



photo submitted

The Volunteer Appreciation BBQ at the BEAM facilities on March 25 included an unveiling of expansion plans for the food pantry. Funds are being raised for the food pantry renovation plans, and construction will begin on the interior modification at existing facilities at Suites 300 and 200 to 850 6th Ave. S. in Jacksonville Beach. Pictured, from left, are volunteers Janet Larson, Alan Gasparovic and Charlene Phillips. Alan Leslie and Steve Lazo cooked up meats for the Volunteer Appreciation BBQ at the BEAM facilities on Sunday, March 25. Karen Fritts of A Catering Solution, and Susan King's mother, Fran Belto, provided side dishes to complete the meal. David Pooler entertained the crowd of about 160 singing and playing his guitar.

Program has generated \$200,000 for county

► WARRANTS, from A-1

law. I cannot give you the right to drive."

Hollingsworth then approached the sheriff's office who told him that there were about 8,000 unserved warrants in the county at the time.

"Being the redneck I am, I thought common sense 'well why don't you assign two warrants per person and send them home, tell them not to come back to work until they have them?'" Hollingsworth said at the meeting.

"Everyone has to come into the tax office at least once per year," Hollingsworth said. But the sheriff at the time was not on board to implement the program.

Hollingsworth then approached Shoar when he came into office.

"He [Shoar] called me into his office and I had helped start a few other programs, so he showed me the idea and said it was being done

in Collier County and asked me what I thought," recalled Dep. Steve Smoyer, the officer who is on site as part of the program.

After the program was approved, Smoyer transferred from the sheriff's office to be a part of the tax collector's office payroll.

"The equipment is all used and the program was already in place. My salary is more than redeemed by the people caught. It's a self-sufficient system," Smoyer said.

He is not dressed in uniform, like an undercover cop, but is a sworn deputy and has a sheriff's car, explained Hollingsworth.

"[The tax collector's office] pays for his salary. He is deputized and sworn in, accredited, and has the power to arrest," said Catherine Payne, sheriff's office spokesperson.

On average the office serves about six warrants per month, but that has

barely made a dent in the number pending in the county, Smoyer said.

In the past four years the program has generated new income of \$200,000 for the county, he said. Though the budget for the tax collector's office is set by the state, money from the fines is sent to the county.

In one year alone, 12,109 licenses were checked, 222 criminal arrests were made, 15 felons were caught, 203 traffic citations were issued, 24 warrants were served, 5 vehicles were impounded and 12 tags were seized, according to Hollingsworth.

"The key is discretion," Smoyer said. That is why the program has never been publicized. He added, however that information about the program is all public record.

Warm ocean water cited as cause for early nesting

► TURTLE, from A-1

Ponte Vedra Beach. "Sea turtle nesting season officially runs from May to October, though there have been previous sightings of leatherback nests as early as April 2 in St. Johns County." Eastman believes warmer ocean temperatures – about 10 degrees warmer than normal – could be a factor in the early nesting.

The nests are marked with bright colored tape and a Do Not Disturb sign.

During nesting season, there is a Beach Lighting ordinance in coastal communities that consist of strict guidelines to avoid causing turtles to become disoriented. The ordinance in St. Johns County prohibits camp and bonfires, tinted windows and replacing certain lighting fixtures, among other restrictions. Given the early nesting events, residents and visitors should be mindful of

lighting and other beach activities, said GTMNERR staff.

The leatherback is the largest and deepest diving of all sea turtles and is listed as an endangered species. According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, leatherbacks weigh between 700 and 2,000 pounds and reach four to eight feet in length. The nesting incubation period is typically 80 to

100 days and generally produces 100-115 hatchlings.

GTMNERR staff members are conducting twice-a-week nesting surveys in March and April that will expand to daily surveys beginning May 1. Friends of the GTM reserve is also coordinating an adopt-a-nest program that provides pictures, updates and other information on a nest's progress with donations going to the reserve.

Object is to teach students value of helping in the community

► DONOR, from A-1

The main Beaches Goodwill is on Beach Boulevard in Jacksonville Beach, between 10th and 11th Streets South. There's a Job Junction there, one of six Goodwill has in the Jacksonville area.

"The one thing that we try to instill in the kids is that, when you support Goodwill, you're helping people in the community get jobs," said Phillips. "We're No. 2 in the country in helping people get jobs, out of all the Goodwills nationwide."

Students pitched in to help the Goodwill employees. Rawlings fifth graders Noah Silverstein, Kesia Ari, Sydney Perez and Will Moore assisted Jim Wadsworth, as did Moore's second-grade sister, Bonnie. Wadsworth and Patti Baumeister of Goodwill kept

tabs on many bags or boxes were received.

At PVPV, Goodwill driver Maurice Hartley worked with Koebrick and Phillips.

"If you're on our executive staff and you're in our transportation department, we all do this drive every year," said Phillips. "We are 'Bag It Up.'"

Stacy Bunkoski, accompanied by the second youngest of her sons, a second grader at PVPV, delivered three big boxes filled with clothes.

When asked how much the Bunkoski family was donating, she said, "Oh, my gosh, I don't know. We just went through everything, and donated it. I mean I have four boys."

The other Bunkoski sons are 4-year-old Nehemiah; Nicholas, who's at Rawlings; and Noah, who's at Landrum.



photo by CHUCK ADAMS

Stacy Bunkoski and her second-grade son, Nathan, deliver the first of three big boxes the Bunkoski family contributes to Goodwill, through PVPV/Rawlings, for the 16th annual Bag It Up drive.

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