

AroundTown

Thomas excels in athletics



SPECIAL/Manatee River News

Jasmine Thomas, a Palmetto High School senior and a former Tillman Elementary student, was recently honored with the Golden Herald Award for Athletics. As a representative from Palmetto High, she was awarded for her athletic ability in basketball and track and for her contribution of numerous community service hours. Thomas is a member of the National Honor Society, ranks in the top 10 percent of her graduating class and has been an active member in both the Palmetto High Math Club and Sports Medicine Club.

Matzah factory bakes memories



SPECIAL/Manatee River News

Families had a great time at Chabad's Model Matzah Bakery last month. Children and adults learned what traditional matzah is, how to make it and why it is significant on Passover. An apron decorating contest was held to see who could create the most original Passover-themed apron. This educational workshop was the last of a series of four Family Fun Days throughout the year, each featuring different Jewish holidays. Next year, Chabad plans to hold its Family Fun Days in factory-style mode.

D'Amato wins opera award

The Bradenton Opera Guild hosted their annual "Helen Jepson Deller Fellowship Award" luncheon, and the award went to **Maria D'Amato**, center, a soprano. D'Amato has a music degree from Boston University and holds a master's from the University of Cincinnati-College Conservatory of Music. Pictured with D'Amato is **Jorgen and Gudrun Graugaard**, who chaired the event.



SPECIAL/Manatee River News

Neal donates trip to Lincoln students



SPECIAL/Manatee River News

Neal Communities recently donated over \$3,000 to Lincoln Middle School. The donation funded a field trip last month to Busch Gardens for 50 students in the school's mentoring program who have met or exceeded the program's academic objectives. This marks the third year that Neal Communities has sponsored the trip for the mentoring program students and the company has donated over \$10,000 during that time. Pictured here John Neal and assistant principal Curtis Davis (back row) with students from the mentoring program.

Homes, from page 1

moving in? We have the products and they are out there. Time is money, and we can build cheaper homes for less. We can make walls, windows, doors, roofing and do it all with almost a two-man crew."

Reducing energy costs are also a main goal for Lewis. For instance, Platinum builds its houses so air-tight that there needs to be a special addition to the air vent, or the typical homeowner wouldn't be able to open the door. Lewis said he could also control the air quality of the homes.

"The electric bills for one of our 1,000-square-foot living area houses are less than \$70 per month during the heat of the summer," he said.

Platinum materials also offer other ben-

efits, according to Lewis. The easier installation reduces the need for highly paid workers. There is reduced waste from the walls, which reduces dump fees while remaining environmentally conscious. There are also better dry walls and exterior finishes.

Some complain that it takes several years for a "green" house to make up for the extra financial output, but Lewis said it is worth the wait.

"We want to save the environment and look to the future," Lewis said. "The products work and we can do it better, more cost-efficient and faster."

Lewis said his homebuilding methods reduce the cost of a home by more than 30 percent, and Platinum is now building homes for less than \$100 per square foot.



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