

# Hospital teacher makes a difference

BY MICHELLE L. START  
Correspondent

Diagnosed with leukemia in February, 10-year-old Typhani Kulikowski has missed a lot of class because of medical appointments and hospitalization. But she's been able to keep up with her work thanks to the help of HealthPark Medical Center teacher Laurie Gill.

"I know you were working with fractions," said Gill, 31, during a recent afternoon lesson at Typhani's bedside. "You

says Kathy Bridge-Liles, executive director of women's and children's services for Lee Memorial Health System. "This collaborative effort with the local school districts and community partners like Suncoast Federal Credit Union is an innovative way to help meet our children's educational needs."

Tom Dorety, President and CEO of Suncoast Federal Credit Union, said his organization is helping to fund the position because it fills a gap that was being created when sick children missed school.



PHOTO MICHELLE L. START

HealthPark Medical Center teacher Laurie Gill helps 10-year-old Typhani Kulikowski with math homework in Typhani's hospital room. Gill is a full-time teacher at the Children's Hospital in south Fort Myers.

did do the work! What about this one? Let's see you do it. Two times six is...what do you put in?"

Typhani grumbles, cajoles and laughs at Ms. Laurie, as the teacher is called, but completes the same work the rest of her fourth grade class at North Fort Myers Academy for the Arts is doing.

"I have what they are using in the classroom here, which has been very helpful," Gill said. "We are working on getting a classroom so we can have computers and materials in there and they can come to the room to use them. However it is difficult because some of our kids can't be combined with other kids."

Gill has worked with children like Typhani since the hospital added an on-staff instructor. A partnership between Lee Memorial Health System, Suncoast Federal Credit Union and the Lee and Collier County School Districts made it possible for The Children's Hospital to establish the full-time position during the 2005-2006 school year.

"We feel it is our responsibility to meet all of our patients' needs while they are hospitalized, not just their medical needs,"

He said officials were hoping the program gave these kids a sense of normalcy.

"A lot of these kids are really worried about their school work," Gill said. "I see six to seven kids a day. It's kind of like a cycle. I'm a kindergarten through 12th grade teacher. My background is in elementary education. I went to Western Michigan University and once I graduated, I moved down here. I went to Lee Memorial at first, but they said they didn't have a program like this."

So, Gill went to work teaching middle school math. When the position at HealthPark Medical Center was created nearly four years later, she applied and landed the job. She works from 9 to 5 year-round.

Once a child has been admitted to the hospital, Gill obtains permission from the parents to call schools and request assignments. Despite facing illnesses that are sometimes terminal, Gill said most of the kids are eager to learn and appreciate her efforts on their behalf.

"I had a student who passed last year and he was so excited that he was able to graduate from the third grade," she said. ■

# Easter eggs net \$4,000 for charity

Eight lucky individuals recently received an Easter egg of extraordinary proportions thanks to Norman Love and his pastry chefs.

Bunnies for Babies, eight, three-foot tall handcrafted masterpieces of edible art were created by Love and his team as a benefit for Lee Memorial Health System Foundation to help expand programs and services of The Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida at HealthPark Medical Center.

"More than \$4,000 was raised to help children," said Love. "I am proud of my team of professionals for being dedicated to this cause. And, I am thankful for the

outpouring of support for Bunnies for Babies." ■

**The winners and drawing locations of their Bunnies for Babies egg were:**

- Andrew Wheeler, Cape Coral Hospital
- Scott Sheffers, Gulf Coast Hospital
- Owen Handel, The Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida
- Gail Wilkinson, Southwest Florida Regional Medical Center
- M. Hillmyer, Norman Love Confections

Maria Light, Norman Love Confections  
Kim Kammerlocher, Norman Love Confections

# Lee schools doing better on FCAT

BY MICHELLE L. START  
Correspondent

A 4 percent gain in Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test writing scores has teachers and administrators at Orange River Elementary School ecstatic.

The Florida Department of Education released the fourth, eighth and tenth grade writing scores last week. At Orange River Elementary School, 85 percent of the fourth graders scored a 3.5 or higher. That's well above the state average of 78 percent.

FCAT Writing, administered in grades 4, 8, and 10 only, assesses student skills in composition writing and specifically in the areas of writing focus, organization, support, and conventions (grammar, spelling, etc). Papers are scored on a scale from 1 to 6 with a score of 3 considered as meeting standard for the Federal No Child Left Behind legislation and 3.5 or higher for the Florida A+ Plan (School Grading). In addition to essay scores, the State has incorporated a multiple-choice section in the Writing test this year and published total scores for the first time.

Last year, 81 percent of the students tested at Orange River Elementary School achieved a 3.5 or higher.

have maintained that training every year. This year we targeted third and fourth graders together, then fourth graders separately. We are reaping the benefits of that. We're very pleased with the results."

Districtwide, the average score was a 3.8.

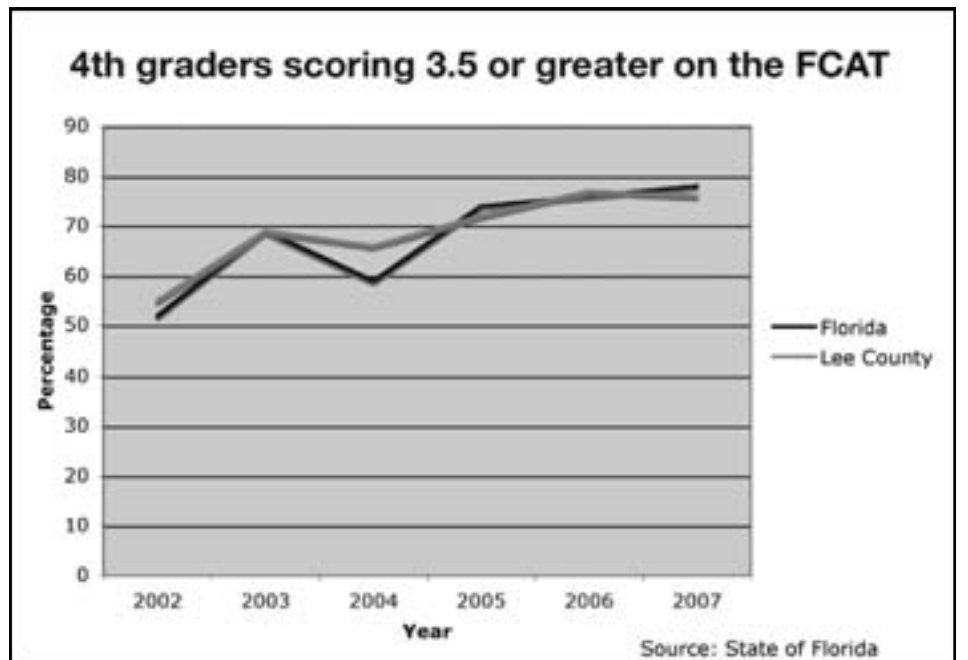
"We see some real positive improvement in our writing achievement," Dr. James Browder, Superintendent of Schools. "But we will continue to look

"It has been a real accomplishment for my staff," said Bell.

closely at how we can focus improvement efforts on the mechanics of writing."

While some of the schools were pleased with this year's results, Lee County Schools spokesman Joe Donzelli said celebration may be a bit premature.

"If you look at our fourth graders, 3.8 was the average score. The state average was 3.9," he said. "We also dropped a percentage point on those scoring a 3.5 or higher from 77 percent to 76 percent. A percentage point isn't cataclysmic but we want to make sure it doesn't go any



"We've worked really, really hard," said principal Holly Bell. "We are a Title I school, 78 percent of our students receive free or reduced lunch and 60 percent are Hispanic. We did breakfast and lunch writing and everything we could do. We are the only Title I school in the district that made adequate yearly progress."

The Title I Act was passed in 1965 and awards funding to schools where the majority of students are financially disadvantaged or do not speak English as a first language.

For purposes of determining if a school achieves adequate yearly progress, children are broken into four subgroups that are based on race, socioeconomic status, learning disabilities and the ability to speak English. A percentage of children in each of the subgroups must receive a passing grade on each portion of the FCAT. The required percentage increases each year.

"It has been a real accomplishment for my staff," said Bell.

At Allen Park Elementary School, administrators and teachers are just as pleased with their students progress. The school experienced a 1 percent increase in the number of children scoring a 3.5, from 88 percent last year to 89 percent this year.

"We are pretty proud," said Jan Cook, curriculum specialist. "Three years ago we began a writing training program through the people in Hillsborough County. We

**Percentage of 10th graders scoring a 3.5 or higher**

- ▶ Cypress Lake High School: **85 percent**
- ▶ South Fort Myers High School: **81 percent**
- ▶ Dunbar High School: **75 percent**
- ▶ East Lee County High School: **75 percent**
- ▶ Riverdale High School: **71 percent**
- ▶ Fort Myers High School: **71 percent**
- ▶ West Zone ALC: **60 percent**
- ▶ Lee Adolescent Mother's Program: **58 percent**
- ▶ Richard Milburn Academy: **51 percent**
- ▶ Lee County ALC Center High: **40 percent**
- ▶ Life Skills Center: **45 percent**

Source: State of Florida

further." Still, Donzelli said there has been substantial improvement in test scores for eighth and tenth graders.

"We went from 76 percent of tenth graders scoring a 3.5 or higher to 79 percent. That is 3 percentage points," he said. "For eighth graders, we went from 83 percent scoring a 3.5 or higher to 85 percent. What we are seeing now is the fruits of our labors. Are where we where need to be? No. We want to continue to see that upward trend."

The math and reading grades should be released this week, while school grades will likely be released mid-May. ■