

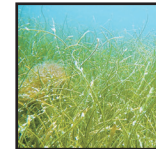
**Oak Hill
Hospital
CEO to
retire
- Page**



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**Seagrass
stable along
Springs Coast**

- Page 22

A monthly publication serving the residents of Sugarmill Woods.

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Commission vows to recover U.S. 98 expenses from OVA

A Staff Report

Four County Commissioners (Commissioner Ruthie Davis Schla-bach was absent due to illness) were unanimous in their determination to make the Oak Village Association (OVA) pay whatever expense is involved to restore the median strip on U.S. 98 "at all costs," no matter what they may be including legal fees.

In 2018 at the request of the OVA, Citrus County received a Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) grant for \$395,000 to landscape a one-mile median strip on U.S. Highway 98.

The original agreement contained a provision that the property owners

See **OVA/Page A3**



The FDOT has agreed to remove the landscaping and prepare the ground for the county to sod the area. The Commissioners voted 4 to 0 to accept that offer and send the estimated bill of \$36,500 for the sod and its installation to OVA. (Gazette staff photo)

U.S. 19 paving project passing Sugarmill Woods is underway

A Staff Report

They were scheduled to be open in 2020, but that was before the contractor, D.A.B. pulled up stakes and went out of business.

The basic project is to repave the existing U.S. 19 highway on a 6.8-mile stretch from the Hernando County line to Green Acres. There will not be an extension of the six-lane highway that goes from Green Acres to Crystal River.

The cost of the repaving is \$20 million. That includes the creation of a 10-foot-wide, multi-purpose path on the east side at a cost of \$2.8 million.

In addition, there will be a 5-foot-wide sidewalk on the west side of the highway at a cost of \$2 million.

The \$15 million repaving project will include a right turn lane to Cardinal Street and eight left turn

See **PAVING/Page A7**

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OVA

Continued from Page A1

would pay the maintenance expense once the landscaping was completed.

The landscaping is a disaster. Where plants were intended to grow, weeds have taken over and what was meant to be a welcoming strip of highway has become an eyesore.

The result has become a contentious issue.

The current OVA Board of Directors contends that it never signed off on this project and therefore is not responsible for any restoration costs. The current officers argue that the agreement was made by a previous board, so this board is not responsible.

The Commissioners are not buying that argument,

not at all.

They were unanimous in expressing their disgust. They are angry that "thousands of dollars of taxpayer dollars have been wasted."

Commission Chairman Ron Kitchen, who made the request of the county to apply for the grant, said this disaster will make it difficult for the county to apply for any future FDOT grants.

He not only supports making OVA pay the restoration costs, he said the association should probably pay back all those thousands of dollars wasted.

Commissioner Holly Davis said: "they should be ashamed of themselves," and suggested that it might be wise just to plant wildflowers there.

Commissioner Scott Carnahan said they should just go in, bushhog it and

let it grow naturally. He added that he opposes wasting county taxpayer money on top of the thousands of state dollars already wasted.

Commissioner Jeff Kinard is concerned that the strip is an eyesore and that is a poor greeting to strangers entering Citrus County.

The FDOT has agreed to remove the landscaping and prepare the ground for the county to sod the area. The Commissioners voted 4 to 0 to accept that offer and send the estimated bill of \$36,500 for the sod and its installation to OVA.

OVA President David Quinn attended the meeting, but he did not speak. He later told the Greenbelt Gazette that, on the advice of the association's attorney, he should reserve comments until his Board meets and decides how to respond.



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World Woods was the only golf facility Cabot wants

Well, that landed with a thud. I'm referring to the announced sale of our three local golf facilities. The new owner, Cabot Links of Toronto, Canada, is interested only in World Woods.

The buyers have no intention of restoring Sugarmill Woods Country Club or the Southern Woods Golf Club. World Woods is their treasure. The other two are just excess baggage put up for sale.

They did say they are

looking for an owner who will "shepherd these assets into the future." (I love the verb "shepherd," if not the decision.)

Having thought about it for a couple of weeks, I am beginning to understand. Cabot develops high-end, first-class resorts. The plans for Cabot Citrus Farms sound exciting. It should be a big boost for the area, an incredible asset which will create 200 jobs where only 86 exist today.

It sounds fantastic, but I

still have my fingers crossed for Sugarmill and Southern Woods.

County Commissioners took turns ripping into the Oak Village Association for the debacle on U.S. Highway 98 where a highway beautification project has become a \$375,000 eyesore. This is the classic example of the best of intentions gone sour. The sooner it's resolved, the better.

It's time to thank Sugarmill resident Beverly Head Howard again. She

See EDITOR/Page A8



Norm Wagdy

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Sugarmill Country Club, Southern Woods are for sale

BY NORM WAGY
Gazette Editor

The Sugarmill Woods Country Club facilities and the Southern Woods Golf Club have been placed on the market by Cabot Links, a Canadian luxury golf resort corporation.

Members of the private clubs were informed of this decision by Cabot Links officials on a zoom call on Jan. 19.

The two clubs were included in the Dec. 16 purchase of the public World Woods golf facility in neighboring Hernando County, which is located on a 1,200-acre site that was in the original plans for the Sugarmill Woods community.

Cabot has major plans to create a luxury golf resort at World Woods, changing its name to Cabot Citrus Farms.

The Pine Barrens and Rolling Oaks 18-hole championship courses, a 9-hole short course and a major practice area were designed by acclaimed golf course architect Tom Fazio.

Citrus Farms will restore and reinvigorate the courses and practice areas and add a club house, a restaurant, accommodations for golfers, residential properties and a commercial area which will include a farmers' market.

The Sugarmill Woods Country Club and Southern Woods Golf Club do not fit in these plans.

Cabot official Daniel Knight told members that “we feel that Cabot is not the right long-term owner of these two assets.”

He announced that the two clubs are listed with Leisure Investment Properties, a Tampa firm that has an associate

who lives in this area and is “familiar with them” and has started “the process of identifying an owner who can do right by the membership and shepherd these assets into the future.”

Neither the purchase nor the asking prices have been revealed.

Cabot will make no investment in Sugarmill Woods or the Southern Woods golf courses and their facilities.

Staff members volunteered their time to paint the exterior of the Sugarmill Woods clubhouse and members volunteered their time and labor to modernize the interior of Southern Woods, but both clubs need major improvements.

The 9-hole Oak course at Sugarmill Woods, for example, has a water issue that caused the course to be closed a few years ago. That issue will not be addressed prior to the sale.

The clubs will be offered “as is.”

In a separate issue, the executives rejected a rumor that they might buy The Dunes, a closed golf club south of Sugarmill Woods. “We have no interest in The Dunes.”

At some time in the future at a date yet to be determined, World Woods will be closed to accomplish its major redesign and development. At that time, all of its golf carts and maintenance equipment will be donated to Sugarmill Woods and Southern Woods.

When it reopens as Cabot Citrus Farms, there will be no affiliations with the private clubs and the members will have no privileges like they enjoyed with World Woods.

Cabot executives expect the sale of the private clubs to be completed by the end of this year.

**GREENBELT
Gazette**

Publisher - Trina Murphy

Editor - Norm Wagy

Send news to:

greenbelt@tampabay.rr.com

*The Greenbelt Gazette is a monthly publication
for the communities of Sugarmill Woods.*



The construction of the 10-foot-wide multipurpose path is getting close to the Sugarmill Woods Cypress Village entrance. Portions of the path will include conduit to protect electric lines to control stop lights and other utilities. The creation of this path designed for pedestrians and cyclists will cost \$2.8 million. (Gazette staff photo)

PAVING

Continued from Page A1

lanes. Two of those locations are south of U.S. 98 closer to the Hernando County line and the other six are all north of

Cardinal Street.

The new contractor hired by the bond company is Watson Civil Construction Inc. The projected completion date for this entire project is spring of 2023.

For updates on this project visit <https://www.fdotampabay.com/project/300/437514-1-52-01>.

Blue Stream fiber optics still under consideration

Cypress Village residents asked to take survey

A Staff Report

An estimated 200 people participated in two town hall meetings on Blue Stream fiber optics on Feb. 3, both in person and on Zoom.

Representatives of Blue Stream were present to answer questions on a proposal that would create a fiber optic grid in Cypress Village to offer high-speed internet, TV and phone services.

The expectation is that fiber optics will be more reliable and less expensive than the current available service.

Charles Borton, CVPOA vice president, who is representing the association to investigate whether this would be practical, says that he felt the

company responded to all the concerns voiced by those in attendance.

Whether or not you would favor proceeding, Cypress Village residents are asked to go online to respond to a survey that will guide the board on its deliberations.

The survey can be found at <https://lezdg46g7v1.typeform.com/to/ubeYWXFt>.

If there is an indication that at least half of the community is interested, Blue Stream and the board will move forward.

If you missed the town hall meeting, the CVPOA website offers links to the presentation and a full description of what a Blue Stream package might contain: <https://www.cypressvillage.sugarmillwoods.com/index.php>.

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Marybeth Bottorf receives Nursing Excellence Award

Special to the Gazette

Bravera Health Seven Rivers reports that registered nurse (RN) Marybeth Bottorf has received the hospital's Nursing Excellence Award.

This peer-nominated award, created in 2020 in honor of the "Year of the Nurse," is in recognition of the critical role nurses are playing in treating patients throughout the COVID pandemic. It was open to qualifying RNs and (licensed practical nurses) LPNs working in a direct patient care position who consistently demonstrate nursing excellence.

Bottorf is a mentor to the health care team. During emergencies, she demonstrates team leadership skills by assisting physicians and colleagues, using her extensive knowledge of critical care nursing.

She is focused on using clinical best practices to ensure safe, quality and appropriate level of care for all patients. She values collaboration and teamwork.

At a very challenging time during the pandemic, Bottorf made sure to take the time to communicate, stay with and comfort patients and family members. She



Marybeth Bottorf

lifts morale and has earned great respect from those she works with and the patients she treats.

EDITOR

Continued from **Page A4**

campaigned relentlessly for a path or sidewalk on U.S. 19 after one of her former students, a young boy, was killed in an accident while riding his bike on that road in 2005.

We are getting both: a path on the east side and a sidewalk on the west. They are under construction at long last.

Thank you, Beverly.

Joe Dube, who was recently honored by his peers (see **Page 12**), assures me he did not photoshop this month's Park Picture. He says he waited, camera at the ready, for nearly an hour waiting for the right moment. He got it! See for yourself on **Page 13**.

It's a relief that the sun still rises over Tampa Bay most mornings. It gives Tom Brady nice weather to go to the unemployment office to file his claim.

Carl Bernstein became a famous reporter when he and his Washington Post partner, Bob Woodward, uncovered the Watergate scandal in the 1970s. While reading his new book, "Chasing History: A Kid in the Newsroom," I came upon a surprise.

Among his assignments as a young reporter breaking in with the Washington Evening Star was covering the activities of the Prince George's County (Maryland) **Greenbelt** Preservation Board. Look where it got him!

Maybe there's hope for me yet.

Our Oak Village library grows

BY DAVE QUINN
President, Oak Village Association

It does my heart good to report great news. When we built our offices several years ago, we put aside a room for our residents to use computers we had installed. That drew little response.

Books were added and some were read. Then along came Rose Flodstrom in 2019. A long-active volunteer in Oak Village, she took over the library operations. She spent many days bringing in books, categorizing them and finding places to put them. The Board had to give her some money for bookshelves out of fear she would yell at us (ha ha).

Now we have an active library. Bring in a book and drop it off. Take another one home with you. Even if you don't have a book to drop off, take a book home anyway, then bring it back and take another one. It's all FREE and not subject to inflation.

If you want to donate books, like me, take them in. Rose will handle it from there. We all applaud you, Rose, and extend our thanks for stepping up to do a "good thing" for Oak Village residents.

I am quite sure most of you have heard that Waste Management has

increased prices per quarter and will require curbside pickup of household trash for the safety of their employees.

Several weeks ago, we received a letter from Waste Management outlining these changes and, if any resident is unable to deliver the trash curbside, a doctor's note will be required for side door/underground pickup of household trash.

All of Waste Management customers in Oak Village will be receiving a letter in March/April on these changes, among others. It is also my

understanding that other providers may also require new guidelines.

Finally, 'tis the special season of SPAM and SCAMS. Please be careful and learn to recognize the phone calls and emails. If an email arrives and you don't recognize the sender, don't open it. If you don't recognize a phone number, don't answer it. They can always leave a message.

The IRS will NEVER call you, so hang up if someone tries to get money out of you to settle a tax liability. Report such activity to the Sheriff's Office at 726-4488.

Do not call 911. The Sheriff's Office has employees to assist you in identifying such scams.

Be well everyone.

Oak Village Association



Dave Quinn
President

Sugarmill Woods women to do lunch in March

RSVP by March 18 to save a spot

Special to the Gazette

The Women of Sugarmill Woods' next luncheon will be held on March 28 at the Sugarmill Woods Country Club. Doors will open at 11 a.m., President's Welcome 11:45 a.m. with lunch being served at noon.

Meal choices are corned beef, cabbage and baby potatoes, shepherds' pie or a large vegetarian salad.

Bread, coffee, tea or soda are included.

To reserve your spot please place your check,

in a small plastic bag, in WSW mailbox slot No. 2 before March 18.

Please write your meal choice on the check.

Everyone is welcome; cost is \$22 for members and \$24 for non-members.

The mailboxes are located on the side road near the exit of Cypress Village on Cypress Boulevard west. Boxes are on the right before the U.S. mailbox on the left.

For questions, please contact Carol Lawson-Program Director 503-6958 or CATL2011@yahoo.com.

Women of Sugarmill Woods



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Oak Hill Hospital CEO Mickey Smith to retire

A Staff Report

Mickey Smith, the Chief Executive Officer of Oak Hill Hospital, has announced his retirement after a 43-year career in hospital management, the Past 19 years at Oak Hill, which is owned by HCA Healthcare.

Smith joined the Hernando County facility in 2003. With its 200 beds and 600 employees, he described it as a nice little "country" hospital.

As the years passed and expansion progressed, his goal became to grow Oak Hill into a comprehensive medical center which could treat virtually any medical condition.

Today, the hospital has 350 beds and 1,600 employees, including 150 physicians. It had 2021 net revenues of \$384 million and a payroll of \$150.9 million.

Oak Hill is the largest non-governmental employer in Hernando County and the largest non-utility county taxpayer.

It is hardly a small "country" hospital today.

Open heart surgery was offered for the first time in 2004. Minimally invasive robotic surgery was an advancement as were expanding a diverse staff of medical specialists and providing the equipment and facilities they required.

In 2013 a \$52 million operating room modernization and a bed tower expansion was completed. A \$20 million labor and delivery service expansion was completed in 2016 followed by a two floor, 70-bed expansion in 2020, which included a Level 2 NICU with 10 private rooms.

Last month, Phase One of a \$30 million doubling of the Emergency Room was opened as was the addition of 600 new parking spaces.

Over the past 10 years \$170.5 million has been spent in capital investments.

Another major achievement was the creation of a Graduate Medical Education program on the hospital campus which began accepting med students in July 2014. It offers medical school

graduates residencies in seven disciplines which include: emergency, family and internal medicines as well as podiatric medicine

On the horizon is the construction of a \$150 million building which will increase single patient rooms to 500 and add additional medical services.

Under his management and HCA Healthcare's investments of \$170.5 million in 10 years, Smith's goal is close to reality.

A native of North Carolina, Smith earned a Bachelor's degree from the Georgia Tech School Industrial and Systems Engineering and a Master's degree in Business from the University of Missouri's College of Business and a second Master's from its School of Medicine in Public Health.

In 1978, he joined HCA and with wife Kathy, whom he married in 1976, moved to Bluefield, W. Va., where he was appointed assistant administrator of the Bluefield Community Hospital.

Seven moves and seven jobs later, Smith joined Oak Hill Hospital and the couple moved to Crystal River.

Smith explains that Kathy, a nurse and mother to their two daughters, followed him through all these changes, now it's his time to follow her.

She is in Georgia in the Atlanta area tending to family matters. Mickey will be joining her there probably in early summer.

His move will occur when HCA hires Oak Hill's new CEO.

Mickey Smith was not only a major medical figure in the area, he was active in community affairs, as President of the Greater Hernando County Chamber of Commerce and a member of the boards of directors for the United Way, the YMCA Hernando and LifeSouth Community Blood Centers and Chapters Health HPH Hospice.

He is also an active member of the Rotary Club of Crystal River.

Smith says it was an honor to serve the staff of Oak Hill Hospital and the community at large.

His presence in the community will be missed.



MICKEY SMITH
is retiring after 19
years at Oak Hill
Hospital.

Look at the positives for CVPOA

BY JERRY CARR
President, Cypress
Village Property Owner's
Association

As I settle into the position of president with great admiration and honor that my fellow directors and members have entrusted me with, we are running on all cylinders.

The pulse of the community is positive. New and current members are feeling comfortable with either calling in with questions, concerns, and resolutions. It is obvious the positive vibes are becoming more apparent.

What a pleasure as a volunteer to see all these above-referenced actions come to light.

You should be noticing

in my third column a pattern of overdue acknowledgement from all that make our CVPOA possible.

I'm only as effective as the great team of directors, officers, committee chairs, staff and especially the members. Without your input and great ideas, we would not be able to provide our community with the superior service you should come to expect from your current administration.

The association officers have been meeting with trash haulers to discuss the future of their opera-

tions in the community.

The potential for the fiber optic option allows members to have a choice. I've spoken in detail with the CEO for Blue Stream. He knows the dynamics of our community. This choice is completely up to you.

Unless there are further questions, we believe we've addressed the major issues with Blue Stream. I will say as a homeowner and member, I was impressed. They are willing to build a specific network to fit our needs.

Should YOU, the members, wish to proceed, it is

imperative that you fill in the survey located on our web page.

Please participate in the process and voice your choice. It's truly the only way.

Finally, check our website and become an informed member when choosing candidates in the coming election. The votes will be counted Wednesday March 23 at the annual meeting.

I'm excited there are three seats up for election. Please check the qualifications of every candidate. Personally, when I look at the bio's, I look for the most imperative aspect: Who is dedicated to volunteer and serve our community?

Best wishes and let's go get it done!

Cypress Village Property Owners Association



Jerry Carr
President

County Clerk's staff makes charitable gifts

Special to the Gazette

Congratulations to the employees of the Clerk of Court's office for their giving back to community program.

Through the Charitable Contribution Denim Days, they donate their time and contributions every month to local Citrus County organizations with no taxpayer dollars involved.

Employees who participate wear denim on Fridays.

The total collected and donated in 2021 was \$4,465.

The Citrus County non-profit organizations recognized in 2021 were:

■ January — Mission

in Citrus Homeless Shelter

■ February — Phil Royal Legacy

■ March — Cinderella's Closet

■ April — PACE Center for Girls

■ May — Jessie's Place

■ June — Dementia Education Inc.

■ July — Blessings & Citrus County Education Foundation school supplies

■ August — The Path

■ September — Cayla's Coats

■ October — Citrus United Basket

■ November — Citrus Abuse Shelter Association, CASA

■ December — The Sanctuary Mission.

Daryl Senica,
President

Linnea Senica,
General Manager

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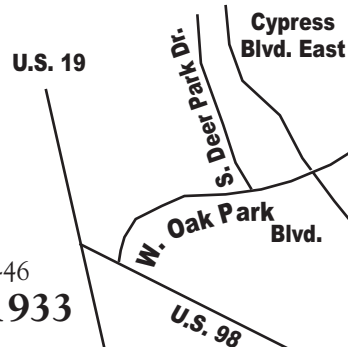
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Dube recognized by peers



Nils Anderson, the President of Friends of the Homosassa Springs Wildlife Park, presented the President Emeritus Award to Joe Dube for his 12 years of "dedication, loyalty and professionalism which reflects great credit on him." Dube served five years as President of the Friends, plus countless hours driving Park guests on the trams, cleaning cages and, most of all, helping to devise marketing strategies that resulted in donations of \$750,000. An accomplished photographer, Dube has made hundreds of photos of the animals, including one each month for the Greenbelt Gazette. (Special to the Gazette)

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The flamingo

Beautiful birds are bright, big

BY JOE DUBE

*Friends of the Homosassa
Springs Wildlife Park*

One can see flamingos all over Florida. Unfortunately, they are not usually wandering around free in the wild.

It's much easier to see a plastic flamingo on a lawn than a feathered one in the Florida wild.

The flamingos that we see here in Florida are generally ones we see in zoos.

Flamingos found at the Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park are not able to be released into the wild for

reasons including injuries and abandonment.

Wild flamingos are found in tropical and warm temperate sites near the shallow lagoons and lakes of South America and the Caribbean.

Flamingos are tall, large-bodied birds with long necks and small heads.

Park Pictures

Most flamingos have bright pink or crimson plumage, legs and bills.

The distinctive pink flamingo color develops thanks to their selective diet, which primarily consists of organisms such as shrimp and algae.

Flamingos can live up to 50 years in the wild.



Photo by Joe Dube/Special to the Gazette

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Greeting and salutations

BY MIKE NYHUS

*President, Sugarmill Woods
Civic Association (SMWCA)*

Having to spend this winter in Delaware has only confirmed that relocating to Florida full time in 2016 was one of our best decisions ever! It's cold, gray, damp and windy thistime of the year in the Northeast, which makes us miss Sugarmill Woods even more.

A few columns ago, I promised to list the SMWCA Community Outreach Program's 2022 calendar and now that the board has finalized the arrangements, I'm pleased to announce the following.

On Thursday, March 10: SMWCA will sponsor a Water Conservation Expo to be held at the Sugarmill Woods Country Club between noon and 3 p.m. Local and county representatives will be on hand to present the latest in water conservation, Florida-friendly landscaping and to answer your questions.

On Saturday, March 12: SMWCA will sponsor the 2022 Spring Clean Up between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. in the upper

parking lot of SMW country club. You can have your documents shredded free of charge; drop off your outdated prescription drugs with the Sheriff's Deputy who will properly dispose of them for you; the Food Bank will be on sight to accept any donations (cash or nonperishable goods) for the needy in our area and The Sanctuary will also be there to accept your donations (usable clothing and household items only).

These Community Outreach Programs are reserved for residents of Cypress Village, Oak Village and Southern Woods, and although a Sugarmill Woods Civic Association membership

isn't required to take advantage of these valuable programs, I do hope that you'll consider buying a \$15 annual membership this year.

Our Association has provided exceptional service and representation to our members and our dues have not increased in over 30 years. I call that a bargain.

We welcome new members and volunteers. You can find the application form in the front of your telephone directory.

**Sugarmill
Woods Civic
Association**

Prescribed fires important for safety of Citrus County

Burns on tap for March

Special to the Gazette

Setting prescribed fires in controlled settings can reduce the risk of wildfires burning out of control, as many Floridians witnessed during the state's wildfire emergency in 2017.

The Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) will be conducting prescribed burns through March on Potts Preserve, Flying Eagle

Preserve and Chassahowitzka River and Coastal Swamps in Citrus County.

Potts Preserve is located approximately 2 miles east of the city of Hernando and three and a half miles north-northeast of Inverness. Approximately 1,000 acres will be burned in small, manageable units.

Flying Eagle Preserve is located southeast of Inverness. Approximately 700 acres will be burned in small, manageable units.

Chassahowitzka River and Coastal Swamps is located south of

Homosassa and approximately 1.5 miles west of U.S. Highway 19. Approximately 50 acres will be burned.

Some major benefits of prescribed fire include:

■ Reducing overgrown plants, which decreases the risk of catastrophic wildfires.

■ Promoting the growth of new, diverse plants.

■ Maintaining the character and condition of wildlife habitat.

■ Maintaining access for public recreation.

The District conducts prescribed fires on approximately 30,000 acres each year.

Join the Cat's Meow Golf Tournament to help our furry friends

By PAT O'BRIEN
Special to the Gazette

Precious Paws Rescue will host its second annual Cat's Meow Golf Scramble at the Southern Woods Golf Club on Monday, April 4.

New this year will be an 18-Hole Scramble as well as a 9-Hole Scramble. Check-in will start at 7:30 a.m., a breakfast buffet will be held on the back patio. An 8:30 a.m. Shotgun start for the 18-hole players and a 9:30 a.m. start is planned for the 9-hole players.

Luncheon will follow with raffles and prizes.

Hole and event sponsors are needed. Most of all, we need golfers!

Call me at 382-5571.

According to the Humane Society of the United States, "cats are the most popular pets, but

also the most likely to die prematurely from diseases, poisons, attacks by other animals, abuse by humans or speeding vehicles."

Most of us who grew up with cats remember them as being indoor/outdoor and many of us also remember losing a cat to one of the above causes.

Whiskers Tails

As a Precious Paws Rescue volunteer, I listen to the requests to take in stray or abandoned cats — very often with their newborns. Over these past years, we realized many of these felines could have had healthy and happy lives if they had not begun their lives as outdoor orphans.

Many people believe cats cannot be happy cats if they are not allowed to roam about and have the freedom to explore their neighborhood.

Stop and think about the outdoor risks; rabies, fleas, ticks,



Jibara is a long-haired male tabby, about 3 years old. He's shy at first. He loves to be with people, but is not a lap cat. (Diana Evans/Special to the Gazette)

snakes, wild predators and uncaring and possibly cruel humans.

Cats are not a part of our natural outdoor environment, but most felines are natural

hunters and well-fed cats will still follow that innate hunting instinct.

The killing of birds and wildlife also causes conflicts between neighbors. Fewer than 5% of lost cats are reunited with their owners, so the cat that wanders a distance from their family can become another orphan.

Cats and dogs are deserving of our love, protection and appropriate veterinary care including sterilization and microchipping. Millions of felines suffer and die needlessly due to the perception that they enjoy life when they are independent and free to roam.

The life span of an outdoor cat is about three years compared to an average of 16 to 18 years for an indoor-only feline.

Cats are happier, healthier and will live a normal lifespan when they are indoor pets in loving homes. Their families

can easily satisfy that "innate" hunting instinct with a little interactive playtime each day. These activities actually strengthen the feline/human bond.

A screened lanai, screened porch or a well-secured window will provide the view of the outdoor creatures that some many of our indoor felines watch daily.

There are also cat harnesses and leashes available for the cat to take a stroll with their human companion along.

Remember spay, neuter and microchipping saves lives — no unwanted kittens, no stray abandoned moms with orphaned kittens and lost felines are reunited with their families.

Please call me at 382-5571 for more information on the second Annual Cat's Meow Scramble or information on Precious Paws Rescue Pet activities.



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Garden Club to visit pier

Special to the Gazette

The Homosassa River Garden Club invites the public to spend an interesting day at St. Pete Pier!

Shop, view the amazing public artwork, visit the St. Pete Museum of History and learn the story of St. Petersburg. See the native plants in the Coastal Thicket by walking the ADA compliant boardwalk. Enjoy a meal at one of the many restaurants.

Visitors will travel by bus on Friday,

**Homosassa
River Garden
Club**

April 1, leaving from the Pinch-a-Penny parking lot at the Shoppes of Sugarmill Woods at 8 a.m. and leave from the Pier at 4 p.m.

The cost is \$40, for transportation only, nonrefundable. The complete day is on your own.

Reservations and payment must be made by March 1. Please mail a check to: Homosassa River Garden Club, PO .Box 4293, Homosassa, FL 34447-4293.

For more information, call Barb at 586-0579.

New members join Garden Club



The Homosassa River Garden Club welcomed three new members at the January annual meeting. From left are Nancy Noyes-Wollinger, Elaine Moore, Kathy Lutkus and Chris Pisarsky, membership chair. (Special to the Gazette)

Email your news and photos to
greenbelt@tampabay.rr.com

Homestead exemption deadline coming up March 1: File online or at office

BY CREGG DALTON
Citrus County Property Appraiser

Act fast! The deadline to apply for the homestead exemption is March 1.

You can file on our website at citruspa.org or come into either of our two offices in Inverness or Crystal River.

Our customer service team is available to assist you with any questions you may have.

So, what is homestead? In the State of Florida, a \$25,000 exemption is applied to the first \$50,000 of your property's assessed value if your property is your permanent residence and you owned the property on Jan. 1 of the tax year. This exemption applies to all taxes, including

school district taxes.

An additional exemption of up to \$25,000 will be applied if your property's assessed value is between at least \$50,000 and \$75,000. This exemption is not applied to school district taxes.

The homestead exemption includes an additional benefit called the "Save our Homes Cap." This benefit will limit the annual increase of the assessed value to 3% or the Consumer Price Index (CPI), whichever is less.

When a property is sold, the homestead exemption is removed, the assessed value increases to the just/market value for the new year.

Now, if you choose to not homestead your property, keep in mind that you will not benefit from that 3% limitation. Instead,

all non-homesteaded properties annual assessment can increase up to 10%.

What do you need to file for a homestead? For starters you must have legal or beneficial title and be residing in the home as of Jan. 1, 2022.

When filing for the homestead exemption, you will need the following documents for all property owners applying: Florida driver's license/Florida ID card, Florida vehicle registration (if you drive) and Florida voter registration (if you vote).

Documents should reflect the address of your homesteaded property.

If you are married and your spouse is not an owner on the property, we will still require their information as well. If your spouse has a homestead

exemption on their home and you want to apply for a homestead at your residence, unfortunately that won't work.

A married couple is entitled to receive only one homestead exemption per the Constitution of The State of Florida, Article VII, Section 6 (b).

If you already have a homestead exemption, you do not need to reapply for that exemption each year. We will renew your exemption(s) annually as long as you still qualify for them.

After Jan. 1 of each year, you will receive a homestead exemption receipt postcard by mail from our office.

This is your renewal confirmation. You must only return the card to our office if you no longer qualify for the homestead exemption.

Help shape the Tampa Bay region's Resilience and Energy Planning

The Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (TBRPC), along with Citrus County government, invites all county residents to take the online Resilient Communities and Homes survey. The survey asks residents about their experiences with hurricanes, flooding, and hot weather — and their preferences for local action.

This 10-minute online survey will provide important feedback to help shape the Regional Action Plan and local programs. The aggregated data will be shared with each participating local government. To access the survey, visit <http://metro.questrysurvey.com/9f3k>.

— Gazette staff report

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Citrus Memorial Hospital announces Fellowship Programs

For cardiovascular, pulmonary diseases

Special to the Gazette

Citrus Memorial Hospital has announced it will add two fellowships to its Graduate Medical Education program. Accredited by the Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), the new programs will train fellows in cardiovascular disease and pulmonary disease.

"The newly minted pulmonary and cardiology fellowship programs in Citrus County underscore the commitment of

HCA Healthcare and Citrus Memorial Hospital to the citizens of our community," said Citrus Memorial Hospital Chief Medical Officer Dr. Joseph Maslak.

"Citrus Memorial already has a thriving internal medicine residency program, and the addition of these fellowship programs underscore the importance of our commitment to education, retention of physicians and the advancement of medicine."

Launching in July 2022, the three-year cardiovascular

disease program will provide advanced training in all aspects of cardiovascular medicine to an expected nine fellows.

According to Cardiovascular Disease Fellowship Program Director Dr. Suman Pasupuleti, the program will focus on coronary artery disease, heart failure, structural heart disease, device-based therapy and atrial fibrillation.

"With this program we'll be able to bring doctors with fresh ideas from across the country to train and recruit to serve our community," he explained. "The cardiovascular disease fellowship training program is

going to take Citrus County and Citrus Memorial Hospital to the next level not only in health care but also in training future generations of doctors."

The two-year pulmonary disease program will provide six fellows with training in general and interventional pulmonology.

"The fellowship program consisting of our faculty physicians and fellows will strive to provide cutting edge pulmonary care in our community," said Pulmonary Disease Fellowship Program Director Dr. Fagun Modi.

"Training pulmonary

physicians locally will increase availability of pulmonary providers and provide opportunities for young doctors to work in our community.

The program will focus on caring for patients with lung diseases including COPD, asthma and pulmonary fibrosis in both hospital and outpatient settings.

Fellows will be educated on treatments for lung conditions and to perform procedures such as bronchoscopy.

The graduate medical education program at Citrus Memorial Hospital currently hosts 55 internal medical residents.



Greenbelt Gazette

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Almost time for St. Patrick's Day bingo

Special to the Gazette

The Oak Village Women's Club will host a St. Patrick's Day luncheon on Monday, March 14, at the Sugarmill Woods Country Club. Wear your favorite green attire and celebrate St. Patrick's Day with loads of fun playing bingo. The luncheon will open with the business meeting at 11:30 a.m. Lunch will be served at noon.

Lunch will start with tomato bisque soup (vegetarian) with dinner rolls. Entrees will be a choice

#1: corned beef with cabbage, red potatoes, carrots and Irish soda bread; or choice #2: fried chicken, mashed potatoes, green beans.

Lunch will be topped off with a hot fudge sundae bar. Soft beverages, coffee and tea are complimentary.

Mark your entrée choice on your check! Cost of the luncheon is \$25 for members. Guests can come the first time with a cost of \$25, and thereafter, it will be \$27 unless they choose to join. Checks (no cash and no envelopes) are due by Tuesday, March 1.

Make the check out to "OVWC" and drop it in one of the two Oak

Village bulletin board boxes located at Oak Village Boulevard South (just past Daisy) or Oak Village Bath & Tennis Club at 1 Village Center Circle.

Enjoy our monthly luncheons and many social activities such as book clubs, game clubs and excursions. Membership is open to all women who reside within Sugarmill Woods. This includes Cypress Village, Oak Village, Southern Woods, Deer Park Cottages and the Royal Dalton House. Ladies are invited to attend any or all our future meetings without joining.

For more information, please contact Hattie Ciolko at 503-7300.

Come **SALE AWAY**

WSW Garage Sale and Craft Show

The Women of Sugarmill Woods will host this annual event on Saturday, March 19, rain or shine, at Sugarmill Woods Country Club upper parking lot. To reserve a spot and more info, contact Roxanne Soden, rmsoden@gmail.com or 630-212-7173.

Garage sale spots will be \$20 each, crafters' spots are \$25.

Proceeds from spot reservations will support local charities. Proceeds from sales will belong to the sellers.

Ladies of the Elks annual Flea Market

The Ladies of the Elks Flea Market is Saturday, Feb. 26, at the West Citrus Elks Lodge on Grover Cleveland Boulevard.

Doors open at 8:30 a.m. and close at 2:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome; no admission fee. Items for sale will include artwork, books, clothing, household items, tools and furniture.

Proceeds will go to local charities. For more information contact Teresa at 503-9417 or Charlotte at 382-0131.

— Gazette staff reports

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Greenbelt Gazette CLUB NEWS

St. Patrick's Card and Game Party

On Tuesday, March 15, the public is invited to join the Ladies of the Elks for a card and game party to honor St. Patrick. It will be held at the Elks Lodge on Grover Cleveland Blvd.

Doors open at 11 a.m. and lunch will be served at noon.

All are welcome. Bring your cards or game you would like to play. Arrange your table of four and plan to play cards or a game of your choice or come alone and meet new friends.

A \$20 ticket includes lunch and chances for raffle baskets, door prizes and the "Pot of Gold" drawing.

Call Edna at 628-3362 for tickets and Information.

Auxiliary's Boating Safety Course

New to boating, new to the area, or a seasoned veteran needing a refresher?

Whatever the reason, a good working knowledge of safe boating skills is needed to avoid what could be a catastrophe on the water.

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary of Homosassa can help you learn or refresh the necessary skills.

Register for the Coast Guard approved "About Boating Safely" course which will be offered in a virtual learning format.

Join an experienced team on Tuesday, March 22 through March 25, 6:45 to 9:15 p.m. from the comfort of your home.

After successfully completing the test, you will be sent the Florida Safe Boaters card from FWC and possibly be eligible for discounts on your boat insurance.

Anyone born after Jan. 1, 1988, must have a "Safe Boater" card to legally operate a vessel with a 10-HP motor or greater.

The establishment of a good foundation for safe boating is a must for anyone operating a boat.

The course cost is \$30 payable by cash or check prior to the course date. There is a discount for family members sharing a book.

Space is limited so RSVP no later than March 12 by contacting Dee Imhoff at hal1414@tampabay.rr.com, or <https://forms.gle/5GmZNVYuSPg4AG3M8>.

Orchid Society to meet in Spring Hill

The Nature Coast Orchid Society will meet Feb. 26 at VFW Post 8681, 18940 Drayton St., Spring Hill. Doors open at noon; meeting starts at 1 p.m.

The program, by Garden Trails, will cover chemicals and planting mediums.

A members' show-off table will be presented as well as a raffle for various items.

Come early to shop and buy your chances to win.

A large assortment of orchid necessities will be available.

Come see what you didn't know you needed.

Guests are always welcome!

NCOS is a 501c3 group. Questions, call 895-4035.

Wright to speak at League meeting

The League of Women Voters of Citrus County will hold its Annual Luncheon Meeting at the Olive Garden at 2151 E. Gulf to Lake Highway, in Inverness at 11 a.m. Tuesday, March 8.

Mike Wright, Citrus County reporter, personality and "gets-around guy," will be the guest speaker. Wright has started a new online venture after working for the Chronicle for over 30 years.

He will discuss his new project, "Just Wright Citrus."

The luncheon menu choices will be as follows:

■ Never-ending soup and salad, various options. \$7.99 plus

■ Spaghetti, fettucine, eggplant parmesan, cheese ravioli, or ziti al forno. \$8.99

■ Spaghetti and meatballs, lasagna classico, chicken parmigiana, or shrimp scampi. \$9.99

No tickets are required, but please RSVP by calling Judy at 527-0207 to reserve a seat. Deadline for reservations is March 7.

Following lunch, Wright will speak. After his presentation, there will be the business meeting for LWVCC members to elect officers for 2022-23.

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. All interested men and women are welcome.

— Gazette staff reports

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Seagrass stable along the Springs Coast

Special to the Gazette

Scientists with the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) completed the latest round of seagrass mapping along Florida's Springs Coast, which is the region from Anclote Key in Pasco County northward to Waccasassa Bay (east of Cedar Key) out approximately 25 miles.

The aerial imagery collected show 586,511 acres of mapped seagrass

habitat along the Springs Coast, up slightly from the previous total of 577,920 acres in 2016. The open water nature of the area and the largely undeveloped and expansive coastal wetlands contribute to the region's stable seagrass habitats.

This Springs Coast region represents one of the largest and most diverse seagrass ecosystems in the country and the District will continue to monitor the long-term health of these habitats.

To better understand trends in seagrass habitat, the District subdivided this region into 16 segments. While the region as a whole saw little change in seagrass acreage, several smaller segments experienced significant gains:

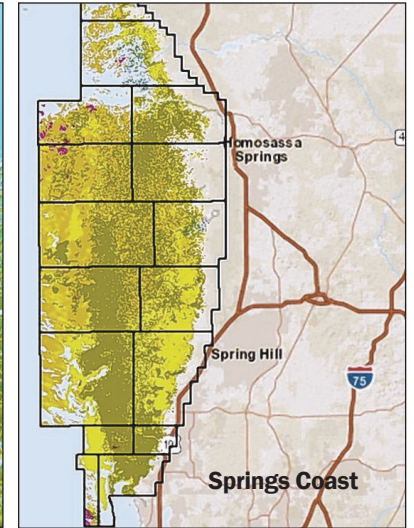
■ The Anclote Offshore segment (near Tarpon Springs) saw the greatest increase (25.7%) from 5,156 acres in 2016 to 6,483 acres in 2020.

■ Waccasassa Bay east of Cedar Key also saw significant gains in seagrass (17.1%) from 10,934 acres in 2016 to 12,807 acres in 2020.

■ The Crystal Bay Inshore segment saw an increase in seagrass (8.4%) from 25,115 acres in 2016 to 27,223 acres in 2020.

Some segments saw a slight loss in seagrass. Just off the Chassahowitzka River there was a 3.1% decline from 30,086 acres in 2016 to 29,163 acres in 2020.

Seagrasses are often mixed with other organisms like sponges, corals and attached algae. Among the many ecological and economic



Seagrasses are a critical food resource for manatees and are often mixed with other organisms like sponges, corals and attached algae. They provide ecological and commercial benefits providing habitats for fish, crabs and shrimp in the Gulf of Mexico seagrass meadows. *(Special to the Gazette)*

benefits of these under-sea habitats, approximately 70% of the recreational and commercial important species of fish, crabs, and shrimp in the Gulf of Mexico spend at least a portion of their lives in seagrass meadows.

Seagrasses are also a major food source for manatees and sea turtles.

While seagrasses help maintain good water

quality, they are sensitive to increased nutrient pollution and other stressors like red tide and hurricanes. For this reason, the District maps seagrass habitat every four years to "take the pulse" of the Springs Coast estuaries. The results are used to track trends in seagrass and to evaluate water quality improvement efforts.

Seagrass maps are

created by professional photo interpreters using aerial imagery. State-of-the-art digital cameras mounted on specially outfitted aircraft. Every image must go through a rigorous quality control process before being released to the photo interpreters. Additionally, qualified field crews visit more than a thousand assessment points to ensure the highest quality.


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