

Where will agents go if State Farm exits? B4

Local News



Daytona firefighters mark milestone, B3

15.82M+

The number of licensed drivers on the road in fiscal year 2008-09, estimated by the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles.

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Attorneys José Baez and Linda Kenney Baden flank Casey Anthony (center) as Circuit Judge Stan Strickland enters an Orange courtroom Friday.

PHOTOS BY RED HUBER/ORLANDO SENTINEL

Crossing illegally? You will pay for it

By JEANNETTE RIVERA-LYLES
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

KISSIMMEE — A handful of people are gathered at a busy Kissimmee intersection waiting to cross the street. When the traffic seems to have cleared, the group ventures into the street, even though the crossing signal still shows a flashing red hand.

"There were no cars coming, so I went," said Gonzalo Peña, right after crossing John Young Parkway with a friend at Vine Street.

The flashing red hand didn't stop Peña because he saw "no harm" in his way.

It was hardly an isolated incident. Jaywalking, Kissimmee police say, is responsible for most of the 220 pedestrian-involved accidents it has handled in the past five years. To curb the trend, they began this week stepping up enforcement by patrolling jaywalking hot spots through the city.

"People don't jaywalk in New York because they know they'll get a fine," said Michael Carter, a Kissimmee police traffic-homicide investigator in charge of the enforcement initiative.

"We want Kissimmee to be known for that too. If you jaywalk, you will get a fine."

For the first two weeks of the enforcement campaign, which began Monday, Kissimmee police are issuing warnings. After that, violators will get a \$49.50 fine.

"We're not looking to hit citizens in their wallets," Carter said. "We're looking to save lives."

PLEASE SEE JAYWALK, B2

"If you jaywalk, you will get a fine."

— MICHAEL CARTER
KISSIMMEE POLICE
TRAFFIC-HOMICIDE INVESTIGATOR

CAYLEE'S MEMORIAL SERVICE ON HOLD — MOM IN COURT

By SUSAN JACOBSON and SARAH LUNDY || SENTINEL STAFF WRITERS

For a few moments on Friday evening, it seemed that a memorial service for slain toddler Caylee Marie Anthony was about to happen and that the little girl whose disappearance has captivated the country would finally be put to rest.

Not so. An attorney representing Caylee's grandparents said a news release issued by First Baptist Orlando incorrectly stated that a public memorial service would be held Feb. 10 at the 5,000-seat church on John Young Parkway.

"Until her remains are released, we cannot set a definite date," attorney Brad Conway, representing grandparents George and Cindy Anthony, said Friday night.

The church sent an update reiterating that it would host a service but deleting the time and date. Church spokesman Scott Link told the *Orlando Sentinel* that the Anthonys sanctioned the service after attending the church at Christmastime.

The release quoted senior pastor David Uth as saying, "We believe that hosting the service will give us the opportunity to minister to a family in need and to a community that is hurting be-



Assistant State Attorneys Jeff Ashton and Linda Drane Burdick confer Friday during a hearing for Casey Anthony, charged in daughter Caylee's death.

PLEASE SEE CAYLEE, B2

SEEING STARS, WITH PRIDE IN HERITAGE

By ALSY ACEVEDO || SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Ralph Acaba will never forget the day his son Joe called to let him know his life had astronomically changed. "He called me at work, so I answered as I used to do, 'Hi, this is Ralph,' and my job title," said the father, who was a private-school administrator. "He said, 'Hi, this is Joe, astronaut.' There are very few things in life that one remembers forever."

Nearly five years after that phone call, the Acaba family is counting the days until Joe's first trip aboard space shuttle Discovery, which is scheduled to launch from Kennedy Space Center on Feb. 12.

He'll be America's first astronaut of Puerto Rican descent. "I'm very proud to represent the Puerto Rican community," Acaba said during a recent interview.

Ralph, 70, and his wife, Elsie, 73, will likely see Joe at KSC on Feb. 10.

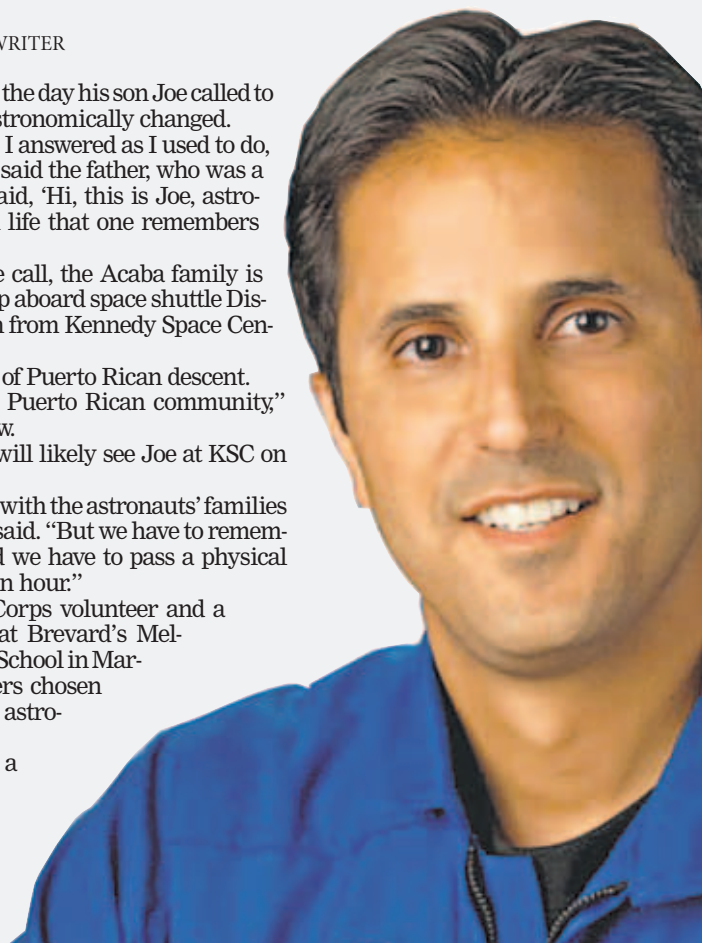
"Traditionally, there is a barbecue with the astronauts' families and we will see him on that day," he said. "But we have to remember that they are in quarantine and we have to pass a physical exam before meeting with him for an hour."

Joe Acaba, ex-Marine, ex-Peace Corps volunteer and a former math and science teacher at Brevard's Melbourne High and Dunnellon Middle School in Marion County, was one of three teachers chosen by NASA in May 2004 to become astronauts.

He moved to Houston to sit in a classroom, this time as a student.

He learned to use the shuttle's

PLEASE SEE PRIDE, B4



NASA

Beetle-borne disease threatens redbay trees

By SATTA SARMAH
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

About half of the redbay trees that adorn Volusia beaches could die if officials cannot contain a lethal tree disease recently discovered in the county.

The disease, called laurel wilt, is spread by ambrosia beetles — insects slightly bigger than a period on a page — which produce a fungus that blocks water flow to redbay trees. The disease makes their leaves wilt and discolor before killing the entire tree.

"These trees look like they've been burned in a forest fire," said Ray Jarrett, an environmental specialist with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Redbays constitute as much as 16 percent of the forest system in Volusia County and nearly half of the tree canopy along the county's beachside. The beetles carry spores of fungus on their bodies and can easily infest other trees.

"If we can't stop the disease, then there'll be a significant number of dead trees in all the beachside communities," said Don Spence, a plant ecologist and environmental consultant for the county.

PLEASE SEE TREES, B4

Bitty ambrosia beetle hits avocados, B4

How to prevent the spread of laurel wilt disease:

- If possible, don't transport any infested trees outside the area where they were found.
- If you decide to discard the tree, dump it at a disposal within the same county. This will prevent the disease from spreading to other locations.
- It's best to cover, burn or chip a tree infested with the disease. This will reduce chances that the beetles will colonize or spread.
- Sterilize all the tools you used to cut the tree.