

Did your Valentine send you a message? Check out Love Lines, B16

# Martin County Hometown News



Music store owners overcome challenges, A11

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YOUR LOCAL NEWS & INFORMATION SOURCE

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## Operation Vaccinate Florida begins

By Beth Underwood  
staff writer

In a continuing effort to thwart possible bio-terrorism attacks, this week marked the beginning of Operation Vaccinate Florida. County health department personnel throughout the state — as well as a small group of

hospital workers — are being inoculated against smallpox in the first stage of the operation.

Although state officials say a possible smallpox attack is not imminent, “preparedness is our goal,” John Agwunobi, secretary of DOH, said in a recent letter.

“At stage one, we’re

basically creating the capacity to respond if there really is an outbreak of the disease,” said Larry Lee, assistant administrator for St. Lucie County Health Department. “By doing this, we make sure that if a hospital patient did have small pox, the staff could safely treat that patient.”

Information about who is receiving the vaccine, the number of workers being vaccinated and where the vaccinations are being given is not being divulged, however, in the interest of security.

“This is all part of Homeland Security, so we’re not giving out detailed information,” he



Staff graphic by Cliff Partlow

said. “And of course, the other more routine part of it is our concern for patient confidentiality.”

But I can say our staff has done a lot of work prepar-

◆ See Vaccination A4

## Ancient tapestry, captured in war, to return to Okinawan home

JENSEN WOMAN ESTIMATES PIECE BROUGHT TO U.S. BY MARINE TO BE 300 YEARS OLD

By Beth Underwood  
staff writer

Peggy Hess recalled an evening 14 years ago, when she and Martin County resident and martial artist Dennis Fritchie sat talking over a couple of beers. He told her of a tapestry he had acquired. It came from the island of Okinawa, which was bombarded for 83 days during World War II, and was brought to the United States by a former Marine who served in the war. As the battles of war began to smolder, the tapestry was apparently one of the few remnants of the Okinawan people.

A student of martial arts for 19 years at the time, Mrs. Hess listened intently. As Mr. Fritchie continued to describe the tapestry, its symbols seemed to match with her style of karate.

“Naturally, that sparked my interest,” said Mrs. Hess, who lives in Jensen Beach. “So a few weeks later I asked to see it.”

Although the two logos on the tapestry were not identified at the time, the Jensen Beach resident and her martial arts master Jack Summers decided to procure the tapestry. Mrs. Hess promised herself that eventually, she would return the piece to its rightful owners.

Since purchasing the scroll, she’s traveled to

the island numerous times with Mr. Summers, and currently, Mrs. Hess continues her research with the people of Okinawa. With the help of eight trips to the island, and continuing communications with Okinawa’s departments of history and education, she continues to close in on the scroll’s rightful owners. Although some questions remain unanswered, she does know that the logos, or mons, represent the seal of the Tokugawa family, who ruled Okinawa from 1603 to the mid-1800s, and says she estimates the tapestry dates back to the late 1600s.

She realizes the significance of the possession, and although prospective buyers have tried to purchase the tapestry, Mrs. Hess has no intentions of selling it.

“I’ll never sell it,” she said, “because I believe it belongs back to the people of Okinawa. This is so important to their history — like owning something George Washington or Abe Lincoln signed.”

In order to return it in a way befitting its importance, she’s heading back to Okinawa in April, to pave the way for the Friendship Tour 2004. The tour is comprised of women — all of whom are martial

◆ See Tapestry page A4

## SEWALL’S POOCHES



The Town of Sewall’s Point, in cooperation with the Humane Society of the Treasure Coast, hosted the 1st Annual ‘Pooches on the Point Event’ last Saturday at the Lantana Lane Park.

Sewall’s Point Police Lt. Tina Ciechanowske, above with her standard schnauzer, Kiwi, was the contact person for the event.

At right, Laura Marek of Sewall’s Point reacts to the ID chip being injected into her dog, Snarfy. Snarfy, an 11-year-old shih tzu, hardly noticed the implant by Stuart veterinarian Dr. Wayne Diamond who injected the ‘microchip’ that can be read by the police department and animal control to locate the dog if it becomes lost.

Edgar Straeffer  
staff photographer



## Bus sports new look

By Beth Underwood  
staff writer

The Historic Downtown Stuart Shuttle Bus — with a distinct new look — is now officially on the streets of Stuart, providing free rides in the downtown area each Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

“People can now recognize what it is,” said Dave Dew, Downtown Business Association board member. “The idea is to make downtown parking more accessible for everyone. People can park in the outer lots and get to Osceola Street, which is where everyone wants to go.”

The park-and-ride service kicked off in mid-December, making a continuous loop along Osceola Street, Colorado Avenue and East Ocean Boulevard about every 10 minutes. The service is sponsored by the city of Stuart and Florida Department of Transportation. Services are provided by the Council on Aging of Martin County and Community Coach.

Ridership on the 14-passenger bus has been a little less than overwhelming in its first two months of operation, but Roger Eckert, director of transportation for community Coach, thinks the shuttle service is beginning to catch on.

“The ridership has been somewhat low,” Mr. Eckert said, “but we’re hoping with the new exterior look of the bus and distribution of the

◆ See Park & Ride A2

## NEWS YOU CAN USE

### ARE YOU A WRITER?

◆ Would you like to become a contributing writer for Hometown News? Please send a sample of the column idea you have in mind, or examples of news and features you’ve written.

Please e-mail us at news@hometownnewsol.com or fax your information to (772) 465-5301. You may also mail your examples to Tammy Raits, managing editor, Hometown News, 2814 South U.S. 1, Suite D-11, Fort Pierce, FL 34982. Please do not send books! Hometown News does not currently have a book review section.

### HOMETOWN HEROES

Hometown News is seeking nominations for Hometown Heroes, a feature which will run each month. Do you know a Hometown Hero? To nominate someone, please fax to (772) 465-5301 or e-mail to news@hometownnewsol.com. The nominee must meet the following criteria:

- ◆ He or she must be nominated by someone else (you can’t nominate yourself!)
- ◆ The nominee must have contributed to the community in which he or she now lives

Please include your name, daytime phone number, nominee’s name and daytime phone number, and a brief paragraph on why you are nominating this person.

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