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Local

Mom lost at sea, dad facing prison, baby girl in limbo

Friends and family plead for man in coin theft case to be reunited with daughter

BY ERIKA PESANTES
Staff writer

Little Emelia Bennett has a mother who is presumed dead after disappearing at sea and a jailed father who faces up to 10 years in prison in a coin theft case.

The West Delray toddler who has all but disappeared from the public drama since her mother vanished from her life, now lives across the Atlantic in England, where her father's relatives care for her.

Letters from family and friends filed in support of Lewis Bennett as he

awaits sentencing this month argue that Emelia, now 1½, especially needs her father after the traumatic loss of her mother, Isabella Hellmann. They paint a picture of a proud father who is eager to raise his baby girl.

Bennett's sister, Claire Bennett, called her brother a devoted father who is devastated to be away from his little girl.

"It has been a tragic time but it is a

See **TODDLER, 5B**

Substitute teachers scarce

Schools often combine classes; discipline problems increase

BY SCOTT TRAVIS
Staff writer

It's not just teachers leaving South Florida's classrooms. Substitutes also are getting scarce.

An improving economy has hit hard in Broward, where nearly one in five classes with an absent teacher had nobody to take over the class. It's prompting the district to consider remedies such as raising pay, recruiting a wider range of people and enticing more retired teachers to sub.

Miami-Dade County has faced a similar shortage for several years now. The situation is better in Palm Beach County, where about 6 percent of classes that need subs don't get them.

"We're having a problem getting subs. A lot of substitutes have certain schools they will not go to," said Terry Lopez Preuss, a vice president with the Broward Teachers Union. "Teachers and administrators are left trying to figure out how in the world are we going to cover these classes, so the kids are safe."

As a result, a class of 20 students may get divided up, so that four teachers have to take five extra students each. Schools often combine classes and move them to larger areas, such as gyms and libraries. Administrators and literacy coaches have to give up their normal duties to serve as substitute teaches. And teachers are

See **TEACHERS, 10B**

Seafood and Music Festival reels in crowds



JENNIFER LETT/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The festival includes seafood from Florida's coastal waters as well as meat and vegetarian dishes, drinks and desserts.

Boca Raton's first-ever annual event continues today

BY WAYNE K. ROUSTAN
Staff writer

Karen Harwood was among the estimated 10,000 people to attend opening day of the first-ever Boca Raton Seafood and Music Festival at Mizner Park on Saturday, and she was eager to conduct her own taste test.

"I'm a New Englander and I wanted to see if they would have

Maine lobster and sure enough they do," she said, as she cracked open a tail. "It's delicious. Lobster is my favorite thing in the world."

Her husband Ted tried crawfish for the first time. "It's like mini-lobsters," he said. "They're awesome but they keep your hands busy, that's for sure."

There was indigenous seafood from Florida's coastal waters as well as meat and vegetarian dishes, beer,

wine, a variety of drinks, and a selection from the dessert menus prepared by local restaurants and special event vendors such as Justin Sattler.

"This is doing pretty well for a first annual event," he said. "Usually it's a little hard to get things kicked off for the first [time]."

Festival producer Ron Soto expects the two-day event will attract

See **SEAFOOD, 2B**

Little has been done in first half of session

BY GRAY ROHRER
Staff writer

TALLAHASSEE — Florida faces no shortage of complex issues — an opioid abuse epidemic, funding for schools, affordable housing and more — but more than halfway through their time at the Capitol, lawmakers have sent Gov. Rick Scott just four substantive bills.

It's not unprecedented. Lawmakers meet for 60 days each year during regular session, and the bulk of the action typically happens in the final two weeks, as

House and Senate negotiators hold back priorities of the other chamber to force through deals.

"We're halfway done, but nowhere near half the work's been done yet," said Democratic consultant Steve Schale. "That's how these things work."

Yet in recent years, brinkmanship has bubbled over into animosity between the GOP-led chambers, resulting in special or extended sessions in 2015 and 2017, as Scott and legis-

See **SESSION, 9B**

Miramar seldom hires companies owned by minorities, study shows

BY BRIAN BALLOU
Staff writer

More than three quarters of Miramar's residents are black or Hispanic, yet the city seldom throws its business to companies owned by minorities, a new study shows.

It's not for a lack of minority-owned businesses in the region, according to the study conducted at the city's request by the MGT Consulting Group.

"Many cities have policies that end up being unintentional barriers," said Mayor Wayne Messam, including making contracts too large for small businesses to han-

dle, rather than dividing up work.

Miramar awarded \$147 million in contracts from Oct 2012 through Sept. 2016. Black-owned businesses received \$3.3 million of that and Hispanic-owned businesses received \$3.2 million, or about 2.2 percent each, according to the study.

The consultants suggested the city:

- Set annual goals to increase the number of contracts awarded to minority businesses.
- Conduct outreach to minority businesses that could potentially serve the city.
- Establish a "Minority/Women Business Enterprise" program to monitor progress in

hiring.

■ Encourage minority-owned businesses to take advantage of small local business programs that assist with training, development and financing.

Contracts are awarded by the city manager but the city commission has to approve ones that exceed \$50,000. Most of the contract money went to construction companies, but the city also hired firms for services ranging from maintenance to engineering.

City commissioners and the consulting

See **MINORITY, 9B**



"Many cities have policies that end up being unintentional barriers."

Wayne Messam, Miramar mayor



Time out for Women

Women's Heart Health: Reducing Stress and Living Healthier

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SEAFOOD

Continued from Page 1B

about 20,000. "People seem to be having a good time," he said. "It's definitely a family affair."

Not everyone was there for the food. Florida Panthers broadcaster Randy Moller and his wife Cathy had their eyes on some sand sculptures.

"What we really like is the local jewelry and the artwork," he said. "We buy certain stuff to decorate our pool area and to support local [businesses]."

And, you can eat to the beat. Live concerts featured both local and regional performers including soul, rock, R&B, jazz, reggae, Caribbean and other music.

The event runs from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. today. Admission is \$5. Children 12-years and younger are free. No pets are allowed inside of Mizner Park.

"We're glad they're supporting the local [community]," said Cathy Moller. "If you put it on, people will come. It's awesome."



JENNIFER LETT/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

An estimated 10,000 people attended opening day of the Boca Raton Seafood and Music Festival at Mizner Park on Saturday.

you put it on, people will come. It's awesome." wkroustan@sunsentinel.com, 954-356-4303 or

Twitter @WayneRoustan

Volusia charges suspect in thefts of toilet fixtures

BY JEFF WEINER
Staff writer

Deputies in Volusia County on Thursday arrested Douglas Garner, 36, who is suspected in several recent plumbing thefts from public restrooms in DeBary.

Garner was booked into the Volusia County Branch Jail on charges of dealing in stolen property, narcotics possession, possession of drug paraphernalia and driving with a suspended license.

According to the Sheriff's Office, deputies were called to public parks in DeBary three times in January to investigate stolen bathroom plumbing. Two of the thefts occurred at Lake Monroe Park and another at the DeBary Splash

Pad.

In the three heists, 16 brass plumbing fixtures were stolen from toilets and urinals. The total value of the stolen plumbing was about \$3,600, deputies said.

Investigators discovered that Garner had made seven sales involving brass toilet fixtures in January, the Sheriff's Office said.

Garner's fingerprints were also found on pipes in the bathrooms at Lake Monroe Park, deputies said.

He faces charges in the Lake Monroe Park heists, but the Sheriff's Office said more charges are pending for the thefts at the Splash Pad.

jeweiner@orlandosentinel.com



PUBLIC NOTICE: City of Fort Lauderdale to Chlorinate Water System Preventive Maintenance Scheduled for February 13 - March 20, 2018

The City of Fort Lauderdale will temporarily return to using free chlorine in its drinking water system. This preventive maintenance procedure will begin at 9 a.m., Tuesday, February 13 and will end at 9 a.m., Tuesday, March 20, 2018.



Flushing fire hydrants is a routine part of the free chlorination process.

Free chlorination is a common practice for water systems using combined chlorine disinfection. The chlorination period is anticipated to be transparent to water customers; however, some may notice a slight change in the taste or smell of their tap water.

This procedure will affect the City of Fort Lauderdale, as well as Lauderdale-by-the-Sea, Port Everglades, Village of Sea Ranch Lakes, Wilton Manors, and sections of the Town of Davie, Oakland Park, and Tamarac (east of State Road 7/441).

Fort Lauderdale utility customers may contact the 24-hour Neighbor Call Center at (954) 828-8000 or online at www.fortlauderdale.gov/customerservice. Customers who receive a utility bill from other municipalities or entities should call their respective water provider's customer service phone number for more information.

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1 man killed, 1 wounded in gas station shooting

One man was killed and another wounded in a shooting Saturday afternoon at a gas station on the 800 block of West Sunrise Boulevard in Fort Lauderdale.

Fort Lauderdale police would not identify the dead man, but said he was 46 years old. The other was taken to a hospital with injuries that are not life-threatening, a police spokeswoman said.

The shooting happened at about 2 p.m. Sarida Gupta, who owns the combination restaurant and gas station with her husband, said she was standing in the kitchen when she heard a loud bang.

"We are so sad here," she said of the incident in the gas station parking lot. "He was a young man. This is so hard to see."

Police said the investigation is continuing.

— Anne Geggis

NOTICE OF INTENT TO USE UNIFORM METHOD FOR THE COLLECTION OF A NON-AD VALOREM TAX ASSESSMENT

The City Commission of the City of Coral Springs, Florida, hereby provides notice, pursuant to Section 197.3632(3)(a), Florida Statutes, of its intent to use the uniform method of collecting non-ad valorem special assessments to be levied upon real property, as defined in the resolution, within the municipal boundaries of the City of Coral Springs for funding the costs of correcting public health, safety, and welfare violations of City's Code of Ordinances and Land Development Code. The City Commission will consider the adoption of a resolution stating its intent to use the uniform method of levying and collecting such assessments authorized by Section 197.3632, Florida Statutes, at a public hearing to be held at 6:30 p.m. on February 21, 2018, in the Commission Chambers of City Hall, located at 9500 West Sample Road, Coral Springs, Florida, 33065. Such resolution will state the need for the levy and will contain a legal description of the boundaries of the real property subject to the levy. All interested persons are invited to attend.

Anyone wishing to appeal any decision made by the City Commission, with respect to this matter, will need a recording of the proceeding and for such purpose may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceeding is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based (§286.0105, F.S.). Anyone needing auxiliary services, please contact City Clerk at least five (5) days prior to the meeting (56 Fed. Reg. 35721, 28 CFR Sec. 35.160(b)).

CITY OF OAKLAND PARK LEGAL NOTICE

A Public Hearing before the Oakland Park City Commission will be held Wednesday, February 21, 2018, at 6:30 P.M., or as soon thereafter as may be heard, in the Commission Chambers of City Hall at 3650 NE 12th Avenue, Oakland Park, Florida, to consider the following:

Case #CD18-02T: "Downtown District Parking & Interim Regulations Ordinance"
AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF OAKLAND PARK, FLORIDA, AMENDING CHAPTER 24, ENTITLED "LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE," ARTICLE XX, ENTITLED "OAKLAND PARK DOWNTOWN MIXED USE DISTRICT REGULATIONS" SECTION 24-270 ENTITLED "PARKING" AND SECTION 24-276 ENTITLED "INTERIM REGULATIONS - ADAPTIVE RE-USE INCENTIVE PROGRAM" IN THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF OAKLAND PARK; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the above City Commission with respect to any matter considered at such hearing, they will need a record of the proceedings, and for such purpose they may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

All interested parties are invited to attend and be heard with respect to the above. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, persons needing a special accommodation or an interpreter to participate in this proceeding should contact the City Clerk's office at 954.630.4300 at least two days prior to the date of hearing.

Renee M. Shrout, CMC
City Clerk