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HAPPY BEYOND WORDS

Parents, kids graduate Grace Place's language program



Women from the Bright Beginnings family literacy program perform a skit during their graduation at Grace Place in Golden Gate on Wednesday. The group takes classes four days a week where they learn English and parenting skills.

Rachel Fradette

Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Four days a week, Susana Beristain walked into Grace Place in Golden Gate with her son. They would separate to go to their respective classes, but meet up right after classes ended.

Both of them are learning English. It's something they are doing together from start to finish, so marking a successful year is a part of the deal.

With her son Manuel, 4, in tow, Beristain, 36, made her way across the stage Wednesday at Grace Place in Golden Gate to receive a certificate for her work in the Bright Beginnings program. The program focuses on family literacy.

"Grace Place means a lot to me," Beristain said. "They've been helping me. Being together, they (her children) are

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Adriana Flores, right, laughs with her daughter Alexa Flores, 3, during the graduation. PHOTOS BY ALEX DRIEHAUS/NAPLES DAILY NEWS

Fertilizer rules in Naples about to get tough again

Lisa Conley

Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

The city of Naples is changing its fertilizer ordinance for the second time in two years, adding stronger language and restoring a rainy season blackout period that a previous City Council had repealed.

The blackout period prohibits the use of nitrogen-based fertilizers from June 1 to Sept. 30. The revised ordinance, which council unanimously passed Wednesday, also prohibits fertilizer use anytime a flood, tropical storm or hurricane watch or warning is in effect, or there's a 60 percent chance of at least 2 inches of rain in a 24-hour period.

"I believe this is a correction of course back to where we should have been," said Vice Mayor Gary Price, who was not on the council when the blackout period was repealed. "This is taking back what we had right the first time ... which is that there was a positive effect on the ban that we had and I'm going to

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Comedian's joke at Naples club prompts 911 call

Dave Osborn

Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Ahmed Ahmed says he's no terrorist and believes humor should unite people.

His performance Saturday at Off The Hook Comedy Club in North Naples prompted a man who attended to call 911 the next day and complain about the comedian asking how many Middle Eastern people were attending.

"After the show, I was shaking everybody's hand and thanked them and did a meet and greet," Ahmed said Wednesday.

"My point is terrorists don't do meet and greets. We don't say, 'death to America, but can we take a selfie first?' I wear skinny jeans and T-shirts on stage. Terrorists don't do that."

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Mideast tension

Amid alleged Iran threat, State Department pulling staff from Iraq. 13A

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Man injured, faces reckless driving charge

Jake Allen
Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

A man sped through downtown Naples late Tuesday, ran red lights and ended up wedging his vehicle between two others, a witness told the Naples Police Department.

Sean Ward, 35, faces a reckless driving causing personal or property damage charge after the crash, which occurred at the intersection of 9th Street South and 5th Avenue South at about 10 p.m. Tuesday, police report.

After the crash, Ward's heavily damaged gray Buick was found on its driver's side with its front end facing south in the left northbound lane of the intersection, police said.

Ward's Buick was wedged between a red Lexus, which had major rear-end damage, and a silver Hyundai, which had damage to its front driver's side hood and headlight. A white Chrysler had damage on its sunroof after debris from the crash struck it, according to Ward's arrest report.

Ward was trapped in his vehicle and Naples Fire Department extricated him.

He was transported to NCH Baker Hospital Downtown for treatment, police reported.

Ward was the only person injured in the incident, but caused \$10,000 worth of property damage, said Lt. Matthew Fletcher, a police spokesman.

Five witnesses told police they saw Ward's vehicle traveling south on 9th Street South at a high rate of speed, according to the report.

Two of the witnesses told police they heard tires squealing as Ward approached the intersection of 9th Street South and 5th Avenue South.

One witness told police he was almost hit by Ward's car before the crash at the intersection of 7th Avenue North and 9th Street North, the report shows. That witness told police Ward's car was traveling at a high rate of speed and ran multiple red lights before the crash.

After clearing the crash, officers went to the hospital and arrested Ward at about 12:32 a.m. Wednesday.

He was taken to the Naples Jail Center without incident after his discharge from the hospital, according to police.

Ward's bond has not yet been set and he is expected to make his first appearance in front of a judge Thursday.

Fertilizer

Continued from Page 1A

support it until the day I die."

In addition to the blackout period, the revised fertilizer ordinance also bans the use of phosphorus. The previous version of the ordinance said the use of phosphorus was "strongly discouraged."

The City Council is expected to take a final vote on the ordinance at its June 5 meeting.

The city passed its first fertilizer ordinance, which included a blackout period, in 2008 as a way to lessen fertilizer runoff and protect water quality. In 2017 council members got rid of the blackout period based on studies that suggest it may actually be better for the environment to apply fertilizer during the summer.

Laurie Trenholm, an environmental horticulture professor with the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, said her research shows that fertilizers are best absorbed during the rainy season, when grasses and other plants are growing most.

"Our science is based on approximately 11 years of research and we had the lowest levels of nitrate leaching, (which is when nitrates percolate down through the soil and eventually hit groundwater), during June, July, August and September, regardless of rainfall," she said.

That's because grass grows best during the summer months due to higher temperatures and more daylight, Trenholm explained, and healthy, growing grass is better able to absorb nutrients.

But in the wake of last year's toxic algal blooms, which scientists have said might have been exacerbated by fertilizer runoff, the city has decided to take a "better safe than sorry" approach and reinstate a blackout period.

"Human behavior plays a role in whether the science is true or not," said Gregg Strakaluse, the city's streets and stormwater director. "Someone could miscalculate how much fertilizer they need for their lawn or miscalibrate their equipment, and so you have a higher probability of a mistake happening if you allow fertilizer application in the wet season than you do if there's a ban."

Trenholm said the city should consider exempting certified professional landscapers from the ban because they're less likely to make a mistake.

"Homeowners are much more likely



A landscaper spreads granulated fertilizer on a lawn in this file photo. FILE

to get it wrong than trained professionals," she said. "So yes, go ahead and ban homeowners who might not have the same level of knowledge, but I would hope that commercial landscapers would be exempt from any bans."

Mac Carraway agreed. He leads a broad-based coalition including urban landscape professionals, golf course superintendents and lawn care service providers.

"Why do we demean professionals and lump them in with others who are irresponsible? Because this is an agenda that is not open to meaningful distinctions and the real lives of real hard-working people," said Carraway, executive director of the Environmental Research & Education Foundation.

"I think a one-size-fits-all blackout like this simply imposes an egregious

regulatory burden on a group of people who've done nothing but invest for decades in the research and implementation of best practices."

Over the years municipalities throughout the state have struggled with how to regulate fertilizer use, and officials from Collier County, Marco Island and Naples met in February to try to devise a countywide ordinance.

Collier County Pollution Control Manager Danette Kinaszczuk, who spoke on behalf of all the environmental staffs, said at the February workshop that a countywide ordinance would result in less confusion for landscapers and likely increase compliance.

However, the three government entities were unable to agree on the best ordinance, which prompted the city of Naples to address the issue on its own.

Graduation

Continued from Page 1A

learning, I'm learning too at the same time."

She was recognized with 32 women who also reached this milestone. Kids were celebrated for their work in the program, donning graduation caps, while their mothers received red roses.

Grace Place, a local nonprofit, offers resources to families in the Golden Gate community through English language classes, literacy programs, adult education and a weekly food pantry.

Beristain first arrived at Grace Place to enroll her daughter Chelsea, 14, in a program.

Twelve years later, she has participated in English language classes, volunteered in other programs and put her children through their classes.

Beristain said it helped her connect with her children.

"They helped me to learn English and at the same time they help me be a good mother," Beristain said.

Many parents, mostly mothers, enter programs with no prior knowledge of the English language. Beristain speaks Spanish as her first language.

During the 2017-18 year, 284 adults were part of the Bright Beginnings program, according to Grace Place.

At Grace Place's ceremony, the graduates performed skits and cheers, read aloud family recipes, and some even gave speeches to show off their new skills and what they have learned.

One group held up decorated papers with pictures of their children on them. "The reason we are here," the group said, then each mother said the name of her child or children.

When asked who was returning to Grace Place next year, almost every stu-



Emma Mireles, right, smiles as she poses for a photo with Oscar Rodriguez during the Bright Beginnings family literacy program graduation at Grace Place in Golden Gate on Wednesday.

ALEX DRIEHAUS/NAPLES DAILY NEWS

dent raised their hands.

Teaching volunteer Debbie Blaine was searching for something in her retirement and Grace Place fell into her lap in 2012.

"I've been stunned when I realize how much work these women do in a day between taking care of their own kids, cooking for the family and taking care of their husbands," Blaine

said. "I could never put in the kind of time. To me, the work effort is just incredible."

Blaine said language allows parents to keep tabs on their kids, but also helps them communicate at their most vulnerable times. She said parents realize that learning English is essential to maneuvering the education system and job market.

Above all, Blaine said, mothers join programs, even with no promise of an official certificate or GED, to better their lives. More specifically, to better the lives of their children.

"These women don't know any English at all when they first start. This is a huge accomplishment," Blaine said. "It's a steppingstone because now it will open up doors."