

which opened that year.

ENTERTAINMENT B1

AT THE SUNRISE



'100 Years of Broadway' coming to St. Lucie County April 9

COMPUTERS A6

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WEEKEND WEATHER



Friday: Scattered thunderstorms; high: 83; low: 66; high tide: 2:35 a.m.; low tide: 9:38 a.m. Saturday: Isolated thunderstorms; high: 84; low: 66; high tide: 4:42 a.m.; low tide: 10:46 a.m. Sunday: Partly cloudy; high: 84; low: 69; high tide: 5:43 a.m.; low tide: 11:47 a.m. Weather courtesy of www.weather.com

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Table with 2 columns: Category and Page Number. Includes Classified B12, Police Report A5, Crossword B2, Sports B9, Obituaries A9, Star Scores B1, Out & About B1, Travel A13, Viewpoint A6.

City increases cable, and Internet fees

By Jay Meisel meisel@hometownnewsol.com

PORT ST. LUCIE — Beginning April 2010, Port St. Lucie residents should expect increases in their cable television, telephone, Internet and cell phone bills.

The City Council last week increased the communications tax from 1.5 percent to 5.22 percent.

Councilman Chris Cooper cast the lone dissenting vote.

The tax increase is expected to generate about \$4.6 million a year.

Last month, Mayor Patricia Christensen said that without the additional revenue, the city would face laying off 250 employees at a time when the unemployment rate is increasing.

In other matters, the Council approved a site plan for the Ravenswood community center complex. The city also plans to spend \$6.5 million for a new community center that will include classrooms for Indian River State College.

The new community center will replace one that was heavily damaged by hurricanes in 2004.

See FEES, A2

Families of children with cancer support need for blood donations

By Jay Meisel Meisel@hometownnewsol.com

PORT ST. LUCIE — Were it not for the tragedy of cancer, Kate Prokop and Kyle Wahl would be sharing the same kindergarten classroom at Floresta Elementary School.

The families of both children united last week at Floresta Elementary to support the need for blood donations.

"It's very hard," Sasha Wahl, the mother of Kyle,

said about dealing with the subject. Kyle died Feb. 24 after a long battle with the disease.

Kate, 5, who has only attended one day of school because of her illness, appeared with her mother, Mary Prokop, at a press conference.

Both children shared the need for numerous blood transfusions during their battles with cancer.

Kate alone has needed 17 blood transfusions and 12 platelets transfusions,

cells found in blood vessels that help clot blood.

She'll continue to need more blood transfusions at a time when the blood supply is low, said Pat Michaels, executive director of public relations for Florida's Blood Centers.

To help with that need, the school held a blood drive on Saturday, March 28, the day after the press conference. Mr. Michaels said people sometimes are under the impression that

See FAMILIES, A4

Young racer supports troops

By Jay Meisel Meisel@hometownnewsol.com

PORT ST. LUCIE — For a 16-year-old and his family, stock car racing isn't just about reaching the finish line first.

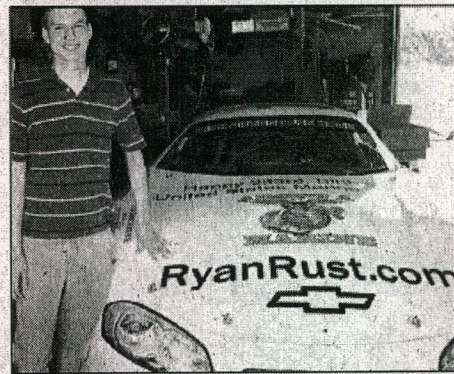
On every car that Ryan Rust races, there's a logo inviting fans to participate in the family's Adopt A Troop program.

"His racing is a tool we use to get the message out," said Susan Rust, his mother.

"We have had people sign up from every continent, except for Antarctica," Ryan said.

Those who sign up for the program receive names of troops to whom they can send care packages.

And last weekend, Ryan took the campaign further by donating



Staff photo by Jay Meisel

Ryan Rust stands near one of the cars he's raced. Ryan, who hopes to become a NASCAR champion, also works to help troops stationed overseas.

\$5,000 to the United Service Organization in Charlotte, N.C., which supports troops and their families.

The donation was made on behalf of Florida

Green Racing, a racing team established by his family to support Ryan's endeavor.

Sponsors such as RGS

See RACER, A2

started getting paid for See SCHOOLS, A8

Public defender's office recognized

By Jay Meisel Meisel@hometownnewsol.com

ST. LUCIE COUNTY — Public defender Diamond Litty has received state awards for two programs that reduce crime and save money.

One program is mental health court, which allows offenders with mental health problems to receive treatment, instead of being jailed.

The other helps offenders in the St. Lucie County jail return to society.

Both awards were issued as part of a government improvement initiative started by Gov. Charlie Christ and co-sponsored by the Florida Tax Watch group, a private organization that monitors how tax dollars are spent. For the re-entry program award, Ms. Litty and program director Krisen Webster received recognition.

The program helps prisoners at the St. Lucie County jail find housing and jobs once they are released, Ms. Litty said.

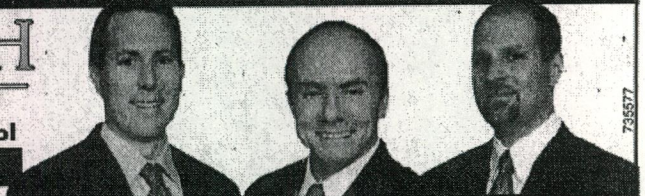
But what is especially unique about the program, she said, is that through cooperation with the St.

See OFFICE, A4

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736577



Nicholas O. Iannotti, M.D., F.A.C.P. (Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center)

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Assets General)
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AST, PA.

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3, Stuart
40 SW Chamber Ct
Suite 300
St. Lucie West
(772) 336-2992

places," she said. Kyle was diagnosed with a brain tumor. During the ultimately

Children's Cancer Founda-
tion, based in Jupiter.
On March 27, Florida's
Blood Centers made a

children with such needs
continue.
Mr. Michaels said blood
donations tend to be off

da's Blood Centers at (772) 924-3585. The office is located at 1321 St. Lucie West Blvd.

Office

From page A1

Lucie County Sheriff's Office, participants are housed in a special jail pod.

Those prisoners receive whatever form of counseling they need to prepare for release, she said.

The aim is to "keep them in jobs and housing so they don't get arrested time and time again," she said.

commit another crime," she said. For that award, Ms. Litty, Lisa Fonteyn, client service program coordinator and Katie Alonzo, drug court coordinator, received recognition.

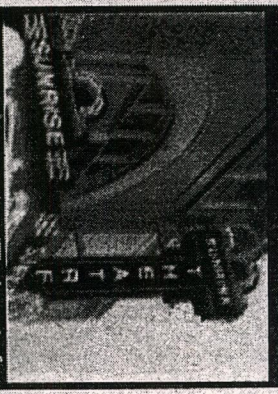
Money is saved because of reductions in recidivism and jail crowding, Ms. Litty said.

"Many are homeless and we help them get off the street, so obviously they are less likely to repeat

their criminal behavior," she said. Ms. Litty said she believes the program is unique in Florida. One other county has a re-entry program, but it begins only after the prisoner is released, she said.

As to how much money the programs have saved the system, she said, it's hard to come up with an exact dollar amount.

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"If there's one less victim that could be hospitalized or killed, what's that worth?" she asked. A safer community also helps the economy by drawing more people to move here, Ms. Litty said.

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"We help them so they are not again repeating criminal behavior," she said. "It's curing the disease rather than punishing them."

Although her office received recognition for initiating the program, she said, partners such as judges, New Horizons, which does mental health counseling, and the sheriff's office have helped make the efforts a success.