

Friday, July 9, 2010 | NTP

Money and politics, sorta

Another gov'na buys her way into office in Lutz's annual charity ritual.



RICHARD DANIELSON | Times

Stephanie Ensor, 38, left, is sworn in as the new gov'na of Lutz by Paul Vahue on Saturday.

BY RICHARD DANIELSON
Times Staff Writer

LUTZ — This is a small and quirky community with some big and quirky traditions.

Independence Day, for instance, means not only celebrating the nation's birthday, but formally proclaiming Lutz itself to be "independent, cranky, contrary and forever its own sovereign self."

On that day, the community symbolically secedes from Hillsborough County and the state of Florida until midnight, or the moment when the gov'na of Lutz's chicken lays a double-yolked egg, whichever comes first.

And it means honoring the person who raises the most money for local nonprofit groups and community causes. This year that is Stephanie Ensor, who outpaced three other candidates to raise about \$3,100 to win the gov'naship.

As is the local custom, Ensor put on a red and white striped hat and took the oath of office on a copy of what's known around Lutz as the sacred book, Dr. Seuss's *Green Eggs and Ham*, during Saturday's Independence Day celebration. She promised to rally to the causes of the people of Lutz, as long as they're trivial, and to preside over community functions, if she's invited.

» See GUV'NA, 5

» GUV'NA
continued from 1

Again, money talks in Lutz

"I didn't win this by myself," said Ensor, who held about five fundraising events and sold fake seats in her Cabinet for \$50 each. "All I did was facilitate it. It's an honor and a privilege to be able to get out in the community."

Ensor, 38, owns the Flip Flop Embroidery Shoppe, an online business that specializes in custom embroidery and promotional products. She has lived in Lutz for 10 years, and she and her husband, Troy, have two girls, Hailey, 12, and Ashley, 11.

Each candidate for gov'na is allowed to choose a nonprofit to receive part of their funds raised. Ensor said she has chosen the Learning Gate Community School.

The naming of the gov'na culminates Lutz's Independence Day celebrations, held on Saturday this year so as not to interfere with church services on the Fourth of July. As usual, the celebration included a parade, 5K road race and charity cake auction, which sold 32 cakes and pies, including a 5½-pound apple pie. The auction raised \$811, with the highest price, \$55, being paid for Alexa Gardner's red velvet cake.

In a twist, outgoing Gov'na Suzin Carr would not give up the office's ceremonial red sash. During the inauguration, she handed Ensor a sash, then pulled off her shirt to reveal an identical red sash, which she said she intends to keep.

"I just can't let it go," said Carr, independent, cranky and contrary to the end.

Richard Danielson can be reached at Danielson@sptimes.com or (813) 226-3403.