

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



## Municipal Services Building Renovations Are Underway

By Jack Donahue



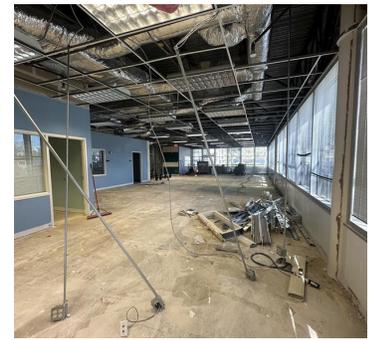
The city of Clearwater has temporarily closed the doors to the Municipal Services Building (MSB) for an extensive renovation project that is expected to take nearly a year. The renovation aims to update the facility, improving the building's overall functionality. The renovation includes the transformation of a three-story, 60,572, gross square feet of space, with significant upgrades to the

MSB offices, workspaces, and conference rooms. These changes will allow the building to house several essential city services, including **Utility Customer Service, Public Works, Public Utilities Engineering, Parks & Recreation, Planning, Economic Development, Finance, Information Technology, and the Community Redevelopment Agency.**

The work is more than just aesthetics. The renovations include stripping away much of the interior of the building, with workers removing old carpets, doors, ceilings, and other outdated features. This project will update

the building's structure to meet the community's current needs, and will create a more modernized and efficient environment for Clearwater employees and residents who rely on the services within the building.

A special thank you goes out to CAD and GIS Technician **Chris Melone**, who assisted the employees and departments with the complicated process of moving furniture, office supplies and a myriad of files.



(continued on next page)

### Employee Adventures: Kelly Rogers

If there's one thing **Kelly Rogers**, Procurement Analyst II, thrives on, it's packing her bags and setting off on a new adventure. As a fearless solo female traveler, she's explored the world on her own terms, immersing herself in new cultures, forging unexpected connections, and proving that solo travel is the ultimate journey.

But this year was truly special, she achieved a monumental milestone by visiting her seventh and final continent: Antarctica. Not only did she set foot on this icy wonderland, but she also crossed the Arctic Circle, an achievement even rarer, as fewer than 1 percent of the world's population has visited Antarctica, and an even smaller fraction has done both. As if that wasn't impressive enough, she took the adventure to the next level by braving the ultimate polar plunge, diving into the frigid waters, estimated at just 28 degrees Fahrenheit.



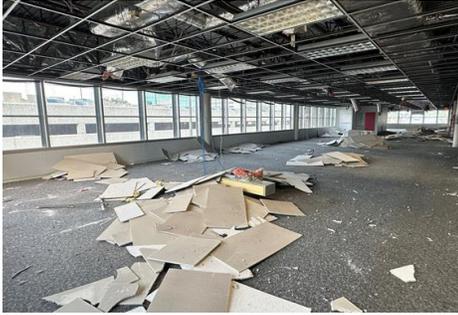
And the excitement didn't stop there. She also checked off a visit to one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World, Iguazu Falls, a breathtaking spectacle spanning the borders of Argentina and Brazil.

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## Municipal Services Building (continued from page 1)

While the renovations are underway, several of the city's departments have temporarily relocated to other facilities to ensure that city services continue during the renovation process. **Utility Customer Service** has divided up and moved to **Clearwater Gas** and also the police headquarters, while **Human Resources** has temporarily set up shop at the Main Library. Other departments -- including **Parks & Recreation, Planning & Development and Public Works** -- are operating from locations such as the Ultimate Medical Academy building and the former Countryside Library location.



In addition to the renovations at the Municipal Services Building, the new City Hall, located right across the street, is also under construction. The new City Hall will also provide a modern and upgraded space for city services when it is completed during the summer of 2026.

## Read Across America Day

Several members of the **Clearwater City Council** and city of Clearwater staff visited Sandy Lane Elementary in Clearwater recently as part of Read Across America Day.

They read books to children there to celebrate the birthday of Dr. Seuss. They were met at the front doors of the school by youngsters, who then escorted them to their classrooms to read.

It's an annual event coordinated by the school's media specialist and is designed to fuel interest in literacy.



## Valentine's Day Heart Cookies With A Cop

By Rob Shaw

Talk about a sweet opportunity – literally – on Valentine's Day.

The **Clearwater Police Department's** community engagement team recently partnered with the Target at Clearwater Mall to have an event where children could decorate their own cookies and make Valentine's Day-themed crafts.



More than three dozen youngsters turned out for the opportunity to slather giant amounts of icing on their cookies and then add some decorative sprinkles.



## Baby Born on Pontoon Boat Meets Rescuers

By Rob Shaw

Nearly five years after he was born on a pontoon boat with the help of Clearwater Fire & Rescue crews, Aiden Easterday got to meet his heroes recently.

It was July 4, 2020, in the middle of a raging thunderstorm on the

waters of Old Tampa Bay, that Aiden came into the world with the assistance of **Lt. Tyler Whitfield** and **Fire Medic Kenny Sweitzer Jr.**

On March 19 of this year, he and some other preschoolers came for a tour of Station 49.



Aiden, along with his family and other youngsters, got to meet Lt. Whitfield and Fire Medic Sweitzer, take a turn behind the fire hose and climb inside a fire engine.



## Clearwater Little League Opening Day



City of Clearwater staff and council members attended Clearwater Little League's opening day on Feb. 22.

Mayor **Bruce Rector** also threw out the first pitch.



## Clearwater Beach McKay Park Grand Opening

City staff hosted a ribbon-cutting event, in collaboration with the Clearwater Beach Neighborhood Association and the Frenchy's Foundation in February, to celebrate renovations to McKay Park on Clearwater Beach.

The renovations included six new pickleball courts, outdoor exercise equipment, a new playground and a resurfaced bocce ball court. A huge thank you to all the city staff that helped to prepare and maintain the park for our residents.



## Exchange Students Visit from Nagano, Japan

By Allie Chandler Baier

Clearwater welcomed a group of students from Nagano, Japan, as part of our Sister Cities program in March. During their visit, the students met with Mayor **Bruce Rector**, Councilmember **Lina Teixeira**, City Manager **Jennifer Poirrier** and Assistant City Manager **Dan Slaughter** to learn more about the city of Clearwater and its government. Their trip



also included attending a Phillies spring training game, sightseeing around the city and connecting with the community during their stay.



Clearwater and Nagano have been sister cities since 1959, participating in high school student exchanges for more than 30 years and engaging in a reciprocal exchange of students, teachers and official delegates for more than 60 years. We're honored to continue this decades-long international friendship.



## Remembering the Whispering Souls From Our Past

By Heather Parsons



Many years in the making, the Whispering Souls African American Cemetery, and Pinellas County Government Historic Preservation Board dedicated a Florida Historical Marker at the small cemetery on South Drive near Safety Harbor. The ceremony was held Feb. 15, and included

the unveiling of a monument with the names of many of those buried on the site, and two benches for quiet reflection.

The dedication included several people who made the restoration of the cemetery possible, including Jacqueline Hayes, president of Whispering Souls African American Cemetery. Speakers included Clearwater City Manager **Jennifer Poirrier**, Safety Harbor Commissioner Nancy Besore, and Pinellas County Commission Chair Brian Scott.



In addition, the city would like to thank the people who helped install this important historical sign. They include **Charles Stephenson, Maciej Klosinski, Marcus Prescott, Tyrone Floyd, Teddy Hordych and James Young**. This team's efforts will remain an important part in remembering those who rest in this cemetery.

## 8th Annual Night At The Library Event

By Allie Chandler Baier

The **Clearwater Public Library System** recently hosted its 8th Annual Night at the Library, celebrating African-American history and culture in Clearwater and the North Greenwood Library.



The event featured inspiring guest speakers, including city staff, activists, educators, historians and students who shared valuable insights.



## 2025 Clearwater Neighborhoods Day

By Allie Chandler Baier

More than 30 neighborhoods across Clearwater came together March 22, to celebrate Clearwater Neighborhoods Day, a tradition since 1999 that brings neighbors, city staff and elected officials together to make stronger neighborhoods.



Throughout the day, city staff, the city manager and council members visited neighborhood gatherings, joined kids in games like cornhole and foam-axe throwing, shared meals with residents, and listened to talented neighborhood bands. Most importantly, they spent time connecting with the people who make Clearwater such a special place to call home.



"Neighborhoods Day is a reminder that our city's greatest asset is our neighborhoods and the families that live in them," said Mayor Bruce Rector.

We also celebrated the restoration of the historic Grand View Terrace Arches. Originally built in 1925, these iconic arches have long marked the entryway to a neighborhood near Drew Street. After nearly a century, they had fallen into disrepair and faced likely removal due to safety concerns.

Determined to save this piece of Clearwater's history, the neighborhood came together to raise funds, volunteer time, and collaborate with the city to restore the arches. The arches were beautifully restored in 2025 and now shine once again at the entrance of Grand View Terrace.

Thank you to everyone who made Neighborhoods Day such a memorable celebration!



## Utility Customer Service Leading a Change

By Rob Simpson

Long wait times and frustrating hold music are now a thing of the past for **Clearwater's Utility Customer Service (UCS) team**. With the introduction of the Genesys Cloud phone system, efficiency and customer satisfaction have significantly improved.



Previously, peak call wait times stretched up to 45 minutes, with nearly half of customers hanging up in frustration. High turnover rates -- 40% among employees -- added to the challenge. The new system, using Voice-over-IP (VoIP) technology, now routes calls based on inquiry type and offers a call-back feature, keeping a customer's place in line.

"This upgrade has had a profound and immediate impact," said **Amy Sessions**, UCS Division Manager. "By enhancing our efficiency, we are serving more customers effectively while improving both customer and employee satisfaction."

The impact was dramatic:

- The average call wait time dropped from 45 minutes to just 10 seconds.
- 98 percent of calls are now answered.
- The abandoned call rate fell to just 3 percent.
- Employee turnover has nearly disappeared.

Beyond faster response times, Genesys Cloud provides real-time call monitoring, staffing insights, and improved resource management. This game-changing upgrade is setting a new standard for customer service in Clearwater, with even more refinements on the horizon.

## Women's History Month Photos and Videos

The city of Clearwater celebrated Women's History Month in March by creating a series of videos about what Women's History Month means to many of the women who work at the city of Clearwater. Thank you to all the departments that submitted photos, those that participated in the interviews and to the **Public Communications Department Multimedia Team** for creating them. [Check out the full series of videos.](#)



## Public Works Tests New Roadway Patch for Efficiency and Sustainability

By Rob Simpson

The **Public Works Department** is testing RockAsphalt, a natural asphalt patching product, to improve roadway maintenance and reduce costs.



Made from bituminous limestone mined in Texas, RockAsphalt requires no heating and remains usable indefinitely, unlike traditional patches. It also comes with a three-year guarantee -- if a patch fails, the company provides a free replacement, and the warranty restarts.

Applying RockAsphalt is simple: crews clean the pothole, press the material into place, and compact it with a vehicle or machinery. The patch is traffic-ready immediately and bonds over time. Each 50-pound bag covers 7 square feet at a 1-inch depth, providing more coverage than many current materials. Its easy storage allows Public Works vehicles to carry it for quick, on-the-spot repairs.

"This product could be a valuable tool to help our teams respond more efficiently to roadway damage," said **Ali Ismailoski**, Right of Way Division Manager. "It's cost-effective, environmentally friendly, and helps us better serve the community."

RockAsphalt is widely used in Florida and Georgia, and Clearwater is now evaluating its performance for potential long-term use.

"RockAsphalt has been around for over a century, and its durability and ease of use makes it an excellent choice for municipalities looking for long-lasting, cost-effective repairs," said Randy McGaha, Government Territory Manager for RockAsphalt. "Its long shelf life, and ability to be used in extreme temperatures, gives road crews greater flexibility when responding to repairs."

The Public Works Department will continue to assess RockAsphalt as part of its commitment to improving road maintenance and service across Clearwater.

## NASA Space-Themed STEM Event at North Greenwood Library

Students in grades five through eight gathered at the North Greenwood Library in March for an exciting afternoon of space-themed STEM fun. Participants explored rocketry and robotics and even designed their own airplanes. Library Division Manager **David Stoner**, who is a NASA ambassador, helped the children look at the sky through a telescope. They also virtually met NASA astronaut and engineer Dr. Linda Godwin, who shared insights about her career and time in space.



The Space4All program was made possible through the Tampa Bay STEM Network, Tampa Bay Times Newspaper in Education, the Clearwater Library System, and the Pinellas Public Library — bringing STEM education and inspiration to our community.

# Personnel Corner

Jan. 1 through April 9, 2025

## NEW HIRES.....

**Atley Acker**, Survey Assistant I, Public Works

**Jay Albis**, Police Officer, Police

**Tyler Baldwin**, Skilled Tradesworker I, General Services

**Joe Bay**, Budget Analyst II, Finance

**Quinn Blauvelt**, Survey Assistant I, Public Works

**Alyssa Brown**, Police Officer, Police

**Garret Chrissley**, Human Resources Analyst I, Human Resources

**Daniel Copeland**, Police Officer, Police

**Roger Costello**, Parks Service Technician I, Parks & Recreation

**Brian Cservak**, Fleet Mechanic, General Services

**Dylan Dasopatis**, Solid Waste Equipment Operator, Solid Waste

**Scott Davidson**, Warehouse Supervisor, General Services

**Terry Dawson**, Solid Waste Equipment Operator, Solid Waste

**Jeffrey Elliott**, Gas System Engineer Division Manager, Gas

**Carlos Estrella**, Police Officer, Police

**Dylan Flora**, Police Cadet, Police

**Benjamin Floyd**, Solid Waste Equipment Operator, Solid Waste

**Spencer Fortmuller**, Gas Technician Apprentice, Gas

**Michael Gainer**, Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator A, Public Utilities

**Edward Graham**, Police Cadet, Police

**Leanne Hallam**, Human Resources Analyst I, Human Resources

**Bradford Hardbarger**, Solid Waste Equipment Operator, Solid Waste

**Devonte Hinton**, Water Distribution Operator Trainee, Public Utilities

**Rhonda Hooks**, Staff Assistant II, Information Technology

**Daniel Hurd**, Police Officer, Police

**Daniel Irwin**, Police Officer, Police

**Reid Ito**, Code Inspector I, Planning & Development

**Sheldon Kautz**, Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator C, Public Utilities

**Craig Lackay**, Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator A, Public Utilities

**Amanda Levicki**, Police Service Technician, Police

**Michelle Mack**, Contracts & Procurement Specialist, Public Utilities

**Jeffrey May**, Skilled Tradesworker I, General Services

**Marcus Mayfield**, Solid Waste Worker I, Solid Waste

**Tyrone McIntosh**, Streets & Sidewalks Technician I, Public Works

**Megan McLaughlin**, Executive Assistant, City Council

**Matthew Mulligan**, Police Cadet, Police

**Kyle Murrell**, Utilities Mechanic, Public Utilities

**Amoy Nelson**, Police Cadet, Police

**Justin Paulson**, Police Cadet, Police

**Jeffrey Payne**, Parks Service Technician I, Parks & Recreation

**Matthew Pego**, Network Analyst I, Information Technology

**Madison Perry**, Police Officer, Police

**Marissa Polencheck**, Police Cadet, Police

**Christopher Powell**, Parks Service Technician I, Parks & Recreation

**Ruben Rivera-Garcia**, Solid Waste Worker I, Solid Waste

**Genesis Rodriguez**, Police Cadet, Police

**Nikita Ross**, Staff Assistant II, Information Technology

**Sharyn Sazama-Moreau**, Staff Assistant I, Parks & Recreation

**Alexis Schroeffer**, Police Cadet, Police

**Aaron Shaw**, Gas Technician I, Gas

**Rob Simpson**, Public Information Coordinator I, Public Communications

**Mason Spino**, Police Cadet, Police

**Jared Staudinger**, Water Distribution Operator Trainee, Public Utilities

**Sarah Straker**, Recreation Specialist, Parks & Recreation

**Nathanael Tayman**, Traffic Signal Technician I, Public Works

**Daniel Terrell**, Solid Waste Worker I, Solid Waste

**Welton Thomas**, Solid Waste Service Supervisor II, Solid Waste

**Patricio Tovar**, Public Utilities Assistant Manager, Public Utilities

**John Turley**, Gas Technician Apprentice, Gas

**Brian Ulbricht**, CRA Specialist, CRA

**Andrew Vanderlick**, Parks Service Technician I, Parks & Recreation

**Dylan Whitaker**, Gas Technician Apprentice, Gas

**Tommy Wright**, Fleet Mechanic, General Services

**Monica Wrobel**, Staff Assistant I, Parks & Recreation

**Daniel Zagone**, Police Cadet, Police

## WELCOME BACK.....

**Kelsy Johnson**, Recreation Specialist, Parks & Recreation

**Gregg Kunz**, Gas System Specialist, Gas

**Catherine Reese**, Code Inspector I, Planning & Development

PROMOTIONS

**Zachary Adkisson**, Fire Medic, Fire

**Christopher Allen**, Police Officer, Police

**Kelly Athan**, Police Office Specialist, Police

**Tracy Ashley**, Billing Specialist II, Utility Customer Service

**John Balcer**, Parks Service Technician II, Parks & Recreation

**Julia Bodolay**, Library Program Specialist, Library

**Stefan Burghardt**, Code Inspector II, Planning & Development

**Jatavious Byrd**, Parks Service Technician III, Parks & Recreation

**Angela Campagna**, Human Resources Technician, Human Resources

**Christopher Castro**, Gas Technician III, Gas

**Dominic Chasse**, Police Officer, Police

**Gunner Clark**, Industrial Pretreatment Inspector I, Public Utilities

**Joshua Coxwell**, Police Officer, Police

**Kenneth Craven**, Network Analyst II, Information Technology

**Aliya Cruise**, Staff Assistant II, Parks & Recreation

**Camilo Espinal**, Firefighter, Fire & Rescue

**Jovontee Frazier**, Water Distribution Operator Trainee, Public Utilities

**Yashua Gonzalez**, Parks Service Technician II, Parks & Recreation

**Charles Graves**, Marine Facility Supervisor, Marine & Aviation

**Donna Groce**, Administrative Assistant, Library

**Taylor Hack**, CAD & GIS Technician I, Public Works

**Nathaniel Hampton**, Parks Service Supervisor I, Parks & Recreation

**Jeffery Harmon**, Business Systems Analyst II, Library

**Isaiah Henderson**, Police Officer, Police

**Leondre Horne**, Parks Service Technician II and then to III, Parks & Recreation

**Cody Kerr**, Firefighter, Fire

**Sage Lamparelli**, Police Officer, Police

**Susan Maloney**, Staff Assistant II, Police

**Vincent Mattioli**, Water Plant Operator C, Public Utilities

**Sean McGowan**, Safety & Training Coordinator, Public Utilities

**Anna Mendoza**, Police Officer, Police

**Timothy Palmese**, Parks Heavy Equipment Operator, Parks & Recreation

**Heather Parsons**, Public Information Manager, Public Communications

**Teresa Phillips**, Billing Specialist II, Utility Customer Service

**Dylan Prins**, Planner II, Planning & Development

**Armon Reedy**, Water Distribution Operator I, Public Utilities

**Dilan Rivera**, Customer Service Representative II, Utility Customer Service

**Balou Ross**, Customer Service Specialist, Utility Customer Service

**Austin Sadorf**, Police Officer, Police

**Joshua Sherman**, Safety & Training Coordinator, Solid Waste

**Cameron Snyder**, Fire Medic, Fire & Rescue

**Tania Vasquez**, Network Analyst III, Information Technology

**Colby Wade**, Gas Technician III, Gas

**Jessica Wilke**, Billing Specialist II, Utility Customer Service

RETIREMENTS

**Alfred Basore**, Parks Service Technician II, Parks & Recreation

**Geraldine Blakley**, Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator A, Public Utilities

**Perry Conzen**, Fleet Division Manager, General Services

**Scott Ehlers**, Fire Chief, Fire & Rescue

**Nilda Espinosa**, Code Inspector I, Planning & Development

**Jon Lopez**, Fire Medic, Fire & Rescue

**Robert Orner**, Fleet Mechanic Supervisor, General Services

**Maria Pita**, Police Officer, Police

**Thomas Wiggins**, Stormwater Heavy Equipment Operator, Public Works

**Christian Zarra**, Police Sergeant, Police

TRANSFERS

**Dennis Cason**, Police Sergeant, Police

**Jarrid Daniels**, Code Inspector I, Planning & Development

**Michael Deatherage**, Parks Service Technician I, Parks & Recreation

**Tyrone Floyd**, Stormwater Supervisor I, Public Works

**Darrell Ford**, Streets & Sidewalks Supervisor, Public Works

**Keyth Hooton**, Parks Service Technician I, Parks & Recreation

**Destiny Jenkins**, Business Systems Analyst I, Public Utilities

**Petra Lara**, Staff Assistant I, General Services

**Ryan Spedden**, Parks Service Technician I, Parks & Recreation

**Ryan Swannack**, Parks Service Technician I, Parks & Recreation

**Brandon Williams**, Parks Service Technician III, Parks & Recreation

**Bethany Walter**, Beach Lifeguard I, Fire & Rescue

**Thomas Young**, Parks Service Technician III, Parks & Recreation

## Service Awards . . . . .

### 20 YEARS . . . . .

- Ellen Ayo**, Staff Assistant II, Parks & Recreation
- Jariel Candelario**, Solid Waste Service Supervisor I, Solid Waste
- Lenard Cox**, Water Distribution Supervisor II, Public Utilities
- Sebastian Dembek**, Water Distribution Operator I, Public Utilities
- Joseph Kraus**, Fire Lieutenant, Fire & Rescue
- Craig Krueger**, Fire Lieutenant, Fire & Rescue
- Jason Matthews**, Fire Medic, Fire & Rescue
- Daniel Taban**, Skilled Tradesworker III, Parks & Recreation
- Karen Vaughan**, Administrative Assistant, City Clerk's Office
- Alexander West**, Utilities Maintenance Supervisor I, Public Utilities

### 25 YEARS . . . . .

- Michael Lockwood**, Assistant Director, Parks & Recreation
  - Leo Mazzullo**, Skilled Tradesworker III, General Services
  - Deane Murray**, Water Quality Technician, Public Utilities
- ### 30 YEARS . . . . .
- Randy Barnoski**, Lead Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator, Public Utilities
  - Azzilene Byrd**, Boom Crane Operator, Solid Waste
  - Thelma Catio**, Recreation Leader II, Parks & Recreation
  - Jeffrey DiVincent**, Police Sergeant, Police
  - Joseph Fazio**, Solid Waste Equipment Operator, Solid Waste
  - Ike George**, Water Distribution Supervisor II, Public Utilities
  - Timothy Henson**, Solid Waste Equipment Operator, Solid Waste
  - Nichole Loux**, Police Telecommunicator Supervisor, Police

## Wedding . . . . .

**Cassidy Bonovitch**, Librarian I, married Kyle Parry on Feb. 7 in St. Petersburg

## Employees of the Month

### JANUARY 2025

**Christopher Collins**  
Fire Medic  
Fire & Rescue

### FEBRUARY 2025

**Brian Maske**  
Traffic Signal Technician  
Public Works

### MARCH 2025

**Lisa Perkins**  
Customer Service Representative II  
Gas

### APRIL 2025

**Adrian Gonzalez**  
Engineering Specialist III  
Public Utilities

## Bi-Monthly Team Award Winners

### JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2025

*Ross Norton Shelter Team, Parks & Recreation*

Members Include: **Dave Scrivener, Jarrel Wade, Dan Crider, Ethan Winget, Ural Robinson, David Spielvogel, Hunter Walke, Freda Dixon, Thelma Catio, Jamie Gatewood, Dora Monterroza, Antionette Alcala, Steven Alejandro-Mar, Marty Bell, Pierre LaBrie, Matt Sammel, Ruth Willis, Brent Jones, Danielle Tipton and Denise Pettus**

### MARCH/APRIL 2025

*The Chill Squad, Public Utilities*

Members Include: **Charles McAbee and Kyle Wilson**

## Births . . . . .

To **Amber Brice**, Arts & Cultural Affairs Manager, a son named August Brice Acor, born Jan. 21, weighing 8 lbs. 3 oz.

To Fire Medic **James Humphrey**, a son named Maddox James, born Jan. 17

To **John Slack**, retired Police Captain, and **Cathy Slack**, retired Detective, a granddaughter, named Mia Renee Slack, born Jan. 6, weighing 5 lbs. 5 oz.

## Sympathies . . . . .

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

- **Dennis Allen**, retired electrician, Dec. 21
- **Susan Anderson**, retired communications operator, Jan. 21
- **Earl Barrett**, retired real estate service coordinator, March 24
- **Carolyn Carrasquillo**, retired detective, Jan. 2
- **Frederick Casale**, retired police officer, April 8
- **Donald Filmon**, retired maintenance manager, Dec. 11
- **Joseph Hill**, retired solid waste supervisor, Feb. 18
- **John Nuebel**, retired wastewater treatment plant operator A, Feb. 11
- **Beverly Verner**, retired staff assistant, Feb. 11
- **Richard Zinge**, retired police officer, March 16

To **Tiffany Makras**, Human Resources Director, on the loss of her father

## Cause For Applause

Clearwater Fire & Rescue Fire Medic **Justin Blocker** and Fire Medic **Isaac Humphreys** were presented with the 2025 Osteopathic Medical Society First Responder Award recently. They were recognized for their lifesaving efforts on a Clearwater Police Department detective who had a cardiac arrest last year. This award was made possible through the Pinellas County Osteopathic Medical Society, which has been in existence for 67 years. This is the first time Clearwater Fire & Rescue personnel have been recognized with this award.



Business Systems Analyst II **Jeffery Harmon** was named the Clearwater Public Library System's 2024 Employee of the Year. Pictured with Library Director **Jen Obermaier**, Harmon is the library's amazing technology guru, who maintains the library's myriad applications and programs.

Lt. **Robert Palisi** and Fire Medic **John Gray** of Clearwater Fire & Rescue received the agency's top awards recently. Palisi, who has worked for the agency for more than 20 years, was named 2024 Firefighter of the Year. Gray, who has worked for the department since 2018, was named 2024 Fire Medic of the Year.



Police Communications Manager **Mike Ogliaruso** was selected as the 2025 Director of the Year for the Florida Association of Public Safety Communications Officials. Ogliaruso retired from the agency as a lieutenant after 25 years of service. A year after retirement, he returned to the agency as the Communications Manager and has been serving there for almost three years.

**Lloyd Simmons**, Recreation Coordinator I, was recognized by the Keep Pinellas Beautiful Organization at its annual awards luncheon for outstanding program support.



The Shining Sol award was presented to Sustainability Specialist **Melody Yin**, who was honored for her innovative contributions to the Pinellas Solar Co-op, which has significantly benefited the community, inspired new initiatives, and added vitality to local solar projects.

## 2024 Employee and Team of the Year Awards

By **Jack Donahue**

The Employee and Team of the Year Awards celebrate the contributions of employees and teams who demonstrate outstanding dedication and service to the community in Clearwater. These awards were given March 28, in a luau-themed employee appreciation event, which recognized the hard work and selflessness of employees who make Clearwater thrive.

### **William B. Horne II Employee of the Year Award**



**Michelle Sheldon**, Human Resources Analyst II

Congratulations to Michelle Sheldon, who has been named the William B. Horne II Employee of the Year for 2024! When you think of the city of Clearwater, you think of Michelle Sheldon. She is there on your first day of work and every day after, helping in any and every capacity she can. Sheldon is committed to everything she puts her mind to. Her dedication to training, recruitment, the achievement awards committee, and the city is unmatched.

When an employee calls or stops by, Sheldon makes it a point to stop her work and give them her undivided attention, all while the mountain of work on her desk awaits her return. Beyond her daily role, Sheldon dedicates countless hours -- any time of the day or week -- to the achievement awards committee, working to bring smiles, memories, and appreciation to every city employee.

She has spearheaded many special events for employees, including cookouts at different departments, bowling, fishing, Festival of Trees, Clearwater Marine Aquarium, Kona Ice, Threshers games, and the Jingle Mingle. Thank you, Michelle, for everything you do! Your unwavering commitment and exceptional service are truly appreciated.

### **Team of the Year Award**



**Stormwater Volunteer Firefighters – Maurice Bryant and Kenny Smith**

The Stormwater Volunteer Firefighters, Maurice Bryant and Kenny Smith, have been named the 2024 Team of the Year for their courageous and life-saving actions during a recent structure fire. While working in the area, they noticed smoke coming from an apartment building and immediately called 911. Without hesitation, they entered the building, knocking on doors and alerting the occupants of the fire. Despite some residents initially refusing to leave, Bryant and Smith worked tirelessly to convince them of the danger and helped them to safely evacuate.

In the words of Clearwater Fire & Rescue, "We wanted to recognize these two employees who went above and beyond to serve the citizens of Clearwater while placing their own well-being in jeopardy. It is public servants like Bryant and Smith that make our community special and help to keep Clearwater bright, beautiful (and safe) from bay to beach."

Their bravery, quick thinking, and selflessness in this dangerous situation reflect the high standards of Clearwater's public service, making our community a safer place.

## Fire & Rescue Staff Hosts Visitor

By Rob Shaw

Fire Medic **Glenn Hannigan** from Station 46 on Clearwater Beach has a new best friend. He recently met 3-year-old Maverick Serra, who stopped by for a tour of the station with his family.



"From the moment we arrived, we were warmly welcomed by Firefighter Glenn Hannigan, who went above and beyond to make Maverick's visit unforgettable," the grandparents wrote in a thank-you letter to the fire department. "He took the time to showcase every aspect of Fire House 46 and its impressive engine, even suiting up in 75 pounds of protective gear to demonstrate how firefighters prepare for emergencies.

"We cannot thank you enough for this incredible experience," the letter continued. "The kindness and dedication you showed made a lasting impression on Maverick -- and on us."

Maverick's father said the visit to Station 46 was a hit that his son can't stop talking about. "Maverick really loves fire trucks," the dad said. "He talks about his visit every day."

## Rescuing Some Feathered Friends

By Rob Shaw



Station 45 B Shift crew members recently took a walk on the wild side, and their unique rescue call will quack you up.

Firefighters recently responded to the area of South Duncan Avenue and Whitewood Drive, where three ducklings were trapped in a storm drain. The only problem was that the baby ducks weren't super interested in being rescued. They ran back and forth under the street from one side to the other trying to evade capture.

Crew members had to use a gentle stream of water and a blower to convince them to head to the manhole where they could be plucked from their precarious perch. They were then returned to a nearby lake and reunited

with their mother and other family members.



Thanks to Lt. **Steve Salagaras**, Driver-Operator **Chris Quinn**, Fire Medic **Matthew Mauger** and Fire Medic **Nolan Slone** for helping our feathered friends.



## Clearwater Celebrates Its Library Team!

By Heather Parsons



Libraries play a critical role in connecting the community to information and access to education. The city celebrated its librarians and library support teams with National Public Library Week from April 6-12, and also National Library Workers Day on April 8.

So much happens at Clearwater libraries that is more than just books. From young families stopping in for storytime, to students sketching out their next creative project in one of our MakerSpaces, to seniors seeking technology help and everyone in between, our library system helps us connect the dots from one part of our community to the next. Residents can chart their next literary adventure by browsing the stacks or joining a book club, authors can ignite your imagination at an author talk, or you can trace your history with your library's genealogy resources.

Thank you to the library staff in Clearwater for your hard work and dedication in supporting our community. We couldn't provide the wide range of services that we do without these important city employees. Your efforts make our libraries an amazing place for everyone!

## Puppies Make Dark Days Brighter

It was the pitter-patter of puppy paws during Clearwater Gas Technician **Peter Smutko's** recent visit to fix a homeowner's gas range. As he was troubleshooting the issue, the curious little labradoodle pups were busy trying to escape their den. It definitely added a little extra joy to the day's work.



You never know what kind of surprises you'll find on a routine Clearwater Gas service and repair call.

# Rotary Club of Clearwater Honors Three First Responders

By Rob Shaw

The Rotary Club of Clearwater hosted an awards luncheon April 9, to honor two **Clearwater Police Department** personnel and one fire medic from **Clearwater Fire & Rescue**.



Receiving awards were:

- Sgt. **Kevin Klein** of the Clearwater Police Department received the 48th Annual Joseph F. Cornelius Family Foundation Outstanding Police Officer of the Year Award. He was recognized for his efforts in finding an 8-year-old girl who had been kidnapped after her mother was brutally slain.
- Sgt. **Nikole Kasperek** of the Clearwater Police Department received the 2025 Rotary Public Safety and Service Award for her unselfish giving of her personal time, talents and efforts to help others. Sgt. Kasperek stepped up to the plate last year to coach a girls softball team that suddenly was without a coach. She continues coaching to this day.
- Fire Medic **Chris Collins** of the Clearwater Fire & Rescue Department received the 2025 Rotary Public Safety and Service Award for his efforts to help the victims of Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina last fall.

Each year, the Rotary Club honors a police department employee and fire department employee for service to the community that goes above and beyond. In addition, the Joseph F. Cornelius Family Foundation honors the Clearwater Police officer of the year, the department's highest honor.

## Climate-Friendly Commuting Winners

By Rob Simpson

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Climate-Friendly Commuting Bingo. We hope you enjoyed it and learned something new about climate-friendly commuting options. Check out some of the submissions below.



Everyone who submitted a completed Bingo card was entered into the drawing. Here are the selected prize winners using a random selection generator:

- First: Specialized Bike Helmet – **Cassidy Parry**, Librarian I
- Second: Kryptonite Keeper Bike Lock – **Jennifer DeCory**, Business Systems Analyst I
- Third: Wraaptor Rotating Smart Phone Bar Mount & Funky Panda Bike Bell – **Casey O'Day**, Recreation Leader I



## City Staff Attended Career Fair At SPC in Clearwater

Staff from **Human Resources, Parks & Recreation** and **Public Utilities** participated in the CareerSource Spring Job Fair at the St. Petersburg College Clearwater campus recently. Participants included:

- **David Scrivener**, Parks & Recreation
- **Nate Brigman**, Parks & Recreation
- **Garret Chrissley**, Human Resources
- **Misty Autery**, Public Utilities



## Countryside Boulevard Restoration Reflects Sustainability

By Rob Simpson

Last fall, severe weather caused significant erosion along Countryside Boulevard, and Clearwater's innovative approach to environmental stewardship was prominently displayed. The city's response addressed immediate infrastructural concerns and emphasized its commitment to sustainability and resource efficiency.

The collapse of the sidewalk along Countryside Boulevard posed a serious risk of further erosion and potential washout of the road. To counteract this, the **Public Works Department** implemented a solution that prioritized environmental protection. Modular baskets were installed to stabilize the embankments to prevent additional erosion, and preserve habitats without additional chemical stabilizers or imported materials.



Storm surge and erosion displaced tons of North Beach sand during last year's hurricanes, leaving it without a proper destination. Taking a pioneering approach, crews tested the sand for chemicals and heavy metals for use in the Countryside project. Once cleared, the sand was used to fill the baskets and additional fill material. This process reduced disposal costs and eliminated the need for additional fill materials, aligning with Clearwater's sustainability goals. Native flower seeds were then planted over top to enhance the area's biodiversity and visual appeal.

The Countryside Boulevard restoration project serves as a testament to the city's dedication to environmental stewardship and sustainable urban development. By integrating innovative engineering solutions with resource-efficient practices, this project has reinforced the motto: "Bright and Beautiful, Bay to Beach."



## CONNECTION

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- Bruce Rector, Mayor**
- Ryan Cotton, Councilmember**
- Mike Mannino, Councilmember**
- David Allbritton, Councilmember**
- Lina Teixeira, Councilmember**
- Jennifer Poirrier, City Manager**

*MyClearwater.com*

## Clearwater Public Library System Card Holders Enjoy Free Online Access to Notable National Newspapers

By Linda Rothstein

Don't you hate it when you click on an article you want to read and hit a paywall? With your Clearwater Library card, that doesn't have to happen. The Clearwater Public Library System subscribes to the daily digital editions of the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and the Washington Post.

Visit [MyClearwaterLibrary.com](http://MyClearwaterLibrary.com), hover over "eBooks, Movies, and More," then click on "Online Newspapers." Click on the newspaper you would like to access, then follow the onscreen prompts. All city of Clearwater employees are eligible for a free Clearwater library card.

Patrons also continue to receive free digital access to other important regional and historical newspapers with their Clearwater library card, as well. For more information, visit [MyClearwaterLibrary.com](http://MyClearwaterLibrary.com), or call (727) 562-4970.

## Clearwater Employee Achievement Awards

The city's Achievement Awards Program recognizes employees whose work and attitudes reflect the values of the city. The program aims to motivate and encourage employees to continuously strive for excellence. Don't forget there are many ways you can nominate your fellow coworkers for great work.

Recognize a colleague by submitting their name for an applause card to recognize a job well done. You can also nominate a fellow employee for Employee of the Month or a team of co-workers for Team of the Month.

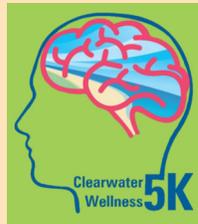
Scan the QR code and fill out the form.



## 2025 Mental Health Awareness 5K Walk

The city of Clearwater Well@Work team in partnership with Cigna Healthcare, Tampa Bay Thrives and NAMI-Pinellas County is excited to host the 2025 city of Clearwater Wellness Mental Health Awareness 5K Walk. [Register online or walk up on the day of the event.](#)

- Thursday, May 15
- 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Start at the Municipal Services Building Parking Garage



## REMINDER

**City offices will be closed May 26, in observance of Memorial Day.**

## Connection

is produced by the Public Communications Department.

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