



VENICE CITY SCENE

October 2016

A Publication for the Employees of the City of Venice, Florida

Venice City Scene is published by email. Please send news items to Public Information Officer Lorraine Anderson at landerson@venicegov.com.

Blanchard receives Congressional fire award

Venice Fire Rescue Battalion Chief Scott Blanchard received the Above and Beyond the Call of Duty Award Sept. 19 in Sarasota from Congressman Vern Buchanan, part of Florida's 16th District Congressional Fire and Rescue and EMS Awards.

In 2015, Blanchard was the recipient of both the Venice Fire Department's Officer of the Year Award and the Valor Award, in part for helping save a man who was preparing to jump from the ledge of a three-story building.

"It's an honor," said Blanchard, 44. "I just feel I was doing my job.

"It's nice to be acknowledged by a group of my peers and selected from the panel. There were a lot of people nominated."

Blanchard has been a firefighter for 20 years —over 15 with the City of Venice. He was originally hired as a firefighter in Punta Gorda and spent a couple years as a volunteer before that.

According to the award categories, the "Above and Beyond" Award is for fire and rescue personnel or EMS personnel who put their lives in harm's way to help others. It is understood that this is always part of any fire and rescue personnel and EMS personnel duties, but there are times when heroism and sacrifice in extreme circumstances need to be recognized, according to the nomination materials. Winners were selected by an independent committee of current and retired fire and rescue personnel in the district.

The Officer of the Year Award Blanchard received is a recognition for a member whose attitude, character, outstanding service and dedication to the fire



Fire Rescue Battalion Chief Scott Blanchard, far right, displays his Above and Beyond the Call of Duty Award he was presented by Congressman Vern Buchanan, third from left, on Sept. 19 in Sarasota County Commission chambers.

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Fire Rescue Battalion Chief Scott Blanchard, center, is flanked by Administrative Battalion Chief Frank Giddens, left, and Fire Chief Shawn Carvey after Blanchard received the Above and Beyond the Call of Duty Award last month.

Married to his wife Barbara for 26 years, they have four children.

“What’s neat is, this is in the Congressional record,” Blanchard said of his latest accolade, presented to him by U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan. “It’s part of my family tree. If anyone ever does a genealogical search, it will be there.”

“We owe so much to our police, firefighters and EMS. Our community is made safer, quieter and more prosperous because we have first responders watching our backs,” Buchanan said. “These brave men and women spend hundreds of hours in training so that they are prepared when they get ‘the call.’ These stellar individuals exemplify what it means to serve a community.”

Three other fire personnel in Florida’s 16th district also received the Above and Beyond Award — Firefighter Christopher Carver and Engineer Mathew Redmond, both with the North River Fire District; and Lt. David Hawes with North Port Fire Rescue. Buchanan honored Chief Brian Gorski with the Southern Manatee Fire & Rescue District with a Career Service Award.

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service is in keeping with the highest traditions of the Venice Fire Department. This award is only available to Lieutenants and Battalion Chiefs.

Blanchard’s nomination went on at length sharing how he leads by example. He has taken on extra responsibility of the department's radio equipment for the last 10 years. He regularly excels in leading training of his personnel beyond the normal department-wide training programs. He even includes Sarasota County's crew members at the station. County members also joined in for Scott's nomination.

The Valor Award is presented in recognition of acts involving extreme personal risk, while attempting to save the life of another. In 2015, then Lt. Blanchard was part of a response team to an incident involving a man preparing to jump from the ledge of a three-story building. While another firefighter provided a distraction, Blanchard was able to approach, grab and rescue the man, pulling him to safety. His actions put himself at extreme risk due to the location and the unpredictable state of the individual.

Blanchard takes pride in striving to be the best whether on a personal level and as a member of Venice Fire Rescue, according to his nomination. His dedication and leadership has been evident throughout his 15 years of service. He joined the department in 2001 and was awarded the Venice Firefighter of the Year 2003 and the City's Employee of the Quarter in 2003. He was promoted to lieutenant in 2007 and battalion chief in January 2016.

Linda Senne named city finance director

Linda Senne was appointed finance director on Sept. 13 by the Venice City Council to applause and cheers from the city’s entire Finance staff, who dropped in to Council chambers to support her.



SENNE

“Ms. Senne has intermittently been in the position of interim (finance) director and has performed exceptionally well in that role,” City Manager Ed Lavallee wrote in a memo to City Council recommending her for the post.

Senne, who has worked for the city for five and a half years, also served as controller.

In May, she was the recipient of the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the Fiscal Year Ending 2016 Budget from the Government Finance Officers

Association.

“I’m excited to assume the role as finance director and feel that my experience with the city will ensure a seamless transition,” Senne said. “I hope to utilize my leadership skills ensuring we remain a financially sound city.

“Thanks to the city manager, mayor and Council, and all city staff, especially the Finance Department employees, for their support.”

Previously in her career, Senne was the deputy financial services director and controller for the City of Cape Coral, working with that city since 2001. There, as in Venice, she managed the city’s financial management system, along with being responsible for accounting, financial reporting, treasury, cash management and investments, debt issues, payroll, grant coordination, capital assets, capital construction projects and customer billing services.

She also prepares the city’s annual financial report.

Senne worked for the Office of the State Auditor in Bismarck, N.D., for 13 years before coming to Cape Coral. While working for the State of North Dakota, she participated in the National Auditor’s Association Quality Control Review for the states of Rhode Island and Alabama.

A Southwest Florida Government Finance Officers Association board member since 2006, Senne served as its president in 2008. She also served on the host



New Finance Director Linda Senne is surrounded by staff in her department: Jon Mayes, Debbie Briggs, Kathy Millsbaugh, Brenda Westlake, Nancy Carello, Joanne Benjamin, Peter Boers, Robin Williams, Carolyn Hart, Jessica Samson and Michelle Newman.

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BUS Token recipients

Bravo for Ultimate Service is an employee incentive program based on the PRIDE (Productive, Responsible, Innovative, Dedicated, Ethical) initiative adopted by City Council. It rewards employees for going above and beyond.

Once an employee collects five BUS Tokens, he or she can turn them in to Administrative Services for \$50.

BUS Tokens were recently awarded to:

Chuck Speake, Public Works

Italia Adams, Information Desk

Joe Stroer, Utilities

Sharon Middleton, Police Records

Wesley Weber, Police

Rodrigo Morales, Police



Senne, from page 3

committee for the Florida Government Finance Officers Association annual conference for two years.

She is a board member with FLSAFE, a local government investment pool.

Senne received a bachelor's degree in Accounting from Moorhead State University-Minnesota and has been a certified public accountant since 1988.

Lavallee told the Venice Gondolier Sun he first learned about Senne from former Cape Coral city manager Terry Stewart at a Florida conference of city managers.

"He told me what a great find she was. A professional," Lavallee said. "I have come to appreciate how really, really knowledgeable she is — a powerhouse of a producer. She knows her department. She's articulate, and as we have seen with her presentations before Council, is an effective communicator.

The city manager added that Senne is great to work with and is a skilled leader.

"She knows the information and process and can explain with confidence what she is proposing," he said.

Added Assistant City Manager Len Bramble: "I will always do all I can to support any city employee, and I must admit that I am very excited that Linda has accepted the position, and optimistic that she will bring about a strong sense of cohesion and 'team' within the Finance Department and between Finance and other departments.

"I think this was clearly seen by the support Linda received from city staff during the time of her appointment at (the Sept. 13) City Council meeting."

Senne, 53, and her husband Scott, a chiropractor/acupuncturist, have been married for 23 years and live in Fort Myers. They have two children, Sommer, 18, and Shiloh, 9.

MEET YOUR CO-WORKER

Heather Taylor: The art of life

Heather Taylor joined the U.S. Army at age 22. At the time, she was a single mom with two young daughters.

“My family took bets when I was gone,” laughed Taylor, now 41. “They said, ‘She doesn’t even sweat.’”

Not only did Taylor make it in the service – she stayed on active duty for 15 years – she enjoyed it immensely.

“I was lucky. I had really good jobs in the Army,” she said. “They’ve been family first (for me).”

Her first duty station was in Fort Hood, Texas, with the 4th Infantry Division, as an assistant for a two-star general.

She went to Afghanistan in 2005-2006. She worked in officer management, handling awards and evaluations.

“I loved it,” Taylor said of the experience. “I didn’t know what to expect, but it’s pretty. It’s desert surrounded by mountains.”

As part of Army outreach, she would sometimes hand out candy to children. Because little girls there would often be overlooked, she tried to get the treats in their hands first.

“I really like to see how other people live,” she said. “It was a neat experience, to meet the people there.”

Taylor also worked for the Criminal Investigation Command in Fort Belvoir, Va., and the 510th Personnel Service Battalion in Heidelberg, Germany, where she did more administrative work and was able to travel to Spain, France, Italy, Egypt and Ireland. Travel, she said, is one of her passions.

In 2007, she began working at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., as a driver for the chief of staff of the Defense Intelligence Agency. She lived in Virginia at the time.

Taylor met her husband Daren in 2011 in a karaoke bar in Virginia. He was in the Army too, serving as a combat medic for a decade, then touring as a performer with the Army Soldiers Show. He’s well-known locally as a lead singer with The BoogieMen band.



Assistant City Clerk Heather Taylor at her desk in the City Clerk’s Office at City Hall.

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Assistant City Clerk Heather Taylor shows kids Katie, 8, and Joey, 12, how to work audio equipment for a City Council workshop earlier this year during Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day.

Co-worker, continued from page 5

Because Daren's kids lived in Florida, when Taylor got out of the Army she relocated to the area. They now live in North Port.

"I was actually temping (here at City Hall), and was planning on going back to Virginia in 2014," Taylor said. Then, a recording secretary post was open. Taylor got that job, then another one in the City Clerk's Office when it became available.

In 2015, she became assistant city clerk. She is learning the job as she goes along, preparing City Council agendas and organizing ordinances and resolutions.

"I like working for (City Clerk) Lori (Stelzer)," she said. "What I like here is the work ethic. I like to be busy."

Now in the Army Reserves, Taylor has two more years to go.

"People are surprised to learn that about me," Taylor says of serving in the military, admitting that she misses it sometimes.

"You had an importance — you knew what your job meant in making things work," she said.

Taylor's daughters are now adults themselves. Hailee, 23, is in the restaurant business, and is moving to Virginia from Florida. Mariah, 20, is in her last year of college in Tiffin, Ohio, where she is studying forensic psychology. Mariah is also leaning toward going into the Army, where she can work with soldiers suffering from PTSD.

Daren's children, Joey, 12, and Katie, 8, are also a huge part of Taylor's life; she calls them "my minis."

When she's not working, Taylor enjoys karaoke — Journey songs are a favorite — and photography, finding ideas on Pinterest and using Katie as her model.

Taylor's other art interest is more obvious: She has 14 tattoos that she says mark specific points in her life. Her daughters' names are on each wrist. Her stepkids' fingerprints form small hearts on her arm; along with a pink ribbon spelling out "hope" for two female relatives lost to cancer. A flag with dog tags on her shoulder represents her time in the service. Three fairy tattoos on her side symbolize her and her two sisters; and Taylor and her two daughters all have the same artwork of three elephants, which is on her shoulder. A bird flying out of a birdcage, on her arm, and the Portland Head Light lighthouse, on her back, mark other distinct times.

"They're my little memories," said Taylor, who doesn't worry about covering them up. "If you do your job and do it well, that's what people should see — not your tattoos."

SUPPORTING OUR OFFICERS



On Aug. 11, the Sons of the American Legion invited Venice Police Chief Tom Mattmuller to the American Legion NO-VEL Post 159, where Sons Commander Robert DiDio presented the chief, second from left, with a donation of \$3,000 for the purchase of personal protective equipment — 2 ballistic shields — for the Venice Police Department. The Sons of the American Legion place an emphasis on preserving American traditions and values, improving the quality of life for our nation’s children, caring for veterans and their families, and teaching the fundamentals of good citizenship.



Residents of Aston Gardens decorated gift bags and filled them with items for grateful Venice police officers in late August. At right, Chief Tom Mattmuller, Capt. Mike Rose, Traffic Officer Paul Freeman, Master Police Officer Mat Sauchinitz, Sgt. Ron Perisho, Lt. Jessica Chappa, Lt. Jason Adams and Training Officer Dan Schuler with the goodie bags. At left, Mattmuller, Perisho and Schuler pose for a photo with a resident.



HERMINE STORMS ASHORE



Hermine's winds and rain hit Venice as a tropical storm Sept. 2, later becoming a Category 1 hurricane as it moved northeast. The storm closed the South Jetty park and Venice Fishing Pier, with flooding at Flamingo, Gardenia, Villas, Golden Beach and other local streets in the vicinity. City firefighters and Public Works staff, at left and bottom left, led sandbagging efforts for residents.



Above, John Monville and Ryan Burns with the Engineering Department shovel open the Flamingo Ditch after storm surge receded, relieving nearby street flooding. Overall, the beaches gained sand, with no significant erosion, according to City Engineer Kathleen Weeden.



IN TRAINING



On Sept. 16, city firefighters trained inside and outside a home on Park Boulevard North set to be demolished. Firefighters practiced survivor skills and conducted a downed firefighter scenario (pictured at left).



Anniversaries

The following employees celebrate one of the 5-year milestones of employment with the city:

20 YEARS

Shawn Carvey, Fire Rescue, Oct. 30

15 YEARS

Marta Ugas-Carpenter, Airport, Oct. 15

Lee Krauss, Utilities Dist/Collection, Oct. 29

10 YEARS

Karen Butterworth, Building, Oct. 2

Aleksander Gregoire, Building, Oct. 2

5 YEARS

Kathy King, Utilities, Oct. 24

Greg Schneider, Building, Oct. 31

Welcome to the Team

The following employees recently started working for the city:

Tracy Self, Utilities, Sept. 7



OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

DAY	EMPLOYEE	DEPARTMENT
2	Scott Hart	Utilities/Wastewater
3	Paul Dagley	Utilities
3	Viktor Kruzhinsky	Fire
4	Jim Petrosky	Utilities/Wastewater
5	Steve Worobel	Fire
7	Dru Miller	Fire
8	Jim Eppley	Airport
9	Michael Cararo	Public Works/Solid Waste
9	Steve McNutt	Fire
10	Brittany Spinosi	Police
11	Stephen Sorrentino	Public Works/Parks Maintenance
15	Robert Clark	Utilities
16	David Marra	Public Works/Parks Maintenance
16	Eric Putnal	Fire
18	Bill Ford	Airport
18	Christina Rimes	Planning
18	Artem Lyashenko	Police
19	Jimmy Bennett	Utilities/Dist/Collection



DAY	EMPLOYEE	DEPARTMENT
22	Sean Conner	Fire
24	Tricia Matero	Public Works Administration
26	Eric Barr	Utilities
27	Michelle Newman	Finance
28	Ed Wix	Public Works/Recycling
29	Justin Cammarata	Fire
31	Paul Iannelli	Code Enforcement

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

DAY	EMPLOYEE	DEPARTMENT
1	Ryan Burns	Engineering
2	Dan Tucci	Public Works
5	Ed Van Deusen	Fire
6	Cheryl Prevatte	Police
6	Josh Hunter	Fire
7	Erin Mungavin	Police
7	George Nixon	Code Enforcement
8	Frank Giddens	Fire
9	William Anderson	Utilities
9	Lorraine Anderson	City Manager's Office
11	Deborah Anderson	City Council
16	Andrew Leisenring	Police
21	Ryan Behling	Fire
26	Jerry Collins	Fire
28	Jessica Chappa	Police



DAY	EMPLOYEE	DEPARTMENT
28	Lavell Cudjo	Utilities/Dist/Collection
30	James Pollard	Public Works/Parks Maintenance

City launches monthly bicycle ride



The city's inaugural monthly bike ride from City Hall took to the streets Sept. 14, led by Bicycle Pedestrian Coordinator Darlene Culpepper, below at left. About 20 bicyclists participated in the casual 6-mile ride around the Island of Venice. The next ride, open to the public, is set for 10 a.m. Oct. 12. Helmets are required.



At right, city Human Resources Manager Oliver Lewis and Mayor John Holic, in background, see the bicyclists off, including Police Officer Erin Mungavin and Sgt. Ron Perisho.



TAKE A BOW

Planning

“Please accept my sincere thank you for (the Planning Commission’s) unanimous positive vote regarding my neighbor’s and my own petitions for the rezoning of our properties on Hauser Lane,” resident Ronald Siegrist wrote in an email. “In the past year I have learned a great deal regarding the mechanics of city government. ... I fully respect your efforts and desire to move our city into a better direction for all of our citizens. I realize from attending the Planning Commission and Council meetings that this must be a sometimes stressful position for you. I hope that this letter simply offers you a bit of intrinsic value for your efforts. I find it rewarding when someone acknowledges my hard work and efforts, and I simply wish to convey the same to you. ... I would also like to offer my thanks to our city Planning Commission members, as well as our city employees/staff who have been an incredible help to me throughout the entire process. Our Planning and Zoning staff including **Jeff Shrum, Scott Pickett, Roger Clark** and **Christina Rimes** as well as (City Clerk) **Lori Stelzer** were all very cordial and gracious with their time assisting me throughout the entire process.”

Scott Stewart with the SKY Family YMCA wrote **Roger Clark**, “Just a quick note of thanks to you and all of the other city officials who helped make our 12th Annual Venice Triathlon such a success. ... From a safety standpoint there were no major incidents to report, and I credit you and your team’s diligence as a contributing factor in this positive outcome. Again, please convey my sincere gratitude to all.”

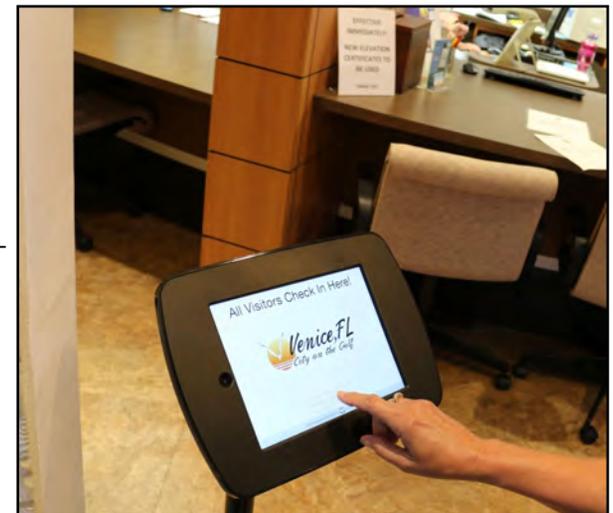
Building Dept. rolls out sign-in kiosk

The city’s Building Department recently initiated a program to alleviate the need for members of the public to stand in line while waiting to see a staff member in either Building or Developmental Services.

With the recent addition of a sign-in kiosk, citizens are able to sign in and specify their needs, submit for a permit, ask a question, ask to see staff, or address any of the services provided by the department, according to Building Official Frank O’Neill.

At times, people stand in line at the permitting counter only to ask a question, drop off paperwork, or to see a plans examiner or inspector. Often, people stand in line only to mark their spot. They are now able to sit down and not feel obligated to stand in line while they wait.

This program was initiated by staff as an added convenience for those dealing with the Building Department or interrelated departments, to increase efficiency and improve customer service.



9/11 CEREMONY



A Sept. 11 memorial ceremony at Patriots Park — which holds a 2-ton steel beam from the World Trade Center wreckage — marked the 15th anniversary of the 2001 terrorist attacks. Fire Chief Shawn Carvey, top left, rang a bell for the victims and was presented a poster of NYFD members lost that day from event organizer Gene Sweeney. Council Member Fred Fraize, top right; Council Member Rich Cautero and Police Chief Tom Mattmuller also attended.



MOORING FIELD CLEANUP

Volunteers pulled nearly 1,000 pounds of debris from the Venice Mooring Field on Saturday, Sept. 17. Spearheaded by the Suncoast Reef Rovers Venice dive club, the cleanup yielded over 300 pounds of anchors and 170 pounds of rope, along with a battery charger, chains, tires, concrete blocks, a culvert and two inflatable dinghies (pictured being removed from the water at bottom middle and bottom right). Dozens of other items were too heavy to lift — in-

cluding engine blocks, a light pole and even a cast-iron sink — so latitude/longitude readings were taken so they could be picked up later.

Forty people were involved from nine different organizations, including the nearby Venice Yacht Club (which hosted a pulled pork lunch for the volunteers), Venice Police and Fire departments, and the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office.



IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS



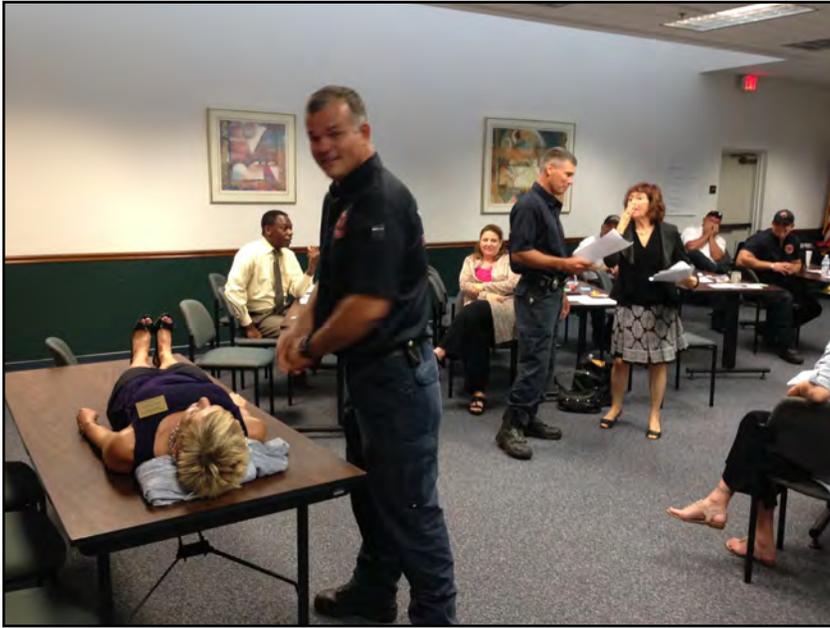
At left, Mayor John Holic congratulates Fire Rescue Battalion Chief Scott Blanchard Sept. 27 for his Congressional Above and Beyond the Call of Duty Award. At right, Holic proclaims Oct. 9-15 Fire Prevention Week with Fire Chief Shawn Carvey.



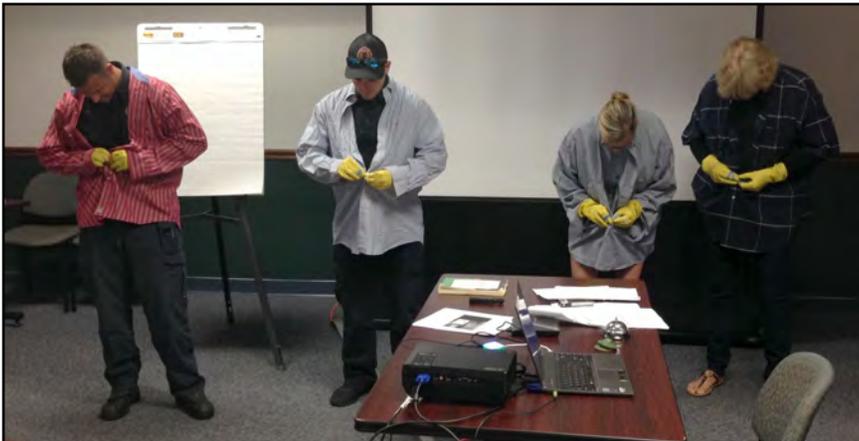
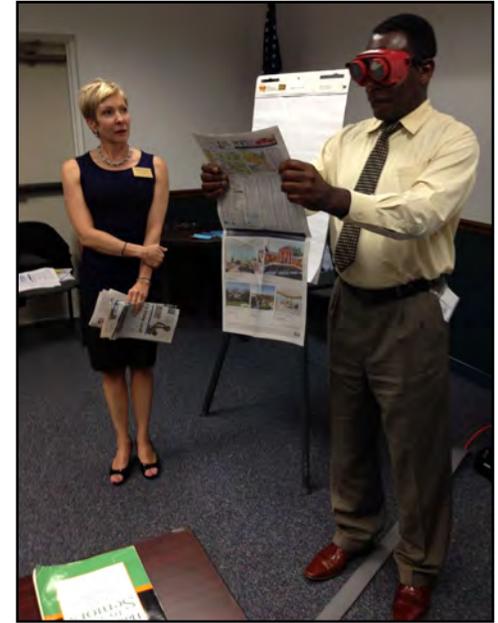
At right, Mayor Holic swears in Venice Fire-medics Hunter Snyder as his parents — and fellow Fire Rescue staff, at left — look on Sept. 27.



IN TRAINING



The city held a series of "Sensitivity for Seniors" workshops this year for employees, facilitated by Joan Lowery and Stacy Prouty. In the Sept. 14 session, participants donned special goggles to see the effects of cataracts and gloves to mimic having arthritis, among other exercises, and attempted to read, button shirts and perform other tasks. The facilitators also role-played with Fire Rescue staff, at left.



AROUND TOWN



City Clerk Lori Stelzer, with coordination from the Florida League of Cities (which provided speakers), organized mandatory training for area public officials on ethics, Sunshine and public records laws Sept. 23 at Village on the Isle. Elected officials in Florida have to take this four-hour course annually, according to Stelzer. Above, attorney Nikki Nate with the Bryant Miller Olive law firm of Tampa discusses the Sunshine Law as, below, Council Members Jeanette Gates, Fred Fraize and Rich Cautero listen. Mayor John Holic also attended. Seventeen officials from Venice, North Port, Naples, Punta Gorda, Fort Myers, Holmes Beach, Arcadia and Lakewood Ranch were present.



Director of Administrative Services Alan Bullock spends a day a month in the field working alongside employees from various departments. On Sept. 20, he worked in Utilities Water Distribution with Noill Leiva, at left, and Patrick Junius, at right, fixing a water leak at Bay Indies.



Separated at birth? Utilities Director Tim Hochuli and Finance Procurement Manager Peter Boers at a recent City Council meeting.



City of Venice and Sarasota County firefighters cross train on gear recently at Station 52 in the city.

AROUND TOWN



Above, Building Official Frank O'Neill with a classic Rolls Royce at the VMA's "Burnin' Rubber" opening reception Sept. 15. At right, Assistant City Manager Len Bramble and Assistant City Engineer James Clinch check out the exhibit.



Left, Public Works Director John Veneziano answers questions from those in attendance at a Venice homeowners/condo owners associations common issues meeting Sept. 21 in Council chambers.



Staff attending the monthly potluck at City Hall Sept. 8 enjoyed "Breakfast for Lunch" with items like biscuits and gravy, hashbrown and sausage casseroles, fruit, pastries, crepes, monkey bread, salads, bacon, and smoked salmon hors d'oeuvres, below, (brought in by Cathy Dubree in Engineering).



WELLNESS FAIR



The city's Health and Wellness Fair for employees, open to the public, was held at the Venice Community Center Aug. 31-Sept. 1. There were food, coffee and smoothie samples; giveaways and raffles, as well as complimentary chair massages and fitness demos including hula hooping, at left. Participants could also learn about bike safety, Venice area wellness, and city parks and trails.



The health fair featured 44 vendors and was organized by city Benefits Administrator Susie Daniels, above, and her Wellness Team, including Airport Administrative Coordinator Marta Ugas-Carpenter at right.



VPD Training Officer Dan Schuler plays a "Family Feud" trivia game about bicycle safety with Public Works employees Stephen Sorrentino, Jay Pollard and Steven Sout.



Utilities workers Chad Andrews and Vadim Bugayev, at left, learn about the benefits of AAA.

HAPPY RETIREMENT



Permit Technician Joan Moudy retired in September after more than 13 years with the city. Co-workers in the Building Department threw her a retirement party Sept. 15 in Room 106 at City Hall with a cake, snacks, punch and a few parting gifts.



Joan Moudy with Al King, Tony Ramirez, Marty Dietz, Frank Conorozzo, Audrey Symowicz, Oliver Lewis, Heather Taylor, Frank O'Neill, Michelle Girvan, Karen Butterworth, Susie Daniels, Judy Gamel and Lori Stelzer.



Building Permit & Systems Analyst Karen Butterworth reads Moudy a proclamation marking her retirement.



At right, Tony Ramirez, Utilities field operations technician, presents Moudy with a bouquet.

