

NSU plans cell-based medical research

By **BRITTANY SHAMMAS**
Staff writer

Nova Southeastern University announced Monday it is creating a new institute for cell-based medical research, boosting South Florida's efforts to become a leader in medical innovation.

The NSU Cell Therapy Institute is being established in partnership with the Karolinska Institute, the prestigious Swedish university that awards The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. It will be housed along with other research groups in an \$80 million, 215,000-square-foot research facility currently being built on the university's Davie campus.

University officials said the new institute, which will research how cells can be modified to prevent and treat cancer and other medical issues, will put NSU at the cutting edge of science and medicine.

"I think some of these findings could be transformative," said Dr. H. Thomas Temple, senior vice president of translational research and economic development. "It may change the way we think about treating certain diseases. I think it's that important."

The institute will be led by Richard Jove, who most recently served as president and director of the Vaccine and Gene Therapy Institute of Florida in Port St. Lucie, or VGTFI. That company, which partnered with the Karolinska Institute in October 2014 to study diseases associated with aging, closed last month after running out of money, according to the Treasure Coast Newspapers.

Port St. Lucie borrowed \$64 million to build a facility for VGTFI, which the company was supposed to pay back with interest over 30 years. The city is now responsible for that amount, which with interest comes out to \$130 million, the Treasure Coast papers reported.

After the institute closed, the researchers wanted to stay together to continue their work, Temple said. They needed a new home — and NSU fit the bill.

The launch of the cell therapy institute is one of several steps NSU has recently taken to expand its reach in medicine and medical research.

"It has caught on like wildfire and every week it's a new investigator, a new idea, a new focus," Temple said. "But the important thing is that these people are all marching in step and singular in the thought that they're going to transform medicine in a way that no one else has."

In April, the university announced it would create a new medical school, which would offer traditional medical degrees at its North Miami Beach campus. The next month, Hospital Corporation of America opened an emergency room on the Davie campus, which NSU officials said will even-

See **CELLS, 2B**

Aquatic center price rises

Officials ponder their next move

By **LARRY BARSZEWSKI**
Staff writer

FORT LAUDERDALE — The company hired to build the city a new aquatic center now wants \$39 million for the job. That's \$3.2 million more than city commissioners agreed to in April and \$6.6 million higher than the firm's original 2012 contract.

City Manager Lee Feldman es-

timates that price is likely to go up another \$2 million to pay for other work the city wants, including screening the parking garage portion of the complex.

Commissioners on Tuesday will discuss their options: Bite the bullet on the increased cost; seek new bids; demand the developer stick to the original budget; find ways to bring the price down; fix up the current complex; or find another use for the site. They expect to make a final decision Dec. 1.

The city has already accumulated \$3 million in bills for de-

signs and other work on the project.

Commissioner Dean Trantalis, a critic of the contract with Recreational Design and Construction, is worried the commission is running out of time to change paths.

"The longer we delay, the more difficult it's going to be to be in a position to say no to RDC," Trantalis said. "We're so close to the deadline, we may be forced to accept the increase."

But other commissioners say the Dec. 1 deadline still leaves the city with time to consider any

option. An independent consultant put its estimate of the work being done at \$16 million more than RDC is charging.

A majority of the project is being paid for with redevelopment dollars that the city must dedicate by 2019, when its beach Community Redevelopment Agency is set to expire. If commissioners agree to a higher price, it would be at the expense of other beach projects, which include improvements along Las Olas Boulevard

See **CENTER, 2B**



WAYNE K. ROUSTAN/STAFF

Hasina Roach, a family therapist who has multiple sclerosis, prepares for her flight on Monday with "Fly for MS" volunteer pilot Tomas Vykruta at Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport.

For a moment, flights lift off the pain of MS

By **WAYNE K. ROUSTAN**
Staff writer

FORT LAUDERDALE — They may have trouble walking, but they had no problem flying as about 30 people with multiple sclerosis lined up at Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport for free flights over Broward County.

Monday's "Fly for MS" cloud-hopping jaunts were part of a bigger plan to raise public awareness, generate donations and help lift some of the psychological weight of this complex disability off of MS sufferers, if only for 20 minutes.

"Fly for MS" volunteer pilots Fouad Ahmed and Tomas Vykruta began their journey in Toronto last week. Fort Lauderdale is the second stop on their tour for the National MS Soci-

Up, up and away

See more about the free flights for patients in video report at SunSentinel.com/Msflights

ety.

"On this mission we have about 32 cities in 18 countries and we'll cover it over a period of three months," said Ahmed. "We're almost covering every country from North America, South and Central America."

In every city, up to 25 people with MS will take turns flying in single-engine planes for about 20 minutes.

Family therapist Hasina Roach, 34, of Lauderdale Lakes, and her 6-year-old son Gianni Guerrier got to fly with Vykruta.

"I've had to deal with MS over three years," she said. "There was a time I had a

walker, I had a cane, because of the way my health is, it goes up and down."

Roach says she copes with her illness for the sake of her son, who has had to grow up quicker than most kids his age.

"He wants to help with cooking. He wants to help with the groceries," she said. "He is very independent, gets himself dressed in the morning, takes his own bath, gets ready for school. I don't have to prompt him. He's a great kid. I'm blessed."

Michael Myette has been dealing with MS a lot longer.

"I was diagnosed in 1992 after 20 years of them not knowing what it was," he said. "Luckily the MS Society was there for

See **FLIGHTS, 2B**

Charity cycling event to roll through Broward

By **EMILY MILLER**
Staff writer

Warren Cohen estimates he's pricked his finger 65,000 times and given himself 55,000 injections during the last quarter-century.

A Type I diabetic, Cohen has a different number in mind this week: 100. That's the number of miles the Boca Raton resident plans to ride as a participant in the South Florida Tour de Cure on Sunday.

"[Cycling] is a great way for

diabetics to stay healthy and lose weight and really take care of themselves," he said.

Cohen, 57, began cycling in June and now rides about 150 miles a week, stopping along the way for snacks when needed and checking his blood sugar before and after each ride.

"[People with diabetes] can't just jump on a bike and go," Cohen said. "You have to be diligent and you have to adjust."

Cohen will join roughly 300 riders expected at the cycling event, which benefits the Ameri-

can Diabetes Association.

The event will begin at 7 a.m. at Hugh Taylor Birch State Park, at 3109 Sunrise Blvd., near Fort Lauderdale beach. Start times for the rides vary and some routes will extend into southern Palm Beach County, a first for the annual fundraiser.

This is the seventh year the Tour de Cure has been held in South Florida. Last year, the event was in Miami and 250 riders turned out.

Participants can choose to ride anywhere from 3.2 miles to 100

miles. The tour is a ride — not a race — with routes designed for everyone from the occasional rider to the experienced cyclist.

The event also will feature a children's ride, live music and entertainment, specialty food trucks and a sponsor exhibit area with the latest about diabetes care and health-related information.

Cohen, a first-year participant, has raised roughly \$11,500 so far. He and other diabetic riders are referred to as Red Riders.

See **CYCLING, 2B**

Sides in fatality discuss policies

Driver was shot by plainclothes cop

By **ADAM SACASA**
Staff writer

Community leaders met with the Palm Beach Gardens mayor and other city officials for more than three hours Monday to discuss the Corey Jones police shooting.

Derrick McCray, president of the Riviera Beach-based Youth Recreation Association, said Palm Beach Gardens city officials were open to their suggestions. He and others pushed Monday for city officials to implement a citizen review board to increase police transparency and for department policy changes that outline how officers identify themselves to citizens.

Plainclothes Palm Beach Gardens Police Officer Nouman Raja fatally shot Jones on Oct. 18 as Jones, a 31-year-old drummer, waited for a tow truck at a highway exit ramp. The case sparked national outrage, and Palm Beach Gardens announced Thursday that it fired Raja.

After Monday's closed-door session, Palm Beach Gardens Mayor Eric Jablin described the meeting as "very productive."

"We're really basically on the same page," Jablin said. "We want answers as much as they do, and I think we're going to be working together to get those answers."

Jones' death happened during a lingering national uproar over use of force by police, from Ferguson, Mo., to Baltimore, involving young black men.

"I think we had a very frank discussion about the concerns that both the African-American community have and the city has," Jablin said. "I'm really excited about the start that we made today."

McCray, citing discussions from the meeting, said the city will be purchasing body cameras for officers, but said he wants to ensure policies are in place so officers don't turn off or misuse the cameras.

Among the other community leaders in attendance at Monday's meeting were the Rev. Rae Whitely, of the Boynton Beach Coalition of Clergy, and Nicholas O'Neal, president of the Palm Beach County Clergy Alliance.

The issue of who will be held

See **JONES, 6B**

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Restaurant's drive-thru dispute leads to gunfire

BY LINDA TRISCHITTA
Staff writer

A dispute between two men over \$1 at a McDonald's drive-thru in Dania Beach led to gunfire, one arrest and a fallen flagpole at the restaurant, the Broward Sheriff's Office said.

The conflict happened at 10:30 a.m. Sunday at the fast food restaurant at 1310 S. Federal Highway.

Robert Smith, 24, of Dania Beach and a friend pulled up to the takeout window and while paying, Smith dropped \$1.

It was picked up by a man who was in the car behind them.

Smith told him, "Merry Christmas," which led to an argument between them and display of a semi-automatic weapon by the other

man who pointed it at Smith, according Deputy Jose Huertas' report.

Smith sped off to another friend's home and the two men

walked back to the restaurant with the friend's firearm and resumed the argument with the man who got the dollar.

At that point, shots were fired and the man who picked up the dollar bill drove away, but not before running over the McDonald's flag pole, the deputy said.

No weapons were recovered and the man in the

other car was not identified.

In 2012, Smith pleaded not contest to a charge of carrying a concealed firearm and was sentenced to probation, court records show.

On Sunday he was arrested on suspicion of violating that probation and was being held without bond Monday in a Broward County jail.

The Sheriff's Office asks anyone with information to call Broward County Crime Stoppers — at 954-493-8477 or online at browardcrimestoppers.org — which will accept anonymous tips and will pay up to \$3,000 for information that leads to an arrest.

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Smith

Man pleads guilty to role in online auto sales fraud

BY PAULA MCMAHON
Staff writer

A Romanian man pleaded guilty Monday to participating in an international fraud that bilked 33 car buyers out of more than \$318,000.

Mihai Daniel Postelnicu, 36, told investigators he was recruited in 2007 at a Romanian night club to take part in the swindle, which operated in South Florida, California and elsewhere.

He pleaded guilty to one count of wire fraud conspiracy and faces a maximum punishment of 20 years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine when he is sentenced in January in federal court in Miami.

Members of the group that operated the fraud listed cars for sale on websites including AutoTrader.com and Craigslist, Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas

Lanigan wrote in court records.

The fraudsters used aliases, owned none of the vehicles, had no intention of making legitimate deals and never delivered any of the cars, investigators said.

When victims responded to the ads and negotiated a purchase price via email, they were instructed to send electronic transfers of cash to banks in Broward County.

Postelnicu admitted he used aliases and posed as both a Swedish and Czech citizen to withdraw money from accounts established under aliases he used.

He told investigators he came to the U.S. in 2008 to participate in the fraud and received training in Los Angeles on how to open fraudulent bank accounts. He later returned to Romania without opening any accounts.

He said he returned to

the U.S. in 2010 and opened several accounts.

Victims told federal agents from Homeland Security Investigations and the Secret Service the cars they bought were never provided to them and the sellers stopped communicating after they received the money.

Authorities said the conspiracy operated from 2010 to 2011 and they obtained an arrest warrant for Postelnicu in April 2014. Postelnicu, who was working on a cruise ship, was eventually arrested Sept. 21 when the ship he worked on docked at the Port of Miami. He has been locked up since then.

Federal prosecutors said they are trying to recover the money the fraudsters received from victims.

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JIM DONNELLY/COURTESY

More than 30 people who contend with multiple sclerosis and limited mobility experience the thrill of flight Monday thanks to "Fly for MS" volunteer pilots.

FLIGHTS

Continued from Page 1B

me."

In addition to funding research for a cure, the National MS Society provides programs, services and financial help for families dealing with MS, said South Florida chapter president Karen Dresbach.

"There are 8,000 people with MS in South Florida," she said. "We get 200 calls a week."

Multiple sclerosis is a chronic, progressive disease that damages nerve cell membranes in the brain and spinal cord. Symptoms vary depending on the person but they may include numbness, speech impairment, muscular dysfunction, blurry vision, and extreme exhaustion.

There are medications and physical activities that have helped people like U.S. Marine Corps veteran Lanny Carrero, 49, of Palm Beach Gardens. He was diagnosed 28 years ago.

"I was 255 pounds and very inactive. For me, being a Marine, it was very difficult," he said. "I've dropped the weight down to 195 now and I'm still cranking out the miles for MS."

Carrero trains by riding his bicycle 15 to 20 miles, three to four times a week and then participates in the Bike MS fundraising ride, logging 150 miles over two days from Fort Lauderdale through the Keys.

"I want people to know that being diagnosed with MS is not a death sentence," he said. "It doesn't mean you sit in a chair and

stop doing things because there are adaptive sports in everything, adaptive cycling, adaptive fishing, adaptive everything."

The next challenge is to overcome cultural barriers, said Yolinda Salgado, 57, of Miami, who was diagnosed 15 years ago but had trouble finding a doctor who could recognize MS and treat it.

"People think it's a black [and] white issue but this also has hit very hard on the Latino community," she said. "I'd say MS is almost like a fingerprint. No two people are the same. Everybody carries it differently."

For more information, go to nationalMSSociety.org.

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CENTER

Continued from Page 1B

and State Road A1A.

Feldman is recommending the city reject the higher price, and choose another option because of the gap in funding.

Plans to replace the current center, located alongside the International Swimming Hall of Fame on Seabreeze Boulevard, have dragged on for years. A previous commission decided in 2002 to spend \$27 million for a replacement, but nothing came of those plans.

The current commission has been working with RDC for the past five years, the only company to respond when it put the project out to bid in 2009. The company's original \$76.1 million proposal — complete with restaurants, commercial space, artificial surf machines and an eye-catching design — was deemed too grandiose for the beach. The project was scaled back to the current proposal, which focuses on two Olympic-sized swimming pools and a separate pool for diving competitions.

The Broward Inspector

General's Office weighed in on the matter in 2013, saying the city had violated state law by moving forward with a one-bid contract when three bids were required. The inspector general said the project should be rebid, but the city disagreed.

The city initially planned to include a new home for the International Swimming Hall of Fame in the plans, but those discussions broke down and the hall is now planning to move to California.

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Bulletin Board

COMPILED BY ANNA BEACH

TUESDAY

Senior and Health Expo, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Deicke Auditorium, 5701 Cypress Road, Plantation. Call 954-549-3568.

Alzheimer's Caregiver Support Groups, 10 to 11:30 a.m. at Brookdale Coconut Creek, 4175 W. Sample Road, Building 1, 2nd Floor, Coconut Creek, 954-971-7155; 10:30 a.m. to noon at Miramar Library, 2050 Civic Center Place, 954-357-8090.

Property Appraiser Outreach, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Deerfield Beach City Hall, 150 NE Second Ave.; 4:30 to 6 p.m. at North Lauderdale Library, 6901 Kimberly Blvd. and Dania Beach Library, 1 Park Ave. Call 954-357-5579.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/Fibromyalgia Support Group Meeting, 12:30 p.m. at David Posnack Jewish Community Center, 5850 S. Pine Island Road, Davie. Call 954-434-0290.

Computer Camp: Downloading Magazines, 1 to 2:30 p.m. at Alvin Sherman Library at Nova Southeastern University, 3100 Ray Ferrero, Jr. Blvd., Davie. Registration required. Call 954-262-5477.

Customer Appreciation Days at Broward County Transit, 2 to 4 p.m. at Broward Central Terminal 101 NW First Ave., Fort Lauderdale; 4 to 6 p.m. at West Regional Terminal, 100 N. Pine Island Road, Plantation. Music, entertainment, refreshments and prizes. Call 954-357-8400.

Broward College Open House, 5 to 8 p.m. at Judson A. Samuels South Campus, Performing Cultural Arts Theater, Building 68b, 7200 Pines Blvd., Pembroke Pines. Call 954-201-7350.

Forgiveness is a Gift, workshop, 6 to 8 p.m. at Miramar Library, 2050 Civic Center Place. Free. Call 954-357-8090.

White Elephant Rummage Auction, by South Florida Depression Glass Club, 7 p.m. with 6:30 p.m. preview at Wilton Manors Women's Club, 600 NE 21st Court. Call 954-964-8073.

Holiday Art Sale, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Studio 18 in The Pines, 1101 Poinciana Drive, Pembroke Pines. Call 954-961-6067.

Community Association Elections and Electronic Voting, 6:30 p.m. at Tamarac Community Center, 8601 W. Commercial Blvd., Free. To register call 954-486-7774

Woodcarving, 9 a.m. to noon at N.E. Focal Point Senior Center, 227 NW Second St., Deerfield Beach. Charge for cost of materials. Call 954-480-4449.

NAMI Mental Health Consumer Support Group, 3 p.m. at Pamela Ann Glassman Center, 7145 W. Oakland Park Blvd., Lauderdale. Free. Call 954-316-9907.

Take Off Pounds Sensibly, 6 p.m. at Collins Center, 3900 NE Third Ave., Oakland Park. Call 954-296-4137.

Toasters, 6:30 p.m. at Jim Ward Community Center, 301 NW 46th Ave., Plantation, 954-253-2645; 7 to 8:30 p.m. at Denny's, 3151 NW Ninth Ave., Fort Lauderdale, 954-600-1532.

Breast Cancer Support Group, 7 p.m. at Hollywood Memorial South, 3600 Washington St. Free. Call 954-791-6318.

Nar-Anon Family Group Meeting, 12 step support group, 8 to 9 p.m. at 5725 S. University Drive, Davie. Call 888-947-8885.

Sit 'N' Fit Chair Yoga, class for seniors, 9 to 10 a.m. at N.E. Focal Point Senior Center, 227 NW Second St., Deerfield Beach. \$2 per class. Call 954-480-4463.

Brain and Body Workout, 10 a.m. at Southwest Focal Point Community Center, 301 NW 103rd Ave., Pembroke Pines. Free. Call 954-450-