



CONNECTION

The Newsletter for Clearwater's
Bright and Beautiful Employees and Retirees



Traffic Team Builds Platform to Help Nesting Osprey

By Heather Parsons; Photos by Ted Mellis and Rob Shaw

In May 2021, danger was lurking directly underneath a baby osprey's nest, built atop a traffic signal at the intersection of Keene Road and Palmetto Street.

The city received many calls and emails from concerned residents, fearing for the chick's safety. They were worried it would fall from the nest onto the road while learning to fly.

The city partnered with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission to bring in a biologist to remove the chick.

Months after the chick was removed, bird spikes were installed atop the light to try to prevent the mother from continuing to build another nest. Despite the spikes, the mother bird continued nesting at that location. The traffic team removed the material almost daily, but she continued to build.



Then in January, the city's **Traffic Operations** team came up with a plan.

"We decided to put up a pole and avian platform adjacent to the intersection to hopefully lure the nesting birds away from the traffic signal," said **Ted Mellis**, traffic operations supervisor.



Traffic Signal Technician **Charles Sheldon** came up with the idea, and the rest of the team worked out the logistics. They got a large dish from **Parks & Recreation** and built the platform in a day.

In addition to Mellis and Sheldon, the team included **Kristian Greve** (traffic signal technician), **Louis Marquez** (traffic signal technician) and **Charles Stephenson** (traffic operations supervisor).

Once the platform was finished, it didn't take long for the osprey to move to its new home.

"The bird took to it that day," said Mellis. "As soon as our crew cleared out, it was already on the avian platform."

Employee Spotlight: Officer Matthew Bremis

By Rob Shaw

When you're a police officer, many times you have to think on your feet and improvise to handle a situation.

That's what **Officer Matthew Bremis** learned on a call involving a runaway girl with autism. The 10-year-old had fled a school and was running into traffic on Sunset Point Road near Union Street. That's where Bremis and **Cpl. Ashley Hinkebein** came into contact with the youngster.



The two knew the girl had trouble communicating verbally, so Cpl. Hinkebein saw the perfect training opportunity for Officer Bremis, who has been with the agency since just September. She told him to find out what he could from the girl, who was sitting on the sidewalk and eating a snack.

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Employee Spotlight

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"I decided to sit down with her on the grass and just started talking with her," Bremis recalled. "I took out my notebook and she seemed interested in that, so I gave it to her."

Whatever difficulty she had in communicating verbally was made up for by being able to write down information. Soon he had the name of her mother and other details about her. She even wrote down the name of her school mascot.

Hinkebein, who has an autistic stepson, was blown away by how Bremis handled the call.

"I loved seeing it, because if it was my stepson who had run out into traffic, I would want the same response from any officer that they would get from me or anyone who is really familiar with it."

The two were featured in a **Clearwater Police Department** Facebook post, and then Channel 10 did a story that focused on the duo and the training police officers receive for handling calls related to people with special needs.

Clearwater Celebrates Neighborhoods Day

City councilmembers, the city manager and city staff participated in the annual Neighborhoods Day March 26. They visited multiple block parties throughout the city and also celebrated the opening of the newly renovated Belmont Park.



The Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival Returns

By Heather Parsons

The Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival presented by Visit St. Pete Clearwater is right around the corner. Happening April 8 to 24, the festival and sand sculpture exhibit returns to bright and beautiful Clearwater Beach. Each year, it attracts visitors from all around the world each year to Clearwater.



This year's theme is "SANDimals, An Animal Adventure," and general admission tickets cost \$12 per person. Children ages 3 years old and younger are free. Baystar VIP Lounge tickets are on sale for \$70 and include a wide range of perks and fun. This year's festival is 100-percent cashless.



Clearwater police and fire employees may be eligible for discounted tickets on "Frontline Fridays." These \$10 tickets are for military personnel, police officers, firefighters, teachers and health care workers, and they can be purchased at the gate only with proper identification April 8, 15 and 22, only.

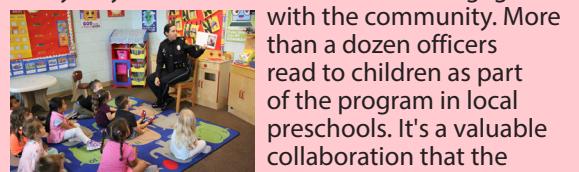
Volunteers are needed, too. If you love Clearwater Beach and appreciate the masterful art of sand sculpting, sign up to be a volunteer. Volunteer perks include a complimentary Sand Ambassador T-shirt, free meal after your shift, free transportation from Downtown Clearwater, access to the Sugar Sand Walk Exhibit day-of-shift, and one free general admission ticket for a return visit.

This year's event is the festival's eighth year and is sure to be the biggest year yet at Clearwater Beach. Buy tickets or sign up to volunteer at SugarSandFestival.com.

Officer Friendly Book Club

By Rob Shaw

The Officer Friendly Book Club is just one of the many ways **Clearwater Police** officers engage with the community. More than a dozen officers



read to children as part of the program in local preschools. It's a valuable collaboration that the police department has with

the Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County to fuel an early interest in reading among youngsters.

As part of the program, **Maj. Natalia Illich-Hailey** has read to children at the Skycrest Child Development Center. Also, **Officer Brittany Ducheney** visited youngsters at Trinity Presbyterian Church Preschool.



North Greenwood CRA Workshop

A community workshop was held recently at the North Greenwood Recreation Complex, where more than 100 people came to learn about the creation of a new North Greenwood Community Redevelopment Area. The workshop was a big success in obtaining feedback from the community.



What Happens to Your Trash Once It's Hauled Away From the Curb by the Solid Waste Department?

By Heather Parsons

Most people don't think about what happens to their trash after a **Clearwater Solid Waste** crew picks it up and hauls it away. The city's solid waste team make a living out of managing that waste for you.

On average, Americans generate more than 292 million tons of waste each year, or about 4.9 pounds per person per day, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Of that waste, 69 million tons is recycled, 25 million tons is composted, and 198 million tons is trash.

So, where does your garbage go, once it leaves your curb?



Brandi Portalatin is a Clearwater solid waste service forewoman, who supervises the crews that drive solid waste trucks around Clearwater neighborhoods, picking up your trash. These men and women manually and mechanically load a variety of different trucks and pack them full of garbage bags, yard debris and bulk items, such as washing machines, broken furniture and old mattresses.

Once the trucks are full, your neighborhood solid waste team takes the contents to the Clearwater Solid Waste Transfer Station. They dump their trucks' contents onto the tipping floor and head back out into the neighborhoods to collect more garbage.

Terrell Smith works at the transfer station as a solid waste equipment operator, and he uses a bulldozer and a large crane to pack trash into a semi-trailer truck. These semi-trailers can hold up to 20 tons of trash, or about as much trash from three neighborhood trucks.



Just like when you pack luggage or play Tetris, there's a fine art to positioning things just right. Smith has the ability to pack the semi-trailer so it can hold the most material in the most efficient manner.

"Terrell is like a chef, but instead of knives he uses the bucket of a 40,000-pound bulldozer," said Bryant Johnson, the Clearwater Solid Waste & Recycling assistant director. "His job as a heavy equipment operator requires skills to manage 12-foot-high piles of garbage and the ability to load a 53-foot-long trailer evenly from front to back. Not everyone can do this job. He excels at it."

Interestingly, when old mattresses are thrown away and dumped onto the transfer station tipping floor, Smith will move them alongside the wall and wait for the end of the day. Then, he uses the bulldozer to push the mattress around the whole transfer station floor to sop up any freestanding liquids or to push loose debris toward other garbage.

"We use it like a scrub brush," said Smith. "Gotta keep the place clean."

From there, crews drive the semi-trailers full of trash to the Pinellas County Waste-to-Energy Plant, where most – if not all – of it is incinerated. This is the primary disposal method for trash in Pinellas County.

Waste-to-energy plants like the one here in Pinellas County are the most effective alternative to landfill disposal. Ours is one of the largest operating waste-to-energy plants in the United States.



At the plant, there are three burners, which incinerate trash to generate up to 75 megawatts per hour of electricity. Some of that electricity runs the plant itself, and then about 60 megawatts per hour is sold to Duke Energy. This electricity powers about 45,000 Pinellas County homes and businesses each day.

"Landfilling trash is a last resort in Pinellas County," said Johnson. "It happens only if the plant is at capacity, then any overage is sent to the county landfill."

Something you may not know is, construction materials from environmentally safe construction and demolition waste are reused in a unique, sustainable way. The artificial reef program reuses safe construction materials along Pinellas County's Gulf of Mexico floor. At the time this article went to press, there were 42 artificial reefs from Tarpon Springs to St. Pete Beach.

Items such as concrete pipes, steel beams or entire ships are carefully placed on the gulf floor. Within about two weeks, algae and barnacles attach to the reef material. Soon, fish come to feed on these creatures. And within a year, the reef begins to support the growth of coral.

In time, these artificial reefs can become a safe habitat to an entire community of beautiful sea life, right here along coast.

Clearwater Library's Annual Clearwater Comic Con Event

The **Clearwater Public Library System** partnered with the **Parks & Recreation Department** this year to host their annual Comic Con event. The event was held at Ross Norton Recreation Complex on March 5.



Personnel Corner

Dec. 14, 2021 through March 28, 2022

NEW HIRES

Mirela Alcani , Sampling Technician, Public Utilities	Marquez Green , Solid Waste Worker, Solid Waste & General Services	Tyler Olson , Parks Service Technician, Parks & Recreation
Mitchell Arnold , Parks Service Technician, Parks & Recreation	Jeremy Hall , Parks Service Technician, Parks & Recreation	Gregorio Patricio-Charrez , Streets & Sidewalks Technician, Parks & Recreation
Vito Biondo , Meter Reader, Utility Customer Service	Brooke Harris , Senior Systems Programmer, Information Technology	Michele Perry , Police Cadet, Police
Shawna Blauvelt , Contracts & Procurement Specialist, Engineering	Amauri Hart-Banks , Library Page, Library	Kristen Pinsker , Police Officer, Police
Gail Brislin , Police Records Specialist, Police	Rhett Havenstein , Gas Technician, Clearwater Gas	Jordan Potter , Crime Analyst, Police
Jennifer Burgett , Staff Assistant, Engineering	Karri Hopkinson , Gas Technician I Apprentice, Clearwater Gas	Dylan Prins , Planner, Planning & Development
Alexis Butler , Customer Service Representative, Utility Customer Service	Matthew James Hutchins , Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Trainee, Public Utilities	Angela Reardon , Library Assistant, Library
Brandon Buzzell , Parking Enforcement Specialist, Engineering	Danielle Janney , Library Assistant, Library	Jacorrie Riley , Wastewater Collections Technician, Public Utilities
George Campbell , Recreation Leader, Parks & Recreation	Brandy Johnson , Customer Service Representative, Utility Customer Service	Alicia Robinson , Development Review Technician, Planning & Development
Matthew Capone , Police Officer, Police	Melissa Keel , Senior Assistant City Attorney, City Attorney	Calleigh Ross , Recreation Specialist, Parks & Recreation
Edward Castillo , Tree Trimmer, Parks & Recreation	Janice Klein , Crime Analyst, Police	Rayshawn Sapp , Solid Waste Worker, Solid Waste & General Services
Evan Chadwick , Crime Analyst, Police	Brian Knoblock , Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator B, Public Utilities	Hunter Sawyer , Skilled Tradesworker, Parks & Recreation
Ahmad Cooper , Solid Waste Worker, Solid Waste & General Services	Megan Kosove , Library Page, Library	John Serricchio , Custodial Worker, Marine & Aviation
Mackenzie Copes , Library Page, Library	Kyle Krukowski , Recreation Leader, Parks & Recreation	Leland Sivanish , Senior Accountant, Engineering
Sawyer Day , Parks Service Technician, Parks & Recreation	Jared Larock , Fleet Mechanic, Solid Waste & General Services	Lauren Styles , Police Officer, Police
Robert Dehainaut , School Crossing Guard, Police	Andrew Lowe , Parks Service Technician, Parks & Recreation	Steven Taggart , Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Trainee, Public Utilities
Richard Derby , Parking, Facility & Security Aide, Library	Tara Mannosso , Utility Dispatcher, Clearwater Gas	Robert Telford , Multi-Media Manager, Public Communications
Deanthony Dodson , Parks Service Technician, Parks & Recreation	Benjamin McCallum , Police Officer, Police	Travis Teuber , Public Utilities Assistant Manager, Public Utilities
Ashley Fackler , Police Records Specialist, Police	Adam Mengerink , Police Officer, Police	Bradley Thomas , Gas Technician Apprentice, Clearwater Gas
Antonio Floyd , Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Trainee, Public Utilities	Jonathan Mitchell , Police Cadet, Police	Penz Tinajero , Water Distribution Operator Trainee, Public Utilities
Michelle Gardner , Librarian, Parks & Recreation	Leslie Moran , Library Assistant, Library	Leslie Walbolt , Librarian, Library
Carl Giardino , Police Aide, Police	Shaun Murray , Street Sweeper Operator, Engineering	Morgan Williams , Police Aide, Police
Christina Goodrich , Wastewater Environmental Technology Manager, Public Utilities	Samantha Negron , Police Officer, Police	Ryan Wingfield , Parking Enforcement Specialist, Engineering
	Kathern Neighly , Senior Accountant, Solid Waste & General Services	Markise Wingfield , Solid Waste Worker, Solid Waste & General Services
	Joel Nina , Police Cadet, Police	Yue Melody Yin , Sustainability Specialist, City Manager's Office

- **RETIREMENTS**
- **John Allen**, Water Distribution Operator, Public Utilities
- **Douglas Alvarez**, Parks Service Foreman, Parks & Recreation
- **Leonardo Aragones**, Senior Parks Service Technician, Parks & Recreation
- **Paul Bosco**, Police Officer, Police
- **Leroy Chin**, Parks Senior Manager, Parks & Recreation
- **Benjamin Coccia**, Senior Plans Examiner, Planning & Development
- **Stephen Colbert**, Fire Medic, Fire & Rescue
- **Patrick Conrey**, Fire Lieutenant, Fire & Rescue
- **Glenn Daniel**, Water Reclaim & Wastewater Collection Manager, Public Utilities
- **Gerard Devivo**, Fire Medic, Fire & Rescue
- **Jose Fernandez**, Firefighter/Driver-Operator, Fire & Rescue
- **Eric Gandy**, Police Deputy Chief, Police
- **Charles Jeffries**, Water Distribution Operator Lead, Public Utilities
- **Lance Kielich**, Fleet Operations Trainer, Solid Waste & General Services
- **David Larremore**, Traffic Engineering Analyst, Engineering
- **Peter Lopez**, Firefighter, Fire & Rescue
- **Suzanne Melton**, Staff Assistant, Engineering/Stormwater
- **Jesse Myers**, Police Officer, Police
- **Gene Nyland**, Network Engineer, Information Technology
- **Denis O'Connor**, Firefighter, Fire & Rescue
- **Julie Phillips**, Inspections Specialist, Planning & Development
- **Fatos Pojani**, Utilities Electronics Technician, Public Utilities
- **Charles Scrivens**, Senior Parks Service Technician, Parks & Recreation
- **Scott Smith**, Customer Service Supervisor, Utility Customer Service
- **Robert Strieder**, Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator A, Public Utilities
- **David Taggart**, Traffic Signal Technician, Engineering
- **Karen Wiseman**, Senior Parks Service Technician, Parks & Recreation

Sympathies

To the family, friends and colleagues of retired firefighter **Michelle Williams**, who passed away Feb. 9, and to Fire District Commander **Larry Williams** on the loss of his wife.

To the family, friends and colleagues of these retired city employees who recently passed away:

- **Oliver "Bobby" Matthews**, Solid Waste Worker on Jan. 3
- **Julia Tynefield**, retired Payroll Technician on Jan. 21
- **Donald Konen**, retired Tradesworker on Feb. 12
- **Robert Jones**, retired Firefighter on Feb. 10
- **Ronald Nessler**, retired Wastewater Treatment Operator on Jan. 23
- **Robert Heine**, retired Police Officer on Dec. 19
- **Donald Osborn**, retired Fire Lieutenant, Jan. 23

To **Audra Aja**, Economic Development Marketing Coordinator, on the loss of her aunt

To **Matthew Burmood**, Fire Lieutenant, on the loss of his father

To **Laura Del Valle**, Senior Graphic Designer, on the loss of her mother

To **Lisa Friday**, Gas Marketing Specialist, on the loss of her mother

To **Jennifer Obermaier**, Library Director, on the loss of her father

To **David Pearson**, Information Technology Manager, on the loss of his father

To **Sue Stieben**, Police Service Technician, on the loss of her husband

Service Awards

20 YEARS

David Bell, Custodial Worker, Parks & Recreation

Suzanne Hollin, Police Telecommunicator, Police

Melanie Kindred, Police Office Specialist, Police

Ioannis Kourmoulakis, Air Conditioning Technician, Solid Waste & General Services

Melvin Maciolek, Stormwater Maintenance Manager, Engineering

James Phelps, Police Officer, Police

Stephanie Sansom, Division Controller, Engineering

Joseph Taylor, Parks Service Foreman, Parks & Recreation

Steve Ussery, Arborist, Parks & Recreation

25 YEARS

Lesli Bland Moord, Fire Medic, Fire & Rescue

Daniel Harrison, Parking, Facility & Security Aide

Michael Walek, Police Major, Police

30 YEARS

Richard Clendenin, Lead Gas Technician, Clearwater Gas

Chrisann Gerakios, Police Service Technician, Police

Charles Warrington, Executive Director of Gas System, Clearwater Gas

Births

To **Louis Christou**, Senior Accountant, a daughter named Phoebe Elisabeth, born Sept. 8

To **Michael Kontodiakos**, Police Officer a son named Pantelis Michael, born Jan. 15, weighing 8 lbs. 15 oz. and 22" long

To **Anne Lopez**, Community Redevelopment Specialist, a daughter named Skylar Grace, born March 8

To **Shawn Markussen**, Fire Medic, a daughter named Isla Joy, born Feb. 28

To **Stephany Ogradney**, Police Officer, a son named Levi, born March 6

To **Scott Sims**, Fire Medic, a daughter named Alana Mae, born Feb. 7

To **Cara Zamudio**, Police Officer, a son named Sergio Daniel, Jr., born Jan. 27 weighing 7 lbs. 7 oz.

Cause For Applause

Sonny's BBQ recognized Officer **Paul Comini**, a school resource officer at Countryside High School, for consistently going above and beyond for students.



Lt. Travis Connolly received the B Shift challenge coin from Fire Medic **Jackelyn Koffler**.

Jeff Harmon, Library Business Systems Analyst, was named Clearwater Public Library System 2021 Employee of the Year.



Fire Medic **James Humphrey** was awarded the C Shift challenge coin from Lt. **Chris Johnson**.

Officer **Michael Morea** was named the recipient of the 2021 Veterans of Foreign Wars Law Enforcement Public Servant Citation Award.



The newest **Clearwater Fire & Rescue** recruits graduated Jan. 7.



Nine new police officers were sworn in at a recent city council work session. Welcome to the team, **Matthew Capone, Jonathan Kline, Benjamin McCallum, Adam Mengerink, Samantha Negron, Kristen Pinsker, Damian Rios, Lauren Styles and Cole VanDeusen**.



Employees of the Month

JANUARY 2022

Mark Jansen
Mechanical Supervisor
Solid Waste &
General Services



FEBRUARY 2022

Patrick Brafford
Beach Lifeguard Manager
Fire & Rescue



MARCH 2022

Samantha Moulet
Recreation Supervisor
Parks & Recreation



Bi-Monthly Team Award

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2022

Reclaimed Water Main Leak Team

The team members include:
Milton Bostic, Chris Damm, Sebastian Dembek, Eric Holmes, Cory Garakop, Leonard Cox, Brennan Milnes, Dan McGuinness, Alex Hannah, Aaron Cowan and Jason Gray

MARCH/APRIL 2022

Library Acquisitions Team

The team members include:
Bonnie Potters, Laura Dann, David Lane, Erin Marks, Bernadette Weiers and Jordan Paradowski

Police Department Awards

The Clearwater Police Department's Awards Selection Committee recently voted to award the following staff:



- The Lifesaving Award was given to **Corporal Matthew Richmond, Officer Raniel Heredia, Officer Jason Moore**.
- The Award of Excellence was given to **Detective Jeremy Jenkins**.
- A Letter of Commendation was given to **Sergeant Timothy Downes, Sergeant Craig Murray, Detective Paul Balmer and Officer SaMarre Perez**.

Keep Pinellas Beautiful Awards

By Heather Parsons



The city of Clearwater is proud to have received Keep Pinellas Beautiful's first Innovation Award. The Keep Pinellas Beautiful Innovation Award

was given for Clearwater's innovative trash receptacles that are designed to prevent trash from escaping onto the beach and into the water and to help curb trash and litter challenges at Clearwater Beach.

The Underground Refuse System is a trash and recycling vault, in which trash and recyclables are placed in underground containers. With traditional trash receptacles, wind and rain can cause trash to spill onto the ground, blowing around the beach and becoming litter. This new contained system has a larger capacity that better contains a greater volume of trash and also results in reduced collection frequency.



"The city is honored to be recognized for adding the Underground Refuse System containers to our solid waste and recycling collection abilities," said **Earl Gloster**, director of **Clearwater Solid Waste & Recycling**.



In addition to the city's receiving the Keep Pinellas Beautiful Innovation Award, Clearwater Recreation Supervisor **Samantha Moulet** received an Outstanding Program Support Award from Keep Pinellas Beautiful. She was recognized for efforts to help organize cleanup and beautification efforts, and especially with last year's Big Clearwater Cleanup 2021.

"Keep Pinellas Beautiful has been an amazing partner in our efforts to keep Clearwater bright and beautiful," said Moulet, Clearwater recreation supervisor. "We are so thankful for their support, and we are excited to build on our current partnerships to create more opportunities for volunteers to be involved in future restoration and beautification projects."

Keep Pinellas Beautiful is a nonprofit organization based out of St. Petersburg which aims to conserve and beautify the natural environment. To learn more, visit KPBCares.org. To learn more about Clearwater's sustainability and resiliency efforts, visit MyClearwater.com/Sustainability.



CLEARWATER

BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL • BAY TO BEACH

CONNECTION

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Frank Hibbard, Mayor
David Allbritton, Councilmember
Kathleen Beckman, Councilmember
Mark Bunker, Councilmember
Lina Teixeira, Councilmember
Jon Jennings, City Manager

MyClearwater.com

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Lightning First Responder Appreciation Night

By Rob Shaw; Photo Credit: Tampa Bay Lightning

Clearwater Police Chief **Dan Slaughter** participated in a ceremonial puck drop at a recent Tampa Bay Lightning game.

Chief Slaughter joined Tony Holloway, former Clearwater police chief and now chief of the St. Petersburg Police Department, and Mary O'Connor, the new chief of the Tampa Police Department, on the ice before the March 1 game.

The appearance by the three chiefs coincided with first responder appreciation night. The Lightning won the game against the Ottawa Senators, 5-2.



Bend and Breathe Lunch-Hour Yoga @ the Main Library

Join us for Bend & Breathe Lunch-Hour Yoga on the Main Library's rooftop terrace every Tuesday. Bring your yoga mat and a bottle of water and join instructor Molly Curls as she leads you in a great stretch and refresh session.



Location: Clearwater Main Library Rooftop, 100 N. Osceola Ave.
Date: Every Tuesday, 11:15 a.m. and 11:45 a.m.

Connection

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REMINDER

**City offices will be closed
Monday, May 30 in observation
of Memorial Day.**



If you have a story idea, article, personnel news, or photos to share, please e-mail them to the Editor at krystal.epperson@myclearwater.com or call 562-4681. Let us know what you'd like to see in the next Connection!