

## Car crash leads to arrest of murder suspects

By JOHN GUERRA and KIM MOODY  
STAFF WRITERS

SEBRING — Bullet casings at a Tuesday evening traffic accident led to the arrest of two teens in the shooting death of a 14-year-old Sebring teen.

Sebring Police arrested Salvador Francisco Cruz of Winter Haven on Tuesday for the Sept. 5 murder of a Sebring youngster. Sebring Police detectives, with the help of the Highlands County Sheriff's Office Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT), pulled Lorenza Stevenson, 17, of Sebring, a second suspect in the youth's



CRUZ

killing, from the attic of a house in the 1900 block of Greenway Drive.

Both men are charged with premeditated first degree murder in the killing of Ricky Harris III.

"The two are known associates," Sebring Police Commander Curtis Hart said of Cruz and Stevenson. "We received information that Stevenson was also involved."

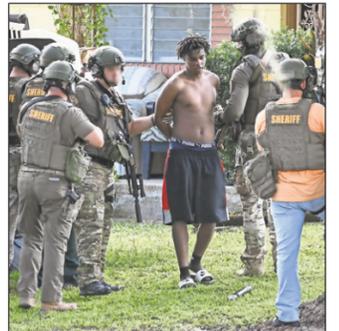
Detectives had already identified Cruz, 18, as their prime suspect by the time Cruz

crashed his Dodge Challenger on U.S. 27 and College Drive in Avon Park. Crash investigators called the police after finding several fired shell casings in the road.

According to Sebring Police Sgt. Jeff Reinhart, the casings in Cruz's car — as well as his Dodge Charger — directly link Cruz to the shooting death of Harris.

The report on Cruz's arrest, which lists Reinhart as the reporting officer, outlined the events from Sept. 5 that led to Cruz and Stevenson's arrests.

Highlands County central



SCOTT DRESSEL/HIGHLANDS SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Members of the Highlands County Sheriff's SWAT team arrest Lorenza Stevenson Wednesday after he hid in the attic of a Sebring home.

CRUZ | 5A



COURTESY ART

A Future Land Use change is moving forward for the proposed apartment building to be built at 139 N. Ridgewood Drive where the Nan-Ces-O-Wee Hotel was once located.

## CRA approves facade, land use change for proposed apartment building

By MARC VALERO  
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — The apartment building proposal for the former Nan-Ces-O-Wee Hotel property is moving forward with various approvals needed before the multi-million dollar construction project can begin.

CRA Executive Director Kristie Vazquez said the CRA Board approved on Monday both the facade design and Comprehensive Plan Amendment for the proposed building at 139 North Ridgewood Drive.

The City's Planning and Zoning Board on Tuesday also approved the Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

The Historic Preservation Commission was going to consider approval of the facade design application at its Sept. 9 meeting, but they didn't have a quorum, Vazquez noted. The CRA is waiting for a new meeting date to present the facade application.

The first reading of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment will go before the City Council at its Sept. 21 meeting.

"It is a great project to incorporate new living opportunities in downtown Sebring," Vazquez said of the building plans for 139 N. Ridgewood Drive. "We have never had a project of this size, so that is encouraging to help fill that [housing/rental] supply and demand issue that we have within, I think, the entire county. "If we can get apartments and people

CRA | 5A

## Home court advantage



COURTESY/BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

The basketball court at Carver/MLK Park in Highway Park has fresh sealant on the surface and new striping, thanks to a donation from two men who, as teens, played on this same court.



PHIL ATTINGER/STAFF

From left: Parks & Facilities Superintendent Richard Fleeger, Quavis Shuler of Q&A Trucks LLC and his nephew, professional basketball player Jovanni Shuler, tell the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners that the Shulers gave more than \$1,600 in donations to improve the basketball court at Carver/MLK Park in Highway Park, where they both played in their teens.

## Uncle, nephew help hometown recreation

By PHIL ATTINGER  
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — A place that holds memories and launched dreams may have a chance to keep doing that.

Two men from Highway Park, who walked and played on those grounds, hope to keep that place alive for many more to come.

Quavis L. Shuler and his nephew, Jovanni Shuler, have started donating funds to help restore and maintain the basketball courts at Carver Park, also known as MLK Park, in their home neighborhood.

This month, already, they have given \$1,638 to pay for asphalt sealing and restriping of the courts at Carver/MLK Park. They plan to give more.

"Some of my best memories actually happened on that basketball court," Quavis Shuler said. "We would pretend we were Michael Jordan."

He said kids and adults — the whole neighborhood — would gather at that park, just come together and have fun.

In February 1998, right out of high school, Quavis Shuler entered the military — the U.S. Marine Corps — where he would spend the next 22 years and five days.

"What drew me to the Marine

Corps? At that time, I knew I didn't want to go to college. The only other thing available for me [to do] at that moment was working at Burger King," Quavis Shuler said.

He was even offered the position of manager, he said. He turned it down to become a Marine. The hardest branch of the service, it gave him the challenge he wanted and took him to Afghanistan, Iraq, Thailand, Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Belgium and Amsterdam.

Jovanni also had dreams on the Carver/MLK Park basketball court, once he finally got to play.

"As a kid, it was hard to get on the court," Jovanni Shuler said. In middle school, he was small and since most of the bigger kids would come on the holidays, he didn't get a lot of time with the ball.

That was, he said, until he reached ninth grade. Up until then, he was the last one picked for junior varsity basketball. Then he had a growth spurt, from 5 feet 9 inches to 6 feet 2 inches.

"That was when my self-motivation kicked in," Jovanni Shuler said.

He was soon playing varsity, and then went to Savanna State, a Division I school, after graduation. There he made three school records: most points in one game, most points in a

season and most steals in one game.

Only the record for steals still stands, he said, but he held the rank at that time as one of the top 50 individual players in that division, as well as an ESPN listing among the top 50 for steals.

From there Jovanni played international basketball, first in Iceland, then in Kuwait, Portugal, France, Canada, Germany, Luxembourg, China, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia. He learned three other languages along the way.

Jovanni found himself just 45 minutes from Normandy. He visited the beaches of D-Day and Normandy American Cemetery. Quavis, now retired from the Marines, said he now hopes to make these travels and see all the things he couldn't see as a soldier.

As the years went by, the Shulers started hearing talk that their home court — their "Field of Dreams" — had become deserted. Quavis Shuler, now owner of Q&A Trucks LLC, got together with his nephew and they decided to donate funds to bring the courts back up to playing specifications.

They believe that having that place, that central space where everyone

HELP | 5A



COURTESY PHOTO

Alan Jay Wildstein has sold 85% of Alan Jay Automotive Network to LMP Automotive Holdings Inc., and will stay on as regional vice president of LMP. He assures team members, valued customers, business associates, colleagues and civic organizations that nothing would change in the relationship he currently has with them. They will see all the same familiar faces at his locations and his community work would continue, as usual.

## Alan Jay Network acquired

### Wildstein to stay in charge, locally

By PHIL ATTINGER  
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — Alan Jay Wildstein has confirmed reports that he has sold 85% of his business to LMP Automotive Holdings Inc., and will stay on as regional vice president of LMP.

Wildstein wants to assure his Alan Jay team members and valued customers, as well as local business associates, colleagues and civic

organizations that have worked with him, that nothing will change in the relationship he currently has with them. That will include the sponsorships, charity work and civic partnerships that Alan Jay Automotive Network has built over the years.

Wildstein said he will stay on as dealer operator and 15% equity owner. In addition, he said that there would be no staff changes, and the leadership team at all the

locations would remain the same. People in the community could expect to see the same familiar faces.

"I'm looking forward to continuing to serve the central Florida community with the same corporate and civic involvement as we have for nearly three decades," Wildstein said.

Wildstein said the sale came about mutually as he was looking for partners and as LMP

was looking to acquire dealerships.

"The timing was right and they were the right partners," Wildstein said. "I'm excited about opportunities with their organization in the future."

He also said this arrangement, hopefully, would allow him to spend more time with family, particularly his three daughters, ages 26, 25

ALAN JAY | 6A



Classifieds..... B5-8  
Comics ..... B9-12  
Lottery ..... A2

Obituaries..... A4  
Sports ..... B1  
TV Listings ..... A11

Viewpoints..... A8  
Weather ..... A12

Good morning To  
Lucille Slaughter  
Thanks for reading!

