

Lotus plant decline on local lakes is an annual – and natural – occurrence. See story, page A-3.



OSCEOLA NEWS-GAZETTE

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Hospital announces \$50M project

Kissimmee

By Fallan Patterson
Staff Writer

The Osceola Regional Medical Center Monday announced it will be undertaking a \$50 million expansion that will include a new patient services tower.

When complete, the new tower will house an additional 64 state-of-the-art private rooms, hospital officials stated in a press release. The hospital is at 700 W. Oak St., Kissimmee.

Twelve of the new rooms will be designated for intensive care unit patients; 20 will be for patients needing an intermediate level of care; and 32 will be designated for medical/surgical patients, bringing the hospital's total bed count to 321.

The expansion will add 107,000 square feet of new space and 20,000 square feet of renovated space to the hospital's existing footprint.

Construction is expected to begin in the summer and be completed by the first quarter of 2013, hospital officials stated in a press release. The tower will be built on the east side of the hospital campus on property owned by Osceola Regional. Plans also call for expansion of the hospital's existing power plant and the addition of a two-story, 250-space parking garage.

"Our new tower is being designed to accommodate future vertical expansion. Ultimately, we will add two more floors and another 68 additional private patient rooms to our main hospital campus," Kathryn Gillette, hospital



Gillette



News-Gazette Photo/Andrew Sullivan

Osceola Regional Medical Center in Kissimmee, pictured here from the north along Oak Street, Monday announced it would be expanding over the next three years, bringing its total room count to 321.

CEO, said. "Osceola County, Kissimmee and Central Florida will continue to grow. It's imperative that we anticipate this growth and the corresponding need for health care. We see our commitment to the new patient services tower as an investment in the health of our community."

Hospital officials stated that they anticipate spending nearly \$6 million on technology and medical equipment to outfit the tower. The expansion also

will create about 125 new jobs.

Kissimmee Mayor Jim Swan said he was excited about the expansion, a proposal that had been in the works for a few years, and that the construction means more jobs will be available for residents.

"I'm really tickled. That's a huge Christmas present for the city of Kissimmee," he said. "Certainly just having the opportunity for more employment for the community is a

great thing."

Swan said he hoped the hospital would look to local construction companies to do some of the work and that it will create opportunities for additional doctor offices and other medical facilities to be built in the city.

He also said he saw the expansion as a push for the city to improve the downtown area, including develop-

See Hospital, page A-6

St. Cloud

City wants comment on sidewalk master plan

By Fallan Patterson
Staff Writer

St. Cloud Public Works is seeking residents' comments on its sidewalk master plan, which would provide connectivity to current sidewalks to and from subdivisions, shopping centers and recreational areas as well as safety along popular pedestrian corridors.

The 20-year plan would add 15 miles to city sidewalks and three miles to existing Osceola County segments that stretch into St. Cloud, costing between \$1.3 million to \$2.2 million over the next two decades. Currently, 143 miles of sidewalks wind through St. Cloud.

Todd Swingle, Public Works administrator, said his department wants feedback from residents regarding the proposed plan.

The city on Nov. 29 sent out nearly 5,000 postcards to residents living in the "grid" where the majority of the proposed sidewalks would be installed. Only 20 responses had been received as of last week. Residents can visit

See Sidewalks, page A-5

Local news

County offices closed

In observance of the Christmas holiday, Osceola County Administration offices and the Osceola County Courthouse will be closed Friday and Monday.

Additionally, the Bass Road Resource Recovery Site and the Yeehaw Junction and Kenansville drop-off sites will be closed Friday and Monday as well. Curbside garbage collection will run as normally scheduled on both days.

County offices, the courthouse and the resource recovery/drop-off sites will re-open Tuesday.

In observance of the New Year's Day holiday, Osceola County Administration offices and the Osceola County Courthouse will be closed on Friday, Dec. 31. The Bass Road Resource Recovery Site and the Yeehaw Junction and Kenansville drop-off sites will be closed Friday, Dec. 31, as well. Curbside garbage collec-

See Local news, page A-6

Purchase on Shingle Creek would complete paddling trail

By Marvin G. Cortner
Editor

The Osceola County Commission voted 4-1 on Dec. 13 to put a 590-acre site along Shingle Creek on the county's environmental lands acquisition list.

The county's Land Conservation Advisory Board has recommended the site, which is part of what is referred to as The Reserve at Legacy Resort, which is south of Osceola Parkway, west of John Young Parkway and north of Babb Road. Osceola Development Trust owns the property. With the addition of The Reserve, there are now nine sites on the active acquisition list.

According to county documents, the property can be accessed from Babb Road or by water on Shingle Creek and that the property has approximately 8,664 feet (1.6 miles) of creek shoreline. The majority of the property is comprised of a large

County

forested wetland system associated with the creek, as well as improved pasture, oak hammock and remnant orange grove. Additionally, the site, which has 333 acres of wetlands, has a series of historic canals for draining the pasture lands.

Doug Hattaway, with the Trust for Public Land, an agency negotiating a purchase price with the owner, said acquisition of the parcel would complete the 16-mile greenway along Shingle Creek, helping to protect the creek's watershed and allowing the county to further promote the stream for eco-tourism. Hattaway also recommended the county apply to the state for a grant through the Florida Forever program to help buy the property.

The trust becomes involved in buying private land either as a partner with government or as a

way to protect a site until government can act to purchase it.

Commissioner Fred Hawkins Jr. said putting the site on the acquisition list is only the "first step" on the road to possible county purchase of the property. He also said buying the site, given the county's recent purchase for \$9.2 million of the Tohoqua property on the east side of Lake Tohopekaliga through the land conservation program, would not be possible without partnerships with other local governments or agencies.

Commissioner John Quiñones, who voted against pursuing the site, said that once a property is added to the list, the county then starts incurring costs.

"This is such a large parcel, the



Hawkins



Osceola County map

The Reserve at Legacy Resort, shown above within the red line, has been added to the active acquisition list for Osceola County's land conservation program.

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Community

Find out the latest news and events in your community. See ...

Page B-3



Sports

Great Florida ShootOut tips off Monday at Silver Spurs Arena, see ...

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News for you

Around Kissimmee, Around St. Cloud and surrounding areas featured in zoned editions.

Section B



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Submitted Photo

The top leaves of the American lotus plant, which look like lily pads, annually dies out on Osceola County lakes. The leaves and flowers of this plant, which is a perennial, will return in the spring.

Lotus plant decline is natural process

By Stacia Hetrick
Special to the News-Gazette

The big showy lily pads on local lakes are browning out and appear to be dying. It looks bad — like someone got overzealous with the herbicide.

But it's OK. Sometimes that's just the nature of things.

American lotus looks like an over-sized lily pad. When the days get shorter and the temperature dips, the American Lotus does what it does every year. It dies back.

American lotus (*Nelumbo lutea*) is perennial, meaning it comes back year after year even though the leaves die off in the winter. You can recognize this native plant by its showy, yellow flowers and round leaves that can be as big as three-feet across. The American lotus also

has a uniquely large seed pod that is prized among florists.

But as we bid them farewell for the winter, we can look forward to their return in the spring. They'll be back — sometimes as a patch here and a patch there, and sometimes they come up all over the place, just like so many other perennial plants that go through the same natural process of dying off and growing back each year.

If you have any questions about plants, either in your yard or on our lakes, contact the Osceola County Extension Office at 321-697-3000.

Stacia Hetrick is a faculty advisor with UF/IFAS Osceola County Extension; she can be reached at shet@osceola.org or at 321-697-3000.

Kissimmee police looking for armed robbery suspect

Kissimmee police are asking for the public's help in identifying and locating an armed robbery suspect.

On Dec. 10, at approximately 8:30 p.m., the suspect entered the Pepper Pot at 2598 Boggy Creek Road and asked the owner if they cater. The owner indicated that they did cater and provided the suspect with a business card, after which the suspect left the establishment.



Suspect

Approximately five minutes later, the suspect re-entered the restaurant, displayed a silver handgun in his waistband and demanded money. The owner complied and handed the suspect the money in the cash drawer. The suspect also took the owner's Panasonic Toughbook laptop. No one inside the restaurant was injured and the suspect fled the scene.

The suspect is described as a clean-shaven black male with closely cropped hair on his head. He was last seen wearing a striped white and black shirt, blue jeans and white tennis shoes. Anyone with information on the suspect or the crime is asked to contact the Kissimmee Police Department's Property Crimes Division at 407-846-3333, by e-mail at seitsayit@kissimmee.org or Crimeline at 1-800-423-TIPS (8477).

Advanced Auto Parts robbed

Osceola County Sheriff's Office deputies are asking for the public's help in locating an armed robbery suspect.

The investigation began Dec. 17 when deputies responded to Advanced Auto Parts at 3310 S. Orange Blossom Trail, Kissim-

mee. Upon arrival, deputies spoke with the store employee who said a black female entered the store and demanded money from the cash register at gunpoint. She fled the area with an undisclosed amount of money.

Additional units, including K-9 and aviation, responded to the scene but were unable to locate the suspect.

The suspect is described as a young black female wearing a white hooded sweatshirt and gray sweat pants.

Anyone with information is asked to call the Osceola County Sheriff's Office at 407-348-2222 or Crimeline at 800-423-TIPS (8477). Calls made to Crimeline remain anonymous and, tips that lead to the felony arrest of suspects and/or the recovery of stolen property and drugs are eligible for cash rewards of up to \$1,000.

7-Eleven robbed

Osceola County Sheriff's Office deputies are asking for the public's help in locating a robbery suspect.

The investigation began Dec. 17 at approximately 10:54 p.m. when deputies responded to the 7-Eleven at 1300 E. Donegan Ave., Kissimmee.

Upon arrival, deputies spoke with the victim, who said he was

walking out of the convenience store when an unknown man approached him, hit him in the face and stole his necklace before leaving the area.

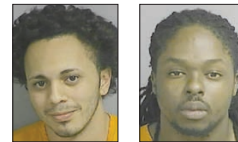
The suspect is described as a young white male approximately 5 feet 5 inches tall weighing 200 pounds. The suspect might be driving a newer model Ford F150 pickup truck.

Anyone with information is asked to call the Osceola County Sheriff's Office at 407-348-2222 or Crimeline at 800-423-TIPS (8477). Calls made to Crimeline remain anonymous and, tips that lead to the felony arrest of suspects and/or the recovery of stolen property and drugs are eligible for cash rewards of up to \$1,000.

Suspects arrested for involvement in shooting incident

The Osceola County Sheriff's Office jailed three Kissimmee males Saturday after they were involved in a shooting.

At about 11:01 p.m., deputies responded to the area



Perez

Foster

of 632 Royalty Court in Kissimmee. Upon arrival, deputies spoke with witnesses who said that several neighbors were in the front yard of 622 Royalty Court when William Scott Clark, who lives several houses away approached them armed with a shotgun. One of the individuals, Mathew Anthony Hernandez, 25, who lived at the home, attempted to grab the shotgun from Clark and pushed Clark to the ground, injuring Clark's face with the shotgun.

A neighbor, later identified as Jean Pierre Perez, 18, of 632 Royalty Court, Kissimmee, who witnessed the incident, approached the residence with an assault rifle, Sheriff's Office



Hernandez

See Police news, page A-6

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After serving in Viet Nam, and being discharged from the military, the family moved to St. Louis, where Phil attended Logan College of Chiropractic. Upon graduating "Dr. H" began practice in downtown Kissimmee, earning the reputation for always being interested in *cutting edge research and technology for chiropractic, nutrition & energy medicine.*

He utilizes an advanced computerized system of chiropractic, precisely determining where and how long to treat with *no popping, twisting, or discomfort.* His goal is always to return patients to balance and a pain-free state, as quickly and inexpensively as possible.

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Dr. Mary Ann has a heart to assist clients to become balanced and whole in mental, spiritual, and physical health. She is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor and Certified Addictions Professional with the State of Florida; Licensed Clinical Christian Psychologist; Certified Clinical Hypnotherapist; Certified Temperament Counselor; Certified Domestic Violence Forensic Counselor, and Trained Basic EMDR Psychotherapist. Additionally, she has training as an Emergency First Responder and Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Advocate. She schedules individual, couple and family sessions, assists with Marriage or pre-marriage counseling, PTSD, Mental Health or Drug Evaluations, drug relapse prevention and 12 Step Work.

The editors of this 2010 Holiday Local Business Update suggest that if you or someone you know needs help, call Dr. Phil at (407) 847-9680, or Dr. Mary Ann at (407) 610-8446. Their offices are located at 320 Pleasant St. in Historic Downtown Kissimmee.

~ Happy Holidays from Haselden Chiropractic & Nutrition ~

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Game #11 Dec. 28 1:00 pm

Game #9 Dec. 28 10:00 am

Game #18 Dec. 29 2:30 pm

Game #12 Dec. 28 2:30 pm

Game #8 Dec. 27 8:30 pm

Game #23 Dec. 30 1:00 pm

Game #24 Dec. 30 2:30 pm

1st CHAMPS

Game #14 Dec. 28 5:30 pm

Game #21 Dec. 29 7:00 pm

Game #15 Dec. 28 7:00 pm

Game #13 Dec. 28 4:00 pm

Game #22 Dec. 29 8:30 pm

Game #19 Dec. 29 4:00 pm

Game #26 Dec. 30 5:30 pm

Game #20 Dec. 29 5:30 pm

3rd CHAMPS 5th CHAMPS

Game #28 Dec. 30 8:30 pm

Game #16 Dec. 28 8:30 pm

Game #7 Dec. 27 7:00 pm

Game #4 Dec. 27 2:30 pm

Game #19 Dec. 29 4:00 pm

Game #26 Dec. 30 5:30 pm

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