Possible Cruelty Charges in Dog Drowning

By Debbie Wolfe

People screaming during the late afternoon on Wednesday, November 23 broke the calm on Gulfport's beach just before the Thanksgiving holiday. They were watching a man throw his dog from the Casino's dock, according to witnesses, and while struggling to swim with a heavy metal chain around its neck the animal drowned. The Casino is located at 5500 Shore Blvd. S. on the shore of Boca Ciega Bay.

See Drowning, page 34

Daily Tradition Keeps Pass-a-Grille Bell Ringing

By Helen J. Simon

 Tradition.
 That’s what keeps Jim LeBlanc schlepping out to Pass-a-Grille on St. Pete Beach every evening rain or shine to find someone to ring the bell that marks each day’s sunset and then record the event for posterity.

Almost every evening for the past 19 years, a volunteer from the Gulf Beaches Historical Museum has overseen the ritual established when the first “sunset bell” was hung and rung by members of the so-called Clapper Club.

The antique bell is attached to a post set

See Bell Ringing, page 36

St. Pete Beach Update

By Lynn Taylor

Mayor’s Chat

The inaugural Mayor’s Chat with Mayor Deborah Schechner was held this month so business owners and residents could ask questions, express concerns and learn more about the city.

“The meeting with residents and businesses went very well,” said Schechner. “Our discussions were informative; residents enjoyed the more casual and friendly atmosphere. I would like to hold these meetings monthly until I leave office. They are very rewarding.”

Currently the city is focused on the many holiday events going on

See Beach Update, page 20

Gulf Beaches Historical Museum volunteer and Assistant Head Ding Dong Jim LeBlanc, left, watches as Sandra and Brian Davison of Belfast, Ireland, ring the “sunset bell.”
Give a Needy Child a Book for the Holidays

Keep St. Pete Lit is in need of donations of new and gently used children’s and young adult books. Keep St. Pete Lit will collect the books and bring them to the Christmas Toy Shop to be distributed to children in need for the holidays. Books can be dropped at the Gabber office, 1419 49th St. S., in Gulfport. Other drop-off locations include Rollin’ Oats Cafe, 2842 Dr. Martin Luther King St. N., Black Crow Coffee, 722 2nd St. N., and St. Petersburg Shuffle, 559 Mirror Lake Dr. N.

The Christmas Toy Shop Project is a non-profit, all-volunteer organization with the goal of providing both new and refurbished toys to less fortunate children in South Pinellas County. Since originating in 1921 the Christmas Toys Shop has served thousands of families in need. For more information about the organization, visit christmastoyshop.org.

Questions about donations can be directed to Keep St. Pete Lit President Maureen McDole, 727-798-4530.

City of Gulfport Holiday Decorations Contest

Gulfport residents, are you ready to get in the holiday spirit and brighten up the city for the holiday season? Then it’s time to enter the city of Gulfport’s Holiday Decorations Contest. “Santa and his Elves” will be judging on Monday, December 19. No one knows what time the big red sleigh will travel through the city, but please be ready by 6 p.m. Deadline to enter the contest is noon, Monday, December 19.

There are two theme categories: general and commercial. The general theme is for single homes only and the commercial theme is for single business and professional locations, including home occupations. Stop by the Gulfport Recreation Center or City Hall to pick up an application to enter. Or go on the city’s website, mygulfport.us under Events then Upcoming Events to print out an application to enter. All applications must be dropped off to the Gulfport Recreation Center. Winners will be announced in the Gabber. Winners will be recognized and presented with a plaque at the Gulfport’s City Council meeting (televised) on Tuesday, January 3 at 7 p.m. Call 727-893-1068 for further information.

New Sale Added this Week at the Book Shop

Check out the big paperback sale cart at the Circle of Friends Bookshop located in the Gulfport Library. Popular titles and authors on sale three for $1. Don’t forget the popular Christmas corner. Great gift ideas for friends and family. That special book for that special someone can be found in the bookshop. The bookshop is located at 5501 28th Ave. S.

Also a continuation of the collectibles on sale at the book shop! Everybody collects something, and the Circle of Friends Bookshop at the Gulfport Public Library has a great selection of books on all kinds of popular collectibles. Their big bargain books include colorful and informative volumes on china, glass, toys, clothing, plants and many more of the things you love. Please call Marilyn Field at 727-321-4035 if you have any questions.
Senior Center Pantry Needs Donations

The Gulfport Senior Center Food Pantry has a special need for pet food and pet supplies. They also need adult incontinence supplies. Donations can be brought to the Center at 5501 27th Ave. S. For more information call 727-893-1231.

Help Gulfport Neighbors Help Those in Need

Help Gulfport Neighbors help those in need this holiday season. Visit the Gulfport Neighbors at the Holiday Hoopla, in downtown Gulfport, on December 10. They will be collecting toy donations for Operation Santa and pet food for the Senior Center Food Pantry. You can bring toys and pet food or make a monetary donation. The Gulfport Neighbors will also have a raffle to collect money for their ongoing work and projects including little food pantries to be made available to those in need, and a new roof for an elderly, needy neighbor.

Visit the Square Mullet and Avoid the Mall

The mall’s not a happy place, especially this time of year. Why not head to the Gulfport History Museum’s Square Mullet Gift Shop instead? Think of all the awesome holiday gifts you can buy in your favorite town in the whole world.

The Square Mullet Gift Shop, at 5501 28th Ave. S., has coffee mugs, books (including Craig Pittman’s “Oh, Florida!” and yes, those are signed!), umbrellas, greeting cards, t-shirts, and the ever-popular Gulfport Starter Kit: a shot glass and a portable doggie water bowl.

Is your heart in Gulfport but you’re not? You can shop online, too. Trying to buy for that hard-to-buy-for Gulfportian? You can gift a membership.

The shop is open whenever the museum is: Tuesday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Saturday from 1 to 4 p.m. and Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m. Remember, too, to support the Gulfport Historical Society by using Amazon Smiles every time you shop Amazon.

Women’s Chamber of St. Pete Luncheon

The Women’s Chamber of Commerce of St. Petersburg invite all Pinellas women to their holiday luncheon on Thursday, December 15, beginning at 12:30 p.m.

The luncheon will be at the St. Petersburg Yacht Club, 11 Central Ave. Come form friendships with local businesswomen (retired too) who share an interest in networking. or more information call Sara Gakiger at 727-460-1038 by December 11.

Sing Along, Play Along or Just Listen

Find the Music in You will present a program of holiday music on Sunday, December 11, from 3 to 5 p.m. Bring your family and all your friends to sing along, play along or just listen to songs of Christmas, Chanukah, and the winter season.

Find the Music in You provides a way to have more fun with music.
VFW Post #39 Breakfast and Flea Market

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #39, 2599 Central Ave., is gearing up for Christmas. They will be serving breakfast on Saturday, December 3, beginning at 8 a.m. for a $5 donation. There will also be a flea market concentrating on Christmas items. Vendors are welcome and tables will be available both inside and out.

For more information, call 727-327-8109.

Gulfport Neighbors Beach Cleanup

On Saturday, December 10, from 9 to 11 a.m., the Gulfport Neighbors will be cleaning the beach and the surrounding areas including Wood Ibis Park. If they have enough people they may also do a cleanup in the northeast corridor of the city. They will meet at the beach in shelter #4.

If you are looking for an activity where you can make a difference, and at the same time get outdoor exercise and meet interesting people while reducing the pollution in our waterways and the litter in our community, this event is for you!

A limited number of picker/grabber tools available. If you have one, please bring it with you. Gloves, sun protection and comfortable footwear are also recommended. Water will be provided.

Blueberry Patch Showcases Trumbo

The Blueberry Patch, 4923 20th Ave. S., will host a literary afternoon showcasing journalist and screenwriter Dalton Trumbo on Sunday December 4 at 3 p.m.

Trumbo was blacklisted in the 1950s for suspected communist sympathies. He said, “The blacklist was a time of evil, no one on either side who survived it came through untouched by evil. Looking back on this time it will do no good to search for villains, heroes, saints or devils because there were none; there were only victims.”

Admission is $5. For more info visit Facebook/Inktankatthepatch or call 727-345-427.
**Holiday Happenings on Treasure Island**

From now through December 16, Santa will personally answer letters dropped off in his mailbox, located in front of the Treasure Island City Hall at 120 108th Ave. Santa’s elves remind everyone to have a return address on their letters.

An afternoon at the North Pole will be held on Saturday, December 17 from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Treasure Island Community Center, Gulf Blvd. at 106th Ave. Activities include a visit from Santa Claus and live holiday shows throughout the afternoon. Enjoy cookie decorating, making holiday arts and crafts projects, train rides, face painting, and enjoying interactive entertainers. The event is free to the public.

The 31st Annual Treasure Island Holiday Lighted Boat Parade and Celebration is scheduled for Sunday, December 11 at The Club at Treasure Island, 400 Treasure Island Causeway. The celebration begins at 4:30 p.m. with the Boat Parade leaving the club at 6:20 p.m.

Bring one unwrapped new toy or provide a cash donation to the Christmas Toy Shop of Pinellas or The Edward’s Family Foundation to the recreation department at city hall or Treasure Bay on Paradise Boulevard by Friday, December 9, to receive a family pass to watch the parade from a spectacular vantage point and participate in the events at the club. For more information, please call 727-367-4511, ext. 236.

A recreational camp for children ages 5 to 12 years will be held from Monday, December 19 through Friday, December 30 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. There will be no camp on Monday, December 26. Activities will include games, sports, arts and crafts, movies and field trips. Registration is held at the recreation department inside city hall at 120 108th Ave. Registration forms are also online at mytreasureisland.com. The fee for the camp is $25/day for Treasure Island residents and $30/day for non-residents (discounted weekly rates are available).

For additional information, please call the recreation department at 727-547-4575, ext 237.
Free Family Movie at Gulfport Library

The Gulfport Library will offer a free family movie on Saturdays, December 17, at 1:30 p.m. The movie is an animated version of a Japanese folktale about a boy who must find his father’s armor to defeat a vengeful spirit. The star-studded voice cast includes Charlize Theron, Ralph Fiennes, George Takei, and Matthew McConaughey. For more information, call 727-893-1073.

Gulfport Lions Holiday Pancake Breakfast

The Gulfport Lions will hold their Holiday Season Pancake Breakfast on Saturday, December 3 from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. Breakfast will be served at the Gulfport Lions Club, 4630 Tifton Dr. S. This breakfast will be the final collection for the Christmas Toy Shop and will determine how many families will be able to have a memorable Christmas. Your support with your unwrapped toy and/or funds collected will go directly to families who would not otherwise be able to afford Christmas.

They will be serving all-you-can-eat pancakes with a serving of scrambled eggs and sausage along with coffee, tea and orange juice at the donation price of $6 per person. Bring your entire family and friends and spend an enjoyable morning overlooking beautiful Boca Ceiga Bay.

When you come and support the Lions fundraising activities, you are doing a lot to help them help those that are in need. Gulfport Lions is a service organization, meeting the needs of those less fortunate.

“Faces of AIDS” at Eckerd College

On Thursday, December 1, at 6:30 p.m., Eckerd College will host a free panel discussion titled “The Faces of AIDS” at Wireman Chapel.

AIDS has infected 1.2 million Americans. Florida has the highest rate of new HIV infection cases in the country, and Pinellas County has had a 30 percent increase in infections in the past year.

Eckerd College’s Presidential Events Series will host a panel of people affected by the growing epidemic to put faces to the issue. They’ll discuss gender, race, class and sexuality taboos that keep AIDS from being treated as a major American public health crisis. Following the panel, there will be a candlelight vigil to commemorate World AIDS Day and those lost to the deadly disease. For more information, email events@eckerd.edu, visit eckerd.edu/events or call 727-864-7979.

Senior Center Foundation Meeting

All members of the Gulfport Multipurpose Senior Center Foundation are invited to attend the Foundation’s annual meeting on Thursday, December 22 at 8 a.m. in the Catherine Hickman Theater. The Foundation will be reviewing the accomplishments in 2016 and presenting goals for 2017. Coffee and donuts will be served.
Grown-Up Movie at Gulfport Library

This week’s movie stars Jonah Hill and Miles Teller as two would-be arms merchants who win a contract to supply arms for the war in Afghanistan, only to find that they are way in over their heads.

The movie is on Saturday, December 3, at 1 p.m. For more information, call 727-893-1073.

“The Art of Giving” Open Studio Event

Consider an artful, local and exciting alternative to “Black Friday” for holiday gift buying. Shoppers and art lovers can find something for almost everyone on their list, including themselves, during “The Art of Giving,” an open-studio event set for Saturday and Sunday, December 3 and 4 from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. each day. Over 50 artists in St. Petersburg and Gulfport are cleaning their studios and welcoming the public.

Artists participating include ceramists, painters, sculptors, jewelers, photographers, glass artists, mixed media artists, woodcrafters and more. The artists will offer discounted prices for holiday gift items as well as great deals for serious collectors.

You can pick up a map of participating studios at the Artist Enclave at 2121 3rd Ave. N. Or visit the Facebook event page at facebook.com/events/347641395597297.

Coffee Club Investment Discussion Group

Do you have questions about your investments? Does the stock market have you worried about your future? Come out to the next Coffee Club that meets at the Gulfport Senior Center, 5501 27th Ave. S. on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 10 a.m.

In this relaxed, informal environment you can discuss your concerns and ask questions about current events, the economy and investing. Scott O’Berry, financial advisor with Edward Jones will be there to offer expertise and information to your questions.

Coffee and doughnuts are provided.

Must be a registered Gulfport Senior Center member. Membership is easy and free for all individuals 50 years of age or older. For more information, call the event line at 727-893-5657.

“Seed” at the Catherine Hickman Theater

“Seed,” the multiple award-winning film, will be shown at the Catherine Hickman Theater, 5501 27th Ave. S. at 8 p.m. on Friday, December 2.

This documentary follows a group of farmers, scientists, lawyers, and indigenous seed keepers fighting to defend the future of planted food. In the last century, 94 seed varieties have disappeared.

The film is being presented by the Gulfport Food Forest and Seed Library. Those attending are encouraged to bring seeds to add to their library. For more information call 727-560-0608.
Operation Santa with Gulfport Police

It’s that time of year again! Santa is putting his list together for this year. If you are a Gulfport resident and could use a little help, the Gulfport Police Department is now accepting applications for Christmas assistance through December 9, between 8:30 a.m. and 3 p.m., Monday through Friday at 2401 53rd St. S. Each family’s head of household must bring photo identification, proof of Gulfport residence as well as the name(s) and age(s) of child(ren) living in the home.

Operation Santa will collect Christmas gifts for children up to 10 years of age. There will be no home deliveries and you must pick up your gifts at the Police Department from December 19 through 21 by appointment only, so it’s important that they hear from you right away. For more information on Operation Santa, please call 727-893-1097 and leave a message.

United Methodist Christmas Bazaar

On Saturday, December 3, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., the First United Methodist Church of Gulfport is putting out the welcome mat for you and your friends. This is the day they are holding their Christmas Bazaar so you can complete your holiday preparations. They are located on the corner of 28th Ave. S. and 53rd St. You can start by enjoying hot coffee and fresh baked treats, then you’ll be ready to start shopping for lots of Christmas decorations, baked goods, ‘white elephant’ treasures and plants Getting hungry and still want to shop longer? They will have wonderful homemade chili, grilled hot dogs or smoked sausage available for lunch. Sophie’s Attic Thrift Shop will be open all during this time, too. There you can find something new to wear to your holiday parties! This yearly event is sponsored by our United Methodist Women and all proceeds will be used to support mission projects.

The Gulfport Multi-Purpose Senior Center Foundation

CRUISE DRAWING

Western Caribbean Cruise From Port Canaveral

8 DAYS - 7 NIGHTS • JULY 8-15 2017

Sailing date may be changed by contacting Carnival Cruises

☐ All inclusive cruise
☐ Cruise is for two people
☐ Ship: Carnival Magic
☐ Balcony Stateroom
☐ Depart 4 PM from Port Canaveral (Day 1)

☐ Day 2: Fun Day at Sea
☐ Day 3: Costa Maya
☐ Day 4: Belize
☐ Day 5: Mahogany Bay
☐ Day 6: Cozumel
☐ Day 7: Fun Day at Sea

Drawing will be held on January 31, 2017

Need not be present to win

Only $20.00 Per Drawing Ticket

Tickets on Sale at: Gulfport ArtWalks, Gulfport Senior Center, Gulfport Welcome Center and Tuesday Fresh Market

For more information, please contact the Foundation at 727-893-1244

PROCEEDS WILL BENEFIT THE GULFPORT SENIOR CENTER
From the Desk of Sheriff Bob Gualtieri

As we broach the pinnacle of the holiday season and count down the final days of 2016, we look forward to social celebrations and new years’ resolutions with high expectations. But during a busy season of festivities and driving, plans for the future can plummet as quickly as the ball in Times Square if you don’t take the proper precautions.

In 2014, almost 10,000 people were killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes, which accounts for 31 percent of all traffic-related deaths in the United States, according to the Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

One death due to impaired driving is too many, let alone one every 53 minutes, and it is not always the irresponsibly impaired driver whose life is lost. In 2014, 209 children – occupants of vehicles with impaired drivers, occupants of other vehicles, pedestrians/bicyclists, etc. – died in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes, according to the NHTSA.

If potential lives lost aren’t enough motivation to stay away from the driver’s seat after drinking alcohol or taking other impairing drugs and medications, consider the tremendous financial burden that comes with a Driving Under the Influence (DUI) charge.

According to the NHTSA, DUI costs range from $5,000 to $20,000, with the national average at $10,000. If you cause a crash, injury, or death, the costs are even higher – not to mention the incalculable loss of life.

The Pinellas County Sheriff’s Office conducts several DUI Wolf Pack operations throughout the county year-round to reduce deaths, injuries, and property damage associated with traffic crashes related to impaired driving, and the holiday season is no exception.

Fortunately, drug- and alcohol-impaired driving is easily preventable. The obvious – and only – option for people who, for whatever reason, must drive, is to abstain from consuming mind-altering substances. However, if you are of legal drinking age, there are several alternate options available.

Designating a responsible driver whom you can trust to abstain from drugs and alcohol to drive you is likely the cheapest option. Taxi services and ride-share programs are also excellent options to get you home safely at relatively low costs – especially when compared to a $10,000 DUI.

In this busy season of parties, travel, and often drinking, holiday plans could end in tragedy if you don’t take the proper safety precautions. I urge you to be responsible, plan ahead, and don’t drive while impaired – now, or at any time of year.

Luncheon at the Lithuanian Club

The Lithuanian-American Club at 4880 46th Ave. N., is serving lunch every Thursday at 1 p.m. The schedule of luncheons is one week cepelinai and the next week koldunai. The cost is $8 for entrée, side, dessert and coffee. This Thursday’s menu is koldunai (meat dumplings), served with bacon and/or sour cream, dessert and coffee. Fresh baked Lithuanian bread is available. Please call 727-525-2924 for more information.

Dover Street Trio Concert at Main Library

The Dover Street Trio, composed of three current members of the Tampa Bay Symphony, will perform a free holiday concert and sing-along at St. Petersburg’s main library auditorium on Saturday, December 10 at 2 p.m.

Members of the trio include pianist Carol Skey, violinst Julie Tollen and cellist Ruth Kern. The concert will feature classical pieces by Beethoven and Haydn. The audience will be encouraged to join in singing familiar holiday favorites.

The concert, sponsored by Friends of the Main Library, will be in the library auditorium and is free to attend. Refreshments will be served. The library is located at 3745 9th Ave. N. Visit Friends of the St. Petersburg Main Library on Facebook.

Seasoned Sowers Garden Club Meeting

Get down and dirty with one of America’s favorite hobbies at the Gulfport Senior Center, 5501 27th Ave. S. The Seasoned Sowers Garden Club meets on the first and third Tuesday of every month at 9:30 a.m. to spruce up the Senior Center Patio with therapeutic herbs and beautiful flowers donated in part by All Seasons Landscaping & Nursery.

No experience needed! Natural-born green thumbs and first-time gardener are welcome.

Must be a registered Gulfport Senior Center member. Membership is easy and free for all individuals 50 years of age or older. For more information, call the event line at 727-893-5657.

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Take the Gabber on Vacation...

Gulfport resident Rick Myers, and brother Steve, from Seguin, Texas, took the Gabber along on their Appalachian Trail adventure. This picture was taken on Springer Mountain in Georgia. The Northbounder’s starting point.

Send us a picture with you and your Gabber on vacation.
Include a brief description and your name.
News@theGabber.com

Live Nativity at St. Luke’s Methodist

St. Luke’s United Methodist Church, 4444 5th Ave. N., will host a live nativity scene on Friday, December 2, and Saturday, December 3, from 6 to 9 p.m.
Attendees can drive through in the comfort of their cars. Free admission, donations are accepted. For more information, please contact the church office at 727-321-1335.

Friends & Family with Memory Problems

How do you help friends and family who you suspect have memory problems? Do you have a friend or family member who is increasingly forgetful, or doesn't seem to be able to hand things the way they used to? Are they in denial? Are you being overzealous?
Many people struggle with knowing when they should be worried about someone, and what to do to help them. Come to the Gulfport Library on Thursday, December 1, at noon. Bring lunch if you like. Drinks are provided. Sponsored by the Circle of Friends of Gulfport Library.
Presented by Alison R. Solomon, LCSW, who was Clinical Director for several non-profit and older adult programs. She is the author of “Along Came the Rain,” a suspense novel that deals with memory issues. For more information, call 727-893-1073.

DON’T MISS The South Pasadena & St. Pete Beach HOLIDAY LIGHTED BOAT PARADE!

Boats start at the North end of the route and arrive in South Pasadena between 6:15-7:30pm
Special Tree Lighting Will Take Place at 7pm

Bring your own chairs to the Barbara Gilberg Habitat Park
1600 Pasadena Ave. South

Calling all Boaters - Have fun and win fabulous prizes including cash and resort get-aways. Call Mandy Edmunds at 727-363-9245 to be in the parade or be an event sponsor: a.edmunds@stpetebeach.org

Enjoy the South Pasadena Holiday Open House and Concert at City Hall, 7047 Sunset Drive South

Friday, Dec. 9th 4-6pm
Visit with City Commission, staff and Santa - then walk to Galatea Garden to enjoy holiday music by Pasadena Fundamental Elementary at 6:30pm at the Dick Holmes Band Shell in Galatea Garden, 7015 Sunset Drive South