

CLAY TODAY



HOOPS
Lady Raiders take title at Jarvis Williams Invitational – SPORTS

Entertainment
Guide
– INSERT

THURSDAY, JANUARY 3, 2019

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VOLUME 53, NO. 1 75¢

Making its mark Keystone Heights steps up Florida Trail efforts

By Wesley LeBlanc
Staff Writer

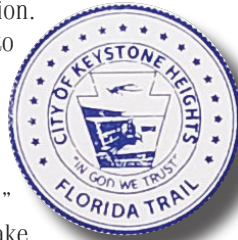
KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – Officials in Keystone Heights are determined to leave a lasting impression with a certain type of visitor who travels to the city.

The city recently received its passport stamp from the Florida Trail Association, which means it joined the ranks of nearly a dozen other areas throughout the state on the Florida National Scenic Trail. When cyclists and hikers who own a Trail Association Passport come through town, city officials can now stamp their passports

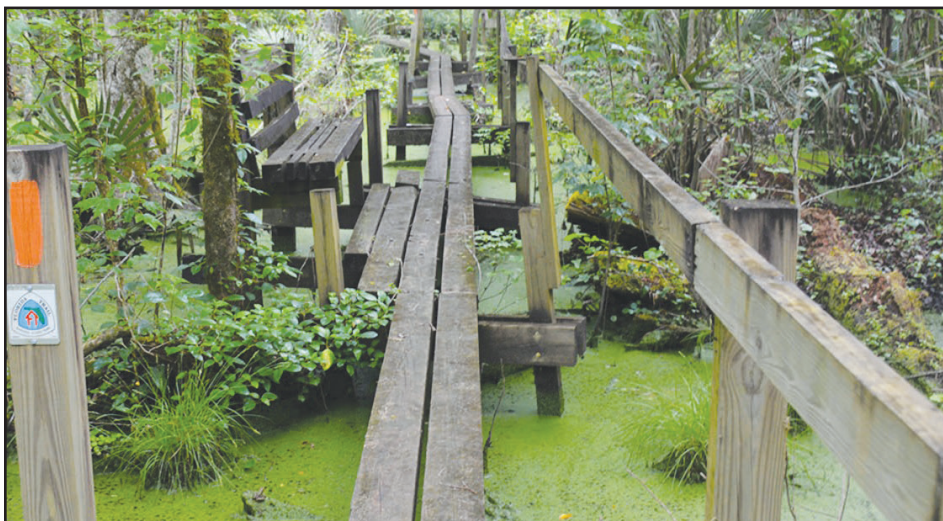
showing proof they have travelled to the city in the Lake Region.

“This is a way to encourage people to explore Keystone and see everything that we, the residents, love about it,” said mayor Karen Lake.

Spanning over 1,400 miles, the Florida National Scenic Trail takes hikers from the Everglades area of the state



SEE TRAIL, 11



The Florida Trail Association's Passport Program helps cities on the trail boost tourism by giving guests incentives and discounts to goods and services in their respective cities.



PHOTO BY KENNETH DETWYLER JR.

Ed Gaw is shown here in the headquarters of Hi-Liner Fishing Gear & Tackle Inc.

Meet Ed Gaw

Making a hometown, truly feel like home

By Kenneth Detwyler Jr.
Correspondent

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – Ed Gaw's impact in Green Cove Springs is no fish story. Instead he and his family were adopted into the community and have since made a mark on the culture that makes a hometown, truly feel like home.

Gaw's story began a long way from

Clay County, a place he probably never knew existed.

After graduating college in Ohio, life took him to the Sunshine State.

Gaw inherited his father's love of fishing, so he used his passion and knowledge to develop Hi-Liner Fishing

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Area maintains record low unemployment rate

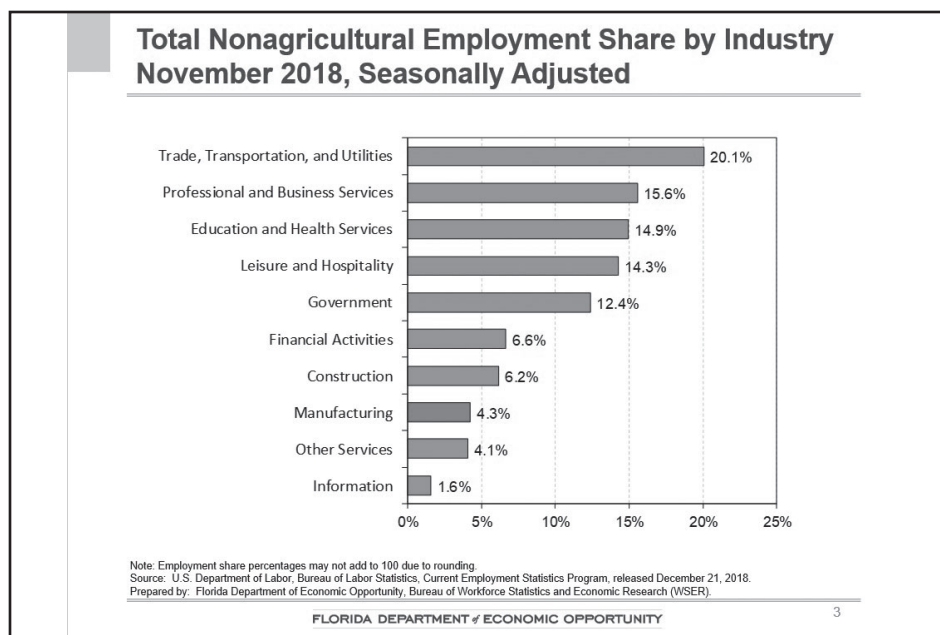
From Staff Reports

JACKSONVILLE – Governor Rick Scott announced that the Jacksonville area added 10,500 new private-sector jobs in the past year, which brings the total number of new private-sector jobs created in Jacksonville to 125,100 since December 2010.

The area's unemployment rate was 2.9 percent in November, which reflects a 0.7 percentage point drop over the same period a year ago. Statewide, Florida businesses created 23,000 new jobs in November. Since December 2010, when Scott took office, 1,673,500 new private-sector jobs were created in Florida.

In November, Clay County had a labor force of 106,306 and out of that number, 103,290 for an unemployment rate of 2.8 percent. According to data from the Florida Department Economic Opportunity, 3,016 Clay County residents were receiving unemployment compensation in November, which is an increase from October's 2,973 workers who were receiving unemployment compensation.

Also in October, the local workforce was only slightly different. There were 106,879



workers in the labor force, of which, 103,906 were working. The unemployment rate was also a steady 2.8 percent.

To look back a year ago, Clay County had a 3.5 percent jobless rate in November 2017 and a smaller workforce. There were 105,307 workers in the Clay County labor

force in October 2017, of which 101,650 held jobs. A total of 3,657 workers were receiving unemployment compensation.

The industry with the highest growth over the year in the Jacksonville area was education and health services with 3,100 new jobs. In November, Jacksonville had

25,914 job openings and of those, 7,588 were for high-skill, high-wage STEM jobs in November.

Florida's November Employment Figures Released Florida's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 3.3 percent in November 2018, down 0.1 percentage point from the October 2018 rate, and down 0.6 percentage point from a year ago. There were 335,000 jobless Floridians out of a labor force of 10,256,000. The U.S. unemployment rate was 3.7 percent in November.

Florida's seasonally adjusted total non-agricultural employment was 8,873,000 in November 2018, an increase of 23,600 jobs (+0.3 percent) over the month. The state gained 241,600 jobs over the year, an increase of 2.8 percent. Nationally, the number of jobs rose 1.7 percent over the year.

With the exception of September 2017 when Hurricane Irma ripped through the state, Florida's over-the-year job growth rate has exceeded the nation's rate since May 2012.

Green Cove Springs' VIA continues tradition of service

By Harrison Dinsbeer
Correspondent

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – A white building on Palmetto Avenue welcomes visitors with a decommissioned white fountain on its lawn and an elegant sign in a modern Gothic script that reads "Village Improvement Association." Its main room includes a stage where a full-color mural depicts a lake and a Mediterranean-style garden.

The Village Improvement Association in Green Cove Springs has been serving Clay County since its founding in 1883, when the members held meetings at their homes and raised money to beautify the town. While cherishing the club's rich history, the women of the VIA work every year to improve their communities through fundraising.

One of the VIA's longest-lasting projects has been the Hacienda Girl's Ranch in Melbourne.

"We founded that in the '70s. . . . Girls are put out: families put them out, or for different reasons they don't have a home, so they go into the home, and we – this is our project – we pay for their keep," said Clara Freeman, VIA historian.



One of VIA's historic artifacts is a portrait of Penelope Borden Hamilton, which was presented in loving memory by the Borden family in 1916.

This shelter for homeless girls between the ages of 10 and 17 can house 45 young women while offering education, recreation, vocational training, counseling and



CLAY TODAY FILE PHOTO

Playwright Tony Walsh, left, escorts VIA Historian Clara Freeman out from the inside of the VIA's Walnut Street offices in this 2015 photo just minutes before Walsh was to go on stage for a reading of his play "Southern Stories" as part of the CalaVida Arts & Music Festival.

more. The club plans to continue supporting this cause, and hosted parts of the CalaVida Music & Arts Festival, which took place Oct. 8-13.

The VIA is taking on another fundraising project

"This year, it's Operation Smile," Freeman said.

Operation Smile is an international charity that provides free corrective surgery to young people born with a cleft lip or palate who live in developing countries.

"Now, the president 10 years ago had Operation Smile, and I think we [the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs] raised somewhere between \$300,000 and \$500,000," Freeman said.

One of the VIA's most beloved traditions is its annual scholarship. As Freeman put it, "Even if we don't give them but just a little bit, they will remember that, and it will help them to know somebody cared about them."

SEE TRADITION, 7

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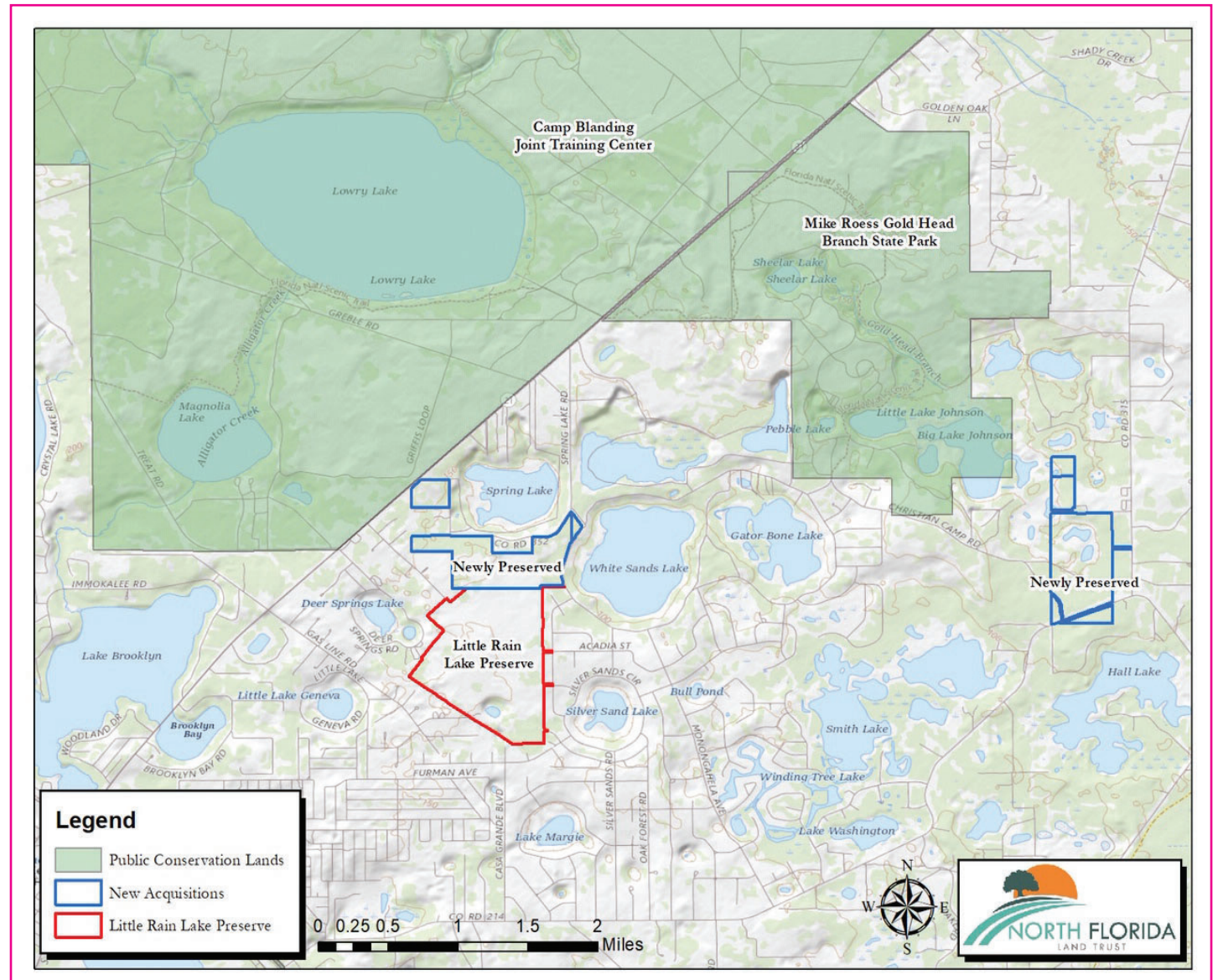
Trust acquires buffer lands around Camp Blanding

JACKSONVILLE – North Florida Land Trust has purchased approximately 465 acres of land in Clay County.

The land is located about three miles northwest of Keystone Heights and east of Camp Blanding. The 200-acre western parcel expands Little Rain Lake Preserve, which NFLT acquired in October 2017, to more than 600 acres. The eastern tract is approximately 200 acres near Gold Head Branch State Park. The proximity of this new preserve to the state park and Florida Trail presents opportunities for hiking, bird watching and other outdoor activities.

“This property contains significant areas of longleaf pine sandhills, which are endangered ecosystems in Florida,” said Jim McCarthy, president of NFLT. “Protection of this land will provide an important habitat for many imperiled species including the gopher tortoise, Florida pine snake, Eastern indigo snakes, and the Florida Black Bear. The porous nature of the land also helps replenish the underground Florida aquifer, which provides fresh water for more than 90 percent of Floridians. Preserving these lands will benefit the lakes of the Keystone Heights area, which have suffered water level declines in recent years.”


NFLT will manage these lands to protect the natural habitats and features, including several clear water lakes surrounded by pine and oak sandhills. They will be working to restore the pine forests to their former condition to provide habitat for many iconic wildlife species such as the Northern bobwhite quail, Eastern wild turkey and Sherman’s fox squirrel. The fresh



water lakes provide habitat for many species of reptiles, fish and birds, in addition to groundwater protection.



Conservation of this property also contributes to buffer lands surrounding Camp Blanding and is important for the protection of military lands from the threat of encroaching development. This acquisition was made possible by funding from the Florida Defense Task Force, the Clay County Economic Development Authority

SEE TRUST, 7



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UF: Charter schools less responsive to neediest students

By Jacob Ogles
FloridaPolitics.com

Charter schools may promise to provide access to a top education for more children, but one University of Florida researcher's findings show that opportunity doesn't get offered readily to many of the most at-risk students.

A new study shows schools of choice often ignore inquiries of students with special needs, and charter schools do so at a higher rate than traditional public schools.



Jacob Ogles

"Our main goal in conducting this research was to provide rigorous experimental evidence on whether schools of choice discriminate against certain groups of students," said Isaac McFarlin Jr., UF assistant professor of education and economics.

McFarlin worked in conjunction with Peter Bergman, assistant professor of economics and education at Teachers College, Columbia University, to study how schools responded to applications that identify different attributes about prospective students.

The "mystery shopper" research found significant differences in response rates from charter schools and traditional schools.

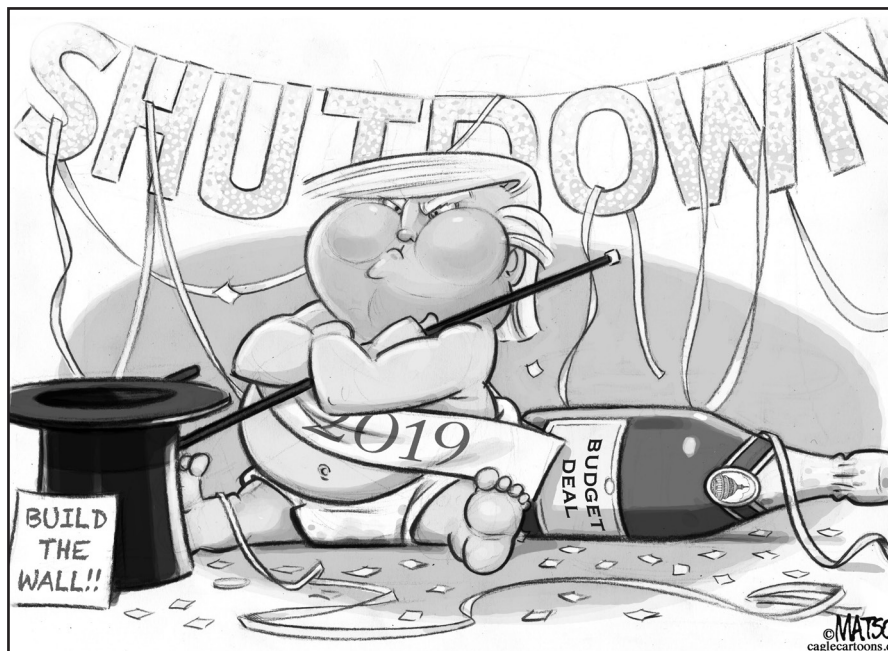
To gather data, researchers sent out 6,452 applications from fictitious parents to schools in 29 states, including Florida. The applications included several potential student attributes to test how schools treated those applications, including disability status, behavior records, extreme academic performance, race, family make-up and gender.

McFarlin said the goal was to set up a "horserace between the admissions behaviors of charter schools and nearby traditional public schools of choice, which may also attempt to limit access to disadvantaged students."

All schools of choice appear less likely to seek out students with poor behavior records or low academic achievement, especially if applications say students have been on an individual education plan, or IEP. The study found a baseline response of 53 percent to all applications, but those

SEE CHARTER, 5

OPINIONS



This Week in History

5 years ago, 2014

AT&T shifted 64 of its customer service jobs from a Downtown Jacksonville office tower to its Fleming Island call center, however, the move did not create new jobs for Clay residents as the Jacksonville residents who held the jobs retained them here.

Clay County Animal Care and Control welcomed Jennifer Broadhurst as its director. She would become the first veterinarian to hold the post in Clay County.

The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office charged Green Cove Springs accountant James Kevin Hargnett with 563 counts of grand theft for allegedly stealing \$15 million from his employer between November 2006 and August 2013.

10 years ago, 2009

The Clay County Sheriff's Office charged Leo Louis Kaczmar III with arson and first-degree murder in the death of his father's girlfriend, 49-year-old Maria E. Ruiz. Kaczmar burned the home at 3159 Dothan Rd. in Green Cove Springs to cover up the homicide.

Clay deputies charged Thomas Miller of Keystone Heights with aggravated domestic battery after he allegedly ran over his wife, Georgiann Miller, causing to flip through the air over the vehicle in their driveway on Twin Lakes Road.

Clay deputies arrested Paul J. Balmier on an outstanding Ohio warrant for drug trafficking only to find he was wanted for murdering another man, his wife and their adult daughter who lived with

them in Franklin Furnace Ohio.

20 years ago, 1999

Orange Park High Assistance Principal Larry Lancaster credited the school's block scheduling program with improving discipline at the school that reported 690 fewer student infractions from the prior year.

Green Cove Springs Police Chief Gail Russell credited controlling the drug trade to the city not experiencing any murders or robberies in the prior year, following a three percent downward trend in crime statewide.

Dale Eggers and his son Rory put the finishing touches on the River Dance music hall they owned and operated on Blanding Boulevard.

30 Years ago, 1989

Jacksonville actor Kent Lindsey, also known as "Safari Sam," came to Orange Park to shoot an episode of the independent TV series "Your Wildest Dreams."

The Board of County Commissioners awarded a \$104,950 contract to the Nolan Co. to renovate and build a new wing on to the Keystone Heights Public Library branch. Another bid was approved for M&S Construction to build a new pole barn at the Clay County Fairgrounds for \$57,000.

After 24 years, Sheriff Jennings Murrhee would not be sworn in during a January 1999 ceremony after being defeated by former Orange Park Police

SEE HISTORY, 5

Word OF THE WEEK

Word of the Week is a feature that aims to help readers boost their vocabulary in a meaningful way that has practical application. Each week, our editorial staff presents a word, its definition and its use in a sentence.

Enervated: A noun meaning "to cause someone to feel drained of energy or vitality; weaken."

"The holidays seem to have left Carol in an enervated state of being."

Letter to the Editor

Organizer thanks community for Wreaths Across America success

I wish to thank each and every one who participated in the 7th Annual Wreaths Across America program on Saturday, December 15 at the Keystone Heights Memorial Gardens cemetery.

This year our donations were overwhelming (\$10,500+ which purchased a total of 1,050 wreaths), the audience (approximately 250+) was just wonderful, including the many children who participated in the program.

The Keystone Heights Elementary School Chorus directed by Melissa Mann, introduced by Tina Bullock, Clay County School Board member, the Cub Scouts from Interlachen and Keystone Heights United Methodist Churches and also Cub Scouts from Pack 362 in Middleburg. It shows that we can teach our children (part of the WAA mission), they were just great.

Thank you to all the veterans motorcycle groups who entered our cemetery all in line. That was awesome, our audience from everywhere, within 100 miles of KH all around; I was told that there would always be a crowd when I was in charge, thank you my dear friends.

I want to thank the past Vice Mayor of Keystone Heights, Paul and Rena Yates along with Karen Lake our current mayor who presented me with a beautiful quilt with the American and Australian flags on it. It is really beautiful.

SEE LETTER, 5

Send us a letter ...

We'd like to hear from you. Perhaps you are concerned about the county commission, the school board or your city council or commission, sit down and take a few moments to write us a letter.

All we ask is that you keep it civil, no name-calling and write

no more than 600 words. All we ask is that you stick to local issues, be clear and make a point. We reserve the right to edit for AP Stylebook errors, grammar and spelling. In your email, type Letter to the Editor in your subject and send it to Managing Editor Eric Cravey at eric@opcfla.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

Opinions

The views and opinions expressed on this page are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Clay Today.

History

from page 4

Chief Dalton Bray.

40 years ago, 1979

A fire at Camp Blanding's Enlisted Personnel Club caused an estimated \$191,500 damage to the 5,500 square foot, two-story wooden building.

Clay County mourned the death of life-

long resident W.E. Cherry who served from 1925 to 1931 on the Board of County Commissioners and from 1937 to 1965 on the Clay County School Board. In 1962, Clay County's newest elementary school was named after him.

Park Avenue Racquet Club co-owners Jim Gordon and Dave Walchle joined its board members in Orange Park to hold a ceremonial groundbreaking for a \$1.1 million expansion of the facility that would include eight air-conditioned racquetball courts, lockers and health spa.

Letter

from page 4

Also, a thank you to Keith Smith, Clay County Affairs officer and Mary Justino who presented me with a lovely bouquet.

I am honored by my veterans, their family and friends who have supported me for the past 12 years with the Veterans Memorial Pathway (which I founded and designed) also the past 7 years with Wreaths Across America National program.

I will always be a veterans' volunteer and leader until I can no longer do it or be here to do it. I want to thank all of the reporters, the speakers, Clint McFarland, owner of the public address system (band -

Black Creek Rizin, chairs furnished by Bob Oehl, Wings of Dreams museum, Amvets 86, who furnished the coffee etc along with Johnnie's BBQ, Hitchcock's and Harvey's, my 2 Chappies, all of my volunteer helpers, and of course all of my donors, new and older ones. God Bless You All. If I have missed anyone, please call me.

See you all next year, write date onto your 2019 calendar, Saturday, December 14th, 2019.

**Your W.A.A. Locator & Chairman
Joan Jones and Staff (Pauline,
Lisa, Kellsie, Harry, Tim & Eddie)
Keystone Heights**

Charter

from page 4

applications marking special education needs saw 5 percent fewer responses.

Moreover, traditional schools were 5.8 percent more likely to respond than charter schools.

The difference proved even more keen at "no excuses" charter schools, those schools that promise an intense focus on academics.

While such schools have shown an ability to turn academic results around in certain poor and minority communities, the study raises the question whether that comes in part because of an ability to weed out the most challenging student cases by ignoring some queries from parents.

"This is one of the most striking findings of the study," McFarlin said, "because it raises the question of whether high-performing charter schools are successful in part because they screen out the costliest-to-educate students from their applicant pools."

Bergman stressed the study doesn't seek to undermine charter schools entirely.

"Many youth benefit greatly from attending charter schools," Bergman said, "but some groups may fall through the cracks in the admissions process. Our hope is that this study leads to constructive dialogue on policies that foster equal access."

Advocates of school choice in Florida say the results of the study don't undermine the value of such institutions but do identify a challenge for school districts and a reason to stay on top of admissions issues.

Bridget Ziegler, a founding member of the Florida Coalition of School Board Members, said the study shows there needs to be attention placed on application practices of all selective schools, as well as an effort to make sure parents know the available options.

"A baseline response of 53 percent is pretty horrible when you consider the education sector should be customer service centric," she said. "That includes all schools."

She said that's why the coalition

Advocates of school choice in Florida say the results of the study don't undermine the value of such institutions but do identify a challenge for school districts and a reason to stay on top of admissions issues.

remains focused on making sure school choice helps students regardless of transportation, family make-up and other elements that can limit who goes to charter schools or magnet programs.

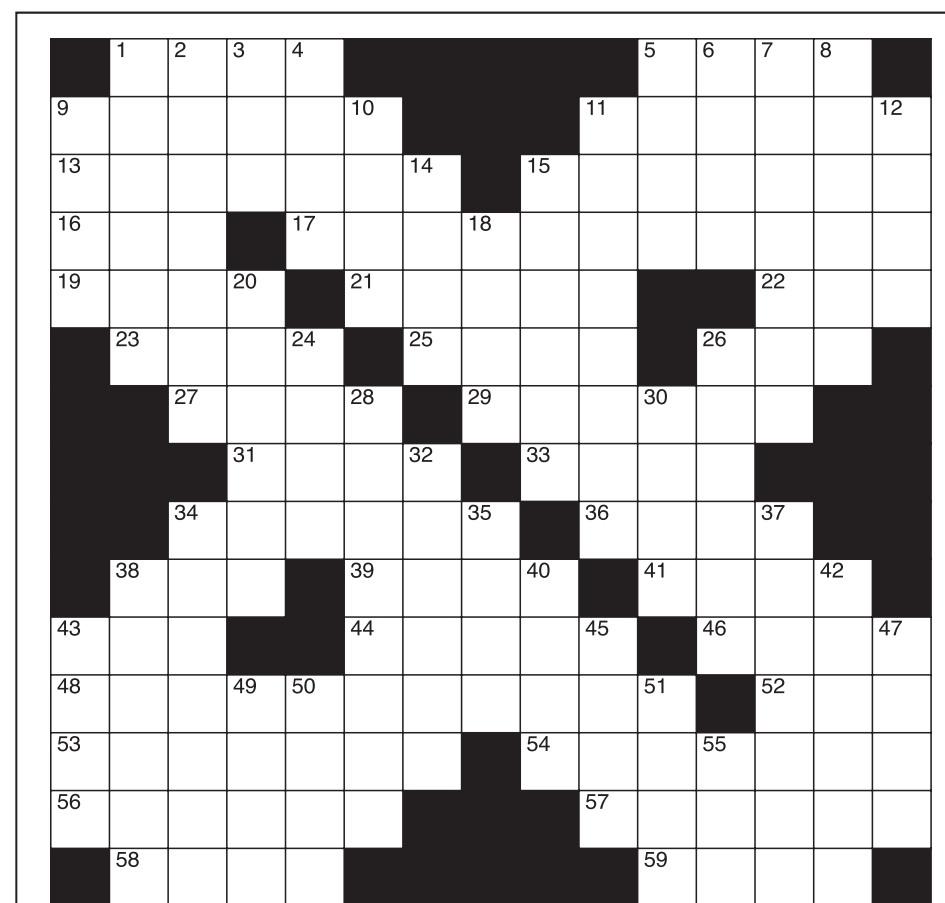
"There is no question, access to information and transportation are paramount to maximize the positive impact for school choice for all students and families," she said. "However, this was known prior to reading the study."

McFarlin and Bergman note that the study, by focusing on applications listing IED needs, specifically scrutinizes how schools handle students with a particular need that costs money.

The research did find that in states where government funding partially or entirely offsets the costs associated with students who bring special needs, the response rates on applications proved negligible.

"Our results suggest that funding is a key constraint on schools' willingness to serve students with disabilities. We show suggestive evidence that cost-reimbursement funding mitigates charter schools' differential response rates for students with IEPs."

Jacob Ogles has covered politics in Florida since 2000 for regional outlets including SRQ Magazine in Sarasota, The News-Press in Fort Myers and The Daily Commercial in Leesburg. He appears courtesy of FloridaPolitics.com.



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. One-time Levi's CEO
- 5. Emperor of Russia
- 9. Islamic theology scholar
- 11. Hammer with a large, wooden head
- 13. Food
- 15. Can be combined
- 16. Midway between east and southeast
- 17. Governs a noun or pronoun
- 19. Gorilla
- 21. Type of trap
- 22. 'Unforgettable' singer
- 23. Atomic #10
- 25. Practice fight
- 26. US gov't branch
- 27. Female deer
- 29. Remarks meant for the audience
- 31. Undergarments
- 33. Prevent from seeing
- 34. Masked
- 36. A Suitable Boy' novelist
- 38. Invisible gaseous substance
- 39. Sour
- 41. County in New Mexico
- 43. No seats available
- 44. Pulitzer-winning composer

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Famed explorer
- 2. Transferred property to
- 3. Clerical vestment
- 4. Free-swimming marine invertebrate
- 5. Cab
- 6. Thin piece of wood
- 7. Persons without pigment in their skin
- 8. Fill again
- 9. Submissive
- 10. His and _
- 11. Sources of stress
- 12. Shelter
- 14. French commune
- 15. Boggy ground
- 18. Old man
- 20. Peanut
- 24. Michael Corleone's personal enforcer
- 26. Geological formations
- 28. Wages
- 30. Insect repellent
- 32. Unit of time
- 34. Musician
- 35. Not good
- 37. Esteemed one
- 38. Structures
- 40. Where workers sit
- 42. Women who foretell the future
- 43. Quantitative fact
- 45. Missing soldiers
- 47. Diminutive
- 49. This (Spanish)
- 50. Hold on to
- 51. Thrust a knife into
- 55. Hengyang Bajaling Airport

Gaw

from page 1

Gear & Tackle Inc.

The company was founded about 10 years ago while Gaw lived in Broward County. The company was a success, but as the already busy area continued to grow so did problems for Gaw's

company. Transporting supplies through South Florida traffic became overly cumbersome. The biggest blow came when their leased headquarters in Pompano Beach was sold from out under Gaw.

Left with no building, he began a search for a new home for Hi-Liner.

"The search took us to about every vacant building in Broward, and Broward is an expensive market to purchase warehouse space," said Gaw.

The exhaustive search did not produce any suitable properties for the company.

This meant Gaw would have to explore areas outside of the place he'd called home since moving to Florida. One idea that floated through his mind was the place his parents reside after relocating from colder climes – Fernandina Beach.

"We went up to Nassau County, found a building, took that offer, went through the whole process," said Gaw. "But it didn't work."

In an instant, Gaw was back where he started, however his luck began to change that same day. While visiting a commercial real estate website, he stumbled upon the property he's in today at 3529 Enterprise Way.

"The next day, me and one of my guys jumped in the truck drove up here looked at the building and went 'that's it,'" said Gaw. "We didn't know a whole lot about Clay County, knew about Green Cove a little bit, but the more we looked around and the more time we spent I went, 'Holy cow! This is definitely going to be something we can take back to the other six families that make up this company'."



PHOTO BY KENNETH DETWYLER JR.
Surrounded by decor that may make guests feel as if they've been transported to a South Florida fishing town, it's difficult to leave Ed Gaw's office and not understand that he is serious about the sport fishing industry.

That's exactly what Gaw did. The board was intrigued by his pitch to move operations to a town they never heard of, in a county most of them hadn't visited. While it's no secret to those who've resided in Clay County for at least the last decade, but this area is growing rapidly. As the executives at Hi-Liner discovered, it's because of the prime real estate market.

Walking into Gaw's office for the first time is a memorable experience. Guests are immediately thrust into the world of fishing, the world Hi-liner fishing gear caters to everyday. The walls are filled with memorabilia, akin more to a maritime museum than a corporate office, a testament to the kind of passion that goes into his work.

"If you went fishing with the same stuff your granddaddy used, you wouldn't catch what you would if you used the new and better," said Gaw. "It's not tree surgery, but it is fishing, and there's a lot of application of science to it."

Since joining the Clay County Community, Gaw has wasted no time trying to leave his mark. He's chairman of the city's Planning and Zoning Board. Along with Green Cove Springs city council member Van Royal, Gaw purchased a plot of land next to the Clay Theater and helped create the popular event, "Food Truck Friday." The highly successful, monthly event has brought a recurring bit of nightlife to Green Cove Springs' core. The event continues to grow at each outing.

According to Gaw, hundreds of food vendors want to join future events and the addition of live entertainment has the potential to make Green Cove Springs a tourist destination year-round.

As Gaw enters his 10th year as a Clay County resident, it doesn't appear that Hi-Liner will be getting a new home anytime soon.

"We left very familiar ground, moved up here to the unknown, and to tell you that I'm emotional about that, I am," said Gaw. "These people have made me feel welcomed, they've made everyone at the company feel welcomed, and from a business owner perspective; you're blessed."

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Tradition

from page 2

This sentiment rang true for one of this year's recipients, Matthew Voigt.

"It really was a lot," said Voigt, who is studying the science of exercise at Florida State University.

Freeman has been serving Green Cove Springs as long as she has lived there. She joined the VIA 47 years ago, when she moved to Florida with her husband.

"We came here in 1970 and bought our property. We couldn't get in to our property because we had to get the people out of our property in order to get in. So, we rented two apartments over at Magnolia Springs. When we finally had a sit-down to the woman that we bought the house from, she told me two things that I needed to do when I come here. One was to get involved in the school system, and the other was I had to join the women's club. So, I joined in '71," Freeman said.

Just as it cares for the community today, the VIA treasures the past. Each room

of its building contains relics of the club's history, from antique chairs to portraits of past members. The most adorned room is the former library, which has become a sort of archive for the VIA's artifacts.

In the old library, a room no larger than an ordinary classroom, shelves line the walls containing a few books from the library's past, but these are outnumbered by tokens of the VIA's history, from photographs of members engaged in service to a grandfather clock that has been in the building since 1899 and was built more than 100 years earlier. Although the clock is unwound today, Freeman set off its hourly bell. As it rang, the small scene above the clock's face began to move: a painted ship rocked back and forth in front of a cloudy sea and a waterfront castle.

Later, she read aloud a speech she had written about the VIA and its history, and concluded, "If we stand together, we have a stronger voice to accomplish what our communities need from us as volunteers, as our girlfriends yesterday. The very best to each of you."



The VIA dedicated this meeting house as its headquarters in 1915.

Trust

from page 3

and the Army National Guard.

These parcels of land are part of the O2O wildlife corridor, a 1.6-million-acre network of public and private lands that connect the Ocala and Osceola National Forests. NFLT is currently leading efforts to accelerate land conservation in the O2O, and leads the O2O Wildlife Corridor Partnership, which is comprised of public and private organizations focused on this purpose. This acquisition brings the Partnership one step closer to their goal of protecting 10,000 acres in the O2O by 2020.

North Florida Land Trust is a nonprofit organization who serves as a champion of environmental protection primarily in Baker, Bradford, Clay, Columbia, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns, Union and Volusia counties. NFLT was founded in 1999 and has protected thousands of acres

of environmentally significant land including property at Big Talbot Island, the River Branch Preserve, Pumpkin Hill, Keystone Lakes Area, Sixmile Creek, along the St. Mary's River and other valued natural areas predominantly in Northeast Florida.

NFLT is funded largely by private and corporate contributions and works closely with private landowners and other public agencies at all levels of government, not-for-profit partners, and foundations.



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Church recontextualizes the Christian message

By Harrison Dinsbeer
Correspondent

MIDDLEBURG — One Sunday morning at Middleburg United Methodist Church, Rev. Brian Sanderson excused himself from the sanctuary in the middle of his sermon. He returned a moment later, struggling to fit two suitcases in the doorway.

He managed to drag them up the stage's steps while explaining his illustration — that people live burdened by their struggles as if by luggage instead of giving them up to God's control.

This sort of effort to clarify Christian wisdom is typical of Sanderson. He and MUMC as a whole hope to communicate the Christian message to the modern day in Middleburg.

"I have no grand vision, nothing new that I bring to the table, other than taking what's solid, what's traditionally our good values — the Scripture, primarily — and finding ways to contextualize, making disciples," he said.

And the reconciliation between tradition and modernity, between an aging congregation and a changing world, is MUMC's main challenge.

MUMC's roots reach down deep.

In the 1940s, members guessed that the church had been founded (as Black Creek Methodist Church) in 1823, since all records of the founding was lost in a fire in the 1890s. Before her death in 1936, a trusted matron of the church claimed that the historic white chapel that stands today was built in 1852 — again, all record of the building's completion is lost.

Though he cherishes the church's proud history, Rev. Sanderson's focus lies in the present.

"Who we are and where we are going — that's what I like," he said. "This church loves our community. And everybody who are leaders here, who are active in ministry, they exhibit that through their heart, their passion to love others."

MUMC reaches out into the community through its weekly Food Bridge program, in which members of the church serve a meal to the hungry in the historic chapel.

It also worked greatly to help Middleburg recover from Hurricane Irma, which devastated much of Florida in September 2017, by hosting work teams and distributing money and flood buckets from the United Methodist Conference. In addition to loving Middleburg, MUMC is focused on its youth ministry.

According to the Pew Research Center, only 27 percent of Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 attended religious services weekly in 2014. Though troubled by a "moral decay" in U.S. culture and by young America's decreasing participation in organized religion,



PHOTO BY HARRISON DINSEBER

The historic MUMC chapel on Main Street, built in 1852. The sign on the lintel reads, "Come and Worship Go and Witness."

Sanderson sees a unique opportunity for spreading the Bible's teachings.

"[Many young people] don't know the Gospel core. They don't understand the stories we know and understand. We get to reteach it all," he said.

But MUMC and Sanderson have a plan to reach the young.

"We gotta be real. . . we gotta show them we care. We gotta spend time. We gotta build a relationship," he said, stopping short of pleading.

This relational perspective to evangelism manifests itself in the running of the church. "Don't give [the members of the church's youth program] your leftover, broken furniture. They're not junk; don't treat them like junk," he said.

Sanderson finds that Christians can hinder the spread of their faith by limiting its involvement in their lives. (In fact, 24 percent of Americans sampled by the Pew Research Center for its 2014 study claimed that religion was just "somewhat important" in their lives.)

"We have to demonstrate to the world that the church is, and always has been, and always will be relevant, because we contain the greatest power on earth. We are God's ambassadors; we are building the kingdom. But sometimes we put a fence around the kingdom we're building instead of letting it be whoever we are wherever we are," he said.

Sanderson finds that many people confine their faith to Sunday mornings, but he recognizes the importance of a meeting place for the Church. Sanderson recalls something that the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, once wrote in his journal: "I look on all the world as my parish."

As Sanderson put it, "we're not a building at all."



OPHS Raider Band wins big in Sugar Bowl competitions

NEW ORLEANS – Months of hard work paid off Jan. 1 for the Orange Park High Raider Band after taking part in the Allstate Sugar Bowl band competitions.

The band is bringing home a plaque for first place in Division AA for Field Show Competition.

The band also received five trophies, one each for Outstanding General Effort, Outstanding Music, Outstanding Drum Major, Outstanding Auxiliary and Outstanding Percussion in the Field Show Competition.

In the months leading up to the Sugar Bowl, Band Director Brett Pikuritz rallied to help raise funds from the community for the trip.

He said the band was motivated and

was working hard to make the trip a success.

“I expect a lot from these kids, I demand excellence,” said Band Director Brett Pikuritz. “So, they’re very deserving of this payoff.”

The Raider Band performed a show called “Out of the Woods,” which features large prop trees and complex marching charts that, if done right, should be one of the best productions the band has ever put together.

“This show was composed for this band based on their strengths,” Pikuritz said. “So far, it’s been a great year, they’re putting in long hours and they don’t really complain.”



For young and old alike, the Treehouse cabin at Camp Chowenwaw Park remains one of the favorite rentals at the county park. Below is another more traditional rental cabin.

Former Girl Scouts camp still a destination after 75 years

By Kenneth Detwyler Jr.
Correspondent

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – In recent years, Clay County has made a name for itself as being one of the fastest growing places in Florida.

Its natural beauty has the tendency to be overshadowed by new developments and sprawling subdivisions. However, this area still has some hidden gems, which remind us that most of our community’s real beauty is in the areas which haven’t been developed at all.

One of those places is the historic Camp Chowenwaw Park north of Green Cove Springs. Sitting on 150-acres of wilderness, the park stands as a living testament to the natural wonders that still exist in Clay County.

“We’re not a far drive[from cities], as soon as you cross into the park property, come through that gate, you immediately see forest, that transition is kind of close to home, and yet still close to any other facilities you might need,” said Park Ranger Ann Stodola.

SEE CHOW, 13



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Community Calendar

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE: Meets Jan. 3, Jan. 10, Jan. 17, Jan. 24 and Jan. 31 at 10 a.m. each date in the Zoning Department Conference Room, third floor, Administration Building, 477 Houston St., Green Cove Springs. Open to the public.

PLANNING COMMISSION: Meets Jan. 3 at 7 p.m., in the Board of County Commissioners Meeting Room, fourth floor, Administration Building, 477 Houston St., Green Cove Springs. Open to the public.

VIETNAM VETERANS MEETING: Vietnam Veterans of America Col. William G. Byrns Chapter 1059 in Clay County meets Jan. 5 at 11 a.m. at the American Legion Post 250, 3939 County Rd. 218, Middleburg. The VVA meets the first Saturday of each month.

QUIT SMOKING CLASS: Jan. 12 from 10 a.m. until Noon at Orange Park Medical Center. This free class provides students with free patches, lozenges, gum, a quit plan, workbook, water bottle, stress ball and more.

Call Northeast Florida AHEC at (904) 482-0189 to register and learn more about classes near you.

MUSICAL AUDITIONS: Jan. 13 at 11:15 a.m., Advent Lutheran Church, 2156 Loch Rane Blvd., Orange Park, Fellowship Hall. All skill levels are welcome from grades 3-12. No preparation needed.

Culminates with April 2019 Musical Dinner Theatre. Info, Courtney Horton, Courtney.Horton@adventop.org or (904) 272-6370.

FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE: Meets Jan. 15 at 3:30 p.m. in the BCC Meeting Room, Fourth Floor, Administration Building, 477 Houston St., Green Cove Springs. Open to the public.

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL: Meets Jan. 16 at 3:30 p.m., in the Clay County Board of County Commissioners Meeting Room, fourth floor, Administration Building, 477 Houston St., Green Cove Springs. Open to the public.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY: Greg Parsons, of the Camp Blanding Museum, presents a talk on WWI POW camps on Jan. 17 at 7 p.m. at the Historical Society meeting in Penney Farms, Council Chambers at Town Hall, 4100 Clark Ave.

CLAY & WATER 2019: Presented Jan. 27-31 at 7 p.m. nightly by Clamour Theatre Company at the Village Improvement Association, 17 N. Palmetto Ave. in Green Cove Springs.

Enjoy free public readings by playwrights from across the U.S.

Join writers Mara Dresner, Ivan Faute, Connie Schindewolf, Bob Stewart, Chris Shaw Swanson, and Danielle Wirsansky and become the first to hear their work.

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FUEL EFFICIENT 37 MPG Hwy/27 MPG City! LS trim. CARFAX 1-Owner, Back-Up Camera, Turbo Charged Engine, WiFi Hotspot, iPod/MP3 Input, ENGINE, 1.5L TURBO DOHC 4-CYLINDER DI... AUDIO SYSTEM, CHEVROLET MYLINK RADIO.. Aluminum Wheels, TRANSMISSION, 6-SPEED AUTOMATIC. 18398A

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2009 HONDA ELEMENT EX

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2012 NISSAN FRONTIER SV

EPA 20 MPG Hwy/15 MPG City! Avalanche exterior and Steel interior, SV trim. CARFAX 1-Owner. Bed Liner, Alloy Wheels, Trailer Hitch, [A94] BED EXTENDER & HITCH, [P01] SV PREMIUM UTILITY PKG. P19780A

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FUEL EFFICIENT 32 MPG Hwy/22 MPG City! BLACK exterior and JET BLACK interior, LS trim. iPod/MP3 Input, Smart Device Integration, WiFi Hotspot, Alloy Wheels, ENGINE, 2.4L DOHC 4-CYLINDER SIDI (SP... TRANSMISSION, 6-SPEED AUTOMATIC WITH... AUDIO SYSTEM, AM/FM/SIRIUSXM STEREO. P19893

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Obituaries

Peter D. Orlandi

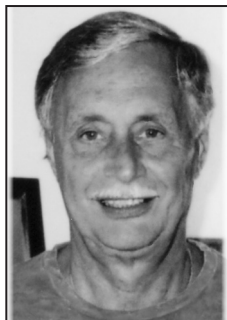
Peter D. Orlandi, 73, of Middleburg, Fla., passed away on December 29, 2018. He succumbed to cancer after a long battle. Born in Westfield, Mass., he was

one of five children of the late Attilio and Virginia Orlandi. Peter graduated in 1963 from St. Mary's High School. He was employed by Columbia Bike for 28 years.

Peter joined the Marine Corps in 1965 and was selected to play the trumpet in the USMC Band. His family and many friends were quite proud of his accomplishments.

Peter was a loving husband, father and grandfather who leaves his wife, Doris; son, Peter and wife Justine; and several grandchildren. He is also survived by his siblings, Ronald (Elizabeth), Bruce (Deborah), Anne Marie and Sherri Zalewa (Alan). Peter was an avid pool player for over 50 years and joined with many Floridians in rooting for the Red Sox.

Broadus-Raines Funeral Home 501 Spring St., Green Cove Springs, Fla. 32043 (904) 284-4000, Fax-(904) 284-1888 www.broadusraines.com



Peter D. Orlandi

Omar Bradley Stepp

Omar Bradley Stepp, 1944-2018 went to be with our Lord on December 25, 2018. He was born June 17, 1944 in Grey

Home, West Virginia. Omar has resided in Sheridan, Arkansas for the past 15 years. Omar loved spending time with his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Omar loved the outdoors and loved watching Westerns. Omar served in our Armed Forces. He was an active duty member of the

United States Marine Corps from 1961-1966. Omar was a loving person and was always willing to help those in need.

Omar influenced the lives of not only his children but those that knew him. Heaven was awarded a precious gift. Omar will be truly missed and will be continued to be loved.

He is survived by his three sons and their spouses; Timothy Stepp (Dominica Stepp) Norvell Stepp (Lisa Stepp) Dakota Stepp (Rachel Stepp): His two daughters and their spouses; Denise York (Bob York) and Angela Newton (Troy Newton): His grandchildren; Samantha Dendor, Annie Stepp, Eli Stepp Jasper Stepp, Charlie Stepp, Dolly (Abigale) Stepp, Josephine Stepp, Caleb Stepp, Blake Norrell, Haley Newton: His great grandchild, Alexis Walker: His laughter and giving heart will truly be missed.

Services for Omar B. Stepp will be held at Orion Missionary Baptist Church, 3826 Stagecoach Rd., Redfield, Arkansas 72132

Martha Baker Hilton

Martha Baker Hilton, 90, of Green Cove Springs, Fla. passed away on December 29, 2018. She was born on February 7, 1928 in Buchanan, Va. to the late Alek and Louise (Rife) Baker. She married her husband, Berlin Hilton, on December 7, 1946 in Grundy, Va.

Martha came to the area in 1957 from Virginia and was a member of Christian Fellowship Church. She worked in the nursing home industry as a care giver until her retirement at the age of 72.

Martha loved to sew, crochet, knit and enjoyed helping others. She was preceded in death by her husband, Berlin Hilton; sons, Michael and Douglas Hilton and brother, Calvin Baker.

Martha is survived by her daughters, Patricia Lynn Harvey (Gregg), Deloris "Dutch" Smith (Steve) and Rita Sue



Martha Baker Hilton

Newman (John); brother, Stewart Baker (Donna); 13 grandchildren; 22 great-grandchildren and 9 great-great-grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday, January 5, 2019 in the Broadus-Raines Chapel with Dr. Tim McDaniel officiating. Martha will be laid to rest at a later date in the Jacksonville National Cemetery with her late husband.

Please sign the family's online guestbook at www.broadusraines.com Arrangements are under the care of Broadus-Raines Funeral Home, 501 Spring St., Green Cove Springs, Fla. 32043. (904) 284-4000.



Helen Sturdevant

Helen Sturdevant, age 89, of Orange Park, Fla. passed away on Saturday, December 29, 2018. She was born on August 4, 1929 in Ashford, Ala. She traveled extensively with her husband, Bert Sturdevant, throughout his military career and settled in Orange Park.

She had been a longtime member of Madeira Drive Baptist Church where she started and maintained the church library and also served as a Sunday School Teacher and VBS Director before joining Oakleaf Baptist Church. Her favorite hobbies were sewing and rubber stamping and she greatly enjoyed creating artistic and personalized greeting cards. Above all, she loved her family and enjoyed spending time with her loved ones. She will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved her.

Mrs. Sturdevant was preceded in death by her parents, Desma and Herb Stafford; a brother, William Joiner; 2 grandchildren; and 1 great-grandchild. She is survived by her beloved husband of 73 years, Bert Sturdevant; 3 children: Darrell "Richie" Sturdevant (Christine), Jerry L. Sturdevant (Cheryl), and Judy R. Andrews (Michael); a brother, Wiley Joiner (Glory); 6 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren; and 1 great-great grandchild.

The family will receive friends from 10-11 a.m. on Friday, January 4, 2019

at Jacksonville Memory Gardens Funeral Home. Funeral services will begin at 11 a.m. officiated by Rev. Robert Ball. Entombment will follow in Jacksonville Memory Gardens Cemetery in the Sermon on the Mount Mausoleum.

Please sign the online guestbook at www.jacksonvillememorygardens.com

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Ethel J. Phillips

Ethel J. Phillips, 95, of Orange Park, Fla., passed away December 27, 2018.

Broadus Raines Funeral Home, 501 Spring St., Green Cove Springs, Fla. (904) 284-4000.



Robert T. Devries Jr.

Robert T. Devries Jr., 81, of Fleming Island, Fla., passed away December 28, 2018.

Broadus Raines Funeral Home, 501 Spring St., Green Cove Springs, Fla. (904) 284-4000.



Betty Jean Mumby

Betty Jean Mumby, 88, of Jacksonville, Fla., passed away December 31, 2018.

Broadus Raines Funeral Home, 501 Spring St., Green Cove Springs, Fla. (904) 284-4000.



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Trail

from page 1

Pensacola Beach. In July, the Florida Trail Association created a passport program, similar to what a hiker might find on the Appalachian Trail. The booklet gives hikers a rite of passage to achieve on the famed Florida trail, but a number of communities, like Keystone Heights, will provide discounted amenities and more to hikers making a pit stop here.)

Lake said becoming a stop on the passport was a no-brainer.

Halle Goldstein, Gateway Community Coordinator for the Florida Trail Association, spearheaded the passport program. Her job sees her traveling to communities along the trail and explaining to them why they should become a passport destination. When she made her way to Keystone Heights, she saw a lovely city that hikers could enjoy.

"Basically, what we've done is set up a partnership with the city hall and local businesses to create advertising for both the city and [the Florida Trail Association] while providing bonuses and opportunities for hikers along the trail," Goldstein said.

This relationship between the parties involved comes by way of a grant that allows Keystone Heights to enter the pass-



The Florida Trail Association has a sampling of what other cities on the Trail are doing with the city-centric stamps for the popular passport booklet. Hikers and cyclists can take part in the passport program and, show their stamp to local participating shops and get discounts when visiting cities on the Trail. It's all designed to boost tourism in cities on the Trail route.

port program cost-free. According to Goldstein, the grant allows the city to obtain the passport stamp for free and set up opportunities for extra business and economic growth as well.

"We want our hikers going through this city feeling welcome," Goldstein said. "At the same time, we're hoping our hikers will spend their money at local businesses. In return, we'd ideally see a relationship grow that sees local business providing hikers with extra water, a place to change clothes or even a hiker's discount.

"This relationship is, at the end of the day, supposed to be mutual and ideally, this passport program is another way for the town and local businesses to get their name out there and an excuse for hikers to go out of their way to check the area out," Goldstein said.

Former Keystone Heights Mayor Tony Brown was a huge advocate for the Florida Trail program. For him, not only is the passport program a great touchstone for the community, but a great way to get people who would otherwise pass the city up, to stop by.

"I always saw it as a benefit economically to Keystone," Brown said. "Having a trailhead in Keystone Heights, which is what we were ultimately trying to accomplish, would bring in bikers and hikers and

those bikers and hikers might have breakfast or lunch in Keystone. Then, Keystone is on their map from that point.

"The trails help build the economy," Brown continued. "Often, people come to a place new to them looking to spend money and economically, for Keystone, that's what we want. It sounds like this [passport program] will help continue that so I completely support it."

Lake, who Brown said is the reason Keystone Heights is on the passport, is excited to see new people in Keystone Heights as a result of the program and hopes to see continued growth along the trails.


"This is just so exciting," Lake said. "It's a free opportunity to have hikers and more come into our city and see what's great about it. It's in effect now and we look forward to the hikers coming in [to City Hall] for a stamp."

Hikers and cyclists can purchase the passport directly from the Florida Trail Association website floridatrail.org for \$5. To obtain the Keystone Heights stamp, which is free, simply go to the Keystone Heights City Hall and ask to be stamped.



Passport programs are not new, but Keystone Heights officials are hoping to create a lot of buzz about joining the Florida Trail Association's Passport Program. Hikers and bikers can now go to Keystone and get stamped and keep hiking or stick around and soak up the city.

Orange Park Community Theatre
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Police Briefs

Orange Park native killed in weekend crash

BRADFORD COUNTY – An Orange Park native died over the weekend in a head-on traffic crash that occurred in Bradford County, according to the Florida Highway Patrol.

Seth Howard, 24, of Gainesville, was driving a 2010 Toyota Corolla northbound at 11:20 p.m. on Dec. 29 on Southwest State Road 231 when his car crossed the center line and struck a southbound 2014 Toyota Camry head-on.



Seth Howard

FHP said the Camry was driven by Antonio M. Flaherty, 24, of Lake Butler, who received serious injuries in the crash along with his passenger, infant son, Neymar Flaherty. Both Flaherty and his son were transported to UF Health Shands hospital in Gainesville for treatment, while Howard was pronounced dead at the scene.

According to FHP, Howard's Corolla rotated and traveled onto the west shoulder and came to final rest facing in a southwesterly direction.

Howard is a 2012 graduate of Ridgeway High and has a degree in engineering from the University of Florida.

Family and friends have launched a GoFundMe page to assist with funeral expenses. To make a donation, go to www.gofundme.com/seth-howard-memorial-relief-fund.

Christmas Eve shooting under investigation

ORANGE PARK – The Orange Park Police Department is investigating a shooting that took place Dec. 24 at approximately 8 p.m. in the Floyd Circle area of town.

When they arrived at the scene, officers found Kendrick Lenard Walker, 41, who was transported to Orange Park Medical Center where he was pronounced dead from a gunshot.

OPPD detectives confirmed that Walker was shot while leaving the Floyd Circle area in a vehicle.

According to a social media posting, detectives have been diligently working on the case since it occurred and have interviewed witnesses and are following up on different leads.

"We believe this incident to be isolated and currently there no longer exists any immediate safety concerns for those who reside in this area," states the post. Residents with information about the shooting are asked to call the Orange Park Police Department at (904) 264-5555 or leave an anonymous tip with First Coast Crime Stoppers at 1-866-845-TIPS (8477).

No bond in aggravated assault case

MIDDLEBURG – A Middleburg man faces aggravated assault charges while being held without bond in the Clay County Jail.

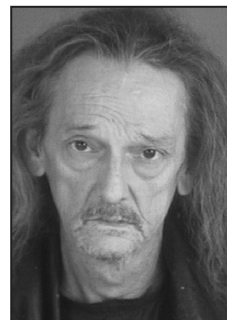
The Clay County Sheriff's Office arrested Richard Allen Webb Sr., 60, on Dec. 23, at 2:12 p.m., after he allegedly threatened to strike another person with a blunt object.

On Dec. 23, the victim of the assault

was at the Winn Dixie at 2721 Blanding Boulevard, where they told police Webb approached him with a blunt object in hand.

The victim and Webb got into a verbal argument, according to the police report. During the argument, Webb attempted to strike the victim with the blunt object. The police report states that a Winn Dixie employee witnessed the fracas. Afraid for his safety, the victim left the area and went home, where he called the police.

Police interviewed Webb at his home in the 3900 block of Appaloosa Road in Middleburg and, shortly after, arrested him, charged with aggravated assault and transported to the Clay County jail where he remains at press time.



Richard Webb

Doctors Inlet man charged with auto theft

DOCTORS INLET – Authorities charged a Doctors Inlet man with grand theft auto after a brief investigation.

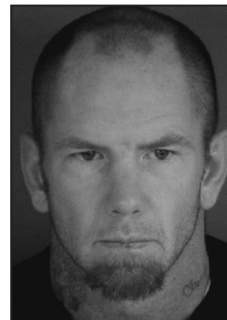
The Clay County Sheriff's Office arrested Anthony Michael Fluhart, 39, on Dec. 21 at 10:11 a.m. after responding to a call about a vehicle that was allegedly stolen from a home in the 1700 block of Wells Road.

Once there, police spoke with the victim who stated he let Fluhart stay the night at his place on Dec. 20 as Fluhart didn't have a place to stay otherwise.

When the victim woke up, he discovered that his 2017 Hyundai Sonata was missing and that Fluhart was gone. On Dec. 21, around 7:51 a.m., police responded to 1710 Wells Road in regarding a white male wearing a black hoodie and sweat pants sleeping in the breezeway with no shoes on, according to the police report. This description matched the description that victim gave regarding Fluhart.

After police named Fluhart their suspect, they began to search for him, according to the police report. Police found Fluhart at 1690 Wells Road and arrested him there. He was charged with grand theft auto. He also faces two counts of petit theft and one count of credit card fraud in an unrelated case.

At press time, he remained in the Clay County Jail where his bond is set at \$32,509.

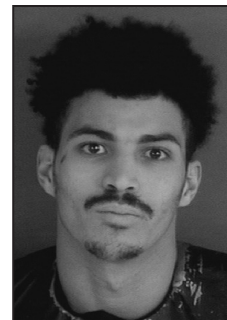


Anthony Fluhart

Teen charged with punching cop

ORANGE PARK – An Orange Park man faces charges of striking a police officer in the eye during a getaway attempt.

The Clay County Sheriff's Office arrested Gabriel Colon Vega, 19, on Dec. 22, at 12:26 p.m. and charged him with strangulation, violence on a law enforcement officer, resisting an officer with violence, tampering and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon without the intent to kill.



Gabriel Vega

According to the police report, around 12:01 p.m. on Dec. 22, police arrived at Vega's home in 1800 block of 88 Kingsley Avenue where they were called about a disturbance in progress.

The victim told police that Vega threatened her with a knife before stabbing holes in the wall of the apartment and strangling her. While police checked the surrounding area for Vega, police heard on the patrol radio that Vega, the child and the victim had returned to the residence.

The officer said he saw Vega run away from the other officers, which prompted a foot chase. After about 50 yards, Vega turned around and punched one of the officers in the left eye.

While trying to apprehend Vega, the same officer was struck in the forehead. Another officer attempted to intervene, according to the police report, but Vega continued to resist. One of the officers drew their taser from its holster and fired it at Vega, which allowed them to handcuff Vega.

While handcuffed and on the ground, Vega attempted to spit on multiple officers. When he was placed in the patrol car, he continued to verbally harass and taunt the deputies on the scene. Vega was charged with strangulation, resisting an officer with violence, tampering and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon without the intent to kill. At press time, he remained in the Clay County Jail where bond is set at \$65,015.

Middleburg woman faces officer battery charge

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – A dispute over how many people are allowed in a convenience store restroom at a time ended Christmas weekend in the arrest of a Middleburg woman.

The Clay County Sheriff's Office ar-



Oshea Beaver

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PD BY CSTF

Arrests & Bookings

Tuesday, January 1

Andrew Paul Harvey, 38, Green Cove Springs, Felony Battery, Domestic Battery by Strangulation, Resisting an Officer

Jesus Marcos, 58, Orange Park, Trespassing

Matthew Lyndle Waggoner, 38, Orange Park, Felony Battery, Domestic Battery by Strangulation, Discharging a Firearm in Public, Drug Equipment Possession, Possession of Not More Than 20 g. Cannabis

Lorie Marie Clarke, 42, Orange Park, Grand Theft \$300-4,999

Matthew Lyndle Waggoner, 38, Green Cove Springs, Methamphetamine Possession

Shane Fausto Godreau, 34, Orange Park, Possession of Not More Than 20 g. Cannabis, Trespassing

Randall Allen Brown, 36, Middleburg, DWLSR, Illegal Vehicle License Plate

Monday, December 31

Emory Lavond Glanton, 50, Orange Park, Failure to Appear for Court

Dawn Lynn Carver, 48, Fleming Island, Petit Theft

Kevin Eugene Furr, 38, Orange Park, Petit Theft

Ocial Odie Green, 31, Green Cove Springs, Two Counts of Simple Domestic Battery

Sunday, December 30

Nicholas Ray Cochran, 40, Lake Asbury, FTA-DWLSR

Steven Lamar Kiser, 48, Green Cove Springs, DWLSR

Adam David Preseau, 32, Middleburg,

Aggravated Assault With a Deadly Weapon

Dale Jeffery Burkett, 49, Uttering a Forged Instrument, Grand Theft \$5,000+

Westly M. Edwards, 18, Orange Park, Petit Theft, FTA-Petit Theft

William Ryan Noel, 19, Keystone Heights, Simple Battery

Erika Jade Olivier, 26, Orange Park, DUI, Refusing Balance Test

Jesus Jay Sanchez, 51, Middleburg, Trespassing

Saturday, December 29

Justin Lawrence Duval, 26, Fleming Island, Cocaine Possession

Dakota Joe Franssen, 23, Middleburg, Aggravated Battery

Tevin Mario Hinds, 21, Argyle, Simple Domestic Battery, Vandalism \$200-999

Zachary Tyler Smith, 23, Middleburg, Simple Domestic Battery

Friday, December 28

Jermaine Brooks, 29, Green Cove Springs, VOP-DWLSR

Christopher Rakes, 49, Orange Park, DUI

Jeremy Noah Hannah, 43, Orange Park, Disorderly Intoxication

Bruce Stephen Jenrette, 51, Middleburg, Simple Domestic Battery

Christopher Randolph Burck, 34, Orange Park, Petit Theft, Grand Theft \$300-4,999

Jared Russell Wells, 20, Middleburg, VOP-Possession of Cannabis With Intent to Sell

Linden Tuslim Samuels, 26, Green Cove Springs, FTA-Grand Theft

Howard Williams, 65, Orange Park, Resisting an Officer, Solicit on Public Roadway Without Permit

Johnathan Paul McConnell, 33, Green Cove Springs, FTA-Domestic Battery

Robin Michele Sivalski, 42, Middleburg, Petit Theft

Michael Allen Singleton, 31, Green Cove Springs, VOP-Domestic Battery

Destiny Anne Marie Howell, 23, Orange Park, Grand Theft \$300-4,999

Kelly Deann Williams, 24, Orange Park, Grand Theft \$300-4,999

Michael Leroy Williams, 46, Orange Park, FTA-No Vehicle Registration

Collier Lloyd Hunt, 20, Fleming Island, Possession of Not More Than 20 g. Cannabis

Thursday, December 27

Craig Bernard Reid, 22, Oakleaf, Possession of Not More Than 20 g. Cannabis

Thomas Lee Klukiewicz, 25, Orange Park, Simple Domestic Battery on Person 65 or Older

Matthew Joseph Hartman, 42, Green Cove Springs, FTA-DWLSR

Keithetta Rose Spikes, 26, Orange Park, Simple Battery

James Frank Little, 45, Green Cove Springs, VOP-Engage in Contracting Business Without Certificate

Jeffrey Allen Parsons, 33, Middleburg, DWLSR

Mitchell Tray Leist, 27, Green Cove Springs, Transport Court Order

Marieka Jeane Waites, 24, Middleburg, Methamphetamine Possession, Heroin Possession, Possession of Not More Than

20 g. Cannabis, Drug Equipment Possession

Adrian Jwuone Phillips, 23, Orange Park, Aggravated Battery on a Pregnant Female

Keith Kelvin Grant, 36, Orange Park, Simple Battery

Tevin Mario Hinds, 21, Orange Park, Vandalism \$201-999, Possession of Not More Than 20 g. Cannabis, Drug Equipment Possession

Kyle Matthew Gibbs, 21, Keystone Heights, Criminal Mischief

Alyssa Brooke Avery, 27, Middleburg, Possession of Not More Than 20 g. Cannabis, Drug Equipment Possession

Wednesday, December 26

Michael Dan Andrews, 44, Keystone Heights, Aggravated Battery on a Pregnant Female, Simple Battery

David Scott Riley, 53, Middleburg, Simple Battery

John Clayton Garvin, 27, Orange Park, Burglary

Kaley Brook Williams, 28, Green Cove Springs, FTA-Trespassing

Richard Orvin Torske, 66, Orange Park, DUI

Jeffrey Aaron Polcyn, 55, Orange Park, Disorderly Intoxication

Andres Atanael Garcia Morales, 34, Fleming Island, DUI With Property Damage, Leaving the Scene of a Crash Involving Damage, DWLSR

Earl Sparkman, 39, Green Cove Springs, Out-of-County Warrant

Police

from page 12

rested O Shea Lhianne Beaver, 26, on Dec. 23, at 3:49 a.m., on charges of petit theft, resisting arrest with violence and battery on a law enforcement officer.

According to the police report, on Dec. 23, Beaver and three other customers en-

tered the Circle K located at 2000 State Road 16 West. The customers attempted to enter the bathrooms in the Circle K in pair, which the clerk said was not allowed. While exiting the store, one of the females, grabbed three bags of popcorn and a bag of candy and left the store without paying, according to the police report.

The clerk called police who said, when they approached Beaver, they smelled al-

cohol on her breath.

When police attempted to place Beaver into custody, she pulled her arms away and attempted to push the officer away, so she could leave. Beaver failed and once placed in the back of the police car, she violently kicked the back driver's window of the police vehicle.

When police attempted to stop Beaver from kicking, she kicked an officer in the

right leg and spit on his face.

Another officer who attempted to restrain was also kicked in the right jaw, head-butted on his right brow and spit in his face.

Beaver was charged with retail petit theft, resisting arrest with violence and battery on a law enforcement officer. At press time, she remained in the Clay County Jail where her bond is set at \$37,508.

Chow

from page 8

The camp opened July 1, 1933. Over the next 73 years, local Girl Scouts spent their summers roasting marshmallows, swimming and exploring the grounds that generations of Scouts had walked before them.

In 2006, Clay County purchased the camp from the Girl Scouts of Gateway Council with assistance from the Florida Communities Trust using Florida Forever funds. The Park now operates as a conservation, historic preservation and outdoor recreation area.

"We don't mind at all, that people still

know it as the old Girl Scout camp, because it was, and that's part of our heritage," said Stodola.

That heritage is on display upon entry into the park. It's awe inspiring for first time guests.

For people who've grown up around the park, spending summers with Girl Scout troops, learning to swim in the pool (or even right in Black Creek), and roasting their first marshmallow in a campfire, a rush of memories comes back.

The camp includes 10 campsites and offers overnight cabin rentals. Another little-known fact is that there is meeting and event space on the property. One of

the buildings is an original cabin from the 1930s. It's arguably Clay County's most affordable venue located on the water.

Though the park has remained in great shape over the years, it's not immune to hazard. Like much of Northeast Florida, Hurricane Irma damaged a significant portion of the camp's Jungle Trail and fishing pier. Some of the destruction could be seen while crossing the Black Creek Bridge.

"We will be rebuilding that, the funds have been approved," said Stodola.

Nestled along the mouth of Black Creek and flowing out to the St. Johns River, children still fish as the water's edge and soak up the scenery in its natural, pure

state. One walk on to the grounds provides guests with makes the land so special. Every step along the trails makes visitors a part of Camp Chowenwaw Park's history. The legacy the park leaves behind will always be its land. And as long as the land is there, so will its memories.

Meanwhile, the area surrounding Camp Chowenwaw Park continues to develop, and welcome new neighbors, rather than pushing them away.

"We certainly invite any of our new neighbors who are coming to our property," said Stodola. "We're right in your backyard, so please come over."

wjct HIGHLIGHTS



Finding Your Roots Season 5 – Tuesday, Jan. 8 at 8PM on WJCT-TV 7.1 (Comcast 8, 440)

The acclaimed genealogy series returns to explore the family trees of George R.R. Martin, Sarah Silverman, Chloe Sevigny and others



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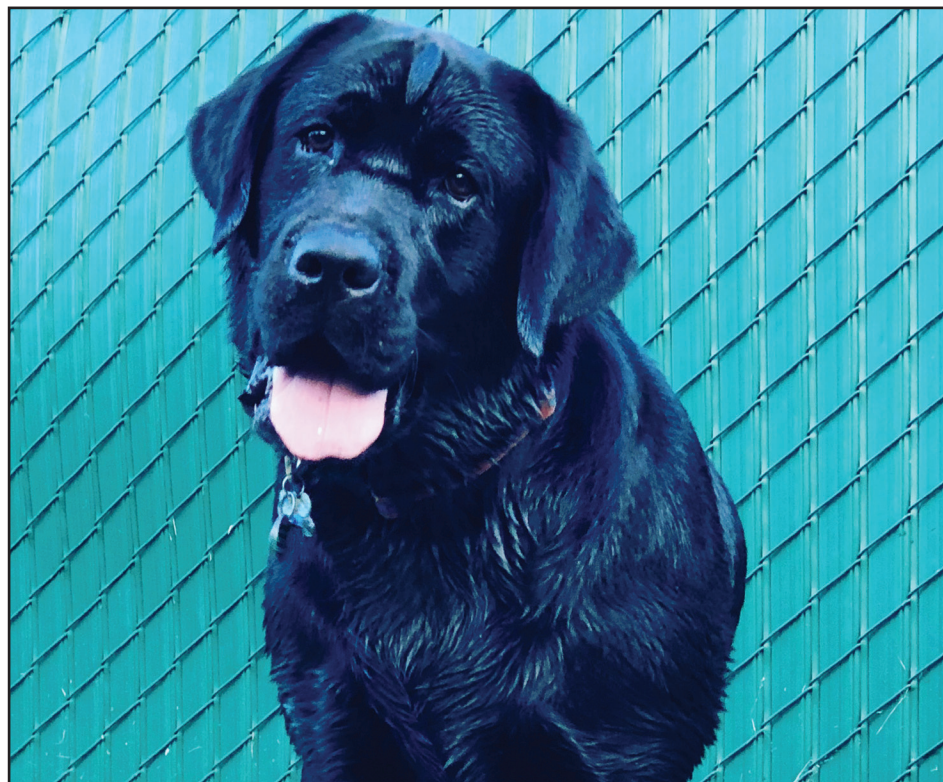


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Protect pets from poisonous plants

By Bradley Burbaugh, Ph. D.
UF/IFAS Extension Director

On the weekends I enjoy taking long walks with my sidekick Mason, a Labrador retriever. Recently Mason has started nibbling on and eating flower blossoms from the plants we encounter during our walks. Does your pet like to nibble on plants in the woods or in your landscape? If so, you have probably wondered, like me, are these plants going to hurt my furry friend?

So, I did some research and believe it or not, a surprising number of the plants in Florida may be toxic or irritating to our pets. Toxicity is a defense mechanism used by plants to protect against grazing. As a consequence, many of these toxins will make the plant smell or taste bad and pets will generally avoid them. However, young pets, like Mason, may eat them out of curiosity or boredom.

I should note that just because a plant is listed as toxic does not necessarily mean that ingesting that plant is fatal. Many of the plants on the toxic list will cause diarrhea and vomiting, but no life-threatening conditions – other plants can be dangerously toxic to your pet.

The plants listed below are common to Clay County and may cause a problem. This is a sampling of some indoor plants that are toxic to pets: alocasia, amaryllis, Ti Plant, English Ivy, dieffenbachia, Chinese evergreen, philodendron, corn plant, cyclamen, desert rose, dracaena, peace lily, pothos, poinsettia and schefflera.

Some landscape plants that may cause a problem include: azalea, bird of paradise, caladium, cape jasmine, Carolina jessamine, chrysanthemum, daffodil, day

lily, kalanchoe, lantana, oleander and sago palm.

The plants listed above have been reported as having systemic effects on animals and/or intense effects on the gastrointestinal tract. This list is not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather a compilation of the most frequently encountered plants in our area.

I encourage you to research this topic for yourself. Once you start reading, it's an eye-opener to realize how many plants can be toxic or irritating depending on what part of the plant is eaten, or if it's in excessive amounts. You can do further research using this University of Florida resource <http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/agriculture/toxic-plants/> or search for toxic plants at <https://www.aspc.org>.

Also, symptoms related to plant poisoning are numerous and vague, and are best left for the experts. As always, if your pet is acting strangely or seems sick, call the veterinarian. In an emergency, call a veterinarian or the Animal Poison Control Center 24-hour emergency hotline at 888-426-4435. Also, if you would like help identifying plants your landscape call UF/IFAS Extension Clay County at (904) 284-6355 or email brad784@ufl.edu.

While you might not consider eating most of these plants, our pets are sometimes less discriminating about what they will nibble on – but being aware of the potential hazard may save your pet some discomfort and help avoid an expensive trip to the vet.

Mason is quite entertained with this new-found activity and I feel more comfortable now knowing which plants to avoid. I hope you do too!

Community Briefs

Learn the history of the POW Camp at Camp Blanding

PENNEY FARMS – Here's a chance to learn about the time when captured Nazis lived on Clay County soil.

Greg Parsons of the Camp Blanding Museum will be the featured speaker on Jan. 17 at 7 p.m. at the Historical Society meeting in Penney Farms.

The presentation will be held in the Council Chamber at Town Hall, at 4100 Clark Ave.

Parsons will talk about the foundation of the Prisoner-of-War Center at Camp Blanding during WWII. By the end of the war, there were over 1,000 prisoners which made the Camp Blanding site the largest such facility in Florida. This promises to be a powerful program with many human-interest insights. Plan to bring your questions and join us for a lively discussion.

Organ concert comes to Penney Farms

PENNEY FARMS – The Penney Farms 2018-2019 Commemorative Concert season will begin 2019 on a "high note" with an outstanding organ recital by Mark Coffey on the Holtkamp organ, in Penney Memorial Church.

The concert will be held on Jan. 13 at 7 p.m. in the church at 4465 Poling Blvd. in Penney Farms, off State Road 16 at the junction of County Road 218.

Coffey is organist and director of music at First Presbyterian Church in Gainesville where he oversees an extensive music and fine arts ministry. After completing his bachelor's degree in music education at Towson State College, he earned a master of music and a doctor of musical arts at the Eastman School of Music. His dissertation focused on the renowned mechanical-action organ builder, Charles Fisk. Do plan to attend this program which will highlight the musical capabilities of the artist and of the wonderful Holtkamp organ. This free performance is open to the public.

Play 'citizen-scientist' at Camp Chowenwaw Park

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – Nature lovers looking for a fresh outdoor experience to start the New Year have a chance to play citizen-scientist at one of Clay County's parks.

Come to the Camp Chowenwaw County Park Nature Center on Jan. 12 to find opportunities you can join, by yourself or with a group. At 11 a.m., Clay County Park Ranger Ann Stodola presents "After the Christmas Bird Count – citizen-science projects through the year." To help hone your skills or design your own project, Bridgett Cotton of Clay County Libraries will have on-hand bird and nature-related materials from the library collection available to check out right on site.

The Center's exhibits will be open 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. This event is free and open to the public.

The park is located at 1517 Ball Rd., north of Green Cove Springs, off U.S. Highway 17. The Nature Center is in the Kiwita Building.

Visit the website campchowenwaw.claycountygov.com or call the park for more details at (904) 29-805, extension 3.

Shepherd's Center offers Adventures in Learning

ORANGE PARK – The Shepherd's Center of Orange Park is pulling out all the stops to help residents 55 and older remain active this winter.

A new slate of about 50 Adventures in Learning classes kick off this month at three locations.

The winter session of Adventures in Learning on Mondays begins Jan. 14–March 18 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Orange Park United Methodist Family Life Center, one block east of Park Avenue on Kingsley, right on Reed Street.

SCOOP Monday classes are Elder Law, Bingo for Prizes, Electric Keyboard Instruction, Tai' Chi Easy, 1968-1969/Rock-n-Roll through "Woodstock," Art Appreciation, Movement/Exercise, Pennies from Heaven (Canasta), Current Events, Line Dancing, Needlework, Crochet, Mah Jongg, Yoga for Seniors, Grandma Moses, Watercolors/Acrylics, Reading the Bible, Beginning Bridge, 20th Century World Leaders, Financial Planning, Feng Shui, Hootenanny Sing Along, Calligraphy, Trivia, Pine Needle Basket Making, Card Making.

Lunch is served on Mondays at Noon and includes entertainment or speakers. Lunch is \$6 and reservations are required.

Bridge Playing is on Tuesdays from 1:30-3:30 p.m. at Orange Park Presbyterian Church. Thursday classes begin Jan. 10 through Feb. 28 from 9 a.m.-Noon at Cross+Road Lutheran Church on County Road 220 and 5101 Lakeshore Dr. W. on Fleming Island.

SCOOP Thursday classes are Beginning Tai' Chi Gung, Knitting, Protect Your Nest Egg, iPad Instruction, Medicare/SS/Insurance Questions Answered, Real Life Organizing, Chair Yoga, Crochet, Pennies from Heaven (Canasta), Water Colors Workshop, Beginning Genealogy, Smart Phone Instruction (iPhone only).

All classes on Monday and Tuesday are one fee of \$40; Tuesday and Thursday classes are one fee of \$30; and all classes (Monday – Thursday) are one fee of \$60 (\$10 discount) for 8 weeks. There is a one-time new member fee of \$25. With more choices and locations, the Center hopes to reach more adults 50+ throughout the community to share the fun, fitness and friends.

For more information, contact SCOOP at (904) 269-5315 or info@tscoop.org. The Shepherd's Center office is at 2105 Park Ave., Suite 30, Orange Park.



Dr. William P. Register
First Assembly Fleming Island

Faith Walk

New things

A baby is born. A couple marries. A family moves to another state. A young person graduates from college. There are always new beginnings. And another segment of the future stretches before us.

It seems natural to think of things like these at this time in our calendar. We call the beginning of every year the "new year." Without having to do it only at the start of another year, God looks at our lives and is always ready to help us "start over again."

Someone said, "He is the God of a second chance." And He is. He is also the God of third chances ... fourth chances ... fifth chances. In fact His "love allowance" for us is unlimited.

He permits us to forget the past. I don't mean He just allows us to

forget. I mean He enables us to forget the troubles and treacheries of the past and serve Him with a new start!

"Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

This is the Apostle Paul telling us that the Lord gives us a new start or new beginning when we come to Christ. This same servant of the Lord wrote, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me." (Philippians 3:13-14)

Forgetting the past. Pressing forward to the prize God has for us. That is the direction we are being given by the Spirit of the Lord every day.

"The future is as bright as the promises of God." When you accept a new start in your life and begin the pursuit of God's will, plan and purpose for you, you are walking into a bright new light.

"Put on your new nature, created to be like God – truly righteous and holy." (Ephesians 4:24 NLT) This is not just a self-help resolution. This is a calling of the Spirit which He enables us to fulfill. Walk in the Spirit this new year!

■
www.firstagcc.org Write the Pastor at PastorBill@firstagcc.org

Military Brief

Vega completes basic training

SAN ANTONIO, Texas – U.S. Air Force Airman Ariana K. Vega graduated from basic military training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, San Antonio, Texas.

The airman completed an intensive, eight-week program that included training in military discipline and studies, Air Force core values, physical fitness, and basic warfare principles and skills.

Airmen who complete basic training also earn four credits toward an asso-

ciate in applied science degree through the Community College of the Air Force.

Vega is the daughter of Maira and Joseph Vega of Middleburg and is a 2018 graduate of Oakleaf High School in Clay County.



Ariana Vega



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Lady Raiders steal Jarvis' hoops title

Fleming Island places third

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

PALATKA – Behind strong inside play from junior center Sha'mia Capers, the Orange Park High Lady Raiders basketball team took care of previous seventh ranked in 4A University Christian (9-2), then came back a day later and took out tournament host Palatka 55-31 for the title at the seventh annual Jarvis Williams Invitational held Dec. 27-29.

"I like that the girls responded strong in this three-day tournament format," said

Orange Park coach Fred Cole, who entered the tournament 13th ranked in 6A. "On the third day, the measure of wills comes to the front and the team that can keep their composure and play through fatigue will win. We did that."

Cole, with his first major title since taking the Orange Park job in 2016, got a tournament Most Valuable Player trophy from Capers who took on size-advantaged opponents against both University Christian and Palatka, plus All-Tournament trophies for guards Macie Faucett and Nayeli Williams.

SEE RAIDERS, 22



STAFF PHOTO BY RANDY LEFKO

Orange Park High forward Sha'mia Capers powers up for a shot in their semi-final win over University Christian during Jarvis Williams Tournament at Palatka. Raiders won the team title.

Blue Devils upend Alabama power; second in tourney

By Ray DiMonda
Correspondent

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – Clay High boys basketball got a sterling defensive effort against a top-shooting Alabama team to get to the championship final of their own Blue Devil Holiday Basketball Classic, but the effort fell short in the final with 8A-Lake Howell exacting a 64-52 championship win Saturday night at Clay High School.

"The practice before this tournament, we worked on everything; man-to-man, zone, any possible thing because we just weren't sure what we were going to get," said Clay coach Jared Moses, now 8-3 with a January 8 match with district 5-6A foe Ponte Vedra. "The grit of this team is we are finding ways to win ugly. I guess it's good. Everyone tells me it's a sign of a decent team, so..."

The seventh annual event saw teams from the Orlando area as well as the Skyline High Vikings traveling over 500 miles from Scottsboro, Alabama.



CORRESPONDENT PHOTO BY RAY DIMONDA

Clay High guard Jaylin Copeland powers for shot at Clay High Christmas Tournament win over Skyline High of Alabama. Blue Devils lost in championship game to 8A-Lake Howell.

In their semifinal win over Skyline, the Blue Devils put on a defensive clinic which held Skyline to four points in the third

quarter. The 43-32 victory paved the way to face the Lake Howell High (Winter Park) Silver Hawks for the tournament champi-

onship on Saturday evening.

Against Lake Howell, Clay was out-matched size wise, but used all their weapons to slow the Silver Hawks and create a 17-17 tie in the second quarter.

Lake Howell called a time out, took some enthusiastic encouragement from their coach, and never looked back as the Silver Hawks used their height to work around Clay on their way to a 64-52 win, sending Clay away as the second place victors in their tournament.

"The whole purpose of this tournament is to see if we can get to the district tournament with the likes of Palatka (district leader 8-1, 4-0), which is a tall task," said Moses.

On Friday against Skyline, a top 1A Alabama school, Clay used a shifting double defense that seemed to knock Skyline off track quickly. At the half, Clay was only up by a single point, 17-16, but was killing it on takeaways. The problem was hitting the basket at the other end. All night, even

SEE DEVILS, 22



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'Chaos' upended in Island final

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

FLEMING ISLAND – The Fleming Island High boys basketball success has ridden a wave of fast and furious pace with high-pressure defense for eight straight season opening wins including two in the Battle on the Island Christmas tournament hosted by the Golden Eagles program.

"We knew a game like this was coming and, at least, it got here early and we can take that," said Fleming Island coach Traavis Chandler. "This was playoff level game in the middle of the season. We beat ourselves; 15 turnovers."

University Christian High (11-2; losses to Andrew Jackson and Palatka) presented a similar game plan and the tournament final between the two came down to an out of bounds call with 2.5 seconds on the clock that could very easily have been three free throws from Fleming Island sharpshooting guard Gianfranco Grafals.

University Christian wins 51-49.

Fleming Island opened the tournament with wins over Thomas County Central High of Thomasville, GA (71-32) and Atlantic Coast (88-74) to advance.

University Christian defeated Orlando Evans and Farragut Academy out of St. Petersburg to advance and win the final.

Against University, Fleming Island

opened the game flat and gave up a 14-6 first quarter lead that put the Golden Eagles offense on defense as the Christian speed was equal to the Golden Eagle press defense.

"We had some dribbling problems and turnovers," said Chandler, noting five ball-handling errors and a slew of missed shots. "It was loud and fast and we got stuck in second gear instead of getting to fourth gear quickly."

In the second quarter, Fleming Island started landing jumpers and was figuring the University halfcourt trap defense with 17-12 run getting the halftime score at 24-23.

An alley oop from Sebastian Astor to Grafals got the ball rolling from 16-9 with Grafals snagging two steals to layups from Aaron Brown and Astor tht tied the game at 16-16.

"This game is good to prepare us for the playoffs," said Astor. "The guys off the bench did a nice job. They stepped up."

A nifty behind-the-back pass from Khalid Pogue to center Elias Martin put the Fleming Island offense in gear for the final push to the halftime buzzer.

In the third, Pogue would push the pace with back-to-back threes and a steal at half court, with Jordan Miles also hitting a three, but University kept pace to end the third stanza up 39-36.



STAFF PHOTO BY RANDY LEFKO

Fleming Island High forward Isiah Martin powers up for dunk in championship game against University Christian at the Battle on the Island Tournament at Fleming Island High School.

"I've been in a slump the past couple of games," said Pogue. "Coach just kept keep shooting, it will come."

In the fourth, Grafals got a three shot foul to tie the game at 39-39 with Pogue hitting another three to put Fleming Island up 42-39 for their first lead.

"We showed some guts in the second half," said Astor. "Khalid came up big with threes and steals."

Pogue would get another steal to layup before Marc Inman sunk his first three of

SEE EAGLES, 21

Oakleaf knocks out 8A-Lee

Third at Baker County Tourney

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

MACCLENNY – In a clash of potential region 1-8A foes, the Oakleaf High Knights' basketball team took the first punch with a 54-52 win over Robert E. Lee High School on Dec. 27 at the Florida First Coast Classic at Baker County High School.

8A-Oakleaf (6-4) continued in the tournament after the win with a 69-41 loss to 2A-Washington County High (9-4) of Sandersville, GA, in the semifinal before beating host Baker County 55-46 to take the third place team trophy. Guard Kenny Thomas landed 19 points with five steals. Williams had 11 rebounds and five blocks.



STAFF PHOTO BY RANDY LEFKO

Oakleaf High guard Amari Fletcher tries to get past a Lee High defender in the Knights' win.

"I like a game like this (Lee) because it is a potential peek at a region playoff atmosphere," said Oakleaf High coach Jason Price. "We got a great game from Chantz Williams with seven blocks and Jalen Rivers adds to the defense in the

middle with his strength."

Washington County eventual won the tournament title with a 89-65 win over Hamilton County (FL). Ridgeview

SEE KNIGHTS, 20

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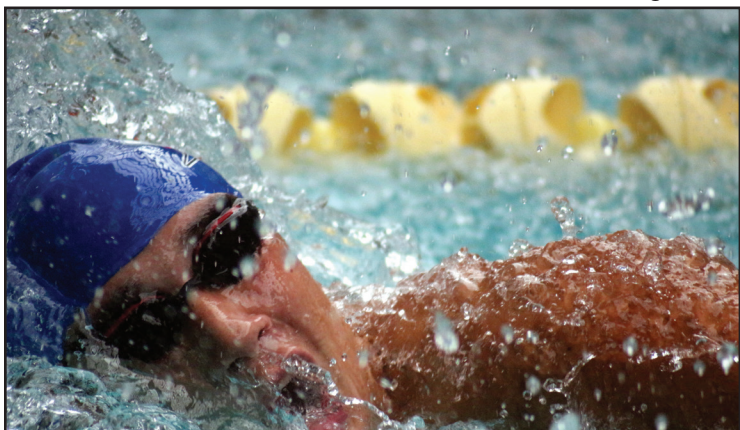
BY RANDY LEFKO



St. Johns Country Day School's Kirsten Pavlisko controls ball for Spartans. Pavlisko was part of NCAA champs FSU season as a freshman defender.



Clay High defenders Lea Plante, No. 7, and Ciara Zino, No. 13, fight off Westside flanker in Blue Devils playoff win.



Clay High freestyler Zach Eubanks powers through in 50 free style at region 1-2A championships.



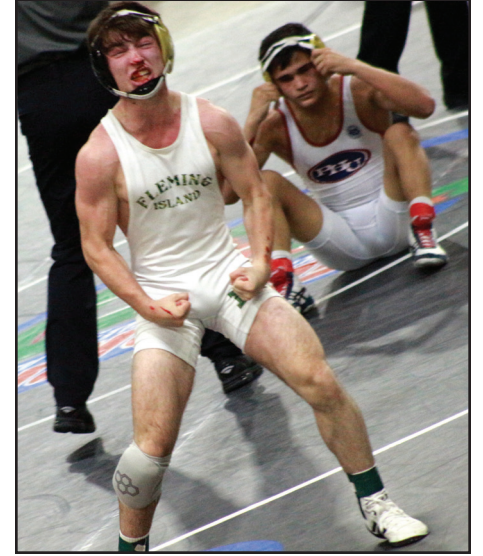
Clay High quarterback Spencer LeSage takes a hard fall after attempting a dive into the end zone in Blue Devils' loss to Raiders in key district game at Clay High School.



Fleming Island shotputter Darius Gooden puts effort into throw at region meet.



Two NBA champions; James Tucker (1955), left, of Fleming Island, and Hall of Famer Kareem Abdul Jabbar (1971, 1980, 1982, 1985, 1987, 1988), gets historic handshake in Orlando meeting.



Fleming Island wrestler Briar Jackson reacts to explosive 47 second pin for state title.



Clay High baserunner Zack Morris, wearing pink shirt for Clay High teacher Mrs. McCool, crosses home plate in rivalry game with Ridgeview High School.



Orange Park High wide receiver Deatwaan Holton eyeballs scoring pass in first half of Raiders upset district win over Clay High School.



Oakleaf High first-year head football coach Frank Garis, right, checks in with assistant Mark Michaels during overtime region playoff loss to Tallahassee Lincoln.



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Knights

from page 18

also competed in the tournament; losing to Hamilton County 68-60 and Lee.

Against Lee, a key region 1-8A possible playoff opponent, junior center Chantz Williams emerged as a key player with seven blocked shots including the final one in the final minute that came moments before guard Markel Allums hit Williams at half court who found guard Kenneth Thomas under the Lee basket for the go-ahead layup with 11 seconds on the clock.

"We got good production from our young guys off the bench and the seniors stepped up at the end to close the game," said Price. "Guys like Chantz and Kenny (Thomas) have to be the leaders so the young guys can see what is expected."

On the next Lee in-bound, from half-court, Williams hovered over Lee guard Cobia Gates as he drove to the basket for a final shot. Williams knocked the forced shot out of bounds. Lee had one final in-bound attempt, but their buzzer shot was off the mark.

Against Lee, Oakleaf opened with a 17-8 surge that finished at 20-17 after one quarter with Oakleaf hitting four three-pointers; Thomas nailing two and Quintez Johnson and Corey Humbles both hitting one apiece. Lee guard Teron Haywood hit a three at the buzzer to close the gap.

In the second quarter, Oakleaf ramped up the trap defense at the half court stripe with the 6'-4" Williams combining with 6'-



STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO

Ridgeview High forward Augustin Kingambe, No. 24, powers up for a shot against Hamilton County in the Panthers' tournament loss at Baker County Christmas tournament.

6" Jalen Rivers in the paint to thwart Lee's attempts to drive to the basket.

Oakleaf continued the hot shooting with Johnson and Zaki Butler both nailing three-pointers and Rivers knocking down two jumpers as the Knights pushed to a 34-20 lead with two minutes to the half. A final three from Humbles sealed the half-court lead of 34-26 as the teams headed to the lockers.

Lee stormed the third quarter to close the gap to 36-32 before Williams popped in an offensive rebound with a layup and a foul to push Oakleaf back to a comfortable 39-32 lead with five minutes left in the period.

Lee pushed back to tie the game at 44-44 with 6'-6" center Alex Fudge nailing a three-pointer to open the fourth quarter, but Oakleaf guard Amari Fletcher, off the bench, hit two jumpers to push the Knights to a 50-44 lead.

Missed free throws by Oakleaf got Lee to 51-50 and 52-52 before Thomas' winning layup.



Fleming Island High guard Gianfranco Grafals gets upended in final moments of Golden Eagles championship loss to University Christian in the Battle on the Island Christmas Tournament at Fleming Island High School.

Eagles

from page 18

the night as Fleming Island looked to pull away at 47-43. Three missed offensive rebounds opportunities and a throwaway pass kept the teams at odds on defense before University hit two uncontested threes to go up 49-47 with minute to go.

"We lost a little focus in those final minutes by not converting the steals," said Astor. "Both teams ramped up the pressure and we came up short."

In the final minute, Grafals hit a layup to tie the game but Astor got stung with an offensive charge foul with seven seconds.

With University hitting a jumper to go up 51-49 with 2.5 seconds, Grafals took an inbounds pass near the halfcourt line, spun and threw for an apparent three shot foul opportunity, but officials called him out of bounds on the spin.

Against Thomas County, Aaron Brown led Fleming Island scoring with 16 points with Astor adding 14 with two threes and Grafals adding 12. Elias Martin led on the boards with nine rebounds.

Against Atlantic Coast, Grafals rang up 31 points with Astor adding 21 and Brown finishing with 13. Elias Martin snagged a team-high 14 rebounds with Brown getting 10. Grafals, Martin and Brown all had two blocked shots.



Fleming Island High guard Hope Rozier puts up shot against Bishop Kenny High in Golden Eagles 56-43 championship loss to Crusaders in the Battle on the Island Tournament at Fleming Island High School.



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Eagles tune up for knockout with explosive conference title

Update: Fleming Island 26th at Knockout

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

FLEMING ISLAND – With 11 of 14 wrestlers getting All-Conference honors, the Fleming Island High wrestling team took a hometown win at the St. Johns River Athletics Conference title in decisive fashion as they push toward 2019 against some of the southeast's best in the Osceola Knockout Classic on Sat., Dec. 29.

"We executed and had good stamina today and that was the goal," said Fleming Island coach P.J. Cobbert, who has put his troops on a rugged schedule of tournaments designed for state meet readiness. "This kind of meet is a good tuneup to get the confidence up, check our positions on the mat and give the young kids a boost going into the meat of the schedule. Knockout will be a lot tougher."

Last year at Knockout, Fleming Island finished third behind Georgia state champion Camden County and Florida 3A multiple champion South Dade High with the Golden Eagles getting two tournament champions; both graduated, Jaquan English and Paul Detwiler. Eventual 3A champion at 133, Briar Jackson, finished second to Camden County's Nicholas Krug.

Note: Fleming Island finished 26th overall at Knockout with 52 team points. Camden County, defending four-time Georgia state champions, won with 191 points with Lake Gibson, the Class 2A defending champion, and Woodland High of Georgia tied for second at 185. Top individual finishers for Fleming Island were Briar Jackson and Tanner Hill, who both lost in the quarterfinals. Jackson, at 122, lost to Camden County's Tyler Crew 2-0. Crew was the Georgia 7A champion at 113 last year. Hill lost 4-0 to Nolin Eaddy of Osceola, fourth in 3A last year at 152.

For the Golden Eagles at the confer-



Middleburg High 138-pounder Storm Mercado arches with Bartram Trail's Nicholas Vugman.

ence meet, who have finished second in Class 3A the past two years to South Dade High School, the weekend featured an unbeaten team record against seven teams. The finals match featured a near-shutout, 65-2, against Class 2A powerhouse Matanzas High School, 15th in last year's state meet.

"I think we go in knowing we are the only 3A school here," said senior Briar Jackson, the lone defending state champion for Cobbert after securing three; Paul Detwiler and Ryan Smenda, last year. "We are looking for just tough wrestling, no mistakes and pins."

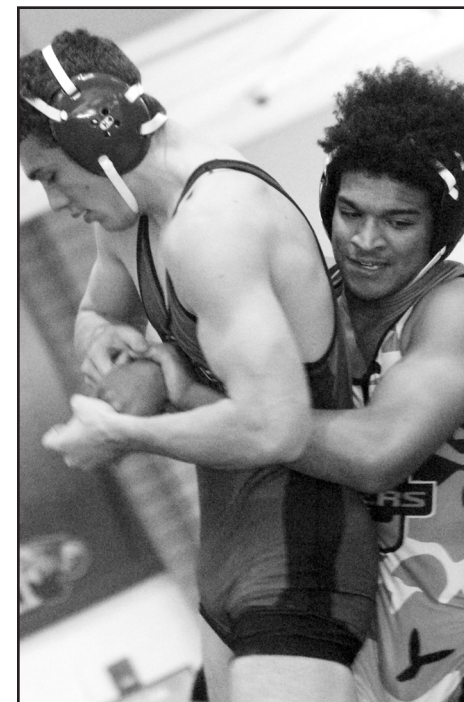
In the team finishes, Fleming Island was first (8-0), Matanzas (6-1), Orange Park (5-2), Bartram Trail (4-3), Middleburg (3-4) St. Augustine (2-5), Pedro Menendez (1-6) and Palatka (0-7) competed.

All conference individual honors for Fleming Island went to Hunter Herrington

(106), Riley Holton (113), Briar Jackson (120), Ryan Hobson (126), Garrett Cole (132), Luke Chop (152), Tanner Hill (160), Nick Janssen (182), Chad Nix (195), Tanner Speer (220) and Jeffery Lascano (285).

For Orange Park, Jacob Campbell, a region 1-2A qualifier last year at 160, was selected at 170 pounds.

Also getting All-Conference were Nicholas Vugman, Bartram Trail at 138, and Ian Eckert, Matanzas at 145. Vugman was third in Class 2A last year at 120. Eckert was a state qualifier (0-2) at 138 last year with a 27-15 record. Vugman defeated

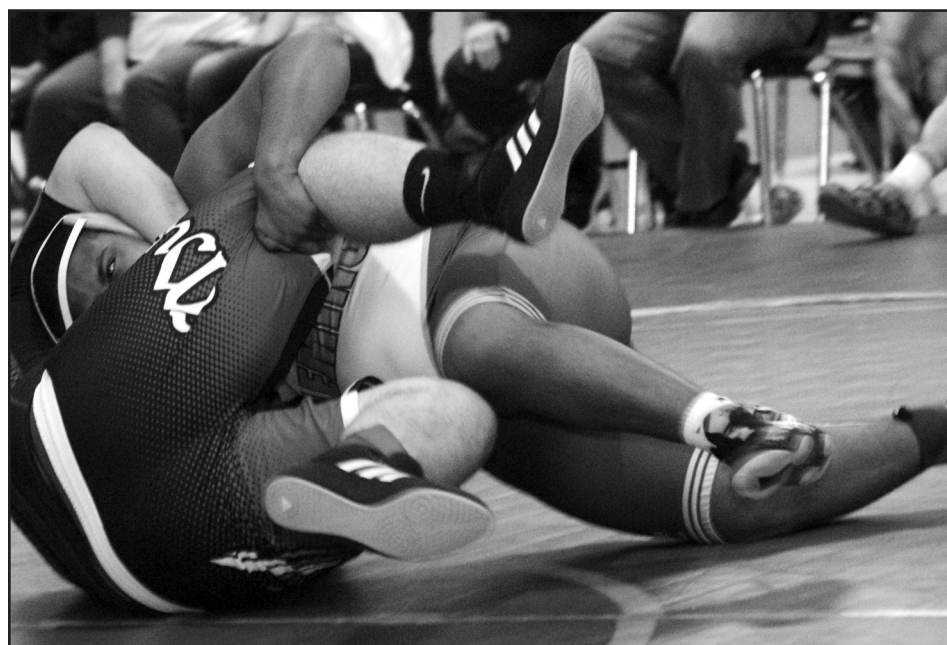


Orange Park High 170-pounder Jacob Campbell, right, controls opponent. Campbell was All-Conference selection.

Fleming Island's Tyler Williams 4-1 and Middleburg's Storm Mercado 16-5, plus pinned Orange Park's Cameron Broughton, to finish unbeaten at 138.

Orange Park lost a close 40-27 match to Matanzas in their matchup with Dean Ganci winning at 132, Cameron Broughton pinning at 138, region 1-2A qualifier Jacob Moore pinning at 182 and Julian Moore pinning at 195.

Against Matanzas, Fleming Island got pins from Nick Janssen, Nix, Lascano, and Herrington. Gannon Janssen defeated Eckert 9-0.



Fleming Island High 285 pounder Jeffrey Lascano drives into opponent to roll to back in Golden Eagles' title run at the St. Johns River Athletic Conference championships.



Fleming Island High's Hunter Herrington tries to tilt his Matanzas' opponent during Golden Eagles rout for St. Johns River Athletic Conference championship rout.

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Raiders

from page 17

"The University Christian game had a playoff feel to it with both teams at 9-1 for the season," said Cole. "I was glad the girls kept the pace a day later against Palatka. Following the University Christian game with a strong effort against Palatka gives us confidence for a strong season finish."

Also in the tournament, Fleming Island finished third with guard Emma Richards earning All-Tournament honors. Fleming Island, with Richards hitting for a team-high 22 points with three three-pointers, lost 69-65 in overtime to University Christian in round two, then defeated Covenant Prep in the third place game. University Christian was scheduled to play Fleming



Orange Park High senior guard Nayeli Williams celebrates with the Jarvis Williams Tournament trophy after Lady Raiders defeated Palatka for team title. Williams and teammates Macie Faucett and Sha'mia Capers were All-Tournament selection. Capers was tournament MVP.

Island for third, but the team never showed for the game. Covenant Prep was in Palatka to watch their boys team play and agreed to play. Fleming Island won 51-32.

Against Palatka (2-6), the fast-paced Raider defense came up with four straight steals to open the game before jetting to a 15-6 lead. Capers ended the first stanza with an offensive rebound to a layup and a steal to a breakaway layup.

Orange Park continued the defensive assault to go a point better in the second with a 16-4 stanza behind Williams blasting a three as the quarter began and sophomore Sydney Rowland hitting more three pointers to push the lead to 31-10 at the break before cruising to the title.

Against University Christian, with Capers battling with 6'-1" Nigeria Harkless under the basket, Orange Park stayed even

for the first period, 15-14, then opened the jets in the second, 25-15, to take a half-time lead of 39-29.

"I felt like I wasn't scared of them because they were so much bigger," said Capers. "I just boxed out and kept at it."

In the second quarter, Orange Park withstood a handful of early missed jumpers before igniting behind a nifty Capers steal to Rowland to a layup from Faucett and a 24-22 lead before Nia Brown hit a set of free throws to push that lead to 26-22.

Yoly Rosado stepped up with a three pointer and Capers got another layup in the paint as Orange Park pushed to a 31-22 lead before University Christian could respond.

"I was not in a good groove in the beginning and I knew the team needed me to

hit baskets," said Rosado. "We all work for each other for the team to succeed."

Faucett and Rosado added one more three a piece to end the half at 39-30.

Two buckets from Capers in the third kept University Christian at bay, but the gap got to 43-42 with two minutes left in the stanza.

"Sha'mia played with no fear in both games," said Jones. "Even though she was not our tallest player, I told her she drew the assignment. I told her to just play physical out there."

In the fourth, Capers got a key offensive rebound to a layup with Brown feeding Rosado for a layup to give Cole enough breathing room to finish the game as the Raiders maintained a four point gap to the final buzzer. The final dagger for Orange Park was a three pointer from Rosado followed by two steals to layups with Capers ending the game with a layup at 68-58.

"I told the girls that this tournament is high-level basketball," said Jones. "Yoly and Macie both were sluggish in the early part of the second half, but I told them to get their mind straight; body language, because we were going to need them to step up to end the game. And, they both did. They are both competitors."

Four Orange Park players finished with double figures with Capers at 16, Rosado at 15 and both Williams and Faucett at 14. Brown added nine. Orange Parks returns to regular season play with an away game at Ribault (9-4) on January 7, at Keystone Heights (10-5) on January 10 and at Baker County (4-7) on January 12.

In game one, Orange Park beat Hamilton County, 59-37, with Faucett leading with 13 points and Capers adding 11. Nia Brown had four blocked shots with five rebounds.



Orange Park High guard Macie Faucett drives to basket in Raiders' championship win over Palatka.

Devils

from page 17

with double digit attempts, Clay never hit a single three-pointer.

"That's the first time in my entire career I ever had any team where we went 0 for on 3's," said Moses. "It's not that we weren't throwing them up and we have really good shooters too."

It was after the break where the Blue Devils came to life, almost shutting down the Vikings. Keeping Skyline to only four third period points, but then turning on the inside game hitting for 12 points made the difference. Skyline never found an answer



CORRESPONDENT PHOTO BY RAY DIMONDA

Clay High guard Brishaun Britt avoids shot block attempt against Lake Howell.

to the Clay defensive juggernaut and were outscored in the fourth as well. The 43-32 victory would set up the Saturday Show-down against what was clearly the team to beat the second they walked in, the Lake Howell Silver Hawks.

Lake Howell made the two-hour drive to hone their skills against the other seven teams who participated. The Silver

Hawks put away the Fletcher Senators by 25 points, then Trinity Christian by 17 as they moved their way into the final game against Clay. The Silver Hawks wasted no time getting out to a 13-6 lead after the first as they shot around with every player on the team. It seemed the Hawks could hit from just about anywhere.

The Clay defense was strong, but the

size advantage was obvious. The Blue Devils tied the game at 17 each in the second and seemed to slow the Silver Hawks. After a Lake Howell timeout, they seemed to get more aggressive and put the ball up more. Although only outscored by one in the second, 18-17, the first period gap was huge at the break 49-35.

Clay maintained an outside game that kept them in the hunt as several players hit for threes.

Lake Howell had an answer for that as well as they proved to be just as effective from the outside. The difference was the pressure brought early on throw-ins and in the back court as the Silver Eagles were relentless in pressure as the Blue Devils set up on offense.

"I told my coaching staff there in the last 10 seconds, this will be a great film for us to learn from," said Moses. "That's a tough team, they are big, they have a kid going to Division 1 at Furman, and they are aggressive off the dribble. I thought we did good defensively, even giving up 64 points. It was just coming out sluggish after half-time and that's normally not us. We usually have a great third quarter. We have a lot of positives to look at."



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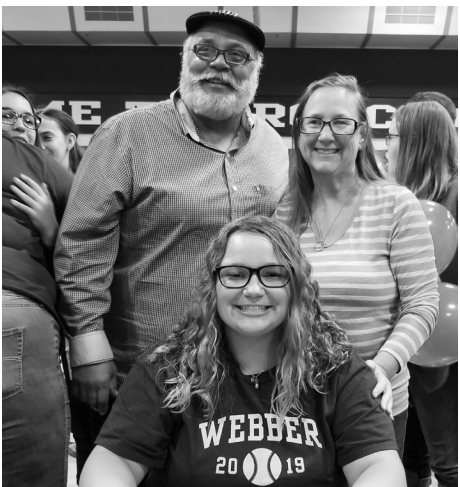
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Middleburg High softball player Arrianna Luzunaris smiles after signing to play at Tennessee Wesleyan University next year.



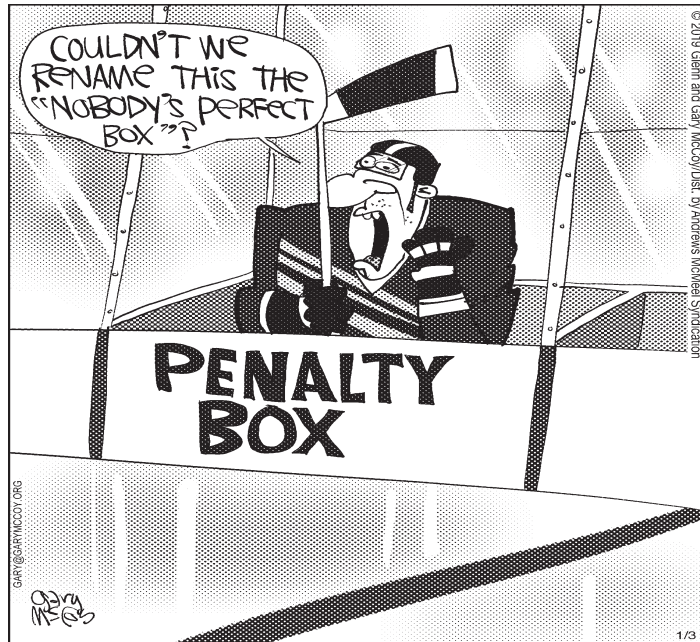
Middleburg High softball player Haleigh Wright smiles as she signs to play at St. Petersburg College next year.



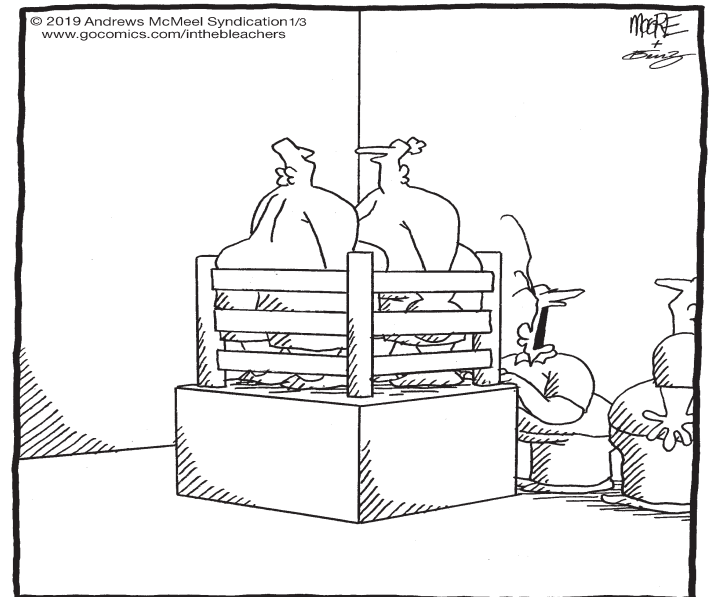
Middleburg High softball player Kiersten Sanchez smiles as she signs to play next year at Webber International University.

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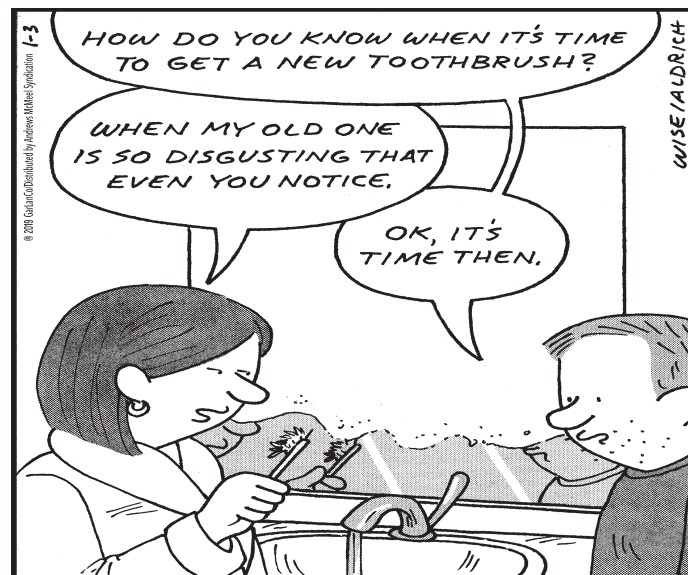


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