

CLAY TODAY

This Week ...

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 Stotler gets gold in Butterfly – SPORTS
 PALATKA SHOWCASE – INSERT
 CLAY ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE – INSERT



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2020

WWW.CLAYTODAYONLINE.COM

VOLUME 57, NO. 47 75¢

National Adoption Month

Kids First of Florida works to find stable and loving homes

By Bruce Hope
 bruce@opcfla.com

CLAY COUNTY – November is National Adoption Month. Many children in the area need the love and stability that a permanent home can offer.

As of October, there were 486 children in care. Not all are foster care. Some live with relatives, some live with their parents, have services in place, and some currently reside in foster homes. Regardless of the care situation, the goal is always to find a permanent, loving home for the children.

Clay County-based Kids First of Florida is a care agency focused on providing child welfare and foster care services to county residents.

“Our first goal when we get a child into care, our first goal, is to reunify with their family if we can do that safely,” said Irene Toto, CEO of Kids First of Florida. “You know, if we have to take a child into foster care because of abuse or neglect, we always try to – of course – place with relatives or family members first, right; people they know. If we can’t do that, if there’s no relative or family members to take the children in, then they would come into care and go into a foster home. Our goal is always going to be to reunify. We want to try to help whatever is wrong with the family. Give them the services and

SEE ADOPTION, 6



The Clay County Teen Court Mock Trial Team celebrates another state championship after beating 12 other teams at the FSU Sunshine State Showdown. The contest was done virtually and the Clay County team was undefeated in four rounds of competition

Teen Court Mock Trial Team wins state championship

Group defends title against 12 other challengers

By Bruce Hope
 bruce@opcfla.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – The Clay County Teen Court Mock Trial Team successfully defended its title over the weekend of Nov. 7-8 at the FSU Sunshine State Showdown. The team didn’t lose in four

rounds, defeating 12 teams to become back-to-back state champions.

Teams from all over Florida competed, including Bolles, Miami Arts Studio, American Heritage, Stanton College Preparatory, Lakeland Christian and Hialeah.

The team was assigned a case they had to prepare according to normal le-

SEE TEEN, 18

District already looking where to use money raised by new sales tax

By Wesley LeBlanc
 wesley@opcfla.com

CLAY COUNTY – Voters overwhelmingly decided on Nov. 3 the county’s school district needed a half-cent sales tax. Now that it’s a reality, the district is hard at work preparing for what the money can fix or buy.

The half-cent sales tax will bring in an expected \$13 million a year, but it will only cost the average family of four about \$5 or a month, or \$60 a year. That’s still an amount that has naysayers worried. The worry comes less from the amount of money and more from how it’s going to be used, with many saying this tax will be used to line the pockets of school board members and others. School administrators are adamant: that’s not the case, and it never was. The tax is a facility infrastructure restricted sales tax.

“It’s a facility infrastructure restricted sales tax,” Coordinator of Planning, Government, Relations, and Safety and Security Supervisor James Fossa said. “It will not be used for salaries, ever. It can only be related to infrastructure whether that’s deferred maintenance or new schools.”

That latter point is especially important because the half-cent sales tax guarantees the district will be able to build its pro-

SEE TAX, 18

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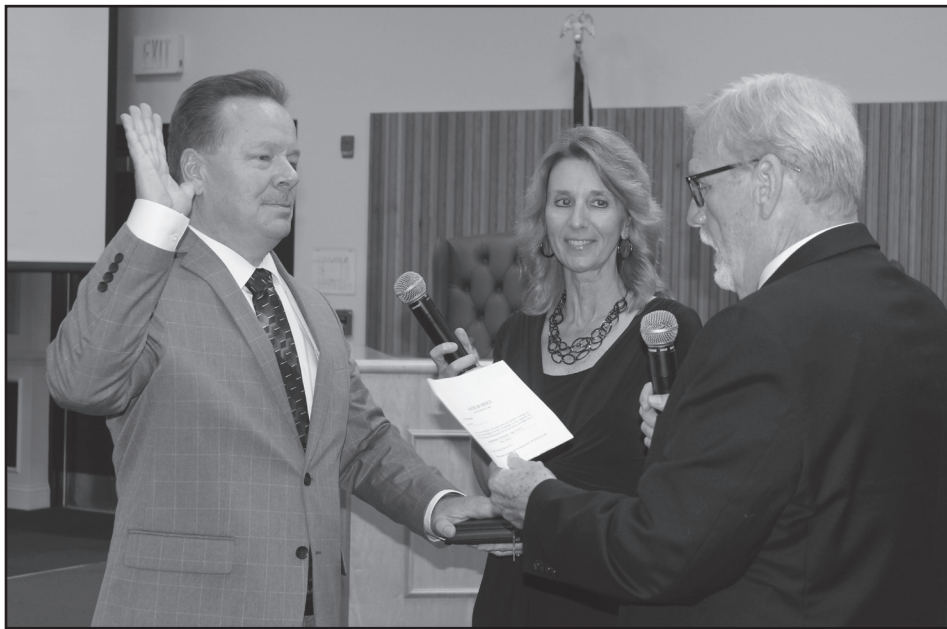
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STAFF PHOTOS BY DON COBLE

New School Board sworn in

FLEMING ISLAND – David Broskie dropped “interim” from his job title Tuesday night when he was sworn in as the new Superintendent of Clay County Schools. Broskie was appointed in March by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis to replace Addison Davis after he accepted a job as the Superintendent of Schools for Hillsborough County Schools. Broskie (above) was joined by his wife, Sue, while school board attorney J. Bruce Bickner administered the oath. Beth Clark (right) also was sworn in as the new board member representing District 2. Doug Matyi swore her in, while her husband, Jeff Clark, and son, Ted Clark, watched. Finally, Mary Bolla (top, right) was sworn in following her re-election for District 4. Pastor Jerry Nordsiek administered the oath and her husband, Clay County Commissioner, Wayne Bolla watched. The board then installed Bolla as the Chairwoman for the next year with Ashely Gillhousen earning support as the Vice Chair.



Elevate Church, OP Mall offering Thanksgiving dinners

Residents can pick up box of food at drive-thru on Saturday

By Bruce Hope
bruce@opcfla.com

ORANGE PARK – In conjunction with Orange Park Mall, Elevate Life Church of Fleming Island wants to do its part to help those in need during this holiday season.

On Saturday, Nov. 21, there will be a drive-through Thanksgiving event at the mall, where residents will receive a bag of sides for a Thanksgiving dinner along with a \$10 gift card to purchase a turkey.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a shutdown that cost many jobs, some which may not return. As a result, more families than normal face economic hardships. One of those hardships is making sure that there is enough to eat.

“The drive-ins have been very popular with Elevate Life Church,” said Chelsea Commodari, Marketing Director of Orange Park Mall. “So far, we’ve done a food pantry drive-through, and then we did a back giveaway for back to school where they gave away about 2,000 backpacks, so we just wanted to see how we could keep working with them to bless the community.

“They had mentioned this [Thanksgiving drive-through] to us at the backpack giveaway, and we were, of course, willing to do whatever we could do to help, so we sponsored the event and partnered with the Clay County Chamber who also helped sponsor the event.”

Orange Park Mall is providing some of the money for the turkeys. However, it wasn’t easy to work with local grocers to get enough turkeys to give away. That was when it was decided to provide the \$10 gift cards instead so that each family could



purchase their turkey.


“For our Thanksgiving Turkey Drive, this is our first official one in quite a bit,” said Joyce Ormeo, the Connections Director at Elevate Life. “We decided to do the drive-by at the mall because then it would keep the flow moving, and we could potentially keep people as safe as we could. We decided that this year we would love to be able to bless the community once again, this time Thanksgiving style.”

Elevate life is currently estimating that

they will be able to help between 500-600 families during this drive.

The drive will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., or while supplies last. Drivers are asked to use the fire lane in front of the Food Court entrance at the mall, where they will receive their bag of sides and gift card.

“We’re just grateful that they [Elevate Life] came to us and allowed us to be a part of something so great for our community. They are incredible to work with. They’re organized. But at the end of the day, they don’t focus on being so organized, but rather how many people they can bless throughout the process. So just partnering with them and knowing that that’s the goal and being a part of that is a great feeling before, during, and after the event,” Commodari said.

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Is Florida still a swing state?

By Kelly Hayes
For Florida Politics

Florida is more than two-weeks postelection, following Democrats rough night against Republicans who dominated at the polls.

The red wave the state saw raises the question: Is Florida still a swing state? Tiger Bay Clubs from across Florida joined Thursday to discuss takeaways from the 2020 General Election.



Kelly Hayes

Susan MacManus, a voting expert and University of South Florida distinguished professor emeriti, said it depends on the perspective. Democrats, she said, would argue that it is, while Republicans may differ.

"Republicans say, 'Absolutely not — we won, we gained seats,'" MacManus said. "The Democrats say 'yes we are.' And they have a right to say that a lot of their problems in this election frankly was just the way the campaign was run."

MacManus said most people still see the Sunshine State as swing state, at least from this election cycle, by pointing at voter registration, TV ads and campaign tours. Of Florida's 14,441,869 registered voters, 5,169,012 are Republicans, and 5,303,254 are Democrats. That leaves a little under one-third of voters registered as third party or no party affiliated voters.

"I think the bottom line is that most people still look at Florida as a swing state," she said. "You look at our registration and in terms of the expectation in this election that we would be a swing state, nothing proved it more than the fact that we received the most money spent on TV ads of any state, and we had the most candidate visits in the eleventh hour of the campaign when it matters most."

Republican pollster Ryan Tyson dissented from MacManus, saying Republicans do not yet see Florida as a red state, and the state could flip blue if Democrats put forth a historical candidate.

"We are a swing state," Tyson said. "Any Republican that remotely thinks that we are not, I would love to spend 20 minutes with you and I can convince you why. I think candidates still matter — all it takes, in my opinion, is for the Democrats to nominate the historical figure, like an Obama, and immediately he can put back the de

SEE FLORIDA, 5

OPINION



We need Billy Joel's wisdom to get through difficult times

By Don Coble
Managing Editor

Pandemic.
Election fatigue.
Zoom.
New normal.
Facemask fights.
Black Lives Matter.
Blue Lives Matter.
All Lives Matter.
Patriots versus anarchists.
Missing ballots.
Rioting in the streets.
Miracle vaccines.
Canceled games.
Empty stadiums.
Social distancing.

If I didn't know any better, I think I just came up with another verse for Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start the Fire."

And just like Joel's final line of his classic hit, I can't take it anymore, either.

I've emersed myself into a new network called Cozi TV. I watched "My Favorite Martian" on Sunday morning. Two shows — one hour of nonsensical humor. No arguing. No threats of voting lawsuits. No promise to save the "soul" of America. No masks.

Other classics on the network are "The Munsters," "Little House on the Prairie," "Here's Lucy" and "The Nanny."

The past nine months have been difficult for everyone. The pandemic, election and civil unrest has been taxing on our patience. Give me some "Charlie's

Angels," "Bionic Woman" and "Six Million Dollar Man."

Or the mute button.

Better yet, open your playlist and listen to Billy Joel.

The Pew Research Centre said our fatigue started long before COVID-19 and this year's election. It reported 59% of us were worn out by the Donald Trump-Hillary Clinton election cycle in 2016.



Don Coble

The drawn-out investigations into Russian collusion and impeachment for phone calls to Ukraine added to our trepidation about the entire process.

Weeks ago, I would have been outraged by the stories coming out of Georgia. According to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, nearly 5,400 presidential ballots were "found" in two of the state's 159 counties during the on-going hand count. Election officials don't seem too concerned because they said it won't affect Joe Biden's apparent victory.

But it is a big concern. It shows the process if flawed. If there's that much discrepancy in Fayette and Floyd counties, what about the other 157 counties?

Also, the Georgia Secretary of State said more than 24,500 Republicans who voted in the primary didn't vote in the Gen-

SEE DIFFICULT TIMES, 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.

Bugbear: (BUG-bair) a noun that means a source of dread or irritation.

"Freddie Freeman's three home runs made him a hero among Atlanta Braves fans, but he was the bugbear of Philadelphia fans."

This Week In History

Five years ago, 2015

- Rodeway Inn owner Jitendra Patel is given a Dec. 11 deadline to correct safety and fire code violation and to curb the high level of crime to avoid foreclosure — and the eviction of 100 people who live there.

- Col. Matt Johnson is selected as the new commander at Camp Blanding.

- More than 16,080 meals were prepared for local food pantries during the Hunger Fight Food Packing event at the Orange Cove Seventh-Day Adventist Church.

10 years ago, 2010

- Danielle Judge is selected by the City Council as the new city manager of Green Cove Springs.

- The Fleming Island Golden Eagle Marching Band win the Class 3A band championship in Tampa.

- Lt. Gov-elect Jennifer Carroll assured the Clay County Chamber of Commerce she still intends to live on Fleming Island while working with newly elected Gov. Rick Scott.

20 years ago, 2000

- After saying Clay County election results were "lost" for a week, Supervisor Barbara Kirkman tells the Clay County Board of Commissioners the certified results had been found.

- The BCC learns its "Quality Tax Initiative" application was approved to assist with helping a company build on Fleming Island.

- Green Cove Springs Fire Chief Richard Knoff and Clay County firefighter Kyle Williamson jump into the St. Johns River at the Green Cove Springs pier to save a teen-aged boy from drowning.

30 years ago, 1990

- Police officers with the Green Cove Springs department picket for better wag

SEE HISTORY, 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 Don Coble at don@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.

Florida

from page 4

mographics necessary to be successful in this state.”

When analyzing why Republicans did so well at the polls, the consensus among panelists seemed to be campaigning — especially with the impact of COVID-19.

MacManus said while Democrats shifted campaigning to social media after the outbreak of new coronavirus, Florida Republicans continued traditional campaign methods with other measures, going door-to-door.

“From the get-go the disadvantage that

Democrats had once COVID hit was the instructions not to go door-to-door campaigning and registering voters,” she said. “Florida Republicans didn’t miss a beat — they kept going door to door, social distancing with masks — asking people to register ... So I think that’s an old lesson that was really vividly played out here — too much reliance on social media is still not going to be a really solid personal contact grounding.”

Tyson described the campaigning method employed by Republicans this cycle as straight from former President Barack Obama’s playbook — registering voters and using data.

Veteran Democratic operative Steve Schale said despite the many unsuccessful

down-ballot runs, Democrats still took the biggest prize — the White House.

“I think there’s a lot of self-loathing going on in my party right now,” Schale said. “Anybody who thought beating Donald Trump was going to be easy was completely not paying attention to reality ... In the end, the biggest thing this election cycle is Donald Trump will not be President and Joe Biden will be.”

Despite the success this election cycle from Republicans in Florida, the progressive Amendment 2 proposal for a \$15 minimum wage passed in the state among voters. This juxtaposition showed what has been largely underreported in the state all along: Florida’s diversity.

That’s what MacManus said should be

the biggest take away this election.

“You can see that the rural part of the Panhandle was the part of the state that voted no on that,” MacManus said. “But the rest of the area of the state was pretty supportive. This is a state where we have such a diverse population that nuances matter. And I think that’s a big lesson that both parties have taken away from this election.”

Kelly Hayes studied journalism and political science at the University of Florida. Kelly was born and raised in Tampa Bay. A recent graduate, she enjoys government and legal reporting. She has experience covering the Florida Legislature as well as local government, and is a proud Alligator alum. You can reach Kelly at kelly@floridapolitics.com.

Difficult times

from page 4

eral Election. I certainly don’t believe that. Neither should you.

But the truth is, I’m too tired to worry about it anymore. So, I turn on old re-runs. “Starsky & Hutch” and “Columbo” won’t raise my blood pressure.

Experts said there are other ways to regain your peace of mind.

“If you voted you’ve done all that you can do at this point so now you just have to wait,” said Dr. Jinneh Dyson, an executive mindset coach and mental health advocate told WFTS-TV in Tampa.

We’ve become too dependent on social media to get quick answers to our questions. We spend too much time on our cell-phones, and we’re too easily swayed by what others write.

The solution is simple: put the phone down and pick up the TV remote to find old

shows. Bet you never thought “The Brady Bunch” could be so entertaining.

We should be encouraged by the promise of a vaccine for COVID-19. Pfizer and Moderna both said they will have a vaccine available in the next couple months. Considering it took more than 20 years to develop a vaccine for polio and an effective vaccine to prohibit AIDS has yet to be discovered, the collaboration between government and private industries has truly been amazing.

And again, I’m too emotionally exhausted to get excited.

We’ve been through difficult times before. Wars, Civil Rights, terrorist attacks. We even survived disco. We bounced back then; we’ll bounce back now.

Or as Billy Joel promised:

“We didn’t start the fire

“It was always burning

“Since the world’s been turning.

“We didn’t start the fire

“No we didn’t light it

“But we tried to fight it.”

History

from page 4

es and working conditions while city officials negotiated with union officials.

- Richard Pyles was arrested by the Green Cove Springs Police Department after they find a pipe bomb in his yard.

- Three are arrested after the Clay County Sheriff’s Office said they help up the Hibernia Jiffy Store at gunpoint.

40 years ago, 1980

- Clay County Tax Collector Wayne Geiger said new tax bills won’t be mailed out until January because he didn’t receive the tax roll in time.

- The Clay County Council on Aging meets to consider building a new senior center in Green Cove Springs.

- Lee Drawdy is voted as the new chairman of the Clay County Board of Commissioners by other board members.

Michael W. Smith brings Christmas concert to Thrasher-Horne

ORANGE PARK – Award winning, Christian music artist, Michael W. Smith will perform a Christmas Concert at Thrasher-Horne Center on Saturday, Dec. 19 at 7:30 p.m. Thrasher-Horne Center is committed to the latest social distancing guidelines using innovative measures to ensure Northeast Florida continues to have live music.

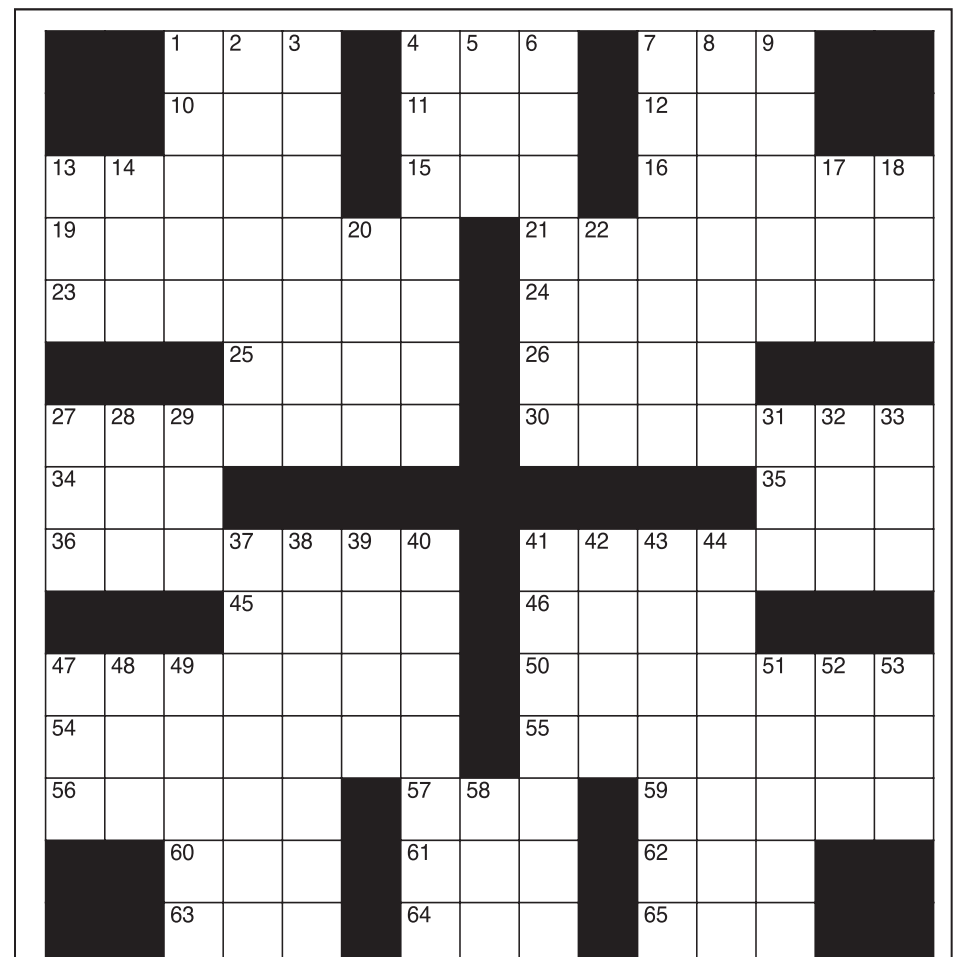
Iconic multi-platinum, singer and songwriter Smith will bring his iconic Christmas show back this upcoming holiday season. The highly anticipated full band show will feature holiday classics spanning his

expansive catalogue.

“I love Christmas time and singing Christmas music, I am so blessed to be able to perform again this season with my band,” Smith said. “It is going to be very exciting to be safely back in venues with an audience. I look forward to seeing everyone there.”

Thrasher-Horne is selling a limited number of tickets to assure social distancing.

For more information on the safety protocols or to buy tickets, call (904) 275-6815, extension 1, or visit



CLUES ACROSS

1. Autonomic nervous system
4. At or near the stern
7. Adenosine triphosphate
10. Polynesian garland of flowers
11. Chinese revolutionary
12. Green veggie
13. Large group
15. Swiss river
16. Semiaquatic mammal
19. Wrongdoers
21. Home to Disney World
23. Spanish doctors
24. Newborn child
25. Absence of difficulty
26. Large, stocky lizard
27. Earned top billing
30. A long wandering and eventful journey
34. Water (French)
35. Brew
36. Winged horse
41. A usually malignant tumor
45. Alfred __, American actor
46. Austrian river
47. A reminder of past events

CLUES DOWN

50. Connected with
54. Status
55. Dean residence
56. Egyptian city
57. Boxing’s GOAT
59. Straits along the Red Sea
60. ‘The Partridge Family’ actress Susan
61. Get some color
62. Facilitates hearing
63. Commercials
64. A team’s best pitcher
65. Patti Hearst’s captors

CLUES DOWN

- effectiveness (abbr.)
17. Sun up in New York
18. Eggs in female fish
20. Stood up
22. NBA legend Willis
27. Calendar month (abbr.)
28. Exercise regimen __-bo
29. The 8th month (abbr.)
31. __ Paulo, city
32. Tall deciduous tree
33. Affirmative
37. Notified of danger
38. NFL game days
39. Archaic term for ‘to’
40. Plant pores
41. Canned fish
42. Phil __, former CIA
43. Connects with
44. Of the skull
47. Time zone (abbr.)
48. When you hope to get there
49. Hindu goddess
51. Land
52. Pitching stat
53. Field force unit
58. Lakers’ crosstown rivals

Adoption

from page 1

support they need to get healthy and make it a safe place so we can return their children. When that's not possible, then we would look at changing the goal to adoption or finding a new permanent family for the child or children."

The process is not particularly difficult, according to Toto, but it can be lengthy. The goal is returning a child or children to their home within a year. However, the courts are involved and will make the final determination. The process often takes more than the projected 12-month period. When it comes to the adoption process, many variables affect the time frame.

"If everything goes perfectly, we could be close to that, maybe a year, or 15 months," Toto said. "Frequently, it can take longer. It really is just an individual and based on the circumstances of the family



County Commissioners join the Gibson family following their adoption of four brothers.

and the progress that's made on the case plan and matching kids with the [right] families."

One adoption story is that of the Gibson family. Four brothers were adopted by their grandmother and her husband. After

caring for the boys, the grandparents legally adopted them. That was of the happy stories. In some cases, it's more challenging to find an adoptive home for multiple children simultaneously.

With a target of 55 adoptions, Kids

First obliterated their goal, facilitating 90 adoptions through the course of the last year. The opportunity to place children in a permanent homes is the No. 1 goal of the organization, and Kids First of Florida is more than meeting it.

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904-574-5557 or ascension.org/jaxheart

Ascension Medical Group St. Vincent's Cardiology
1658 St. Vincent's Way, Suite 300
Middleburg, FL 32068

Meet our Clay County team:



Omar Dajani, MD



Joel Cohen, DO



Leon Chow, MD



Garry Taylor, MD



Ravi Prasad Nanjundappa, MD



Omer Zuberi, MD



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Care Center

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Obituaries

Robert Mitchell Young

Robert Mitchell Young, 72, passed away Sunday, November 15, 2020 in Orange Park, FL. He was born April 8, 1948 in Homerville, GA, to the late Elza Butler Young and Ludell Flanders Crews.

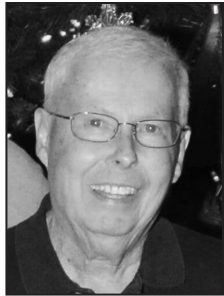
Robert is survived by his loving wife of 51 years, Sally Amanda Young; children, Robert Michael Young and Amy Young Mayfield (Kevin); grandson, Christian Michael Mayfield; brother, Edward Young; sisters, Peggy Salvati and Barbara Oxford.

He was preceded in death by his parents and sister, Mary Ruby.

Robert earned his Bachelor of Business Administration degree at the University of North Florida. He previously worked for Heart Utilities and C and C Powerline.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to Haven Hospice, <https://beyourhaven.org/donate>.

A visitation will be held Thursday, November 19, 2020 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at Aaron and Burney Bivens Funeral Home, 529 Kingsley Avenue, Orange Park, FL 32073.



Robert Mitchell Young

loved spending time with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She was known as "Meme" to all.

Mrs. Tabor is survived by her devoted husband of 70 years, James Tabor; one son, Richard Glen Tabor (Kennette); two daughters, Ginger Hampton (Tim) and Patricia Statzer; four grandchildren, Wesley Hewitt, Laura Hall (Jacyn), Jaime Spencer (James), and Andrew Hampton (Vanessa); eight great-grandchildren, Jerry (Jay), Madison, Bradley, Wayne, Melanie, Kaylyn, Tabor, and Ryan.

A private family service will be held. Arrangements are under the care of Russell Haven of Rest Cemetery, Funeral Home and Cremation Center, 2335 Sandridge Road, Green Cove Springs, FL 32043. Family and friends may share their condolences at: www.RHRFH.com 904-284-7720



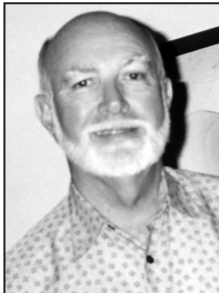
Gene R. Nardi

Gene R. Nardi, 83, passed away on November 9, 2020. He was born in Indianapolis, Indiana and retired from the US Air Force.

Mr. Nardi enjoyed golfing, square dancing, playing piano, NASCAR and the Seminoles football team.

He is survived by his loving wife of 36 years, Bonnie Nardi; 2 daughters: Suanne (Mike) Duff and Michelle (Mark) Morig; step-son: Jamie Rhodes; 2 brothers: Ronnie (Kay) Nardi and Richard Nardi; sister: Regina Nardi (aka Princess) and her husband, Bob; 5 grandchildren: Zach, Jake, Clayton, Micayla, Haley; 2 great-grandchildren; brother-in-law, Ron (Vicki) Baugh; and a host of extended family and friends.

Funeral services were held 11 a.m., Wednesday, November 18, 2020 at Hardage-Giddens Rivermead Funeral Home, 127 Blanding Blvd, Orange Park, FL with visitation held 1 hour prior to the service. Burial followed in procession to Jacksonville National Cemetery, 4083 Lannie Road, Jacksonville, FL (Lane 2). Please post words of comfort at www.hollyhillfunerals.com.



Gene R. Nardi

Community Calendar

LAKE REGION KIWANIS CLUB: will meet Nov. 19 at 7:30 a.m. at Montgomery Center, 88 SE 75th St., Starke.

HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS: will be held virtually for people grieving the death of a loved one on Nov. 19 from 6-7:30 p.m. There is no charge. For more information, visit <http://hopefortheholidays2020.eventbrite.com> or by calling (904) 407-7001.

CLAY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE: will meet Nov. 19 at 10 a.m. at the Zoning Department Conference Room, third floor of the Administration Building, 477 Houston St. in Green Cove Springs.

HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS: will be held virtually for people grieving the death of a loved one on Nov. 21 from 10-11:30 a.m. There is no charge. For more information, visit <http://hopefortheholidays2020.eventbrite.com> or by calling (904) 407-7001.

TAI CHI FOR SENIORS: is offered for free Nov. 23 at 9 a.m. at the Orange Park Town Hall Park, 2042 Park Ave. For more information contact Aging True at (904) 803-6312.

CLAY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS: will meet on Nov. 24 at 4 p.m. at the BCC Meeting room on the fourth floor of Administration Building, 477 Houston St., Green Cove Springs.

THANKSGIVING DINNER: will be served for free to all residents from noon-2 p.m. at the First Baptist Church of Orange Park, 1140 Kingsley Ave., in Orange Park. Dinners are to be picked up. There are no dine-in options at the church. Please call Ruth at (904) 214-5120, Cassandra at (904) 502-0553 or Kathy at (904) 505-1576 to get more information and delivery details.

LAKE REGION KIWANIS CLUB: will meet Nov. 26 at 7:30 a.m. at Montgomery Center, 88 SE 75th St., Starke.

TAI CHI FOR SENIORS: is offered for free Nov. 30 at 9 a.m. at the Orange Park Town Hall Park, 2042 Park Ave. For more information contact Aging True at (904) 803-6312.

ORANGE PARK TOWN COUNCIL: will meet on Dec. 1 at 5:30 p.m. at Town Hall, 2042 Park Ave.

CLAY COUNTY FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE: will meet Dec. 1 at 3 p.m. at the BCC Meeting room on the fourth floor of Administration Building, 477 Houston St., Green Cove Springs.

CLAY COUNTY PLANNING

COMMISSION: will meet Dec. 1 at 7 p.m. on the fourth floor of Administration Building, 477 Houston St., Green Cove Springs.

CLAY COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL: will meet on Dec. 2 at 3:30 p.m. at the BCC Meeting room on the fourth floor of Administration Building, 477 Houston St., Green Cove Springs.

CLAY COUNTY BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT: will meet Dec. 3 at 6 p.m. on the fourth floor of Administration Building, 477 Houston St., Green Cove Springs.

LAKE REGION KIWANIS CLUB: will meet Dec. 3 at 7:30 a.m. at Montgomery Center, 88 SE 75th St., Starke.

TAI CHI FOR SENIORS: is offered for free Dec. 7 at 9 a.m. at the Orange Park Town Hall Park, 2042 Park Ave. For more information contact Aging True at (904) 803-6312.

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS CITY COUNCIL: will meet Dec. 7 at 6 p.m. at City Hall, 555 S. Lawrence St.

HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS: will be held virtually for people grieving the death of a loved one on Dec. 8 from 6-7:30 p.m. There is no charge. For more information, visit <http://hopefortheholidays2020.eventbrite.com> or by calling (904) 407-7001.

GREEN COVE SPRINGS CITY COUNCIL: will meet on Dec. 8 at 7 p.m. at City Hall, 321 Walnut St., Green Cove Springs.

CLAY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS: will meet on Dec. 8 at 4 p.m. at the BCC Meeting room on the fourth floor of Administration Building, 477 Houston St., Green Cove Springs.

CLAY COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL GRANTS SUBCOMMITTEE: will meet Dec. 9 at 11 a.m. in Conference Room B, fourth floor of the Administration Building, 477 Houston St. in Green Cove Springs.

HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS: will be held virtually for people grieving the death of a loved one on Dec. 10 from 10-11:30 a.m. There is no charge. For more information, visit <http://hopefortheholidays2020.eventbrite.com> or by calling (904) 407-7001.

JUST US GIRLS OUTRAGEOUS FASHION SHOW: is Dec. 10 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Club Continental, 2143 Astor St. in Orange Park. Fashion show, exquisite food, door prizes and speaker Ethel Lee will be available. Cost is \$20 a person. To reserve a spot, contact Joyce at (904) 509-3388.

Lois Henry Tabor

Lois Henry Tabor, 88, of Fleming Island, FL passed away Wednesday, November 11, 2020.

Mrs. Tabor was born in Crossville, Tennessee to the late Albert and Laura Sells Henry and was one of eight children.

Lois and her husband, James, owned and operated the James W. Tabor and Son Electrical Company in Virginia prior to moving to Clay County 28 years ago.

While living in Chesapeake, Virginia, she was a member of the Pilot Club and the Great Bridge Cruise Club. Lois enjoyed traveling as a hobby and saw much of the country from her RV. She enjoyed boating, gardening in her flower garden and cooking.

Most of all, Lois loved her family. They were of utmost importance to her and she



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PHOTO BY DON COBLE

Nights of lights

Even with Christmas being nearly five weeks away, workers with the City of Green Cove Springs were dodging traffic and getting into the holiday spirit this week by putting up Christmas lights along North Orange Avenue. Tim Moulton (front) untangles extension cords, while Herbie Ledford and Garry Johnson (back) install lights around palm trees.

Question of the week

Are you fatigued by this year's presidential election?

By Wesley LeBlanc
wesley@opcfla.com

CLAY COUNTY – It's been more than three of what feels like the never-ending 2020 presidential election and Clay Today readers on both sides of the aisle are feeling exhausted.

It's been 20 years since the U.S. has had an election as unclear as 2020, when the 2000 George W. Bush and Al Gore election created the term "hanging chad" and changed the face of subsequent elections. This year's election is not quite the same dilemma, but the heart of the problem is the same: some people believe the election results aren't what they seem.

We asked our readers what they thought for this week's Facebook Question of the Week and they range from patient to tired.

"When the legalities are finished, there will be a declared winner," reader Missy Leilani said.

Even Leilani's comment reveals the dilemma of this year's election. Leilani believes there are lawsuits – likely those of President Donald Trump who is filing lawsuits in many states to challenge what he perceives as voter fraud – to be completed first, whereas supporters of Joe Biden believe the election is a done deal. Biden has been named president-elect by many in the media. The election won't be officially over until electoral voters file their votes next month.

Reader Lee Smith said this is unlike

the 2000 election.

"No, not at all like the 2000 election where votes were counted, a concession [was made], and we had a new president," she said. "This is more like a horrible nightmare where a sick man will not concede."

She said President Trump seems to be staging a military coup and that she worries he'll attempt to start a war. He does not care about the good of the country, she said. Scott Harrington challenged her, as one does on Facebook, and said 71 million people voted for Trump. He said that makes a sizable support group and that Trump is using the legal system to ensure the vote was constitutional and lawful.

"Do not be concerned," Harrington said. "Republicans or Trump supporters haven't rioted, looted or killed police officers or destroyed any cities. You'll be safe. Now, I would be worried if Trump lawfully overturns the election and the Biden supporters take their violent protests to the streets, businesses and communities."

Others chimed in to say that Trump has "every right to not concede the election until all the many voting fiascos are resolved." This again points back to the issue at hand: half the country doesn't believe there are fiascos in this year's election while the other half does.

Where do you fall on this topic of discussion with the 2020 presidential election? Let us know in the comments of our Facebook Question of the Week on the official Clay Today Newspaper Facebook page.

Entries being accepted for Lake Region Kiwanis Club Christmas parade

For Clay Today

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – The Lake Region Kiwanis Club is accepting applications for entries to this year's Christmas parade on Dec. 12 at 6 p.m.

This year's route has been altered this year due construction on S. Lawrence Boulevard. The theme for this year's parade is Santa's Superhero Christmas.

Rules for entries include:

1. Floats must be brightly lit.
2. No float may have a Santa Claus. Kiwanis provides the only Santa
3. On Friday, Dec. 11, you will be called with your number in line and any last-minute instructions. Please place your number on your float for the judges and master of ceremonies to announce.
4. Check in is on S.W. Grove Street side of Keystone Heights High. Arrive between 4-5 p.m. and have your entry in place for judging by 5 p.m.
5. Parking and staging can be done at field next to the high school.
6. Do not throw candy from entry. Walkers may hand out candy.
7. All youth entries must be accompanied by adults.
8. Entry forms must be completed and mailed to Lake Region Kiwanis P.O. Box 715, Keystone Heights, 32656 or dropped

off at My Brand (previously Mallards) at 255 S. Lawrence Blvd, City Hall or Hatch Realty Services at 350 S. Lawrence Blvd.

9. For additional information please contact Todd Beal at (904) 588-2083.

The parade will line up on S.W. Grove Street on the side of Keystone Heights High. Upon arrival check in to confirm your number and location then go to your designated marked spot on S.W. Grove Street. When the parade begins, you will move down S.W. Grove, left onto Orchid, right on S.W. Jasmine, right on S.W. Magnolia and right onto S.W. Pecan and end back at the high school.

Do not stop but do slow down in front of high school for announcing or any performances.

Judging for six categories:

- Judges Choice
- Most Original
- Closest to Theme
- Best Youth entry
- Best Marching Unit
- Best Business Entry

Judging begins promptly at 5 p.m. You must be in place to be judged. Trophies will be presented at the high at the Judging Station.

Visit keystoneheights.us/community for an application.



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JP Hall Children's Charities set for Dec. 13 at fairgrounds



By Wesley LeBlanc
wesley@opcfla.com

CLAY COUNTY – Despite recent challenges and shutdowns, JP Hall Children's Charities will be handing out more than 6,000 toys to residents through their drive thru next month.

The annual JP Hall Children's is one of the biggest holiday giveaways a big deal. It's an event that involves thousands of toys that are given away to the needy children. For many, the toys are the only toys they'll get during the holiday season.

Even when COVID-19 pandemic hit, the charity didn't flinch.

"It wasn't ever a question of should we or should we not have the party," JP Hall president Virginia Hall said. "It was a matter of figuring out how to do it safely during all of this. We weren't asking ourselves if we could do it. We were asking how we

could do it safely for our volunteers and for the children and their families"

The charity decided on a drive-thru party. Parents usually arrive at the Clay County Agricultural Fairgrounds on Friday before the Saturday morning Christmas party. They camp out overnight to be first in line so that they can get bags of toys for each of their children and a bicycle to match as well. That won't be possible this year.

The first reason is there won't be an in-person standing line. Residents will line up in their vehicles at the Clay County Fairgrounds near the Cattlemen's Arena to pick up their toys. The second reason is JP Hall is not allowing anyone to camp out overnight. The event has been moved to Sunday, Dec. 13, and it will run from noon to 4 p.m.

Hall said it's all about safety and ease

for everyone involved – the parents, the children and the volunteers. She said that only Clay County residents will be allowed to pick up toys and IDs will be checked to ensure everyone in line is a county resident. Children will also need to be in the car for parents to pick up toys.

While children can still expect the usual bag of a handful of toys, there will unfortunately be no bicycles given away this year because children won't be able to sit on a bike to determine a proper size and proper helmet fit.

COVID-19 also has made it to where that's not possible for the 39th annual party. Hall joked that this means more bicycles for next year's big 40th party.

COVID-19 has also made fundraising and community help for this party different. Each toy bag is usually filled with two

SEE TOYS, 15

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Doctor shares ways to gather safely for Thanksgiving

For Clay Today

ORANGE PARK – Thanksgiving is the most traveled holiday of the year. It is almost here and COVID-19 can be an unwanted guest if families do not take precautions. If you are gathering a large family around the dinner table next week, an Orange Park Medical Center physician has advice on how to do that as safely as possible.

People who are at higher risk for severe illness or live with someone at increased risk should not attend large in person Thanksgiving gatherings. If you or an immediate family member has recently tested positive for COVID-19 or are waiting for test results, it



Dr. Nilmarie Guzman

is recommended you do not host or participate in family gatherings. Visit the CDC website for guidance on when it is safe to be around others after testing positive for COVID-19.

“There are a few questions that everyone needs to ask themselves before deciding to gather around the table this year,” says Dr. Nilmarie Guzman, Infectious Disease Specialist at Orange Park Medical Center. Here’s a quick checklist:

What are your community levels of COVID-19? Higher levels of COVID-19 cases and community spread in the gathering location, as well as where attendees are coming from, increase the risk of infection and spread among attendees. If you are in an area with increased cases it is recommended to limit gathers.

Where is the gathering? Indoor gatherings generally pose more risk than outdoor ones. Indoor gatherings with poor

ventilation pose more risk than those with good ventilation.

How long is the gathering? Longer gatherings pose more risk.

How many people will be there? Gatherings with more people pose more risk than those with fewer people. CDC recommends determining the size of the gathering based on the ability for attendees to remain six feet apart.

What were the behaviors of attendees prior to the gathering? Gatherings with attendees who are not adhering to social distancing (staying at least six feet apart), mask wearing, hand washing and other preventative behaviors pose more risk than gatherings with attendees who are engaging in these preventative behaviors.

What are the behaviors of attendees? Gatherings with more preventive measures, such as mask wearing, social distancing and hand

washing, in place pose less risk than gatherings where fewer or no preventive measures.

Dr. Guzman says guests should consider wearing a mask and be mindful of social distancing when possible. Limit contact with commonly touched surfaces or shared items. Wash your hands often and use hand sanitizer.

If you are hosting this year’s festivities, you may want to consider moving the party outdoors if weather allows or, open doors and windows to increase airflow. “This may be the year to set a limit on the number of guests and perhaps try and keep the list local,” said Dr. Guzman.

To determine your travel risk visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-risk.html>.

Getting your flu shot is also recommended by the CDC to avoid the spreading of influenza this holiday season.

Three area churches collecting shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child

Worldwide program has provided more than 178 million boxes of gifts

For Clay Today

CLAY COUNTY – Residents are encouraged to drop off shoeboxes filled with goodies at one of three local churches as part of this year’s Operation Christmas Child program.

Boxes should include fun toys, school supplies and hygiene items for children around the world.

Hibernia Baptist Church on Fleming Island, Oakleaf Baptist Church and Trinity Baptist Church in Keystone Heights have been designated drop-off locations in Clay County.

The worldwide program concludes on Monday, Nov. 23.

In the summer of 1993, Samaritan’s Purse President Franklin Graham received a call from a man in England asking if he’d be willing to fill shoeboxes with gifts for children in war-torn Bosnia. Franklin agreed, but figured Christmas was months away. He forgot about the promise until he received a call back around Thanksgiving asking about the gifts.

Franklin asked his friend the late Pastor Ross Rhoads of Calvary Church of Charlotte to see if he could help with the need. A Sunday shortly afterward, Pastor Rhoads demonstrated for his congregation how to fill a shoebox with simple gifts and encouraged them to include a letter to the child as well. Within weeks, the church had 11,000 shoeboxes lining their hallways.

Due to their generosity and additional gifts from Canada, Samaritan’s Purse sent 28,000 shoebox gifts to children in the Balkans that Christmas.

Every year since, Samaritan’s Purse



has collected shoebox gifts filled with toys, school supplies, and hygiene items for children around the world. Since 1993, more than 178 million children in more than 150 countries have received an Operation Christmas Child shoebox. The project delivers not only the joy of what, for many kids, is their first gift ever, but also gives them a tangible expression of God’s love.

Tens of thousands of volunteers from local churches around the world partner with us to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ at festive outreach events where children are surprised with these shoebox gifts.

Samaritan’s Purse suggests anyone who wishes to help start with a quality “wow” item such as a stuffed animal, soccer ball with pump, or clothing outfit that will capture the child’s attention the instant he or she opens the box. See our gift suggestions according to age and gender listed below for other fun toys, hygiene items and school supplies to fill the shoebox.

Items that aren’t allowed include

candy, toothpaste, gum, used or damaged items, war-related items such as toy guns, knives, or military figures, chocolate or food, seeds, fruit rolls or other fruit snacks, drink mixes (powdered or liquid), liquids or lotions, medications or vitamins, breakable items such as snow globes or glass containers and aerosol cans.

Local drop-off times are:

Hibernia Baptist Church, 7100 U.S. Highway 17 on Fleming Island: Thursday

– 3:30-5:30 p.m.; Friday – 11 a.m.-2 p.m.; Saturday – 10 a.m.-1 p.m.; Sunday – 3-5 p.m.; and, Monday – 9-11 a.m.

Oakleaf Baptist Church, 800 Oakleaf Plantation Parkway: Thursday – 9-11 a.m. and 4-6:30 p.m.; Friday – 11 a.m.-2 p.m.; Saturday – 9 a.m.-1 p.m.; Sunday – noon-6 p.m.; and, Monday – 8 a.m.-1 p.m.

Trinity Baptist Church, 3716 SE State Road 21, Keystone Heights: All days, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

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- St. Giles Presbyterian
- Community Hospice of NE Florida
- Calvary Assembly of God
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- Andromeda School of Clay County
- Twisted Scissors
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- Springs Baptist Church - "Springs Chapel"
- Springs Academy
- Congressional Holiness Church
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- First Coast Psychiatric Services
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- Miller's ATV
- Dr. Mate & Dr. Huaman
- Smokey Barrel Vapor Co.
- Smokey Barrel Vapor Lab
- Russel's Feed & Farm Supply
- Fleming Island Signs
- Black Creek Distilleries
- Local Fare Jax
- Bold N Classy Hair & Boutique LLC
- Omar Coleman Enterprises Inc
- Anell's Beauty Bar
- Marcia Faye Moore
- Ardnas Health Care Services
- Harris Insurance Group
- This N That Hair Creations
- T Hearts Nails
- Great Clips JVL Clipx
- Bold N Classy Hair & Boutique LLC
- Root Hair Salon LLC
- Delia McCall - Dollface
- Rock Foil Shoot
- 1801 Wells Road
- T & L Salon Properties LLC
- Trademark Title Services
- Fellowship Bible Church
- Centerpoint Food Pantry
- Centerpoint Baptist Church
- Black Creek Baptist Association
- Fox Meadows Baptist Church
- Foxmeadows Christian Daycare
- Diamond Tip Tatoo
- Fleming Signs
- Hair Hut
- Black Creek Distilleries
- Cobb Law Firm
- SONLight Christian Academy
- OPK Inc
- Asbury United Methodist Church
- Christian Home Academy
- Antiques For You
- Realty Connect LLC
- Affordable Insurance Alliance Inc
- KDdid Designs
- Orange Park Christian Church
- We Frame to Please
- The Treasure Box
- Expressions of Fleming Island
- The Broach School of Orange Park
- Hope Center of Orange Park
- Carla McCarthy
- Leighann Pitts
- Faith Community Church of God
- Vicki Middlekauff CMA, PA
- Advent Lutheran Church
- Advent Lutheran Preschool
- Protege Hair Studio LLC
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- Precision Clock & Watch
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CLAY TODAY **SCAN ME**





Students and faculty were rocked by the death of computer science teacher Tim Clyatt of COVID-19 on Feb. 13.

Bannerman computer teacher dies of COVID-19

Tim Claytt remembered fondly by fellow teachers, students, parents and administration

By Don Coble
don@opcfla.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – An R.C. Bannerman Learning Center computer teacher was remembered as a man who made “a difference in the lives of many students during his teaching career.”

Tim Clyatt, 59, died of complications of COVID-19 on Nov. 13, according to the Clay County School District.

Clyatt is the second school district employee to die of the virus this year. Bus driver Gail Brusseau died in October after contracting the disease.

County health officials said there’s no evidence through contact tracing to suggest Clyatt’s infection affected co-workers or students at his Green Cove Springs school.

A statement from the school district read: “Clay County District Schools is deeply saddened by the passing of Tim

Clyatt, a veteran teacher at Bannerman Learning Center. The District extends its sincerest condolences to Tim Clyatt’s family, friends, and coworkers ... He made a difference in the lives of many students during his teaching career.”

Superintendent David Broskie said one of the most-difficult aspects of running a district with nearly 5,000 employees is dealing with the death of a co-worker.

“I’m deeply saddened anytime we lose an employee,” Broskie said.

Clyatt was remembered during Tuesday’s organizational meeting of the school board. Members offered their condolences to Clyatt’s family and his students.

The Fleming Island resident also was remembered fondly on the district’s Facebook page.

“I’m simply devastated and heartbroken!!,” one parent posted.

Another post read: “We’ll miss our friend. His students will miss him. And we are a lesser place without him.”

Clyatt was laid to rest Wednesday at Jacksonville Memory Gardens in Orange Park.

Ridgeview teacher earns environmental award

Florida Project Learning Tree Recognizes Donna Foley

By Kim Scotto-Kelley
IFAS/UF Extension

CLAY COUNTY – Ridgeview High’s Donna Foley was selected by Project Learning Tree as the Facilitator of the Year for who demonstrating amazing dedication, support and program delivery skills.

Foley is an environmental and marine science and anatomy and physiology teacher at Ridgeview High. Donna has been a PLT facilitator since 1994, facilitating PLT professional development trainings for every age level. Donna also assisted with the evaluation of the PLT Southeastern Forests and Climate Change Secondary Module.

She expands Florida PLT’s reach by presenting at conferences, and in 2019, helped to make PLT formally part of the Florida Forestry Teachers’ Tour, providing training to 45 educators. Donna brings an incredible level of enthusiasm, expertise, and experience to each of the trainings that she leads.

Foley facilitates PLT professional development trainings focused on early childhood through high school curriculum, bringing an incredible level of enthusiasm, expertise, and experience and engaging and inspiring educators to use PLT to advance environmental literacy and promote stewardship among Florida’s youth.

Each year, Florida Project Learning Tree recognizes facilitators, educators and partners who have made exceptional contributions, dedicating their time, energy, and ideas to the program. Other 2020 awardees include Dawn Perez, Sol-



Donna Foley

id Waste Authority of Palm Beach County, Facilitator of the Year; Janet Schnauss, Duval County Public Schools, Educator of the Year; Ben and Louann Williams, Wetland Preserve, LLC, Partner of the Year; and Ken and Lynetta Griner, Usher Land & Timber, Partner of the Year.

Awards were presented during a virtual event,

that we could reach every single teacher.”

Project Learning Tree is the environmental education program of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and is sponsored in Florida by the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, School of Forest Resources and Conservation. PLT advances environmental literacy and promotes stewardship through excellence in environmental education, professional development, and curriculum resources that use trees and forests as windows on the world.

Clay Health offers tips for avoiding holiday foodborne illnesses

CLAY COUNTY – We know this holiday season will be different for most of us this year. Although we are all celebrating in different ways, foodborne illness can still be a concern. The Department of Health in Clay County wants to remind residents about the basics of Holiday Food Safety.

1. First, CLEAN – wash your hands, utensils and all cooking surfaces before and after food preparation. Especially wash after prepping meat, poultry, eggs or seafood.

2. Next, COOK – cook food to the proper internal temperature. Check for doneness with a food thermometer.

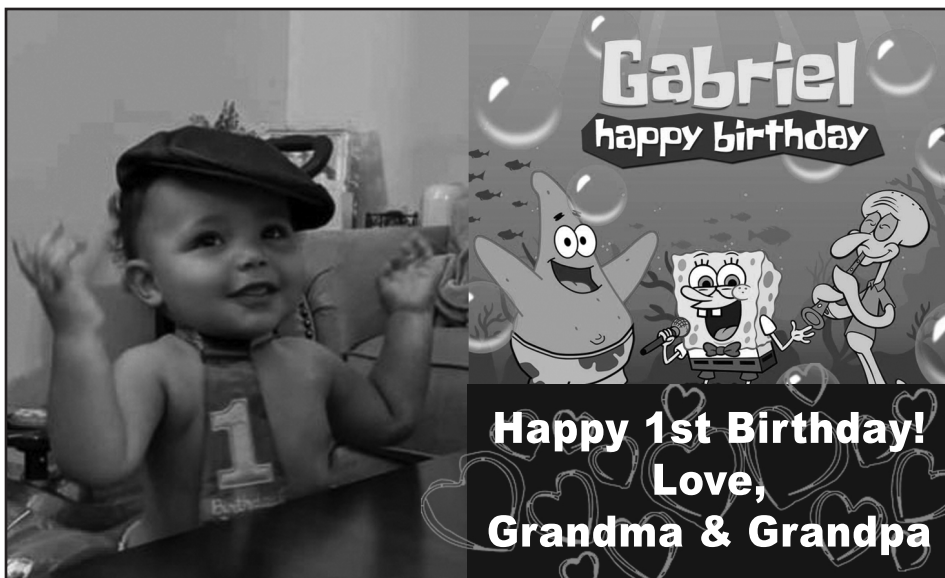
3. Then, CHILL – refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food and leftovers within two hours. Do not leave turkey, stuffing or other foods on the table all day. Be sure to store large quantities in smaller, shallow containers to ensure rapid cooling. Make sure the refrigerator is set at no higher than 40 degrees Fahr-

enheit, and the freezer is set at zero degrees Fahrenheit. Reheat leftovers to 165 degrees.

4. Finally, SEPARATE – do not cross contaminate foods. Keep raw meat, poultry, eggs and seafood and their juices away from ready to eat food.

5. REMEMBER – when defrosting turkeys and other foods, the safest thawing method is in the refrigerator at 40 degrees Fahrenheit. A 16- to 20-pound turkey can take four to five days to thaw in the refrigerator or 8-10 hours to thaw in cold running water.

“During the Holiday season, Salmonella cases tend to spike in Clay County. Salmonella infections often cause severe diarrhea, fever and stomach cramps. This illness is often caused by improperly cooked foods and poor hand washing,” said Heather Huffman, Health Officer and Administrator for the Department of Health in Clay County. “Following the basic Food Safety Tips can help prevent illness and ensure a happy holiday for all.”



Business Briefs

Fleming Island Medical Plaza I and II sold for \$6.75 million

FLEMING ISLAND – The Fleming Island Medical Plaza I & II on Fleming Island recently was sold to Woodside Health for \$6.75 million.

The transaction was brokered by NAI Hallmark Senior Vice President Daniel Burkhardt, SIOR, CCIM and Managing Partner Keith Goldfaden on behalf of the seller, Fleming Island Medical Plaza LLC and Fleming Island Medical Plaza II LLC.

The Property is located at 1681, 1685, 1689 & 1675, 1677, 1679 Eagle Harbor Parkway, and consists of six multi-tenant-ed medical office buildings totaling 46,357 square feet situated on 4.14 acres of land. At the time of sale, the property was 83% occupied by medical tenants including First Coast Cardiovascular, St. Johns Vein Center, JE Foot and Ankle, Brooks Rehabilitation and others.

“We were able to attract numerous qualified buyers during our marketing process given the property’s long standing and stable tenancy, strong in-place



income, and value-add opportunity.” said Daniel Burkhardt, Senior Vice President of NAI Hallmark. “Ultimately, Woodside Health was awarded the deal because they saw the great long-term potential for this property and the overall growth dy-

namics of the surrounding submarket and Clay County.”

DuBose joins Berkshire Hathaway at Fleming Island/Orange Park office

FLEMING ISLAND – Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty is pleased to welcome Kiara DuBose to the Fleming Island/Orange Park office.

Kiara has lived and worked in Jacksonville for more than 25, and prior to becoming a realtor, Kiara worked in healthcare as an outpatient registrar and administrator. With her background in customer service, transitioning into becoming a Realtor was a natural step for Kiara.

When asked why she became a Realtor, Kiara said: “I love building relationships with my clients. I work to maintain a positive attitude in high stress or changing environments, and I am eager to help my clients through each real estate transaction and make sure their experience is smooth

and stress-free.”

“I am excited to welcome Kiara to the Fleming Island Office. Kiara believes that superb customer service, attention to detail, and clear communication leads to the best results for her clients – as well as lasting relationships,” said Linda Benson, Broker/Manager of the Fleming Island/Orange Park office.

The Fleming Island/Orange Park office is located at 3535 US. Highway 17, Suite 10 on Fleming Island.

Ted’s Montana Grill to host Thanksgiving Day feast

ORANGE PARK – Ted’s Montana Grill, a classic American restaurant known for genuine hospitality and elevated comfort food, invites guests to relax and let them handle the cooking for Thanksgiving this year.

Ted’s Montana Grill, located at 8635 Blanding Blvd., will be open on Thanksgiving Day from 11 a.m. until 8 p.m., and will feature a special menu with a made-from-scratch Turkey Feast and signature items for dine-in or pick-up.

The Thanksgiving Day feast is \$29 per person and includes roasted turkey with garlic mashed potatoes, turkey gravy, herb dressing, buttered carrots, “Aunt Fannie’s” squash casserole and cranberry sauce. Back by popular demand, Ted’s will offer its seasonal Apple Pecan Crisp for dessert. Children 12 and younger can enjoy turkey and dressing with a homemade cookie for \$13.

Guests who wish to pick-up their meal can view the menu on Thanksgiving Day at www.tedsmontanagrill.com and call their local Ted’s to place an order.

Ted’s is also making the prep work simple for guests celebrating at home with a feast for 4-6 people for \$120 or 8-10 people for \$230. The feast includes roasted turkey, herb dressing, turkey gravy, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, buttered carrots, squash casserole, yeast rolls, whipped butter and apple crisp. Orders should be placed before Friday, Nov. 20 and picked up before 11 a.m. on Thanksgiving Day on Thursday, Nov. 26.



JP Hall Children's Charities will continue as drive-thru event

Toys from page 10

gifts from JP Hall and two from community partners and donations. All of the gifts have to come from JP Hall this year due to safety reasons and Hall said more money is needed because of that. Hall said the organization isn’t looking for toy donations or volunteers as they try to adhere to CDC guidelines.

She said anyone wishing to help can donate money directly to JP Hall by going to jphallcharities.com and clicking the orange “donate” button. Donations would be espe-

cially helpful as JP Hall is having to spend more money than ever before for the party with less money coming in due to the pandemic. The charity even had to cancel its annual lunch and silent auction that helps fund a large amount of toy purchases.

Hall said regardless of what happens in terms of money between now and Dec. 13, the 39th annual JP Hall Children’s Charity Christmas Party will happen.

“We always want to serve Clay County and Clay County’s children and we’re just going to continue to do like we’ve done every year and do the best job we can with community support,” she said.



Kiara DuBose

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First Baptist Church of Middleburg hosts 'Feeding the 5,000' Saturday

MIDDLEBURG – First Baptist Church of Middleburg will hold its annual “Feeding the 5000” event on Sat. Nov. 21. The event officially begins at noon, and will be held on the church campus at 2645 Blanding Blvd.

“This event is one of the largest Thanksgiving food giveaways in northeast Florida and is designed to be a blessing to the residents of Clay County,” according to Senior Pastor, Dr. Chris Bonts. “Providing Thanksgiving meals for those in need is a tangible expression of our church’s love for our community, especially in the midst of a pandemic which has caused widespread physical, financial and spiritual struggle for so many families.”

First Baptist Middleburg will give away a complete Thanksgiving meal to the first 1,000 families that arrive on campus at noon. The meal contains a 10-12-pound turkey, green beans, tur-



key stuffing, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce and a pumpkin pie.

For more information contact, Pastor Tim Martin at (904) 282-5289 or tmartin@firstmiddleburg.org.



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Copper Chancellor and Michelle Velasco will perform a dressage test Friday after being inducted into the Dressage Foundation's Century Club.

Michelle Velasco to be inducted in Dressage Foundation's Century Club

For Clay Today

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – Michelle Velasco will be inducted into a nationally-known group for senior dressage riders and horses on Friday, Nov. 20. The ages of Michelle and her horse, Copper Chancellor, qualify them to become members of The Dressage Foundation's Century Club.

The Century Club recognizes dressage riders and horses whose combined ages total 100 years or more. Michelle is 68 and Copper Chancellor is 32. In addition to having ages totaling 100 or more, horse and rider perform a dressage test of any level and are scored by a dressage judge. Michelle's ride will take place at the Jacksonville Equestrian Center in Jacksonville.

The Dressage Foundation provides a Century Club ribbon and wall plaque to each horse and rider team. Local dressage clubs, family and friends help to make the ride into a celebratory event.

The Century Club was formed at The

Dressage Foundation in 1996, at the suggestion of noted dressage judge and instructor, Dr. Max Gahwyler. The intent was to encourage older dressage riders to remain active in the sport. Since that time, the Century Club has grown into a meaningful and popular endeavor and has more than 470 members.

Dressage is a word drawn from the French verb for “to train.” Dressage is both a method of training horses and a competitive sport and is designed to develop correct movement in the horse. Dressage is an Olympic event and is unique in that men and women of all ages compete against each other. TDF's Century Club is sponsored by Platinum Performance.” At Platinum Performance horse health is a primary mission. Since 1996, the group has been committed to providing high quality equine nutritional supplements that are developed, tested and made with care to ensure results. Visit www.platinumperformance.com/ equine for more information.

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COPD is a condition everyone should take seriously during COVID-19 pandemic

ORANGE PARK – COVID-19 has put lung health front and center. The term preexisting or underlying condition has taken on new meaning during the coronavirus pandemic and patients with impaired lung functions are being more cautious.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a long-term lung disease that makes it hard to breathe and includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema. It is the third leading cause of death by disease in the United States. More than 16.4 million people have been diagnosed with COPD but millions more may have the disease without knowing. COPD symptoms look different for everyone but many suffer from a chronic cough or multiple respiratory infections.

“Before COVID-19 we would see patients that would just think they were short of breath or perhaps they couldn’t do

as much as they used to when they were younger,” says Dr. Luis Laos, Pulmonologist at Orange Park Medical Center. “Now, there is a spotlight on these symptoms and we can easily test and determine the root cause, helping us set up on a treatment plan. COPD can be managed.”

Most patients are able to manage their COPD through medications, oxygen therapy and pulmonary rehabilitation. But the best thing is to take preventative actions. “First and foremost – if you smoke – stop,” says Dr. Laos. “Avoid second-hand smoke, long-term exposure to air pollution or fumes and chemicals at home or at work.”

Other tips for patients with COPD during the pandemic are to make sure they wash their hands, use hand sanitizer and avoid crowds. “I would encourage them to go a step further and before spending time with family this holiday season, make sure the family member is not feeling ill and are taking precautions to avoid COVID-19 in their daily routines,” Dr. Laos said.

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|--|--|
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Orange Park, FL 32073 | Clay Today (Front Lobby)
3513 U.S. Highway 17
Fleming Island, FL 32003 |
| Gordon Chevrolet (Customer Lounge)
1166 Blanding Boulevard
Orange Park, FL 32065 | Clay County Administration Building (Front Lobby)
477 Houston Street
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043 |
| Clay County Farm Bureau (Main Lobby)
2000 Henley Road
Middleburg, FL 32068 | Clay County Courthouse (Main Lobby)
825 North Orange Avenue
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043 |
| Clay County UF/IFAS Extension Center
2463 State Road 16 West
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043 | CenterState Bank (Drive-Thru)
1440 Kingsley Avenue
Orange Park, FL 32073 |

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- Clay County Cattlemen’s Association
- Clay County UF/IFAS Extension Center
- Orange Park Medical Center
- Rotary Club of Green Cove Springs
- Orange Park Mall
- Rotary Club of Orange Park
- David A. King, Attorney
- Clay Today
- Gordon Chevrolet
- Clay County Fair Association
- Anthony’s Catering
- CenterState Bank
- Town of Orange Park
- Clay County
- Clay County Soil and Water Conservation Board
- Clay County Beekeepers Association



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James Fossa outlined immediate plans after voters approved the half-cent sales tax, and he said the future has never been brighter for the school district.



A rusted picnic bench is one of the eyesores the half-cent tax will help fix. The tax is expected to cost residents about \$5 a week to maintain county schools.

Tax

from page 1

jected schools in order to keep up with the county's growth. The district would have been looking at some large bonds and loans to do that had the tax not been passed.

The additional tax increase will begin at the start of the new year. It will be an added cost to purchases at retail shops and other sales-tax subjected businesses. It won't be something that will come on a tax bill.

Fossa said the school board will begin preparing for this money in the coming

weeks and one big part of that preparation is the creation of a citizens' oversight panel.

"The school board is going to workshop this very soon, but basically...the purpose will be for the panel to look at every project that comes before it to determine that it fits the letter of the law," Fossa said. "The letter of the law is what's outlined in the referendum the voters passed. This panel will make sure our projects fit what that referendum said because we can't use this money for anything outside of that referendum description."

The projects will be something planned out each year in the district's annual five-

year plan. It will be part of the Educational Facilities Plan, which is where Fossa, assistant superintendent of operations Bryce Ellis, who Fossa said is the mastermind behind all of this, and others will present to the school board and the residents of Clay County what the next five years of projects, maintenance and fixes look like on paper. This plan will guide the district in its spending.

Fossa said that despite the five-year plan, there's leeway for emergency fixes. If a roof falls in at a classroom, that is quite obviously a fix that needs to be made immediately. While that specific fix might not

be in the plan, the district will still have the power to use funds to fix the roof.

"We're so proud of the county for passing this and proud of the work that everyone's put into this," Fossa said. "The folks of Clay County should rest easy because we're going to take care of the students and staff in our schools. Teachers have always done a great job at making sure our kids got the education they needed, but we kind of dropped the ball in giving them facilities.

"Now, because of this half-cent sales tax, we can give them the first-class facilities these students need and deserve."

Teen

from page 1

procedures such as reading witness statements, exhibits, objections and evidence rules.

Coach Kendra New, a Green Cove Springs lawyer, is a veteran of the program, who practices corporate, civil and estate law.

Team member Linnea Stuart won an award for the top attorney and scored the highest points for the plaintiff and defense. Stuart is a home-schooled senior who also is enrolled at St. John's River State College.

"Part of our home school program is we do an eighth-grade mock trial every year," said Stuart. She was advised to join Teen Court, and she did. "I really enjoy being a part of Teen Court just to be able to mentor other kids who are the same age as I am and going through a lot of the same problems that I do.

"I think that as attorneys, we're able to empathize a bit better. I like doing mock trials because of the community around it. The kids who do mock trials are incredibly excited, enthusiastic, and really eager to learn. I just love being around those kinds of people, and they're great friends to me."

Mock trial differs slightly from Teen Court, in that the mock trial focuses more on the competition aspect while Teen Court



The Teen Court Mock Trial team is honored by members of the Clay County Board of Commissioners following their second state championship in two years.

is a diversionary program for young people who may stray onto the wrong path. Stuart intends to pursue a double major in philosophy and mathematics for her undergraduate degree and then go on to law school. She is uncertain what type of attorney she wants to be but is looking toward intellectual property or appellate law.

Stacey Smith is the Teen Court Supervisor.

"This is the third year we have competed in the competition, and it is the second year we have placed first. We were the only team this year that went undefeated in

and spending time there and just the atmosphere there as well as helping the kids. Especially some of the defendants. They actually turn out to be really good people."

Maxwell doesn't intend to become an attorney; she is working towards becoming a veterinarian.

She says the team was shocked last year after winning their first title in the event.

"Last year when we won it the first time it was a complete shock. It was actually our second time competing, and the first year we didn't place. I was so happy and excited. This year, I wouldn't say it was foreseen. We were all nervous about it but to be honest, I had complete faith in Linnea [Stuart] because she had done the online trial format before, and she really helped us prepare for it."

This year, the competition was held via zoom to ensure everyone followed COVID-19 protocols during the competition.

Both competitors recommend other young people get involved with the Teen Court and Mock Trial Programs.

"Both Teen Court and mock trial have been very rewarding experiences," Maxwell said. "Not only do you get community service hours, but it's honestly just a great experience to be around people. A lot of them are the nicest people you're going to ever meet, and you learn a lot."

all four rounds," said Smith. "So we came home winners for the second year in a row. Last year we were also the only team that went undefeated in all four rounds."

Lily Maxwell also is home-schooled and attends St. John's River St. College. She is another team member who came across the program while doing the mock trial project like Stuart.

"I'm the courtroom coordinator. I'm basically kind of like a glorified secretary. I really work more behind the scenes with everyone," Maxwell said. "What I really enjoy about it is just being with everyone

Justin Hyler's dream leads him to writing 'The Pewtar Scarab'

By Bruce Hope
bruce@opcfla.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – In life, we often hear about following dreams. Green Cove Springs resident author and musician Justin Hyler literally followed his dream, and it led him to write his first book, "The Pewtar Scarab."

Hyler moved to the Jacksonville area from Pensacola in 2001, first living in Orange Park.

"Over the last 20 years, I've been here [Clay County] for roughly 17 of them," said Hyler.

He spent about a year in Birmingham, Alabama, and a year and a half in Raleigh, North Carolina. He's been in Green Cove Springs for almost two years now and loves the community, with many friends who are lifelong residents.

Hyler got into writing early in life.

"I started out writing young like a lot of kids do," he said. "You know, you write poems and little stories and things like that. And then I got into music and kind of transitioned into writing music and writing lyrics, and I think that kind of brought out more of the writer in me. It just progressed over the years."

Hyler said he had thought many times over the years about writing a short story or a novel but never really put the time into



Justin Hyler

doing so. He always had other things going on, like work or his music. That's when things changed for him.

"It came to me in a dream. I dreamt the whole thing like watching a movie," he said. "I woke up; I wrote it down. I had the characters, the plotline, everything, and then I just fleshed it out over the course of a few months, and it came to life." That book that came to life out of Hyler's dream

became "The Pewtar Scarab," the first in a series of three.

Hyler gets some inspiration from people and places around him. He doesn't mimic people or places directly, but it does play a role.

"A lot of the characters that I use, I won't necessarily mimic people I know precisely," he said. "They say write what you know. I think it plays greatly into the scenic

approaches when writing. It's [Clay County] beautiful. We've got the river, we've got the creeks. Everyone is wonderfully nice, friendly, and we've got great views. I love the historical aspect, too. With the springs being a hotshot tourist destination a long time ago, I love seeing all the old photos of that and feeling like I'm a part of someplace that has some history to it."

"The Peter Scarab" is about a company conducting illegal DNA research. An analyst discovers something he shouldn't have seen, and the outcome will change the world.

The sequel to "The Pewtar Scarab" will be named "The Psychic Thieves", and the third is yet to be named.

Hyler recommends that anyone who is interested should try writing. "Everybody's got a story," he said. "Let's try to hear them all."

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Back to the 50's Again

More than 140 cars, hundreds of fans attend Clay County Cruzers event

By Bruce Hope
bruce@opclla.com

FLEMING ISLAND — Local residents showed up to take in the excellent weather, marvel at more than 140 exotic cars and participate in the best-dressed in 1950's attire competition Saturday at the 13th annual Back to the Fifties Car Show at the Town Hall Event Center.

"It's a very nice day; it's a little hotter than we expected. But we appreciate the sunshine," said Teri Hurihane of the Clay County Cruzers. "We had expected about 150 cars, and our registration was right at that, about 148 or something. It's our first time here at the Town Center. Everybody seems to be enjoying and we've got a lot of room where everybody is able to social distance. It's going real well."

The club raffled off several prizes such as a firepit of smores, a salad bowl of dollars and a Bloody Mary basket. There were also door prizes for people who brought their cars.

Gary Arca's 1955 Chevrolet Bel Air won Best of Show, while Keith Carlasco's 2017 Factory Five 818C won the Kid's Choice award and Mike Buddecke's 1932 Hudson Essex won the Town Hall Event Center Choice award. The Callahan Cruisers of North Florida were honored for having the most members in attendance.

Wayne and Judy Newkirk of Jacksonville were one of two couples who took plaques for best-dressed. The other

couple who was awarded was Garrett and Valeria Waters of Oakleaf.

Wayne Newkirk wore a pink polo with jeans and Penny Loafers, which he said have been with him since the 1950s — he graduated from high school in 1959. His wife Judy matched with a pink shirt and ribbons in her hair in the 50s style.

After all of the raffles, door prize giveaways and the best-dressed competition, the Cruzers made \$1,000 donations to local charitable organizations, including Quigley House, Vietnam Veterans of America, SAFE Animal Shelter and AMI Kids.

Gary Newman, Naval veteran and vice-president of the Florida State Council of VVA, accepted a donation on behalf of Vietnam Veterans Chapter 1059.

"On behalf of all Vietnam Vets, I'd like to say thank you very much for this donation," said Newman. "The Clay Cruzers have been very supportive of us, and we appreciate it very much."



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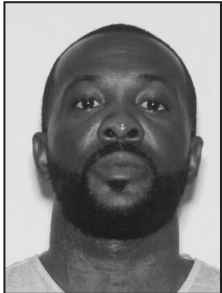
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Police Briefs

Oakleaf murder suspect killed by Maryland police

OAKLEAF – The man wanted for murder by the Clay County Sheriff's Office was shot and killed by police Tuesday afternoon in Maryland.

Shawn Lequin Braddy was killed by officers with the Prince George County Police Department when they tried to arrest him. A Montgomery County deputy was shot in the chest in the shootout following a short foot chase and shootout at an apartment complex in Laurel.



Shawn Lequin Braddy

Officers were part of the U.S. Marshals task force, who were assigned to catching Braddy after deputies said he shot and killed his estranged girlfriend, Tiara McDaniels, on Grayson Lane Monday in Oakleaf.

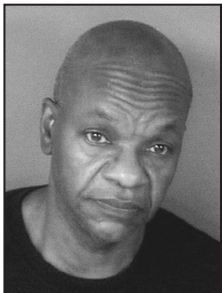
Montgomery County Police Chief Marcus Jones said, "A chase ensued with a gun battle. The suspect was wounded and succumbed to his injuries on the scene."

The officer was listed in stable condition following surgery.

Man charged with murder after shooting wife in head

OAKLEAF – A 60-year-old man was arrested Saturday morning, Nov. 14, and charged with killing his wife with a single shot to the head.

Cleon Erland McQueen, was booked into the Clay County Jail on a charge of premeditated murder. He's being held without bond.



Cleon Erland McQueen

According to the arrest report, the Clay County Sheriff's Office was called to a residence near Deercroft Lane in Oakleaf Plantation after neighbors said they heard a gunshot. They found his wife, Terrion, in the front seat of her SUV with a wound to the left side of her head. She was transported to the Orange Park Medical Center where she later died, CCGSO said.

Deputies said the apparent murder weapon was a .380 handgun. They also said the shooting appeared to be a domestic dispute and that he punched his wife in the head before shooting her.

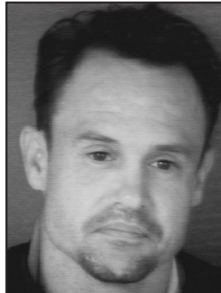
A neighbor told deputies the McQueens were having "marital issues."

Neighbors said they saw McQueen "casing" the neighborhood prior to the shooting. McQueen then travelled to Jacksonville and turned himself into the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

Man arrested for breaking into home, threatening residents

ORANGE PARK – A 37-year-old man was arrested for breaking into a home and threatening the residents while he tried to rob them.

Joshua Robert Welch, of Orange Park, was charged with burglary and armed burglary on Nov. 11 after Clay County Sheriff's Office deputies found him crouching behind a barbecue grill near the victim's garage.



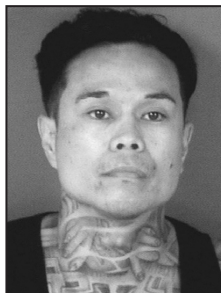
Joshua Robert Welch

Welch was identified as the man who entered the couple's kitchen in the middle of the afternoon.

Traffic stop leads to arrest for gun, drug possession

ORANGE PARK – An alert Clay County Sheriff's Office deputy stopped a pickup truck after he learned the owner's license was suspended, and that led to an arrest for drugs and weapons.

Emmanuel Joseph Blanco, 39, of Jacksonville, was charged on Nov. 13 with possession of a weapon and ammo by a convicted felon, as well as possession of methamphetamine, ecstasy/molly, fentanyl and oxycodone and trafficking in cocaine.



Emmanuel Blanco

According to the arrest report, Blanco was a passenger in a truck that was stopped after a routine check revealed the driver's license was suspended. K-9 Odin then alerted deputies of the likely presence of drugs in the truck.

Deputies said the handgun was reported stolen.

Blanco, who was convicted of armed carjacking, had a holster in his waistband, as well as a pill bottle with the ecstasy or molly.

Blanco's bond was set at \$350,021.

Couple goes to jail after they were stopped for expired tag

OAKLEAF – A couple were arrested after they were stopped for an expired tag on Nov. 13.

Christopher Patrick Swihart, 41, of Jacksonville, was charged with possession of fentanyl and methamphetamine, as well as driving with a suspended license. Kelly Frances McParland, 40, of Jacksonville, was charged with an out of county warrant. She was wanted in Jacksonville for battery on a person 65 years or older.

K-9 Cash alerted deputies of the presence of drugs inside the car.

Stolen tag leads to man's arrest for drugs on Wells Road

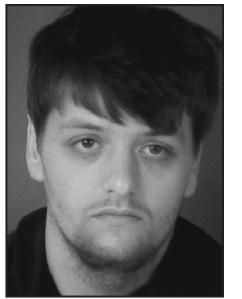
ORANGE PARK – A Jacksonville man was charged with possession heroin, two controlled substances without a prescription and drug paraphernalia, along with driving with a suspended license following a traffic stop on Wells Road.

Jack Edward Johnson Jr., 24, was stopped after deputies were alerted the

tag on his Jeep was reported stolen in Jacksonville.

Deputies learned the tag belonged to a car owned by Johnson's father.

K-9 Oden alerted deputies of drugs during the stop.



Jack Johnson

Skydiver dies practicing for Krawl'n for the Fallen

Miami man found in wooded area at Keystone Heights Airport

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – A South Florida skydiver plunged to his death during a practice jump for last weekend's Krawl'n for the Fallen near the Keystone Heights Airport.

Yuset Hernandez, 51, originally of Cuba who lived in Miami, died when his main parachute malfunctioned. His body was found in a wooded area near the airport.

Krawl'n for the Fallen is a three-day event that celebrates the lives and service of first responders. This year's event included recognition of Clay County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Eric Twisdale, who died in September after contracting COVID-19. Organizers planned a one-mile run on Saturday, Nov. 14, to honor Twisdale.

The Off Road United Foundation, which organized Krawl'n for the Fallen, posted the following comment on its Facebook page:

"This past Friday [Nov. 13], skydiving Team Eagle member Yuset Hernandez, died after a malfunction with his main parachute while practicing for the 2020 Krawl'n for the Fallen event.

"Yuset was 51 years old and lived in Miami. He is from Cuba and leaves behind a daughter and grandchild.

"His team honored and remembered him during their afternoon jump on Saturday.

In multiple discussions with the team we learned that Yuset did not have what is commonly referred to as a Automatic Activation Device. These devices are designed to activate the reserve parachute at a preset altitude if the rate of descent is over a certain threshold. These devices can be expensive and not all "old school" jumpers want the new technology

"In talking with each other we want



to help raise awareness to safety of using these devices as well as remember Yuset and his family.

We have put up a link so that our wonderful community can help us establish that goal.

"We would like to ensure the entire team has additional safety measures for their parachute systems. They have become part of our family and we want them same. At the same time we will also use part of the donations to continue to help Yuset's family.

"Remember no gift is to small."

The website to help the family is <https://secure.qgiv.com/for/yuset>.

Arrests & Bookings

(Name, age, location of arrest, charges).
Key: FTA-Failure to Appear; DWLSR-Driving Without a License-Suspended or Revoked; DUI-Driving Under the Influence; VOP-Violation of Probation; BAL-blood alcohol level. There are no assumptions or representations about guilt or innocence. Anyone arrested or booked is presumed innocent.

Tuesday, Nov. 17

Sara L. Lester, 29, Orange Park, DUI with property damage

Louis E. Platt, 63, Green Cove Springs, FTA-possession-controlled substance

Brittany N. Jones, 40, Orange Park, trespassing

Tara E. Rausch, 33, Middleburg, FTA-failure to register vehicle, FTA-DWLSR

Amber N. Burkes, 29, Green Cove Springs, VOP-grand theft auto

Vania Retana, 32, Orange Park, vandalism

Dennis R. Hansen, 42, Fleming Island, retail petit theft

Jason M. Adams, 40, Middleburg, burglary, domestic stalking

Nicole C. Russo, 40, Orange Park, retail petit theft

Ruben M. Hill, 47, Orange Park, trespassing with warning

Monday, Nov. 16

Cecil L. Dixon, 47, Middleburg, child abuse

Gerald A. Warner, 46, Orange Park, burglary

James W. Devoe, 36, Green Cove Springs, VOP-battery

Kevin L. Rehberg, 38, Orange Park, VOP-community control

Bethany M. Downs, 32, Keystone Heights, simple battery

Gerald A. Warner, 46, Orange Park, burglary

Shannan M. Allen, 39, Middleburg, retail petit theft

Adam D. Preseau, 34, Orange Park, resisting police with violence, battery on a law enforcement officer, simple domestic battery, prevent communication to law enforcement, vandalism, resist/obstruct/oppose police

Zachary B. Harrison, 27, Green Cove Springs, discharge firearm in public, use of a firearm while under influence of alcohol/drugs

T. Charles Hendricks, 51, Green Cove Springs, domestic battery

Sunday, Nov. 15

Modesto Z. Ortiz, 35, Orange Park, DUI

Robert B. Weaver, 46, Orange Park, FTA-failure to register (Bradford)

Loretta J. Dyal, 51, Green Cove Springs, FTA

Saturday, Nov. 14

Cleon E. McQueen, 60, Orange Park, premeditated murder

Collin S. Stewart, 24, Keystone Heights, sale/delivery-narcotics, use of two-way communications device to facilitate a felony

Caleb B. Stewart, 22, sale/delivery-narcotics, use of two-way communications device to facilitate a felony

Caleb M. Koessler, 27, Orange Park, simple domestic battery, criminal mischief

Daron J. Boyd, 28, Orange Park, fugitive from justice

Patrick V. Busby, 71, Orange Park, DUI

with property damage

Donald E. Lockwood, 24, Middleburg, vandalism

Friday, Nov. 13

Christopher P. Swihart, 41, Oakleaf, possession-fentanyl, possession-methamphetamine, DWLSR

Kelly F. McParland, 40, Oakleaf, out of county warrant

Cecil L. Dixon, 47, Fleming Island, DUI, resist/obstruct/oppose police

Emmanuel J. Blanco, 39, Jacksonville, possession-firearm/ammunition by convicted felon, possession/trafficking-methamphetamine, possession-ecstasy/molly, possession-fentanyl, possession-oxycodone, trafficking-cocaine.

Michael S. Noble, 69, Orange Park, possession-firearm/ammunition by convicted felon

Ryan M. Vance, 30, Orange Park, VOP-possession-heroin (Duval)

Eli A. Espinosa, 19, Middleburg, sexual battery on child younger than 16

Gerald A. Warner, 46, Orange Park, two counts burglary

Aleigha J. Meeks, 26, Green Cove Springs, two counts FTA-DWLSR

Devin S.J. King, Orange Park, disorderly intoxication, resist/obstruct/oppose police

Garrick D. Pettus, 26, Green Cove Springs, aggravated battery with deadly weapon

Thursday, Nov. 12

Mark D. Tafoya, 26, Orange Park, DUI

James M. Hensley, 77, Argyle Forest, domestic battery

Andrew R. Dickerson, 34, Orange Park, burglary

Nathan A. Coolbaugh, 34, Green Cove Springs, FTA by Zoom-DWLSR

Faheem M. Schwarha, 37, Orange Park, possession-firearm/ammunition by convicted felon, concealed weapon violation

Jack E. Johnson, 24, Orange Park possession-heroin, three counts possession-controlled substance, DWLSR, failure to register

Emmy C. Hall, 50, Middleburg, DUI

Graham T. Marcum, 43, Orange Park, possession-firearm/ammunition by convicted felon, possession-hydrocodone, failure to register

Wednesday, Nov. 11

Kevin L.B. Thompson, 32, Middleburg, possession-methamphetamine, possession-marijuana, possession/use-drug paraphernalia

Gerald A. Warner, 46, Orange Park, four counts burglary

Tommy L. Johnson, 46, Orange Park, possession-cocaine

Charles R. Odom, 45, Middleburg, possession-controlled substance, possession/use-drug paraphernalia

Breanna M. Palmer, 27, Orange Park, domestic battery

Joshua R. Welch, 37, Orange Park, assault/battery during burglary, burglary

Annabelle L. Frailey, 50, Middleburg, battery on a law enforcement officer, resisting police with violence, trespassing with warning

Thomas R. Mathis, 34, Green Cove Springs, possession-marijuana, possession/use-drug paraphernalia

Sofia A. Garza, 46, Fleming Island, DUI

SJR State to forge ahead this spring with on-campus classes

ORANGE PARK - Spring registration is in progress at St. Johns River State College and includes welcoming students back to campus for face-to-face instruction. President Joe Pickens announced that the three campuses - in Orange Park, Palatka and St. Augustine - are ready to accommodate more students as the College presents a "new normal" in January.

"We are open, and more importantly, we're prepared to ensure the students will feel safe, secure and at home," Pickens said.

The decision to add more on-campus instruction to the spring schedule comes after much deliberation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and understanding the students' need for more course options. "Moving forward with on-campus classes will give students better access to classes that fit their

preferred style of learning. Face-to-face instruction provides the enrichment and learning environment many have missed since the College transitioned to online classes in April," Pickens said. "It will also help students who struggle with computer and internet access, as well as those who are experiencing social isolation."

Workforce and teacher education programs that rely heavily on field experiences and hands-on practicums will continue with on-campus instruction. Resources such as tutoring, counseling, financial aid, and the library will also be available on campus as well as online. The baseball and softball teams are also expected to return to the field for home games.

Pickens said adjusting to a new normal means implementing proper social distancing and smaller class sizes, as well as a re-

duced audience capacity for athletics and cultural art events. Preparations to welcome students on campus continue with the College following state and federal guidelines to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and employees. Those measures include enhanced cleaning, accessible hand sanitizer stations, and protective barriers. Face masks will also be required on campus.

"This is also the ideal time to encourage students to not be derailed by the pandemic, and to continue working toward their academic and career goals. We have dedicated faculty and staff who are here to assist students through these challenging times. Now is not the time for postponement, as the College has announced a new grant created to connect qualified residents with career and technical education and

support" Pickens said.

For students and residents who are unemployed, underemployed or furloughed due to COVID-19, opportunities include the recently announced Rapid Credentialing grant program. The program aims to assist participants in getting to work faster, affordably and with in-demand credentials.

For students who wish to remain online, the spring remote classes will include traditional online, hybrid and "live online." The "live online" classes were introduced during the fall and allows students to interact in real time with professors and classmates. The College will accept applications for the spring semester through December 14. The spring semester begins January 6. Students are encouraged to visit the College web site at www.SJRstate.edu for details and to apply and register for classes.

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100 and counting ...

Allegro's LeCouvre stays positive, busy as world continues to evolve

By Don Coble
don@opcfla.com

FLEMING ISLAND – Lucille LeCouvre will turn 100 on Sunday, Nov. 22.

She's lived through the War to End all Wars – twice – and watched man defeat polio and walk on the moon. She's survived several pandemics, watched 18 different men be elected as the President of the United States, cried when terrorists attack the country on Sept. 11 and was part of a generation that transformed living rooms into entertainment centers with the invention of the television.

Partially isolated by threats created by COVID-19, LeCouvre is still quick-witted, active and happy. Life is too short to dwell on the negative, she said.

"There's always tomorrow," she said during a visit from her niece, Shann Mills, at Allegro on Fleming Island.

Another thing that helps is a glass of red wine every night after dinner.

LeCouvre was born at her mother's home on Nov. 22, 1920. Days earlier, William Harding has just been elected as the 29th president. There was no indoor plumbing in the house in Midway, Pennsylvania, and she walked to and from school,

as well as walking home for lunch, every day.

She was one of 20 graduating high school seniors in 1938. She married one of her classmates, Leonard LeCouvre, in 1984. She worked as the Director of Consumer Affairs for Equitable Gas, appearing at the 1964 World's Fair in New York to demonstrate how to make fondue.

Her husband died after 27 years of marriage. She lived at San Diego until she fell and broke her hip in 2015. She moved to Fleming Island to be closer to family and has been a happy resident at Allegro since.

"First, I hope to get out of bed every morning," LeCouvre said with chuckle. "They keep you busy here at Allegro. There are a lot of things to do. I look forward to lunch because there are other people around. Now we can go outside again to get some fresh air."

Like other long-term care facilities in Florida, Allegro was required to isolate residents and prohibit them from any outside contact from March to September. Rules have relaxed some, but visitors still aren't allowed inside the facility. Allegro set up a room where family and visitors can enter from the outside and the resident can enter from the hallway.



Lucille LeCouvre is an avid reader who decided to organize the library at Allegro. She will turn 100 on Sunday, and she plans to celebrate like she lives every day - with a glass of red wine.

"It really wasn't that big of a deal," LeCouvre said. "What was bad was when they closed the hair salon and the dining rooms. Now that they're back open, it's getting back to normal."

That includes the return of Happy Hour at the facility.

"I like a good Cabernet," she said.

LeCouvre said she loves to read, talk with family, play trivia and stay mentally

active.

"I still have all my mental facilities," she said.

Allegro will have a private party for LeCouvre. There will be cake, but no outside visitors.

By the time she turns 101, she believes things will be better. "It always gets better," she said.



Im looking for a man who would have been in Middleburg FL in 01/88. He was 20-25 with L. brown/aub hair & L. blue eyes. He was 5'9"- 6 ft & thin. A more oval face, straighter nose turned up a touch at end & mustache. He was wearing a thick brown jacket, blue flannel & jeans w/ trucker hat. He had a class ring. He drove a 2 door, chevy chevette hatchback with tan interior. The panel & speaker was missing behind the drivers side door in back seat. Im unsure on exterior color.

After the Minute Mart on CR 218/Mimosa, my car broke down before Cocoa. He offered a ride to call my dad but then refused to turn around to go to pay phone. He yelled about police coming to his work & making him look bad, they said he hurt a girl.

This man knew the Middelburg area very well, main st boat ramp, past mimosa into the woods/fields and a property in Muscovy area w/ lighted barn. He prob offered other girls rides or tried to talk them into his car. I was 16 so he may have targeted young women/teens.

If you remember this man offered you/friend a ride after a breakdown or any other time please Call/email or go to the **Facebook Page: Unsolved In Northeast Florida**

memesofia71@gmail.com | 562-576-6997 | www.facebook.com/UNSOLVEDINNORTHEASTFLORIDA

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Stotler snags gold in butterfly

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

STUART - Clay High senior swimmer Sara Stotler had to endure yet a second second place finish in the first individual championship event of her 2020 season; in the 200 individual medley, but the steely-eyed veteran regrouped to dominate about two hours later in the 100 butterfly to get her second state title as swimmers finished off the Class 2A championships on Saturday in Stuart. Stotler won gold in the 100 butterfly in 2018.

Earlier in the day, Stotler finished second in the 200 individual medley and also was part of a sixth place finish for the 200 medley relay.

"Sara swam magnificently," said Clay coach Carol McDougall. "She had said she wanted the state record in the fly, but missed by just a little."

For Stotler, who admitted that chasing the 100 butterfly school record held by Clay's Sherridon Dressel had been on her mind, had also competed Friday at the

SEE SWIM, 34



PHOTO BY BRIAN STOTLER

Clay High senior Sara Stotler waves to family after record breaking 100 butterfly for gold. Stotler also won gold in 100 butterfly in 2018.

Rodriguez stays with Lehigh wrestling

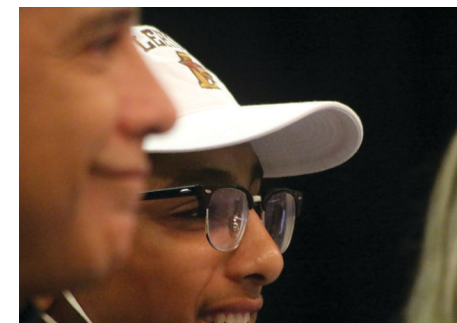
By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

ORANGE PARK - Over the past two or so weeks, the Matthew Rodriguez wrestling following has hinted that Ridgeview High wrestler Matthew Rodriguez would be announcing his choice to continue wrestling in college with a few more teams on the original roster.

When asked "How do you like snow?" prior to his ceremony to announce, Rodriguez smiled and said, "I used to live in Pennsylvania so I'm used to snow."

With Lehigh his initial first choice and

SEE WRESTLING, 30



Ridgeview High wrestler Matthew Rodriguez dons Lehigh University hat with dad, Bart.

Calise TD fuels Panthers' comeback

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

ORANGE PARK - A first half that put half the Panther Stadium faithful on the edge of leaving the game to attend Friday night festivities elsewhere turned into about an 11 minute highlight film of defensive ef-

ports turned to points as the Ridgeview High Panthers turned around a 17-3 snoozer of a first half into a thrill-packed fourth quarter en route to winning a first playoff game under coach Matt Knauss, a 38-20 win over Tavares in round one of re-

SEE PANTHERS, 31



Ridgeview High's second half touchdown trio, from left, Miika Tuisano, Josh Dorsainvil and Eddie Whipple celebrate Tuisano's gamewinning score late in playoff win over Tavares.



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NEW ARRIVALS

BENNINGTON



Weird week, weird start: Blue Devils still dominate 43-0

By Doug Deters
Correspondent

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – “It was a weird week with storms and holidays,” said Clay high Blue Devil head coach Kyle Kennard. The head Blue Devil was referring to a cut short practice Tuesday (Weather), a school holiday (Veterans Day) on Wednesday and Clay County teams forced to cancel all activities Thursday because of tropical storm Eta.

The first play from scrimmage for the Blue Devils seemed to indicate a smooth night when quarterback Tre Griner ran 50 yards down the sidelines to put Clay in prime scoring position at the winless (0-6) Leesburg’s 20 yard line.

Two high snaps over Griner’s head and an incomplete pass later the Blue Devils found themselves with fourth and 30 and forced to punt. Leesburg would put to-

gether a solid drive on their first possession and got all the way to the Blue Devil 39 yard line until a third down sack by defensive lineman Jamal Pierre stopped the drive cold. The Blue Devils would punt again on their second possession and both teams failed to put any points on the scoreboard in the first 12 minutes of action.

The Blue Devils offense got going early in the second quarter with a 91 yard drive that included an early third down conversion throw to Reid Waugh and a difficult catch by wide receiver D’Maurion Frazier that included a late hit out of bounds to get the Blue Devils into Leesburg territory. The drive would then feature Frazier and running back Al’Querious Ray trading touches that ended with a five yard touchdown run by Ray to give the Blue Devils a 7-0 midway through the second quarter.

Remember when Clay coach Kyle Ken-



Clay High junior running back Al’Querious Ray has been driving force of impressive turnaround of 1-9 season from last year to a second round playoff on Friday.

nard said it was “weird” week? Well, the last six minutes of the second quarter literally defines the word “weird.”

Leesburg started its possession on their

own 30 yard line and promptly fumbled the snap that was recovered by Clay defensive lineman Izaiah Butler. The Blue Devils took

SEE WEIRD, 32



CORRESPONDENT PHOTO BY DON LONG

Orange Park running back JoJo Restall romps around end for gain in playoff win over Citrus.

Raiders take step one to season turnaround finale

By Bruce Hope
Staff Writer

ORANGE PARK – Orange Park High football coach Tom Macpherson has said throughout the season that a maturation process was going to dictate the success of his Raiders with the team full of young, inexperienced players.

On Friday, in the round one region playoff game against Citrus High, a 1-7 team, Orange Park, after a maybe-demoralizing 0-4 season open, held the line just enough to hold off and defeat a stingy Citrus High team 20-7 who attempted to end the Raiders 2020 season. Orange Park won three of their final four games with a season ending loss, 35-32 to Pedro Menendez.

With the Citrus win, Macpherson will get a second shot at Menendez in playoff round two action on Friday.

“Great team win tonight. We struggled a little bit on offense at times,” said Raiders head coach Thomas MacPherson. “Fields’ a little slippery, not proper footing for a running back like JoJo [Restall] sometimes, but we picked it up on defense for him and the last couple of wins we got back on the board because these guys offensively picked us up and that’s what football is.”

Orange Park had a healthy run-pass balance throughout the game, getting solid contributions from sophomore running

SEE RAIDERS, 32

Maier highlight reel fuels Eagles

By Mike Zima
Correspondent

FLEMING ISLAND - Fleming Island High middle linebacker Alex Maier made up for a sluggish offense by scoring two touchdowns, spearheading a suffocating defensive effort as Fleming Island shut out visiting Cantonment Tate 21-0 in a Region 1-7A play-in game on Fri., Nov. 13. The Golden Eagles, now 7-2, will travel to the state capital to battle Tallahassee Lawton Chiles in a Region 1-7A quarterfinal on Friday, November 20.

Maier made the play of the game with the Golden Eagles clinging to a 7-0 lead early in the fourth quarter. The Aggies had taken possession at their own 20 yard line after a Colt Hyams punt had bounced into the end zone. On the next play, tackle Ricky Joseph sacked Tate quarterback Caleb Shelby, forcing a fumble. Maier and a

Tate offensive lineman converged on the ball, and Maier batted it into the end zone. Maier reached the pylon first and dove on it for a touchdown that gave Fleming Island a 13-0 lead.

“The quarterback was rolling out of the pocket, so I was coming downhill to stop him from running and I tapped the ball into the end zone,” said Maier, a senior.

Two possessions later, Maier struck again. Reading Shelby’s eyes from his zone in the middle of the defense, the Furman commit stepped in front of a throw intended for Jonah Smith, caught Shelby’s pass and took off toward the left side. Cutting inside a block by teammate Abraham Wright, Maier beat Shelby to the pylon for the game-clinching touchdown with 5:00 remaining.

SEE EAGLES, 32



CORRESPONDENT PHOTO BY LAURA ANDERSON

Fleming Island linebacker Alex Maier had a career night with two scores off turnovers in 21-0 win.

Fleming Island girls take sixth in 4A XC

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

TALLAHASSEE - Fleming Island High cross country coach Suzanne Baker utilized her front four strong running pack to a sixth place finish at the Class 4A cross country championships Saturday in Tallahassee in the highest ever finish for the school in the sport.

Baker, who earned a district and a region title as warmups for the state meet, has relied on the strong running of her top four runners; Emma Millson, Marisa Kortright, Mei Chiang and Grace Adams, to put the team points in small digits up front before crossing fingers to secure team titles with freshman Allie Knotts' finish instrumental last week in snagging the team trophy from Mandarin.

With the top seven runners in Saturday's final all breaking the 19 minute mark, led by overall champion Amber Schulz of Timber Creek in 18 minutes. 26.1 seconds, Fleming Island's foursome finished slightly behind recent splits led by Millson's 19:52.7 for 25th place. Kortright and Chiang were just behind in 29th and 33rd; 20:02.1 and 20:08.8, with Adams five seconds from Chiang as Fleming Island had their first four runners in ahead of Mandarin.

Newsome had just three runners ahead of Millson with Lakewood Ranch with two finishers above Millson as Fleming Island made a stunning move to steal the title with their front pack.

In the first mile, a threesome of

SEE RUN, 29



STAFF PHOTO BY RANDY LEFKO

Fleming Island senior Emma Wilson powered through her final season in epic comeback from injury.



The Stratton running duo; Matthew, left, and Rebecca enjoy a moment together after Matthew Stratton finished third in the Class 1A cross country championship on Sunday.

Stratton third in 1A cross country final

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

TALLAHASSEE - At the start of the Class 1A cross country championship race, rescheduled from Friday to Sunday due to Hurricane Eta, defending champion Austin Montini, of Oak Hall, with a 15:20 split in Atlanta earlier in the season, blasted to the front in an attempt to get away, but St. Johns Country Day School junior Matthew Stratton, second to Montini last year, stayed right to Montini's left shoulder with Tallahassee Maclay's Jackson Yarbrough, second to Stratton in last week's region 1-1A race.

"We all started out really, really fast and wound up we played his game," said Stratton, who was second in last year's

Class 1A championship last year. "I really think if I had run my own race knowing he ran a 15:20 during the season and I had a 15:25, that I might have been able to get up to him at the end of the race. It didn't work that way, though."

Stratton, who defeated Tallahassee Maclay's Jackson Yarbrough at the Region 1-1A meet last week in 15:55, joined Yarbrough and Montini as the the third runner in the front escape pack. Stratton came to Tallahassee with wins in the district and region race in his back pocket and a handful of sub-16 minute races through the season.

"At the region race, Yarbrough kind

SEE STRATTON, 29

Class 2A championship race

Clay High School's Savannah Hill, left, and Ulyana Damme finished the Class 2A championship race in 82nd place in 22:05.3 and 104th place in 23:01.1. The girls are with coach Frank Wickes.



Middleburg High cross country runner Emma Mussante got her ticket to the Class 3A championship on Saturday and came home with a 24th place finish in 20:01. Mussante recently committed to run at Florida Southern College.

Hudson inks with Alabama gymnastics

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

FLEMING ISLAND - Fleming Island High senior Lilly Hudson has waited nearly six years to do what she did Friday morning at Fleming Island High School. And what she did was postponed two days more for a hurricane that never showed.

"It's been since eighth grade that I got the offer from Alabama and now, here we are five years later about to make it happen," said Hudson, a state all around gymnastics champion in 2018 and a Junior International Elite competitor. "Alabama was the last school I talked to back then with Georgia, Oklahoma and Florida all giving me visits before I visited Alabama. I loved the campus and that made my decision."

For University of Alabama coach Dana Duckworth, a member of the Alabama 1991 NCAA championship team, Hudson's evolution in the sports since their offer five years ago has impressed her as to Hudson's value to the program.

"Lilly is a beautiful gymnast with impeccable lines on all four events. Her elite experience, discipline and resilience along with an internal fortitude for constant improvement in every aspect of her life will make for an awesome collegiate transition," said Duckworth, in a statement on RollTide.com news. "We have built a relationship with Lilly since she was in the eighth grade and I have witnessed her evolve into a leader with confidence who owns her voice and puts family first. It has been several years since her commitment and we are excited the time has come to celebrate her arrival." Duckworth's resume as an Alabama coach; five years as present head coach, six as an assistant coach and nine as a volunteer coach, includes three NCAA titles, five SEC championships and 17 region titles as well as 15 individual NCAA championships and 204 All-America athletes. Duckworth, ironically, was twice NCAA balance beam champion (1992, 1993).

Hudson has spent the last five years honing her gymnastics while also persevering through, as she says, "just about every injury that a gymnast can have."

"They were all gymnastics-related injuries," said Hudson, who plans on attacking the all around aspect of gymnastics at Alabama with the balance beam, also state champion, one of her favorites of the four disciplines; beam, vault, floor and uneven parallel bars. "Focus on the goal of getting to Alabama and also my love of the sport helped me to overcome all of the injuries. I want to concentrate on the all around part of the gymnastics with the balance beam my best event." Ironically, Hudson's decision to go to Alabama has indirectly affected her hopes of an Olympic team bid.

"Since I chose to go the university route, I don't plan on taking the Olympic route," said Hudson. "It was in the path,

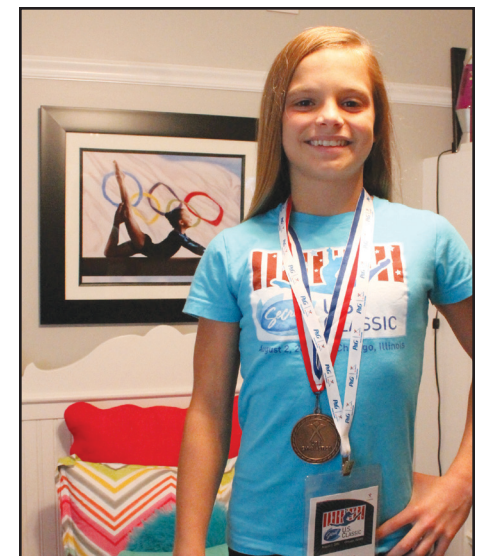


STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO

Fleming Island High gymnast Lilly Hudson, seated, had family and friends around her as she signed to continue gymnastics at NCAA-power University of Alabama.



Fleming Island's Lilly Hudson, here at 12 years old, was gymnastics prodigy eight years ago when she was featured by Clay Today Sports Editor Randy Lefko.



but the injuries were part of my decision. I wanted to focus on the college team."

Hudson's biggest influences on her last five years have been parents Stan and Marcy Hudson as well as her coach at Florida Elite Gymnastics in Ponte Vedra; Valentin Buse. Also part of the Hudson team is dance coach Mila Picus.

"He's been my main mentor; coach Vali, he has taught me so many life lessons," said Hudson, who competed in prestigious events such as the 2016 P & G U.S. National Gymnastics Championships held in Missouri, the 2016 U.S. Secret Classic as well as the Florida Level 10 State championships. "My mom and dad and my whole family have been way supportive through everything to get to today."


Hudson cited her biggest moment was the 2016 P & G Championships where she saw the likes of Olympians Simone Biles and Aly Raisman. Hudson finished 19th overall with a two round score of 105.250 (52.7, 52.550) with the overall

junior champion scoring a 115.050 (57.05, 58.00).


"My peak from there has made me believe that I was capable of national level gymnastics," said Hudson. "That meet let me see what I want and what I am capable of. Everything went up from there."

As for Alabama, where football rules the campus, Hudson was well aware of the Southeastern Conference rivalries Alabama gymnastics has with the likes of Georgia and Florida. The Alabama gymnastics average fans per meet last year was nearly 12,000 fans per meet with a school and SEC record of 15,162 fans for a 2006 meet.

"I heard they have a pretty good football team at Alabama," said Hudson. "I understand the intense rivalries that Alabama competes against. The Alabama vs. Georgia rivalry in gymnastics is about as big as Alabama v. Auburn football, I think. Georgia was my first visit with Alabama my last one."




ATHLETES OF THE WEEK



Sara Stotler
Clay, Swimming, Sr.

Sara Stotler returned to the Class 1A swimming championships after two second place finishes and came home last week with a state title in the 100 butterfly and a silver medal in the 200 individual medley.







Alex Maier
Fleming Island, Football LB, Sr.

Alex Maier took things into his own hands to fuel a 21-0 playoff win for the Golden Eagles with two touchdowns off Tate High errors; one a fumble recovery in the end, the other a 37 yard interception return; both in the fourth quarter.

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Stratton

from page 27

of let me go after I broke at the two mile mark," said Stratton. "I think he was comfortable in second place and getting to state and went ahead and pushed to get under 16 minutes."

With the field cut in half by FHSAA recent standards due to the COVID, runners were able to space out and not get caught in crowded space on turns.

Seffner Christian, Oak Hall and Tallahassee Maclay were the three teams considered top threats to the team title.

Before the mile mark, Montini and Stratton were amongst a group of five runners all positioning up front for the hills and late surges.

At one mile, five runners, including Stratton, Yarbrough and Montini, went through at 4:47 as the lead pack started to inch away from the chase groups. Seffner Christian and the rest of the Oak Hall team were in the second pack as runners were approaching the first hill of the race. Oak Hall had position at the one mile to take the team top spot. After the mile split, Montini started to surge a bit with Stratton just behind him. After the first hill, five runners still clung together but in single file position as the first signs of wear and tear started to creep into the race.

Montini, Yarbrough and Stratton got a slim five yard gap as runners turned back onto the start stretch of the course to repeat the loop around the Appalachee Park

trek, the home race course for the Maclay High team.

With Yarbrough and Montini sandwiching Stratton on the long straightaway back toward the finish line on lap two, the front pack maintained a torrid pace, but still could not break the chase pack.

After passing the finish line on to lap two, Montini and Yarbrough got some space in front of Stratton.

Back into the backside of the course, Montini surged slightly away from Yarbrough in an apparent attempt to shake his two chasers including Stratton and Seffner Christian's Riley Novack who had clamped on to the back of the chasers.

Montini punched in near the two mile mark with a much larger gap on Yarbrough and Stratton trying to hang within striking distance for the final mile.

Novack joined the top five runners with the second three struggling to keep Montini in sight. Ironically, Cade Montini, Austin's sophomore runners, was fading off the second pack at the two mile mark.

Up the final hill, Montini and Yarbrough powered up five yards apart before the finish line, with Stratton in a three man chase group. Stratton, after the final hill, put a chase in on Yarbrough as the finish line loomed.

"Montini made it a race and Jackson was going to stay with him," said Stratton. "I wished I would have run my race because I would have been able to be up there at the end."

Yarbrough surged hard in the final 800



STAFF PHOTO BY RANDY LEFKO

St. Johns Country Day School's Matthew Stratton, left, and Tallahassee Maclay's Jackson Yarbrough finished 1-2 in region 1-1A, then 2-3 in the Class 1A championship race behind defending champion Austin Montini of Oak Hall.

meters to push Montini who was struggling.

At the finish, Montini just outleaned Yarbrough at the finish for his second title in two years with Stratton striding in for third place. Montini finished in 15:48.8 with Yarbrough at 15:49.1 and Stratton at 15:59.8. "It was a disappointing run after I saw my time at the finish knowing I had a lot of finishes much faster," said Stratton. "Now, we just retweak the training through soccer and gear up for track."

The split between Montini and Yarbrough was the closest finish in FHSAA

history. Dalin Mitchell of Seffner Christian snuck in ahead of Novack for fourth with both just over 16 minutes.

In the team points, Seffner Christian powered to the front with 61 points with Oak Hill at 83 and Maclay at 126. St. Johns finished 11th with 262 points.

Finishing for St. Johns were Jacob Kailes in 17:28.4 for 45th, freshman Richard Nichols in 18:20.6 for 71st, Stanley Cowhere in 19:38.8 for 92nd, James Wilson in 20:12.9 for 102nd, Aidan Herrera in 20:27.4 for 106th and Cade Zehner in 21:20.3 for 111th.

Run

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runners broke away from the start with a large chase group behind followed by a third chase group that had Chiang up front, Millson and Kortright just behind her and Adams five steps off the pace.

With three top runners making a fast break heading to the first hill, Millson was on Chiang's shoulder prior to the mile mark.

At the first mile, the leaders went through in 5:25 through 5:29 with Millson first to the mark for Fleming Island in 5:51.3, Kortright at 5:51.4 and Chiang at 5:51.8. Adams hit the mile mark in 6:03.1.

With the rugged hill section of the park upcoming, Millson maintained her top team spot by powering up the hill with Chiang and Kortright still together as the runners headed back to the start line for lap two on the course.

Up Front, Crystal Rodriguez, second in her region race, was powering in the lead ahead of Timber Creek's Amber Schulz with both holding a 10 yard gap heading to the finish line for lap one.

At the two mile mark, Rodriguez and Schulz stayed gapped ahead of the chases with Millson tucked in behind taller runners with Kortright behind her as Chiang started to fall back. Adams, the top finisher for Fleming Island at last year's state race, was within eyeshot of the Fleming Island trio.



Fleming Island High's girls cross country team show off their region 1-4A team trophy after winning the championship event a week ago. Fleming Island traveled to the Class 4A championship in Tallahassee on Saturday and finished sixth, the highest place ever for the team.

The two mile mark went by in 11:34.4 with Rodriguez holding a two second lead on Schulz.

Creekside's Elizabeth Illif was top area runner past two miles at 11:55.1 in seventh place with Flagler Palm Coast's Jada Williams across the mat in 12:13.6 just ahead of Nease's Naila Etique.

Millson was Fleming Island's first at two miles in 12:29.3 with Kortright at 12:33.0 ahead of Mandarin's Alyssa Wyatt. Chiang was two seconds off Wyatt's pace at 12:36.9 with Adams behind two Mandarin runners, but ahead of one by a hair at 12:49.9.

Schulz, fourth last year in 17:56, would take the lead and extend from Rodriguez after the two mile mark as the final hill and

long straight to the finish line loomed ahead.

In the final straight, Niceville's Keleigh Scallon, headed to University of Florida next fall, made a push to chase Schulz, but Schulz repelled the attempt in the last 50 yards to win in 18:26.1 with Scallon at 18:29.3.

In between Millson and Chiang, Mandarin landed two more runners to make the team scoring even more tense for Baker with Mandarin's Anna Loehle edging Adams to put three Mandarin girls across the finish line. As the runners filed in and the front-runners were joined by their teams behind the front four of both Mandarin and Fleming Island, Mandarin landed two runners ahead of Knott; 76th and 77th, Knott at 97th about

30 seconds behind to give the Mustangs top team honors from north Florida; 162 to Fleming Island's 166.

Tampa Plant won the team title with 79 with Newsome second at 92 and Lakewood Ranch at 136 for third.

Fleming Island also had Elliott Baker and Marlea Field finish in 115th and 116th.

Timber Creek slid in with 162 to tie Mandarin with Fleming Island 30 points up on Niceville, Sarasota and Viera. Creeksdie was 10th as the third area team.

In the boys 4A race, won in 15:26.9 by Rheinhardt Harrison of Nease, Fleming Island's Jayden Scherer finished his third straight state meet in 17:40.9 for 84th place.

Wrestling

from page 25

Penn State capable of snow, Rodriguez, in the end, chose to stay with Lehigh University to continue his wrestling career.

"It was definitely the comfortability of the program and the degree program," said Rodriguez. "I felt very at home with the coaching staff at Lehigh."

Rodriguez, twice the Class 1A runnerup and a third place finisher as a freshman, has had Lehigh University as his initial choice nearly a year ago, but recent camps and visits to campus put the likes of Penn State, Oregon State and Arizona State all on Rodriguez' list.

"The past few years, I have learned the discipline attached to the sport with things like cutting weight, consistent training and eating right," said Rodriguez, who currently has 204 wins, eight losses and 154 pins with a senior season to come. "Wrestling has definitely helped build me to the person I am today."

In 2020, Rodriguez finished at 60-1 with his lone loss the 126 final against Lake Highland Prep's Danny Nini.

In 2019, Rodriguez finished at 54-1 with his lone loss in the Class 2A 106 final; a 2-1 loss to Kai Owen of Tampa Jesuit.

In 2018, Rodriguez finished at 41-1 with a 3-0 semifinal loss in the Class 2A 106 bracket to Lake Gibson champion Chase Ayers. Rodriguez would compete through the wrestlebacks to win the third



STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO

Ridgeview High wrestler Matthew Rodriguez, center, with dad Bart, and mom, Rachel, celebrated his signing to continue wrestling at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania. Top right, Mattehwh Rodriguez's hand donned some of his championship rings.

place match with a 10-0 win.

In 2017, as an eighth grader at University Christian, Rodriguez finished at 41-5 and lost in the consolation quarterfinals.

With the firepower of multiple national champion Penn State on his table, with Oregon State and Arizona State, both top ranked wrestling programs, Lehigh University, with a history of 28 NCAA champion individuals, 158 NCAA All-Americans and 16 to five NCAA team finishes in the last decade or so, was high on Rodriguez list for a few reasons.

Note: In a listing of individual national champions per school, Oklahoma State tops the list at 142 with Penn State at 44 and Lehigh at 28 with Iowa, Iowa State and

Oklahoma in between Oklahoma Stat and Lehigh in sixth place.

Rodriguez' level of excellence at the state level had an early start with his eighth grade season at University Christian, also with a state meet visit, a formidable stepping stone to his career at Ridgeview High.

"I realized that, after going to the state meet, and then traveling to wrestle and beat top dudes from other states, that I may have found the sport for me," said Rodriguez, who won four district titles and three region titles. "That's when it kind of hit me that noone else should beat me unless I make a mistake."

Rodriguez noted that he learned a little bit more each time he competed in at the



state meet, although his opponents were all nationally ranked wrestlers from

Rodriguez sees his experiences in high school, with near misses at the state championships, only strengthens his notion to get to college and use the setbacks as motivation.

"I know that going against those guys that can handle me and rough me up a bit at the college level will be something that won't deter me," said Rodriguez. "I can only learn from guys who have won titles."

Rodriguez named former teammate and Ridgeview High assistant coach Saeid Ejmal as a top advisor through the last three years as a Panther.

Emjali, a state placer in his senior year, has sat in the Panthers corner of the mat with Panther head coach Bart Rodriguez, yes, Matt's dad. Ejmal was also a teammate during Rodriguez' freshman and sophomore seasons.

"He is very motivational to me in the things he says and he has been there before as a competitor," said Rodriguez. "He knew what it took to get to the state meet and win some matches."

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Ridgeview High's season looked doomed just before halftime in their home playoff game against Tavares as the scoreboard indicates until coach Matt Knauss, below, issued a time warning to his team that reversed the game and got a second playoff game at Vanguard.

Panthers

from page 25

tion playoffs Friday night.

"We've been here before; dealing with adversity," said Calise. "I don't know who sparked who, but we got it done."

The win propels the Panthers (7-3) to round two with a second round trip to Ocala Vanguard (6-1) as the Panthers must now set up to play a former Class 6A powerhouse program. Vanguard trampled over Crystal River 38-0 in their round one playoff.

After seeding Tavares a 17-3 lead off first half offensive woes and a tough front pushing Tavares offense, Ridgeview struck back with a 50 yard bomb to wide receiver Spencer Calise that seemed to jolt the Panther sideline.

"It was a dogfight," said Knauss. "I don't think we underestimated them, but there number 26 in the Wing T is deadly. It's tough to stop. I think we got a little shellshocked at our first playoff game."

Calise, who has become a top target for quarterback Max Monroe in the past three weeks, had to "climb the ladder" in the end zone to snatch the lob from Monroe for the score.

"Spencer Calise and Josh Dorsainvil on defense were the two plays that woke us up," said Knauss. "From there, the energy overflowed."

Knauss' reference to Dorsainvil was a bonecrushing sack on Tavares quarterback that created a new atmosphere on the Ridgeview sideline.

"I think Jason (defensive coordinator Jason Smith) just went back to doing what we do; just play football in base defense and get after it," said Knauss. "It was genius."

The Smith genius turned into a Dorsainvil sack that led to a Miika Tuisano touchdown plunge after T.J. McClain crashed in on the Tavares punter who had bobbled the snap and started to run for his life toward the sideline.

"Coach Smith just said, 'Stop him,'" said Dorsainvil. "I didn't want to go home. We wanted to go to one more game. Coming off a 1-9 season last year, we've come a long way."



Ridgeview High coach Matt Knauss urges some urgency on time in final moments of Panthers playoff win over Tavares.

Two plays later, Tuisano smashes up the middle to put Ridgeview up 23-20 after Calise's acrobatics got the Panthers within striking difference of the lead.

"We just came out and went back to what we know how to do; the 3-3," said Tuisano. "Whatever we did, it worked."

After Tuisano's blast, Ridgeview's defense got another sack on Tavares with Darryl Carter and Dillon Torrenfranca crashing in to set up a punt to the 50.

From there, wideout Ed Whipple took a left side pitch near midfield, ran through three tackles and broke to the end zone to push the score up.

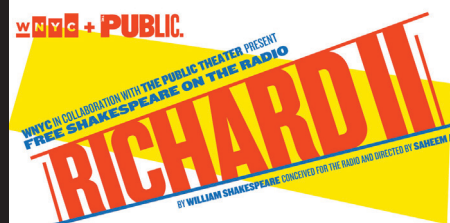
"I was going to do anything to get my team to the next game," said Whipple, who had an ice wrap on his shoulder in the first half. "Spencer has been playing a big role as a second target for Max (Monroe) and that opens up our offense. It was a great catch."

Knauss acknowledged that his two pass receiving targets are now understanding the complimenting of skill sets to each other.

"Spencer's catch was a must-have with a guy draped on him on fourth down; it doesn't get any bigger than that," said Knauss. "Eddie was not going to let us bench him with his shoulder and put himself back into the game and came up with the nail in the coffin with that run."

Ridgeview's defense was not done just yet with a scrum at the Tavares 30 seeing A.J. Beaufort pop out of a pile of bodies with the ball and heading to the end zone for the final score.

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CORRESPONDENT PHOTOS BY DON LONG

Above: Orange Park High football has gotten double duty from a pair of strong running backs in JoJo Restall, left, and Deandre Robinson, top right, who have powered the Raiders to a second playoff game Friday at Pedro Menendez. Menendez defeated Orange Park 35-32 in regular season play.

Eagles

from page 26

“Those two plays were very important,” said Fleming Island head coach Damenyum Springs. “Without Alex, we do not win this game.”

Maier’s heroics were needed because the Golden Eagles offense sputtered. Fleming Island failed to score in the first two quarters against the Aggies, who entered the game with only one win in six games. While running back Tim Thomas gained 73 yards on nine first half carries, the passing game could not overcome penalties that put the hosts in long distance situations. Quarterbacks T.K. Kocak and Grant Travis completed just three of 10 passes on the night.

Springs noted after the game that the Eagles came out flat, and was not pleased with the first half effort. He tried to instill a sense of urgency in his team at the intermission.

“I told them to get ready to pack up their lockers,” said Springs. “Then I left the room.”

The short but pointed message worked, as the Golden Eagles took the second half



CORRESPONDENT PHOTO BY LAURA ANDERSON

Fleming Island speedster Sam Singleton will be key cog in Golden Eagles shot at defeating tough Chiles team in second round playoff game in Tallahassee on Friday.

kickoff and crisply drove 69 yards in eight running plays. Thomas and sophomore Sam Singleton alternated carries, finding larger holes to run through than they had in the first half. Kocak followed Thomas up the middle from two yards out to finish the drive, which took exactly 3:00 and

improved Springs’ mood.

“Our running backs were running hard the whole time,” he said. “That drive had a lot to do with wearing them [the Tate defense] down. Plus, our linemen stayed on their blocks longer.”

Thomas finished with 138 yards on 16

rushes, while Singleton contributed 89 yards on 11 attempts.

Defensively, Fleming Island dominated. The Golden Eagles allowed only five first downs, limiting the Aggies to 21 yards on 26 rushes. Darryl Nesmith and Jourdan Haynes each had two of the hosts’ seven tackles for loss, and four different Golden Eagles registered a sack.

The Golden Eagles turned back the Aggies’ two best scoring chances. In the first quarter, Fleming Island cornerback Detric Walker recovered a fumble forced by linebacker Hunter Williams at the Golden Eagles’ 24 yard line. Halfway through the third quarter, Tate receiver Zamir Dyer got behind the Fleming Island secondary for an 80 yard catch and run. The Aggies reached the 13 yard line after a penalty for too many men on the field against Fleming Island. On fourth down from there, Haynes chased Shelby out of the pocket, and no receiver could get near his desperate pass to the back of the end zone.

Tackle Tyler Cross also recovered an Aggies fumble for Fleming Island, which won the turnover battle 4-1.

The Aggies end their season 1-6.

Weird

from page 26

over and Griner threw an interception in the endzone on the next play.

Leesburg, right on cue, again fumbles the snap and the Blue Devils recovered at the Leesburg nine yard line.

The Blue Devils give the ball to Ray who, you guessed it, fumbled the ball right back to Leesburg at their own three yard line. Then on Leesburg’s second play of the drive from their own 16 yard line they fumbled the snap for a third turnover in less than five minutes. For those of you counting; the two teams combined for six plays and five turnovers during the sequence. Did I mention the game was played on Friday the 13th? Even Jason Vorhees would be proud of the voodoo during that last half of the second quarter.

Ray would stop the bleeding (Which is very Anti-Jason) with a 14 yard touchdown run for a 15-0 halftime lead and a much needed break to reset and settle down.

“We got into them a little at halftime and I think they responded well in the second half” said Kennard. Translation: The coaches may have “slightly” raised their voices and may or may not have had a brief science lesson on how small projectile objects respond when they meet a solid object such as a brick wall at a high rate of speed. Those of you reading this that have played played high school football may or may not have had similar motivational halftime speeches in the same manner.

The Blue Devil defense continued to dominate and forced a punt on Leesburg’s first drive of the second half. The offense then established the running game behind Ray who picked up 10 plus yards on three

straight running plays. The drive ended with a 22 yard touchdown run by Ray to give Clay some breathing room leading 22-0 halfway through the third quarter.

The Blue Devil defense got another fumble recovery this time by Brandon Peavy at the Leesburg 19 yard line. Al Querious Ray would score on a screen pass on the first play of the drive for a commanding 29-0 lead. Any hope’s Leesburg had were dashed when Jared Mosely would pick up yet another Leesburg fumble.

The second units for the Blue Devils would take over from there including a 15 yard rushing touchdown by freshman Gavin Rossow and a 23 yard touchdown pass to D’Maurion Frazier by freshman sensation back up quarterback Jayden Jenkins for a 43-0 win to advance in the FHSAA State playoffs.

Senior defensive lineman Jamal Pierre

was excited at holding their first opponent scoreless this season. “It’s crazy. We have been trying all season to get a doughnut (Shut out) and we were blessed to get one in a playoff game” he said. “We took advantage of our opportunities and my teammates did their jobs” he added. Even running back Al Querious Ray was thankful his defensive teammates stepped up when the offense was struggling. “I thank the defense for getting those two red zone turnovers that allowed us to get a lead” he said.

The goals only get bigger and more important for Clay high as they will host Port Orange Atlantic in the second round of the playoffs. For Ray, the game plan is simple for the Blue Devils to advance to the third round. “We have to practice hard all week and come out of the gate strong” he said. Next week’s game time is set for 7:30pm in Green Cove Springs

Swim

from page 25

US Open in Sarasota and had a three hour drive to get to Stuart for the FHSAA meet.

"My time in the 100 fly was a new lifetime best for me," said Stotler, who won convincingly in 53.35 seconds to set a Clay record of Dressel's. "I was shooting for a 52 second finish, but a 53.3 was like crazy because of coming over from nationals on Friday. To swim that well as I did on Saturday was pretty good."

From the start horn, Stotler crushed the opening 50 with a 25.41 split over Tampa Robinson's Avery Hawker's 25.80 before punching up a dominating second 50 to win by nearly three seconds; 53.35-56.12.

"I wasn't really focusing on winning but more just embracing the moment," said Stotler. "I was more just going for a best time because it being my senior year."

Stotler, swimming for the Planet Swim Aquatics club team, swam Friday at the 2020 Toyota US Open Championships held in Sarasota with a 37th place finish in the 100 butterfly long course in 1:01.21. Stotler also swam the 200 free, placing 45th in 2:04.86. For McDougall, who has seen the likes of a family with a last name of Dressel and a guy called Heath, seeing the end of a fantastic career go with a best time and a gold medal was part of what brings her back year after year after 16 years on the pool deck.

"She looked awesome; her turns were



PHOTO BY BRIAN STOTLER

Clay High senior Sara Stotler got her gold medal in last meet of her high school career as a Blue Devil. Stotler was set to sign Letter of Intent to University of Tennessee on Tues., Nov. 17.

good, her breakouts were good and her underwaters were good," said McDougall. "I kind of started the Clay swim program a long time ago with some other people and it has been a blessing to see these kinds of swims year after year."

In the 100 butterfly, Stotler was second last year in 54.35 to Blair Stoneburg of Jensen Beach who won by just .01 second.

In her first individual event of the day, Stotler faced off again against Pine Crest's Julia Podkoscielny in the 200 individual medley in a rematch of last year's final won by Podkoscielny. Stotler had hinted that the rematch was on her mind in an interview two weeks ago as she dominated the district and regions lineups prior to arriving in Stuart.

With both swimmers hitting the water

in the first championship event of the night; the 200 medley relay with Podkoscielny as leadoff leg and Stotler as third leg, in breaststroke, the pair got a chance to eyeball each other's readiness for the 200IM battle in less than an hour.

With the 200 freestyle sandwiched between the relay and Stotler's 200 individual medley, the savvy senior took to keeping her mind right and her cooldown, warmup procedures in tact for an anticipated very fast final. "Sara had the 200 medley relay boys, both 200 free finals and an awards ceremony to get her mind right for the 200 individual medley," said McDougall. "She is used to big meets with close time schedules."

In the boys 200 free, Orange Park senior Jose Medina finished ninth overall with a 1:44.89 time with Jake Sciscente of Lincoln Park winning in 1:40.35. Medina qualified 10th in 1:46.32 and dropped nearly two seconds in his B Final swim. Medina was 19th in 2019 in 1:47.35.

In the 100 free, Medina finished 20th in 49.92. In the 200 medley relay, Pine Crest won convincingly with a 1:44.00 split that was five seconds ahead of runnerup Holy Name with Clay, without senior backstroke Kinsey Williamson, finishing sixth in 1:51.76.

"The relay came in eighth ranked and swam great to get sixth," said McDougall.

Junior Marley Meyers opened for Clay with Elysia Addison (14th in 100 breaststroke), Stotler and Jayde Dillevig finishing the task. Clay finished eighth in the 200

free relay with Audrey Ivy on the roster with Dillevig, Stotler and Addison. Pine Crest won. Orange Park finished 16th in the 200 free relay with Ryan Pritchard (23rd in 200IM), Bruce Arauz, Josiah Sabino and Parker Meeks. Also for Orange Park Jalen Randall was 10th in the 100 breaststroke with Pritchard 18th.

With the 200 freestyle done, Stotler stepped up to the start block with Podkoscielny in a match that featured the two best girls in Class 2A by nearly five seconds.

"She's awesome and we talk," said Stotler. "She said she was really focused on the state meet and didn't compete at the national meet."

Stotler, as his her style, blasted the first 50, the butterfly, in 25.65 to Podkoscielny's 26.09 which was a relook at how last year's race opened. In the backstroke, where Podkoscielny would eventually be crowned 100 backstroke state champion later in the meet, Stotler lost her fast butterfly lead; 56.11 to 55.19 to create enough of a gap for the win in 1:59.14 to Stotler's 2:01.32; both national age group top times. Podkoscielny won in 2:00.46 last year with Stotler second in 2:02.09. With the second place done, Stotler reset her mind and body to not go home with two silvers again with her intent on the 100 butterfly very apparent.

In team points for the women, Clay was 10th with 88 points with Pine Crest winning at 338 over Gulliver Prep.

For the boys, Orange Park was 33rd with 18 points. Jesuit High won with 277 over Pine Crest.

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A Special Meeting of the Membership of the Clay County Council on Aging, Inc. is being called for 5:00 P.M., Wednesday, December 2, 2020 at the town of Orange Park Town Hall, located at 2042 Park Avenue. The purpose of the Special Meeting is to ratify resolution(s) unanimously approved by the Council's Board of Directors that would legally dissolve the corporation and establish a distribution plan for the Council's remaining assets. For additional information you may contact: Tina Clary Board President tclary@claryassoc.com 904-704-0267

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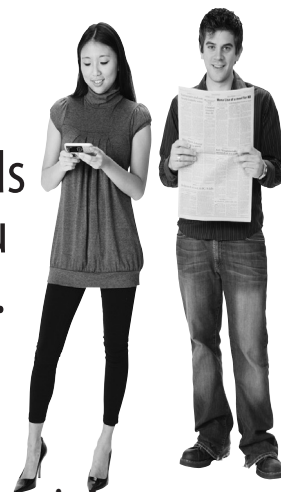
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