LAKE COUNTY
FLORIDA
Where the best comes into view

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

FALL 2009 • VOLUME 4

FEATURE FUNCTION:

A day in CODE.

BACKGROUND: The Lake County Department of Conservation & Compliance, Code Enforcement Services Division, employs code officers to enforce violations of the Lake County Land Development Regulations and various ordinances governing the use of property in Lake County.

From downtown Tavares, Glen Guzman jumps into an SUV embarking on a long drive to the northern reaches of Lake County.

Guzman is one of two senior code enforcement officers that are stationed in the County by the Code Enforcement Services Division. He supervises three code enforcement officers for the north section of Lake County.

He's checking out an anonymous complaint the Division received at 11 a.m. about a home in Astor with debris in the yard. He'll meet up at the property at about 2 p.m. with Frank Couch, one of the Division's code enforcement officers.

"On a daily basis, when we receive complaints we try to respond to them as quickly as possible," he says as he traverses the winding road of Country Road 455 through the Ocala National Forest on his way to Astor.

As he pulls into the unincorporated community bordering the St. Johns River, he flips on his GPS unit to locate the home. The majority of an enforcement officer's work is conducted from their County vehicle. Each is equipped with a laptop, air card (to connect to the internet) and printer.

Couch and Guzman arrive almost simultaneously in the neighborhood. Couch knocks on the door of the home in question while Guzman heads next door to the neighbor's house to gather information about the case. If the resident of the house isn't home, Couch will leave his business card to alert the owner that the County visited the property.

"Code enforcement officers don't walk around the property unless the property owner allows us," Guzman says. "We'll sometimes talk to a neighbor to get permission into their property so we can get a better view of the problem next door."

(continued on page 2)

Making Cents: The Cost of Adult Mosquito Abatement

Did you know that during the past several years the County has identified **47** different mosquito species in Lake County. There are **85** different mosquito species statewide and **2,700** different mosquito species worldwide.

When the mosquitoes start swarming, it is the responsibility of the Lake County Department of Environmental Utilities, Mosquito & Aquatic Plant Management Division, to swat back.

Division staff monitors the composition and abundance of mosquitoes in 10 regions in the County. The regions are comprised of areas that share the same environmental traits. Each region is set with four mosquito traps that are monitored twice a week.

(continued on page 5)

A Day in CODE (continued from page 1)

After several knocks at the door, Couch makes contact with the property owner saying politely, "Hi, I'm Frank with the Lake County Code Enforcement Division." He questions the property owner on the excessive debris in the yard, including the inoperable vehicle. Couch takes several photographs of the yard and tells the property owner he will have to issue a Notice of Violation (NOV) giving the property owner two weeks to correct the issues.

Within 30 minutes of arriving at the property, Couch and Guzman have located the property, made contact with the property owner, issued a NOV using their vehicle's printer and entered the data in the computer. Using information from the County's databases and online resources, such as Municode, the Property Appraiser and Tax Collector, their preliminary research on the case is complete. In about two weeks, they will re-inspect the property for compliance. A failure to comply may result in fines levied against the homeowner.

"I'll look at a home's deed records, property records, open code enforcement citations, tax records and other information," Guzman said. "That helps me get a mindset of what the big picture is with this home."

From Astor, Guzman travels back to Umatilla to investigate a complaint of a homeowner building an addition without a permit. The property owner admits to building without a permit and a NOV is issued. In this case, the property owner will have to pull permits after-the-fact, which will be double the cost. From Umatilla, Guzman meets up with another of his code enforcement officers to look at a home in the Sorrento area.

In about four hours and three code enforcement cases later, Guzman has traveled about 84 miles from Tavares to Astor, Astor to Umatilla, Umatilla to Sorrento and Sorrento to Tavares. Lake County code enforcement officers work 10-hour days. They stagger their shifts so the Division can be open six days a week, Monday-Saturday.

Some of the common code violations include:

- Abandoned property, such as inoperable vehicles, old appliances, furniture, machinery, materials, etc., must be stored in a completely enclosed building or removed from the property.
- Boats, boat trailers and recreational vehicles must be parked in such a way to meet the single family front and secondary front yard setbacks.
- The erection, alteration or reconstruction of any building, shed or structure, including signs, shall not be commenced without a building permit. Signs shall not be placed in the right-of-way.
- A home occupation may be allowed for office use only, as an accessory use in a bona fide dwelling unit or accessory building on the same lot as the main building, subject to certain requirements. A business tax must be paid for all home occupations.
- RVs cannot be occupied except in a designated RV park or campground.
- No person within the County shall allow his or her property, of less than one acre, to become overgrown with weeds, vegetation or other plant matter.
- It shall be unlawful to park any vehicle with a "Gross Vehicle Weight Rating" of 12,000 pounds or more in residential zoning districts (Emergency and on call vehicles are exempt). Semi parking is limited to parcels with five acres or more having a residence on the property. Parking is prohibited on vacant lots.
- No person shall, within the County, allow their property to become filled with materials, trash, garbage or rubbish of any kind.

For more information about the **Lake County Code Enforcement Services Division**, call **(352) 343-9639** or log on to **www.lakecountyfl.gov, keyword: code**.

IN THE FOLD: Crafty Computerization

Employee: Erikk Ross

Position: Director of Programming & Application Support Services

Department & Division: Information Technology

What are the main responsibilities of your job?

Programming & Application Support Services (PASS) covers a variety of services. Our primary focus is process improvement through the use of technology. I manage our division. Before becoming the PASS Director, my job title was Software Engineer. I still maintain all the responsibilities of Software Engineer with the added management duties.

What are you currently working on?

Currently, we are working on several different projects. We are upgrading all of our database servers to the latest and greatest software version. We are also working on changes to the Automated Agenda process. PASS and Information Outreach are helping Growth Management get several of their applications online including contractor renewals, site plans and zoning clearances. Citizens will be able to apply and pay for these applications online, which we think will greatly improve customer service. In fact, just this week we launched the online zoning clearances to the County's Web site, www.lakecountyfl.gov.

What has been one of your favorite projects to work on?

Over the last year we completed two similar projects. Both were GIS Web mapping applications: one for the Department of Economic Growth & Redevelopment, which we called the Lake County Property Finder (http://propertyfinder.lakecountyfl.gov); and the other was the new GIS Interactive Map (http://gis.lakecountyfl.gov/gisweb). The reason I liked these projects is that they were both truly team efforts. Both projects required the skills of PASS, Information Outreach, GIS and Economic Growth & Redevelopment to complete. Another reason I liked them was because they were challenging. To complete both sites required learning new technology. It was rewarding to see the final product being useful to our employees and citizens.

Pinpoint POST

Media 'Mega' Center

WHAT: Cooper Memorial Library

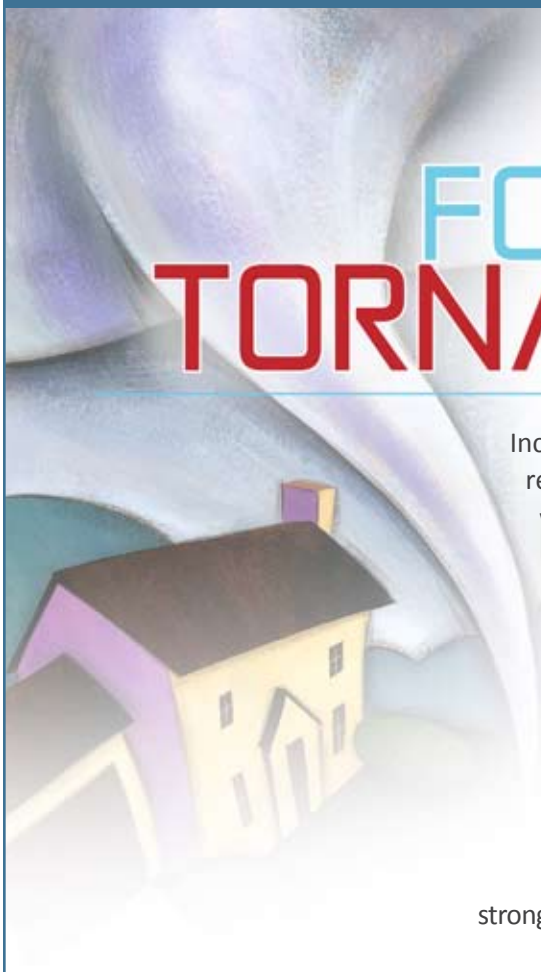
WHERE: 2525 Oakley Seaver Drive
Clermont, FL 34711

HOURS: Monday-Thursday 9 a.m.-7 p.m.; Friday-Saturday 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

PHONE: (352) 536-2275

STAFFED: 11 full-time County employees, 7 part-time and 26 volunteers; 1 full-time Lake-Sumter Community College employee and 9 work study students; 1 full-time UCF employee

SERVICES AVAILABLE: The 50,000-square-foot facility offers 130 public computers, wireless computer access, a bookstore, a cafe', computer classrooms, study rooms, a children's section and a separate area for teenagers. The library is a partnership project between Lake-Sumter Community College, the Lake County Board of County Commissioners and the University of Central Florida.



PREPARE FOR A STRONG TORNADO SEASON

Increased tornado activity is expected this winter in Central Florida. The reason for the predicted tornado activity is El Niño, which is an abnormal warming of surface ocean waters in the eastern tropical Pacific. An El Niño weather pattern usually occurs every three to seven years and it can impact global weather patterns. For Central Florida, an El Niño typically means a weak hurricane season, but a strong tornado season in the winter.

The last two El Niño seasons in 1997-1998 and 2006-2007 produced deadly tornadoes throughout Central Florida. The most recent El Niño season resulted in three tornadoes in Lake County: the Christmas Day tornado in Leesburg and the Groundhog Day tornadoes in Lady Lake and Lake Mack, which killed 21 people. Historically during El Niño periods, the strong and violent tornado threat is greatest at night and in the morning.

Safety tips for tornado preparation

- ☐ When storms approach, monitor TV, AM/FM radio and NOAA weather radio broadcasts. Keep a battery-powered radio for emergencies.
- ☐ **A TORNADO WATCH** is issued when a severe weather system may spawn tornadoes. It means watch the sky. **A TORNADO WARNING** lasts for one hour or less and it means take action right now. A tornado is on the ground or about to be on the ground.
- ☐ Have a family disaster plan. Ask about tornado plans in offices, stores or other areas you visit frequently. Learn the locations of interior shelters.
- ☐ Remember, practice the plan. Have a place to call and a place to meet.
- ☐ Know where to shelter in the house. Store protective materials – such as blankets or sleeping bags – in the shelter.
- ☐ In case family members are separated, plan a place to call to let others know you are safe. Plan a place to meet if you are cut off from your neighborhood.

For more tornado-preparation information, contact the Lake County Department of Public Safety, Emergency Management Division, at (352) 343-9420, e-mail disasterready@lakecountyfl.gov or log on to www.lakecountyfl.gov, keyword: emergency.

Mosquito Abatement *(continued from page 2)*

"It's easier to associate trap collection data to a smaller area because the environmental conditions can be significantly different and change within any given day in Astor compared to Bay Lake," said Eric Cotsenmoyer, Director of the Mosquito & Aquatic Plant Management Division.

Equipped with 16 trucks and 11 drivers, the Mosquito & Aquatic Plant Management Division deploys resources to regions when surveillance data collected from the field by staff, mosquito traps and service calls exceed a three-year historical mean. Reducing the mosquito population is not only important to provide residents comfort from the pesky insect, but to reduce the risk of mosquito-borne diseases, such as Eastern equine encephalitis, St. Louis encephalitis and West Nile virus.

"We know we can reduce the risk by the information collected through our mosquito surveillance," Cotsenmoyer said. "We can say with confidence the level of risk is less after spraying because we can see changes in the mosquito population due to our abatement activities."

Each region of Lake County is divided into 12 subregions, which are sized appropriately to allow a mosquito spraying truck to cover a subregion's roads in a four-hour period. The weather of a particular month largely determines how often the seasonal part-time drivers of the spray trucks are deployed. For example, spray trucks were sent out 165 times in November and 257 occasions in September. The cost of sending one truck out is about $161 a night, which includes gas, driver wages, materials and truck maintenance.

The spray trucks are stripped down four-wheel drive subcompact trucks that cost the County about $17,000-$20,000 apiece. In the bed of each truck, is a mounted power unit, pesticide unit and air compressor, which costs about $12,000.

One of the largest recurring costs of mosquito spraying is the pesticides. The Mosquito & Aquatic Plant Management Division uses two kinds —fyfanon and permethrin— to help reduce the possibility of the mosquito population from developing resistance to one specific compound. With the trucks spraying 4.3 ounces a minute, the cost of pesticides, which range from $37 to $101 a gallon, can add up quickly.

For more information about the Lake County Department of Environmental Utilities, Mosquito & Aquatic Plant Management Division, call **(352) 343-9682** or log on to **www.lakecountyfl.gov, mosquito**.