chiefs since Shears received his shield in 1992. Eiland served 35 years until retiring in 1996. Howell followed until 2002. Russ Barnes and Jerry Freeman, who were hired from outside the department combined for six years on the job before Shears was named chief in 2008.

"I hate to throw it out there, but the chief who lasts the longest around here are the ones who worked for this department," Shears said. "The outsiders didn't win the public's trust."

Through his work and advancement through the ranks at ZPD, the community

embraced Shears. His time in Michigan was just a starting point; Zephyrhills became his home.

"I consider this my hometown. I grew up with these people of Zephyrhills. They are my friends and I mold to their style of living. ... I think it took a while for the people to get to know me. While everybody was sleeping I was getting the bad guys off the streets."



David Shears

His career was not a boring one: he was dragged down the street by a car going 45 mph; he was nearly sandwiched between two cars; he had to dodge bullets flying above his head. There were times when his watch could have come to an end.

Those instances pale in comparison to his two battles with colon cancer.

From 2010 to 2014, Shears fought more than crime and no bulletproof vest or sidearm could protect him. Cancer was the perpetrator that was aiming to take the chief's life.

The first time, a tumor had formed inside his colon. He had surgery to remove a section of his colon and went through grueling treatment with radiation and chemotherapy.

A scan following his treatment showed an aggressive tumor on the outside of the colon. Shears questioned the doctor, asking what if nothing was done about the second tumor? The response hit him hard. He would be dead in six months.

"That was the most scared I've ever been even being a cop," Shears said. "When you hear the C-word, you automatically think death. I wasn't giving up. I had a wife and I had babies. I was not going to let it get me. I was going to fight. ... That's what I do.

"This could have been death and I knew it was coming. It's not like getting hit by that bullet and not expecting it. This was reality."

He credits his family and friends for their faith in his ability to push through.

"They never, ever gave up on me," Shears said.

Well, he never backed away from a fight before, so he wasn't about to start now.

"My choice was to go get chemo every other week and get radiation every day. I worked Monday through Thursday and then recovered the other three days," Shears said.

"I wasn't going to stop working. I made that decision that I wasn't going to sit around and pout. I went to work and it kept my mind off of it."

He has been cancer-free for the last 18 months and gets scans every six months.

There are vacation plans, home improvements and quality time in his future, however, he's looking forward to being someone besides 'Chief Shears'.

"I'm looking forward to being Dave Shears again. It's not that I don't appreciate what I've done, but being Dave Shears is something I missed. I don't want people to be uncomfortable around me because I'm the chief.

"I'm ready and I think my family is ready for it. I think they want Dave Shears back."

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Fresh plants and new rocking chairs accompanied the arrival of Main Street Zephyrhills and certain city employees when they moved into the historic house last month.

New Tenants At Jeffries House

City Employees, Main Street Settle In

Story and phot by **Keri McAlpine**

Main Street Zephyrhills and a handful of city employees have officially taken up residence in the Captain B. Jeffries House. A lawn packed with freshly grounded plants heralds potential growth at the house, while new white rocking chairs have been added to the front porch for visitors to rest their feet.

The Planning Department and Community Redevelopment Agency director Gail Hamilton moved into the historic house at 38537 Fifth Ave., on May 12.

The Planning Department will reside in the house for about a year while the new city hall is constructed.

Hamilton said everyone is still getting settled, as boxes are still being unpacked and necessary furniture has yet to arrive.

The rest of City Hall will be moving into the old police station on Ninth Street and Sixth Avenue starting June 9.

Other than improving the parking situation, City Manager Steve Spina said construction on the Jeffries House is complete, as far as he knows. A slew of delayed refinements and adjustments to the building delayed Main Street's move for a number of months. Main Street was originally meant to transition into the house from their long-time location at 38434 Fifth Ave. Unfortunately, the delays and need of the downtown location's new fabric shop tenant

required Main Street to temporarily take up residence in City Hall on Eighth Street.

Historic Preservationist Audrey McGuire said Tuesday she has been thrilled to be stationed in the house, previous home of the founder of Zephyrhills.

"I love it. I'm in historic preservation so I think it's a great place to be, at least for a little while. We'll be here for about a year before our building's done," McGuire said.

The carriage house, located just behind the Jeffries House, is one of the city's next projects. Spina said there has been some debate on its fate out of two options: rehab it or tear it down.

With much of recent focus on completing the Jeffries House, and now moving city hall, Spina said a decision has yet to be made.

"We need to at least spruce up the carriage house if it stays," Spina said.

The carriage house is a garage with an upstairs apartment, and was last used by Main Street for storage. However, back in the day it used to be owned by the Hermann family as a law office, with Eileen Hermann's father living in the apartment. An attached porch had to be torn down in recent years for safety reasons.

"Other than that, they say it's in decent shape. It would probably be another office or just storage," if it is kept intact, Spina said.

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Graduation • Continued from Page 1A

Del Torro added, "If people care enough to try to ruin your success – and they probably will – don't let it bother you and focus on your goals."

The two bantered back and forth delivering a humorous, yet appropriate message to their classmates.

They wrapped it up perfectly, saying together, "Once a Bulldog, always a Bulldog."

More than 350 ZHS seniors walked across the stage at the USF Sundome to receive their diplomas, pose for a photo with ZHS Principal Angie Stone and shake hands with dignitaries.

Stone addressed the Class of 2017 comparing their diplomas to learner's permits for the rest of the drive through life.

"Always feel confident in the direction of your goals and dreams," said Stone. "Remember some trips take longer than others. Hard work will always be required for success. While



Nariam Clark shows her excitement on the stage during the Zephyrhills High School graduation ceremony at the University of South Florida Sundome.

you may take some side roads for adventure, always keep your focus on your goals."

Senior Class vice president Glenda Montgomery was quick to let those in attendance know that she stood before them by default since First, the senior class president, was part of the collaborative address.

Montgomery kept her speech light

and added a student driving comparison of her own.

"We became drivers in high school. It was great because we no longer had to be chauffeured around by mom," she said. "Being licensed meant you could drive yourself, in your own vehicle to the most happening spot in Zephyrhills ... the McDonald's parking lot."

Montgomery went on to list all of the impressive accomplishments students at ZHS made during their four years.

She added a quote from the television show "The Office," "I wish there was a way to know you were in the good ol' days before you actually left them. Ladies and gentlemen, these have been the good ol' days. We have been living them since 2014 when we walked through those school doors for the very first time.

"Regardless of the path everyone takes, we will forever be connected by Zephyrhills High School. What comes next may be expensive, stressful and a little bit scary, but I can guarantee you one thing: Class of 2017, your future is going to be huge."

The Zephyrhills Band, directed by



Graduate Brett Lemay enters the arena for the Class of 2017 ZHS graduation ceremony Thursday night at the USF Sundome.

Russell Schmidt, played "Pomp and Circumstance" and the recessional and the graduates entered and exited the arena. The ZHS Chorus led the Alma Mater and Outstanding Senior Keith Brockington led the pledge of allegiance.



Brianna Edge lets everyone know she is headed to the University of Miami in the fall.



Big smiles were found throughout the USF Sundome last Thursday night during the ZHS graduation.



Graduate Dalton Gold shakes hands with State Representative and ZHS Alumnus Danny Burgess during the Zephyrhills High School Graduation ceremony.



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