Presidents' Day is Monday, February 20

THE RIVER WEEKLY NEWS

FREE
Take Me Home

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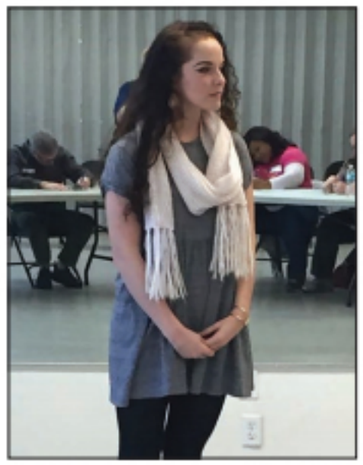
Finalists Named For The Young Artists Awards



Finalist Callie Atkinson photo provided

Tickets are still available for the 14th Annual Young Artists Awards Gala on Monday, March 6 at the Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre. For $55, a ticket includes a silent auction beginning at 5:30 p.m., dinner at 6 p.m. and the show starting at 7 p.m. In addition to the performances judged by professionals in attendance that evening, the program will feature the Audience Choice award, where ticketholders are invited to vote on their favorite performer. Thirty-five cash scholarships and other prizes will be awarded to the students this year. There will also be a special appearance by the Cypress Lake Center for the Arts award-winning The A Cappella Group. The stage host for the evening is Lois Thome of WINK-TV.

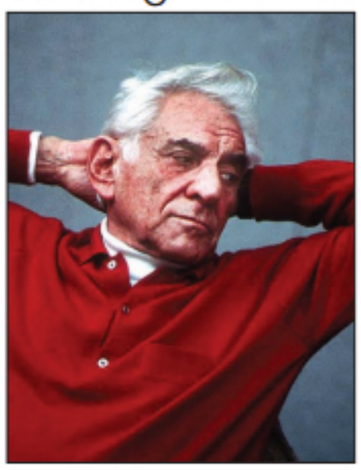
On four separate audition days during two weekends in January, seven panels of 60 professionals and educators in the performing arts adjudicated registered auditions in dance, drama, instrumental music, classical voice and contemporary voice/musical theater. The best of performing arts students ages 8 to 21 from throughout Southwest Florida participated in the largest independent performing arts competition in Lee County, held on the campus of the Alliance for the Arts/Foulds Theatre in Fort Myers.

The finalists of this year's auditions are:

Instrumental Music 13-16
Kevin Dimaculangan – Veterans Park

continued on page 21

Late Night With Bernstein



Leonard Bernstein

photos courtesy SBDAC

This February, the 2017 Chamber Series celebrates one of classical music's most enduring figures. A Multi-Media Cabaret: Late Night with Leonard Bernstein is a scintillating, and affectionate multi-media portrait of the personal side of this charismatic, singularly public figure. Hosted by his daughter Jamie and featuring acclaimed soprano Amy Burton and pianists John Musto and Michael Boriskin, this vibrant evening features Bernstein's most intimate (and favorite) music. The show includes works by Copland, Confrey, Coward, Schubert and Chopin, along with

continued on page 24

New Play To Open At Alliance For The Arts

Theatre Conspiracy presents *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* from February 24 through March 11 at the Alliance for the Arts.

Written by August Wilson and directed by Sonya McCarter, the play is set in a 1927 recording studio in Chicago. Ma Rainey, the mother of blues herself, is late to her own recording session. Her producers are frantic, the band is bored and her trumpeter, Levee, won't stop talking about his new shoes. As the band waits around for Ma, they swap stories about their experiences with racism, religion and, of course, music.

A talkback with Director Sonya McCarter and cast will take place after the March 5 performance. Talkbacks are open to the public and allow the discussion of ideas, themes and performance of the play.

"August Wilson is lyrical, extraordinary and powerful playwright," said Bill Taylor, founder and producing artistic director of Theatre Conspiracy. "This is a fabulous opportunity to highlight one of his best plays."

The *Ma Rainey's* cast includes a host of local actors including Cantrella Canady as Ma Rainey; Curt Sheard as Cutler; Roosevelt Stewart as Levee; Cicero McCarter III as Slow Drag; Elvis Mortley as Toledo; Charlie Sloin as Irvin; Patrick Day as Sturdyvant; Shaunte Manuel as Dussie Mae; Vladimy Bellefleur as Sylvester; and Austin Harn as the police officer.

Performances are on Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. with one Sunday matinee on March 5 at 2 p.m. Tickets are $24 or $11 for students with proper ID. Thursday nights are "buy-one-get-one-half-off." Alliance for the Arts Member Theatre Night is Friday, February 24 and tickets are $15 for members of the Alliance. For tickets, call 936-3239 or purchase online at www.theatreconspiracy.org.

This production is sponsored by Noreen Raney.

Alliance for the Arts is located at 10091 McGregor Boulevard in Fort Myers.

Arts And Crafts Fair On Sanibel This Weekend

The Rotary Club of Sanibel-Captiva will hold its 34th annual Arts and Crafts Fair on Saturday and Sunday, February 18 and 19 at The Community House, located at 2173 Periwinkle Way.

The arts and crafts fair is a celebration of community spirit, beautiful arts and crafts from around the country, entertainment, food, and displays from community and charity projects supported by the Sanibel-Captiva Rotary Club. With no fees for parking and a $5 suggested donation for entry, the public is invited.

More than 300 artists applied for the show this year. The club's jury committee was challenged to choose only the best works of art.

The show will be open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday. Over 100 participating artists will offer unique gifts, wearable art, sculpture, paintings, photography, wood working, painted furniture, jewelry and other wares. Many local businesses have donated items for the silent auction, including weeklong beachfront stays.

This year, the food section will be expanded to the soccer field next to the playground, with an assortment of food vendors and a beer and wine tent.

Proceeds are used to meet community needs, to fund local scholarships, and for human service needs worldwide. For more information, visit www.sanibelartfair.com.

Foundation members

photo courtesy SWFLCF

Nonprofits Benefit From Grant Funds

The Southwest Florida Community Foundation has awarded $557,036 to both established and new programs that are designed to increase the quality of life in sustainable and equitable ways for Southwest Floridians.

Eighteen local nonprofits were granted money from the community foundation's available Field of Interest funds as well as individual and corporate donations resulting from the foundation's Compassionate Shark Tank audience.

The nonprofits include: Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Association - Florida Gulf Coast Chapter; Audubon of the Western Everglades; CROW - Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife, Inc.; Family Initiative Incorporated; Glades Education Foundation, Inc.; Goodwill Industries of Southwest Florida, Inc.; Gulf Coast Symphony; Gulfshore Opera; Hendry County School District; Human Trafficking Awareness Partnerships; I Will Mentorship Foundation; JFCS of Southwest Florida; Lee County Alliance for the Arts; New Mission Systems International; Sanibel Sea School; the School District of Lee County; and The Heights Center.

Some examples of the regional funding include Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Association - Florida Gulf Coast Chapter's REACHing Southwest Florida (Resources for Enhancing Alzheimer's Caregiver Health). This program provides training for caregivers of people with Alzheimers to reduce burden and depression, improve ability to provide self-care, provide social support,and help caregivers learn how to manage difficult behaviors in care recipients.

The Hendry School District's Clewiston Industrial Mechanics Program will focus on providing training and a link to employment in the area of industrial and farm mechanics. A huge demand for this high-skill, high-wage trade exists within the community. Providing this training will help bridge an unemployment gap as well as provide a qualified workforce locally trained.

The Heights Center's Teach.Learn.Connect (TLC) program will allow parents to receive training for three hours each week on such topics as: forming positive relationships, building self-esteem, positive discipline, conflict resolution, communication, the power of encouragement, fostering responsibility and resiliency, routines and structure, interactive literacy, math and more. Training will be presented by certified professionals and will incorporate time for parents and children to work together as new skills are practiced.

The first award from the new Fund for the Environment of Southwest Florida was granted to Audubon of Western Everglades' Protection of Vital Wetlands and Habitats in Southwest Florida, which works to preserve as much Southwest Florida wetland acreage via "smart growth" where it does the least environmental damage while still providing benefit to the local economy. Building in environmentally sensitive areas jeopardizes not only the broad natural vistas many enjoy but also wetlands, which are critical for clean drinking water supplies as well as for the health of creeks, rivers, estuaries, beaches and wildlife habitat.

"Awarding this funding is just the start of our partnership with this regional mix of nonprofits," said Sarah Owen, president and CEO of the Foundation. "We will stay connected with them all year in a learning community where we share information and build our partnerships with the nonprofit and its leadership."

The Southwest Florida Community Foundation, founded in 1976, cultivates regional change for the common good through collective leadership, social innovation and philanthropy to address the evolving community needs in Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Hendry and Glades counties. Last year, it partnered with individuals, families and corporations that have created more than 400 philanthropic funds over the last 40 years. Thanks to them, the foundation's invested $5 million in grants and programs to the community. With assets of more than $93 million, it has provided more than $67 million in grants and scholarships to the communities it serves since inception. The foundation is the backbone organization for the regional FutureMakers Coalition and Lee County's Sustainability Plan. Based in Fort Myers, the Southwest Florida Community Foundation has satellite offices located on Sanibel Island, in LaBelle (Hendry County) and downtown Fort Myers.

For more information, call 274-5900 or visit www.floridacommunity.com.

Tickets On Sale To Author Dinner

Meet and dine with dozens of best-selling authors at the Evening with the Authors on Friday, March 17 at the Marina at Edison Ford, 2360 West First Street in downtown Fort Myers. The event begins at 5 p.m. with dockside cocktails, followed by a buffet dinner and dessert reception at sunset in the Edison Ford Coconut Grove on the Caloosahatchee.

The event is a chance to meet the more than 20 authors who will headline the Southwest Florida Reading Festival the next day. Reservations are required. Tickets are $55. Space is limited. The deadline for reservations is midnight, March 3. Go to www.readfest.org/events and select Evening with the Authors to make a reservation.

The dinner will honor author Kimberla Lawson Roby with the 2017 Distinguished Author Award for her work as a member of the Womanspace Community Advisory Council, which seeks to connect, empower and transform the world one woman at a time.

The evening is sponsored by Books-A-Million and the Edison & Ford Winter Estates. Visit www.readfest.org/Authors to see the list of the outstanding authors expected at the festival and dinner.

Complete author information, schedules of festival activities, partner events, directions to the event and more, are available in the festival app available free at the App Store or Google Play, www.readfest.org or by calling 479-4636.

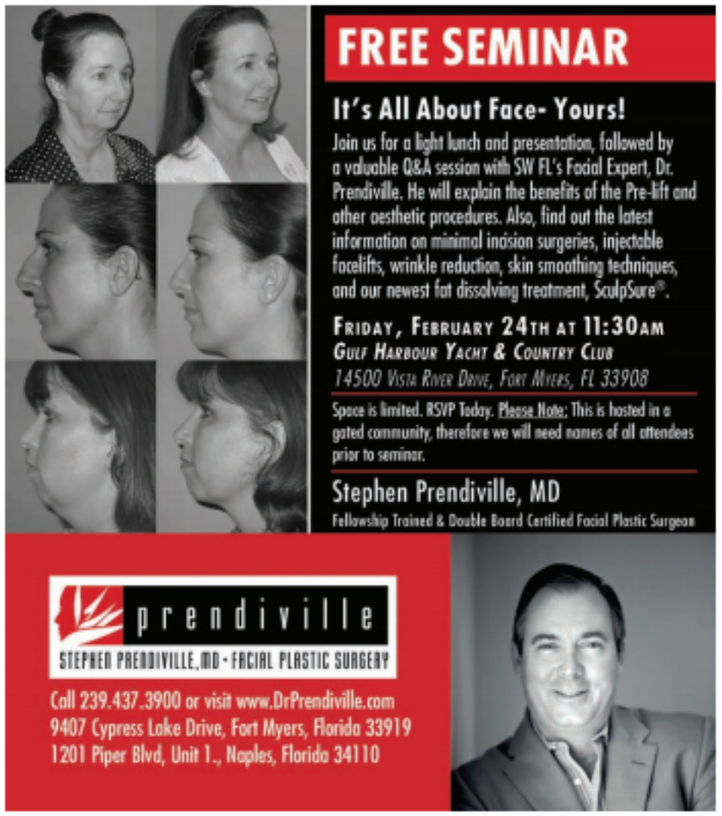
Church Requiem

Peace Lutheran Church will welcome the Rev. David Johnson as a guest conductor at a festival choir requiem on Saturday, February 25. Rev. Johnson worked with John Leavitt to create the requiem.

This allows a deeper understanding of the work, the composer and how it will be brought to life at Peace Lutheran. The requiem follows the pattern of Brahms' *A German Requiem*.

This work, which includes Pianist Janet Carter, Organist Ric Jaeggi and Tenor Robert Beane, is designed to bring joy to the living through the use of psalms, hymns and a Gaelic blessing that offers the listener comfort and hope through the beautiful creation.

Texts for this work have been drawn from: Psalm 23, Psalm 27, Psalm 47. It also includes a prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, and hymns *How Can I Keep from Singing* by Robert Lowry and *Easter Carol*, a Latin antiphon of *Dona nobis pacem*.

This concert is made possible by a generous gift from Joyce English, a beloved festival choir alumni.

Peace Lutheran Chruch is located at 15840.