

Capital for small business

Small businesses pushing for Small Business Administration reform

By PHIL ATTINGER
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — If you own a small business, this past year may have been devastating. If you're still going, you may want a loan to help retool for a post-COVID economy.

Getting that funding has posed a problem not just this last year, but for the last 40 years, according to advocates for reforming the Small Business Administration.

Frank Knapp, president and CEO of the South

Carolina Small Business Chamber of Commerce, has spent this week traveling through Florida, drumming up press and small business support for reforms that he believes would improve the plight of small businesses. He said the majority of new jobs get created by local companies that have been in business five years or less and have as few as four or five employees.

"If they are not creating jobs, we will be in a world of hurt," Knapp said. "The SBA needs a bigger mission."

The mission, he said, would have SBA Administrator Isabella Guzman direct the agency to help businesses

access capital — loans — a major barrier to opening and growing small businesses.

"Every small business owner and entrepreneur, especially in rural and underserved areas, and particularly if they are a minority or a woman, immediately identifies with the roadblocks to entrepreneurship," Knapp said. "Politicians are fond of saying that small business is the backbone of our economy. Well, that backbone is deteriorating."

REFORM | 4A

State surpasses 35,000 resident deaths

By KIM MOODY
STAFF WRITER

Highlands County added 21 new cases of coronavirus to its tally on Wednesday, which is about par for the course of the past few days. The Florida Department of Health reported a total COVID caseload at 8,398 infections. The cases are divided by 8,305 residents and 93 non-residents.

Of all the new cases on Wednesday, only one person was a non-resident.

FDOH shows two additional deaths overnight. Those deaths bring the total up to 345 people whose deaths have been attributed to COVID-19.

There was 282 tests processed with 260 negative results. The positivity rate is a much improved 7.8% but still not as low as the World Health Organization would recommend. The daily median age shot up to 50 on Wednesday. The overall median age is still 51 years of age.

Hospitalizations have reached 652 people admitted for COVID. Those who are hospitalized from COVID went up overnight in the county at 42. Across the state, there was 3,299 hospitalized.

Long-term care facilities has gone up to 703. FDOH shows 93 deaths from long-term care facilities residents or staff.

Across Florida, cases of infections have risen to 2,222,546. That total includes an increase of 5,178 overnight. That was a lighter caseload than the previous day.

There have been 2,180,924 residents and 41,622 non-residents who have contracted the virus.

An unfortunate benchmark was crossed as more than 35,000 residents have lost the battle with this dangerous virus. The addition of 74 resident deaths and two non-resident deaths overnight brought the total to 35,722.

There were 89,385 processed with 84,240 negative results. The testing produced a 5.76% positivity rate.

The number of new cases in the United States dropped slightly as states reported 48,846 new cases on Tuesday. That's 7,941 fewer than last Tuesday and 4,160 fewer cases than the seven-day average of 53,006.

There were 789 new deaths reported, which is 102 more than the seven-day average of 687. Last Tuesday there were 803 reported deaths, so the slightest of decreases there.

The seven-day positivity rate average is 3.58%.

Vaccinations were just 1.64 million for the day, which is well below the seven-day average of 2.72 million. The country has given 235 million of the 302 million vaccines that states have received. Pfizer has been the most popular vaccine in the country, with 124 shots given, while there have been 102 million Moderna shots. A little more than 8 million of the Johnson & Johnson vaccines have been given.

According to the Johns Hopkins University Center for Systems Science and Engineering, there have been 32.2 million cases in the United States and 574,018 deaths.

Globally, there have been 149 million cases and 3.14 million deaths.

See the 'Cases by County' graphics on page A4

High Achievers



MARC VALERO/STAFF

From left: Greater Sebring Chamber of Commerce President & CEO Tenille Drury-Smith, the Sebring High School senior scholarship winners: Kyria Wickham, Cali Zimmerman, Jayden Lee, Camila Rimoldi Ibanez, and James Branca, Jr. and Alan Jay Automotive Network President & CEO Alan Jay Wildstein.

8 SHS seniors recognized at banquet

By MARC VALERO
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — Eight Sebring High School seniors were recognized for their academic and community achievements at the 28th Annual Scholarship Awards & Recognition Banquet sponsored by the Alan Jay Automotive Network and the Greater Sebring Chamber of Commerce.

Alan Jay Automotive Network President & CEO Alan Jay Wildstein thanked the Greater Sebring Chamber of Commerce board and the Island View Restaurant and Sun 'N Lake for a great lunch.

Wildstein thanked the educators for being supportive of the students and he thank their parents, friends and teachers and all those present honoring the outstanding seniors.

The scholarship program, in its 28 years, has awarded over \$250,000 to more than 400 seniors, he noted.

Alan Jay Automotive Network Director of Marketing & Communications Don Elwell said



MARC VALERO/STAFF

Alan Jay Wildstein speaks at the 28th Annual Scholarship Awards & Recognition Banquet Wednesday afternoon at the Island View Restaurant, Sun 'N Lake Golf Club.

the eight seniors, who were interviewed a week ago, are really top level students and individuals.

The scholarships were awarded to: James Branca, Jr, (\$5,000), Camila Rimoldi Ibanez (\$2,500), Cali Zimmerman (\$1,500), Kyria Wickham (\$1,500) and Jayden Lee

(\$1,500).

In addition to those who received scholarships, Kobe Burgos-Labra, William Cochlin and Cheyenne Middleton were recognized for the achievements.

ACHIEVE | 4A

'Most conservative'

Steube rated highest among Florida Congressional members by conservatives

By PHIL ATTINGER
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — Congressman Greg Steube has reportedly won the distinction of a 100% conservative rating by the American Conservative Union.

Steube, through an email press release, said he was glad to have the ranking for representing District 17.

He has the most conservative rating of any Florida member of the House, and ranked sixth out of all



STEUBE

Lee of Utah and Rep. Tom McClintock of California.

The Highlands News-Sun phoned and emailed Steube's office but did not receive comment as of

press time Wednesday.

The next most-conservative Florida congressman was Rep. Matt Gaetz, District 1, who ranked 55th; followed by Sen. Rick Scott, who ranked 67th, and Sen. Ted S. Yoho, who ranked 74th. Senator Marco Rubio ranked 93rd and Rep. Bill Posey (District 8) ranked 94th.

In his release, Steube claimed Congress needs more conservatives and more funds raised for conservative candidates and to

promote their legislation. Currently, Republicans hold 17 of the 27 House of Representative Districts and both Senate seats.

The Center for Legislative Accountability (CLA), an initiative of the American Conservative Union Foundation (ACUF), holds itself as producing the longest-running conservative congressional scorecard and the only one in the nation that scores all 8,000 lawmakers in the 50 states across every policy area.



Classifieds..... B4-6 Sports B1 Viewpoints..... A6
Comics B7-10 TV Listings A7 Weather A8
Lottery A2

Good morning To
Robert Snyder
Thanks for reading!

