

BENSON: City founder was committed to community

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eled to Gulf Breeze in 1935 to manage the Gulf Breeze Cottages, and became some of its first permanent residents. Four years later, Mark X. Benson founded the first Post Office in the city, and became the first post master, and when Mark went into the service during World War II, Eloise served as post master.

The original Post Office, built by the Bensons brick by brick, became the first Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church when seven residents gathered and formed the Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church and the St. Paul United Methodist Church in 1955.

A second complex was built,

housing a gas station and grocery store, and later the Bensons also built and managed a clothing store, all in the area now known as the Benson complex.

Eloise was remembered among those honoring her as: very smart; kind; loving; peaceful; encouraging and fair. She has managed the Benson complex properties for years and the tenants from the Benson Building sat together during the service. Many had known Benson as landlord and friend for years.

Benson's commitment to her community went beyond church and commerce. She was constantly opening her building and her home to civic and volunteer groups: the Gulf Breeze Volunteer Fire Department had

their first meetings at the Benson Building; the first pharmacy was located there and served as the command center for the first community paper, The Sentinel; and the first private library was located in a cottage owned by the Bensons. Ella Louise Benson was awarded lifetime honorary membership in the Hoe'n Hum Club after 44 years of service and in the Gulf Breeze Chamber of Commerce.

Just weeks before her death, Benson attended a luncheon at City Hall in honor of newly appointed Chamber Executive Meg Peltier. Peltier was moved that the nonagenarian attended the tea to welcome her, and plead with Benson to sit at the head of the table. In her typical modesty, Benson blushed,

smiled gently and replied "no, dear, I am here to welcome you. I'm only a chamber member."

Anyone describing Eloise Benson would be unlikely to use the word "only" in reference to her long list of successes, and dearest to her heart is the growth of her church, the Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church. "Eloise was there when the church was formed and grew from seven brave souls," Sadler recounted at the funeral, "to one of the great congregations of Methodism. Eloise helped form and served this church, and this church now impacts the world for Christ."

Benson counted her greatest loves as Mark X., her king, and her "precious Jesus," her savior. And now she is with them both.

COUNTY: Offenders must register with the state

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son, "You don't talk to strangers." The woman then asked her son what Vandegriff had said to him and the boy told her that Vandegriff asked him if he wanted to "play ball with him" and if he wanted to "go home with him." The woman then went home, searched the Internet, and saw that Vandegriff is a registered sex offender. Witnesses, including the 4 year old, were able to identify Vandegriff through photo lineups. Vandegriff lives on Esplande Street in Navarre, within 1.5 miles of the park.

According to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) website there is no state law that prevents a predator from living in the vicinity of schools, playgrounds or parks. There is, however, a state law that prevents certain sexual predators from working or volunteering in places where children normally congregate.

In the state of Florida, sexual offenders are required to register with law enforcement and must update their personal information, such as their address, every time they move. The FDLE keeps a complete record of all registered sex offenders that is available to the public online at <http://offender.fdle.state.fl.us/offender/>. Citizens can search the database by name and physical address. County Attorney Thomas Dannheisser said this system would make the proposed ordinance easier to enforce.

"They're a specific group of

people, you know where they are. It can be enforced because it's a finite number of people and you have the actual list of who they are," Dannheisser said.

County officials are looking at similar ordinances that are already in place elsewhere to give them a sense of how they would like their policy to work. Goodin would like to see limitations placed on how close predators could live to parks and signs that prohibit their entrance to such facilities.

"The [ordinance] that I've seen from Seminole County has got a lot of exceptions to it and then after a while you wonder if it has any teeth to it" Goodin said. "I want teeth and I know our attorney is going to try to give us that."

Dannheisser said he hopes to have a draft of the proposed ordinance within the next couple of county commission meetings.

To be labeled as a sexual predator, one must be designated by the court and must have been convicted of either one first-degree felony sex crime, or two second degree felony sex crimes within ten years. Vandegriff is registered as a sexual offender. According to the FDLE website there are no sexual offenders or predators living within Gulf Breeze city limits, and two sexual predators that have addresses within the Midway area. The sexual predators listed are Robert L. Driggers and Ellis D. Colley. There are three predators listed in the Navarre area and they are: William T. Smith, Marion E. Bryan and Charles N. Wasson.

MARKET: Group's first event scheduled for next spring

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group hope to gain sponsorship through local businesses to help offset the event costs. Merchants will have the opportunity to rent booths for the day at a minimal cost in comparison to other events. Members of GBEL hope that the event will be a catalyst for the local economy.

"We are organizing the Gulf Breeze City Market which will be an upscale, open-air market in the city of Gulf Breeze beginning next April. Our hope is to have an economic and tourist event that will give craft-makers, artisans and cooks a venue to sell their products and liven up weekends in Gulf Breeze," said Koonce.

In addition to the planning the Market, the group participates in monthly "Lunch and Learn" sessions giving members the opportunity to enjoy a lunch together while attending an informative talk by area leaders and speakers. Past Lunch and Learns have included an emergency preparedness talk by Lynn Erickson, Gulf Power; local environmental issues discussion by the Dr. William Benson, Environmental Protection Agency Gulf Ecology Division; and archeology update by Dr. Judith Bense, University of West Florida Anthropology Department.

"I'm am so excited about the Gulf Breeze Emerging Leaders as a group. Their individual ener-

gy and enthusiasm is contagious. Many of the members are now actively involved with current Gulf Breeze Chamber Events and Committees," said Chamber Executive Director Meg Peltier. "In addition, they are working on creating their own event that will benefit the Chamber, the community and other non-profits as well. If these young men and women are the future of our Chamber and the community, then I'm proud to say, 'we're in good hands!'"

The group also hosts monthly socials to promote networking opportunities at local establishments. The October social was held at SpringHill Suites on

Pensacola Beach with approximately 30-40 young professionals in attendance.

"The monthly socials are an excellent opportunity for area young professionals to network as well as get to know each other as people," said

GBEL member and legal assistant to J. Donovan Whibbs Breena Bolster. "We are the future of the Gulf Breeze, and it's important that we become a cohesive unit as we continue to take on leadership roles in the area."

For more information on becoming a part of GBEL, call Bolster at (850) 261-7019 or email gulfbreezeemergingleaders@yahoo.com.

PARKING: Shoreline South almost completed

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"Once the repaving is complete, the parking lot traffic pattern will be one way only, in a counter clockwise direction. By allowing traffic to exit in front of the recreation center, we will eliminate as much as 50 percent of routine parking lot traffic," he said. "All parking places will be angled to encourage and accommodate this directional flow. Eliminating two-way traffic in the parking lot will decrease the congestion and the likelihood of an accident and allow a greater degree of safety for pedestrians." This revamp of traffic flow also considers the increased traffic from the new football fields, currently under construction. The area west of the library is cleared and work continues on those fields.

"We'll be seeking competitive bids for the earthwork in the coming week. The old lighting has been removed and the old concession stand and sidewalks will be demolished in the next week," said Pulley.

Another large project underway includes gazebos and restrooms at Shoreline Park South. The boat ramp has been open since late July, and after a small glitch in the construction of the studier gazebos and a restroom, the park is expected to be fully operational soon.

"The manufacturers of the gazebos designed a receiver that would be used to connect the metal gazebo upright columns to the wooden pilings that have been driven in the ground to provide foundation and support," said Pulley.

"There's a design flaw in the receivers that will either be corrected or addressed as a field adjustment." Pulley added that the Wayside Park West boat ramp has been open for two weeks.

Although residents have been waiting patiently for the parks to completely reopen, the consensus seems to be the repairs are worth the wait.

"Everyone has been extremely understanding and supportive," said Pulley.

MIDWAY FIRE: Commission to change ordinance verbiage

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services. For residential units, the fee is \$247 per dwelling unit, while for commercial buildings it is 33-cents per square foot. The impact fee for industrial/warehouse space is 3-cents a square foot, and for institutional is 98-cents a square foot. Impact fees are charged any time a building permit is pulled in the county.

In the residential development column, new housing units actually decreased over the past year, with 314 units being built since last October and 341 over the 12 months before.

"If we had not has the 128 houses register for August this year we would have really been down from last year," said Fire Commissioner and Treasurer Clyde Broome.

Broome provided copies of the income statement for the past 12 months ending Sept. 30 at the Oct. 10 meeting. It shows actual impact fees over the past 12 months collected add up to \$117,474.38 of the department's almost \$2-1/2 -million budget for the past year. That is \$25,474 more than they had expected, as shown by last year's budget projections.

But the fire department has discovered their impact fee ordinance is not clear in some areas, so they have revised it. But to adopt it they must first hold a public hearing, which they will do 30 minutes before

TREES: City to distribute first batch

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December then again in April. According to James, the reason for the staggering gives the suppliers time to grow the additional trees to an adequate height, which will be somewhere between six to eight feet.

their monthly November meeting.

Midway Chief Stephen Demeter told the board, "There is just some verbiage changed to make it more consistent with what we are actually doing and make it consistent with what everyone around us is doing. These changes came out of the Catholic church wanting to build their community life center. We realized there was nothing clear in the ordinance to cover such construction."

In other Midway Fire District News, the District will soon be assured of never missing a single call, no matter what the weather or emergency. A new state-of-the-art alerting system will be online in about 90 days.

The fire chief Stephen Demeter told the fire commissioners last week that the present system is simply a VHF radio system. "It is like if you phone is not ringing, you don't know you are missing any calls," he explained. "So if it goes down now, we don't know dispatch has sent us any alarms. But with the new system, it will tell us there is a problem with the system, and actually tell us it has gone down, so we can manually call dispatch and not miss a call, ever."

He said the new system was already budgeted. And it will also help them with their ISO insurance rating.

Additionally, storage was a concern of the surplus trees in the event all of them were delivered at the same time.

"We didn't want to have trees stored over night that weren't being watered," said James.

For more information call 934-5140.

Fire Safety Week family fun



Pam Brannon/Gulf Breeze News

Midway Fire Chief Stephen Demeter welcomed another "chief" to the Midway Fire Department open house. Trevor Isakson of Gulf Breeze came dressed and prepared from his dad's fire house in Escambia County. Trevor's Dad, Curt Isakson of Gulf Breeze, used to work at Midway, but now serves as Battalion Chief in Escambia County Fire Dept.

Calendar of Events

Today, Oct. 19

Education Task Force: Florida's Bright Futures Scholarship Program, 11:30 a.m., Gulf Breeze Middle School Library, 649 Gulf Breeze Parkway, Gulf Breeze

Friday, Oct. 20

No meetings scheduled as of press time

Saturday, Oct. 21

No meetings scheduled as of press time

Sunday, Oct. 22

No meetings scheduled as of press time

Monday, Oct. 23

Membership Committee Meeting, 8:30 a.m., Gulf Breeze Chamber of Commerce, Chamber Conference Room, 409 Gulf Breeze Parkway, Gulf Breeze

Santa Rosa County Commission Meeting, 9 a.m., Commissioner's Board Room, 6495 Caroline Street, Milton

Tuesday, Oct. 24

Seminar: Business Solutions Using QuickBooks, 8 a.m., Gulf Breeze Chamber of Commerce, Chamber Conference Room, 409 Gulf Breeze Parkway, Gulf Breeze

Board of Adjustments, 6:30 p.m., Gulf Breeze City Hall, 1070 Shoreline Drive, Gulf Breeze

Wednesday, Oct. 25

Board of Director's Meeting, 7:30 a.m., Gulf Breeze Chamber of Commerce, Chamber Conference Room, 409 Gulf Breeze Parkway, Gulf Breeze

Thursday, Oct. 26

Santa Rosa County Commission Regular Meeting, 9 a.m., Commissioner's Board Room, 6495 Caroline Street, Milton

6 Steps to a Better Business,

11:15 a.m., Gulf Breeze Chamber of Commerce, Chamber Conference Room, 409 Gulf Breeze Parkway, Gulf Breeze

School Board Meeting, 6:30 p.m., 5086 Canal Street, Milton

Same Time, Same Place

The South Santa Rosa Writers meet each second and fourth Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. at St. Augustine's Episcopal Church Parish Hall, 7810 Navarre Parkway. This week will feature popular columnist Claudine Kriss. For further information, contact Nancy at (850) 936-6889 or email lilysmom49@mchsi.com.



Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office Report

Information provided by the Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office.

FELONIES

10/10/06

Jackson, Robert Joel, 23, A/M, 9000 block of Deer Lane, Navarre, possession of a controlled substance without a subscription

Flanders, Andrea Marie, 25, W/F, 8300 block of Marcadeo Street, Navarre, possession of a controlled substance without a prescription

Smith, Craig TAYLOR, 18, W/M, 5100 block of Mandavilla Boulevard, Gulf Breeze, possession of a controlled substance without a prescription

10/13/06

Fischer, Sandra Annette, 52, W/F, 2300 block of Crescent Wood Road, Navarre, possession of a

controlled substance without a prescription, possession of cocaine

Fischer, Allison Rene, 20, W/F, 2300 block of Crescent Wood Road, Navarre, possession of a controlled substance, possession of cocaine

Fischer, Kevin Paul, 51, W/M, 2300 block of Crescent Wood Road, Navarre, possession of cocaine

Fischer, Nicholas Adam, 25, W/M, 2300 block of Crescent Wood Road, possession of cocaine

10/15/06

Vandegriff, Thomas Andrew, 27, W/M, 2000 block of Esplande Street, Navarre, luring or enticing a child

Cassidy, Paul Damien, 40, W/M, 1900 block of Jamaica Drive, Navarre, aggravated assault

DUI

10/8/06

Grady, David Patrick, 44, W/M, 1100 block of Shoreline Drive, Gulf Breeze, DUI and property damage

10/15/06

Maya, Victor Manuel Gamez, 30, H/M, 5700 block of Harves Villase Court, Navarre, DUI

Benson, Troy Gordon, 40, W/M, 3300 block of El Portal Street, Gulf Breeze, DUI

McC Campbell, Tonya Louise, 25, U/F, 2800 block of Winners Circle, Navarre, DUI