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Teel wrongful death suit now
set for July. P6

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territory seen likely. P12

Island resident who worked
in JFK's White House dies at 88. P4

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Dodgertown looks great, worthy of its glorious past

For about 30 minutes last week, I was back in my baseball-writing past, chatting with former All-Star outfielder Ken Griffey Sr. on the Holman Stadium concourse at the once-sacred ground many of us still call Dodgertown.

"I made every trip here from Tampa," Griffey said, recalling the spring-training memories of his youth, when he was a fixture in the Cincinnati Reds lineup that won back-to-back World Series in the mid-1970s.

"It took us three hours to get here, and then we had to sit in the hot sun for another three hours because the dugouts weren't covered," he continued. "There was no outfield fence, either – just a berm – so

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

County public school students to be issued high-tech ID cards

BY GEORGE ANDREASSI
Staff Writer

High-tech identification cards will be issued to Indian River County's 17,000 public school students for the upcoming school year that will enable educators to upgrade security on campuses and buses.

The new ID cards will also be part of a new system that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

Tragic death of 'the kind of person people just gravitated to'



PHOTO BY BRENDA AHEARN

BY LISA ZAHNER AND BRENDA AHEARN
Staff Writers

More than 70 people gathered on South Beach Sunday evening to celebrate the life of 57-year-old Michael Gianfrancesco who, with his terrier mix Molly, was struck by a speeding car and killed while walking along A1A near his home in The Dunes.

For a couple of hours, the good memories shared by family, friends, fishing buddies and neighbors – toasted with a shot glass of Scotch – eased the pain.

Former pastor of Christ by the Sea United Methodist Church Rev. Cliff Melvin, a family friend, described Gianfrancesco as being on top of the world prior to his death. "He retired a few years ago and everything he wanted was right here," he said.

But Sunday night's respite from the circumstances surrounding Gianfrancesco's death was short. Huge questions remain.

The biggest one: Why has no one been arrested yet, despite a loaded gun and



drugs being found near the car that struck Gianfrancesco, and the alleged driver of the vehicle in violation of his probation on felony charges?

Three Indian River County Sheriff's Office deputies who worked that stretch of A1A in South Beach that evening described a devastating scene that quickly turned from a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Potentially toxic algae in lagoon at Oslo boat ramp

BY SUE COCKING
Staff Writer

An ugly outbreak of lyngbya, a potentially toxic blue-green algae, has the summer off to an ominous start at the Oslo Road boat ramp.

Arriving at the ramp at the end of a long, narrow shell road in southern Indian River County last Friday with a group of summer camp kayakers, Dr. Richard Baker was shocked by what he saw – large mats of green and white goo blanketing the surface of the shallow lagoon.

"It was awful looking stuff," said Baker, president of the Pelican Island Audubon Society. "I said, 'No way we're

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Environmental groups ask Gov. DeSantis to declare an emergency

BY SUE COCKING
Staff Writer

The Clean Water Coalition of Indian River County – joined by the Indian River Land Trust, the Environmental Learning Center and other environmental groups – is urging Gov. Ron DeSantis to declare a state of emergency to battle pollution in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

June 17, 2021

Volume 14, Issue 24

Newsstand Price \$1.00

News 1-14
Arts 39-44
Books 32
Dining 56-59

Editorial 30
Games 33-35
Health 45-51
Insight 25-38

People 15-24
Pets 60
Real Estate 63-72
Style 52-55

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4-H supporters
all-in at festive
'Casino Night.' P18

NEWS

Algae in lagoon

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

going to have our kids going in this.”
The group turned around, headed

back up the shell road and went elsewhere to launch their colorful kayaks.

Baker took photos of the foul-smelling gunk and fired them off to **Vero Beach 32963** and other news media and conservation groups, rais-

ing the alarm. Researchers from Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute in Fort Pierce went to the boat ramp and kayak launch and collected samples, then conducted an analysis in the lab of Dr. Amy Wright, head of

Harbor Branch's Center of Excellence in Biomedical and Marine Biotechnology.

The verdict: a cyanobacteria, or blue-green algae called lyngbya, ac-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

NEWS

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

According to Wright's colleague, research associate Dr. Malcolm McFarland.

“It has the potential to have toxic compounds in it, but we have not measured that,” McFarland said. “People should avoid coming into contact with it if possible. Hopefully, it won't last long.”

He said lyngbya is known to cause skin irritation if handled.

Potentially toxic algae showing up at the Oslo boat ramp is doubly troubling because the water in that area typically is some of the cleanest in the lagoon.

Baker visited the site on Sunday and observed dark water, but no gunk remaining at the boat ramp. However, he said it was still present at the adjacent kayak launch. He theorized boat traffic may have broken up the mats at the ramp. No warning signs have been posted in the area.

McFarland said lyngbya is native to the Indian River Lagoon and is sometimes observed during the hot, rainy summer months. But he

said it's not usually seen here “in these big, evil-smelling mats.”

“This grows on the bottom. When it gets really abundant, it floats to the surface in these big mats,” he said. “This year, there has been a lot of it.”

Similar to a plant, lyngbya needs nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen to grow, the scientist added.

The lagoon has been flooded with nutrient pollution in the past decade with chemicals coming from lawn and agriculture fertilizer, leaky septic and sewer systems, and stormwater discharges, causing repeated algae blooms that have degraded the ecosystem.

“We are stimulating their growth,” McFarland said.

With the onset of the rainy season, he said, we may see more of the stuff pop up in various parts of the lagoon.

The algae outbreak at the ramp comes as the Clean Water Coalition of Indian River County, the Indian River Land Trust, the Environmental Learning Center and other environmental groups are urging Gov. Ron DeSantis to declare a state of emergency to restore water quality in the lagoon. ■