Lightle, partners lift firm to new levels; expands with two offices

By Ken Datzman

When the commercial real-estate market started sputtering five years ago, followed by a steep decline, many firms in the industry scaled back as credit tightened and transactions became increasingly scarce. Investors stepped aside waiting for a clearer picture to develop.

The commercial–property market pretty much coat-tailed the residential collapse, which was triggered by lax lending standards during a time that could be characterized as a “roaring–twenties” environment.

The high–flying real–estate market eventually blew up, values sunk, and economic progress stalled.

But “in the middle of difficulty lies opportunity,” Albert Einstein once said. And local business partners Brian Lightle, Robert “Rob” Beckner, and Jeffrey Robison came to embrace that thinking.

Five years ago, amid the market turbulence, they began strategic planning for ways to better position their firm for growth and extend their reach into other parts of the state, which eventually led to the company's first office expansion in its 17–year history, and a record year in 2012.

“We spent a lot of time as partners talking and strategizing about the business environment we were operating in and where the opportunities lie,” said longtime area businessman Lightle, president and founder of Lightle Beckner Robison Inc., a full–service commercial real–estate firm headquartered in Melbourne with newly opened offices in Orlando and Miami.

“Over the last five years, we looked at the trends, studied the different markets, and studied the past history of commercial real–estate cycles. We were able to make adjustments and pursue new business opportunities. It was a very pro–active approach versus a reactive approach. A reactive business is probably not here today,” he added.

Their strategy has delivered results. Lightle Beckner Robison closed more than 150 lease and commercial sales transitions in 2012, posting its “best year ever,” in what many still view as a lukewarm market for commercial real–estate deals around the nation.

“We believe our volume this year will even top last year's performance,” said Lightle, who started in the field 25 years ago. “We are definitely going to grow the size of our business in 2013.”

The firm plans to expand its staff as it grows and will likely add two support personnel in 2013, bringing Lightle Beckner Robison to 12 people.

“We have built a great team of people, from property management to data management to sales support and agents,” he said.

Lightle started his firm in 1996. Before that, he was a business partner with Myles Wilkinson for eight years at Corporate Property Group Inc.

Wilkinson went on to become a commercial real–estate developer. “And I still wanted to be a broker. We parted as friends,” said Lightle. Both have built successful businesses in their respective areas of the real–estate industry.

Lightle first brought Beckner aboard the firm in 2000 and later Beckner became his first partner in the practice. “Brian mentored me,” said Beckner. “It's been a great working relationship all these years.”

Beckner said his company, which is licensed in Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina, has evolved and grown considerably over the past decade.

“We are constantly selling Brevard County to out–of–area clients,” said
Home At Last Adoption Agency in Cocoa Beach achieves Hague Accreditation; intercountry adoption

Home At Last Adoption Agency Inc. has received notification that it has achieved Hague Accreditation through the Council on Accreditation (COA) as authorized by the U.S. Department of State.

Home At Last Adoption Agency is a nonprofit, licensed, child–placing agency based in Cocoa Beach.

Dr. Rachel Fornes, a chiropractor, is the founder and president of Home At Last Adoption Agency.

Since 2001, the agency has been offering domestic adoption services for both birth and adoptive families. The board of directors, Dr. Fornes and the staff of Home At Last Adoption Agency are “excited to be able to expand adoption services to include intercountry adoption.”

Hague Accreditation “attests that Home At Last Adoption Agency is in substantial compliance with the Hague Convention Accreditation Standards.” Home At Last Adoption Agency’s Hague Accreditation expiration date is Feb. 1, 2017.

The Hague Convention is an international treaty created to ensure that intercountry adoptions are in the best interests of children and to prevent abduction, exploitation, sale, or trafficking of children.

In 1994, the U.S. signed this treaty and agreed to develop regulations and a monitoring process for adoption–service providers in the U.S. that worked with agencies in countries that signed onto the Hague Convention.

For more information about the Hague Convention, including a full list of participating countries, visit the Hague Conference on Private International Law’s website at www.hcch.net.

Congress passed The Intercountry Adoption Act (IAA) in October 2000, which serves as the implementing legislation for the United States. The IAA names the U.S. Department of State as the central authority for the United States and the federal agency responsible for implementing the Hague Convention.

The IAA requires agencies and persons providing adoption services in cases involving Hague Convention countries to be accredited or approved. In July 2006, the U.S. Department of State named COA as the only national accreditor for adoption–service providers under the Hague Convention.

COA is an independent, not–for–profit accreditor of the full continuum of community–based behavioral health care and social–service organizations. COA’s mission is to partner with human–service organizations worldwide to improve service–delivery outcomes by developing, applying and promoting accreditation standards.

Home At Last Adoption Agency is a member of the National Council for Adoption, Florida Adoption Council, Better Business Bureau and the Cocoa Beach Chamber of Commerce. The mission of Home At Last Adoption Agency is to provide services in the “best interest of children by placing them in homes where they can be nurtured, protected, and guided by the loving support of a family.”

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MARCH 11, 2013
Hospital patients, PGA Tour golfers thank Arnold Palmer at event leading up to the Arnold Palmer Invitational

ORLANDO — With less than a month until the start of tournament week for the Arnold Palmer Invitational, presented by MasterCard, hospital patients and three local PGA Tour golfers came together at Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children to say thank-you to Arnold Palmer.

Current and past patients of the hospital along with professional golfers Brian Davis, Brian Gay, and D.A. Points recognized Palmer and his legacy of helping children and families in this community since the opening of Arnold Palmer Hospital in September 1989.

“The Arnold Palmer Invitational, presented by MasterCard, is a very exciting time for us as buzz for the tournament starts to build around the community,” said John Bozard, president of Arnold Palmer Hospital.

“It allows us opportunities to highlight some of the hospital’s amazing stories of courage and compassion that are possible only because of Mr. Palmer’s continuing commitment to ensuring children, women, and families receive the best care.”

During the gathering, Bozard announced the inaugural “Arnie’s March for Children’s Cancer,” a walk around the course at Arnold Palmer’s Bay Hill Club and Lodge to raise awareness and funds for children’s cancer. The walk will take place at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, March 19, and will be led by Davis, Gay and Points — PGA golfers whose families have experienced the care of Arnold Palmer Hospital and Winnie Palmer Hospital for Women and Babies.

The gathering concluded with the presentation of a giant signature wall bearing the iconic logo of the Arnold Palmer Invitational, presented by MasterCard. Hospital patients and the golfers were among the first to sign the wall and write a message of thanks for Arnold Palmer. The wall will be on tour throughout Orlando, making stops at locations including Orlando City Hall and the Mall at Millenia, allowing Central Florida residents to sign the wall and write a personal message to Palmer.

Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children, supported by the Arnold Palmer Medical Center Foundation, is a 158-bed facility dedicated exclusively to the needs of children.

The hospital provides expertise in pediatric specialties such as cardiac care, craniofacial surgery, emergency and trauma care, gastroenterology, nephrology, neurology, oncology, orthopedics, pulmonology and sports medicine. Visit www.arnoldpalmerhospital.com to learn more its specialties.

Karen Raley to present program at library

Imagine a tour through Eau Gallie and Melbourne from pioneer days to the present as Karen Raley hosts an audio-visual stroll of the South Brevard area at 3 p.m. on Saturday, March 9, at the Melbourne Public Library, 540 E. Fee Ave. The program is free of charge. For additional information, call Carol Andren at 725-4115.
Young athletes today must learn to balance health and challenges in life

By Lisa Barkley
UCF Forum columnist

We all want sports heroes and we all want to win — but that desire comes with a price. Just as there will always be winners in sports, there will always be injuries and losers. Often the lines are blurred between what is in the best interest of an athlete’s health and well-being and what it takes to win.

These distinctions are particularly difficult when it comes to young athletes. There is a lot riding on being good at sports. With the rising costs of education, the limited job market and the continuing economic downturn, sports is often the only viable option of many young athletes for their future.

There are many other perks, as well. Good athletes are often very popular and get special attention that others do not.

Considering all of these factors, it is not surprising that athletes are willing to sacrifice a lot of their personal well-being to be good and win.

A medical study from the 1990s asked athletes if they could take a pill that would make them great at sports but would kill them in 20 years. More than a third of the athletes surveyed said they would take the pill.

And it is not just the athlete who is tempted to win at all costs. Coaches, parents, schools, and communities are also very invested in winning in sports for the many advantages that will be available to those people as well.

For most athletes, this push to be better is a great motivation and a very productive factor in their lives. But, many athletes struggle to handle the pressures to win at all cost. In just the recent past we have seen larger-than-life sports heroes such as Lance Armstrong and Oscar Pistorius fall from grace.

Having served as a team physician at the Little League, high school and collegiate level since 1996, I have seen several patterns of progress for young athletes who aspire to play at the collegiate level and beyond. I will call these the straight-arrow, boomerang, and shoot-yourself-in-the-foot approaches.

The straight-arrow approach describes the athlete who is able to maintain balance in training, responses to the trappings of athletic success, and in personal relationships. I have seen this approach lead to more success in getting to the next level of sport beyond high school.

A critical success factor for young athletes is building in rest and recovery time to avoid overuse and burnout. Young athletes are not just small adults. Their bodies and brains are growing and changing rapidly. This means that time is needed to adjust and recover. Cross training in several sports can assist with this as well to use muscle groups and stress the body in different ways.

Even when an athlete knows that a particular sport is the one that he/she wants to focus on, it is imperative to build in some rest time. This helps to avoid injury and mental burnout while continuing to build skills.

The boomerang approach is by that athlete who has pushed to the point of overuse injuries and other health-related problems but is able to rehabilitate and return to a more balanced state. After injury, there is a new line on limits. It is a process for athletes to learn when to push, when to back off and how to manage practices and games so that he/she can recover and play as much as safely possible.

The shoot-yourself-in-the-foot approach occurs when the athlete is pushing too hard all of the time. He/she never wants to let injuries quite heal, plays on multiple teams with no breaks, and wants to play through injuries repeatedly. The justification for this is to get that scholarship, spot on the team, etc.

While there sometimes are clearly certain circumstances when you want to push through to play, this should not happen on a routine basis. These athletes tend to get repetitive injuries, and often over time, the sport is not as fun as it used to be. Many times, full potential never develops and burnout is high. There is often less balance in personal relationships as the desire to be that star athlete is such a dominant part of their lives.

Sports are a fun and important aspect of our lives. There are many advantages for young athletes to join in, but a balance needs to be developed to help avoid the downsides of participation and to prepare athletes for playing longer and handling the challenges.

UCF Forum columnist Dr. Lisa Barkley is the assistant dean for Diversity and Inclusion and an assistant professor of medicine in the University of Central Florida’s College of Medicine. She can be reached at Lisa.Barkley@ucf.edu.

State program recognizes top students in science, technology, engineering and math

TALLAHASSEE — Central Florida’s highest-achieving science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) students joined their peers from across the state in Orlando to be honored during the recent 2013 Sunshine State Scholars program.

The two-day awards and recruitment event celebrated the accomplishments of these elite students and provided a unique venue for Florida’s colleges and universities to recruit their talents.

Each school district selected the top 11th-grade STEM scholar to participate. Locally, Ian Chan of West Shore Junior-Senior School in Melbourne past the 2013 Scholars list.

The Sunshine State Scholars program is possible because of collaboration among the Florida Education Foundation, the Division of Florida Colleges, the State University System of Florida, and the Florida Department of Education.

Event sponsors of this year’s program included AT&T, State Farm, Helios Education Foundation, Universal Orlando Resort, Gulf Power Co., The Florida Lottery, “Florida Trend” magazine, and Capital City Bank.

For more information about the event, visit FloridaEducationFoundation.org.

Melbourne Regional Chamber selects F.I.T. Aviation as its Business of Month

The Melbourne Regional Chamber’s Better Business Council recognized F.I.T. Aviation LLC as the February recipient of its Better Business of the Month Award. The firm was awarded this recognition at the Chamber’s monthly Business Breakfast of Champions event at the Hilton Melbourne Rialto.

The award, sponsored monthly by Chamber Trustee Member Courtyard by Marriott/Residence Inn Marriott, was presented to Donna Wilt, Florida Tech’s associate dean of the College of Aeronautics.

F.I.T. Aviation is a “high-quality flight-training company.” It provides flight training for F.I.T. students, airlines around the world, and customers in the local community as well. F.I.T. Aviation has been a Chamber member for 13 years and a Better Business Council member for nine years. F.I.T. Aviation also helps the Chamber host local events such as the annual “Aviation Day” and the “Defenders Car Show.”
BCC is tops in Central Florida graduation rates, says study by the U.S. Department of Education

A new federal study bolsters Brevard Community College’s reputation as one of the top community colleges in the state and nation.

It shows that BCC has the highest graduation rate among all community colleges in Central Florida, according to a U.S. Department of Education database.

The recent report showed that more than 47 percent of full-time students working toward an associate degree at BCC finished within three years. Lake-Sumter State College has the second-highest graduation rate at about 40 percent. Polk State College has the lowest graduation rate at less than 29 percent.

The graduation rates were among the information in a new “College Scorecard” database that was released after President Barack Obama’s State of the Union speech Feb. 12. BCC President Dr. Jim Richey said the data reflects the college’s focus on working closely with students to guide them into the right career track and required coursework.

He cited the college’s Career Planning and Development Center as an example of the effort. More than 16,200 students have utilized its services since it opened early last year with a growing emphasis on internships that can lead to jobs upon graduation. The center also partners with more than 60 companies.

“The graduation rates are a direct result of the excellent work by our faculty and staff, who are dedicated to doing everything possible to help students graduate on time and succeed,” said Richey.

Other studies the past year have also ranked BCC highly in graduation rate categories. Statistics from the Florida College System showed BCC ranked second in graduation rates among the 28 member colleges. Meanwhile, a “Community College Week Magazine” analysis of U.S. Department of Education statistics ranked BCC 19th in the U.S. in awarding A.A. degrees among 1,200 community colleges nationwide.

The same analysis showed BCC ranked 13th in awarding associate degrees in science technologies, 68th in awarding associate degrees to African-American students, and 76th in awarding associate degrees to members of all minorities.

BCC offers more than 100 two-year degree and certificate programs and will start offering four-year bachelor degrees in August after becoming Eastern Florida State College on July 1.

Florida 4–H pushes to reach registration goal for event at Capitol

GAINESVILLE — This year, Florida reached a milestone, marking the 500th anniversary of Juan Ponce de Leon’s arrival on Florida’s east coast.

To commemorate that anniversary, Florida 4–H has come up with a goal related to the number 500: The University of Florida–based organization hopes to bring 500 green-shirted young people to the state’s government headquarters in Tallahassee for its annual 4–H Day at the Capitol event on March 14.

“4–H Day at the Capitol is a unique event because it isn’t just about being at the capitol and looking at the legislative chambers, but it is about understanding what is taking place within those chambers,” said Jordan Callaham, state 4–H events coordinator.

The event has drawn about 400 4–H youth in recent years, but event organizers hope to add 100 to their ranks this year, Callaham said. Participants will take part in mock legislative sessions, observe government at work, watch the state’s Supreme Court, or any of a number of other activities designed to enlighten them about government.

The 4–Hers also will have the chance to meet and talk with elected officials. 4–H is the nation’s largest youth-development organization and has more than 230,000 members in Florida. 4–H is part of the University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

Dr. Jiannine to speak at paralegal meeting

Brevard Paralegal Association, an affiliate of the Paralegal Association of Florida Inc., will host its monthly meeting at 6 p.m. on Thursday, March 14, at Suntree Country Club in Melbourne. The guest speaker will be Dr. Louis Jiannine, who will talk on the topic of “The Mythology of Hearsay.” From the time of its formation in 1991, BPA has supported the needs of paralegals and paralegal students on the Space Coast by providing a local forum for networking and continuing legal education. To RSVP or receive more information, contact Sabine Martel at bpameetings@yahoo.com.
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Longtime area business Visual Dynamics earns Apple’s highest level of recognition as a service provider

Visual Dynamics Inc., with stores in Indian Harbour Beach and at The Avenue Viera, has earned Apple’s highest level of recognition as a service provider.

The longtime business was presented with Apple’s “Premium Service Provider” award.

This status is only given to a select few top service providers worldwide and recognizes Visual Dynamics for its outstanding performance providing service and repairs of Apple products as well as technical ability and knowledge.

There are a number of metrics that Apple uses to evaluate performance, such as overall customer satisfaction, repair efficiency and how quickly repairs are completed.

Technical excellence is also part of the evaluation, as the technical staff is required to have achieved a number of high-level certifications to qualify as a Premium Service Provider.

Apple’s expectation for businesses such as Visual Dynamics is to provide a “world-class” experience for customers including excellence in sales, superior product knowledge, outstanding training and classroom facilities, and quick and efficient “break/fix repairs” as well as troubleshooting. Premium Service Providers “go above and beyond” those expectations, said Apple.

Visual Dynamics (VisDynInc.com) is an authorized Apple Specialist. It offers the complete line of Apple Macintosh Computers, iPads and iPods. The business has been locally owned and operated for nearly 25 years by Jay Wooten. Visual Dynamics has exclusively sold Apple products since its inception.

Space Coast Cancer Center chosen to pilot a breast cancer quality program

Space Coast Cancer Center was selected to collaborate with the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) in developing CancerLinQ, a “ground-breaking” information-technology initiative that aims to achieve higher quality, higher value cancer care with better outcomes for patients.

Space Coast Cancer Center is one of four cancer centers in the U.S. helping ASCO to pilot the breast cancer-specific prototype of the CancerLinQ system. CancerLinQ is supported by the Cancer Care Foundation of the ASCO, the Susan G. Komen “For the Cure,” Helsinn Group, and Genentech.

Space Coast Cancer Center says it is the first practice in Florida, and the only cancer center in Brevard County, certified for quality by the ASCO’s Quality Oncology Practice Initiative.

For further information regarding Space Coast Cancer Center, call toll free (800) 894–HOPE (4673) or visit www.SpaceCoastCancer.com.
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SATURDAY, MARCH 16 .... 7:30 P.M.
SUNDAY, MARCH 17 ........ 2 P.M.
TUESDAY, MARCH 19 ...... 7:30 P.M.
THURSDAY, MARCH 21 .... 7:30 P.M.
FRIDAY, MARCH 22 ....... 7:30 P.M.
SATURDAY, MARCH 23 ..... 2 P.M.
SUNDAY, MARCH 24 ....... 2 P.M.
TUESDAY, MARCH 26 ...... 7:30 P.M.
THURSDAY, MARCH 28 .... 7:30 P.M.
FRIDAY, MARCH 29 ....... 7:30 P.M.
SATURDAY, MARCH 30 ..... 2 P.M.
SATURDAY, MARCH 30 .... 7:30 P.M.
SUNDAY, MARCH 31 ....... 2 P.M.
Brenner Real Estate Group closes lease transactions here and West Palm Beach

Brenner Real Estate Group, a full-service commercial real-estate firm based in Fort Lauderdale with offices at Imperial Plaza in Melbourne, has reported a new lease and two lease renewals.

Carla Casey, regional manager and property management in Brevard County, and Colette Wood, commercial leasing and sales associate, handled the following lease renewals:

- Senator Thad Altman has renewed his lease of 1,335 square feet of office space within Imperial Plaza, 6767 N. Wickham Road, for a state of Florida senate office. Casey and Wood represented the landlord, Sterwick Development Corp. The tenant represented himself.
- Goodman Gable Gould, an insurance adjustment firm, has renewed its lease of 1,329 square feet within Imperial Plaza, 6765–6769 N. Wickham Road. Casey and Wood represented the landlord, Sterwick Development Corp. The tenant represented itself.

Bert Freehof, vice president, commercial brokerage, negotiated this new lease:

- Medical Coral Way Center has leased 2,450 square feet of retail space at Dixie Plaza, 1401 S. Military Trail, in West Palm Beach. Freehof represented the landlord, Roshi LLC. The tenant represented itself.

Brenner Real Estate Group provides asset solutions, brokerage, development, investment sales, property management, asset management, and receivership services for office, multi-family, industrial/commercial, and retail properties. The firm has been serving Florida since 1987.

For more information, visit www.breg.net, on Facebook at “Brenner Real Estate Group” or contact the firm in Melbourne at 242–4575.

Songwriters series comes to King Center in Melbourne March 15 in Studio Theatre

Island Music's popular “Writers' Night” songwriter series is coming to the King Center for the Performing Arts on the campus of Brevard Community College in Melbourne. Some of the best songwriters of the Space Coast and beyond will perform in concert at 7 p.m. on Friday, March 15, in the Studio Theatre.

The featured songwriters will include Sheryl Paige, Austin Church, Ashely Breau and many more.

“We're excited to come to the King Center,” said Island Music owner Sam Tritico. “In five years this series has been graced with over 250 different writers from beginners to Grammy winners. We're delighted to be doing this show at such a prestigious venue with some of our best talent — and for an important cause.”

Tickets are $20 and all proceeds will benefit the Space Coast Cancer Foundation. Single tickets may be purchased by visiting kingcenter.com or by calling the ticket office at 242–2219.
Pilot Club of Titusville to present annual fashion show at La Cita Country Club — to benefit Children’s Center and North Brevard Charities; seeks sponsors

By Ken Datzman

TITUSVILLE — For more than 50 years, the Pilot Club of Titusville Inc. has been quietly going about its mission as a volunteer service organization bettering the lives of people in North Brevard County through its outreach efforts.

The club promotes the “awareness of brain-related disorders” and works to improve the lives of those affected — through education, volunteer activities, financial support, and research, said businesswoman Lily Renzetti, president of the Pilot Club of Titusville, which was established in 1957.

“We are proud of Winnie,” said Renzetti. “We’ve had male and female members before and we’re always recruiting both men and women. “We’ve had male members, said Renzetti, who runs Renzetti NeuroScience.” These findings may be at the heart of the mechanisms underlying intellectual disability and many other brain disorders, the research said.

Brain-related illnesses include Alzheimer’s disease, post-traumatic stress disorders, depression, and autism.

A new finding in neuroscience “for the first time” points to a developmental mechanism linking the disease-causing mutation in an autism-related disorder, “Timothy syndrome,” and the observed defects in “brain wiring.” The study was published online Jan. 13 in “Nature Neuroscience.” These findings may be the pilot’s motto is “Friendship and service.”

One of the Pilot Club of Titusville’s main fund-raising events is its annual fashion show. This year’s benefit, themed “Pretty Woman — Diamonds are Forever,” will be hosted from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, March 23, at La Cita Country Club in Titusville.

Fashions will be provided by Dillard’s of Merritt Square Mall. Models will showcase the new trends in clothing. They include Winnie Brewer, Ashley Byrne, Donna Cox, Cathy Denson, Jo Lyn Nelson, Rachel Greene, Christi Reid, Robi Milbert, Patrice Pilot, Suzanne Sparling, Cathy Denson, and Holly Woolsey.

Candi Neuwelder, owner of the Merle Norman & Boutique in Titusville, will emcee the event and provide accessories from her store. There will be a jewelry raffle and a 50-50 drawing. Dillard’s has donated some gift baskets.

Tickets to the event are $35 per person and include lunch. Tickets must be purchased in advance of the luncheon. Sponsorship opportunities begin at $125 for the “Tres Chic” level and go up to the $1,000 “James Bond” support level, said Katherine Musick, the Pilot Club of Titusville’s corresponding secretary and catering manager for La Cita Country Club.

“We have four sponsorship levels. However, any donations will be greatly appreciated. Last year this event raised $10,000 and our goal this year is $16,000,” said Musick.

For sponsorships, tickets and event information, contact Evelyn Taylor, event chairwoman and fund-raising committee member, at 543-9637 or Musick at 480-8594. Tickets are also available for purchase from Pilot Club members.

Proceeds from the fashion show will benefit The Children’s Center in Titusville and the North Brevard Charities Sharing Center, said Renzetti. “Every year we choose one or two organizations in the community that fall within our mission to support from this fund-raiser.”

The Children’s Center, a service of Parrish Medical Center, provides a full range of childhood health, education, and human services at one location in Titusville.

“It’s a typical day care, but it also serves special-needs children, handicapped children, and developing children, all in one setting, said Esther Porta, president-elect of the Pilot Club of Titusville.

“The center has a full-service playground that is handicap-accessible and was recently renovated. It’s a great facility. There are different sections fenced off so the teachers are able to watch the kids.”

The facility offers activities at every developmental stage for youngsters. The center, home to several health and human-service agencies, including the Child Care Association and Healthy Families Brevard, hosts community education classes for families.

It serves more than 1,000 children and their families yearly and relies on support from the community and the Jess Parrish Medical Foundation.

The Pilot Club of Titusville, a service organization that focuses on promoting awareness of brain-related disorders, will host its annual fashion show fund-raiser March 23, at La Cita Country Club in Titusville. Tickets are $35 and must be purchased in advance. Sponsorships start at $125. From left: Lily Renzetti, club president; Katherine Musick, corresponding secretary; Esther Porta, president-elect; and Evelyn Taylor, event chairwoman. They are at La Cita Country Club.
Positioned in the commercial market, U.S. Lawns sees solid growth, buys own facility; Michael Silverstein reaches out to area veterans through Aging Matters

By Ken Datzman

ROCKLEDGE — The small business U.S. Lawns is growing in the Brevard County market and has purchased an 8,000-square-foot facility to better accommodate its team and sizable inventory of equipment.

The full-service professional landscape-management business serves the commercial market, including homeowner associations, condominiums, office parks, shopping centers, municipal centers, and industrial costumers.

The company’s new facility on Commerce Parkway is situated on about two useable acres and contains a large warehouse. U.S. Lawns of Brevard’s working inventory includes a full stable of mowers and roughly 20 vehicles.

At peak season, the business generally employs some 45 people.

“We’re growing and needed a larger facility,” said businessman Michael Silverstein, whose company worked with Michael Moss of area firm Lightle Beckner Robison Inc. in locating the new site for U.S. Lawns of Brevard.

The property housed a similar business, so few adjustments needed to be made to the building, said Silverstein.

The Silverstein family purchased an existing U.S. Lawns of Brevard franchise in 2005 and have guided the business into the Orlando-based company’s “Million-Dollar Club.”

Founded in 1986, U.S. Lawns has 260 franchise locations nationwide, and is coming off a record year of growth in 2012. The “Kiplinger Letter” ranks U.S. Lawns as one of the “seven fastest-growing franchises” with staying power.

U.S. Lawns of Brevard is operated by Michael Silverstein, a U.S. Army veteran, his wife Norma Silverstein and their son Brandon Silverstein. It’s a veteran-owned, woman-owned business that is experiencing solid growth in a competitive industry.

“We have been growing around 20 percent a year for the last three years,” said Brandon Silverstein, general manager of the business, who joined the company a number of years ago after graduating from the University of Tampa with a bachelor’s degree in economics.

The Silversteins were invited to attend U.S. Lawns’ recent annual “Million-Dollar Retreat” held at the Waldorf Astoria in Naples. Franchise owners have the opportunity to network, discuss best practices in the industry, and relax.

“The retreat presents a good platform to share ideas and information with your colleagues,” said Michael Silverstein. “And the corporate office provides insight at these events on helping franchise owners move to the next level of profitability, which is important.”

He added, “Pricing has become a big issue in the last three years because of the economy. But we have been fortunate enough to grow in this environment. Our penetration is full service. Businesses are looking for price performance, but I think they are starting to understand that price is only one piece of the puzzle. We provide clients with one-stop shopping for their commercial grounds.”

Their company’s services include irrigation, fertilization, and tree-trimming, said Brandon Silverstein, who has a certified pest control operator’s business license. U.S. Lawns of Brevard is licensed in the specialty areas of irrigation and fertilization. “We focus on ‘curb’ appeal. It adds value to a property,” said Brandon Silverstein.

U.S. Lawns of Brevard surveys its customers on a quarterly basis and has customer service at the top of its mission statement. “I personally try to visit all of our clients or contact them at least once a month,” said Brandon Silverstein, whose company also has a job foreman and a crew leader as a point of contact. “It’s all about delivering what you say you are going to deliver to the customer, and be on time for the scheduled work.”

The Silversteins run their business as one big family, with activities and socials for the employees scheduled regularly. U.S. Lawns of Brevard took its employees to Universal Studios in Orlando last year for its annual holiday party. Throughout the year, the company hosts cookouts for its employees and bowling nights at the alleys.

“We try to reward our employees,” said Brandon Silverstein. “The job is hard. I remember when I started with the company and was fresh out of college. I did a little of everything, and I still try to get out there every couple of months and work alongside them for a few hours. We show the employees respect.”

The Silversteins are involved in the community through a number of organizations, one of which is Aging Matters in Brevard. Aging Matters is a private not-for-profit entity that operates a number of programs, including The Brevard Community Kitchen, Meals-on-Wheels, and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program project, or RSVP.

Michael Silverstein volunteers to drive veterans on a weekly basis to their various appointments around the county. Most of the trips are for medical purposes.

For the calendar year 2012, he drove 1,173 miles and donated 51.2 hours of his time to help veterans in the community, according to Connie Emmons, the Senior TranServe program coordinator for Aging Matters. He was singled out for making a “significant impact in the community.”

Aging Matters has just been named the recipient of a highly competitive RSVP project grant by the Corporation for National and Community Service in Washington, D.C.

“This is the first time we had to compete nationally as part of a federal requirement. We are thrilled about the grant,” said Britta Moore, director of RSVP for Aging Matters in Brevard, whose RSVP project is scheduled to begin this spring with details to be announced soon.

The CNCS is providing more than $14 million in funding to support organizations and nonprofits across the country, in a host of areas including veterans’ services.

“There are 500 to 800 homeless veterans in Brevard County. We need to reach out to them,” said Michael Silverstein, who will be involved in the new RSVP project.
Public invited to help ensure accuracy of fallen soldiers’ names for war memorial covering a six-county region

TAVARES — The Central Florida Veterans Memorial Park Foundation Inc. is seeking information from the public to ensure that all soldiers who died in battle — starting from World War I until and including present-day conflicts — are thoroughly and correctly honored at a new memorial to be built.

Soldiers will be included from Lake, Brevard, Orange, Osceola, Seminole and Volusia counties.

The Veterans Memorial Park will be located adjacent to the new Veterans Affairs Medical Center at Lake Nona, in southeast Orlando. As the foundation begins the construction phase, and before etching granite, it requests all corrections and additions as soon as possible, and no later than April 30.

The names of the fallen now appear, by county, at www.cfvmpf.org, under the “Honors/Fallen Heroes” section. The website also lists the criteria used by government agencies for being honored, as well as information on how to correct and add names to the list, if honorees appear to be missing.

“There are several reasons why a soldier might not be in the official records,” said Tom Osebold, veterans services officer with Lake County’s Community Services Department.

“For example, a fallen soldier might be from one of the six counties, but entered the military outside Central Florida and thus, he would not be found in the official record. Another reason might be an ROTC–commissioned officer with a Home of Record within our six–county region, but was commissioned outside the region.”

The research for these names began in 2007 and will be complete with the public’s help. Sources of the names were from the U.S. Department of Defense, Florida’s Department of Veterans Affairs and from County Veteran Service Officer records for the six counties in the region.

In the past two years, the all–volunteer board of directors of the Central Florida Veterans Memorial Park Foundation has raised sufficient gifts and pledges in both private and public dollars to begin constructing the $1.5 million Veterans Memorial. Ongoing fund–raising efforts seek another $1.5 million in outright gifts, as well as bequests from veterans to the public, for an endowment fund, intended to facilitate the ongoing maintenance of the memorial grounds.

Verification documents may be e–mailed to honors.committee@cfvmpf.org, faxed to (407) 679–1699, or sent via U.S. mail to the Honors Resolution Committee, c/o CFVMPF, P.O. Box 4303, Winter Park, Fla., 32793–4303. For more information, call Jerry Pierce, chairman of the foundation, at (407) 529–6925.

Diaz named regional president for TD Bank in Florida, promoted from market role

TD Bank has named Jesus “Ernie” Diaz regional president for the company’s Florida operations. In this role, Diaz will lead TD Bank’s retail, small business, commercial and specialty–banking operations and lending services throughout a network of more than 170 stores. Most recently, the position was held by Kevin Gillen, who has been promoted to head of Retail Strategy and Solutions for TD Bank.

“I am excited to take on this new role as TD Bank continues to expand its business and provide unmatched convenience and legendary service to customers in Florida,” said Diaz.

“There is tremendous growth opportunity here, and I’m excited that TD Bank is serving the banking needs of more Floridians and Florida businesses each day.”

Diaz has more than 28 years of banking experience, including five years with TD Bank. Most recently, he served as the South Florida market president, leading commercial banking operations in the region.

A longtime South Florida resident, Diaz serves on The Beacon Council Executive Board, The Orange Bowl Committee, Florida International University School of Business Dean’s Council, and Latin Builders’ Association Executive Board. He is also a corporate director of Florida Christian School, and serves as FIU’s director of Pino Global Entrepreneurship.

Diaz earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Florida International University in Miami and a master’s degree in accounting from Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale. He is a licensed certified public accountant.

In his new role, Diaz will maintain an office in Coral Gables. To learn more about TD Bank, visit www.TDBank.com.
Aging Matters appoints Tom Kammerdener as the new director of its Brevard Community Kitchen operation

COCOA — Aging Matters in Brevard has announced the hiring of Tom Kammerdener as the new director of The Brevard Community Kitchen.

Kammerdener comes with a “wealth of experience” in the food–services industry. For the last 19 years, Kammerdener worked for Health First Inc., where he was instrumental in providing food services for Holmes Regional Medical Center in Melbourne, including inpatient, cafeteria, employee day care, and catering.

Aging Matters’ Community Kitchen provides hot, nutritious meals for Meals on Wheels, Seniors at Lunch, adult and child day–care centers, charter schools and the parks and recreation summer–lunch program in the county.

The kitchen also operates a catering service for corporate banquets, annual picnics, and community events as well as providing meals during times of disasters for first responders and special–needs shelters. Located in Rockledge, the kitchen produces more than 500,000 meals a year.

“Coming to Aging Matters in Brevard was a wonderful opportunity to enter an exciting new world and get back to the grassroots of helping people in our community,” said Kammerdener.

“I look forward to all challenges that come my way. The foundation is strong, filled with dedicated associates and volunteers working toward one goal. When speaking to others about the position every person recognized the Meals–on–Wheels program. Now it’s an opportunity to continue the mission of Aging Matters in Brevard.”

Cindy Flachmeier, president and chief executive officer of Aging Matters in Brevard, added, “We are very fortunate that we were able to find someone of Tom’s caliber to fill this role. Tom’s wealth of experience and knowledge of the food–services industry has already made him a key addition to the Aging Matters in Brevard team. I’m confident that Tom will play a key role in providing and implementing high quality solutions for our clients.”

Established in 1965, Aging Matters in Brevard is a nonprofit organization recognized by the Florida Department of Elder Affairs and the Area Agency on Aging as the lead organization for senior services in Brevard County.

Aging Matters in Brevard services are funded by federal, state and local grants. Private–pay services are also available. The organization offers a variety of services to enable seniors to live safely and independently in their own homes.

Physician Helft of Pediatric Wizards named one of ‘America’s Top Pediatricians’

Area practitioner Dr. David Helft has been named one of “America’s Top Pediatricians” by the Consumers’ Research Council of America.

Dr. Helft has practiced in Brevard County for almost 12 years. He has built a “well–respected pediatric practice” known as Pediatric Wizards. As part of his commitment to children, Dr. Helft took part in a medical mission trip to Nicaragua this past spring, and “takes great pride in caring for the children of our military service members.”

Pediatric Wizards is also a corporate sponsor for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, Walk to Remember and the Brianna Marie Foundation.

His “bright, fun, kid–centered office,” located at 1310 W. Eau Gallie Blvd. in Melbourne, features a yellow–brick road leading to a “medieval castle” at the front desk. There are two separate waiting rooms to accommodate both sick and well children. A sleeping dragon in the hallway leads the children to four examination rooms, each with a different theme to make patients of all ages feel comfortable.

Parents says they “love to see photos of their children posted on the walls,” along with lots of sports memorabilia as Dr. Helft is a sports fan. Both healthy and sick children get excited to visit “The Wizard and his Castle.”

Dr. Helft is assisted by pediatric nurse practitioner Emine Comer. She specializes in newborn care, nursing mothers, toddlers, teenagers and female patients who “feel more comfortable seeing a female provider.”

The office has recently decided to open its “castle doors” and accept new patients (so long as the family is willing to vaccinate, even using a modified schedule). Patients are accepted on an individual basis so that the practitioner sees no more than an average of 30 patients per day, he said. For more information, visit www.PediatricWizards.com.
Soto rising through the ranks at Allied Steel Buildings in South Florida; named GM of international accounts

Catherine Soto, the new general manager of international accounts for South Florida–based Allied Steel Buildings, is a driving force for the company’s expansion in Latin America.

Soto has been rising through the ranks at Allied since her start in 2009 as a project coordinator for the company’s Latin American business division.

She began by managing engineering schedules, client communications and logistics. By 2011, she moved up to project manager with the firm. At Allied, Soto has managed more than 4 million square feet of one–story steel building projects in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Allied has been providing buildings in Latin America and the Caribbean since 2005. However, it wasn’t until 2009 that the company made a significant investment in the market, by hiring new personnel, which “has paid off.” That staff is now being managed by Soto as the company’s newly appointed general manager for international accounts.

“Catherine is an integral part of our company, her management style and ability to look for solutions has enabled us to expand our presence in multiple countries as well as increase our repeat business,” said Chris Rucker, director of Latin America/Caribbean accounts for Allied.

Originally from the country of Panama, Soto has worked in the construction industry in South Florida for 12 years. While working at Allied, she attended the construction–management program at Florida International University and later transferred to Broward College, where she received a degree in business management.

“I feel very fortunate to have attended both programs,” said Soto. “I was able to gain real–world experience in the classroom from my professors. Going to school and working helped me grow professionally and I was able to apply all of the things I was learning in school to work directly. By setting this goal I was able to challenge myself and achieve my dream.”

She has been a part of the project team that has managed some of the largest buildings the company has completed to date, including a power plant at the Panama Canal that will provide power to the Canal expansion as well as send power back to Panama City.

“It’s exciting to see Catherine’s growth at Allied, said Michael Lassner, company president. “She’s a great example of what can be accomplished in our industry and internally at Allied where we are focused on organic growth. She’s also a good role model for South Florida University students on what can be accomplished. We look forward to her continued success here in this new leadership role at Allied.”

Allied is celebrating its 10–year anniversary, with more than “3,700 projects delivered.” For more information on the company, see AlliedBuildings.com.

Area firm Militano Construction signs new projects, including medical facility

Militano Construction of Indian Harbour Beach has announced the start of several new projects.

“The first quarter of 2013 is off to a great start,” said businessman Kyle Militano, founder of Militano Construction, a longtime general contracting firm. His company is currently in the design phase and will be breaking ground soon on a state–of–art 20,000–square–foot medical facility in Suntree.

In addition to that project, Militano Construction has secured a contract to build a 7,500–square–foot custom home in Indialantic, and is breaking ground on a 10,000–square–foot riverfront estate on Merritt Island, he said.

Prudential Sterling announces top five producers

Barbara Wall and Nancy Taylor, broker–owners of Prudential Sterling Properties in Indian Harbour Beach, have announced their company’s top five producing associates for 2012. They are Rae McCabe, Deanna Davis, Shari Abbott, Lynn Raymond and Alicia Lozeau. Prudential Sterling, which is independently owned and operated, became a member of the Prudential Real Estate Network in 1992. Prudential Sterling Properties was founded in September 1982. Since that time it has earned a host of honors. Prudential Sterling serves all of Brevard and Indian River counties, with offices in Indian Harbour Beach and Vero Beach. For more information about the agency, call 768–7600.
WASHINGTON — Borrowers and lenders of loans backed by the U.S. Small Business Administration will have greater access to capital and less paperwork as a result of a proposed regulation aimed at streamlining the SBA application process, while also strengthening oversight and the integrity of the agency’s loan programs.

“Streamlining and simplifying has been a key focus of our agency over the last few years. The changes are the latest steps to reduce paperwork burden, with our eye on the larger goal of expanding access to capital and giving entrepreneurs and small business owners the financial resources to grow and create jobs,” said SBA Administrator Karen Mills.

“Specifically, these proposed regulations will provide greater access to capital through our two largest loan programs, while also reducing risk to taxpayer dollars.”

The SBA proposes the new measures after extensive consultations with lenders and borrowers to identify the greatest challenges they face and find ways to reduce barriers to making and accessing loans, while still maintaining strict oversight.

“SBAs efforts to streamline and simplify the loan program produced positive results over the past few years,” said SBA South Florida District Director Francisco “Pancho” Marrero. “Changes to the Small Loan Advantage (SLA) Program are one example. In the south Florida district alone, we have nearly double the numbers of SLA loans during the first quarter of the fiscal year over the previous fiscal year’s total number.”

Among the proposed changes are:

- Eliminating the Personal Resource Test: A borrower will no longer be required to obtain a maximum level of personal finance resources for a 7(a) or 504 loan. This will streamline the loan process by eliminating complicated regulations used to determine the amount of collateral required.
- Revising the Rule on Affiliation: Revising this rule will open access to SBA loans to businesses that, under current rules, would not qualify as a small business under SBA’s size standards by virtue of their association with other companies. It also would streamline 504 loan applications and reduce paperwork requirements for 504 and 7(a) loan applications.
- Eliminating the Nine–Month Rule for the 504 Loan Program: Eliminating the Nine–Month rule removes a restriction that limits a business to include in its 504 project only expenses incurred nine months prior to submitting the loan application. The new rule would allow inclusion of expenses incurred at any time (for example, projects put on hold for more than nine months because of a natural disaster).
- Increasing Accountability of the Certified Development Companies’ Board of Directors while Eliminating Requirements for Membership: Refocusing CDC corporate governance requirements will reinforce the importance of board accountability for CDC oversight for the 504 loan program and set in place measures to strengthen oversight in order to maintain program integrity.


Justin Connors of Connors Wealth Management makes LPL Financial club

COCOA BEACH — Justin Connors, an independent financial adviser at Connors Wealth Management in Cocoa Beach, has been named to the LPL Financial Patriot’s Club.

This distinction is based on an annual production ranking of the roughly 13,300 registered advisers nationwide who are supported by LPL Financial LLC, the nation’s largest independent broker–dealer network.

“We congratulate Justin Connors for this excellent achievement, which demonstrates a strong commitment to vibrant business growth and exceptional client service,” said Bill Dwyer, president of national sales and marketing for LPL Financial. “Patriot’s Club advisers are among the most respected financial advisers in our industry. They serve as trusted partners for their clients and their communities.”

Connors is affiliated with LPL Financial and provides independent financial–planning services, investment advice and asset–management services to more than 100 clients in Brevard County. For more information, visit www.lpl.com.
Nickelodeon mobile app available to Bright House customers, a cutting-edge interactive platform for iPad

ORLANDO — Popular Nickelodeon shows, including “SpongeBob SquarePants,” “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles,” “iCarly,” “Victorious” and more, are now available on the go, anytime and anywhere.

Bright House Networks has announced that a new Nickelodeon mobile app that allows kids to interact with Nick in unprecedented ways is now available to its customers at no additional charge.

Available initially for iPad, the “Nick App” features a moveable tile layout that can be swiped in any direction, promoting discovery and exploration, and offering kids instant and on-demand access to fun and funny content like original video, HTML5 games, polls, articles, photos and more.

Full-length episodes of Nickelodeon’s current top shows will be available via subscriber authentication.

The Nick App is jam-packed with more than 1,000 pieces of Nickelodeon-themed content, including short-form videos of original skits, sketch and comedic bits; behind-the-scenes clips and photos from Nick stars and animated characters; full-length episodes; and polls and games.

The Nick App will add new content daily, and kids will be able to put selected content into a “favorites” drawer to watch whenever they want. True to the spirit of Nickelodeon, the app offers an array of funny interactive elements, as well as a featured “Do–Not–Touch” button that triggers an array of disruptive comedy and surprises.

Content highlights of the Nick App include:

- An offering of HTML5 games at launch, with a new game added every week.
- Music and remixes, including an original SpongeBob SquarePants remix created by electronic music artist Pogo, for launch.
- Weekly videos offering tips and previews of new Nick games.
- Short-form content featuring Nickelodeon’s live-action stars performing skits, comedic music videos, parodies and more.
- “On the Road with BTR,” a documentary-reality series that gives kids an inside look at the daily lives of Big Time Rush.

New local business Green Can Cleaners develops system to sanitize garbage cans

A new company in Brevard County, Green Can Cleaners, protects your “health and the environment from an unexpected hazard.” Florida trash cans contain seven different bacteria, including E. coli, listeria and salmonella. Every time you touch your trash can, “whether it’s lifting the lid to put your trash bags in or dragging it to the street by the handle, you are exposed to these germs.”

Until now, the only solutions were to clean your trash can yourself or dispose of it and buy a new one.

This innovative company has developed a self-contained system that uses high-pressure steam to sanitize garbage cans curbside. There are no chemicals and no runoff into storm drains.

At 225-degree Fahrenheit, “all germs are destroyed,” not just rinsed out, and the water is recycled, says owner Peter Allen, a mechanical engineer who designed the process. He added, “In a place like Florida, where our waterways are such an important part of our ecosystem, it is vital that we do not use chemicals that contaminate them.”

“Steam-cleaning is the preferred method of sanitizing with consumers, health-care advisers and environmentalists. This is important to us because we care about the health of our environment as well as that of our family.”

Green Can Cleaners uses the same process to sanitize playground equipment and shopping carts, which rank second and third in America for the most “unsanitary places we come in contact with regularly,” he said.

For more information about Green Can, contact Denise Allen–Puhl at 610-3571 or visit www.GreenCanCleaners.com.
Sachs Media adds two veteran communicators, deepens the firm’s leadership in new multimedia era

TALLAHASSEE — Solidifying its reach in new-media directions, the award-winning Sachs Media has announced the addition of two veteran communicators who add “extensive expertise” in digital and broadcast media to the firm’s roster.

This announcement comes in the wake of the firm’s rebranding and positioning to “better meet the challenges of an ever-changing communications landscape.”

The new staff additions include 11-year Florida television and radio newsman Trimmel Gomes, the award-winning statewide news director of Florida Public Radio; and Peter Dowling, a former U.S. Marine Corps counter-terrorism team leader who most recently has been a writer and editor within a key unit of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in Washington.

“Sachs Media is adding additional muscle and expertise to the strongest professional team in our industry anywhere in Florida,” said Ron Sachs, founder and chief executive officer. “The addition of Trimmel Gomes and Peter Dowling boosts our capability as we ramp up to a more dominant position in the ever-changing space of modern media.”

Gomes has served as Florida Public Radio’s news director since 2006, and has worked in radio and television around Florida since 2004. A graduate of the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications, Gomes was honored in 2009 by the Associated Press with a “Best in Show” award for investigative reporting and by Public Radio News Directors Inc. with its Edward R. Murrow Award for best investigative reporting.

Dowling has held several government positions in Washington and Florida. His most recent assignment within Homeland Security was in the communications office of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service, where he helped develop strategic marketing and communications plans targeting international students, tourists and business travelers to increase their use of the government’s Electronic Immigration System.

After his honorable discharge as a U.S. Marine lance corporal, where he served in the Third Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team Company, Dowling earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Florida State University, and received a graduate certificate in social media for government from Georgetown University.

Barnes & Noble in Melbourne to offer parent, daughter workshop free of charge

Barnes & Noble Inc. has announced it is teaming up with American Girl to present “Just Between Us,” a parent and daughter event, at the Barnes & Noble store in Melbourne at 10 a.m. on March 18.

This free workshop for parents and daughters, ages 8 and older, will highlight the importance of helping girls build confidence, adopt a healthy self-image and keep the lines of communication open with their parents as they encounter questions and worries about growing up.

American Girl, a leader in providing top-advice books for girls, developed the workshop using content from several of their body- and mind-related guides, including the new “Care & Keeping of You 2: The Body Book for Older Girls,” written by board-certified pediatrician Cara Natterson.

The workshop will focus on successful tips, tools and activities girls and parents can use to navigate the emotional changes and challenges of growing up in the most positive and constructive way possible.


“American Girl has established a huge and loyal following with this book,” said Mary Amicucci, vice president of Children’s Books for Barnes & Noble.

“It’s been a fantastic resource for parents, girls, educators, nurses, pediatricians — anyone who works with or cares for girls and wants to make growing up a little easier for them. We’re thrilled to partner with American Girl on a nationwide event that will bring parents and daughters together to celebrate girlhood and to learn fun ways to enjoy the growing up process together.”

Space is limited at this event. Parents and girls interested in participating may contact Kaori Fischer at 726-8817 for details on how to sign up. Visit www.BN.com/StoreLocator for store locations and additional details.
Habitat for Humanity’s 25th Strawberry Festival set for March 16–17 at Wickham Park Pavilion

Habitat for Humanity of Brevard County will present its 25th annual Strawberry Festival on March 16 and 17 at Wickham Park Pavilion next to Brevard Community College, in Melbourne.

The Open Car and Bike Show, on March 16, is from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sponsorships are available. The event will feature more than 300 antique, classic, custom and hot-rod cars and motorcycles. along with 1950s, 1960s and 1970s music.

The Berry Patch 5K Run is set for 8 a.m. on March 17. Sponsorships are available. The event will be officiated by the Running Zone.

There will be an Arts and Craft exhibit from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on March 16 and 17. Sponsorships are available. More than 200 exhibitors will be showcasing their products.

The “weekend star, of course, is the fresh strawberries picked the day before the festival and served in every imaginable way.” Admission is free. All proceeds from the event will benefit Habitat’s mission of building houses throughout Brevard County. To register, visit www.BrevardHabitat or call 728–4009.

Town of Malabar Springfest scheduled for April 13 in Malabar Community Park

The annual Town of Malabar Springfest will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, April 13, in the Malabar Community Park. The event is offered to the community free of charge. It will feature arts and crafts; live music with “The Johnny Quinlivan Band,” food and beverages, vendors, horse and pony rides, and other activities for children.

The event is billed as “family fun in a rural setting.” Visit www.townofmalabar.org for more details.

Many local businesses are supporting this event. They include: “Hometown News,” CMR Construction Inc., Waste Management, Acquaviva Pharmacies, PODS of Melbourne, Coco-Cola Bottling Co., Data Management/Digital Graphics, Twisty Cone Ice Cream, Marisa Acquaviva, BB&T, TD Bank, and Sunshine Food Mart 44.

Crafters and vendors may obtain an application for the Springfest by contacting event coordinator Cindi Kelley at 727–7764, extension 11, or send an e-mail message to ckelley@townofmalabar.org.

Sponsors and donors are also needed. Donations can be made in the form of cash, products, or services, as well as raffle items.

Law Enforcement Academy accepting applications

Brevard Community College is recruiting for the May 2013 Institute of Public Safety Law Enforcement Academy, scheduled to begin on May 28. The registration deadline is April 15. Applicants are required to take a basic written examination by April 16 in order to be considered for the May academy class. Because of the high demand for law-enforcement training and class-size requirements, placement is limited. Candidates are encouraged to apply as early as possible and work to meet all academy selection requirements, “increasing the odds of getting into the class of choice.” Visit www.BrevardPolice.org.
Beckner, whose firm leases and manages the roughly 300,000-square-foot Florida Business Centre on South Babcock Street in Melbourne.

“I host fishing trips on my boat when clients come here from Chicago and other places, they can’t believe the quality of life and the assets of the county. As a team, we work really hard to build relationships. It’s not just a buzzword for us, we make sure the out-of-towners understand the dynamics in the county,” he said.

Armed with reams of data, they are like ambassadors for the county in the area of business development. Their firm partners with Tuttle–Armfield–Wagner Appraisals and Research to produce the quarterly “Brevard County Commercial Real Estate Report Market Overview.”

The comprehensive report tracks all sectors of the commercial market in the county, including office, retail, industrial, and multifamily occupancy. It is a rich resource for businesspeople.

“We try to pull in all the data we can to help meet the needs of clients,” said Lightle, whose company manages more than 1 million square feet of commercial space in Florida, and is growing.

Lightle Beckner Robison sends the report to its clients “to keep them posted on the overall condition of the commercial real-estate market in the region, within the specific subsectors,” added Beckner, a graduate of Brevard Community College.

Robison says his company’s “uncanny ability to understand market dynamics and be able to match our clients’ needs with clients who have similar needs creates a win-win situation. And when we can do that, it certainly allows for the prospects for growth, which we have been fortunate to experience.”

He added, “We have not changed our business model to be all things to make a quick buck. It’s about being savvy enough to meet the needs of the client.”

Robison worked for more than 15 years in the pharmaceutical industry for global companies in the areas of sales management, corporate development, and training before transitioning to commercial real estate and joining Lightle and Beckner in 2005.

He accepted a bailout from one of the pharmaceutical giants and set his sights on a new career path. “I first spent a stint in residential real estate. In fact, I sold Rob Beckner’s home for him. We met at a local Bible-study gathering,” said Robison.

Recently, Robison was at the center of the deal that brought Bass Pro Shops here, one of the premier outdoor retailers in North America and a destination shopping experience for sportsmen and sportswomen.

Last month, the Springfield, Mo.-based company announced it will open a 112,000-square-foot Bass Pro Shop Sportsman’s Center at the intersection of Interstate 95 and Palm Bay Road.

Robison and colleague Brandon McGuire represented the seller of the existing facility. They worked closely with Johnny Morris, the founder of Bass Pro Shops Inc., which operates 77 retail stores across the U.S. and Canada.

“We spent a lot of time and effort selling them on the natural resources we enjoy in Brevard County, and we were very proactive in the marketing of the facility and its attractive location,” said Robison, who along with McGuire worked directly with Bass Pro as sole brokers of the transaction.

“The marketing of the building involved a very strong data approach. I think the most impressive testimony to client service in this business is when your customer thanks you for helping them understand the market. Over and over again, they have been very complimentary and we are ecstatic about Bass Pro being in Brevard,” said Robison.

Bass Pro Shops is known for combining retail with entertainment, conservation, and education. The company is fast-tracking development of the Palm Bay building and plans to open to serve hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts by this summer.

Atlantic saltwater fishing is one of the big attractions in the region. Demographics show there are more than 1 million people who live within the 50-mile radius of the new store location. The average customer spends more than two hours at a Bass Pro store, according to the company.

“It’s going to be a strong regional pull to the area,” said Robison, who has a bachelor’s degree in biblical studies from Palm Beach Atlantic University. “The new store will help lift the local economy, create jobs (about 200), and bring visitors to the area. They will spend money at restaurants, bait shops, hotels, and other businesses.”

Robison added, “A lot of people will say you just made a big paycheck. When you meet a client’s needs, you are rewarded. But we are not here to serve selfishly; we’re here to create win-win solutions that reach beyond our firm and benefit the community in general.”

Bass Pro Shops purchased the former Chevrolet dealership at 1450 Executive Circle in Palm Bay. Bass Pro acquired the 20-year-old building from iStar Financial Inc., a public company, for $6.5 million. It sits on 12.4 acres.

“That building had been vacant for a number of years,” said Lightle, who is on the board of directors of the Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast and is a past chairman of the organization.

“Jeff reached out to the owners of the building and said ‘give us a chance to market the facility for you.’ And they agreed to do that. Once they gave us the opportunity, I thought Jeff and his team did an outstanding job designing a plan to find the right client. That’s what we try to do for every listing situation.”

Lightle has leased more than 4 million square feet of office, industrial, and retail space over his career, involving some 1,600 transactions. He’s been active volunteering on community boards and says those experiences have provided him additional insight into the county.

“Being intimately involved in the community for many years through various groups and organizations has helped us better understand the market and why we think certain businesses would benefit being here. We are very proactive in telling the story of the area as well as of the specific assets.”

Bass Pro Shops said it saw an opportunity to build its brand in Brevard and draw customers from the surrounding markets.

Bass Pro Shops was recently named by “Advertising Age” magazine as one of the “Top 10 Hottest Brands in America,” and is one of only eight retailers in the U.S. to have earned the J.D. Power “Customer Service Champion” honor.

Last year, Lightle Beckner Robison opened offices in the financial district of Brickell Avenue in Miami, and on North Alafaya Trail in East Orlando, near the 650-acre Lake Noma “medical city,” home to the University of Central Florida College of Medicine, Sanford–Burnham Medical Research Institute, Nemours Children’s Hospital, and other health and life-science facilities.

Beckner is cultivating the East Orlando market and handling business there.

“In general, we have traveled the state for many years doing business,” said Lightle, who earned his bachelor’s degree in financial management from Florida Southern University, where he was the senior class president in 1983.

“It was Brevard clients who took us into the South Florida market, so the opening of the Miami office was a natural progression for our firm. We have spent a lot of time there doing outreach and building relationships, and we are having some successes.”

Over the past three years, investment dollars have poured into South Florida real estate. The money is coming from individual investors in the U.S. and abroad, as well as from real-estate investment trusts.

“From an investment standpoint,” said Lightle, “prices are getting inflated again in South Florida. So we’re looking to bring some of those investment dollars to Brevard County, to show people a place that was like Miami decades ago and has growth potential.”

Lightle was in Coral Gables in January attending an outlook conference hosted by the Florida Chapter of the Certified Commercial Investment Member, a professional organization that offers the CCIM practitioner’s designation.

He said conference attendees were upbeat and economists from the National Association of Realtors in Washington, D.C., presented their forecast for the commercial market this year.

“They said they believe the market has bottomed and it is moving forward. It has a slight incline as far as the direction it’s going, which is positive. That is just one source we look at to help us better understand the direction of the market,” said Lightle, who holds the CCIM designation and is also a member of the Society of Industrial and Office Realtors.

The SIOR Commercial Real Estate Index Survey also points to an improved market in 2013. Vacancy rates are lower than a year ago and leasing activity is up for SIOR members.

“As a firm, we’re positioned to take advantage of market opportunities,” said Lightle, who worked in the financial–services industry for five years as a stockbroker after his college graduation.

“I learned to ‘dial and smile,’ which is what this business is about, too. It’s been a great transition. I can’t believe this is my 25th year in the commercial real-estate business.”
Imperial Plaza is a Class “A” office building located in the heart of Suntree.

It offers newly renovated lobby areas, bathrooms and upgraded finishes.

Space is available from 1,183 sf - 3,600 sf and the CAM is full service net of electric for the premises.

The Beautiful Office Campus, with Riverview offices available, is close to I-95, Patrick AFB and the Government Center.

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