

HITLIST

[BY THE WAY]

The latest on news and events:

The **Southwest Florida Chapter of the American Red Cross** is hosting the **Fourth Annual Hurricane Bash**, featuring a tropical-themed dinner, dancing, auctions, a live performance by The Rum Runners and special appearance by The Weather Channel's **Jim Cantore** at 6:30 p.m. April 18 at Mote Marine Aquarium, 1600 Ken Thompson Parkway, Sarasota. \$125. 379-9300, Ext. 223; southwestflorida.redcross.org.

The **Players Theatre** has come up with its own stimulus package: hosting a free night of stand-up comedy. **"The Volvo Rents Hard Hat Tour"** featuring **Carmen "The Construction Comic" Ciricillo**, **Tony Gaud** and **Lisa Corrao** at 8 p.m. April 20 at 838 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Although admission is free, attendees are encouraged to bring a canned food donation. 365-2494; theplayers.org.

Mark your calendar:

- April 22 — **"From Hester Street to Hollywood: The Yiddish Theatre From Second Avenue to Sunset Boulevard"** (3:30 p.m., USF's Selby Auditorium. \$10. Presented in English by lecturer Dr. Arthur Liebman and pianist Joyce Ann Liebman. Fundraiser for Lifelong Learning Academy)
- April 25 — **Art of Fighting MMA's Rumble at Roberts 2** (7 p.m. Roberts Arena, Sarasota. \$10 to \$20. AOFMMA.com)
- April 25-26 — **31st Annual Siesta Fiesta Art and Craft Show** (10 a.m. Siesta Key Village, Sarasota. Free. artfestival.com)
- May 1 — **3rd Annual International Female Ride Day** (6:30 p.m. O'Leary's, 5 Bayfront Drive, Sarasota. witwsheshoreriders.com)
- May 16 — **28th Annual Tropical Heatwave** (5 p.m. Cuban Club, Ybor City, Tampa. \$30 to \$35. wmnf.org)

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Ringling alum finds success in animation

By LINDSEY GARRISON
H-T Intern

Most locals know that Sarasota is home to the Ringling College of Art and Design, one of the best art schools in the world. What they do not know is where the alumni go after graduation.

Not surprisingly, many stay close to the Tampa Bay area, including at animation, video production and graphic design company Digital Tap, which calls Wesley Chapel home.

The ever-growing creative team is full of ambition, fresh ideas and concepts — and a number of Ringling graduates.

The group includes Martin Grebing, principal creative director at Digital Tap. Before joining the company, Grebing brought his 3D computer animation skills to the television movie, "A Christmas Adventure," which featured the voices of stars Tiffani Thiessen and Dean Cain. He was also involved with Bradenton's famed Bollettieri Tennis Academy, where he was praised for his graphic design work.

Grebing came to Digital Tap through the American Consulting Engineers of Florida, where he had been hired as a freelancer to design a 3D fly-through for an international corridor between the United States and Canada.

After seeing his work, Digital Tap offered Grebing a full-time position. Here, he was able to hand-pick a graphics team that includes fellow Ringling graduates.

"They provided really good portfolios, a great work ethic, and the motivation to develop their own products and ideas," Grebing said.

With the team's focus divided between the engineering developments and creating their own product, Grebing pitched his idea for a 3D animated series to the owners of the company.

Grebing's thoughts have come to life in the form of "Zap Squad," a secret organization of kids with super powers who protect the world from evil.

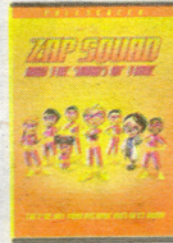
The first installment is available through the Web site www.zapsquad.com, and Grebing's team hopes to release their trilogy.

The film has already won them attention, Grebing said.

"Two clients are interested in hiring us to develop a sample of a cartoon they have created," he said.

An expansion of the film's Web team is already taking place, and once it is picked up by a distributor, the "Zap Squad" will surely be the team children want to be a part of.

For more information on Digital Tap, visit www.digitaltap.tv



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[HOT THIS WEEK]



SOME EVENTS OF NOTE

Pat Godwin, above — a quirky comedian-musician — sets up shop at McCurdy's Comedy Theatre at 7:30 p.m. today, 7:30 and 9:45 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 7:30 p.m. Sunday. 3333 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. \$6-\$12. 925-3869; mcurdyscomedy.com. Hear him here: myspace.com/thepatgodwin.

Villanova Junction, with Complete From Mountains and Sons of Hippies — 8 to 11 p.m. today. Steel Can Alley, 2645 Mall Drive, Gulf Gate, Sarasota. 921-6480.

"Dancing with the Charlotte Stars" — Six Charlotte celebrities are paired with professional dance instructors from Higher Ground Performing Arts and Florida Dance Workshop for this competitive dance event. 6 p.m. Friday, with hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar, followed by dinner. The Cultural Center of Charlotte County, 2280 Aaron St., Port Charlotte. \$55. 764-8100; theculturalcenter.com.

Ray Bonneville — The Juno Award-winning bluesman plays a WSLR benefit concert at the Irish Rover Pub at 8 p.m. Saturday. 6514 Gateway Ave., Sarasota. Tickets are \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door — available at Sarasota Emporium, Sarasota Green Marketplace, Rocketman, Fogt's Music and wslr.org. 894-6469.

Ski-A-Rees — Haven't seen this free water ski show at Ken Thompson Park in Sarasota? You have five more chances before the end of the season, including 2 p.m. Sunday. Other shows: April 12, 19 and 26 and May 3 (the season finale). 388-1666; skiarees.com.

Jacobites Pipe & Drum Band — The Scottish-heritage group celebrates National Tartan Day at 3 to 4:30 p.m. Sunday at Faith Lutheran Church, 7750 Beneva Road, Sarasota. \$15. 924-4664; jacobitesband.com.

TODAY-WEDNESDAY 4-8

SEAFOOD AND SYESHA

Bradenton/Sarasota's own Syesha Mercado, country singer Tracy Byrd, Bradenton country group One Night Rodeo (winners of "The Next GAC Star") and "America's Got Talent" finalist Cas Haley and other acts will entertain the masses at this weekend's Seafood Festival on the waterfront in downtown Bradenton. More than 40 local and national seafood vendors will be on hand, along with artisans and craft vendors and a kids zone. Presented by the Hernando de Soto Historical Society and sponsored by 106.5 CTQ, the festival is free. Hours: 5-10 p.m. Friday, 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Saturday and noon-6 p.m. Sunday. Mercado performs at 6:30 p.m. Friday, followed by Haley at 8:30. One Night Rodeo is set for 6 p.m. Saturday, with Byrd following at 8:30 p.m. 747-1998; seafoodfest.info.

FRIDAY-SUNDAY 4-5

