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Braves may have an eye on Venice

SPRING: Might the MLB team consider a move there if it exits Orlando?

By **MICHAEL SCOTT DAVIDSON** and **DAVID HACKETT**
Staff Writers

VENICE — A source close to the Atlanta Braves says the Major League baseball team is looking to relocate its spring training base when its lease in Orlando expires, and Venice is a possible destination.
 “The decision is still down the road, but Venice is a name that keeps coming up,” said Mark Bowman, who has covered the Braves on its official website at MLB.com since 2001. “Venice is

certainly among the favorites.”
 Local government leaders, including Mayor John Holic, said they were unaware of any efforts to recruit the Braves.
 The Braves have trained at Disney’s Wide World of Sports complex in Orlando since 1998. The lease ends in 2017. Atlanta is said to be concerned that only three other teams are close to the Braves’ site, and two of those — the Houston Astros and Washington Nationals — are considering a move.
 Eight of the 15 Major League clubs that train in Florida are on the West Coast, including the Boston Red Sox and the Minnesota Twins in Fort Myers, the Tampa Bay Rays in Port Char-
See BRAVES on 2B

SHERIFFS WON’T BACK BILL ON POT



After Sen. Jeff Brandes introduced the bill, speculation arose that the sheriffs’ group might support it.
ASSOCIATED PRESS / 2014

VOTE: Opposed to a state proposal to allow its use in limited circumstances

By **MICHAEL POLLICK**
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 The Florida Sheriffs Association, which took a staunch stand last year against a constitutional amendment that would have allowed medical marijuana, on Tuesday said it also opposes a new bill that would allow cannabis for certain conditions.
 The sheriffs’ announcement about S.B. 528, a bill proposed last week by Sen. Jeff Brandes, R-St.

Petersburg, came amid the group’s winter conference on Amelia Island.
 Association members voted 38-2 against endorsing the bill.
 “We have looked at the bill from Senator Brandes and we are in opposition to it,” said David Shoar, the elected sheriff of St. Johns County and the current president of the association.
 After Brandes introduced the bill, speculation arose that the sheriffs’ group might support it — especially if doing so would negate a 2016 ballot measure on marijuana.
 The 2014 amendment proposal
See MARIJUANA on 3B

At karaoke, BUZZ

is a celebrity. The rest of the week? Lonely.

PALMETTO — The 99 South is running late tonight and the karaoke cowboy has already been waiting by the bus stop for two hours.
 He is wearing a yellowish leather jacket with black and white cowboy boots and there is a patch glued to the front pocket of his tight blue pants that says “Indiana Jones.”
 He has a Massachusetts police badge sticker taped to his black cowboy hat and the people who drive by must wonder who he is and what old Western he just moseyed out of.
 His name is Charles Leavens, but he goes by Buzz. He is 79, has a form of dementia, those closest to him say, and he is trying to get
ONLINE:
 To see more photos and a video of Buzz Leavens in action, go to heraldtribune.com and follow the link to this story.

from Palmetto to Captain Curt’s on Siesta Key for karaoke night.
 It is the place that takes him from lonesome cowboy to local legend and his lost eyes will twinkle again as he sings “Cotton Eye Joe” in auctioneer style while cajoling all the women to join him and the tourists clap and holler at the charmingly-strange spectacle of it all.
 But there is another reason he endures the 2½-hour, 25-mile bus ride to Captain Curt’s each Friday and Saturday night. Her name is Teresa Phillips, and he took her to the karaoke bar for their first date over 15 years ago.
 “That was the beginning of a wonderful marriage,” he says. “But now she’s gone.”
 They were regulars at Captain Curt’s for years until Teresa died in August. She was 54. Buzz says she had a drinking problem and sometimes he would have to sleep in his car for days because of it.
 Court records show there was a 2011 incident between her and Buzz and she was charged with battery on someone over 65. It allegedly happened on the way home from Captain Curt’s one night. She had been drinking and she hit him.



Meet Buzz of Palmetto who was a police chief in Winchendon, Massachusetts, for four years and on the police force for a total of 27 years. Over the years he arrested nine murderers. Now in his retired years he likes to Karaoke at Captain Curt’s Crab and Oyster Bar on Siesta Key. Here Buzz sings “Rocky Top, Tennessee.”
STAFF PHOTO / THOMAS BENDER

It doesn’t matter now. Buzz misses her. You can see it on his face and certainly hear it in his voice. His mobile home is a shrine to her. There are cardboard collages all over his walls with pictures of her — pictures of them — at karaoke. A video cassette of their wedding is on a wooden shelf. Their wedding photo is on the kitchen table.
 “I loved her,” he says. “Still do. I’ll never find another like her.”
 Sometimes he even keeps her photo under

his cowboy hat as he rides his bicycle around Palmetto.

‘Cotton Eye Joe’
 “He’s lost without his wife,” says Dale Rexford, an Elvis tribute singer from Sarasota. Rexford is known as “Delvis” and is about the only person who has been going to Captain Curt’s longer than Buzz. When Buzz and Teresa were married on Lido Beach, Rex-
See ANDERSON on 3B



Andrea Mogensen will represent Citizens for Sunshine in the lawsuit over the departure of the state’s FDLE chief.

A local attorney is in on a Scott suit

FDLE FLAP: Lawyer known for work on Sunshine Law cases in Sarasota

By **IAN CUMMINGS**
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 SARASOTA — A Sarasota attorney known for her litigation of area open government cases will take the lead in a lawsuit filed Tuesday against Gov. Rick Scott and the Florida Cabinet.

Andrea Mogensen represents the nonprofit Citizens for Sunshine in the lawsuit filed Tuesday, which claims that Scott violated the state’s Sunshine Law in communicating with Cabinet members about a controversial change in leadership at the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

Also joining the suit were the Associated Press, the Florida Society of Newspaper Editors and St. Petersburg attorney Matthew Weidner, who has called for an investigation of the replacement of FDLE Commissioner Gerald Bailey.

Disagreements over how Bailey left his position in December have grown to involve other members of the state Cabinet and attracted statewide media attention. The case, filed in the 2nd Judicial Circuit Court in Leon County, seeks a ruling that the Florida Cabinet is subject to the Sunshine Law and a prohibition on polling members about appointments and communicating decisions to them before meetings.

Mogensen often represents Citizens for Sunshine, which has advocated for open government across the state. Most often the group files cases in and around Sarasota and Manatee counties. Citizens for Sunshine became a plaintiff in the case because it involved citizen access to government decision-making.

“That’s the purpose of the group — government transparency,” Mogensen said. The group hoped the case would expose to the public a “pervasive” evasion
See LAWSUIT on 3B

Fall revival possible for canceled air show

AERIAL MARVELS: Rising costs grounded Punta Gorda show in 34th year

By **CHRISTI WOMACK**
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 CHARLOTTE COUNTY — Citing rising costs and a lack of help from local government, the board of directors of the Florida International Air Show canceled the March event, but are consider-

ing moving the show to the fall.
 The event, named one of the “Ten Best Air Shows in the World” by USA Today, was scheduled for March 27 to 29 at the Punta Gorda Airport.
 The board members of the nonprofit, which is in its 34th year, decided Tuesday to explore the feasibility of rescheduling for October, when associated costs, such as hotel and rental car rates, will be less expensive because it is not
See AIRSHOW on 2B



Stunt pilots in biplanes thrilled audiences during last year’s Florida International Air Show. **HERALD-TRIBUNE ARCHIVE / 2014**

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Bayshore area could be first for funds

REDEVELOPMENT: Tax increment dollars to start spending within district

By DALE WHITE
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MANATEE COUNTY — A new redevelopment zone spanning much of Manatee County's urban core could take 30 years to achieve the improvements that neighborhoods and county commissioners agree are needed, with the Bayshore area as the most likely starting point.

The county established the Southwest County Tax Increment Financing District last fall. When the amount of property taxes collected within the district rises because of improving property values, half of those extra taxes will be invested back in the area

for improvements such as streetlights, parks and better code enforcement and public safety.

For its first year, the county has \$400,000 in tax increment dollars to start spending in the TIF district, which is south of Manatee Avenue, Cortez to Tallevast.

Although that is not a substantial amount of start-up capital, the idea is that it will increase as improvements are made and property values continue to rise.

The county can also leverage those dollars with federal and state grants and "sweat equity" by neighborhood groups, Cheri Coryea, the county's neighborhood services director, told the commissioners on Tuesday.

The next step is to set eligibility criteria and start determining what neighborhoods need priority attention.

A long-range plan is likely to

take 30 years to achieve all of its goals, County Administrator Ed Hunzeker said.

County planner John Osborne said it will be critical for residents to have "skin in the game" and determine what their neighborhoods need.

The Bayshore area, west of U.S. 41 and mostly south of the State College of Florida, may be an appropriate starting point, commissioners said. The county could re-activate a 2001 improvement plan for Bayshore that it worked on with the community association but never fully funded and implemented.

With much of its housing dating to the late 1950s and its deed restrictions having expired in 1982, the Bayshore Gardens subdivision especially encountered several setbacks during the recession with crime, foreclosed properties

and other concerns.

"This area is one of the first planned communities in Manatee County," said Commissioner Rob-in DiSabatino, whose district includes Bayshore. "...It's a gateway between the east and the west."

Bayshore residents are currently exploring the possible benefits of becoming a historic district because of the mid-century, ranch-house-style architecture there.

Bayshore Gardens resident Suzanna Young, who has been organizing residents there to study infrastructure and other issues, said the neighborhood is "very enthusiastic" about the possibilities of getting improvements underway.

"We're back on track."

Commissioner Charles Smith noted that the county created the redevelopment zone prior to his election last fall. He complained

Bayshore residents are currently exploring the possible benefits of becoming a historic district because of the mid-century, ranch-house-style architecture there.

that it does not include the east Bradenton and Palmetto neighborhoods that he represents.

"You don't have anything in (County Commission) District 2 to remove slum and blight," Smith said. "...There's no plan whatsoever."

Commissioner John Chappie noted that the TIF area is in the unincorporated county and that much of Smith's District 2 is in the cities of Palmetto and Bradenton. Chappie said the county should work with the two cities to improve struggling areas that span the municipalities and unincorporated county.

On this stage, Buzz is beloved

ANDERSON from 1B

ford sang "Can't Help Falling in Love."

What Buzz can't remember of his life can be seen in photos. Inside his wallet is a photo of his late father, Charles, an auto mechanic. There is another of himself from the 1970's, when he was young and handsome and the Chief of Police in Winchendon, Massachusetts, where he investigated nine murders.

On a bedroom wall inside his mobile home is a collage of photos of his children. He has four. Some of the photos are of this son and daughter catching fish in Alaska.

"I was always good to them," he says somberly as he looks at the photos at 1:30 a.m. "I don't know why the hell they don't call me."

There are photos of him winning stock car races, and another when he was an Honor Guard member in the Army and he was standing watch as President Eisenhower boarded the presidential plane in 1954.

And yet earlier in the day he couldn't remember the name of the president.

And when he went to the ATM he couldn't remember his PIN and had to go inside for help.

At karaoke he has been singing the same three songs for years — "Cotton Eye Joe," "Mountain Music" and "Rocky Top" — but sometimes he has to ask "Delvis" which songs he knows because he can't remember them.

He begins preparing for karaoke at 4 p.m. That's when he stands before his closet and picks out his cowboy outfit. He has been known to wear white



Buzz Leavens dances on stage with Karla Brown, another regular at Captain Curt's karaoke nights. "He's such a good soul," says Brown. STAFF PHOTO / THOMAS BENDER

chaps, red boots, a vest with a badge, a decorative pistol around his neck and a hat that says "Cotton Eye Joe" on the front with a small picture of him and Teresa in the headband.

A good soul

He no longer has a driver's license, and if he can't catch a ride from someone in his mobile home park, he will pedal his bicycle two miles to the bus stop next to the Palmetto Publix, where the manager lets him keep it in the office so no one steals it overnight.

He usually grabs the 6:05 bus, the 99 South, pays a dollar, and it takes him to 1st Street and Lemon Avenue in Sarasota.

Then he transfers, pays another dollar, and another bus takes him to within a block of Captain Curt's.

On Saturday nights, he says the owner of the bar pays someone to take him back to Palmetto. On Fridays he's on his own. Last week, he paid the last person left in the bar \$30 to bring him back. Everyone else had said no.

On stage he is a hoot. He loves to dance and he is

always trying to set a new personal record for getting the most women to join him. He says it's 30 but "Delvis" says it's more like 10.

The tourists go wild and often pull out their cell phones, but when he is done singing he usually sits quietly on a stool by the door and waits to hear his name called again — "Next up is Buzz."

"He's such a good soul," says Karla Brown, a karaoke regular. "He does nothing but want to make everyone smile. His presence makes this place a happier place."

She is one of the few who knows the story of Buzz, the karaoke cowboy from Palmetto, the man who has just delivered another rousing rendition of "Rocky Top" and now must find his way back home.

She puts her arm around his shoulder, tells him how much everyone at Captain Curt's loves him, and then she looks at his face and says, "It makes his eyes twinkle to be here."

Contact Chris Anderson at chris.anderson@heraldtribune.com

Mogensen in on Scott suit

LAWUIT from 1B

of the Sunshine Law in the state's executive branch, she said.

Bailey resigned in December and has publicly contradicted Scott's version of events. Scott and other members of the Cabinet unanimously confirmed his replacement, Rick Swearingen, in January. Since then, Scott and Cabinet members have been criticized over the details of Bailey's ouster.

Scott said that the commissioner resigned, only to have Bailey contradict him in statements to the Miami Herald/Tampa Bay Times Tallahassee bureau, saying "I did not voluntarily do anything."

Since then, Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater and Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam have voiced displeasure with how the matter was handled. Attorney General Pam Bondi said she thought Scott's staff may have acted without the governor's knowledge.

The FDLE commissioner position is a Cabinet-level appointment. Florida law requires the governor and the Cabinet, including Putnam, Atwater and Bondi, to agree

on firing the leader of the FDLE.

The Cabinet is scheduled to discuss the process it uses to replaces appointees when it meets Thursday in Tampa.

Scott's office has countered claims that his staff pushed Bailey to resign immediately in December.

The lawsuit filed Tuesday acknowledges that the FDLE commissioner serves "at the pleasure" of the governor and the Cabinet, but claims that the decision was made in a roundabout manner behind closed doors and then presented in public only after Bailey resigned.

The complaint accuses Scott of using aides or "conduits" in polling the cabinet on "his unilateral decision to force the resignation of the FDLE Commissioner and appoint a replacement without any notice to the public."

The aides' communications were allegedly achieved verbally, allowing the Cabinet to signal Scott their approval, or non-objection, to removing Bailey and replacing him with Swearingen as commissioner.

Those communications amounted to a "de facto meeting of the cabinet," the lawsuit alleges, in which no notice was given to the public and no minutes or other records kept.

In responses to the media, Scott's office has defended its handling of Bailey's resignation, citing a "long-standing convention" of communication between the governor's office and the Cabinet. Scott's office did not respond to a request for comment on Tuesday.

Mogensen said the public should be concerned that the governor described this as a common practice in Tallahassee.

"If this is the way things are traditionally done, then the law really has no teeth and we don't have the transparency in government guaranteed by the constitution."

The suit asks that a court declare the episode violated the Sunshine Law and issue a permanent injunction against "polling, discussions, and communications" about appointments before public cabinet meetings. It also asks for payment of attorneys' fees if the suit prevails.

Sheriffs won't back pot bill

MARIJUANA from 1B

failed to reach a 60 percent threshold in favor, capturing 57.6 percent of the popular vote — 500,000 more votes than Gov. Rick Scott received in winning a second term.

Both Shoar and Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri, who also spoke at Tuesday's press conference, said they liked aspects of Brandes' bill, however.

They liked that under the bill county governments could decide whether to allow medical marijuana dispensaries, along with their number and location.

The sheriffs also said

they agreed that medical marijuana recommendations should be limited to medical doctors and osteopathic physicians — eliminating chiropractors and acupuncturists, as could have been allowed under the amendment. But the sheriffs' group remains strongly opposed to allowing smokeable marijuana, citing potential abuse.

It also objects to the use of medical marijuana to relieve general pain or muscle spasms.

"A patient must not receive medical marijuana for general pain because pain is not a disease," the sheriffs

stated, adding exceptions could be instituted for the terminally ill.

The group also believes any medical marijuana intake should be limited to patients with illnesses such as cancer, epilepsy, HIV/AIDS, ALS, Crohn's disease, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, paraplegia and quadriplegia.

While more restrictive than last year's Amendment 2 plan, Brandes' bill would allow medical marijuana for relief of "severe and persistent muscle spasms," "severe and persistent nausea" and "severe and persistent pain."

Allegations reignite a sex case

MIAMI: Clash began with claims about Prince Andrew

By CURT ANDERSON
AP Legal Affairs Writer

MIAMI — First came the allegations late last year that Britain's Prince Andrew and a prominent American lawyer took part in a wealthy sex offender's abuse of teenage girls aboard private jets, in luxury homes and on the financier's Caribbean island.

The story, part of a long-running U.S. legal fight focused on the rights of the women, gained steam when Buckingham Palace took the unusual step of issuing a carefully worded denial of the kind of salacious claims that royal officials rarely acknowledge. Defense attorney Alan Dershowitz, who represented the highly connected Jeffrey Epstein and was himself named in the latest court filings, then called the most outspoken of the four women a serial liar and practically dared to prove her particular

accounts.

Instead of letting the case play out from there, the woman known as Jane Doe No. 3 hit back with a 23-page affidavit detailing dates, locations and more about the powerful men she says Epstein forced her and the others to satisfy.

More than six years after Epstein pleaded guilty to Florida charges involving sex with underage girls, the case has erupted anew. Even Bill Clinton's name has resurfaced as a guest of Epstein's, although no one has accused the former president of impropriety. A Clinton spokesman declined to comment Friday.

Dershowitz has accused Jane Doe No. 3 of making up most or all of her claims, including a story about seeing Clinton on Epstein's island years ago.

Jane Doe No. 3 and three others who say Epstein victimized them want a federal judge to make public and throw out the part of Epstein's plea deal that guaranteed that neither he nor any co-conspirators would face federal charges. Prosecu-

tors oppose the request, contending they did their best to confer with the victims but that the women aren't entitled to details of the plea talks.

Even if the judge rules for the women, the U.S. Justice Department wouldn't necessarily have to bring a case against Epstein. But opening the "non-prosecution agreement" could bring further embarrassment for Epstein and his high-profile friends, and provide the women with leverage as they seek damages from the U.S. government. They contend their rights as victims were trampled by the then-secret agreement.

Epstein, 62, served 13 months of an 18-month jail sentence in the state case and was required to register as a sex offender. He also reached undisclosed financial settlements with dozens of women who made similar allegations against him, according to court documents.

Before he was prosecuted, Epstein was a well-known member of the super-wealthy enclave of

Palm Beach, where he frequented Donald Trump's exclusive seaside Mar-a-Lago club.

"He was certainly a man about town and because of the fact that it is a small island, he got to know a lot of people," Trump, who has not been implicated in any wrongdoing, told The Associated Press recently. "When I started reading about the different things and then things were proven, that's a different planet, that's a different world."

Although Epstein's connections with the rich and powerful have been well chronicled over the years, Jane Doe No. 3 is the first to provide specific details, in a public court filing under oath, about her purported sexual encounters with some of them.

Epstein's celebrity law-



In this July 30, 2008, photo, the highly connected Jeffrey Epstein is shown in custody in West Palm Beach. ASSOCIATED PRESS ARCHIVE

yer, Roy Black, accuses Jane Doe No. 3's attorneys of trying to inflame the case and wants the judge to keep the plea documents private.

Although Jane Doe No. 3's true name has been published elsewhere, The Associated Press does not identify victims of sex crimes without their consent. One of her attorneys, Brad Ed-

wards, said in an email she does not wish to be named.

Now a 31-year-old wife and mother, Jane Doe No. 3 insists her motives are to hold the elite accountable.

"These powerful people seem to think that they don't have to follow the same rules as everyone else. That is wrong," she said in the affidavit.

HEALTH

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SUNDAY PROFILE

91-year-old Millie Belden volunteers at the All Faiths Food Bank. 6A

INTERACTIVE ART PROJECT

Noa Haim's structures blur the lines between art and architecture, artist and audience. 1E

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HEALTH PANEL'S POWER IS A MATTER OF DEBATE

FLORIDA: Will commission do more than echo Scott as special session nears?

By LLOYD DUNKELBERGER
H-T Capital Bureau

TALLAHASSEE — Gov. Rick Scott's newly formed Healthcare and Hospital Funding Commission this week will launch itself into the middle of a bitter debate over health care funding that has stalemated the Florida Legisla-

ture's ability to pass a new state budget.

The nine-member commission, which will be chaired by Manatee County's Carlos Beruff, a Scott political supporter who is a developer with few health care ties, is already drawing questions about its ability to bring any direction to the budget crisis, which must be resolved by July 1.

It is also the second hospital commission that Scott has created since he took office in 2011. The first commission, which was

aimed at "taxpayer-supported" hospitals, met 14 times and released a report at the end of Scott's first year in office.

Not much resulted from the commission's findings, despite the antipathy of Scott, a former private hospital company executive who has long been skeptical about the role of public or "tax-supported" hospitals.

The new commission, which holds its first meeting Wednesday, has a broader scope. Scott says he

See HEALTH CARE on 16A

BERUFF HEADS PANEL

Some question whether Manatee-based developer Carlos Beruff was the best choice to lead the commission. 16A

Man of motion, and of emotion

DICK VITALE: Whirlwind sports analyst determined to fight pediatric cancer

By CHRIS ANDERSON
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SARASOTA — The smell of black marker permeates the room as Dick Vitale whips through book after book, each signature a personal promise that he will fight pediatric cancer by using the celebrity and stardom he has achieved.

It is early afternoon at the Ritz-Carlton and Vitale is feverishly attempting to sign 1,000 copies of his latest book in two hours, each one to be passed out at the Dick Vitale Gala. The annual event, held this past Friday, raises money for pediatric cancer research, a cause Vitale says he is now obsessed with.

His face, his voice, his brand, they all are among the most recognized in America. Everyone, it seems, loves the famed ESPN college basketball analyst and Lakewood Ranch resident and he loves them right back. In fact, Vitale says he has never eaten a home-cooked meal because he likes talking to people in restaurants so much.

So what is it like to be Dick Vitale, who will be 76 next month? From the periphery it looks like it is terrific fun and a life lived in awe of the heavyweights he's been fortunate enough to meet.

Here is a guy who has been in a private room with the pope, talked hoops with three U.S. presidents, shook Sinatra's hand, con-

See VITALE on 8A



Skiers Island in Roberts Bay is one of seven spoil islands eyed by Sarasota Bay Watch for the proposed project.

STAFF PHOTO / DAN WAGNER



Carrotwood.



Australian Pine.



Brazilian pepper.

Spoil islands in Roberts Bay could become an emerald 'necklace' of water-accessible eco-tourism spots, with native plant life

By MICHAEL POLLICK
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I t's a five-minute paddle from the North Siesta Key Bridge to Edwards Island.

Six acres in size, the island is a prized chunk of land, boasting gradual sandy beaches in some areas, ecologically valuable mangrove stands in others and a surprisingly hilly interior.

Like the other five dozen-plus spoil islands that dot Southwest Florida's bays, Edwards was an afterthought when it was created in the 1960s. The mission of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was simply to carve out the bottom of Sarasota Bay to create the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. The fill, which is mostly high-quality sand, had to go somewhere.

Larry Stults of Sarasota Bay Watch has beached his small boat on the west side of the island. After pointing out what invasive Brazil-

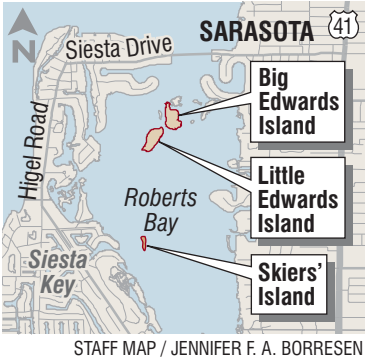


ian pepper, carrotwood and Australian pines look like, Stults walks up a nearby hill and waves his hands toward the interior.

"Just imagine this as a native plants version of Selby Gardens," said Stults. "This could become a native botanical treasure."

An early retiree, Stults has taken on what some would call Mission Impossible: get enough of a consensus from Sarasota County, nearby homeowners, boaters and environmentalists to turn at least a few of the closest spoil islands into miniature ecological gems.

See ISLANDS on 7A



STAFF MAP / JENNIFER F. A. BORRESEN

ONLINE:

To learn more about Blue Economy's Gulf Coast Innovation Challenge, go to gulfcoastchallenge.org

ONLINE:

See videos, photo galleries and coverage of Friday's 10th annual Dick Vitale Gala, and Saturday's post party at Vitale's Lakewood Ranch home at heraldtribune.com/vitale

THE PREAKNESS STAKES

SECOND JEWEL CAPTURED

American Pharoah sets up the ultimate drama in racing — a Triple Crown attempt at the Belmont Stakes in three weeks. 1C

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A man of motion and of emotion

VITALE *from 1A*
versed with Ali — at the Kentucky Derby, no less — and was kissed by Priscilla Presley.

And yes, that was him dressed as Elvis at the ESPY awards that time in Vegas, sliding down from the ceiling on a wire while wearing a wig and sideburns with Michael Jordan in the front row laughing hysterically.

That's what being Dick Vitale looks like. But what does being Dick Vitale feel like? Now that's a very different question.

Spend a few hours in a room with him and you'll hear all the fun stories. But you'll also see his lips quiver and his eyes well up as he talks about heart-wrenching hospital visits and funeral eulogies and phone calls to shell-shocked parents who have just buried a child. Indeed, you get a very different perspective of the man everyone knows as Dickie V.

There can't be a celebrity in America who deals with more contrasting emotions on a daily basis than Vitale. And as he talks about them he is handed another book to sign. Then another. "C'mon Dick, hurry," Gala coordinator Mary Kenealy says to him. "Keep going."

Giving it his all

In between assembly-line signatures, Vitale pulls out his cellphone and finds a photo of an 8-year-old girl named Sophia. He met her during this year's Final Four college basketball tournament. She has inoperable brain cancer.

Vitale visited 20 rooms at Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis during Final Four weekend, but after he saw Sophia he had to leave her room. He went into the hallway and cried his eyes out.

"I have five beautiful grandchildren," Vitale says. "I can't even imagine."

There was a boy in the hospital. He was a big Kentucky basketball fan who planned to go to the game, but the day before they rushed him to the hospital. His cancer was back. Vitale visited him and was crushed.

Last year he visited a hospital in Dallas with his agent, Susan Lipton, and together they saw a kid whose eye had been devastated by cancer.

"We get in the car and my agent says, 'I can't even imagine what these parents must go through,'" Vitale says.

Two days after the Final Four, Vitale's phone rang. It was Lipton.

"She says, 'When I went to the Final Four, my son had been battling a fever and the fever wouldn't go away. We tested him and he has leukemia.'"

"She says, 'I've been doing all this for you all the time, helping kids, and now I have to be one of those parents.'"

"I started crying like crazy."

Vitale says he gets at least one phone call every day from someone about pediatric cancer, and he never says no to helping a kid. He remembers many of the kids' names he comes into contact with, and has many pictures of them on his phone. When he visits he gives them gifts — but more importantly, he gives them himself, and all the emotion and support he can muster.

"We get attached," he says. "It's not like a one-time phone call and you forget about them."

Though Vitale visits as many children as he can, he does not speak at funerals every time he is asked. It is just too heartbreaking, he says.

For all the speaking he has done in his life, Vitale says the toughest speech he ever gave was at the funeral for 1-year-old Adrian Little-



In an instant, Dick Vitale can go from smiling to crying when talking about the fight against pediatric cancer. Jimbo Fisher, head football coach of Florida State, looks on during the Dick Vitale Gala Friday. STAFF PHOTO / THOMAS BENDER

john of Lakewood Ranch, who died in 2011.

"Watching a mother and father put a child to rest, how much tougher does it get than that?" Vitale says.

Vitale says his face is now synonymous with fighting pediatric cancer, and he believes his celebrity was given to him for the purpose of speaking to the people who can give money to the cause.

Bristol-Myers, he says, pledged \$500,000 to the V Foundation upon hearing Vitale speak. And when he talks to corporations and CEOs, nothing is scripted. All he has to do, he says, is remember the faces of the kids.

"You think you have it tough economically?" he says. "Oh really? You're going to moan and groan about not making a sale? Well, why don't you come with me to All Children's Hospital where mothers and fathers sit from 7 in the morning until 11 at night praying for a miracle."

His wife, Lorraine, worries that Vitale gets too emotional.

"Especially when he's giving speeches about the children and he can't go on with the speech," she says. "He can't remove himself. He talks about it and he feels it."

"I can feel it, too. When he chokes up, I choke up. I almost know his next sentence, and when he stops I know he's trying to re-

group. But that's the passionate person he is and it's a good thing.

"Some people get up and talk about cancer and you hear it but don't feel it."

"He will make the audience feel it."

A jersey for Sinatra

Dickie V was the grand marshal at the Cherry Hill Blossom Festival in California one year and former NBA star and friend Moses Malone was in his court.

After the parade Dickie V and Lorraine walked into the famous Spago restaurant in Beverly Hills, one of the hardest places in town to get a table.

"I walked in there and the guy says, 'Tonight, I'm going to put you next to Moses,'" Vitale says. "My wife says, 'Geez, we know Moses Malone well.'"

"He says, 'Ma'am, not Moses Malone, but Moses. You know, Charlton Heston.'"

"And on my left I'm rubbing shoulders with Peter Falk. We had a blast that night."

The extremes in Vitale's life could not be more pronounced. Part of his life is trying mightily not to cry in the presence of a cancer-stricken child, to give pep talks to their reeling parents, and part is sliding down a wire on national TV in Las Vegas dressed as Elvis.

"Sitting in the front row laughing his butt off was

Michael Jordan, and Shepherd — what's her name? — Cybill Shepherd caught my wig," Vitale says.

"I do remember that," Lorraine says. "He was sore in the groin area for weeks."

"Yeah, they put a harness on you," Vitale says as he signs another book.

Vitale and his wife love to go to concerts. He's met Garth Brooks, Lionel Richie, Smokey Robinson, the Four Tops, the Temptations and, recently, James Taylor. He trades texts with Kenny Chesney. He never met Elvis, though Priscilla Presley once kissed him at a Memphis game. Ashley Judd kissed him recently, too — and she initiated it, he proudly says.

And then there was the night he met Sinatra after a Detroit Pistons game he was coaching.

"I was in awe," he says. "I gave him a Pistons jersey."

In 2011, Vitale met Pope Benedict XVI in Rome and he blessed some rosary beads Vitale now has in his Lakewood Ranch home.

"He comes down this staircase and you can't believe what you are seeing," Vitale says.

He has talked basketball with Presidents Clinton, Bush and Obama, and who can count how many superstar athletes and coaches he has met? When he walks into a college basketball arena, the students almost always chant his name.

"I'm going to be 76 years old on June 9, and I'm acting like I'm 12 with these kids," he says. "That's what keeps me going."

One night last week, he was at Tropicana Field to see the Rays play the Yankees — he has Rays season tickets — and the following night he was at Game 6 of the Tampa Bay-Montreal National Hockey League playoff series. And there he was, on the Jumbotron, of course, firing up the crowd, even though he knows nothing about hockey.

His nights are often exciting, but many mornings he wakes up to the same images in his head — kids in a hospital, their parents hoping they will walk out alive.

"I always think of these kids and their families because I always think it could be me," Vitale says. "I'm sure there are people saying, 'Oh, he's wasting his time and money. There's never going to be a cure.' But I can't let those people bother me. I know in my heart this is the best thing I've ever done in my life."

Dickie V is handed another book. He quickly signs, well on his way to what has to be done: 1,000 signed books in two hours, all to raise money for pediatric cancer research, and one day, maybe, a cure.

"C'mon, c'mon, c'mon," Kenealy, his assistant, says. "Keep going. We can make it."



Dick Vitale visits a young cancer patient at the Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis during Final Four weekend. Vitale visits many children to provide support but is often reduced to tears. PHOTO PROVIDED BY DICK VITALE

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SUNDAY PROFILE

Through his 41 years in the communications center of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, Lynn Platt has heard it all. **Page 6A**

FOLLOWING HIS BLISS

A latecomer to art, Matt Pecson sees the colors in music. **Arts, 1E**

A NEW PATH TO SAFETY

Florida works to make roads safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. **Local, 1B**

BOLTS NEED ONE MORE WIN

Montreal tightens the series with a Game 5 victory. **Sports, 1C**



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Montreal Canadiens goalie Carey Price deflects a Tampa Bay Lightning shot.



Olivia Marie Braida-Chiusano's original watercolor, Magnolia grandiflora "Little Gem" No. 2 (2003) is in the permanent collection of the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation.

COURTESY PHOTO / FROM OLIVIA MARIE BRAIDA-CHIUSANO

BOOMER REVERBERATION

OLDER WORKERS: Job market being reshaped by changes to traditional retirement

By **BARBARA PETERS SMITH**
barbara.smith@heraldtribune.com

Her mother always thought she should be an artist, but Olivia Marie Braida-Chiusano is glad she became a businesswoman first.

Her sales and marketing skills have helped Braida-Chiusano build the kind of second career many older Floridians can only dream about.

She teaches botanical illustration, with students who range

from curious dabblers to dedicated strivers working for years toward a certificate in the field. Her Academy of Botanical Art, based in Sarasota and affiliated with Selby Gardens, allows her to offer distance learning and conduct workshops in places like Hawaii.

Born in 1948, Braida-Chiusano belongs to the leading edge of the baby boomer generation that is forging new paths into a post-retirement — or nonretirement — existence. The often-cited statistic of 10,000 daily retirements in the United States reflects the number of boomers turning 65 each day.

But no one seems to know how many people in this huge cohort

are taking a full retirement, staying on the job or — like Braida-Chiusano — successfully combining a passion with a profit to embark on what is increasingly called an “encore career.”

Not so long ago, retirement was a rite of passage that followed a predictable pattern set by employers, pension plans and government policies. Today, with the decision of when and how to call it quits left to individuals, baby boomers — those Americans born between 1946 and 1964 — are learning that they must forge their own way into unknown territory. Some are leaving their jobs with vague ideas of working part-time or start-

ing a business, only to find that this is more difficult than expected.

Younger boomers may eventually be offered more incentives to remain in the workplace, as employers struggle to fill gaps created by the first large wave of retirements. But for now — especially in a region like Southwest Florida, with a generous supply of available older workers and few large workplaces to absorb them — there appears to be a misfit between the number of people who would like to earn money after retirement and the number of opportunities to do so.

As the nation recovers from the Great Recession, the share of

See BOOMERS on 16A



A

GIFT

FOR

MOM

By CHRIS ANDERSON, *chris.anderson@heraldtribune.com*

BRADENTON — A red plastic pinwheel spins in the breeze at the grave of a daughter who has finally come home.

Suddenly, a car winding its way around the narrow cemetery road stops, and a sprightly 84-year-old woman emerges wearing a stylish silk scarf.

Her name is Isabella Ruggiero, so devout a Catholic she disguises her voice at confession sometimes because she goes so much.

She walks from her car in the back of Fogartyville Cemetery to the grave near the tall swaying pine tree, the leash of her 17-year-old dog Daisy in one hand and the can of ant spray that she always keeps in her trunk in the other.

She sprays around the headstone and then spruces up the flowers. She inserts a blue and orange butterfly into the ground and then checks the handmade rosary draped around the small statue of Mary.

Some family members, including her four great-grandchildren, have arrived before her. When she is done tending to the grave, she turns to them and asks: “Did you all say hello to Theresa yet?”

The children nod. Yes, they have. Then she smiles in a way she couldn’t for decades.

This is the gravesite of Theresa Ruggiero.

And this is the gift to Isabella, her mother.

See MOTHER on 10A

Their money and trust vanish

FOREIGN EXCHANGE: Dashed dreams leave questions about man they relied on

By **JOSH SALMAN**
josh.salman@heraldtribune.com

David Harding and his family sat around a small fire near Disney World, chatting away the evening in late 2012 with other Christians who made the two-hour trip for a campout organized by their Sarasota ministry.

It was the last place the Hardings ever expected to lose their life savings.

The Hardings were approached by another churchgoer — a father of four, with a charming smile and what seemed a promising investment opportunity. He introduced himself as Brett Hartshorn.

Conservative investors, the Hardings had always shied from stocks. The middle-class family leveraged equity in their home and years of hard work in Pittsburgh to move to Florida. They were still raising two children and couldn’t afford a big gamble.

But they say they almost instantly trusted the dark-haired stranger they met that night. Harding says it might have been the calming nostalgia of Disney World, that they shared friends with the 48-year-old Hartshorn at the Church of Hope and that Hartshorn’s wife directed a local religious homeschool program.

Soon after, the Hardings gave Hartshorn control of more than \$200,000 in an online foreign exchange trading account that he opened for them. They financed the account through a line of credit on their Laurel Lakes home.

Within months, it was gone.

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WASHINGTON

A BILLIONAIRE BEHIND RUBIO

Even in an era dominated by super-wealthy donors, billionaire auto dealer Norman Braman stands out, given how integral he has been not only to Sen. Marco Rubio's political aspirations but also to his personal finances. **5A**



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Christina Conley holds hands with her mother, Isabella Ruggiero, 84, who says she can now be near her deceased daughter Theresa and plans to be buried next to her at Fogartyville Cemetery in Bradenton — something she never thought would happen. The rest of the family includes Josi King, Savannah Smith, 15, Blake Smith, 15, Christine Ruggiero, Robert Ruggiero, Mason King, 7, and Bella Mae King, 4. **STAFF PHOTOS / THOMAS BENDER**

A mother’s wish fulfilled

MOTHER *from 1A*

Was there ever a better sister than Theresa Ruggiero? Whenever Christina Conley — who was 10 years younger than her sister — got sick, Theresa would place candy under her pillow at night. Of course it didn’t take long before Christina was faking her coughs.

And since there were six kids in the family, Theresa was changing her sibling’s diapers when she was only 6 years old, which is why she always said she would never have children of her own — she had already raised her mother’s.

The family lived in Columbus, Mississippi in the 1970s, and Christina Conley still remembers Theresa’s voice, how she kind of looked like Sally Field, how all of her friends would always come over and listen to the same Elton John records that are now framed and hanging on her guestroom wall in Parrish.

In the summer of 1976, the family moved from Mississippi to New York but Theresa and a brother and a sister stayed behind. Then one day — it was a Friday — Theresa collapsed in her brother’s bathroom and was rushed to the hospital. Her father Fred immediately flew to Mississippi from New York to be with her.

She died that night, Sept. 1, 1976, at age 20. Family members say it was complications from a burst appendix.

Back in New York, Christina Conley remembers her mother answering the telephone in the foyer and saying in shock, “Oh, she did?”

Isabella flew to Mississippi the next morning while the three children in New York stayed behind with relatives. Only the parents and the two older siblings who were already there attended Theresa’s funeral. The headstone was paid for by Theresa’s friends. They all chipped in.

She was buried in her white debutante’s gown, but Isabella didn’t go near the casket because they put too

people.

For the last 15 years she has been attending three funerals a week of people she doesn’t even know. She just picks them out of the paper. She goes for support, but she’s also jealous of the deceased because they are in heaven already and she’s not.

For many years, she seemed content in her faith, in doing everything she could for others, but eventually she started hinting about Theresa and how she wished she was with her in Bradenton. And when her daughter-in-law Chris heard her say it one day, she told Robert Ruggiero, Isabella’s 54-year-old son.

“It must have been troubling her,” he says.

And that’s when Robert came up with the idea: What if we brought Theresa to Bradenton for Isabella? After all, didn’t she deserve it?

Fred Ruggiero has always wanted to go on a road trip. He even has a camper-van with a microwave in it. One problem: he’s 86 years old now.

The family was worried how he’d react to the idea of moving Theresa’s remains to Bradenton, but he surprised them all by embracing it. So in June 2012, Fred Ruggiero and his son



Theresa Ruggiero is now buried at Fogartyville Cemetery in Bradenton.

there. Then they had to get permission from Theresa’s friends to move the headstone because they were the ones who originally purchased it.

Once it was determined there were remains in the grave, there was also the religious question as to whether her body could be cremated and moved. Those concerns were alleviated by Russell Ruggiero, Isabella’s son who is also a Catholic priest in Bradenton.

Eventually, Robert Ruggiero told Isabella of the plan shortly before they went to Mississippi. She began to cry.

“I was very, very happy about it because for years I always said, ‘Oh, I would love for Theresa to be here,’” Isabella says.

When Fred and Robert Ruggiero returned to Bradenton, Chris Ruggiero met them at the car and Robert handed her the urn.

As soon as Chris walked in the front door, Isabella ripped the urn from her arms.

And then on July 15, 2012, nearly 36 years after Theresa died, the family had a memorial service at Fogartyville Cemetery for her. Russell Ruggiero, the Catholic priest, presided over the service for his sister.

Christina Conley sat between Isabella and her own husband. She held

ding. At Christmas the family has placed a small tree there, and they have set up lights at Halloween. It’s all been done to include Theresa in their lives again.

“She’s here and part of the family,” Isabella says.

Isabella says she goes to the grave once or twice a week. The family thinks it’s more. Theresa’s grave is a happy place for her, nothing somber about it at all, and she especially likes taking her great-grandchildren.

“They all know Theresa,” Isabella says. “She exists. Someone once told me if you don’t talk about them, you’re saying they never existed, but she did exist.”

At the grave she does more than spray for ants and pluck grass. She talks to her daughter. She even thinks about what she would look like today, what she would have done with her life. She would have been single, probably still working, with no children of her own because she changed too many diapers when she was a child.

“I just say, ‘Hi Theresa, Daisy and I have come to visit you,’” Isabella says. “It’s normal talk. I wouldn’t say she can hear me, but maybe she does hear me, I don’t know. We just talk. ‘How is everything? How was my day?’”

Conley often stops by and does the same thing, pulling out the chair she keeps in her car and talking to the older sister who used to give her candy when she coughed.

“She’s back in my life now,” Conley says. “I’ll say, ‘Hey, I miss you. Here’s a favor from the party. Wish you were there.’ We just talk. She talks back to me.”

“I can’t imagine what my mom feels like because I feel like all is right with the world now.

“This was the best thing ever. It was honestly the best thing that ever happened to our family.”

As it turned out, just bringing Theresa back was not the only surprise for Isabella. Her son Russell, the priest, not only arranged for There-

“She’s back in my life now. . . . This was the best thing ever. It was honestly the best thing that ever happened to our family.”

– Christina Conley, sister of Theresa Ruggiero

much makeup on Theresa. Didn’t they know? Theresa never wore makeup.

For many years the death was never talked about in the family, or so the siblings remember, and from September of 1976 until June of 2012, no one in the family ever went back to Theresa’s grave in Mississippi either.

No one is really sure why.

Now, it should be explained that Isabella is unlike anyone else you will ever meet. She attends church six days a week, washes and irons the church’s altar cloth, and even has an altar inside her Bradenton home. Her favorite thing is going to Hobby Lobby for material to make rosaries for

Robert packed up a Hyundai and took a road trip to Mississippi to get Theresa. And yes, that was Fred, then 83, driving the whole way, even stopping at 1 a.m. in the middle of a highway during a rain storm.

Indeed, Fred gave his blessing but there were other complicated hurdles to overcome: The two oldest siblings who were in Mississippi when Theresa died were against moving her. In fact, they still are.

“It was kind of ghost-spooky for them but I kept telling them, ‘Mom wants her down here,’” Robert Ruggiero says.

They also had to find the cemetery in Columbus — it had been nearly four decades since anyone had been

Isabella’s hand while she coiled up in a ball and sobbed into her husband’s chest.

As for Isabella, her daughter’s ceremonial homecoming elicited a very different reaction.

“She was smiling the whole time,” Conley says. “She never dreamed anyone would ever do this.”

A few years ago, a tiny teddy bear the height of a golf tee was placed next to the grave. It’s still there. The bear was a bookmark given to guests at a baby shower for Isabella’s granddaughter.

Conley also placed a bookmark at the grave. It was a favor from her wed-

sa’s plot at Fogartyville, but also one for himself, Fred and Isabella.

It wasn’t long ago that Isabella thought she would never see Theresa’s grave again. Now she will be buried next to her.

“I’ll see her in heaven,” she says as she prepares to leave the cemetery.

And as she does, she hugs her great-grandchildren goodbye, leads Daisy by the leash to her car, puts the ant spray back in the trunk and then slowly drives down the narrow cemetery road, winding her way back home.

What more could a mother ask for? It’s been another wonderful day with her daughter.

And the red plastic pinwheel spins in the breeze.