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**JOHN HACKWORTH**

**Life after politics suits Sara Devos**

The last time readers heard about Sara Devos she was stepping down as a Charlotte County commissioner after a sticky and protracted disagreement about whether or not she lived in her district.

Since then, Sara is doing just fine, thank you. As a matter of fact, Devos is thrilled to be out of politics and back doing what she feels is her strength — child advocacy. As president of the Charlotte County Boys & Girls Clubs she, and some good friends, have been able to turn around an organization that was in such disarray a year or two ago that the United Way (which did allocate \$5,000) and Charlotte County commissioners threw up their hands and said basically: "You're on your own. Sink or swim."

Devos and a dedicated board of directors, including president-elect Lorraine Grant, rolled up their sleeves and went to work.

The transformation has been nothing short of incredible. Two years ago, someone described the Boys & Girls Club, which is housed in the Family Services Center on Gibraltar Avenue in Port Charlotte, as chaotic.

Well, it's still chaotic, but in a good way.

There are 195 kids, ages 6-16, registered for its summer program alone. There are another 50 in a summer program at the Housing Authority in Punta Gorda and a good number at L.A. Ainger Middle School in a third, successful summer program.

Now, economics no doubt play a role in the success of these programs. The cost for the whole summer is \$150. And, according to Devos, a good percentage of the kids are attending on scholarships because their parents are out of work or cannot afford to pay anything.

Nevertheless, that does not detract from the job the board and new Chief Professional Officer Lynn Dotler are doing.

How did things turn around so quickly? "Well, when we hired (Dotler) it made a difference," Devos said. "He came from Lee County and he has been great."

"When Sarasota County's Boys & Girls Club came in a year or so ago and provided much-needed leadership, that helped get things going. We also have many new faces on the board that have brought a lot of credibility to the organization."

"We hired an outside financial person who gives us a monthly report and we're selling our old building in Englewood. That doesn't mean we are abandoning Englewood though. We have plans to stay there."

Recently, at the Punta Gorda club, kids cooked a meal for their parents as they tackle needed life skills. "We are stressing family time at that club," Devos said.

Plans are being made for two major fundraisers each year and Devos is happy that the Stone Crabs and Tampa Bay Rays are both eager partners in raising money. The Wyvern Hotel in Punta Gorda is another business that has committed to help raise funds through an event there this fall.

"I think by the end of this year we will have one of the best organized nonprofits in Charlotte County," Devos said proudly.

As for any spare time, she says she enjoys her two grandchildren immensely. And that is essentially her life now. "And it is so much more rewarding," she said.

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**Push to revisit fees fails**

Tiered impact structure will still take effect later this year

By **NEIL HUGHES**  
STAFF WRITER

**MURDOCK** — After further consideration, Charlotte County's new tiered impact fees will remain in place.

A push to revoke on last week's divisive issue fell flat, thwarted Tuesday by the technicalities of the county charter.

It all started at the end of

Tuesday's land-use meeting, when Commissioner Bob Starr made an attempt to have last week's vote reconsidered. But Starr was on the losing end of that vote, and the rules dictate that only a commissioner in the majority opinion may bring forward a previous approval for reconsideration.

It was Chairwoman Tricia Duffy who at first seemed

interested in changing her mind.

"I do still have some concern about the justification of the road costs," she said. "I'm still not 100 percent convinced that we used the right numbers, I guess you could say."

However, the rules prevented her from doing so — the chair may not make a

motion, only second one presented by another commissioner.

Despite her lack of ability to make a motion, Commissioner Robert Skidmore seconded her intent. But even with the eagerness of Starr and Skidmore to repeal the new tax structure, the only

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PHOTO PROVIDED

**Getting a feel for trucks**

Nikolas Posilovich, 2 1/2, grins from the seat of the tractor provided by Charlotte County Public Works during the Touch-a-Truck event coordinated by Charlotte County Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department on Saturday at the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center. Waste Management sponsored the event. For more pictures from the event, see page 14.

**County accepts Fire & EMS concessions**

By **NEIL HUGHES**  
STAFF WRITER

**MURDOCK** — Tense negotiations gave way Tuesday to a flood of praise between the Charlotte County Commission and its Fire & EMS service, thanks to major progress in ongoing negotiations.

In response to committed budget reductions from the

administrative side and proposed salary and benefit concessions from the employees' union, members of the County Commission made glowing remarks about their Fire & EMS organization at Tuesday's land-use meeting.

"The fire service stepped up and gave the people of Charlotte County a break," Commissioner Bob Starr said.

That's particularly high praise coming from Starr, who stood out by taking a hardline stance in negotiations. The District 5 commissioner had pushed for the county to explore the option of privatizing its Fire & EMS services, if it would save money.

"This has been a long and painful process," Starr said Tuesday. "Our job is to get the

most bang for our buck, and I think that (Chief Dennis DiDio's) proposal presents that."

Nearly \$3 million in additional upfront concessions were offered by both the organization and the union Tuesday. Most of the reductions — more than \$2 million

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**Southwest Florida College adds new programs**

By **PAMELA STAIK**  
STAFF WRITER

**PORT CHARLOTTE** — Southwest Florida College's Port Charlotte campus has expanded its offerings once again.

The additions include a diploma program in crime scene investigation, according to spokesperson Diana Rodrigues.

The curriculum for the program, known as CSI, has

been approved by the Crime Scene Certification Board of the International Association for Identification. A successful completion of the required 36 credit hours entitles students to earn first-level certification from the association.

Also, three new associate degree programs have been added to the campus' lineup, Rodrigues said.

They include coursework in criminal justice and early

childhood education, and a program for management and marketing. All three programs require 96 credit hours for graduation.

Both the diploma program and the three degree programs are being offered in the summer mini-semester session, which begins on Aug. 10, as well as in the fall semester, which is slated to begin Sept. 28.

Tuition is \$275 per credit hour, with financial aid oppor-

tunities available. This includes a scholarship the college offers to anyone who has graduated from high school. Also, the college offers lifetime career placement to all graduates.

For more information, call 888-526-7973 or visit www.swfc.edu. You also can visit the campus, located in the Grand Oaks Plaza II, at 950 Tamiami Trail.

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**Bill passes to name post office for SEAL pioneer**

By **GREG MARTIN**  
STAFF WRITER

**MURDOCK** — A bill to name a local post office for the late Lt. Cmdr. Roy Boehm, a Punta Gorda man who fought in three wars and started the Navy SEALs, has passed the U.S. House, the bill's sponsor, Rep. Tom Rooney, announced Tuesday.

Calling Boehm a "true American hero," Rooney said he was "honored" that his first bill to get passed by the House would be to recognize Boehm for his service.

House Resolution 2470 calls for naming the post office at 19190 Cochran Blvd. the Lieutenant Commander Roy H. Boehm Post Office Building.

"Lt. (Cmdr.) Boehm deserves to be honored for his service in the Navy and for his role in creating the elite fighting force known as the Navy SEALs," said Rooney in a statement. "I thank my colleagues in the Florida delegation for co-sponsoring this bill, and House leadership for

bringing the bill to the floor today."

Boehm, who died in December, enlisted in the Navy in 1941 and fought during World War II, and in Korea and Vietnam.

"In 1942, he participated in the Battle of Cape Esperance at Guadalcanal, one of the largest "all surface" sea engagements of WWII," according to a press release from Rooney. "He also was involved in action in Kerama Reto and Okinawa." A pioneer of frogman

tactics, Boehm obtained qualifications in deep sea diving, deep submergence rescue chamber operator for submarine rescues, experimental diving and salvage diving. He also graduated from both Airborne and Ranger Training.

In 1961, under orders from President John F. Kennedy, Boehm developed and launched the Navy's elite Sea, Air and Land forces unit known as the SEALs, according to the press release.