

Senior scholarship drive begins

By KAREN FELDMAN
New-Press Bureau

PUNTA GORDA — Charlotte High School officials have begun their annual drive to get local businesses and clubs to provide scholarships to graduating seniors.

John Kelly, a guidance counselor, said Tuesday he expects the 14 organizations who provided local scholarships last year to do so again this year but that more are needed.

Local scholarships to seniors totaled \$13,000 last year, ranging from \$100 to \$1,000 each, Kelly said. He added that the total figure actually was much higher because students who were already in college might have had their scholarships continued from the previous year.

"Some organizations renew their gifts for all four

years of a college if the student continues to do well in his studies," Kelly said.

About 60 seniors will graduate in May and about 30 percent of those will go on to college.

Kelly said school officials will continue seeking scholarship donors through the end of December and that, early next year, the groups will begin reviewing letters of application written by the seniors.

The scholarships will be presented in May at an awards ceremony to be held at the Port Charlotte Cultural Center.

"The amount of the scholarship does not matter," Kelly said. "From the smallest amount will help students cope with the rising cost of college and it's exciting for the students to receive this sort of recognition."

Anyone interested in getting more information on the drive should call Charlotte High School.

Five charged with arson of pickup truck

New-Press Bureau

PUNTA GORDA — Three Sarasota County men and two juveniles were arrested and charged with arson Tuesday morning after a North Port policeman watched them flee from a burning pickup truck.

According to reports, Patrolman Howard Hernandez was patrolling on Chancellor Boulevard near the Charlotte-Charley County line when he spotted the burning pickup.

As he approached the truck, Hernandez saw a white truck with

five occupants leaving the scene. The car headed into Charlotte County with Hernandez giving pursuit. He finally stopped them on E. 11th and arrested four of the occupants. The fifth occupant was arrested later by Charlotte County sheriff's deputies.

Included among those arrested were two juveniles whose names were not released.

Also arrested were William Mack, 20, Richard Marley Jr., 20, and Francis Joseph Burkley, 17, all of North Port. All were charged with arson but Mack also was

Candidate ticketed after accident

New-Press Bureau

PUNTA GORDA — A county commission candidate was ticketed for violation of the right-of-way after he broadsided a car driven by a court clerk early Tuesday morning.

Tammie McClain, a clerk in the summary court division, was driving her son to school when his car was hit by a pickup driven by Celia, the Democratic candidate for the Dist. 2 seat on the county commission.

According to the report filed by the Punta Gorda Police, Ms. Mc-

CETA

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Allen was driving east on Allen Street when Carr hit her in the intersection of Allen and Elizabeth Street.

Sgt. Jim Vallier, who investigated the accident, said Carr stepped on the stop sign at Elizabeth, then looked out the way but did not before entering the intersection.

No one was injured in the accident.

Vallier said about \$1,300 worth of damage was done to the 1978 Pontiac Catalina driven by Ms. McClain. Carr's 1972 Chevy pickup truck had about \$200 worth of damage to it, Vallier said.

Drug

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"There's definitely something tragically wrong when you contact the Internal Revenue Service regarding a billion-dollar drug profit, and they say they can't help because they're involved in investigating witnesses who are not reporting tips."

Earlier two men, charged by D'Alessandro nearly four years ago with drug smuggling and then granted immunity in exchange for information, testified about a flight they made to Colombia for a pilot-load of narcotics.

Joseph Fiata, a private pilot and Robert Ellrich, who said he was a captain with National Airlines, told of landing their DC-9 on a small airstrip and washing from the cockpit as a large military convoy approached.

"We thought we'd be held," one of pilots told the subcommittee, "but the military didn't come to arrest us. They came with truckloads of marijuana which they loaded onto our plane."

"We granted the two pilots immunity to work up the criminal ledger and grab the people at the top," D'Alessandro said. "We eventually arrested John Darrell Boyd and Tracey Boyd (brothers) and John Piazza, three of the top smugglers in the southeastern United States."

In August, John Darrell Boyd was convicted by a Collier County jury in Naples of smuggling a plane-load of marijuana into Glades County in 1974. A month later, Tracey Boyd pleaded guilty in Naples to importing 15 to 17 tons of marijuana in the same case.

D'Alessandro said the Boyd case originally was a federal case but was prosecuted by his office when federal officials "exhausted evidence that they were not interested."

in pursuing cases in the 20th Judicial Circuit.

Commissioner described "federal administrative" rules regarding U.S. Customs as "absolutely ridiculous."

"Customs officers and agents have done a fine job — despite the fact the federal government is doing everything possible to hinder their efforts with bureaucratic red tape," Cunningham said. "Customs agents contact DEA agents for assistance, and DEA commission officers turns them down."

D'Alessandro said his office currently is investigating a system of transferring money from the United States to South America through about nine banks in the Miami area.

"After checking these banks, we have found over \$75 million going through various phony corporations in personal accounts of several South American citizens, some of which are directly related to members of the Colombian government, even as high as the senate level."

Chiles said D'Alessandro probably would be called to Washington sometime after the first of the year to testify in greater depth before the full committee.

"We definitely want to know a lot more about this cash flow system," Chiles said.

D'Alessandro urged greater harmony between local, state and federal agencies to "at least hamper drug smugglers" but admitted skepticism.

"I have little confidence in this ever happening since we cannot even have a consolidated effort of narcotic enforcement in our country between Customs and DEA, without an enormous amount of backing, red tape and back stabbing."

Murder

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Two organizational meetings for a neighborhood child-protection network held within the last week have attracted over 120 applicants so far. The "Helping Hand" emblem, signifying a house of refuge for a child who is in danger will be distributed Thursday at 10 p.m. in the Port Charlotte Cultural Center meeting room.

According to John Maguire, one of the organizers of the Helping Hand program, those whose applications have been screened by the sheriff's department will receive temporary cardboard bedding blankets after showing proof of identity.

Maguire's wife, Juanita, said the group plans to get electric blankets

later but the cardboard hands will serve temporarily to get the program off the ground.

Maguire added that several civic organizations, from as far away as Sarasota, have contacted him about promoting the program to their members.

Donations to the Linda Plakartz Howard Fund, established last week at Barrett Bank, Port Charlotte, had a balance of \$1,184 as of closing time Tuesday but it is expected to increase this week.

Shirley Hoyt, a mother and owner of the HELPING HAND HOME, said the money is to be rewarded for information which leads to the arrest of a suspect.

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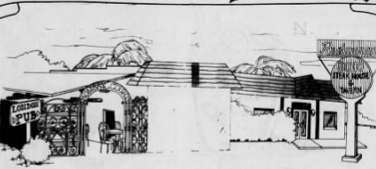
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