

Manatee River News

December 14, 2007

Serving Communities North and South of the Manatee River

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NewsWorthy

North River Names New Fire Chief

John McInnis was named the new fire chief of the North River Fire District.

A panel of community leaders selected McInnis, a 28-year veteran of the fire district by a 5-2 vote after a panel of community leaders voted. The panel originally recommended the three applicants for a final vote.

McInnis will take over for retiring fire chief Mike Johnson who is retiring after 34 years on the force as well as the last 20 as fire chief. Johnson will now become fire chief of the Parrish fire department where he has been acting fire chief for the past six years.

McInnis was raised in Palmetto.

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Parrish Library Plans on Hold, Not Forgotten

Jeff Berlinicke
Staff Writer

There are a lot of ideas about what Parrish needs to develop itself before the developers do it for them.

One of the things Parrish residents have been clamoring for is a new library. According to Ben Jordan, president of the Parrish Civic Association, there are three major items on the wish lists of Parrish residents. One is a library

and the other two are a community center and a YMCA.

All three have been bandied about, but Jordan said that, while the civic association is working on it, the county couldn't really offer much help until it knows the cost of the projects. With recent budget cuts slashing almost all civic projects to the bone all over the county, the Parrish library is just another item up for consideration.

Until a library project is underway, the best Parrish residents can do is drive to the new, sparkling facility in Palmetto that opened in 2006.

The land is already available, Jordan said. There are nearly 40 acres set aside at State Road 62 and U.S. 301. The library would encompass about four acres with the YMCA on the same site.

"We are working on it," Jordan
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Migrant Workers Have Home for Holidays

Jeff Berlinicke
Staff Writer

Don Sturiano was in his mid-20s and was a self-described "mess."

He was looking for answers that never seemed to be there and laughed off many suggestions as to how he could find those answers.

Finally, with all the skepticism he could muster, he lent an ear. Then he lent the other, and he found his calling. He realized it wasn't karate, even though he practiced professionally. He found religion and set about teaching his own little corner of the world.

"I started to believe in miracles," said Sturiano, now the pastor at the Kingdom Life Christian Church in Palmetto. The ministry operates out of the Holiday Inn at the Riverfront Hotel and has grown rapidly since the first meeting in 2005, when four people gathered in Sturiano's living room.

Sturiano was looking for a way to get his message across and started to hear about the issues with migrant workers in the Palmetto and Parrish area. Most of them lead transient lives and, during the holiday season, often have no place of worship to call home, so Sturiano decided to reach out. His father-in-law works closely with the migrant workers, so it was time to find a place to allow those workers a way to spend the holiday and be able to treat their loved ones to some treats they otherwise couldn't afford.

He got help from the Palmetto community last year when the Taylor & Fulton Packing House offered its facilities to bring migrant workers together for a worship service and it grew this year.

"The Palmetto community responded to us so well," Sturiano said. "There is such compassion in this community and a desire to help and we are just so blessed."

The church offers outreaches during the Easter season and Christmas time. Sturiano brings
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Regatta Pointe Planning Major New Addition in 2008

Jeff Berlinicke
Staff Writer

The newest addition to Regatta Pointe is soon going to marry the finest in Longboat Key dining with the beauty of Palmetto's waterfront.

As yet unnamed, the facility will also host banquets and wedding receptions and is projected to open in the fall of 2008. It will be a local project, a joint effort between Van Der Noord Partners and Regatta Pointe Marina with Zirkelbach Construction, which is based in Palmetto.

The project was designed after the amenities, which have served hundreds of boaters at Regatta Pointe for several decades, were starting to age after several years of upgrades. Van Der Noord said the idea was to bring all of the amenities to a higher-scale condition to match its overall growth of the marina. Not only will a new waterfront restaurant be opening, but there will also be new shower and bathroom facilities, laundry facilities and new media and club room. An exercise facility will also be added.

"Regatta Pointe Marina has been one of the premier waterfront destinations on Florida's West Coast," Van Der Noord said. "Over the years, hundreds of boaters have called Regatta Pointe home and we've been privileged to serve the general community and boat community through our facility."

Regatta Pointe recently celebrated its 25th birthday and this year opened its new day spa - Inspirations - and a new banquet facility.

In 2008, the marina will feature a new exterior, changing from the former "Boston Harbor" look to a more "Grand Floridian" or "Key West" look with softer colors and a metal roof.



Left to Right: Charlie Ugarte - Ugarte and Associates, Inc., Peter VanDerNoord, Mark Buerger, Marc Modisett, Barry Batson and Harry VanDerNoord

The restaurant will have a waterfront theme with paddle fans, bronze corals and seaweed, a painted floor with a flowing water design and lights that mimic seashells and coral.

There will be refined elements as well as granite and dark warm woods. The best feature will be a panoramic setting that allows 180 degree waterfront views.

The entire restaurant will be able to be either open or closed using high-end European glass walls that practically will disappear when opened. This will allow heating and cooling when needed and also has the ability to be open during the cooler and typically busier seasons.

Van Der Noord said that wasn't the only upgrade.

"To service our boating customers we will also update all of our marina amenities and looking to dredge our basin," he said.

The entire building includes two banquet floors and is 12,000 square feet. The new restaurant on the water will be 4,000 square feet and seat more than 150 inside with another 60 on the water.

Van Der Noord said he had been planning the restaurant with several well-known restaurateurs, including two from Longboat Key.

More information will be released in the spring of 2008.