



## Second Annual Hillsborough County Neighborhoods Conference a Hit

The second annual Hillsborough County Neighborhoods Conference on March 12 was an overwhelming success. We saw an attendance of over 500 people including attendees, speakers, exhibitors, and sponsors. Many individuals commented on the great variety of workshops offered and the opportunity to network with other associations from around the county.



Commissioner Hagan, County Administrator Pat Bean and the Collins Family

Commissioner Ken Hagan and Commissioner Mark Sharpe were on hand to present Neighborhood Recognition Awards to many of the outstanding associations in our county. County Administrator Pat Bean also was on hand to present the Lonnie Lea Napier Good Neighbor Award to Tom and Irene Collins for the work they have done to assist their neighbors.

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Commissioner Sharpe presents an award to Bealsville Inc.

The 2005 Conference offered 33 workshops that ranged from Code Enforcement to Landscaping to neighborhood website development. In addition there were over 55 exhibit booths to visit which included most county departments, several local businesses, and a few neighborhood associations.

Thanks to the Board of County Commissioners and Hillsborough Community College as well as major private sponsors including The Tampa Tribune, The Home Depot, Lupton's Restaurant, and Gold Seal Roofing and Construction the conference was a spectacular event which will continue to grow.

## Get Ready for the Rainy Season

by Lisa Leslie

We all hope the upcoming hurricane season will be calm and quiet. However, we can do more than just keep our thoughts positive. Now is a good time to think about preparing our homes against the wet season ahead. This means making sure your home is protected as much as possible against moisture intrusion by driving rain or moist air. This article will discuss some things you can do to reduce moisture problems in your home.

Evaluate Your Home— Check your homes for leaks or potential weak spots. Water can get into your home in a variety of ways - gaps in window flashings, leaky roofs (especially around chimneys and vents), and through exterior walls.

*Continued on page 2*



Office of Neighborhood Relations  
Phone: 813-272-5860  
Fax: 813-272-5882

## IDENTITY THEFT BEWARE

To help protect yourself from identity theft, the fastest growing white collar crime in the nation, order and review your credit report for errors and omissions at least once a year. A recent amendment to the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act requires each of the nationwide consumer reporting companies to provide consumers with a free copy of their credit report. Floridians can order their free reports beginning June 1, 2005. You can order your free annual credit report online at [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) or by calling 877-322-8228.

Want to learn more ways to protect yourself? Call the Hillsborough County's Consumer Protection Agency at **903-3430** or visit <http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/consumerprotection/home.cfm>.

## Camelot CommUNITY Program

The Camelot Florida 5X5 CommUNITY Program is one that encourages associations to challenge themselves by selecting and publicizing five goals to be accomplished in five years. The goals are of the association's own choosing. The association then shares the goals with the Camelot Program and other neighborhoods in the County.

By publicizing their goals, they are encouraged to reach them. This should also increase community involvement and membership.

When all five goals are met, the neighborhood is designated as a Camelot 5 Star CommUNITY by the Camelot Council. The Council is made up of all participating associations. This recognition encourages more participation.

To get more information on the Camelot 5X5 CommUNITY Program, e-mail [CamelotFlorida@verizon.net](mailto:CamelotFlorida@verizon.net) or call Neil Cosentino at 813-251-4669.

## Rainy Season

*continued from page 1*

**Exterior Walls:** Water from rain can penetrate exterior wall surfaces. Evaluate your exterior walls to see if cracks need to be sealed or if it is time to repaint. If you decide to repaint, choose a paint product that will help increase water resistance on the exterior walls.

**Interior Walls:** Homes in Florida normally dry to the inside of the house. Water that does penetrate the exterior wall can cause mold problems if it gets trapped in the wall. Avoid mold problems by not using vinyl wall coverings on the interior of exterior walls. In general, avoid vinyl or cellulose wall coverings in high moisture areas such as the kitchen or bathroom.

**Windows:** Windows are another spot that can be especially prone to moisture intrusion. Make sure windows are properly sealed. Check window frames regularly for condensation and wipe off as needed.

Seal All Penetrations Doors, electrical outlets, attic hatches are examples of areas that penetrate the house and need to be properly sealed. Foams, caulks, or flashing are types of products that can be used as sealants.

**Roofs:** Fix any roof leaks promptly. According to the Federal Alliance for Safe Housing, installing self-adhering flashing tape over the joints in your roof deck can help keep out the rain in the event the roof covering is damaged or destroyed by severe weather. For further information go to [www.flash.org](http://www.flash.org)

**Air Conditioning System:** A properly functioning air conditioning system will remove moisture while it cools the air. Regular air conditioning maintenance should include cleaning or replacing your filter and maintaining the coils. The condenser coil (found on the outside unit) should be kept free of debris from trees or shrubs. The evaporator coil (found on the air handler) should be checked annually and cleaned as necessary. Consult a professional if needed.

**Helpful Website:** The Extension Disaster Handbook has information about preparing for hurricanes. It can be found at <http://disaster.ifas.ufl.edu>

## SOULD ONR MOVE? LET US KNOW!

Our County Commissioners have a question for Neighborhood Associations. Should the Office of Neighborhood Relations move?

The current options are to move the Office of Neighborhood Relations to County Center or maintain our current location across the street from County Center. It is up to you to decide our future? Please let your County Commissioners know how you feel about the proposal.

You can send your comments and suggestions to ONR at 505 E. Jackson St. Ste. 308, Tampa FL, 33602 or email them to Shelley Blood at [bloods@hillsboroughcounty.org](mailto:bloods@hillsboroughcounty.org).

**Your feedback is vital!**

## The Switch Is On - Changes Come to Water Treatment

The month of April will bring a change in the way Hillsborough County's Water Department treats drinking water for customers in Brandon, Riverview, Apollo Beach, Ruskin, Sun City Center and other communities in its South-Central service area.

When the switch is made, 75,000 homes and businesses in this area will receive drinking water that is treated with chloramines, rather than chlorine.

Chloramines are a disinfectant produced by combining chlorine and ammonia. This proven, safe treatment has been used for decades by utilities across the country and in Florida, including the cities of Tampa and Miami. Chloramines have been used in the Water Department's Northwest service area since November 2001.

Although chloramines are perfectly safe for humans and our four-legged friends, fish owners and kidney dialysis patients must take special precautions. Like chlorine, chloramines must be removed from water used in the kidney dialysis process, and from water that is used in fish tanks or ponds.



The conversion will allow the county to receive regional water supplies from Tampa Bay Water to meet the demand in this rapidly-growing area.

Anyone who's driven through south Hillsborough County lately can't help but be amazed by the amount of new construction under way. More people means more demand for water. The chloramines conversion is the first step of a multi-year, \$70 million plan being undertaken by the county and Tampa Bay Water that includes new water treatment capacity, storage, booster facilities, pipelines and interconnection points in the Brandon area and south Hillsborough County. An added benefit is that the chloramines disinfection also meets higher quality and safety standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Most people report an improvement in the way their drinking water tastes when it's treated with chloramines, because they can no longer detect the chlorine.

However, like chlorine, chloramines are toxic for fish, both freshwater and saltwater, and other aquatic life, including lobster, shrimp, frogs, turtles, snails, clams and live coral.

Water conditioners and filters specifically designed for removing both chlorine and chloramines are available.

Pet stores or pet suppliers can provide information on products and instructions.

Medical centers that perform dialysis or supervise home dialysis are responsible for ensuring that water is purified before it enters the dialysis machine. If you have any questions, consult your physician.

Some temporary impacts may be noticed as the chloraminated water is introduced into the distribution system, such as a variation in water color or possible sediment. The sediment may occur as the pipelines are flushed to purge the chlorinated water and make way for the new chloraminated water.

If this happens, try running cold water in your sink or bathtub for three to five minutes. If that doesn't clear up the problem, contact the Hillsborough County Water Quality line at 744-5544.

There are no known interactions between chloraminated water and any kind of medication. Also, vegetables, fruit and nut trees are not affected by chloramines.

If you own a pool, you may find that there is a slight increase in chlorine demand after the conversion is made. That means you might have to add a little more chlorine than usual to get to the level you typically maintain after it is topped off with tap water.

If you have a home water filtration system, you may notice that filters, particularly activated charcoal filters, have to be replaced slightly more often than before. Be sure to follow manufacturer's recommendations. Granular-activated filters are capable of removing chlorine and chloramines; check with the manufacturer if you are interested in finding out if your particular brand of filter removes chloramines.

For more information about chloramines, contact Luke Mulford or Norman Vik at the Hillsborough County Water Department, 272-5977, during normal business hours.

### SEND ONR YOUR STORIES!

Every year Hillsborough County neighborhood, civic, and crime watch associations are busy working to improve their communities. If your association or group has what you believe to be a newsworthy story, we'd like to publish it.

Send your story, with photographs, to Tony LaColla at [lacollaa@hillsboroughcounty.org](mailto:lacollaa@hillsboroughcounty.org) or call him at 307-3564 for more information. Please keep article to no more than 1,000 words and please submit everything in digital format if possible.

We would love to put your association in the **Spotlight** and give it the attention it deserves.

## HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY CHARTER REVIEW PROCESS UNDERWAY

The Hillsborough County Charter Review Board (CRB) has been convened for the review of the Charter that occurs every five years and lasts for a full year. It is an autonomous body appointed by the County Commission.

The members of the current Charter Review Board appointed by County Commissioners are: Commissioner Castor, Jim Porter and Yvette Miranda Chapman; Commissioner Hagan, Keith Hall and Ralph Fisher; Commissioner Scott, Gerald White and Sharon E. Miller; Commissioner Storms, Janet Wilson and Terry Ballard; Commissioner Norman, Hung Mai and Jan Platt; Commissioner Blair, Mitch Thrower and David Storck; Commissioner Sharpe, Marc Mandt and Jim Beeler.

The Charter is the County equivalent of the State Constitution, establishing the structure, organization and responsibilities of the County government. The Home Rule Charter was approved by voters in a County-wide referendum in September of 1983.

A summary of issues covered by the Charter include:

- Responsibilities of the executive branch (County Administrator) and legislative branch (County Commission) are specified, and neither branch is to exercise powers pertaining to the other branch.
- There are seven members of the County Commission; four are from single-member districts, and three are elected countywide. Every elector of the County may vote for a majority of the commissioners: the commissioner representing the elector's district, and three commissioners elected at large.
- Terms of County Commissioners are staggered.
- The Charter does not affect any court, any constitutional officer, district school board or any municipality.
- Special laws enacted by the Florida Legislature may be effective in Hillsborough County without approval by County electors if they relate to the following: civil service, aviation, the port, sports, transportation, hospitals, planning, environment, solid waste management, consumer affairs, resource recovery, criminal justice, historic preservation, and the arts.
- The County Attorney is to be hired and fired by the County Commission.
- There are provisions for recall of elected officials.



- There is a provision for a Charter Review Board to be appointed by the County Commission two years after charter implementation and every five years thereafter. The Charter Review Board is empowered to conduct a study of County government and propose amendments to the charter.
- Amendments also may be proposed by the County Commission by ordinance adopted by five commissioners, or by initiative.
- No amendment may be effective unless it is approved by a majority vote of the electors of the County.

The last CRB, which served during 2000, placed one item on the November 2002 General Election Ballot that amended the Charter. The amendment, which created the position of the Internal Auditor for the Board of County Commissioners, was approved by the voters. No previous CRB had approved any amendment to go to the voters.

The meetings are televised on cable channel HTV22. The meeting schedule can be found at the Board's website, which is :

<http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/charterreviewboard>

The CRB members want to hear from interested parties. If you would like to comment on the current Charter, please write or e-mail the Board at 505 E Jackson Street, Suite 308, Tampa, FL 33602 or [Crboard@hillsboroughcounty.org](mailto:Crboard@hillsboroughcounty.org). There is also an opportunity for public comment at the end of each meeting.

The Board members are extending an invitation to representatives of neighborhood and civic associations to attend their meeting of July 11, 2005. Meetings begin at 6:00 PM and are held in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Boardroom of the County Center at 601 E. Kennedy Avenue in downtown Tampa.

**The Charter Review Board requests that you please fill out the comment card on the following page and return it. Your comments and suggestions are valuable to the future of Hillsborough County. Comments and suggestions may also be emailed to Shelley Blood at: [blooms@hillsboroughcounty.org](mailto:blooms@hillsboroughcounty.org).**

## Hurricane Summit Convened to Provide Input to Long Range Comprehensive Plan Update

More than 30 representatives from agencies and organizations throughout Hillsborough County and the surrounding areas joined together this morning in downtown Tampa for the first session of a three-part hurricane summit convened by the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission to identify issues and address them in the four comprehensive plans for the local governments in Hillsborough County that are being updated over the next two years.

After a keynote address by WFLA-TV Chief Meteorologist Steve Jerve, a facilitated discussion was held that enabled participants to share their individual experiences relative to last year's active hurricane season and identify major issues and lessons learned.

Planning Commission Executive Director Robert B. Hunter, FAICP, noted, "The Planning Commission is working with all four local governments in Hillsborough County on major updates to the comprehensive plans that guide growth and development. Last year's unusually active hurricane season offered a great learning opportunity. This summit enables participants to learn from one another about how our community can be better prepared for a hurricane in the future. That information can help their respective agencies and organizations and help the Planning Commission create a community that is more resilient to a major storm through well thought out long range growth and development policy," he explained.

A variety of organizations and agencies were represented at today's summit meeting including the police, fire, planning, parks, water, public works and emergency management departments from the local municipalities. They will meet next at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, March 16 in the Planning Commission's offices, 601 E. Kennedy Blvd., to get an overview of the pertinent parts of the current comprehensive plans and assess whether the concerns and issues expressed today are adequately addressed in the existing plans.

The final summit meeting was held on March 24. Participants made suggestions for changes to the existing comprehensive plans. Those suggestions, along with the entire proceedings of the summit, will be published in April and shared with participants, local elected officials and the public.

The public will be able to check them out from the Planning Commission's library; purchase them on CD or in print form and view and download them from the agency's website, [www.theplanningcommission.org](http://www.theplanningcommission.org).



### Charter Review Board 2005-2006

What issues would you like to have the Charter Review Board consider?

Do you feel the current government structure (Elected Board of County Commissioners, Appointed Administrator, Elected Constitutionals – Sheriff, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Tax Collector, Property Appraiser, & Supervisor of Elections) is effective?

\_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

What changes, if any, would you recommend to be made to the current government?

What is your general opinion of the Hillsborough County Government?

Additional Comments:

OPTIONAL

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

Hillsborough County Charter Review Board

601 E. Kennedy Blvd., 20<sup>th</sup> Floor

Tampa, FL 33602

Phone: (813) 272-5750 Fax: (813) 272-5248

## Thinking About Buying a House? Then Don't Miss Anatomy of a Home: Buy Green and Save

The Hillsborough County Cooperative Extension Service will be offering the "Anatomy of a Home: Buy Green and Save" class on May 14 from 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. at Hillsborough County Extension office in Seffner, 5339 County Road 579.

This is an opportunity for homebuyers to ask the experts important questions before they make a major investment in a new home. The class will educate potential homebuyers about some of the features to look for in a well built, environmentally sustainable home. Professionals involved in the building industry will explain which features can be added to a house to decrease operating costs while increasing the quality of the home environment. Homebuyers will learn how to protect a home from termites. The program also covers construction of a house from start to finish, information about how to make a home more energy and water efficient, and basic information about landscaping designs that work best in our region.



Participants will receive a free copy of Building, Buying, or Remodeling Your Florida Home: A Guide to Energy and Water Savings (one per household). Thanks to the continued support of local sponsors

there is no cost for this class. However, seating and materials are limited, so pre-registration is required. The number for phone registration is (813) 744-5519 x137 or register online at <http://hillsboroughfcs.ifas.ufl.edu/>.

For persons with disabilities requiring special accommodations, please contact Lisa Leslie at (813) 744 – 5519 x 143, at least five working days prior to the program so that proper consideration may be given to the request.

Program supporters include Hillsborough County Extension Service, Hillsborough County Development Services, Tampa Bay Builders' Association, Tampa Bay Water, Impact Pest Management Inc., and Tampa Electric.

## Goodwill's Freedom Village Flagpole Dedication

Residents of Goodwill's Freedom Village II, an apartment building for people with disabilities or low incomes, dedicated a new flagpole that will allow them to fly our nation's colors with pride. The flagpole dedication took place on Monday, Feb. 21, at 1 p.m., at Goodwill's Freedom Village II apartments, 5002 Bridge St., Tampa.

Tampa City Councilman John Dingfelder gave the dedication address. A Freedom Village resident who is a disabled veteran will present the flag, and another resident spoke about his son's commitment to serving our country. Florida Rep. Fay Culp and Hillsborough County Commissioner Kathy Castor also made remarks.

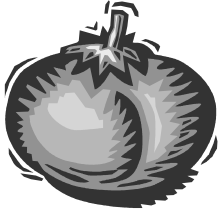
The Freedom Village II Neighborhood Watch Association obtained a grant from the Hillsborough County Commission for installation of the flagpole and flag. Funding organizations are the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners, the Children's Board of Hillsborough County and the Frank E. Duckwall Foundation.

Goodwill's Freedom Village II is one of five affordable, barrier-free apartment communities operated by Goodwill Industries-Suncoast for people who are low-income, disabled or elderly. Goodwill Industries-Suncoast, founded in St. Petersburg, Fla., in 1954, is the No. 1-ranked Goodwill organization in North America for the number of people placed in jobs last year – nearly 13,000. Its mission is to help people achieve their full potential through the dignity and power of work. The organization's successful donated goods operation helps support its human services in 10 counties, including work force development and employment programs for people with all types of employment barriers, work activity centers for people with disabilities, subsidized apartment communities, as well as community corrections facilities. Goodwill-Suncoast is one of 207 worldwide branches of Goodwill Industries International, founded in 1902. Visit our Web site at [www.goodwill-suncoast.org](http://www.goodwill-suncoast.org) for more information.



## It's Tomato Time Again!

Join us as we celebrate our agricultural heritage. There will be food, fun and farmer's market with great entertainment, shows, contests and don't forget the free sliced tomatoes!



**What:** Annual Ruskin Tomato and Heritage Festival  
**Who:** Ruskin Community Development Foundation  
**Why:** 'Celebrating our Agricultural Heritage'  
**When:** May 7 & 8, 2005; 10a.m. - 5 p.m.  
**Where:** E.G. Simmons County Park, 2401 19th Ave NW, Ruskin  
**Admission:** \$3; children under 6 yrs old free



Since the early 1900's Ruskin has been an agricultural center with a unique beginning. The town was started as a utopian community, where residents not only farmed the land, but acquired an education at the Ruskin College. Until the early 1960s, this 'Commongood Society' remained intact through depression and war. The legacy they left was a considerable amount of publicly owned waterfront property which has given Ruskin a wonderfully accessible relationship with the Little Manatee River which flows through it, a designated Outstanding Florida Waterway. In addition to farming, fishing has always been a popular occupation, both commercially and as a hobby.

Early pioneers, the Dickman family, still operate Artesian Farms, which donates all the tomatoes that are used during the festival. The Festival is especially important because much of our previous farmlands are being converted to housing. This celebration of our agricultural heritage helps us all remember our roots are in farming.

The Ruskin Tomato and Heritage Festival was 'resurrected' 9 years ago after a 30 year hiatus, by the Ruskin Community Development Foundation. All funds raised go toward projects designed to enhance the community, or programs helping local youth.

**Attractions:** Antique Tractor Show, Classic Car Show, Ruskin Tomato Queen Contest, Country and Bluegrass music on two stages, Heritage Center with Ruskin History Display, Plant Show and Sale, Horticultural Seminars and Workshops, Watershed Tour, Kid's Rides and Games, Fried Green Tomatoes, Farmer's Market, Food and non-alcoholic Beverages, Crafts, Butterfly tent with release on Sunday, free sliced tomatoes, free tomato plants to first 100 visitors each day and free mulch available while supply lasts.

**Entertainment:** Saturday starts off with our Annual Ruskin Tomato Queen Pageant, followed in the afternoon, on the Main Stage, by the Bluegrass Parlor, then Southern Star Bluegrass, bands. Finishing out the day is one of our local favorites, Paul Carr and the Swamp Stompers. On our Heritage Center second stage, learn about rainbarrel-making, composting, trees and herbs, with an acoustic break for music by Mercy featuring Jack Sigler. The afternoon will feature the Ruskin Historical Society, whose members will be on hand to record stories and reminiscing from native Floridians. The afternoon program on this stage will end with the music of the Blue Grass All Stars.

Sunday on the Heritage Stage will offer an artistic workshop in the morning and music by Blue Moon Bluegrass all afternoon. The main stage will feature Gospel/Christian music, followed in the afternoon by another favorite local celebrity, Bill Floyd. Our finale for the festival will be recording star Tommy Cash, performing a special tribute to his brother, Johnny Cash.

The Ruskin Tomato and Heritage Festival was made possible by the following sponsors:

*Ruskin Community Development Foundation, The Tampa Tribune/South Shore News/WFLA; Artesian Farms; Tampa Electric Co.; Mosaic; Publix Supermarkets; Sun City Tree Farm; Full Moon Music; Wilhelm Heat and Air Conditioning; Ringpower; Observer News; Sun Towers Retirement; M & M Printing; Hubbell's Nursery; Speedling; J.R. Johnson Supply; Sundance Growers; Beef O'Brady's; Thompson's Auto; Walmart; Cracker Barrel Restaurants, Google, Ruskin Chamber of Commerce; Southwest Florida Water Management District; Hillsborough County Tourist Development Council; and Hillsborough County Parks, Recreation and Conservation.*

Visit us online at <http://ruskinfoundation.org> for downloadable schedules, maps and applications  
 postmaster@ruskinfoundation.org or 813-363-5438.

## County Commissioner Kathy Castor Invites Citizens of Ruskin to Share Concerns

Hillsborough County Commissioner Kathy Castor will hold open office hours from 10:00am to 12:00 noon on Friday, April 29, 2005 at the Ruskin Library. "I enjoy meeting directly with constituents to hear their concerns and assist them with services," notes Castor. Residents can meet directly with Commissioner Castor to discuss any County service including:

Planning and Growth Management 272-5920 - administers planning, zoning, development review, permitting and inspections. Code Enforcement 274-6600 - enforces the minimum housing code and handles complaints concerning nuisance conditions such as inoperable vehicles, rat infestation, trash, high weeds and grass on vacant lots, use of private property, signs and adult uses. Libraries 273-2640 - Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Libraries maintain a network of 24 libraries.

Hillsborough Health Care Plan 272-5555 - provides basic medical care for uninsured county residents and families at or below the poverty level including pharmacy, emergency dental, home health and medical equipment.

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**“ I enjoy meeting directly with constituents...”**

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Children's Services 264-3821 - provides residential and non-residential services for at-risk children, Head Start, child care licensing, parent education, respite care for families of developmentally disabled children, Haven Poe Runaway shelter, and emergency shelter for abused and neglected children.

Health and Social Services 272-5040 - provides assistance to eligible residents for rent, food, utilities, job placement, homeless recovery, Sunshine Line, veteran's assistance, summer food program and Ryan White HIV/AIDS program.

Animal Services 744-5660 - provides temporary shelter for lost or stray dogs and cats, picks up injured and dead animals, quarantines dangerous animals, provides for animal adoptions, spay and neuter program and licensing.

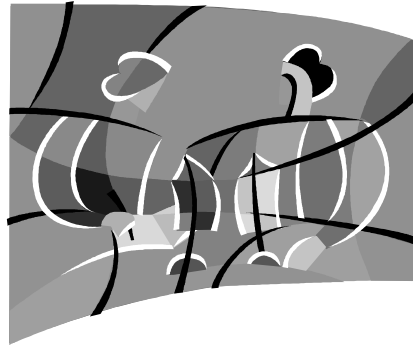
Mosquito Control 554-5025 - controls and sprays for larvae and adult mosquitoes and aquatic weeds.

Senior Services and Elder Helpline 272-6630 and 273-3779 - Alzheimer respite program, assisted living assistance, in home care, housekeeping, senior centers and nutrition and activity programs.

Neighborhood Relations 272-5860 - acts as liaison between neighborhood associations and county departments, administers the neighborhood mini-grant program, and updates neighborhoods on county activities.

Community Relations 24-Hour Hotline 272-5275 - a citizen's advocate responds to problems and emergencies and provides help with concerns which may not clearly fall within a particular department.

Consumer Protection 903-3430 - enforces consumer protection laws through investigation and mediation and acts as a clearinghouse for consumer complaints.



Emergency Management 276-2385 - coordinates hurricane and emergency preparedness and response.

Environmental Protection Commission - 273-3686 - protects air, water and wetlands of Hillsborough County.

Castor adds, "If you cannot meet with me on Friday, please contact me at 272-5470 or [castork@hillsboroughcounty.org](mailto:castork@hillsboroughcounty.org) with questions and concerns."

### Hillsborough Association for Home & Community Education

Hillsborough Association for Home and Community Education (HCE) members partner with the Hillsborough County Extension Service to better serve Hillsborough County residents. HCE members host the adult Neighborhood Village competition at the Strawberry Festival, make "ouch" dolls to give to children receiving medical care, make baby quilts and neonatal caps, and provide scholarships to 4-H members.

Membership as an HCE volunteer offers an excellent opportunity for community service. Clubs are active in Temple Terrace, Ruskin, Plant City, and Riverview. If you would like to be part of the Hillsborough County association by joining a club or by forming a club in your neighborhood, please call Lisa Leslie at (813) 744-5519 x 143.

## Residents Perceive Declines in Quality of Transportation, Affordable Housing and Historic Preservation

Residents who participated in a recent survey indicated that they perceive little change in the quality of life in Hillsborough County in 2004 compared with the previous year. The survey is administered annually by the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission. It gives residents an opportunity to evaluate their perception of the overall quality of life in the county and of 18 individual factors of which it is comprised.

"While overall the results show that the perceptions of the quality of life are holding steady in Hillsborough County, there were some interesting changes from 2002. For example, both the affordable housing and historic preservation factors were perceived to have declined significantly in quality. This is the first time we've seen this result," explained Planning Commissioner Executive Director Robert B. Hunter, FAICP.

The three factors that fared best in the survey were entertainment, parks & recreation, and the arts. The three factors that fared the worst were growth management, transportation and health care. These rankings have remained largely unchanged, except for transportation which is perceived to be getting worse, since the survey was first launched to measure the perception in change to the quality of life.



The factors for which there was the most improvement from 2002-2004 in the minds of the respondents were economic opportunities, non-governmental social services, and local government

services, such as police and fire service. The factors that saw the most decline were transportation, affordable housing, historic preservation

"We caution those who review the survey results to remember that they apply to an entire institution or system as opposed to any one program or one government's responsibility, Hunter explained.

The survey provides valuable information about the public's perception of changes in the quality of life. The Planning Commission conducts the survey on an annual basis in January. Survey was mailed to a random sample of 8,300 registered voters the week of January 10, 2005.

The response rate was 13.2% compared with 12.8% last year, virtually the same. Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not a listing of 18 quality of life factors increased or decreased in quality between 2003 and 2004. Respondents were also asked if they felt each of the factors required more or less attention in 2005. Nine of the nineteen quality of life factors were seen to be significantly worse in 2004 than in 2003.

Results were compiled and analyzed by an independent statistician. The complete survey results are on the Planning Commission website, [www.theplanningcommission.org](http://www.theplanningcommission.org).

For more information contact: Jim Hosler, Team Leader, Research & Economic Development, Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission  
(813) 273-3774, ext. 359

### Public Notice on DEP Contamination Sites

Recent legislation that requires the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to notify property owners statewide who live near contamination sites where pollutants may have migrated beyond the property boundaries. Over the next six months, you may receive notification. Where residences are connected to a public water supply, risk of exposure to pollutants is usually minimal. For those properties using private drinking water wells, DEP will work with the property owner and the Department of Health (DOH) to test the water and provide an alternative water supply, if needed. In most cases, the agency is already working to assess, define and clean up the pollution.

DEP's first mailing went out Monday April 18th for the first set of 230 sites. Hillsborough County has approximately 14 sites in this round of mailing. Subsequent mailouts will be made to affected property owners adjacent to around 500-600 sites every six weeks until all owners have been notified. DEP estimates approximately 2200 sites in the state with approximately 100 in Hillsborough County.

To address the concerns of any affected residents, DEP and DOH have each established an exclusive information line. Property owners will be able to call toll-free 1-877-798-2772, Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. to receive additional information concerning health related questions and 1-866-282-0787 for information concerning contamination and cleanup issues involving referenced sites.

## Hillsborough County Projects Receive Community Education Grants

The Southwest Florida Water Management District is announcing the recipients of the 2005 Community Education Grant Program. The grants, which are up to \$5,000 each, will help fund projects that provide communities the opportunity to learn about water resources.

This year the District awarded 29 grants Districtwide for a total of \$107,667.

The overall goal of the Community Education Grant Program is to actively engage adults in water-related issues pertaining to conservation, protection and preservation. Funded by the District's Basin Boards, the program is intended to motivate communities to get involved in water protection through various activities and educational formats.

This is the ninth year community education grants have been available. Here's a list of recipients from Hillsborough County grouped by the appropriate Basin:

The Ruskin Community Development Foundation will receive \$2,000 for the "Welcome to Your Watershed Tour." This two-day festival is designed to inform more than 5,000 Tampa Bay-area residents on the issues within the watershed. By taking a "watershed tour," participants will learn about water quality, conservation, flood protection, natural systems and habitat preservation. The tour will consist of visiting interactive booths that will have hands-on water-related activities. In addition the District will provide the water conservation restroom trailer for further water conservation education. The watershed tour will be held in conjunction with the annual Ruskin Tomato and heritage Festival to encourage a wide range of people to attend, not just people already interested in the environment.

Funding for this project comes from the Alafia River Basin Board. The Alafia River Basin includes the southern half of Hillsborough County and a southwestern portion of Polk County.

Crystal Springs Preserve will receive \$1,982 for the "Good Habits Add Up to Healthy Habits" program. Approximately 1,500 residents will be informed about watershed awareness, habitat conservation, preservation and protection, water conservation and water quality through a series of monthly workshops this spring and a "Watershed Watch" family organization. Residents in the Crystal Springs community will also receive a water usage survey and conservation guide. Participants will also install "Watershed Watch Area" and "This Is OUR River—Keep It Clean" signs.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection will receive \$4,000 for the University Area Community Center Native Plant Enhancement & Education. Approximately 500 local residents will learn about exotic/nuisance vegetation and re-vegetation with beneficial native plants through a demonstration project. The residents will participate in plantings at the University Area Community Center and will learn about wildlife value and water quality as they relate to vegetation and plant maintenance. Department staff will provide educational material in the form of brochures, handouts and PowerPoint presentations relating to the benefits of native plants and control of exotic vegetation. Interpretive signage will be installed to maximize exposure at the community center.

Joe Payne, P.E. will receive \$624 for the Westchase Reclaimed Water Conservation project. Approximately 2,000 Westchase residents will learn about efficient reclaimed water practices during the rainy season. Participants will attend a presentation on the effects of overwatering and proper timer control. Using real sod mats and water, Mr. Payne will describe how overwatering limits the development of root growth and affects site drainage and residents' personal land use.

Funding for these projects comes from the Hillsborough River Basin Board. The Hillsborough River Basin includes portions of Hillsborough, Pasco and Polk counties.

### Countywide Projects

The following projects have countywide benefits and are being jointly funded by the Alafia River, Hillsborough River and Northwest Hillsborough Basin Boards. The Northwest Hillsborough Basin is located in Northwest Hillsborough County.

The Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI) will receive \$5,000 for the Bioworks Wastewater Treatment Exhibit and Butterfly Garden. This exhibit is a model of an engineered wetland that has been teaching MOSI guests since 1996. To enhance the educational value of the exhibit, funding will be used for volunteer-docent training and to add signage focusing on native landscaping, water conservation and the use of butterflies.

The Florida Aquarium will receive \$4,597 for the Community Education and Habitat Restoration at Fantasy Island program. The program will inform approximately 160 people about point-source pollution, water quality and water conservation. Participants will also travel to Fantasy Island, a spoil island in Tampa Bay, for a hands-on activity involving the restoration of a Florida habitat, cultivating native plants, using water from a rain barrel and testing water quality.

*Continued on page 11*

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### Grants

*Continued from page 10*

The Hillsborough River Greenways Task Force, in partnership with the Tampa Audubon Society, will receive \$4,051 for the Frog Listening Network Workshop. This workshop will be made available to 30,000 to 50,000 people within the Tampa Bay area. Frogs are excellent barometers of conditions in the ecosystem because of their sensitivity to the environment. Participants will be trained to identify frogs by sight and sound, and to record data to be used for analyses.

The Southwest Florida Water Management District's 2006 Community Education Grant Program will begin its application process in August of this year if funding is approved by the Basin Boards. The deadline for applications is tentatively scheduled for October. To be added to the mailing list to receive the 2006 application, call the District's Communications Department at 800-423-1476 or 352-796-7211, ext. 4757.

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## UPDATE YOUR ASSOCIATION INFORMATION!

- **Did this newsletter come to the wrong address for your association?**
- **Has there been a change in board leadership in the past year?**
- **Have you created an association website or now have new association email address?**
- **Has your management company changed?**

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