

Clothes Closet and Food Pantry of Orange Park win \$25,000

By Don Coble
don@claytodayonline.com

ORANGE PARK – Volunteers huddled Tuesday morning to talk about their assignments moments before the doors opened at the Clothes Closet and Food Pantry of Orange Park.

Volunteer Anita Aultman was paying more attention to her cellphone, constantly refreshing a page to see the results of the State Farm Neighborhood Assist program.

Just as the group was about to go to work, Aultman looked up from her phone and smiled. The all-volunteer organization that provides food, clothing and household items to residents in need in Clay County suddenly realized they were among 100 national winners who will receive a \$25,000 grant.

“Jubilant,” yelled one of the volunteers as he packed a grocery bag for a family

The money is one of the biggest gifts to the Clothes Closet and Food Pantry of Orange Park. What started as the longest of longshots, the Neighborhood Assist grant evolved into a community-wide drive that gained speed until the online balloting ended a few weeks ago.

“This is one of the largest grants we’ve received so far and it will do a great deal for our community,” Aultman said. “We have between 60 and 70 families a week coming in for food, and it means that the children won’t go hungry.

“Due to a significant and sudden increase in clientele, funding has been inad-



STAFF PHOTO BY DON COBLE

Volunteer Anita Aultman was thrilled to learn the Clothes Closet and Food Pantry won a \$25,000 grant from State Farm.

equate to meet the demand for assistance. The grant from State Farm will help meet these needs.”

State Farm opened the program for the first 4,000 applicants. All of the spots were gone within an hour, Aultman said.

The insurance company then pared the list to the top 200 vote-getters and the Clothes Closet and Food Pantry made the

SEE PANTRY, 14



STAFF PHOTO BY NICK BLANK

Clay County Sheriff's Office marine deputy Bill Maher was busy on Boaters Skip Day making sure everyone had the proper emergency and safety equipment on board.

Water safety stressed by law enforcement, community members

By Nick Blank
nick@claytodayonline.com

CLAY COUNTY – Departing Governor's Creek marina Friday afternoon, Deputy Bill Maher had already seen about 200 boats in a few hours on the St. Johns River.

He helms a Clay County Sheriff's Office marine patrol unit. His boat hit the wakes at moderate speed on “Boaters Skip Day,” one of the largest gatherings of boaters every year. The sun is oppressive and the water is rough, though Maher said it was quieter earlier in the day.

“You learn not to say the ‘Q’ word,” he says later in the day.

His purpose is to assist people in distress and make sure the boat has the right safety equipment on board such as life jackets, whistles and throwable seat cushions. Maher stays vigilant for many outcomes.

“You get a lot of people swimming around, from boat to boat. I’m looking for people who may be swimming,” Maher said. “They may look OK. There will be a lot of times where I pull up to some-

SEE WATER, 17

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Potential charter changes now in commissioners' hands

Potential salary increases, removal of term limits among issues under consideration

By Nick Blank
nick@claytodayonline.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – The Charter Review Committee has forwarded three charter amendments to the Board of County Commissioners to possibly place on the ballot.

Last week, the committee approved a cost of living increase for county commissioners, removing term limits for constitutional officers and revising appointments of committee members. For the amendment to pass, county commissioners must approve each to place on the ballot and voters must pass changes with a majority vote this fall.

The committee voted to maintain com-

missioner salaries at \$37,000, but use the federal Consumer Price Index data to adjust it by the rate of inflation each budget year. The measure was passed by the committee, 8-3.

Committee member Mitch Timberlake said he believed the current commissioner salary package was punitive. He said voters would give the ultimate answer.

"It hadn't been increased in a number of years and certainly the county commissioner (salaries) deserve to be amended for that," Timberlake said.

According to the charter, a person elected to a constitutional office for three consecutive four-year terms is not eligible to run for a fourth term. Removing term limits for the county's five constitutional officers also passed, 8-3.

A much larger commissioner salary increase forwarded by different committee members was negated by voters in the



STAFF PHOTO BY NICK BLANK

Commissioners have several changes to the county's charter, including pay raises for members and the elimination of term limits, to consider.

2018 election.

At the 30-minute committee meeting, resident Richard Klinzman voiced concerns on multiple items. He said this was the second committee in a row focused on the five commissioners' salaries. He didn't

like that the proposal was cumulative, meaning a commissioner could potentially have several cost of living increases.

He asked if the commissioner position could be listed as a full-time job.

SEE CHARTER, 5

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Governor signs bill to bolster school crisis intervention, enhance safety

By Anne Geggis
By FloridaPolitics.com

Gov. Ron DeSantis signed an update to the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act Tuesday that will bolster school crisis intervention and include charter schools in some safety requirements.

The new law aims to improve earlier legislation passed in response to the state's worst school shooting in 2018 at MSD High School in Parkland. Testimony during this year's Senate and House hearings on the update revealed none of the state's 67 school districts were entirely in compliance with the law that aimed to improve school safety.

So the new law will cement some new requirements and increase school districts' accountability.

"Every child needs a safe and secure learning environment," DeSantis said in a statement. "By signing HB 1421, we continue to build on the many steps we have taken since 2019 to implement the recommendations of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Public Safety Commission, while also making record investments in mental health and school safety."

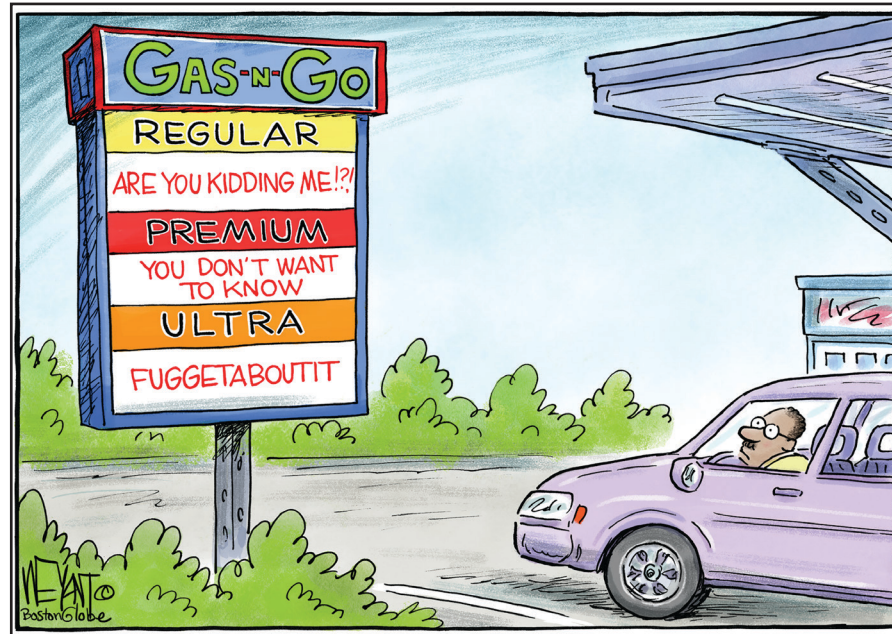
Republican Fred Hawkins sponsored the bill, and the Senate adopted that after. Sen. Joe Gruters introduced similar legislation (SB 802). It passed unanimously in both chambers.

The Governor highlighted some provisions in the 19-page law. The law will:

- Extend the term of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission from 2023 to 2025.
- Increase the powers of the Education Commissioner to enforce, rather than just oversee, school safety and security compliance.
- Authorize safe school officers to make arrests on charter school property.
- Mandate that safe school officers complete crisis intervention and training to better respond and de-escalate situations.
- Require law enforcement officers to be active at assailant emergency drills at school.
- Require school boards to adopt family reunification plans in the event of an evacuation to avoid the chaotic scene that unfolded after the MSD shooting.
- Require school districts to annually certify at least 80% of school personnel

SEE BILL, 5

OPINIONS



Tough lesson learned:

Pay attention when your body's telling you something

By Don Coble
Managing Editor

Our mothers and doctors have told us for years to listen to our bodies. For most of my life, that meant a chorus of growls, groans, creaks and a throaty rumble that best resembles a cold diesel engine slowly coming to life.

Sometimes our bodies have a lot to say without making a sound. I know that now.

I quickly noticed my energy level had deteriorated to the point where going to the grocery required a 10-minute timeout on the pharmacy bench.

I went shopping for flowers and flower pots last month and I had to do it in three trips. I was too exhausted to do it all in a single day. Worse yet, it

took me two more days to find the physical and emotional strength to move the plants from my car to the driveway. I admit, gravity did most of the work. From there, the plants sat another 10 days.

At the same time, I couldn't stop sweating. I mean the kind of sweats where I had to keep a towel in every room.

Oddly enough, I had my annual bloodwork done at the same time I started to go into my fatigue funk. Other than step-



Don Coble

ping on my doctor's scales and it telling me "one at a time, please," everything was fine. Despite the number of Xs in my pants and shirt sizes, I essentially was a pillar of health.

But my body was telling me something different.

I had an interview on a Friday afternoon, and less than two minutes after my first question, I doubled over in pain. I also felt nauseated. Something was wrong. And for the first time, I started listening to what my body was trying to tell me.

I excused myself from the interview and went home. I tried to outlast the pain but like a sputtering car engine and cracked mirror, this wasn't going to fix itself.

I eventually broke down and drove myself to the Baptist Clay ER. Shortly after they took my vitals, a doctor said he was concerned my sharp pain had lasted so long under my right ribcage.

A CT scan confirmed his concern – and my worse fears. I not only had stones in my gallbladder but the organ was extremely inflamed and an infection had spread throughout my body cavity.

Suddenly, I was in an ambulance to Baptist South.

A surgeon originally said he wanted to operate on Saturday night, but he decided to wait until Sunday to give the infection and my fever to subside. Because of the inflammation, he also wanted to make sure there were additional specialists in the operating room.

SEE BODY, 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.

Reliquary: (REL-ah-kwer-ee) a noun that means a container for holy relics.

"An archaeological dig sometimes uncovers a reliquary or two."

This Week in History

Five years ago, 2017

- Clay County Schools District Asst. Superintendent Susan Legutko tells the school board the district fund balance will end the year with a 4% increase, up from 3.5% from a year ago.

- Four \$1,000 scholarships are given to high school seniors from the Wyatt Morrison Scholarship, a program created in the memory of the 4-year-old who died of leukemia.

- Pastor John Sanders hopes to establish the first homeless shelter in Green Cove Springs called The Vineyards.

10 years ago, 2012

- Three-hundred thirty Oakleaf High students are given their diplomas during the school's first graduation ceremony.

- For the 10th year in a row, the Clay County Agricultural Fair is given a Blue Ribbon from the Florida Federation of Fairs.

- Clay County's Emily Hyatt won first prize in magnetospheric physics in a student research project sponsored by the National Science Foundation and Community Coordinate Modeling Center.

20 years ago, 2002

- Residents from Clay and St. Johns counties express frustration at a Town Hall meeting at Robert M. Patterson Elementary over not being able to decide where to build a bridge over the St. John River to relieve traffic concerns for the Buckman Bridge.

- Clay County officials learn the state plans to build much-needed exits for Blanding Boulevard which will include a Collins Road exit from Interstate 295.

- With gas prices reaching \$1.40 a gallon, the Clay County Sheriff's Office said

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.

Body

from page 4

When I woke up, all the surgeon told me was, "It was bad." It was like my body was saying, "Told you so!" If not for the stones, I may never have realized the seriousness of the infection that was coursing through my body until it was too late. And from what I learned since, that probably would have been sooner than later.

I left with a belly full of staples, a drainage bag dangling from my side and a real disdain for hospital beef and chicken broth.

I can also say, the panda bear haircut on my belly is not a good look.

Two days after I was released, I had enough strength to plant all the flowers that survived two weeks of neglect and cut my grass. I went shopping to replace the dead flowers and buy solar-powered landscaping lights.

Now I'm left with the challenge of finding which foods my body can tolerate. So far, it's been more misses than hits. The Mayo Clinic suggests not eating beef, pork,

I left with a belly full of staples, a drainage bag dangling from my side and a real disdain for hospital beef and chicken broth. I can also say, the panda bear haircut on my belly is not a good look. Two days after I was released, I had enough strength to plant all the flowers that survived two weeks of neglect and cut my grass. I went shopping to replace the dead flowers and buy solar-powered landscaping lights.

fried foods, carbonated drinks, alcohol, caffeine, refined sugar, spicy foods, processed foods like cake, cookies and pastries, fast foods, pizza, butter, ice cream and sausage.

I'm supposed to find solace in knowing I feel better. But I can promise you, next time I'll pay more attention when my body is trying to tell me something.

Charter

from page 2

"What I don't understand, is why this came up four years ago, it was voted down decisively and why it's been brought back again because calling it a cost of living increase ... it's not straight," Klinzman said. "It's just looking for a raise."

The final item forwarded last week sought to change how often the committee meets, from four years to eight-year intervals, which in previous meetings committee members said was following the lead of other Florida counties. The item passed unanimously as well as a committee recommendation to the county to create a file to assist future members with previous committee decisions.

This committee usually met between one-and-three times a month since October. Items on the cutting room floor include

changes to the number of commissioners or making their voting districts at-large rather than zoned. The committee decided not to forward ballot measures altering the comptroller's duties or adding minimum qualifications or age requirements to constitutional officer positions.

Committee member Connie Schoenung voted against the salary adjustment and removing term limits, but remarked how civil the committee did its work.

"We respected each other's opinions whether we agreed or disagreed," she said.

Chairman Bo Norton said the 12 meetings led to a long process, but county staff and committee were owed a debt of gratitude for their assistance.

"This is a group of concerned citizens who volunteer their time. This is democracy in action and we appreciate it," he said.

\$1.7 million in delinquent property taxes were collected at a tax collector's office.

40 years ago, 1982

- Lt. Gov. Wayne Mixson addressed a standing room only crowd at the Green Cove Springs Senior Citizen Center's dedication.

- Harry Perlman, 85, longtime owner of Harry's Men's Store in Green Cove Springs, passes away.

- Kitty McGlave said she will run for the District 3 seat on the Clay County School Board – a seat once occupied by her late husband, Charles McGlave.

History

from page 4

the number of reported "drive-offs" from stations without paying have doubled from the previous month.

30 years ago, 1992

- Orange Park Town Councilman James Tillman cites declining health as the reason he resigned from the council.

- "Project Graduation" is offered by Project Graduation to offer graduating seniors an all-night, chemical and alcohol free party.
- The county's tax collector's office said

Bill

from page 4

have received mandatory youth mental health awareness training.

Tuesday's signing drew praise from stakeholders, according to the Governor's Office.

State Board of Education Member Ryan Petty, whose daughter was killed in the MSD rampage, called DeSantis' action "a huge leap forward."

"Extending the Commission's work and requiring mental health and de-escalation training for safe-school officers will make a major difference in mitigating the risk of a future tragedy," he said.

Tony Montalto, the president of Stand with Parkland who lost of daughter in the shooting, called the legislation "an important next step" to providing students and parents the assurances they need.

"Florida will continue to do everything possible to make sure our schools meet the highest safety standards and that mental health issues associated with school violence are being addressed," Montalto said.

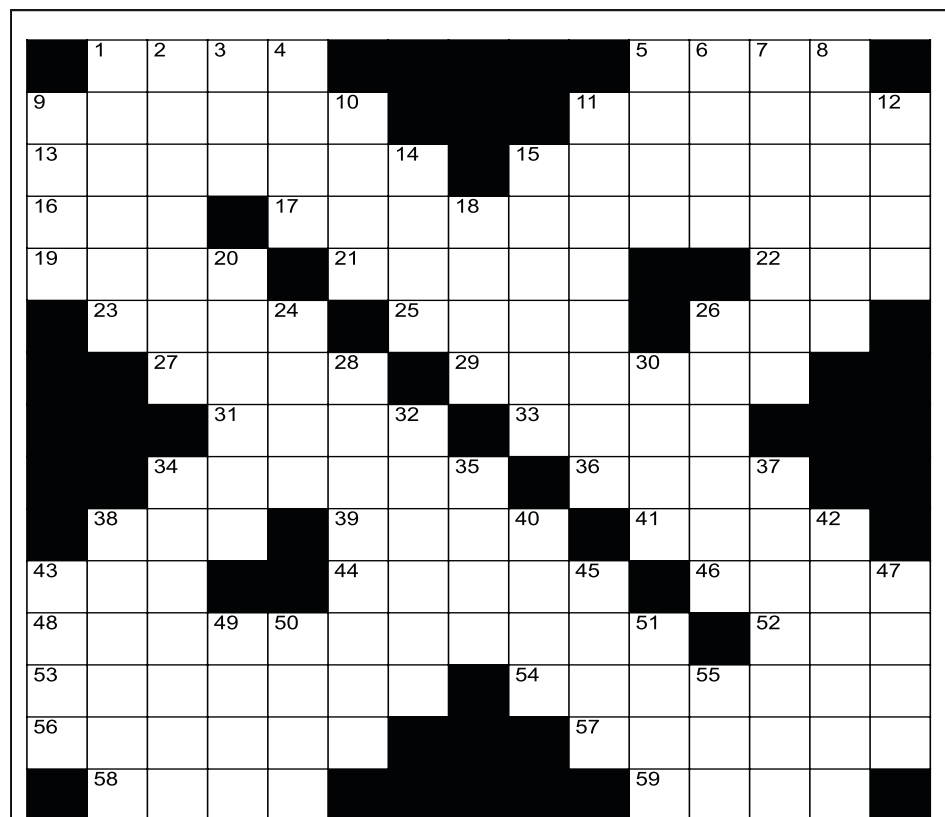
The Governor's Office also noted De-

Santis has continued to invest in improving students' mental health and school safety.

The budget has a record \$140 million for mental health and \$210 million for school safety approved. That includes school hardening grants and youth mental health awareness and assistance training, the release said.

Every year DeSantis has been in office, he's increased these investments, according to the release. Although his decision to end the state's biennial participation in the Centers for Disease Control's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey, which identifies student risks, has come under criticism.

Anne Geggis is a South Florida journalist who began her career in Vermont and has worked at the Sun-Sentinel, the Daytona Beach News-Journal and the Gainesville Sun covering government issues, health and education. She was a member of the Sun-Sentinel team that won the 2019 Pulitzer Prize for coverage of the Parkland high school shooting. You can reach her on Twitter @AnneBoca or by emailing anne@floridapolitics.com.



CLUES ACROSS

- Slovenian mountain
- Growl
- Where things stand
- Made a sharp sound
- Female spirit in Irish folklore
- Deteriorate with age
- A way to save for retirement
- The Big Apple
- Intestinal pouches
- City in New Hampshire
- Giving a bad impression
- Samsung laptops
- Without (French)
- Scientist's tool (abbr.)
- System of one more computers
- Captures
- Authentic
- Female mammal's nipple
- Pandemonium
- Satisfy
- Arrived extinct
- Shipborne radar (abbr.)
- Network of nerves
- Monetary unit

CLUES DOWN

- Looks at for a long time
- Solution for diseases
- Belonging to a thing
- Former Packers fallback
- Contemptible person
- One billionth of a second (abbr.)
- Helps
- Final section of the large intestine
- Invests in little enterprises
- Look for
- Unbeliefs
- Susan and Tom are two

- Female sheep
- A poet writes it
- Affirmatives
- 'Full House' actress Barber
- Traveled rapidly
- Long upholstered seat
- Set wages
- Peter Gabriel song
- Sides of a jacket
- More beautiful
- Actress Kate
- Furniture with open shelves
- Indicate
- The cost of a room
- Gets rid of something
- Impudence
- No No No
- Drunkards
- Middle eastern country
- High energy lasers (abbr.)
- Primary component of ribosomes
- An informal debt instrument

Iconic 'The Sound of Music' coming to Island Theater



Island Theater will put its own spin on the Rogers and Hammerstein's classic, "The Sound of Music" during a 10-day run, starting on June 17

By Nick Blank
nick@claytodayonline.com

FLEMING ISLAND — Clay County audiences can see the von Trapp family and "Do-Re-Mi" at The Island Theater when "The Sound of Music" is performed during a 10-day run.

The famed Rodgers and Hammerstein musical detailed the plight of a housekeeper and a large Austrian family escaping the

"I told the cast before we began we need to remember it's a true story. Though Broadway and Hollywood took a lot of liberties with the story, it's a story from a time where we can't fathom what it was like in Europe back then."

rise of Nazi Germany in the late-1930s. The 1965 film adaptation, starring Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer, won five Academy Awards. The cultural reach of the musical is wide-ranging from jazz icon John Coltrane to a live TV event with country music star Carrie Underwood.



The von Trapp family actors practice one of the musical's classic numbers "So Long, Farewell" during a recent rehearsal.

For The Island Theater's adaptation, director Caleb Wheeler spoke on a few of his favorite things about the show, which runs June 17-26.

"There are slight differences to both productions there," he said. "We're adding some movie songs into the stage show."

Auditions drew about 75 people, Wheeler said. The casting involved a variety of ages with a cast of 45 people. "The Sound of Music" is a longer musical, some runtimes of the musical total almost three hours. There's a time crunch and a lot to learn, Wheeler said.

"Before I started, it seemed really daunting, but it came together because

SEE THEATER, 10

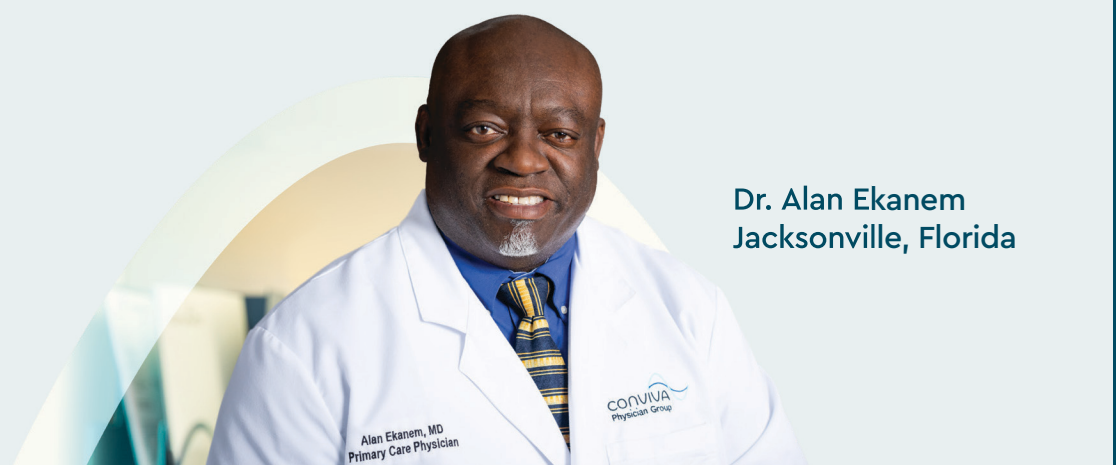
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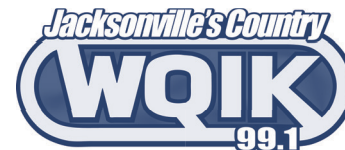
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Obituaries

Thomas 'Dee' Newton Cummings

On Tuesday May 31, 2022, Thomas "Dee" Newton Cummings, loving husband, father, brother, grandfather, great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather, passed away peacefully at the age of 89.

Dee was born on July 13, 1932 in Imboden, Arkansas to Maxie Jaunita Estes and Horace Coleman Cummings. He grew up in Mobile, Alabama with his siblings Patty (Dewberry) and Charles. He graduated from Murphy High School and enlisted into the United States Army in 1950. He was in the Gunnery Division and also a Golden Gloves boxer during his 2 years of service.

In 1952, he and his father moved to Jacksonville and started working for City Pest Control where he met his loving wife of 69 years, Inez Horton. They were married on May 22, 1953 and raised 4 children together: Marsha, Rusty, Mike and Karen. They enjoyed family vacations to their cabin in Ocean Pond, and he made his goal of traveling to all 50 states! He was a member of the American Legion Post 137 and a Mason in the Shriners for over 40 years. He joined the Federal Civil Service and worked at NAS Jacksonville NADEP until retiring as a metalsmith in 1995.

They purchased a home on Doctors Lake after retirement, and here he enjoyed fishing and boating. He seemed to claim ownership of his canal, and was not above turning on his sprinklers to scare away local bass fisherman. He was quite creative and handy and enjoyed painting, woodworking, and building model trains. His grandchildren loved visiting his home to see his elaborate train table that took up an entire room. He liked playing horseshoes, doing yard work and taking care of many animals. He loved and cared for all animals, no matter how strange. He had a pet squirrel named Geraldine, many dogs,



Thomas 'Dee' Newton Cummings

birds and one day brought home a pet goat! You could frequently find him relaxing on the back patio drinking a cold one or cheering on his favorite football teams, the Gators and the Jaguars. He was a modest, hardworking, fun-loving family man and will be greatly missed by many.

Dee is survived by his wife Inez, his brother Charles Cummings (Nancy) his children Marsha Smith (Wayne), Mike Cummings (Pam), Karen Alexander (Dwight), his grandchildren Shannon Smith (Tony), Melinda Eller (Steve), Kimberly Olivant (Nelson), Judd Cummings, Chad Cummings (Gina), Travis Cummings (Jessica), Todd Cummings (Carrie), Josh Alexander, his great-grandchildren Shawn Smith, Brooklyn Heath, Dillon Heath, Austin Kittle, Levi Olivant, Jake Cummings, Carter Cummings, Cody Cummings (Kaitlyn), Abby Cummings, Beckham Cummings, Fletcher Cummings, Hattie Cummings, great-great grandchildren Haley Smith, Emma Smith, Riley Smith and Gracelynn Smith, nieces Lisa Chamberlain, Aleta Dazinger (Mike), Stacey Cummings, nephew Steve Dewberry (Patricia), many friends and neighbors. Dee is pre-deceased by sister Patty Dewberry, son Rusty Cummings (Kathy), grandson John Hall III, and great-grandson Justin Smith.

Funeral services were held on Saturday June 4, 2022 at 10 a.m. at Jacksonville Memory Gardens located at 111 Blanding Boulevard, Orange Park, FL 32073.

In lieu of flowers, please make donations in Dee's name to The Military Museum of Northeast Florida, 1 Bunker Avenue, Green Cove Springs, FL 32043 themilitarymuseumofnorthflorida.com.

Joyce Elisabeth Ridner

Joyce Elisabeth Ridner, 66, of Orange Park, FL passed away on June 5, 2022.

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



Duane Allen Honadle

Duane Allen Honadle, 54, from Orange Park, Florida, passed away May 26th, 2022, after a brief time in the hospital. He was born in Millington, TN, on June 15, 1967, to Charlotte Eavenson and Charles J. Williams.

Duane lived life and loved his way. He entertained everyone with his quick wit and rib-hurting, humorous take on life, making him the center of attention in any crowd. He will forever be remembered for his boundless energy, love of fishing and the sun, social skills, and vast knowledge of anything and everything. Duane will live forever in our hearts and never be forgotten. He is preceded in death by Duane Allen Honadle his Aunt and Uncle,



Shirley and Roy Absher. He is survived by his friend, Leeann Ferguson and their dog, Daisy, his parents, Charlotte Eavenson and Charles J. Williams, his two sisters, Cheryl Yoder (Tony Yoder) and Sheila Larson (Terry Larson), and two brothers, Darrell Honadle (Lisa Honadle) and CJ Williams (Janeen Mikowski), his nieces, Jessica Dalton, Halle Larson (Noah Cloer), Jennifer Stein (Jay Stein), Rebecca Honadle, and his nephews Chris Yoder (Ashlee Yoder) and Trent Larson, grandnieces and grandnephews Madi and Maddox Dalton, Louis and Adrianna Honadle, Berklee Yoder, and Addison Cloer, and cousins, Mark Absher (Ann Absher) and Carol Morris (Howard Morris), and a vast extended family that loved him dearly. No funeral or memorial service is currently planned. The family will notify loved ones in the future when a service is scheduled.

Joi Hope Thomas

Joi Hope Thomas, 61, of Green Cove Springs, FL passed away on June 5, 2022.

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



John Joseph Peter Minorics III

John Joseph Peter Minorics III passed away September 7, 2021. A retired the U.S. Navy veteran. He was a loving husband and father. His wife Judy Elaine Marie Minorics passed away May 25, 2018. He is survived by his son, Christopher Adam Minorics, daughter Lisa Ann Griffin, neice Kim Godsey, 7 grandchildren, Michael, Samantha, Alexadra, LeeAnn, Adam, Matthew, Taylor, 1 great grandson, Brantley and many more who loved him. May he live forever in our hearts.

Donald Malcome Johnson

Donald Malcome Johnson, 75, of Green Cove Springs, FL passed away on June 5, 2022.

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



College Briefs

Orange Park's Farley graduates from Graceland

LAMONI, Iowa – Graceland University celebrated his Spring graduation, including Orange Park's Heather Farley, who graduated with a Master of Science in Nursing (Family Nurse Practitioner).

Founded in 1895 and sponsored by Community of Christ, Graceland University in Lamoni, Iowa, is more than just a school. It is a community of passionate, caring and dedicated individuals who put their relationships with students first.

Sciartelli earns degree from The College of Charleston

CHARLESTON, S.C. – Kirstin Sciartelli, of Orange Park, recently graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Hospitality and Tourism Management from the College of Charleston.

Located in the heart of historic Charleston, South Carolina, the College of Charleston is a nationally recognized public liberal arts and sciences university.

JACKSONVILLE MEMORY GARDENS

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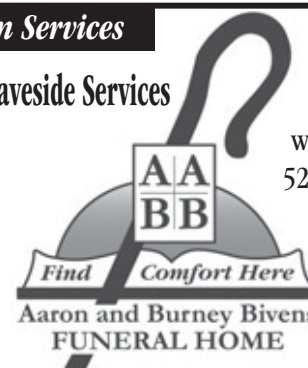
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Hospital food specialist discusses challenges, food's role in health

By Nick Blank
nick@claytodayonline.com

ORANGE PARK – Hospitals are a place to treat the sick and recover from illness, but ceating a family atmosphere can make a big difference in improving the quality of care.

Food and nutrition services department specialist Amber Woolsey was born at HCA Florida Orange Park Hospital. She also leaned on the hospital during both her and her mother's struggle with cancer. Woolsey has worked at the hospital for about a decade since



Amber Woolsey

she was 19 years old.

In 2010, Woolsey's mother underwent chemotherapy for up to 15 hours a day. Woolsey made sure her mother received nourishment during the treatment regimen. A passion for nutrition emerged, she said.

Woolsey referred to the hospital as her foundation, recalling her co-worker's efforts after her mother died, such as setting up a fundraiser.

"This hospital became a family for me," Woolsey said. "Everyone here opened up their garage, or they would say, 'Stay on our couch, eat at our table.'"

Woolsey was treated for kidney cancer in 2015, and she spent three months at the hospital.

"I was in this hospital for three months and not once did I sit in there by myself. It's

so touching that they cared about little old me (who works) in dietary," Woolsey said.

Working at the hospital you were born at is a weird feeling, she said, albeit rewarding. For Woolsey, it's about asking what she can do to help and taking the initiative, adding she wouldn't have it any other way.

"What an honor to be here, I work here and I was born here," Woolsey said.

Feeding patients remains a critical part of any hospital's fabric. Her job can entail anything from preparing food, assisting with the doctor's lounge or lending a hand in the cafeteria.

"It's wherever they need, whatever to satisfy someone," she said.

Food staff is much-needed during a di-

saster. During hurricanes Matthew and Irma, in 2016 and 2017 respectively, she volunteered to stay and feed patients. That philosophy extended to the COVID-19 pandemic, she said.

"We were in a mobile unit," Woolsey said. "When COVID hit, we had to prepackage everything."

Woolsey said food staff quickly learn about hygienic practices, supplements and best practices. If certain foods aren't grounded down, the patient could choke.

Woolsey said food is medicine, but it must be delivered properly if a person is diabetic for example.

"You don't know how important it is," she said. "With some of the food, you can't just put it on a plate."

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Theater

from page 6

people have some familiarity with the story whether it's on the stage or the movie," Wheeler said. "It's really been a joy to direct and put together."

Wheeler emphasized the plight of the von Trapps is nonfiction, based on Maria von Trapp's memoir. Their tense exit from Austria involved tenacity and courage, which is what Wheeler wanted audiences to take away.

"I told the cast before we began we need to remember it's a true story. Though Broadway and Hollywood took a lot of liberties with the story, it's a story from a time where we can't fathom what it was like in Europe back then," Wheeler said.

"They relied on each other to guide them through a horrible time in history."

About three weeks out, the cast is practicing the material, working out the kinks. They've finished blocking, or the finalization of the performers' exact positions. The live audience on opening night is a different proposition from an audience a few shows in, though Wheeler coaches the performers to not get too comfortable.

I think of the show as a way to get better. When people come to opening night (performers) are still getting their feet wet and for some, it's their first time in front of an audience," Wheeler said. "The show gets more refined, but we tell them not to let their guard down."

Tickets are available at theislandtheater.com.



The Island Theater's adaptation of "The Sound of Music" tells the true story of an Austrian family escaping Nazi Germany during World War II.

Clay County Animal Services on Petco Love's Top 100 adoption partners list

For Clay Today

FLEMING ISLAND – Clay County Animal Services has made the Petco Love 2021 Top 100 Adoption Partners list. The animal shelter received this recognition due to the outstanding effort its staff made to increase the number of pet adoptions by partnering with offsite adoption locations like Petco on Fleming Island.

In addition to the many animals available for adoption at the animal shelter in Green Cove Springs, Clay County Animal Services places adoptable pets at Petco in Fleming Island each week, where they are adopted out to the community by Petco staff. Thanks to this long-standing adoption partnership with Petco, 250 animals found forever homes in 2021. This brings the total number of pets adopted through Clay County Animal Services to 2,186 in 2021, and the reason why Petco Love wanted to acknowledge this achievement.



Clay County Animal Services Shelter Manager Aymie Hellard said, "Clay County Animal Services would not have been able to reach the top 100 Adoption Partners list without the tireless dedication of our staff, partners, volunteers, and the amazing foster families and adopters that gave forever homes to our animals. Thank you!"

In recognition of these efforts, VIP Adoption Partner Petco on Fleming Island will receive Petco Love branded items for future adoptions, including wire crates, leashes and collars. These items will be offered to families when they take home their newly-adopted pet.

"Clay County Animal Services appreciates the strong partnership with Petco and shares the common goal of increasing the number of shelter animals adopted each year. Shelter staff and volunteers should be commended for the work they do to better our lives and the lives of homeless pets through adoption," said Board of County Commissioners Chairman Wayne Bolla.

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Step by step, nail by nail

By Don Coble
don@claytodayonline.com

FLEMING ISLAND – Darin Roark wraps up each working day at the Baptist Clay Medical Campus by walking through the ongoing construction of a 102-bed hospital. He doesn't need blueprints to know what goes where, because every nail and piece of flooring has been part of lifelong dream.

He often steps over extension cords and around piles of debris. He enthusiastically greets every worker. Most important, instead of dreaming about a hospital, he can

see it finally coming to fruition.

And each walk takes the Baptist Clay President a little closer to the expected opening this fall. "This project is really a passion of mine," Roark said. "I've been dreaming of being able to build a hospital here in Clay County ever since we opened the doors of the emergency room in 2013.

"I've had a big hand in the design of this hospital as well. I pay attention to details. I'm a stickler for the details, if you will, and I absolutely can tell where the progress has been made. And I can tell where something doesn't necessarily agree with the drawing. There's been a couple of times I've been walking through and alerting the team that we missed a cut out for personal protective equipment or a cabinet or that particular piece of plumbing is in the wrong place and needs to be moved or shifted."

The hospital will be connected to the Baptist and Wolfson Clay Emergency Room.

Once opened, the new hospital will have 102 private rooms on spread throughout the three bottom floors. A fourth and fifth floor also is under construction that eventually will expand the number of beds to 174.

There are 340 construction workers, Roark said, to build the \$185 million hospital. Counting the purchase and rebuilding of the old VyStar building next door that will be part of the medical campus, the entire investment is \$235 million, Roark said. "We're getting closer every day," Roark said. "We're just thrilled to have the teams here on site working every day. In the end, the blood sweat and tears that we're putting into the building is just amazing. There's a whole different level of workmanship and you know the complexity of the rough end and the mechanical equipment that goes into the hospital. Seeing the men and women with their expertise come in every day and do great work is just really it's great to watch."

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CLAY COUNTY SENIOR AWARDS NOMINEES

SHEPHERD'S CENTER OF ORANGE PARK OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER

Chris Bass

VOLUNTEER MEN OF THE YEAR

Gray Chandler, Jim Corbin, and Robert Simpson
Robert Simpson - Winner

VOLUNTEER WOMEN OF THE YEAR

Connie Eden, Dolores Felkey, Selena Hayle, Marilyn Hollowood, Dorothy Robinson, Millie Wilkes, and Kathy Wray
Kathy Wray - Winner

ERNIE COHEN LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Pat Fernandez, Jay Heather, John Gilman, and Evelyn "Dolly" Hillman
Pat Fernandez - Winner

Photo Left to Right:
Andrea Crowder Emcee,
Kathy Wray,
Chris Bass,
Pat Fernandez,
Robert Simpson,
Al Benson Emcee,
Christy Fitzgerald ExDir.

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Local seniors Bass, Fernandez, Wray, Simpson honored at annual Golden Years Gala awards banquet

For Clay Today

FLEMING ISLAND – The 15th Annual Golden Years Gala honored older adults at Sullivan Hall at Sacred Heart Catholic Church who volunteer in Clay County.

Shepherd's Center of Orange Park presented awards to four volunteers in the following categories: Shepherd's Center of Orange Park Outstanding Volunteer, Ernie Cohen Lifetime Achievement Award, Woman of the Year and Man of the Year.

The Ernie Cohen Lifetime Achievement Award was given to Pat Fernandez by JoAnne Cohen, Ernie's wife. Fernandez currently volunteers for The Way Free Medical Clinic and St. Mary's Episcopal Church of Green Cove Springs. She has volunteered at The Way Clinic since its inception in 2006 and has steadfastly served when needed. She is professional and works proactively to take care of the patients and facility.

She is a Spanish translator, working with doctors, nurses, and patients to facilitate medical treatment; she manages supplies and the recycling program at the clinic. Pat inspires others with her work ethic, her faith, and her intelligence. She has a relentless passion for helping others and throws herself into anything that must be done, no matter how big or small.

She previously volunteered for the Green Cove Springs Food Pantry and Challenge Enterprises. Pat retired as a teacher

in 2007 and has kept up a phenomenal pace of volunteerism ever since, logging an estimated 25,000 of service hours in Clay County for more than 50 years. Pat said she was honored to be chosen out of a such wonderful group of nominees.

The Shepherd's Center of Orange Park Outstanding Volunteer Award was given to Chris Bass. Chris has been a member of

the Shepherd's Center since 2016. She is a great ambassador for the Shepherd Center and the Adventures in Learning Program. At SCOOP she serves on the Board of Directors as Secretary, teaches two classes in Tangling, assists with registration, mans the outreach booth at the Orange Park Farmer's Market, does data entry, has designed a marketing piece, and redesigned

the newsletter.

Chris is a member who never says "No" when asked to help with a project and is dedicated to SCOOP.

In Chris's words, "I want to make sure this wonderful program keeps going. The only way I can do this is by pitching in and donating my time and talents. I started by

SEE GALA, 13



Left to right, emcee Andrea Crowder, Kathy Wray, Chris Bass, Pat Fernandez, Robert Simpson, emcee Al Benson and executive director Christy Fitzgerald.

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Gala

from page 12

volunteering to help the Shepherd Center, but I found by volunteering, I get so much more. I look forward to all my volunteer jobs.”

Kathy Wray accepted the Woman of the Year award. Kathy volunteers for The Clothes Closet and Food Pantry which has a volunteer base of 110 volunteers and serves approximately 5,000 Clay County Residents.

She is Secretary of the Board of Directors, Team Leader in charge of opening and running the Clothes Closet and Food Pantry on Mondays and Second Saturdays. She is also an Executive Board Member.

In 2021, Kathy took on several monumental tasks at the pantry. First, she drove a total renovation of the Food Pantry’s 9,000 square foot building for better accessibility and to maximize the space. Second, Kathy reached out to the food pantry volunteers to seek their advice and suggestions for the renovation. Kathy toured other food pantries in the area to observe best practices, glean any helpful advice, and identify particularly useful systems. Kathy acted as the Project Manager for a total upgrade of the food preparation area. Kathy shared that her father, Jim Dalzell, was an early member of the Shepherd’s Center, so it is an honor to receive this award.



Joanne Cohen and Pat Fernandez.

The Man of the Year Award was given to Robert Simpson. Robert volunteers for the Young Life Florida Region, Young Life Clay County, and Grace Anglican Church and Preschool.

He started volunteering with Young Life

in 1985 as a part of the Hiring Committee when the dream of Young Life Clay County began.

Currently, Bob is the Treasurer of the Young Life Area Board, a guest host at Young Life Summer Camp, and is the DJ at

weekly youth events, annual fundraisers, and camp events. Bob serves as a volunteer Facilities Maintenance Coordinator at Grace Anglican Church and Grace Anglican Preschool. Bob is known for being someone always willing to help. He goes above and beyond expectations and always rises to a challenge.

Bob also is very caring and has a passion for the adolescents in Clay County to know Jesus Christ.

Bob embodies belonging and helps newcomers feel seen and valued. Bob is an irreplaceable thread in the tapestry of the lives of those who know and love him.

Those honored are nominated by people in the community. Nominators write a letter about the person and what they have done to serve the community. The nominees are judged by local leaders who select winners in each category.

Andrea Crowder and Al Benson were Emcees for the event. Bradley Bean, Senator Aaron Bean’s son, filled in for his father as the auctioneer. Bradley did a wonderful job engaging the crowd and raising money for the Shepherd’s Center.

The event had more than 160 attendees. The Shepherd’s Center’s Board Chairman, Suzanne Tower, said that the event is an outstanding way to showcase senior volunteers in our community.

The volunteers’ commitment and generosity exemplify their generation’s values of integrity and a strong work ethic.

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Pantry

from page 1

Clothes Closet and Food Pantry made the cut. From there, the top 100 organizations would share a total of \$2.5 million.

The State Farm Review Committee selected the top 200 finalists, and public voting determined the top 100. In the eleven years of the program, nearly 500 organizations have received a total of \$12.5 million to enact change in their communities.

Aultman isn't sure exactly where the Clothes Closet and Food Pantry finished in the balloting, but she said it was ranked 58th heading into the final day of voting.

"State Farm is happy to celebrate its 100th anniversary by providing 100 organizations with grant money to help them address the needs in their communities," said Rasheed Merritt, Assistant Vice President at State Farm. "We look forward to seeing the impact these \$25,000 grants will have."

More than 2 million ballots were cast nationally during the promotion, State Farm said.

Mary Fleener didn't know about the



Mary Fleener said without the Clothes Closet and Food Pantry her family would go hungry.

grant money. She was more focused on finding clothes and food to help her family of three.

"This helps me because of the fact that my family can eat more," she said. "It's good to know we have a place where we



STAFF PHOTOS BY DON COBLE

Volunteers work tirelessly to fill food orders for needy Clay County residents. They were overwhelmed when they learned Tuesday State Farm would gift the pantry a \$25,000 grant.

can go when we need help and the assistance is always going to be there.

"Without this, I don't know what to do. We wouldn't always have enough food. I'll come here and I fill out the forms and I'm doing everything I have to do to make sure that my family can eat, and they make sure that they do everything possible to help you as well."

Aultman said the bulk of the money will be spent on restocking the shelves with food.

According to the organization's mission, better nutrition produces better employees, better students and better communi-

ties, thus leading to an overall increase of community health.

By providing food for low-income parents, we will ensure a child does not go to bed hungry, and a parent does not wake up wondering where the next family meal will come from.

Additionally, the parents will have the financial freedom to spend their income on other necessities such as rent, transportation, and health care.

For more information on State Farm's program, please visit: www.neighborhoodassist.com, and for more information on The Clothes Closet and Food Pantry, please visit: <https://www.ccfpop.org/>.

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POLICE	\$139,000	\$100,000	\$102,000	\$104,000	\$106,000	\$551,000
FIRE	\$0	\$0	\$5,000	\$75,000	\$80,000	\$160,000
AMBULANCE & RESCUE	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$100,000	\$80,000	\$180,000
EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE	\$100,000	\$8,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$108,000
RECREATION & PROGRAMS	\$152,500	\$138,000	\$175,000	\$88,800	\$0	\$554,300
FACILITIES MAINTENANCE	\$124,466	\$48,466	\$102,000	\$137,500	\$65,000	\$477,432
STREETS	\$1,422,266	\$1,800,000	\$1,287,000	\$1,520,000	\$1,603,000	\$7,632,266
MAGNOLIA CEMETERY	\$15,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$15,000
NON DEPARTMENT WATER/SEWER CAPITAL PROJECTS	\$30,000	\$0	\$20,000	\$0	\$0	\$50,000
	\$3,207,500	\$2,255,700	\$2,052,500	\$2,210,000	\$1,970,500	\$11,696,200
STORMWATER	\$3,665,302	\$450,000	\$125,000	\$30,000	\$0	\$4,270,302
TOTAL	\$8,856,034	\$4,800,166	\$3,868,500	\$4,265,300	\$3,904,500	\$25,694,500

The Capital Improvement Program is available for inspection at Town Hall, 2042 Park Avenue, Orange Park, Florida, from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday at the Town Clerk's Office. A public hearing will take place on this program on June 28 2022, 7:00 pm, at Town Hall, 2042 Park Avenue, Orange Park, Florida.

Legal 35647 was published June 9, 2022 in Clay County's Clay Today Newspaper.

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Reyes one of 14 artists awarded Art Venture grants

For Clay Today

JACKSONVILLE — Fourteen Northeast Florida artists, including Clay County's Perla Reyes, recently received grants of \$3,500 each as part of The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida's Art Ventures initiative.

Reyes developed a series of multidisciplinary works based on her expressive character, Sitboy.

The character is inspired by childhood memories, anime, insects and sci-fi.

Reyes has been part of significant group projects, including the "Few 'N' Far Mural" events in Wynwood, Miami, as part of Art Basel.

The grant will allow Reyes to expand the Sitboy series into digital art as a new medium and create related merchandise.

As it entered its 32nd year, Art Ventures attracted a record number of applicants who competed for the coveted awards.

The individuals selected for the 2022 awards were chosen for their demonstrated talent as well as their determination to move to the next level of professional development.

"Northeast Florida is home to a tremendous number of talented artists working in a variety of disciplines," said Amy Crane, senior program director at The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida. "The Community Foundation continues

to be inspired by the quality of work we see in the Art Ventures process, which makes the selection difficult, and the awards well-deserved."

Applications are reviewed by a panel of judges and predominantly evaluated on artistic excellence, with additional consideration for how the artist is influenced by and impacts Northeast Florida.

This year's selected grantees were drawn from the categories of Film, Creative Writing, Music and the Visual Arts. They include:

Patrick Barry is a commercial director and cinematographer working throughout the Southeast, calling Jacksonville his home.

Several of his projects have gained significant recognition including the nationally syndicated web documentaries, State of the RE: Union.

He was also recently a semi-finalist in Austin Film Festival's screenplay competition. The grant will fund equipment to complete postproduction on "The Maestro of Lake Orlok," a Northeast Florida-based film project.

Other winners were RaeJeana Brooks, Joe Gaskin, Cheryl McCain, Jennifer Chase, Christie Holecheck, Malcom Jackson, Paul Jackson, Tatiana Kitchen, Mark Krancer, Patrick Berry, Thorn, Shameera West and Sheila Goloborotko, all from Jacksonville.

Country Music Duo Crawford & Power to headline Freedom Fest

Festival honors active duty, veterans, first responders

ORANGE PARK — Orange Park recently announced country music duo Crawford & Power will headline this year's Freedom Fest event on Saturday, June 25. The duo has opened for a variety of artists including, The Marshall Tucker Band, Willie Nelson, Travis Tritt, The Charlie Daniels Band,



Crawford and Power

Luke Combs, Cody Johnson and 38 Special.

Gates will open at 4 p.m. with the presentation of colors by the Clay County Sheriff's Office Color Guard, followed by the National Anthem. Music begins at 4:30 p.m. with the Navy Band Southeast's Popular Music Group, "Pride," followed by local favorite Cumberland and Crawford & Power closing out the festivities.

The beloved annual event will feature a variety of local food and brews, veteran-owned businesses and crafters. Other activities include a kid's zone, a silent auction benefiting St. Michael's Soldiers, a Veterans Lounge, food trucks, beer and wine and a fireworks finale to end the evening.

Admission to the festival is free. Outside food and drink will not be permitted in the event area, and parking policies will remain consistent with daily mall operations. Guests are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and picnic blankets.

The event is made possible through partnerships with Double A Productions, WQIK 99.1, Santori Fireworks, Fields Automotive, Jacksonville Memorial Gardens and *Clay Today*.



Perla Reyes will be able to use her \$3,500 Art Venture Grant to expand her expressive character, Sitboy. The Clay County resident was one of 14 artists from Northeast Florida to earn grants from the Community Foundation.



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Green Cove gets first look at U.S. 17 Corridor Study Project

City hopes to work with state to dramatically improve the main thoroughfare

By Don Coble
don@claytodayonline.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – Residents and members of the city council got a chance Tuesday night to see a final draft of an exhaustive study on the future of U.S. Highway 17 (South Orange Avenue) from Leonard C. Taylor Parkway to Orion Road.

The city has grappled for years with how to address additional traffic and the revitalization of the downtown area. Adding to the challenge is the lack of space to significantly widen U.S. 17 and the fact the highway is operated by the Florida Department of Transportation.

The city hired Kimley-Horn for the U.S. 17 Corridor Study Project. It tasked the consultants to “create a sense of place and community within the city limits through hardscape and streetscape improvements,” according to Green Cove Springs Planning and Zoning Director Mike Daniels.

Portions of State Road 16 and U.S. 17 already are heavily traveled, especially with large tractor-trailers that use the corridor as a shortcut between Gainesville and Interstate 95 in St. Augustine.

While the council said it hopes a lot of that traffic will be diverted to the First Coast Expressway once it’s completed, Kimely-Horn’s Terry Shaw said his company projects as many as 36,000 vehicles soon will pass through the city.

Councilman Ed Gaw asked how can the



Terry Shaw (middle) of Kimley-Horne explains the proposed future of the U.S. Highway 17 corridor through the middle of Green Cove Springs.

STAFF PHOTO BY DON COBLE

U.S. 17 corridor project help move traffic through the city while also luring many visitors to pull off the main thoroughfare to enjoy local shopping, restaurants and Spring Park.

One solution is to eliminate some of the left turn lanes to create more space for wider sidewalks and attractive landscaping.

Since it’s a state highway, the city is asking the state to pick up the expected \$17.2 million tab.

“We want to see the wider sidewalks, more landscaping on one side FDOT is concerned and rightfully so about safety and trying to you know, mitigate for all the left turn turning movements,” Daniels said. “So that’s what we’re trying to work to come up with something that is going to be funded, you know, we can put together a great plan. But if it’s not going to be fund-

ed, there’s really there’s no point, but we are still working.”

Once approved, the project is expected to take between seven and 13 years, Shaw said.

In other business, the city council approve rezoning of 13.92 acres at U.S. 17 and County Road 209 that moved a plan for a 276-unit apartment complex forward. Now that rezoning has be approved, the council still has to examine the plans for the complex before approving it at a future meeting.

Also, the council denied two rezoning requests on Roberts Street that would have moved forward a proposed seven-unit apartment building on one property and seven townhouses on another.

The next Green Cove Springs City Council meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. on June 21.



Orange Park Vice-Mayor Eddie Henley announced his resignation and departed the dais about 45 minutes into Tuesday night’s town of Orange Park council meeting.

OP Vice-Mayor Henley disputes allegations, resigns after half-hour tirade

By Nick Blank
nick@claytodayonline.com

ORANGE PARK – Vice-Mayor Eddie Henley announced his resignation as a town council member following a 30-minute speech early in Tuesday night’s town meeting, saying he was subject to racism and intimidation.

The past few meetings he has mentioned allegations about him and Tuesday addressed rumors he did not live in the town or didn’t care about residents.

Henley and Council Member Alan Watt voted for Henley to become mayor, while Mayor Randy Anderson and council members Susana Thompson and John Hauber voted for a second term for Anderson.

He said before the mayoral vote in mid-May, he received rumors there

SEE RESIGN, 24

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Water

from page 1

one and ask if they're OK, but it looks like they're struggling or maybe embarrassed."

Maher, who has a captain's license as well as pursuit, life-saving and operational-related course certifications, said the marine patrol isn't out to harass boaters. He said he's worked hard to establish a good relationship with the community. His water safety advice sticks to having the necessary equipment, and being courteous to other boaters and law enforcement, who he insists are not there to spoil the party.

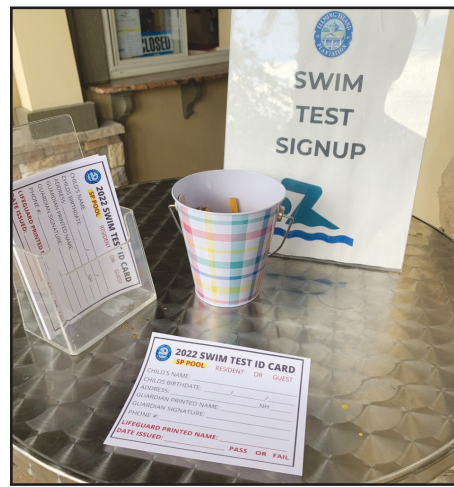
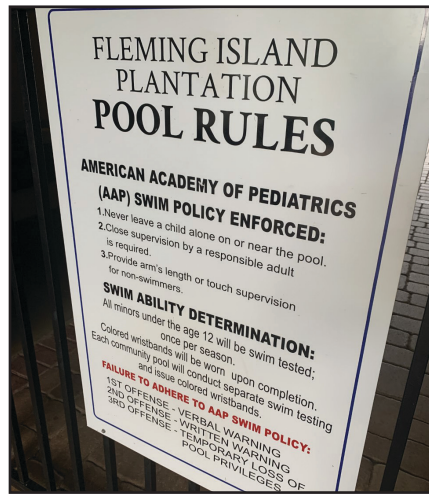
While CCSO wants the river's boaters to have fun safely, going through emergency procedures on the water is a difficult proposition. Maher shared the story of a man who jumped from a boat into the shallow water head first and had to be rushed from the water to land at a hospital. A spine injury on the water complicates the process, he said.

At different points of the river, Maher passes jet skis, pontoons and speed boats. Having the right safety equipment on board is imperative, he said.

"People buy \$20,000 play toys, and it makes no sense to not be safe," he said.

Swimming pools

Albeit without the expanse of the St. Johns River, safety is a major concern for Fleming Island Splash Park officials. After a few scares with saves and even a near-



STAFF PHOTOS BY NICK BLANK

Water safety is a priority for local emergency rescue departments since the number of unintentional drowning deaths happen during the summer months.

drowning, the pool reshaped its practices, bringing in Linda Bolger's Fast Swim Program.

Bolger administered the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and American Association of Pediatrics guidelines at the pool. There have been zero saves and near-drownings at the pool since the program was instituted, she said.

Lifejackets were a key component. The signage was changed. Children who are not swim-tested have to be kept at arm's length supervision.

"It's a prevention system for the life-guards," Bolger said. "It's a whole different philosophy. By following AAP guidelines, a child never gets in that dangerous situation."

According to CDC data, Florida has the fifth-highest rate of drownings in the U.S. For Bolger, safe swimming practices have to happen one skill, one pool – and one state at a time.

She said charges are pressed if a child is left in a hot car, but the same can't be said for a child who drowns near authority figures. Learning to swim is a vital ability early and later in life, she said.

Affordability of swimming lessons varies, though some areas are teaching swimming lessons unconventionally, like in blowup pools near public libraries.

"It's got to be more consistent. We've got to be advocating for zero saves," Bolger

SEE WATER, 19



Red Cross:
It's important to know the basics to safely perform a water rescue

By Don Coble
 don@claytodayonline.com

CLAY COUNTY – An average of 10 people drown unintentionally every day in the United States, and of those, two are children 14 and younger.

It's a number Skip Cramer has spent more than 30 years trying to lower.

The most-important step is preventing an accident. But happens when someone is already in the water fighting for a gasp of air – or their life.

It takes as little as 20 seconds for someone to drown, Cramer said. Most who perish, die between 20 seconds and one minute submerged.

A 30-year community volunteer with the American Red Cross and the former CEO of the Northeast Florida Chapter of

SEE RESCUE, 24

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PruittHealth-Fleming Island's Davis earns Registered Nurse of the Year award

For Clay Today

FLEMING ISLAND – Cynthia Davis, a caregiver at PruittHealth – Fleming Island, recently was named Registered Nurse of the Year by the Florida Health Care Association as part of its Excellence in Long Term Care Awards Program.

The FHCA awards honor exemplary nurses for their commitment and dedication to long-term care communities through clinical practice, person-centered care, continuous quality improvement, customer responsiveness, leadership and communication.

Davis was nominated by her administrator, Eric Weisz, because of her incredible track record in caring for long-term patients and training new PruittHealth employees.

“Cynthia successfully grew the location’s staffing and recruiting efforts during one of the most challenging and unprecedented times of the health care profession. From 2019 to 2021, she

oriented and developed more than 150 employees per year at our center. Her contribution to our organization has been nothing less than outstanding,” Weisz said.

As a registered nurse in the Jacksonville area since 2013, Davis joined PruittHealth – Fleming Island before the center opened to patients in November 2018. Her experience in establishing the Fleming Island center enabled her to become a frequently tapped advisor to assist with opening and establishing standards and practices for other new PruittHealth locations in Florida.

Most days, Davis can be found interviewing and coaching caregivers, as well as ensuring each PruittHealth employee grows and succeeds in personal and professional endeavors. A proud Turkish immigrant, Davis enjoys spending time with her husband and international travel, including returning to Turkey to see family and a recent trip to Thailand.



PHOTOS BY NATALIE GILSTRAP

Park of Palms is considered a hidden treasure in Keystone Heights for its facilities to enhance independent and assisted living residents.

Park of the Palms assists residents to thrive with lively assisted living

By Natalie Gilstrap
For Clay Today

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – Park of the Palms is a Christian retirement community that offers independent and assisted living.

It was founded by George Tibbits when he wanted a southern extension of his facility in New York. It began as a Bible Conference Center before turning into a retirement community. Park of the Palms has one and two-bedroom apartments for independent living and one and two-person suites for their assisted living. They also have a variety of amenities that the residents can enjoy such as a heated pool, dining lodge, walking path, church, community center and a recreational center.

The retirement community also offers a lodge for relatives to stay while visiting.

Not only does Park of the Palms provide a community with amenities, but they also care for the well-being of its residents.

“In the assisted living facility we can assist people with their activities of daily life,” said Denise Cribbs, Vice President and Director of Operations.

Bathing, dressing, grooming and house-keeping are some of the daily activities the staff can help their residents. They also do individualized laundry for those living in assisted living. Meals and activities like BINGO, physical activities, gardening, crafts, and games are provided for the residents as well.

“We take excellent care of our residents,” she said.

Park of the Palms also hosts social events monthly and on holidays for their residents. They have a special holiday meal in their dining hall on Easter, Christ-



Vice President and Director of Operations Denise Cribbs said there are many daily activities that keep residents busy.

mas and Thanksgiving. In addition, they have a Mother’s Day Social, a Christmas party and a Father’s Day event. In the summer, the residents have an event called Ice Cream Social.

Lastly, the retirement community offers a peaceful environment for its residents and individualized care. Unfortunately, despite the excellent care and activities Park of the Palms offers to its residents, it is not well known in the Keystone Heights area. Due to that, it is seen as a hidden gem in the area.

To learn more about Park of the Palms, which is located at 204 Maranatha Road, visit www.parkofthepalms.org or call (352) 473-6100

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STAFF PHOTOS BY NICK BLANK

Doctors Lake Marina Lead Dockmaster Dale Sampson, above, said boating safety starts at the dock, while Green Cove Springs Police Department Commander Shawn Hines, below, keeps an eye on the St. Johns River to make sure everyone has fun and safe day on the water.

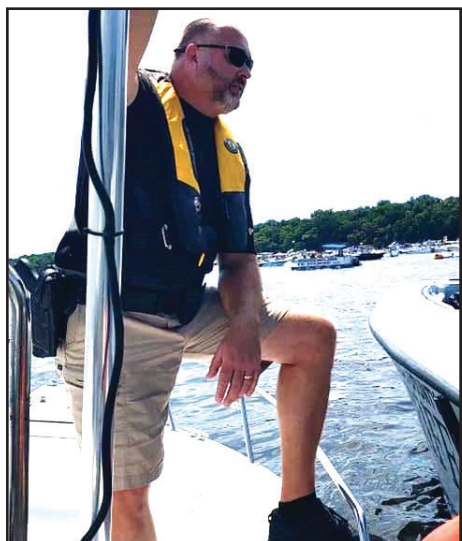
Water

from page 17

said. "If (children) are four years or older, we can teach them how to swim in 10 lessons utilizing life jackets."

As far as certifications go, longtime American Red Cross member Skip Cramer urged residents to receive CPR and AED training. An extra 20 seconds or one minute wasted during a hazardous situation could lead to tragedy.

"I always encourage somebody in the household to be CPR and First Aid-trained," Cramer said.



Marine Patrol with GCPD

Back to the law enforcement side, Green Cove Springs Police Department Operations Commander Shawn Hines also leads the organization's marine patrol. He patrols an area from Bayard Point to the train tracks near Black Creek.

"The biggest thing I would say is, law enforcement and (U.S.) Coast Guard, we harp on it all the time, is having the proper safety equipment," Hines said. "Our boats are on trailers. Right now, if there is no law enforcement on the water, it could be a 20-to-30-minute wait for us to arrive."

Hines' role pertained to emergency callouts for distressed boaters and related incidents, though on routine patrols he

conducts inspections and looks for unsafe conditions. Hines drew parallels between an officer stopping a vessel and an officer in a motor vehicle pulling over a car.

State law now requires civilian boaters to come to an idle speed when they see a law enforcement boat with lights activated stopping a vessel. Two vessels can be side-by-side and rattled by a wake, he said.

"That is very important for boaters to adhere to. It's a safety issue," Hines said. "It smashes the boats together. If somebody has a hand or leg between boats that could be a serious injury situation."

Smart Boating

Sherri and James Varner visited Doctors Lake Marina earlier this week. They used to own boats and are looking for one again. They said they would get any certifications or equipment necessary.

"We're going to get any training we need for storms," Sherri Varner said. "We know the basics. Florida law may change. We need to stay aware and educated."

Lead Dockmaster Dale Samson, who served 25 years in the U.S. Navy, drives a golf cart around the property, surveying the docked boats. Samson stresses preventative maintenance for pumps, switches and lines. Hours rather than miles are important for maintenance, he tells boat owners. Get insurance via Sea Tow, he said.

"Sea Tow will give you five gallons of gas to get you to the nearest marina," Samson said.

Follow the requirements for how many people can be in the boat and have approximately 10% more lifejackets than your boat's capacity, he said. Have an anchor and working whistle.

"The horn doesn't count," Samson explained. Good safety comes in many forms. Samson recalled seeing several younger people on a boat about to refuel. The boat had a short circuit somewhere and caught fire. He said he told them to get off while he put the blaze out.

"They are standing in the boat wondering what to do," he added. "If you have a boat by a gas pump, that's on fire, your best bet is to get off that boat."

the Red Cross, Cramer said saving someone in the water takes skill and knowledge.

"Back about 50-60 years ago, we had a saying: 'reach, throw, row, go.' Today, the Red Cross would not encourage you to the 'go' part it."

Cramer said only someone trained in water rescue should attempt a pull a drowning victim to safety. A person in distress often tries to use the rescuer to gain leverage to get above the water line. In response, the rescuer too often becomes the victim.

That leaves reach, throw and row.

"The whole idea being not to put rescuer in the position of becoming a victim," Cramer said. "The next is throw and by the way reach can include a broom, a lawn rake and for pool owners, that cool brush that reaches almost across your pool.

"You can also throw a life preserver or a life ring with a lanyard on it. So, once it reaches the victim and they're capable of rubbing it that you can pull them back in to the safety of the shore or the edge of the pool."

If that's not an option, Cramer said to use a boat, if available, to reach a victim.

Getting a victim out of the water is only half of the rescue. It's imperative at least one person in every group is certified in Cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Cramer said it's important to see if a victim has the ability to respond.

"You yell at them. Yell their name. If they don't answer, it's time to start CPR," he said.

While it's still all right to breath into a victim's mouth, Cramer said the most-vital response are chest compressions.

There are several apps on the Red Cross website that offer rescue tips, Cramer said.

"I think really basic is Red Cross has some really terrific application that they've come up with in the last few years," he said. "If somebody is looking for something they can do right after they open their phone, I would send them to redcross.org/apps and they can just go into their search engine. Click on Red Cross apps and what it will do it will take you to a whole shopping list."

There are several private and public classes to learn CPR, including Florida Fire and EMS Training Institute and Encore CAN and CPR Training, both in Orange Park, and Red Cross locations in Jacksonville and St. Augustine.

"We have some kind of fundamental rules that we deal with in terms of water safety at polls and there they seem like common sense," Cramer said. "But somehow we still managed to have a lot of kids and adults drowning. And among children ages 4 and under, drowning is the leading cause of accidental death. So, it is a big deal."

And a number Cramer is committed to change.

A promotional poster for a concert. At the top right, it says "ALL-STAR CONCERT SERIES" in large, bold, blue letters. Below that, in smaller text, it says "VALDOSTA, GEORGIA" and "PRESENTED BY TKO". The central image shows a woman, Tameka Mann, wearing a leopard print long-sleeved top and a bright pink skirt. She is smiling and has her arms raised in a celebratory gesture. At the bottom, the name "TAMEKA MANN" is written in large, bold, white letters with a blue outline. Below her name, the date "June 11" is written in a yellow, cursive font. At the very bottom, the words "WILD ADVENTURES" are written in a large, stylized, yellow font with a red outline, and "THEME PARK" is written in a smaller, white font below it. The background of the poster is a dark blue and green gradient with a rope-like texture at the bottom.

Hopeful Eagle Scout to-be gifts courtyard project to junior high

By Nick Blank
nick@claytodayonline.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – Not many eighth graders leave a positive legacy at their junior high school.

Enter Shane Sigman, an almost-Eagle Scout and Troop 309 member who attended Green Cove Springs Junior High. For his Eagle Scout project, he renovated a portion of a school courtyard outside the cafeteria, including benches and rails.



Shane Sigman

Sigman passed the area every day. The fences and benches needed a coat of paint, he said.

“I was afraid someone would lean on the railing and knock it over,” Sigman said. “I was doing my Eagle Scout project and wanted to help the school however I could.”

Eagle Scout projects must be well-planned to the most minute detail like measurements of wood. Sigman fundraised money to get the wood. Sigman and a team had to stain the wood, remove the structures in place and install the new pieces. They arrived on a Saturday and worked for about nine hours.

When a downpour came that Saturday,



Eagle Scout hopeful Shane Sigman’s project was replacing benches and rails at Green Cove Springs Junior High.



there were about five hours of work left. He also turned 14 in the middle of his project.

“We came back the next day. On my birthday,” Sigman said. “It’s a birthday project, I guess.”

Sigman still has his conference and board review to go, but there was no pressure to achieve his Eagle Scout rank, he said. “I want to help out the troop and give back to scouts,” he said. “We do as much as we can in the community.”

Sigman paused and reflected on how completing the project now will free up time when he attends Fleming Island High this fall.

“I just took my time, I had goals and I

wanted to complete those goals. I wasn’t planning on being an Eagle Scout this early,” Sigman said. “There’ll be no pressure to do it in high school, so that’s a relief.”

Green Cove Springs Junior High Principal Justin Faulkner has assisted with similar scout-related projects before. He said Sigman’s planning and vision transformed the space.

“I think it’s definitely a work that leaves a legacy,” Faulkner said. “Whenever you leave a space better than you found it, especially for an eighth-grader, it’s impressive.”

It’s not just a bench and railings, he added, it’s an improvement to an area stu-

dents traverse every day. “With a project like Shane’s, you start the ideas in other kids to do those kinds of projects and improve spaces for the sake of other people,” Faulkner said. Troop Scoutmaster Marty Luchter called Sigman dedicated, family-oriented, and a good role model for the younger scouts. Sigman is involved in several facets of the Boy Scout organization.

“He’ll jump out and help them right off the bat,” Luchter said of Sigman.

Luchter said Sigman’s project was intense.

“(Sigman) had a lot of hours. He wanted to do it before he turned 14,” Luchter said. “I couldn’t believe it.”

Entertainment News



Middleburg’s Malcolm Hall to tape ‘Who is Malcolm’ special at Thrasher-Horne Center

ORANGE PARK – There are comedians. And there is Malcolm Hall. Hall, a 2005 graduate of Middleburg High, started his comedy career in 2009 at the Greensboro, North Carolina, Comedy Zone while attending college.

After creating a foundation for his stand-up

comedy career, he gravitated toward the bright lights of Hollywood since 2013, Hall will be recording a new set called “Who is Malcolm” at the Studio Theater at Thrasher-Horne Center, 283 College Dr., on July 23. The show starts at 8 p.m. and tickets are available at thcenter.org or by calling (904) 276-6815. Hall has performed at the world-famous Comedy Store, Hollywood Improv and other legendary venues.

He also hosts a monthly comedy show in Bellflower, California. If you know Malcolm he is “Cheap Not Broke.” After performing comedy all over the country he is finally coming home to let everyone know “Who is Malcolm?”

Michael Feinstein to salute Judy Garland’s 100th birthday at Thrasher-Horne

ORANGE PARK – Legendary performer Michael Feinstein salutes and celebrates the great Judy Garland on her 100th birthday on Feb. 11 at the Thrasher-Horne Center. Feinstein will lead you on a historical journey through Garland’s amazing life, telling stories that he has learned from Liza Minnelli and other close friends. Audiences will be treated to recently discovered, previously unheard musical arrangements, as



well as gain rare insight into the enduring Garland mystique. Tickets, start at \$49, are available at thcenter.org

Paula Cole, Sophie B. Hawkins to perform on Nov. 20

ORANGE PARK – In 1996, Paula Cole released her self-produced, second album “This Fire”. It was incendiary, a double-platinum smash. The first single, “Where Have All The Cowboys Gone?” catapulted to the Top 10. Her songwriting was loved by traditionalists, feminists, the LGBTQIA community, the whole world. Sophie B. Hawkins burst onto the international music scene with her 1992 platinum-selling debut album, Tongues and Tails, which included the indelible hit song “Damn, I Wish I Was Your Lover”, and earned her a Best New Artist Grammy nomination.

Both will perform on Nov. 20 at the Thrasher-Horne Center, 283 College Dr., at 7 p.m. Tickets, which start at \$29, are available at thcenter.org or by calling (904) 276-6815. Cole was nominated for 7 Grammy awards and was the first woman to be nominated as Producer of the Year with no collaborators. Her second single, the anthemic “I Don’t Want to Wait” dominated charts for a year and then lived again as the well-loved theme song for “Dawson’s Creek.”

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Wednesday service: 12:15 p.m.

GREEN COVE SPRINGS

CELEBRATION FELLOWSHIP CHURCH
806 Oak St. • 284-1570

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH
Paul Salazar, Pastor
506 So. Highland Ave. • 284-5936

CHURCH OF CHRIST
Claude McElDowney
3650 Russell Rd. • 284-1858

CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST
703 Middleburg Ave.

CONGREGATION HOLINESS CHURCH
Rev. Ronnie Surrency
Hwy. 16 • Home • 284-5913
Congregational Holiness Church School

CROSSROAD LUTHERAN CHURCH
5101 Lakeshore Drive West
Fleming Island Plantation
Rev. James Graesser • 264-6575

DECOY BAPTIST CHURCH
Bobby Baker
671 Decoy Rd. • 284-5223

FAITH BAPTIST TEMPLE
Rev. Louie Doan • 4330 CR-15A

FIRST AFRICAN BAPTIST CHURCH
433 Palmetto Ave. 284-5490

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
615 Walnut St. • 284-9231
Pastor Anselmo Castano

FIRST HAITIAN CHURCH
Rev. Fritzner Jean
1489 Russell Rd.

FIRST UNITED PENTECOSTAL
Buddy Dean, Pastor
5945 Hwy 17 S.
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043
Sun. @ 10 a.m.; Thurs. @ 7 p.m.
850-322-4201

MIDDLEBURG

APOSTOLIC LIGHTHOUSE OF MIDDLEBURG
Pastor M. David Goodman
4182 CR 218 Suite 6,
Middleburg, FL 32068
Sunday Worship 11:00a.m. / Wed. 7:00pm.
(904) 298-1443 or (904) 945-9663

BLACK CREEK CHURCH OF CHRIST
3216 State Rd. 218 • 282-4033

BLACK POND BAPTIST CHURCH
Rev. Charlie Hunt, Senior Pastor
3644 Old Jennings Rd., Middleburg FL 32068
282-5718

BRANAN FIELD BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Jack Lee
908 Brannanfield Rd. 282-7970

CALVARY BAPTIST
Pastor Ken Pledger
1532 Longbay Rd. • 282-0407

CELEBRATION CHURCH - MIDDLEBURG
Meeting at Tynes Elementary
9:30a.m. & 11:15a.m. 264-8133

CINNAMON STREET BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Daniel Padgett
20 Cinnamon St. 282-0881

CHRISTIAN FAITH CENTER
4201 Everett Ave. • Middleburg, FL
Wendell A. Shaw, Minister
Mark Sellers, Minister 291-1235

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN
Charles McCuckin
1651 Russell Rd. 282-5048
Corner of CR 220 & 209
Sunday School 10:00 a.m.
Sunday Service 11:00 a.m.

GOOD SAMARITAN ANGLICAN CHURCH
Rev. Christopher M. Klukas, Rector
3813 Old Jennings Rd.
904-406-5660
www.GoodSamaritanAnglican.org
Sunday Worship 8:00am & 10:30am
Sunday School 9:30-10:15am

CROSSROADS BAPTIST CHURCH
1595 Baxley Road, Middleburg, FL 32068
Pastor John Sweat, Sr. 904-376-9049

EGLISE BAPTISTE DU CALVAIRE
A French-Creole Speaking Church
Dr. Samuel Louis-Jean, Pastor
1532 Long Bay Rd.
Sunday School 10:00 a.m.
Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
Sunday Night 7:00pm
639-5244

EVANGEL TEMPLE
Southwest 5040 CR 218
Middleburg, FL 32068
Sunday Morning 10:40a.m. Wed. 7:30p.m.
904-291-1426

FIRST ASSEMBLY OF GOD
Pastor Ira Cloud
3167 CR 215
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m.
Wednesday 7 pm to 8 pm, Children's Church,
Student Ministries, Adult Bible Study

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
Dr. Bobby R. Lewis, Jr.
2645 Blanding Blvd. 282-5289

FIRST CHURCH OF GOD
Pastor Bob Coulter
3965 Old Jennings Rd. 282-1810

FREEDOM DESTINY
1241 Blanding Blvd.,
Orange Park, 32065
Pastor Adam Smithyman

GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Edward L. Wenberg
Everett Avenue, Middleburg
282-7777
Pastor Melvin Register

KINGSLEY LAKE BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Jonathan Rodriguez, Pastor
6289 Mary Dot Lane
Starke, FL 32091
Sunday School 9:45am.
Sunday Worship 11a.m. & 6p.m.
Wednesday Prayer Service 7p.m.

LAKE ASBURY BAPTIST CHURCH
2674 Henley Rd. • 282-7079
Pastor Matt Swain
Sunday School: 9:15 & 10:15
Sunday Worship: 9, 10:30 & 6
LBCFamily.org

LIVING WATERS OF MIDDLEBURG
Dennis Mills, Pastor
5118 County Road 218 West 291-0704

CENTERPOINT BAPTIST
Pastor Lee Fulerwilder
1650 Blanding, Middleburg 291-1880
Sunday 10:15 & 5:30, Wednesday 7:00
Sunday 10:15 & 5:30, Wednesday 7:00

MAXVILLE ASSEMBLY OF GOD
Rev. Linda Adkins
8140 Jct. US 1 • Mevl 289-9727

MIDDLEBURG CHURCH OF GOD
2728 Howard Rd. • 282-2957

MIDDLEBURG PRESBYTERIAN
Pastor Holly Medaens 4564 Rosemary St. • 282-0130

MIDDLEBURG UNITED METHODIST
Rev. Brian Sanderson
3825 Main St. • 282-5589

NORTH MIDDLEBURG BAPTIST CHURCH
Rev. Ron Robertson
2360 Blanding Blvd (behind Karate Studio)
735-4318

MORNING STAR FAMILY CHURCH
Pastor Tom Croft
3900 Main St. 282-3393

NEW INDEPENDENT CHURCH OF GOD
4360 Longmie Rd.

OAK GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Kermit Matthews
CR 215, Middleburg 282-2984

PINEWOOD PRESBYTERIAN
Pastor J. D. Funday
198 Knight Box Rd.
Middleburg, Florida

SALVATION ARMY
2795 CR220 • 276-6677

SOUTH MIDDLEBURG BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Delton Kilpatrick
4565 Alligator Blvd.
904-406-2883

ST. LUKE CATHOLIC CHURCH
Rev. Fresh Blaszkowski
1606 Blanding Blvd. • 282-0439
Sunday 8:15 and 11 a.m.

ST. PETER'S LUTHERAN
1614 Blanding Blvd. • 282-8876

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
4342 County Road 218, Middleburg, Fla.
(904) 282-1040
Worship services begin at 9 a.m. on Sundays

THE ROCK BIBLE CHURCH
1831 Henley Rd. Middleburg
(904)572-6599
Sunday School 9:45 a.m. Worship service: 9:15, 11:00 and 5:30 p.m.

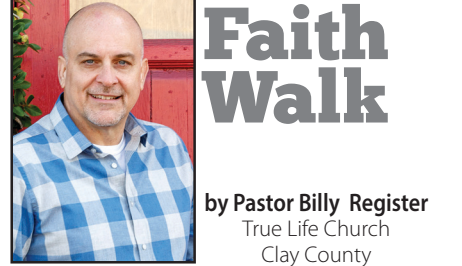
TRUE LIFE
Rev. Bill Register
2221 CR 220, Middleburg
904-284-3030

VINEYARD CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
P.O. Box 862 or 3114 CR 220 904-282-0310

ORANGE PARK

THE SPRINGS CHURCH
317 Blanding Blvd., Orange Park, FL 32073
379-6208
Pastor John Bailey www.tscjax.com

ABUNDANT JOY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
Pastor Rev. Donald F. Taylor
999 Blanding Blvd. 213-0048



Faith Walk

by Pastor Billy Register
True Life Church
Clay County

Does God Still Perform Miracles Today?

27 "I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me? Jeremiah 32:27 (NIV)

Throughout the Bible, we see miraculous things happening by the power of God. The Red Sea is parted to save the Israelites, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, Jesus and the disciples are healing the sick, and many other examples that are too numerous to list. In the Scriptures, we often see God working in the lives of people in dramatic and astonishing ways!

When reading these stories in the Bible, some may be confused because they don't see God working exactly this way in their own life. This contrast causes many people to ask the question, "Does God still perform miracles today?"

The short answer is simple: YES, He does! But there's more to it. First, we must realize the timing of the miracles we see in the Bible and the purpose that God used them for. Hebrews 2:4 says, "God confirmed the message by giving signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit whenever he chose." (NLT).

Everything in the Old Testament was leading to the arrival of Jesus and what He did at the cross. Jesus brought the message of the Gospel, through which we find salvation. The signs and miracles performed during this time in human history were to point to Jesus. This also proved Jesus was who He said He was. It confirmed the Gospel message He brought with Him.

Yes, God absolutely performs miracles today! They may not always come in the way we expect, but rest assured, God will not withhold ANY of His power to better the lives of His children! He is constantly working in our lives in both big and small ways. But make no mistake, the power of God brings healing, deliverance, and freedom in 2022 just as it did in the First Century. If you are facing something that seems impossible, it is not out of the reach of God's power.

Jesus said in Mark 10:27 (NLT), "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God." You can build your life on that truth!

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Police Briefs

Four arrested following alcohol-fueled argument at local bar

MIDDLEBURG – Four people were arrested on June 5 following a couple disturbances at the Southern Social Whiskey Bar and Lounge on County Road 220.

William Gunnar Westberry, 22, of Orange Park, was charged with disorderly intoxication and trespassing; Rachael Lynn Walton, 30, of Martinsville, Indiana, was charged with driving under the influence; Joshua Vincent Walton, 29, of Jacksonville, was charged with resisting law enforcement with violence and resisting, obstructing or opposing law enforcement; and Dawson Robert Ewing, 23, was charged with resisting, obstructing or opposing law enforcement after a Clay County Sheriff's Office deputy called for backup when onlookers became rowdy while they were dealing with a suspected impaired driver.

According to the arrest report, deputies noticed a car parked in the service alley at the bar with its emergency lights blinking. When they approached the car, they found Rachael and Joshua Walton asleep with the car running.

Deputies eventually were able to wake the couple up. After smelling alcohol and noticing both seemed incoherent, they attempted to give the driver, Rachael Walton, a field sobriety test, but she "continued to interrupt the instructions and was being belligerent." She then was arrested. At the jail, her blood alcohol measured at .185 or .193. The legal limit in Florida is .08.

While deputies dealt with her, her brother, Joshua Walton, became "enraged" watching his sister go through a field sobriety test. Joshua Walton "threw his elbows to the rear of him in an attempt to strike" the deputy. Joshua Walton then was tripped by the deputy so he could be restrained.

As that happened, Westberry and Ewing started yelling at deputies from the



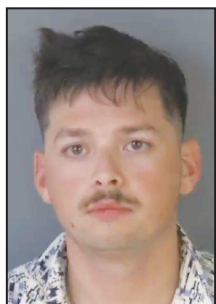
William Westberry



Rachael Walton



Joshua Walton



Robert Ewing

front door of the bar. As Westberry passed the deputies in the car, they noticed he seemed to be "heavily intoxicated." They told Westberry not to drive home.

The staff at the bar said they wanted Westberry removed from the property and asked he be giving a no trespass warning to prevent him from returning to the bar.

After being ordered to leave five times, Westberry was arrested.

Green Cove Springs man busted for watching child pornography

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – A man was arrested with more than 100 photographs of children having sex after the Clay County Sheriff's Office's Internet Crimes Against Children Unit and Homeland Security Investigations got a CyberTip from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

David Wayne Copeland, 54, of Green Cove Springs, was charged with 10 counts of possessing files with at least 10 photographs of sexual performance by a child after Google discovered the images on Copeland's account.

The files were downloaded into Copeland's account between Nov. 24-26, 2020, according to CCSO. The case was investigated for more than a year before Copeland was taken into custody.

Copeland told investigators he viewed the photographs "maybe a hundred times, I guess." He said the youngest child was about 10. According to the arrest warrant, he also told investigators, "I feel so horrible."

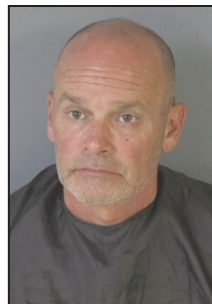
Copeland's bond was set at \$750,030. His next court appearance is scheduled for June 28.

Pair arrested for squatting at vacant Middleburg house

MIDDLEBURG – A pair of squatters were arrested on June 1 on Myrtle Street after a short standoff with the Clay County Sheriff's Office SWAT team.

Nathan Ray Morris, 44, of Hilliard, and Lauren Nicole Bowman, 36, of Middleburg, were charged with burglary and resisting arrest after they spent two days in a vacant house. Deputies were able to charge the couple because they used electricity without the permission of the house's owner.

According to the arrest report, a neighbor became suspicious after she noticed



David Copeland



Nathan Morris

cars parked in the driveway. She knew the house had been vacant for a year, and she asked the man why he was at the home when he was in the driveway. He told her he was there to "clean up the property for a friend."

The woman called the sheriff's office and the couple refused to leave the house once it was surrounded. The SWAT team eventually made entry into the house and found them barricaded in the master bedroom.

Morris' bond was set at \$35,005; Bowman's bond was set at \$60,005.

JSO officer indicted for asking boys to share sexually explicit photos

JACKSONVILLE – U.S. Attorney Roger B. Handberg announced the return of an federal indictment against Alejandro Carmona-Fonseca, 47, of Green Cove Springs, charging him with one count of using a minor child to produce sexually explicit images, two counts of attempting to use a minor child to produce sexually explicit images and one count of attempted online enticement of a minor to engage in illegal sexual activity.

For each of the first three counts, Carmona-Fonseca faces a mandatory minimum penalty of 15 years and up to a maximum of 30 years in federal prison. For the fourth count, Carmona-Fonseca faces a mandatory minimum penalty of 10 years and up to a maximum of life in federal prison. In addition, he faces up to a \$1 million fine and a potential life term of supervised release. Carmona made his



Lauren Bowman

initial appearance in federal court on June 2 and was ordered detained without bond pending trial.

According to public records, Carmona-Fonseca is currently employed as an officer with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

According to the indictment, between April 2021 and March 2022, Carmona-Fonseca used a minor to produce or attempt to produce sexually explicit images. The indictment also alleges that in March 2022, Carmona-Fonseca attempted to entice an individual he met at a fitness center in Lake Asbury who was believed to be a minor to engage in illegal sexual activity, that is, to produce sexually explicit images.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed one or more violations of federal criminal law, and every defendant is presumed innocent unless, and until, proven guilty.

The case was investigated by the Clay County Sheriff's Office and Homeland Security Investigations. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Ashley Washington.

This is another case brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who sexually exploit children, and to identify and rescue victims.

For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.usdoj.gov/psc. For more information about internet safety education, please visit www.usdoj.gov/psc and click on the tab "resources."

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, June 7

Willie Davis, 57, Middleburg, battery
Tiffany D. Kronenburg, 32, Fleming Island, domestic battery
Ricky D. Strickland, 55, Green Cove Springs, battery (Duval)
Matthew E. Wilkerson, 30, Orange Park, domestic battery
Nicholas J. Priester, 20, Green Cove Springs, VOP-burglary
Jason D. Kelley, 46, Green Cove Springs, VOP-possession-fentanyl, VOP-possession-methamphetamine
Juan Garcia, 43, Orange Park, domestic battery

Gabriel C. Singleton, 27, Orange Park, FTA
Cody M.G. O'Neill, 25, Orange Park, FTA (Pasco)

Monday, June 6

Tina J. Culp, 56, Orange Park, shoplifting
Exalus Justilien, 59, Green Cove Springs, FTA-failure to register vehicle
Seth M. Sieminski, 33, Green Cove Springs, VOP-DUI
Gidado A. Cofield, 44, Fleming Island, domestic battery

Sunday, June 5

William P. Best, 28, Middleburg, domestic battery
Christian E.M. Jackman, 23, Orange Park, fugitive from justice
Dwayne H. Douglas, 52, Orange Park, possession-firearm/ammunition by convicted felon

County receives Vac-Con truck ahead of hurricane season

For Clay Today

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – The Clay County Public Works Department recently purchased a new Vac-Con Single Engine Combination Machine to help with the ongoing maintenance of stormwater drainage systems in the county and to prepare for hurricane season.

Clay County now has two Vac-Con units the Public Works team uses to regularly clear out stormwater systems. This specialized piece of equipment can identify where a clog or defect is in the storm drain, so crews can clear the line or make any needed repairs. Last year upgrades were made to the camera unit, so crews can also send a small camera inside the storm pipe and determine the extent of any

damage that needs to be repaired.

All components of the stormwater systems are carefully inspected and cleaned. Special attention is given to clearing debris out of retention ponds and underground drainage structures that carry stormwater away from streets and houses to retention ponds. Drainage systems in areas of the county that have experienced localized flooding in the past are given priority for cleanout. Other areas are prioritized when residents call in with drainage issues.

The Vac-Cons have a 180-degree articulating hose reel with 600 feet of three-quarter-inch hose and a nozzle that sprays highly pressurized water through a storm pipe to loosen any mud, leaves, sticks, or other debris that may be clogging the



pipes. The vacuum hose then draws the water and loosened debris back into a storage tank on the unit for proper disposal. In the field, the Vac-Con can be easily refilled at a fire hydrant.

The stormwater system is flushed clean at each access point all the way to the outlet at the stormwater pond to ensure runoff can flow unobstructed, and the system

can handle the heavy downpours associated with tropical storms.

“Commissioners have made it a priority to provide our Public Works department with the equipment they need to keep our stormwater systems functioning properly, and this new Vac-Con unit is a great investment for Clay County,” said Board of Commissioners Chairman Wayne Bolla.

Arrests

from page 22

Brian S. Tymoniewicz, 46, Melrose, DUI with property damage/personal injury

Tamara M. Fulton-Dolan, 43, Keystone Heights, failure to register

Jermarcus D. Bradley, 29, Green Cove Springs, burglary

Joshua V. Walton, 29, Middleburg, resisting law enforcement with violence, resist/obstruct/oppose law enforcement

Rachael L. Walton, 30, Middleburg, DUI
Sarah J. Lammers, 37, Orange Park, DUI
William G. Westberry, 22, Middleburg, disorderly intoxication, trespassing

Dawson R. Ewing, 23, Middleburg, resist/obstruct/oppose law enforcement

Thomure F. Queen, 33, Orange Park, trespassing

Saturday, June 4

Kendall Hachez, 33, Green Cove Springs, DUI

Amber L. Waldron, 29, Orange Park, fugitive from justice

Geshyla F. Street, 19, Starke, battery, assault with intent to do violence

Frank Parra, 21, Orange Park, battery
Sharon D. Graves, 52, Middleburg, FTA-possession-drug paraphernalia, FTA-battery

Kelly C. Bridgman, 43, Middleburg, two counts VOP-community control

Cody A. Gale, 24, Orange Park, battery
Mark E. Orbe, 51, Middleburg, possession-methamphetamine, possession-fentanyl, possession-drug paraphernalia

Steven K. Turner, 70, Middleburg, possession-marijuana

Kierstin A. Rissman, 26, Orange Park, battery

Friday, June 3

Michelle L. Swafford, 37, Middleburg, trespassing

Felipe O. Borges, 41, Middleburg, domestic battery

Morency Cherfrere, 43, Orange Park, non-support

Vanessa Lockett, 70, Orange Park, battery

Thursday, June 2

Joshua P. Dempsey, 32, Green Cove Springs, three counts contempt of court
Mathew L. Zummo, 35, Green Cove Springs, VOP-aggravated assault with deadly weapon, VOP-resist/obstruct/oppose law enforcement

Charles C. Chamberlain, 49, Keystone Heights, shoplifting

Gregory L. James, 39, Green Cove Springs, non-support

David W. Copeland, 54, Green Cove Springs, 10 counts possession/control/view depiction of child sexual conduct

Victor A. Flores, 28, Middleburg, domestic batter, child abuse

Brittany R. Wink, 22, battery in detention center

Calogero A. Mazarella, 26, Middleburg, possession-marijuana

Vincent L. Adams, 30, Orange Park, grand theft auto, resist/obstruct/oppose law enforcement

Wednesday, June 1

Summer M. Shepherd, 36, Keystone Heights, battery

Samuel E. Hense, 24, Fleming Island, DUI

Ruthann M. Cooper, 27, Green Cove Springs, violation of pretrial release conditions for domestic violence

Lauren N. Bowman, 36, Middleburg, burglary, resist/obstruct/oppose law enforcement

Graham T. Marcum, 45, Green Cove Springs, FTA-possession-firearm/ammunition by felon, FTA-possession-hydrocodone, FTA-failure to register vehicle

Neil E. Tressler, 44, Orange Park, burglary

Nathan R. Morris, 44, Middleburg, burglary, resist/obstruct/oppose law enforcement

Brandon E.I. Dawson, 29, Green Cove Springs, two counts violation of pretrial release conditions for domestic violence, DUI

Daniel A. Cooper, 57, Green Cove Springs, vandalism

Richard A. Garrett, 62, Orange Park, trespassing after warning

Experts warn to take precautions for cyber-attacks during summer vacations

For Clay Today

CLAY COUNTY – Now that the 2022 school year has come to an end, the surge of summer travel plans begins. With an estimated 60% of Americans planning at least one trip over the next three months, hackers have roughly 200 billion projected tourists to prey on.

Lookout's Cyber Security Expert, Hank Schless, shares how these cyber-attacks usually capitalize on travelers who are often overwhelmed or distracted when in unfamiliar environments, like airports and cafes.

Public Wi-Fi connections

“Although many airports offer free Wi-Fi connectivity, you should make sure that you join the official airport network and not a similar network that is configured to trick

travelers into giving up their usernames and passwords”

Attackers have been known to set up fake networks – with obvious but convincing names like ‘Starbucks_Guest_Wi-Fi.’

Once you connect, they’ll gain access to sensitive information, including your login credentials, emails, and messages.

To protect yourself from Wi-Fi threats, alter your device’s settings so that it does not automatically connect to nearby networks, which the Lookout app does automatically.

Social awareness

While on the go, travelers rely on power outlets and USB cords to keep their mobile device’s battery charged. Attackers can exploit USB chargers by loading malware onto them that infects your device the sec-

ond you plug it in, so always be aware of your surroundings

If someone approaches you and offers their USB charging cord, it is best to decline.

Always travel with your own USB cords, and plug your charger directly into an electrical socket (vs USB port) if possible.

The easiest place for a scammer to steal or hack your phone is in crowded areas – so never leave your phone or device unattended and only let people you know “borrow” your devices.

SMS and email travel updates

“It’s important to be on guard for travel-related email, text and social media scams as well,” Schless said. “Attackers may try to steal a traveler’s credentials through

phishing campaigns that pretend to be an airline, credit card company, or TSA.”

Here’s how it works: a scammer will send a message telling the recipient their TSA PreCheck needs to be renewed, but the link in the renewal email leads to a fake site where hackers can accept payment and steal a victim’s personal information.

Although the TSA sends renewal reminder texts and emails, travelers should always go directly to the TSA website for information on their existing accounts.

For added protection, consumers can also download security protection apps, like Lookout.

They will automatically monitor and identify scam URLs in email, text messages, and on the web and block you from threats that can do harm.



Clay County Fire Rescue teaches Cardiopulmonary resuscitation in an effort to save lives during an emergency like accidental drowning.

Rescue

from page 17

the Red Cross, Cramer said saving someone in the water takes skill and knowledge.

“Back about 50-60 years ago, we had a saying: ‘reach, throw, row, go.’ Today, the Red Cross would not encourage you to the ‘go’ part it.”

Cramer said only someone trained in water rescue should attempt a pull a drowning victim to safety. A person in distress often tries to use the rescuer to gain leverage to get above the water line. In response, the rescuer too often becomes the victim.

That leaves reach, throw and row.

“The whole idea being not to put rescuer in the position of becoming a victim,” Cramer said. “The next is throw and by the way reach can include a broom, a lawn rake and for pool owners, that cool brush that reaches almost across your pool.

“You can also throw a life preserver or a life ring with a lanyard on it. So, once it reaches the victim and they’re capable of rubbing it that you can pull them back in to the safety of the shore or the edge of the pool.”

If that’s not an option, Cramer said to use a boat, if available, to reach a victim.

Getting a victim out of the water is only half of the rescue. It’s imperative at least one person in every group is certified in Cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Cramer said it’s important to see if a victim has the ability to respond.

“You yell at them. Yell their name. If they don’t answer, it’s time to start CPR,” he said.

While it’s still all right to breath into a victim’s mouth, Cramer said the most-vital response are chest compressions.

There are several apps on the Red Cross website that offer rescue tips, Cramer said.

“I think really basic is Red Cross has some really terrific application that they’ve come up with in the last few years,” he said. “If somebody is looking for something they can do right after they open their phone, I would send them to redcross.org/apps and they can just go into their search engine. Click on Red Cross apps and what it will do it will take you to a whole shopping list.”

There are several private and public classes to learn CPR, including Florida Fire and EMS Training Institute and Encore CAN and CPR Training, both in Orange Park, and Red Cross locations in Jacksonville and St. Augustine.

“We have some kind of fundamental rules that we deal with in terms of water safety at polls and there they seem like common sense,” Cramer said. “But somehow we still managed to have a lot of kids and adults drowning. And among children ages 4 and under, drowning is the leading cause of accidental death. So, it is a big deal.” And a number Cramer is committed to change.

Resign

from page 16

were doubts about a a purchase a home in Oakleaf.

“If you wanted to know who I made my mortgage to ... when I would have planned to move into a home in Oakleaf, if you wanted an idea, I really don’t know myself,” Henley said. “But I would have told you, maybe even invited you over.”

He repeatedly called the unidentified accusers “faceless cowards,” and he referenced Adolf Hitler and Vladimir Putin, and also said the people attacking him will be going to Hell if they don’t change their ways. Henley held up a large stack of printed emails and read a few, referring to the sender or senders as a “secret society.”

Henley later read out a definition of the word “racism.” He held up a printed picture that he said depicted a racist image.

“This is the trash and garbage I received,” he said. “I’m sick and tired of it. I don’t have to tolerate it anymore.”

Town Clerk Courtney Russo later read Henley’s official resignation into the record before he left with a large crowd.

The council then heard a few public commenters, such as Sherri Snow and Larry Carter, who challenged Henley’s claims and insisted the board wasn’t racist. Former Mayor Eugene Nix also disputed Henley’s statements, but said that town officials don’t listen to the town. He criticized the town spending money on branding.

“You’re not listening to the people,” Nix said.

In other business, council members passed the first reading of a food truck ordinance and chose to remain with SouthState Bank by 4-0 votes.

Shortly after Henley’s announcement, Anderson said he didn’t know of any resident investigations into Henley. Anderson said council members regularly receive harsh emails from frustrated residents. Anderson then apologized to Henley after the vice-mayor resigned and he asked Henley to reconsider.

Anderson asked for it to be an agenda item at a later meeting to discuss the future of the seat. Town Attorney Sam Garrison said Henley’s resignation triggered a few decisions for council mem-

bers.

Council members can vote in an appointee by a majority. The appointee has to be a U.S. citizen and reside within town limits for six months prior to their appointment. Garrison said there is no perfect process, council members are the arbiters of that process and there are no time limits for the decision.

“Basically, what this says in layman’s terms is that you do have a vacancy obviously now. So, your responsibility (is) to appoint a successor, to fill the remainder of this year until the next regular election,” Garrison said. “Whoever is appointed, that will be their appointed term.”

During council member comments, Anderson said he was sad to see what transpired.

“I think some residents go overboard. Some of the things (Henley) read, he should have never have read because that should have never been sent,” Anderson said. “I feel people can get behind a keyboard and write whatever they want, because you’re not looking at them, and send it.”

Hauber called the content of the emails Henley shameful and disheartening. He said no one on the council has been racist. The town needs to be unified, he said.

“We don’t see color up here, we see everybody as a human and that’s how we intend to treat everybody,” Hauber said.

Before quoting Proverbs 27, Thompson said she wanted people to keep working toward the betterment of the community rather than causing strife. Thompson said she couldn’t imagine what Henley has been through.

“I want him to know I feel for him and his family,” Thompson said.

The final speaker was Watt, who said he’s been the subject of abuse, but nothing compared to Henley’s statements Tuesday night. Watt said several public commenters do not know how municipalities work whether its laws, acquisitions or accounting. He said public commenters who verbally attack town staff should be shut down by the mayor’s gavel and public comment shouldn’t be used for one-on-one conversations with council members or staff.

Watt said Henley earned his unanimous appointment to the council through his work in the community and he would call the vice-mayor after the meeting to apologize for getting him involved in government.

“It’s just so wrong and it just paints such a bad picture for all of us, everybody, all 9,000 of us,” Watt said.

G

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STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO

Former Oakleaf High All American linebacker Shaq Quarterman watches football camper in action at FIAA Eagles Sunday summer camp.

Quarterman to football campers:

One hour a Day

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

FLEMING ISLAND - Former Oakleaf High football linebacker Shaq Quarterman returned to Clay County Sunday afternoon for a quick visit to watch and chat with a summer camp staged by the FIAA Eagles youth football association.

"I love being back home and being around kids like this that are pursuing their dream," said Quarterman, now a third year linebacker for the Jacksonville Jaguars in the National Football League. "My cousin Dominique (FIAA Eagles coach Dominique Easterly) ran me through the same drills that he is putting you guys through today 10 years ago."

For Easterly and FIAA Eagles football operations director Gio Portabanco, the first of the four camps set for the summer preparations for fall football, was special with Quarterman on hand.

"He's such a great athlete and a great person with a great family," said Portabanco, who noted Easterly and himself both played together in high school at Fleming

SEE SHAQ, 32



Middleburg High softball's Paige Amato walks the Class 5A championship trophy in during recent celebration at Bronco football field.

Lady Broncos get a heroes welcome from the community

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

MIDDLEBURG - Middleburg High Athletic Director Jay Stilianou, fresh off decades of sports trophies at Clay High told a story about when he took the job at Middleburg a few years ago.

"When I took this job, I had people ask me if I thought they could win over here," said Stilianou, a football coach in the state championship game, a flag football coach in the state Final Four and a school-wide driving force to tons of state titles individually for the Blue Devils sports programs. "I was told they didn't win much. Well, we're state champs baby."

At Thursday's state title celebration at Middleburg High School, complete

SEE BRONCOS, 26



Middleburg softball coach Ashley Houston addresses crowd at state champions celebration.



Former Ridgeview High baseball standout Evan Wickeri is one of handful of Clay County players to play in junior college national championship tournament with Florida State College-Jacksonville.

Six Clay players part of FSCJ World Series trek

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

JACKSONVILLE - The Florida State College of Jacksonville baseball team; with six Clay County players and one St. Johns Country Day School player on the roster, advanced to the National Junior College Athletics Association Division II World Series after winning a best two of three matchup in the NJCAA super regional championship against Gatawba Valley Community College in Hickory, NC. The team, now 30-19, traveled to Enid, Oklahoma to start the national tournament on May 28. The invite is the first since 2000 and fourth time overall for the program.

FSCJ, winning game one 3-0, lost game two 11-8, then won the decider 10-6.

At the NJCAA Div. II World Series, Florida State College at Jacksonville's incredible 2022 season came to an end on Wednesday at the NJCAA Div II World Series. FSCJ went 3-2 at the national tournament en route to a third place finish in

SEE BASEBALL, 27

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NEW ARRIVALS!

IN THE ProShop



Left: Middleburg High's softball team gets escorted into Bronco Stadium for Thursday state champs celebration after winning Class 5A title. Right: Part of the Broncos motivation came from "Finish the Assignment" motto coined by coach Ashley Houston.

Broncos

from page 25

with a Clay County Sheriff escort thanks to Clay High grad Sheriff Michelle Cook, Middleburg High PA Announcer Bob Adamson reminded Middleburg High School softball fans that just five weeks ago, their softball team was sitting with a .500, 11-11, wins and losses record.

"I can, I will, I did, this team was .500 a month ago," said Adamson to the home field filled side of Broncos stadium at Thursday's state championship ceremony. "They never quit, they never waived, they kept with their core beliefs, and worked harder and believed in each other. It is now my honor to introduce a coach that personifies Horsepower, Ashley Houston."

At Thursday's state championship celebration, a first-time event in Middleburg High history, Houston displayed her scrappy, vivacious group of athletes that turned that 11-11 mid-season into a nine game run that culminated with two hard-fought 1-0 wins in the Class 5A Final Four tournament; one over Naples in the state semifinal, the second in the Class 5A championship against South Lake High, both in Clermont's Legends Stadium.

"We're just so humbled and grateful to everyone who has supported this team," said Houston, in just her fourth year at Middleburg. "At the beginning of this season, we talked about taking just one game at a time, everything one step at a time and never looking too far ahead. I can honestly say that no matter what our record was, no matter how poorly we played, they always kept fighting. They stayed in the fight all year."

Houston coined a simple phrase "Finish the Assignment" for the team that held through the final month's championship run.

"No matter how cheesy it sounds, it worked," said Houston. "Our kids bought into it because we finished the assignment."

First baseman Belle Mincey, who hit the gamewinning fourth inning homer in the Broncos championship win, agreed with the "Finish the Assignment."

"Check, check, we finished the assignment with a 100 percent," said Mincey.

Senior pitcher Mallory Forrester with her final four games recording game slates of 19, 19, 10 and 10 strikeouts to power the Broncos defense.

"We knew that no matter we played, we had the support of our fans," said Forrester.



Middleburg coach Ashley Houston waves before entering Bronco Stadium



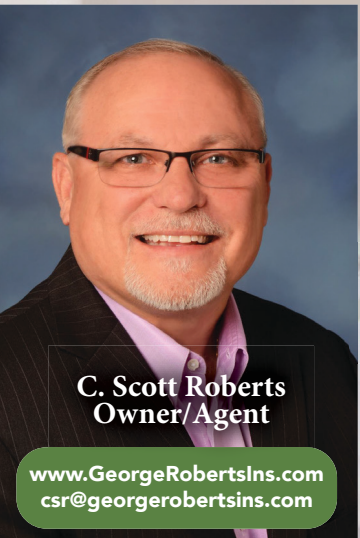
Middleburg senior pitcher Mallory Forrester was the driving force for Broncos state championship with 58 strikeouts in last four games.

er. "That gave us the determination to finish."

Final speaker of the night was Bronco athletic director Jay Stilianou, who reminded fans that Forrester was selected as a second team All County team member.


"I think me repeating that because it was important to me, whether it was

motivation for them I don't know," said Stilianou, who now has his first state champion trophy in the Middleburg hallways. "When I took this job, I had people ask me if I thought they could win over here. Well, we're state champs baby."





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Baseball

from page 25

the country, along the way beating Phoenix College (AZ) twice and Lansing Community College (MI) and losing to the eventual national champion Pearl River Community College (MS) twice. The final record for the 2022 campaign was 33-21, in the most successful season since 2000, claiming the



Clay High grad Garrett Chun patrols left field for the Blue Wave and carries big bat.

Region 8 Championship, the South Atlantic District Championship, and advancing to the program's fourth World Series.

On the team for the Blue Wave are Clay County athletes Garrett Chun of Clay (Outfield), Evan Wickeri of Ridgeview (Infield), Jack Gidcumb of Fleming Island (Catcher), Dylan Dudones of Fleming Island (Pitcher), Ryan Dickey of Ridgeview (Outfield) and Mason Davis of St. Johns Country Day School (Pitcher).

Game One - FSCJ 4, Phoenix 0

In the opening game of the World Series



Fleming Island High grad Jack Gidcumb sits behind home plate and smashed homer in Blue Wave playoff run.

on Saturday, the Blue Wave rode the hot hand of ace lefty Daniel Gaviria (8-2) as he threw a complete game shutout against Phoenix, going all nine innings, allowing no runs on five hits, no walks, and three strikeouts on just 93 pitches. The final run of the contest came in the eighth inning via a Jack Gidcumb RBI single. Evan Wickeri led FSCJ at the plate with two hits.

Game Two - Pearl River 10, FSCJ 2

In Sunday's winner's bracket matchup, Pearl River jumped out to an early lead and never looked back. After FSCJ scored one in the sixth on a Garrett Chun sacrifice fly, the Wildcats used a three run home run to put the game away. Evan Wickeri continued his hot start to the tournament, recording another multi-hit game.

Game Three - FSCJ 5, Phoenix 3

FSCJ took on Phoenix College for the second time in three days in Monday's 1-1 elimination game. FSCJ struck early and took a 1-0 lead in the first inning on an

Evan Wickeri RBI single that scored leadoff batter Cam Wademan. The Blue Wave would take the lead for good in the third inning, scoring three runs on a Wickeri RBI walk, Garrett Chun sacrifice fly, and Blake Wood RBI double. True Freshman righty Dylan Dudones (5-2) shook off some early nerves that resulted in the three runs for PC in the first inning to turn in a gritty performance on the mound, going 5.2 innings, only allowing the three early runs on seven hits, five walks, and two strikeouts.

Game Four - FSCJ 7, Lansing 0

FSCJ took the field for the fourth time in four days on Tuesday on the back of True Freshman lefty Colby Lipovsky (3-7), who turned in his best outing of the season at 7.1 shutout innings, allowing only six hits and four walks, striking out six. The Blue Wave struck early to take a commanding 5-0 lead after two innings thanks to five RBI singles by Barry Eiseman, Jack Gidcumb, Cam Wademan, Evan Wickeri, and Garrett Chun. In total, FSCJ pounded out 13 hits, with Wickeri and Chun having three apiece and Hunter Bradshaw contributing a pair.

Game Five - Pearl River 13, FSCJ 11

As the calendar turned to June, FSCJ's fifth game in five days came in the form of a semifinal matchup rematch with Pearl River. The back and forth affair saw five lead

changes and a total of nine pitchers. PRCC struck first in the bottom of the first with one run before FSCJ answered with a run of their own in the second inning on Jack Gidcumb's first career home run. FSCJ came back once again in the seventh to take the lead 8-6 on a two-RBI Eiseman double and a Garrett Chun RBI single. After a scoreless bottom half of the eighth, the Blue Wave clawed to the very end, getting Chun and Hunter Bradshaw in scoring position to have a chance to tie the game, but were unable to bring them in. Evan Wickeri threw the final 1.1 innings with zero runs allowed.

At the NJCAA Division Two region 8 baseball tournament, FSCJ won 7-6 against Palm Beach State College, 8-6 against Asa College in Miami, lost 13-6 to Pasco Hernando State College and beat Pasco 9-2. The region 8 tournament was a double elimination format.

Led by a strong bat from Clay High's Garrett Chun, with an RBI double in game two; an 11-8 loss, that also saw Ridgeview High grad Evan Wickeri hit an RBI single, FSCJ, had to, and did, win the decisive third game 10-6 with Chun bashing a second RBI double to put FSCJ up 10-4.

Also on the roster are Fleming Island High products Jack Gidcumb, a catcher, and right hand pitcher Dylan Dudones. Dudone started game three and stayed for 4.2 inning and allowing four runs before reliever Manny Reyes entered the game finishing the job with just two hits and no runs. Gidcumb had a double in game two and scored a run and hit an RBI single.

From St. Johns Country Day School, Mason Davis is a freshman right hand pitcher. Also from Ridgeview is Ryan Dickey, an outfielder. In the 7-6 Palm Coast region 8 win, Wicker had an RBI double, Chun had a two-RBI single that put the Blue Wave up 5-2. Against ASA, Chun had an RBI single.

In the championship game against Pasco for the second time, Wickeri had a solo homer in the fifth inning with Chun adding an RBI single and Gidcumb adding an RBI single. Gidcumb hit another RBI single in the eighth. Dudone earned the win with four shutout innings.

In the NJCAA Div. II rankings, Pearl River Community College, in Mississippi (36-10) is top ranked with FSCJ 14th.



Area players win HBCU national title

PHOTO COURTESY OF EDWARD WATERS COLLEGE

Edward Waters College's baseball team won the Tyson Foods History Black College and Universities (HBCU) national championship with a 3-2 win over Kentucky State in Alabama on May 14. The Tigers won the Black National title last in 2011. Kentucky State was the NCAA Div. II national champion. On the Edward Waters team, former Oakleaf Junior High and Trinity Christian standout Keilin Washington, a senior, was named tournament Most Valuable Player with a RBI triple putting the Tigers up 2-0. Also on the team from Clay County are Anthony Roman (Ridgeview), Nathaniel Schirmer (OPHS) and Hugo Schoening (OPHS). The Tigers, who beat top seed Florida Memorial in the NAIA Division final, competed as an NAIA program and will play as an NCAA Div. II next season.

PET ADOPTION



♥ STAFF PICK OF THE WEEK ♥

We asked one of our Cattery staff, Cierra, who her favorite animal at the shelter is. She chose Emerald! Here's what she had to say about lovely Emerald:

Emerald is just like any other cat, but she also stands out among the others. She's got spunk. She doesn't just play with her toys, she attacks them. She doesn't just observe bugs outside, she stalks. She's not a fan of other animals because she likes her space. She doesn't have time between her busy schedule to entertain others. She's too busy stalking lizards and bugs through the window, yelling at the birds and squirrels to get off her lawn, and making sure each and every toy in the house gets the attention they deserve. Once her daily shift is done, she goes to bed and rest assured, she makes sleep her priority when it comes time to it. She's definitely very good company.



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Coach Kenney visits Lady Raiders soccer

(circa 1991-2002)

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

EAGLE HARBOR - With a spirited soccer game with a flurry of goals scored, a handful of Orange Park High School girls soccer teams that finished with back-to-back state runnerup finishes in 1995 and 1996 showed off some "Old School" muscle memory in the presence of legendary coach Charles "Rodney" Kenney. The game was staged at the Clay County Soccer Complex in Eagle Harbor on Saturday.

"It started a few years ago as a phone call between my son, Chris and Stephanie Butler, then it just grew to today," said Kenney, who sported a shirt displaying his 1991-2002 coaching tenure at Orange Park High School. "These girls all played for me or for the two state runnerup teams from back in 1995 and 1996."

Kenney's tenure included the two championship runs; a 3-1 loss in the Class 6A championship game against Countryside Clearwater in 1995 and a 2-1 loss to Spanich River (Boca Raton) in 1996.

On the 1995 team, at 24-1-2, was standout Jill Ford, who was selected that year as the Dairy Farmers Miss Florida Soccer winner and played at Florida State University. The 1996 team was 31-2.

"We played a lot of teams out of the county and down in south Florida because we wanted to see what we might see in the playoffs," said Kenney, noting Ford was unable to attend the reunion game on Saturday. "Back then, soccer was big at Orange Park with the boys teams winning a title with coach Frank Pontore and Randy Warren."

Kenney, 75, left Orange Park in 2002 after amassing at 248-42 wins/losses record before winning his 300th game at Hagerty High School and a state title in 2012.

In 2012, Kenney was the Class 5A coach of the year and had stints at University of North Florida and Stetson University.

Nicole Rossi-Wofford, a 1995 midfielder, remembered her assignment was to mark the top scorer for Countryside.

"I remember she was a big girl, like a



Former players Tara Kenney (1994) and Erica Reinsell (2002) move downfield in unison.



Orange Park High former soccer players, left, Katie Trumble (2003) and Gerilynn Eason (2001) battle for possession. Center: Kelly Carpenter (2003) moves downfield. Right: Samantha Lague (2006) powers shot to goal.

brick house, said Rossi-Wofford. "We've been talking about today for a few years and we finally got it arranged."

One player, Kalin Wilson-Fisico, traveled all the way from Canada to play.

"I coached a couple of years after high school, but am now a mom," said Fisico. "Canada is a hockey nation so being a state champion soccer player up there did not carry much street cred."

Kelly Carpenter, Class of 2003, noted that Kenney always had pretty cool slogans that eventually became T-Shirts in the hallways at Orange Park High.

"I have a bunch of them with me," said Carpenter. "The best ones had Attitude and Focus on the fronts."



STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO

Former Orange Park High girls soccer coach Charles "Rodney" Kenney, who guided the Lady Raiders to state championship games in 1995 and 1996 got to see many of his former players at a recent reunion at the Clay County Soccer Complex.



One much-repeated phrase that Kenney employed was in Carpenter's head for most to the Saturday contest.

"I kept hearing "conditioning is everything, conditioning is everything," said Carpenter. "Coach was right back then and even now, it still applies. I was feeling it today."

One regimen at practices that Kenney made sure improved his team's conditioning was the dreaded "Hell Runs," according to Carpenter.

"Every practice, we ran around the fields with a sprint one leg, jog three, then sprint two legs, jog two, sprint three legs jog one, then the final one was a sprint



Kristina Rueda (1998) shows off still great footwork with ball.

SEE SOCCER, 33

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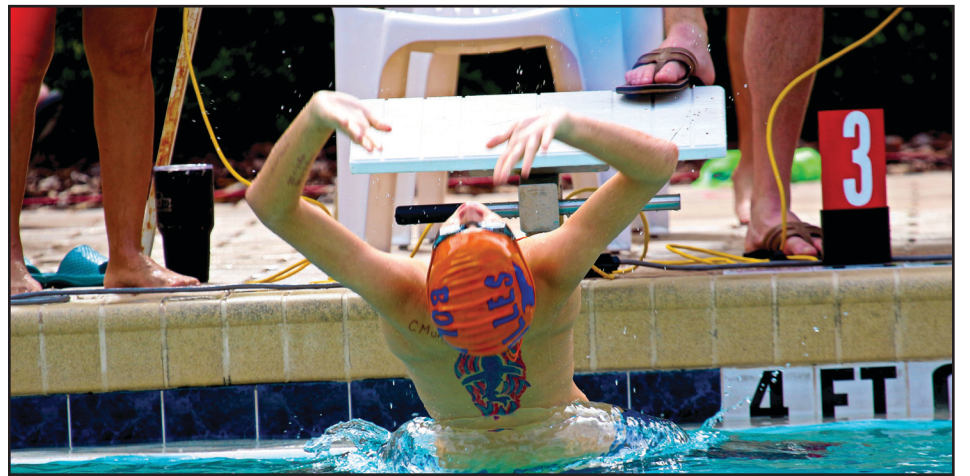


Brantley Rogers gets tight fit with swim cap before 50 backstroke.

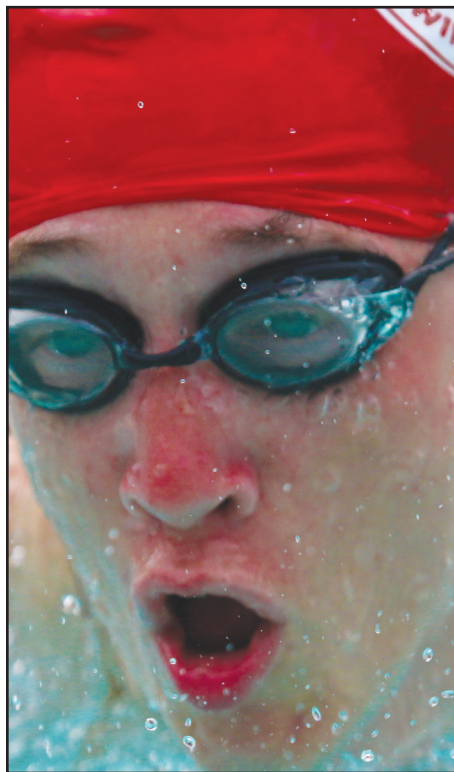
STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO



Eagle Landings' Brylee Wood powers through 50 backstroke.



Left: Pace Island's Chandler Cioffi in 50 fly, center: Eagle Landing's Jessie Kelly in 50 backstroke, right: Connor Murphy blasts start of 50 backstroke.



Left: Pace Island's Sapphire Braun preps for 25 back, top left to right: Amorette Lilly flies, Pace Island's Brady McKendry catches breath in 50 fly, Pace Island's Luke Frisbee wins 50 fly, Eagle Landing's Kylie Loving rolls in 50 fly.

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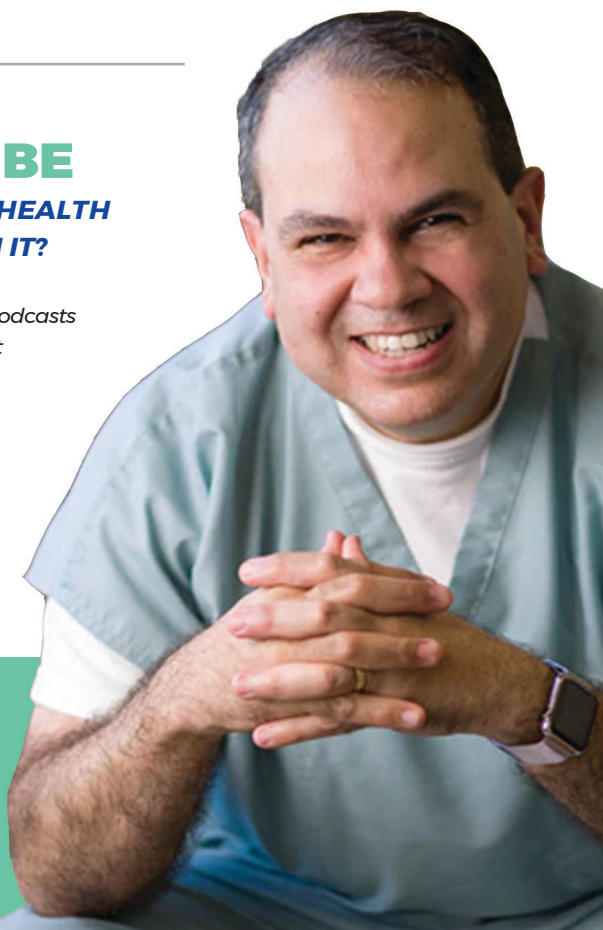


PHOTO COURTESY OF UNFATHLETICS

Cody Carroll, a Middleburg High graduate and state champion, had top first round score (75) for Ospreys at NCAA Tournament qualifier then went one stroke better in third round (74).

Carroll tops for UNF golf at NCAA regionals

For Clay Today

A rough start turned into a round that never found its footing for No. 33 North Florida men's golf on the opening day of play at the NCAA Championships regional qualifier at Grayhawk Golf Club in Arizona on May 27-30.

For the Ospreys team, with four year senior Cody Carroll, a Middleburg High state champion graduated, leading the team on the first round on May 27, the Ospreys scored 26-over as a team with only seven birdies to show for in the first round. They were one of seven teams in the tournament to score 20 shots or more over par on Thursday afternoon.

Carroll held the best score on the day for the Ospreys with his round of 5-over 75. The four-year UNF veteran had one of the strongest finishes of his senior season with eight straight holes of par or better to end his day in the desert.

After three rounds, Carroll wound up with an 18-over par score of 228 (75, 79, 74), but did not advance to the final round.

In the final scorecard, three teams; Vanderbilt, Oklahoma and North Carolina were tied at first place with Texas just three strokes in second place.

North Florida did not advance as a team into the top eight teams for the NCAA championship.

At the NCAA championship tournament, Texas won on June 1 with Arizona State second. The title for Texas was its fourth in school history and first since 2012 when Jordan Spieth, a top PGA pro, was playing.

SCORECARD

30 - North Florida | 26-over 306
T82. Cody Carroll | 5-over 75
T101. Nick Gabrelcik | 6-over 76
T121. Davis Lee | 7-over 77
T132. Robbie Higgins | 8-over 78
T143. Brandon Mancheno | 9-over 79

ROUND REFLECTIONS

- Carroll had a rocky start, but put together a strong back nine score of 1-over to card 5-over 75 during the first round.
- He recorded two birdies on the round and scored at par or better from the 11th hole on during his back nine.
- Nick Gabrelcik joined Carroll with two birdies in the first round to notch 6-over 76 where he had a similar stretch of six straight holes on the front nine at par or better.
- The back-to-back ASUN Golfer of the Year also had a share of the second-best average score on par-five holes at 1-under (4.50).
- Davis Lee went birdie and par on his last two holes of the day to finish his 7-over 77 round on Thursday afternoon.
- Robbie Higgins rolled out five consecutive pars to close out his first round at 8-over 78, as he was the only Osprey to avoid recording double bogey on any hole.
- Brandon Mancheno closes out the opening round for the Ospreys at 9-over 79 with a 2-under (2.50) average score on par-three holes that was tied for second among the field.



Pink Ribbon Symposium Butterfly Race

The winners of the Pink Ribbon Symposium Butterfly Race to serve National Cancer Survivors Day on June 4 in Orange Park had Lashaniqua Howard, 34, winning the womens title in a tunnel of pride with mens winner Salvavor Camacho, 52, taking early lead in first half mie to 19:22 winning time. For the Fun Run one miler, winner Steven DeSanto, 9, almost gets to break the finish line tape ahead of dad, David, and brother Lochlainn, 4, in the carriage. Kids run starts with a cannon blast.



Clay County Sheriff Michelle Cook, center, supervises her Donut Protection Service prior to the Clay PAL Donut Get Caught 5K, held Sat., May 28 at the Orange Park Mall. At the start, high flyers, Carter Roberts and Logan Taylor blast from start of 5K. Womens winner Veronica Sheppard strides in to win in fifth place over in 21:39. Husband Alan Sheppard won mens title in 19:43.



The Memorial Day 5K in Orange Park was won decisively by St. Johns Country Day School graduate and twice state champion Matthew Stratton in 15 minutes, 16 seconds over runnerup Jonathan Hulzebos, 26, who finished in 15:27. For the girls, Krista White, 26, won in 18:51 ahead of Mikaela McGee, 19:19. Runners get set for cannon start while kids Fun Run one mile gets going much to surprise of some on left.



Frank Garis



Grant Bigilin

Two coaches leaving; one heads to Clay

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

OAKLEAF - In a quick flurry of coaching moves, three area coaches are finding new employment. Oakleaf High football coach Frank Garis announced his resignation from that position with Oakleaf Athletic Director Marcus Miller slated to fill the slot, according to Principal Matt Boyack.

"I loved my time at OHS," said Frank Garis in a quick statement when Boyack

announced the resignation.

At Fleming Island High, baseball coach Grant Bigilin announced that he will leave the Golden Eagles after taking them to the Class 6A title game two years ago to join the Bartram Trail High School baseball program. At Clay High, former defensive coordinator at Fleming Island and a former head coach at Orange Park High, Craig Nosse, will join head coach Kyle Kennard as his defensive coordinator. Nosse will also coach defensive backs for the Blue Devils.



Craig Nosse

Shaq

from page 25

Island High School. "To come out here and to the other football practices around the county that he has been to is a perfect way to show that the dream is possible with the work."

Portabanco, a Fleming Island High assistant coach now, had nearly 50 football prospects from age five to age 14 on hand at the Achieve Fitness fields in Fleming Island in preparation to rebuilding his youth football team that went deep into the state playoffs last year.

"We got some returners out here, but a lot of new faces and that is good for the program," said Portabanco. "The camp is a good start to getting the young athletes in the county into something that can be a part of their lives for a long time."

Quarterman spoke of his journey into the NFL with the Jaguars and after a superb career as a record-setting linebacker at the University of Miami where his record of four years of starting at linebacker was established.

"It's all about dedicating yourself to an hour a day to something you love," said Quarterman to the athletes after the session which had a bit of rain and humidity to make things a little tougher for the camp-

ers. "Each of you (athletes) play video games and are good at them because you practice everyday. Same as football. Take some friends and go outside and practice for an hour a day; catching passes, blocking, sprinting, and you can take the steps to realizing the dream."

For himself, Quarterman has taken a bit of advice from everyone around him at the Jaguars practice sessions to get better.

"The difference at the NFL level is attention to detail," said Quarterman. "In college, from high school, the speed of the game is much higher and games are much faster. At the NFL, everyone is a great athlete, it's the little things that make the difference; knowing the plays, executing your

assignment, studying your position."

Quarterman is now involved in the Jaguars OTA summer practice sessions under new head coach Doug Pederson, a former Philadelphia Eagles head coach that won a Super Bowl ring as head coach of the Eagles, but also had a Super Bowl ring as a member of the Green Bay Packers in Super Bowl XXXI.

Pederson is also one of just four coaches to win a Super Bowl as a player and as a coach when his Eagles won Super Bowl LII over the New England Patriots in 2017.

"He is doing great things at The Bank (TIAA Field, home of Jaguars in downtown Jacksonville)," said Quarterman.



Left: FIAA Eagles football coordinator Gio Portabanco gives instruction to Sunday camper in fine points of back pedaling. Right: Jacksonville Jaguars linebacker Shaq Quarterman brought his outstanding work ethic and love of football to the FIAA Eagles summer camp on Sunday.

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