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VETERAN'S RETURN KEY TO LIGHTNING WIN OVER FLORIDA

Ryan Callahan wasn't even supposed to be in the lineup, but an injury to Ondrej Palat gave him the chance to return. He capitalized with a goal Sunday in a 5-2 win over the Panthers. **Sports, 1C**

Bulls rally for 72-68 victory

The USF Bulls men's basketball team is on its first five-game winning streak in conference play since 1992, overcoming a 13-point deficit at the half to East Carolina. **Sports, 1C**

Would-be mayors address climate

The seven candidates running for Tampa mayor have a variety of answers on how to address climate change. **Local, 1B**

Couple transform historic home

A couple has restored the 1925 plantation-style home of Judge Leo Stalaker Sr. in Ybor City. The home features windows, columns and stairs that the judge salvaged from the original Hillsborough County Courthouse. "We call this the Rainbow Plantation," one owner says. **Local, 1B**

Banks' merger leads to questions

Both SunTrust and BB&T have supported Tampa Bay area economic development organizations, so how will the banks' merger affect that support? The banks haven't said, and nonprofit leaders say it's too soon to guess. **Local, 1B**

Focus turns to human trafficking

With Tampa set to host the Super Bowl in 2021, Tampa Bay officials have started to focus on how the game exacerbates trafficking. **Ernest Hooper column, 1B**

A police, church balance

A TV series shines a spotlight on the relationship between Scientology and the Clearwater police.



Actor Leah Remini has been critical of Clearwater police.

BY TRACEY MCMANUS
Times Staff Writer

CLEARWATER — The social media comments started a few weeks ago, then only intensified, devolving into what police Chief Dan Slaughter called a "public relations nightmare."

Following two January episodes of the Emmy award-winning *Leah Remini: Scientology and the Aftermath* A&E series that focused on Clearwater history, suspicion on Facebook and Twitter rained down on Slaughter's department and its

interaction with the Church of Scientology.

Critics attacked the fact that Scientology can hire off-duty officers for security like any other local church when it is the only one with a documented policy for destroying enemies' lives. They also criticized Slaughter's cordial public interaction with an organization investigated, though not charged, by the FBI in 2009 in connection with human trafficking.

The attacks prompted Slaughter to take
» See **POLICE, 5A**



Clearwater police Chief Dan Slaughter says he has to treat Scientology as he would any tax-exempt religious group. **DOUGLAS R. CLIFFORD | Times**

MAKE OR BREAK



CHRIS URSO | Times

The University of South Florida board of trustees will decide if the St. Petersburg campus, above, and the Sarasota-Manatee campus will be treated as "branch" campuses with a high degree of autonomy or as "instructional sites."

This week, University of South Florida trustees take over plans for consolidation and the decision on how to treat each campus.

BY MEGAN REEVES
Times Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG — After months of brainstorming, a complex effort to consolidate the University of South Florida system into one university enters a new phase this week.

The USF board of trustees will take the reins of a process that has been under way since the fall as faculty, staff and civic leaders across the three USF campuses hashed out ideas in dozens of meetings. At issue are details large and small, from the inner workings of departments, to campus culture to who will be in charge of what.

That last one will loom large as the trustees begin their work.

Accreditation rules say one site must be designated as the main campus, which many have suggested should be USF



Detractors fear designating the USF St. Petersburg campus as an instructional site with little authority over curriculum will make it difficult to attract top professors.

Tampa. The others can take on one of two titles with vastly different meanings.

If designated as "branch" campuses, USF St. Petersburg and USF Sarasota-Manatee would retain high levels of autonomy. The cam-

pus would keep strong leaders in place who would continue to have discretion over hiring, spending and curriculum, according to accreditation rules.

However, many in the USF community fear the

two smaller campuses could become "instructional sites" instead. That designation, according to leaders at both institutions, would strip them of the independence that has helped them thrive.

While a decision on USF's structure won't be final until March 2020, when trustees submit a plan to the region's accreditation agency, conversations on the topic could begin any time, according to USF spokesman Adam Freeman.

They'll be guided by a series of recommendations from multiple groups: A 13-member task force, an 86-member committee and most recently, teams of faculty members across the three campuses who finished their work on Friday.

Some of the efforts were guided by Huron, a consulting company that submitted a report to trustees in December.
» See **DECISION, 6A**

Scooters starting to zip our way

Tampa is launching a pilot program, while St. Petersburg waits for state to set rules.

BY CAITLIN JOHNSTON
Times staff writer

TAMPA — Tampa Bay so far has dodged one of the biggest crazes to sweep the nation in the past year. But it won't be long before electric scooters are here, too, zipping people across town and potentially changing how they think about transportation.

Electric, dockless scooters invaded dozens of cities in 2018 — sometimes overnight and with little-to-no warning.

They quickly elicited strong reactions. Some praised the shareable scooters as the perfect option for trips that are too far to comfortably walk, but too short to merit driving. Others deemed them a fad, a nuisance at best and a safety threat at worst.

But while other cities have spent much of 2018 determining if and how to allow scooters into their downtowns, much of Florida has stayed out of the mix. That's because many local governments interpreted current Florida law as prohibiting companies like Lime and Bird from entering their markets unless an ordinance exists.

Fort Lauderdale is the only Florida city to fully embrace scooters so far. A pilot program is underway in Coral Gables and Miami is planning one.

Tampa Bay could see its first electric scooters in April when Tampa launches its pilot program. The city will dispatch as many as 1,800 scooters in a 12-square-mile area around downtown and south of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

Hillsborough County is researching a potential pilot, but
» See **SCOOTERS, 13A**



Tampa officials are working on a pilot program for motorized scooters like this one being ridden in San Francisco. **Associated Press**

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Did you hear that?

Catch up on the latest from Tallahassee, Washington and beyond with an inside look at politics at tampabay.com/buzz.

TODAY'S WEATHER

Partly cloudy

8 a.m. 63° Noon 79° 4 p.m. 79° 8 p.m. 74°

10% chance of rain
More, back page of Sports

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Tampa mom Diana Blinkhorn cleans out her bedroom closet, Marie Kondo-style. It was the second time in three years she's decluttered. **JOHN PENDYGRAFT | Times**

Cutting clutter to free up space, minds

A bestselling book and hit Netflix series are leading to tidier closets.

BY LANE DEGREGORY
Times Staff Writer

She opened the closet in her upstairs bedroom and stood, hands on hips, surveying her clothes.

On the left, dozens of dresses she'd worn over the last decade. On the right, a row of blouses, another rod filled with skirts and slacks. Shoes in the center. Plus, a pile of purses.

Diana Blinkhorn took a deep breath, then pulled everything out and threw it on her bed.

Just like Marie Kondo says. "I did it three years ago, after a friend gave me her book," said Blinkhorn, a Tampa mom who writes a blog and home schools her three young daughters. "But I just can't keep up with all our stuff. The new Netflix show inspired me to go around again." So on a recent weekday, while her husband was at work and her parents were downstairs watching her girls, Blinkhorn started sorting.

"This time," she said, "I'm going full-blown KonMari."

Marie Kondo's bestselling book, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, encourages people to go through their possessions and discard everything that doesn't "spark joy." She wrote in her native Japanese, and it was translated to English in 2014. Since then, it's been published in 30 countries.

In January, Netflix debuted a series starring Kondo who, through a translator, helps families control their clutter.
» See **CLUTTER, 11A**

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