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LOCAL

SECTION B

SATURDAY, April 17, 1993

Keeping the faith on hands, knees

The flowers are probably dead, Marian Trembly cautions as she braces herself for disappointment. She's 74 years old; she can't be lugging jugs of water over here every day.

She steers over to the soft shoulder of the southbound acceleration ramp from SR 46 onto I-95. Wearing denim slacks, white tennis shoes and a "Keep Brevard Beautiful" T-shirt, she steps carefully along



By David A. Hall
FLORIDA TODAY

Florida's Department of Professional Regulation suspended a Merritt Island counselor's license to practice Friday in connection with sexual misconduct involving three juvenile clients.

Thomas James Pagni III, who worked as a mental health counselor through the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, is not allowed to practice mental health counseling until the District Court of Appeal

reviews the department's finding.

"Pagni presents an immediate and serious danger to the health, safety and welfare of the public," DPR Secretary George Stuart said.

Pagni is accused of having sexual relations with a female juvenile and sexual misconduct with two boys.

He also faces charges filed in October by the State Attorney's Office for unnatural and lascivious acts in the presence of a child.

State suspends counselor's license

In 1988, Pagni served as counselor to a 16-year-old girl's family for six weeks after a juvenile judge ordered the counseling for a sibling of the girl.

In 1992, Pagni was approached by the girl's father and asked to counsel the family again. Soon after, Pagni and the girl began to see each other daily and went to movies, went bowling and went to dinner together, the report shows.

In October 1992, the girl's father saw Pagni exiting the

girl's bed and confronted them, the report shows. The girl later told investigators she and Pagni had sexual relations four to five times.

In October 1989, Pagni was referred by HRS to a family with 14- and 12-year-old boys for six weeks of counseling, the report shows.

Pagni continued to send about 40 cards and letters to the boys while they were attending summer camp and took the 14-year-old boy to movies, the mail and to

an amusement park in Tampa, the report shows.

During the friendship, investigators say Pagni videotaped the 14-year-old in his underwear.

Pagni later "made sexual overtures" toward the 12-year-old boy, including an invitation for the boy to shower at Pagni's apartment.

Thomas Pagni Sr. said his son now lives in the Tampa area but that he did not have an address or telephone number. Pagni could not be reached for comment.