

SRQ Strong Helps Launch National Network

BY ANDY BLANCH

Father Paul Abernathy of the Neighborhood Resilience Project (NRP) in Pittsburgh is fond of saying “If it doesn’t happen with you, it happens to you.” From June 1-3, teams from Sarasota and seven other localities joined Father Paul to launch a national network committed to resident-driven, trauma-informed community development. The discussion was framed by the question: “What would trauma-informed racial reconciliation, justice, and equity look like at the local level?”

Participants came from a wide range of settings, from tiny rural communities to inner cities. They included local residents who had been “deputized” to help during the Covid epidemic, a retired Navy chaplain, representatives from community groups, and a psychologist who works with the Pittsburgh police department to address the impact of traumatic encounters on both officers and residents. Participants shared experiences of working in trauma-affected communities, discussed barriers and solutions, and inspired each other with

possibilities. They struggled with questions like “Is it even possible to establish ‘truth’ in the current political environment?” and concluded that if it’s done right, trauma-informed community organizing can contribute directly to political empowerment.

One of the group’s goals is to create national infrastructure to support trauma-informed grassroots work. Just like the Freedom Schools organized by the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee supported the development of the civil rights movement, people today need training and resources to tackle the challenges of healing a deeply divided and traumatized society. NRP proposed a framework with seven “pillars” - public health, community development, training and leadership development, technology and innovation, school-community



interface, research and evaluation, and funding. They currently convene local teams addressing each pillar. Teams start by identifying the “invisible infrastructure” that already exists in communities, and build from there. As this kind of supportive infrastructure becomes more widely available, it will

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Equity in Sarasota Schools: Dr. Harriet Moore at the Helm

BY CAROL M. LERNER
CHAIR, PROTECT OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS (POPS) MANASOTA

Equity, often viewed as a key principle of critical race theory, is a hot button issue in Florida these days. Governor Ron DeSantis has condemned the Palm Beach County School Board for their equity statement and has placed that district and two others, one of them being Sarasota County Schools, on his list of three school districts that have implemented, he claims, critical race theory practices. In addition, Sarasota School Board meetings and, more recently, Town Hall meetings have been raucous affairs where partisan sides

were drawn over issues like masks, teacher indoctrination and critical race theory.

It is in this tumultuous atmosphere, that Dr. Harriet Moore took the reins last March as Sarasota County Schools’ first Director of Innovation and Equity. While concerned about the recent events, she projects a positive vision of her role in bringing the community together and is moving forward with a full range of equity-related plans for the district.

Dr. Moore, who has had a long career in education and most recently served as principal of McIntosh Middle School, has already established a fully functioning Equity Committee for the district. This

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Dr. Moore (r) with Dr. Cathy Rodriguez, principal of the Dreamers Academy and the first Hispanic American principal of a Sarasota public school.

Support Local News and Public Affairs

In response to the declining access to local news, WSLR is launching a Community News

Fund to expand the capacity of the organization to provide local news and information to the Sarasota-Manatee community. WSLR is seeking funding to enhance current news and public affairs programming which includes a ½ hour weekly local news program ‘Critical Times’, daily local news briefs, a website and associated social media, the quarterly Critical Times newspaper, and several local public affairs shows – including The Detail and the Peace and Justice Report. The News Department currently operates with one part-time paid news producer, student interns, and volunteers. WSLR has active internship programs with New College of Florida and the University of South Florida. One goal is to hire a full-time News Director to oversee our news and public affairs programming and expand our ability to produce and distribute local content.

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Support local news with your donation between noon, July 19th – noon, August 13th.

NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT | MODERN MARIMBA

Modern Marimba is a cultural destination for the performing arts featuring marimba, vibraphone, and other mallet percussion keyboard music in Southwest Florida. Founder Tihda Vongkoth has appeared as a marimba soloist with the United States Air Force Band, The Florida Orchestra, and the Interlochen Arts Academy Orchestra.

The organization is driven to create spaces to listen, recognize, and reflect on powerful expressions of ideas through sound – **with a primary purpose to amplify and RECLAIM the musical voices of living, formerly living, and collective peoples who have been muted throughout western history through performance and education.**

Modern Marimba seeks to learn, take action, and partner with **those who take responsibility and action in creating sustainable and equitable musical ecosystems that dismantle oppression and dismantle white supremacy:** socially conscious audiences, music creators, composers, musicians, artisans, arts leaders, musical instrument manufacturers, performing artists, educators, and students/parents; organizations in mutual aid, human rights, social justice, environmental justice, disability justice, LGBTQ2IA+ rights, and especially racial equity; and ethically conscious businesses, supporters and patrons.

They offer a unique range of programs — including concert music, virtual lectures, and outdoor exhibitions featuring internationally acclaimed artists. Upcoming events include:



Modern Marimba partnered with WSLR to present the Jalen Baker Quartet at Fogartyville on May 24th



July 6-9 and July 13-16 - 2021 SummerFest for mallet keyboard percussion (Virtual and In-Person). This festival is geared towards middle and high school students wanting to discover more about the world of mallet keyboard percussion music. The Teaching Artist Schedule is TBD but

will include guided practice sessions, marimba clinics, intro to composition clinics, intro to Thai classical music, jazz vibraphone clinics, and performances of guest artists streamed to the public on Facebook (a Facebook account is not required).

SummerFest is a creative way to build skills, develop friendships, and help students explore their own artistic talents. The skills of listening, empathy, thinking creatively, and working together will help them thrive after their school years are over, and the world needs these skills now more than ever. Thanks to Modern Marimba's generous donors and the Equity and Access Grant cycle of the Community Foundation of Sarasota, **SummerFest 2021 is free of charge and there is a free shuttle & lunch provided for the In-Person Festival hosted at Sarasota High School.**

<https://modernmarimba.org/summerfest2021/>

July 25, 3pm Parents' Day Concert - location TBD



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MISSION:

WSLR+Fogartyville is a center for creative expression and community engagement that amplifies the voices of our diverse community and promotes peace, sustainability, democracy and economic and social justice.

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2021 SUMMERFEST
for mallet keyboard percussion!

Virtual Festival:
July 6 - 9 (Open to the Public)

In-Person Festival:
July 13 - 16 (Students Gr. 7-12 Only)
Hosted at Sarasota High School

REGISTER AT MODERNMARIMBA.ORG

SRQ Strong Helps Launch National Network

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become possible to “weave” communities together into a growing movement.

The Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practice (CTIPP), a national advocacy organization, was also in attendance. Jesse Kohler, director of CTIPP, updated the group about federal funding and legislation supporting a trauma-informed approach, and stressed the importance of educating legislators about realities on the ground.

The day after the Summit ended was National Gun Violence Awareness Day. NRP staff, community residents, and Pittsburgh police officers (including

the Police Chief) walked together through five neighborhoods experiencing higher than usual levels of gun violence. The marchers wore orange, handed out water and food, and engaged community residents as they walked. There were no signs, no chants, and no message about what people should or shouldn't do – just an opportunity to “meet and greet” and a visible commitment to be there for communities in pain. The smiles and high fives and promises to stay in touch were testament to the promise of healing and to the power of the NRP framework.

Covid Testing

The Drive-Thru Testing site at 5400 Bradenton Road, Sarasota (the former dog track) remains open 7 days a week: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. No appointment is needed.

Vaccines

Beginning June 25th the Moderna vaccine will be available at the following DOH Sarasota locations:

- DOH Sarasota (downtown)
2200 Ringling Blvd
Sarasota, 34237
Monday thru Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., no appointment is necessary.
- DOH Sarasota (North Port)
6950 Outreach Way
North Port, 34287
Monday thru Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., no appointment is necessary.

Everyone receiving a vaccine must present a valid ID, a signed consent form and be ready for the 15-minute wait after receiving your vaccine. Individuals walking up for their first dose are asked to return to the same location 28 days later to receive their second dose, as they will not receive a second-dose appointment reminder.

Manatee County is no longer holding County-operated vaccination events.

Vaccinations are available by appointment at select locations of the following pharmacies (you must register via their websites): CVS, Publix, Walgreens, Walmart and Winn-Dixie.

COVID-19 Call Center available 24/7 | +1 (866) 779-6121
or email COVID-19@flhealth.gov

Emergency Rental Assistance Funds May Still Be Available

Sarasota County received \$13 million from the U.S. Department of Treasury Emergency Rental Assistance program to help households unable to pay rent and utilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Eligible households may receive up to 12 months of assistance, plus an additional three months if needed to ensure housing stability, as long as funds are available. As of mid-June, money was still available for rental assistance.

Individuals can apply online at scgov.net/rent.

For assistance with applications, an ERAP Call Center is available at 941-861-RENT (7368). The call center will be available from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Ambassadors for the ERAP program will also be available to assist individuals with the

application process at several locations throughout the county, including the following within the city limits:

Betty J. Johnson Library, 2801 Newtown Blvd.
- 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday

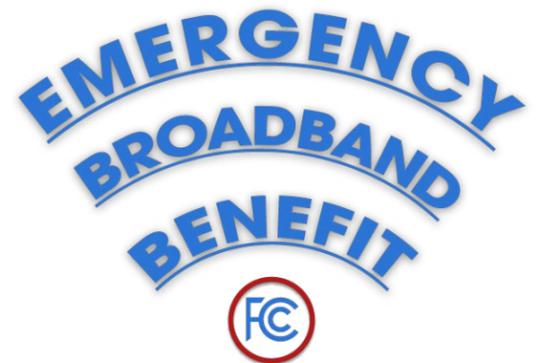
Goodwill, 1781 Dr. Martin Luther King Way
- 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday

Funds are also available in Manatee County https://www.mymanatee.org/departments/redevelopment_economic_opportunity_community_development/manatee_cares/emergency_rental_assistance_program

Expanding Broadband Access

The Emergency Broadband Benefit was launched in May 2021 as a way to help Americans struggling to afford broadband internet particularly during the pandemic. Eligible households are given a discount off the cost of broadband service - up to \$50/month or \$75/month on qualifying tribal lands. The \$3.2 billion fund is available until it's depleted or up to six months after the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declares the pandemic over.

Not sure if you're eligible? Learn more and apply on the FCC website: <https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit>



Suncoast Clean Jobs Alliance Launches in Sarasota

BY CAROL LERNER

The Suncoast Clean Jobs Alliance made their debut at the Climate, Jobs and Justice Forum held on June 22 at Fogartyville. The forum was sponsored by Progressive Sarasota and the Suncoast Climate Justice Coalition. The aim of the Suncoast Clean Jobs Alliance is to educate local residents on how addressing the climate crisis through the implementation of clean energy and climate-oriented infrastructure projects could create tens of thousands of good, living wage jobs while transforming the Suncoast region to fight climate change.

Johannes Werner, representing Progressive Sarasota and the Suncoast Clean Jobs Alliance, outlined how President Joseph Biden's American Jobs Plan and American Families Plan will, if enacted, be a first step in addressing climate change, while simultaneously focusing on the needs of working Americans. A major goal behind President Biden's plans is a massive reduction in greenhouse gas emission, a shift that would go hand in hand with the trillion-dollar infrastructure program. Werner explained how the interest of working Americans comes first in these plans, by focusing on union jobs, "Made in America" jobs, and the need for

racial justice in employment. The funding for these projects will come from tax hikes on corporations and on wealthy Americans, he said.

Werner described how a group of climate activists and entrepreneurs in Sarasota got together earlier this year to research the potential benefits of massive investments in renewable energy, clean water projects, environmental cleanups (such as the gypsum stacks at Piney Point), sustainable agriculture practices and better transportation on a local level. He described how the Suncoast region will benefit in terms of tens of thousands of good jobs and other hands-on gains. Werner hopes that this project will help break through the myth that tackling the climate crisis and reducing the area's dependence on fossil fuels is a job killer. To the contrary, he said, the proposals of the Suncoast Clean Jobs Alliance will create a renaissance in jobs and general well-being in Sarasota and Manatee Counties. To learn more, you can read the full report, "The Green Transition: An Economic Opportunity for Sarasota-Manatee", on the Progressive Sarasota website.

Two high school students, Anja Schwarzbauer of Sarasota High School and Mehak Sandhu of Booker



Anja Schwarzbauer of Sarasota High School (right) and Mehak Sandhu of Booker High School, co-leaders of Sarasota Students for Climate, present at the Climate Forum

High School, both co-leads of Sarasota Students for Climate, also addressed the forum. Sponsored by the Suncoast Climate Justice Coalition, the students recently attended the Power Shift Network Conference and reported on this exciting event. The Power Shift Network believes in supporting, convening and mobilizing young people to build and carry out innovative campaigns around climate and environmental justice. Schwarzbauer and Sandhu also described past and current activities and the next steps of Sarasota Students for Climate, including their participation in the Sarasota Ready for 100 campaign, climate-related student art installations and student-led COVID-safe climate strikes.

Locals Study Impact of Climate Change

BY MARGARET JEAN CANNON AND ROY WYSNEWSKI

Climate change indeed is one of the world's greatest existential enemies. Following the Covid-9 protocol, the United States government asks all Americans to participate in and approve funding the fight against this enemy. Unfortunately, many Americans, including residents in Sarasota, take an apathetic stance towards this 'call to arms' because they believe climate change does not seriously impact them today, nor will it do so in their future. Not only do they ignore the call to action – the same people are less likely to believe the government should make funding the battle against climate change a priority at this time.

In retrospect, local apathy is understandable. For the better part of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021, while sequestering at home from Covid-19, we were spectators watching California burn, Texas flood, then 'freeze' in February, and the coastal sections of Louisiana and Texas devastated by an unprecedented number of dangerous tropical cyclones. Yes, we were safe, and we escaped the 'wrath' of Climate Change.

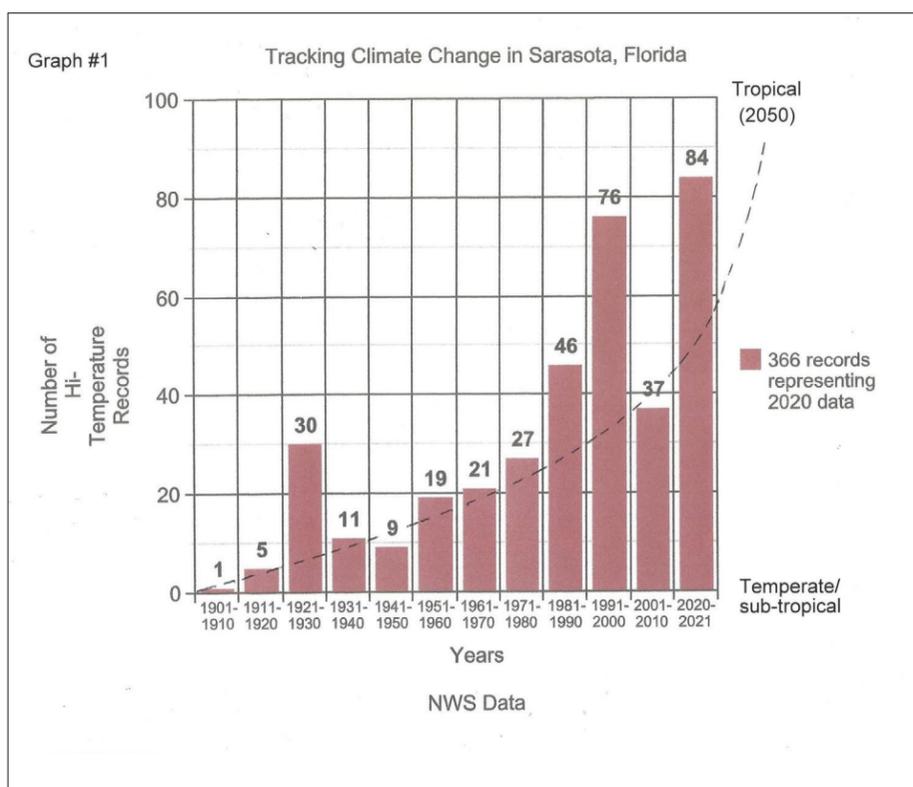
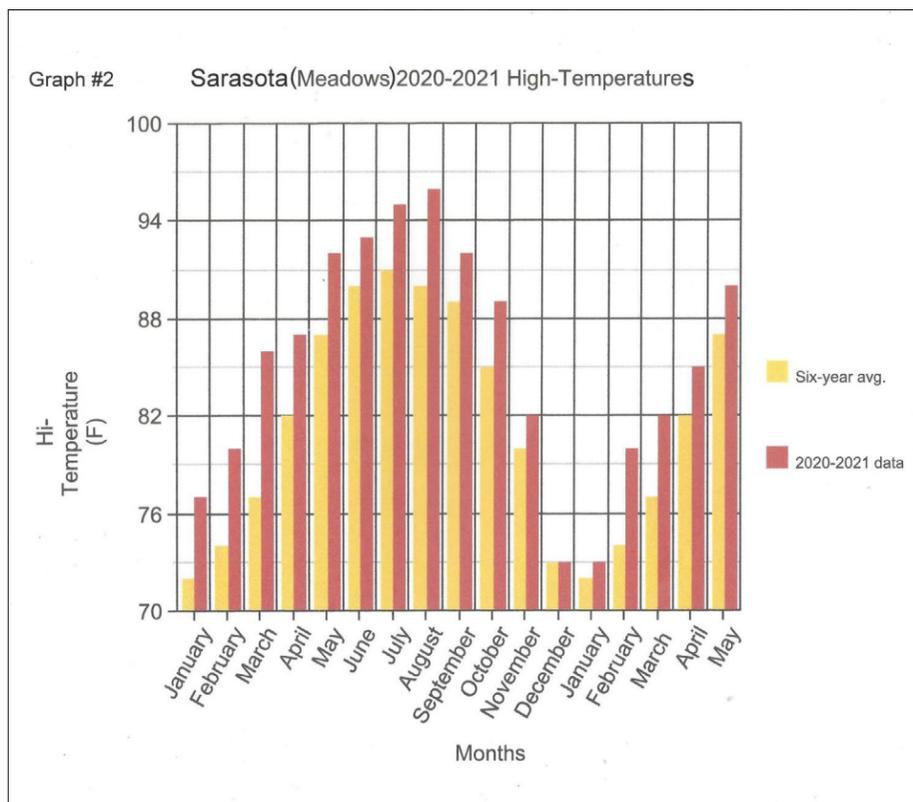
Nevertheless, here's the truth about climate change. While we were fortunate to escape the devastation seen afar, we are, in fact, deeply entwined in a serious climate change process. And, there's evidence suggesting that the ultimate consequences of this process may be at our doorstep right now. Based on recent results of a climate change outreach program underway in Sarasota, this truth is evident -- see Critical Times (3rd quarter 2020) article by Sarasota residents Jean Cannon and Roy Wysniewski.

The outreach program demonstrates to Sarasota residents the impact of local climate change through the lens of weather and climate. By tracking climate change locally (Graph #1), residents see first-hand how historical (record) increases in atmospheric temperature (weather) influence a sub-tropical to tropical change in our climate. Scientists substantiate this finding by reporting that surging record temperatures and increased rainfall during the next three decades are expected to increase Sarasota's average summertime temperature by 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit and annual rainfall by 10 inches. This brings our climate close to tropical Miami. In other words, Sarasotians are living through a significant climate change.

Another aspect of the outreach program is current weather monitoring. For example, Graph #2 illustrates the results of a recent seventeen-month atmospheric temperature study. Monthly temperatures are at or above the most recent six-year average every month -- this is quite striking! Unfortunately, as the atmosphere continues to 'heat' up, it becomes more volatile and historical weather patterns are less predictable. Now, factor in ongoing above-average Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico water temperatures -- and the ingredients exist for nasty weather-related events to become more prevalent in our future. Prolonged higher than average temperatures also lead to increased air pollution and water contamination – bad news for the health and well-being of all life forms.

Isn't now the time to join the worldwide movement to fight climate change?

Submit comments and questions about this article to: mjcannon@gmail.com; roywys8@msn.com.



Sarasotans Organize Against Gun Violence

After a year of online activities, members of Brady Sarasota United Against Gun Violence ventured out for a rally along the Bayfront on May 20. The group, which has held one-hour rallies every Thursday in the Fall, Winter and Spring for about eight years, was thrilled to get together after a long pandemic hiatus. Thirty people holding signs that promoted the safe storage of guns, Universal Background Checks and other gun safety programs and bills were mostly enthusiastically greeted as they waved to passing cars.

Recent polls show that 86% of Florida voters favor background checks. Republicans polled 82% in favor and gun owners over 80%, according to Giffords advisers. "It's time to make this happen," said Brady Sarasota president Carol Rescigno. "The U.S. House has passed such a bill. Gun safety should never have been politicized. Our senators need to get behind this public health issue to keep their constituents safe."

The Sarasota chapter hopes to start up its regular rallies on Oct. 28 following a welcome back get-together the week before. Details are being finalized. For more information, contact: sarasota@bradyunited.org.



Brady Sarasota members along the Bayfront in May.

Sarasota Urban Reforestation

BY GENE JONES, FLORIDA
VETERANS FOR COMMON SENSE

SURF (Sarasota Urban ReForestation) is making a positive impact on the Sarasota environment while combating climate change and supporting veterans. The SURF partner organizations are: Florida Veterans for Common Sense Fund Inc., (FLVCS FUND), Rotary Club of Sarasota Bay, Sarasota County's Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship Team (NEST), and Solutions to Avoid Red Tide (START).

SURF's mission is to grow a sustainable business that removes carbon from the atmosphere and sequesters it in the ground by installing microforests. Scientific studies confirm that creating a microforest is an effective way to offset our carbon footprint because trees take up carbon from the air, and they do so more efficiently when planted as a microforest.

SURF's first step toward developing a sustainable enterprise was the installation of a beautiful microforest located at Celery Fields Park in Sarasota. Initiated in October 2020, it covers about ¾ of an acre and has over 175 trees. What was a mowed field of weeds is now a thriving microforest.

The microforest provides many benefits in addition to fighting climate change. It absorbs and utilizes thousands of gallons of water that would otherwise find their way to Sarasota Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. It also filters nutrients and pollutants as water passes through it. As a result, less storm runoff reaches our bay and the water that does flow into our waterways is cleaner, hindering algae and destructive red tide blooms. This important aspect of the microforest is one reason Solutions to Avoid Red Tide (START) joined SURF as a partner.

Microforests provide another important benefit in our southwest Florida subtropical environment – they have a tremendous cooling effect. Before the days of air-conditioning, Sarasota was known as the air conditioned city as it generally experienced

cooler summer temperatures than nearby towns. This can probably be attributed, in part, to the benefits of Sarasota's extensive tree canopy at the time. The temperature in a mature forest can be approximately 10 degrees cooler than the surrounding areas without shade.

We know that Sarasota is located in an area susceptible to hurricanes, and fortunately, microforests can help mitigate hurricanes' harmful effects by calming their strong winds. When hurricane Katrina slammed New Orleans, some areas were less damaged because large trees slowed the wind in those places.

Another big benefit of microforests is that they provide a diverse habitat for creatures of all types, particularly birds. At the Celery Fields, we now observe bird species feeding and resting in the microforest that previously didn't use the area.

Microforests also help avoid the expenses of mowing, fertilizing, spraying insecticides, and long-term watering. Before SURF installed the Celery Fields microforest, Sarasota County mowed the area with huge tractors that spewed carbon into the air. Now the carbon pollution caused by mowing machines and their expenses are avoided.

Now that we see the success and benefits of the Celery Fields Park microforest, rest assured that the SURF team will install more. Realistically, FLVCS FUND can't plant enough trees to have a huge impact on climate change, but those we plant will help. Our research confirms that our first demonstration microforest at the Celery Fields Park in Sarasota will sequester around two million



Sebastian Gardner, a USF student intern, at the Celery Fields reforestation site.

pounds of carbon over 30 years.

Needless to say, SURF's first demonstration project has benefitted from the support of many individuals and groups. Among them are Michael Saunders Foundation, Florida Native Plant Society, Florida Veterans for Common Sense Inc., McKeithen Nurseries, Sarasota Chapter Florida Audubon, and more. Individuals and other organizations are encouraged to join with SURF to advance the mission.

To plant more microforests SURF needs financial support. You can make a donation to support SURF at <https://floridaveteransforcommonsensefund.org/surf-microforest-project/>

For more information contact the project managers: Professor Charles Reith at charles.c.reith@gmail.com, or Mike Burns at mtburns44@gmail.com

Support Local News and Public Affairs

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The decline of local news is associated with higher polarization, decreased voter turnout, less cross-party voting, increased corruption and more government waste. The decline of local reporting means residents are less well-informed about schools, government effectiveness, economic development, criminal justice, health care, the environment, crime, religion, issues facing small businesses and the basic elements of community life. WSLR's Community News Fund aims to support local journalism and ensure that community members have the information they need to make informed decisions about local issues and that residents are aware of resources they can access to support their businesses, their health and their overall wellbeing.

There are two ways you can support our local news expansion:

1. Give through the 'A Community Thrives' platform From July 19th at noon ET through August 13th at noon ET WSLR will be participating in 'A Community Thrives', a grantmaking and crowdfunding program from the USA TODAY NETWORK, which includes USA TODAY and the Herald Tribune. All donations made through this platform will be targeted to help us expand our capacity to produce and distribute local news content. The initiative is part of the



News Producer Becca Hadwen works with summer intern Precious Darling.

Gannett Foundation and supports nonprofit organizations with projects focused on community building. Fundraising through this program, allows nonprofits to qualify for "bonus" incentive grants ranging from local operating grants in the amount of \$2500 to national project grants of up to \$100,000. Similar to the Giving Partner Challenge run by the Community Foundation of Sarasota, this is an online giving fundraiser and donations must be made on the official A Community Thrives challenge page. The minimum Eligible Donation is \$5 per transaction. There is no maximum donation limit. Eligible Donations can be made using a credit card, PayPal, Apple Pay or Bank account and must be successfully

processed through WSLR's 'A Community Thrives' page which can be found here: <https://acomunitythives.mightycause.com/organization/Wslr>

2. WSLR has also launched a Community News Fund so that you can designate support for local news development. You can make an ongoing monthly contribution or a one-time contribution through the WSLR website at <https://wslr.org/pledge-now/>.

As our Community News Fund grows WSLR hopes to build a program of public service journalism modeled after the program developed by City Bureau, a Chicago-based civic journalism lab. In less than three years, City Bureau has gone from an audacious idea to a replicable model for more equitable, inclusive and representational community news coverage. They work to bring journalists and communities together in a collaborative spirit to produce equitable media coverage and encourage civic participation. There are three elements to the program - a Civic Journalism Reporting Fellowship, the Documenters Program and a free Public Newsroom forum — which work together to broaden paths of entry into the journalism industry, increase transparency and accessibility at local public governance meetings and bring people into solutions-based dialogue.

LIVE FROM Forgartyville

COMMUNITY MEDIA AND ARTS CENTER

ALL SHOWS: Student tickets available at 1/2 price (show ID at door); Kids 12 and under are free.

7pm Thursday August 12

\$25 members/\$30 non

DUANE EUBANKS

QUINTET

A skilled composer/bandleader, straight-ahead post-bop style jazz, reminiscent in delivery of Miles and Morgan with a modern progressive emphasis and vibe.

Featuring:

Duane Eubanks - Trumpet/Flugelhorn **Dezron Douglas** - Bass **David Bryant** - Piano
Abraham Burton - Tenor Sax **Eric McPherson** - Drums

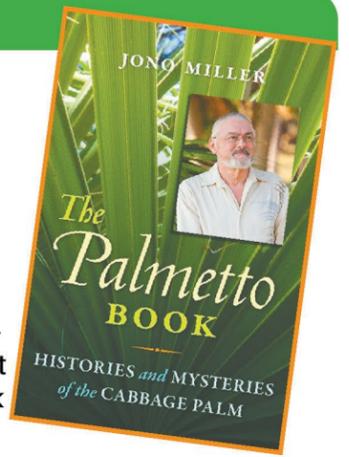


7pm Tuesday July 13

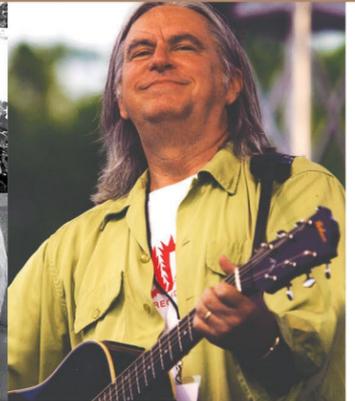
Free for All

Book Talk with Jono Miller The Palmetto Book

The palmetto, the state tree of Florida + South Carolina is an iconic part of the southeastern landscape. Talk will include some surprising facts about this important native plant.



8pm Saturday August 21



\$12 members/\$15 non

Rebekah Pulley & Ronny Elliott

This is a Local Legends show - St. Pete's best- Rebekah is a jaw dropping sultry, singer-songwriter a performer with a tendency to break your heart and shake your soul. Tampa native Ronny Elliott is an insurgent country singer/songwriter in the vein of Guy Clark or Townes Van Zandt.

8pm Saturday August 14th

\$20 members/\$25 non

AARON JOHNSON

NYC-based jazz saxophonist, adventurous multi-instrumentalist who has led his own band in nearly every major NYC jazz club, he is the new generation of jazz embracing older styles, the great american songbook as well as classical + avant-garde. His pianist **Sacha Perry**, is a true master in his own right.



7:30pm Sunday, October 17

\$15 members/\$18 non

SHAMARR ALLEN & THE UNDERDAWGS

Hailing from the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans, Allen, lead vocalist and trumpeter has influences in jazz, hip-hop, rock, funk rhythms, blues and country. The Second-Line comes right to Forgartyville...



7pm Thursday October 28

\$15 members
/\$18 non

TIME SAWYER

NC folk rockers with an alt-country dusting their songs they are influenced by Poco, Uncle Tupelo and beyond.



8pm Friday, November 19

\$25 members/\$30 non

Mary Gauthier

Grammy-nominated folk singer-songwriter and author, whose songs have been covered by performers including Tim McGraw, Blake Shelton, Kathy Mattea and Jimmy Buffett. Her songs often deal with marginalization, informed by her experience of addiction/recovery, and growing up gay, and demonstrate an "ability to transform her own trauma into a purposeful and communal narrative." *This concert is being presented in conjunction with the Listening Room of Sarasota*



4-9pm Sunday November 7

\$12 members/\$15 non

Our longest running signature event is back!

VERY MERRY JERRY DAY



WE CELEBRATE THE LIFE & MUSIC OF OUR GUITAR HERO
JERRY GARCIA
featuring sets from
DEAD SET FL
&
FREE RANGE STRANGE



WSLR PROGRAMMING UPDATE

We're happy to welcome back more programmers *LIVE to the studio*, including **Purple Mike** (*Basement Boxes*, Thursday, 2-4pm) alternating with

Susan Runyan and her new show, *High Tide*. **Donna B** returns to the airwaves on alternating Wednesdays, 2-4pm, with *Jazz & Broadway Swirl*. We wish **Phil G** (*Progressive Palace*) great success as he moves out of the area, but Thursdays, 9-11pm, will continue the great progressive rock groove as *Music Is The Best* with **Mark Markus** expands to every Thursday. Many thanks to **Hawaii Bob** and **Sven** for their high energy and fun Wednesday afternoon shows (*Hawaii Bob Theme Show & HotRodRock*). We wish them the best in their retirement. We're shifting the format as we welcome **Brian Jones** and his show *Jazz And More* to



Wednesdays, 4-6pm. Diversity is an important part of our Mission at **WSLR+Fogartyville**, and as our volunteer programmers retire, move away, or make requests to move their shows, the *Radio Programming Committee* explores what's possible. *Tuesday Drive Home* is closed down, but **David Young** is waking us up on Tuesday mornings, 7-9am, with *Gotta Get Up*. *Indie-licious* with **Sheila Jane** (alternating Thursdays, 7-9pm) and *Velvet Radio* with **Elissa Bello** (alternating Saturdays, 7-9pm) have traded places, so be sure to listen in at the new time.

The Pandemic and associated health and safety protocols prevented us from training and bringing new programmers to the studio for more than a year.

But listen for changes this summer as we bring in several new local programmers and their new shows. If you are interested in *hosting a program* on **WSLR**, you can submit an application on the website - just click on the **Volunteer** tab (under *Support*).

YOU CAN SUPPORT WSLR +Fogartyville by participating in our **Brick-by-Brick** campaign. If you don't have a brick on our **People's Patio** yet, *there's still time!* It's a great opportunity to honor a family member



or loved one, to pay tribute to a favorite mentor, or to celebrate your appreciation of live music, art or activism.

Visit PolarEngraving.com/wslrinc to place your order or scan this QR.

If you'd like to support the patio renovations with a larger donation, please reach out to **Arlene** at 941-894-6469.

wslr lp 96.5 fm

WEEKLY PROGRAM GUIDE

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- WBPV-LP 100.1 FM Sarasota

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archive.wslr.org Music shows are archived for two weeks. News and public affairs are available for download, and expire later.

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Electronica · Dubstep · Club · Hip-hop
Freeform · Eclectic
Rock · Punk · Jam · Indie · Pop
News · Public Affairs
World · Spiritual

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
12 mid.		Down The Road Syndicated	Lumpytunes! The Head Lump, Rob Demperio	New Radio	All Mixed Up Syndicated	And You Don't Stop Syndicated	In My Room Syndicated
1 a.m.	Deep Threes Syndicated					Synthelectico Syndicated	
2 a.m.	Music Automated playlist	Midnight Special Syndicated	Music Automated playlist	Upfront Soul Syndicated	Music Automated playlist		
3 a.m.							
4 a.m.	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Music Automated playlist	Music Automated playlist
5 a.m.							
6 a.m.	Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)	Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)	Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)	Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)	Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)		
7 a.m.							
8 a.m.	Blues to Bluegrass John D.	Gotta Get Up David Young	Generation X Alecia Harper Music with a Purpose Pat Monahan	Eclectic Blender Dave Pedersen	Latin Explosion Juan Montenegro	Saturday Morning Gospel Jonah	A Way With Words Syndicated
9 a.m.	Shortwave Report	TUC Radio	Peace & Justice Report Tom Walker & Bob Connors	The Detail Cathy Antunes	Surreal News Lew Lorini & Steve Norris	TownTalk TampaBay Ruthless Truth	The Detail Cathy Antunes (Rebroadcast)
10 a.m.	Critical Times Week in Review	Sea Change Radio					
11 a.m.	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Radio Reset Sharon Preston-Folta	Law and Disorder Syndicated
NOON	Music of the World Marco Ciceron	Nuestra Musica Mariano Afro Cuban Jazz Frankie Piniero	Bop & Beyond Bill Ewell Vibrational Journeys Perette Cannady	Metropics Carlos Pagan	Complex Waveforms Mark Zampella	Upfront Soul Syndicated	Folk Alley Elena See Syndicated
1 p.m.							
2 p.m.	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Hard Knock Radio Syndicated	Dadee-O's Collector's Corner Dadee-O
3 p.m.	Positive Friction John Haupt	Second Wind Seany G	Rhythm Revival Rev. Billy C Wirtz Jazz & Broadway Swirl Donna B	Basement Boxes Purple Mike High Tide Susan Runyan	Everything But the Kitchen Sink Jazz Edition Art on the Air Everything But the Kitchen Sink Art on the Air	AfroSonic Taxi Syndicated	
4 p.m.							Velvet Hammer Blues Beth Hammer
5 p.m.	Music Museum Ed Foster	HipRawk Nation Syndicated	Jazz And More Brian Jones	Ted's Head Ted	Friday Happy Hour Bartender Tommy D.	Juke In The Back Syndicated	
6 p.m.	Economic Update Richard Wolff	Ralph Nader Radio Syndicated	Got Science?/Critical Times	Alternative Radio Syndicated	Critical Times Week in Review	We Got The Funk Syndicated	Karen Rakos' Music of the World Syndicated
7 p.m.	Capitol Update State News		Laura Flanders (Syndicated)		Counterspin/Cannabis Connection		Donne Del Mondo Syndicated
8 p.m.	Yesterday's Dead Today Mark Binder	The Root Cellar Roger & Peter	Acoustic Waves James Hawkins Eclectricity Ishmael Katz	Retro Cocktail Hour Syndicated Indie-licious Sheila Jane	Ripper's Rarities Russ Yodice	Velvet Radio Elissa Bello New Radio DJ Joey PD	Blue Groove Mark Gruder
9 p.m.							
10 p.m.	Indigenous Sounds White Horse and Friends	Strange Currency Syndicated	Fur Peace Ranch Syndicated	Music Is The Best Mark Markus	Dark Side of the Tune Syndicated	Sonic Cafe Syndicated	Soul Kitchen Paul Junior
11 p.m.			Portraits in Blue & Green Syndicated			Mix Sessions Syndicated	Louning After Dark Syndicated
12 mid.	Down The Road Syndicated	Lumpytunes! The Head Lump, Rob Demperio	New Radio	All Mixed Up Syndicated	And You Don't Stop Syndicated	In My Room Syndicated	Cafe Chill Syndicated

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A Look Back at the Florida Legislative Session

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Friday, April 30th, marked the 60th and final day of the 2021 Florida Legislative Session – a session that began during unprecedented health and economic uncertainties as state and global economies scrambled to contain COVID 19 outbreaks and surges while managing the impact to Florida businesses, schools, families, and health care facilities.

The Legislature operated under strict COVID public access restrictions, eliminating in person Senate committee meetings allowing for public testimony from the Leon County Civic Center. The House authorized limited access to committee hearings through a laborious pre-approval and verification program. The legislative process was conducted mostly without in person public access, leaving the halls of the Capitol, typically bustling with advocates, remarkably empty and quiet.

Like much of this year's legislative work, the 2021 Session adjourned Sine Die with lackluster ceremonial festivities and collegial pomp and circumstance – with the House and Senate voting up on the 2021-22 spending plan totaling \$101.5 billion – powered by \$10.2 billion in federal American Rescue Plan funding of which the legislature used \$6.6 billion and put the rest in reserves. The 2021 budget is almost \$10 billion higher than last year's budget.

Billions of dollars are being devoted to the environment, creating what House Speaker Chris Sprowls, R-Palm Harbor, called “the greenest budget in Florida's history.” That includes \$100 million for the cleanup and closure of the Piney Point phosphate plant that threatened to flood hundreds of Manatee County homes in early April.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF FLORIDA

More than \$750 million is going to maintenance and construction projects for schools, colleges, and universities. Lawmakers avoided cuts to hospital funding, and additional federal dollars allowed the state to pay for the 1 million Floridians who joined the state's Medicaid rolls during the pandemic. The budget also includes direct payments to many Floridians, requested by Gov. Ron DeSantis. Teachers, police, firefighters, and paramedics can expect \$1,000 bonuses. Many state employees will see raises, thanks to Senate President Wilton Simpson, who pushed to increase the minimum wage in state government to \$13 per hour.

Lawmakers also chose to permanently halve the state's share of affordable housing money, using the rest on flooding projects and wastewater programs. Instead of \$423 million for affordable housing this year, the program is getting \$209 million.

Lawmakers found \$239.8 million to extend Medicaid benefits for new mothers, giving eligible women and their babies a full year of coverage. It is a triumphant blend of compassion with fiscal savvy. Good health care, early in life, can catch many problems before they become expensive and difficult to treat.

Due to the federal infusion, Legislators appropriated \$500 million for teacher pay increases, 3% across-the-board pay raises for all state

employees, \$100 million for Florida Forever, \$650 million for water/Everglades, fully funding Visit Florida, and the Sadowski Trust Fund – to name just a few budgetary high notes.

This year there was no shortage of bills filed with a very conservative number passing. In total, the 2021 regular session included:

- 3,140 bills and PCBs filed
- 2,632 amendments filed
- 3,788 votes taken
- 39 floor sessions
- 29 preemptions & mandates
- 7 repeals of preemptions
- Only 275 bills passed both chambers (8.8% of bills filed)

Legislators returned to Tallahassee on May 17 for a special session to approve the ratification of a multi-billion-dollar gaming deal with the Seminole Tribe of Florida that the governor was instrumental in negotiating. Governor DeSantis has estimated that the agreement would help raise \$2.5 billion in new revenue over the next five years and \$6 billion through 2030. The arrangement now runs for the next 30 years.

Top Priority Opposition — Senate Bill 90 - Election Administration

After days of contentious debate and last-minute amendments bouncing between chambers, the Republican-controlled state House and Senate came to an agreement and party-line votes approved Senate Bill 90 on the eve of Florida's final day of the legislative session.

The bill, which Gov. Ron DeSantis has signed into law, creates restrictions such as adding new ID requirements for voting by mail, limits who can return a completed mail-in ballot, prohibits the use of nonprofit and private funds to conduct elections, expands partisan observation power during ballot tabulation, and creates additional restrictions for drop box use.

The bill is part of a Republican-led effort nationwide to restrict voting access at the state level in the wake of record turnout in last November's elections. A tally by the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University found that 361 bills with provisions that restrict voting had been introduced in 47 states as of March 24. In the last

month, the effort to restrict voting has intensified as state legislatures begin to head into the final months

of their respective sessions. legislation cuts access to drop boxes by limiting their use to early voting hours unless they are located

at election supervisors' offices. All drop boxes must always be staffed in person by election supervisors' office workers if they are in use. The bill also requires supervisors to set and publish drop box locations 30 days before the election. Those locations cannot be moved for any purpose. The bill says election supervisors can be subject to a \$25,000 penalty if they do not adhere to the new drop box rules.

The League of Women Voters of Florida is the lead plaintiff in a lawsuit brought forth alongside Black Voters Matter Fund, Florida Alliance for Retired Americans, and several individual Florida voters to challenge Senate

Bill 90. The lawsuit's filing came minutes after the measure was signed into law by Governor Ron DeSantis.



Photo courtesy of ACLU of Florida

of their respective sessions.

The biggest changes in the bill involve limits and restrictions on ballot drop boxes, used by around 1.5 million Florida voters in the 2020 election. The

How Local Legislators Voted

SB90 passed the Senate on a 23-17 party line vote. A single Republican — Jeff Brandes of St. Petersburg — crossed party lines to join Senate Democrats in voting against the bill. Senator Jim Boyd and Joe Gruters both voted in support of the Bill. The House voted to pass the bill by

a 77-40 margin. Republican area representatives Will Robinson (HD71), Fiona McFarland (HD72), Tommy Gregory (HD73) and James Buchanan (HD74) all supported the bill. Rep. Michele Rayner (HD70) was a strong opponent of the bill.

NOTE: Michele Rayner has announced that she will be running for Charlie Crist's Congressional seat in 2022. Crist has thrown his hat into the race for Governor.



Top Priority Opposition — House Bill 1 - Combating Public Disorder

After a session of trying to fight off a bill that would hinder our right to peacefully protest and force harder punishments for people who are in violation to this new law, the Florida Legislature passed HB 1, which was a priority for the Governor.

The House passed HB 1 through all its committee stops and on the Floor. However, the Senate never heard the companion bill throughout committee weeks. It was not until President Simpson pulled SB 484 and referred it to the Senate Appropriation committee, where it was heard and passed after hours of debate by senators and testimony from the public. Eventually it was passed by committee and on the Senate floor. The governor held a press conference on the 19th of April to sign the bill into law.

Here is what the final legislation entails:

- Allows prosecutors and local officials to appeal to the state if a municipality tries to cut its police budget amid calls to cut or defund the police.
- It makes battery on a law enforcement officer “in furtherance of a riot or an aggravated riot” punishable by at least six months in prison. “Willfully and maliciously” pulling down



Rallies were held across the state in opposition to HB1. Photo courtesy of PSL Florida.

a memorial or historic property would be a second-degree felony, a penalty that critics said would protect Confederate monuments.

- The bill also makes it a third-degree felony to participate in a riot, which is defined as three or more people acting in common to “assist each other in violent and disorderly conduct” that results in injury, property damage or “imminent danger” of injury or property damage.
- The measure also creates a defense in civil

lawsuits if the plaintiff’s injuries were caused while participating in a riot or unlawful assembly. Critics said that would protect counter protesters from liability if they drove through a demonstration and killed a person.

NOTE: On May 11th, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), ACLU of Florida, and Community Justice Project filed a federal lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida challenging a recently enacted state law (H.B. 1) designed to chill Floridians’ First Amendment right to free speech and peaceful assembly in the wake of last summer’s demonstrations against police violence. The lawsuit was filed on behalf of the Black-led organizations The Black Collective, Black Lives Matter Alliance Broward, Chainless Change, Dream Defenders, the Florida State Conference of the NAACP, and the Northside Coalition of Jacksonville. The law firm of Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP is serving as counsel with the civil rights groups. The lawsuit argues that H.B. 1 violates the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution by chilling protected speech and criminalizing protest activity.

How Local Legislators Voted

HB1 passed the Senate on a 23-17 party line vote. Again, Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Jeff Brandes of St. Petersburg was the only Republican to vote against it. Senator Jim Boyd and Joe Gruters both voted in support of the Bill. The House voted to pass the bill by a 76-39 margin. Republican area representatives Will Robinson (HD71), Fiona McFarland (HD72), Tommy Gregory (HD73) and James Buchanan (HD74) all supported the bill. Rep. Michele Rayner (HD70) was a strong opponent of the bill.

Critical Race Theory Controversy

Background: Congressman Buchanan published a poll to constituents on June 6, asking the following question: “Given what you know about Critical Race Theory, do you think it should be a mandatory component of the K-12 curriculum?” The following letter was written to the Congressman on June 13.

Congressman Buchanan,

I am not aware of any proposal that mandates the teaching of Critical Race Theory. If I am misinformed, please direct me to the source of that proposal.

I do not think CRT should be taught, much less mandated, in K through 12 schools. CRT is an academic framework, originally designed by legal scholars seeking to examine the role of race and racism in public policy and the persistent inequality produced by those policies. Hardly the stuff for elementary schoolers.

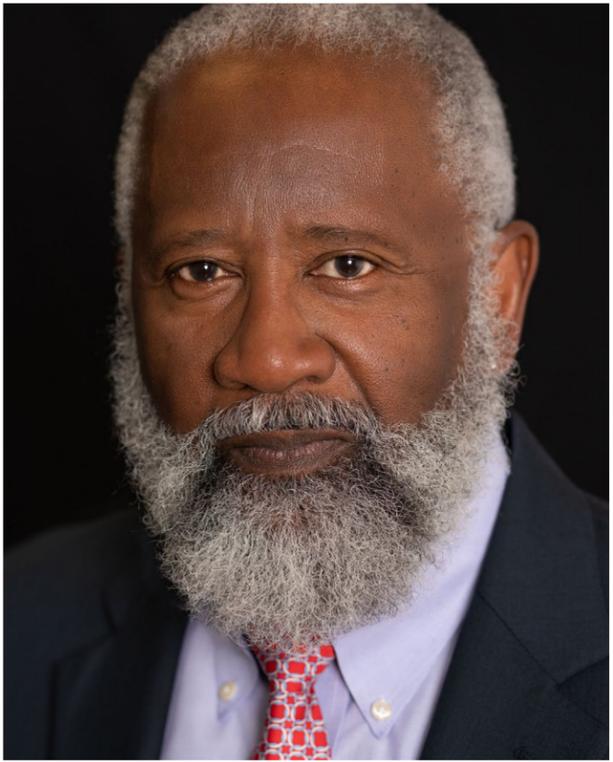
Given all the controversy and confusion surrounding CRT, I would have thought you would have asked whether your readers know what it is and what concerns they might have about plans for its incorporation into their children’s curricula. The phrasing of your question leads me to believe that, a) you know there are no plans to mandate the teaching of CRT and, b) you are only interested in further inflaming the controversy.

Promoting the controversy over a non-existent

“mandate” to teach CRT does pose a potential threat to the teaching of American History and Civics. I believe most scholars in these fields, whether conservative or progressive, would agree that neither subject can be adequately taught without considering the role of race and racism. Can the development of the American Colonies be taught without consideration being given to the distinctions between European indentured servants and enslaved people of African descent, and the race-based laws that would ultimately be passed to favor the former and dehumanize the latter? Can the study of the U.S. Constitution exclude consideration of the 3/5ths Clause, the Fugitive Slave Clause or the Clause extending the African Slave Trade to 1808, demanded by the Southern Colonies who would not have signed the document without those provisions? Can the study of the Civil War, the Amendments passed as a result of the War, the Reconstruction Era, and the legalized system of discrimination, popularly referred to as Jim Crow, be studied without discussing race and racism?

The threat to which I refer should be obvious. If teachers and school districts try to avoid discussing race or racism for fear of being accused of teaching CRT, our children are robbed of the American History and Civic education they deserve, and our society is deprived of the well-educated citizens it needs to progress as a democracy.

Congressman, was your poll designed to advance the education of our children, making



David G. Wilkins, Esq.

them better informed citizens, or did you have another purpose in mind?

David G. Wilkins, Esq.
President
Manasota ASALH

We Know What We Voted For

A recent Sarasota County public records request showed that no one in our county is blowing up County Commissioner emails regarding the subject of Single Member Districts. Nor did any email show up from voters expressing disappointment of only being able to vote for one commissioner. A county public records search request from 2018 to present shows that not a single email in the files provided by the county records department showed a single mention of SMD confusion.

Commissioner Detert, along with the rest of the SRQ County Commissioners, claims they have received a mound of questions from constituents about their confusion over Single Member Districts. The records request search showed that Commissioner Detert had received zero emails from any citizen living in Sarasota about being confused about SMDs.

The Commissioners are effectively removing the value of the simple act of voting in Sarasota County.

Recent Sarasota voter neutering by County Commissioners or the Charter Review Board are:

Redistricting of Newtown voters, silencing the Black vote and cutting Fredd Atkins out of his potential to beat Commissioner Mike Moran.

Making citizen-initiated petitions requirements more difficult by increasing signature collection.

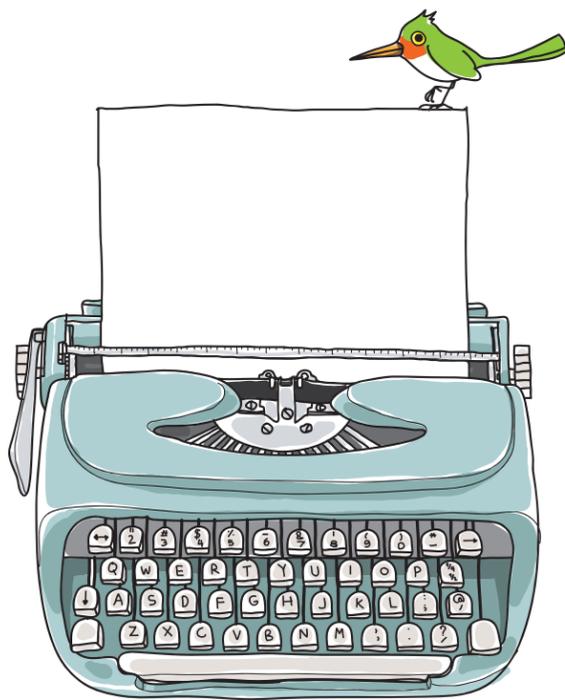
Constantly our Sarasota commissioners neuter votes without being asked to. County Commissioner members say they are being bombarded with people on the street stopping them and demanding that Single Member Districts be rescinded. The County Commissioners are lying and effectively making it more difficult at each and every turn for the average citizen to believe that their vote has any value. It's the great Sarasota Swindle and our Commissioners keep churning out lies to nullify our votes.

Sarasota voters took the time to vote in favor of SMDs; there is an implication from the County Commissioners that the people of Sarasota who voted are stupid. Commissioner Maio and Detert continue to say that we didn't know what we were voting for. We knew what we were voting for and just because Commissioners don't like the way the vote turned out does not mean they should twist the reality of stating people are asking for SMDs to be dissolved. We are not.

A phone call survey, as suggested by the County Commission, is a waste of time and money. Who in this day and age picks up their phone when an unknown phone number appears? Most of us don't. And that is a statistical fact that is way more accurate than the Commissioners clamoring about all of their voters being too stupid to understand what Single Member Districts mean.

It ain't rocket science, it ain't broke and no one is asking for it except the politicians who are too scared to run on their own merit, in their own district.

Adrien Lucas



No Lynching Memorial in Newtown

After reading articles in regards to the proposed lynching memorial being placed in the Newtown community for the said purpose of honoring those who were supposedly lynched in Sarasota, I was moved to respond. The editor of the Herald Tribune says that there are at least six documented cases, but doesn't give any information on where these individuals were lynched, failed to mention if these individuals had any surviving families or what their families thought about this idea. No one is saying that the brutally slain don't have the right to be honored. What we are saying is that if it is known through documentation the place, time frame, and manner in which these individuals were slain it would serve as the utmost importance for accuracy and a matter-of-factness for these memorials to be placed near the actual lynching sites just as vigils and memorials are erected on the particular sites of where the unfortunate happened! Not to disregard the importance of awareness, but to also bear in mind that an established community has the right to decide what does, and does not, affect them in a particular manner. Furthermore, it would be a totally different conversation were these memorials to be established in communities like Bird Key or The Meadows as opposed to being placed in a predominantly black community.

In over 106 years of Newtown's history, there are no known documented cases of past lynchings happening in Newtown, besides the modern day lynchings of our youth, like Rodney Mitchell. His grieving mother, Tasha Clemmons, and family haven't had anyone offer to erect a memorial in his name, and his unlawful, untimely death serves in relevance to the racism and injustices that have always plagued our communities... and continue to happen in the modern era. It serves as an even greater reminder that the only thing that has changed in our country is the white sheets and hoods have been traded in for black robes and bench seats in addition to police uniforms that come with a license to lynch publicly still!! We have the right, NO! We have earned the right to decide!!!!

Maurice Fryson

It Never Ends

In 2018 the voters were clear about having single member districts that would allow citizens in Sarasota elect their Commissioner to represent them at the table. After the successful vote for single member districts, Mr. Moran, Ms. Detert and their colleagues decided to adjust the boundaries of the districts before the census came out, thus preventing a large group of Black and Brown people from voting in 2020. It is ironic, but not surprising, that the county commissioners don't want diversity on the commission. Control is what they want to keep. In the meantime it violates the people's right to choose who represents them.

Everyone that voted for Single Member Districts knew what they were voting for; they understood what it meant to have single member districts. The people's voices have been heard.

It is an act of greed, control, and skillful manipulation for the County Commissioners to ask the Charter Review Board to "review single member districts" while they put a biased and manipulative question on the June Community survey, to fabricate a reason to put a repeal amendment on the ballot. It is part of their scheme to control the citizens. It's time for all voters to speak up and stand up for single member districts.

Valerie Buchand

Resist Efforts to Overturn SMD

Our community needs to unite in opposition to any effort to overturn the will of the voters.

As currently configured, Districts 2 and 4 are vulnerable to challenge next year. Both Districts are disgusted with current County leadership for different reasons—Gerrymandering/Disenfranchisement (D2); Overdevelopment/traffic (D4).

So how does the power structure potentially remove the threat of any dissenters winning seats on the County Commission in 2022?

Nov 2020—and ongoing: Conjure up discontent with SMD (despite voters having little to no direct experience with it)

June, 2021: Place a slanted SMD question on the annual County Survey (despite residents having little to no experience with it)

October, 2021: Turn the desired survey results over to the CRB to assess the need to return to At-Large BoCC elections.

After October, 2021: BoCC issues an ordinance for a special election to overturn SMD.

In 2019, the County Commission defied the LWV, NAACP, City of SRQ Commission, members of Venice and NP Commissions, the local media and thousands of residents by using faulty methodology and a disgraced political operative to redraw District boundaries to favor incumbents in Districts 1 and 3. The timeline offered above is consistent with recent history.

Pat Rounds

Sarasota's First Bilingual Public School Opens in August

BY GERI CHAFFEE

After years of planning, Dreamers Academy will open its doors this August, welcoming students and families to its educational campus at 1050 S. Tuttle Avenue, at the corner of Bahía Vista, in Sarasota. There have already been a lot of firsts for this fledgling charter school: the first dual language immersion program in Sarasota; the first local public school to be led by a Hispanic American principal; and the first to implement a year-long literacy enrichment program in conjunction with cultural and arts organizations.

The road to opening day has been challenging, but along the way there have been so many highlights, learning moments and supporters that have encouraged us to persevere. Sarasota is known as one of the best school districts in the state and has an astonishing number of philanthropic organizations, yet racial/ethnic minorities, language learners, and the poor consistently underperform their peers across academic content.

Dreamers Academy was conceived out of a desire to tackle the persistent achievement gap suffered by about 30% of the school district student population. In 2018-19, the last year for which we have FSA data, 56% of Black and Hispanic students in 8th grade were reading below grade level, and consequently performing poorly across all academic subjects. A stunning 80% of Black and Hispanic students were below grade level in math.

Of our district's 42,618 students, 22% are Hispanic, about 8% are African American, while 6% are multi-racial or Native American. 46% are considered economically disadvantaged. Mirroring a trend we see across the country, Sarasota's schools are increasingly becoming triply segregated: by race, by income, and most recently, by language. Most schools in north county are considered minority-majority schools, a term common in education circles to denote schools where minority racial and ethnic groups have become the majority.

Unfortunately, the system has been slow to adapt to its changing demographic. Under new leadership, Sarasota's school district is finally tackling academic outcome disparities that seem to align with certain demographic and socio-economic characteristics and not with the innate promise and potential of each child.

Dreamers Academy has been touted as an innovative instructional model where all children can attain grade level proficiency with the added enrichment of doing it in two languages. In reality, this model has been implemented in over 3,000 schools already, and the "astounding" academic results are well documented. Children who start in Kindergarten and first grade are taught all the standards by two teachers, and spend half their time learning in English and the other half learning in Spanish. The model has been credited with engaging not only students but their families in a linguistic and cultural learning adventure that is fun for all involved. In school after school, Dual Language Immersion (DLI) cohorts consistently outperform their peers in the traditional monolingual classrooms, regardless of race, ethnicity, economic status or even linguistic ability.

"Happy children are children who learn", says Dreamers Academy Head of School Dr. Cathy Rodriguez, who was on the foundational team



Dreamers Head of School Dr. Cathy Rodriguez introduces teachers at a recent information session for parents.

of Delaware's first Dual Language Immersion school ten years ago. Rodriguez was a clinical psychologist when she switched careers to education, because in her words, "The first time I was in a classroom learning with my students I knew this was my path, my passion – I love to be part of learning communities."

Rodriguez has assembled a team of bilingual teachers from all over the country, most with over ten years experience and multiple certifications. She is requiring all to add a reading endorsement to their list of accomplishments. "A lot of teachers have had a very difficult year, and the opportunity to be in this new school and become part of a student-centered culture, where we partner with parents and do life together was very exciting."

For more information visit www.dreamersacademy.org or call 941-867-0779.

Equity in Sarasota Schools: Dr. Harriet Moore at the Helm

continued from 1

33-member committee has broad representation from the community and its members include business leaders, educators, parents, organizational representatives and students. The committee has already met four times and will continue to meet on a monthly basis.

One of the first tasks of the Equity Committee is to prepare an equity statement which will become a key part of the district's five-year strategic plan now under development.

Geri Chaffee, an Equity Committee member and founder of the newly established dual language-based Dreamers Academy in Sarasota, spoke extremely highly of Dr. Moore saying that she is the "consummate professional" who treats everyone with respect. Chaffee described the process of the group developing its equity statement. She said that Dr. Moore used her excellent facilitation skills to bring together diverse views. She also utilized break-out groups to refine the language of the statement and then brought the input from the various groups together into a coherent document.

Chaffee pointed out that equity and diversity are not just racial but "are also economic, social, linguistic and cultural," she said. "Diversity takes many forms and our school system needs to adapt and ensure that our children feel supported in school, and are able to express their needs, in order to achieve academically. Our district's student population has become increasingly diverse with one in five students coming from a Hispanic family."

Another committee member, Rhana Bazzini, who

is active in Protect Our Public Schools Manasota, remarked on Dr. Moore's excellent listening skills. "She really hears people and makes a heroic effort to include everyone's voice."

In an interview on WSLR's Peace and Justice Report on June 9th, Dr. Moore said that one of the biggest challenges facing the district is closing what Dr. Moore calls the "academic deficiency gap." While Sarasota is one of the highest achieving school districts in the state, there is still a significant gap in performance particularly affecting students of color. Dr. Moore said closing the gap does not mean bringing any students down but providing the supports and resources to bring struggling students up. The Equity Committee will explore strategies for closing this gap.

Dr. Moore sees her role in the district as a bridge builder, serving as a "liaison between the school, parents and the community." When asked by Tom Walker, who led the WSLR interview, how she will begin to resolve the tensions and conflicts that have arisen at school-related meetings, she said that "people are passionate in what they believe in and as long as they are respectful, that's okay. I'm here to listen."

Considerable time was spent in the WSLR interview discussing critical race theory (CRT) as it has dominated the news recently. Dr. Moore first wanted to make it clear that Sarasota County School has not, is not and will not teach critical race theory. She herself, very well-schooled in educational policy, had never heard of CRT when it was first raised at the recent Town Hall meetings and had to

look it up on the internet. "No teacher in Sarasota schools teaches critical race theory," she said. "We teach the standards."

Dr. Moore said there is a lot of "misinformation in the community" concerning CRT. She said that some teachers are confused and struggling with what they had heard about new rules placing a ban on teaching CRT and limiting the way history can be taught. "But teachers are very resilient and good teachers do what is in the best interest of students," she said. She emphasized the importance of teaching the truth as students need to learn from the "mistakes that have taken place" in our nation's history and they need to learn this from teachers. She warned that if students don't get the truth in the classroom, they will get it on their phone and that information may be distorted.

Dr. Moore plans to address staff training on cultural and equity issues in a different manner than previous practices. An attempt to address these issues backfired last year when some teachers criticized the approach of author and consultant Sharroky Hollie in an August training session. Dr. Moore said that she plans to take a different approach in discussing equity. She plans to help staff develop a framework and a language that is positive and builds people up and helps them "belong to a culture of dignity." She will start with the administration staff and then go into individual schools. All staff will read the book, *Belonging Through a Culture of Dignity: The Keys to Successful Equity Implementation* by Floyd Cobb and John Krownapple.

Report Reveals Corporate Sponsors of Voter Suppression

BY RICK CLAYPOOL

Some of the biggest names in corporate America are backing state lawmakers who are pushing bills to make it more difficult to vote, a new Public Citizen report shows.

Corporations contributed \$50 million since 2015 to state legislators supporting anti-voter bills, including \$22 million over the past two years, according to the report, "The Corporate Sponsors of Voter Suppression." Meanwhile, industry trade groups have contributed another \$36 million to these state legislators.

The anti-voter bills included in the report's analysis would do such things as shorten early voting periods, cancel voting on Sundays, severely constrain mail-in voting, reduce the number of drop boxes for ballots, criminalize the act of providing food and water to voters waiting in line, and even authorize the state legislature to overturn the results of a presidential election.

The bills hearken back to one of the most shameful chapters in American history: the Jim Crow era of legalized discrimination when, among other horrors, barriers were created to prevent Black Americans from voting. The proposed voting restrictions are cloaked in a rhetoric of deterring voter fraud. But this rationale is a ruse, as cases of voter fraud are extremely rare, a fact well known to supporters of voter suppression measures. Donald Trump himself established a commission during his presidency to document cases of voter fraud; he then abruptly shut down the commission after its search came up empty.

State legislators are pushing at least 361 such voter suppression bills in all but three states, according to tracking by the Brennan Center for Justice.

"Corporate leaders cannot credibly claim to love America while also giving contributions to lawmakers who are supporting thinly veiled attempts to suppress the vote, especially among people of color," said Public Citizen Executive Vice President Lisa Gilbert. "The only acceptable action for corporations to take is to stop giving to supporters of these bills, forever."

AT&T has given the most to supporters of state-level voter suppression bills, at more than \$811,000. AT&T is followed by Altria/Philip Morris (\$679,000), Comcast (\$440,000), United Health Group (\$411,000), Walmart (\$377,000), State Farm (\$315,000), and Pfizer (\$308,000). Additional well-known corporations among the top supporters of voter suppression bills include the infamous billionaire-owned Koch Industries (\$293,000), the multi-national beer company Anheuser-Busch (\$265,000), telecom giant Verizon (\$246,075), and auto manufacturer General Motors (\$185,100).

Among members of the Fortune 100, 81 companies have contributed to these lawmakers, giving them a combined total of \$7.7 million.

After the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol at least 123 companies paused their PAC contributions either to those who objected to the electoral college vote or to all federal candidates, according to a CNN tracker. Public Citizen noted at the time that any measures short of lifetime bans on donations to federal level disenfranchisers likely amounted to nothing more than PR stunts.

The same logic applies to any corporation condemning these voter suppression bills at the state level, as some have already done in Georgia



and Arizona. Disavowing these bills now will amount to a meaningless gesture if corporations continue to bankroll the bills' supporters with future campaign contributions.

Three-fourths of the companies that paused some or all political contributions in response to the Jan. 6 insurrection contributed to state legislators who are supporting voter suppression legislation. In total, these 94 companies - including AT&T, Comcast, United Health Group, and Walmart - contributed \$7.3 million over three most recent election cycles.

The days in which corporate America can fund politicians and then claim no responsibility for their actions may be coming to an end. Corporations seeking to demonstrate their reverence for our democracy could best do so by ending their attempts to influence the outcomes of elections at the federal and state level.

See the full report here: <https://www.citizen.org/article/corporate-sponsors-of-voter-suppression-state-lawmakers-50-million/>

Rick Claypool is the Research Director at Public Citizen.

The 25 Companies Contributing the Most to the Supporters of Voter Suppression Bills (Includes contributions from 2015 to 2020)

COMPANY	2020 ELECTION CYCLE CONTRIBUTION	TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS 2015 - 2020
AT&T	\$312,780	\$810,915
Altria / Philip Morris	\$351,850	\$678,700
Comcast Corporation & NBC Universal	\$167,400	\$439,700
UnitedHealth Group	\$201,600	\$411,200
Walmart	\$146,000	\$376,617
State Farm	\$121,500	\$315,370
Pfizer	\$133,925	\$308,085
BNSF Railway Co	\$151,990	\$300,820
Farmers Insurance	\$127,730	\$293,635
Koch Industries	\$132,350	\$293,000
Dominion Energy	\$152,600	\$280,050
Anheuser-Busch Co	\$104,550	\$265,000
Verizon Communications	\$111,575	\$246,075
Union Pacific Corporation	\$106,200	\$243,050
Enterprise Holdings	\$107,618	\$240,340
RAI Services / Reynolds American	\$102,550	\$236,350
American Electric Power / AEP	\$87,850	\$209,450
McGuireWoods Consulting	\$83,550	\$207,570
Exelon Corp	\$79,650	\$207,550
Marathon Petroleum	\$85,965	\$205,365
Centene Corp	\$111,950	\$205,200
HCA Management Services	\$106,500	\$203,700
Charter Communications	\$79,146	\$203,426
D B H Management Consultants	\$76,892	\$200,192
General Motors	\$86,200	\$185,100

Sources: Public Citizen's analysis of data from the National Institute on Money in Politics (FollowTheMoney.org).

This Independence Day, We Can Thank Tom Paine.



Thomas Paine is the author of "Common Sense", a pamphlet that outlined our form of government. Paine also served as citizen soldier during the American Revolutionary War.

Paine struggled to advance the promise of America. He was one of the first abolitionists, the father of Social Security, and an advocate for efficient and peaceful government.

As Veterans of the American military, the mission of Florida Veterans for Common Sense is to inspire Americans of today with the spirit of Thomas Paine.

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