

Opinion

Gulf Breeze NEWS



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On the Spot:

WHERE WE PUT PEOPLE "ON THE SPOT" TO ANSWER A QUESTION "ON THE SPOT."

By Hannah Bunning

What do you think about the toll increase for the Garcon Point Bridge?

Super homestead exemption going to voters

A short time ago the Senate voted along party lines to give voters the opportunity to decide whether to substantially expand the homestead exemption and provide significant portability when people move to other homes.

Republicans solidly supported creating a "super homestead exemption" of \$150,000 on the first \$200,000 of a home's value and an additional 15 percent or \$45,000 of the next \$300,000 of value.

Democrats unanimously opposed the provision.

During consideration of the constitutional language, the Senate also ensured that property owners could voluntarily opt

Report to Northwest Florida

Senator Don Gaetz



into the super homestead exemption or keep their "Save Our Homes" benefits, whichever they found most favorable to their own interests.

Again, Democrats opposed the option for taxpayers and Republicans voted yes.

Depending on the timing of the constitutional amendment vote (either January, 2008 or

November, 2008), voters will have substantial opportunity to study the proposal, ask questions, and form their own conclusions.

The Senate is currently debating the statutory proposals to roll back property taxes, cut taxes based on the past taxing behavior of local governments, and then cap further tax increases

to no more than the increase in average per capita income (about 4% per year during recent years).

These statutory cuts and caps will benefit every Florida taxpayer - homeowners, businesses, investors, second home owners, and renters who pay property taxes indirectly when rents are raised.

Thank you for the many calls, emails, comments, criticisms, and suggestions I've received in the last few days. Clearly, property tax relief and reform is a crucial issue for Northwest Floridians. I hope to be able to report to you later today that the statutory language was adopted, as well.

Sheriff Hall kicks off Summer Youth Camp 2007

BY SHERIFF WENDELL HALL
Special to the news

As The Sheriff of Santa Rosa County, I am very pleased that our agency is able to conduct its "Summer Youth Camp 2007."

This nine-week program takes at risk children or children who are trying to find their path in life, and introduces them to law enforcement

in a different manner than they are used to seeing. It is my desire to give these children positive alternatives in their lives.

We teach participants curriculum including DARE; Aggressors, Victims and Bystanders; Sexual Misconduct; and Drug and Alcohol Abuse. Along with the teaching, they have several activities at the camp that teaches team work. We also

take them to several areas, such as the U S S A l a b a m a , B l a c k w a t e r R i v e r , U S N a v a l M u s e u m , and to see the Blue Angels.

With these activities, the children are required to have a good discipline and attendance.



Hall

It is my desire to take these children and provide them with direction, give them positive role models, and facilitate education in a setting that is different from the typical contact they would have with law enforcement.

If we can reach even one or two of these children and change their life, it is well worth our efforts.

Sheriff Hall can be reached at (850) 983-1216.

Feral cats create interesting debate on national level

There is great debate as to the effectiveness of trapping and removing feral cats. Removal efforts on a wide scale are beyond the current resource capabilities of most municipalities. Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) with ongoing management can reduce overcrowding at shelters and decrease costs to the municipality.

In an ideal world, all cats would be safely confined indoors or on their family's property. TNR removes lost and abandoned pet cats and young kittens for possible placement in homes. Feral cats are not tame and are poor candidates for adoption as pets into a typical home. TNR reduces the numbers of feral cats and improves their health and quality of life.

Dedicated volunteers exist for TNR efforts, but pet overpopulation is a community problem that cannot be solved by any one person or agency. We hope that Gulf Breeze's municipal officials, veterinarians, animal shelters, rescue groups, feral cat caretakers and others work together to improve the health and safety of cats and the community.

Nancy Peterson
Feral Cat Program Manager
The Humane Society of the United States

Letters to the Editor

Washington, DC

Zero tolerance means zero intelligence

I don't think I've ever read a clearer example of "Zero tolerance equals zero intelligence" than a recent article in the Gulf Breeze News.

A female student was expelled for bringing prescription drugs to school and giving them to another student. The mother has claimed she finally succumbed to sustained peer pressure from the other girl. If that was that, I'd have to agree punishment is deserved. Her mother didn't want to see her daughter sent to the alternative school, so chose to tackle the disciplinary effort herself and appeal to the school board to allow her efforts to replace the standard punishment.

The mother required her daughter to research the dangers around the abuse of prescription drugs and put together a program that could be used to teach other children on the subject. Having completed this work,

managed voluntarily by the mother, she requested her daughter be readmitted to her regular school. She further offered to put her daughter through any kind of drug program or other summer school program if this could happen.

School board? No dice. Superintendent of Schools John Rogers admitted it was great what the mother had done, but fell back on the precedent of previous punishments meted out for similar offenses. He said to the mother, "How would we explain to them, if we made an exception here, why they have to go there and your daughter does not?"

I have an idea. Rogers could say something like, "Her mother took an active interest in her subsequent discipline and worked with her through a community service effort designed to directly counter the problem at no expense to taxpayers. Perhaps you could do the same and return to your regular school."

School Board Chair Hugh Winkles said, "When it comes

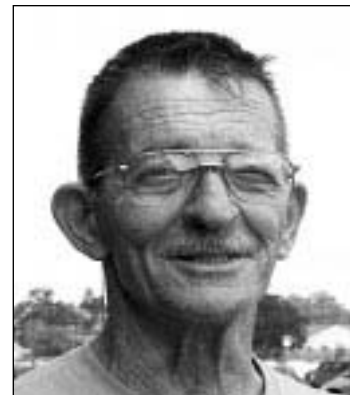
to weapons and drugs, we cannot do anything less than zero tolerance. We have drawn this line in the sand, and we cannot change it now."

My interpretation: "We had a thought and we are disinclined to entertain a different one. We must instead stick to this one and only way of handling things." I sure wish Winkles would go on record in opposition to the ever-changing ways schools seem to use in teaching arithmetic. None of the techniques used when I was a child apply anymore and it seems each of my three children has been taught differently.

Two other school board members asked to see the program, anticipating incorporating some or all it into next year's curriculum. How many other students sent off to an alternative high school have supplied such a tool? And how many more parents will bother to attempt alternative and highly educational discipline of their own children after understanding how little good it will do them directly?

Aaron L. Overton
Rockville, MD

Submit your letter to the editor via email to news@gulfbreezenews.com.



"I don't think there should have been a toll on that bridge to start with. If it hadn't been for politicians it would have been free.."

-Maurice Cockerham
Gulf Breeze



"I never use it, so it doesn't affect me."

-Robbie Neely
Navarre



"I don't think it should increase. People will just avoid it and if it is decreased then more people will use it.."

-Christa Scharinger
Navarre



"It's crazy. It should be going down to get more people to use it."

-Jerry Stephens
Gulf Breeze