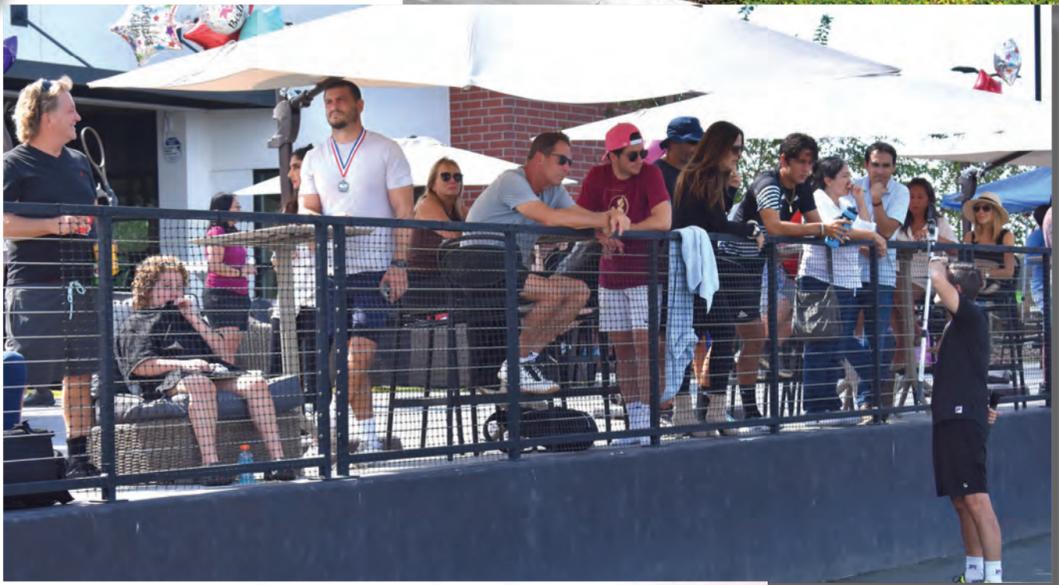




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# Welcome back home winter residents

By STEVE LEE  
News Reporter

The Zephyrhills News graciously welcomes back our winter visitors returning from places up north in the United States, Canada and elsewhere.

We publish this annual special section to provide you with updates on news, events and various changes within the city and surrounding areas you might have missed while you were away.

We are now two years into the return of somewhat normalcy following the unfortunate affects of the coronavirus pandemic. Local businesses have picked up and numerous activities have resumed within the city as well as the surrounding areas.

Here are some of the top stories we ran in *The Zephyrhills News* while many of you were gone:

As is the case for many growing municipalities in a state that keeps growing and growing, Zephyrhills has experienced expansion and welcomed new businesses and facilities.

The long-awaited Zephyrhills VA Clinic, a 14,000-square-foot building off Eiland Boulevard that provides services to local U.S. veterans, opened in May.

AdventHealth Dade City celebrated a 50-year anniversary with free health screenings, food and children's activities. Another celebration of a well-known local facility took place at the Sarah Vande Berg Tennis Center, which opened three years ago and is dedicated to the late great tennis player.

On the local political scene, two notable people were brought back into the fold, so to speak.

Melonie Bahr Monson, formerly the executive director of the Greater Zephyrhills Chamber of Commerce, returned as the city's newly elected mayor. She replaced Gene Whitfield. Steve Spina, who

twice served as city manager, was elected to the city council. Well-versed in the ins and outs of how the city operates, Spina shares a love of the city and people here as do many others in their capacities of serving Zephyrhills.

Another new face you'll run into at downtown events is Antwon Gildon, the new director and event coordinator for Main Street Zephyrhills. He also is an assistant coach for the Zephyrhills High girls basketball team.

Led by Chief Derek Brewer, six new officers for the Zephyrhills Police Department were sworn in.

Additionally, the city's millage rate of 6.25 was set for the 2023-24 fiscal year and reclaimed water has become a priority to address the city's water woes.

Downtown events are once again flourishing. There have been parades for Veterans Day and Christmas. A few other downtown traditions have continued, like the annual Halloween festival and Paulie Palooza Festival. That charitable event is a primary fundraiser for Gulf-side Hospice.

The neighboring Pioneer Florida Museum and Village in Dade City also continued to host such events as horse pulls, a fall festival and Easter Egg hunt.

The Zephyrhills Chamber once again celebrated a tribute to local ambassadors and businesses. This year's theme was: It Happened on 5th Avenue.

*The Zephyrhills News* extended its longstanding place in the community by celebrating its 112th anniversary. Publisher/editor Jan Linville continues to focus on the best local news coverage. Reporters Steve Lee, Andy Warrenner and Susan Slater bring you that information.

Sales manager Theresa LeBlanc helps advertisers promote their businesses and products. Elizabeth Sancelz is the graphic artist, Josephine Light and Wendy McElroy are our receptionists, Cindy DeMatteo is the accounting manager and James Bannon oversees circulation.

# Melonie Monson and Steve Spina win municipal elections

*Monson replaces former mayor Gene Whitfield and Steve Spina defeats incumbent Alan Knight for a city council seat*

By STEVE LEE  
April 20, 2023

Zephyrhills welcomed a new mayor and a city councilman after last week's municipal elections that featured five candidates overall. The Alice Hall Community Center polling location stayed open until 7 p.m. on April 11 to allow local residents to cast their ballots.

Melonie Bahr Monson won among three candidates vying for mayor while Alan Knight lost his Council Seat 2 to Steve Spina, formerly a two-time city manager. The mayor's race included challengers Nick Deford, a local pastor, and businessman Martin Harm. Spina and Knight, the incumbent, sought the council seat.

Monson garnered 59 percent of the votes, well ahead of Deford's 32 percent and Harm's nine. Spina tallied 61 percent of the vote compared to Knight's 39. Knight, who had been in the Pasco County School District for 35 years as a teacher and coach, has resided in Zephyrhills for more than 50 years.

Bob Winters, president of the Zephyrhills Volunteer Fire Rescue Association and a community leader who sold Winters' Mobile Home Park in 2020, was among many locals who attended the recent debates at the community center in Zephyr Park.

On the council result, he said, "We couldn't have gone bad with Steve or coach. It was a win-win there."

As for the mayor's race, Winters noted that Monson, formerly the executive director of the Greater Zephyrhills Chamber of Commerce, was an ideal candidate.

"I think she's extremely qualified," he said. "She can walk into that job very well. I think she's ideal. She's really involved."

For her part, seeking the role of mayor is something Monson said has been in the works for the past 10 years.

"I actually started joking with my grandkids about 10 years ago," she said. "I knew that, five years ago, when (Whitfield) retired that I would do it. The stars aligned."

Monson chose to have her election night celebration at the Sarah Vande Berg Tennis & Wellness Center off Simons Road.

"It was so great," she said of celebrating the results there on election night. "We wanted to have it there so I could show off the venue."

Surrounded by family and friends, excluding her late father Ron Bahr who passed away in 2020, Monson shared an observation from that night: "I don't think I've seen my mom (Edna Bahr) smile so much in years."

Spina celebrated on election night at the Silverado Golf and Country Club. He is a resident of Silver Oaks.

"It feels good," he said. Monson plans to meet soon with Whitfield "to find out all the ins and outs," she said, adding, "The things I've done for the past 10 years have prepared me for this."

Spina, who is very well familiar with the city and its inner workings as a longtime administrator, will now seat in the row of council members. He had semi-retired, serving part of last year as an interim city manager in Temple Terrace.

Still, being up there with council members will give Spina a different perspective, which he is looking forward to.

"It will be a lot different. You're looking at things at kind of a different level," Spina said while manning a Zephyrhills Noon Rotary booth last Saturday at the Music & Motorcycles event sponsored by Main Street Zephyrhills. "Running was an experience. I've never done that before. That was totally different."

Spina said he "felt good" about his chances of winning the council seat. "I was out there. The best part was talking to people and hearing what they had to say."



Above: Newly elected city councilman Steve Spina (second from right in front row) and Melonie Monson, the city's new mayor (in dark hair, glasses and black sweater two seats to Spina's right) attended a meeting in council chambers at city hall.

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# Zephyrhills VA Clinic hosts ribbon-cutting

*Long-awaited 14,000-square-foot building off Eiland Boulevard provides needed services to local U.S. veterans*

By STEVE LEE  
May 11, 2023

At long last, the new Veterans' Administration Clinic in Zephyrhills, which had a groundbreaking ceremony in June of 2019, is targeted for a May 16 opening. A symbolic ribbon-cutting took place last Saturday at the 14,000-square-foot facility at 37827 Eiland Blvd.

Taking place on the same day that so many people around the world tuned into the historical coronation of King Charles III at Buckingham Palace, one of the speakers at Saturday's local event offered a different perspective that was well-received.

"If I get a choice of being at a ribbon-cutting for our veterans or at a coronation, I'll be at a ribbon-cutting for our veterans all day," said Joe Battle, James A. Haley Veteran's Hospital's former director, who thanked the community for its unwavering support and added that veterans are "sacred."

Scheduled to be the keynote speaker, congressman Gus Bilirakis, who pushed strongly for federal funding to get the clinic built, was unable to attend due to the recent passing of his brother. Dr. Emmanuel Bilirakis worked at the VA Clinic in New Port Richey.

Instead, David K. Dunning JAHVH's executive director, read a few words on the behalf of the congressman, a staunch advocate of veterans.

"This truly represents a huge win for the local veteran community that has been waiting for years," Dunning read Bilirakis' words. "I am so proud that we can open the doors to this facility. Many services that veterans need are now under one roof."

"We care about the veterans and our nation," said Major General James S. "Hammer" Hartsell, executive director of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Among the numerous services provided to veterans at the new facility, which replaces the old outpatient clinic off U.S. 301, are audiology, physical therapy, podiatry, a pharmacy, women's health, telehealth and others. There also will be additional rooms for patient exams and mental health.

Ron Oakley, a Pasco County Commissioner serving the east side of the county, noted the need for hospitals and veterans' clinics, which include a recently opened facility in New Port Richey with work under way on another one in Lakeland.

"As we become more and more of a premier county we have to have these services for our seniors and our veterans," he said.

"We owe (veterans) much, but mostly we owe them a place in our hearts," added David Isaacks, director of the Veteran Integrated Services, Network.

The Marine Corps League Color Guard's 708 chapter from Spring Hill kicked off the ceremony before chaplain Roosevelt Hanna put the new facility in proper perspective.

Left: Among the longtime veterans happy to attend the ceremony were George Bishop, who is in a wheelchair and served two tours in Vietnam, and Major General James Hartsell, executive director of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs.



Above: The ribbon cutting ceremony took place in front of the new Veterans' Administration Clinic on Eiland Boulevard.

"We claim this place as healing ground; physically, spiritually and emotionally," he said.

Of the color guard members, Terrence Dunne earned special praise during the ceremony. He is a Vietnam Veteran with five purple hearts and a bronze star.

Another veteran, 74-year-old George Bishop who is wheelchair-bound and had a career in the Air Force, passed out pamphlets before the ceremony.

"I'm proud to be a part of this," said Bishop, who did two tours in Vietnam and one in Thailand.

Several local officials were in attendance, including city manager Billy Poe, newly elected mayor Melonie Monson-Bahr, city councilman Ken Burgess and Steve Spina, the former city manager recently elected to a city council seat.

"To have this type of facility in Zephyrhills is huge for our community," said Poe, whose late father William, spent 42 years in the Army Reserves.

In all, there are 1.5 million veterans in Florida. The new facility will primarily serve veterans in east Pasco.



Left: The Marine Corps League Color Guard 708, a chapter out of Spring Hill, gets ready to kick off Saturday's ceremony.



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# AdventHealth's Nurse of the Year is Alicia Duncan

*Hospital branches in Zephyrhills and Dade City also announce 12 Daisy Award winners*

By STEVE LEE  
May 11, 2023

The timing could not have been more appropriate. Coinciding with AdventHealth's Nurses Week (May 6-12), the Zephyrhills and Dade City hospitals united on May 8 to commemorate its top nurses.

The 14th Annual Nurse of the Year Celebration Ceremony took place at Waller Ranch in Dade City for the second year in a row. Highlighting the event were 12 Daisy Award winners, one of whom was nurse of the year Alicia Duncan, as well as the top unit and rookie nurses from both locations.

This marked the second straight year of doling out in-person awards. The 2020 and 2021 ceremonies took place virtually due to the coronavirus pandemic. Prior to that the ceremonies took place at various locations in east Pasco.

"This has been a tradition of ours for many years," said Gwen Alonso, chief nursing officer overseeing both hospitals. "During the pandemic we were unable to gather like this."

Added keynote speaker Robin McGuinness, chief nursing executive for AdventHealth's West Florida Division, "It's so much better to be

here in person than virtually."

Duncan, a registered nurse for less than two years, works in the Women's Center at Zephyrhills. Alonso recalled how last November a mother went into labor for two days before delivery and soon afterward had to be taken to the operating room due to complications.

Duncan stayed with the mother, even after her shift ended, and later Alonso received a complimentary letter from the woman's mother-in-law.

"She held (the mother's) hand and kept her calm," the unnamed mother-in-law wrote. "Alicia is everything every nurse should be. She truly went above and beyond."

For Duncan, there was no second-guessing about staying to help.

"If that was my family, I would've wanted the nurse to stay," who celebrated the occasion with her husband Markee and three children — Jordan, 16, Jeremiah, 10, and 6-year-old Jackson. "I didn't do it for recognition. I treat all my patients like that."

A response like that was incredibly heartening to McGuinness, who shared a story about an act of kindness. When on a road trip to Connecticut last December for a Christmas celebration she, her husband Jim and dog Riley broke down in their vehicle in North Carolina but were helped by a good Samaritan who helped them out by carting them around and finding a rental.

McGuinness repeatedly offered to pay the man she labeled as "a kind human" or give him something, but the only thing he asked for was a nice letter to his boss and it was done. That man, along with Duncan's actions, symbolized McGuinness' speech on special moments and how

they can affect others.

"Defining moments shape our lives and we don't have to wait for them to change our lives. We can create them," she said. "Think about the impact you can have by creating moments with your patients."

The other 11 Daisy Award recipients, extraordinary nurses selected monthly, were: Emily Hoffman, Alisha Napoletano, Annabel Hardesty, Michelle Murphy, Stephanie Douglas, Keri Leininger, Gretchen Jones, Larissa Adams, Freida Langdale, Marcia Chichester and Robert Meredith.

Rookie Nurses of the Year were Jennifer Or-baker (Dade City) and Hailey Brookes (Zephyrhills). Earning support staff awards were Jordan Reid and Savannah Henson (Dade City); along with Kelly Bowe and Latoya Washington (Zephyrhills).

Additionally, Kimberly Friedmeyer, nursing education manager for the hospital's in Zephyrhills and Dade City, received a special recognition from Alonso. Friedmeyer has helped organize the event for several years.



Above: Nurse of the Year Alicia Duncan is surrounded by hospital administrators and personnel.



Left: Six of the 112 Daisy Award winners get together for a group photo.



Right: Nurse of the Year Alicia Duncan is shown with her family and two hospital administrators.

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# Stamp out Hunger collects food to help local families

*Letter carriers along with local volunteers help collect food for local food pantries*

By SUSAN SLATER  
May 18, 2023

On Saturday, May 13, letter carriers collected food donations for the National Association of Letter Carriers 31st annual food drive, which benefitted the Neighborhood Care Center in Zephyrhills and the Lutheran Church in Wesley Chapel.

"This is my favorite day of the year," said Al Friedman, president of the NALC, who has been doing this for 25 years. "Zephyrhills was expected to receive 40-50,000 pounds of food."

Letter Carriers provided 34,000 bags that were donated by St Luke's Eye Clinic in Wesley Chapel into the local mailboxes. The residents filled bags with non-perishable foods and left them by their mailboxes. The letter carriers took care of the rest. Volunteers from the local food pantries unloaded and loaded all of the bags into trailers and delivered them to the food pantries.

Pastor McKinney of the First Baptist Church in Zephyrhills, with the help of the JROTC of Zephyrhills, collected food for the Neighborhood Care Center on 6th Street in Zephyrhills. They will only be open on Mondays for clothing and Wednesdays for food due to having less staff in the summer months. They are looking for committed volunteers to help them stay

open more to meet the needs of the community and sort the bags of food donated. They will be closed in July and August also due to lack of staff.

"I like to give back to the community," said JROTC's Demetrius Oates. "I want to give to the people who need help."

Paul Weil, board of directors for the Lutheran Church in Wesley Chapel's Food Pantry, with the help of Boy Scouts Troop 2 and Scout Master Leigh Smith collected for their food pantry.

All the volunteers worked swiftly making sure all food was weighed and accounted for. "This is my first year volunteering," said Kimberly Greene as she unloads the mail trucks. "I can give back to the less fortunate."

"I do this because it gives back to the community, we help stock food for the pantry and the scouts learn to give back to those in need," said Smith.

The letter carriers drove into the docking area. The volunteers unloaded bags into the bins to be weighed. When filled to the top, each bin weighed 1600 pounds. Once weighed, the food was loaded and delivered to the Neighborhood Care Center and the Lutheran Church.

The volunteers worked from noon until 5 p.m. when the last of the letter carriers came in. By 3:30 p.m., the volunteers had unloaded 30,000 pounds of food.

"We will probably receive three months worth of food, which helps," said Pastor McKinney. "We will not have to rely on cash donations because we have less residents in Zephyrhills in the summer."

The timing of this food drive is important for both donation centers because children will be out of school. Mothers will be working less



Left: Zephyrhills JROTC volunteers with Pastor McKinney assisted with loading and unloading of thousands of pounds of food for The Neighborhood Care Center.

hours during the summer months to be home with their children. Less hours means less income. Hunger does not take a holiday. When school lunches stop, the pantries are stocked by this food drive to help the local families through the summer.

"Working families are living paycheck to paycheck and with inflation, they need more help putting food on the tables for their families," said Friedman.

"The Neighborhood Care Center is closed next week so that they can sort the food," said Leann Bickford, director. "We need to get it out

as soon as possible to the community." "We feed over 1900 people a week with 40 volunteers to give out food," said Weil of the Lutheran Church in Wesley Chapel. "The post office and letter carriers were fantastic for doing this. It is such a community involved effort. If it were not for them and the NALC (National Association of Letter Carriers) doing this, we could not do it. We give credit to the letter carriers. This year's food drive showed a complete recovery from Covid years."



Left: Volunteers for the Lutheran Church Food Pantry in Wesley Chapel includes Boy Scouts Troop 2 with Paul Weil, board of directors.



Right: Annia Morales, letter carrier, was very choked up; she loved being involved. "It is very good to do this. It makes me very emotional."

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# City council meeting swears in new ZPD officers, codifies moratorium

*Monday's city council meeting saw six new ZPD officers sworn in and further solidified the development moratorium*

By **ANDY WARRENER**  
June 29, 2023

A packed council chambers played host to six new patrol officers being sworn in on Monday. Friends and family crowded in to witness their loved ones take the oath administered by Zephyrhills Police Chief Derek Brewer. Officers Juanita Gonzalez, Karly Crews, Colton Nelson, Mariah Hamilton, Philip Martin and Paul Gonzalez became part of ZPD.

There were five items in the Consent Agenda. The items were bundled together and passed 4-0. Item 2.1 approved minutes from the May 8 meeting.

Item 2.2 approved a consultant work assignment with Jacobs Engineering for Runway 1-19 at the Zephyrhills Municipal Airport. The item approved a \$70,000 contribution from the city, together with a FDOT Aviation Grant of \$250,000. The city's share is budgeted in the FY 2022-23 Budget.

Item 2.3 approved the purchase of a new water division vehicle, a 2007 Chevy pickup truck. The cost of the new truck is \$78,098.

Item 2.4 picked up on an emergency item from the last meeting that addresses sewer issues at the Zephyrhills Police Station by asking council to approved building a new lift station in the amount of \$114,839. Being an unexpected expense, funds must be drawn from the city's General Fund Contingency. This requires council's approval.

Item 2.5 renewed an agreement with Duke Energy for use of a portion of Taxiway B at the airport as a staging area for their disaster response. The agreement, the Zephyrhills Airport Storm Staging Site Agreement expires on Aug. 1. The item renewed that agreement for the next three years.

In Business Items, the one item on everyone's mind was the Residential Moratorium passed on the first reading at the last meeting. There was a great deal of discussion at the last meeting regarding the moratorium and thus discussion on Monday was limited.

The moratorium is now set for 12 months and applies to residential developments over

1-acre for annexations, land use modifications, rezoning, major PUD development amendments, conditional uses and variances. There was one minor change to the moratorium since the first reading. It allowed for two projects that are currently in Pasco County but are serviced by the city. The result is actually a net gain of 100,000 gallons per day as the developments have their own water capacity.

"It doesn't obligate us to approve these types of agreements but it allows us to consider them," City of Zephyrhills Attorney Matthew Maggard said.

The notion of the city being on the hook to service developments in Pasco County emerged but that was quickly dismissed by Zephyrhills City Manager William Poe Jr.

"We are sending a message that if these developments in Pasco County want to be serviced by the city, they need to bring their (water) capacity with them," Poe said. The item passed 4-0.

In the City Attorney's Report, Item 4.1 was a first reading of a backyard chicken ordinance. The proposed ordinance allows backyard chickens to be raised, kept, maintained, harbored in zoning district ER, R1, R2 and R3. It allows for a maximum of four chickens. The ordinance establishes that chickens shall be protected from the elements and kept in a secure enclosure at all times, except during sunrise and sunset. The property where the chickens are kept shall have a six-foot high fence. The coop itself shall have

at least four-square feet of space per chicken but shall not exceed 150 square feet. Coops shall be located in backyards, be kept neat and sanitary at all times. Stored feed shall be kept in a rodent and predator proof container and backyard chickens shall be kept for personal use only. While the ordinance does codify, although the item was only in its first reading, keeping backyard chickens. It may very well address the free roaming chickens that forage near city hall.

The notion of creating a lot of work for code enforcement was brought up as well.

Councilman Ken Burgess noted that the ordinance does not preclude existing rules for HOAs regarding chickens.

After some debate, Councilman Steve Spina noting that it was "counter productive" and Burgess noting that it had, "unintended consequences." The notion that it might bring more chickens into the city limits rather than reduce the number was a convincing factor and the motion failed.

In the City manager's Report, Item 5.1 was a presentation by Wharton-Smith and Kimley Horn regarding Hercules Park. The approved design for the park came in over budget and city staff have been working with the construction manager (Wharton-Smith) and design consultant (Kimley Horn) on finding cost-saving options for the park.

Concern over the cost of these amenities was expressed from the dais. Juanmiguel Gorut of Wharton-Smith spoke about how his firm is

looking at cost-saving measures in nearly an itemized fashion, challenging each vendor to see if they could come back with more cost-effective ways of executing the designs.

Council members went through seven items and took or left them, ultimately cutting costs in the amount of roughly \$800,000. Poe mentioned that American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding would be available for use at the park. Poe also mentioned that the park's groundbreaking may commence as soon as this December. It was a non-action item, Poe just looking to move in the direction discussed. There was consensus at the dais as far as what they were taking and leaving.

Item 5.2 was a Utility Capacity Agreement with Wire Ranch Investors. The firm owns a 24.16-acre property on U.S. 301 and plans to develop the property with 329 residential apartments. The extant agreement requires payment of 50 percent of total capacity fees within 30 days of the effective date. That amount is \$582,330. The present water and sewer capacity fee is \$3,540 per apartment unit. The agreement is binding for five years and can be assigned to future purchasers of the property. The item was approved 4-0.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CITY OF ZEPHYRHILLS



Above: New ZPD patrol officers, from left to right, Juanita Gonzalez, Karly Crews, Colton Nelson, Chief Derek Brewer, Mariah Hamilton, Philip Martin and Paul Gonzales, respectively, were sworn in on Monday.

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# Reclaimed water and Zephyrhills's water woes

*New sources of potable water are high on the city's priority list, while only a minimal amount of reclaimed water is piped to residents*

By ANDY WARRENER  
July 13, 2023

Providing water to residents is the big issue facing Zephyrhills as unprecedented growth engulfs the city. The city produces plenty of reclaimed water. Can reclaimed water be an answer? The city produces 1.676 million gallons of reclaimed water per day in 2021. Could this abundance of reclaimed water augment the rising use of potable water?

The short answer is yes but just how much remains a complex question. First, reclaimed water has limited uses. Obviously it cannot replace potable water. Yet, it can and does find use in landscape and lawn irrigation, a major draw on current potable water.

Second, the infrastructure to distribute reclaimed water to residents in the city, while growing, is still in a skeletal state. Last and probably most significant, is that the city uses its reclaimed water to offset its own draws from both the Hillsborough and Withlacoochee River basins.

Let's dissect these three obstacles. Currently, uses for reclaimed water are limited to lawn and landscape irrigation. Nearby municipalities, the City of Tampa in particular, have floated what have been called "toilet to tap" ideas.

The monicker is mildly hyperbolic as Tam-

pa's proposal included sending treated wastewater or reclaimed water back into the Hillsborough River, a primary source of eventual potable water for Tampa residents that would be diluted and again treated. It would not go directly into the city's potable water supply lines.

Naturally, this proposal has met with vociferous opposition and the effort is currently stalled as the city looks to alternative sources to supply its potable water demands. Barring the notion of returning reclaimed water to a potable water source, reclaimed water use will be limited to lawns and landscaping.

One benefit of Zephyrhills residents using reclaimed water is its reduced cost. Reclaimed water goes for 18 cents per 1,000 gallons for properties over one acre in size. That rate is 32 cents per 1,000 gallons for property under one acre. Potable water currently goes for \$5.49 per 1,000 gallons and is set at an "inclined" rate that goes up based on usage. The cost difference is stark.

One of the main issues is getting that water to residents who would like to use it. Reclaimed water lines were down in Zephyrhills prior to Zephyrhills Utilities Director John Bostic, who took over the post in 2013. The pink/purple pipe network has grown under Bostic.

Currently, Abbott Square and Abbott Park are slated to get reclaimed water. Abbott Square still needs the pipes extended to it and Abbott Park already has the pipes going in.

The City of Zephyrhills uses reclaimed water at its city parks, schools and at Krusen Field as well as on the municipal golf course. If you see those purple/pink pipes near a large park or development, it's almost certain that reclaimed water is being used there.

The sticking point is extending access to residents. It's no small task. Laying new pipes in a tight residential area is difficult, even prohibitive in some cases. It is not financially expedient

to run reclaimed water pipes to a couple of residents in a neighborhood but there are possibilities.

"If 20 people on a street want reclaimed water, then maybe it becomes economically viable to install infrastructure," Bostic said.

What the city currently does is they offer opportunities for residents to band together to get the pipes to their homes. Recently, the city used an old tap water extension to pipe reclaimed water to residents along Fort King Road.

An example, not necessarily pertaining to the Fort King project but representative of how it can work, is that if 10 residents in a neighborhood want reclaimed water, the city will hold a \$30,000 bond that is paid by the residents in increments of \$3,000 each. As residents come online with the reclaimed water, they pay that \$3,000 until the bond is met. As more people tap into the reclaimed water lines in that area, rebates are issued to residents that put up the initial \$3,000. So a rate payer could eventually recoup their investment.

The last and perhaps most significant obstacle is that the city uses reclaimed water to offset their draws of potable water from both the Hillsborough and Withlacoochee River basins. Zephyrhills has four wells that draw from the Hillsborough River Basin at the rate of 1.5 million gallons per day and three wells in the Withlacoochee River Basin that also draw 1.5 million gallons per day. The Hillsborough Basin is what's known as a Water Use Caution Area as it directly affects the greater Tampa Bay area.

Zephyrhills in 2021, produced 1.676 million gallons of reclaimed water per day but they were required to return 1.316 million gallons to the Floridan Aquifer through a process called Rapid Infiltration Basins or RIBs. This is done at the water treatment plant near the airport. For 2021, that left just 360,000 gallons per day for other uses.

The idea behind the RIBs is to return water flow to the aquifer so that other municipalities can continue to draw from it. Municipalities can use potable or reclaimed water but reclaimed water is the obvious choice. Zephyrhills is trying to shift its dependence on the Hillsborough Basin toward other sources as the demands for RIBs within that basin are high.

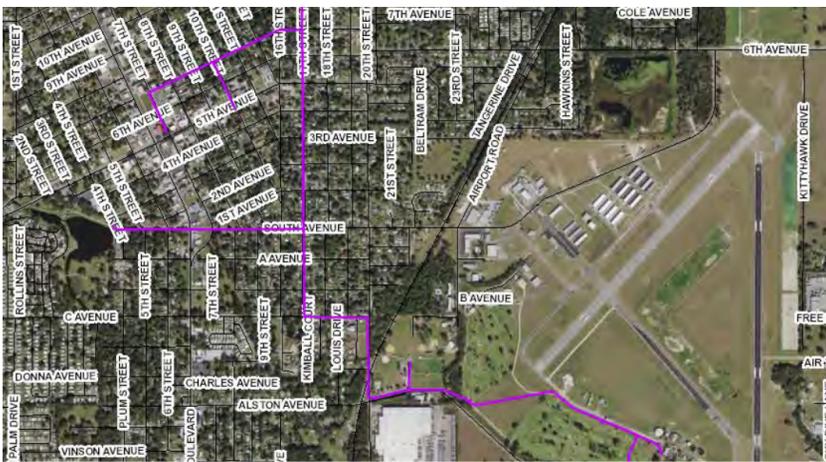
The models for how much water needs to be put back into the basin against what is drawn out were compiled by

Jones Edmunds for the City of Zephyrhills and were included in their 2020 Water Use Permit with the SouthWest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD). This model is designed to, "not affect other permittees in the district." The Withlacoochee Basin, which is connected to the Hillsborough Basin and does affect it, has a much lower rate of RIBs.

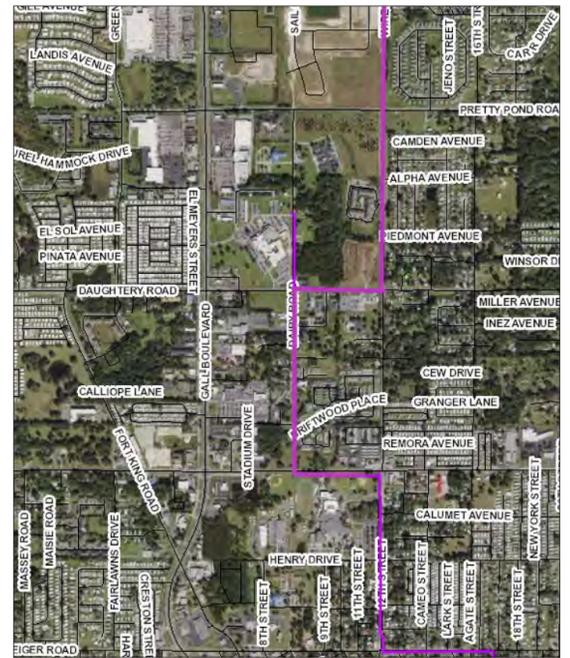
"In the next few years, we hope to open a new well in the Withlacoochee Basin," Bostic said.

So is reclaimed water the panacea to solving the city's water woes? Not presently, no. However, as the city diverts its dependence away from the Hillsborough Basin, the amount of reclaimed water they must return to the aquifer will diminish and there will always be more reclaimed water available as growth continues, even as city council enacts measures to curb that growth.

Bostic also has aims on taking over agricultural wells that may not be in use in Pasco County. There are other options like drilling a deep well directly into the aquifer and possibly getting a permit from Tampa Bay Water but those options are considered costly and less attainable. So there is light at the end of the purple pipe.



Above: Some of the reclaimed water piping and where it extends to City residents.



Above: More reclaimed water pipe layout in the city.



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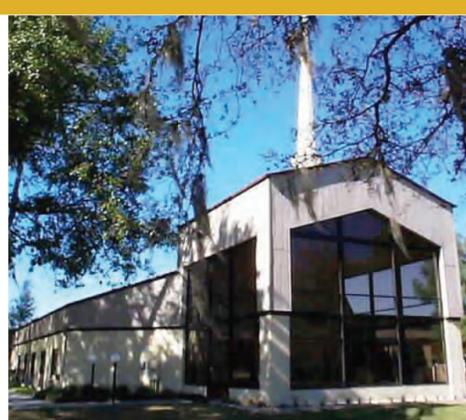
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# New ZPD officer sworn in, tentative millage rate set for 2023-24

*Monday's city council meeting brought another ZPD officer on board and tentatively set the 2023-24 millage rate*

By ANDY WARRENER  
July 27, 2023

The Zephyrhills Police Department is one step closer to being fully staffed now after the swearing in of Zephyrhills Police Officer Joel Aguayo. Aguayo is a local product, born in Tampa and raised in Zephyrhills where he played sports for Zephyrhills High School.

"Aguayo is excited for the opportunity to serve in the community he was raised," Chief Derek Brewer said during the swearing-in. "We are excited when locals come to join the force."

There were four items in the Consent Agenda for the evening. Item 2.1 simply asked for approval of the July 10 regular meeting minutes. Items 2.2 asked to approve minutes from the July 10 budget workshop.

Item 2.3 asked council to approve a "build and scope fee" of \$398,926.70 for Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc. for a 6,000 to 8,000-square-foot FBO/Terminal building at the municipal airport. The cost is covered by a \$6,600,000 state appropriation allocated for design and construction at Taxiway F.

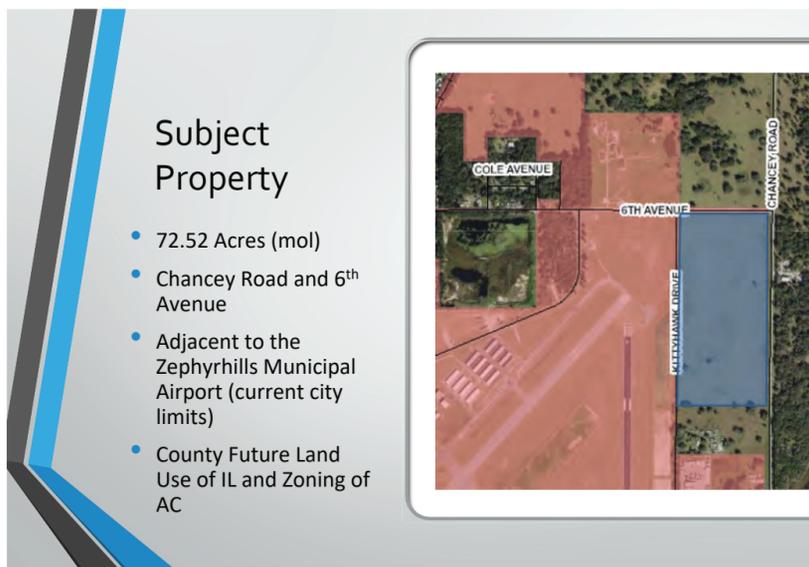
Item 2.4 asked that council approve Kimberly Miller be added to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. All four items were bundled and passed 4-0.

In Business Items, Item 3.1 set into the city's charter, the amendments that passed during the April Municipal Election. The ordinance got its first reading at the July 10 meeting. Monday's second reading was passed 5-0 and will now be added to the city's charter.

Those charter amendments that passed changed the terms of both mayor and city council members to four years instead of three, to allow the city's finance director to make quarterly reports on money deposits to council, require newly elected officials to take office at the next city council meeting and accept and declare the results and reviewing the charter every 10 years. Lastly, the new charter amendment added a date of creation and establishment of the City of Zephyrhills. The item passed 4-0 with no public comment.

In the Planning Director's Report, Item 4.1 was an annexation of subject property located in the city's industrial corridor, northeast of the airport. The property is just over 72 acres and is located near Chancey Road and 6th Avenue. The item asked for both an annexation into the city as well as a Future Land Use Map Amendment to City IN (Industrial) and a rezoning to City LI (Light Industrial). The item passed 4-0.

In the Finance Director's Report, Item 5.1 established the tentative millage rate for the 2023-24 Fiscal Year at 6.25. This is unchanged from last fiscal year's rate and the rollback rate is calculated to be 5.6768. The Pasco County Tax



Above: Aerial map of the area to be annexed into the city near the municipal airport.

Assessor determined that the city's total taxable value is \$1,345,792,668. This is an increase of \$168,188,254 from last year. A part, \$102,166,785, of that increase is attributed to new construction. The first public hearing on the millage rate is set for Sept. 12 at 6 p.m. and the second set for Sept. 25 at 6 p.m. The millage rate can be decreased from here but not increased unless each taxpayer is mailed a notice. The item passed 4-0.



Left: Officer Joel Aguayo being sworn in by Zephyrhills Police Chief Derek Brewer.



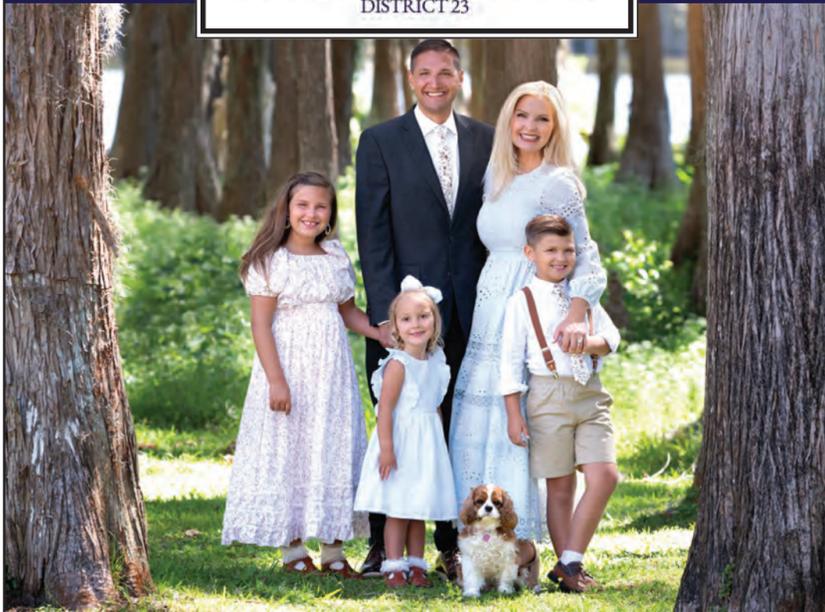
Right: Aerial map of where the new terminal building will be located.

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# Minimal damage in Zephyrhills from Hurricane Idalia

*Excluding the west side, most of Pasco County was spared as the season's first major hurricane made landfall in northern Florida*

By STEVE LEE  
September 7, 2023

It's called disaster preparedness for a reason as the entire west coast and parts of central Florida took cautionary measures in the wake of Hurricane Idalia.

Projected to make landfall by Wednesday morning, school and airport closings, along with many government offices including Pasco County, were in place early last week. More importantly, mandatory evacuations in various places of the county, including mobile home parks, were ordered by local officials.

While the Big Bend region and Cedar Key, which had not had a storm like Idalia since 1896, suffered catastrophic damages by the state's first hurricane of the season, Zephyrhills, along with east and central Pasco, came away virtually unscathed. Much like Hurricane Ian, Idalia spared this area.

That set just fine with Shane LeBlanc, the city's public works director who is entrusted with much of the local preparation for inclement and what sometimes can be catastrophic weather.

"We definitely dodged a bullet," he said. "Of course, we made our normal preparations. We prepared for the worst and prayed for the best because you just never know if a hurricane's going to turn. We're prepared for it."

Coming through the straight between the Yucatan Peninsula and western Cuba, the tropical storm intensified to a Category 3 Hurricane as it spun through the Gulf of Mexico. It came ashore on the morning of Aug. 30 and made its way across northwestern Florida and parts of southern Georgia before exited into the Atlantic Ocean.

Along the way, Idalia ravaged some of those areas with dangerous storm surges, massive flooding and power outages.

As for Zephyrhills, LeBlanc said, "We really didn't have anything other than some small tree limbs and palm fronds that we had to pick up. Just small stuff that we could throw in the back of a truck."

Sandbags were at the ready to protect properties from flooding with planning officials warning of life-threatening storm surges with hurricane-force winds and heavy rain, but mostly on the county's west side.

In Zephyrhills, LeBlanc listed a checklist in citing how well the area was prepared to withstand a storm. That included preparing emergency generators and fueling city vehicles. That helped to create space in the large city tanks out by the airport for a 7,500-gallon delivery if warranted.

On Thursday, the day after the hurricane hit, LeBlanc said that supervisors Rob Fennell and James Lyon came in for damage assessment.

While Idalia came through Hurricane Franklin made its way northward off the state's east coast and passed near Bermuda. That weather system, however, was far enough out in the Atlantic Ocean as not to affect Florida, aside from heavy rains and some high winds.

As hurricane season runs from June 1 through Nov. 30 with expectations for as many as 18 named tropical storms, weather agencies are now keeping tabs on a development that, as of Tuesday, was projected to strengthen to a Category 4 hurricane by this weekend as it nears the eastern Caribbean.

LeBlanc is among the local officials well aware of that potential threat, which could turn into Hurricane Lee.

"One at a time," he said. "We watch the weather real close. We've got another one brewing right now."

While financial tabulations are still under way in the aftermath of Idalia, the last major hurricane, Ian, caused an estimated \$112 billion in damage to Florida's west coast. Along those lines, Pasco County Community Development is accepting applications for Hurricane Idalia Disaster Relief for customers who's homes were damaged by the hurricane.

# Antwon Gildon named Main Street Zephyrhills Director and Event Coordinator

The City of Zephyrhills is pleased to announce Antwon Gildon as Main Street Zephyrhills Director and Event Coordinator, now effective.

With extensive experience and passion for Zephyrhills community development, Gildon is set to lead Main Street Zephyrhills into a fresh era of growth and revitalization.

Gildon will work closely with local businesses, residents, and community organizations to enhance the attractiveness and vitality of the Zephyrhills downtown business district, under the supervision and guidance of the city's Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Director.

Gildon's strategic vision and ability to build collaborative partnerships will be instrumental in creating a welcoming and engaging environment for locals and visitors alike, also bringing knowledge of historical preservation, supporting small business and event planning.

The full-time position offers a seamless transition for Gildon, having served on the Main Street Zephyrhills Board of Directors for over three years, including chairing the organization's Economic Vitality Committee.

As board member and chairperson, Gildon was responsible for establishing Main Street's popular Sip & Stroll and Night Market event series, along with leading volunteer recruitment and fostering meaningful relationships with Zephyrhills merchants and citizens.

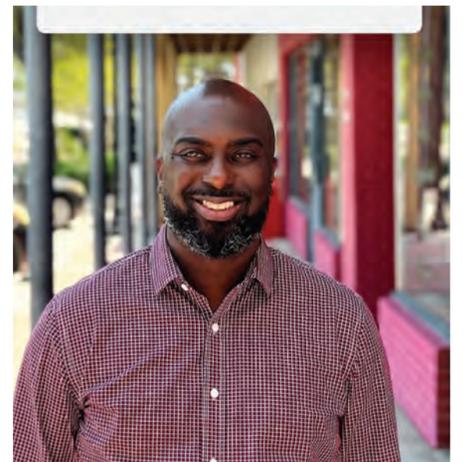
Gildon expressed enthusiasm for this greater role, stating, "With the growth that Zephyrhills is currently experiencing, having an organization like Main Street Zephyrhills is critical to offer an environment that is friendly and welcoming. Every time someone visits one of our Main Street events, I want them to say, Wow, I visited Zephyrhills and I had a great time! We're going to continuously strive to create new, fun, and engaging activities promoting that vibe."

With a background in sales and marketing, Gildon most recently worked for CareerSource Pasco Hernando, as a workforce development specialist.

Gildon's other community involvement includes serving as an East Pasco Family YMCA advisory board member and Zephyrhills High School varsity girls basketball volunteer assistant coach.

Gildon is a longtime Pasco County resident and is married with three children. He is a native of Tupelo, Miss.

"Antwon brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to Main Street Zephyrhills," said Zephyrhills City Manager Billy Poe. "His vision, leadership and affable, outgoing personality will be instrumental in advancing the city's mission for Main Street and our downtown area. We are thrilled to welcome him on board and look forward to the positive impact he will make."



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# Lions Club bingo helps several local groups

*Combatting blindness along with several local charities benefit from weekly bingo games at the Zephyrhills Lions Club on Dean Dairy Road*

By SUSAN SLATER  
September 14, 2023

The Zephyrhills Lions Club vision is to be a global leader in the community with humanitarian services. The club is better known for combatting blindness. Lions lead by example by building relationships in their communities.

Run by all volunteers, the Lions Club engages in many facets of humanitarianism such as supporting the community with free eye exams, diabetes screening, and disaster relief.

Christine Malone, treasurer, speaks about some of the charities the Lions Club supports. "We have supported the Pasco Meals on Wheels, Zephyrhills Elks - Feed the Kids Summer Program, Gulf Side Hospice, and Woodland Elementary School with school supplies to name a few." Malone added, "Our largest fundraiser is our bingo."

Bingo is every Tuesday and Friday at 6 p.m. Doors open at 2 p.m. Bring in a snack or get food delivered, set up your spot, get your papers and

relax with your bingo friends before a fun night of bingo. Bingo is open to the public. You must be 18 years of age to play.

"Bingo is getting to be more of the young people," said Debra Phelps, "It is not your grandmother's game anymore. Couples come for date night."

They can come out after work, play a few games and can be home early to get up for work in the morning.

"Some of the young get frustrated when they are not winning," said Phelps. "But I tell them hold their head up high, you helped the community."

Bingo's proceeds go to the club's sight programs. The Lions Club offers free eye exams and free diabetes screening since diabetes is the leading cause of blindness. Exams and screenings are open to the public on a first come - first serve basis from 9-11:30 a.m.

"We provide financial assistance for free glasses with proof of income, a proper ID and proof of residency and living expenses," said Malone. "Free glasses are given once a year."

The club is pursuing working with the homeless in the Zephyrhills and Dade City areas. "It is rewarding to see someone come back because they were able to get a job after getting glasses," said Malone. "Then they were able to get an apartment."

The club sponsors many local sports through proceeds from bingo. For three years they have sponsored the Zephyrhills High School, Pasco Invaders, a gymnastics and cheerleading group that instills empowerment through choices. The Junior Football League, Dade City Pirates,



Above: These lovely women, better known as the Three Amigos, are gearing up for a fun night of bingo.

4-6-year-old boys and girls playing football. Members were present to cheer on the kids by attending their opener last week.

Another charity bingo funds is Toys for Tots. "At Christmas the place is filled with toys," says Phelps. 50/50 raffles from bingo have supported the Elks Feed the Kids and turkeys for those in need at Thanksgiving.

The Lions Club acquired a new eye testing machine for children. It can detect five eye diseases, helping to prevent blindness at a young age. The first time this machine will be used will be at the Fall Festival on Sept. 16 on Dean Dairy Road. There will be free vision and dia-

betes screening, games, face painting, and craft tables. "We plan to partner with the schools to bring the machine to the children," said Malone.

Other organizations the Lions Club support include the Foundation for the Blind and Florida's State Organization of Guide Dogs. The club also helps the hearing impaired with a local business Affordable Hearing owned by Bill Moorehouse. "We get donations of hearing aids and Bill has them repaired for the community."

With 1.4 million members the Lions Club is growing and helping more. If you would like to join the Lions Club, you can approach any member and they will be happy to sponsor you.



Left: Christine Malone, treasurer and Debra Phelps, bingo chairperson are ready to serve.



Right: Michelle Pulis, club president and Bonnie Wheeler help out on bingo night by selling pull tabs to win prizes.

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# Chamber presents: It Happened on 5th Avenue

*The Greater Zephyrhills Chamber of Commerce holds annual membership appreciation banquet and installation of officers*

By SUSAN SLATER  
September 21, 2023

The Greater Zephyrhills Chamber of Commerce 62nd Awards Banquet held at St. Joseph's Parish Community on Fifth Avenue began with Vicki Wiggins, CEO/president of the chamber welcoming everyone. She set a welcoming pace for the evening.

"We are awarding Oscars to the businesses that came together," said Wiggins. Wiggins made mentioned of Light the Grill, Randy and Daniel Light, who cooked the delicious food, installation of new officers, the awards, live auction, dessert dash and raffles.

Wiggins introduced Senator Danny Burgess who was the Master of Ceremonies for the evening presenting the Oscars.

"I am glad to be back here in Zephyrhills. This is where I went to church," said Burgess. "I got Slurpee's at the 7-Eleven and I dreamed of having an office on Fifth Avenue. Now, here I am with my own office downtown as a senator."

Mike Murrill, CEO of AdventHealth Zephyrhills, performed the invocation and everyone was led in the "Pledge of Allegiance."

Murrill talked about family and coming from Georgia to Zephyrhills. "AdventHealth

has been in Zephyrhills for 40 years and Dade City for 50 years," said Murrill. "We have 1600 employees bringing health to our community."

"Tonight, we have live auction items, raffle items, and more," said Burgess. He went on to name some of the producers of tonight's events; Kevin Bahr, Bahr's Propane Gas and AC, Randy Maggard, and the staff for their assistance in making this night shine. Film crews included the businesses of Spectrum Diversity, Healing Hearts Café and Kendall Deford the Handyman.

Burgess dedicated a moment of silence to those who have passed and made very meaningful contributions to the community; Charles Waller, Dennis Alphonso, George Luca, Everett Rigsby and Nelson Ryman, whose granddaughter gave a heartfelt tribute.

"Nelson Ryman was never stopped by a challenge, always had a positive outlook and refused to quit," said Kelli Ryman, Nelson's granddaughter. "He was that people magnet."

Next came the dessert dash, always a big hit. The highest bidding table dashed to the dessert table for first choice of all the amazing desserts. Proceeds from the dessert dash bids went to the East Pasco Chamber Foundation Scholarship fund.

The awards were well deserved. The Diamond Award for Best Non-Profit went to the Thomas Promise Foundation. Dr. Randy Stovall presented the Member of the Year Award to director Sam Abrahani. Ambassador of the Year Award went to Vicki Glisson. This award is voted on by the staff and board members. Citizen of the Year Award went to Kimberly Miller McCullough, of the parks and recreation department.

Small Business of the Year went to the Gentleman's Quarters and Best Large Business of



Above: All of the winners of the night stand proudly with their awards.

the year went to the business showing the best corporate leadership and the winner was Chick-fil-A.

Leadership, Government Economic Development award was presented to Zephyrhills Mayor Melanie Monson who has enriched the community with her excitement and blessed feelings for being a part of a magical community.

A basket of cheer was raffled off and donated back by Sam Abrahani, the winner. Many items were battled over with high dollars to go toward the scholarship fund.

A watch was donated by Boyd Jewelry and Zephyrhills City Manager, Billy Poe walked around the room to model it for all the guests to see. Other items auctioned off were salt room

sessions, dinner for two and some Fitness. Burgess held up a racquet and said, "These racquets have Bluetooth." A beautiful charcuterie was donated as well as Captain Mike Wells Fishing Trip for four hours on the seas of West Pasco.

Raffle items donated by many local businesses included massage items, food, wine, coffees, bowling, barbecue package and more.

Burgess ended the night with the installation of the next year's Greater Zephyrhills Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and Officers.



Left: Senator Danny Burgess performs the installation of the Greater Zephyrhills Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and Officers.

Right: The hall was packed with many people from the local businesses and dignitaries in Zephyrhills.



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# Community turns out for a block party at the fire station

*Pasco County Fire Rescue Station in downtown Zephyrhills kicks off Fire Prevention Week with a block party*

By SUSAN SLATER  
October 12, 2023

Pasco County Fire Rescue Station 25 begins Fire Prevention Week with a block party for the community at the station on 6th Avenue to help raise awareness about fire safety. The campaign for fire safety is "Cooking safety starts with you." Cooking is very much a part of our daily lives, so we forget the simple tasks of preventing fires in the home.

Lisa Brekke and Dragang Peters, public educator initiators from the Community Risk Reduction Division and event coordinators wanted to bring fire safety awareness to the public with the assistance of Antwon Gildon, director of Main Street Events.

"We are here to promote fire prevention," said Brekke. "We opened up the fire station to the community so they can see what we do."

Justin Wehle and Larry Helsel demonstrate fire prevention methods. One device is the Knox Box. "Hang it on your front door and place your house key inside," said firefighter Wehle. "Only Pasco Fire Rescue has the key to the box. It will

work on all boxes." The keys are kept on the engine. A code is needed to access the key to the Knox Boxes. The lock box logs removal and return of the key for further safety precautions. "Each key is specific to each county," added Wehle.

Firefighter Cody Little helped the children into the fire truck. "It's a block party to bring the community out to see the fire trucks," said Chambers. "We are showing special apparatus, and we have our cadets and volunteers assisting."

Brelynn Hacker and Dustin Hacker climbed into the fire truck with the help of Little. "It was fun to go into the truck. I loved it," said Dustin. "I have not been in a fire truck since I had an asthma attack. The firemen that came in the fire truck carried me out to the truck and took me to the hospital. They helped me."

The block party had many activities such as a bounce house, fire station tours, 'touch-a-truck, fire safety demonstrations, free food, and the police community truck. Suncoast Safe Kids was on hand to give away free bicycle helmets to the kids; each adjusted properly for each child's head.

Zephyrhills Police Officer Jonathan Rose showed up in the Zephyrhills Police Department's Community Truck. It was originally the fire rescue's vehicle. "We acquired it and set it up with an Xbox, PlayStation, music, and barbecue grill to evoke human nature to get to know the police officers," said Rose, who was educating the community on bike and pedestrian safety.

"A lot of the same laws for cars apply when walking and, on bicycle," said Rose. "We edu-



Above: Pasco County Fire Cadets helped the kids in the bounce house.

cate the parents, too, so they can educate their children." Following the law and obeying all traffic signs applies to bike and pedestrian safety. Be seen, Be safe! Wear bright clothing or protective gear at night.

The children got lessons from firefighters, Zach Freda and Greg Panzer on how to put out a fire with a fire extinguisher simulator. "This simulator shows all levels of fire and different sizes," said Freda. "Fire starts, pull the alarm, grab the extinguisher and see how long it took for to put the fire out."

Nasyah Davis, 3, put out a full fire in 29.5 seconds. "I put out the fire," said Nasyah. "I

sprayed it." The face painting tent was nonstop all day. The Majorette Dance Team from the Zephyrhills High School was painting Spiderman faces, unicorns, cats and other characters on the children. "We are out helping the community," said Marlydia Lawrence, one of the majorettes.

The Pasco Fire Rescue's first event for fire safety was an amazing success. The community was out in full force enjoying the educational part of it as well as the fun in the bounce houses. For more information on fire prevention, you can go to the National Fire Prevention Association at [www.nfpa.com](http://www.nfpa.com).



Left: A 1927 fire truck acquired from St. Pete in January of 1927. Gordon Hood cares for the truck. The children love sitting in it and ringing the bell.



Right: Antwon Gild, Main Street Director and several of the fire station employees pose with the newly appointed Fire Chief Tony Perez and his wife, Jennie in front of the fire station.

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# AdventHealth Dade City celebrates 50 years of dedication

*The community was invited to free health screening along food and activities for the children during the hospital celebration*

By SUSAN SLATER  
October 19, 2023

AdventHealth Dade City celebrated 50 years of service to the people it proudly calls neighbors.

"We are celebrating our 50th anniversary with health screenings, the Pasco Fire and Rescue and the Pasco Sheriff's office, face painting and food," said Marie Pazmino, marketing for the hospital. "It's just a fun day in the community."

Each tent represented the different facets of healthcare and screenings that AdventHealth has to offer. "We want to leave a lasting legacy, elevate services and provide whole personal care," said Shane Bedward, COO of Dade City AdventHealth. "This is our 50-year legacy."

In one tent, Tiffanie Roberston-Singleton, CMA, medical assistant, provided information about the care in the Primary Care Department. A team of two Nurse Practitioners and doctor, Zaynab Rasheed, MD advocate for the healthcare needs of the entire family. Open communication and respect for the patient is the key.

Pasco Fire and Rescue's Dragana Peters and Lisa Brekke as well as Pasco Fire and Rescue Firefighters participated in the event providing knowledge to the community about fire.

"We are here to support the community, teach EMS Safety, and to be supportive of AdventHealth because they are very supportive of us," said Brekke.

Pasco Sheriff's Office's Detective Ortiz was on hand with Mango, the department's therapy dog. Mango is six years old, a rescue and one of five therapy dogs. Mango came to the department through Brevard County's inmate training program. Mango provides a calm and soothing presence on calls.

"Mango will help citizens in crisis that have been in a car accident or a horrific crisis," said Ortiz.

Another stop was with Paras Hirapara, Dade City AdventHealth Lab Supervisor and Jose Rosales, Zephyrhills Lab Supervisor. They offered several different free screenings, ie. PSA, A1C, glucose, cholesterol.

"We process the patient's information and take their blood," said Hirapara. "We then send it to the lab and the patient gets their results in one week by mail."

At the stage, COO, Shane Bedward, greeted the community by thanking the teams of AdventHealth.

"I want to thank the teams that put this together, all who made this day possible," said Bedward. "I also want to thank our elected officials, Bob Hatfield from Gus Bilirakis' office, James D. Shive, Mayor of Dade City, Scott Black, commissioner, Ann E. Cosentino, commissioner and Terry Shaw, CEO and president of Wesley Chapel AdventHealth."

"We are proud of the progress made since 2018," said Bedward. "We have done a remarkable job here with more than \$31 Million in donations. Since 2018 the hospital improved its technology, infrastructure, and made improvements in the different departments, said Bedward. "We also set up free health screenings



Above: Pasco Fire and Rescue along with Pasco Sheriff's Office came to support the community and give back to AdventHealth.

with the schools and charities" added Bedward. "We provide exceptional health care."

On stage, Cassandra Bedgood has worked at AdventHealth for two decades. "My story began at birth because I was born here in 1982," said Bedgood. "In high school I got a job here to earn money for a car in medical records when it was paper files." In 2013, her first was born at the hospital. Reflecting on the hospital's progress, and looking to the future, Bedgood said, "It's been a journey from the Flintstone's to the Jetsons where all the technology and advancements have flourished."

Next introduced was Amanda Martin. She

started her career two decades ago on June 14, 1996, and is now the assistant VP of nursing. "I have seen a lot and am proud of the hospital, said Martin." She started as a volunteer in the ER when they were seven bays "That day changed my life," Martin said.

AdventHealth Dade City's remarkable journey over the past 50 years is a testament to its commitment to providing exceptional healthcare while nurturing deep-rooted relationships within the community. As the hospital embarks on the next chapter, there's no doubt that the future will be as bright and promising as its past has been impactful.



Left: The lab teams of AdventHealth Zephyrhills and Dade City give free health screenings to the attendees.



Right: AdventHealth's COO Shane Bedward informs the community about the progress they have made over the past five years at the hospital.

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# Paulie Palooza Music Festival makes for a festive downtown

*The charitable event on 5th Avenue raises funds for Gulfside Hospice thanks to promoter Paul Correia*

By STEVE LEE  
October 19, 2023

While there are plenty of fall festivals throughout east Pasco and the surrounding areas at this time of year there is a distinct event that has become somewhat of a local tradition. It happens annually in Zephyrhills.

The Paulie Palooza, a primary fundraiser for Gulfside Hospice, lured hundreds of people to downtown Zephyrhills. The festival relocated to 5th Avenue in 2021. In 2020, the charitable fall event was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. Nonetheless, the show went on so to speak as a virtual fundraiser took place the following spring.

"I think that's been it's key to growing," Carla Armstrong, Gulfside Hospice's director of philanthropy, said of the festival moving to the downtown area.

Last year's Paulie Palooza generated nearly \$30,000 for Gulfside Hospice. Since the festival's inception 13 years ago, more than \$130,000 has been raised for the non-profit organization's programs.

Initially scheduled as a Ride For Hospice, led by the Pasco Sheriff's Posse, with a music festival held in the drop zone of the Zephyrhills Municipal Airport, the annual event. In between

the airport and downtown it took place for a few years at The Venue, a stage and large field for various events adjacent to the airport.

The Paulie Palooza was initiated by Paul Correia, whose father passed away while in hospice care. It is his way of showing how much he appreciated the effort and kindness of those working in hospice.

"I think it's a great event and it turned out to be a spectacular day," he said, noting that some predictions of rain did not pan out and it was a sunny, cool afternoon.

Correia's daughter-in-law Liz came with her husband Matt and 5-year-old son Nate.

"We love it," she said. "I think it's the community that it brings out and the attention that it brings to hospice."

The musical entertainment, which included other bands than Correia's Sand Spurs like the Dade City Dawgs, clearly was a main attraction for people coming downtown on Saturday. The concrete area in front of the Eiland Bandstand was often packed with dancers throughout the festivities.

"We love it downtown," said Elaine Crowley, who along with her friend Dustin Harper have come to the past three music festivals. "We love the music and I lost my dad while in hospice care so this hits home for me."

"The music, the people here' it's fantastic," said Diane Brewer, who came with Vinny Ortiz. Among those who agreed with the fantastic part were a handful of men and women who follow the Sand Spurs.

"We come for Paulie's band," said Gabby O'Neal, who did plenty of dancing.

As for the Dawgs, band member Robin Noll was glad to be a part of the festival for a second straight year.

"(Correia) asked us to come back and we



Above: Paul Correia plays with his band on stage during Paulie Palooza.

did," Noll said.

Aside from the music and dancing there were food trucks, a silent auction featuring such items as tickets to a Tampa Bay Lightning National Hockey League game at Amalie Arena, French wine and a jersey worn by Bill Mazeroski, a former all-star and two-time World Series champion for the Pittsburgh Pirates.

There were various vendors, including ones for arts and crafts. Among them was Kelsee Fey

of K & K Crafts who came out for the third year in a row. There were several family members, including Charlotte, who is nine months old.

"She was here last year when she was in my belly and she loves the music," said Fey, of Zephyrhills.



Left: Manning the Gulfside Hospice tent, which featured tables of items for a silent auction, adjacent to the stage were Donna Fryza, Diane Joyce and Carla Armstrong.

Right: People got up and danced to the music as the bands played on.



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# Sarah Vande Berg Tennis Center celebrates three years

*Anniversary event highlighted by skydivers' show and tournaments for tennis and pickleball*

By STEVE LEE  
October 26, 2023

The Sarah Vande Berg Tennis Center opened three years ago. To commemorate that milestone management organized a memorable celebration.

The festive atmosphere last Saturday featured tours of the facility and wellness center with tournaments and demonstrations for tennis, pickleball and padel. Although there is a sandy area for beach volleyball that sport was not part of the activities.

That's because that area was kept clear for the landing of 36 parachutists who jumped out of two airplanes that came from Skydive City at the Zephyrhills Municipal Airport. They descended from the air, several of them with fireworks or colorful streaming smoke devices strapped to their legs.

A gathering around the outdoor patio, along with people on the various courts, cheered as they came down and landed. The parachutists, who made four-way and 16-way diamonds in the sky, are members of the Qatar Army Parachute Jump Team.

"We're here training in Zephyrhills," said Mike Lewis, who coaches that team. "It's one of the best places in the world to skydive. Plus, it's

good weather."

The tennis center is named after the late Sarah, who starred on the courts for Zephyrhills High and (college) before she perished in a fatal car crash in 2019. Her father, city planner Todd Vande Berg, expressed how the third-year celebration was somewhat bittersweet.

"It's obviously such a legacy for Sarah," said Todd, who is an avid tennis player and competed in league play earlier on Saturday morning. "It's sad for Sarah but thank you for what you've created here."

Pascal Collard, one of SVB's founders who formerly was the tennis director at Saddlebrook Resort in Wesley Chapel, marveled at the anniversary celebration. He was especially enamored with the skydivers since he is an avid jumper.

"When you see all the people coming to this it tells a lot about this place," he said. "It's pretty impressive."

David Lloyd, SVB's director of pickleball, helped make arrangements for the Suncoast Pickleball Club to set up their Octoberfest Invitational. It is the third tourney for that organization at SVB since July with plans for another one in December. The July tourney was called Summer Nights and the September series was named Sunshine Slamfest.

While many of the 120 players in Saturday's tourney were from the Tampa Bay area, others came from other parts of Florida including Boca Raton and the Miami-Fort Lauderdale area.

"A lot of them have never heard of SVB," Lloyd said. "It's just more bodies. Hopefully, they come back."

Armando Cajuso and his wife, Paula Rivers, ran the tourney. The couple is from Clearwater and while they hope to expand their Suncoast Pickleball Club tourneys to other areas of



Above: Club members and visitors gathered around the outdoor patio to watch the skydivers come down.

Tampa Bay they spoke fondly of the SVB facilities.

"It's an amazing, beautiful facility," said Cajuso, adding, "We bring people from all around Florida."

Debra Fields of Zephyrhills came for the afternoon celebration and later watched her son, David Hengehold, play in the pickleball tourney.

"This place is so classy and so inviting," she said. "It's bringing a new vibe into Zephyrhills."

On the nearby padel courts encased in glass, the Davila family played that racquet

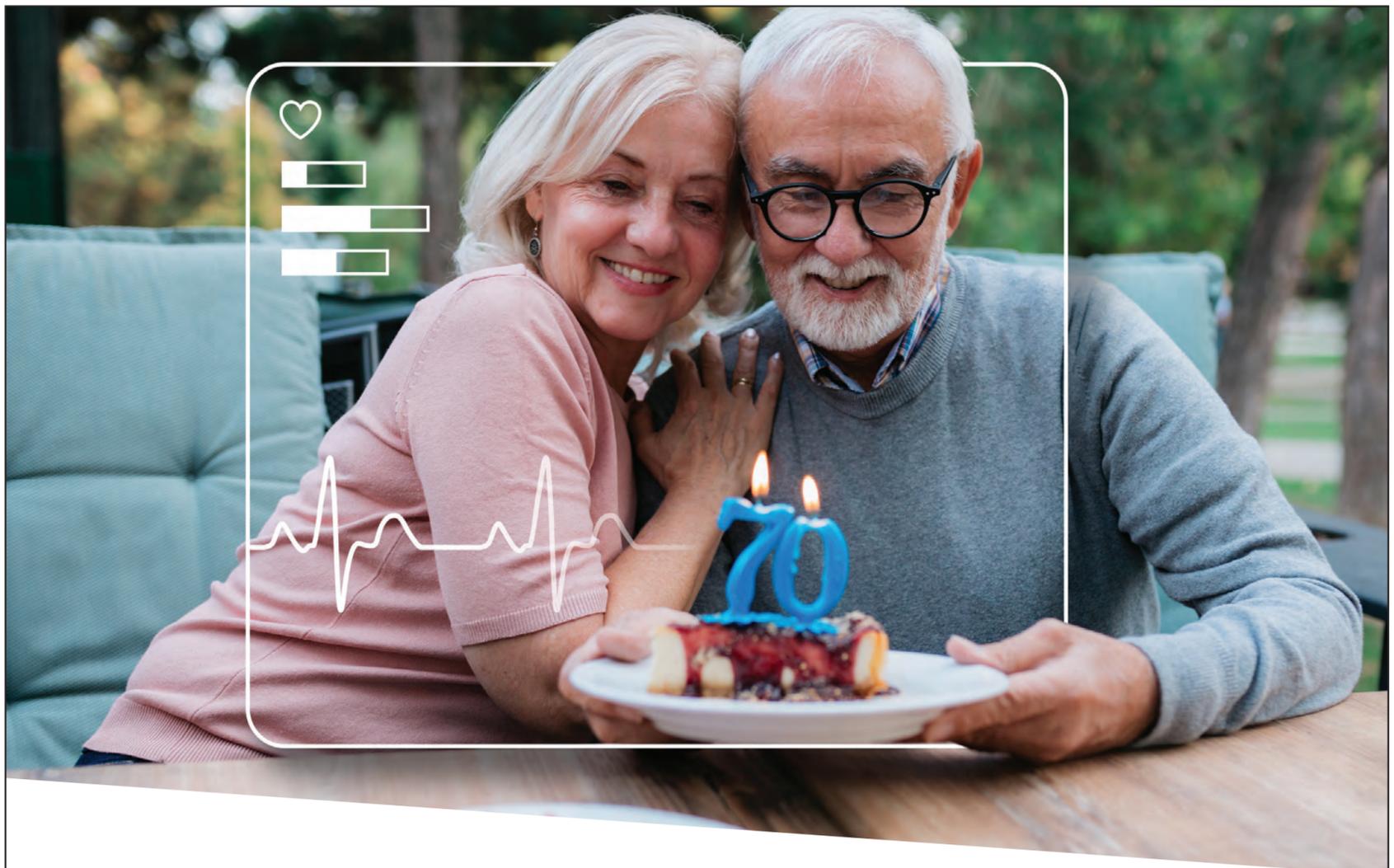
sport. Marlon and Gabby were joined by their two sons, 13-year-old David and Gabriel, 11. Marlon noted that the family liked padel when they tried it and have been coming to SVB since it opened, but that they just became members six months ago.

Aside from tennis tournaments there were exhibitions played by University of South Florida standout Sam Frizelle and others. That was arranged by Ed Krass, founder of the College Tennis Exposure Camp.



Left: More than 100 players turned out for a pickleball tournament scheduled as part of the Sarah Vande Berg Tennis Center's third anniversary celebration.

Right: The Davila family played padel on one of two indoor glass courts.



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