

EASTERN SHORE NEWS

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CAPE CHARLES

Arcos is named new town manager

Longtime staffer is the only interview

By Ceri Larson Danes
Staff writer

CAPE CHARLES — The Cape Charles Town Council appointed acting Town Manager Heather Arcos to the position of town manager during a closed session on Thursday, Sept. 3.

Arcos has held the interim position since former Town Manager Joe Vaccaro resigned the post in February during a political battle among council members over his communication style and working relationships with some of them. He was on the job about a year and a half.

Arcos will be paid \$76,000 annually, the same salary she was earning as interim manager. The pay is in the second step of a five-step pay range for the manager slot.

The Town Council vote was nearly unanimous in favor of her hiring. Councilman Steve Bennett did not vote in favor of the move, citing concerns that no other candidates were interviewed, yet still supported Arcos.

"He was very supportive," she said of Bennett, adding that all councilmen, the mayor and many residents also were.

Cape Charles received 28 applications from around Virginia and out-of-state. Two applicants were Shore residents.

The council had short-listed the pool of potential managers, but Arcos said they decided to interview internal applicants first, which explains why she was the only candidate interviewed.

A 37-year-old Shore native and Northampton High School graduate, Arcos was promoted from assistant to the town manager to assistant town manager in August 2008.

She was living in Vermont when she first applied for a job with the town and returned to the Shore for an interview.

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Jay Dism photos

Evelyn, right, and Batista Madonia Sr., look at the inaugural Thumbprint Award from Syngenta Seed Care for their work with upgrading migrant farm labor housing on the Shore and other areas. The Madonias own East Coast Growers and Packers.

Massive tomato grower lauded for its dedication

Madonias, East Coast Growers and Packers get top honor

By Ceri Larson Danes
Staff writer

TASLEY — A group of corporate executives donned jeans and T-shirts to spend a day last week working at a farmworker camp installing clothes driers, painting, planting ornaments and building playground equipment.

It's all thanks to the work of a local large-scale tomato company recognized for its contributions improving the quality of life of farmworkers.

Batista and Evelyn Madonia of East Coast Growers and Packers received the first-ever Thumbprint Award from vegetable seed company Syngenta here on Thursday.

The Madonias were already attracting attention for an agreement forged a day earlier with a major restaurant chain to pay workers an additional penny per pound of tomatoes they pick.

More than 300 people — mostly Hispanic farmworkers and their families — showed up at the former Taylor and Fulton packing shed to honor the Madonias for their goodwill and share



Lollipop the Clown (Laura Grimes) of Bishopville, Md., blows up balloons for children during an award ceremony for East Coast Growers and Packers owners Evelyn and Batista Madonia Sr. in Tasley on Thursday. The Madonias were honored for their efforts to upgrade migrant farm laborer housing on the Shore and in other areas.

in a celebratory meal. Also on hand were local business people, Chairman of the Accomack Board of Supervisors Steve Mallette, Economic Development Director Larry Forbes and members of the Madonia family.

The Plant City, Fla.-based company has a major presence

on the Shore — employing about 2,400 people during the growing season, which winds up in about six weeks.

The closely held family operation also includes their daughter, Rosemary Madonia, vice president and controller, and sons Batista Jr., and

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ONANCOCK

Town not liable in employee lawsuit

Judge removes town in \$18M claim

By Carol Vaughn
Staff writer

ONANCOCK — An \$18.4 million civil lawsuit against Onancock and its elected officials has been dismissed by a circuit judge, but the case against three town employees, including former town manager Susan Scott, has not yet been decided.

The lawsuit includes claims that Scott, Dewey Borufsen and Kevin Mondorff "intentionally systematically and methodically abused, assaulted, battered, berated, belittled, teased, ridiculed and methodically sexually harassed" former town laborer Steven Key at work, resulting in his suffering severe emotional distress.

It further claims Key suffered "extreme physical pain and injuries" as a result of a birthday beating administered by Scott on his 21st birthday, during which Scott allegedly hit Key 31 or 32 times on the legs and buttocks with a two by two-inch wooden stick.

Judge Glen A. Tyler issued an opinion Aug. 28 in which he said the town, Mayor Bruce Paone and six Town Council members at the time had sovereign immunity under common law and also could not be sued for negligence for not disciplining the trio for the alleged abuse.

In addition, Tyler ruled that Scott had authority to negotiate a release Key signed absolving the town, its officials and its employees of liability. Key signed the release in the town attorney's office but not in Scott's presence five weeks after resigning in August 2007 and received \$1,543.77 in vacation and severance pay in return. He later claimed the release was invalid because he signed it under duress.

The court will not impanel a jury to resolve issues about the release, Tyler also said.

But the lawsuit remains active against Scott, Borufsen and Mondorff regarding four counts of assault, battery, false imprisonment — stemming from an Oct. 31, 2006, incident in Scott's office — and physical injury.

into the operation of the police department, which reports to the manager. am going to utilize what we have now and save money." She earned certification in the harbor breakwater project, multi-use trails and a new wastewater facility.

on the internet for late breaking news

Madonias

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Stephen, vice presidents in charge of sales and growing, respectively.

Their daughter, Laurie, was also present but is not employed by the company.

East Coast farms about 4,000 acres on the Shore. This year's crop nearly mirrors last year's, with 70 percent round tomatoes, 20 percent roma and 10 percent cherries, according to *The Packer*, a produce industry newspaper.

The Thursday-night awards dinner was the culmination of an inaugural Act of Kindness Day hosted by Syngenta Seed Care. Syngenta is responsible for coating the tiny tomato seeds.

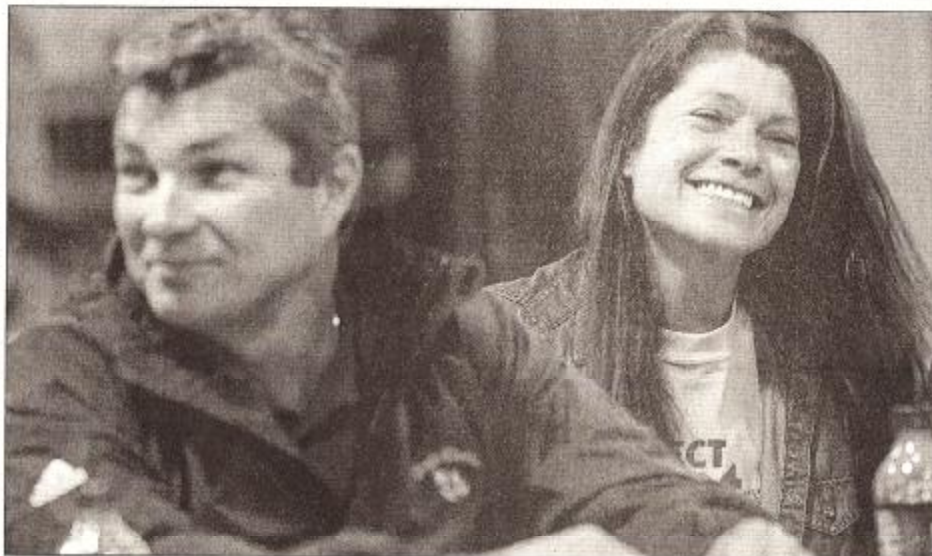
"We put the product on the seeds before they are planted," said Jodie McClement of Syngenta.

"That way they have a much better chance of coming out of the ground without disease or insect infestation.

"It's better for the workers, and it's better for the environment."

As part of the seed company's recognition of the Madonias, employees spent the day helping out the farmworker community and presented a Thumbprint Award to the couple.

The emblem of Syngenta's proprietary seed protection system, called FarMore, is a farm-



by Dick photo

Stephen and Rosemary Madonia smile as they react to their parents, Evelyn and Batista Madonia Sr., receiving the inaugural Thumbprint Award from Syngenta Seed Care. The Madonias own East Coast Growers and Packers and were recognized for their efforts in upgrading migrant farm worker housing.

field in the image of a thumbprint, "because no two vegetable fields are alike," the company Web site states.

While the Madonias provided McClement with the inspiration for an award, it is the FarMore image that inspired its name, the Thumbprint Award, because the couple "puts their thumbprint on the community wherever they go," she said.

Syngenta now plans to open up the award program to all of East Coast's farmworkers in Virginia

and Florida, and the winner will receive their own Act of Kindness Day in their community.

"We're trying to make a good thing better," McClement said. "Syngenta would like to pay that forward."

Accepting the award, Evelyn Madonia, the company's executive vice president, said East Coast is governed by the triple bottom line, a business approach that seeks not

only economic but also social and environmental gain.

"Responsibility is more than a word," she said. "It is a business imperative as well as an investment in the future.

"Therefore, we will not take a step unless we know that the thumbprint we are about to leave on the world is the right one," Madonia said, adding that the company is committed to its employees and focused on

tomato grading machine at the grape tomato shed.

Their Shore tomato labels include King's Choice, Prince's Pick, Skipjack and Red Rose — named for the red-headed Evelyn Madonia and her daughter, Rosemary.

East Coast purchased a Mappesville packing house from Garguilo Inc. in 1998 and since then has expanded its presence on the Shore to include the former Byrd Foods in Parksley and Taylor and Fulton.

"Our idea was to have tomatoes year-round," Rosemary Madonia said.

She said it was only after months and months of negotiations that East Coast struck a deal with Denver-based Chipotle Mexican Grill and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, a Florida farmworker activist group, a day earlier.

The agreement will increase pay to workers by a penny per pound. That translates to a 64 percent increase from 50 to 62 cents per 32-pound bucket of tomatoes picked.

ETHANOL FREE GAS



DAVIS WHARF
MARINE

FILL UP FROM

IT'S "BACK TO TAX