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Circuit judge tells students driving is hazardous privilege

By PATRICE E. LEE
News-Press Staff Writer

PUNTA GORDA — Calling auto accidents the greatest killer of young people under 25 years old, Circuit Judge Richard Stanley warned about 500 Charlotte High tenth-graders Friday that driving is a privelege that should not be taken lightly.

Stanley said the country's traffic death rate for one year equals the total number of lives lost during 12 years in Vietnam.

"Any year of the 12 years we were there, there were 50,000 killed on the highways of America," Stanley said.

During his 30-minute presentation on juvenile law held in conjunction with "Law Week," Stanley said that higher insurance rates is one of the lesser evils that can result from a poor driving record.

"Your insurance company might not notice the first ticket," but, Stanley explained that, by law, insurance companies can raise insurance rates 10 percent or more according to the number of points a driver has received.

Gov. Bob Graham has declared this week Law Week in Florida. Stanley's speech was one of the activities that are a part of the county-wide celebration planned by the Charlotte County Bar Association.

The week's events will conclude next Tuesday on Law Day, U.S.A., when the theme of "Our Changing Rights" will be celebrated nationally.

According to Program Chairman Darryl Casanueva, three films are scheduled to be shown at the Port Charlotte Cultural Center theater Monday at 7:30 p.m.

To conclude the week, Casanueva said Tuesday's free seminar on the traffic court system will feature local attorneys advising how to prepare a defense for such cases.

Worker charged with water theft

By PATRICE E. LEE
News-Press Staff Writer

PUNTA GORDA — A construction worker was charged with stealing 13 cents worth of water from a fire hydrant, police records showed.

Robert Henry Tintera, 18, of 1951 Summit Dr., Clearwater, faces a maximum penalty of one year in the county jail and a $1,000 fine for obtaining about 150 gallons of water from a hydrant located at Maud Street and Retta Esplande.

Officer T. W. Branscome, who investigated the case, said Friday that the water was to be used by Dixie Drilling Co., Tintera's employer.

Branscome said that Tintera was arrested for using the fire hydrant without permission, rather than for actually using the water.

Branscome also said that he felt the court would be fair with Tintera, since he was acting under his employer's orders.

Branscome said Tintera explained that he was ordered to obtain the water by his employer and, after his arrest, he was released on his own recognizance.

Stolen Charlotte High artwork returned

By PATRICE E. LEE
News-Press Staff Writer

PUNTA GORDA — A Charlotte High School student has been suspended in connection with an artwork stolen from the school, the Charlotte County Sheriff's Department reported Friday.

Deputy John Hause said that a student had admitted taking the lead crucifix from an empty locker located next to the art room, after having observed another student take it from the art room.

According to Hause, the boy said he had a change of heart and put the piece in some bushes at the south end of the school, so it could be seen.

Hause said he decided to allow school officials to handle the boy's punishment after recovering the sculpture Thursday because "it may have started out as a joke."

Hause said the student, whom the deputy declined to name, was suspended for two days and had never before been in trouble.

Hause said the student told him he could not identify the person who removed the artwork from the display case.

Charlotte senior Peggy Collins reported the theft of her sculpture Wednesday but told police she was unsure when it was stolen.

Ms. Collins sculpture had been on display in the school's art room after she won first place in the sculpture division of the high school art show.

A school spokesman was unsure if the artwork would again be displayed.

Case

From Page 1B

On Nov. 14, Phillip L. Drake, 20, was arrested and charged with making false statements under oath during the investigation. Court records said Drake denied loaning his car to friends the day Linda Pikuritz was abducted. LeBeau said his men had learned otherwise.

"We have told everyone we questioned the seriousness of the crime," Clement said sternly.

On Nov. 15, Clement told reporters of a "fruitful" trip out of state in pursuit of the killer. That same day, Assistant State Atty. Gene Berry said Drake wasn't a suspect in the murder.

The next day, Charlotte investigators broadcast a statewide alert for an Illinois man, Brian Patrick Kane, 22. They said he was wanted for questioning in the case.

On Nov. 18, LeBeau announced, "We're very anxious to question Brian Patrick Kane regarding the Linda Pikurtiz homicide."

LeBeau said Kane wasn't a murder suspect, but had information that could "lead us directly to the person or persons responsible."

On Nov. 21, Kane turned himself in to authorities in Madeira Beach. He said he'd be glad to talk.

"We have three or four good suspects," LeBeau announced hopefully. "Now all we have to do is prove one of them did it."

LeBeau's Public Information Officer, Byron Snowden, told reporters more than 75 persons had been questionied about the crime.

On Nov. 26, investigators said they were finished questioning Kane.

Snowden said no charges would be filed.

During this period, the Animal Welfare League in Port Charlotte reported a dramatic surge in the sale of watchdogs to worried residents. Sellers of door locks and guns reported an anxious demand for their goods.

Dec. 1 came and went.

"There are no new suspects," Snowden told reporters.

A careful, painstaking restudy of the case supposedly began at this point.

"The investigators are going over everything from the start," Snowden explained.

Two more months passed.

During that time, LeBeau announced that two investigators had been assigned "fulltime" to "sift through testimony and evidence."

"Things could be brighter," Clement conceded. "But we're working on it."

It was after the first two months of investigation, inside sources insist, that the chase settled into a "dormant" phase. At the very least, others argue, activity by the investigators appeared to diminish.

As the six month mark approached, the two investigators who had been assigned full time to the case, were pulled off.

Jones, who had been working as a road deputy, was assigned "full-time" to the Pikuritz case.

"Sometimes you get too close to an investigation," LeBeau said at the time. "You can't see the forest for the trees. Jones has uncovered a couple of rocks that were unturned before. He's working on it every day, going from A to Z on the case again. I feel confident the perpetrator will be found."

If the sources close to the investigation are correct, Jones spent his first week sitting in the department, sorting through chaos. LeBeau doesn't deny that he did.

About one week later, Charlotte authorities asked for help from the Florida Department of Criminal Law Enforcement. The state agency, whose expertise had been available from the beginning, dispatched an agent. He has worked with Jones since that time.

Prosecutor Berry offers the strongest rebuttal to all of this.

"It's an active investigation," he said. "Very active. It was not just put on the back burner. It's being actively worked. I think they (the sheriff's office) have had a very difficult case on their hands and it is still difficult. The only way to work a difficult case is with perseverance."

Grant

From Page 1B

tions, deteriorating streets, an insufficient drainage system and a lack of recreational facilities.

The proposed program would rehabilitate at least 35 homes, tear down about 10 more, build a $52,000 playground, improve several streets and provide adequate drainage.

If the city receives funding for another two years, the application has a number of projects outlined.

According to the document, there is a need to increase the production of low and moderate income housing in the city. Other than the work of the housing authority, it states, production of such housing has been inadequate.

Those planning to construct and finance low or moderate income housing must have some assistance, according to the application.

Under a two- or three-year program, additional streets would be repaved and deteriorating storm drains would be replaced.

It also states the city must increase its water and sewage treatment facilities to accommodate the rapidly increasing population of the city and states that the city has begun several projects to carry out these goals.

The Punta Gorda Housing Authority has agreed to oversee the program when the city receives funding. An administrator will be hired by the agency once the program is underway.

The formal application must be sent to HUD by May 15 and, if approved as expected, the city will receive the first year's funding by Aug. 15.

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THE NEWS-PRESS is looking for sharp aggressive boys & girls with neat appearance for sales work after school and Saturdays. For more information call Bill Howard, 629-1650.

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MUSICIANS wanted for Country Rock Band. Guitar, drums & piano. Must be mature & willing to travel. 629-2266.

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TUESDAY, MAY 1	
Fish Square w/sauces, Macaroni & Cheese, Buttered Spinach, Celery Sticks, Hot Roll, Applesauce, Milk.	Fish Square w/tartar sauce, Macaroni & Cheese, Buttered Spinach, Celery Sticks, Cornbread, Applesauce, Milk.
WEDNESDAY, MAY 2	
Barbecue Beef w/Bun, Tater Tots, Apple & Cabbage Slaw, Fruit Cup, Milk.	Barbecue on bun, Tater Tots, Apple & Cabbage Slaw, Green Beans, Pineapple Cake, Milk.
THURSDAY, MAY 3	
Roast Turkey w/gravy, Sweet Potato Casserole, Buttered Peas, Biscuit, Pineapple, Milk.	Roast Turkey w/gravy, Sweet Potato Casserole, Buttered Peas, Biscuit, Peaches, Milk.
FRIDAY, MAY 4	
Country Fried Steak, Mashed potatoes w/gravy, Buttered Broccoli, Carrot & Celery Sticks, Hot Roll, Custard Pudding, Milk.	Lasagna, Buttered Broccoli, Florida Salad, Garlic Bread, Apple Crisp, Milk.

Menus subject to change if conditions warrant.

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