

# HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN

Wednesday, April 28, 2021

VOL. 102 | NO. 118 | \$1.00

YOUR HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER SINCE 1919

An Edition Of The Sun

## Another life lost in structure fire

### Staff Report

SEBRING — For the second time in four days, a life was lost in a structure fire.

A person died Tuesday morning when firefighters responded to a structure fire in the 20 block of Copperhead Drive in Lake Placid Campground resort. Highlands County Fire Rescue Chief Marc Bashoor said the structure fire was paged out at 10:26 a.m. and despite water being on the mobile home within nine minutes, it was

too late to save the resident.

The Highlands County Sheriff's Office said deputies arrived on the scene first and the home was already engulfed in flames. Deputies could not find an entrance to get in to assist the resident because the fire was so intense.

Responding units were: Tanker 33, Medic 36-1, Medic 41-1, Engine 36, Engine 41, and Battalion 2 and 4. Highlands County Sheriff's



COURTESY/HIGHLANDS COUNTY FIRE RESCUE

Highlands County Fire Rescue Tanker 33, Medic 36-1, Medic 41-1, Engine 36, Engine 41, and Battalion 2 and 4 responded to a Tuesday morning fire on Copperhead Drive in Lake Placid. It was the second fatal fire in four days.

FIRE | 4A

## Inside today

Look inside today's edition for the Spring Home & Garden section for tips on landscaping and home improvement this season.



## County adds another COVID death

By KIM MOODY  
STAFF WRITER

Highlands County's COVID-19 numbers went up across the board from new cases to deaths and positivity rate. With only nine new cases on Monday, it was easy to see that it would rise. In fact, new cases rose to 25 infections on Tuesday. All of Monday's new cases were from residents.

The additional cases bring the cumulative total to 8,377 infections. Of those infections, 8,285 have been residents and 92 non-residents.

The Florida Department of Health shows 218 infections over the past seven days. That is an average of 31.14 cases per day. The daily average age was 31 on Tuesday. The overall median age remains at 51.

One death was reported overnight. This brings the county's death toll to 343 people whose deaths have been attributed from COVID.

Hospitalizations have hit 651, that is 8% of all cases. The Agency for Health Care Administration shows 37 people hospitalized because of COVID on Tuesday afternoon. That is three more from the previous day. AHCA also reports 3,349 people were in the hospital during the same time frame.

Testing more than doubled with 221 processed with 195 negative tests. Tuesday's positivity rate took an unwanted turn to 11.76%.

The state saw an increase of 5,271 new cases, raising the total to 2,217,368 cases. Of those, there have been 2,175,844 resident cases and 41,524 non-resident cases.

Testing climbed a bit, with the state processing 76,269 resident tests on Monday. The positivity rate for the day was 6.92%.

Florida saw an increase of 46 deaths, bringing the total to 35,646. There have been 34,958 resident deaths and 688 non-resident deaths.

FDOH reported 81,611 vaccines given in the state on Monday, which raises the total to 8,625,933 people to have received at least one vaccine dose. Of those, 5,884,717 people have received both doses or one dose of the single-shot Johnson

UPDATE | 4A

## Contamination cleanup



FILE PHOTO

The City of Avon Park will remove contaminated soil from a former aircraft business site at the Avon Park Executive Airport.

## Work to begin in May

By MARC VALERO  
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — City workers will be doing the cleanup work of arsenic impacted soil at the Avon Park Executive Airport.

The City Council approved contracts Monday with Environmental Consulting & Technology to oversee the cleanup and to take soil samples at the former Poole Aircraft site at 1535 State Road 64 West.

The scope of work shows that two separate areas with arsenic-impacted soils were identified from 0 to 2 feet below the land surface. One area was estimated to include 13.3 cubic yards, weighing 18 tons, while the other area included 82.2 cubic yards, weighing 115 tons.

The excavated areas will be left open pending the confirmation of laboratory results. If the laboratory results meet the criteria, then the excavations will be backfilled with clean soil.

If the testing results are greater than the criteria, additional soil will be excavated and additional confirmation soil samples will be collected.



FILE PHOTO

The Avon Park City Council approved contracts Monday evening with Environmental Consulting & Technology to oversee the cleanup at the former Poole Aircraft site.

Most of the work, if not all of it, will be done in-house, said Councilwoman Maria Sutherland.

Council approved three contracts with Environmental Consulting & Technology in connection with the cleanup.

Sutherland explained they are

different covering inspection and monitoring, while the city rents equipment and uses its manpower making the overall cost about \$30,000. It would have cost between \$75,000 to \$110,000 if the work was done by an outside

AIRPORT | 4A

## Couple aims to bring back AP Mall Festival

By MARC VALERO  
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — Shane and Sherri Eason hope to bring events and festivals back to the Avon Park Mall, including Springtime on the Mall.

At Monday's meeting of the Avon Park City Council, the Easons presented their plan to partner with the Heartland Cultural Alliance to bring back the good times that made Avon Park such a beautiful community.

They noted that many events have disappeared over the years such as the Mall Festival and the Halloween Festival & Parade.

"Since Main Street is also a state road, we would plan to simply do like we did back in the day, close the inside lane on both sides of the mall and leave the outside lanes open for

traffic," according to the Easons.

Councilwoman Maria Sutherland said the Easons are planning for the Mall Festival for April 2022.

The Avon Park Chamber of Commerce had sponsored the Mall Festival, which was moved to Donaldson Park in recent years, but the chamber has been focusing on its membership and services for its members, she said.

The chamber is willing to have the event done by someone else and the city encourages the Easons for trying to bring more activity to the downtown, Sutherland said.

In March 2016, what would have been the 37th annual Springtime on the Mall, the event was relocated to Donaldson Park and the name changed to Springtime in the Park.

Sutherland said the festival lost some

of its splendor when it was moved to Donaldson Park because there was less space for vendors. The vendors enjoyed setting up on the Mall and she believes the public liked walking on the inside roadway streets when they were closed off making it a more walkable event.

"I used to be the chamber's executive director in the late '90s and it [Mall Festival] went all the way up to Museum Avenue and on both sides of the inside lanes that were closed off," Sutherland said. Vendors were side by side from City Hall all the way to the railroad tracks/Museum Avenue with thousands of people coming out for the event.

It started slowing down around 2008 with the setback in the economy and things changed with the dynamics of the business needs, she said.

Avon Park Chamber of Commerce

Executive Director George Karos said Monday, "We are very much in support of any plan to encourage people to present community events."

The chamber, as a small non-profit business organization, can't take on all the signature events in the city, but will be behind the Easons, and the Heartland Cultural Alliance will be helping them with grant money, he said.

The chamber is focusing on providing services for its paid membership, which may include some events, but widescale events may need the support of the municipality and maybe some type of underwriting from a major corporate entity, Karos said.

Go to Shane Eason's Facebook page for a link to a petition to provide an idea on how much support and participation they have to make it happen.



Around Town ..... D1  
Classifieds ..... C1-6  
Comics ..... B5-8  
Highlands Health ..... D1

Lottery ..... A2  
NASCAR ..... B3  
Obituaries ..... A4

TV Listings ..... Xxx  
Viewpoints ..... A6  
Weather ..... A10

Good morning To  
Richard Bigelow  
Thanks for reading!

