



December 27, 2011

Meet The News-Press' 'Heroes 2011' finalists

The finalists for The News-Press' "Heroes 2011" have a proven track record of service to the Southwest Florida community. Their works range from helping the poorest among us to seeking to make the area safer for cyclists and pedestrians. Their efforts have yielded results, praise and new followers who plan to continue moving their agendas forward.....

[BikeWalkLee portion only:]

BikeWalkLee

Florida is a dangerous place for pedestrians and cyclists — 5,163 pedestrians have been killed over the last decade at an estimated cost of \$22.2 billion.

BikeWalkLee formed in 2009 precisely to work to make roads safer and more user friendly in this outdoor friendly community.

Their efforts have paid off and the group, made of cycling enthusiasts, retirees, professors and others, have wielded considerable influence in persuading Lee County and Fort Myers to adopt "Complete Streets" resolutions that ensure that road planning includes bicycle lanes, sidewalks and greater transit options. Results include work being done on the State Road 82 widening, from Ortiz Avenue to Colonial Boulevard, the Six Mile Cypress Parkway widening and the new Matlacha Bridge.

Due to its work, BikeWalkLee now counts on 38 supporter organizations ranging from cyclists clubs like the Caloosa Riders Bicycle Club and Bonita Bay Bicycle Club to large organizations like Lee Memorial Health System, AARP of Florida, Audubon Society of Southwest Florida and FGCU.

Lee County administration plans to update county commissioners on Complete Streets implementation in early January.

"The policy achievements we've seen in the past three years are a result of a broad based public engagement and coalition-building effort," said BikeWalkLee steering committee member Darla LeTourneau.

Visit the website bikewalklee.org or call for more information. Or contact Dan Moser at 334-6417 or dmoser@bikewalklee.org, or Darla Letourneau at 472-1179 or dletourneau@bikewalklee.org

News-Press: Dec. 18, 2011

Editorial: People of the Year Finalists

Today The News-Press editorial board presents finalists for its People of the Year/People to Watch awards.

The editorial board received dozens of nominations from the public and also made recommendations for nominations.

On Nov. 20, we published a list of 60 nominees on these pages representing community, government, business, the arts, service, veterans and sports.

Each person or group is well deserving. The finalists below were selected by the editorial board leadership based upon community impact, particularly in 2011, and potential for success in 2012.

The five categories are People of the Year, People to Watch, Heroes, Trailblazers and Public Officials.

The News-Press will announce the award winners at a reception Jan. 19 called "People of the Year: Making a Difference" at the Sidney and Berne Davis Arts Center in Fort Myers.

Our records show we have been honoring exceptional people since 1987, and at the reception we will also honor 25 years of past winners and name a Person/People of Distinction of the last quarter-century.

Your suggestions these past few weeks have been enormously helpful in determining the most influential individuals in Southwest Florida over the last 25 years.

Now, here are the finalists and a little info about why we selected them:

HEROES [BWL 1 of 3 finalists]

BikeWalkLee

This organization has tirelessly advocated for a safer community for pedestrians and cyclists.

The 14-member steering committee was successful in persuading the Lee County Commission to adopt a “Complete Streets” resolution in 2009 to include pedestrian and bike paths in road planning. An update on “Complete Streets” implementation will be presented to commissioners in January.

Cities and planning organizations have endorsed new bike lanes.

The group’s goals include freedom of choice in transportation, active recreation and greater public dialogue.

Stories of cyclist and pedestrian fatalities and injuries are constant in Southwest Florida, and in May BikeWalkLee was among the groups represented in the annual Ride of Silence sponsored by Caloosa Riders Bicycle Club of Southwest Florida to honor victims.

Steering committee members include Margaret Banyan, professor at Florida Gulf Coast University.