County hosts home builders ‘boot camp’

Four dozen inspectors and home builders gathered at the Flagler County Emergency Operations Center to learn about the changes coming July 1 to Florida’s building codes.

“Our annual training course is always well attended,” said Jason DeLorenzo, government affairs director for the Flagler Home Builders Association.

The course is conducted by the Building Officials of Florida and the Florida Home Builders Association through the sponsorship of the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation. It has been held at the Emergency Operations Center for the past several years.

“There are some places that have to cancel the training because they don’t get the interest,” DeLorenzo said. “We don’t have that problem here. This is a nice place to have the training. Flagler County is always very easy to work with.”

Flagler County’s chief building official, Mark Boice, manned the office so the other county inspectors could attend the training on April 24.

“I want to ensure that as many of our people as possible were able to get this training,” Boice said. “Being in the training with our homebuilders puts us all on the same page.”

Construction for Matanzas Woods Interchange set

A long sought after interchange and Matanzas Woods Parkway and Interstate 95 is about to become a reality.

“It’s a major milestone for our community,” said Frank Meeker, Flagler County Commission Chairman. “I was here during the ’98 wildfires when the county had to be evacuated. The lack of the interchange there hindered our ability to get people out.”

Hubbard Construction Company is ready to begin the 368-day project on May 4, but work on the roadway itself won’t begin until June 5. Matanzas Woods Parkway will be closed for two months between 7 p.m. June 5 and August 10 – after the end of the school year – so that the portion of Matanzas Woods Parkway that spans I-95 can be reconstructed to accommodate four single-lane ramps for on and off access to the interstate.

County Engineer Faith Alkhatib has been working on the project for a decade and secured both federal funding and money from the Florida Department of Transportation to cover the nearly $9 million in construction costs.

“This has been a team effort,” Alkhatib said, “We really expedited all phases of this project, and to arrange for it to be built in a year is amazing.”

The Matanzas High School schedule will be considered throughout the construction period including home football games.

There will be no lane closures allowed on Matanzas Woods Parkway between 7 and 8:30 a.m. or between 1:30 and 2:30 p.m. on days when school is in session. Additionally, there will be no lane closures three hours before or an hour after the end of football games.

“For a county of our size, it really shows the quality of our staff to handle a really big project like this,” County Administrator Craig Coffey said.

A ground-breaking ceremony is scheduled for 1 p.m. on May 18. More details about that event will be forthcoming.

Project updates will be posted on the Flagler County website.
Museum offers family-fun events

The Florida Agricultural Museum is pleased to announce that it will co-host an orienteering event with Florida Orienteering from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, May 16, that is suitable for all ages from toddlers to adventurous grandparents.

Orienteering is the sport of navigating an outdoor course with a map and a compass. No experience is required, and there will be instructors on site. Bring plenty of water for the trails and wear suitable clothing.

There is a $2 per person registration fee and additional map fees. The event takes place rain or shine.

Two weeks later, the Florida Agricultural Museum will host Family Farm Day.

The program will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, May 30, and will feature historians dressed in period clothing who will demonstrate cast iron cooking, blacksmithing, basketry and other rural crafts.

Eric Dusenbery will give a presentation at 2 p.m. about his new book, “Florida Soup: Putting History on the Table.” It is a collection of stories and images about the people, places and foods of rural Florida.

There will be plenty of hands-on activities for visitors of all ages, as well as music and storytelling.

Admission is $5 per person. Museum members and children ages 5 or under are free of charge. Sensible shoes are recommended. Click here for more information.

Public safety picnic won’t be last

A new effort to bring together Flagler County public safety personnel from all agencies for a picnic and camaraderie under the theme “Building Bridges, Building Relationships” was a success.

“The goal was to bring together all of our agencies in a low key, low stress environment to build and strengthen our relationships internally to help the residents of Flagler and its municipalities,” said Kevin Guthrie, Flagler County’s public safety emergency manager. “Steve Cox (Flagler Beach firefighter) was the one that started the idea and concept from a fire perspective but I talked him into a more all encompassing ‘first responder’ approach.”

Lunch was served to 174 first responders and their families at the picnic. Food was delivered to on-duty personnel at Florida Hospital Flagler and the fire stations.

“We accomplished our goal,” Guthrie said.

For more information about Flagler County Emergency Services go to the website.
Access Flagler First was started four years ago by Janet Nickels, program manager for Flagler County Human Services, and Pastor Charles Silano, of Grace Tabernacle Ministries. About 40 social services agencies have agreed to provide information and assistance. “That says something about all of the social services agencies here in Flagler County,” Nickels said. “There is a need here and they have committed to do this.”

TRAIL, which stands for Transitioning youth with disabilities into Real vocational opportunities through Action planning and Individual Learning, was given the spotlight at the April 17 event. TRAIL is part of the Flagler County School District and serves 18- through 21-year-olds with disabilities who are looking for employment.

“We help young people increase their daily living skills, and help them apply their skills to the real world,” said Kim Halliday, transition coordinator. “We focus on volunteer work. It equalizes the playing field. When we are here packing bags of food, we don’t look like people with disabilities. We are giving back to the community and they are learning skills that translate to the workplace.”

TRAIL has been in existence for a mere two years and has 32 participants who can stay until they are 22 years old. Twenty have “aged out” of the program and of them 19 have been placed in jobs, vocational training or further academic GED programs.

“We want to help families realize their vision,” Halliday said. “It truly is a trail, a path, that leads them to where they want to be in their lives.”

Another “first” on Friday was that the Flagler Technical Institutes Cosmetology Department students and instructors, as well as beauticians from the Smart Style Salon at Walmart provided haircuts during the event.

An Access Friday First staple is the free nutritious food that is given out and clean, “gently used” clothing.

“We provide food for about 350 families,” Silano said. “This time we had dry goods for them, a whole frozen chicken, bread and fresh vegetables (cabbage, potatoes, okra and bell peppers).”

The next event will be held from 1 to 4 p.m. on Friday, June 5.

“This is a one-of-its-kind program,” said Joe Mayer, community services director. “It’s very beneficial for our community.”

For more information click here.
We Are Flagler County!

Adam Mengel is not only a Florida native, but has roots as deep as a cyrus tree.

The first of his lineage to move to Florida was Abraham DuPont who came to the area now known as DuPont Center in 1825. Six generations! (More information about his family tree can be found at Flagler County Families.)

“I come from the Moccasin Branch DuPongs,” Adam said. “That would be in the area of Princess Place.”

Adam was raised in Jacksonville, earned a bachelors degree in economics from Florida State University and a masters degree in public administration from the University of North Florida. He is a certified planner, a certified flood plain manager and is LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified.

Before coming to work for Flagler County in September 2006, Adam worked for the City of Palatka for 8 years and for Putnam County for nearly 3 years before that.

“I really like what I do,” Adam said. “My family has had an impact in this area for generations. I’m continuing to have a role in making this a great place to live.”

When he’s not working, Adam enjoys taking pictures and going on cruises with his longtime companion and Palm Coast resident, Amy. He also enjoys geneology.

“I’ve been pretty serious about studying my ancestory,” Adam said.

Flagler County hosts Slovenian paramedics

Flagler County Fire Rescue is hosting four paramedics from Slovenia in May to offer a taste of how the emergency medical system works in the United States.

“I have met two of the four paramedics,” said Lt. Mike Pius, a member of Flagler County’s world champion Team USA, a team of advanced life-support paramedics who won the world championship title more than once during competitions held in Prague, Czech Republic. “Physiologically, a heart attack is the same over there as here, but the way medical calls are handled is completely different. Training and competing abroad gives you a different perspective.”

Paramedics in Flagler County operate under the licensure of Dr. Kristin McCabe at Florida Hospital Flagler. Under that arrangement, paramedics are able provide medical care on the way to the hospital.

“Over there, it’s not that way,” Pius said. “There doctors meet the ambulance at the call. The doctors there are trying to fix the patient at the scene, while we’re trying to stabilize the patients for the trip to the hospital.”

The Slovenian paramedics will be in Flagler County May 13 through 17. They will work in concert with Flagler County Fire Rescue for 10 to 12 hours a day.

“We work 24 hours on and 48 hours off, but that would be unrealistic for them,” Flagler County Fire Rescue Chief Don Petito said. “They need time to digest the information and assess the protocol differences.”

Matt Dunn, vice president for tourism development at the Flagler County Chamber of Commerce, secured hotel rooms for the foreign paramedics at the Hampton Inn on State Road 100 in Palm Coast.

“Ryan Crabb, general manager and a member of the tourist development board, provided the rooms as a gesture of good will,” Dunn said. “I just asked on behalf of Chief Petito.”

County Road 305 re-opens

Residents in western Flagler County can rejoice, as the roadwork on County Road 305 has been completed and detours removed.

This last project replaced the third and final box culvert on and the roadway, and there work was finished ahead of its May 3 deadline, County Engineer Faith Alkhatib said. It rounds out about $20 million of roadwork, including the replacement of all seven bridges.

“We are very happy to have the roadway completely open,” Alkhatib said.

The roadway improvements included roadway widening, milling and resurfacing and shoulder construction in addition to removing deficient drainage structures. Federal stimulus and Florida Department of Transportation funds have been used on the projects along County Road 305 that runs from State Road 100 to the Volusia County border.

Other construction projects are in the works. County Engineers had a pre-construction meeting Tuesday with Halifax Paving, which has been contracted to repave County Road 302 and runs between State Road 100 and County Road 305.

The $2 million project is being 100 percent funded by the Florida Department of Transportation.

“Our staff does a great job finding grant money to get these projects completed for the benefit of the community,” County Administrator Craig Coffey said. “We are able to get a lot of big projects done without a financial impact to our residents.”