



DAVID MORRIS

Reuse power you've already paid for?

I am asking for any assistance you can provide to determine whether an energy saving device which I saw advertised really works. I also saw two different vendors selling them at the Home Show at the Events Center in Punta Gorda. They all claim that this device can result in up to 25 percent savings on your electric bills. Needless to say, this is a very enticing idea, particularly now when everyone is looking to cut back in any way possible. My basic questions are:

"Do they really work?"
 "Are they legal?"
 "Does FPL approve/endorse these devices? Thank you, Janice Urbanek, Lake Suzy."
 Janice,
 Your answers:
 With no scientific data, reluctant to say categorically that they don't.
 Yes.
 No.

"The last time I heard the word 'capacitor' was the flux capacitor device that Doc Brown put on a DeLorean to create the 1.21 gigawatts of power needed to make time travel possible in 'Back to the Future.'"

Although I barely passed high school physics, I've read that capacitors can temporarily store an electrical charge. If you've ever changed batteries in an electronic device, there's probably a capacitor that's maintaining a temporary power supply.

Capacitors are at the heart of this small "power factor correction device" or "KVAR" that's installed in your breaker box — for approximately \$500 — and reportedly "reclaims, stores and recycles otherwise lost power." "A small capacitor would help offset the motor loads in the home," explains Florida-licensed electrical contractor Milner Irvin. "However, there has not been total agreement among electrical engineers as to the advantage of doing this. I would be reluctant to say categorically that the device won't work, but would certainly question the results." The past president of the National Electrical Contractors Association concluded, "I would not spend my money to correct the power factor at my house."

"We have not seen any data that proves these types of products for residential use accomplish what they claim," confirms Energy Star, a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy. "Power factor correction devices do not generally improve energy efficiency, meaning they won't reduce your energy bill." (For the full discussion, go to <http://tinyurl.com/cr5ncx>.)

When I contacted one of the companies in Florida selling a KVAR device, I got both personal and third-party testimonials but no hard scientific data.

"KVAR devices do not affect or change the 'real energy' consumption in an inductive load," explained Florida Power and Light's Mayco Villafana. Inductive loads are typically found in motors such as those in pool pumps, air conditioners or refrigerators. FPL bills its customers on a kWh basis or "real energy" basis.

"In addition, these devices do not help reduce energy consumption for resistive loads such as toaster ovens, incandescent bulbs or stove tops," said Villafana. "Based on the additional cost of these devices, the reduction of energy consumption will not be enough to provide appreciable billing

Rare turtle washes ashore

Endangered Kemp's Ridley nests on Casey Key

By **DANA SANCHEZ**
 ASSISTANT ENGLEWOOD EDITOR

Vacationers and tourism workers watched, enthralled, as a rare Kemp's Ridley sea turtle crawled onto Casey Key Beach before the official start of turtle season and laid a clutch of eggs.

The nest is just the third Kemp's Ridley ever verified on Sarasota County beaches, according to the Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota. Two other nests were found there in 1999.

None have ever been recorded on Charlotte County beaches, according to Wilma Katz, vice president of Coastal Wildlife Club.

"They are critically endangered," said Tony Tucker, manager of Mote's Sea Turtle Conservation program.

Visiting from Oviedo, Fla., Alyson McCoy grabbed her camera when she saw the turtle emerge from the Gulf on April 25. Her images later verified for Mote officials that the turtle was indeed a rare



PHOTO PROVIDED BY ALYSON MCCOY

An endangered Kemp's Ridley sea turtle comes ashore to nest on Casey Key in south Sarasota County before the official start of the nesting season. Vacationer Alyson McCoy's photo helped Mote Marine officials identify it. Only three Kemp's Ridley nests have been verified on Sarasota beaches since 1999.

"They're small and scrappy, kind of like the Chihuahua of turtles. They've got a real attitude. They'll try to bite you."

— **Jeff Schmid**,
 Conservancy of Southwest Florida

Kemp's Ridley.
 "My husband dives for sharks teeth and I was sitting on the beach watching his

diving flag and up she comes," McCoy said. "At first I thought it was a kid's toy or a float."
 The smallest of the world's

seven sea turtle species, they are the only ones that nest in daylight. They are flatter, grayer and about a foot smaller than the more common loggerheads.

They almost disappeared due to drowning in shrimp trawlers and a mistaken belief in some Latin countries that the eggs were aphrodisiacs, Tucker said.

Mexican beaches host 99 percent of the world's nesting population, specifically Rancho Nuevo Beach in the Gulf Coast state of Tamaulipas.

Padre Island in Texas also sees some Kemp's Ridley nests each year. Efforts to boost the population there may be responsible for the occasional wayward ones showing up on Florida beaches, according to Jeff Schmid, research manager at the Conservancy of Southwest Florida in Naples.

A film made in the 1940s records an estimated 40,000

RARE | P6

Training students for tomorrow

By **PAMELA STAIK**
 STAFF WRITER

PORT CHARLOTTE — After working as an administrative assistant in Pennsylvania for six years, 27-year-old Donna Piano knew she was ready for a change.

So ready in fact, that she packed up her things, moved to North Port, and began looking for educational opportunities.

At first, she toyed with the idea of becoming an accountant. But after visiting a program at Manatee Community College, Piano knew it wasn't for her.

"It just didn't feel right," she said.

After doing some research on other schools in the region, Piano landed on the Port Charlotte campus of Southwest Florida College; a private, accredited and nonprofit school located in the Grand Oaks Plaza II at 950 Tamiami Trail.

Not only did the school offer small class sizes, with an institution-wide student-to-teacher ratio of 20:1, but it was close to home and affordable.

"This was the right place for me," said Piano, who is now seeking her associate's in health information technology.



SUN PHOTO BY PAMELA STAIK, pstaik@sun-herald.com

English professor James Jones reviews the work of Karen Fleishman Thursday at the Port Charlotte campus of Southwest Florida College.

nology. "Everyone is so nice and helpful. The instructors are awesome, and I never have to be afraid to ask questions. I love it here."

She isn't the only one. Since opening in February, the Port Charlotte site has 72 students enrolled in classes, with another 18 set to begin

taking courses at the beginning of a mini-spring term on May 18.

STUDENTS | P6

Wife struggles after husband's life-changing crash

By **ELAINE ALLEN-EMRICH**
 NORTH PORT
 COMMUNITY NEWS EDITOR

As she went around the corner on Oct. 4, Laura Sturgill knew something was terribly wrong.

Glancing in the rearview mirror, she didn't see her husband Shawn, who had been following behind her on his motorcycle after a relaxing day at Manasota Beach.

She pulled over and ran to the curb and saw him lying in the street. She knew instantly that it was bad. Her husband, the father of her son, had lost control of the bike, hit a railroad tie and was thrown more than 15 feet. His skull was fractured and part of his neck and back were broken.

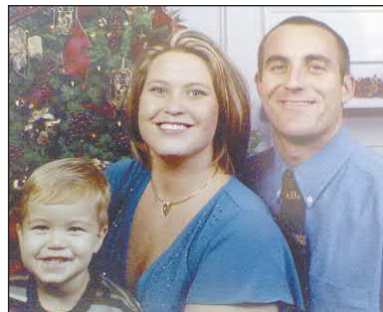
Shawn, 35, was airlifted to Bayfront Medical Center in St. Petersburg. Laura and the couple's little boy, Dylan, now 5, knew life would never be the same.

In an instant, Laura went from being a wife and mother to the head of the household and Shawn's caregiver.

Each day she visited Shawn, who has been in a coma since the accident.

"He's not able to respond," she said. "I think he does know who we are. I can tell. His body language tends to change when he sees us."

After six months of limited progress, Shawn's doctors decided that beginning in April, he could be cared for closer to the couple's Venice



PHOTOS PROVIDED

Shawn Sturgill, his wife, Laura, and son, Dylan, were a happy family before Shawn was in a life-changing motorcycle crash in October.

home. He has now been moved to Harmony House in Sarasota.

As she did when he was in St. Petersburg, Laura visits Shawn every day. She holds his hand and talks to him. She has tried to return to her job as a dental hygienist, but can only work

two days a week. Although Shawn had insurance at his job as a salesman for Omega Garage Doors in Venice, it only paid for a month's worth of intense physical therapy.

CRASH | P6

COMMUNITY NEWS BRIEFS

'Green' builder to speak

The Harbour Heights Civic Association invites the public to hear Bill Truex speak at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the Civic Association building, 2530 Harbour Drive, Harbour Heights. Truex is the president of Truex Preferred Construction, a certified Green professional with the NAHB, and certified through the Florida Green Building Coalition. Bill will discuss ways that every individual can begin turning his home into a more efficient and sustainable building. His discussions will include thermal protection, lighting, appliances, solar water heating, photovoltaic, rain harvesting and much more. For more information, call 941-629-2313.

Investors' seminar offered

Jim Sproul, financial advisor with Edward Jones, will offer a free seminar, "Financial Workshop For Individual Investors," for clear and practical investing. This is a three-part seminar will be held 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Tuesdays, May 12, 19 and 26 at 21234 Olean Blvd., Suite 2A in Central Plaza Port Charlotte. Participants will gain a better understanding of the key principles of saving and investing and learn specific strategies to help reach long term financial goals. The seminar is open to the public and dinner will be served. Seating is limited and reservations are required. To RSVP or for more information, call 941-743-4121.

Church offers grocery relief

Burnt Store Presbyterian Church, 11330 Burnt Store Road, Punta Gorda, with Angel Food Ministry have announced upcoming order dates. There are

no eligibility restrictions to participate in the program. Participants only need to complete an order form and pay by cash, credit card, money order or food stamps by the ordering deadline. Personal checks are not accepted. To obtain a copy of the current menu and order form, visit www.bsponline.org and select the Angel Food icon.

For the May 30 distribution date, orders will be accepted 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. April 25, from 8 a.m. to noon on Sundays April 26, May 3, 10 and 17, and from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. April 27 and 29, May 1, 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, and 15. No orders will be accepted after May 17. Pickup is between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. on May 30. Participants are encouraged to bring a carrying box or ice chest. Any orders not picked up during the designated times will be donated to a needy family. For more information, call 941-639-0001 or e-mail to info83@embarqmail.com.

Key West lunch offered

The Cultural Center of Charlotte County will host a Key West themed luncheon from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday in the Conference Center, 2280 Aaron St., Port Charlotte. The menu will include: tossed salad, tropical fruit salad, conch fritters, conch chowder, Key West chicken, mojo pork, mahi mahi with a mango chutney, black beans, yellow rice, key lime pie, coffee, iced tea and water. Tickets cost \$9 in advance and \$10 at the door per person. Advanced tickets can be purchased at the Information Desk, The Learning Place, the Administration office, and at the Cultural Center Café. Tickets are \$9 in advance and \$10 at the door. For more information, call 941-625-4175.

RARE: Kemp's Ridley turtle nests on Casey Key

FROM PAGE 1

Kemp's turtles nesting in a single day on a Mexican beach. By the time the film was discovered in the 1960s, that number had dwindled to several thousand per year, Schmid said.

When Schmid began studying Kemp's Ridley turtles in 1986, only a few hundred nests were being laid each year.

"They were thought to be headed for extinction," he said.

Since then, the numbers have rebounded to 1960s levels — several thousand nests a year — due to protection efforts by the Mexican government and the adoption of turtle excluder devices on shrimp trawlers.

Some Kemp's Ridley turtles have also started showing up on North Carolina beaches.

"There's something about the Mexican beach that's beneficial to hatchlings," Schmid said. "The question is: If it hatches in Florida, can it survive and come back to the U.S. coast?"

Kemp's hatchlings are just 1-1/2 inches long, and difficult to tag.

Schmid describes Kemp's turtles as one of the world's meanest.

"They've got real attitude," he said. "They'll try to bite you. They're small and scrappy, kind of like the Chihuahua of turtles."

Only 13 Kemp's Ridley nests were recorded in Florida in 2008, according

to a Mote report. Despite that, juveniles commonly forage in Florida's coastal waters, something most people don't know, Schmid said.

Schmid and Tucker will begin working in Charlotte Harbor this summer on a new netting technique for catching Kemp's Ridley turtles for research.

The research is funded through a grant from the Marine Turtle Grant Program using proceeds from marine turtle license plates.

The first Kemp's Ridley turtle nest was recorded in Florida in 1990. On Mexican beaches, they usually nest in massive, synchronous events called arribadas, Tucker said.

In the past, this made

for easy pickings by people who took the eggs to market.

"That's hitting them in the maternity wards," Tucker said.

These days, Mexican officials remove the eggs to a secure location and rebury them, monitoring them closely in a hatchery. Staci Anderson, manager of the Island House Apartment Motel, witnessed the recent Kemp's turtle nesting on Casey Key.

"We wondered why she was laying them in the daytime," she said. "When we told Mote about the turtle, they were very excited and so were we. It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

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MORRIS: Reuse power you've already paid for?

FROM PAGE 1

savings to customers."

If considering purchasing one of these devices, personally contact those behind any testimonials and get a written money-back guarantee. If the device doesn't produce the

promised energy savings.

But first, consider making some proven energy efficient choices. According to Energy Star, www.energystar.gov, ensure your attic insulation is at least at R-30. Look for water heater models that are Energy Star qualified or at least

have an Energy Factor (EF) rating of a 0.62. Replace your highest-used light fixtures — like the kitchen ceiling light and dining room table — or the light bulbs in them with energy-efficient models. Finally, look at a programmable thermostat that automatically

sets the temperature back when you are away from home or asleep.

Do you have a consumer issue or problem?

Contact David Morris clo@TheSun.com, 23170 Harborview Road, Port Charlotte, FL 33980 or e-mail dmorris@sun-herald.com.

CRASH: Wife struggling after husband's accident

FROM PAGE 1

That benefit ran out on Friday.

Laura said it will cost \$100 an hour to continue the therapy. She is also struggling with the estimates for a wheelchair similar to one used by a quadriplegic.

It costs more than \$6,000.

Laura considered herself fairly lucky because family members came from up north to help her after the accident. However, her mother returned home two weeks ago. The next day, her house was almost broken into.

She was, she said, nearly asleep at 11 p.m. when she heard her front porch door open. She said she went to the front bedroom and saw a man trying to get in. She shut off the lights, and the man

was suddenly hospitalized with a quadruple bypass. To protect her, Laura's neighbor has been sleeping outside in her driveway, inside his pickup truck.

Keller said Laura is still frightened. To help, Keller wants to have an alarm system installed in her friend's home.

She estimates it will cost about \$675 for installation and a year's worth of payments.

"Shawn's medical bills have reached the million-dollar mark, and there's no way she can afford to pay for an alarm system," Keller said.

Keller has been calling alarm companies to see if they will help reduce the fees to help the Sturgill family.

"I know keeping her and Dylan safe is so important," she said.

A trust fund has been



PHOTO PROVIDED

Following a motorcycle crash in Englewood, Shawn Sturgill now spends his days in a wheelchair at the Harmony House in Sarasota.

set up at SunTrust Bank for Shawn. Several people donated to the family during the holidays to help Laura give Dylan a nice Christmas.

"I appreciate the help," Laura said. "My wish would be that he gets well enough to come home one day."

Donations can be made at any SunTrust Bank, in care of Shawn Sturgill.

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STUDENTS: Southwest Florida College offers training for in-demand jobs

FROM PAGE 1

By the start of the summer term on June 29, it hopes to boast a triple-digit enrollment, said Campus Director Shannon MacDonald.

"Hopefully, we'll have 100 students by the summer," she said.

Of course, that won't be too difficult to accomplish for the career training institution. After all, graduation rates in the region have remained relatively constant and more people are considering career shifts in the wake of the economic downturn.

The college, which draws students from Charlotte, Sarasota and DeSoto counties, offers a variety of coursework, including associate's degree programs for surgical technicians and in health information technology and medical assisting. Also, students can enroll in diploma programs in medical assisting and medical billing and coding technology.

By the summer term, the school hopes to begin holding classes for an early childhood care and management program.

The college also offers several online classes, including associate's

degree programs in criminal justice, business management and paralegal studies as well as bachelors degree programs in business management and criminal justice.

Considering its course offerings, MacDonald said the Port Charlotte campus is faring well when it comes to attracting students as well as keeping up with the competition offered by other educational facilities.

"Maybe we have the program a student wants that is not at the (Charlotte) Technical Center, or at Edison (State College) or at another educational facility in the area," she said. "But I think our smaller classes and one-on-one atmosphere is appealing."

It's also affordable. Tuition rates are about \$275 per credit hour, said Diana Rodrigues, the college's director of marketing communications.

"Obviously we can't compete with the state schools in the area because we are private and nonprofit," she said. "But our tuition cost is below the cost of competition in the area."

Financial aid is available, she said. Southwest Florida



SUN PHOTO BY PAMELA STAIK, pstai@sun-herald.com

Donna Piano and Kristin Smith perform a writing exercise for their English class Thursday at the Port Charlotte campus of Southwest Florida College.

College accepts federal and state grants and scholarships, including the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship. Also, the institution offers a \$7,000 scholarship to anyone that graduated from high school, Rodrigues said.

In addition to these options, the Port Charlotte and Fort Myers campuses have been approved as Florida

Workforce Development training providers.

To make sure graduates get all they can from their experience at the college, they are offered lifetime career placement assistance. This means that anytime following their graduation alumni can meet with career placement staff to find jobs in their fields.

Even when completing

the course work at the college, students have access to staff members that can help them perfect resumes and interview skills.

These methods have resulted in high graduate placement rates, which — depending on the field — range between 90 and 100 percent, Rodrigues said.

"We train in fields that offer students a future

and we want to help them get on track with success," she said.

The Charlotte campus has scheduled an open house celebration from noon to 4 p.m. on May 16.

For more information, call 239-939-4766 or 1-877-906-4948. You can also visit the college Web site at www.swfc.edu.

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