

Dengue cases rising after heavy rain

Hillsborough, Pinellas have extended state of emergency orders.

BY JUSTINE GRIFFIN, LIZZY ALSPACH AND NINA MOSKE
Times Staff Writers

After days of rain across the Tampa Bay area, local officials are ramping up efforts against an unprecedented rise in cases of dengue fever this year.

As of Oct. 1, Hillsborough has seen 223 confirmed dengue fever cases. But that number is likely much higher, Florida Department of Health officer Carla Fry said. State and local officials are testing people for dengue regularly. A total of 540 cases have been

reported in Florida as of this week, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Pinellas County reported 20 cases since August. Overall, the Tampa Bay area has recorded 282 cases across Pinellas, Hillsborough and Pasco counties as of Thursday.

Pinellas and Hillsborough counties have extended state of emergency orders from last month as cases rise. That allows counties to access state resources to continue mosquito control efforts. “This is unprecedented. This is now the largest outbreak in Flori-

da’s modern history,” Fry said. At a news conference Tuesday, Tampa Mayor Jane Castor said the city is working with Hillsborough County to curb the outbreak. Tampa’s neighborhood enhancement department has focused on identifying businesses likely to have standing water — a breeding ground for mosquitoes, she said. **See DENGUE, 2A**

3 lawmakers are seeking answers for sick nuclear workers

Their comments came after a Tampa Bay Times report on staffers fighting for healthcare.

BY EMILY L. MAHONEY
Times Staff Writer

Three members of Congress who represent Tampa Bay are calling for the federal government to urgently address medical claims from former Pinellas County nuclear weapons plant workers, which have languished for years in the federal bureaucracy. The statements from U.S. Reps. Anna Paulina Luna, Kathy Castor and Gus Bilirakis came after a Tampa Bay Times article detailed the plight of the workers last month. Now in their 70s and 80s, staffers at the Largo General Electric plant built components of nuclear weapons during the Cold War. Many of them have since been diagnosed with the types of cancers most commonly associated with radiation exposure. The Times reported from an August government hearing in Tampa, where government consultants and physicists argued **See NUCLEAR, 2A**

Florida removes Trump’s info from voter file

State lawmakers last year voted to allow some to keep information private.

BY ANGELIQUE RODRIGUEZ
Fresh Take Florida

Elections officials in Florida removed President Donald Trump’s personal information from public voter registration records, after Trump cited a new state privacy law that does not apply to him as the president. The Palm Beach County Office of the Supervisor of Elections said it approved Trump’s request earlier this year but never checked the legality of it. The move shields from disclosure Trump’s home and mailing addresses, birth date, party affiliation and email address. The change separately makes it harder to identify when Trump votes by mail versus in person. The president’s request has not been previously reported. Trump signed the request and attested on the notarized document that he was eligible to make his voter information private as a current member of Congress or state public officer **See TRUMP, 5A**



Head Start teacher Zaida Ozual works on a literacy lesson with Jonathan Valero at Kenly Elementary School on Sept. 30 in Tampa. (Photos by DOUGLAS R. CLIFFORD | Times)

Sparkling kids to read earlier is working

Hillsborough’s early literacy program just got a \$1 million grant to expand.



Cami McVay reviews the sounds of vowels and consonants with her kindergarten students at Kenly Elementary School, as a new grant from the Helios Education Foundation is expanding literacy programs in Hillsborough County.

BY DIVYA KUMAR
Times Staff Writer

Students in Cami McVay’s kindergarten class at Kenly Elementary sat on an alphabet carpet as they sounded out words on a screen. “I sat at the mat,” they called out slowly. “Good,” McVay told them. “We did it!” they yelled back. A few classrooms away, students in Airen Young’s Head Start class talked about the parts of a book, from the spine that holds it together to the title and table of contents. In Franceska Herring’s pre-K class, students rearranged letter magnets in a tray and pinched and pulled at Play-Doh, working on fine motor skills needed to write with pens and pencils. The push for early literacy at Kenly, and other schools across the district has paid off. **See LITERACY, 7A**

After dirty runoff rule, polluters could get an out



A canal brimming with water links drainage through a residential area to the Indian River at Satellite Beach in this 2019 photo. Environmentalists worry that Florida isn’t taking strong enough steps to protect local waterways from pollution-filled runoff. (DOUGLAS R. CLIFFORD | Times, 2019)

Environmentalists say the state caved to industry demands at the last minute.

BY JACK PRATOR
Times Staff Writer

In a reckoning with Florida’s rampant development, state lawmakers took steps in recent years to crack down on dirty water running off of new roads, parking lots and buildings and into rivers, lakes and estuaries. The latest measure drew bipartisan support. “Stormwater is a major, major source of nutrient pollution in our waterways,” Sen. Gayle Harrell, a Republican who sponsored the 2024 bill, told the Senate floor. “These rules are in place to make

sure that we are going to improve our natural waterways.” But since then, the state’s environmental agency has quietly taken the teeth out of another new program meant to help local governments and developers meet these stricter stormwater rules. It has raised concerns from environmentalists who say efforts intended to take meaningful steps in the fight against Florida’s water pollution are being undercut. Even the companies working with developers are unhappy with the changes. Three businesses have formally challenged the rule, saying the environmental agency’s actions went beyond its authority. A Florida administrative law judge is expected to hear the issue next month. **See WATER, 10A**