

**FROM AROUND THE BIG BEND**

■ GADSDEN COUNTY

■ TALLAHASSEE

**Officers investigate southwest Tallahassee drive-by shooting:** Tallahassee police are investigating a drive-by shooting of a home in the 1500 block of Lake Avenue. Shots were fired from a vehicle about 12:30 a.m. Monday into the home, said David McCranie, spokesman for the Tallahassee Police Department. No one was hurt. Anyone with information is asked to call TPD at 891-4200 or Crime Stoppers at 574-TIPS (8477).

**Texas man arrested on marijuana charges:** A man wanted in Texas on a charge of possessing 50 to 2,000 pounds of marijuana was arrested Monday in Tallahassee. Ruben Vega, 44, was arrested at a home on East College Avenue after Texas law enforcement notified local police he was staying there, said David McCranie, spokesman for the Tallahassee Police Department.

**Candidate forum set for today:** Leadership Tallahassee and the Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce are holding a forum for sheriff, County Commission and state House of Representatives candidates today. The event is 5:30 p.m. at the Leon High School Auditorium, 550 E. Tennessee St. Another forum for the City Commission and School Board candidates will be 5:30 p.m. Thursday at Leon High.

■ LOTTERIES

**Florida Fantasy 5:** One ticket sold in Greenacres matched all five numbers in Sunday's Fantasy 5 drawing of the Florida Lottery. The ticket with the numbers 4-10-12-17-35 is worth \$173,594.42. The 256 tickets matching four numbers are worth \$109 each, and the 8,564 matching three numbers are worth \$9 each.

**Georgia Fantasy 5:** One ticket sold in Powder Springs matched all five numbers in Sunday's Fantasy 5 drawing of the Georgia Lottery. The ticket with the numbers 7-15-17-28-27 is worth \$373,580. The 104 tickets matching four numbers are worth \$120 each, and the 1,095 matching three numbers are worth \$7

# Local & State

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MIKE EWEN/Democrat

Bernard Safford smooths out pea gravel on Friday in front of Woodville Elementary School as landscaping continues to transform the front of the school into a garden oasis that will feature butterfly gardens, benches and areas for students. The \$21,000 project was funded by a grant submitted by FAMU professor Matt Powers.

## Grant, FAMU help Woodville Elementary's garden grow

By **TalMarlyn Waters**  
DESKTOP STAFF WRITER

**TALLAHASSEE.COM**

■ View a photo gallery.

A barren acre of grass and weeds will no longer greet students at Woodville Elementary School.

Instead, there's a pea-gravel path bordered by Beautyberry, Yaupon holly and milkweed, along with two outdoor classrooms.

The botanical transformation, which started a year ago, is courtesy of a \$21,500 grant from the Florida Wildflower Foundation. Students from Florida A&M University's School of Architecture combined ideas given from Woodville students with a functional design for the garden.

"That's what's so unique about this," said new Principal Nancy Stokely. "The kids are going to see their plans in the final project."

Woodville is the oldest school in the district because it's been in the same location for 152

years. The garden, which is located near the front of the school facing Woodville Highway, should be complete sometime this week. A grand unveiling ceremony is scheduled for late September.

Stokely watched recently as a crew worked on what was once a "forgotten area of the school."

The garden will include two areas of outdoor classroom activities, and one area will get an outdoor board for teachers to expand the classroom atmosphere. The chosen plants are meant to attract butterflies and birds so children get a VIP seat to the nature around them.

An orange line in the grass indicates about half an acre starting from a portion of the garden to

Woodville Highway's border in front of the school. It will become a wildflower meadow. Students will get to sprinkle the seeds next month.

Matt Powers, an assistant professor at FAMU who led the project, said the meadow will include an assortment of red, blue, orange and yellow wildflowers.

Powers said seven FAMU students in the American Society of Landscape Architecture worked on the design of the garden. He said most of the time students work on designs for massive buildings for class assignments. He said students will be pleasantly shocked to see the garden's progress.

"This is really a unique opportunity because they are going to see their actual designs," Powers said.

■ Contact Reporter TalMarlyn Waters at (850) 599-2162 or [twaters@tallahassee.com](mailto:twaters@tallahassee.com).

## Budget cuts, utility costs hit FAMU hard

By **Angeline J. Taylor**  
DESKTOP STAFF WRITER

additional \$4-million loss.

Trustees who make up Florida A&M's budget and finance committee listened intently Monday as the university's chief financial officer told them that \$15.3 million had been lost through state budget cuts and skyrocketing utility costs.

That information was critical considering subcommittee members needed to vote on decreases to the 2008-2009 budget.

"Revenue for the state of Florida is slowly declining every time we have a meeting," said Teresa Hardee, FAMU's chief financial officer.

In the June meeting, Hardee told trustees that they would need to vote on a \$6.5-million reduction. Since then, however, the amount has grown. Gov. Crist asked to hold 4 percent from state agencies, which amounted to a \$4.8-million loss for FAMU. And utility costs went up 19 percent, creating an

up the subcommittee no choice but to approve the changes to this year's budget. Their session won't be final until the full board votes.

"We're in a tight spot," said FAMU President James Ammons, "we're not the only one in the state university system. This situation requires us to use our creativity we can't be some real challenge we have before us."

Ammons said Board of Governors offered week to come to utilities' aide by asking more money from

Legislature. The 1 of Governors 2009 budget includes a million to help utilities' energy costs state legislators have approve that increase first.

"If they provide funds, it won't be July 1," Ammons said.

## State Farm proposes homeowner rate hike

By **Brittany Benner**  
FLORIDA CAPITAL REPORTER

them eyeball to eyeball and say, I'm a C

State Farm Florida wants to raise Florida homeowner property insurance rates by an average 47 percent statewide.

The proposed rate hikes would be higher for coastal residents. State Farm has about 1 million homeowners policies in the state, and intends to drop about 50,000 coastal policies.

State Farm is not selling any new homeowners policies in Florida.

Public hearings begin today for regulators to consider the rate request.

In 2007, in response to legislation and pressure from regulators, State Farm lowered its homeowners rates 9 percent. However, that came after increases that averaged 52 percent statewide two years ago.

Policyholders fear another increased cost in a struggling economy.

"We just want to be treated with fairness and respect," said Ron Nickel.

Ron and Judy Nickel said they've been State Farm customers for 21 years. They're from Tarpon Springs but they're babysitting two of their nine grandchildren in Tallahassee this week.

"I'd just like to ask

... and say, I'm a C profession so no mean a lot to me show me what just 47 percent increase Ron Nickel.

The company will that case to reg in public hearing start today.

"The key is supp the filing and for that's being required Ed Domansky communications director Florida's Office of

Regulators will hurricane models calculate expected from storms, whether insurance companies chased cheaper re

ance through the and how much p acceptable.

A State Farm spokesman referred to comments he made month when the ny filed its request.

"We know this difficult situation customers, we know but it's the only

choice we can because unlike (st Citizens Property

ance) we can't have rate up front and the assessment

wards ... we have ready to write the as soon as the sto with money we hand," said spokesman Justin Glover.