



Cartoons lampoon da guv

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Few teenagers can poke fun at the governor and his wife and get a pat on the back for it.

But **Melissa Oppenheim**, a junior at Pine Crest School, recently had that opportunity. "It was a lot of fun," she said. Oppenheim expresses herself through political cartooning. She is the cartoon editor of her school newspaper and her work has also been published in two community newspapers, including the *Weston Express*.

In August, the teen from Southwest Ranches was commissioned to lampoon none other than Florida Gov. **Jeb Bush**, first lady **Columba Bush**, and **James McDonough**, former Florida drug czar and current Department of Corrections chief.

Her three cartoons were introduced at the annual Florida Statewide Prevention Conference held Sept. 20-22 in Orlando.

The cartoons were presented to the governor during the conference. "He thought I depicted him kinder than the press normally does," said the teen, who had a chance to chat with the first couple after her presentation.

She only had a few days to put her cartoons on paper. **Joy Mills**, the conference manager, said this year's event was intended to

Teen's work takes friendly jabs at Gov. Bush and his wife.



MEET THE ARTIST: Eleventh-grader Melissa Oppenheim with Gov. Jeb Bush and his wife, Columba. Photo courtesy of Melissa Oppenheim

honor Bush for his work reducing youth substance abuse during his term. She thought a cartoon would be a unique and enduring legacy.

"He likes to work with kids so we thought this would be perfect," said Mills, who had seen Oppenheim's work on her Web site.

She created a cartoon of the governor sitting at a computer editing photos on his "My Gov Space."

The photos show him tackling hurricanes, working to increase literacy, conquering the FCAT and working to battle substance abuse.

It also pokes fun at the governor's self-proclaimed "bhag," which stands for big, hairy, audacious goal. Bush came up with the term while promising to cut substance abuse in half years ago.

The first lady's cartoon shows her at the helm of a ship loaded with her many accomplishments.

"She's like the captain of her ship," Oppenheim said.

For McDonough, the teen drew him sinking the drug problem while playing the game Battleship.

She loves cartooning as a hobby. She started doodling last year when stuck in San Francisco after Hurricane Wilma.

Looking for something to do, she remembers reading some of her father's news magazines and wanting to try her hand at cartoon expression.

She takes her inspiration from items she reads in the newspaper or sees on television.

"I like the different ironies in life," she said.

To see more, check out her Web site www.Melscartoons.com