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Cities grapple with public sleeping ban

Officials fret over consequences of failing to enforce vague law on homeless

By **Susannah Bryan**
South Florida Sun Sentinel

Homeless people all over Florida will soon be banned from sleeping in public places — including sidewalks, streets and parks — under a controversial new state law signed by Gov. Ron DeSantis on Wednesday.

Now, attorneys throughout the state are busy dissecting what critics are calling a vague law that will likely lead to legal battles, including some that challenge the law itself.

A key component of the new

law gives local governments the option to set up homeless camps that can remain in place for one year. The camps will be required to have security, running water and working bathrooms. The law also requires strict enforcement to keep the camps free of drugs and alcohol.

The law won't go into effect until October.

But it already has some city and county officials throughout the state fretting over how the new rules will work in reality and how many lawsuits they might face if

they can't figure that out.

Starting in January, the law grants permission to residents and business owners to file a civil suit against local governments that fail to enforce the public camping ban within five days after receiving written notice of the alleged violation. If the plaintiff prevails, the court can award attorneys' fees along with witness fees and court costs.

Legal experts throughout Florida are scrutinizing the new law

Turn to Ban, Page 6



Homeless people live in tents in a parking lot along Broward Boulevard on Feb. 28 in Fort Lauderdale. A new law will ban homeless people from sleeping in public places. **MIKE STOCKER/SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL**



Nicole Arroyo, of Dania Beach, snips a tissue sample from the fin of a blacktip shark on Wednesday off the coast of Key Biscayne. **JOE CAVARETTA/SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL**

F.I.N.S. and fun

Hands-on program gets teens up close and personal with wild sharks to boost science careers

By **Bill Kearney**
South Florida Sun Sentinel

For many of us, the most intense science experience of our youth was dissecting a small frog. A group of a dozen teen girls from South Florida certainly have that beat.

On a recent breezy day on Biscayne Bay, they measured, tagged and snipped fin samples from several species of very live, and very wild sharks, including an 8-foot, 300-plus-pound tiger shark.

The program, supported by Canon cameras, paired local teenage girls who are interested in science with a mostly female team of researchers from the University of Miami's shark research program.

Part of the university's F.I.N.S. (Females in Natural Sciences) initiative, teen girls have the opportunity to spend the day on the water with women researchers as they catch and collect data for ongoing studies. Not only do the teens experience collect-

ing data from wild animals and learn about South Florida's marine ecosystems, they hang out with the women and talk about aspirations, challenges and future opportunities.

The hope that the experience will inspire more girls to enter STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields. According to the National Science Foundation, women make up about one-third of STEM workforce

Turn to Teens, Page 8

Can Democrats in Florida raise the cash to compete?

By **Steven Lemongello**
Orlando Sentinel

The day after Tuesday's municipal elections, Florida Democratic chair Nikki Fried said the party had a "tremendous night ... showing that Florida continues to be in play."

Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis had another description of Florida Democrats: "the best opposition party we could ever ask for."

The state Democratic party has been reeling over the past few years, with narrow losses in 2018 for governor and U.S. Senate turning into a massive landslide for Republicans in 2022. The registration advantage for Republicans over Democrats has steadily grown to exceed 850,000 voters as of March.

The party's decision to cancel its presidential primary also led

to an overwhelming advantage in turnout for Republicans on Tuesday, which might help the GOP win a registration and mail ballot boost for the fall.

Although this year's presidential and U.S. Senate races will be major challenges for Democrats, party leaders have cited special election victories earlier this year in Jacksonville and Central Florida as signs of a competitive playing field that could lead to winning back some legislative seats in November.

Whether the party will raise enough money to contend, however, is another question.

"Number one is money, and number two is money," said Democratic consultant Dick Batchelor about his party's needs this year. "Number three

Turn to Democrats, Page 2

Princess undergoing chemotherapy for cancer

By **Brian Melley and Jill Lawless**
Associated Press

LONDON — Kate, the Princess of Wales, has cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy, she said Friday in a stunning announcement that followed weeks of speculation about her health and whereabouts.

The princess disclosed her condition in a video message recorded Wednesday in Windsor and broadcast Friday. It came after relentless speculation on social media ever since January, when she was hospitalized for unspeci-



Kate, the Princess of Wales, was hospitalized in January for abdominal surgery. **KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH/AP 2022**

Turn to Cancer, Page 2

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Teens

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in the U.S.

Once we reach the fishing spot in about 15 feet of water, just off Key Biscayne and within sight of the Miami skyline, the research team sets out the baits — a steak-size chunk of very fragrant false albacore tuna on a big circle hook designed to catch in the corner of the shark's jaw, not its throat.

The hook is attached to a long stretch of fishing line, a heavy concrete weight and a big orange buoy. They set 10 baits out along a stretch of about half a mile, and then come back and check them an hour later. The outgoing tide carries the stink of the bait across acres of inshore water, seducing a menagerie of sharks. Hopefully.

In the meantime, the girls, who today came through a Broward nonprofit called Surf Skate Science, get a lesson on how to safely collect data while alongside a 350-pound predator. Then we wait.

'She's pregnant!'

All eyes are on lead scientist Catherine Macdonald as she pulls up the first buoy. Once she grabs the monofilament, the line comes tight, very tight. That means one thing — shark on. The girls get excited. The shark, a 5-foot blacktip, appears on the surface and surges. Macdonald has to brace herself and give some line back to the animal. Eventually she wins the battle.

Once they pull the streamlined shark up on a floating Jet Ski dock that's been converted into an examination platform, Macdonald she straddles its back and the team of researchers descend like a Formula 1 pit crew.

They pipe water over its gills, draw blood to measure stress response and gather other information, and use bolt cutters to clip the circle hook and slide it out of the corner of the shark's mouth. It takes five to seven minutes to collect all the data from the shark, and another minute if they find a particularly cool parasite.

But instead of collecting all the data, they call in the first group of girls. One girl measures the shark's length and girth; one gently hoses the shark down to keep its skin moist; another snips a fin sample and a fourth uses a tool to plunge the simple tag into the skin at the base of the dorsal fin.

For this first shark there's a lot of guidance and reassurance, the female researchers walk them



The nurse shark, though often mellow in the water, can be a troublemaker on the research platform. An 8-foot-long nurse shark is seen Wednesday off the coast of Key Biscayne. **JOE CAVARETTA/SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL**

"It feels very extraordinary to be able to be that close to these beautiful animals that are huge and powerful. To be able to get that information from them is just breathtaking."

— Kaylin Anderson, 17, an aspiring marine biologist

through everything.

The girl tasked with puncturing the skin below the dorsal with the screwdriver-like tag inserter — the physically most demanding job — struggles at first. The skin seems leather-tough. She pushes and pushes. Finally the tool breaks through the skin. She twists the device free, then reads the tag numbers aloud for confirmation. She steps off the platform with an unrestrained smile.

Then some unexpected news. A researcher scans an ultrasound device over the shark's midsection. "She's pregnant," she yells, and cheers go up around the boat. The University of Miami shark team has projects looking at how pollutants affect blacktip shark pregnancy and offspring, so the data the girls just collected will help those efforts.

Macdonald had explained earlier that Biscayne Bay is important to at least seven species of sharks and rays for reproduction. It's also the only established nurs-

ery area for great hammerheads on the east coast of the U.S. "So for a lot of shark species, we're an important ecosystem. And we're obviously heavily human-impacted," she says.

One of the most urgent concerns for the bay is climate change. Though large sharks can swim away from overly hot water, the bay is a nursery. Rising water temperatures along Florida's coast can exacerbate seagrass die-offs and stress corals to the point of bleaching. Both seagrass and coral support the bays biodiversity.

Twelve-year-old Chloe Contin, of Lake Worth, goes to American Heritage school. She had been watering the pregnant blacktip down to cool it off. "I was pretty close," she said. "Because of movies or something, I thought it might bite. But obviously it didn't, so, yeah." She says she has wanted to be a scientist ever since she knew what one was. "I always wanted to be something with animals. Not so much math, because I stink

giddiness you'd expect after a Taylor Swift concert. "It reminded me of when you get your ears pierced. They gave me a tool to put the tag in the shark and they handed me a mallet because it had thick skin. I had to hit the tagging tool with the mallet to get the tag into the shark because its skin was so thick."

"The skin was leathery in one direction and smooth in the other direction because it has dermal denticles," she said, explaining the microscopic texture of shark skin. "This is a totally cool new experience."

The ornery nurse

Later, we haul in another 5-foot blacktip and a similar blacknose shark.

Next is an extremely surly nurse shark, about 8 feet long. Though relatively mellow when being reeled in, once it's on the platform it transforms. Nurse sharks are "a little bit of a pain sometimes," says researcher Amani Webber-Schultz. She's wrangled many, and says they can buck like bulls once out of the water.

At 8 feet, it weighs at least 200 pounds. It just keeps bucking. The girls don't seem intimidated at this point. By now, the fifth shark of the day, they're practiced and primed. They get into position and rapidly move through their task, even as Macdonald, who has her torso atop the shark's back, gets jostled around.

It takes three women to finally shove the nurse shark, an angry loaf, off the platform and back to sea. At the end of the day, Macdonald walks gingerly, a bit stiff, like a bull rider who's just been thrown. When asked if she grew up wrestling, she laughs, and says, "No, but with two brothers."

The girls and female researchers end the day with a small, "cute" blacktip, our sixth of the day.

As the boat motors through the bay, 17-year-old Kaylin Anderson, an aspiring marine biologist who lives in Miami Springs and is home schooled, recounts her highlights — measuring the big tiger shark. "It feels very extraordinary to be able to be that close to these beautiful animals that are huge and powerful. To be able to get that information from them is just breathtaking."

Bill Kearney covers the environment, the outdoors and tropical weather. He can be reached at bkearney@sunsentinel.com. Follow him on Instagram @billkearney or on X @billkearney.

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