

## NewsWorthy

### County Continues to Worry About Housing

The median price for a home in Manatee/Sarasota area has increased with 34% from 2004 to 2005. The price tag for a median-priced home in the area is \$367,800, according to National Association of Realtors. Several options have been discussed by Manatee County to keep housing at an affordable level. One option is having a land trust hold the property to avoid the reselling at a higher price or put limits on how much profit a homeowner can make. Some of the solutions are already being processed through the system. If approved, developers will be required to have 25% of planned housing in the affordable category. Right now affordable housing is considered \$160,000 or below.

### Manatee County Residents Get Easier Access to Stroke Care

Blake Medical Center in Bradenton and Sarasota Memorial Hospital are now approved as acute care facility providing Manatee County residents with two options when it comes to stroke centers. According to the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organization, Manatee Memorial Hospital's stroke program is under review, but up and running at the time. Other hospitals in the area including Doctors Hospital of Sarasota and Lakewood Ranch Medical Center don't have a stroke center program right now. Doctors Hospital is currently waiting for its certification.

### Community Grants Help Local Organization

Nineteen grants will be given out during a reception at the Lakewood Ranch Town Hall on Oct. 27. The grant money that totals \$76,589.50 comes from the Lakewood Ranch Community Fund that was established in 2000 by Schroeder-Manatee Ranch Inc.

#### *Underneath is a list of the 19 organizations:*

- \$9,009 to Willis Elementary School.
- \$4,000 to the Exchange Club Family Partnership Center.
- \$3,484 to the Art Center Manatee.
- \$1,402 to the Braden River Band Boosters Association.
- \$2,250 to Braden River Middle School.
- \$1,950 to the Braden River Soccer Club.
- \$1,650 to Boy Scouts Troop 303.
- \$2,800 to Family Resources Inc.
- \$5,000 to the Girl Scouts of Gulfcoast Florida, Inc.
- \$3,000 to the Humane Society of Manatee County.
- \$5,000 to Junior Achievement of Manatee.
- \$10,000 to the Lakewood Ranch Community Development Moms group.
- \$3,240 to Manatee Children's Services.
- \$4,696 to Manatee Religious Services Inc.
- \$1,700 from the community fund and \$1,300 from the John W. and Lydia J. Kolbas Family Fund to Manatee Technical Institute.
- \$4,000 to the Myakka City Community Center.
- \$7,000 to Nolan Middle School.
- \$1,108 to the Special Olympics of Manatee County.
- \$4,000 to the YMCA at Lakewood Ranch.

# New Program Motivates Students

By Melissa Donley  
Staff Writer

There is a movement on the campus of Palmetto Elementary School. You can see it everywhere: students working hard and making an 'X' with their arms.

The students are not starting a revolt; they are showing they are 'extreme' students, motivated to do well and make good grades.

It is the new program "Renaissance" that is keeping students, faculty and staff motivated to do the best they can.

"It's a way of recognizing and celebrating academic success, growth, character and citizenship," Principal Eddie Hundley said.

The national program that recognizes the students, staff and faculty is most often used in high schools and middle schools, but Hundley and the Palmetto Elementary staff wanted to make it work for the elementary students.

"It's setting the foundation for them to do well in middle school and high school and eventually graduate," special education teacher Kathy Frey said.

The school's Renaissance committee learned about the program at a conference this year in Orlando.

"You catch the bug," Hundley said. "You catch the fever for Renaissance."

Because it is an elementary school that is making the program work, Palmetto will go back next year and present the program for elementary schools at the conference.

The program began at the school with an appropriate, energizing and motivating kick-off. The 800 students rallied in the cafeteria with the help of the Palmetto High School band and cheerleaders. The school's teachers performed skits that helped explain the program and its benefits to the students.

"The high school kids even got into it," special education teacher Joanne Bergamin said. "It was a good community-building event."

A former Palmetto Elementary student, Jordan Hird, now a middle school student, was brought in to serve as a role model to the students. Hird got every question correct on his FCAT.

The first awards of the school's Renaissance program were presented to the deserving students at the Renaissance Recognition Celebration last Wednesday. Of the about 800 students at Palmetto, nearly 500 qualified for an award.

Students can receive Extreme Student Awards on three different levels. To get a gold award, the student has a 3.5 to 4.0 grade point average, all 1's for grades in Primary, no U's and no office referrals resulting in suspensions. Silver award recipients must have a 3.0 to 3.4 GPA, 1's and 2's for grades in Primary, no U's, D's and F's and no office referrals resulting in suspensions. Bronze awards are for students that have a 2.5 or 2.9 GPA, 2's for grades in Primary, no U's, D's or F's and no office referrals resulting in suspensions.

There are also awards for hard work,

super citizenship, quality work and awesome attendance.

Not all students will be getting awards, just the ones who earned.

"It's not to recognize everyone," Hundley said. "They have to want to earn it. We do it big, but you have to earn it."

The students that win awards will be eligible to win prizes throughout the quarter. With funds from the school's PTA, \$2,500 was used to purchase prizes, such as a remote controlled robot, two bicycles, a 13-inch TV and an X-Box.

Teachers say the prizes are a great incentive for the kids.

"It makes them want to come to school and do well," Bergamin said.

The students are not the only ones who get rewarded in the Renaissance program.

The 'stafulty,' a new phrase used in the program to unify the staff and the faculty, get motivational gifts, such as candy, books and software, that keep them working hard for the students.

"It takes everyone in this school to help the kids," Bergamin said.

Only the students winning awards were invited to Wednesday's ceremony. Hundley says this too helps to motivate the students to do well so they can join the party.

"It's a very hyper, celebratory, exciting experience," Hundley said. "If they don't earn an award, they don't get to go. They'll be in the classroom working while the others are celebrating."

# Lakewood Ranch Grad Takes Holy Role

By Melissa Donley  
Staff Writer

The theater hasn't always been calling for Megan Wintersteen, 20, but the spotlight has.

"I'm just a ham," Wintersteen said. "I

could be on stage all day."

"I'm not a diva," she laughs. "But I guess you could say that."

Wintersteen, a 2003 graduate of Lakewood Ranch High School, will be taking to the stage in the Manatee Community

College musical production "Jesus Christ Superstar" as Mary Magdalene, the only female lead.

"There was a little competition," Wintersteen said. "I knew what I could do and tried my best."

Wintersteen was not always involved in theater productions or music.

"I did ballet, tap and jazz, but I never sang," Wintersteen said.

She stopped cheerleading at Lakewood Ranch High School and decided to audition for the choir. After making the choir, "The Sound of Music" audition posters around school began to catch her eye. She landed the role of Liesl von Trapp, her first musical theater performance.

"I fell in love with it," Wintersteen said. "It was such a good experience."

Now Wintersteen is finishing her final year at MCC as a voice major. She also helps out at a day care, Kids

are Kids, in Lakewood Ranch.

Musical theater is not her only strong suit. Wintersteen said she enjoys classical music and opera. Recently she sang a solo with the orchestra.

For now it is practice, practice, practice for Wintersteen and the cast of the show. The cast found out what roles they got last May and began practicing when school began on Aug. 22.

"I love to be busy," Wintersteen said. "I don't know what I'm going to do when this is over."

Wintersteen does have ideas for her future. She is currently auditioning for Florida State University's music school where she plans to focus more on vocal performance than musical theater.

But there might be more of Wintersteen's name in lights.

"I just want to keep performing," Wintersteen said. "I would love to be Belle in "Beauty and the Beast" or in "Jekyll and Hyde." That would be amazing."

For now, Wintersteen is focusing her efforts and talent on making "Jesus Christ Superstar" a success.

"I think its going to be awesome," Wintersteen said. "The people in the show are amazing. It's so much more fun performing for a bunch of people who are excited about the show."

Those wanting to see a good performance should not let the religious theme of the production keep them away, Wintersteen said.

"Its a really emotional show," she said. "Everyone up there is putting their heart into it. No matter what you believe, it's going to touch you."

The production of "Jesus Christ Superstar" begins on Oct. 28 and continues through Oct. 30 in Neel Performing Arts Center at the MCC-Bradenton Campus. For more information, call the MCC Music Program Office at 752-5351.



Lakewood Ranch High School graduate Megan Wintersteen stars as Mary Magdalene, opposite Kevin Rose as Jesus, in Manatee Community College's performance of "Jesus Christ Superstar" in the Neel Performing Arts Center from Oct. 28 to Oct. 30.