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MARTIN COUNTY Hometown News

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FRIDAY, February 23, 2007

abc WPBF NEWS 25 WEATHER FIRST WEEKEND FAMILY PLANNER FRIDAY PARTLY CLOUDY 79 HIGH 62 LOW High Tide: 12:37 AM Low Tide: 6:35 AM SATURDAY PARTLY CLOUDY 81 HIGH 64 LOW High Tide: 1:38 AM Low Tide: 7:39 AM SUNDAY PARTLY CLOUDY Storm Chance: 10% 84 HIGH 69 LOW High Tide: 2:48 AM Low Tide: 6:50 AM WPBF NEWS 25 Chief Weather Specialist MIKE LYONS WHERE YOU COME FIRST

This Week



CLASSIC VICTORY

Martin County claims the St. Lucie County Baseball Classic Tournament D5

Useful health news

Columnist Shelley Koppel provides health information on a variety of topics, including cancer B1

Tribute to my dad

Grammy guru Arlene Borg offers a recipe for crab alfredo that her dad would have enjoyed eating B1

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Indiantown hosts foreign president

President of Guatemala promised to visit

By Rita Hart Staff writer

INDIANTOWN - A crowd of 500 stood on the grounds of Holy Cross Catholic Church on Saturday, Feb. 17, for what could be for many a once in a lifetime opportunity - a chance to meet a foreign head of state. With the sun shining, anxious residents of Indiantown awaited the arrival of president Oscar Berger of Guatemala.

Among them was Art Matson, a member of the Board of Directors of the Indiantown Chamber of Commerce. 'I'm here to represent the Chamber,' said Mr. Matson. 'We feel the Guatemalans are an integral part of Indiantown. They are hard-working people. It's our pleasure to welcome the president here.' And welcome him they did. When he arrived, the president was greeted by Rev. Nestor Rodriguez, pastor of Holy Cross, who estimated that 75 percent of

See PRESIDENT, A2

Congressman Mahoney wants insurance reform

By Rita Hart Staff writer

STUART - U.S. Rep. Tim Mahoney is already making headway on his top priority of easing the insurance crisis facing many of his constituents. The newly elected Democrat listed insurance reform, the environment, and Florida's agricultural heritage as his chiefs concerns at a recent ceremonial swearing-in held in downtown Stuart. The key to making those things happen is getting on the right committees in the House of Representatives. 'I'm proud to say that I got on the financial serv-

ices committee because I had to deliver on homeowner's insurance - that was number one,' said Rep. Mahoney. 'I had to beg the leadership to get on another committee, and now I am the most junior member on the agricultural committee. I'm so low on the totem pole, they have to give me a milk can to sit on,' he said with a laugh. Rep. Mahoney's new office at 9 S.E. Osceola St. in Stuart was packed with friends and supporters on Feb. 11, as the new congressman held an open house. Just before noon on the picture-perfect Sunday, the crowd walked to the gazebo in front of the

courthouse in downtown Stuart, to witness the ceremonial swearing-in of the new congressman for Florida's 16th district. Rep. Mahoney was elected to the office previously held by former Rep. Mark Foley, who resigned in Sept., 2006 when inappropriate communications with teenage congressional pages came to light. After Circuit Court Chief Judge William Roby administered the oath of office, Rep. Mahoney spoke of the issues he knows are foremost on the mind of many Floridians in his district. 'The first is windstorm

See MAHONEY, A3

Mental health court aims to help ill avoid jail

By Matt Donegan Staff writer

Until last year, law-breakers with serious mental illnesses like schizophrenia or bipolar disorder who were deemed sane and competent were traditionally sentenced to do time with the general population at Treasure Coast jails.

A rapidly growing mental health court formed in the Treasure Coast's 19th Judicial Circuit last June is taking a new approach to dealing with these offenders. Those affiliated with the court say it's working.

The program started with six cases in June. Since then, there have been nearly 200.

'I don't think the public realizes how many mentally ill people go through the criminal justice system and are in our local jails,' said 19th Circuit Court public defender Diamond Littly. 'The beauty of this is that it not only helps the mentally ill who need help and don't need to be incarcerated, it also helps ease jail overcrowding.'

In lieu of jail, clients identified by law enforcement, judges, casework-

'I don't think the public realizes how many mentally ill people go through the criminal justice system and are in our local jails.'

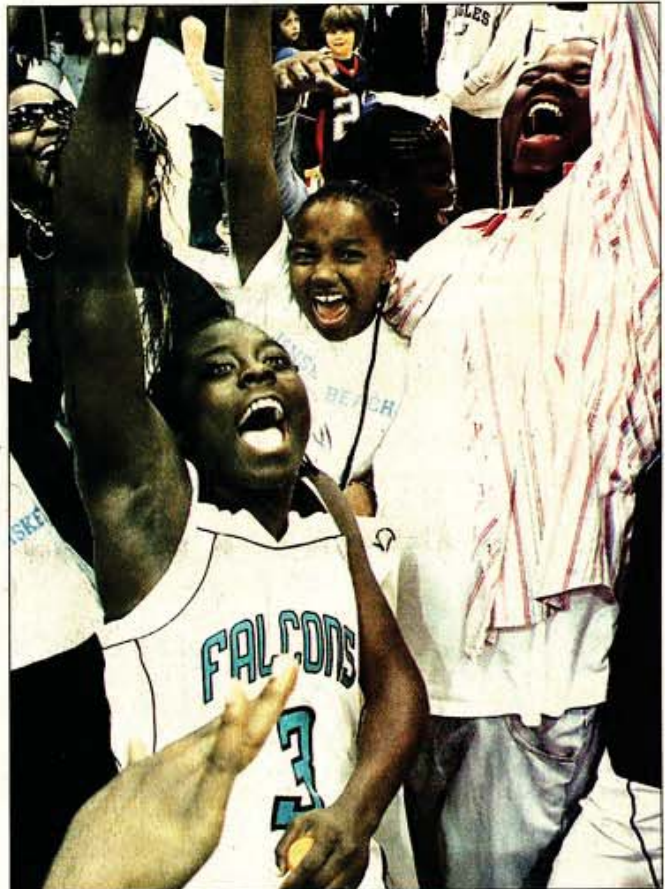
Public Defender Diamond Littly

ers, etc ... as being mentally ill qualify for mental health court, where individualized alternative sentences are handed down.

To graduate mental health court, which can take anywhere from six months to a year, depending on the offense, people in the program must do things like go to their doctor and/or therapist appointments, take their medication and stay clean of illegal drugs.

'All we really want to do is get people out of the revolving door and get them hooked up with the services they need,' said Lisa Fonteyn, director of the public defender's office client services division, which oversees

See COURT, A7



Mitch Kloorfain/chief photographer Jensen Beach High School's Cameo Kent (No. 3) celebrates with teammates, friends and family after winning the Region 4-4A finals against Suncoast at Jensen Beach High School. The Falcons were scheduled to play Bishop Moore for the State semifinal Thursday, Feb. 22 in Lakeland. Visit www.hometownnewsol.com for results of the game.

Emergency service team supports blood center

By Robin Rinke Staff writer

STUART - The recent tornados that ripped through Central Florida was a call to action for a team of Martin County Emergency Services veterans.

They knew the hard-hit region would be in dire need of blood. So, on Feb. 14, Steven

first-hand, the need of keeping the local shelves stocked. We encourage them to give as often as possible. I try and give about twice a year,' said Mr. Wolfberg, Martin County Department of Emergency Services director.

'Most people don't understand how important it is to donate blood on a regular basis. It is cru-



I'd like to say something about people who might be going to the hospital, or have to in the future.

Be wary of what you take with you, as my 93-year-old mother had breast cancer surgery on Jan. 8.

She didn't go to the hospital naked, but her clothes were never found. She was admitted through the emergency room. A supposed thorough search was made, including security and nothing was ever found, even a pair a Ped hose, at close to \$70.

Maybe I'm the only one in Martin County who has that problem with Martin Memorial Hospital. I don't think so, because I have spoken to several persons, I am in the medical field myself, and am in contact with lots of people.

I really would like to hear from other persons who might have had a problem in the past, because they're certainly not going to get any compensation from it.

I've been through departments at the hospital, including customer relations, nursing director, security, and the nursing station.

Nothing has been resolved, and never will be.

Thank you, Martin County

Dear Editor,

Last year during the Martin County Fair, a little girl ran up to me, gave me a hug, and said, "By the way, you're my role model!" That was it! All I ever wanted to do was to be a role model for kids!

Hi! My name is D'Anna Stracuzzi and I am your Miss Martin County Fair queen of 2006.

My participation in over 100 events has introduced me to many opportuni-

ties. I'd like to thank Anne Schafer and her "Pink Tie Friends". Even performing a song in the rain using sign language was fun.

In this year's Christmas parades, I wanted to go back to the roots of the county's agricultural history, so I chose to ride in the back of a huge pickup truck. Seeing the diverse members of our community enjoying the festivities, made me smile.

Along with the fun events, also came some sadder ones, too. Like when signing a song at the

"Sept. 11 Memorial Service", or assisting with fundraisers for various worthy causes.

I realized that the opportunities to help in our own community are many. Being your queen has opened many doors and provided new friends. It has been incredibly fun meeting new people. I can truly say that it's been a pleasure representing Martin County as your queen of 2006.

Space here does not permit me to name the many people, clubs, businesses and events that have so warmly welcomed me this

year, but I do want to specifically thank my parents, Tony and Genie Stracuzzi, for their support and love. And, to everyone else that took the time to share a hug or smile or an encouraging word with me, "thank you!" You are a piece of fabric to a memory in my heart!

In closing, remember my motto:

"Never frown even when you're sad, because you never know who's falling in love with your smile!" I love you all.

D'Anna Stracuzzi
Stuart

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Martin County • A7



Mitch Kloorfain/chief photographer

Jennifer and Chester Matheny of Stuart renew their marriage vows during the same month they will celebrate their 31st wedding anniversary at a special beach ceremony sponsored by WFLM-104.7FM Saturday, Feb. 17 at John Brooks Park on Hutchinson Island.

Four couples renew vows at beach

By ROBIN RINKE
Staff writer

FORT PIERCE — Was it cold weather or cold feet that turned a mass wedding celebration into a mini-event?

When a local radio station announced it was hosting a mass wedding and vow renewal ceremony for listeners scheduled for Feb. 17, the calls came in and couples signed up.

In all, 55 couples said they wanted to participate, but in the end only four came to renew their vows.

"When we heard about the wedding vow renewal ceremony we appreciated the opportunity and wanted to take part in it. This month we are celebrating our 31st

wedding anniversary," said a couple from Stuart, Chester and Jennifer Matheny.

The idea of a wedding and vow renewal ceremony came from Fort Pierce radio station WFLM 104FM — The Flame. The station then partnered with Treasure Kissed Weddings, the Port St. Lucie beach wedding specialists.

"We felt that offering a ceremony like this would be a great way for the station to create a deeper sense of community here on the Treasure Coast. That is important to us," said Ruby Adams, WFLM 104.7FM marketing director.

The station received a lot of interest, but when temperatures dropped, so did the attendance.

The four couples that did show up actually had a picture perfect day for a wedding.

With the calm, teal-blue ocean as the backdrop, the couples walked down four prepared white sand isles to traditional wedding music. Each couple stood before their own personal officiator, while lush and beautiful tropical foliage surrounded them along with garden arches, dolphin statues and seashells.

The smiling couples renewed their vows and love for one another, while the crisp air and warm sun engulfed them.

Once the vows were renewed all four couples stepped to the edge of

the shore. Together, on the count of three, they tossed a "blessing stone" into the ocean. The stones' ripple effect on the water symbolized good wishes and blessings toward the couples that will never end.

After the ceremony, a reception with sandwiches, fruit, wedding cake and refreshments was provided for the couples. The ceremony and reception were free. Many local businesses donated gifts and food for the occasion.

Those attending included the four officiators, Tammy and Glen Pennell, owners of Treasure Kissed Weddings, Pastor Vernon Shazier and Pastor Donald Davis, the four couples and the WFLM crew.

Court

From page A1

mental health court.

Success stories include that of a paranoid schizophrenic, who continued failing to follow the court's orders. Instead of sending him to jail, the court continued to work with the man, and Ms. Fonteyn said he finally "got it."

"He takes his medication, and when he feels his medication isn't working, he checks himself into New Horizons (a Fort Pierce center specializing in mental health and substance abuse rehabilitation), and that's really what you want to try to get them to do - to understand mental illness is an illness, just like cancer or heart disease, and that you have to know your signs and symptoms," she said. "It's very successful to me when someone can recognize they have a mental illness, recognize if their medications aren't working and ask for help."

In addition to medical care, client services also helps those sentenced in mental health court get jobs, living accommodations, education and more.

"We feel strongly that clients, whether they're mentally ill, minor offenders or first-time offenders, if proper attention is paid and direction is given, they can become productive citizens," Mrs. Litty said. "As a result, you've helped the community, reduced jail overcrowding, reduced case loads, the crime rate, everything. The majority of cases we represent are these kind of people."

This type of diversionary court has been a long time in the works for the

19th Judicial Circuit, though Mrs. Litty said the need for it has been around forever. A local panel began looking at other state mental health courts several years ago. But funding kept the county from implementing its own, Mrs. Litty said.

About seven years ago, Circuit Court Judge Cynthia Cox was on the original committee aimed at starting a mental health court for the 19th Circuit. But back then, she didn't think it was possible.

"Our administration didn't have the mindset yet for these problem-solving courts," she said. As a drug court judge in Indian River County in 2002, Judge Cox said many of the people who appeared in her court had mental illnesses. Unless deemed incompetent to stand trial or not guilty by reason of insanity, the mentally ill faced the same punishments as everyone else.

Judge Cox has since gone through training on the topic of mental illness and learned how jail can decompensate those suffering from mental illness and be a danger to their safety, even if they do receive medication while incarcerated. She's now Circuit 19's mental health court judge.

Even though it's only in its infancy, she said the court is already making a difference to offenders.

"It enhances their ability to live with their mental illness when you give them a job, a place to live, make sure they're drug-free, using their medication and have support if they need it," she said.