

HERNANDO TODAY

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Down To One...

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OUT & ABOUT



IMAC Spring Classic

The 12th annual IMAC Spring Classic will be held this weekend in Land O' Lakes.

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Study: Spending Doesn't Equal High Test Scores

By LINNEA BROWN
Hernando Today

BROOKSVILLE — Money isn't everything.

That's the word from a report released Tuesday from a national organization of state legislators, in which officials say there is no direct correlation between student performance and conventional measures of education inputs, such as expenditures per pupil and teacher salaries.

In the American Legislative Exchange Council's annual "Report Card on American Education," researchers found that despite dramatic increases in the amount of money spent on primary and secondary education during the past two decades, average scores on standardized tests have improved only slightly. But the study is not specific enough to be truly helpful, local officials say.

"Philosophically, I've never thought that once you pump

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Bubbling Over With Excitement



Hernando Today photo by BOB EAST III

Ten-year-old Delaine McFarland uses a wand Tuesday as she makes bubbles at Delta Woods Park.

Keeping Calm In Eye Of Storm

DESPITE PROBE, LIFE GOES ON AT EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

By MICHAEL D. BATES
Hernando Today

BROOKSVILLE — The investigation into the county's Emergency Management Office is more than two weeks old, the department manager remains on paid administrative leave, his secretary resigned and there is still no word when the cloud will be lifted.

But that is not stopping Interim Emergency Management Director Mark Tobert from maintaining as best



Tobert

he can a business-as-usual attitude and moving forward with preparations for this year's hurricane season, which begins June 1.

"We need to move forward because hurricane season isn't going to hold its breath for us and wait for us to get online," Tobert said.

"The morale's good. We've still got the core team here, and we're just making a few administrative adjustments and making sure we're all on the same page," said Tobert, who formerly held the title of senior emergency management coordinator in the department.

Leto was placed on paid administrative leave March 31 pending the results of a sheriff's office investigation.

Leto's department secretary, Stephanie Anderson, was placed on paid leave that same day. She resigned four days later.

While details of the investigation remain sketchy, County Circuit Court Clerk Karen Nicolai said it has to do with the department's payroll records and overtime.

In addition to Tobert, the department has four staffers. An employee from public works was moved in to take over Anderson's administrative

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Tax Group Revs Up Endorsement Machine

ONE CANDIDATE QUESTIONS METHODS

By TONY MARRERO
Hernando Today

BROOKSVILLE — Linda Hayward has become a poster woman of sorts for the causes of lower property taxes and smaller government.

In 2006, Hayward handed over a petition to the county commission with more than 11,000 signatures from county residents demanding, as the petition put it, "significant" property tax relief.

The Brooksville bookkeeper threatened then to try to unseat incumbents who didn't go far enough to meet that demand.

Now Hayward, a Brooksville resident and founder of the Hernando County Taxpayers Alliance, is revving up that group's endorsement machine for this year's round of county commission races — and the first endorsement is not for the incumbent.



Hayward

Hayward announced Wednesday that the group is throwing its support behind Republican Jim Adkins in the crowded race for the commission's District 5 seat currently held by Commission Chairman Chris Kingsley. Four Republicans are vying for the chance to face off against Kingsley, the only Democrat in the race.

"It is our most sincere desire to rid our county of the tax and spenders that are literally forcing many of us from house, investment properties and business," Hayward wrote in an e-mail blast announcing the endorsement. "Unfortunately the dollars are being stacked high by those candidates who have a history of tax and spend. We, the regular people of Hernando County, are not being represented, nor are we being looked after by those who have influenced the elections in the past."

"It is up to us to stand up and get our neighbors to vote for people who have the ability, strength, courage, integrity and the desire to help us," Hayward continued. "We need people like Jim to represent us."

Hayward said in an interview Thursday that the group won't be supporting the two other incumbents up for re-election this year, either: Commissioners Diane Rowden and Jeff Stabins.

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Feuding At The SPCA

ALLEGATIONS OF IMPROPER TREATMENT OF CATS

By TONY HOLT
Hernando Today

BROOKSVILLE — There is only one SPCA of Hernando County — but its members have splintered into two groups.

There are those who believe the leadership has reduced the cat population more through euthanasia than adoptions.

Those in the second group contend they have treated the cats humanely and put down only those that were terminally ill. They believe they have improved the day-to-day operations and made the facility safer for all animals.

Charlene Lambertsen is in the former category. She recently was removed from the SPCA board for actions "detrimental" to the SPCA.

She hasn't gone away — at least not yet. Lambertsen was helping other volunteers clean

the rooms designated for the 70 or so cats at the shelter last week. She began complaining about the board, but stopped herself short of a long rant and walked out of the room.

She did not want to say too much for fear of further retribution, particularly from president Michelle McCabe.

"She can't get rid of you twice," joked Al Iannuzzi, who was sweeping behind the front desk. "I'll be next."

Iannuzzi is a longtime board member. He has clashed with many at the SPCA, board members told *Hernando Today*.

McCabe was elected president in January by a 20 to 7 vote. Her opponent was Iannuzzi.

Lambertsen, Iannuzzi and Tracey Hedges, another volunteer, have accused McCabe and the other eight board members of neglect, ignoring bylaws and maintaining an unsanitary work station.

They, in turn, have accused those three of perpetuating falsehoods, sabotaging their efforts to im-

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Hernando Today photo by TONY HOLT

Tracey Hedges, a volunteer at the SPCA of Hernando County, has charged the shelter's president and board members with neglect and poor organizational practices. She alleges they have refused to send purebred dogs to their proper rescue organizations, showed a lack of attention to the shelter's cats and wrongfully denied adoptions to seniors. Both the president and the board have denied Hedges' allegations.

