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08/30/05

**SD North Port Area Republicans ready for
election year**

Local Republican Party wants to be the party for all

NORTH PORT -- As the North Port Republican Party gears up for the 2006 election year, a main focus of the party's local leaders will be to educate the public

about their platform.

"I think people have the preconception of the Republican Party as personifying people who are pompous and uncaring," said Darryl Henry, the president of the North Port Area Republicans Club.

"We believe in less government intervention and more emphasis on the individual initiative," said Henry.

In what many people consider to be the political off-year, a year with no major offices at stake, the party is full steam ahead with their projects.

One of the projects the party is committed to is the "Support our Troops" donation program. People can read the postings of soldiers overseas on the Web site, www.Anysoldier.com, and get an insight into the daily lives of our soldiers.

The soldiers make requests for specific items. Beanie Babies and toys for children are at the top of the list of items requested.

As the items are collected and boxed, they are addressed to a specific soldier. That soldier, in turn, is responsible for dispensing the requested items once they arrive.

"The Chamber of Commerce Business Expo was the kickoff of our troop-support project," said Carol Van Cleef, the club's vice president.

Thanks to area donations, many different supplies, treats and hygiene products are on their way.

Unfortunately, Carol Van Cleef, one of the coordinators of the program, will be moving out of the area.

"She is leaving the area due to the increase in taxes and the decrease in services. It is just too overwhelming for lots of families in North Port," said Henry. "We will surely miss her, but I will make sure the troops program continues to thrive."

Affordable housing and continued quality of living here in North Port is high on the party's agenda.

"It's important that the city remain a city that embraces all its citizens," Henry said. "We cannot afford to drive the heart of our town away with high taxes."

At the North Port Area Republican Party meeting, the guest speaker will be the new city manager, Steven S. Crowell Jr. The meeting is set for 6 p.m. Sept. 8 in the Juliano Room of the North Port Public Library, 13800 Tamiami Trail in North Port.


"I hope to ask questions, and express our concerns, about the taxes and the housing and the hopes we all have for North Port," Henry said.

Anyone interested in donating items and/or money to the "Support our Troops" program may call 426-2177 or 426-6978.

You can e-mail Shelley Draper at sdraper@sun-herald.com.

By SHELLEY DRAPER

Staff Writer

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