

2 PASCO □ THE TAMPA TRIBUNE □ TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 1998

editorials

Uplifting pickup in Pasco

More than 250 people fanned across Pasco County on Saturday to correct the nasty misdeeds of others. They were not paid. All they got was a T-shirt, refreshments, fast-food coupons and satisfaction.

It was an uplifting example of businesses, residents and government teaming to make Pasco a cleaner, if not better and more attractive, place to live and work.

The occasion was the Glad Bag-a-thon/Great Florida Cleanup. The twist this year was that Pasco as a whole was swooped upon by volunteers, who searched roadways and parking lots and gladly gave up nearly half their weekend. Previously, the cleaning mostly occurred along the Pithlachacote River in west Pasco.

David West, executive director of Keep Pasco Beautiful, saw to it that the spring cleaning was expanded to include Land O' Lakes, Wesley Chapel, Zephyrhills, Dade City and other areas where interest — and community spirit — was high. He is driven by more than picking up trash.

"People have been trained to think that littering is acceptable," West explains. "They litter because it's already there. When people help clean up they're less likely to throw things on the ground. And they'll get used to the people who do it. We're trying to change

people's attitudes and behavior."

Judging from the take — four tons of trash, 50 tires and a nautical surprise — we have a lot of work to do and attitudes to mold.

Divers found an old boat, with motor, in the Pithlachacote. Shopping carts were pulled from retention ponds in Dade City. In Shady Hills, volunteers found more than 10,000 beer bottles, discarded along roads.

Forty-yard Dumpsters overflowed. In Gowers Corner, West says, he saw enough litter to fill two trash cans beside a Dumpster.

It is clear much of the littering could have been prevented by simply securing objects in the beds of trucks or, simpler than that, putting trash in proper receptacles.

The 200 volunteers — residents, business leaders and their employees, and public employees — who dirtied their hands for Pasco were at a bit of a disadvantage. The cleanup fell on a day when many youth groups, all ways dependable, had scheduling conflicts. That makes the volunteers' work more admirable and says much about their character.

"It's cleaner," West says of Pasco. "Obviously, there's a lot of work to be done. I've got several groups wanting to go out and do another cleanup."

Let's do it.

COURTS/Commissioners support switching funding to state

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It's illegal to spend taxpayer money on the effort because the PAC's settlements went to give both sides of the courts funding issue.

Pinman says Florida County courts clerk Karlene DeBaker and other clerks in the state who up the handling bill for four it will jeopardize court operations.

"We are kind of trapped between the devil and the deep blue sea," Pinman said. "I understand why commissioners would want to lower (property) taxes, but then the rest of us would have to scrape by."

At issue is the association of counties support for one of nine packages of proposed constitutional revisions expected to be on the November ballot. Revision 1 would force the state to pay an estimated 60 percent to 65 percent of the cost of running state courts.

Florida's 67 counties now pay

about 54 percent of the \$1.14 billion court bill, said an association spokeswoman. If the proposed revision were in effect this year, it would save Florida counties about \$72 million.

But Pinman said there's hardly enough money now to operate Pasco's court system.

"I love my county commissioners, but you have to look after your own office," he said.

Pinman plans to talk to commissioners at their 9:30 a.m. meeting today in Dade City. He wasn't at last week's meeting.

The Pasco clerk's office has an annual operating budget of about \$8 million, he said. About \$5.3 million comes from the county.

Pinman accused commissioners of driving political games in trying to shift responsibility for the courts to the state Legislature.

"If they (commissioners) lower taxes, they look good," he said.

But Pasco residents are going to pay one way or another, Pinman

said. They either pay it to the county or to the state.

Association executive Director Vivian Zarick disagrees. The present tax system, she said, unfairly burdens the property owners who pay taxes.

In some smaller counties, only 30 percent to 40 percent of the state's \$2.05 billion operational budget, Zarick said. They support the court system.

"It is not accurate that it is just a shift," she said. "It is a realignment."

If the state Legislature funds the system, then more from other sources will be used and everyone who uses the courts will pay, she said.

One of the state's largest sources of revenue is sales taxes.

Man jailed in armed robbery

DADE CITY — Zephyrhills police caught a man early Monday accused of using a pellet rifle to rob three people of about \$172.

Dade City police said Donald Wayne Wornack, 33, of 1817 U.S. 90 Highway in Dade City, was charged with two counts of armed robbery and two counts of petty theft, police said. He was being held in the Land O' Lakes jail Monday, with bail set at \$81,500.

Around 11:30 p.m. Sunday, according to police, the robber came upon two people sitting in a car, waiting for a friend to arrive work at ABC Plaza on South U.S. 301.

The suspect used the 1987 Buick Chrysler he drove to block the victim's car, then walked up to the driver's side with the rifle and demanded money, police said.

Although they handed over what they had, he stuck the rifle in their faces, cocked it and threatened to shoot them as he demanded more money, police said. He then ordered them out of the car. As they did, he jumped into his car and drove off.

At 12:45 a.m., Wornack approached a woman walking across an intersection in the West Dade parking lot on South U.S. 301, police said. He stuck the rifle in her stomach and demanded money, police said.

Zephyrhills police stopped Wornack's car about 15 minutes later.

3 arrested in store holdup

BLANTON — Two men robbed a store at gunpoint Monday morning, and three people were arrested later in the day.

The robbers, armed with a shotgun, hit Vaughn's Country Store at 2405 Blanton Road about 9:54 a.m., sheriff's spokesman Jim Powers said. Nobody in the store was injured.

At 10:41 a.m., a deputy stopped a 1987 Chevrolet that had tried to elude him at various points between Dade City and Zephyrhills, Powers said. The car — which was later found to be stolen — had Zephyrhills Park on State Road 54.

The three people in the car all were charged in the case, Powers said.

Andre Eugene Simmons, 22, of 2107 White St. in Dade City, was charged with armed robbery, grand theft auto and being a felon in possession of a firearm. He was being held without bail in the Land O' Lakes jail.

Thomas Cabin Turner, 19, of 3809 Travis Lane in Zephyrhills, faces the same three charges. He also was being held without bail in the jail.

Michael Jay Thomas, 26, of 1150 Jerry Lane in Dade City, was charged with armed robbery and grand theft auto. He was being held in the jail, with bail set at \$63,000.

Espora said Simmons, armed with the shotgun, and Thomas robbed the store of several hundred dollars while Turner waited in the car.

Missing woman tips investigated

AGASSON — A woman whose finger was found last week along U.S. 19 remained missing Monday, while detectives received 38 calls about her over the weekend, sheriff's spokesman Jim Powers said.

"We are in the process of following up on them to determine if any of them are worthwhile leads," Powers said. Many of the calls came from people who believe they saw Diane August at different places throughout the area.

August, 60, of 1700 Chesapeake Drive in Odessa, had been seen the afternoon of April 10 near a bar at State Road 52 and Little Road. A heavy drinker, August also suffers from manic depression and hadn't been taking her medication, her family has said.

A woman calling to work last Wednesday spotted a finger by the side of U.S. 19 near New York Avenue. Via fingerprints, sheriff's technicians determined the finger belonged to August.

Anyone with information about August is asked to call Detective Jeff Bousquet at 940-864-2002, Ext. 7427.

Program geared toward women

ZEPHYRHILLS — Young women interested in nontraditional occupations should plan to attend "A Woman's Place is Anywhere She Wants to Be" tonight at 7 p.m. at the Silver Hill Community Center at Zephyrhills Park on State Road 54.

The program, presented by the Pasco East Chapter of the American Business Women's Association, will host women from several

occupations traditionally filled by men — including auto mechanics, law enforcement, construction and computers.

The event, jointly because of the nation's annual Take Our Daughters to Work Day on Thursday, is free and open to the public. Call 752-6717 for information.

Teen is accused in BB gun shooting

PORT RICHEY — A teen lobbing an 11-year-old girl is accused of shooting her twice with a BB gun, but said he was only playing around, sheriff's reports said.

John David McKnight, 17, of 1150 Grand Drive, was charged Sunday with child abuse and reckless driving to his aunt.

The victim said McKnight shot her Saturday afternoon on the inside of the front leg, then in the back with a pump BB gun, reports said. The girl needed minor medical attention for her injuries.

McKnight admitted to the shooting, but denied trying to hurt the girl, reports said.

Guardian ad Litem seeks volunteers

DADE CITY — April is National Child Abuse and Prevention Month, and the east Pasco County Guardian ad Litem office is seeking volunteers.

The office will hold an open house from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday at the Pasco County Courthouse in Dade City.

The office represents the interests of children in court matters in which they are either victims or witnesses in criminal or civil cases. No special education or background is required to volunteer.

For information, call Marge Palswick at (352) 321-4178.

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