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ROBIN WATT PHOTOS

SCC Emergency Squad Team 6 members load a Community Association resident onto an ambulance. From left are Deputy Chief Ed Whitehead, working here as a driver, EMR Betty Richer and EMT Herb Hartman.

## Emergency Squad seeks parity between the C.A. and Kings Point

By ROBIN WATT

For more than 38 years, Kings Point residents have provided a constant and reliable source of funding for the Sun City Center Emergency Squad. Their monthly contributions allow us to plan and budget in advance, knowing we

can count on those funds. While some Community Association residents make individual donations, it isn't funding we can count on. In the next few weeks, members of the community and the SCC Emergency Squad will be circulating a petition regarding support for the squad. The petition for

CA members states "by signing, you are showing your support for adding a \$15 per year fee to your annual dues to ensure continued services of the SCC Emergency Squad are not in jeopardy." This amounts to \$1.25 per month

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## Iron Rock Insurance rockets its way to success

By LOIS KINDLE  
lkindle@aol.com

Iron Rock Insurance has much to celebrate June 1 when it observes its fifth anniversary. Since its founding in 2020, the company's growth has been quite impressive. Owner and managing partner

Lisa Hast had 37 years of experience working in the insurance industry when she decided to start her own agency. Her 23-year-old daughter, Torie, initially helped set up the office and its technology and then became an agent. Hast now has 11 licensed employees,

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COURTESY PHOTO

Lisa Hast, owner/managing partner of Iron Rock Insurance, and her dog Remy are surrounded by family members who have helped the agency thrive after only five years. Standing from left is Kate Norberg; Torie McCorkle-Sanders; husband, Jason; and Katie Kinder.



LINDA CHION KENNEY PHOTO

Road Closing" signs lit up at 11:59 p.m., February 28 for an expected 21-day project at the intersection of U.S. Highway 301 and Boyette Road, as it turns into Gibsonton Drive.

## U.S. 301 and detour route traffic heats up with road work projects

By LINDA CHION KENNEY  
linda@observernews.net

Things are getting a bit messy and testy in Riverview, thanks to construction at and near the intersection of U.S. Highway 301 at Boyette Road as it turns into Gibsonton Drive.

Motorists seeking to cross U.S. Highway 301 from Boyette Road are in view of 11 "Road Closed" construction signs, put in place by Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) officials, for an

intersection improvement project that includes replacing asphalt pavement with a durable concrete surface.

The road section closed at 11:59 p.m., Friday, Feb. 28, and is expected to remain closed for 21 days, weather permitting. The closing blocks a heavily traveled route for access to the I-75 interchange before moving further west to U.S. Highway 41, passing on the way AMC Riverview 14, New East Bay Road, Walmart and

Gibsonton Elementary School. Overall, the \$1.24 million state project includes as well repaving U.S. Highway 301 from Whitt Road to Rivercrest Drive. FDOT officials say the intersection work will be done in phases and will take approximately 140 days to complete.

The first phase, which launched within a minute of midnight on March 1, aims to reduce travel through the intersection from both

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# Emergency Squad

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per person and is equitable to the \$2.50 per month per home fee Kings Point residents have paid since 1987.

"Fairness is what Americans believe in—equity, parity, justice and impartiality—all American values," said Chief Mike Bardell. "And they are community values, as well."

"I believe our Emergency Squad should be funded equally by all residents," he continued. "This request is a fee for service; however, there has never been a charge for ambulance transportation or anything else we do. We always appreciate the donations both individuals and organizations make to the squad; however, what I'm seeking is secure funding to ensure our squad can continue to serve our residents."

"Right now, we count on the monthly donations we get through the agreement with Kings Point. But we can't count on that from the Community Association. We would hate to eventually have to cut service to residents of the CA due to lack of support," the chief said.

**A bit of history**  
When the SCC Emergency Squad began in 1964, donations and contributions rolled in, because the community realized residents had no immediate emergency services. It would take more than an hour for an ambulance to arrive from either Tampa General or Manatee Memorial because back then there was no I-75, and county roads were only two lanes.

Over more than 25 years, various funding programs were established and changed as the times changed. They included fund drives, memberships and donations from Community Association residents because the squad served only residents of the Community Association until 1987.

Kings Point began building in 1973. From then until 1986, its residents were served by the Apollo Beach Rescue Squad.

Historical news articles have provided a great deal of background regarding this relationship. The Apollo Beach Rescue Squad had a voluntary household membership fee of \$20 per

year, plus insurance billing. Kings Point was in its jurisdiction.

However, by late 1986, the Apollo Beach Rescue Squad was facing financial difficulty. There were charges of mismanagement, and it was disbanded.

**Squad begins service to Kings Point**

After many initial attempts failed to bring Kings Point into the SCC Emergency Squad jurisdiction, the disbanding of the Apollo Rescue Squad opened the door. In 1987, KP developer Al Hoffman negotiated with then SCC EMS Chief Greg Geiger to provide ambulance service to Kings Point residents for the \$2.50 monthly fee for service per home. This fee has never changed.

In 2024, Emergency Squad Chief Bardell negotiated a three-year bulk contract with Kings Point to continue this fee, which is attached to each homeowner monthly fee. This generates about 1/3 of the squad's annual operating budget.

Once Kings Point residents began donating and receiving service from the SCC Emergency Squad, regular donations from Community Association residents dropped off.

"What I'm pursuing is stable funding," Bardell said. "Kings Point residents have provided us with funding we've counted on the past 38 years, but I feel it's only fair that all residents share in supporting us on a somewhat equal basis."

"On a couple of occasions, I've presented to the Community Association Board that there are several ways we can do this. In fact, past chiefs, including Noreen Schramm, also made attempts to secure routine funding. But thus far, the Community Association leaders have avoided having this discussion with the residents."

"This is why I want to directly address CA residents. Do you know how and where your money is spent? Would \$15 per year, essentially 4 cents per day per resident be excessive?"

The squad understands many residents may never need an ambulance or wheelchair van; however, all residents benefit from



On another run, Team 6 EMT Herb Hartman, driver Annie Symington and EMR Betty Richer take a gurney from the ambulance and head up the driveway to aid a caller.

the many additional services it provides. In addition to hundreds of ambulance and wheelchair-van runs, the SCC Emergency Squad provides an added layer of care and security for residents who are, in many ways, unaware. A few of these include

- Disaster planning and coordination with multiple state and county agencies.
- Symposiums on health issues, such as Advance Life Decisions and Understanding Insurance.
- Quick response to the pandemic to provide drive-thru testing and later vaccine clinics.
- Stand-by ambulance at community events.
- CPR training for community organization staff and volunteers.
- CPR training for church groups, community groups and clubs.
- Emergency communication capabilities—radio and phone networks to provide a faster response.
- Health education through symposiums and group presentations.
- Van service for wheelchair-bound residents to doctor visits and dialysis.
- Blood pressure checks at our main building and community events.
- Loans of equipment: walkers, rollators, wheelchairs, canes and crutches...

and much more. All are offered free of charge.

No other community in Florida has the added resources the SCC Emergency Squad provides, so even if you haven't needed an ambulance or wheelchair van, you're still receiving the benefits of our efforts.

The SCC Emergency Squad has served the community for more than 60 years. We want to be able to continue that tradition of service.

Robin Watt is chairwoman of the SCC Emergency Squad Board, an emergency medical technician and a 20-year squad volunteer.



## SCC Rotary and Sportsmans clubs peanut butter and cereal collection

The Sun City Center Rotary and the Sportsmans clubs held their spring peanut butter and cereal collection. These items are key food products in providing support to families in need. They are especially desirable due to both their nutritional value and ease of storage.

During the February Sportsman Club meeting, 300 pounds of food items were collected. The resulting horde was delivered to the Emergency Care Help Organization (ECHO) to assist local families. ECHO assists families in

crisis with emergency food as well as clothing and access to life-stabilizing programs, all at no charge. Cash donations were used to purchase pasta, which ECHO identified as an immediate need.

Rotary also has an ongoing project to collect clothing in support of ECHO's retail store. The SCC Rotary Club meets each Tuesday for lunch with a topical speaker at Freedom Fairways. For more information, visit its Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/RotarySCC](http://www.facebook.com/RotarySCC) or call Bill (membership) at 813-634-3936.

## SCC Swim Dancers presented Kaleidoscope



On March 1, the Sun City Center Swim Dancers presented its annual show titled "Kaleidoscope" in the indoor pool. As always, this year's performance drew a full house. Routines included beautiful moves, such as flamingos, waterwheels, dolphins, walk-overs and Eiffel towers.

The popular Swim Dandies also entertained the crowd with antics during "Spish Splash." Our swimmers practice all year long and invite anyone who would like to learn synchronized swimming skills. If interested please call Barb Reznor at 860-841-3282.

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