



February 2010

Student Collects Teddy Bears for Victims

Last week, 12-year-old Clair Young dragged three giant bags of teddy bears into the Key West Police Station and handed them over the Chief Donie Lee. Young knows that a simple teddy bear can provide vital comfort to children when the whole world seems a scary place.

Young collected dozens of teddy bears as part of her upcoming Bat Mitzvah.

“One of my teachers told me about a special program at the Key West Police Department that helps children who are involved in car accidents and domestic violence situations,” Young wrote in a letter she distributed throughout the community. “Unfortunately, there are times when children are affected by situations that are scary. When the police are called, kids can get really scared and upset.”

The bears can ease that fear, giving children physical and emotional comfort. They make it easier for young children to talk to an officer about things they may not be comfortable talking about.

Young, working with Victim Advocate Elaine Woodson, learned about a program called Christina's Courage, which provides support for the victims of sexual assault and child abuse. She visited the shelter.

“Now that I have met with Advocate Woodson, I think these bears are even more important,” Young said.

“You should be very proud of what you've done for this community,” said Police Chief Donie Lee, looking at Clair across a table laden with soft, cuddly bears. “You just have no idea what a difference this can make in a time of trauma in someone's life. Even adults can be comforted with them.”

According to Young, the 100-plus bears will be divided up among the Monroe County Sheriff's Office, Christina's Courage, and the Key West Police Department.



This student of Horace O'Bryant Middle School student wanted to do something meaningful for her Bat Mitzvah. She turned to the community. The response was tremendous and, on Feb. 26, she met with Police Chief Donie Lee to donate over 100 teddy bears to comfort frightened children.

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Questions? Comments?

If you have information for the next City newsletter or would like to see something added to the publication, please contact Communications Manager Alyson Crean at acrean@keywestcity.com. This newsletter is a publication of the City of Key West.

Flagler Ribbon Cutting



City officials were joined by neighbors in mid February to cut a ribbon signifying the removal of barricades that have cut off several blocks of Flagler Avenue while it had a major facelift. As the ribbon fluttered into pieces, a member of the Conch Republic sounded a conch horn.

Shown are several of the many involved with the upgrade as they gathered to cut the ribbon. They are (left to right): Gary Bowman, General Services manager for the City of Key West; City Commissioners Teri Johnston Billy Wardlow and Barry Gibson; Paul Toppino, Edward Toppino, Sr.; and Christopher Toppino. The Toppino's company was the prime contractor for the project.

What could be more romantic than raising funds to fight cancer? The Key West Police Department's team of volunteers was up to their ears in chocolate and strawberries this month to benefit the annual American Cancer Society's Relay for Life. The team - the KWPD Revenge of the Nerds - raised \$1,400.

That money did not come easy: they sold 165 dozen strawberries. That means they hand-dipped and packaged almost 1,700 berries. They spent more than seven hours dipping and another seven hours delivering the goodies all over town.

The team would like to send special thanks to the following people:

- * The grower who donated the berries: Keith DeShong of Keith DeShong Farms*
- * Roy and Carol Hartline for recommending the grower and making contact with him.*
- * John and Cindy McGaughan for driving from Plant City to Fort Myers at 3 a.m. to get the strawberries on the ferry by 6 a.m., and*
- * Key West Express for shipping the strawberries free of charge and taking care of them in route.*

Thanks also go out to everyone who volunteered for dipping and/or delivering, and a special thank you to everyone who bought the Valentine's Day treats!

Urban Search And Rescue Team Hones its Skills

They are equipped and ready for just about anything imaginable -- and sometimes the unimaginable. The Key West Fire Department's Urban Search and Rescue team is an advanced rescue team that is trained and equipped to respond countywide to structural collapses, incidents in which victims are trapped, or in which there is a threat to the safety of first responders.

This week, the 24-member team had a chance to practice several different scenarios during a 3-day training session. The state-mandated annual training exercises, which unfolded in an old trailer on Stock Island, tested all of the team's search and rescue skills.

During this mock incident, the USAR team practiced shoring up an unstable structure. They removed an extremely heavy victim that could not be removed by normal means. Team members practiced rescuing victims through a confined space by crawling through kitchen cabinetry, and they

utilized specialized USAR equipment to assess potentially dangerous situations.

In the four years of its existence, the USAR team has rescued people trapped in buildings after hurricanes. They retrieved two victims in a construction collapse at the Key West International Airport. They saved a man who was crushed under tons of concrete when a cistern cover collapsed.

The team is often called upon to remove medical patients who cannot be transported by normal means, whether it's because they're in a loft or just too large to be carried through a small doorway. The advanced equipment and expertise is sometimes called upon to enhance vehicle extractions after an accident.

Under an agreement with the state of Florida, Key West's team is prepared to send six USAR team members whenever there's an incident in the county that requires their specialized expertise. In exchange, the state has provided vital grant



funding to equip and train this highly efficient search and rescue team.

In the attached photo: The Key West Fire Department's Urban Search and Rescue team had to open a hole in the wall to remove a mock victim Wednesday during a 3-day training session.



Fighting Underaged Drinking



Cameraman Tyler Lee, Teacher Ed Smith, actor Ricky Hatch and director Clay Wagner all worked together to create a sobering short film about teenage drinking and driving. Smith has all three students in his video production class at Key West High School.

The Monroe County Coalition for a Safe and Drug Free Community screened a "rough cut" of the film at its monthly meeting in February.

"This is as real as it gets," Hatch said of the film, which depicts the downward spiral of one student who succumbs to the siren song of booze and drugs.

The Coalition -- made up of law enforcement and service providers throughout Monroe County -- is supporting a number of ways to stop underage drinking. The Coalition provided a grant for the film equipment used by the students to make the startling and potentially award-winning film.

Collapsible Bikes Approved on Lower Keys Shuttle

The Key West Department of Transportation has solved a problem that has perplexed riders and drivers along the Lower Keys Shuttle route. Effective immediately, folding portable bicycles WILL be allowed on the shuttle.

These compact bikes can be folded and carried alongside a rider without taking up precious space on the sometimes busy shuttle. That means anyone relying on a bike to get around after riding into town on the shuttle will be able to bring their alternative transportation on board.

In the past riders have vied for the very limited space on the racks that fit the front of the bus. Because they only held two bikes, there was not adequate space to accommodate everyone who wanted to bring along a bike. When conflicts arose, it was decided that no bikes were allowed on the shuttle.

This solution means that anyone willing to share their leg space with their folding bike will be able to bring it along.