

BOCA TIMES

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Serving Boca Raton and Highland Beach

YMCA moving The LAB back to Boca campus

By Alex Kushel

The YMCA of South Palm Beach County continues to make a commitment to teens. The YMCA is moving THE LAB, a teen center at Town Center at Boca Raton mall, to its campus at the Peter Blum Family YMCA of Boca Raton.

The YMCA of South Palm Beach County is in the process of the transition and construction, which will be completed by the first quarter of 2023.

Jason Hagensick serves as the president and CEO of the YMCA of South Palm Beach County. He said THE LAB was launched to impact teens, meet the community's needs and provide an opportunity for teens with a space of their own. The community responded with a significant increase in the number of teens attending over time.

Despite the lease coming to an end at THE LAB, the YMCA of South Palm Beach County was committed to implementing a plan to provide the same services on its Boca Raton campus as they repurpose administrative offices into a space to continue to deliver teen programs.

"From the day I got here, one of the things that I wanted to bring was a focus on teen programming,"



James Rodriguez, left, and teen participant Kyle will have a new space for teen programs and activities at the Peter Blum Family YMCA of Boca Raton. **YMCA OF SPBC/COURTESY**

Hagensick said. "The YMCA positively impacting teens was important to me and to mentor and teach kids to love learning. Teenagers want a place they want to go to, hang out, feel accepted and feel a sense of belonging. There is a benefit for teens

getting involved in programs and activities and building relationships with others. There is a power of volunteering, supporting your community and engaging in activities that strengthen our community. The Y can help teens to be better

people, leaders and role models, and I am thrilled."

Hagensick said they want to continue to expand teen programs while teaching and exposing them to vocational opportunities, which includes film, technology and entrepreneurship.

"We will be very intentional and creative," he said. "The programs and activities will be brought over and we valued everything we had there. I want to give them more opportunities to learn and experience new things. "THE LAB as

it was previously did hold challenges to get there with transportation. We want to create space and programs the entire family can participate in. If one member of the family is participating in the program, there are other activities for the family members to do."

Hagensick's 14-year-old daughter is one of the teens who participates in the programs. She volunteers with the special needs program and is active at the Y.

"I truly appreciate the role the Y plays in helping me be a better dad," Hagensick said. "My daughter is a better person through what she is doing at the YMCA."

James Rodriguez, who serves as the director of teen programming at the Peter Blum Family YMCA in Boca Raton, said teens are excited about the new space at the Y facility. They do not have to make a separate trip to the mall.

"Now that it's here, the teens feel at home a lot more," he said. "THE LAB was cool and amazing. It didn't feel like the Y. We are able to see them more often now that the teens are in that space."

The YMCA of South Palm Beach County had six

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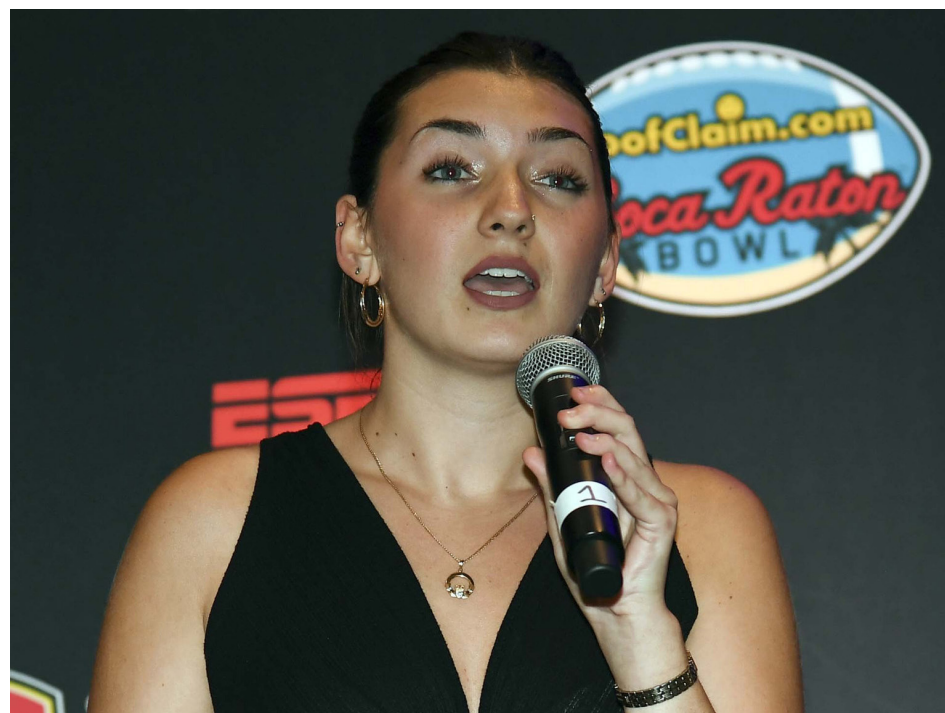
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COMMUNITY



Florida Atlantic University student Jillian Flaherty, of Lake Worth, recently won the live performance round of the 2022 Roofclaim.com Boca Raton Bowl Idol talent competition. **BOCA RATON BOWL/COURTESY**

FAU student wins Boca Raton Bowl Idol talent competition

By Jennifer Shapiro-Sacks

Florida Atlantic University student Jillian Flaherty, of Lake Worth, recently won the live performance round of the 2022 Roofclaim.com Boca Raton Bowl Idol talent competition and will sing the national anthem during the 2022 bowl game Dec. 20 at FAU Stadium.

The event benefited the bowl's charity partner Spirit of Giving and its annual Holiday Gift Drive that helps thousands of children in need.

Flaherty was chosen out of five finalists through online voting that was open to the public. Contestants performed a song of their choice for the live audience and a combination of audience and judges' votes determined the top three. The other two contestants were Hadas Levy, 40, soloist, professional, of Boca Raton and Emily Shecter, 21, soloist, professional, of Wellington.

Flaherty, who will receive 10 game tickets for family and friends, started singing in grade school and hasn't stopped since. In her second year at FAU, Flaherty is currently majoring in music and is a member of the Chamber Singers and Cantemos, a Latin American choir, at FAU.

The 20-year-old entered the competition because she said she feels that singing the national anthem is one of the most fulfilling experiences one can have as a singer.

"I love to support our country with the

nation's anthem, and as a singer I couldn't think of a better way to represent my department, school and country," she said in a statement.

Judges for the singing competition were Andrea O'Rourke, deputy mayor of the city of Boca Raton, the National Anthem Competition's presenting sponsor; Shanna St. John, executive director, Nat King Cole Generation Hope; and Molly Jade Vogel, theater, film, TV and vocal performer.

"Each year the national anthem competition talent is steeper, the final live rounds are more crowd-pleasing, the audience is more engaged and our charitable partner, Spirit of Giving, leaves also as a big winner," RoofClaim.com Boca Raton Bowl Executive Director Doug Mosley said in a statement. "I congratulate Jillian for bringing her talent and dedication to win this competition and thank bowl partner the city of Boca Raton for its support in making this lead-in event a resounding success."

The next event is the 2022 RoofClaim.com Boca Raton Bowl Great Chefs Tailgate Showcase Presented by BRiC and CP Group at 6 p.m. Nov. 29 at Boca Raton Innovation Campus, 5000 T-Rex Ave. Tickets are \$40 advance, \$50 at the door and includes chef food samplings, entertainment and beer, wine, cocktails and soft drink.

The Roofclaim.com Boca Raton Bowl is the only collegiate bowl game in Palm Beach County. Visit [roofclaimbocaratonbowl.com](https://www.roofclaimbocaratonbowl.com).

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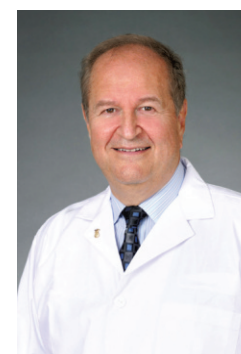
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With increasing life expectancy, an accident or injury resulting in an orthopedic problem is almost inevitable at

some point. Among the most common orthopedic concerns are sprains and strains, muscle and tendon tears, fractures and other traumatic injuries, and arthritis. In addition, back pain causes more visits to physicians than any other orthopedic problem. Some conditions are caused by repetitive motion and wear and tear on the body, while others could be the result of a congenital, or birth problem.

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Moving

from Page 1

teens attend the Blue Ridge Assembly Leaders Program in Black Mountain, North Carolina this past summer. The teens were able to learn about opportunities to become staff members within the YMCA, such as swim instructors, lifeguards, camp counselors and group leaders. The teens also have opportunities to volunteer and take on leadership roles by planning events and activities. They also have teens who volunteer with the youth board and their teen rally and teen summit.

“They pick up skills and knowledge and it will help them be a more well-rounded teenager,” Hagensick said. “They have a sense of value, purpose, belonging, responsibility and it builds their confidence.”

Kyle, a 10th-grader at SLAM Boca Raton, is one of the teens who credits the YMCA’s teen programs in changing his life. The openly gay teen was having trouble with self-acceptance before engaging with others at the Y in the last two years. He has made tremendous growth and attends the Y at least two times each week. He said he is able to express himself more and is having the time of his life.

“I met other teens my age that have gone through similar experiences that I did and made a bunch of new friends,” he said. “I learned a lot about the way I view things and how I can better myself. It’s such a safe space for me being able to come in and know I am loved no matter what.”

Kyle said he enjoys working out at the Y, which has helped him stay healthy and build higher self-esteem. As a member of the Leaders Club, he has volunteered his time to participate and assist in planning events, including Halloween at the Y, Healthy Kids Day and Breakfast with Santa.

Kyle attended the Blue Ridge Assembly Leaders Program in North Carolina this past summer. He was



Teen participant Kyle takes part in some of the activities offered by the YMCA of South Palm Beach County.

able to learn about leadership opportunities at the Y, disconnect and enjoy nature and new experiences such as hiking.

“My biggest takeaway was that it was a safe space for everyone to open up and talk about any issues whatever they may be,” he said. “I was able to meet all these new people and create friendships. I was able to really grow and learn about myself. I was vulnerable and when you are not masked behind anything to begin with, it will help create genuine friendships. It’s really eye-opening to travel on my own for an entire week and be able to take care of myself.”

Rodriguez, who also attended the YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly, said it was a great learning experience for the teens.

“Kyle roomed with people he never met before and it took a few days for him to settle in,” Rodriguez said. “It can be extremely overwhelming. He was having a difficult time and struggling to get acclimated. He got through it. He realized the choices belong to him. He was able to turn it around. He was able to engage and interact with others.”

Rodriguez, who has known Kyle since his start at the Y with the Leaders in Training summer development program, has noticed his transformation. Kyle has previously been recognized with the Leaders In Train-

ing of the Week Award.

“It depends on the teen who embraces it,” Rodriguez said. “I have seen the growth, development and initiative that was taken. He started to realize his actions actually matter and he can set an example for others and they will follow. He has stepped up not just as a participant and as a leader. He wants to now interact and work with the kids and he wants to be able to make an impact on the future. When they stay involved after the Leaders in Training program and roll into the Leaders Club, they take on that responsibility and care about themselves to want to serve and give back. They have never been in front of situations that they need to handle on their own. When they are volunteering and planning the events and they have to fix something, they are pushed to go figure it out. We give them that accountability.”

After struggling with self-acceptance, Kyle has been able to build a better relationship with his family and at school since joining the Y.

“My family has not always been there for the best support in some moments,” he said. “I have been able to accept myself truly and that has allowed them to accept me more. My home life has become better as a result. The response at school is a lot better. It’s great being



James Rodriguez, left, director of teen programming at the Peter Blum Family YMCA in Boca Raton, and teen participant Kyle discuss some of the leadership programs. **YMCA OF SPBC/ COURTESY PHOTOS**

able to know myself better. I feel less insecure. My self-esteem is so much better.”

Kyle said he enjoys taking on a leadership role at the Y and being a role model for the other teens.

“I am not the youngest

anymore and I can give them advice on what I learned,” he said. “I have been there before and I can talk to them about how we handle situations. When dealing with conflict, I have a sense of maturity and improved the

way I handle myself. I feel like it’s the best time of my life. It keeps getting better and better.”

The Peter Blum Family YMCA is at 6631 Palmetto Circle S, Boca Raton. Visit ymcaspb.org/thelab.

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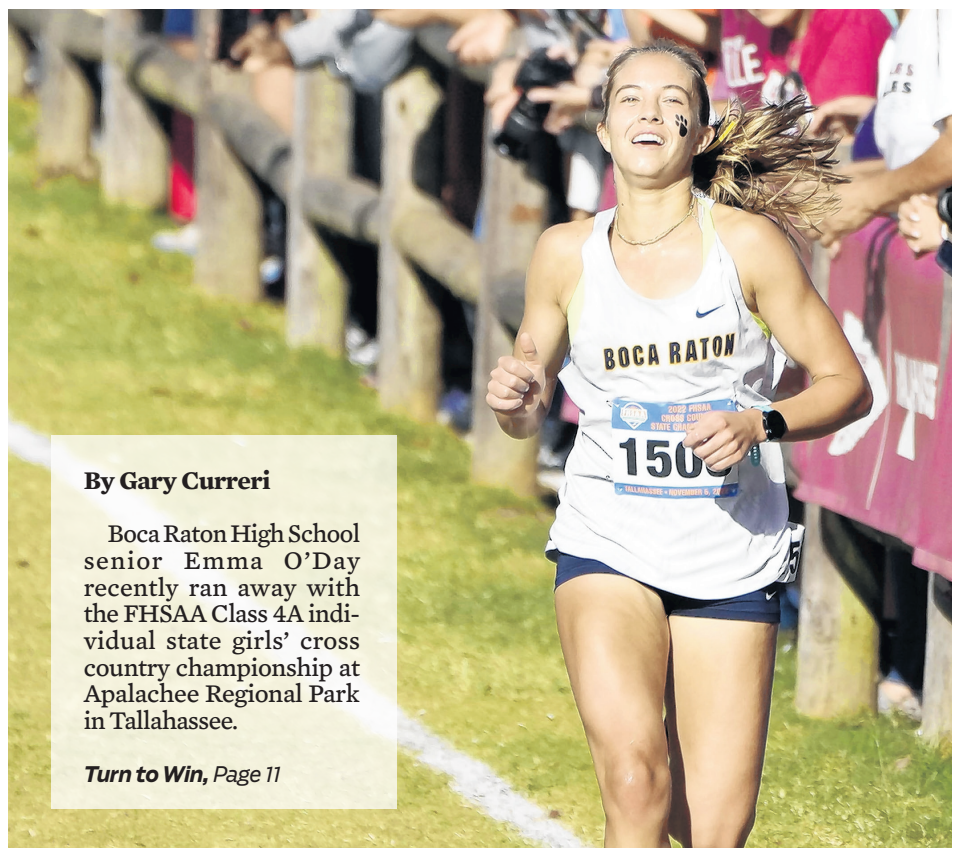
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Boca High senior wins cross country championship



By Gary Curreri

Boca Raton High School senior Emma O'Day recently ran away with the FHSAA Class 4A individual state girls' cross country championship at Apalachee Regional Park in Tallahassee.

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Emma O'Day won top honors at the FHSAA Class 4A girls' cross country race at Apalachee Regional Park in Tallahassee. The Boca Raton High School senior recorded a winning time of 18 minutes, 23.90 seconds. SEAN O'DAY/COURTESY

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OPINION

BOCA TIMES

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Keeping peace at Thanksgiving


Bea Lewis

Last Thanksgiving was the first time post-COVID that my family could gather for the holiday. Somewhat nervous that we would all get along, I hoped that my daughters, who are now in their mid-50s, had put to rest their earlier sibling rivalry issues.

As they chattered about their childhood, I realized that no matter how old they are now or how trivial an episode was then, my adult kids have kept a mental scorecard, different, perhaps, from how I remember an incidence some 40 years ago.

Here's an example: When two of the girls were in an ice-skating competition at our community center, it was the younger sister who won. Both my husband and I, sensitive to the older one's feelings, made a fuss over her, hardly acknowledging the sibling that won. That is, until Jen said, "Why are you ignoring me? I was the winner?" Gulp. As hard as both their father and I tried, our parenting skills needed a tune-up.

When they tried out for the cheerleading squad, it was the youngest that made the team. This time we thought we knew better and praised the winner with a special dinner, only to have the other sister whine, "Don't you care about my feelings?" Somehow Ed and I had trouble getting "we love you equally" stuff straight.

As we passed around the platter of turkey, I tried to recall both incidents, but all I could remember was that after a tiring day at work, I had schlepped them back and for to their many practice sessions, sitting through freezing cold at the outdoor skating ring, or in the overheated gymnasium as they rehearsed for the Saturday football games. Who had time for ego stroking?

The girls are now grown, married with children. So I figured that those long ago competitive feelings were something of the past. Not so.

As the pumpkin pie was served, I overheard one sister comment to another: "Great necklace, when did you get it?"

Mom bought it for my 50th birthday, she responded. Afraid that jealousy would rear its ugly head, I quickly reminded the other sister that for her big 50, I treated her to a Broadway show. Even Steven, I thought, at least for now.

When does this rivalry begin, and more

so, does it ever end? According to experts, the problem is basically one of competition for limited resources — a mother's love, approval and time. It can start when a mother brings home a new baby sister or brother, and the older child (or children) becomes keenly aware of having to give up being the sole focus of his or her parents' love.

What begins as a struggle for mom's attention and approval soon grows into a battle of who gets the biggest dessert, the nicest stuffed animal or the best Christmas present. Fast forward a few years and the competition becomes who has the largest house, the most successful career, or the most money.

Problems between siblings can be aggravated when a son-in-law or daughter-in-law enters the picture. Bob and Phyllis, for example, found they had in-law rivalry issues when the wife of one son would avoid a family get-together if the wife of their other son would attend. To avoid friction, the couple thought to prepare two separate Thanksgiving dinners — one for each of their children and their families. No doubt that this plan would be both expensive and exhausting.

While Bob and Phyllis can't make friends of enemies, they could share their feelings with each couple, advised Ann Bair, a Boca Raton psychotherapist. A dialogue could go something like this:

"Although I understand that there are issues between the two of you, I hope both of you can be respectful enough to care about our feelings and put aside your conflict for a few hours. It would make us happy for the entire family to be together at my holiday table."

To keep harmony at the holiday table, consider these suggestions.

- If you praise one grandchild, praise all. Kids are watching for an equal grandma approval.
- Remove cell phones, tablets, etc. at the dinner table. Allow picture taking before and after.
- Don't tolerate talks of politics; alert family members in advance.
- Lower your expectation: Some years are better than others.

Bea Lewis is a journalist and author in Boynton Beach. Contact her at Beaclewis@gmail.com

Hit-and-runs: Why do people run and what's the actual risk?


Michael Pike

Recently, a mother and infant were hit by a car while crossing a road in West Palm Beach. The driver of the vehicle didn't stop. In Lake Worth, there was a hit-and-run accident that killed a pedestrian and a 65-year-old woman also was killed after being hit by a pick-up truck. The news seems shocking. Week after week. How could someone leave the scene of an accident?

Unfortunately, the numbers tell a different story.

According to the Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, in 2021, the total number of hit-and-run incidents across the state increased by over 17% compared to the prior year. In Florida, between 2015 and 2021, there were 710,727 hit-and-run accidents that resulted in 1,606 traffic fatalities.

No matter what the situation, it is both ethically and legally wrong to flee the scene of an accident. The law is clear: In Florida, a driver is required to stop immediately at the scene of a traffic incident resulting in property damage, injury or death. Leaving the scene of an accident where there are injuries or fatalities is a felony, and if convicted of doing so, drivers could be sentenced to prison and will lose their license. Specifically, a hit-and-run incident with property damage could mean up to 60 days in prison and a \$500 fine, while fleeing the scene after causing injuries could mean a revoked license for at least three years, five years in prison and a \$5,000 fine. Kill someone in a hit-and-run crash, and it's up to 30 years behind bars, a \$10,000 fine and three-year license revocation.

So why would anyone leave the scene of an accident? Sometimes the motivation to flee is related to a driver being under the influence of drugs or alcohol who makes another poor decision by fleeing the scene. However, there are other reasons why people put themselves in legal jeopardy by fleeing the scene, such as:

- Money: With the increasing cost of living, some people can barely afford food or rent, much less unexpected costs and

possibly financial ruin incurred because of a traffic accident.

■ Insurance: Florida ranks No. 1 nationwide as the state with the highest number of uninsured motorists at nearly 26%. Without insurance, people may think the risk of running is worth avoiding a potentially huge expense. Even with insurance, high deductibles and the fear of increased premiums may cause someone to run.

■ Criminal record: For ex-convicts, a vehicular crime may call for jail time, high fines, loss of license and other consequences that may lead them to run from the scene.

■ Immigration Status: If a driver is in the U.S. illegally or does not have the required paperwork for their alien status, they may face deportation if detained by law enforcement for any reason, including a motor vehicle accident.

Regardless of whether you are the driver of the vehicle or the victim, running is never the answer. If you are involved in a crash, please follow these steps:

- Check to make sure you are okay and remain calm.
- If possible, move to the side of the road. Remove your keys if you get out of your vehicle and stand in a safe place.
- Check on anyone else involved. Call 911 if anyone might be injured or a vehicle is inoperable.
- If there are no injuries or major property damage, gather information. Get the name, driver's license, insurance and tag information from the other driver(s). Preserve evidence. Take photos of the vehicles and any information that you can't write down and then use it to file a report online.
- Call an attorney.
- Most importantly, always stay at the scene. Leaving the scene of an accident will only make matters worse. Staying at the scene will not only spare a driver significant legal penalty, but it may also save lives.

Michael Pike is a business litigation and personal injury attorney. He is managing partner of Pike & Lustig, LLP, a firm with offices in West Palm Beach, Miami, Wellington and Palm Beach Gardens. He lives in Wellington with his wife and two daughters. Visit PikeLustig.com.



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St. Andrew's School junior Diego Balbi finished second in the boys' 100-yard butterfly event at the Class 1A regional championships at Nova Southeastern University. **GARY CURRERI/CONTRIBUTOR**

Balbi, Gersper help lead Scots to state Class 1A swim meet

By Gary Curreri

After their performances in the Region 4-1A Swimming and Diving Championships at the NSU University School Aquatic Complex in Davie, juniors Diego Balbi and Aspen Gersper are two of the reasons that St. Andrew's School is headed to the state championships on a high note.

Balbi won the 100-yard backstroke (50.06) and was second in the 100-butterfly to help St. Andrew's (369 points) edge Pine Crest (346) for the boys' title. Balbi was also on the runner-up

200-medley relay (1:34.61) with Altor Arrese-Igor, Valerio Bonuglia and Jake Venezia and the winning 400-free relay (3:06.28, AA-C) with Bonuglia, Arrese-Igor and Ambrus Barcsak.

"It was really cool getting to race the relays with the boys," said Balbi, 16, of Lake Worth. "The guys really managed to throw down and place well in almost every race. It was a really good group effort and I'm glad I got to be a part of it."

Due to Hurricane Nicole, the FHSAA Class 1A state meet was moved back a week and will at the Sailfish

Splashpark Aquatic Athletics Center in Stuart on Nov. 18.

"Personally," Balbi said, "I see it now as the best-case scenario...one extra week to try and get every minor detail in check. I can't wait to see how the team ends up racing next week."

Gersper, 17, of Boca Raton, captured the 100-yard free (51.25) and was second in the 50-free (23.92). She was also on the regional runner-up 400-free relay with Alexia Sotomayor, Erin Miller and Siena Griffiths (3:30.07, AA-C) and the third place 200 medley relay

(1:46.47) along with Sotomayor, Alexandra Ericson, and Gioia Balzano.

"I felt pretty strong this year," Gersper said. "This meet was pretty good. It was pretty hot out. I had to drink a lot of water and the team just pulled together. I feel we have just done well as a team supporting each other and making sure we congratulate each one in the blocks. This meet was kind of to see where everyone is and where I am heading into the state meet, and I feel pretty good about it."

"This is 100% just like the state meet," Gersper said.

"We have one of the fastest regions in our state. Even our state meet, I would say we are the fastest out of all of the other states. Regionals is a good time to get up and go, especially when you know who you are racing against, and you know what they do."

Gersper recently committed to attend the University of Virginia.

"I absolutely love it," she said of her recruiting trip to Virginia. "I went up there on my recruiting trip when it was just about turning fall and it was so pretty. Literally from the moment I stepped on campus I loved it, and the

team was so nice. They seem so supportive of each other, and I really loved that."

The King's Academy (374 points) won the girls crown over St. Andrew's (314).

"Aspen inspires her teammates on a daily basis," said St. Andrew's coach Sid Cassidy. "Her leadership qualities are unparalleled, and when she brings it in practice, everyone is lifted."

Other winners from the Scots at the meet included Arrese-Igor, who won the 200-yard individual medley (1:52.91), and Erin Miller in the 200-yard freestyle (1:51.47).

Win

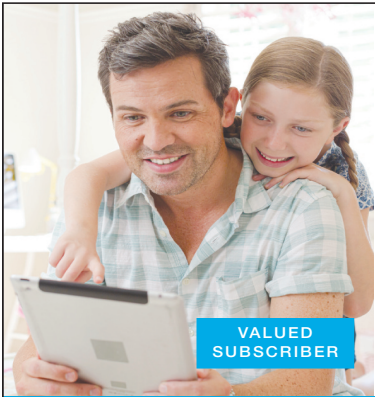
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After finishing 50th with a time of 20:29.90 in the same meet a year ago, O'Day trimmed more than 2 minutes off that time in winning with an 18-minute, 23.90 seconds clocking for the 3.1-mile layout.

"I was told to start moving up the pack around the mile and a half and then go with the leader at mile two," O'Day said of her race strat-

egy. "I was supposed to take the lead with 650 meters (left in the race). I executed everything perfectly and I was super happy with the race. I had to pass on the hill because no one comes back from that. This is pretty cool, and I am happy to represent not only Boca High but all of Palm Beach County."

Team mate Katelyn O'Brien, a freshman, finished 10th overall with a clocking of 19:12.30 as the Bobcats finished 19th in the team standings.



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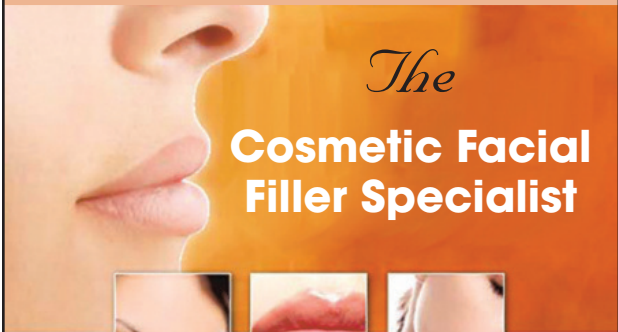
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