

Our views: Weekend wrap-up (June 12)

Special surfers, Cocoa Playhouse, Titusville station

June 12, 2010

Need some good news at the end of a hard week?

We've got it in the story about the Brevard Special Olympics program teaming with Ron Jon Surf Shop to launch a pilot program in surfing.

It's a great idea for the Space Coast and its special-needs kids and adults, who already have the chance to participate in 20 individual and team sports through Special Olympics Florida.

The classes took place in Cocoa Beach, and it was hard to tell who enjoyed the waves more — the teachers, the students or their parents.

Among those involved was Craig Carroll, a former pro surfer who once coached nine-time world champion Kelly Slater, putting the novice surfers in excellent hands.

Special Olympics is invaluable because it helps those with special needs develop an active and well-rounded life, and surfing is a sport they can enjoy for many years.

Organizers hope it becomes as much a part of Special Olympic as swimming and track and field.

So do we, believing it deserves approval. Kudos to everyone who's making it happen.

- Change is afoot at the historic Cocoa Village Playhouse, where the city may take over operations from Brevard Community College under the school's shake-up of its control of cultural institutions. The playhouse has been a landmark since it opened in 1924, with silent films and vaudeville acts. More recently, it has become a centerpiece for the arts in Cocoa Village. Finding the money won't be easy with Cocoa facing budget problems caused by the recession. But negotiators should seek creative funding solutions to determine if it can work. The playhouse costs about \$263,000 annually to operate and

needs \$450,000 in improvements — a lot of cash in austere times. But it's important to remember it has a positive economic impact to surrounding restaurants, bars and shops and its productions are popular with audiences. Any funding plan should pass rigorous review to make sure it would work for the long run. But where there's a will, there should be a way. The playhouse is too much of a gem to see shuttered.

- While we're on the subject of historic buildings that can boost the economy, here's another: The abandoned century-old train station in downtown Titusville. In a smart move, the City Council is supporting a plan to refurbish and reopen the station should Amtrak passenger service between Miami and Jacksonville — with three stops in Brevard — resume in 2013. The location could draw visitors to the surrounding business district and the Indian River Lagoon and Canaveral National Seashore, which the city is marketing as part of its ramped-up ecotourism plan. As Titusville searches for ways to rebound from the post-shuttle layoffs, Amtrak service and the downtown station could be one small piece of a big, complex puzzle.

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Mom Dilemma #36:
Your daughter insists on wearing her princess costume to the grocery store. Allow it or not?

YES, at least she's dressed!

NO, I have some rules!

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