

'Gangster Redemption' tells a compelling story of Lawton's fall and rise

By Ken Datzman

PALM BAY — Perhaps the most riveting chapter of many in Larry Lawton's "Gangster Redemption" — his tell-all book about life in organized crime, his years in some of the roughest federal prisons in America, and his work today as a successful businessman helping steer troubled youth and young adults in the right direction — is "The Last Heist."

It didn't go as planned, unlike all his previous heists up and down the East Coast, in Pennsylvania, Florida, Georgia, and even locally.

As he sped away in his car after robbing a jewelry store in a Philadelphia suburb, a bullet came flying dead-center through the driver's-side windshield.

An unarmed Lawton, who robbed the store with a BB gun, instinctively ducked.

The bullet fired by the store owner who had been tied up but was able to unravel — a mistake Lawton's crew only made once in a long string of heists — grazed Lawton's head and hit his brother.

In the early 1990s, Lawton, who grew up in Brooklyn, N.Y., was considered the most notorious jewel robber in America, managing to stay one step ahead of police and FBI agents, it seemed.

He was bold. He loved diamonds and learned about them through course work. Lawton could size up a diamond's value down to the dollar.

At 6-foot-2 and 200 pounds, he threw a powerful punch. One of his mobster nicknames was "Crazy Larry." Among his titles within the ranks, Lawton was an "earner" and an "enforcer" for the Gambino crime family.

Once in 1981, on a \$100 bet, he drove naked on his motorcycle, from Sandy Hook, N.Y., to the Bronx, N.Y., at speeds of up to 100 mph. He says he "flew through" the toll booths.

"I was wild. I was a bad guy. I don't make excuses for anything that has ever happened to me or make excuses for my crimes. Read the book. I committed those crimes. But people change. Down deep, I think I always had a good heart for people," said area resident Lawton, the president and founder of Lawton911 and the results-oriented Reality Check DVD Program that is used in the Brevard County court system for young offenders.

The 367-page book, written with "The New York Times" best-selling author Peter Golenbock, appears to be headed for the big screen. Lawton's life is tailored-made for Hollywood.

The action-packed book, which reads like fiction but is fact-based, has chapters titled "Earner for the Mob," "Loyalty," "Journey to Atlanta," and "Free at Last." In the chapter "Diamonds are a Guy's Best Friend," Lawton describes his most ambitious planned undertaking, what he called his "retirement heist."

After making trips to study the layout and security of H. Stern



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

Businessman Larry Lawton of Palm Bay is president and founder of Lawton911 and the Reality Check DVD Program that is used in the Brevard court system. He has plans to expand his company to include a range of DVDs such as 'Reality Check Teen Texting and Driving' and 'Reality Check Parenting.' He wrote 'Gangster Redemption' with The New York Times' best-selling author Peter Golenbock. Lawton was once considered the most notorious jewel robber in America.

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Dr. Rachel Fornes honored with Congressional Adoption Award

Dr. Rachel Fornes, founder and operator of the Home At Last Adoption Agency in Cocoa Beach, has been selected as an honoree for the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI) Award to be presented Sept. 12 at a gala event in Washington, D.C.

Sen. Bill Nelson nominated her for the award.

The Angels in Adoption program is CCAI's signature public-awareness campaign and provides an opportunity for members of the U.S. Congress to honor the good work of their constituents who have enriched the lives of foster children and orphans in the U.S. and abroad.

Dr. Fornes is being honored for her "tireless work advocating for children in need of a permanent, secure and loving home."

In order to provide this permanency for children, Dr. Fornes and Home At Last educate the community about the positive option of adoption for birth mothers who are unwilling or unable to parent their children.

She said she believes that birth mothers should be honored for the selfless and often-difficult decision they make regarding the best interests of their children. In order to honor them, Home At Last sponsors a Birth Mother's Day Celebration every year. Recently, it purchased a birth-mother home in order to provide counseling and other support services to the birth mothers who are served.

Dr. Fornes and her staff assist birth mothers with getting their general education diploma, applying to college or vocational training, finding employment and securing a permanent place to live. Dr. Fornes "goes above and beyond to make sure her birth mothers know they are supported, understood, and loved."

In addition to the more than 150 local angels from around the country, several "National Angels" will also be recognized at the ceremony and gala for their dedication and commitment to child welfare on a grand scale.

Former National Angels include First Lady Laura Bush, Patti LaBelle, Jane Seymour, Muhammad Ali, the late Dave Thomas, Steven Curtis Chapman, Bruce Willis, Alonzo Mourning, Rhea Perlman and Kristin Chenoweth.

Sen. Rubio recognizes FAA graduate Gaylor

Republican Sen. Marco Rubio recently recognized intern Hunter Gaylor on the floor of the Senate on July 12. Gaylor, an intern in Sen. Rubio's Washington, D.C. office, is a 2008 graduate of Florida Air Academy in Melbourne and a senior at Harvard University majoring in government. "Hunter is a dedicated and diligent worker who has been devoted to getting the most out of his internship experience," Sen. Rubio told his Senate colleagues. "I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Hunter for all the fine work he has done and wish him continued success in the years to come."

Realtor Doescher joins Hallmark Properties

Realtor Jeff Doescher has joined the Melbourne office of Weichert Realtors' Hallmark Properties. He is a member of the Melbourne Area Association of Realtors. Doescher has a professional background in geotechnical engineering and geology. Hallmark Properties is at 7640 N. Wickham Road.

BBN SPACE COAST BUSINESS

Brevard County Health Department is honored for Excellence in Public Health

Dr. Heidar Heshmati, director of Brevard County Health Department, was honored at the 2012 annual conference of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), for developing and implementing a program that demonstrates exemplary and replicable qualities in response to a local public-health need.

The Sexual Assault Examination Response Program was one of 39 public-health programs developed by a local health department selected from across the nation to receive NACCHO's Model Practice Award.

The Sexual Assault Examination Response Program was implemented in partnership with the State Attorney's Office, Sexual Assault Victim Services, Salvation Army and Serene Harbour Domestic Violence Shelters, as well as law-enforcement agencies and the Brevard County Health Department.

The program, said Dr. Heshmati, responds to sexual-violence victims "quickly and compassionately," 24 hours a day with "comprehensive, individualized, victim-centered care in a safe location."

It program helps reduce a "tremendous burden" on the emergency-medical system in both capacity and cost.

"We are proud to receive NACCHO's Model Practice Award for Sexual Assault Examination Response Program," said Dr. Heshmati. "The award is evidence of our commitment to developing responsive and innovative public-health programs that improve the health of local residents."

Brevard County is the only health department nationwide to receive a total of 11 "Model Practice Awards" from NACCHO. Each project receiving the award was peer-reviewed by other local health-department professionals and selected from a group of 166 applications.

The Brevard County Health Department's Model Practice Program, "Sexual Assault Examination Response," is now part of an online, searchable database of successful public-health practices in areas ranging from immunization and maternal and child health to infectious diseases and emergency preparedness.

The NACCHO Model Practice database allows users to benefit from colleagues' experiences, to learn what works, and to ensure that resources are used wisely on effective programs that have been implemented with good results. It also enables NACCHO to share information with key stakeholders and the media about the good work being done by health departments across the country.

For more information and to view the list of award winners, go to www.NACCHO.org.

American Legion Riders to host benefit

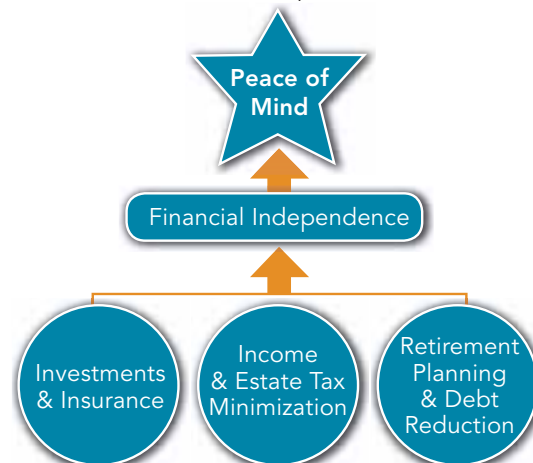
The American Legion Riders of Post 359 will host its monthly "Bike Night at the Tiki Bar" fund-raiser from 5 to 11 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 4. The Post is located at 7260 S. U.S. Highway 1, between Titusville and Port St. John. There will be live music by "Vintage" and food for \$6 per plate. The program will include a 50-50 drawing. The event is open to the public. Proceeds help fund local community-service projects. Contact Joe Marino at 794-7105 or the Post at 268-1632 for more information.

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Professor says service providers should strive for 'Doing Better Than That'

By Denver Severt
UCF Forum columnist

Excellent service enhances the quality of life both for employers, employees and consumers — it is universally beneficial.

So how can we ensure that when something succeeds, it is repeated? And how do we make sure that when something goes wrong it is fixed and the poor design is changed to prevent it from happening again? Or when the problem is beyond repair, how do we make the most of the distasteful service experience?

As a researcher, teacher, keynote speaker and service-management consultant, I have the opportunity to walk deeply into the field of service. The walk offers a chance to wear my "service glasses," which provides greater understanding of situations. Maybe what these "discerning eyes of service" see can help consumers, business owners and service providers.

The discerning eyes of service are not judging. They

simply see service unfold in millions of steps similar to a slow-motion film scene. This clears and magnifies service like a dissection. The new magnified sight reveals opportunities for what I call the philosophy of "Doing Better Than That," or DBT² for short.

Though service engineering and design are essential, the root of service is based on personal experiences. Studying personal experience and the engineered systems together help forge improvement. Typically we judge what we receive based on some moment, experience, advertisement or past event. If the current product or service improves from the past standard, that creates a genuine transformational-service experience of DBT².

Some personal examples of DBT² enhancing service:

- On a rainy Sunday morning at a Bojangles,' I opened my steamy chicken buttermilk biscuit. The steam just reached my nose when Shirley, a Bojangles' employee, walked up to the table. With a sincere smile, gentle, gracious tone, and professional-yet-personal body language, she said: "Good morning. I came to say 'Welcome.'" The biscuit, the steam, and Shirley's welcome, in perfect unison, transformed the chicken-biscuit experience into an unforgettable moment. DBT² plus.

- For a car wash at Mr. Big's, I pulled forward to choices (\$3, \$4, \$5, \$10 and \$20). Next, I proceeded through the wash, and arrived at 24 beautifully maintained, endlessly humming vacuums. They were all without timers, and included in the initial price. Instantly, I was loyal. I did not expect a car vacuum could be a transformational experience, but there were no worries about wrapping the vacuum cord or wasting time finding more coins. Vacuum and wash your ride for a reasonable price with no pressure. Systematic DBT².

- At a mall I saw 92-year-old Henry meet Ida at Panera Bread. I overheard Ida mention she had not been to her favorite store, JCPenny, in five years since she started using a walker. Henry, in his electric wheelchair, smiled widely and said climb on. Ida got on and Henry drove the two of them through the mall to the store. A truly transformational-service experience! Not just for them but also for everyone watching. DBT² from a non-customer, non-service provider.

- Sometimes the value of a DBT² experience can be a precious moment to hold onto forever. At a neo-natal intensive care unit, the physician held my 3-day-old son, Noah, to administer medication that would allow his last breaths to be more peaceful. In the next few moments, before passing into eternity, Noah turned his head and looked directly into his mother's eyes for one last look. Though a tragedy, this became a wonderfully transformational experience. Noah could not be saved, but his last

moments were magnified forever in time for family. For the doctor, I call this a grace-under-fire element of DBT².

Service situations vary greatly due to the people, process, and product value of the service experience. Experts can create service systems, but what produces a transformational-service experience is discretionary innovation on the part of the service personnel working along with the system. Usually, DBT² experiences are not costly to the business and include simple discretionary actions. For example, the way Shirley welcomed me to Bojangles'.

DBT² service is linked to a more productive economy and a better functioning world. For the business entity, the service provides a large return to the company by transforming a returning consumer into another payment for the business. For consumers, DBT² experiences improve and enhance life through making transactions and interactions enjoyable, hassle-free, and a value enhancement.

DBT² experiences will keep you returning to wonderful greetings and more chicken biscuits for breakfast, and to humming vacuums for a stress-free clean car. They will let you witness random acts like that of Henry. And for those situations that may not be pleasurable business visits, you will seek those who understand skillful orchestration of care.

For service providers, it is always necessary to ask: What could we do today to allow someone to experience a transformational DBT² service experience?

For everyone in general, try the discerning eyes of service and see how you can improve DBT² in your own acts, opportunities and deeds.

Denver Severt is an associate professor with the Rosen College of Hospitality Management at the University of Central Florida, where he has taught and researched service management for eight years. He is experienced in leading multiple restaurant businesses in various segments, including country clubs, fine dining and family dining. Severt has a total of more than 100 publications and presentations, keynote speeches and workshops related to service excellence, accounting, time management and leadership. His personal-service theory in the hospitality industry is what he calls "Doing Better Than That." He grew up in Raccoon Holler, N.C., and he enjoys arranging music on the piano and singing to groups of strangers when possible. He can be reached at Denver.Severt@UCF.edu.

Brevard Zoo ranked No. 8 by TripAdvisor

The Brevard County Commissioners approved a resolution congratulating the Brevard Zoo for its ranking as one of the top 10 zoos in the country, according to the TripAdvisor "Popularity Index." TripAdvisor's reviewers ranked Brevard Zoo No. 8. Brevard Zoo is an independent, 501(c)3, not-for-profit institution built and managed by local citizens. The zoo opened to the public in March 1994. It is one of the few not-for-profit zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums that does not receive recurring public support for operations. However, the zoo works closely with Brevard County and other governmental agencies to meet the education, conservation, recreation, and tourism needs of the region. The Brevard Zoo is home to more than 550 animals representing over 165 species from Florida, South America, Asia, and Australia. The zoo features many extraordinary animal experiences, including giraffe and lorikeet feedings.



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Brevard Business News is published every Monday by Brevard Business News Inc. Bulk Rate postage is paid at Melbourne, FL and Cocoa, FL. This publication serves business executives in Brevard County. It reports on news, trends and ideas of interest to industry, trade, agribusiness, finance, health care, high technology, education and commerce.

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Subscription Rates for home or office mail delivery are \$26.00 for one year (52 issues). Send all address changes to: Circulation Department, Brevard Business News, 4300 Fortune Place, Suite D, West Melbourne, FL, 32904, or email BrevardBusinessNews@earthlink.net.

Brevard County Bar Association announces its 2012–2013 officers

The Brevard County Bar Association hosted its 2012–2013 President's Installation Dinner and Awards Ceremony July 19 at Suntree Country Club.

The BCBA acknowledged last year's leaders and introduced its 2012–2013 officers and board of directors.

Installation of the 2012–2013 Brevard Bar Foundation and Young Lawyers Division Boards also took place.

The event was sponsored by Shay Rowe and Mercedes Benz, Porsche, Audi of Melbourne, attorney Mark Peters of Eisenmenger, Berry & Peters, P.A., and Lexi Nexi.

The 2012–2013 executive board includes: Alan Diamond, president; Jay Fowler, president–elect; Mark Peters, treasurer; and Leslie Castaldi, secretary. The board members are: Geoff Golub, G. Philip Zies, Tino Gonzalez, Eric Hostettler, Greg Hansen, Bryan Lober, Michelle Naberhaus and Michelle Studstill.

The 2012–2013 Brevard Bar Foundation executive board includes: Michael Kahn, president; Maureen Matheson, secretary; and Christina Sanchez, treasurer. Board of directors members are Steven Koons and Britta Hawkins.

The 2012–2013 Young Lawyers Division executive board includes: Andrew Pickett, president, Christina Sanchez, president–elect, Jay Thakkar, treasurer; and Ashley Bonifant, secretary. Board members are Derrick Connell, Gracie Heim, Aaron Thalwitzer and Krystal Ward.

The BCBA is a voluntary professional association with more than 640 attorneys practicing within the 18th Judicial Circuit of Florida. The members of the BCBA work to improve the legal profession, the community in which they live and the administration of justice in society.

Programs and sponsorship opportunities are available. For details, contact Kelly Collazo Camirand at 544–8076.

Rotary Club of Indialantic installs officers

The Rotary Club of Indialantic recently installed its volunteer officers and directors for the new administrative year of July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013. The new officers include Dwan Buie, president; Dan Liparini, secretary; and Cyndie Crawford, treasurer. Directors–at–large who will be serving for the next 12 months include Steve Audino, Ed Baranowski, Pat Bouchard and Corinne Ishler. Indialantic Rotary meets at 12 p.m. on Wednesdays at the Eau Gallie Yacht Club.

Wolfenbarger joins Kempf's Jewelers

Kempf's Jewelers of Indialantic has announced the addition of Tim Wolfenbarger to the staff. He comes to Kempf's from Atlanta, Ga., with seven years experience in fine jewelry. Wolfenbarger has studied at the Gemological Institute of America and received his diamond and diamond–grading degree. Since Rolex has recently elevated Kempf's Jewelers to a "Level 3 Official Rolex dealer," Tim's "expertise in these fine timepieces will be an asset to the store." Wolfenbarger also specializes in precious gems and diamonds and says he "looks forward to working with Kempf's customers." He and his family "are excited about the move to Brevard and being part of the community."

'You cannot hold me responsible for the consequences
of the fact that they reacted poorly.'

Margaret Roth, M.A.
Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland

From: Bill Roth [mailto:BrevardBusinessNews@earthlink.net]
Sent: Sunday, April 15, 2012 9:40 AM
To: Ms. Lisa Pietruszewicz (JFB)
Cc: Dr. Michael H. Slotkin (FIT); Dr. Ted Petersen (FIT); Mr.
Rodd Newcombe (FIT); Ms. Drew Lacy (FIT)
Subject: RE: "Yom HaShoah Remembrance Ceremony"

April 15, 2012 — Sunday

Dear Ms. Pietruszewicz,

My name is Bill Roth and I am the husband of Adrienne Roth. Adrienne is the publisher of Brevard Business News.

Adrienne and I and our daughter Erna would like to attend the "Yom Hashoah Community Holocaust Remembrance Day" ceremony this afternoon at Gleason Auditorium on the campus of Florida Institute of Technology.

Per the attached you will find that Adrienne and I are subjected to the following: "Furthermore, as my client has previously advised, you shall no longer receive press releases, interviews, or editorial opportunities from Florida Tech, and you are not permitted on campus ever again."

In spite of this warning, we choose to attend and listen to Shlomo Fleischmann.

If our attendance would cause you undue concern, please inform me and we shall abide by your wishes.

Otherwise, we shall be there at 2:30 p.m.

Thank you,

Bill Roth
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BBN / SPACE COAST BUSINESS

UCF's Rosen College set to offer Florida's first hospitality management Ph.D. program

ORLANDO — A new doctorate degree program in hospitality management will be offered at the University of Central Florida's Rosen College of Hospitality Management beginning this fall, becoming the first such program in the state and one of just a handful in the nation.

The new degree offered by the nation's largest hospitality-management college will prepare students to teach, research and consult in the hospitality and tourism industry, and will replace the college's previous doctoral track in hospitality education.

"This freestanding doctoral program strategically aligns with our purpose and objectives, and further solidifies UCF's Rosen College as a leader in hospitality management education," said Abraham Pizam, dean of UCF's Rosen College.

The program will take an interdisciplinary approach to support research in hospitality and tourism. "The field of hospitality management is relatively new, and (Rosen College) is taking a unique leadership role in defining this emerging field at both the undergraduate and graduate levels," according to the proposal to begin the program.

The 58-hour curriculum will include 16 credit hours of core courses, 27 credit hours of specialization courses and 15 credit hours of dissertation.

Paul Rompf, the college's director of graduate studies, said the new curriculum will better align with other academic programs and have more variety in course selection.

Students already enrolled in the hospitality education track have the option to continue with their existing curriculum or transfer into the new hospitality management program, he said. Students will no longer be able to enroll in the Hospitality Education track.

The University of Central Florida established its hospitality management program in 1983 within its College of Business. The program quickly experienced "tremendous growth" in enrollment, degrees and research to develop into one of UCF's 12 colleges.

Orlando hotelier Harris Rosen donated more than \$18 million in cash, land, and scholarships to UCF to create the Rosen College of Hospitality Management, which opened its own satellite campus in 2004. The college has more than 3,000 students in its undergraduate, graduate and certificate programs.

For more information about UCF's Rosen College of Hospitality Management and its degree programs, visit Hospitality.UCF.edu.

Art dolls on display at Cocoa Beach Library

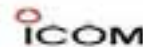
Art dolls created by Space Coast Doll Artists will be on display at the Cocoa Beach Public Library throughout the month of August. Space Coast Doll Artists is an art-doll club in Melbourne, which meets on the fourth Thursday of the month. The mission statement of Space Coast Doll Artists is "to further the enjoyment and appreciation of art dolls, develop individual creativity, help doll-makers grow in excellence as doll artisans, and promote doll-making as an art." New members are welcome, and the first meeting for prospective members is free of charge. For more information, call Patty Briggs, club president, at 956-0924.

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Health First Health Plans introducing new community initiative — 'Ask a Local Expert'

Health First Health Plans is rolling out a new educational lecture series designed to help Brevard County and Indian River County residents navigate and better understand original Medicare.

Health First Health Plans, which was founded in Brevard by local residents, is headquartered here and driven by its mission to "serve the health-care needs of the community." Every day, Health First Health Plans representatives take calls from residents wanting to understand original Medicare and how it will affect them and their families in Brevard and Indian River counties.

To help understand the information that revolves around original Medicare, Health First Health Plans is launching "Ask a Local Expert," a public forum. Health First Health Plans experts will answer questions and explain the alphabet soup of Medicare Part "A", Medicare Part "B," Medicare Part "C", and Medicare Part "D".

"As the only locally headquartered health plan on the Central East Coast of Florida, we understand that we have a responsibility to residents in the community to answer questions about Original Medicare," said Margaret Haney, Health First Health Plans president and chief executive officer.

"We are proud to offer these educational seminars to enhance their understanding of original Medicare."

These lectures are not sales pitches, she added. No specific information on Health First Health Plans details, benefits, or programs will be discussed. The program is intended to meet the increasing demand among local residents, Haney said. The information offered in "these presentations is from the people who know the area."

The "Ask a Local Expert" sessions are being offered on the following dates, times, and locations over the next three months:

- On Friday, Aug. 8, at 1 p.m. at the Indian River County Chamber of Commerce, 1216 21st St., Vero Beach.
- On Tuesday, Aug. 14, at 10 a.m. at Cape Canaveral Hospital — Room C (across from the gift shop), 701 W. Cocoa Beach Causeway, Cocoa Beach.
- On Thursday, Sept. 13, at 2 p.m. at Holmes Regional Medical Center — Auditorium A. 1350 S. Hickory St., Melbourne.
- On Saturday, Sept. 29, at 10 a.m. at Crane Community Center, 1440 Mosswood Drive, Melbourne.

Seating is limited. To make a reservation, call 434-5665 or (800) 716-7737. For special needs, call (800) 955-8771. You may receive a messaging service on weekends and holidays. Leave a message and your call will be returned on the next business day.

Health First Health Plans is a Medicare Advantage organization with a Medicare contract. This event is for educational purposes and no plan-specific benefits or details will be shared.

Library to show classic surf film 'Waterlogged'

The Cocoa Beach Surf Museum will present the classic surf movie "Waterlogged" at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 18, in the Community Room. The library is at 550 N. Brevard Ave. For more information, call 868-1104 or visit www.cocoa-beach-public-library.org.

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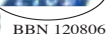


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Cancer Care Centers of Brevard physicist Prabhu makes presentation at meeting

Cancer Care Centers of Brevard's physicist Anand Prabhu made a poster presentation at the 54th annual American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM) Meeting on July 29 at the Charlotte Convention Center in North Carolina.

The presentation, "Use of BrainLab — ExacTrac IGRT with Dot Decimal electron compensator (BolusECT) for Accurate Patient Positioning," is the result of a study conducted by Prabhu and his CCCB colleagues including chief medical physicist Daljit Saini, physicist Bhavin Patadiva, dosimetrist Tod Garthwaite and medical director and radiation oncologist Dr. Ravi Shankar.

Dot Decimal electron compensators are used to achieve conformal dose distributions that significantly spare critical organs from unnecessary radiation exposure.

The compensators are beneficial for cases with varying patient contours with steep gradients. These cases are treated with single-electron fields and the setup can be difficult and time-consuming for patients because of the small clearance between the electron cone and the bolus, said Prabhu.

In order to avoid patient discomfort, the study explored the use of BrainLab's ExacTrac Image Guided Radiation Therapy (IGRT) system for enhanced setup accuracy and speed.

The test included a specifically designed wax phantom and BolusECT. The plan was achieved using Varian Eclipse Planning System and Dot Decimal electron compensator software.

Prabhu and his colleagues then focused on two patient studies with the nose as the targeted treatment area in each patient. Five holes were drilled into this wax compensator and tungsten fiducials, or markers, were inserted at different depths.

As a result of both of these studies, the ExacTrac system correctly aligned with the implanted fiducials and demonstrated that the use of BrainLab's ExacTrac IGRT system with the Dot Decimal electron compensator provides more accurate daily positioning and faster patient setup.

"I was excited and honored to represent CCCB at this prestigious meeting," said Prabhu. "We take tremendous pride in working together to study how advanced technologies can enhance the overall comfort level and effectiveness for patients undergoing radiation therapy treatments. We believe that the results from our study are just another example of why it is imperative for us to continue to test and measure the efficacy of current and future technologies in radiation therapy."

For more information about CCCB, call 952-0898.

'Neighborhood Unity Day' in Melbourne

A "National Night Out and Neighborhood Unity Day" in Melbourne is planned for the afternoon of Aug. 7 at Lipscomb Park, 3416 Monroe St., as part of an effort to reduce crime in the community. The event, which is being staged by the Powell Subdivision Neighborhood and supported by the Melbourne Police Department, is planned from 3 to 7 p.m. For additional information, contact Sandra Pelham at 724-1770 or SPelham@yahoo.com.

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HBCA to host 'Dreamstreet Expo' at Eau Gallie Civic Center — vendor booths to showcase home-improvement products, services; a \$25,000 'prize vault'

By Ken Datzman

The Home Builders and Contractors Association of Brevard has put on an event each year for the past three decades that typically draws throngs of consumers on a fall weekend to see the latest products and services on the market by exhibitors in all facets of the building industry.

It's a marketing bonanza for the home-improvement businesses that participate, exhibiting their merchandise and their niche expertise over two days to a range of potential users.

"The show is a platform for us to allow our members to get their products and services in front of the public," said Sandy Nicotra, the executive director and member liaison of the HBCA in Melbourne. "It's a benefit for the members to be there and for the HBCA to drive traffic to them through our marketing efforts."

The HBCA's 30th annual "Dreamstreet Home & Garden Expo," a show about building materials and home builders with trades and suppliers showcased as well as home-related businesses, will be conducted from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 27 and 28, at the Eau Gallie Civic Center in Melbourne. This is a new site for "Dreamstreet," which is one of HBCA's key fund-raisers for the year.

"The Eau Gallie Civic Center is really a 'venue within a venue' because of all the shops in and around the Eau Gallie Arts District," said Dave Armstrong, the HBCA president and founder of Armstrong Custom Homes.

"They are excited we are having 'Dreamstreet' in their business district. We are going to have mobility and traffic."

The HBCA is selling booth space for the event, with prices starting at \$450 for members. "We hope to fill all 47 booths available for the show," said Nicotra, adding that 20 to 25 percent of the space is currently reserved. Non-HBCA members can purchase space starting at \$550.

Nicotra says she believes the \$450 rental price is "very reasonable. Across the state, it's about twice as much for space at these types of association shows."

"It truly gives a business the opportunity to showcase their wares with like-industry participants," said Armstrong, who is leading the HBCA as president for the fourth time in his career. "There are a

lot of talented professionals within our industry and we think 'Dreamstreet' is the perfect format for them to reach the consumer with their products."

If your business is interested in purchasing booth space for "Dreamstreet," call the HBCA at 254-3700 or send an e-mail message to Nicotra. Her e-mail address is Sandy@HBCA-Brevard.org. Space can also be reserved at www.HBCA-Brevard.org.

Businesses that have committed to exhibit at "Dreamstreet" include Solar Energy Systems of Brevard, Connected Technologies, Falcon Realty, All-Pro Title, GB Shelter Mortgage, Armstrong Custom Homes, Stanley Homes, and Century 21 Indian River Realty.

There are vendor openings for a range of industry trades, including a tile-setter, a roofing contractor and a plumbing business.

Under one roof, attendees will be able to check out everything from hurricane shutters and window protection to floor coverings, water systems, talk to professional landscapers and remodeling contractors, home builders and interior designers, as well as financial experts including mortgage brokers.

Nicotra said the HBCA, a trade organization that is affiliated with the Florida Home Builders Association and the National Association of Home Builders, surveyed the general population to gain additional insight into what area consumers look for in a home-improvement show.

The top responses, in no order, were outdoor living products, including kitchens and items for the patio; high technology, such as home-entertainment systems; remodeling contractors; home-interior displays; and mortgage and refinancing businesses.

To help build traffic for the show, the HBCA is selling tickets for the chance to win \$25,000 cash. "We will have a Plexiglas 'prize vault' with a six-number digital combination. There are 3,000 opportunities to open the vault. The HBCA will be selling tickets for \$1 each," said Nicotra. To play, attendees enter a six-digit number into a digital keypad. If the correct combination is entered, the vault unlocks and the individual will receive the \$25,000 prize.

"Dreamstreet" will also feature workshops and programs put on by area



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

Sandy Nicotra is the executive director and member liaison for the Home Builders and Contractors Association of Brevard. Dave Armstrong is the four-time, and current, president of the organization. The HBCA is recruiting vendors in all facets of the building industry to participate in its 30th annual 'Dreamstreet Expo' this fall. They are at the HBCA office in Melbourne.

businesses, including Lowe's Home Improvement, one of the vendors for the show.

Armstrong said one program will address the fast-growing aging-in-place market.

Nine out of 10 people age 50 and older say they want to remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible, according to a report by the National Association of Home Builders. The first baby-boomers turn 65 this year.

The NAHB, in partnership with AARP, launched the "Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist" program 10 years ago. At "Dreamstreet," CAPS experts will talk about what consumers are looking for in universal design and the aging-in-place trends.

After the close of "Dreamstreet," the HBCA team will focus all of its energies on

the 2012 Fall Parade of Homes, an annual event the organization puts on in the county for builders to showcase their models to the public. And the housing market seems to be turning the corner on building activity.

Builder confidence in the market for newly built, single-family homes surged six points to 35 on the NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index for July.

"That's very encouraging news," said Armstrong, one of the longstanding home builders in the county. "And, of course, the inventory of existing homes in Brevard County is shrinking."

The HBCA report said it was the largest one-month gain recorded by the index in nearly a decade, and brings the HMI to its highest point since March 2007. Builder confidence increased by solid margins in every region of the nation in July.

Columbia College's campuses in Florida see solid enrollment growth; singled out by 'U.S. News' in new ratings category, 'Least Debt Load' upon graduation

By Ken Datzman

Columbia College's satellite campuses in the Sunshine State, including sites at Patrick Air Force Base, Orlando, and Jacksonville, are experiencing solid enrollment growth as the Missouri-based institution ramps up its branding efforts.

The surge is being driven in part by affordability, a hybrid-learning format that combines in-seat instruction with online study, eight-week sessions with five starts per year, and other conveniences that cater to busy adult students.

"A lot of people are retooling for the next wave of opportunities in the job market," said Dr. Jeffrey Musgrove, director of Columbia College's Southeast Region, which comprises eight campuses in Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina, as well as Guantanamo Bay, where the U.S. has a naval station.

"The Florida campuses of Columbia College are doing very well, across the board. If you look at our year-to-year projections, there has been linear growth at all our locations throughout Florida. Student participation is up, our enrollment numbers are up, and our graduation numbers are up," he added.

And Columbia College students are earning their degrees without being saddled with large amounts of debt as a result of education loans.

A new category that "U.S. News & World Report" has added to its annual rankings of "America's Best Colleges," shows Columbia College shining brightly in the "Least Debt Load" upon graduation. "We're proud of that," he says.

Founded in 1851, private, nonprofit Columbia College offers both associate and bachelor degrees in the local market. The areas of concentration include business, management-information systems, and criminal justice.

Fifty-three students have just graduated with their degrees from Columbia College's Education Center at PAFB. It was the 12th commencement ceremony for that campus, which averages 180 to 200 enrollments per session.

Dr. Musgrove opened the PAFB site 13 years ago, with 12 students enrolled for classes, and has overseen it ever since. He served 20 years in the U.S. Air Force before retiring as a first sergeant for the Security

Forces Squadron at PAFB.

Columbia College serves both the military and civilian populations at its satellite campuses cross the nation. They have 35 campuses nationwide, including 18 on military bases.

"G.I. Jobs" magazine selected Columbia College as a "military-friendly" school for 2012 because of its commitment to educating military and student veterans. The honor places the college in the top 15 percent of schools nationwide.

The magazine evaluates institutions on such things as being a VA-approved school for the GI Bill, generous transfer-credit policies, flexible learning programs and tuition benefits.

In addition, Columbia College was singled out by "Military Advanced Education," a publication that focuses on educational services and opportunities for military students. It invited more than 3,000 institutions to share their "military-friendly practices." Only 10 percent were selected as being military-friendly. Institutions such as Columbia College, says MAE, set the "gold standard" for serving the military.

Locally, Columbia College offers students the hybrid format for select courses.

"We recently started going that route. It provides more opportunity for the student," said Dr. Musgrove.

GetEducated.com, a respected clearinghouse of accredited online programs, designated Columbia College as a "Best Buy" for several of its web-based degrees.

The college's online bachelor's degree in criminal justice ranked among the "top five best buys" as did the online four-year degree programs in business, human services, psychology, and sociology.

"Today more students are migrating toward online instruction because of the convenience factor. As students mature, time becomes more critical for them," said Dr. Musgrove, adding, "If they like the initial experience, they tend to stay online."

The Sloan Consortium's 2011 "Survey of Online Learning," a collaborative effort between the Babson Survey Research Group and the College Board, reveals that the number of students taking at least one online course has now surpassed 6 million.

What that means is nearly one-third of all students in higher education today are taking at least one Web-based course. The



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

Dr. Jeffrey Musgrove is director of Columbia College's Southeast Region, which includes eight campuses in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and on Guantanamo Bay, where the U.S. has a naval base. Locally, Columbia College's Education Center at Patrick Air Force Base has introduced a hybrid-learning format that combines in-seat instruction with online study.

rate of growth in online enrollments is 10 times that of the rate in all higher education, the report said.

Each market, however, has its own distinct characteristics, said Dr. Musgrove. For example, the trend for Columbia College in Orlando stands out in a different way.

"Those students prefer seat-based classes, and enrollment is surging," he said.

"At Patrick, it's a 50-50 mix of seat-based instruction and online learning. You could see the trend develop, especially at the military locations because of deployments. If they are deployed to a place where there is connectivity, they will continue their course work."

Columbia College in Orlando typically enrolls 1,600 or more students per session,

making it the school's largest extension campus. "Our Orlando campus is an incredible story," he said.

At the recent graduation ceremony of Columbia College in Orlando, 230 students were awarded their degrees. "That's huge for us."

Business, criminal justice, and human services are the most popular degree programs for Columbia College in Orlando.

In Jacksonville, where Columbia College has two campuses, one on a naval base, more than 100 students are set to graduate the first week of August.

Someday, Columbia College could have two campuses in Brevard, a 72-mile-long county. "Our goal is to eventually have an off-base location. And I think our strategic plan will lead us there," said Dr. Musgrove.



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email: sandy@hbca-brevard.org

Central Brevard Humane Society set to celebrate 60th anniversary with event

The Central Brevard Humane Society will mark its 60th year with its inaugural "Tuxes and Tails Gala ... An Evening Filled With Stars," from 6:30 to 9 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 11, at the Indian River Colony Club in Melbourne.

There will be live and silent auctions and a cocktail buffet.

The program will include recognizing the Humane Society's founding members who were pioneers of the animal shelter, and the community leaders who have significantly contributed to its success.

The cost to attend the event is \$100 per person or \$150 per couple.

Proceeds from the gala will be used to renovate the aged 5,300-square-foot shelter in Cocoa. The facility has housed and cared for "thousands and thousands of unwanted, abandoned and abused pets over the last 60 years, and is in great need of repair."

A truly unique organization in Brevard, the Central Brevard Humane Society is a "no kill for space" facility, is self-sustaining, and receives no support from tax dollars. All of their funding comes through donations, adoption fees, product sales, their four Molly Mutt Thrift Shops, fund-raisers and other pet-related services.

Event sponsors include the Indian River Colony Club, "Florida Today," "Hometown News," Lite Rock 99.3 FM and Space Coast Electric Vehicle.

Other sponsors are: Brad BernKrant, "Brevard Business News," Clean Footprint, the Cocoa Village Playhouse Presenters, Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica Inc., Community Credit Union Florida, Myra Haley, Jon's Fine Jewelry, Tony and Anne O'Flaherty, Waste Pro, Case & Leader LLP (Robert Leader), Craig Technologies, Edmund and Dori Clark, Florida Power & Light Co., Nanialei Golden, Scott and Noretta Huff, In Memory of Sierra of Corona, Jim and Sara Milburn, Sharon Martin, George and Dianne Roe, Tom and Susie Wasdin and Veincare of Brevard LLC.

For more information or to make a reservation, call the Central Brevard Humane Society at 636-3343 or visit www.CritterSavers.com.

Brian Bo exhibit opens at BCC's King Center

Brian Bo, founder of the Mini Prophets, is showcasing his collection of wall hangings in the Harris Gallery of the King Center for the Performing Arts on the BCC campus in Melbourne. This 12-piece show called "Advertised Paranoia" is a series of mixed-media collages. Open to interpretation, they are a study on the effects of advertisements. "Like in music, finding and restoring things is a passion of mine, so all the content in these 12 pieces are images and cutouts from the 1950s," said Bo. "As I go through the magazines, books and ad brochures of this era, I read and take in everything they say which influences the photos I choose." The exhibit will run through Sept. 4 and can be viewed by ticketed patrons attending King Center main-stage performances. There will be a reception and public viewing, which will be announced at later date. For more information, contact Bo at 501-9005.

Chamber's Business Champion of the Year Awards scheduled for Sept. 28

MERRITT ISLAND — The Business Resource Council of the Cocoa Beach Regional Chamber of Commerce will present the 24th annual "Business Champion of the Year" awards on Friday, Sept. 28, at the Holiday Inn Melbourne-Viera, 8298 N. Wickham Road.

The theme this year is "Where the Stars Shine." The event begins at 5:30 p.m. with a cocktail reception, with the dinner and the awards program to follow. Keith Houston of Crest Cleaners will be the event's master of ceremonies.

"Each year we are amazed at the accomplishments of the businesses that are nominated," said Keith Ried, the event chairman who is with KER Bookkeepers.

"We are honored to go through the process of recognizing these outstanding businesses and look forward to extending our congratulations to all and bringing deserved applause and appreciation to our winners."

The Cocoa Beach Regional Chamber will be aligning itself with the Small Business Administration's Business Champion of the Year categories so the winners can be submitted into the running for Business of the Year with the SBA, if they choose to do so.

This event helps recognize the dedication that small businesses have to improving the community.

Some categories for Business Champion of the Year include Emerging Business, Jeffrey Butland Family Owned Business, Nonprofit Business, Professional/Technical, Minority Business Champion, Service Industry Champion, Hospitality Industry Champion, and Professional Services Champion.

General admission to the Business Champion of the Year Awards is \$45 per person. A \$125 sponsorship provides two reserved seats and recognition in the event program. Event sponsors include Community Bank of the South, Progressive Document Destruction, ndtArtemis, and "Florida Today."

For more information or to make a reservation to attend the banquet, contact the Chamber at 459-2200.

Brevard Nature Alliance names board members

Brevard Nature Alliance Inc. has announced its newly elected board members. They are: Carey Beam, communications specialist, Craig Technologies; Ben Yeagen, Spherion manager; and Vince Lamb, master naturalist and nature photographer. They will join these current board members: Stephen Bankert, computer programmer; Virginia Barker, Brevard County Office of Natural Resources; Anne Birch, Florida Coastal Restoration director, The Nature Conservancy; Dr. Karen Chambliss, co-founder and treasurer, Praecipio EFS Inc.; Robert Day, PWS community advocate; Nancy Evans, director of sales, Fairfield Inn & Suites; Bart Gaetjens, account manager, Florida Power and Light Co.; Don George, natural and cultural resource manager, CCAFS; Dr. Ross Hinkle, chairman and professor, UCF Department of Biology; Martha Jane Long, Titusville Council member; J. Stanley Payne, CEO, Canaveral Port Authority; Catherine Sligh, Home Instead, senior care manager; Laurilee Thompson, owner, Dixie Crossroads Seafood Restaurant; and Keith Winsten, executive director, Brevard Zoo.



6th annual Daffodil Gala

Proceeds raised from this year's Daffodil Gala will go to cancer patients in Brevard County with financial need, including transporting them to and from their medical appointments, and providing financial aid for medications, and living basics such as rent, utilities and groceries.

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Melbourne High School takes first place in an international event held at Indiana University

The Melbourne High School Community Problem-Solving Team (CMPS) recently captured first place in the senior division at the International Future Problem-Solving Competition at Indiana University.

Thousands of students from 13 countries joined the opportunity to offer their admiration in a standing ovation for the Melbourne High CMPS project: "Beachside TOPSoccer."

In March, the team won the prestigious title of grand champions at the Florida Future Problem-Solving Competition. As they departed for the international competition in June, they knew they would be facing difficult competition from the best projects around the world.

Teammates Kimberly Bress, Elizabeth Bress, Beatrice Ottomaneli, and Cara Cagney spent many weeks before the competition preparing reports, creating a video, collecting presentation materials, and updating the team scrapbook for their project.

After setting up their interactive display, interviewing for 30 minutes with a panel of judges, and presenting their program in a three-hour-long Community Fair, the girls won first place. "The result of their hard work is not just their trophy from the event, but also the impact of their program in Brevard County."

TOPSoccer is a national organization that offers soccer opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The acronym stands for The Outreach Program for Soccer.

After months of research, training and preparation, the Melbourne High CMPS Team offered registration last January for their first soccer season through the Melbourne Beach Soccer Club.

During their first season, there were 27

registered athletes in the program and more than 50 regular volunteer "buddies."

The success of the program and the rapid growth the team experienced "raised some eyebrows at the Florida Youth Soccer Association (FYSA)."

Dale Burke, executive director of FYSA, made a personal visit to see Beachside TOPSoccer in action last March. He was "so impressed by the their enthusiasm and the success of the program," he invited the Melbourne High team to speak at the annual general meeting for FYSA in August.

At the FYSA meeting, the team will also talk with students from other high schools in Florida who want to implement TOPSoccer programs in their own counties.

"Words cannot express the love and dedication these girls have for this program," said Pamela Bress, the CMPS coach for Melbourne High. "The volunteer 'buddies' who participate deserve equal recognition. The weekly volunteers are what make the program so special for our athletes. This truly is a unique group of selfless teenagers who just want to make an impact on the athletes they serve and teach them that they are special and can play soccer like everybody else."

She added, "I have personally witnessed the countless hours spent planning, setting up, preparing and recruiting volunteers. The girls and all of the volunteer 'buddies' in the program are amazing."

Beachside TOPSoccer, a not-for-profit group, is offered to the community as a free service through community donations.

To make a donation to the program, mail a check made payable to Beachside TOPSoccer and send it to Pamela Bress, 509 Second Ave., Melbourne Beach, Fla., 32951. For more information, visit www.BeachSideTOPSoccer.Webs.com.

West named to Brevard Rescue Mission board

Brevard Rescue Mission Inc., has announced the addition of Brian West to its board of directors. A native of Rockledge, West has worked in the insurance and financial-services field for more than 13 years. He is a member of First Baptist Church of Merritt Island and is married with two children. West, is a State Farm Agent in West Melbourne, where he has served the community for six years. Brevard Rescue Mission is "grateful for Brian West's experience and expertise that will help support the continued growth and development of the organization." Brevard Rescue Mission works to permanently break the cycle of homelessness by providing housing for women with children and giving them access to health care, transportation, education, nutrition, job training and life skills in a safe, Christ-centered residential setting. The 12-to 24-month program is designed to transform families from dependency to self-sufficiency through daily accountability, personal responsibility and goal advancement. Visit www.BrevardRescueMission.org to learn more about the 501(c)3 organization.

Jobs expert: Standardized people won't win America's future; give career education priority

Since former President George W. Bush amped up standardized testing throughout the nation in 2002 with the No Child Left Behind Act, critics say results have been negative.

"The bottom line is that there is no clear correlation between standardized testing and the knowledge and skills kids will need to prosper in the 21st century world of work," says Peter Weddle, former chief executive officer of Job Bank USA Inc., and author of "A Multitude of Hope: A Novel About Rediscovering the American Dream" (www.AMultitudeofHope.com).

"It seems we're more interested in creating a homogenized workforce than a nation of individuals who have learned what their talent is and how to bring it to work with them," he says.

Consider these statistics:

- Annual state spending on standardized tests has increased by 160 percent — from \$423 million in 2002 to \$1.1 billion in 2008, according to the Pew Center on the States.

- Since 2002, the U.S. dropped from 18th in the world in math on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) to 31st place in 2009, with a similar drop in science and no change in reading.

- The NCLB Act has drastically narrowed content, according to a study by the Center on Education Policy.

"This problem begins very early on. We take kids in elementary school and give them tests. Those who do well are designated as 'gifted and talented,' which means that everyone else is, by definition, ungifted and untalented. And, that's just not true. In effect, we're devaluing all the capabilities that are not reflected in a standardized test," he says.

"Of course, we want to take care of our academically proficient kids, but we have to find a way to do that without signaling to every other child that they were at the end of the line when talent was handed out." Too many Americans are stuck in old ways of thinking, from the classrooms of our elementary schools and colleges to the workplace," Weddle says. "But we're in a

new economy and the path to the American Dream has changed. That means our old-school thinking must change as well."

He offers ways Americans can get back in the game as world leaders:

- We need to accept that the economy has changed: The first step to change is acknowledging it's needed, Weddle says. "Our employers are no longer competing with cheaper labor; they're up against smarter labor worldwide," he says. We hold a trump card, however: We have the most diverse pool of talent on the globe, whereas countries such as China and India have, by choice, a homogenous work force.

- We must give career education greater priority: In China, every college student must, as a requirement of graduation, take a yearlong course that teaches them the skills and knowledge to manage their own careers effectively. In the U.S., that instruction is missing from college curricula. Yet, 53.6 percent of all college graduates under the age of 25 are now either unemployed or underemployed.

- We need to redefine talent so we can use it: "Our culture has taught us that talent is the province of exceptional people doing exceptional things," he says. "We can see the talent of Lady Gaga, but not the talent of an accounts payable clerk. And that's myopic. We are all endowed with talent, but we have to discover it, nurture it and then bring it to work with us."

- We have to see ourselves as a "work in progress": "The world of work is changing at warp speed — new technology, shifts in the global marketplace and changes in consumer tastes," he says. "That's why we need to be committed to continuous learning. Regardless of our educational degree, years of experience or level of seniority, we need to be acquiring new skills and knowledge all of the time."

Weddle, a former recruiter and human-resource consultant, is the chief executive of the International Association of Employment Web Sites, a trade organization.

He has written or edited more than two-dozen non-fiction books regarding careers and employment. "A Multitude of Hope" is his first work of fiction.

Authors' group elects new leadership

Members of the volunteer Space Coast Writers' Guild recently elected author Donna Chesher as its president. Chesher's previous nonprofit experience includes fund-raising with the University of California. The SCWG is dedicated to encouraging, instructing and developing writers. The new leadership's goal for the SCWG is an "emphasis on outreach." More information on available at www.SCWG.org.

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Two Central Florida organizations partner to help small businesses grow; services are offered free of charge

ORLANDO — The Small Business Development Center at the University of Central Florida and the Florida Economic Gardening Institute at the University of Central Florida (GrowFL) has formed a partnership designed to offer second-stage growth companies in Central Florida a comprehensive array of services to help them, all at no cost to the client business.

Utilizing a team of professional business specialists, the SBDC at UCF and GrowFL are partnering to provide technical and research services to drive business growth.

Through the SBDC at UCF's Growth Acceleration services, a dedicated consultant will conduct an in-depth business assessment and provide recommendations on growth strategies, including how to shore up financial practices, access capital and uncover hidden profits.

That same consultant will collaborate with the client in on-going confidential consultation to implement both strategic and tactical plans.

GrowFL offers the capabilities of a Fortune 500 company's market research department to provide a second-stage business with a variety of sophisticated tools for the purpose of growing their sales, including competitive intelligence, social-media strategy, geographic information, core strategy review and business-opportunity referrals.

"Being a strong community partner and supporting the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the Central Florida region are high priorities at UCF," said Tom O'Neal, associate vice president for research and commercialization at UCF and executive director of the GrowFL.

"The expanded cooperation between GrowFL and the SBDC, two of UCF's key service providers for area small businesses, will help catalyze and sustain second-stage business-revenue growth, business expansion, profitability, job creation and job retention in Central Florida."

"Second-stage small businesses are the winners as a result of this partnership," added Eunice Choi, regional director for the SBDC at UCF.

"The collaboration between the SBDC and GrowFL can only mean enhanced services for Central Florida growth companies. With the SBDC's strong technical services capabilities focused on financial sustainability and GrowFL's

strategic research capabilities that will enhance sales growth; all of our small-business clients will have a comprehensive set of services at their disposal."

The SBDC at UCF's Growth Acceleration services offers companies consulting assistance aimed at developing sustainable growth strategies in key business areas, including marketing and business development, cash-flow management, strategic planning, market and industry research, as well as capital access.

Specifically, the consultants will provide high-level consulting of 50 to 100 hours (fair market value of more than \$10,000) to help qualified growth-oriented small- and medium-size enterprises develop sustainable growth strategies.

In addition, qualified businesses will receive a 35-hour strategic research engagement from GrowFL.

These engagements are intended to drive revenue by helping to identify qualified sales leads by sorting the contents of an extensive data base; map geographic areas to facilitate targeted marketing efforts; review core strategies related to commodity or niche markets; analyze employee temperament to build strong management teams and recruit new hires that fit the organization's dynamic; examine social-media utilization to connect with customers; and provide search-engine optimization to place the website in front of more customers.

For more information about the SBDC at UCF's Growth Acceleration services, contact Choi at (407) 420-4850 or send an e-mail message to echoi@bus.ucf.edu. For more information about GrowFL's Strategic Research programs and services, contact Fran Korosec, director of client services, at (407) 823-6384 or fran.korosec@ucf.edu.

The SBDC at UCF serves an eight-county area that includes Brevard, Flagler, Lake, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Sumter, and Volusia counties. It also maintains seven satellite service centers.

In 2011, the SBDC at UCF helped entrepreneurs create or retain "1,517 jobs, win contract awards worth \$28.9 million, acquire \$17.7 million in capital formation, and increase sales by \$51.9 million."

The SBDC at UCF is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration.

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Larry Lawton's "Gangster Redemption"

Continued from page 1

Jewelers, located in the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami Beach — a favorite performing venue for Frank Sinatra in the 1950s — he estimated there was \$4 million in jewels in the store.

The jewels were going to be his. And he would get 40 cents on the dollar, his usual conversion rate. But the elaborate robbery plan was eventually called off.

"Gangster Redemption" is an "up-from-never" story, from imprisonment to businessman and community volunteer. Lawton even beat a life sentence, four 12-year terms.

This August marks his fifth anniversary on the outside, and he is as busy as ever delivering his important message to young people. Upon his release from prison, he came to Brevard County because his parents live here. "I'm close to my family."

The 50-year-old Lawton is building a multifaceted company of products and services all centered on his experiences and designed to reach troubled youngsters in communities before it's too late. In general, his message to young people: Make the right decisions in life and never bend to peer pressure.

The Reality Check DVD Program is one of a number of products his company produces. It provides the platform to grow the Lawton911 brand.

"We have a business plan that calls for a \$1 billion company, that's both potential domestic and international sales," said Lawton, in an interview conducted at a 76,000-square-foot business-suite office building on Palm Bay Road that he owns with partner Joe Reilly, who is an investor in the company.

"Joe believed in me from the beginning, before we even had the DVD in the market," said Lawton. Their company is seeking large-scale investors as it rolls out new products.

Lawton started his business in his mother's home in Brevard. "I lived in a small room of the home and later moved to a two-bed apartment in town. I love it. I'm happy. I don't need a lot of space. I come to my office and I travel a lot."

He says he has a number of mentors in the community. They include Joe Fraumeni, who owned Brevard Bowling Center for many years, and Louie Constantino.

After appearing on Fox News' "Huckabee Show" in New York City, 200 units of the Reality Check DVD were sold within 60 seconds. He also has appeared on "The Daily Show" with Jon Stewart, and the "700 Club" on CBN with Pat Robertson.

He typically appears on national programs wearing his signature red sleeveless T-shirt, which shows off his large biceps and fully tattooed arms.

Lawton is a commentator for New Corp.'s local "Fox News" affiliate. He has provided commentary on the current case of the shooting death of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman.

The nationally recognized Reality Check DVD Program is used by judges, law enforcement, attorneys, and parents. Lawton created the DVD as an educational tool and it already has changed the lives of many young people. Studies have been done to prove its effectiveness. In 2009, Lawton started the Reality Check Foundation to help low-

to moderate-income youngsters who can't afford to purchase the DVD.

In addition to the sales of the Reality Check DVD (geared toward prevention and telling youth about the consequences of making bad decisions), Lawton said he now has a TV show in the works with Bogner Entertainment Inc./FremantleMedia of North America in Burbank, Calif. (producers of "American Idol" and "America's Got Talent").

And new DVD programs are being created by his business targeting specific segments of the market.

"We are going to have 'Reality Check Teen Texting and Driving,' 'Reality Check Goes off to College,' and 'Reality Check Parenting.' We want to get the DVD programs into the hands of national retailers," said Lawton, a licensed and certified paralegal who is very astute at law and does a lot of writing.

The prisoner re-entry market is yet another potential area for business growth. "I don't think there is anyone out there doing what we do and with our success rate," said Lawton, who is an expert witness at court cases.

Negotiations are under way with Andromeda Studios to adapt "Gangster Redemption" to the screen, said Lawton. He recently flew to Los Angeles and met with Carl Evans and Robert Deak, the studio's top executives.

Evans' resume includes feature films, theater, and television credits, including "Beverly Hills 90210." Deak is a writer, producer, and performer.

Ronald Lesser, the founder of Lesser Theater Services, also sat in on the meeting at The Palms Restaurant in Los Angeles. Lesser Theatre represents more than 400 screens throughout the nation.

Soon after reading the book, Evans called Lawton and congratulated him on "Gangster Redemption," and used such words as "tragic," "miraculous transformation," and "unbelievable."

The actor who plays Lawton will have to have a "hard edge and the right build. Forget about the bald head, because I didn't have a bald head back then."

There is enough material in "Gangster Redemption," which is sold at Amazon.com, in area bookstores, and on the website Lawton911.com, that it could be produced and released as two films, if the project goes to contract.

An agent hooked Lawton up with Golenbock, whose multiple best-selling books include "American Prince," about movie idol Tony Curtis, and "Tight," his lurid biography of New York Yankee manager Billy Martin. Golenbock has numerous sports books in print.

"Peter got a lot out of me," said Lawton. "The book took two years. We spoke for hundreds of hours. He lives in Tampa-St. Petersburg. I would drive there from Palm Bay. And we talked constantly on the phone. I stayed focused. I would sit on my patio and talk to Peter, reliving this nightmare."

The book was "self-published" this year by LL Research & Consulting Inc. It is a fast-moving documentary of a life that spiraled out of control.

Lawton, who was an alter boy at St. Francis de Chantal in the Bronx, N.Y., served honorably in the U.S. Coast Guard, enlisting at age 17. In April 1980, he was involved in the "desperate rescue" of the Freedom Flotilla from

Cuba. It was the largest Coast Guard rescue operation in peacetime.

The Mariel Boatlift was a mass emigration of Cubans who departed from Cuba's Mariel Harbor for the U.S. between April 15 and Oct. 31 heading to Key West.

The event was precipitated by a sharp downturn in the Cuban economy, which led to internal tensions on the island and a bid by up to 10,000 Cubans to gain asylum in the Peruvian Embassy. The exodus was organized by Cuban-Americans with the agreement of Cuban President Fidel Castro.

Lawton was sent to the Coast Guard station down in Key West. "We were among the first people sent there. We were rescuing those Cuban people coming in, and we got a lot of joy and satisfaction from helping them, but at the same time it was very sad," he writes in "Gangster Redemption."

A many as 125,000 Cubans made the journey to Florida. Hundreds, if not "thousands," died in their attempt for freedom.

Lawton said there were dozens of boats that left Cuba that were never accounted for. "I saw many dead people floating on inner tubes. Many times I saw boats on fire with the people on board dead."

Later, an on-ship injury ended his Coast Guard career. Lawton wanted action and he found it in the underworld.

He went on to knock off one jewelry store after another. A day's work in Daytona netted him \$800,000. Another job produced \$400,000, and on and on.

He worked about six weeks a year robbing jewelry stores for some six years, before he was caught, convicted, and sent to prison in 1996. He started serving his 12-year sentence at the maximum-security federal penitentiary in Atlanta, "the worst prison in the country at the time."

No one was seriously injured in any of Lawton's heists. He always worked during the day and never covered his face when robbing a jewelry store. He dressed like a businessman. Lawton wore a Rolex and liked expensive jewelry.

The occupation he favored in conversation was that of a real-estate developer. He was in town doing a construction project, usually a condominium, and shopping for his wife.

When he walked into a jewelry store that he had targeted, he would strike up a conversation with the owner about diamonds. Soon, the store's diamond trays were shown to him for viewing. Generally a day or two later he would return to the store and make his announcement and jump the counter.

In all, his six-year spree of some 20 stores tallied roughly \$15 million, which was "fenced" through the mob. "I had homes, boats, limousines, horses. I had it all, illegally of course," said Lawton, who gave some of his proceeds to charities and needy youth.

Now, Lawton said his "ultimate goal" is to have a "big home for teens and young adults who leave the foster-care system. Foster kids have nothing. And there is a transition period, generally from age 18 to about age 24, when they are lost. This home would provide them with counseling and mentoring. It would help them through that key transition period in their life. I want to make this happen in Brevard County."



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