

Animal Services Wins Outstanding Agency of the Year Award

Pinellas County Animal Services was recently selected as the *Outstanding Agency of the Year for 2014* by the Florida Animal Control Association at their 2015 conference. In addition, **Jodey Stambaugh** was honored with the *Animal Control Officer of the Year* award. The [Florida Animal Control Association](http://www.faca.org) was established in 1984 to improve the methods and standards of the animal control and protection profession while informing the public of the importance of work performed by these professionals.

"We are extremely proud of these awards," said Maureen "Moe" Freaney, director of Pinellas County Animal Services. "These are great accomplishments for our team and for Pinellas County." The award application detailed Animal Services' caring staff, equipment improvements and increased live release rate.

Last year, staff at Animal Services cared for approximately 13,000 dogs and cats and handled over 130,000 telephone calls. In addition to the busy Adoption Center, staff worked hard to reunite citizens with their

pets, promoted public education on responsible pet ownership, performed surgical procedures, and investigated complaints. Over the last two years, Animal Services has increased adoptions by 16% and boosted the live release rate for dogs by 10% and cats by 11% (i.e., animals were returned to the owner or adopted by a new owner). In order to find homes for homeless dogs and cats, staff worked with a network of partners including over 70 approved rescue organizations and 11 local pet stores. A variety of adoption events were held in 2014 including Yappy Days Are Here Again, Freedom Paws (July 4) and 12 Paws of Christmas. All of this was made possible by a great team of employees.

Animal Services' current initiatives include offering affordable spaying and neutering for dogs and cats belonging to low-income residents; replacing the vehicle fleet which has been in use for ten years; and purchasing a climate-controlled animal transport trailer for adoption events.

Award winner **Jodey Stambaugh** has been an Animal Control Officer with

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Pinellas County Animal Services for ten years. She saw a need for a compassionate proactive program to help families with pets in lower-income neighborhoods of St. Petersburg. She developed the Pinellas County Animal Services Community Outreach Program which uses grant monies to purchase dog houses and proper tethering equipment.

Please join us in congratulating the Pinellas County Animal Services team on a job well done!



Back row: Animal Control Officer Alaina Bible, Animal Care Assistant Sr. Collis McKenzie, Animal Control Officers Gary Brown, Jodey Stambaugh and Deborah Riehle. Front row: Animal Services Director Maureen "Moe" Freaney, Animal Control Assistant Glen Griffith and Enforcement Manager Doug Brightwell.

President of Florida Animal Control Association
Paul Studivant with
Animal Control Officer
Jodey Stambaugh.



Employee Spotlight

Gwen Brooks

Property Records Supervisor
Property Appraiser's Office
St. Petersburg



What is your job?

I assist internal and external customers with information pertaining to the value roll system for taxation purposes. These tasks involve answering questions about exemptions, just market value/assessed value, taxes, portability, save our home, and property characteristics. It includes

having a vast knowledge of departmental operations for county, municipal, state, and federal departments. I also order office supplies and distribute mail to other departments and provide assistance with operating office equipment. In addition, I do whatever is needed to help my co-workers and directors.

How has the County helped in your career development?

I am grateful for the Pinellas County Tuition Reimbursement Program that helped me earn an Associate of Arts Degree and a Bachelor of Applied Science Degree while being employed here and being a full-time single parent. In addition, I graduated from the Succession Management Program and Career Development Program that teaches you how to be an effective leader for Pinellas County Government.

What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most? Why?

I enjoy all parts of my job especially assisting taxpayers and others with exemption, explaining value processes, and training others. It makes me happy to be of service to someone else and brighten their day.

Who has been a mentor for you here at the County? How have they helped you?

Joan Read, my mentor, is an inspiration. She encourages me to continue my education, and to be innovative in my career. She provides guidance for improving my capabilities and skills to enhance my career with Pinellas County Government.

What piece of advice would you give to a new employee?

Take the county consortium classes and participate in the career development programs that are offered through the Pinellas County Human Resources Department. Every day try to learn something new and be a helpmate to others.

The Employee Spotlight is a new feature focusing on you. If you would like to nominate a fellow employee, please send his or her name, position, and why you are nominating them to employee.communications@pinellascounty.org.

OurSpace

Don't forget to check the employee blog – **Our Space** – regularly.

Bookmark it. There is news every day!

YOU can post to the blog. It's easier than you might think – give it a try! Share your photos, celebrations, upcoming events and check for the latest news from the County.

If you have questions, please contact Mary Sault at 464-5098 or employee.communications@pinellascounty.org.

The Pen

PUBLISHER: Peggy Rowe

EDITOR: Laura Berkowitz

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Mary L. Sault

A monthly publication by the
Pinellas County Human Resources Department

How to Participate:

It's easy to get involved in *The Pen*. You can contribute by informing us of noteworthy news or sending us story ideas.

You can also ask about writing a guest column or submit photos of co-workers at work in your department.

PHONE: (727) 464-5098

FAX: (727) 453-3660

E-mail: employee.communications@pinellascounty.org

REPCO News

REPCO's April meeting will be held at 12:00 noon on April 13 at Applebee's, 5110 East Bay Drive, Clearwater. The speaker will be elder law attorney Sean W. Scott and he is going to explain how to protect our assets. For more information contact Rudy at (813) 855-3466 or rdgarcia@verizon.net.

You don't have to be a Pinellas County retiree to attend. Current employees and family members are also welcome.



BLOOD DRIVE

**Every donor is
three more lives
saved!**

Mark Your Calendars

Public Works ERB

22211 US Hwy 19 N

Clearwater

Thursday, March 26, 2015
2:30 - 4:45 p.m.

Clearwater Courthouse

315 Court Street
West Parking Lot

Thursday, April 2, 2015
10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

ASK PEGGY



Peggy Rowe
Director of Human Resources

Q. In the past, HR sent a link to the weekly job postings but I haven't seen one in many months. I'm guessing it stopped due to the implementation of Taleo and the fact you can set up job alerts?

A. You are correct. The new Taleo Applicant Tracking system is a real-time process and constantly changing. Employment and promotional opportunities are posted and removed anytime during the week.

Anyone can subscribe to [Job Alerts](#) or the [RSS Feed](#). Job alerts notify those interested by sending them an email. The RSS Feed enables subscribers to receive

web-based information in your web browser, which is like a bookmark that updates itself. Also current recruitments are always posted to the HR website at www.pinellascounty.org/hr/jobs.

Q. I recently had a life event for the birth of my daughter and wanted to update my election. In OPUS, it doesn't have the capability to do so. What documentation will be needed to make the election, and how do I do it?

A. Congratulations! You may add your daughter to your medical and dental insurance as well as dependent life and health and dependent care flexible spending accounts within 60 days of her birth. You need to send her name, birth date and the coverage you'd like to employee.benefits@pinellascounty.org. When you receive her birth certificate and social security number, please send Employee Benefits copies of those as well.

You can always email us or call the Employee Benefits office at 464-4570 whenever you have questions.

FACE

FACE of Performance:

Tips

Looking for some support for your ongoing FACE conversations? We have a resource for you: [FACE of Performance: Training Courses for Employees](#).

This resource lists current courses that support the components of the FACE model. Want to improve the conversations about your professional growth? Need to better understand the expectations being set for you? Need to improve your ability to receive feedback?

Review the courses and select what is right for you. Then, sign-up through [OPUS Learning Management](#).

Additional resources available on the FACE website include FAQs, login tips, help guides and video tutorials. Visit www.pinellascounty.org/hr/face.

Benefits U

Planning for the Unexpected

Maybe you're the person who always has a plan. Or do you live in the moment? Probably you're somewhere in between. Regardless of how you like to look at life, one thing is certain: you should be prepared for the unexpected.

As members of the Unified Personnel System, we have coverage for which we designate beneficiaries. This includes basic life insurance, the Florida Retirement System (FRS), perhaps supplemental coverage, the Wrap Plan, and deferred compensation. You may also have coverage outside of your employment.

It is a good practice to regularly review your beneficiaries and update as necessary:

- Update your group life insurance beneficiary through OPUS.
- Contact our deferred compensation provider directly to update your 457 account.
- Call the FRS Financial Guidance Line at (866) 446-9377 to inquire about your beneficiary.

If you would like an in-person presentation at a staff meeting with a focus on planning for the unexpected, please contact Employee Benefits at 464-4570 or employee.benefits@pinellascounty.org.

Training & Development - Upcoming Classes

Some classes fill up quickly so request enrollment early through [OPUS Learning Management](#) (OLM).

Effective Listening - 4/16

This workshop provides a valuable tool in better communication techniques - the ability to listen more effectively. Learn to identify barriers to good listening skills: look beyond the words we hear to the meaning behind them and practice active listening skills.

Passport to Retirement -

4/30, 5/7, 5/14 (6 hours total)

This 3-night seminar, offered outside of official work time, will introduce you to the concepts and practices that will help make your retirement more comfortable. You will develop a written summary of your assets, income, social security and pension benefits, as well as *The Passport to Retirement* workbook. There will also be an optional, no obligation retirement planning consultation with the instructor after the class is completed.

Time Management - 4/21

Most people think they are efficient. But unless they know how to manage their time, it's unlikely they will ever be fully effective. Poor time management can also have an effect on their colleagues or the team they work with. Start the day correctly in order to be more productive and learn to prioritize tasks. Identify "time robbers" and build the right defenses against them.

A Leader's Guide to Delegating - 4/23

Shared trust is a simple but central aspect of delegation. But when delegating a task, trust typically suffers or flourishes based on the skills of the person doing the delegating. This program can fill the gap many managers feel when it comes to delegation by presenting a simple but thorough 5-step process that will achieve success for the manager, the delegate, and the organization.

The class titles provide a direct link to the course in OPUS; you will need to log in if you are not currently using OPUS. Users without OPUS access may register through their training coordinator.

To view a complete list of all courses, along with descriptions, go to the [Consortium Training Catalog](#). Need assistance? Contact Training and Development at 464-3796 or email them at training@pinellascounty.org.

Training
Catalog

The Pen



BREAKFAST BYTES

The Breakfast Bytes series presented by Business Technology Services (BTS) in partnership with Human

Resources is almost over; only one session remains. The series is focused on enhancing user productivity through the use of technology. Each session is one hour long from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

There has been an overwhelmingly positive response to these sessions and BTS is looking at "taking them on the road" to other locations around the county as well as offering these and other topics during Lunch 'n' Learns.

Documentation regarding each session and other technical training resources can be found on the BTS Enterprise Technical Training SharePoint site. Additional Instructor-Led courses offered by the [BTS Technical Training team](#) may be found in OPUS.

Contact the series facilitators for additional information:

Kat Black – kblack@pinellascounty.org

Kevin Connelly – kconnelly@pinellascounty.org

UPCOMING SESSION:

- Tuesday, March 24
GCF Learn Free:
Supplemental Self-Paced
Online Tutorials



PARTICIPANT REACTIONS:

"The instructors made it look easy to do, but none of us could have guessed at all of the shortcuts they did."

"This information will save time."

"Any time I can come away from a class learning at least one new tip it was worth my time and effort to attend."

"Class was very well put together for only being one hour long."

SERVICE ANNIVERSARIES

35 YEARS



John Cueva
Planning Department

25 YEARS



Mary Evans, *Business Technology Services*
Lynn Lemonias, *Clerk of the Circuit Court*
Sandra McDonald-Claude, *Office of Engineering & Technical Support*

25 YEARS



Carol Purchell
Building Services

Unavailable for Photo

30 YEARS

Lucretia Long, *Clerk of the Circuit Court*

25 YEARS

Dondi Irish, *Clerk of the Circuit Court*

Beverly Lunan-Thomas, *Clerk of the Circuit Court*

David Slonena, *Office of Engineering & Technical Support*

Lora Strong, *Building Services*

20 YEARS

Carolyn Johnson, *Utilities*

Vincent Lester, *Public Works*

15 YEARS (February and March)

Phyllis Austin-Archie.....Property Appraiser's Office
Jeff Clauss.....Airport
Jeffrey Closterman..... Public Works Department
Dennis Dimovski Clerk of the Circuit Court
Barbara Fogel..... Utilities
Jolanda Jordan Utilities
Gilda Kelly Tax Collector's Office
Cecilia May..... Tax Collector's Office
Donna Miller Building Services
Thomas Murray Engineering & Technical Support
Andrew PupkeReal Estate Management
Gracine Reed.....Property Appraiser's Office
Gabriel Rodriguez..... Public Works
Cynthia Watkins..... Planning Department
Shirley Zeller..... Office of Engineering & Technical Support

10 YEARS (February and March)

Pamala Baker.....Clerk of the Circuit Court
Linda Benoit..... Office of Management & Budget
Lenora CollinsTax Collector's Office
Larry ElliottClerk of the Circuit Court

Pamela Grabo Risk Management
Charlene Johnson.....Clerk of the Circuit Court
Wendy Knott-Comer Utilities
Candis Mancuso..... Purchasing
Felix Montalvo..... Utilities
Curtis Nielsen Property Appraiser's Office
Jeffrey Rohrs..... Business Technology Services
Cheryl Skantze Utilities
Wendy Tate-PalumboAnimal Services
Jianguo Wang..... Business Technology Services
Norris Watson..... Utilities
Cindy Whittenberger.....Clerk of the Circuit Court
John Wood..... Utilities

5 YEARS (February and March)

Monty Armstrong Utilities
Scott Butler Business Technology Services
Eileen Conway..... Regional 911
Jennifer Gibbs.....Tax Collector's Office
David Mangicaro Risk Management

Promotions

Promotions listed are for February 2015.

Board of County Commissioners

Ambulance Billing & Finance Services

Dawn Barclay..... Medical Bln Spec
Pamela Bell..... Amb Bln Mgr
Deborah Peters..... Medical Bln Spec

Building Services

Bradley Lawson..... Elect Insp 2

Planning

Glenn Bailey..... Zoning Mgr

Risk Management

David Mangicaro..... Risk Mgmt Safety Supv

Solid Waste

Bill Embree..... Sect Mgr 2

Utilities

Jim Dulaney..... Sect Mgr 3
Terry George..... Wk Plng Coord
Christina Goodrich..... Wstwtr Treatmt Mgr
Megan Ross..... Wstwtr Treatmt Mgr

Clerk of the Circuit Court

Lynn Abbott..... Board Reporter
Angela Ervin-Williams..... Crt Rec Spec Sr
Ashley Skubal..... Crt Rec Spec 2

Tax Collector's Office

Elizabeth Bemis..... Cust Svc Tech 2
Stephanie Bennett..... Tax Spec Sr
Brittany Campbell..... Cust Svc Tech 2
Kelsey Lowe..... Cust Svc Tech 2
Rae Sievers..... Cust Svc Tech 2

RETIREMENTS

43 YEARS



Charles Gibson
Section Manager 2
Environment & Infrastructure

35 YEARS



Peter Hessling
Environmental Division Manager
Air Quality

OVER 29 YEARS



Richard Koontz
Airport Firefighter
Airport

OVER 9 YEARS



Calvin Morton
Scalehouse Services Spec
Solid Waste

UNAVAILABLE FOR PHOTO

32 YEARS Thomas Maher, *Spray Technician Sr, Public Works*

Wellness Update

The new 2015 Wellness Incentive Program details are now available. Chart your course for improved health and earn up to 200 points or \$200 with the [Wellness Incentive Program](#).



In case you missed it!

In March's [To Your Health](#) newsletter, you will find links to *Wellness in the Community* resources, the March class schedule at the Clearwater campus, info on local Farmers Markets, an invitation to register for the May 2 *Spring Scramble Golf Tournament*, and more.

The topic of the March [Management & Supervisory Notes](#) is too intriguing to ignore: "Getting Your Mojo Back."

Congratulations to All of the AchieveGlobal® Participants!

Since August 2013, supervisors and managers have been engaged in the *AchieveGlobal® Leadership Development Program*, to learn and apply



a common approach to effective leadership that fosters respectful and productive communication among team members. These

County leaders have learned about *Coaching Others for Top Performance*, *Reaching for Stellar Service*, *Accelerating Team Productivity*, and *Problem-Solving Results: Solutions, Improvements and Innovations*. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes learned and reinforced during this training is on par with leadership standards worldwide.

In partnership with the County Administrator and other Appointing Authorities, the program has been coordinated by Human Resources. We all congratulate the **174 employees** who completed the program in February 2015. The participants have invested a lot of time, effort and dedication to their growth and development. Please join us in congratulating the following individuals in this major accomplishment!

Michael Agliano
Ruth Alber
Misael Munoz Alers
Tammy Allen
Leroy Anderson
Otha Armstrong Jr
Juan Arosemena
Brian Athans
Katherine Baird-Adams
Sue Ball
Aaron Bellinger
Randy Bellomo
Linda Benoit
Samuel Benton
Paul Berlage
Gina Berutti
Sharon Biemiller
Barbara Born
Joseph Borries
Nicole Boucher
Robert Boyd
Douglas Brightwell
Keith Brosseau
Mary Buccigrossi
James Butts
James Cannon
Patricia Cannon
Karen Cervone-Nitz
Bruce Cherkas
Larry Childs
Kimberley Circello
Katherine Cleary
Jeffrey Closterman
Richard Coates III
Scott Coulter
Sherrill Culliver
Robert Curtis
Harold Davis
Ivanetta Dorsey
Peter Duff

Glenn Dulmes
Glen-Paul Edson
Catherine Eichner
Brenda Ellers
William Embree
Michael Engelmann
Willie Faison
Eric Fehrmann
Ron Ferris
Mark Flock
Pamela Frazier
William Froberg
Malinda Fusco
Dean Galate
Andrea Gammon
Debra Gerdes
Jeffrey Gibbud
Richard Gildea
Christina Goodrich
Bill Gorman
Carol Gray
Laurie Griffith
Christopher Griggs
Edwin Guasp-Santos
Herbert Gunthner III
Rahim Harji
Timothy Hellijas
Cassandra Helm
Karen Heyse
Pennie Hill
Charles Hoffman
James Holbrook
Raina Holliday
Damon Hostetler
Michael Huskey
Michael Iguina
David Jackson
Isaiah Jackson
Kelvin Jackson
Debra Jaramillo
Nan Jensen
Norman Jester
Joel Johnson
Rufus Jones
Joanne Kerouac
Harold Kiehl
Raymond Kosach
Yuan-Chen Kung
William Laird
Dana Land
Stephanie Lauster
John Leahy III
John Linton
Wayne Longhurst
David Lyle
Ramona Madhosingh-Hector
Sarah Malone
David Mangicaro
Charles Mangio
James Marsh
Lindsey Marshall
Henry Martin
John Martinotti
Ryan McCabe
Matthew McCarthy
James McClendon
Sandra McDonald-Claude

James McGill
Wesley Merritt
Allan Miller
John Milvid
Carla Mitchell
Anderson Mitchell
James Monroe
Felix Montalvo
Ronald Moretuzzo
Jane Morse
Susie Morse
Brian Mowry
Christopher Muhrlin
S. Jane Muhrlin
Carlos Negron
Gary Nelson
Joseph Niski
John Ondrovic
Mark Oswald
Johnny Parker
Kevin Pedicord
Vance Perkey
Nathan Philipson
Shannon Ransom
Deborah Reed
Larry Resovsky
Charles Richards
Maria Riley
Anamarie Rivera
Angel Roldan
Donald Ross
Benton Rothermel
Gwendolyn Roundtree
Denise Rucker
Daryl Russ
Sandra Sandmeyer
Jose Santana Jr
Glenn Schmidt Jr
Kimberly Schrott
Robert Schulze
Dorothy Simpkins
James Skinner
David Slonena
Lynn A. Smith
Richard Soderlund
Timothy Stevenson
Jason Stuck
Robert Taylor
Vicki Taylor
Travis Topa
Jacqueline Trainer
Georgienne Trauscht
Errol Turner
Michael Van Schoonhoven
Bobby Voss
David Walker Jr
Malcolm Walker
Tiana Walker
Jackie Waller
Matthew Weaver
Elena Weeks
Ginger White
Dale Williams
Don Wilson
Thomas Wright
Gary Yeargans
Gregory Zellers

the
Colors
of PINELLAS

THE
National
ARTS
PROGRAM®
For the encouragement and development of artistic talents

Registration is now open! Click [HERE](#) to enter your works of art in the *2015 Colors of Pinellas Art Show*. The juried art show is open to Pinellas County employees, their immediate family members, retirees, and active volunteers.

Here are the important dates:

May 29	Registration Deadline
June 12	Artwork Drop-off Day
June 18	Artwork Judging
June 29	Awards Ceremony
June 29-July 28	Artwork Exhibition Dates

Welcome Aboard!

Board of County Commissioners

Airport

Drew Jester Trades/Fld Svcs Wkr
Mark Sprague Airpt Oper Mgr

Animal Services

Season Groves Ani Svcs Prog Coord

Building Services

Jeffrey Bews Bldg Insp 1

Development Review Services

David Smith Eng Spec 3

Emergency Management

Gregory Becker Emerg Mgmt Coord

Engineering & Technical Support

Annissa Kwaak Office Spec Sr
Charles Slaughter Fld Insp 1

Parks & Conservation Resources

Ronald Curtis Spray Tech
David Harshbarger Park/Preserve Maint Wkr

Planning

Scott Swearingen Principal Plan

Public Works

Vincent Jones Traf Sig Tech

Regional 911

Tracy Boone Law Enf Telecomm
Gregory Brummett Law Enf Telecomm
Shannon Tanguay Law Enf Telecomm
Doneshia Weaver Law Enf Telecomm
Aaron Wrona Law Enf Telecomm

Real Estate Management

Mitchell Gryboski Craftwkr 3

Utilities

Malcolm Seaman Meter Rdr

Clerk of the Circuit Court

Katherine Gaines Fis Rec Spec
Anne Kaczmarek Crt Rec Spec 1
Esther Kennedy Crt Rec Spec 1
Charles McDavid Crt Clk
Sheryl Powell Crt Rec Spec 1
Amanda Shields Fis Rec Spec
Pam Ulrich Fis Rec Spec

Property Appraiser's Office

Jay Allen PAO Appraiser 1
Carlos Ayala PAO Rcds Asst
David Henderson PAO Appraiser 1
Kathy Hollis PAO Appraiser 1
Krista Spaccarelli Prop Rcd Asst

Planning Council

Tina Jablon Admin Sec

Tax Collector's Office

Nicole Ingram Cust Svc Tech 1
David McCraney Cust Svc Tech 1



New employee orientation class on February 9, 2015.

Graduate Certificate in Public Management (GCPM) program completed

In 2013, Pinellas County partnered with the University of South Florida (USF) to offer an on-site graduate certificate program in Public Management. Nearly 20 employees participated and have recently completed their studies. Here are excerpts from a letter written about the class.

In the summer of 2013, the University of South Florida's School of Public Affairs began to offer courses for the Graduate Certificate in Public Management (GCPM) for Pinellas County employees on the Clearwater campus.

I had the privilege of being the instructor for two of the courses. I enjoyed having so many motivated and talented students in the class. I may have more knowledge about public administration and leadership theories, but it was the students who put perspective and daily input into practice.

We had engaging class discussions. Pinellas County has many creative and innovative employees. They have many outstanding ideas for improving service delivery and employee morale.

As a professor of Public Administration, which makes me a natural advocate for the public sector, the opportunity to meet and interact with so many innovative and committed public servants affirmed my belief that government organizations are full of talented and committed employees.

Please extend my congratulations to the participating class!

Joan E. Pynes, Ph.D.
Professor, Public Administration
USF School of Public Affairs

Catherine Bailey Noble
Merry Celeste
Stephen Davis-Thompson
Nancy Sherman
Darin Johnson
Charles Miyawa
Jennifer Obermaier

Sarah Pemberton
Andrew Pupke
Carol Purchell
LeeAnn Smedley
Margaret Templeton
Eric Wanibeck
Matthew Wotowiec



Create Sustainable Solutions

Vision • Innovation • Collaboration

What are the **nine principles** of Florida Friendly Landscapes?

Floridify Your Yard
Five Easy Way to be Floridian

Facebook page:
www.facebook.com/PinellasFFL



Want more information?

April is Water Conservation Month
• **Upcoming classes**

Meet Your
Extension Agent
Brian Neimann,
Florida Friendly
Landscaping™
Programs



UF | IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

FROM THE RECORD KEEPER



What is an RMID?

A Records Management Identification Number, or RMID number, is a unique number that is assigned to each department that stores records in the Records Center. RMIDs help us locate and track your records from the moment you submit a new box storage request, when you request a file or box retrieval, and when a record is sent back to us for re-filing. Once records go through the destruction process, we can still see all the details.

If you have any questions about or need additional information, please contact Michele Koehler in Records & Information Management at (727) 453-3038.

Consumer Corner

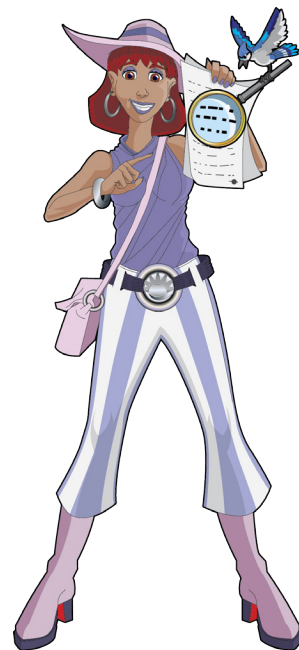
Springtime is approaching and that means time for home improvements. Whether you're planning a room addition or just some much needed repairs, finding a reliable contractor is important. A home improvement project gone wrong can cost you.

First, verify that the contractor is properly licensed with Pinellas County Construction Licensing Board (PCCLB) and check out the complaint history of the business with the Office of Consumer Protection.

Next, obtain several written estimates and compare the estimates before selecting a contractor. Remember, the lowest bidder may not be the best choice. Ask friends and family for recommendations.

Once you choose a contractor, the contractor should pull any required permits. Make sure to stick to your payment schedule and don't make the final payment until all the work and inspections are completed. Be sure the contractor provides you with a release of lien with each payment and a Contractor's Affidavit at the end of the job.

For more home improvement information or to file a complaint, contact Pinellas County Consumer Protection at (727) 464-6200 or visit www.pinellascounty.org/consumer/tips.htm.



PET OF THE MONTH



Tiffany's dream forever home would include a fenced yard. She loves to retrieve the tennis ball and has lots of energy. She is 2 years old and weighs 50 lbs.

Check out Pinellas County Animal Services for specials during the month of March. All of the pets offered for adoption at Animal Services are spayed or neutered and have all of their required shots. Visit Tiffany and the other dogs and cats up for adoption at 12450 Ulmerton Road in Largo, or see them online at www.pinellascounty.org/animalservices/petfind.htm. To learn more about Animal Services, stop by the shelter, call (727) 582-2600 or visit www.pinellascounty.org/animalservices.