HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN Monday, October 25, 2021



VOL. 102 | NO. 298 | \$1.00

YOUR HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER SINCE 1919



FILE PHOTO

Ciara Martz and Shawn Martz, along with Anna Freitas, in background, prepare barbecue sandwich meals for the 2019 annual Sebring Sunrise Rotary Club First Responders Appreciation Lunch. This year's event is this Thursday, Oct. 28, for fire, EMS, law enforcement and all their service personnel.

Rotarians host BBQ for responders

By PHIL ATTINGER STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — Firefighters, EMS, law enforcement and their support staff will get fresh-grilled barbecue this Thursday, for the sixth year in a row.

Last year they served 300 meals, said Debra Weiser, secretary of the Sebring Sunrise Rotary Club, and may have more this year, as they deliver

to emergency responders' substations throughout the county.

Four years ago, they set up their smokers, pop-up tents, tables and coolers in the back parking lot of the Highlands County Sheriff's Office, behind the then-new administration building. This Thursday, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., will find them at the Fireman's Pavilion at the Highlands County Fairgrounds.

This year's event corresponds to National First **Responders** Appreciation Day, which was designated as Oct. 28 in 2017 to recognize the men and women who make it their business to take immediate action when disaster strikes. Examples include those firefighters, police, paramedics and others who rushed toward Lower Manhattan and/or into the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001, to

deal with a terrorist act or those in Highlands County who rushed on Jan. 23, 2019, to the scene of an active shooter at the former SunTrust Bank in Sebring.

"Whether you've had your own emergency or not, it's not hard to understand and appreciate the dangerous and difficult work they do," states the entry

HOST | 3A

Elections Supervisors speak out against disparaging 2020 vote

By PHIL ATTINGER STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — One year later, as many candidates and elected officials continue to dispute the results of the 2020 presidential election, the Florida Supervisors of Elections association has asked them to tone down the rhetoric or risk undermining all national and local elections.

"The Great American Experiment, our cherished democracy, is under threat. Our nation is only as strong as the faith our citizens have that their voice, their vote, has a say in our government," Florida's elections supervisors said in a statement released this week. "In this hour, public trust in our elections is being systematically undermined, to the detriment of all Americans."

The letter goes on to state that elections officials take "We the People," as a professional and personal mantra to ensure elections on every level are secure, sound and fair. They continuously strive to debunk false claims, the letter states, and provide voters with accurate election information.

"We are dedicated to the cause of election integrity, ensuring that every eligible voter's ballot is counted accurately and that no fraud takes place. But false claims of fraud do not strengthen our elections," the letter states. "Instead, they degrade confidence in the institutions, and discourage citizen participation in our democracy." The "misinformation, disinformation and malinformation" that has circulated in the last year has not only sown discord and undermined trust, the letter states, but has led to many election supervisors being threatened by their fellow citizens. "There is 'politics' and then there's 'elections,'" Assistant Supervisor of Election Karen Healy said. "If this misinformation and malinformation is out there, it does nothing but undermine the public confidence in what we do." Healy said most people probably don't realize the level of security factors elections workers have in place to ensure no one tampers with or mishandles ballots. Those measures include security cameras and locked ballot boxes brought in with care from the polls. They also include constant upgrades to their computer software and hardware to prevent cyberattacks. The Supervisor of Elections Office has glass partitions that allow the public to come in and view the process, she said. Not many do. A recent publicized demonstration Friday afternoon in Avon Park of a Logic and Accuracy Test of all election equipment was attended by the Avon Park City Canvassing Board members, but not by the public, she said, even though it was open to the public. For the 2021-21 fiscal year, the Supervisor of Elections Office has a \$1.22 million budget, nearly twice this previous fiscal year's budget. It's in preparation for Florida's gubernatorial and the national mid-term elections on Nov. 8, 2022, shortly after the end of the fiscal year.

ROMONA WASHINGTON/STAFF

Jo Ann Serdynski talks with the girls at Beauty Fit For a Queen while they package patient support kits for Who I Am.

Organizations, students help Who I Am Foundation

STAFF REPORT

thing for them. Helping put

Community service

The budget year is split between the primary and general elections, Healy said.

VOTE | 3A

SEBRING — When word first started to spread about the Who I Am Foundation patient support kits, a group of young ladies jumped at the chance to help them get started.

Brittney Fann, director of Beauty Fit for a Oueen, first learned about Who I Am Foundation when visiting with co-founders Tracy Stites and Jo Ann Serdynski.

Fann told Emilie Franklin, who is Miss Highlands County, about the foundation's mission and she wanted to get the group involved.

The Who I Am Patient Support Kit contains information on national, state and local Highlands County support organizations like Meals on Wheels and social services. Most importantly the 28-by-24inch wall hanging has 13



ROMONA WASHINGTON/STAFF

The girls at Beauty Fit for a Queen helped package patient support kits for the Who I Am Foundation.

clear pockets families can fill with pictures and notes from loved ones. Five of the clear pockets hold Who I Am cards the family can fill out to tell the patient's story when a family member cannot be there. These wall

hangings are made with hospital grade plastic so they can be hung inside the patient's room.

Fann said, "The girls come in and they know people, or have family members who have passed. It's a personal

the kits together, the girls know they are going into the rooms of patients and will help their caretakers know them better. It is encouraging for the girls to do this.

Fann and Franklin gathered about 20 middle school and high school girls from Sebring and Wauchula to help package the kits for a first round of distribution.

Of the three boxes of kits that the girls worked through, 60 went to AdventHealth in Sebring, 10 each to the Avon Park, Sebring and Lake Placid chambers of commerce and 10 to a volunteer working specifically with families with loved ones in COVID isolation at Baycare in Plant City.

Stites and Serdynski opened the gathering by telling why the foundation

SERVICE | 2A

New position focuses on improving school attendance

By MARC VALERO STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — The School District has a new position called "attendance liaison," to help student attendance, which is one of the areas the district has focused on improving.

At a recent meeting of the School Board of Highlands County, a few administrators provided an update on the district's efforts to achieve the Stock Take goals,

student performance to recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff.

Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services Melissa Blackman provided an update on the area she is overseeing — Development of the Whole Child, which focuses on the learning environment and that a student's physical and mental needs are being met when they are in school.

In order for students to

Viewpoints..... A6

Weather...... A8

which range from improving benefit from the highly effective teaching strategies in Goal 1, they need to be in school and attentive to their teacher's instruction, she said.

> The three main strategies are improving attendance, improved discipline and expanding the mentorship program.

The goal is to increase the percentage of students who are present for more than 90% of their time enrolled.

Good morning To

Carol Derrick

Thanks for reading!

"We began in 2018-19 with 77% of our students attending at least 90% of the time and we all know has happened with attendance over the last couple of years," Blackman said.

A chart showed that at the end of the 2018-19 school year it slipped a bit to 75% and was back to 78% at the end of the third nine weeks of the 2019-20 school year.

At the end of the 2020-21,

facebook com

highlandsnewssun

NEW 3A

witter.com



Classifieds	.B4-6	Sports B1
Comics	B7-10	TV Listings A7
Lottery	A2	



1. The original "Ghostbusters" cast was to include John Belushi as Peter Venkman and Eddie Murphy as Winston Zeddemore. Belushi's death required recasting, and Murphy's Beverly Hills Cop contract prevented him from being able to commit.

2. Both Huey Lewis and Lindsey Buckingham were offered the opportunity for the "Ghostbusters" theme song, but in the end Ray Parker Jr. won out, and reportedly wrote it in less than two days. Huey Lewis went on to sue Parker, claiming the theme was a blatant ripoff of his hit "I Want A New Drug." The suit was settled out of court in 1985.

3. The exploding Marshmallow Man goo was powerful. To achieve the melty look, they dumped 50 gallons of shaving cream on actor William Atherton, nearly knocking him to the ground.

4. There were several cameo appearances in "Ghostbusters," including Larry King, and '80s pop star Debbie Gibson, who played the birthday girl in a pink bow at Tavern On The Green.

5. Many of the montage sequences of the gang running around New York were shot without permits. In one particular shot, a real security guard can be seen chasing after them.

Source: thrilllist.com

LOTTERY NUMBERS

POWERBALL

Saturday, October 23, 2021 10-30-51-57-63-20-x2 Next Jackpot: Monday, October 25, 2021 \$93 MILLION Winning Numbers 3-8-10-11-33-7

MEGA MILLIONS

Friday, October 22, 2021 9-14-26-29-66-22-x3 **Winning Numbers** Next Jackpot: Tuesday, October 26, 2021 \$20 MILLION

LOTTO

Saturday, October 23, 2021





Roquiz honored, stays humble

By PHIL ATTINGER STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — A good man is hard to find, but not a good doctor, unless that doctor is as humble as Dr. Placido Roquiz, who puts God, family and his patients before accolades.

When awarded this year's Surgeon of the Year by the Highlands News-Sun, not only was he speechless, or pose for a photograph, he could not be reached for a photo or comment.

When sought at his practice or via phone, he was not available, but staff at his son's medical practice said they were off at an important family function.

As described by his son Dr. Andrew Roquiz, who practices family medicine in the Sebring area, his family stays close and have celebrated life, even in the face of the loss of his mother, Dr. Placido

Roquiz's wife, last year. Dr. Andrew Roquiz wrote in his blog, "The Christian Doctor," of the light-heartedness of his family, how they were convinced his mother would not want a funeral,

SERVICE **FROM PAGE 1A**

was formed and how the girls could help. As the girls wrapped up this community service



COURTESY PHOTO/ROQUIZ FAMILY

Dr. Placido Roquiz Jr. and his wife, Nida, pause at a formal function. Dr. Roquiz has been named this year as the Highlander Awards Surgeon of the Year for 2021.

but instead would want a Celebration of Life with laughter, food, parties, faith, family, generosity and music. The essence of her life was the essence of life, he wrote. Photos of their family, especially of her and Dr. Placido Roquiz together show a couple in love with life and with each other.

Dr. Placido Roquiz, on his own social media outlet, recorded a video a few years ago, singing of the immense joy of seeing his daughter become a bride.

His passion comes out in his work, as well, as

described by 77-yearold Donna Pierce, who arrived at AdventHealth Sebring's Emergency Room one day sick at her stomach, soon to learn she needed a hernia operation.

That's when she met Dr. Placido Roquiz, called in for the emergency surgery.

"When he came in, he asked if I would mind if he said a prayer. I thought, 'That is amazing,"" Pierce said. "He just set me at ease, like an old doctor who just cared

about his patients."

Pierce said he said a prayer for her and for him and to guide his hands during the surgery, to make the surgery a success and to have God watch over it and them.

"He really put me at ease," Pierce said.

Pierce, who has split each years since 2000 between Highlands County and Alexandria, Indiana, said the surgery couldn't have gone smoother. She said preparation went well and the scar "looks great," too.

"He just needs to keep working," Pierce said. "He's just a beautiful person. That's a quality that has to come within your heart."

Dr. Roquiz is listed as having graduated from the Manila Central University Filemon D. Tanchoco Foundation College of Medicine in 1978. He is a general surgeon in Sebring and is affiliated with multiple hospitals in the area, including AdventHealth Sebring and Highlands Regional Medical Center.

Patients praise him as one who listens closely, attentively, and one who explains the situation to them clearly and kindly.



JACKPOT TRIPLE PLAY Friday, October 22, 2021

Tuesday, October 26, 2021

FANTASY 5

Saturday, October 23, 2021

PICK 5

Sunday, October 24, 2021

Saturday, October 23, 2021

5-21-28-39-43-45

Winning Numbers

Next Jackpot:

10-12-14-15-27

5-5-6-4-6-7

\$425,000

Family Owned & Operated Since 1978 560 U.S. 27 North Sebring, FL 33870 (863) 385-4796 CarpetPatioBlinds.com

to hear the mission of this project so they know the difference they can make helping an organization or a program. They (Serdynski and Stites) have made something beautiful out of something so sad," Fann said.

Some of the girls who helped with the project included Aurora and Sapphire Denz, Roxie Lipowski, Audrey Coulter, Macie and Brooke Fann, Annandra Ramkissoon, Scarlett Lackey, Emilie Franklin, Rylie Schewe, Charlee Prendergast, Adrianna Sarmiento, Octavia Boone, Willow Hines and Alyssa Coulter.

Last week, students from Avon Park High School and more volunteer adults put together over 250 of Patient Support Kits. The week prior, over 150 were completed by students from Sebring and Wauchula.

Again today, Monday, Oct. 25, volunteers will

SUPPORT KITS FOR WHO I A

be at the Rotary Club in Avon Park from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. On Nov. 2, student volunteers will be in Sebring at the Lagrow Irrigation Warehouse on U.S. 27.

The Who I Am Foundation provides free Who I Am Support Kits to anyone with a loved one admitted to an infectious disease isolation unit. They are also free to families with special needs children and adults admitted into any type of room, as well as families of any patient who is non-verbal.

The kits are available for patients at AdventHealth Sebring, all local chambers of commerce and through the website at whoiamfoundation.com.

Watch the Who I Am Foundation Facebook page for schedules of when students can get



ROMONA WASHINGTON/STAFF

Some of the girls who helped package patient support kits for Who I Am offer prayers over the kits before they are delivered to hospitals where they will be distributed to families for their loved ones who are unable to communicate.

community service hours by helping prepare the patient support kits. For more information or to request a kit, visit whoiamfoundation.com. Donations can be made at the website, or mail a

check payable to Jo Ann Serdynski, Who I Am Foundation, P.O. Box 866, Avon Park, FL 33826.

For more information about Beauty Fit for a Queen, email info.beautyfitforaqueen@gmail.com

HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN IR HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER SINCE 919 ighlandsnewssun.cdm

The Highlands News-Sun (USPS 487 900-SN 2473-0068) is published daily by Гim Smolarick at the Highlands News-S 1 Ridgewood Drive, Sebring, FL 33 70. eriodical postage paid at Lakeland nd additional entry office(s). All mat rial ontained herein is the property of hlands News-Sun, which is an affilia te of Media. Reproduction in whole or ir part rbidden without the written permi sion he publisher. All material submitte blication becomes the property of spaper and may be edited for clarit and ace, as well as reprinted, published nd d in all media. Postmaster: Send ad ress changes to : Highlands News-Sun N. Ridgewood Drive, Sebring, FL 3 870. COMMITMENT TO ACCURACY The Highlands News-Sun promp

corrects errors of fact appearing in its news stories. If you believe we have made an error, call the newsroom at 863-385-6155. If you have a question or comment about coverage, write to Romona Washington, executive editor, 321 N. Ridgewood Drive, Sebring, FL 33870; email romona.washington@ highlandsnewssun.com or call 863-386-5634.

> OFFICE Location: 321 Ridgewood Drive, Sebring, FL 33870 Hours: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday Phone: 863-385-6155 Main Fax: 410-297-0050

SUBSCRIPTION RATES				
13 weeks	Tax	Total		
\$55.12	\$4.13	\$59.25		
26 weeks	Tax	Total		
\$110.24	\$8.27	\$118.51		
52 weeks	Tax	Total		
\$220.48	\$16.54	\$237.02		
EZ Pay	Tax	Total		
\$15.91	\$1.19	\$17.10		

MAIL SUBSCRIPTION RATES 3 months \$74.36 6 months \$133.81 12 months

\$237.02 Your newspaper is delivered by an independent contractor. If you do not receive your home delivered newspaper by 6 a.m. on any daily publication date, or 7 a.m. Sunday, please phone the circulation department at 863-385-6155.

PLACE A CLASSIFIED AD From 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays

Tracy Weikel, Classified Account Executive tracvweikel@highlandsnewssun.com 863-658-0307

> LEGAL ADVERTISING Janet Emerson 863-386-5637 legals@highlandsnewssun.com

SUBMIT NEWS & OBITS Email all obituaries and death notices to obits@highlandsnewssun.com Email all other announcements to highlandsnewssun@highlandsnewssun.com

VP & PUBLISHER, D-R MEDIA

Timothy D. Smolarick 863-386-5624 tim.smolarick@highlandsnewssun.com

CORPORATE EXECUTIVE EDITOR **Romona Washington** 863-386-5634 romona.washington@highlandsnewssun.com CORPORATE CIRCULATION DIRECTOR Rob Kearley 863-385-6155 rob.kearley@highlandsnewssun.com

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR Amanda Young 863-386-5844 amanda.young@highlandsnewssun.com





321 N. Ridgewood Drive, Sebring, FL 33870.