

from the front page



Cindy Skop | Daily Sun

Lane Munz, low-voltage supervisor for Galaxy Home Solutions, performs a rough inspection.

EXPANSION

Continued from A1

construction workers, and their families, not only in Sumter County, but also scores of other communities throughout the region; as well as providing additional life-style opportunities to thousands of retiring baby boomers.

What occurred in the ensuing months can be described only as one of the state's economic development success stories of the year.

It certainly had a big effect on Brett Hage, who serves as not only a president of Yoder's T&D Distribution division, but also as 2018 president of the Sumter County Chamber of Commerce.

"The economic impact has been tremendous," Hage, of Oxford, said. "It's hard to put into perspective what the Developer has done for the Sumter County economy. The growth plays into my train of thought all the time in being able to see our workers prospering."

Wonderful Place

Much of what transpired started with a resolution that the late-state Rep. Don Hahnfeldt, R-The Villages, signed on Sept. 22, 2015, as the then-chairman of the Sumter County Commission. Hahnfeldt died on Christmas Eve following a battle with cancer.

"The big issue was The Villages contemplating the end of development at State Road 44; and, in 2015, started communicating that plan quite clearly," Sumter Administrator Bradley Arnold said. "And the contractors that have been such strong supporters of the Developer would have been forced to look to other areas, other developers, to continue the viability of their companies and continued employment for their workers."

Under Hahnfeldt's leadership, however, the commission adopted a resolution in support of the Developer expanding southward.

"Looking back, we're all thankful for Don Hahnfeldt's leadership as chairman in 2015 who led this resolution that became an important catalyst to continuing the development of this fantastic residential and commercial community," Arnold said.

The passion behind this effort even gained the governor's support.

In January, Scott attended a community event at The Sharon at Spanish Springs, where he spoke in favor of the then-newly announced plans to develop 8,000 acres in and around Fenney and Southern Oaks.

"If you think about it, why would anybody want to slow down the best development?" he told the Daily Sun in a May interview. "I've had the opportunity to travel around the world, and I've never seen

anything like The Villages."

The governor also viewed the expansion as a way to further his mission to return Florida as much as possible to full employment.

"I have told so many people to move to The Villages," he said. "I always tell everybody that this is about the most wonderful place in the world to live."

The Mindset

Nearly every one of The Villages contractors put the growth of their companies on hold in the year prior to the announcement, because the Developer originally anticipated the community's buildout this year.

"We all had it in our minds because The Villages was winding down," said Yoder, chairman and CEO of Wildwood's T&D Family of Cos.

So, Yoder, Munz, Scott and many of their peers each capped job growth, delayed inventory and equipment purchases and developed diversification plans to keep their workers employed.

"We were all in the mindset of a slowdown," said Munz, president of Wildwood's Galaxy Home Solutions.

At Mike Scott Plumbing, brothers Shawn and Jason Scott and sister Tracy Hinde even added a retail division to offset any slowdown in new construction work.

"We weren't prepping for a downsizing," said Shawn Scott, the company's president and CEO. "We're also a service company; we were getting ready to modify. So, we began prepping for the showroom in Wildwood."

Great Feeling

Each of these construction executives took a moment to check their emotions when they talk about what The Villages growth means to their workers and their families.

"There's no words to explain how I feel," Yoder said.

Over the past year, the T&D companies — particularly its concrete division — added 250 new employees to a workforce now at about 600 people, and he still needs about 200 more workers to meet The Villages building demands.

"The best blessing in Terry Yoder's eyes is when The Villages decided to expand," he said. "It took so much pressure off me. In December this year, I thought I was going to have to lay off half of my people. What was I going to do for these employees and their families? That was weighing heavily on my heart. But when the Developer decided to expand, the pressure was lifted off my heart."

Munz harbored similar concerns at his electrical contracting company.

Over the past year, he hired 25 new employees, for a total workforce of about 130, and needs another 20 workers or so.

"Everyone is just ecstatic about keeping it going," Munz said. "It means our children will be able to retire here. We have children who started at The Villages Charter School in kindergarten now working for the company. My son, Lane, will be taking his electrical contracting examination the first of the year. Now, he's going to be able to retire in Sumter County."

Since the expansion started, Scott Plumbing added about 20 workers for a total workforce now of more than 150 employees, Scott said.

"There's not a better feeling anytime of the year, but especially this time of year, that our employees will have a place and a job," he said. "You know, we're a second-generation company, with my brother, sister and me. This brings in our third generation of family members. It's a great feeling to be involved with The Villages."

Lifting Spirits

Because of The Villages expansion, nearly every contractor reinvested considerable dollars to absorb the new work.

Over the past year, Yoder acquired 56 new trucks, purchased new buildings to accommodate growth of the T&D Distribution division and acquired new land to meet growth needs at the T&D Concrete and TD Pool & Spa divisions.

"That's because of the shift in growth coming to Sumter County," Yoder said. "The Villages gave me the incentive I need to reinvest. And that's energized our guys; it's energized me. It's such a positive attitude that cycles down all the way through the company. We all feel good about ourselves and our future."

Growth demands motivated Munz to purchase 18 new trucks not only for his electrical contracting work but also for Galaxy Site Services, the commercial maintenance division.

"A lot of people saw The Villages coming to an end," he said. "I work on a five-year plan; so, we didn't buy new vehicles. That's all changed. Now there's 20 years or more of work, and everybody has gone and upgraded their vehicles."

Scott Plumbing acquired 40 new trucks to keep pace with The Villages development, Scott said.

"Over the last two years, we were thinking about decommissioning trucks," Scott said. "But then we thought, why buy new if we're retiring them. Now, by the time we're done setting up these trucks, we've easily invested \$80,000 in each truck to make them work."

That reinvestment activity describes the bulk of activity happening at nearly every company that serves the Developer, Yoder said.

"We went back and invested in our company," he said. "And it's just picked up our spirits."

Frankie and Johnny's Love Life: To Be Or Not to Be?

The Studio Theatre's second installment of season two features a two-character play exploring their relationship.

By KRISTEN FIORE  
Daily Sun Staff Writer

Before a waiting audience sat a comfortable studio apartment, equipped with a messy coffee table, unmade bed, open closet, duct-taped counter stools, an old gas stove and a Dumbo the Elephant stuffed animal sitting atop a green couch.

The set was part of The Studio Theatre at Tierra Del Sol's second installment of season two, "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune," a two-character play filled with comedy, emotions and the thought-provoking themes of heartache, loneliness and commitment.

The realistic, complicated and strong-willed Frankie is played by Whitney Morse, while Trevin Cooper plays the persistent, sincere and dramatic Johnny.

The middle-aged pair work at the same restaurant in New York City. The play, written by Terrence McNally, starts with a passionate sex scene at the end of a first date — at least, what Frankie believes to be the end.

When Johnny doesn't leave the apartment, Frankie continuously tries to hint that he should, but he has other ideas in store for the night.

The story unfolds to reveal a continuous conversation about a relationship that may or may not happen.

Both Morse and Cooper expertly delivered their lines — impressive for the amount of dialogue in the play.

"It's really difficult for two people to carry on that kind of conversation," said audience member Bill Johnston,



Submitted photo

"Frankie and Johnny In The Clair De Lune," at The Studio Theatre at Tierra Del Sol, features Whitney Morse as Frankie and Trevin Cooper as Johnny.

of the Village of Pennecamp. "It's pretty incredible with the amount of lines that they have."

Throughout the conversation, Johnny is overly eager and maybe a little too open, while Frankie is guarded and practical.

As the night turns to the early hours of morning, the two learn about each other — they have similar childhood backgrounds, Johnny likes to quote Shakespeare and Frankie wanted to be an actress.

There are many stories within the story.

They both have scars, but Frankie doesn't want to show hers.

Both characters are lonely as well, but they experience loneliness from different angles. While Frankie watches neighbors from her window, Johnny looks to the moon.

Audience member Bill Edwards, of the Village of Pennecamp, said he found the relationship and dialogue between the characters believable and realistic.

"We've been season subscribers since the first season," Edwards said. "It's always very well done."

By the second act of the play, Johnny still hasn't left

the apartment, and Frankie has started to open up a bit, although, as Johnny puts it, she doesn't want to hear anything that she doesn't already know.

The play is a look through the window at two lonely people with two different ideas of what should happen next.

"Frankie and Johnny" balances speckles of comedy with flecks of more serious moments, creating a rich dialogue and relationship with the potential to go in many different directions.

Kristen Fiore is a staff writer with The Villages Daily Sun. She can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5270, or kristen.fiore@thevillagesmedia.com.

**Do You Qualify for Medical Cannabis?**

- Cancer
- Crohn's
- Epilepsy
- Glaucoma
- HIV/AIDS
- Seizures
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Parkinson's
- PTSD
- Chronic Pain
- ALS

**BETTER HEALTH Compassion Clinic**

**352-601-4200**

Fast / Affordable / Compassionate

SEIZED & FORFEITED ASSETS PUBLIC AUCTION

JEWELRY AND FINE ART SEIZED BY POLICE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES.

Property from seized and forfeited assets auction. Bankruptcies and liquidation of Rolexes, large diamonds, fine art, and jewelry together with general order merchandise which constitutes the majority to be liquidated piece by piece.

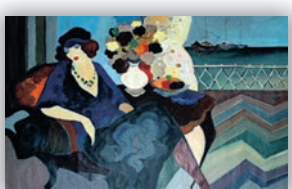
ALL ART AND JEWELRY AUTHENTICATED AND CERTIFIED. OVER 2 MILLION DOLLARS!!



9 Ct. Tanzanite W/Diamonds



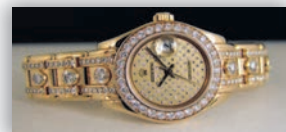
12 Ct. Diamond Bracelet



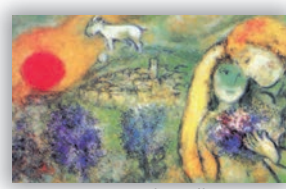
Itzhak Tarkay



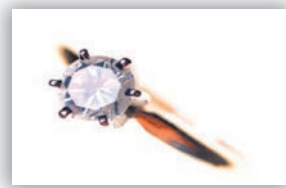
Peter Max



Ladies 18K Pearlmaster, Diamonds



Marc Chagall



Large Diamonds



Rolex Watches



Norman Rockwell



H.C. Pissarro



Joan Miro



Salvador Dali



Tennis Bracelet



Diamond Earrings

**MONDAY  
JANUARY 1st  
PREVIEW: 10:30AM  
AUCTION: 11:00AM**

**HOSTED AT:  
WATERFRONT INN  
1105 LAKESHORE DR.  
THE VILLAGES, FL  
32162  
INFO (561) 877-4890**

**Happy New Year**  
from all of us at

**escapes**  
Landscape & Nursery

Landscaping The Villages® Community over 20 years.

**352-303-8610**