

Vouchers Schools in Sarasota

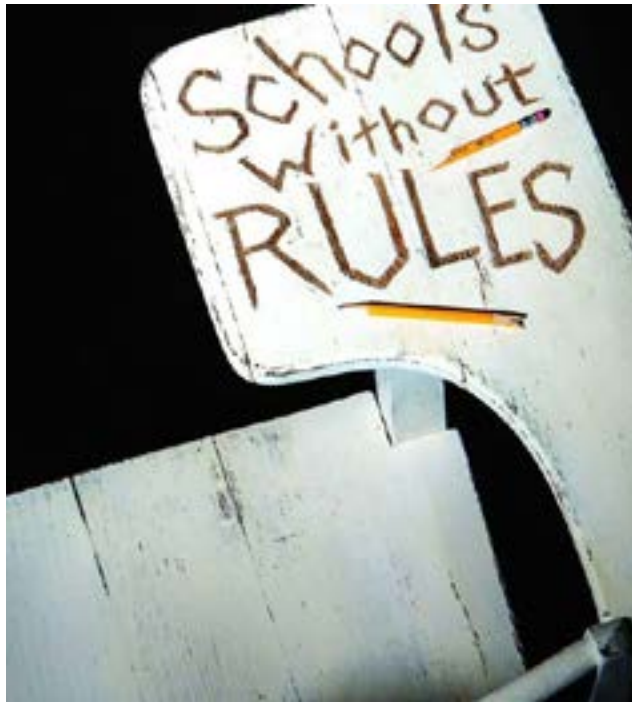
BY CAROL LERNER, PROTECT OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Last year, the Orlando Sentinel published an in-depth series of articles, aptly called Schools Without Rules, on private schools in Central Florida receiving Florida school voucher funding. The articles were a scathing indictment of the Florida voucher programs that drain more than \$1-billion from public education through six different voucher programs.

The Sentinel reporters found that there was little oversight/accountability of Florida's "scholarship" programs for private schools. Some schools hired teachers without college degrees, hired staff with criminal and sex-offending records, held classes in aging strip malls, falsified fire or health records and taught curriculum that denounced evolution, using illustrations in a science text book that show men and dinosaurs together.

More recently, the Sentinel exposed how more than 80 private Christian Schools receiving Florida school voucher funds had discriminated against LGBTQ students and their families. For example, Calvary Christian High School in Clearwater denies admission to students if they, or someone in their home, are practicing a "homosexual lifestyle or alternative gender identity" or "promoting such practices."

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The Orlando Sentinel spent months reporting on Florida's scholarship programs in 2017. They reviewed thousands of pages of Florida Department of Education documents, court records and other materials in addition to interviewing dozens of people, including parents, students, school operators and policy experts. The series is still available [online here](#).

COVID 19 Resources

Florida Department of Health COVID-19 Hotline & Email:
 866-779-6121 (8am-5pm, Monday-Friday)
COVID-19@FLhealth.gov

A Sarasota-specific call center for questions and concerns about COVID-19 is now available through the Department of Health in Sarasota County – 941-861-2873. Subject matter experts are available Monday – Friday, 8 am to 5 pm.

Sarasota Memorial Hospital COVID-19 Hotline:
 941-917-8799

For COVID-19 text updates from Sarasota County Government, text SRQCOVID19 to 888777

Stay Informed:
[World Health Organization \(WHO\) Website FAQ](#)
[CDC Website](#)
[Florida Department of Health Website](#)
[Sarasota Memorial Hospital \(SMH\) Website](#)

[The New York Times Coronavirus page](#)
 Sign up for a free daily coronavirus briefing from the New York Times [here](#).

Business Assistance

With so many small businesses, including restaurants, bars, nightclubs and retail stores, heavily impacted by COVID-19, resources for small business owners and employees are becoming available:

Florida Division of Agriculture and Consumer Services - <https://www.fdacs.gov/Consumer-Resources/Guidance-for-Consumers-on-COVID-19>

[Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan information and application](#)
[Florida Business Damage Assessment Survey](#)
[Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County Reemployment Assistance Service Center](#)

Food for Kids

Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried activated a text line and call center to find free meals for kids during the school closures. Text FLKIDSMEALS to 211-211 to find the closest participating Summer BreakSpot location with meals available.

Residents can also call 2-1-1 to speak with a live operator for additional information.
<https://summerbreakspot.freshfromflorida.com>

Library Hoopla

Hoopla, Hooray! Sarasota County Libraries has temporarily increased all Hoopla checkouts to 10! Get instant access to all your favorite movies, shows, music, books and audiobooks! - <https://www.scgov.net/government/libraries/library-resources/library-app>

New College Fights to Survive Merger Proposal

BY DAVE GULLIVER



After nearly a month on the Florida legislature's death row, New College of Florida received a reprieve when Senate President Bill Galvano killed a Republican bill that would have merged the innovative, nationally ranked

Sarasota institution into University of Florida.

Now, New College is building a case for its survival, as House Republican lawmakers say that in next year's session they again will address what they see as excessive costs in the state's higher education system.

The crisis began Feb. 11, when Rep. Randy Fine abruptly introduced a bill, with no prior committee hearings, that called for merging New College into Florida State University and merging Florida Polytechnic University into University of



New College students rally in support of New College independence. Photo by Anna Lynn Winfrey.

Florida. The bill required the colleges to submit their mergers to accrediting organizations on July 1, 2020. It also made changes to Florida scholarship programs.

Amendments to the bill later changed the mergers to flat-out acquisitions, which had fewer legal hurdles, and established University of Florida as the acquiring institution for both colleges.

New College immediately responded by sending President Don O'Shea and other officials to Tallahassee, where its lobbying team was already at work. Students joined them at a hearing on the bill and turned out at rallies.

Critics assailed the bill for a lack of specific reasons for the acquisitions. An Appropriations Committee staff analysis released almost two weeks later reported that both universities had far higher costs to the state per degree, and higher administrative costs, than University of Florida.

	NCF	UF
Cost per degree	\$197,681	\$31,598
Administrative costs as % of budget	27	9.8

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Sarasota Strong Grows Stronger

BY ANDY BLANCH

Just over a year ago, Sarasota Strong held its first public forum on trauma-informed communities. Since then, the group has grown to over 500 participants. Monthly “conversations” engage neighbors in sharing their stories and learning about trauma and resilience, with community input shaping the direction of future activities. Films have been screened, events held, partnerships developed, and information about trauma and resilience provided to community groups and agencies. Almost a dozen healing workshops have been held, and exciting steps have been taken towards using dance and the arts for trauma healing and social change. A new project, called ONE234, is building connections between the Indian Beach/Sapphire Shores neighborhood and Newtown, two parts of the 34234 zip code divided by Route 41, as well as by social, economic, and cultural differences. Most recently, a leadership group has emerged in South County. They hosted their first event in March, a training on how to be present with someone in emotional crisis without feeling the need to fix or offer advice.

A recent week-long visit from Father Paul Abernathy - an Orthodox priest, Iraq war vet, and



Father Paul giving public address at Selby

founder of the Neighborhood Resilience Project in Pittsburgh – drew a diverse crowd of over 150 to Selby Gardens. Father Paul, whose work has shaped the SRQ Strong approach, preached a unique blend of basic human values, trauma science, community organizing, and lessons from the civil rights movement. He left the audience with a strong message that change can and will happen here – but only if each of us risks getting involved. Ellen Heath, member of the Sarasota Anti-Racism Workgroup and SURE, commented: “Thank you for bringing Father Paul here. What a powerful speaker and message. . . My mindset, now, is thinking toward the heart of a healthy community and what it looks like. Justice and reconciliation with hope. I pray that he will return.”

Other events with Father Paul illustrate how SRQ Strong operates. A prayer breakfast engaged many small churches – and a few larger – in a discussion of the role of faith in healing trauma-

affected communities. A dinner with a variety of community and neighborhood leaders built new relationships and led to honest conversations about pitfalls that can derail change efforts. A meeting with the Sarasota Anti-Racism Working Group



Father Paul talks to community members Val Buchand and Tom Walker

delved into how to address racism inside and outside faith communities. And a trolley tour of historical Newtown, led by Newtown Alive, resulted directly from input from the last community forum, where participants had urged SRQ Strong to “Raise up the strengths and the positive history of Newtown.”

For more information or to get involved, see www.SRQStrong.org and <https://www.facebook.com/sarasotastrong/>

PLACE AN AD IN THE CRITICAL TIMES

2500 Copies of the Critical Times are distributed free of charge at local libraries and community events. It is also distributed digitally to over **4000 e-newsletter subscribers** and promoted on our Facebook and Twitter feeds.

1/12 page - 3.325" x 3.32" - \$55 or \$200/4 issues
1/6 page - 6.65" x 3.32" - \$90 or \$300/4 issues
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1/3 page horizontal - 10.25" x 5.32" - \$135 or \$450/4 issues

For more information, email CriticalTimesSRQ@gmail.com



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WSLR+Fogartyville is a center for creative expression and community engagement that amplifies the voices of our diverse community and promotes peace, sustainability, democracy and economic and social justice.

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Three Sarasota City Commission Seats up for Election

BY REBECCA HADWEN

In November 2020, Sarasotans will be voting at every level of government - national, state, county and city. This year on the City Commission, seats are up in Districts 1, 2, and 3.

Incumbent City Commissioner **Willie Shaw** is currently running unopposed in District 1. Shaw has served two terms as city commissioner and one as mayor. His focus for this term would be to continue investing in his district's neighborhoods, building workforce housing and developing job training programs.

District 2 is the most contested seat on the City Commission with incumbent **Liz Alpert** being challenged by **Martin Hyde, Terry Turner, and Jerry Wells**.

Liz Alpert currently serves as City Commissioner for District 2. She has also served on the City's Human Relations Board and the General Personnel/Civil Service Board. In an email, she stated that her campaign goals are based on "supporting the cultural assets of this city", "plan[ning] for growth to protect our environment and support sustainability", "affordable housing", and "integrity in city government". She also wants "to make sure we improve our current infrastructure and develop modern multi-modal transportation".

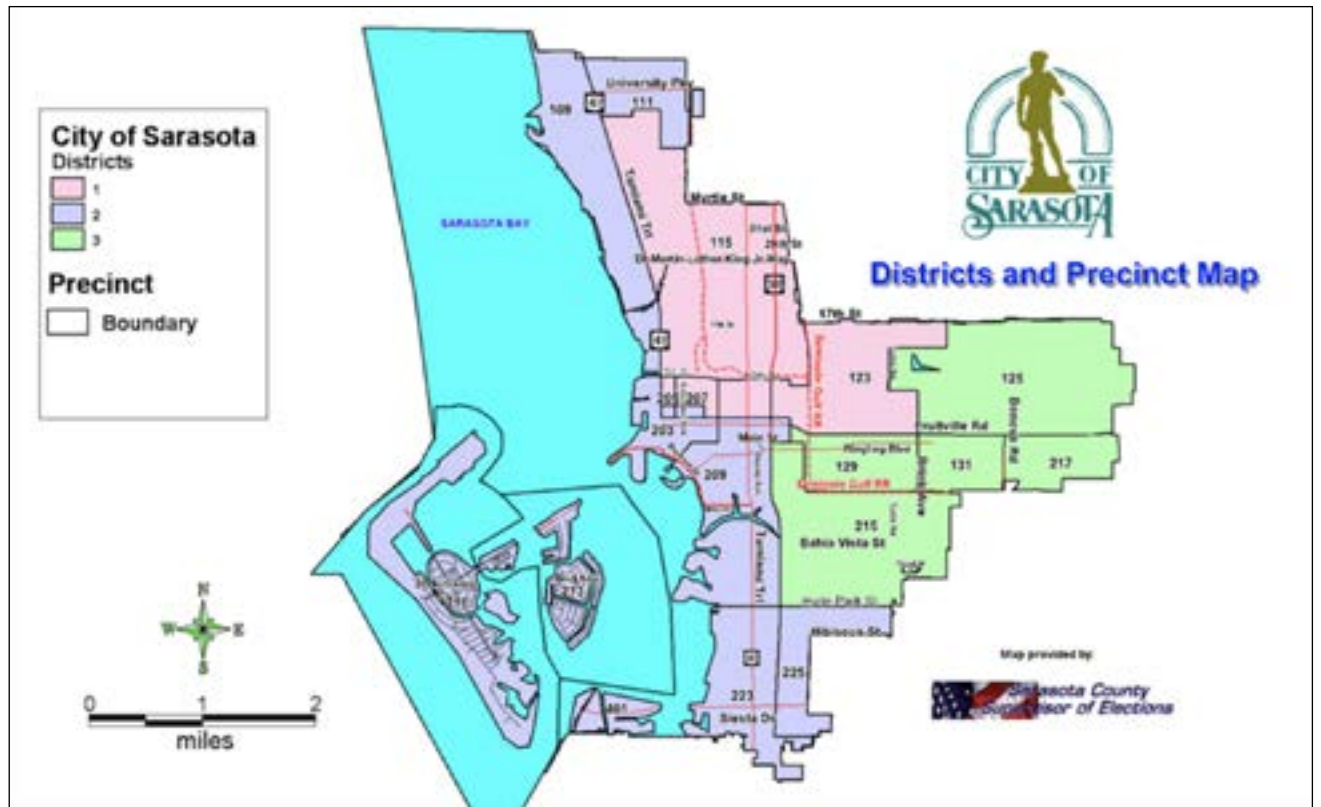
Despite some controversy surrounding alleged racist comments earlier in his campaign, **Martin Hyde** is running against Liz Alpert. He described his goals as follows: to "put an end to the Bobby Jones Golf course fiasco...; invest in daycare and after school facilities for those on less than median income; limit major road projects to one at a time on major routes to avoid the recent traffic chaos; [and] vote for a referendum on changing our City Charter to include a strong elected Mayor with a 2 year term".

Former City Commissioner **Terry Turner** is running with a goal of lowering taxes. He seeks to draw on his experiences working at banking institutions and teaching finance at various universities to make this possible. In addition, he aims to address climate change, sea level rise, and water quality.

The final candidate running for District 2 is **Jerry Wells**. Wells has served on the Sustainability Advisory Board and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. According to his website, his main goals are sustainability, economic expansion, and maintaining a responsible City budget. In terms of sustainability, he plans to focus on reducing the City's carbon footprint as well as working on both water and air quality.

Erik J. Arroyo and **Daniel Clermont** are both running for District 3. Arroyo, a business and estate planning lawyer, plans to focus on spending, traffic, and homelessness. Clermont plans to focus on water and wastewater management, growth, fiscal responsibility, and infrastructure.

The deadline for filing to run for City Commission is noon on Friday, June 12, 2020. The primary election will be on August 18, 2020 and the General Election will be November 3, 2020. For those that will be out of town in August, you can request a vote-by-mail ballot online at sarasotavotes.com.



Liz Alpert



Willie Shaw



Erik J. Arroyo



Jerry Wells



Dan Clermont



Terry Turner



Martin Hyde

Candidate	District	Website	Phone Number	Email
Willie Shaw	1	none	941-204-5023	Willie.Shaw@sarasotafl.gov
Liz Alpert	2	none	813-786-1177	Liz.Alpert@sarasotafl.gov
Martin Hyde	2	electmartinhyde.com	941-323-2289	sarasotaeagle@gmail.com
Terry Turner	2	terryturner4sarasota.com	941-914-0913	terryturner@comcast.net
Jerry Wells	2	electjerrywells.com	646-808-7346	electjerrywells@gmail.com
Errik J. Arroyo	3	arroyocampaign.com	941-539-8646	ErikJARroyo@yahoo.com
Daniel Clermont	3	dan4sarasota.com	941-962-4857	dan4sarasota@gmail.com

Dirty Politics Lead to Dirty Water

BY CATHY ANTUNES

A new awareness of the importance of County government is growing. In recent years millions of gallons of wastewater have “spilled” into Sarasota waters, harming the environment. Last month nearly 700,000 gallons of reclaimed water and 4,500 gallons of raw sewage spilled into two local stormwater retention ponds. While wastewater infrastructure was languishing, Sarasota County Commissioners backed by wealthy development interests kept approving projects for their benefactors. The resulting harm is real. If you have any doubt, ask business owners and workers who suffered during the 2018 red tide summer.

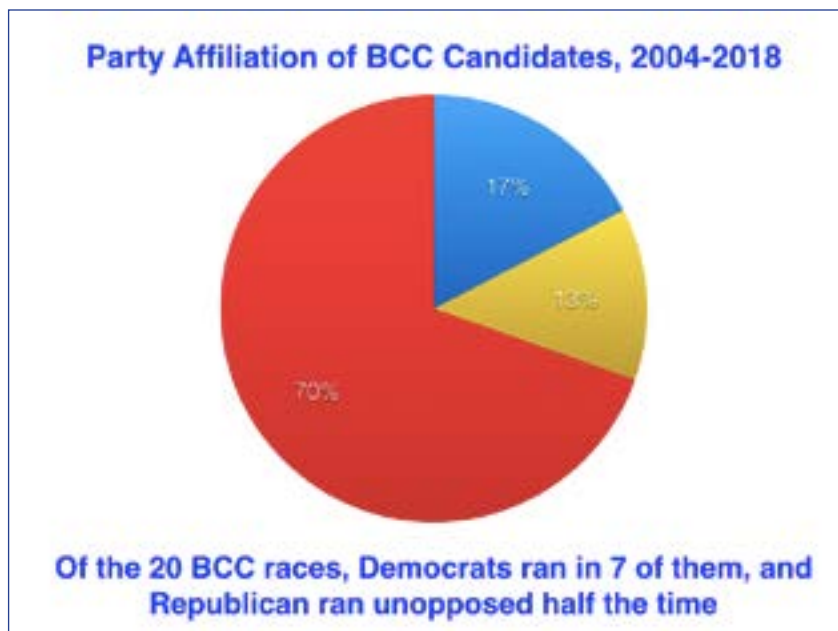
Consider too how all this sprawl development has impacted traffic, and it’s clear we need a County government that takes good care of the interests of constituents, not special interests.

By now, many Sarasota County voters are aware that we have had a Republican County Commission for 50 years. I attribute this phenomenon to voters choosing to vote along party lines in County Commission races, because when I ask Sarasota residents if they can name their five County Commissioners, most cannot name one, let alone five.

When people walk into a voting booth not knowing the candidates, they look to other means to make their decision. Party affiliation

is an obvious distinguishing feature when name recognition isn’t in play. Registered Republicans outnumber Democrats, and independents tend to split down the middle. Advantage: GOP.

But that’s not the whole story. A look at



Sarasota County Commission elections shows just how lopsided our choices have been.

There have been twenty Sarasota County Commission races since 2004. Those races have included 46 candidates: 33 Republicans, 8 Democrats, and 5 NPAs. Republicans have run unopposed in the general election in 11 of the 20 races. And of those twenty County Commission elections, Democrats ran in only seven of them. You’ve got to be in it to win it.

For developers backing County Commission candidates, it’s not really about electing Republicans. It’s about electing their anointed candidates. Witness what happens to grassroots Republican candidates. In 2014, former local GOP chair Bob Waechter was caught on video purchasing a debit card in the name of a Republican candidate considered unfriendly to the developer power structure. Waechter then took that card and made contributions to Democrats in her name. That’s felony identity theft, committed to create attack fodder against an internal Republican rival. Another grassroots 2016 Republican County Commission candidate was the subject of an attack website funded by a PAC that received \$15,000 from developer Pat Neal.

Of course grassroots Democrat County Commission candidates who are considered a threat get attacked too. Who can forget the 2008 TV commercial run against Jono Miller, showing a man dressed in a ballerina tutu dancing around? You can’t make this stuff up.

Dirty politics lead to dirty water. In 2020, single member districts for County Commission races will reduce the cost of running, and increase the efficacy of grassroots campaigns. Do you care about clean water? Be sure you vote carefully in the County Commission races. Are you interested in making a difference? We need you on the County Commission.

Sarasota County Commission Candidates 2020

BY CASSIE MANZ

Sarasota County will vote on three open County Commission seats in the upcoming general election - Districts 1, 3, and 5. In 2018, voters passed a single-member district amendment that will change the way Sarasota elects its County Commissioners. Now, each person will vote for candidates running in their district only, and not for all candidates throughout the county. In addition, the Sarasota County Commission passed a new redistricting map for the county, which could potentially have implications for this current election cycle. In response to the early redistricting - three Newtown residents — Mary Mack, Michael White and former Sarasota Mayor Fredd Atkins — filed a federal lawsuit against Sarasota County and commissioners Michael Moran, Nancy Detert and Alan Maio for “depriving thousands of African American voters living in the Newtown community of the right to vote in the 2020 election” (Trial date: April 27).

District 1



Mark Pienkos (D): The newest addition to the field of candidates for County Commission, Pienkos filed to run on March 27th. Pienkos ran for a seat on The Meadows Board of Directors and describes himself as “a life-long educator with excellent analytical, budgetary, and human relations skills”.



Mike Moran (R): Moran, elected to the County Commission in 2016, is the Republican incumbent for the District 1 seat. He was named chairman of the County Commission in December 2019. Moran was a key figure in the redistricting conversations last year. His seat was at the center of the redistricting effort last year,

which moves Republican voters into District 1, and moves Newtown, a largely minority community, out of District 1 into District 2.

Fredd Atkins (D): Atkins, former Mayor of Sarasota, served on the Sarasota City Commission for 18 years. This will be his fourth attempt at a County Commission seat, but his first in a single-member district. Atkins said this will alter his prospects of winning, since he carried District 1 when he ran in 2016. However, the new redistricting map would move him to District 2, which will not vote on a new commissioner until 2022.

Mike Hutchinson (R): Mike Hutchinson moved to Florida in 1973 to work as a software engineer. He and his wife Eileen live on 10 acres in east Sarasota County with two horses and Raven, a black German shepherd dog. Mike retired in 2007.

District 3



Nancy Detert (R): Former state senator Nancy Detert was elected to the Sarasota County Commission in 2016. Detert has served in the Florida House of Representatives (1998-2006) and Florida Senate (2008-2016).



Cory Hutchinson (D): In 2016, Hutchinson became the youngest person ever to run for North Port City Commission. He’s now filed for County Commission at 23-years-old. Hutchinson currently serves as chairman of the North Port Charter Review Board, and president of Holly’s Hope, a nonprofit mental health service organization, and works as a career advisor at Laurel Nokomis School. According to the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, Hutchinson’s platforms include increasing affordable housing and mental health resources for the community.

John W. Holic (R): Holic served as Mayor of Venice for the three terms allotted. In Holic’s lifetime, he has registered both as a Republican and as Democrat, but ran for mayor with no party affiliation. He’s doing the same for the County Commission race. As mayor of Venice, Holic has been an advocate of affordable housing and the economic redevelopment of the Seaboard area of Venice.

Harrison J. Zeffert (R): Zeffert, age 30, works in the life insurance/financial services sector. His priorities are maintaining a balanced budget and keeping property taxes low. He serves as the treasurer of the South Sarasota County Republican Club.

District 5

County Commissioner Charles Hines reached his term limit this year, which has left his seat open.



Alice White (D): White, known affectionately as North Port’s “Tree Lady,” is a retired teacher and the founder of People for Trees, a nonprofit native tree advocacy group. White is a self-proclaimed advocate of self-governance, and was partly inspired to run for County Commission after getting involved in citizen ballot initiatives and referendums. In 2002, she formed North Port Citizens for Tree Protection to place a minimum tree standard amendment referendum on the ballot. “Experiencing first-hand the resistance to that proposal that came from our elected city commissioners made me even more determined to see to it that the voice of the people would not be silenced,” White told the *North Port Sun*. She also told the *Sun* that “North Port needs to have a voice on the County Commission.”



Ron Cutsinger (R): Cutsinger has lived in South Sarasota County for nearly five decades and has

a long experience in business, from owning and running “Ron’s Restaurant” to providing financial guidance as the owner and operator of Waypoint Wealth Management. Before filing to run for County Commission, Cutsinger served as Chair of the Sarasota County Planning Commission. According to his campaign website, Cutsinger “is a steadfast supporter of President Trump and is committed to the conservative cause. We can rest easy knowing that Ron will be tireless in his fight for lower taxes and less regulation. He will stand up for the rights of the unborn and defend all of our rights enshrined in the Constitution – especially those in the Second Amendment.”



Christopher B. Hanks (R):

Having lived in North Port for almost a decade, Christopher Hanks is an entrepreneur with interests in marketing, hospitality, and travel. Citing the implementation of single-member

districts as one of the reasons he decided to run, Hanks told the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, “I think it’s very important for the city of North Port to have representation up in North County.” Hanks would be the second North Port resident to serve on the County Commission, after Gene Matthews. According to the *Herald-Tribune*, Hanks was one of three new North Port city commissioners elected in 2016 who increased transparency of city government.

Joseph B. Mason (R): Mason graduated from Venice High School and served in the U.S. Marine Corps. He is a realtor and licensed Home Inspector.

You can find information on proposed new Districts [here](#).

Qualifying Deadline to file to run for County Commission:

Noon, June 12, 2020

To see other offices up
for election visit:

sarasotavotes.com.

For more information
call the Supervisor of

Elections office:

941-861-8600

What is a “Stand Down?”



Stand Downs are one day events providing supplies and services to homeless Veterans, such as food, shelter, clothing, health screenings and Veterans Affairs benefits counseling.

Veterans can also receive referrals to other assistance such as health care, housing, employment, substance use treatment, mental health counseling and other events coordinated with local VA Medical Centers and other providers.

FLVCS is a co-sponsor of the annual Sarasota “Stand Down” for our Veterans.

WHERE: Sarasota Fairgrounds

WHEN: 2 May 2020, 8:00AM



Monthly meetings
are second Mondays
at 7:00PM at the
Waldemere Firehouse,
2nd floor meeting room

Florida Veterans for Common Sense, Inc. is a non-partisan/non-profit 501(c)4 corporation. Dues are 45.00 annually. Contact FLVeterans@aol.com.

Commentary: Allow Florida Cities to Use Ranked Choice Voting

**JOHN SEVERINI
CHAIR, RANK MY VOTE FL**

“The one reform to save America, ranked choice voting (RCV) is the most impactful and viable fix for our troubled political system”. - David Brooks, NY Times.

Our democracy is in a moment of great upheaval and divisiveness. In this divided climate the way we conduct elections themselves has earned some well-deserved scrutiny and been the subject of many proposed reforms. RCV is on the move throughout the country and making headway right here in Florida. It’s a simple change—the ability to rank candidates in order of preference on the ballot—with profound impact. It promises to bring more voices and choices into our elections, produce better outcomes, and discourage mudslinging in favor of positive, issue-based campaigns.

Sarasota voted to adopt RCV in 2007 with 77.8% voter support. We now have voting systems capable of running a RCV election but need approval from the Secretary of State. Please visit our website to add you name to our supporters - <https://www.rankmyvotefflorida.org/join>.

Ranked Choice Voting is currently used in 20 cities in the US and two dozen more are working on implementing RCV. Sarasota, Jacksonville, Gainesville, & Orlando are in the process. The Utah legislature, in a bipartisan manner, passed a pilot program to allow any city in Utah to use RCV. After having used RCV for local elections in its largest city, Portland, the state of Maine became the first in US history to use this voting system for statewide elections and the 2020 Presidential Election. Five states will use it in the 2020 Presidential primaries,

and 5 more currently use it for military and overseas voting. Alaska and Massachusetts are working on Statewide adoption.



John Severini and other Sarasota supporters of Ranked Choice Voting

RCV increases voter participation, saves time and money by eliminating the run-off election. It encourages more candidates to apply for the job and to campaign for second choice votes which promotes civility and issue driven campaigns with greater representation of the community at large. With voters being able to rank their vote, there is no such thing as a “spoiler candidate”. Voters can vote for their favorite candidate without fearing their vote will be wasted.

Ultimately, the system will change only once those calling for reform organize and become visible enough to motivate and mobilize like-minded citizens to demand change. Cities are laboratories of democracy and we should allow Florida’s cities to choose and use ranked choice voting while opening the door to consider adopting this positive reform for statewide elections.



For her work with the Sarasota Alliance for Fair Elections and Unitarian Universalist Justice Florida, Kindra Muntz was presented with this year’s Tom Paine Award by Gene Jones, President of the Florida Veterans for Common Sense.

WSLR 96.5fm NEW SATURDAY MORNING LINE-UP

Since August 2005, when WSLR-LP first went on air, our goal has been to serve all of the communities in Sarasota & Bradenton especially those that are currently underrepresented in the mainstream media through music and public affairs programs. In that tradition, we're proud to announce our new Saturday lineup of music and talk shows serving Communities of Color, with a focus on the African American community. Some of the programs are new to our weekly line-up - while others have been a part of the station for the past few years, and are now airing at new day/time.

SATURDAY 7-9AM

NEW The Saturday Morning Gospel Beat - Host Jonah Ray shares music & songs from, and for, the heart.

SATURDAY 9-9:30AM (alt. weeks)

TownTalk TampaBay Highlighting the energy, issues, and happenings of communities of color. Hosted by Sharon Preston-Folta, interviewing T.B. locals who are making a difference.

NEW I AM THAT I AM

A talk & call-in show focusing on self-empowerment. Hosted by motivational speaker and life coach, April Glasco.

SATURDAY 9:30AM - 11AM

RADIO RESET

Hosted by Sharon Folta, this show celebrates female voices in music, verse, activism & community from Sarasota and beyond!



SHARON PRESTON-FOLTA, APRIL GLASCO + JONAH RAY

SATURDAY 11AM-1PM,

UP FRONT SOUL A nationally syndicated funk/soul/jazz music show. send your requests at upfrontsoul@gmail.com

SATURDAY 1PM - 3PM

NEW HARD KNOCK RADIO

Hosted by Davey D and Anita Johnson, the show covers news, views and hip-hop.

wslr96.5lpfm

WEEKLY PROGRAM GUIDE



listen on the air

- WSLR 96.5 LPFM Sarasota
- WPV 100.1 LPFM Sarasota

listen online

- WSLR.org (desktop)
- WSLR App at wslr.org (mobile)

listen on demand

archive.wslr.org Music shows are archived for two weeks. News and public affairs are available for download, and expire later.

Americana · Folk · Cajun · Acoustic · Bluegrass
Blues · Roots · Jazz · R&B · Soul
Electronica · Dubstep · Club · Hip-hop
Freeform · Eclectic
Rock · Punk · Jam · Indie · Pop
News · Public Affairs
World · Spiritual

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
12 mid.		Down The Road Syndicated	Lumpytunes! The Head Lump, Rob Demperio	New Radio	New Radio	Open A.I.R. Matt Dakan	New Radio
1 a.m.	GoodLife Syndicated						
2 a.m.		Midnight Special Syndicated	Strange Currency Syndicated	Upfront Soul Syndicated	Music Automated playlist		
3 a.m.	Deep Threes Syndicated						
4 a.m.		Letters to Washington Syndicated	Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)	A Way With Words Syndicated	Economic Update Richard Wolff		
5 a.m.							
6 a.m.	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated		
7 a.m.							
8 a.m.	Blues to Bluegrass John D.	We Got The Funk Syndicated	Generation X Atecia Harper	Eclectic Blender Dave Pedersen	Latin Explosion Juan Montenegro	Saturday Morning Gospel Jonah	Alternative Radio Syndicated
9 a.m.			Music with a Purpose Pat Monahan				Wings of the Heart Salima Rael & Carol Rosenbaum
10 a.m.	Shortwave Report	The Waterkeepers	ALTERNATE WEEKS	The Detail Cathy Antunes	Surreal News Lew Lorini & Steve Norris	TownTalk / I Am That I Am	The Detail Cathy Antunes (Rebroadcast)
11 a.m.	Critical Times Week in Review	Sea Change Radio	Peace & Justice Report Tom Walker & Bob Connors			Radio Reset Sharon Preston-Folta	Law and Disorder Syndicated
NOON	Music of the World Marco Ciceron	Nuestra Musica Mariano	Vibrational Journeys Perette Cannady	Metropics Carlos Pagan	Complex Waveforms Mark Zampella	Upfront Soul Syndicated	Folk Alley Elena See Syndicated
1 p.m.		Afro Cuban Jazz Frankie Piniero					
2 p.m.	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Hard Knock Radio Syndicated	Dadee-O's Collector's Corner Dadee-O
3 p.m.	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	AfroSonic Taxi Syndicated	
4 p.m.	Positive Friction John Haupt	Second Wind Seany G	What's The Frequency, Kenneth? Syndicated	Basement Boxes Purple Mike	Eclectricity Susan Runyan	Global Village Syndicated	Velvet Hammer Blues Beth Hammer
5 p.m.			Portraits in Blue & Green Syndicated	ALTERNATE WEEKS	Friday Afternoon Jazz Break Donna B	Juke In The Back Syndicated	
6 p.m.	Music Museum Ed Foster	Tuesday Drive Home David Young	Hawaii Bob & Company Hawaii Bob	Ted's Head Ted	Everything But the Kitchen Sink Art S		
7 p.m.		Big Willy's Juke Joint Big Willy	Hot Rod Rock Sven		Friday Happy Hour Bartender Tommy D.	All Mixed Up Syndicated	Sundazed Rachel
8 p.m.	Economic Update Richard Wolff	Ralph Nader Radio Syndicated	Talk Nation	Background Briefing Syndicated	Critical Times Week in Review		
9 p.m.	Capitol Update State News		TUC Radio		Counterspin/Cannabis Connection		
10 p.m.	Yesterday's Dead Today Mark Binder	The Root Cellar Roger & Peter	Acoustic Waves James Hawkins (ALTERNATE WEEKS)	Retro Cocktail Hour Syndicated	Ripper's Rarities Russ Yodice	Indie-licious Shelia Jane	Blue Groove Mark Gruder
11 p.m.			Fur Peace Ranch Syndicated	Velvet Radio Elissa Bello			
12 mid.	Indigenous Sounds White Horse	In Transition The 801	Woodsongs Syndicated	ALTERNATE WEEKS	Mind.Your. Business. Ryan & Dana	The Big Picture DJ Smooth E	Perpetual Stew Mary
			Jazz And More Brian Jones	Progressive Palace Phil G	Dirty Ice Cream Truck LoFi Luke Rosebaro		
	Down The Road Syndicated	Lumpytunes! The Head Lump, Rob Demperio	New Radio	ALTERNATE WEEKS	ALTERNATE WEEKS	New Radio	Cafe Chill Syndicated
				New Radio	Open A.I.R. Matt Dakan & Jamiel Livingston		

Streaming live 24/7/365 at WSLR.org · Studio line 941-954-8636

WSLR: Come Home to Community

With each new day, life during the coronavirus pandemic seems to shift beneath our feet before we even have a chance to make sense of what happened the day before. The uncertainty and fear can be disorienting, but the shutdown of much of our society also gives us time to reflect and think about how our society operates and how, during this time of crisis, there might be an opportunity to bring about enormous change. I encourage you to read this recent article published in *Common Dreams and Waging Nonviolence* by Ken Butigan, a leading teacher, advocate and strategist of nonviolence, who writes, "*this crisis is so global, so encompassing, so pervasively universal—touching virtually every person on the planet—that it not only begs for an immediate and comprehensive response, it cracks open the possibility for a long-term cultural and planetary shift toward a more just, peaceful and sustainable order.*"

That, of course, is why WSLR was founded – to promote this needed cultural shift. It is indeed the history of community radio in the US. *Pacifica* founder **Lewis Hill**'s mission was *to create a new kind of radio, supported by listeners, owing nothing to sponsors, providing an outlet for creative expression, and a safe haven for artistic experiments with the radio medium.* Perhaps best known as a chronicler of social justice movements and cultural change, *Pacifica* stations have consistently embraced the performing and literary arts, offering sometimes the only forum for cutting edge and classical arts, and providing a stage to experiment with radio drama, spoken word, sound sculpture and the art of radio documentary. *WSLR-LP is a proud Pacifica affiliate!*

connected to the community, access relevant information and find some *stress-relief* through our curated music programs.

As with all our local nonprofit arts organizations, **WSLR+Fogartyville** has been significantly impacted by the cancellation of our concert season. The **2020 Giving Partner Challenge** is coming at a very opportune time for our community. It is a chance for folks to help their favorite nonprofits weather this critical time. **From noon April 28th to noon April 29th**, online donations can be made to **WSLR+Fogartyville** through the **Giving Challenge's** website. Each unique online donation of \$25-\$100 during this 24 hour period **will be matched 1:1**. The **2020 Giving Challenge** is presented by the **Community Foundation of Sarasota County** with giving strengthened by **The Patterson Foundation**.

While WSLR is celebrating its 15th Anniversary,



Dadee-o will be celebrating his 90th birthday! We were planning a party at Fogartyville, but now we'll be having a **Virtual Birthday, Sunday, April 5, 1-3pm** with him on the air. **Tune in and share you birthday wishes with Dadee-o by phone at 941-954-8636 or on our Facebook page /wslr965.**

If you haven't before, or haven't in a while, it's time to support **WSLR+Fogartyville** in any way you can, with your money, your energy and your attention. If you're already a supporter, we ask that you give a little more so that the impact of your contribution can be doubled starting at **12pm on Tuesday, April 28th**. You can **Be the One** to help us by setting up a Peer to Peer Fundraising page to encourage support for **WSLR+Fogartyville** during the **Giving Partner Challenge**. This **must** be done through the *GiveGab* platform, so please contact us if you are interested in helping in this way.

Looking for other ways to help? Listen! Tune in to **96.5FM**. Download our mobile app – available for Apple and Android phones (LINKS). Share your ideas with us. What type of programming would serve the community best during this crisis? How can we better use the airwaves and our space to serve the community? Please reach out to us with news tips and stories of how you and your circle of friends are being impacted.

Of course, non-profits aren't the only ones being impacted, local businesses and individuals are also facing economic crises due to the coronavirus pandemic. **WSLR** is doing what we can to help the community access necessary information and resources. We really are all in this together...and we must all do our part. At **WSLR+Fogartyville** we will continue to use the public airwaves and our community space to amplify the voices of our Community and cultivate positive change.

Why is community radio so important? One hallmark feature of community radio is providing a voice for people from communities that are underserved by other broadcast media. Unlike public radio, community radio attempts to provide unmediated airtime, where individuals and representatives from communities have an opportunity to speak for themselves. Whether this is in the form of weekly programs dedicated to the issues and interests of particular communities, or through live long-form interviews that aren't limited to sound-bites, community radio emphasizes direct communication to the audience. Hearing people who share your experience and come from your community on the radio is validating, no matter who you are, and it helps to strengthen ties and build awareness of common values, challenges and solutions.

Community radio supports and broadcasts journalism that is unflinching in its investigation of power and economics, regardless of what party is in control. From national programming like **Democracy Now!**, **Ralph Nader Radio** and the **Thom Hartmann Program**, to local news programming like **Critical Times** and **The Detail**, community radio has been shining a light in the dark for more than a half century. We need that light now more than ever.

No one knows what will happen in the coming months, but we feel community radio will become more important for people seeking to remain



2020 Marks the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day

BY MAYA GREENBERG,
PEACENTER INTERN

Prior to the 1970s, the vast majority of Americans were oblivious to environmental concerns and the detrimental effects of pollution while large industries belched out massive amounts of smoke and sludge without fear of legal or moral consequences. This, in part, began to shift with the publication of *Silent Spring* in 1962, a groundbreaking bestseller written by Rachel Carson which shed light on the need for awareness and concern for the environment and, in particular, the threat of pesticides and other sources of air and water pollution to public health.

Later on, after witnessing the detrimental impact of a massive oil spill in California in 1969, and further inspired by the student anti-war movement, Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson came to the realization that if the energy of anti-war protests merged with growing public awareness of the negative effects of pollution, together these movements could force environmental protection onto the national political agenda. This ultimately led Nelson to found the first national day dedicated to the environment, Earth Day, on April 22, 1970. On that day, now five decades ago, 2,000 colleges and universities, 10,000 primary and secondary schools, and nearly 20 million Americans altogether (10% of the total U.S. population at the time) united in peaceful demonstrations in support of environmental protection and reform

in streets, parks, auditoriums and campuses across the country.

environmental consciousness ever since. By the end of 1970, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency had been established along with the passage of the Clean Air, Clean Water and Endangered Species Acts. Later in 1990, 200 million people in 141 countries took part in the first global Earth Day, lifting environmental issues onto the world stage; this also catalyzed worldwide recycling efforts and led to the first UN Earth Summit in 1992. The Paris Agreement, an international agreement on climate change, was signed in 2016 to address the global need to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

2020 marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day -- today, it is considered to be the largest secular observance in the world, with over a billion people dedicating April 22 to a day of action to spread awareness, change our impact on the environment, and demand appropriate policy changes each year. With the help of digital and social media, environmental conservations, protests, strikes and mobilizations are growing across the globe.

Nonetheless, the fight for a clean, healthy and safe environment becomes increasingly urgent with each passing day. If you feel disillusioned or frustrated with the lack of progress following the international adoption of the 2015 Paris Agreement - and environmental lethargy more generally - find out some of the ways you can help demand greater action for our planet and its people at earthday.org.



The celebration of the first Earth Day marked the birth of the modern environmental movement and has continued to serve as a voice for emerging

Breaking Free from Plastic

BY CAT DILLARD, RETHINKING
PLASTICS

Pre-emption continues to be an issue for single-use plastics and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. The Florida legislative session ended in mid-March and bills HB6043 and SB182 both died in committee. These bills would have allowed local Florida governments and municipalities to regulate single-use plastic in their own towns and cities, however they and the citizens see fit. Currently local governments are banned from taking action by state law and these items are allowed to make their way to our waterways, causing harm to the environment and to the sea life which we all care deeply about.

With great hope, federal lawmakers have introduced a sweeping bill designed to phase out single-use plastics and overhaul the recycling infrastructure, holding packaging manufacturers more responsible for reducing waste. Introduced by U.S. Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) and U.S. Representative Alan Lowenthal (D-CA), the Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act 2020 and includes several measures, most notably a requirement called Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). As a condition of sale, producers will be required to design, manage and finance end-of-life programs for products and packaging. Industry will also be incentivized to develop more sustainable alternatives. At this time, there are no co-sponsors in the Senate, but this alone is a big step to addressing this problem and validating its importance.

<https://www.tomudall.senate.gov/news/press-releases/udall-lowenthal-release-outline-of->



Core members of the local Rethinking Plastics Group: Jana Hoefling, Cat Dillard, Paul Murphy, Bruce Black and Mark Rieke

[legislation-to-tackle-plastic-waste-pollution-crisis](#)

Personal accountability is paramount when it comes to single-use plastic. It is so easy to do what's convenient and let ourselves be served over and over again in a container that can be tossed when we are finished with it. Millions of these items are thrown out every day. Don't give in to convenience. Once you address the issue and find your solution, make yourself stick with it. Do you like your Chai Lattes from your favorite coffee place but they won't use your cup because of Covid-19? Buy some Chai at the supermarket and make your own at home. Take your reusable container to the restaurant to bring

home your leftovers, or leave them there if your only choice is polystyrene. It's difficult at first, but once you commit, it becomes a no-brainer.

Rethinking Plastic is a local group making strides to support sustainability in current times of convenience. It is imperative that we find alternatives for single-use plastics in the food industry. Our aim is to research, educate and collaborate. As depicted in our logo, we strive to help individuals and restaurants become Bad Five Free! Visit us at www.rethinkingplastic.org, Facebook and Instagram to contact us or find out more.

Transition Sarasota Dares to Grow in 2020!

BY REBECCA BREY

This year, Transition Sarasota invites you to celebrate with us and Dare to Grow! Dare to Grow is our 2020 campaign to grow our resources, grow our impact, and grow our community. We're looking to create an even larger dent on food waste and hunger in our community. We're striving to grow by strategically gleaning more, starting community conversations, volunteering with partner organizations and increasing our farm partnerships.

DARK FACTS: The facts about food waste in our country are EXTREME.

- 40% of food produced goes uneaten. (<https://www.usda.gov/foodwaste/>)
- Food makes up 1/5 of our landfill space in Nokomis.
- Nationwide, 10 Million tons of produce is discarded or left unharvested on farms. (<https://www.refed.com>)
- That's the equivalent to 52,631 Blue Whales (which is more whales than are even believed to be in existence.)

Wasting all this food is EXPENSIVE to our health, our community, and the environment. If "food loss and waste" were it's own country, the greenhouse gases it produces would rank third highest in the world. (<https://www.wri.org>)

FLIPSIDE: Think about the last time you sat down with 6 people you know, at least 1 of them is food insecure and may not know where or when their next meal is coming from. The statistics are 1 in 6 Americans and 1 in 5 children may not know where their next meal is coming from. Having to live with food insecurity has serious health, learning, and safety complications. No one should have to choose between learning, important healthcare, or healthy food.

BRIGHT SIDE: Within this behemoth of a problem there is an incredible opportunity for



In 2019 Transition Sarasota's Gleaning Project volunteers harvested over 32,000 pounds of fresh, local produce to donate to our community in need.

solutions. We strongly believe food loss and waste is a problem that can be SOLVED. In the process, it can provide additional opportunities to solve hunger, create green jobs, and reunite us with our neighbors. Diverting just 15% of food waste would cut the number of food insecure Americans in HALF.

Transition Sarasota is committed to walking the walk with our initiatives - eliminating food waste and feeding the hungry through the Suncoast Gleaning Project and building community conversations through Eat Local Week.

NEWSFLASH: Eat Local Week is moving to March 2021! Specific dates coming soon. We're excited to share this week with you during National

Nutrition Month and to allow participating restaurants access to more produce during the Florida growing season. We hope you'll join us!

SAVE THE DATE - April 28 - 29: **THREE TIMES** the impact when you give to Transition Sarasota during The Giving Challenge presented by the Community Foundation of Sarasota with giving strengthened by The Patterson Foundation and Transition Sarasota's Board of Directors. Come hang with us and other enviro-organizations at Fogartyville the evening of April 28!

Join us and learn more at TransitionSRQ.org.

Say 'Yes' to Composting

BY TRACIE TROXLER

Soil loves compost. That is the message behind this year's International Compost Awareness Week being celebrated around the nation from May 3-9, 2020. For those who didn't realize that there is a national effort to spread awareness about the importance of composting and feeding soil, this is the time to tune in. It is a time to gather together, share what we have learned, and continue to grow a culture of composting and regeneration in our region and across the planet.

Locally, plans are in the works for a family-friendly education and action event on May 9th in Gillespie Park to celebrate composting, creativity and community. The event is being organized by Sunshine Community Compost in partnership with the Gillespie Park neighborhood association, who was the first community group in Sarasota to say "yes" to a community composting pilot program. Since the start of that program in 2017, two additional community compost programs have been put in place and over 40,000 pounds of food scraps have been diverted from the landfill and transformed into compost for gardens and land-care projects.

It is an exciting time to participate in the regeneration movement. We are moving beyond the notion of sustainability and towards internal and external renewal and revitalization of our planet and ourselves, indicating some level of

focus as a culture back to our roots and into the soil. The soil that has sustained our communities



for generations is being recognized as a solution to many rising planetary challenges. If we want healthy watersheds and a thriving, water-centric economy in Florida, we need to look hard at what is happening to the soil on our farms and in our landscapes. If we want to draw down carbon, we need healthy soil to be able to interconnect with

key players in the web of life to do that work. If we want nutrient dense food, we need nutrient dense soil. If we want food to be the medicine that it was intended to be, we must take action to care for and feed the soil.

The time has come to remember that life on the planet is uplifted when humans participate in and celebrate natural cycles of life. This collective remembering informs us that there is no separation in the web of life and clarifies a deeper knowing that what we choose to do - or not to do - to any part of the web affects the whole.

How can you get involved? Start first by reducing behaviors that lead to the wasting of food. Instead of extracting life in the form of food from the soil and tossing it into the landfill where nutrients cannot be recovered - choose differently. Secondly, we can feed the soil by returning the valuable nutrients embodied in the scraps we peel away and compost them. Thirdly, if you or your family would like to learn more, then join us on May 9 to celebrate International Compost Awareness Week! Sunshine Community Compost will follow local, state and national guidance to support public health during the COVID-19 outbreak. If social distancing is still urged or required as May 9th approaches, we intend to honor public health guidance and invite you instead to follow us online for tips, tools and activities during International Compost Awareness Week. More details at sunshinecommunitycompost.org.

Opinion: Abolish Corporate Personhood

BY WILLIAM “COTY” KELLER,
FLORIDA VETERANS FOR
COMMON SENSE

Constitutional Rights originally meant to protect human beings from the potentially oppressive powers of our government now belong to corporations. Corporate Personhood has its roots in the 19th Century with a precedent set by the 1886 Supreme Court case (Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad). That case resulted in corporations being entitled to the same rights as people. Since then, corporations have claimed these constitutional rights in Federal Court to overturn, weaken and circumvent laws designed to protect the environment, worker safety, public health and myriad other laws. The 2010 Supreme Court decision in the Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission is the most recent and flagrant example. One of the most egregious tenets of Corporate Personhood is equating the spending of money in political campaigns with free speech as protected by the First Amendment. This equivalence allows those with the most money to speak with the loudest voice. The result is giving artificial entities undue access, privilege, and leverage. Thus, disempowering real persons.

The remedy is to amend the Constitution to check previous precedent and rulings of the Supreme Court. The *We the People Amendment* (H.J. Res. 48), now before Congress, establishes that only living human beings, not corporations, are endowed with Constitutional rights and that money is not the same as speech. It also mandates the regulation, limitation, or prohibition of political money in elections.

With growing public support for a 28th Amendment to squelch the power of corporations and money in elections, several alternative Amendments have come before Congress. It is important that we recognize that these proposals, while well intended, are not equivalent to the *We the People Amendment* (H.J. Res. 48). The *Democracy for All Amendment* is presently in the House and Senate (H.J. Res. 2 and S.J. Res. 51). Another bill (H.J. Res. 57) is before the House. We should all be aware that the *We the People Amendment* calls for abolishing all forms of “corporate personhood” (i.e., corporate constitutional rights). The H.J. Res. 2, S.J. Res. 51, and H.J. Res. 57 Amendment proposals have no equivalent provisions. The *We the People Amendment* also states that governments “shall” regulate, limit or prohibit political money in elections. The alternative Amendments do not mandate control of money in elections. Instead, the *Democracy for All Amendment* says government “may” regulate political money in elections. H.J. Res. 57 states, “... nothing in the Constitution prohibits Congress from imposing reasonable content-neutral limitations on private campaign contributions ...” The *We the People Amendment* is profoundly more sweeping and effective in legalizing We the People’s right to protect our families, communities, environment, and democracy. The *We the People Amendment* is the only proposed amendment that comprehensively removes the right of personhood from corporations and controls money in elections.

Resolution of all of the important issues our nation faces including healthcare, the environment, and public safety hinge on retaking our democracy from the yoke of corporate



Jaime Canfield of Move to Amend at MLK Park educating people about the proposed 28th Amendment to the Constitution.

personhood and returning power to real people. Therefore, Florida Veterans for Common Sense (FLVCS) fully supports constitutional rights being reserved for natural persons only and that spending money on elections not be considered protected free speech. FLVCS urges all officials and candidates to pledge support for H.J. Res. 48, the *We the People Amendment*. It alone removes rights reserved for human persons from corporations and requires regulation, limitation, or prohibition of campaign spending. You can contact the FLVCS at FLVeterans@aol.com.

New College Fights to Survive Merger Proposal

Continued from pg. 1

In response to questions from Critical Times, New College is pushing back against the costs, and providing a preview of its strategy to survive another challenge.

First, the state’s numbers don’t reflect New College’s current budget or students, “The House was also looking at state funding per degree, which was reported to be \$197,681. It turns out that value was calculated using our 2019-20 state appropriations divided by the number of degrees we awarded in 2017-18,” said Ann Comer-Woods, the college’s communications and marketing director, in a written statement.

Using proper Education and General funding figures and actual graduates for the respective years, New College reported, the numbers change:

Year	Graduates	E&G Funding (actual)	Funding per degree
2018-19	229	\$36,151,915	\$157,868.62
2017-18	184	\$34,589,562	\$187,986.75

Moreover, New College is in the midst of an expansion plan — encouraged and approved by the Board of Governors, and funded by the legislature — which would increase enrollment to 1,200 students.

New College believes it will reach 1,200 students by 2024, Comer-Woods said, and when it does, the cost numbers change even more drastically. “Once we hit 1200 students – and also meet our goals for growing our Master of Science in Data Science program – we anticipate awarding 325 degrees per year.”

At that point, the number of degrees awarded will have increased 91 percent, which in turn cuts the cost per degree almost in half from the current level, to \$98,535 per degree.



Students rally against the proposed merger.

However, that’s still more than three times University of Florida’s \$31,598 per degree. Whether it would be enough of an improvement to satisfy the legislature is unknown. Comer-Woods said the legislature has given no signal to New College on what would be a satisfactory cost per degree.

In theory, New College could close the gap further by cutting administrative costs, something the Appropriations analysis spotlighted. Asked if New College anticipated cutting staff — the biggest component of administrative costs — Comer-Woods said that was not the College’s plan, but did not rule it out. “We’re focused on per-student costs and the best way for us to reduce those costs is by increasing enrollment,” she said in the statement.

New College’s future may depend on how well it can make that kind of argument, because its officials say it is in the state university system to stay. A return to its roots as a private, independent college is virtually impossible — nor is it desired.

“We do not want to withdraw from the SUS. Florida is the top ranked state in the nation for higher

education and we benefit tremendously from being a member of the State University System,” Comer-Woods said in the statement. “In return, the state benefits from being able to provide a world-class residential, liberal arts education to Florida students. State statutes list New College as a member of the State University System and define our mission and goals. It would take an act of the legislature to withdraw NCF from the SUS.”

Instead, New College’s plan to prove its worth by maintaining its academic reputation while cutting per-graduate costs through growth, according to a statement from President O’Shea:

“New College of Florida holds a special place in the State University System. Once Session ends and the dust settles, we will get to work right away to address the concerns of the Legislature. We will increase our enrollment and graduation rates, thereby decreasing costs and securing our place among the nation’s greatest educational institutions, public or private. Our state, our region, and our students deserve nothing less.”

Vouchers Schools in Sarasota

Continued from pg. 1

If you think this abuse and outrageous behavior perpetuated by voucher-funded schools is limited to the Orlando area, think again. Many of these same horrendous policies are happening right here in Sarasota County at voucher-funded private schools.

There are 36 private schools in Sarasota that take Florida State-supported vouchers—a surprisingly large number when you consider that Sarasota County has only 39 traditional public schools (excluding charter schools). However, many of these schools are quite small and some of the schools have small numbers of students receiving vouchers so the overall numbers amount to 1673 students, which is about 3.8% of total student population in Sarasota County and is at a cost of about \$10-million.

Of the 36 voucher-funded schools, 55% of the schools are religious with the following breakdown: 13 are Christian schools; 5 are Catholic schools; 1 is a Jewish school and 1 is an Islamic school. Interestingly and not surprisingly, the highest performing private schools in Sarasota County, like Out of Door Academy (with a tuition of \$28k), do not accept school vouchers.



School voucher proponents argue that vouchers improve equity and provide choice for low income families and children of color, but in Sarasota very few African American students, the most economically-challenged group in the County, use vouchers to attend private schools. Over 70% of voucher recipients are white students while only 2% are African American (even though African American students comprise 7% of Sarasota District schools).



While there are many reputable private schools receiving voucher-funding, like Cardinal Mooney High School (still a strong argument can and should be made against their funding), there is a sizable grouping of schools in Sarasota County that demonstrate disturbing practices or preach definite ideologies or extreme religious beliefs. These include:

- The Classical Academy of Sarasota, which accepts school vouchers, is based on a model developed by Hillsdale College, a Michigan-based ultra-conservative religious college that

is financially supported by US Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos and her family. The Sarasota Classical Academy, which is one of many Hillsdale College-shaped classical academies dotted throughout the US and Florida, teaches from a “Western canon” perspective emphasizing lecture-based learning and a “back-to-the-basics” approach. It rejects multi-culturalism, forces all students to study Latin and teaches the virtues of free-enterprise.

- A number of Christian schools in Sarasota County accepting vouchers discriminate against LGBTQ students and family members. For example, the Venice Christian School received \$864,972 through State voucher programs in 2018-19 and educates students “in accordance with the truth of scriptures.” Its parent handbook (which is no longer available online) states that the school “retains the right to refuse enrollment to or to expel any student who...professes to be homosexual/bisexual/transsexual (sic) or is a practicing homosexual/bisexual/transsexual (sic), as well as any student who condones, supports or otherwise promotes such practices.”
- The Calvary Chapel School in Sarasota, which last year received \$189,197 in voucher-payments, has similar admission and expulsion policies as the Venice Christian School outlined above. Additionally, the school only admits and retains students who attend church and requires that “at least one parent” also attend church. The school states that it seeks “godly families committed to biblical standards, and students who demonstrate a high level of respect and obedience toward their parents...”
- All 13 of the Sarasota voucher-accepting Christian fundamentalist schools use Christian curriculum products developed by three major vendors: Abeka, BJU Press (Bob Jones University) and Accelerated Christian Education (ACE).
- ACE, the most widely used curriculum in Sarasota Christian fundamentalist schools, is particularly popular and is useful for schools that hire inexperienced staff. ACE is a self-paced, workbook-based curriculum that is available for all subjects K—12th grade. Each workbook is sequenced and self-explanatory, utilizing fill-in-the-blank and multiple-choice worksheets. When a student completes one workbook, the student advances to the next level workbook. The company recommends that students sit in separate cubicles with extensions so as to reduce distractions. The students process these workbooks in multiple subjects all day long. The workbooks provide a “bible-based curriculum” to promote a “God-centered environment of absolutes.” History text books minimize the effects of slavery and the science text books deny evolution.
- The Abeka Curriculum, used at Calvary Chapel School and Venice Christian School, is based on extreme Christian fundamentalist

beliefs. The authors of the curriculum state that they based their curriculum on the belief that “God created the heavens and the earth in six literal days.” The authors state that they “reject the man-made theory of evolution occurring over millions of years.” And further state that “God created man and woman in His own image and instituted marriage between one biological man and one biological woman.”

But the most troubling finding is that of the Westcoast School for Human Development in downtown Sarasota. The Westcoast School, largely funded with Florida school vouchers, was founded by Dr. Henry Porter, a prominent Newtown resident, and former bishop of the Westcoast Center for Human Development. Dr. Porter was arrested on January 2 and charged with several counts of sexual battery with a child under 12. The Sarasota police reported that Porter has multiple allegations of sexual assault, some sources claiming upwards of 40 assaults, over a 30-year span with male children, some as young as 10 years old, who were students at the school. Most of the sexual assaults took place in the school’s inner office while school was in session. Porter remains in jail without bail. While Porter retired from his position at the church and school over three years ago, he still spent considerable time at the school. In a recent phone call to the school, it was learned that the school still receives vouchers from the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship program and the Family Empowerment Scholarship program. None of the local media has linked Dr. Porter and his school to the fact that it has been largely funded through the Florida voucher programs for probably close to 20 years. Could multiple assaults over 20 years have happened in a regulated public school?

Schools like the Westcoast School or the Venice Christian School are able to operate under the radar because they lack regulation and accountability. Incidents like these do not seem to matter to the champions of privatization in the Florida State Legislature, to Governor DeSantis or to Secretary of Education Richard Corcoran. They turn a blind eye to discriminatory practices or harmful educational practices. Secretary Corcoran has said repeatedly, and in public, that he would like to see all of public education “vouchered.”

One glitch has recently surfaced that may limit the expansion of vouchers funded through the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship program—a program that has provided the bulk of the scholarship vouchers. Two young activist Florida House representatives, Reps. Anna Eskamani (D-Orlando) and Carlos Guillermo Smith (D-Orlando) have challenged the legislature to give LGTBQ students receiving vouchers guaranteed protections against discrimination. Their efforts has thus far failed in the legislature, but Eskamani and Smith have taken their case directly to the businesses that donate to the Tax Credit Scholarship program in exchange for tax credits. This is working and thus far seven large businesses, including Wells Fargo, have severed ties with the program costing the program millions of dollars.



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2020 Florida Legislative Session Review

STAFF REPORT

During the most recent Florida Legislative Session, more than 3,500 bills were introduced with only 207 passing into law. This year the legislature paved the way for teacher raises, approved compensation for college athletes and passed an expanded school voucher program (see article by Carol Lerner).

Some bills that passed:

Parental Consent Girls under the age of 18 will have to get a parent's permission before having an abortion under SB404 passed by the Florida Legislature. The bill has a provision that will allow a girl to ask a judge for a waiver from the law in cases of abuse, incest or when involving a parent could cause more harm than allowing the procedure.

Barriers to Citizen Initiatives SB1794 raises the threshold for the number of signatures required before the Supreme Court reviews an initiative for placement on the ballot from 10% to 25% of voters in at least half the state's districts. This bill will increase the cost and complexity of the petition process

Term Limits Senators imposed term limits (12 years) on the job of public counsel at the Public Service Commission. In rate hearings, counsel J.R. Kelly has repeatedly stood up for consumers against powerful utility companies, which have a monopoly on the state's power grid and donate millions of dollars to lawmakers' political committees to keep it that way. So far this election cycle, Florida Power & Light has donated \$3.1 million to 2020 campaigns and political committees since the November 2018 election. TECO Energy has given almost \$1.2 million and Duke Energy has spent about \$870,000.

Compensation for College Athletes SB646 has been characterized as a "bill of rights" for Florida college athletes in outlining how they can earn compensation for their "name, image, likeness or persona."

Bills that did not pass:

NCF Merger From out of nowhere a plan emerged to merge the smallest state universities — New College in Sarasota and Florida Polytechnic in Lakeland — with the University of Florida. The bill failed but will come up again in next year's legislative session. (Read more about this effort in Dave Gulliver's article in this edition of Critical Times)

Gun-show loophole A modest bill (SB 7028) to close the gun-show loophole by requiring background checks on private gun sales, an idea supported by more than 90% of Americans, died in committee.

School Safety HB 7065 which would have implemented further recommendations of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas commission failed to pass. Stand With Parkland has called for a Special Session to address the issue.

School Board Term Limits Nearly three decades after voters approved term limits for state lawmakers, the House this year passed a measure (HJR 157) that sought to place similar eight-year limits on county school-board members. Senators were divided on the proposal and it did not come up for a vote on the Senate floor.



Senate President Bill Galvano was given credit for killing the New College merger bill. Galvano term-limited out of the Senate at this end of this legislative session.

Open government? Lawmakers tried to throw a blanket of secrecy over the searches for the presidents of all 12 state universities and 28 state colleges (SB 774) until a finalist or finalists are chosen. The measure drew fire from open-government advocates, and the Senate did not vote on it. They also attempted to keep secret the addresses and phone numbers of legislators and Cabinet members (SB 832), as well as judicial assistants and county attorneys.

Tree Protection An attempt to repeal last year's law that nullified local tree-protection ordinances went nowhere. A House bill was referred to a committee and never heard from again. No bill was filed in the Senate. The 2019 bill, which appeared to be result of isolated complaints by property owners, was widely condemned by local officials interested in protecting urban tree canopies.

Bottle Bill An effort to revive beverage container deposits did not even get a committee hearing.

THC Cap House leaders pushed to place a cap on the amount of THC in medical marijuana for patients under age 21. But the Senate would not agree to a cap, and the issue was dropped from a broader health-care bill (HB 713).



Office of Energy Move A controversy flared about a House plan to move the state Office of Energy from the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to the Department of Environmental Protection, under Gov. Ron DeSantis. Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried, the only statewide elected Democrat, fought the move, and the Senate scuttled it.

Vacation Rentals Lawmakers considered proposals that would have taken away power from cities and counties to regulate vacation rental properties. Local governments mobilized to fight the proposals (HB 1011 and SB 1128), which did not get votes in the full House or Senate.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS:

Affordable Housing After raiding the state's affordable housing fund for more than \$2 billion over the last two decades, the new state budget fully funds the housing programs at \$370 million in the new year.

State Worker Pay The new budget is set to provide a 3 percent across-the-board raise for all state workers, beginning Oct. 1. It also means a 3 percent pay hike for the governor, Cabinet members, and judges. DeSantis' salary will rise to \$134,181 on Oct. 1. Cabinet members' pay will increase to \$132,841. Supreme Court justices will receive \$227,218, with appellate judges at \$174,641 and circuit judges at \$165,509 a year.

Florida Forever The budget will provide \$100 million for the Florida Forever environmental land-buying program. It will more than triple the \$33 million being spent in the program this year, although it falls short of the \$300 million a year the state spent during the program's peak years.

Visit Florida After the House threatened to end all funding for Visit Florida, the state's tourism-promotion agency, lawmakers agreed to provide \$50 million for the agency this year and extend its life through at least 2023.

Students Have Someone to Lean On at Brookside

BY SALUA RIVERO

Spearheaded by Amy Weinberger and Jordan Stonecypher, the Lean on Me Program at Brookside Middle School is a donor-funded crisis prevention, trauma-informed wellness initiative for students, educators, and families. Launched in October 2019, the program has a three tier model of support. The first tier is access to mentors for students. Students have daily access to mentors and, if needed, they can access social workers at Coastal Behavior Health Care for additional support during a mental health crisis. The second tier is connecting with families. The



school uses Book Circles to connect with parents raising middle school kids. As parents and school personnel share stories, they build community support for the program and for themselves. The third tier is looking out for the well-being

of teachers and administrators. The goal is to reduce the stress placed on the school's staff in different ways.

Program administrators are currently working on an initiative to create a garden space as part of the wellness program. Their philosophy is that the environment in which the kids are learning is a factor which contributes to their overall physical and emotional health, and their academic success. Lean On Me is getting creative in supporting the entire community's mental health. To learn more about the program you can visit: lombrookside.org/welcome