

THE LEHIGH ACRES CITIZEN

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Plan would keep track of disabled people during disaster

By MEL TOADVINE

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A word of encouragement and a suggestion to continue to pursue the state regarding a plan to keep account of all disabled people in Florida in time of a devastating hurricane or other natural disaster or emergency has come from Lt. Governor Toni Jennings.

"We're really hoping we can take our plan to the state and have it included in Gov. Bush's recent \$565 million budget recommendation to establish a 'culture of preparedness' and mitigate future threats to public safety and infrastructure," said Linda R. Carter, of Lehigh Acres, who is the chairman of the ADA Advisory Board of Southwest Florida.

The letter from Marsha Cantrell, the executive assistant to Jennings came a few days ago after Carter, who lives at 704 Homer Ave. North, had sent a packet of information titled No Person Left Behind to legislators and Jennings' office in Tallahassee.

Carter has spent the last few years preparing

a plan she hopes will make sure that all disabled people in Southwest Florida, including Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Hendry and Glades counties, are safe if a natural emergency should occur.

In an executive summary, included in the packet sent to Tallahassee, Carter noted that more than one-third of Florida's 6,341,130 households include at least one person with a disability.

"Over the last two years with multiple hurricane threats in various counties, it became even more evident that dedicated support for emergency preparedness for persons with special needs of all ages is critical," Carter said.

She said that those who have medically stable personnel or equipment may not have considered all their options related to bringing things to a shelter or needing to evacuate. She says there is no standardized template for pre-registration, nor an easy-to-understand state information source for those who should consider going to special care units or special needs

See PLAN, page 2



Linda Carter, the chairman of the ADA Advisory Board of Southwest Florida, who lives in Lehigh, has prepared a program that would make sure disabled people in Southwest Florida are accounted for during a hurricane or other disaster. The plan could be augmented in the state's overall preparedness plan.

Photo by MEL TOADVINE



Riding the seahorse

Several children sit in the cavity of a giant seahorse that was a popular ride at the Medieval Faire on its final weekend this past Saturday at Veterans Park in Lehigh Acres. The "pirate" at the top was all the manpower that the giant seahorse needed as no electricity was used for the rides on the site. More photos can be found inside on page 8.

Photo by MEL TOADVINE

Jazz program to be held at Veterans Park in February

"Jazz in the Park" is coming to Lehigh Acres on Feb. 26 and the event will be held at Veterans Park on Homestead Road.

The program will feature Ken Navarro, jazz guitarist, with Allon Sams, jazz keyboard and their bands and Jose Valentino, a jazz flutist, as one of today's leading contemporary jazz guitarists and composers. Navarro's newest album, "Love Coloured Soul," was released last January.

Tampa native Allon Sams has strong roots in contemporary jazz, having performed with David Sanborn, Boney James, Paul Brown and others. He has achieved national recognition for his album "A Place in Time," which featured Peter White and his newest album, "Music and Laughter" which features special guest Les Sabler.

Jose Valentino is only 18 years old and already racking up the accolades for his first album "Flute on Fire," as well as winning the National Flute Association Jazz Flute Masterclass Competition in 2005 and other recognition.

There will be food, drinks and good music, said Liz Eilf, executive director of Lehigh Community Services. Proceeds to benefit the agency to support the needy of Lehigh.

The program begins at 1:30 p.m. and lasts until 6 p.m. Tickets are \$20. At the gate they will be \$25. Children under 10 get in free. Tickets can be purchased at Lehigh Community Services at 9 Beth Stacey Blvd., Suite 206 and at the Lehigh Acres Chamber of Commerce on Lee Boulevard.

Jazz audiences will come from Port Charlotte all the way southward to Naples, Eilf said. There are ticket locations across Lee County. Smooth Jazz WJZ 107.1 is partnering with Lehigh Community Services.

"This is the biggest event we have had planned in our 17 years as executive director. I am very excited about bringing jazz to Lehigh," she said. "People from all over the county and Southwest Florida will see what beautiful facilities we have in Lehigh."

To help by being a sponsor, call Liz Eilf at 369-5818.

Welcome back snowbirds to Lehigh Acres

Here is what happened from last spring to this past fall

By MEL TOADVINE

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For the past several weeks, lots of winter-time residents have been returning to Lehigh Acres from the icy and cold north. Among those many "snowbirds" who have decided call Lehigh home for the winter are several visitors from Canada.

Here at The Lehigh Acres Citizen, we wanted to keep you up with the latest news of Lehigh and the surrounding areas. We have dedicated this article to the many people who come to Lehigh in the early winter and January and stay generally until around Easter, or at least until the freeze up north thaws.

For many years, the old Lehigh Corp.,

the early developers of Lehigh Acres, held a festival each year to bid farewell to their friends and neighbors who just came to spend a few months in the winter in Lehigh.

It was a way for the townsfolk to say goodbye and the Lehigh Corp., or whatever name it came to be during the those early years, came up with a committee that planned a week of activities that culminated with a parade on the final Saturday. A few thousand people turned out in those early years.

Today, there is a group of a dozen or so of dedicated Lehigh residents who have kept that idea to bid farewell to the snowbirds who go back up north in

March. The Spring Festival has continued to become one of more fun attractions in all of Lee County and this year's event promises to even be better than last year.

How can that be? Well, there are people like Ernie Hartman and Debbie Jackson and others who are dedicated to bring you the best festival ever.

Jackson is the committee's entertainment director and she works hard each year to bring in new and fresh entertainment. She has outdone herself this year with two hot attractions with names such as Vonzell Solomon and BJ Thomas, who will each be performing on the big outside stage at Veterans Park on Homestead Road in March.

We hope most of you who have plans to return to the north will stay until the

Spring Festival is over. The final day of the festival is March 25 when there is a parade bringing the festival to a close.

We start here by bringing you a sampling of the "news events" that have taken place since last year's Spring Festival. It's a way to let our snowbirds know about some of the things that have occurred in this community over the past several months.

Before we start the travel over the year since March of 2005, everyone in Lehigh is talking about the phenomenal growth in the community and the soaring values of land and homes in Lehigh.

Ada Thompson, who operates the Lehigh Lot Owners Association in

See WELCOME, page 11

Plan

Continued from Page 1

shelters in a disaster. Hospitals, she said in the executive summary statement, may not have the space, personnel or supplies to care for a large number of shelter persons, and face liability issues and a lack of reimbursement for services provided.

Carter and the Americans Disabilities Act Advisory Board of Southwest Florida have come up with a pilot program they call No Person Left Behind. While it has been operational for 19 months locally and could be considered as a model program for the state, Carter is counting in gaining support from local legislators who she is contacting this week.

The plan, contained in a booklet an inch thick, has the stamp of approval on it not only from the ADA Advisory Board of Southwest Florida, but from such other groups as the Center for Independent Living of Lee County, Deaf Service Center of Southwest Florida, the Division of Blind Services, Florida Gulf Coast University and the Lee County Emergency Management. In addition, the Ruth Cooper Center and the Lee County Parks and Recreation Dept., among others, helped in the creation of the project for all people with disabilities.

Carter, who is also a member of the Lehigh Acres Community Planning Corp., or LACPC, is no stranger to preparing projects of this magnitude. Carter spent several years in the U.S. military, including several months in Vietnam. Part of Carter's job was to come up with projects that would include evacuation and other plans during natural disasters or nuclear attacks.

"I began thinking of this plan several years ago, back in 1995, but I was not able to draw a lot of interest in it," Carter said. Noting that in 2004 when Hurricane Charlie hit parts of Southwest Florida, she said it became paramount in her mind that a plan be drawn up to help disabled people to be accounted for locally.

Then when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, she saw on TV and read in the newspapers that families had been separated and many of those were families with disabilities. Many had been flown out of New Orleans and their families were not able to get information about where their disabled family members were.

"People who were disabled were just left behind in nursing homes and others were left behind to fend for themselves," Carter said.

"Many of these people who were left behind were found dead later, mainly because there were no specialized resources to help evacuate them from the affected areas."

Carter said that shelter staff in many areas are not trained to deal with people with disabilities and

sometimes create a very adverse atmosphere for them in their frustration.

"So some of the people who are disabled prefer to stay at home and risk the disaster rather than put themselves through degradation they usually find at shelters that are not equipped to handle the many issues facing disabled folks," Carter said.

After the hurricane season of 2004, Carter said she realized there now was a dire need for a plan to see that no handicapped person was left behind in a hurricane. Back in the early 1990s, nobody was interested in even talking about a plan, she said.

"That was because there had been no serious hurricanes for many years that had hit this area," Carter said.

But after 2004, even before Hurricane Katrina had hit the Gulf Coast of Louisiana and Alabama, she began gathering all the information she said that was usually distributed to the general populace. She worked to put the information in large print and then she sent it to agencies, department and organizations to distribute to those who are visually impaired, much like herself.

Carter uses large magnifying devices to use her computers at her home in Lehigh, which is a hub or center for the plan she has put into place for Southwest Florida. Her living room looks more like a modern communications center with computers, TVs, communication devices and a large computer server.

Carter said after collecting information for the disabled, she came up with a plan for correcting the problems and presented it to the local Center for Independent Living of south Florida, the ADA Advisory Board and asked for their input and support.

The ADA Advisory Board was 100 percent behind the work she had done and threw its support behind the plan. Carter said with the help of ADA Board members, they started to fine tune a plan of identifying and addressing all the issues that can arise for persons with disabilities during a hurricane or disaster.

"Simply put," she said, we all have to come up with a plan to ensure that no person with disabilities gets 'left behind.'"

Carter said a registration form and processing procedure has been designed so the group can account for everyone who registers in the plan. Such agencies as the Emergency Management System and FEMA Publications Supply Center were contacted to provide literature. Many disabled people did not even know there were materials available to them in disk, Braille, large print, and/or languages other



Linda Carter, who is disabled with visual problems, uses visual magnifying aids to work at a computer at her home in Lehigh. This is where she has prepared a plan that could be used state-wide to account for disabled citizens in the event of a hurricane or other disaster. Left: Here Linda Carter, of Lehigh, the chairman of the ADA Advisory Board of Southwest Florida, stands in front of a computer server where thousands of names of handicapped people can be stored to be used in the case of an emergency by having everyone accounted for.

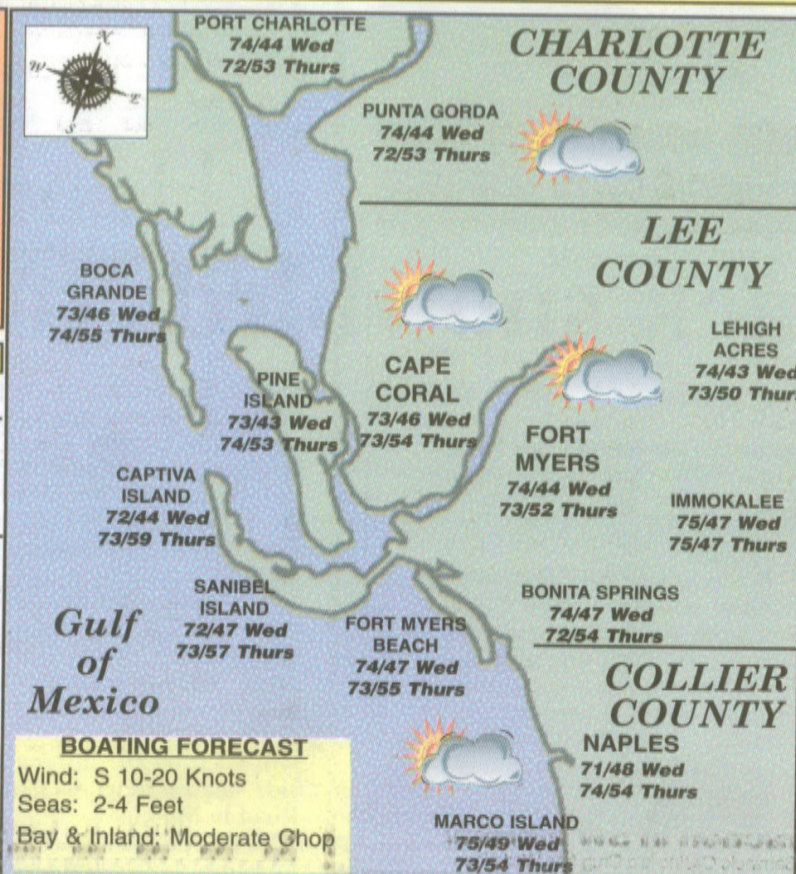
Citizen photo

See PLAN, page 3

WEATHER FORECAST FOR JANUARY 25 & 26

WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY	
A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
Warm but pleasant weather today with a noticeable drop in temperature tonight.		More warm, sunny weather in the low to mid 70s and not quite as cold tonight.	

WEEKEND TIDES				
City	Sat. High	Sat. Low	Sun. High	Sun. Low
Cape Coral	2:20 a.m.	7:42 a.m.	2:37 a.m.	8:43 a.m.
Bridge	12:57 p.m.	8:55 p.m.	2:06 p.m.	9:34 p.m.
Captiva at	12:10 a.m.	4:26 a.m.	12:27 a.m.	5:27 a.m.
Redfish Pass	10:47 a.m.	5:39 p.m.	11:56 a.m.	6:18 p.m.
Fort Myers	3:13 a.m.	8:24 a.m.	3:30 a.m.	9:25 a.m.
	1:50 p.m.	9:37 p.m.	2:59 p.m.	10:16 p.m.
Matlacha	1:48 a.m.	7:08 a.m.	2:05 a.m.	8:09 a.m.
Pass	12:25 p.m.	8:21 p.m.	1:34 p.m.	9:00 a.m.
Pineland	12:46 a.m.	6:06 a.m.	1:03 a.m.	7:07 a.m.
	11:23 a.m.	7:19 p.m.	12:32 p.m.	7:58 p.m.
Point Ybel	9:52 a.m.	4:28 a.m.	11:01 a.m.	5:29 a.m.
	11:32 p.m.	5:41 p.m.	11:50 p.m.	6:20 p.m.
Punta Rassa	12:04 a.m.	4:21 a.m.	12:21 a.m.	5:22 a.m.
	10:41 a.m.	5:34 p.m.	11:50 a.m.	6:13 p.m.
St. James City	12:35 a.m.	4:56 a.m.	12:52 a.m.	5:57 a.m.
	11:12 a.m.	6:09 p.m.	12:21 p.m.	6:48 p.m.



FOX 4 CAST

WFTX - CAPE CORAL - FT. MYERS - NAPLES



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STATE FORECAST-THURSDAY		
CITY	LOW/HIGH	
CAPE CORAL	73/54	
DAYTONA BEACH	65/47	
FT. LAUDERDALE	73/55	
FT. MYERS BEACH	73/55	
GAINESVILLE	67/41	
JACKSONVILLE	64/42	
KEY WEST	75/65	
KISSIMMEE	69/48	
MIAMI	74/59	
ORLANDO	69/49	
PANAMA CITY	64/43	
PENSACOLA	63/43	
SARASOTA	69/53	
ST. PETERSBURG	68/55	
TALLAHASSEE	65/36	
TAMPA	69/53	
VERO BEACH	70/52	
WEST PALM BEACH	69/57	

THURSDAY SUNRISE 7:17 AM
THURSDAY SUNSET 5:50 PM