

GULF COAST

Manatee and Sarasota

QUESTIONS? Contact Editor David Hackelf at 941-315-0631

to be closed

SARASOTA — The Payne Park playground will be closed from July 20-27 while crews complete the second and final phase of improvements to the playground this summer.

New surface material will be installed at the splash pad, a portion of the turf grass will be replaced, and all the turf grass will be re-sanded and leveled, according to the city. In addition, play equipment, including a crawling tube and swing, will be replaced. Also, in the musical play area, new chimes will be installed.

The playground is expected to reopen later in the day on July 27, weather permitting. Families are encouraged to use other public playgrounds, such as Bayfront Park at U.S. 41 and Ringling Boulevard.

The circus-themed Payne Park playground opened in June 2012. It is surrounded by 29 acres of urban parkland adjacent to the Sarasota Police Headquarters, 2991 Adams Lane. Payne Park also includes a half-mile exercise trail, skateboard park and tennis courts.

LECOM welcomes dental students

BRADENTON — The fourth class of 390 dental students began classes at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine School of Dental Medicine dentists this week.

This is LECOM's first year with full enrollment of 400 students. First-year students begin with an introduction and overview of the dental profession, before preclinical instruction.

Three of the students are from the Gulf coast area.

The curriculum spans 48 weeks. Second- and third-year students are currently working in the LECOM School of Dental Medicine patient clinics, providing comprehensive dental care to the community. The fourth-year is devoted to training at community-based primary care clinics in Delaware, Georgia as well as Erie, Pa.

School supplies in North Port

Students in kindergarten through 12th grade who live in North Port can receive free backpacks and school supplies, but they must register in advance and then attend the Park to School Back-to-School

MISSION CATARACT

The gift of clarity



The Center for Sight in Sarasota completed Mission Cataract 2015 on Wednesday, giving five cataract surgery to over 100 patients who would otherwise be unable to afford it. The program, founded by Dr. David Shoemaker and funded by donations, allows the center's staff to conduct free cataract surgeries to anyone in need. The procedures are conducted annually on two days, a week apart, to allow one eye to heal before surgery is done on the other.

— Dave Wagner



TOP: The Center for Sight staff prepare to perform a cataract surgery on Wednesday. **ABOVE:** Center for Sight founder and director Dr. David Shoemaker uses a scope as he works on a patient's cataracts. **LEFT:** Carel Edge of Sarasota smiles minutes after her cataract surgery at the Center for Sight in Sarasota on Wednesday. Edge had her left eye done a week before and her right eye completed on Wednesday. "It starts a little but I don't care, because I can see," Edge said. "I had to leave my way around Sarasota with these cataracts." **STAFF PHOTOS / DAVE WAGNER**

Actress Inspires in 'Amish Project'



Katherine Michelle Tanner is wonderfully vibrant as she portrays seven characters in this play about a fictionalized school shooting in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania is at the heart of the Banyan Theatre production. **Review, 87**

CAPITOL COMMENTS

Sentence reform is urged for Florida



LOYD DUNKELBERGER

TALLAHASSEE — As President Barack Obama commuted the sentences of 40 prisoners, including 21 Floridians, who were serving long-term federal prison sentences for non-violent crimes, advocates used the occasion to call for sentencing reforms in Florida.

Dominic Calabro, head of Florida TaxWatch, said the sentences are "unnecessarily harsh" for both the inmates and the taxpayers.

"Over-incarceration of non-violent drug offenders, such as these inmates, provides little to no public benefit to community safety, but results in astronomical costs," said Calabro, whose nonpartisan research group is part of a coalition calling for changes in the way Florida sentences prisoners.

Robert Weissert, a senior TaxWatch researcher, said while Florida's crime rate has plunged to a 40-year low, the state's tough sentencing policies have caused the prison population to "explode."

Florida currently houses more than 100,000 inmates in its prison system at a cost of more than \$2.2 billion a year.

"As Florida lawmakers look for options to reduce the state budget for prisons and continue to make Sunshine State streets safer, they must ensure