

WILDFIRES: Burn ban is in effect

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as of press time. "Our biggest concern is Shoreline Park," said Gulf Breeze Fire Chief Shane Carmichael. "Because the city is so strapped for cash we can't take any pro-active steps to remove debris from that area... When we respond to a brush fire in that area we send everything we have. Time is the enemy in that area."

Carmichael said there was one small brush fire near the intersection of Beach Drive and McLane Road May 19.

The northern parts of Santa Rosa and Escambia Counties have not been as lucky.

"We've had a lot less activity here than other parts of the state," said Ben Wolcott with the Florida Division of Forestry's Black Water District. Wolcott, who works in the state forestry district that covers Escambia, Santa Rosa and Okaloosa Counties, said local officials have eliminated the number one cause for forest fires - yard debris fires.

"The largest component of wildfire ignition is human activ-

ity," Wolcott said. "The single greatest cause in the district and in the state is escaped yard trash fires."

Wolcott said his department has dealt with three major fires over the course of the last three weeks and his resources are now spread thin by other wildfires throughout the state. Wolcott said the largest of these fires occurred in northern Escambia County May 12. By the time the blaze, dubbed the mother's day fire, was mostly contained it had consumed close to 400 acres. Lightning was determined to be the cause of the fire. The next largest fire in the area began close to four weeks ago near Tar Plant Road in Milton, south of Old Highway 90. Wolcott said the blaze was in a remote area and destroyed 14 acres of woodland and was probably caused by an uncontrolled yard debris fire. The third incident occurred in the Avalon Boulevard area and devoured approximately 8 acres.

Wolcott voiced concerns that 2007 could see an active wildfire season not experienced in this area since 1998. According

to state forestry numbers, 4,893 wildfires damaged or destroyed 330 structures and charred over 506,000 acres statewide that year. So far this year, 2,392 fires have burned 418 structures and eviscerated over 250,000 acres throughout Florida. State Forestry Public Information Officer Jim Harrell said in 1998 the bulk of the structures were houses and this year they have been highly concentrated hunting camps and mobile homes.

"Just a little bitty fire can burn houses down," said Santa Rosa County's Emergency Services Coordinator Brad Baker. "You're responsible for any fire you start that gets out of control."

According to Walton County officials, 1,035 acres were destroyed by a fire that was finally contained May 9. Another border-crossing fire near Lake City destroyed 109,000 acres in Florida and 139,813 acres of swampland in Georgia.

Florida was not alone in battling forest fires this month as fires have broken out in New Jersey, Montana, and California.

Burn ban in effect

It is illegal to burn household garbage (including paper products), treated lumber, rubber materials, tires, pesticides, paint, and aerosol containers.

At this time, dry (not green) vegetative debris such as grass clippings, pine straw, leaves, tree limbs and shrub trimmings can be legally burned between 8 a.m. and one hour before sunset if it is in a pile not larger than 8 ft diameter and located on the property where the debris originated and is: not closer than 25 ft to a wooded area or the owner's residence; not closer than 50 ft from a paved public road; and not closer than 150 ft from other occupied buildings.

Burning material in a pile larger than 8 ft. diameter, or burning any area of land, requires an authorization from the Florida Division of Forestry (850 957-6145), and is subject to additional restrictions. For details, visit www.santarosa.fl.gov.

Calendar of Events

Thursday, May 24
School Board Meeting, 10 a.m., School District Administrative Offices, 5086 Canal Street, Milton

Friday, May 25
No meetings scheduled as of press time

Saturday, May 26
No meetings scheduled as of press time

Sunday, May 27
No meetings scheduled as of press time

Monday, May 28
The Gulf Breeze News, Gulf Breeze Chamber of Commerce, Gulf Breeze City Hall, Santa Rosa County, and Santa Rosa Chamber of Commerce offices will be closed for the observance of Memorial Day

Tuesday, May 29
Gulf Breeze Rotary Club, 6:45 a.m., Athletic Performance Florida Center Conference Room, behind The Andrews Institute, 1020 Gulf Breeze Parkway, Gulf Breeze. All future meetings of the Gulf Breeze Rotary Club will be at the Andrews Institute in the Athletic Performance Florida Center, which is the smaller building in the back of the property. Rotary will meet in the Conference room on the first floor to the right as you enter the building.

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

Wednesday, May 30
Executive Committee Meeting, 6:30 p.m., Gulf Breeze City Hall, 1070 Shoreline Drive, Gulf Breeze

Thursday, May 31
Santa Rosa County Commission Regular Meeting, 9 a.m., Commissioner's Board Room, 6495 Caroline Street, Milton

For additional meeting information, please visit these websites:

City of Gulf Breeze:
<http://www.cityofgulfbreeze.com>

Santa Rosa County:
<http://www.santarosa.fl.gov>

Gulf Breeze Area Chamber of Commerce:
<http://www.gulfbreezechamber.com>

SRIA:
<http://sria-fla.com>

School District:
<http://www.santarosa.k12.fl.us>

GBPD encourages seniors to volunteer

By FRANKLIN HAYES
 Gulf Breeze News
franklin@gulfbreezenews.com

Senior volunteer crime fighting programs have proven to be worth a worthwhile effort Gulf Breeze Police Department (GBPD) say and there are plans to expand their reach.

When volunteer John Crane approached a man entering a diabetic coma at the Naval Live Oaks park last year, he had no idea his quick action would earn him a prestigious recognition. Crane radioed in for help and paramedics arrived just in time to resuscitate the man.

"I'm a community man and I enjoy helping the community. I'm glad I'm able to be a part of the police department and their mission in life," Crane said.

Crane, who is apart of the Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) program, was honored at this year's City of Gulf Breeze awards dinner May 23 as volunteer of the year for his efforts. Crane was also honored at the state Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) conference in Ocala, Fla. In April for completing 500 volunteer hours.

Exceptional volunteers like Crane are what have the GBPD

officials looking to increase their responsibilities and expand their volunteer programs like VIPS and establish a new satellite office for Seniors Versus Crime.

"The VIPS have turned out to be a colossal help to us," said Deputy Police Chief Robert Randle. "Not only are they slowing traffic down but they're doing all sorts of other things."

Randle said the VIPS, a division of the USA Freedom Corps developed by President Bush in 2002, are involved in working security at special events, transporting police equipment, taking fingerprints and working traffic and marine patrols.

The success of the VIPS program has led to the inclusion of a new senior volunteer group called Seniors Versus Crime, also known as the Senior Sleuths program.

"This is another avenue seniors can utilize for help," said GBPD Sgt. Sharon Armstrong, coordinator of VIPS and Seniors Versus Crime.

"[Area seniors] may need help with an issue that is of a civil nature and they don't know where to turn."

Senior Sleuths help elderly residents affected by unethical business and construction practices, acting as the eyes and ears of the state Attorney General's Office and local law enforcement by reporting on scams, high pressure sales techniques, false or misleading advertisements and any other deceptive or illegal activity that may come to their attention. There are currently 29 offices, dubbed storefronts, throughout the state of Florida where seniors can come for help.

"The Senior Sleuths program is well-known around the state and can serve as the Attorney General's eyes and ears, volunteer, or actively assist in consumer protection investigations," Florida's Attorney General Bill McCollum wrote on the Seniors Versus Crime website. "These crime fighters have been responsible for recovering nearly \$5 million for seniors who were the victims of con artists."

Don Shopmyer is one of the program's sleuths that collects case information and then

researches ways to recoup the affected citizen's money.

"It's very rewarding to know you've helped somebody," Shopmyer said. "We've taken some crook off the streets and gotten some restitution for the victim."

Judy Ertl, who runs the nearest storefront in Navarre, said the Gulf Breeze satellite office would be a crucial element in the program's effort to help seniors in need and would give GBPD officers another way to help victims handle civil matters.

"The seniors can't afford to lose any amount of money," Ertl said. "We can't always get their money back but most of the time we do. We have about an 80 percent success rate statewide."

For more information about these and other GBPD programs, contact them at 850-934-5121 or 850-934-4050 after regular business hours. Seniors Versus Crime volunteers are available 1p.m. to 3 p.m. Monday Through Friday at the GBPD office located at 311 Fairpoint Drive, Gulf Breeze. Their office in Navarre can be reached at 850-939-4000.



Crane



From left to right: Capt. Mark Schimpf with the St. Lucie Sheriff's Office, Santa Rosa Sheriff Wendell Hall and Lt. Chris Vandeventer with the St. Lucie Sheriff's Office.

Sheriff's Office gets a new helicopter

Look! Up in the sky! It's Santa Rosa Sheriff's Office's new helicopter!

The Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office added a helicopter to its ranks on May 8. The helicopter was a part of a fleet of four belonging to the St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office. The helicopter, a 1970's-era OH-58A+ Bell Jet Ranger, was donated by St. Lucie County Sheriff Ken Mascara at no cost to Santa Rosa County.

The helicopter will be used for drug eradication and special circumstances, such as missing people and natural disasters and will not be flown on a regular basis for patrol functions.

The Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office has been without its own department air support since Sept. 3, 2003, when its fixed wing aircraft crashed during a marijuana eradication mission in the north end of Santa Rosa County.

Sheriff Wendell Hall is pleased to receive this gracious donation from a fellow agency and is currently exploring ways to fund the fuel and maintenance that is necessary to operate the helicopter. The funds to operate this new addition will be met through drug seizure funds and grants that are available to the Sheriff's Office.

COUNCIL: Grants variance

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liquor sales at Publix allowed for more strict guidelines as to hours of operation and signage.

"We will be able to restrict Publix more due to the variance, even more than otherwise allowed. The two sites allowable by ordinance are also at high-traffic areas at the bases of the two bridges," Eddy said. "Staff really believes that this location will be more in the interest of the public."

Wheatley, who owns a liquor license under the name Pier One Bait and Tackle, could not be contacted to determine if he still intends to open a liquor store on his property at the base of the Three Mile Bridge.

Council also adopted a moratorium on all building, landscaping and painting in the Community Redevelopment District until the CRA plan is completed and applicability standards could be set for the design guidelines.

HBTS: Recall successful

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movement. "We could either gather a majority of votes to call for a special meeting to consider the recall, or we could gather the majority of votes for the recall. We turned in a majority of ballots for the recall."

Over 2,500 signed ballots were turned over to the board in early January. When the board rejected 722 ballots and did not certify the recall election petition, the disgruntled residents took action.

"According to state law, the board had five days to review the petitions and accept and certify them or reject them," explained Kizer. "They rejected

numerous petitions and did not certify."

So, the residents petitioned the state to intervene with an arbitrator, and four months later the recall was confirmed.

"A committee is forming to look into the actions of this board and sweetheart deals granted to favored vendors," said Kizer. "My action on behalf of the homeowners is over. I am 100 percent behind the newly elected board and my role is to support them and work with them as a homeowner."

Raymond F. Newman, Jr., Esq., representative for the petitioners, could not be reached for comment.

Correction:

Gulf Breeze News strives for 100 percent accuracy and we regret any errors in our publication. To report an error, please call 850-932-8986.

Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office Report

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

| Felonies | bation |
|--|---|
| 5/16/07 Duncan Sr., William James, 41, W/M, 1900 block of Highway 87 South, Navarre, possession of cocaine, destroying evidence | 5/18/07 Ballow, Kamen Richard, 26, W/M, 9200 block of Sunset Drive, Navarre, kidnapping/false imprisonment |
| Kallutz, Lynette Adele, 42, W/F, 2100 block of Bergren Road, Gulf Breeze, battery on an officer or EMT, resisting an officer with violence | DUI |
| 5/17/07 Neblett, Candy Sue, 47, W/F, 2700 block of Oakley Court, Navarre, driving on a suspended license | 5/14/07 Castonguay, Jared Adam, 23, W/M, 8200 block of Gulf Boulevard, Navarre Beach, DUI |
| Sheffield, Carlton Gregory, 19, B/M, 2000 block of Avenida De Sol, Navarre, burglary, grand theft | 5/17/07 Kallutz, Lynette Adele, 42, W/F, 2100 block of Bergren Road, Gulf Breeze, DUI and property damage |
| Trumble, Curtis Bradley, 37, W/M, 2000 block of Navarre Parkway, Navarre, violation of pro- | 5/18/07 Spalla, Bernadine Rae, 53, W/F, 1400 block of Tiger Lake Drive, Gulf Breeze, DUI |

Elected Officials CONTACT

- GULF BREEZE ELECTED OFFICIALS**
 1070 Shoreline Dr., Gulf Breeze, FL 32561; (850) 934-5100
- Mayor LANE GILCHRIST**
 (850) 932-5565
mayor@ci.gulf-breeze.fl.us
- BEVERLY ZIMMERN**
 (850) 932-4717
bzimmern@ci.gulf-breeze.fl.us
- CARL HOFFMAN**
 (850) 932-4948
choffman@ci.gulf-breeze.fl.us
- J.B. SCHLUTER**
 (850) 232-0939
jschluter@ci.gulf-breeze.fl.us
- RICHARD FULFORD**
 (850) 932-5135
rfulford@co.gulf-breeze.fl.us
- SANTA ROSA COUNTY COMMISSION**
 6495 Caroline Street, Milton, FL 32570; (850) 932-1340 or 983-1877
- JOHN BROXSON, Dist. 5**
 (850) 932-2617
comm-broxson@co.santa-rosa.fl.us
- GORDON GOODIN, Dist. 4**
 (850) 939-1274
comm-goodin@co.santa-rosa.fl.us
- DON SALTER, Dist. 3**
 (850) 983-1877
comm-salter@co.santa-rosa.fl.us
- BOB COLE, Dist. 2**
 (850) 983-1877
comm-cole@co.santa-rosa.fl.us
- TOM STEWART, Dist. 1**
 (850) 983-1877
comm-stewart@co.santa-rosa.fl.us
- SANTA ROSA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT**
 5086 Canal St., Milton, FL 32570; (850) 983-5000
- ED GRAY III, Dist. 5**
 (850) 932-6287
- JOANN J. SIMPSON, Dist. 4**
 (850) 994-5446
- DIANE COLEMAN, Dist. 3**
 (850) 939-5538
- HUGH WINKLES, Dist. 2**
 (850) 623-6299
- DIANE SCOTT, Dist. 1**
 (850) 623-0413
- FLORIDA STATE REPRESENTATIVES**
- GREG EVERS (R)**
 District Office: 5424 Willing St., Milton, FL 32570
 (850) 983-5550
greg.evers@myfloridahouse.gov
- DAVE MURZIN (R)**
 District Office: Suite 22B, 7100 Plantation Rd., Ste. 3, Pensacola, FL 32504
 (850) 494-7330
- C.V. "CLAY" FORD (R)**
 District Office: 1804 W. Garden St., Pensacola, FL 32501-4418
 (850) 595-5550
- RAY SANSOM (R)**
 District Office: 348 SW Miracle Strip Pkwy., Bldg. C, Ste. 12, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548-5257
 (850) 833-9328
- FLORIDA STATE SENATOR**
- DON GAETZ (R)**
 District Office: 217 Miracle Strip Pkwy., Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548
 (850) 897-5747
 SunCom 277-5009
don.gaetz.web@flsenate.gov
- U.S. REPRESENTATIVE**
- JEFF MILLER (R)**
 Pensacola Office: 4300 Bayou Blvd., Ste. 17C, Pensacola, FL 32503
 (850) 479-1183
 Toll Free: (866) 367-1614
- U.S. SENATORS**
- Senator MEL MARTINEZ (R)**
 315 E. Robinson St., Landmark Center 1, Ste. 475, Orlando, FL 32801
 (407) 254-2573
- Senator NELSON, BILL (D)**
 US Court House Annex, 111 N. Adams St., Tallahassee, FL 32301
 (850) 942-8415