

metro

CHURCH CONTROVERSY

Congregation battles for ownership

Story, B-3



Board plans to tap school reserves

\$8 million expected from state budget dissolves

By Denise Smith Amos
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After Duval School Board members Tuesday heard they'll get about half of the \$16 million increase they were expecting from the state, they informally agreed to tap district reserves to bridge some funding gaps for the coming school year.

During a budget discussion last week, board members learned that Gov. Rick Scott's efforts to wring \$100 million more in education funding per

student from the Legislature would, if successful, net up to \$16 million for Duval, which has a \$1.7 billion total budget.

As statewide budget details emerged this week, board members were told to expect about half that, or \$8 million. The other half, district staff said, is going for set-asides for state-mandated expenditures, called categoricals, and for charter schools, which are public schools that operate independently of school districts and elected school boards.

Scott, who visited the Jacksonville area Tuesday, is expected to sign controversial education legislation Thursday that will, among other things, create a \$120 million "Schools of Hope" program to attract more charter schools to Florida.

Critics say it also will send hundreds of millions of capital dollars and Title 1 money for poor students to charter schools.

The board decided to borrow \$3.2 million of the district's 5 percent reserve to overcome a shortfall in

funding, even after budget cuts.

"The reason you have a reserve is for a rainy day," said school board member Scott Shine. "If this isn't a rainy day, I don't know what is."

Florida law requires school districts keep at least 3 percent of their revenue in reserve. The board has over the years been more cautious, maintaining a 5 percent cushion.

The \$3.2 million amounts to 0.5 percent of district revenues.

Some board members said that dipping into reserves might hurt district credit ratings, but Duval

School Board Chairwoman Paula Wright said the district intends to pay it back into reserves as soon as it can, hopefully before the close of the next fiscal year.

"It's a sad day when you have to tap into your reserves just to maintain," said board member Lori Hershey.

"This is not a good place to be in," said board member Cheryl Grymes. "This is one-time funds."

Vice-chairwoman Ashley Smith Juarez said she wants to be sure it is spent only on critical budget

DUVAL continues on B-4



mark woods

Miss Shelly has 20 summers of theater camp stories to tell

The summer after kindergarten, my daughter Mia went to the Jewish Community Alliance's Theater Camp for four weeks.

Well, it was supposed to be for four weeks.

A decade later, she is still there. She spent nine summers as a camper, reaching the ninth grade age limit and returning this summer to volunteer.

It's hard to overstate the role that the JCA and staff — especially theater director Shelly Hughes — played in Mia growing up, working through childhood issues, becoming more confident and, yes, loving theater.

When we asked Mia the other night how she would describe Miss Shelly, she said, "Like a second mom."

Toni and I would say she's like the "fun aunt."

I know this is true not just for Mia, but for hundreds of kids in Jacksonville.

This is the 20th summer of the Stagedoor Camp. It has reached the point that one of the campers is the daughter of two former campers, James and Amy Bouchelle.

Some campers have gone on to the big time, from Broadway to Hollywood. One summer all the camp groups were named after former campers who grew up and became actors. But, of course, for many of the kids this is it, the start and finish of their acting careers.

Through the years, Miss Shelly often tells stories that sound like the JCA Theater version of "Kids Say the Darndest Things." So the other day, in honor of the 20th summer, I asked her to share a few.

• Mia is the part of several stories, including one when she was quite little and they were doing "Jungle Book." One of the other campers said to Miss Shelly, "You can be the elephant."

"Be the elephant?" Shelly said in mock indignation. "Elephants are old and wrinkly and grey and fat."

Mia attempted to defend her.

"Yeah," she said, "Miss Shelly isn't grey."

• She remembers while the cast was working on the song "Popular," a couple of the kids started talking to each other.

"I turn to the two little chatterboxes and say, 'You need to listen, because we've got to get this song right. ... I want to learn how to be popular.' Without missing a beat my buddy Will looks up at me and says, 'It will probably help if you wipe the eye liner off your face. I think it's dripping.'"

• She sometimes posts a "Kid Quote of the Day" on Facebook. A sample: "When I asked a 5-year-old boy what he wanted for Christmas, he replied, 'I want a new bike. My dad wants Santa to bring him a new car. He thinks it will help him get a girlfriend. I told him to just ask for the girl!'"

Miss Shelly's addendum: "LOVE LOVE LOVE MY JOB!"

Speaking of ... she also posted this one day: "During swim today, 6-year-old Isabel floats by on her noodle and casually looks over at me and asks, 'Miss Shelly, do you have a job?'"

• One day she overheard two little ones talking.

"Their subject was a gal

SHELLY continues on B-4



A group of mostly teachers rally for Gov. Rick Scott to veto a controversial education bill before Scott spoke to supporters Tuesday at Angie's Subs in Jacksonville Beach. (Will Dickey/Florida Times-Union)

Teachers protest bill to 'imperil' schools

Governor was met by educators at local stop

By Garrett Pelican
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During his Tuesday visit to Angie's Subs in Jacksonville Beach, Gov. Rick Scott was greeted by nearly 200 teachers and demonstrators protesting a controversial education bill that they warn will imperil public schools.

"Gov. Scott, don't sign that line. Veto 7069," protesters lined up on the sidewalk along Beach Boulevard chanted as the governor spoke to a crowd gathered inside the popular sandwich shop.

Among other things, the wide-ranging bill would make it easier for charter

schools to move into neighborhoods with academically struggling schools, as well as allow charter schools to tap local property tax dollars for school construction.

Toting a sign depicting a thumbs down, Sumter County kindergarten teacher Kathy Traggerer spoke out against part of the bill that she said lets charter schools tap into federal funding traditionally reserved for schools in impoverished areas.

"This bill would funnel money from Title I schools into charter schools, which would be very detrimental to every child in our county because then we won't have the funds to buy their textbooks and other supplies they need," said Traggerer.

Standing alongside Traggerer was Twila Haeser, a first-grade teacher also from Sumter County, who said she also teaches adult education at night to make ends meet. She voiced her opposition to a provision

that threatens teachers' job security.

"Part of what this bill is doing is taking brand new teachers — and we already don't have enough teachers — and it's telling them, 'Even if you get a good review, we're not going to allow them to guarantee you a job,'" said Haeser.

"You can't compete with other states that are able to offer continuing contracts, so we don't get highly qualified teachers. We get teachers that are willing to work without the guarantee of a job," she said.

The rally was led by Joanne McCall, president of the Florida Education Association, who said they were at Sawgrass for an annual summit when they heard Scott would be in town and decided to organize a demonstration on the fly. So they threw some signs together, rented three buses

BILL continues on B-6

Winn-Dixie heirs give Jacksonville Zoo \$2 million

By David Crumpler
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The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens announced Tuesday a gift of \$2 million from the family of Dan and Brenda Davis for growth and improvements throughout the zoo.

The family's contributions to the zoo began in the early-1990s with the Great Apes Loop and has

continued over the past 25 years, the zoo said in a prepared statement.

"The Davis family has been inspirational in their dedication and devotion to the Jacksonville community," said Tony Vecchio, the zoo's executive director. "To be one of the organizations that they have chosen to invest in to make our community a better place is an

honor."

The zoo is a nonprofit that relies on community partners like the Davises, the zoo said, "to further the zoo's mission of creating innovative and fun experiences that highlight education and conservation of wildlife."

As recently as March, the Davises were recognized for their philanthropy when they made the

lead gift of \$25 million for an expansion project at Mayo Clinic.

The Davis family has been a longtime supporter of Mayo as well. Dan Davis' father, Winn-Dixie co-founder J.E. Davis, and his family donated land and launched a fundraising campaign in 1984 to help bring the Mayo to Jacksonville.

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Misspelling forces UNF to reprint 1,600 grads' diplomas

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A missing "h" forced University of North Florida to reprint all 1,634 diplomas for students who graduated April 28.

The diplomas dropped the letter from the word eighth in the date at the bottom of the diplomas, making it read: "This

Twenty-Eighth Day of April, A.D., 2017."

The diplomas with the error were handed out at the university's spring 2017 commencement, according to The Spinnaker, the campus newspaper.

The university's registrar sent out a letter to students with their corrected diplomas, saying the original diplomas "contain an un-

fortunate error."

"We are disappointed in the error and corrected it immediately," registrar Megan Kuehner wrote. "Enclosed is a reprint and we apologize for any inconvenience."

University of North Florida spokeswoman Joanna Norris told the Times-Union that a computer coding error caused

the misspellings, calling it "an unfortunate error."

"UNF regrets the mistake and apologizes to our recent graduates," she said. "... The university has addressed the issue and taken steps to prevent it from happening again."

University graduate Kendall Griffey, who earned her degree in communications, said she did

not notice the mistake on her diploma until she received the corrected one.

"I will be keeping the corrected version instead of the original," Griffey told The Spinnaker. "I can't believe no one caught the typo, but since it's been corrected it's not that big of a deal. I'm just glad someone found it."

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