

# CLAY TODAY

## This Week ...

35 earn prestigious rank of Eagle Scout – Page 6  
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 Clay Today receives Emergency Management Award – PAGE 16  
 Diver goes to great depths – SPORTS  
 CLAY ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE – INSERT



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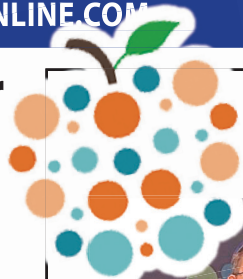
## Clay County hosts Active Shooter Incident Management training

A dozen agencies sort through the 'chaos' of responding to an emergency situation

By Don Coble  
 don@claytodayonline.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – The Clay County Extension Office became ground zero for an active shooter training class earlier this week. More than 50 first responders from a dozen local agencies worked through several scenarios to be on the ready if a real-life threat arises.

SEE SHOOTER, 16



CLAY COUNTY SCHOOLS

## Teacher of the year



Fellow teachers and staff from Lakeside Junior High join in the celebration after math teacher Melissa Matz was selected as the county's Teacher of the Year during the Apple Awards at the Thrasher-Horne Center.  
 For more, see story on Page 3.

### School Related Employee of the Year

School-Related Employee of the Year, Jacquelin Edwards, a Title I assistant at Clay Hill Elementary, shared her excitement with her children.  
 For more, see story on Page 9.



## AMI Kids celebrates its new home at Augusta Savage Center

By Nick Blank  
 nick@claytodayonline.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS — AMI Kids has traded a portable at Clay High for a set of classrooms on Lemon Street.

AMI Kids has been in the Augusta Savage Arts & Community Center since the start of the year, and the school had an open house last week. As a prevention program, the school helps boys between the ages of 11-17 with behavioral or truancy issues by establishing a structure.

The school's average stay is 10-15 months and the plan is ultimately to return to public school. The key is small class-

SEE AMI, 20



From left, Archie Harrison, Troy Betts, Maria Przybylski and Wendell Watson.



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# School District considers changes to workshop meetings

By Nick Blank  
nick@claytodayonline.com

FLEMING ISLAND – A board member asking for a workshop schedule change was the longest item of discussion at last week's Clay County School District board meeting.

Board Member Ashley Gilhousen said she had accepted a teaching position in Duval County and asked about the availability of moving the Agenda Review workshop from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The meetings are usually held on a Tuesday to prepare two days before a board meeting.

"I think it's important, as a board member, that I'm in attendance physically for every meeting that we schedule and I would hope I would have my fellow board members support in that," Gilhousen said.

The issue was not resolved after more than 25 minutes of discussion. Gilhousen said the potential change would only affect four workshops. She said there's no reason it can't be rescheduled.

"I want to be as flexible as I can be," she said.

Board Member Tina Bullock said impacting the workday of district staff has to be in consideration. Bullock, who commutes from Keystone Heights, said a change could inconvenience board members.

"When we agreed to the 9 a.m. time, then I changed a lot of things to make sure I freed up that time and I have things now scheduled in those afternoons," Bullock

said.

Gilhousen could meet independently with staff at a different time, Board Member Janice Kerekes said, or participate via Zoom. Kerekes said the burden on staff would be upsetting to her.

"I don't think we should inconvenience another board member because someone else's schedule is changing," she said.

Board Member Beth Clark commended Gilhousen for entering the profession due to the teacher shortage, which was a prominent part of last week's meeting. Board Chair Mary Bolla said the workshops are relatively new, but they are valuable. She said the purpose of the meetings is about getting a grasp of the most important items.

For staff, eight or nine people are required for the workshop, Bolla said, and she asked for the time to be moved to 3:30 p.m.

"We have to do things to make it work, and with telecommuting, I mean you can do it all," Bolla said.

Gilhousen said she doesn't just represent herself, but also her district. She called being present at the workshops a duty and an obligation.

"I would hope my board members would have respect for me as a board member and work with me on this," Gilhousen said.

Questions about how much teleconferencing can be used were put to district staff and would be reviewed at another meeting.

## District Board members discuss extending DROP Program

By Nick Blank  
nick@claytodayonline.com

FLEMING ISLAND – Like several school districts combating a teacher shortage, a few district board members called on the organization to extend the deferred retirement option program.

The program, referred to as DROP, is a type of benefit where, in exchange for teachers working past their eligible retirement age, the district will set aside money into an account.

During public comment, long-time educator Linda Lyons said she talked to the state staff and she was eligible. When she reached out to the district, she said, she was told the extension has not been given in the past.

Lyons referenced more than 35 vacant teacher positions in the district and said the district is offering a bonus to attract new bus drivers. She said many teachers have a passion for their students.

"I don't see how this doesn't benefit all concerned," she said. "If there was a sudden influx of teachers, then my DROP

would not be extended again."

She mentioned the shortage of substitutes pulling other teachers away and said the gap in earnings between veteran and starting teacher salaries has been closed, but bringing veteran teachers is the right call.

"Yes, a long-term substitute is cheaper, but is that the county's goal? Is it cheaper education or quality education?" Lyons asked.

Board Chair Mary Bolla said the state law allows the district to permit three years of DROP extensions.

"I think this is the year we need to discuss it even more," Bolla said.

Board Member Janice Kerekes asked to extend DROPs and wanted district staff to review why the district isn't doing it.

"Here we have teachers with years of experience and certifications that we could continue to use," Kerekes said.

Board Member Beth Clark said women in her generation were either nurses or teachers, but times have changed. She said the number of people going into teaching is being thinned out. Clark said she's advocating for the DROP program and the district is doing what the state allows it to. "It's something we're working on," Clark said.

## Clay Chamber creates Lake Region Prosperity Partners in Keystone Heights

For Clay Today

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – The Clay Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors officially approved a new Council to be located in Keystone Heights.

The approval came at the November 24th meeting. The Council will be known as Lake Region Prosperity Partners. Patricia Evans, President of Bradford and Clay County Capital City Bank, has been working alongside Keystone Heights City Manager, Lynn Rutkowski, to lay the foundation for the formation of this Chamber Council.

The Lake Region Development Corporation is sponsoring the new Council. LRDC Executive Director Scott Kornegay said, "we are very excited to announce the formation of this new Council and proud to be sponsoring this much-needed resource for the Lake Region. LRDC is committed to assisting with sustainable business and eco-

nomical growth in our area and this is just one more example of that commitment."

The Clay Chamber of Commerce recognized the need to have a physical presence, to focus on, and be an advocate for the smaller and more rural communities in the county.

The Lake Region Prosperity Partners Council of the Clay County Chamber of Commerce will be comprised of small businesses, sole proprietors, and individuals who meet regularly to share ideas, chal-

lenges, opportunities, and best business practices.

The Council promotes businesses throughout the county, providing them resources for the issues they face such as insurance, business banking and lending, legal services, and marketing.

The Council focuses on increasing commerce and education for business owners as well as providing opportunities to network. It is a cross between an "industry/topic" Council and a peer group.

The Council will focus on continuing to expand economic development programming that highlights the unique qualities of the Keystone Heights Lake Region by connecting existing resources to coordinate efforts.

Rutkowski has been working on this initiative for a number of years. Wendell Chindra, President of the Clay Chamber, spoke with Rutkowski earlier this year and

informed her of the appointment of Patricia Evans to the Chamber Board of Directors. Upon Evans's appointment to the board, she and Rutkowski began the legwork to form the Council.

They reached out to Scott Kornegay about the possibility of sponsoring the Council and he took it to the LRDC Board for discussion. The LRDC Board subsequently approved the sponsorship and Kornegay began working with Rutkowski and Evans to formally establish the Council.

Chamber Board Member Dana Heisler is serving as liaison and advisor to the new Council. Heisler said, "I'm thrilled to help the Lake Region area create a resource network of people that supports the local area business needs and helps them grow."

The next meeting of the council will be held on Feb. 22 in Keystone Heights. The LRPP will hold its first mixer on Jan. 27 at Cedar River Seafood in Keystone Heights.



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CLAY COUNTY SCHOOLS  
*Apple Awards*

# School District recognizes Melissa Matz as its Teacher of the Year

By Nick Blank  
nick@claytodayonline.com

ORANGE PARK — Clay County's 2022 Teacher of the Year is well-known for making math fun and describes the honor as being unbelievable.

Melissa Matz teaches seventh-grade math at Lakeside Junior High. She's been with the district for 18 years. Originally from Iowa, she visited a teacher fair in Orlando, met a few district representatives and landed a job in Clay.

After a two-hour ceremony at the Thrasher-Horne Center, she can put Teacher of the Year on her résumé.

"It was one of most amazing nights," Matz said of last week's Apple Awards. "I'm so thankful they made teachers feel so special and honored."

Matz isn't a stranger to encountering a student who initially "hates math," she said. Matz focuses on small successes and "math confidence." She added that developing math skills requires self-belief.

"What I do is, I believe in them. I tell them they can do it and I show them how to do it," Matz said.

Her activities and lessons sometimes revolve around calculating sales tax and tips, and having students act out a restaurant transaction.

"It's like a life skill," she said. "I'm teaching math in a real-world setting."

Clay County Board Member Janice Kerekes introduced Matz by saying she showed tremendous dedication to students and has a great work ethic. She said Matz is engaging and a strong motivator. Matz is also heavily involved in district math programs and curricula.

"It's no wonder why Miss Matz is a great leader that is always ready to step in and assist when needed," Kerekes said.

"We're so proud to have her represent us. She does a great job with our students and making sure every kid has exactly what they need to be successful," Lakeside Junior High Principal Rodney Ivey said.



Clay Hill Elementary Title I assistant Jacquelin Edwards and Lakeside Junior High math teacher Melissa Matz are joined by members of the Clay County School District after they were selected as School-Related Employee and Teacher of the Year, respectively.

"We're really proud of her."

Matz said she's appreciative of the months-long journey since being tabbed as her school's Teacher of the Year in September and later a finalist in the leadup to last week's ceremony.

She called the recognition at the Apple Awards well-deserved for teachers and district employees who give so much to the profession.

"I was very overwhelmed and just filled with gratitude," Matz said.

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## American Cancer Society applauds Senate's \$1.83 million plan to fight cancer

By Kelly Hayes  
For FloridaPolitics.com

The American Cancer Society is praising the recently released Florida Senate budget proposal, which allocates \$1.83 million for the Mary Brogan Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program as one of its priorities.

The state's Mary Brogan Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program was created in 1990 to make breast and cervical cancer screenings accessible to all Floridians. The screenings are provided for free or at a low cost for those that fall under the program's eligibility requirements. The program's early detection sites are located throughout the state.

"We're grateful for today's commitment from Senate lawmakers that ensures access to affordable, timely screenings and a reliable path to treatment for individuals diagnosed," ACS Florida senior government relations director Susan Harbin said in a statement. "After such an arduous year for cancer care and screenings, it's our hope lawmakers build on their commitment by increasing funding for the lifesaving program to reflect the severity of the pandemic's impact on cancer care."

Breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosis in Florida, according to the ACS. More than 20,000 Floridians are estimated to be diagnosed with breast cancer this year alone, a number that has yet to reflect the effects of the pandemic.

At the state of the pandemic in 2020, breast and cervical cancer screening rates fell by 80%, according to the ACS. Cancer diagnoses were down by nearly half last year, and the state has yet to return to pre-pandemic screening rates.

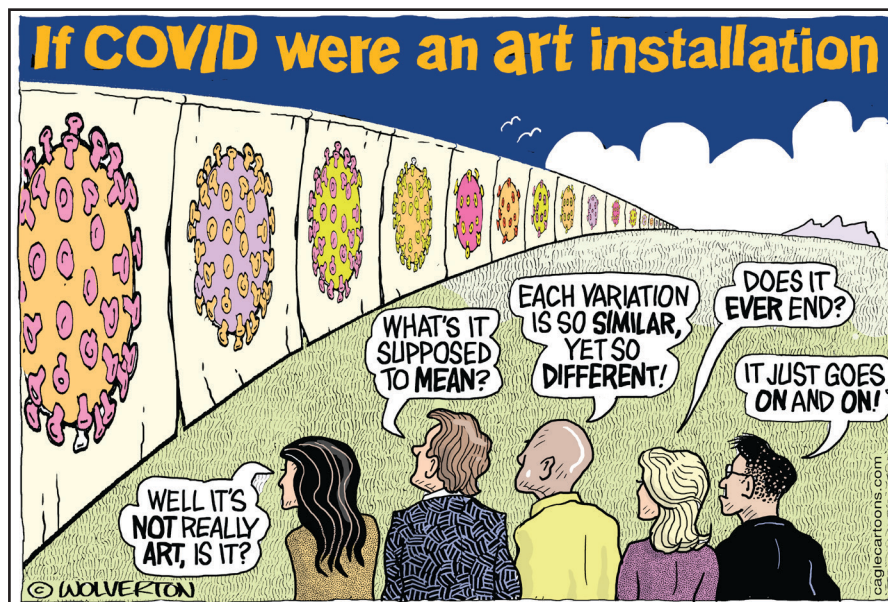
"A \$3 million investment in the Mary Brogan program would allow Florida to provide the resources necessary to truly address today's massive backlog in screenings — particularly in our Black and Latin communities that have been hardest hit financially and make up the majority of individuals eligible for the program," Harbin said in a statement.

The ACS also emphasized the impact a cancer diagnosis can have on families, including the state's First Family — First Lady Casey DeSantis was diagnosed with breast cancer last year. She has since completed her chemotherapy treatments, Governor Ron DeSantis shared in January.

"On behalf of all families touched by cancer, including the governor's, we look

SEE CANCER, 5

### OPINIONS



## NASCAR's Clash set the stage for a resurrection in racing

By Don Coble  
Managing Editor

By any measure, last Sunday's Busch Light Clash at the Coliseum was smashing success. Although the quarter-mile track didn't make for a lot of side-by-side racing or a lot of passing, it still wound up being a glitzy production that can successfully take stock-car racing back on the road to being relevant again.

The sport stripped away its crusty routine to take its preseason exhibition race to the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. Moreover, it started with a concert by Pitbull and a mid-race performance by Ice Cube, along with music from DJ Skee during caution periods. Riki Rachtman, formerly of the *Headbangers Ball*, was the host of the NASCAR Fan Fest. And WWE wrestler Shamus waved the green flag to start the race.

NASCAR took an enormous, yet educated, gamble. It didn't just think outside the box; it took its future to a new area code.

"I think it was a risk. We knew that from the start," said Ben Kennedy, NASCAR senior vice president of strategic innovation. "As we've talked about the schedule over the past couple of years, we talked about being bold, we talked about being innovative. That's part of it.

"We're really proud of the outcome today. I think it was successful."



Don Coble



And in the process, it brought young Kennedy out of the shadows and into the white-hot spotlight. He's the great-grandson of NASCAR founder Bill France, and he brings a game plan that's meant to appease older fans, but attract a new legion of followers.

"I think it says we've got a bright future. I never doubted with Ben," said NASCAR executive vice president and chief racing development office Steve O'Donnell. "I think always on top of things, great communicator, well-liked, which is cool. He won't say it, but deserves a ton of credit for seeing this through from the beginning, then staying on top of it even when there were challenges to say, 'This is where we're going.'"

Los Angeles traditionally has been a dead spot in the NASCAR schedule. Auto Club Speedway in nearby Fontana

SEE RACE, 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.

**Quondam:** (KWAN-dum) an adjective that means what once was or formerly.

"During the pandemic, home workouts regained their quondam popularity."

## This Week in History

### Five years ago, 2017

- For the first time in 11 years, the Clay County School Board votes to build a new elementary in the Oakleaf area.
- The Clerk of Court office unveils its transition to three new electronic services for legal aid, document filing and legal resources.
- Eagle Harbor residents joined forces to pick 489 pounds of oranges in the Fleming Island area to benefit Waste Not Want Not.

### 10 years ago, 2012

- Jarred Mitchell Harrell pled guilty to the 2009 murder of Somer Thompson, who was abducted when she walked home from Grove Park Elementary.
- Jax River Cruises asks the Green Cove Springs City Council for permission to move its sternwheeler "Annabelle Lee" from Jacksonville to boost local tourism.
- Clay County will get \$470,000 from the Federal Transit Authority to purchase seven new buses and eight satellite radios.

### 20 years ago, 2002

- William C. Courtney Jr., the assistant vice president of Merrill Lynch, is selected as the moderator for the Orange Park Medical Center's Board of Directors.
- Clay High's Dianna Miller is picked as the Teacher of the Year for the Clay County School District.
- The Bishop Kenny girls soccer team eliminates Middleburg, 4-0, which was playing in its first playoff game in team history.

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@claytodayonline.com

### 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.

# Race

from page 4

doesn't attract big crowds. The two-mile speedway is being transformed into a short track with hopes of putting people in the seats.

With 60,000 at the Coliseum – as many as 45,000 first-time fans – the sport may have opened its arms to a new, more diverse, audience.

"That's incredible. That's nuts. To know that only happened because we came to them, right?," Clash winner Joey Logano said. "We were racing in the city. We've never been able to do that. Typically, you got to go 30 minutes, an hour or so out of downtown to put a race on because we need such a huge area.

"(Sunday) proved that, hey, we can race anywhere. That says a lot about our sport. That's the biggest win today for the future of our sport. It's so big."

The sport also has gone to its Next Generation cars which brought back the true shapes and characteristics of a showroom sedan.

For the first time in more than 30 years, a Ford will look like a Mustang; a Chevrolet will look like a Camaro; and, a Toyota will look like a Camry.

Drivers were skeptical about a made-

for-television race in Los Angeles. But most were happy with the experience – and the future of the sport.

"Coming into L.A., if that's how you want to term it, I felt like it was a huge success," said Kyle Busch. "I thought it was a huge chance, Ben Kennedy and the guys at NASCAR, if this didn't work, it was going to be ugly.

"I'm sure they're taking a huge sigh of relief and a big high five because it was a big success."

The real racing season gets underway with the Daytona 500 on Feb. 20. All 101,500 permanent seats were sold out a month ago and dedicated spots in the infield are going fast.

"I think as you go into the Daytona 500, this is a great event, but there is nothing like coming to the green flag of the Daytona 500 with all the anticipation and excitement from the off-season and everything that has happened over this last year with the new car," said Kevin Harvick. "You have a lot of enthusiasm and this event and hearing about this event, it is a lot like it had been 20 years ago when every race was an event. You have that feeling and that excitement and enthusiasm that goes with that event."

Now it's up to the Daytona 500 to keep the momentum going.



STAFF PHOTO BY JON CANTRELL

## Overtaken truck snarls Green Cove Springs traffic

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – A truck trying to make a turn at the intersection of U.S. Highway 17 and State Road 16 overturned on Monday, Feb. 7. Nobody was injured in the accident, according to the Green Cove Springs Police Department, but traffic was affected for 2½ hours during the investigation and cleanup.

# Cancer

from page 4

forward to working with the Senate to ensure such lifesaving action at such a pivotal point in the fight against cancer," Harbin said.

The suggested funding is part of the \$108.6 billion Senate budget proposal, released by state Friday. The 2022-23 proposed budget is a more than \$7 billion increase on the current year's budget, thanks largely to an infusion of federal stimulus dollars given to states to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.

In health care, the Senate plans to spend \$47.8 billion, a \$3.3 billion increase on the current year. Much of that stems from an increase in Medicaid caseloads, which shot up in the wake of the COVID-19

pandemic, as did federal funding for the program.

The plan will be reviewed and voted on at Wednesday's Senate Appropriations Committee meeting, followed by a vote on the Senate floor later in the Legislative Session. That will set the stage for negotiations with the House for the final spending plan for the 2022-23 fiscal year, which begins July 1.

*Kelly Hayes studied journalism and political science at the University of Florida. Kelly was born and raised in the Tampa Bay area. 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](mailto:kelly@floridapolitics.com).*

- The BCC votes to not allow a private seaplane base on Doctors Lake.

### 40 years ago, 1982

- Developer Ray Markwalter said The Cove Plaza Shopping Center will be opened on April 1.
- The county commission hires Robert Lipscomb as the new library director.
- Clay County continues to keep single member districts after the state announces the creation of four new district that would add a portion of southern Duval County to Clay's current district.

# History

from page 4

### 30 years ago, 1992

- Charles E. Bennett's Patricia Dukes, Green Cove Springs Elementary's Jane Keskinen, Ridgeview Elementary's Emily Nolan, Montclair Elementary's Emily Phillips and Lake Asbury Elementary's Jane Schoonover are selected as finalists for the Clay County Teacher of the Year.
- The Board of County Commissioners said it will study making ordinance regulations for private ambulance services.

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### CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Remain as is
- 5. Functional
- 11. News magazine
- 12. Popular treat
- 16. Area units
- 17. Artificial intelligence
- 18. Marten valued for its fur
- 19. Forms of matter
- 24. Home of the Dodgers
- 25. Bordering
- 26. Part of the eye
- 27. It might be nervous
- 28. Visualizes
- 29. Crest of a hill
- 30. Measures engine speed (abbr.)
- 31. Tears in a garment (Br. Eng.)
- 33. Not easily explained
- 34. Song in short stanzas
- 38. Detonations
- 39. Intestinal
- 40. EU cofounder Paul-Henri \_\_\_\_
- 43. Balmy
- 44. New Mexico mountain town
- 45. Gobblers
- 49. Insecticide
- 50. Golf scores
- 51. Has its own altar
- 53. "Pollock" actor Harris
- 54. Being livable
- 56. NHL play-by-play man
- 58. "The Great Lakes State" (abbr.)
- 59. Unpainted
- 60. Swam underwater
- 63. Native American people
- 64. Containing salt
- 65. Exam

### CLUES DOWN

- 1. Small bone in middle ear
- 2. Long, angry speech
- 3. Move out of
- 4. Male organ
- 5. Two-toed sloth
- 6. Making dirty
- 7. Article
- 8. Oil company
- 9. Emits coherent radiation
- 10. Amounts of time
- 13. Unit equal to one quintillion bytes (abbr.)
- 14. Forbidden by law
- 15. Drains away
- 20. Not out
- 21. Sea patrol (abbr.)
- 22. Bird genus
- 23. Gratuity
- 27. \_\_\_\_ and feathers
- 29. Spiritual part of an individual (ancient Egypt)
- 30. Hot beverage
- 31. Pouch
- 32. It followed the cassette
- 33. Large northern deer
- 34. Ones who offer formally
- 35. Famed genie
- 36. Bequeathed
- 37. Skeletal muscle
- 38. Atomic #56
- 40. Silk garment
- 41. They deliver the mail
- 42. Equally
- 44. Check
- 45. Light-colored breed of hound
- 46. Drug that soothes
- 47. Railroads
- 48. Most slick
- 50. Jacket
- 51. A radio band
- 52. Hello
- 54. His and \_\_\_\_
- 55. Supporter
- 57. Popular software suite (abbr.)
- 61. Railway
- 62. NY coastal region (abbr.)

# 35 earn the prestigious rank of Eagle Scout

Newly-created Bartram Trail Troop hosts its annual celebration

By Don Coble  
don@claytodayonline.com

FLEMING ISLAND – Cory Hester learned a lot about himself during his 11-year journey of earning the rank of Eagle Scout.

He realized he had the fortitude to work through challenges that come with tough assignments. He embraced his role of helping his community. And he beat the odds by going through an arduous process that so few can finish.

“It wasn’t until I earned Star that I decided I wanted to be an Eagle,” Hester said shortly after he joined 26 other boys and seven girls in receiving their white neckerchiefs at Sullivan Hall of Sacred Heart Catholic Church last Saturday.

“It wasn’t easy, but I got it done. It was worth it.”

Troops from Clay, Putnam and Bradford counties were combined to create the new Bartram Trail District. The annual recognition ceremony was a chance for every Eagle Scout to be individually honored.

Hester, who graduated from Oakleaf High, has embarked on another challenge



STAFF PHOTOS BY DON COBLE  
Von Wilhite receives his white neckerchief.

by taking classes at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University with hopes of being a pilot.

“Being an Eagle helped me understand how to work toward a goal,” Hester said.

Each Eagle was required to complete an Eagle Project. With the help of other



Cory Hester, Jr., center, thanks his mother, Theodosia, and he’s joined by his father, Cory, after he earned the prestigious rank of Eagle Scout.



Sheriff Michelle Cook, BCC Chairman Wayne Bolla and Rotary Club of Orange Park president-elect Bo Norton present newly-decorated Eagle Scout Lance Adair with letters of certificates.

Scouts and adults, each Eagle candidate was to collect money and materials with contributions from friends and businesses.

In the process, the 35 new Eagles combined to provide more than 4,102 service hours to their community, and they collected \$39,720.86 in materials.

The program started when Rick Kiefer was given the Coup Feather for being part of the Eagle Recognition ceremony for 40 years. Then, one by one, Scouts were called to the stage where the prestigious white neckerchief was placed around their necks. After that, each Scout was given a hand-

made woggle, letters of certificates from U.S. Rep. Kat Cammack, Fla. Sen. Jennifer Bradley, Fla. Reps. Sam Garrison and Bobby Payne, Board of County Commission Chairman Wayne Bolla, Clay County Sheriff Michelle Cook, Clay Superintendent David Broskie, Clay School Board Chairwoman Mary Bolla, Putnam Superintendent Dr. Rick Surrency, Free and Accepted Masons, Morocco Shriners, Sons of American Revolution and Fleet Association, as well as a five-year membership in the National Eagle Scout Association and a flower for each recipient to give their mothers.





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# Garrison's overhaul of Medicaid program advances in Florida House

By Christine Jordan Sexton  
For FloridaPolitics.com

A contentious plan to overhaul the state's mammoth health care safety net took its second step forward Monday as a divided House committee approved a bill that will alter the program that currently serves roughly four million Floridians.

The House Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee approved HB 7047 by a 10-5 vote along party lines.

If the bill is ultimately approved, it will require the state to enact a long line of changes ahead of Florida's plans in 2025 to rebid major contracts with managed care companies that now work with the bulk of those who enrolled in the program. There are more than 5 million people in Medicaid but not all are required to be enrolled in managed care. But four million are.

Democrats warned about some of the proposed changes included in the legislation that could affect dental services provided to Medicaid as well as affect some of the large public hospitals that treat Medicaid patients. "We have to ensure we have a health care system that works for everyone," said Rep. Marie Woodson, a Hollywood Democrat.

Bill sponsor Rep. Sam Garrison, a Fleming Island Republican, insisted that the changes – which have the backing of the Agency for Health Care Administration – would help keep the roughly \$35 billion



Rep. Sam Garrison hopes his overhaul of the state's Medicaid program will simplify services and keep costs under control.

Medicaid program from becoming too expensive in the future.

"It is easy to just say: 'Keep like it is,'" Garrison said.

The bill does everything from consolidate the number of regions included in Medicaid to requiring that cancer hospitals be included as providers.

But one part that has drawn a lot of attention is a provision to have the managed care plans offer dental services. Legisla-

tors several years ago separated out dental services after a fierce legislative and lobbying battle, and the bill would eliminate that "carve out" as it is called.

Joe Anne Hart, chief legislative officer for the Florida Dental Association, said the elimination of separate dental service would lead to unnecessary hurdles for patients seeking dental care.

"It will create a disincentive for dentists to participate," said Hart, who also pointed out that the state reimburses dentists now at a lower rate than in other states such as California and Texas.

Meanwhile, those representing hospitals said they were concerned about another part of the legislation aimed at requiring so-called essential providers to contract with health plans.

Justin Senior, CEO for the Safety Net Hospital Alliance, called the sanctions contained in the legislation for providers who fail to follow the measure unfair.

"Ultimately we think the punishments need to be less draconian," Senior told legislators.

The Medicaid managed care overhaul has one more stop before it heads to the full House. A similar bill — but one that preserves the dental "carve-out" also is moving in the Senate. The legislative tug-of-war has attracted plenty of attention as nearly 100 lobbyists have registered to lobby on the House bill.



**Celebrates 20 years of helping callers in crisis**

**For Clay Today**

CLAY COUNTY – This month, United Way of Northeast Florida celebrates the 20th anniversary of its information and referral service, United Way 211.

Founded in 2002, United Way 211 is an integrated information and referral helpline and online database that connects people of all ages and walks of life to essential health, human and social services. United Way plans to celebrate this anniversary on social media and with staff this week, culminating Friday, Feb. 11, known nationally as 211 Day.

Fielding more than 100,000 calls annually from individuals and families seeking services, United Way 211 operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The service connects callers for free to trained information and referral specialists, who provide up-to-date information on and referrals to available community services such as food pantries, mental-health resources, transportation, rent and utility assistance and more.

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# Obituaries

## Donald Milton Scheer

Donald Milton Scheer, 95, of Orange Park FL passed away February 6, 2022.

Broadus-Raines Funeral Home, 501 Spring St., Green Cove Springs, FL (904) 284-4000 [www.broadusraines.com](http://www.broadusraines.com)



## Louise Marie Howard Saunders

Louise Marie Howard Saunders, age 92, passed away February 1, 2022, in Orange Park, FL. Louise was born to Henry Richardson Howard, Sr. and Alice May Baker Howard on January 7, 1930, and was a lifelong resident of Orange Park, FL.

Louise was predeceased by her loving and devoted husband of 49 years, Claude Eugene Saunders and son, Phillip Howard Saunders and granddaughter, Tera Coker along with her parents and four brothers and three sisters. She is survived by a devoted family including five children: Susan (Karl) Babb, Sarah (Dale) Stubbe, Martha (Lamar) Creamer, Harold (Terri) Saunders, Claude Mac (Celenia) Saunders.



Louise Marie Howard Saunders

Eleven grandchildren: Kelly (Steve) Dalton, Karla (Chris) Green, David (Amanda) Babb, Stephen Creamer, Jennifer Johnson, Christina (Larry) Paver, Joshua Saunders, Jacob (Crystal) Saunders, Will Saunders and Rebecca (Floyd) Farris. Three step-grandchildren, and Eighteen great grandchildren: Brian and Tyler Dalton, Christopher, Ansley and Presley Green, Hazellyn and Lucia Babb, Dawson and Dylan Germano, Elle Johnson, Zena Heiland, Landon and Logan Short, Caleb, Abigail and Chandler Saunders, Royce and Adeline Farris. Great great grandchildren: Avalon Dalton, Matthew Hieland, Myla Martin, and one sister, Ruth Holt and many, many close relatives and close friends.

While a young girl Louise accepted Jesus as her Savior and was a lifetime mem-

ber of First Baptist Church of Orange Park, serving in the children's Sunday School ministry for 53 years and in many other areas of service in the church. Louise centered her life around her church and her worship of God. She made sure as many children as possible had a ride to church, and never told anyone "no." (Sometimes making several trips to make sure everyone had a ride). Louise also worked as the first official rural mail carrier for Orange Park and served as a Pink Lady for Clay Memorial Hospital in Green Cove Springs. Louise was a very devoted wife, mother, and grandmother, and enjoyed helping people, researching local history, and throughout her life she continued to be devoted to family, church and Jesus her Savior.

Louise will always be cherished and remembered for her loving and giving ways.

Services for Louise Marie Howard Saunders was held at First Baptist Church, 1140 Kingsley Ave, Orange Park, FL on February 7, 2022. Viewing was at 10 am and service at 11 am. Internment followed at Jacksonville Memory Gardens.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggest memorials be gifted to the Children's Ministry at First Baptist Church of Orange Park, Haven Hospice of Orange Park, or a charity of your choice.

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## Theodore "Ted" F. Zentner

Theodore "Ted" F. Zentner, 76, went home to be with our Lord in his West Virginia home on February 1, 2022.

Born in Miami, Florida, on December 8, 1945, he was the son of the late Theodore F. and Louise J. (Campbell) Zentner. He was preceded in death by his brother, George Hoffman.

Ted was a prominent attorney in many fields. He was a graduate of the University of Florida and Stetson Law School. He was a prac-



Theodore F. Zentner

ticing attorney for 51 years. He believed that everyone deserved exceptional representation and worked endlessly to achieve the best possible outcome.

He is survived by his wife, Leona (Schooley) Zentner, daughters, Lacy Hurst, (Randy), Tina Staniszewski, (Frank), Lisa Batten, (Jeremy) and son, James Freet, 12 grandchildren, 6 great grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews. Also surviving are his sister, Jessica Sartin, (John), sister-in-law, Charlotte Goshorn and brother-in-law, Mark Foust.

Ted was a dearly beloved husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather, brother, brother-in-law, uncle and friend. He will be dearly missed by all who loved him.

His funeral Mass will be celebrated Sat., Feb. 12, 2022, at Noon in Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church (St Mary's), 21169 Cross Road, Doylesburg, PA 17219, with a one hour viewing at church prior to Mass. Interment Reformed Church Cemetery, Fannettsburg.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his name may be made to Humane Society Pocahontas, 410 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave., Marlinton, WV 24954. [www.agetlakjer.com](http://www.agetlakjer.com)

## Linda "Diann" Wendorf

Linda "Diann" Wendorf, 61 of Green Cove Springs, FL passed away on December 13, 2021. Born May 21, 1960 in Sinton, Texas, Diann was the youngest of 9 siblings growing up.

After graduating from Galena Park High school in Texas she enlisted in the Navy and met the Love of her life on the way to Sicily, Italy for sea duty. Diann

served her country as a Radiomen and was very patriotic. While attached with the military, she enjoyed traveling, experiencing new adventures, and meeting new friends.

Diann was active in the Clay County Shrine Club for numerous years and was the Presidents Lady in 2006. Halloween was one of her favorite holidays and she enjoyed decorating each year for the event. She enjoyed attending the parades around North Florida with the Clay Kats go-cart unit. She was active in the Middleburg VFW post 8255 and the American Legion Post 250 where she enjoyed meeting with friends and making people laugh. Music was a passion to her but most importantly was spending time with her granddaughter.

Diann is survived by her husband of 41 years Ivan; daughter Brandy; grandchild Riley; sisters Virginia Turgeon, Frankie Eanes, and Debbie Burns; and brother Tim Williams.

Her family will have a service and celebration of life at a later date. Please sign the family's online guestbook at [www.broadusraines.com](http://www.broadusraines.com)

Arrangements are under the care of Broadus-Raines Funeral Home, 501 Spring St., Green Cove Springs, FL 32043. (904) 284-4000.



**LAKE REGION KIWANIS:** will meet on Feb. 10 at 7:30 a.m. at Camp Montgomery, 88 SE 75th St. in Starke.

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

**PENNEY FARMS TOWN COUNCIL:** will meet at 7 p.m. on Feb. 15 at the Town Hall, 4100 Clark Ave.

**GREEN COVE SPRINGS CITY COUNCIL:** will meet on Feb. 15 at 7 p.m. at City Hall, 321 Walnut St.

**CLAY COUNTY FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:** will meet on Feb. 15 at 1 p.m. at the BCC Meeting Room, fourth floor of the Administration Building, 477 Houston St., Green Cove Springs.

**ORANGE PARK TOWN COUNCIL:** will meet on Feb. 15 at 7 p.m. at Town Hall, 2042 Park Ave.

**LAKE REGION KIWANIS:** meets Feb. 17 at 6 p.m. at Clyde's Cozy Corner Café, 195 S. Lawrence Blvd., Keystone Heights.

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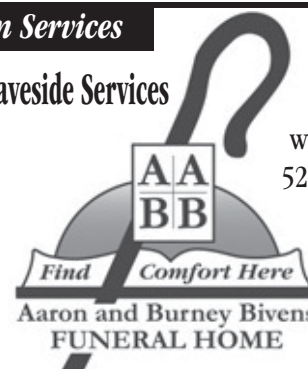
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Jacquelin Edwards was recognized for working with students improve their math and English so they can move from low scores to their grade level.

## Clay Hill Title I assistant selected as School-Related Employee of the Year

By Nick Blank  
nick@claytodayonline.com

ORANGE PARK – At the Apple Awards last week, Clay Hill Elementary School Title I assistant Jacquelin Edwards was sitting close to the Thrasher-Horne Center stage when her name was called.

As a finalist for School-related Employee of the Year, she had already been introduced and was stunned to learn she received the honor.

“It always takes a second to realize they just said your name,” Edwards said.

In 30-minute rotations, Edwards interacts with seven or eight small groups a day in math and English from different grades. Her goal is to bring students scoring low up to their grade level.

“These children need extra support and it comes in many forms,” Edwards said. “It’s about social and emotional needs. I think that’s important. Every child’s story is different out here. I take pride in my students knowing I care.”

Edwards began as a substitute teacher. Clay Hill Principal Adele Reed said Edwards is a gifted educator who puts 150%

into everything she does.

“She exudes enthusiasm and that’s exactly what she gives her students,” Reed said. “They love working with her. She’s an amazing person and we’re blessed to have her.”

District Board Member Ashley Gilhousen said Edwards is a positive force to be reckoned with and shined when she works with small groups. Gilhousen added that Edwards throws a birthday party for students with summer birthdays and she organizes the school’s talent show.

“Her colleagues regard her as a perfect example of someone who leads others through the examples set by their own behavior,” Gilhousen said.

Edwards said the last few years have been tough. She thanked the district for their ceremony and said the networking and recognition prior and during the event were second-to-none. She was also appreciative of her Clay Hill coworkers for nominating her.

“I love where I work, I truly think it’s the gem of our county,” Edwards added. “What we have out there is very special.”

## Habitat for Humanity advocates for affordable housing at annual conference

For Clay Today

MIDDLEBURG – Clay County Habitat for Humanity joined hundreds of housing affordability advocates and supporters today for the Habitat on the Hill annual legislative conference. The conference, held virtually for the second year, highlights the strides Habitat for Humanity International and its local affiliates have made to better address and advance racial equity in housing and housing policy.

During the conference, entitled “Building a More Equitable Future,” advocates will attend virtual workshops and discussion sessions that explore topics including access to credit, addressing the shortage of affordable housing stock, and advancing equity. Attendees will also have the opportunity to meet with members of Congress to discuss housing challenges and opportunities in their local communities.

“Affordable housing has become more elusive than it has ever been and that is because of the rise in housing costs nationwide. People are finding out they are having to work two or more jobs to be able to afford a basic two-bedroom home. When people are facing that kind of challenge, people believe that owning a home is impossible. This is why Clay County Habitat for Humanity and other Habitat affiliates across the nation are vital in making the dream of homeownership possible,” said Carolyn Edwards, Clay County Habitat for Humanity.

The demand for affordable, safe, and healthy homes far outweighs the avail-



able supply causing many families to face extremely difficult choices between how to afford their housing and other basic needs. Clay County Habitat will be advocating for the Community Restoration and Revitalization Fund, as well as robust funding in the FY2022 and FY2023 budgets for federal housing programs such as the Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program, the HOME Investment Partnerships Program and the USDA 502 direct loan program. By prioritizing resources that will spur the production of affordable homes for sale, we can prevent major losses in homeownership and expand access to new affordable homes for all.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Deputy Secretary Adrienne Todman will speak during the opening plenary about the Biden-Harris administration’s priorities, including working with state and local governments and nonprofit organizations to increase the supply of affordable housing in communities across the country.

Other speakers include Jerusalem Demas, a policy reporter at Vox; Bryan Greene, vice president of policy advocacy at the National Association of REALTORS; and David Lipsetz, president and CEO of the Housing Assistance Council.



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STAFF PHOTOS BY DON COBLE

### Clydesdales attract huge crowds at Middleburg Winn-Dixie

MIDDLEBURG – Despite cold and blustery weather, fans of the famous Clydesdale horses didn't seem to mind waiting for 90 minutes for a chance to pet one of the iconic animals. Anheuser-Busch brought two of their horses to six Northeast Florida Winn-Dixie stores. The horses also made an appearance at the Argyle Forest location on Thursday, Feb. 3, but Saturday's stop at Middleburg was described as one of the largest, according to one of the horse handlers. "It was great for the community," said store manager Dave Smith. "It was nice to give something back to the community." More than 2,000 stood in lines and were given the opportunity to get up close and personal with the one-ton horse.



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ORANGE PARK – Last Saturday's Bestie Bash at the Orange Park Mall celebrated Valentine's Day with arts, crafts, music and friendship.



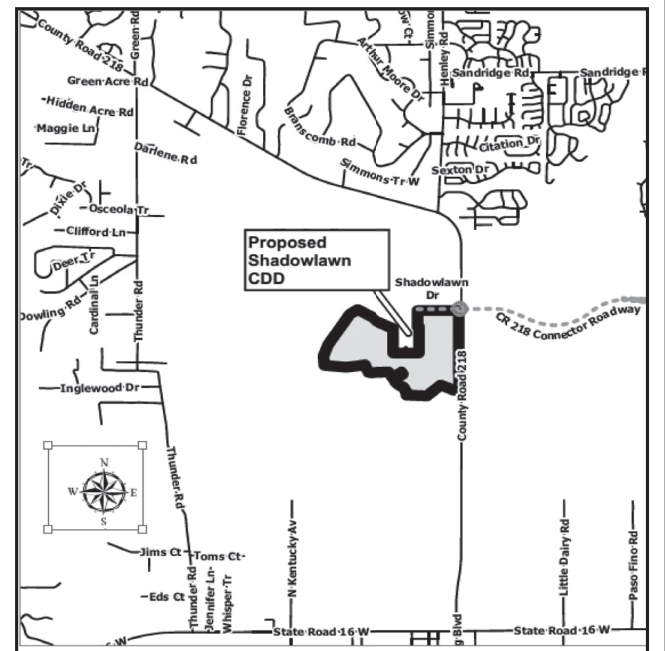
### NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Clay County Board of County Commissioners  
To Consider a Petition to Establish  
Shadowlawn Community Development District

**DATE:** March 8, 2022

**TIME:** 5:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as may be heard

**LOCATION:** Clay County Administration Building  
BCC Meeting Room, Fourth Floor  
477 Houston Street  
Green Cove Springs, Florida 32043



In compliance with the provisions of Chapter 190, Florida Statutes, a public hearing will be held by the Clay County Board of County Commissioners on the 8th day of March, 2022 at 5:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as may be heard at the BCC Meeting Room, Fourth Floor, Clay County Administration Building, 477 Houston Street, Green Cove Springs, Florida 32043, to consider a petition to establish the Shadowlawn Community Development District. The proposed Shadowlawn Community Development District is comprised of 268.82 acres, generally located south and west of County Road 218, north of State Road 16 and east of Thunder Road. The petitioner has proposed to establish the Shadowlawn Community Development District to plan, finance, acquire, construct, operate and maintain infrastructure and community facilities which may be authorized by such district under Florida law, including but not limited to: stormwater management system, roadway improvements, water, sewer and reclaimed water systems, amenity improvements, hardscaping, landscaping, irrigation, fencing and signage improvements, and other infrastructure.

A copy of the petition is open to public inspection at the Clay County Attorney's Office, 2nd Floor, Clay County Administration Building, 477 Houston Street, Green Cove Springs, Florida 32043, (904) 269-6377.

All interested persons and affected units of general-purpose government shall be given an opportunity to appear at the hearing and present oral or written comments on the petition. Any persons or affected unit of general-purpose local government, who wish to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at this public hearing will need a record of the proceedings. For that purpose, the person or unit of general-purpose local government may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made that includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

**NOTICE TO PERSONS NEEDING SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS AND TO ALL HEARING-IMPAIRED PERSONS:** In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, persons needing special accommodations or an interpreter to participate in this proceeding should contact the County's ADA Coordinator mail at Post Office Box 1366, Green Cove Springs, Florida, 32043 or by telephone at (904) 278-4719 no later than three (3) days prior to the hearing or proceeding for which this notice has been given. Hearing impaired persons, please call the Florida Relay Service (1 800 955 8770), no later than five (5) days prior to the meeting.

Legal 33063 published Feb 10,17,24 and March 3, 2022

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# County to negotiate with Comcast for Broadband Project

By Nick Blank  
nick@claytodayonline.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – Clay County Commissioners will negotiate with Comcast for the company to be the internet provider for the county's large scale broadband project.

Assistant County Manager Troy Nagle said the Request For Proposals was sent Oct. 28 and county staff has had evaluations, meetings and presentations since then. The county has allocated \$2 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds for the project and expects federal and state dollars.

However, the county's figure is not enough to lay fiber for the whole targeted area, which includes portions of Middleburg near Blanding Boulevard, homes near County Road 301 and areas around Keystone Heights.

With Comcast, there would be a \$9,987,130 cost to the county. They offer a base speed of 50/10 megabits per second for \$9.95 a month and a maximum speed of 3 gigabits a second.

"Our interest is to be aggressive to serve as many residents in Clay County as possible and to stretch that investment," Comcast Senior Director of Government and Regulatory Affairs Bill Ferry said.

Nagle said the county has a plan of how internet service would get to unserved areas, which set the county up for success as

funds become available.

"It came down to the decision of do you do everything at a lower speed or do you start working on a piece of the county and get fiber and higher speed service to an area?" Nagle said.

Commissioner Betsy Condon said she had discussions with Rep. Kat Gammack's staff and the congresswoman favored fiber and the fact the county has a plan rather than a loose concept of what it wants to do. She added that underserved areas have considerable data usage concerns and high costs.

"We know right now in these five areas we put up for bid, we have 17,000 homes that are either not served or underserved today," Condon said.

Broadband is needed for the court system. Clerk of Court Tara Green said the state Supreme Court recently heard an oral argument about virtual hearings and she said by a certain date virtual hearings may be required for self-represented litigants.

"It's a serious issue that they're taking up statewide," Green said.

Comcast building a network now will allow for higher speeds as more funding becomes available, County Commissioner Mike Cella added. Commissioner Jim Renninger said the high level of service is important for the county to prosper in the



future.

BCC Chairman Wayne Bolla said the \$9.9 million figure is to subsidize the internet deployment and there would still be a fee for residents. He said entering into negotiation with Comcast is the most progress the county has made on broadband in eight years.

"You're still going to have to pay some-

thing for the internet service if you choose to buy it," Bolla said. "We're not talking about completely free internet here."

The county is also asking residents to take the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity's internet speed test, which can assist the state in spotting gaps in high-speed internet service. The test is available at [floridajobs.org/broadband](http://floridajobs.org/broadband).

## Community Briefs

### Don Thompson Chorale coming to Penney Farms

PENNEY FARMS – Penney Memorial Church welcomes the Don Thompson Chorale as part of the Commemorative Concert Series at 7 p.m. on Feb. 13.

Named after the original director, the chorale is a non-profit, volunteer, community chorus based in Jacksonville. The prime directive, for members, is to create and to share.

Penney Memorial Church is located at 4465 Poling Blvd. The concert is free, to the general public, and street parking is

plentiful. For questions, call Neil Petty at (904) 284-1209.

### Guess Who coming to Thrasher-Horne Center

ORANGE PARK – The Guess Who, a group that's connected with the masses throughout an exultant hit parade spanning fourteen Top 40 hits, including "These Eyes," "Clap For the Wolfman," "Hand Me Down World," "No Times," "Star Baby" and "Share the Land" will perform at the Thrasher-Horne Center on Feb. 18 at 8

p.m. Add in fellow classics and double-sided singles like their No. 1 rock anthem "American Woman" and "No Sugar Tonight," plus "Laughing" and "Undun," and the Canadian bred stateside conquerors are amongst music's most indelible treasures who are eternally etched within the very fabric of pop culture history.

"You're going to see an excellent version of the songs and hear exactly how they should sound or be played," said founding member and original drummer/songwriter Garry Peterson.

"We're coming at a new generation

of fans who are seeing how the band can execute with enthusiasm. And we're also making sure the respect level remains at an all-time high for how the music was initially recorded and remains at an all-time high for the fans who have been with the band from the beginning." To buy tickets, visit [thcenter.org](http://thcenter.org) or call (904) 276-6815.

### Augusta Savage Cultural Arts Festival planned for Feb. 26

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# United

from page 7

In Northeast Florida, United Way 211 serves nine counties: Duval, St. Johns, Clay, Nassau, Baker, Putnam, Columbia, Suwannee and Hamilton.

To get help now, dial 2-1-1, or call (904) 632-0600 on your cell phone or landline. To access the online database, visit [unitedwaynefl.org/get-help](http://unitedwaynefl.org/get-help). There is no cost to those seeking services.

"From 'hello' to help, we're here for you," said Jeff Winkler, United Way's head of basic needs. "United Way 211 has the unique advantage of having approximately 1,300 community resources in the database of our service at any given moment. Our information and referral specialists are highly skilled, compassionate team members who will ensure you know about and can access any resources available. If you're struggling financially, physically or mentally, we encourage you to call." According to the most recent ALICE Report, nearly 40 percent of Northeast Florida residents struggle to make ends meet – and that was prior to the start of the pandemic. Last year, United Way 211 staff answered more than 111,600 calls for help, completing over 96,400 referrals to available community resources and services. This was a 17% jump in calls compared to 2020. During the height of the pandemic economic fallout in 2020, United Way 211 saw a nearly 74% increase year-over-year in calls compared to 2019.

United Way has a long history of connecting callers in crisis to the resources they need. The foundation of United Way 211 began in 1985 as "First Call for Help," a partnership with Lutheran Social Services and the City of Jacksonville. Eleven years later in 1996, full administration of the call center transferred to United Way, and the initiative was rebranded "United Way's First Call." Then, in February 2002, the call center became part of the national 211 networks, and United Way 211 was officially established in Northeast Florida.

In 2019, Mission United launched in partnership with United Way 211 to provide specialized care coordination to active military, veterans and their families in Northeast Florida. For more information on United Way 211 or to access the online database, visit [unitedwaynefl.org/get-help](http://unitedwaynefl.org/get-help). To get help now, dial 2-1-1, call (904) 632-0600 on your cell phone or landline, or text HELLO to 211904. Information on United Way of Northeast Florida can be found at [unitedwaynefl.org](http://unitedwaynefl.org) or on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn.



## Orange Park Police recruits future officers at job fair

ORANGE PARK – The Orange Park Police Department make a compelling sales pitch to recruit future officers at the Orange Park Junior High Job Fair on Feb. 4. Cpl. Samantha Frehulfer talked with students about what it takes to be a police officer and the variety of assignments it entails.

# College Briefs

### Four Clay students earn spots on Troy's honors lists

TROY, Ala. – Mason Richards of Orange Park was selected to the Provost's List at Troy University for the Fall Semester/Term 2 of the 2021-2022 academic year, while Gabrielle Deaton and Hannah Hargraves of Middleburg and Alisa Detlesen of Fleming Island earned spots on the Chancellor's List, while Mason Richards earned a spot on the Provost's List.

Full-time undergraduate students who are registered for at least 12 semester hours and who earn a grade point average of 4.0 qualify for the Chancellor's List. The Provost's List honors full-time undergraduate students who are registered for at least 12 semester hours and who have a grade point average of at least 3.65.

Troy University is a public, historic, international university with 22,500 students and 154,000 alumni. Students choose TROY for its quality academic programs, reasonable costs and availability of financial aid, outstanding faculty, and flexible in-class and online class offerings. Students on the Troy, Ala. campus

enjoy a traditional college experience, while adult students are the centers of attention at campuses in Dothan, Montgomery and Phenix City, Alabama, as well as at locations around the world and online.

### Hyams on Dean's List at North Georgia

DAHLONEGA, Ga. – Colt Patrick Hyams of Fleming Island made the fall 2021 Dean's List at the University of North Georgia (UNG) for achieving at least a 3.5 grade point average, carrying 12 or more credit hours in one semester and having no grade lower than B.

Positioned in the fastest-growing region of the state, the University of North Georgia comprises five campuses united by a single mission focused on academic excellence and academic and co-curricular programs that develop students into leaders for a diverse and global society.

### Yearwood on Kennesaw State's Dean's List

KENNESAW, Ga. -- Jarod Yearwood of Orange Park was selected to Kennesaw

State University's Fall 2021 Dean's List in recognition of academic achievement.

Yearwood, a Geography major, was among the more than 7,300 students named to the Fall 2021 Dean's List. To qualify, students must earn a grade point average of 3.5 or higher and complete a minimum of nine credit hours.

A leader in innovative teaching and learning, Kennesaw State University offers undergraduate, graduate and doctoral degrees to its nearly 43,000 students. With 11 colleges on two metro Atlanta campuses, Kennesaw State is a member of the University System of Georgia.

### Bucknell puts Porter on its Dean's List

LEWISBURG, Pa. – Bucknell University Dean's List for outstanding academic achievement during the fall semester included Danielle Porter of Green Cove Springs. A student must earn a grade point average of 3.5 or higher on a scale of 4.0 to receive dean's list recognition.

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## 2022 Clay County Science Fair Award Winners

### Animal Sciences

Place	Division	Student	School
1st	Senior	Evan Jaeger	Clay HS

### Behavioral & Social Sciences

1st	Senior	Byanna Johnson Joshua Moore	Oakleaf HS Oakleaf HS
-----	--------	--------------------------------	--------------------------

### Biomedical & Health Sciences

1st	Junior	Audry Cisco	Keystone Heights HS
2nd	Junior	Mills Weinstein	Green Cove Springs JH
1st	Senior	Kaiden Kowel	Fleming Island HS
2nd	Senior	Asmaa Hassan	Ridgeview HS
3rd	Senior	Ashley Yu	Ridgeview HS

### Cellular & Molecular Biology

1st	Senior	Serenity Derausie	Ridgeview HS
2nd	Senior	Mishka Sonavadeka	Ridgeview HS

### Chemistry

1st	Junior A	Aubrey Taylor	Green Cove Springs JH
1st	Junior B	Evan Vance	Orange Park JH
2nd	Junior A	Mady Charles	Fleming Island Elementary
2nd	Junior B	Brayden Coffee	Green Cove Springs JH
3rd	Junior A	William Drawdy	Lake Asbury JH
3rd	Junior B	Arriana Denmark	Keystone Heights Elementary
1st	Senior A	Joseph Salazar	Ridgeview HS
1st	Senior B	Audrey Asher	Oakleaf HS
2nd	Senior A	Clarissa Toney	Middleburg HS
2nd	Senior B	Kelsey Sullivan	Fleming Island HS
3rd	Senior A	Justin Alli	Ridgeview HS
3rd	Senior B	Madison Mescall	Middleburg HS

### Earth & Environmental Sciences

1st	Junior	Amelia Hart	Orange Park JH
1st	Senior	Riley Chapman Ayden Catucci	Ridgeview HS Oakleaf HS
2nd	Senior	Miranda Flowers Cal Dobbs Katelyn Robinson	Oakleaf HS Oakleaf HS Oakleaf HS

### Engineering

1st	Junior	Nadir Kaser	Green Cove Springs JH
2nd	Junior	William Shoesmith	Green Cove Springs JH
3rd	Junior	John Elixson	Wilkinson JH
1st	Senior	Samuel Smith	Clay HS
2nd	Senior	Gabe Stanley	Keystone Heights HS
3rd	Senior	Edmund Randolph	Ridgeview HS

### Environmental Engineering

1st	Junior	Camden Ghisolfi	Green Cove Springs JH
2nd	Junior	Madison Brinson	Keystone Heights HS
1st	Senior	Phoenix Ricketts	Ridgeview HS

### Intelligent Machines, Robotics, and Systems Software

1st	Senior	Lucas Knutsen	Clay HS
2nd	Senior	Alexander Gordon Nathan Bartholomew Benjamin Lohse	Ridgeview HS Ridgeview HS Ridgeview HS

### Mathematics & Computational Sciences

1st	Junior	Aiden Grubbs	Lake Asbury JH
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PHOTOS BY KATHRYN RUELAS

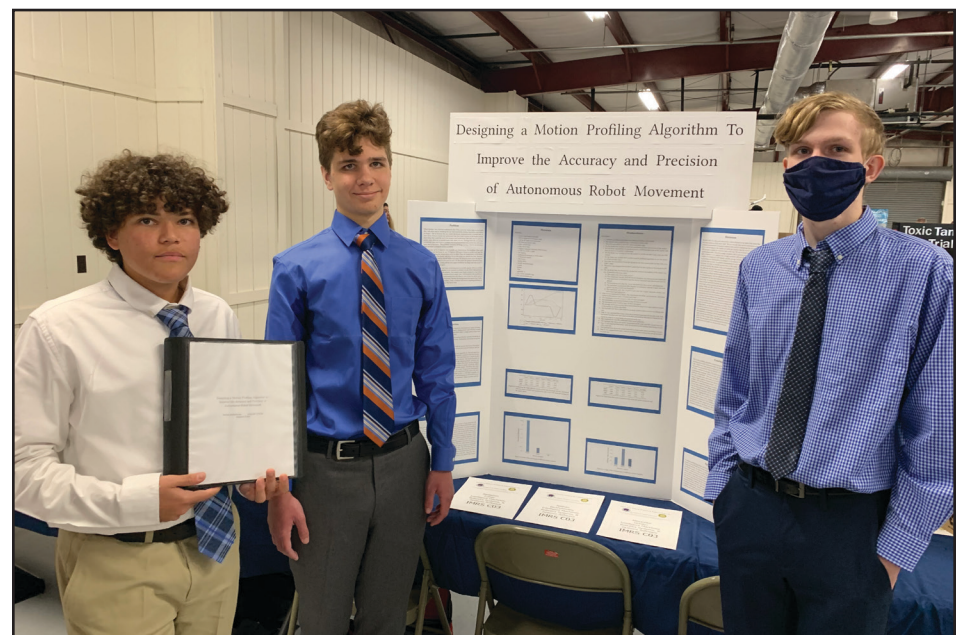
Pictured is Lisa Ashworth, Rotary Club Science Fair Coordinator and Clay High's Lucas Knutsen, who will attend the State Science Fair in the Intelligent Machines, Robotics, and Systems Software Category.

### Physics & Astronomy

Place	Division	Student	School
1st	Junior A	Sarah Fordham,	Green Cove Springs JH
1st	Junior B	Brantly Goodwin Joshua Chun	Orange Park JH Orange Park JH
1st	Junior C	Jacob Newlin	Wilkinson JH
2nd	Junior A	Mason Corby Alex Morales Mason Peterson	Lake Asbury JH Lake Asbury JH Lake Asbury JH
2nd	Junior B	Madison Chandler	Orange Park JH
2nd	Junior C	London Barlow	Wilkinson JH
3rd	Junior A	Saige Bialek	Lake Asbury JH
3rd	Junior B	Tyee Nathan	Oakleaf JH
3rd	Junior C	James Thomas	Keystone Heights HS
1st	Senior	Anthony Fiore	Clay HS
2nd	Senior	Isabelle Boysen	Clay HS
3rd	Senior	Karlee Wessels	Ridgeview HS

### Plant Sciences

1st	Junior A	Sophia Jia	Fleming Island Elementary
1st	Junior B	Iolanthe Cushman	Keystone Heights Elementary
2nd	Junior A	Gabrielle Vincent	Lake Asbury JH
2nd	Junior B	Lauren White	Lakeside JH
3rd	Junior A	Mia Petrosky	Orange Park JH
3rd	Junior B	David Murphy	Lake Asbury JH



Ridgeview High 10th graders Nathan Bartholomew, Benjamin Lohse and Alexander Gordon placed second in Intelligent Machines, Robotics and System Software category.

**Plant Sciences (Continued)**

Place	Division	Student	School
1st	Senior	Mary Reed	Ridgeview HS
2nd	Senior	Savannah Green	Clay HS
3rd	Senior	Brynna Barry	Oakleaf HS

**Stephen Rodesney Awards**

**Earth & Environmental Science**

Riley Chapman, Ayden Catucci, Ridgeview HS

**Engineering**

Samuel Smith, Clay HS

**Environmental Engineering**

Phoenix Ricketts, Ridgeview HS

**Physics**

Anthony Fiore, Clay HS

**State Science & Engineering Fair Participants**

**Junior Engineering Division**

Nadir Kaser, Green Cove Springs JH

**Junior Physics & Astronomy Division**

Sarah Fordham, Green Cove Springs JH

**Junior Plant Science Division**

Iolanthe Cushman, Keystone Heights Elementary

**Junior Physics & Astronomy Division**

Madison Chandler, Orange Park JH

**Senior Biomedical & Health Sciences**

Kaygen Williamson, Clay HS

**Senior Intelligent Machines, Robotics, and Systems Software**

Lucas Knutsen, Clay HS

**Senior Chemistry**

Audrey Asher, Oakleaf HS

**Senior Cellular & Molecular Biology**

Serenity Derosie, Ridgeview HS

**Senior Environmental Engineering**

Avery Crawford, Ridgeview HS

**Senior Environmental Engineering**

Phoenix Ricketts, Ridgeview HS

**Senior Intelligent Machines, Robotics, and Systems Software**

Angelo De La Rosa, Ridgeview HS

**Senior Intelligent Machines, Robotics, and Systems Software**

Alexander Gordon, Nathan Bartholomew, and Benjamin Lohse, Ridgeview HS

**Senior Plant Science**

Mary Reed, Ridgeview HS



Lakeside Junior High seventh grader Lauren White placed second in the junior B category of plant sciences.



Serenity Derosie and Mary Reed, both from Ridgeview High, are Clay County's selections for the International Science and Engineering Fair.

**International Science & Engineering Fair Participants**

**Senior Cellular & Molecular Biology**

Serenity Derosie – Ridgeview HS

**Project Title:** Enzymatically Treated Cellulosic Packaging Waste Utilized to Release Fermentable Sugars for the Production of Bioethanol: a Third Year Study

**Senior Plant Science**

Mary Reed – Ridgeview HS

**Project Title:** How does nitrate absorption differ between the Rhizophora mangle, Laguncularia racemosa, and Avicennia germinans over a 48 hour period?



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Center hours are Monday - Friday, 7:30 am to 3:30pm. Tours are available on Tuesdays at 11:00 am - 1:00 pm.

The Adult Day Care located in Green Cove Springs is licensed through AHCA: Registration #8232





# State emergency management organization honors Clay Today

By Clay Today staff

SANDESTIN – The Florida Emergency Preparedness Association selected Clay Today and Managing Editor Don Coble with its Media Award last week at its statewide meeting.

The organization is comprised of Emergency Management offices throughout the state. Clay County Director of Emergency Management John Ward told his colleagues that Clay Today is committed to providing information on its website and newspaper pages ahead, during and after emergencies. He also told them of the newspaper's obligation to get all county residents to sign up for Alert Clay, which can send emergency alerts to mobile devices and home telephones ahead of a storm.

Coble accepted the award and said the effort the product of dedication and hard

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work by everyone at Clay Today.

"There are a lot of spokes that make up the wheel at Clay Today," he said. "We all share the passion of working in our community because we're all part of the community." The award generally is given to a television outlet, Ward said. Clay Today became the first newspaper outlet to be honored by the organization.

Clay Today and Coble also were recog-



From left, Clay Emergency Mangement's Michael Ladd, Don Coble and Tara Ayers and Director John Ward, both of Clay's Emergency Management, all joined in honoring *Clay Today* for its work to inform residents about emergency situations.

nized by Ward and the rest of the Board of County Commissioners during Tuesday's regular meeting.

"We are proud the Florida Emergency Preparedness Association chose to recognize our commitment to keeping everyone in Clay County safe and informed," said Hugh Osteen, co-owner and COO/Vice

President of Clay Today's parent company Osteen Media Group. "Clay Today has created unique professional relationships with Emergency Management, County Commission, Sheriff's Office, Green Cove Springs and Orange Park police departments, Fire Rescue and the School District to serve our community."

## Shooter

from page 1

The training was realistic, including calls from dispatchers, communication between on-the-ground law enforcement agencies, fire and rescue, logistics and public information.

The best part was no shots were actually fired.

The Clay County Sheriff's Office hosted the training class, and it was joined by Clay County Fire Rescue, Emergency Management and the School District Police Department. Other agencies included the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, St. Johns County Fire Rescue, Green Cove Springs Police Department, Duval County School District Police Department and Orange Park Mall security.

They all worked together to prepare for some of the most difficult challenges a community could face.

"Clay County, we are not super resource-rich. So, if we did have a mass casualty incident in the county, it's very realistic that those partners that are here



Representatives from a dozen agencies work on a scenario of an active shooter at a mall during a training class Tuesday at the Clay County Extension Office.

training with us today, would actually be responding with us," Clay County Sheriff Michelle Cook said.

On Tuesday afternoon, the group was working on an active shooter scenario at a mall. It started with a 911 call, and it quickly morphed into a quick response.

A command center and response team were created. Tactical and logistical teams were put on alert. And agency spokespeople were trained on how to provide answers to the media.

And it was all done with a computer program.

"Normally, you have officers running through with guns drawn," said C3 Pathways instructor Travis Cox. "We mimic that on the computer so you don't actually have to draw your guns. We create the scenario there. They have to do everything to manage the incident.

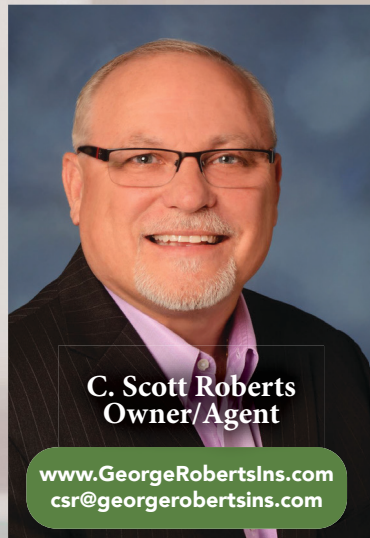
The size of Clay County and surrounding areas was the reason so many agencies worked together during the drill, Clay County School District Police Chief Kenneth Wagner said.

For example, if there was a call for an active shooter at a school, the response will likely involve several local law enforcement and medical agencies.

"This is what we're focusing on. How do we from a dozen different agencies come together and manage this chaos? And that's what this training does for us," Cook said.

The program was created by Homeland Security and taught by a private company.

"By doing it like this, we can work through several different scenarios," Cox said. "Right now, we're working on a mall. We also will work with schools. We can get a lot done in one place."



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## Faith Walk

By Pastor Billy Register  
True Life Church  
Clay County

### The Power of Love

February is “love month”. Valentine’s Day is just around the corner. Many times, love is a misunderstood term.

Love is a word with layer upon layer of meaning within it. That’s why there are three different words used for “love” in the New Testament scripture: *eros*, *philos*, and *agape*. Love is too powerful a word to only have a single meaning. It would greatly benefit our faith to understand the different aspects of the word “love” and how they relate to our lives.

Valentine’s Day is a holiday when we celebrate romantic love. In the New Testament, romantic love is *eros*. It is a word that speaks of the passion and desire we feel towards those we fall in love with. This understanding of love is a beautiful thing to celebrate within the confines of a godly relationship.

But God wants us to understand so much more about love that we can also celebrate this season! *Philos* in the New Testament is a word signifying the love you feel for a close friend. *Philos* is the kind of love we should have for all of our brothers and sisters in Christ. God has blessed us richly with the gift of friendship, and we should always find opportunities to celebrate it.

The most powerful love of all is found in the word *agape*. This word represents the unconditional, eternal love that God has for all His children. *Agape* is the love that brings us to repentance and redemption. *Agape* shapes us and molds us, transforming us in every way through the power of God’s love. God desires for us to live in His love daily, experiencing all of the benefits that it brings.

Let this month of February and Valentine’s Day serve as a reminder of the depth of the word “love.” Reflect on the unconditional, life-changing love that God has for you, and consider how you may show that same love towards others. This Valentine’s Day season, remember Jesus’ powerful words: “*Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind*” (Matthew 22:37) and “*Love your neighbor as yourself*” (Matthew 22:39). No matter who you encounter in life, always share the love of God with them as God has so graciously done to you.

You can write the Pastor at [pastorbilly@findtruelife.com](mailto:pastorbilly@findtruelife.com).



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# Local competition brings Clay businesses together

By William Davis  
For Clay Today

FLEMING ISLAND – The seventh annual River City Rumble CrossFit competition kicked off bright and early. The event is hosted each year by Steel Mill Fleming Island and is an open invitation for other gyms in the area to come and compete in healthy competition to crown the fittest in North Florida.

This year there were more than 64 athletes competing and representing eight local gyms in Duval, Clay and St. Johns counties. River City Rumble has been bringing competitors and gyms together for the past seven years. It also brings together other local small businesses in the Clay area to highlight their business. These types of events are becoming more of a regular thing in Clay County but still need help from the public to make them successful. This event like many others held by Steel Mill aims to bring awareness and cooperation to small local businesses, especially those within Clay County. Whether it is a brick and motor or online business, a non-profit or food trucks, all have their place in this community and deserve to be spotlighted. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and shutdowns around the country it is more important than ever to shop local and in the case of gyms “lift local.”

This year some of the businesses highlighted at River City Rumble 7 were:

Present Tense Coffee and books which is a coffee shop and used bookstore which is opening their second location in Clay County. Jax Sports Nutrition which is a supplement and vitamin shop which has four locations around North Florida.

Abled Veterans Outdoors, a local non-profit which focuses on empowering veterans with life skills and opportunities to connect with the community. They also sponsor fishing and outdoor excursions for veterans. Strength Depot is a local fitness equipment supplier located in Orange Park. They supply fitness equipment for big gyms, garage gyms, and at home use. Smoothie King just moved into Fleming Island and was passing out free healthy smoothies to everyone.

DJ6burgh is a local DJ who works events, weddings, and has a wonderful setup and fun atmosphere. He provided all the music for the event.

CPull Photos is a local photographer who specializes in fast paced photography



and sporting events, wedding and event photography.

Each year this event has been a showcase not only for the competitors to show off what their healthy lifestyles can do but also what local businesses can do when they communicate and come together. Clay County is growing, and this provides more of an opportunity for our local businesses to grow and work together. Let’s continue pushing Clay County business forward by shopping local and lifting local.

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# Police Briefs

## Man brought back to Clay following series of 2021 robberies

CLAY COUNTY – A Jacksonville man was arrested Feb. 7 following several thefts, including a grab and dash of a diamond ring from store at the Orange Park Mall.

Antonio Theron Fagan, 20, was charged with grand theft, two counts of petit theft and one count of shoplifting.

According to the Clay County Sheriff's Office, Fagan was suspected of running away with a ring valued at \$3,999 on Nov. 17, 2020, as well as a \$658 theft from the Middleburg Lowe's Home Improvement store on Feb. 16, 2021; and, two different \$499.99 thefts from the Fleming Island Target on Feb. 5, 2021.

Fagan was at the Duval County Jail when he was arrested and brought back to Clay County. His bond was set at \$125,009.



Antonio Fagan

## CCSO: Sleeping man caught with cocaine in running car

MIDDLEBURG – Clay County Sheriff's Office deputies arrested a man for having cocaine and crack cocaine after they found him sleeping in a parked car in somebody's driveway.

According to the arrest report, Desmond Bennett Turner, 58, was passed out in the car with the engine running. As deputies knocked on the window to wake him up, they noticed a red clear plastic bag with "a white rock like substance" and another baggie with white powder.

Turner tried to hide both bags when he exited the car. Both substances tested positive for cocaine.

Turner's bond was set at \$5,003.

## Sheriff's office, police departments ramp up DUI enforcement

CLAY COUNTY – The Clay County Sheriff's Office wasn't kidding when it posted a warning on its social media pages, warning everyone to "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over."

Deputies, along with the Green Cove Springs and Orange Park police departments, already have arrested 15 people this month for driving under the influence.



Sheriff Michelle Cook announced more than 26 points of methamphetamine was seized in a controlled buy from a California man. The meth had a street value of \$200,000.



## California man arrested with 26 pounds of methamphetamine

Drug arrest came after trafficker sold the drugs to CCSO undercover agent

By Don Coble  
don@claytodayonline.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – A California man was arrested and sent to the Clay County Jail with a \$25 million bond after he sold 25 pounds of methamphetamine to an undercover deputy on Jan. 27.

Ricky Donial Overton, 19, of Hawthorne, was charged with trafficking in crystal methamphetamine after a deputy paid \$75,000 for the drug at the Winn-Dixie parking lot in Green Cove Springs.

In all, Overton was found with 26 pounds, four ounces, according to the sheriff's office. It is believed to be one of the largest caches of methamphetamine confiscated in Clay County history, Sheriff Michelle Cook said.

The estimated street value of the drug is \$200,000, Cook said.

Overton told deputies he got the drugs from an unknown Hispanic man in Southern California and told to fly to Florida to deliver it to the buyer. He had a suitcase with three black-taped bundles containing the drug.

"It is our theory that it was coming



Ricky Overton

SEE METH, 19

# 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, Feb. 8

- Michael R. Smith, 56, Middleburg, FTA-domestic battery
- Arik L.A. Bach, 26, Keystone Heights, violation of injunction against domestic violence
- Amanda L. Major, 31, Orange Park, possession-methamphetamine, petit theft
- Robert A. Love, 41, Middleburg, DWLSR, possession-controlled substance
- Demetrius D. Lewis, 28, Middleburg, DUI
- Shannon L. Sweatt, 46, Green Cove

- Springs, grand theft
- Derald L. Sweatt, 55, Green Cove Springs, grand theft
- Danny J. Somers, 41, Keystone Heights, FTA
- Monday, Feb. 7**
- William J. Walker, 39, Green Cove Springs, FTA-larceny of credit card
- Antonio T. Fagan, 30, Fleming Island, two counts petit theft, shoplifting, grand theft
- Jimmy C. Goodwin, 29, Green Cove Springs, FTA-failure to register vehicle, FTA-DWLSR
- Colvin L. Cox, 38, Orange Park, DWLSR, license tag not assigned to car, petit theft
- Jessie L. Smith, 31, Green Cove Springs, FTA-violating health/safety with abandoned vessel
- Skye L. King, 46, Green Cove Springs, FTA-petit larceny
- Taylor B. Ellyson, 27, Orange Park,

- grand theft auto
- Tommy D. Gravely, 41, Green Cove Springs, VOP-battery
- Carlisha K. Johnson, 28, St. Augustine, grand theft auto
- Caleb A. Molina, 18, Orange Park, lewd/lascivious behavior to victim 12-16 years old
- Andrew J. Marcar, 30, Green Cove Springs, VOP-DUI
- James M. Bell, 42, Green Cove Springs, non-support
- Jerome L. Monroe, 71, Keystone Heights, possession-cocaine, possession-marijuana, possession-drug paraphernalia
- Ruth A. Yamamoto, 50, Orange Park, child abuse

### Sunday, Feb. 6

- Christopher I. Vandergrift, 46, Orange Park, VOP-community control

SEE ARRESTS, 19

## Community

from page 12

Green Cove Springs with Friends of Augusta Savage, Inc., will celebrate Black History Month with the Augusta Savage Cultural Arts Festival on Saturday, Feb. 26, at Spring Park from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

There will be performances by regional bands like D Five, Let's Ride Brass Band and Heart & Soul Youth Fine Arts Club, Keystone Heights High band, Orange Park and Middleburg High choruses, choir performances by local churches.

COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters will be offered, as well as art activities, food trucks, and the Black History Living Wax Museum by Charles E. Bennett Elementary.

### Fair offers special hours, accommodations for non-visible disabilities

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – The Clay County Agriculture Fair will offer sensory-friendly hours – also known as Sunflower Hours – on April 2 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The fair worked with the Sunflower

Project to make several sensory rooms and make hidden disability lanyards and stickers available.

The Sunflower Project is a globally-recognized symbol for non-visibility disabilities that can be physical, mental or neurological such as autism, Asperger syndrome and cognitive impairments.

During Sunflower Hours, fair sounds and music will be lowered and noise-isolating headphones will be available. The fair also will provide trained volunteers and sign language interpreters.

### Vietnam Veterans Day ceremony set for March 26 at TAPS Monument

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – More than 250 are expected to attend the ceremony to commemorate the National Vietnam War Veterans Day at 10 a.m. on March 26 at the TAPS Monument, 915 Walnut St.

The ceremony is open to the public.

The ceremony is being held in partnership with Vietnam Veterans of America Col. William G. Byrns Chapter 1059 and the Clay County Board of Commissioners.

It is the only Vietnam War Veterans Day recognition event being held in Northeast

overdose deaths last year. So, we take these drugs seriously, and if you're bringing this type of weight into our community, there will be harsh penalties."

Cook also said open borders have allowed massive amounts of drugs to be brought into the country from Mexico.

"We are seeing a significant amount of drugs making its way to Clay County because of open borders and that is definitely something that concerns me," she said.

The agency continues to encourage to call the sheriff's office with information to help keep drugs off county streets.

If you have information, please contact the CCSO at (904) 264-6512, submit an anonymous tip through our SaferWatch app, or visit the website at claysheriff.com and submit a tip to us through the Resources tab.



Florida with Vietnam Veterans of America chapters from Duval, Nassau and St. Johns counties being represented at the ceremony. All Vietnam Veterans throughout Florida are encouraged to attend as there will be representatives from the Vietnam War Commemoration staff from Washington, D.C. to present commemorative lapel pins and certificates to the Vietnam Veterans along with lapel pins to surviving spouses and Gold Star families.

The TAPS monument at the Historic Triangle has the names of 66 Clay County Veterans that were killed in action, 21 during Vietnam.

The names of the KIA will be called followed by a bell tone ring.

The National Vietnam War Veterans Day, which is actually Tuesday, March 29, honors the U.S. military members who served during the Vietnam War (1955-1975).

From Jan. 1, 1965, to March 28, 1973, 2.6-million military personnel served within the borders of South Vietnam. Another 50,000 served in Vietnam between 1960 and 1964.

During the Vietnam Era – Aug. 5, 1965, to May 7, 1975 – more than nine million served on active duty.

There were more than 58,000 U.S. military casualties in Vietnam from 1959 to 1975. There are still 1,584 missing or unaccounted-for from Vietnam.

For more information contact David Treffinger at dtreffinger433@msn.com or (609) 320-1723.

### Vietnam Veterans' Chapter 1059 to award scholarships

CLAY COUNTY – Vietnam Veterans of America Col. William G. Byrns Clay County Chapter 1059 is offering two \$1,500 scholarships to graduating seniors from Clay County high schools, homeschoolers, private schools and the Camp Blanding Youth Challenge.

The scholarship, named in honor of former VVA 1059 member Sid Newberg, is also open to relatives of current members of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1059. All applicants (except for VVA Chapter 1059 family members) must be residents of Clay County and planning to attend any post-high school accredited university, junior college or vocational/technical school.

Criteria to apply:

- A letter telling us about yourself, your life goals, and your plans for the future. Include name, address, phone number and email address.

- An official, original letter of acceptance to an accredited 4-year university, 2-year college or trade school.

- An essay, with a minimum of 500 words, based on an interview with a veteran, or active-duty member, from any branch of the United States military. The interview should include a veteran's experiences while serving either here or abroad or a significant mission in which he/she participated. An essay is comprised of the introduction, the main points and the conclusion. The essay will be judged on originality, grammar, and spelling.

- A letter of recommendation from a school faculty member who is a school counselor, principal or teacher.

- A list of your community service, awards, and recognitions received during grades 9-12. Provide copies of documentation. The deadline for the completed application is on or before April 30.

Please mail the completed application on or before the deadline to: Vietnam Veterans Scholarship, P.O. Box 626, Orange Park, 32067-0626. For more information email: Jo Ann Phillips at joannstone@rocketmail.com or call (904) 489-5570.

## Meth

from page 18

across the border, especially since it came here from California," said CCSO Narcotics Unit Director Wayne McKinney.

Cook said it doesn't matter if Overton was a major cog in the trafficking or just a delivery person.

"I don't care if you're a mule or the person making the drugs. You are still part of a drug trafficking industry that is bringing dangerous drugs into our county, so no matter what your role is, you are bringing these bad things into our community, and it's not going to be tolerated," Cook said.

"Last year alone, the Clay County Fire and Rescue responded to more than 500 overdoses, and we worked more than 50

## Arrests

from page 18

Tracy A. Robinson, 51, Green Cove Springs, FTA-extortion/threatening, FTA  
Shane P. Miller, 33, FTA-DWSLR  
Stephanie R. Newsom, 43, Orange Park, DUI with BAL .15 or higher  
Christopher W. Farkas, 30, Orange Park, DUI

Chase R. Massey, 29, Orange Park, DUI with property damage, leaving scene of accident involving damage

### Saturday, Feb. 5

Daniel J. Cole, 50, Orange Park, simple battery

James P. Hucks, 20, Fleming Island, simple battery, possession-controlled substance, resist/obstruct/oppose police

Jessica B. Nelson, 30, Green Cove Springs, FTA

Justin O. Byrd, 35, Orange Park, DUI  
Alena B. Farmer, 42, Green Cove Springs, DUI  
Marc S. Allen, 47, Middleburg, DUI

### Friday, Feb. 4

Amber N. Brown, 31, Orange Park, domestic battery  
Devin K. Cummings, 27, Orange Park, trespassing

Shane R. Dunn, 36, Orange Park, shoplifting

Timara L. Brown, 20, Orange Park, DUI with property damage/personal injury  
Brittany L. Locke, 34, Green Cove Springs, two counts VOP-dealing in stolen property, two counts VOP-providing false information to pawnbroker

Hassan H. Kallaje, 55, Green Cove Springs, making fraudulent insurance claim, insurance claimant fraud

Casandra Chacon, 25, Green Cove

Springs, FTA-DWSLR  
Austin T. Leek, 23, Fleming Island, simple domestic battery  
Desmond B. Turner, 58, possession-powder cocaine, possession-crack cocaine  
Melissa E.G. Bilbrey, 24, Fleming Island, DUI

D'Andre A. Pearsall, 25, Middleburg, possession-marijuana

### Thursday, Feb. 3

Kristina N. Webb, 29, Fleming Island, DUI

John C. Rabe, 34, Keystone Heights, simple battery  
Ryan V. Bevis, 33, Fleming Island, shoplifting, trespassing  
Khairy M. Zayed, 21, Orange Park, trespassing

David A. Little, 43, Orange Park, dealing in stolen property, giving false information to pawnbroker

Jalica J. Hodges, 33, Green Cove Springs, animal cruelty  
Sabree A. Thomas, 36, Orange Park, two counts FTA  
Casey L. Carr, 35, Orange Park, criminal mischief

### Wednesday, Feb. 2

Robert T. Hill, 30, Middleburg, possession-drug paraphernalia, attempting to flee/elude with lights/sire active, attached tag not assigned to vehicle

Christopher D. Stone, 37, Fleming Island, DUI

Michael J. Barrett, 35, Green Cove Springs, FTA-driving without valid license  
Brandon V. Baker, 25, Green Cove Springs, FTA-DWSLR Lisset Gonzalez, 51, Orange Park, simple battery

# College

from page 13

## 16 students earn academic honors at SNHU

MANCHESTER, N.H. – It is with great pleasure that Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) congratulates the following students on being named to the Fall 2021 President’s List: Ryan Mucha, Marlene Arellano and Remus Figuero of Orange Park, Dominique Pimienta and John Griffin of Middleburg, Michael Russell and Joshua Camden of Oakleaf and Rebekah Tonkin, Maria Hagedorn and Holly Martine of Fleming Island, while Erin Zuback, Stephen Long and Trystyn Inches of Middleburg and Elizabeth Zwiesler of Oakleaf earns spots on the university’s Dean’s List.

Full-time undergraduate students who have earned a minimum grade-point average of 3.700 and above are named to the President’s List. Full-time status is achieved by earning 12 credits; undergraduate day students must earn 12 credits in the fall or spring semester, and online students must earn 12 credits. Full-time undergraduate students who have earned a minimum grade-point average of 3.500 to 3.699 are named to the Dean’s List.

## Three local students land on Samford’s Dean’s List

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. – Samford University recognized 1,826 students named to the 2021 fall semester Dean’s List, including Madelyn Rosenau of Fleming Island, Kathrynne Cataldo of Green Cove Springs and Corey McDaniels of Orange Park.

To qualify for the dean’s list, a student must have earned a minimum 3.5 grade

point average out of a possible 4.0 while attempting at least 12 credit hours of coursework. Dean’s List is the highest academic recognition given by the school at the end of each semester.

Samford is a leading Christian university offering undergraduate programs grounded in the liberal arts with an array of nationally recognized graduate and professional schools.

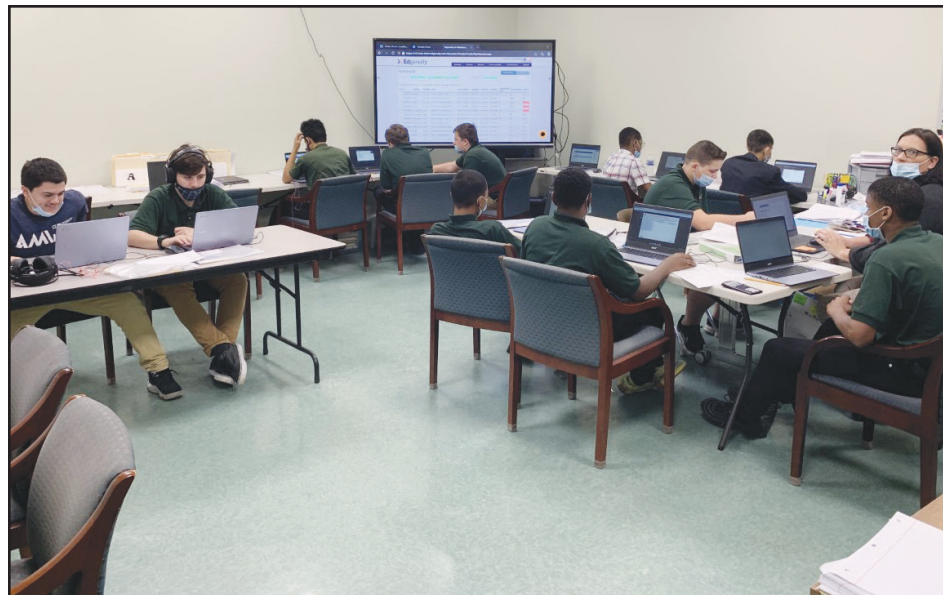
## Pair qualify for Dean’s List at Palmer College

PORT ORANGE – Alan Burnsed of Orange Park and Jared Hamilton of Green Cove Springs both earned spots on the fall quarter Dean’s List at Palmer College of Chiropractic’s Florida campus.

Palmer College of Chiropractic, the first and largest college in the chiropractic profession, has campuses in Davenport, Iowa; San Jose, Calif.; and Port Orange.

## Kanaskie makes Dean’s List at Tampa

TAMPA – Michelle Kanaskie, of Orange Park, earned dean’s list honors at The University of Tampa for the Fall 2021 semester. Kanaskie is majoring in Allied Health BS. Students must maintain a GPA of 3.75 or higher to be eligible for the dean’s list. The University of Tampa is a private, comprehensive university located on 110 acres on the riverfront in downtown Tampa. Known for academic excellence, personal attention and real-world experience in its undergraduate and graduate programs, the University serves more than 10,000 students from 50 states and most of the world’s 195 countries.



STAFF PHOTOS BY NICK BLANK

Students work in their new computer class at AMI Kids at the Augusta Savage Center. The organization moved from a portable to four classrooms in Green Cove Springs.

## AMI from page 1

room sizes and case management, Director of Operations Archie Harrison said.

With more space and visibility, the organization has the ability to accomplish its mission to a greater extent, he added.

“It’s definitely a blessing. We’ve been praying about a new facility for a long time. ... When Clay High School started getting more students, we knew it was almost our time,” Harrison said.

Harrison said AMI Kids takes children to school to prevent truancy and gets to know families. It’s generally more attentive than a larger school setting. The 44 students are a part of a ranking system where they are graded per class period. When the numbers are tallied at the end of the week, they get different rewards.

“These kids have really bought into this program,” Harrison said. “They love the ranks. They love to move up.”

Troy Betts, Vallenguard Construction Risk Manager, said the building wasn’t in good shape because it sat unused for a long time. He said the boys had to speak at a Green Cove Springs council meeting and the city ran with it after that.

“Once the boys spoke, the city council was onto it,” Betts said. “From that point on, it was a matter of meetings and work-



Director of Operations Archie Harrison oversees children working on projects to help prevent truancy.

ing out the construction and what the cost was going to be.”

AMI Kids accommodates the entire county, Executive Director Maria Przybylski said. At the site, the students can also do community service for the Food Pantry of Green Cove Springs.

The program has come very far. She said space is expensive and she thanked the city of Green Cove Springs and Vallenguard for accommodating the program.

“It was a six-month journey of building, we worked at it and now we have three classrooms, a large group area and office space,” she said. “It gives us more stuff to do.”

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# TODAY'S Sports

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## Rain of 3s spoil Mustang's run; Knights champs

By Randy Lefko  
Sports Editor

OAKLEAF - Oakleaf High's girls basketball team turned a 16-11 gap in the first quarter to a 36-16 halftime lead in their district 1-7A championship game against top-seed Mandarin High before exploding with a barrage of 3-pointers in the second quarter to bounce the Mustangs 68-40 Friday night at Oakleaf High to repeat as district champions.

"That is what it is all about and why I did our schedule the way I did it," said Oakleaf coach Fred Cole as his team, led by the frenzied attack play of guards Fantasia James (25 pts., 6 3-Ptrs) and Kaylah Turner (15 Pts.) and a courageous shooting performance from injured point guard Kamiya Jones (16 Pts., 4 3-Ptrs), celebrated with the frenzied Knightmares' fan base in the Oakleaf High gym. "I preach to everyone that our schedule prepared us to play a game like tonight despite everything that this team has gone through to get here."

Turner added to her aura of play with 10 assists and six steals.

No. 4 Oakleaf (11-11) advances into the region play-off to try and repeat as region champion and return to the Class 7A Final Four with a



STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO

Oakleaf High guard Fantasia James indicates yet another three point shot swished the nets in the Lady Knights district championship win over Mandarin.

Thurs., Feb. 10 playoff opener against No. 5 Oak Ridge High (13-12). Region top seed Colonial (21-7) will host No. 8 Timber Creek (12-14) in the other quarterfinal. No. 7 Mandarin (17-3) will travel to No. 2 Spruce Creek (19-6) on the bottom of the bracket along with No. 3 Apopka (19-6) hosting No. 7 Hagerty (19-9).

An emotionally drained Jones, a junior point guard, was overcome with tears after her gutsy three point performance with an injured back, then a kick in the face

SEE KNIGHTS, 28



Clay High wrestler Garrett Tyre, left, presses Raines wrestler Jamari Wilson in thrilling 220 championship match at Clay Rotary on Saturday. Tyre won.

## Martin, Tyre, Girgis win Rotary titles; Clay wins title

By Randy Lefko  
Sports Editor

GREEN COVE SPRINGS - Clay High wrestling got a shot in the arm; more in the mouth to 220 pound wrestler Garrett Tyre, as the Blue Devils garnered two individual champions to grab the team title at their own Clay Rotary Invitational held Saturday at Clay High School.

"This is a pretty good pre-state meet event that can put kids in the pressure situations that the region and state meet might offer," said Clay High coach Jim Reape, who won decisively over 3A-Gainesville Buchholz 280-170.5 with a 3-4 finish by Middleburg and Oakleaf putting Clay County in the forefront of upcoming district slates. "The kids will get beat up here with 36 teams from around the state from all classes; 1A, 2A, 3A."

Tyre, at 220, and Clay teammate Dominic Martin, at 182, both won individual titles with Middleburg senior Riley Girgis, at 126, the third Clay County champion of the day. Girgis also won his 100th career match en route to the Clay Rotary title.

"This was our best finish here ever," said Middleburg

SEE CHAMPS, 30



Middleburg High softball coach Ashley Houston does her best Randy Lefko photography impersonation with a quick pic of her pitcher Mallory Forrester and her family during National Letters of Intent signing day at Middleburg High School. Forrester signed to play at Flagler College next year. See more scholarship pictures on pages 26-27.



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NEW ARRIVALS  
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STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO

Ridgeview High's girls soccer team blasted three goals in the first five minutes of the second half to beat Menendez 4-0 in the district championship game.



**Panthers out**

Ridgeview High goalie MiaBella Gutierrez kicks away ball in Lady Panthers' 2-0 loss in the region 1-5A quarterfinal to Panama City Arnold, last year's Class 4A runnerup. Ridgeview finishes season at 11-2-2.

# Lady Panthers silence critics for soccer title

**By Randy Lefko**  
*Sports Editor*

ST. AUGUSTINE - Ridgeview High girls soccer got challenged (actually a non-money bet) at the half of their district 3-4A championship game with the Lady Panthers clinging to a 1-0 lead against Pedro Menendez.

"He bet us that we could not score three goals in the first 10 minutes of the second half," said senior Julianna Reali, after the challenge elicited three goals in four minutes and a 4-0 final score for Ridgeview and a district title. "We started communicating and controlling the ball. The second



Sisters Niurka Ortiz, left, and Naycka Ortiz discuss possible fat lip cosmetics during soccer break.

five minutes were a little different though."

Ridgeview had to survive a challenge from Middleburg to win their semifinal 2-1; Middleburg beat Clay 3-0 to advance, with head coach Trevor Clark kind of knowing how his girls play their best game.

"We have good feet and good quick passes and Middleburg played a scrappy game in the end," said Clark, who moves to 11-1-2. "I don't dictate our schedule as bus situations kept us from traveling to schools too far from the school. This is a solid soccer group."

Ridgeview, the fourth seed, will host No. 5 Arnold (12-5-0) on Tues., Feb. 8 in their region opener with No. 1 Gulf Breeze (12-3-1) hosting No. 8 Menendez (5-12-1) in the opposite quarterfinal.

Against Menendez, with Reali and Kenley Prestridge controlling the 50 yard line, sisters Naycka Ortiz and Niurka Ortiz were steadily breaking past the Menendez back line defense to push the Ridgeview of-



Ridgeview High midfielder Kayley Ware fires shot in Panthers district championship win over Menendez.



Ridgeview High celebrates goal by Kayley Ware in 4-0 win over Menendez.

fense to the first goal off a corner kick and scramble that Naycka Ortiz blasted in next to teammate Blaylock Rikki.

In the fateful second half, with coach Jeff Reedy's challenge, Ridgeview executed their short-pass, quick-pass strategy to garner Reedy's bet.

"I wanted the girls to believe in themselves and that using their possession-based soccer, they could be successful," said Reedy. "We try to keep the ball at our feet and use short, quick passes to move downfield. I challenged them for five minutes and they executed it in 4:35. After the second one, we knew they would be susceptible for another and we went right

after it."

Late in the first half, Ridgeview scored off a corner kick from Reali that hit the inside of the goal post and causing a frenzied scramble that Naycka Ortiz buried in for the first score of the contest at 9:58 to go to halftime.

Opening the second half, Ridgeview got a breakaway that started with Kayla Ware pushing a ball in from midfield that had Naycka Ortiz streaking down the left sideline and serving across to sister Niurka in the box, but Niurka could not put a foot on the ball.

**GIRLS SOCCER UPDATE**

**District 4-2A**

**Semifinals:** St. Johns Country Day 8, Oak Hall 0; St. Joseph Academy 8, Saint Francis Catholic 0

**Final:** St. Johns Country Day School 8, St. Joseph Academy 0 (See story, page )

**Region:** St. Johns (14-3-1) hosts Saint Francis Catholic (7-4-2) Tues., Feb. 8 6 p.m.

**District 4-3A**

**Quarterfinal:** PK Yonge BYE; Newberry 7, Fort White 0; Keystone Heights 11, Interlachen 0; Trinity Catholic 9, Williston 1

**Semifinals:** PK Yonge 8, Newberry 0, Keystone Heights 5, Trinity Catholic 3  
**Final:** PK Yonge 8, Keystone Heights 0



Fleming Island goalie McKenzie Kirk will likely get a second shot at Fletcher after penalty kick loss in semifinals as Golden Eagles strength of schedule put team back in region playoffs.

Regions, Tues., Feb. 8: Ponte Vedra hosts Lincoln, East Ridge hosts Fleming Island, Buchholz hosts Niceville; Navarre hosts Fletcher



Keystone Heights lost 8-0 in district final to P.K. Yonge to end season at 15-6-3.

**Keystone Heights (15-6-3)**

**District 5-4A**

**Quarterfinal:** Middleburg 3, Clay 0  
**Semifinal:** Ridgeview 2, Middleburg 1; Menendez 2, Matanzas 1  
**Final:** Ridgeview 4, Menendez 0



Clay High defender Kaegen Williamson watches ball in front of Middleburg's Kennedy Young in Broncos semifinal win.

**Regions:** Ridgeview (11-1-2) hosts Arnold (12-5) Tues., Feb. 8 7 p.m.

**District 3-5A**

**Semifinal:** Orange Park 5, Riverside 0  
**Final:** Stanton 6, Orange Park 1

**Orange Park (7-5-3)**

**District 3-6A**

**Quarterfinals:** Ponte Vedra 11, First Coast 0; Nease 2, Atlantic Coast 0; Fleming Island 8, Englewood 0; Fletcher 5, St. Augustine 0  
**Semifinal:** Ponte Vedra 2, Nease 1; Fletcher 4-3 over Fleming Island PKs  
**Final:** Ponte Vedra 2, Fletcher 1



Oakleaf had to face top-ranked nationally, unbeaten Bartram Trail in first round of playoffs. Did not go well, 8-0.

**District 1-7A**

**Quarterfinals:** Oakleaf 1, Flagler Palm Coast 0; Mandarin 2, Sandalwood 1  
**Semifinals:** Bartram Trail 8, Oakleaf 0; Creekside 5, Mandarin 1



Ridgeview soccer; goals from Ortiz and Julianne Reali, beat Menendez 4-0 for district title.

**Final:** Bartram Trail 2, Creekside 0  
Regions: Bartram Trail hosts Winter Park; Boone hosts Creekside

**Panthers**

from page 22

Fortunately, Reali was following the advance on the opposite sideline and was alone outside the far post where she retrieved the ball and buried it undefended at 35:32 for a 2-0 lead.

The game got to 3-0 on a breakaway with Niurka Ortiz and Kayla Ware with Ware punching in from about 12 yards out at 34:26.

The final goal came off a penalt kick from Naycka Ortiz off a handball call, that knocked down by the Menendez goalie, then got punched in by Leah Noble for the fourth goal at 29:57.

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# Lady Raiders rev engine with quick blast to title

By Ray DiMonda  
Correspondent

ORANGE PARK - Off the tipoff and only seconds in to the 5A District 3 championship game, Orange Park High point guard Samantha Hardison drained a 3-pointer from the corner to make a statement; The Orange Park Lady Raiders would not be denied the title tonight.

"I know the work I put in with these girls, and the work we put in that people never see because we are in the gym at zero-dark thirty, nobody understands it," said Raider Head Coach Michael Nesmith. "We are not cocky. We are going to come out and impose our will. We are going to play Lady Raider basketball, what I instilled in them and we are going to take a lot of teams out."

Raiders playmaking guard Eris Lester led her team with 19 points as Orange Park's defense denied the Ridgeview Panthers from scoring until 2:44 left in the first quarter. The Raiders went on to a 37-14 halftime score and completing the competition with a 55-44 victory as the Lady Raiders steamrolled their way into the number one seed in region 1-5A.

Orange Park did not have a walk in the park by any stretch as the Raiders led by 13-5 at the end of the first, with the team having their most issues with the easy layups.

"Our goal was just to win every possession," said Nesmith. "I know this is high school basketball and things happen, but at the end of the day, we are just trying to win and advance."

Where Orange Park made up the difference was after missing the easy layups, they played the rebounds, came down with the ball and hit the net to build their lead.

After the quick hit 3-pointer and knocking off playoff jitters, the 13-5 Orange Park lead was jolted into second and third gear with a pair of 3-pointers and steady, reliable play from Eris Lester continuing to lead the Orange Park charge as the team had a 24 point second quarter as Ridgeview could only add nine points going into the locker room at the half 37-14.

On defense, the Raiders were relentless as they would frequently double the ball and frustrate the Panthers from setting up and organizing. The more aggressive Orange Park went on defense, the



Orange Park coach Michael Nesmith is all about excited after his Lady Raiders won district title over Ridgeview.



Orange Park guard Eris Lester does her best "Matrix" move trying to control ball in Lady Raiders district championship win over Ridgeview.

more Ridgeview threw up bad shots that the Raiders would come down with.

The Panthers came out in the third quarter and poured it on as hard as they could to add 11 more to the total, but Or-

ange Park answered with 11 of their own, punctuated with a 3-poiner at the buzzer to stretch their lead to 48-25 with one

**SEE RAIDERS, 33**

## Girls District Basketball Update

**District 4-2A**  
**Semifinal:** St. Johns Country Day School 66, St. Joseph Academy 23; University Christian 70, Oak Hall 34  
**Final:** University Christian 64, St. Johns Country Day School 50

**Regions:** St. Johns travels to North Florida Education, Thurs., Feb. 10 7 p.m.; University Christian hosts Aucilla Christian.

**District 4-4A**  
**Quarterfinal:** Keystone Heights 48, Santa Fe 23; Eastside 53, Palatka 48  
**Semifinal:** Dunnellon 65, Eastside 54; Keystone Heights 52, North Marion 35  
**Final:** Dunnellon 58, Keystone Heights 46

**Region:** Keystone Heights (19-5) travels to Bishop Kenny (22-4) Thurs., Feb. 10 7 p.m.

**District 3-5A**  
**Quarterfinals:** Clay 49, Middleburg 44  
**Semifinals:** Orange Park 69, Clay 15; Ridgeview 58, Westside 24  
**Final:** Orange Park 55, Ridgeview 44

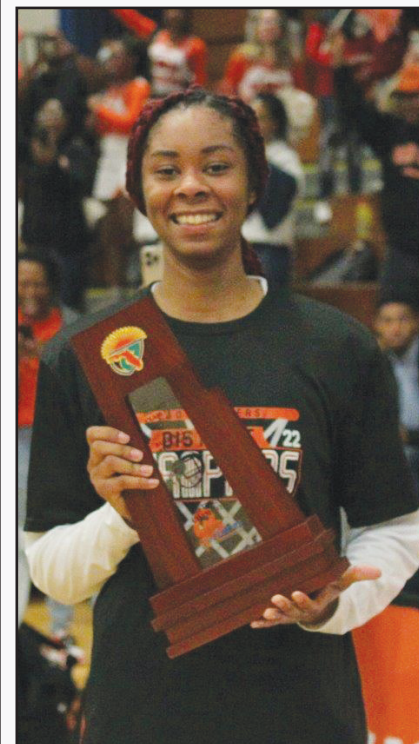
**Regions:** Orange Park hosts Choctawhatchee Thurs., Feb. 10 7 p.m.; Ribault hosts Rickards, Pine Forest hosts Ridgeview, Mainland hosts Arnold.

**District 3-6A**  
**Quarterfinal:** Buchholz 66, Forest 26  
**Semifinal:** Gainesville 65, Buchholz 47; Columbia 80, Fleming Island 56  
**Final:** Gainesville 70, Columbia 62

### Fleming Island (18-8)

**District 1-7A**  
**Quarterfinal:** Bartram Tral 54, Creekside 48  
**Semifinal:** Mandarin 64, Bartram Trail 62; Oakleaf 55, Sandalwood 33  
**Final:** Oakleaf 68, Mandarin 40

**Region:** Oakleaf (11-11) hosts Oak Ridge (13-12) Thurs., Feb. 10 7p.m.; Colonial (21-7) hosts Timber Creek (12-14).



Orange Park senior Nia Brown smiles with district championship trophy.

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# Mouhourtis' 41 second blasts title game

By Mike Zima  
Correspondent

ORANGE PARK - Christopher Mouhourtis scored the tying and go-ahead goals within 41 seconds of each other as host St. Johns Country Day School rallied in the second half for a 3-1 victory over St. Joseph Academy in the District 4-2A championship game on February 1.

"This is a big win because it guarantees we will play at home throughout the regional, and maybe in a state semifinal," said SJCD head coach Brad Schmidt.

The Spartans trailed 1-0 into the sixty-ninth minute before Mouhourtis's heroics, largely because St. Joseph was content to station most of its players at the defensive end of the field in order to limit the SJCD scoring chances. Despite the extra possession time and fired off 10 shots in the first half. The Flashes, counter-attacking when recognizing an opportunity, took only three shots in the first half, but took a lead 13 minutes in when senior forward Ryan



Hunt lined a free kick from 30 yards out that hooked just under the crossbar and into the goal.

Thanks to keeper Andrew Fetyko, the Flashes maintained the lead into the intermission. The sophomore made difficult saves on a header by the Spartans' Dru

Detlefsen and a redirect by Jacob Graston, and snatched a corner kick off the foot of Detlefsen before any Spartan could make a play on the ball.

The Spartans continued to get the better of it in the second half, but when Fetyko

SEE SOCCER, 32



## Spartans ousted in district final

Taliah Scott could not overcome a strong University Christian front line to an 18 point game well below her 32.5 points per game average in the district 4-2A championship game as the Christians won 64-50 for the title. St. Johns (20-5) won a 66-23 semifinal over St. Joseph Academy and will travel to North Florida Education (8-11) for their region 1-2A opener on Thurs., Feb. 10.

# Lemieux Hat Trick gets Spartans 19th title

By Mike Zima  
Correspondent

ORANGE PARK - Hannah Lemieux's hat trick and seventh grader Esther "Essie" Melicharek's first goal as a Spartan highlighted St. Johns Country Day School's 8-0 rout of visiting St. Joseph Academy in the District 4-2A championship game on February 1.

The Spartans dominated from the start, sustaining pressure on St. Joseph keeper Isabel Doshier and scoring three times in the first 10 minutes. Lemieux got the only goal the Spartans would need three minutes in by quick-kicking a cross from Julia Bonaventura past Doshier. Bonaventura showed off her ball-handling skills again at the 34:20 mark, evading two defenders by the end line and delivering a pass to Sydney Schmidt for a left-footed finish from six yards away. Three minutes later, Lauryn Mateo increased the Spartans' lead to 3-0



St. Johns Country Day School girls soccer coach Mike Pickett is lined up for another state title run; his 11th in a row, after his Lady Spartans beat St. Francis 8-0 in their region 1-2A quarterfinal on Tuesday. Leading the scoring for the Spartans was Cece Nowicki with two goals.

by wresting control of a rebound in front of the Flashes' goal and pushing a drive to Doshier's left side.

Pickett substituted liberally. While the Spartans remained in control, the offense tapered off slightly. A 5-0 halftime lead

From that point, SJCD head coach Mike

SEE TITLE, 32



St. Johns Country Day School senior Kamryn Towers is tough outside midfielder for Spartans attack.



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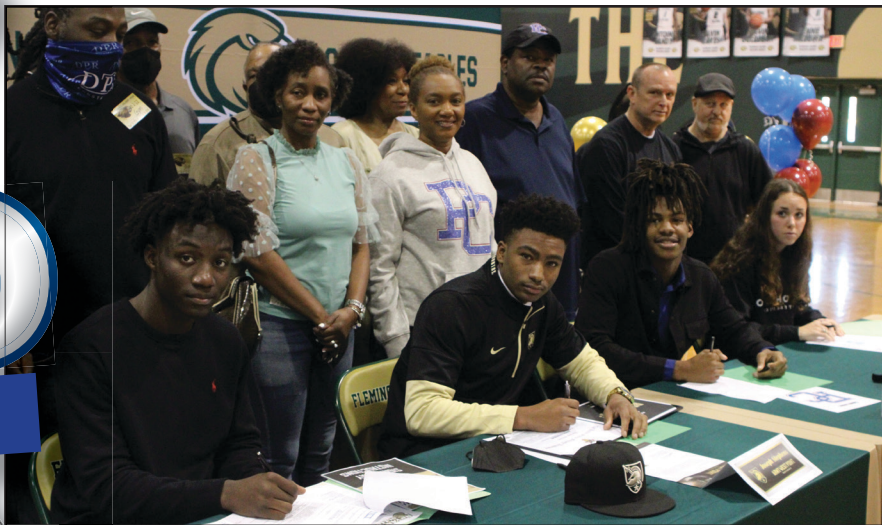
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**Fleming Island signs four**

Right: Fleming Island football signed three athletes; Dedric Walker to Bethany College, Joseph Stephens to Army West Point and Caleb Jones to Presbyterian with cross country runner Ellie Baker going to Oglethorpe in Georgia. Stephens, top right, getting family pic from Grandpa before ceremony at Fleming Island High.



**Middleburg**

Middleburg High had a long table of signees with, from left, Kennedy Young going cross country to Lagrange College; Trent White baseball going Finlandia University; softball Kaitlyn Stacy going Union College; softball Mallory Forrester going Flagler College and football Tanner Peery going Concord College. Center is Kierstyn Stacy, right is Trent White with smiling mom.



**Five from Orange Park Raiders sign**

Orange Park signed away five athletes; from left, Laquan Jones football to Bethany College in Kansas; Maggie Colgan softball to Thomas University; Maliek Carter football to Lake Erie College and, top right, Samantha Hardison basketball to Spring Hill College. Not pictured individually is cheerleader Madison Claro to North Greenville University.





**St Johns Country Day School signs three**

St. Johns Country Day School had three athletic scholarship signees on Wed., Feb. 2 with basketball forward Jaidy Mejia Andrade signing to NAIA-College of Coastal Georgia in Brunswick, GA, and two soccer athletes; Hannah Lemieux, center, heading to NCAA Div. I-Holy Cross College in Worcester, MA, and teammate Kamryn Towers heading to NCAA Div. I-Coast Carolina University in South Carolina.



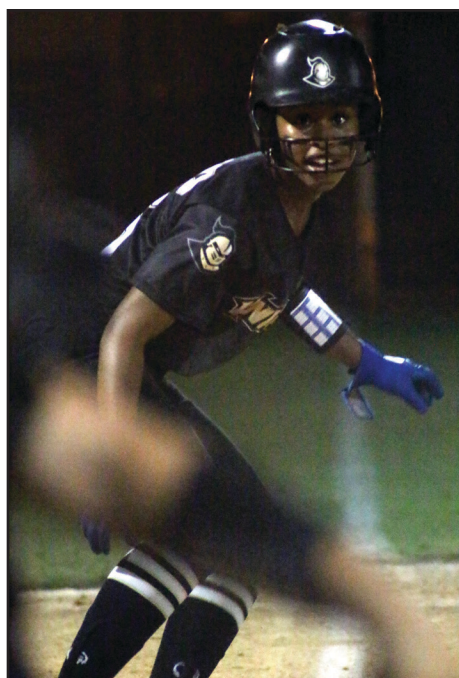
**Clay High**

Clay High wrestler Madisyn Blackburn is with family and friends after signing to continue at Brewton Parker College in Georgia. Blackburn also competed on cross country for Blue Devils.



**Oakleaf High**

Oakleaf High swimmer Kylie Loving signed to continue her swimming at the University of North Florida with Knights softball ace Khloe Banks, right, heading to Purdue University. Below, Oakleaf volleyball sends Madison Fagan to St. Catherine University with Adrionna Coleman signing for track at Southern Wesleyan University, Micah Coleman going football at MIT and Honrae Murray going football at Presbyterian.



**Ridgeview**

Ridgeview High signed away four athletes on National Signing Day; with top left, James Snipes cross country going to Flagler College; top right, swimmer Gage Quigley going U of Tennessee Southern; volleyball Elaina Reynolds going Gulf Coast State and baseball Austin Arrocha going MidAmerican Nazarene University.



# Knights

from page 21

from a scramble for a loose ball.

"I fell straight back on my lower back on Wednesday in our final game and hurt my back," said Jones. "I knew my shot would be a bit off, but I think I adjusted my shot so the pain would not be so high. A game like this makes you want to play no matter what."

Cole's premonition that his super tough schedule would pay dividends against a season of topsy-turvy play that saw the Knights get handily defeated in the early part of his encore Final Four season debut.

"To see how this team has responded to



Oakleaf guard Kamiya Jones took hard shot to jaw, but still played on for district title win.

the tough schedule, the two weeks of season shutdown from illnesses and the return to our style of winning tonight is very emotional," said Cole. "We lost a tough, tough game to Orange Park in just our third game back from two weeks of absolutely no gym time and that was our first real test of resiliency; our third game in four days."

In their explosive second quarter, Oakleaf countered the inside play of Mandarin's power senior duo of Samantha Freeland and Ellie Jackson, both six footers-plus in the paint, with a full throttle attack that led to a barrage of three pointers that started with Oakleaf down 16-11 and Jones nailing her first three pointer at 4:22 to half time.

Jones answered with a second three just 12 seconds later to put Oakleaf up 17-16.

A James rebound to Turner got a jitterbugged layup to 19-16 with James, on the next possession hustling down from her defensive rebound to nail a three from the corner to 22-16 at 3:15 to half.

An in and out three by Turner with a second effort rebound to layup got to 24-16 at 2:13 turned to 25-16 with Turner's followup foul shot.

A pickpocket steal from James to layup put Oakleaf up 27-16.

At 1:46, Trista Brown put up her three point shot in the flurry to 30-16.

With Ja'Nease Bender slicing in for a layup to 32-16, Cole looked like he was wanting to slow things down, but his Oakleaf girls did not get the memo.

"I wanted to keep the pressure on but



Oakleaf High's Ja'Nease Bender holds up district title trophy of Lady Knights after dominating win over Mandarin.

we were kind of winging it even though everything was falling," said Cole. "It is a very fine line between a big scoring surge knowing that Mandarin is not going to back down. I kind of liked the girls playing fast, but I wanted to go in the half with the momentum on our side. If they surged in return, that would give them some energy to start the second half."

A sixth team foul from Brown on a reach-in, gave Mandarin one final possession, but James blocked a shot at seven seconds and Mandarin failed to score to end the half.

"That blocked shot was big," said Cole.

Out of the lockers, both teams exchanged threes; Jones with hers, to 38-19. "They looked a bit winded near the end of the half and my coach Ron Jefferson keeps these girls in great run shape and I told them we needed to finish them off right now."

Near the end of the third period, Jones nailed a three to 51-32 with steals converted to layups keeping Mustang 16-20 points away.

James hit one more three at 25 seconds to 54-32 with James getting a steal to Jones for a jumper to 56-32 to end the third period.



Slashing guard Kaylah Turner is focal point of Knights attack and energy for Final Four return.



Oakleaf bench erupts in final quarter action in district championship win over Mandarin.



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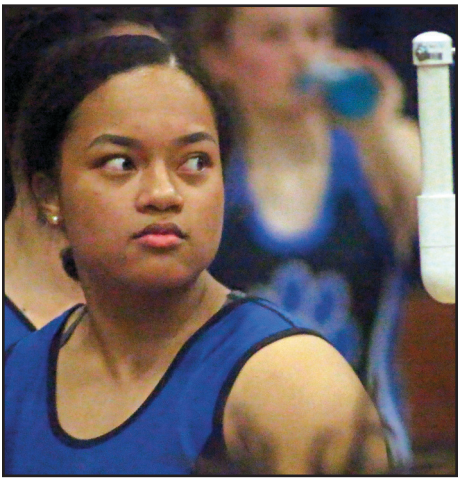
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**Traditional (Bench Press/Clean and Jerk) Class 3A**

119 Lbs.  
 No. 1 OHS Tamira Briley, 365 total; No. 2 at 315  
 129 Lbs.  
 No. 14 OHS Madison Linscomb, 275 Total, Top total 355  
 169 Lbs.  
 No. 4 OHS Ivy Gunn, 355 Total, Top Total 380  
 183 Lbs.  
 No. 16 OHS Amari Grant, 285 Total, Top Total 345  
 199 Lbs. No. 15 OHS Caylin Volpe, 280 Total, Top Total 450

**Class 2A**

101 Lbs.  
 No. 13 RHS Ania Haber, 195 Total; MHS KaylInn Gaither 190 Total. Top Total 295  
 110 Lbs.  
 No. 11 CHS Gabby Etheridge 225 Total; RHS Jolie Dresner 220 Total; Top Total 280  
 119 Lbs.  
 No. 7 CHS Riley Ledford 270 Total; Top Total 320  
 129 Lbs.  
 No. 2 CHS Emma Heck 355 Total; Top Total 360  
 139 Lbs.  
 No. 9 RHS Tyra Sulph Total 295; No. 12 MHS Kendall Bryan Total 290; Top Total 345  
 154 Lbs.  
 No. 1 CHS Janiyah Stevens, Total 370; No. 15 MHS Taylor Mills 285 Total  
 169 Lbs.  
 No. 6 CHS Gianna Torres 320 Total; No. 12 MHS Allison Cox 300 Total; Top Total 360  
 183 Lbs.  
 No. 2 CHS Anna Harbison 365 Total; No. 6 RHS Ava Haber 345 Total; No. 11 RHS London Francis 290 Total; No. 14 CHS Ruthchie Gedeon 270 Total; Top Total 375  
 199 Lbs.  
 No. 4 MHS Katlyn Griffin 365 Total; No. 10 CHS Ansley Lyda 315 Total; No. 14 MHS Bryanna Walker 305 Total; Top Total 420  
 Unlimited  
 No. 2 CHS Kyleigh LaFary 400 Total; No. 9 CHS Kenya Tinajero 325 Total; Top Total 405

**Class 1A**

129 Lbs. No. 6 SJCDs Evelyn Hanson 275 Total; No. 13 SJCDs Ad-

dison Frisbee 255 Total; Top Total 325  
 139 Lbs.  
 No. 15 KHHS Grace Wagener 255 Total; Top Total 395  
 183 Lbs.  
 No. 5 KHHS Kaylee Wright 305 Total; Top Total 430

**Olympic Snatch Qualifiers**

Class 3A  
 119 Lbs.  
 No. 2 OHS Tamira Briley 125 Total; Top Total 130  
 183 Lbs.  
 No. 11 OHS Amari Grant 100 Total; Top Total 145

Class 2A  
 101 Lbs.  
 No. 11 MHS Kaylynn Gaither 65 Total; No. 15 Jada Ricketts 65 Total; Top Total 100  
 110 Lbs.  
 No. 3 CHS Gabby Etheridge 90 Total; No. 13 RHS Brianna Adams 75 Total; Top Total 110  
 119 Lbs.  
 No. 2 RHS Adriana Dimeo 110 Total; No. 7 CHS Riley Ledford 100 Total; Top Total 115  
 129 Lbs.  
 No. 1 CHS Emma Heck 150 Total; No. 14 CHS Ansley Weseman 95 Total; Top Total 150  
 139 Lbs.  
 No. 10 RHS Tyra Sulph 105 Total; Top total 140  
 154 Lbs.  
 No. 3 CHS Janiyah Stevens 135 Total; Top Total 150  
 169 Lbs.  
 No. 4 CHS Gianna Torres 115 Total; No. 6 MHS Allison Cox 100 Total; Top Total 120  
 183 Lbs.  
 No. 2 CHS Anna Harbison 135 Total; No. 12 CHS Ruthchie Gedeon 100 Total; Top Total 150  
 199 Lbs.  
 No. 3 MHS Katlyn Griffin 145 Total; No. 5 CHS Ansley Lyda 125 Total; Top Total 170

Unlimited  
 No. 2 CHS Kyleigh LaFary 150 Total; No. 4 CHS Kenya Tinajero 125 Total; Top Total 155

**Class 1A**

129 Lbs.  
 No. 1 SJCDs Addison Frisbee 115 Total; No. 4 SJCDs Evelyn Han-  
 sen 105 Total; Top Total 115

ADAPT

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# Champs

from page 21

High first year coach Coll Robertson, who competed at the Clay Rotary as a Ridgeview Panther in his days. "Having Riley get his 100th match and, with his senior leadership in the room, the program improved greatly this year to get this trophy."

Reape did mention that county rival Fleming Island was not on the team roster, but that their presence was in the Clay gym during the finals rounds.

"They were here and they are going to be tough on Thursday, but us and them are probably the top two teams out of north Florida and that's what makes the rivalry big," said Reape. "I think they were going to Lake Gibson to wrestle, but stayed to train here."

Fleming Island coach P.J. Cobbert, a four-time state champion for Reape in his days as a Clay High Blue Devil, will bring his troops to the Clay gym on Thursday after a week of home preparation

"We got banged up a bit at the Flagler Rotary two weeks ago and were supposed to go to Lake Gibson (defending Class 2A champion), but decided we've seen them already and we would be better off doing our own training at home to prepare for the Clay match and the districts," said Cobbert, who is now in Class 2A after a decade of Class 3A dominance as north Florida's only school capable of chasing seven-time 3A champion South Dade. "We train just as hard in our warehouse as any match in a meet and we get to stop and improve. I don't look at wins and losses pretty much, but whether we are improving."

Last year, Clay took a spine-tingling win in the annual clash with some rough antics creating some penalty points in the 32-31 Clay win.

In one of the more historic matches in the Clay gym, a seventh criteria tiebreaker had to be utilized to declare a winner.

"It will always be a tough match," said Cobbert, who had kept the Tussle of Muscle title in his "W" column four of the last five years.

At the Clay Rotary, from as far south as Key West and as far west as South Walton High in the Panhandle, Reape's team faced off for top three finishes in eight weight divisions with seniors Dominic Martin at 182 and Tyre, at 220, both winning tough championship matches with late theatrics giving the Clay faithful about as much stress as Thursday will bring.

"Our goal is to get as many guys to the podium in meets of this caliber and like the state meet," said Reape. "We got two in Garrett and Dominic with a bunch of guys in the top five, but we want to get more podiums. We have a month to prepare for the state run."

Tyre, top ranked in Class 1A at 38-2, with a rugged overtime 11-9 win over Raines' Jamari Watson, 14-1 and ranked number three in Class 1A, battled to a bloody lip for Tyre and a Wilson stop for a shoulder tweak, foreshadowed a possible second meeting in March with their battle.

"That was definitely a pre-state state



Clay Rotary wrestling action, left to right, Clay High wrestler turned medals' girl Jaysie Garcia awaits next podium approach; 182 Clay wrestler Dominick Martin won his first Clay Rotary title in overtime; Ethan Larson latches on the Matanzas Jordan Mills in 170 semifinal.



Middleburg's Riley Girgis won his Clay Rotary title and earned 100th career win along the way, Middleburg coaches Coll Roberts, in black, and Robert Duisenberre put a third place trophy in their locker room and Clay High's Luke Boree readies for his next match.



Luca Finnaca goes cross face in semifinal match; Oakleaf got a third from senior Marcus McGee and Orange Park's Trevion Sermons awaits pin slap.



Middleburg High's Grady Woodard shows off his fourth place medal, Middleburg coach Coll Robertson got big kudos for third place finish; best ever, for Broncos in his first year as head coach; Middleburg's Cowboy, left, Austin Cruce had sister, Cheyenne, also a Bronco wrestler, at his side for semifinals.

championship caliber match," said Tyre. "I have only seen film on him, but he is strong as all."

Ironically, Tyre won the match with a Wilson stop.

"I was very aware of his double leg takedown blast," said Tyre. "He's so fast and strong and I kept him away from my

legs. At the end, I think I surprised him by using that to score the final two points."

For Martin, ranked fourth in 1A, who survived a gastro-problem in his semifinal win over Oakleaf's Onjel Caraballo complete with a vomit session after the match, recovered in less than 90 minutes to defeat 3A-Buchholz Kason Arnold (12th

at 170), also in overtime, 3-1, with both scoring just escapes to end regulation time tied at 1-1.

For Oakleaf, top placer was Marcus McGee at 132 with a third place finish. Orange Park's Trevion Sermons, at 160, finished third with a win over Oakleaf's Roman Polinsky.



## OPHS grad Pacheco taking deep, deep dives

By Randy Lefko  
Sports Editor

ORANGE PARK - While in the U.S. Air Force via a random visit, Orange Park High grad Ruben Pacheco wound up, within his 15 years of military service, in Hawaii and underwater a lot in the pristine waters of the Pacific Ocean.

"Even as a kid, I was always hanging around the pool and jumping in to hold my breath sitting at the bottom of the pool," said Pacheco, 37, a 2002 Orange Park High School graduate and father to Isabella, 6. "I got interested in scuba diving when I was 15, then the Air Force, then the free diving."

Pacheco, now a professional free diver instructor with his InnerLimitsFreediving business, one who swims without available oxygen to depths in bodies of water, is set to challenge his own body with a trip Monday to the Caribbean to go even further underwater than he has ever done. Pacheco will attempt a near 200 foot descent into the Caribbean Sea without, repeat WITHOUT, oxygen tanks. One recognized world record is an astounding 702 feet by a guy named Herbert Nitsch, considered the "Deepest Man on Earth."

"My joining the Air Force was by accident as I went to the recruiting office and the Navy guys was not there," said Pacheco. "The Air Force guy was and that's what happened."



In the Air Force for 15 years as an Aircraft structural maintainer, Pacheco was introduced to scuba diving again in Hawaii where he was stationed for four years and found free diving.

"I just took the tanks off and would just jump back in the water with the flippers and dive deep, touching the coral reef and chasing fish," said Pacheco. "I found some open water challenges; some pool challenges with back and forth underwater swims and it was in Mexico in 2019 that I first competed."

Pacheco's competitive introduction to the sport of free diving was an eye-opening, very intimidating experience that has



STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO; ABOVE PHOTO COURTESY RUBEN PACHECO

Orange Park High grad Ruben Pacheco, top left, will be tackling some deep depths in his pursuit of going way underwater in his profession as a free diver. Above: Pacheco follows a tunnel of light downward in recent dive. Left: Pacheco prepares his wetsuit and flippers for pool training at Barco Newton YMCA in Fleming Island.

since fueled his dedication to the sport.

"My best dive is 170 feet with the world's current best at 400-plus feet," said Pacheco. "That's just three minutes underwater."

Pacheco has gradually learned the physiology of oxygen control and also mind and body relaxation under stress.

"Once you start diving, relaxation is the primary way to conserve your very limited amount of oxygen," said Pacheco. "We wear weights either around our neck or waist and try to glide as smoothly as possible down. The water body itself will kind of suck you down at a certain point and that's where the oxygen conservation is critical. It's called the sink or glide phase."

In the hood of his wetsuit, Pacheco has a depth meter that beeps every 20 meters.

"Once I hit that 20 meters below the surface is when I can feel the water just absorb me downward," said Pacheco. "A couple more kicks for speed and you glide to the bottom."

Pacheco must calculate his depth precisely concerning his return trip as, at the top, competitors are required to finish a 15 second awareness test to deem them safely back from the attempt.

"You register a dive depth prior to the attempt based on your technique, preparation and streamline being on point," said Pacheco. "LMC, Loss of Motor Control, is what can happen if you extend too far past your training. Not quite the Bends, for Scuba, but similar, only because you don't have enough oxygen in you to be able to tell the body what to do. You tremble, look out of focus."

Stationed in Guam after Hawaii, Pacheco found the worldwide following of other

free divers.

"In Guam is where it started to kick in that this was a thing," said Pacheco, admitting he was just a regular student while at Orange Park High; not a swimmer. "I was training everyday in Guam. Me and a friend would dive and feed nurse sharks for the tourist submarines that traveled the waters."

Since 2018, when he left the Air Force, Pacheco has lived in Thailand and started his InnerLimitsFreediving teaching operation.

"Safety is the primary purpose of the classes and training to go a little further each time," said Pacheco. "I have found that, once people wrap their mind around the mental relaxation that is required in free diving, the sport opens up their mind."

For Pacheco, the Holy Grails of free diving are in Doha, Qatar, and a place called Dean's Blue Hole in Clarence Town on Long Island in the Bahamas. Dean's Blue Hole is rated the second deepest "blue hole" beyond Dragon Hole in the South China Sea with a depth of 202 meters (663 feet).

Dean's Blue Hole is the venue for Vertical Blue, an annual freediving international competition since 2008.

Dragon Hole, known as the "eye of the south China Sea" descends 300.89 meters (987.2 feet). "Doha is a camp venue where divers connect and learn," said Pacheco. "The waters there is filled with fish and wildlife and the water is pristine with great lighting. I will eventually meet friends in March at Dean's Hole, but I'm heading to Bonaire on Monday (February 7) to teach."

Bonaire Tropical Divers Resort is in Kralendijk, the capital of Bonaire, a Dutch island in the Caribbean Sea.



St. Johns Country Day School outside midfielder Esther Melicharek, just a seventh grader, is one of coach Mike Pickett's young talents able to get serious game time as the Lady Spartans head to 11th straight state title.



St. Johns Country Day School forward Ava Johnson is junior goal scorer for Lady Spartans with experience in numerous state title runs under coach Mike Pickett.

## Title

from page 25

grew to six in the fifty-ninth minute when Lemieux converted a rebound in traffic off of a corner kick. The senior drove home a cross from Kamryn Towers to end the game

under the mercy rule with 11:51 showing on the clock.

"Lemieux does everything well," said Pickett after the game. "She is two-footed, she has been in our system since seventh grade, and she is the poster child for a kid who has spent time in our program."

All 25 players on the SJCD roster saw

action, and five of them scored. Along with fellow middle schooler Schmidt, seventh grader Esther Melicharek provided a glimpse of the Spartans' future. Melicharek energized the home crowd with two steals from her left wing position, and scored her first varsity goal by descending on a rebound of a shot by Schmidt that ricocheted

off the left post and depositing the ball into the net. Pickett was impressed.

"Essie has vision well beyond her age," he said. "She is very technical and is a [game] film junkie. She is going to be the best player in the area in three years."

Mateo scored two goals and junior Av



Clay High will play in their first region playoff game in 50 years when the Blue Devils travel to Panama City Arnold as the eighth seed in region 1-5A. Clay won tough 1-0 game against Middleburg in district tournament, then lost a 1-0 semifinal to Matanzas. The Blue Devils, now 7-5-3, had a strength of schedule strong enough to earn a region berth.



Oakleaf High won back-to-back district playoff games; a 7-6 overtime semifinal over Creekside with Braden Hill, in picture, landing a late goal that ended regulation time at 1-1. In the district 1-7A final, Oakleaf (15-1) beat Bartram Trail 3-0 in the final and will host Deland (12-4-1) on Wed., Feb. 9 in the region 1-7A quarterfinal.

## Soccer

from page 25

punched out a curling laser from Corban Berrang with only 13:30 to play, it appeared as if the Flashes might travel back to St. Augustine with the championship trophy.

However, Schmidt did two things at the second half water break. First, he moved Detlefsen, one of only five seniors on the Spartans 20-man roster, from center back to central midfielder to kickstart the offense.

"Detlefsen has a different intensity about him," explained Schmidt. "When he goes forward, the ball goes quicker. And the forwards go quicker because they know he will get the ball to them. It is a little riskier for us in the back, but sometimes you gotta go for the win."

The second thing was to give his charges an old-fashioned chewing out.

"We personally challenged a few players at the water break," said Schmidt. "When you have younger players, they do not always have the focus you need in a big game like this."

With just under 12 minutes remaining, Graston charged hard into the box from the right side and centered the ball. St. Joseph fullback David Curtis tried to clear it, but did not get a clean strike on the ball, which dribbled toward the top of the box. Mouhourtis met it with a full head of steam and blasted a shot to the right of a diving Fetyko.

Graston and Berrang disrupted the ensuing Flashes possession and the ball squirted out to Mouhourtis, who raced down the middle of the field with it. Approaching the box, Mouhourtis passed to freshman Shane Reaves on the right wing.

Reaves quickly passed it back to Mouhourtis, who drilled a low ball to the left side of the goal that Fetyko, who had to honor a potential shot from Reaves, had no chance of reaching.

"It feels great," Mouhourtis said of scoring the tying and winning goals. "Coming from behind will boost our confidence throughout the playoffs."

Schmidt was pleased with his junior striker.

"He responded well to being challenged," Schmidt said.

A Detlefsen corner kick led to the Spartans' final goal. His corner with five minutes remaining was controlled by Graston, who leveled a shot right at Fetyko.

The shot bounced off Fetyko's midsection into the belly of Curtis, who instinctively caught it in his hands.

The hand ball in the box resulted in a penalty kick for Detlefsen, who right-foot-

ed a roller to the left corner of the goal. Fetyko had dove in the other direction, giving the Spartans a two-goal advantage.

St. Joseph did not mount any serious threats in the final five minutes.

Despite trailing for 58 minutes, Schmidt never thought that the Spartans, who finished with a 22-6 shot advantage and a 7-1 edge in corner kicks, would lose.

"The way the game was going, I always thought we were going to win it," he said. "If it had gone down to 10 minutes, I would have been nervous."

SJCD improved to 8-1-1. The Spartans, ranked seventh in Florida's Class 2A, will host a Class 2A regional quarterfinal on February 9 at 7:00 p.m.

St. Joseph falls to 8-5-2, and will hope to make the regional playoffs based on their state ranking, which stood at 13 entering the contest.



# Raiders

from page 24

quarter to play.

“I think if our girls would have come out more aggressive in the first half, we would have been in a closer game than we were,” said Panther Head Coach Gussie Solomon.

In the fourth quarter, with 3:42 to play, Nesmith went deep on the bench to let all of the team enjoy the win. During the last three-minute stanza, the Raiders added only three points to their lead, while Ridgeview did all they could, but only could add 12 more for the final 55-44.

“Our star center Nia (Blocton), her shot was off tonight,” said Solomon. “I think if her shot would have been on, that would have been a totally different outcome.”

Even with what her coach called an off night, Nia Blocton led the Ridgeview offensive charge, but the rest of the team just could not find an answer to the smothering Orange Park defense that was in the Panthers face all evening.

“The plan was in the second half, to drive more, and it began to work for us,” said Solomon. “Unfortunately, a little bit too late.”

Nesmith commented on his pre-season objective as state to Athletic Director Destiny Brightman.

“When I got the job here, I told our Principle and our Athletic Director my goal was to win a District Championship here,” said Nesmith. “It’s so sweet to win it here on this court with all the work I put in with these girls.”

On Thursday evening, Orange Park will face off against No. 8 seed Choctawhatchee as Ridgeview will take on No.2 seed Pine Forest/Pensacola.

# PUZZLE FUN

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**CRYPTO FUN**  
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 Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Solve the code to discover words related to the library.  
Each number corresponds to a letter.  
(Hint: 17 = O)

**A. 21 18 21 8 18 15**  
*Clue: Part of a group or club*

**B. 8 17 17 19 26**  
*Clue: Bound volumes*

**C. 3 22 26 9 18 26**  
*Clue: Passages between rows*

**D. 8 17 15 15 17 25**  
*Clue: Temporarily use*

Answers: A. member B. books C. aisles D. borrow

## WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to the library.

**S R H C R A E E**

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Answer: Research

## Guess Who?

I am a singer born California on February 17, 1972. I wrote my first song when I was five years old, and met my first bandmate in school. My anti-war album won a Grammy and six other music awards.

Answer: Billie Joe Armstrong

S	T	E	T		U	S	A	B	L	E				
T	I	M	E		N	O	N	P	A	R	E	I	L	
A	R	E	S		A	I		S	A	B	L	E		
P	A	R	T	I	C	U	L	A	T	E	S	L	A	
E	D	G	I	N	G	I	R	I	S	T	I	C		
S	E	E	S		K	N	A	P		T	A	C	H	
				S	C	A	G	S		E	E	R	I	E
B	A	L	L	A	D		B	L	A	S	T	S		
I	L	E	A	C		S	P	A	A	K				
D	A	F	T		T	A	O	S			T	O	M	S
D	D	T		P	A	R	S		C	H	A	P	E	L
E	D		H	A	B	I	T	A	B	I	L	I	T	Y
R	I	M	E	R		M	I			B	A	R	E	
S	N	O	R	K	E	L	E	D		O	T	O	S	
				S	A	L	I	N	E		T	E	S	T

7	9	2	6	1	8	5	3	4
4	6	1	5	9	3	2	7	8
5	3	8	2	4	7	6	1	9
1	5	7	8	3	4	9	6	2
2	4	6	7	5	9	1	8	3
9	8	3	1	2	6	7	4	5
3	2	5	4	7	1	8	9	6
6	1	9	3	8	2	4	5	7
8	7	4	9	6	5	3	2	1

# LIBRARY LEARNING WORD SEARCH

J	M	K	A	Z	L	N	T	V	J	W	L	S	N	Y	I	Y	U	M	Z
Y	K	D	J	F	O	L	I	O	D	H	L	O	R	C	H	Y	U	K	C
T	T	T	U	V	H	I	N	H	I	C	I	A	C	P	N	G	C	Z	I
O	D	P	H	X	R	M	N	L	W	T	N	F	A	R	U	O	A	A	R
J	N	V	B	O	B	U	J	K	A	O	S	R	M	Z	S	Z	L	N	C
O	A	X	A	C	N	E	C	T	I	T	G	X	E	D	N	I	L	L	U
U	R	I	R	Z	H	D	O	T	E	O	M	G	N	U	B	U	N	R	L
R	C	Z	C	S	G	N	C	S	I	C	N	A	W	G	B	E	U	I	A
N	H	W	O	J	N	I	A	L	V	I	I	S	M	K	Z	E	M	Y	T
A	I	G	D	A	D	B	B	U	D	R	R	O	F	W	N	M	B	C	I
L	V	M	E	C	A	I	P	N	A	V	D	I	T	X	E	T	E	I	O
B	E	E	A	T	B	P	I	R	G	C	A	N	A	M	L	A	R	S	N
R	S	H	A	G	N	B	B	U	F	Y	W	S	R	H	H	O	L	D	I
O	H	D	D	B	A	I	L	A	C	I	T	E	B	A	H	P	L	A	N
W	P	Y	O	N	L	Z	B	V	B	R	L	Y	Y	X	S	A	N	E	O
S	O	T	J	S	F	O	I	Z	O	W	T	J	J	G	Z	B	N	A	I
E	C	T	K	D	R	E	C	N	E	R	E	F	E	R	M	G	U	U	T
R	F	T	E	R	Z	R	F	J	E	Z	T	C	D	J	V	P	V	B	I
W	B	O	O	N	P	H	G	V	T	S	S	K	O	O	B	X	Z	H	D
N	W	W	D	Z	H	J	R	Y	P	Y	C	I	T	A	T	I	O	N	E

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

## WORDS

- ALMANAC
- ALPHABETICAL
- ANNOTATION
- ARCHIVES
- BARCODE
- BIBLIOGRAPHY
- BINDING
- BOOKS
- BORROW
- BROWSER
- CALL NUMBER
- CIRCULATION
- CITATION
- DATABASE
- DICTIONARY
- EDITION
- FOLIO
- HOLD
- INDEX
- JOURNAL
- LIBRARIAN
- MAGAZINES
- REFERENCE
- TEXT

# Clay COUNTY CLASSIFIED

Serving Keystone Heights, Orange Park, Fleming Island,  
Green Cove Springs, Penney Farms & Middleburg



## Classified Rates

All Line Ads are 4 Lines, 20 to 25 Characters Per Line.  
\*Additional Lines May Be Purchased.  
\*All Rates Are NET.

### Private Party Line Rates:

\$15.25 1 wk, \$26 2 wks,  
\$34.75 3 wks, \$42 4 wks

(Couches, T.V's, Beds,  
Household Items, Etc.

### Commercial Line Rates:

\$24 1 wk, \$42 2 wks,  
\$60 3 wks, \$76 4 wks  
(Cars, Renting or Selling Real Estate or Advertise Your Business or Service)

### Employment Spotlight:

(2" Minimum)  
1 Week: \$27 Per Inch

Garage Sale  
1 Week: \$22

### Business & Svc. Directory:

1.5" x 2" \$80/4 Weeks  
1.5" x 3" \$160/4 Weeks

RATE-GUIDE-FOR:  
**CLAY LEADER TODAY** claytodayonline.com

**CLASSIFIED DEADLINE**  
Monday  
12:00 p.m.

**TO REACH OUR OFFICE CALL:**  
**579-2154**

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All ads are non-refundable. Please check your ad copy the first week of publication. We will only apply credit for the first run and credits are subject to approval by the Publisher. If ad is cancelled prior to the first insertion, cancellation must be made by the classified deadline of Monday by 12p.m. Ads must comply with Federal, State or local laws. We are not responsible for ad content. Ads are subject to approval by the publisher.

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Both Clay Today & Clay County Leader & online now!

## AUTOMOTIVE NETWORK

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GENERAC Standby Generators provide backup power during power outages, so your home & family stay safe & comfortable. Prepare now. Free 7-yr extended warranty \$695 value! Request a free quote today! Call for terms & conditions. 1-844-334-8353

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Wants to purchase minerals and other oil and gas interests. Send details to P.O. Box 13557 Denver, CO 80201

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Texas Tour	West Coast Tour	Field of Dreams Tour
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Home games for the Houston Astros and Texas Rangers. Tour begins in Dallas/Ft. Worth and ends in Houston	Home games for Arizona, San Diego, Los Angeles (Dodgers & Angels), San Francisco, Oakland and Seattle. Tour begins in Phoenix and ends in Seattle	Home games for Chicago (Cubs/White Sox), Brewers and Twins. Also a visit to the Field of Dreams movie site. Tour begin/ends in Minnesota

Each starting/ending location is near a hotel with free shuttle to/from major airport  
Tours include deluxe motor coach transportation, addl. sightseeing opportunities and quality game tickets/hotels

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GENERAC Standby Generators provide backup power during power outages, so your home & family stay safe & comfortable. Prepare now. Free 7-yr extended warranty \$695 value! Request a free quote today! Call for terms & conditions. 1-844-334-8353

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**Legal Services**

If you or a loved one worked around Roundup Weed Killer, (glyphosate),

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2002 Dodge Caravan Sport 107,000 miles \$2500.00 OBO 904-891-0899

**Burial Plots for Sale**

Two burial plots in "Apostles Garden," Jacksonville Memory Gardens Cemetery-section 225A, lots #3 & #4. \$4500 OBO. Kim, 772-532-5295

**NEW BUSINESS STARTING A NEW BUSINESS?**

Have you registered your name with the state and need to run a fictitious name advertisement?

It is a very easy process. Email Christie at christie@opcfla.com or call 904-579-2153 to request the necessary form. It will run in our legal section for one week for \$35. Affidavit will be mailed to you.



**SENIOR ACCOUNTANT**

Osteen Media Group in Jacksonville, Florida, is seeking a Senior Accountant to work out of our Fleming Island office.

**Pay range:** \$50,000 to \$65,000 based on experience  
Osteen Media Group owns and operates three established weekly newspapers, web sites and their numerous associated publications and promotions (monthly, quarterly and annual magazines, special

**JOB OPPORTUNITY IN FLEMING ISLAND**

sections, contests, events, etc) in Fleming Island, Fla.; Ponte Vedra, Fla., and Las Cruces, New Mexico.

This position is based in the Jacksonville area, with occasional travel to New Mexico. We are a small, privately owned media company that specializes in producing trusted, reliable, award-winning community journalism and advertising/marketing solutions for our wide range of readers and advertisers, both in print and online.

We are a team-oriented company (35 employees) with highly experienced publishers and experienced, versatile personnel at each of our three locations.

**EXPERIENCE REQUIRED**

- BA in Finance, Accounting or equivalent
- 3 or more years of progressive accounting experience
- Supervisory experience a plus
- Advanced Quickbooks Online experience
- CRM media sales system experience a plus
- Excellent interpersonal skills

- Report directly to ownership team on a daily basis
- Work with experienced, industry specific
- CPA firm to develop, implement and maintain financial controls and guidelines.
- Ability to solve problems, analyze data, produce reports and implement change
- Communicate and explain accounting, cost control and evolving financial guidance to the management team.
- Perform complex accounting duties, including month-end close, G/L maintenance, variance analysis, journal entries, payroll and account reconciliations.
- Strong Excel skills
- Ability to work independently, prioritize, organize, and coordinate assignments and responsibilities of self and staff

The position is office-based in Fleming Island, but allows for flexible hybrid work solutions after successful 6 months.

Employment with Osteen Media Group is at-will and nothing in this Job Description should be interpreted or construed to alter the at-will employment relationship.

This Job Description includes the essential job functions required to perform the job described above, as well as additional duties and responsibilities. This Job Description is not an exhaustive list of all functions that the employee performing this job may be required to perform. The Company reserves the right to revise the Job Description at any time, and to require the employee to perform functions in addition to those listed above.

Background check and references required.

**BENEFITS**

401K match after 1 year  
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RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 18, PAGE 47, OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS OF CLAY COUNTY, FLORIDA.

has been filed against you and you are required to serve a copy of your written defenses, if any, to it on eXL Legal, PLLC, Plaintiff's attorney, whose address is 12425 28th Street North, Suite 200, St. Petersburg, FL 33716, within thirty (30) days after the first publication of this Notice of Action, and file the original with the Clerk of this Court at 825 North Orange Avenue, P.O. Box 698, Green Cove Springs, FL 32043-0698, either before service on Plaintiff's attorney or immediately thereafter; otherwise, a default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint petition.

WITNESS my hand and seal of the Court this 1ST day of February, 2022. Tara S. Green Clerk of the Circuit Court By: Jaimie Pippin Deputy Clerk

If you are an individual with a disability who needs an accommodation in order to participate in a court proceeding or other court service, program or activity, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR CLAY COUNTY, FLORIDA

Division: Probate File No. 2021-CP-000792 IN RE: ROBERT D. MAY a/k/a BOB MAY, a/k/a ROBERT DOUGLAS MAY Deceased.

The administration of the estate of Robert D. May, a/k/a Bob May, a/k/a Robert Douglas May, deceased, whose date of death was August 17, 2021, is pending in the Circuit Court for Clay County, Florida, Probate Division, the address of which is Clerk of the Court, 825 N. Orange Ave, Green Cove Springs, FL 32043. The names and addresses of the Personal Representatives and the Personal Representatives attorney are set forth below.

TICE. ALL CLAIMS NOT FILED WITHIN THE TIME PERIODS SET FORTH IN FLORIDA STATUTES SECTION 733.702 WILL BE FOREVER BARRED. NOTWITHSTANDING THE TIME PERIODS SET FORTH ABOVE, ANY CLAIM FILED TWO (2) YEARS OR MORE AFTER THE DECEDENT'S DATE OF DEATH IS BARRED. The date of first publication of this notice is February 10, 2022.

Attorney for Personal Representatives: Heather Bond Vargas Florida Bar Number: 230900 Cobb Cole, P.A. 149 S. Ridgewood Ave. Suite 700 DAYTONA BEACH, FL 32114 Telephone: (386) 255-8171 Email: Heather.Bargas@CobbCole.com Secondary Email: Anne.Kehrli@Cobb-Cole.com Personal Representatives: Robert Scott May 9929 Old Kings Road Jacksonville, FL 32219 Legal 33099 published Feb 10 and Feb 17, 2022 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper.

AMENDED NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE SALE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FOURTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR CLAY COUNTY, FLORIDA

THE BANK OF NEW YORK MELLON, F/K/A THE BANK OF NEW YORK AS TRUSTEE FOR REGISTERED HOLDERS OF CWABS, INC., ASSET-BACKED CERTIFICATES, SERIES 2004-13, Plaintiff, Case No: 2018 CA 001065 vs. CHRISTIAN VARGAS; et al., Defendants.

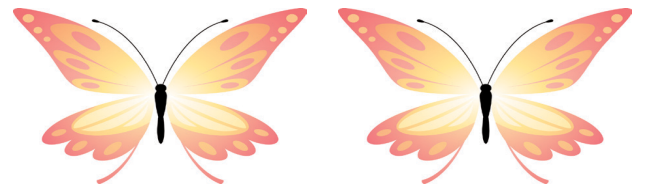
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to the Final Judgment of Foreclosure dated January 27, 2022 and entered in Case No. 2018 CA 001065 of the Circuit Court of the Fourth Judicial Circuit in and for Clay County, Florida wherein THE BANK OF NEW YORK MELLON, F/K/A THE BANK OF NEW YORK AS TRUSTEE FOR REGISTERED HOLDERS OF CWABS, INC., ASSET-BACKED CERTIFICATES, SERIES 2004-13, is the Plaintiff and CHRISTIAN VARGAS; UNKNOWN SPOUSE

OF CHRISTIAN VARGAS; YANIZA VARGAS; UNKNOWN SPOUSE OF YANIZA VARGAS; HOA PROBLEM SOLUTIONS 5, INC., AS TRUSTEE OF THE 1520A VINELAND CIRCLE LAND TRUST; MORTGAGE ELECTRONIC REGISTRATION SYSTEMS, INC., AS NOMINEE FOR 123 LOAN, LLC; FORD MOTOR CREDIT COMPANY, LLC; AUTUMN GLEN TOWNHOME OWNERS ASSOCIATION, INC.; FLEMING ISLAND PLANTATION OWNERS ASSOCIATION, INC.; WILLIS STUCCO CONTRACTORS, LLC; UNKNOWN TENANT #1; UNKNOWN TENANT #2, is/are Defendant(s), I, Tara S Green, Clay County Clerk of Court will sell to the highest and best bidder for cash at CASE NO: 2018 CA 001065 www.clay.realforeclose.com at 10:00 a.m. on FEBRUARY 23, 2022 the following described property set forth in said Final Judgment, to wit: LOT 35A, AUTUMN GLEN, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF, AS RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 44, AT PAGE 38 THROUGH 42, OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS OF CLAY COUNTY, FLORIDA.

More Commonly Known as: 1520A VINELAND CIRCLE, ORANGE PARK, FL 32003 Any person claiming an interest in the surplus from the sale, if any, other than the property owner as of the date of the lis pendens must file a claim before the clerk reports the surplus as unclaimed. DATED in Clay, Florida this, \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2022

As Clerk of Circuit Court CLAY County, Florida Rebecca Crews Deputy Clerk

If you are a person with a disability who needs an accommodation in order to access court facilities or participate in a court proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. To request such an accommodation, please contact Court Administration at least three business days prior to the required service by using one of the following methods: Phone - (904) 630-2564; Fax - (904) 630-1146; TTD/TTY - (800) 955-8770 (Florida Relay Service). E-Mail - crtintpr@coj.net. Legal 33133 published Feb. 10 and 17, 2022 in Clay County's Clay Today Newspaper.



Do you have an Apartment or Home for Rent? Advertise it here!

Call 904.579.2154 to find out how to put your rental in this spot.

STARTING A NEW

Business

Have you registered your name with the state and now need to run a fictitious name advertisement?

One easy step

Email Cassandra at cassandra@claytodayonline.com or call 904-579-2153 to request the necessary form. It will run in our legal section for one week for \$35 Affidavit will be mailed to you.



## Baptist Medical Center Clay is on the way!

Construction of our new hospital, Baptist Medical Center Clay, is in full swing. Baptist Clay will be a full-service 100-bed hospital on Fleming Island opening in the fall of 2022.

Our new six-story hospital will have a wide range of medical services, from primary care to advanced heart care, and everything in between.

Because Clay County is a family place, our new hospital will have a large Labor & Delivery Center with 20 large private rooms. We'll also have an 8-bed NICU where moms and their partners can stay overnight with their newborn.

These services complement those we already have at our existing Baptist Clay campus, including an adult ER, a Wolfson Children's Hospital ER, an ambulatory surgery center, specialty services, and imaging.



### Meet Darin Roark

Baptist Medical Center Clay will be led by Darin Roark, BSN, MBA, RN, FACHE, a long-time Baptist Health executive and resident of Fleming Island.

"Clay County residents tell us they need more hospital-based health care services close to where they live and work," said Roark, hospital president. "Having a full-service hospital nearby will eliminate the need for travel, while providing the medical expertise that Baptist Health is known for.

"As a Clay County resident for many years, I am excited and humbled by the opportunity to bring world-class, patient-focused health care to Clay County," said Roark.

**We're looking forward to being your community hospital!**

1771 Baptist Clay Drive  
Fleming Island, FL 32003

