

CLAY TODAY

happy FALL
Basically Summer with pumpkins

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PHOTO BY AARP

Clay Watch is a new program at the Clay County Sheriff's Office designed to help identify and locate people with special needs who become lost. By creating a voluntary database of those with histories of wandering, communication and cognitive issues, CCSO said it could cut valuable minutes, if not hours, from the time it takes to identify or locate someone.

CCSO creates databank to speed recovery of missing, lost residents with cognitive issues

By Don Coble
don@claytodayonline.com

CLAY COUNTY – It's the call most law enforcement hate most: someone's missing.

Whether it be someone with a diminished mental capacity or a child, they know every second matters. The longer they're missing,

SEE CCSO, 2

Homeless to happiness

Community uses faith to help woman's family get a new home, car

By Kyla Woodard
For Clay Today

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – A shed. A car. A hotel. Three places Crystal Chisholm and her sons had to call home until they found a place they could call their own.

A community means having support and somewhere to turn when things go wrong. And that's exactly what Chisholm's story entails.

With the help of Pastor John Sanders and the local True Vine Fellowship, the Breaking Bread Ministry and the Penney Retirement Community, Chisholm's village came together to improve her life. With a new car, home and job, Chisholm's story will forever be forged by the people around her.

Early this year, as a single mother, Chisholm was met with the plight of homelessness in a way she never expected. And, the road to her new life was not easy.

"It was despair. I didn't have anywhere to turn," Chisholm said.

After enduring a severe back injury on the job, Chisholm couldn't continue working. Using her workman's compensation initially, Chisholm said she was eventually let go from her job. Chisholm landed in a tough spot



STAFF PHOTOS BY DON COBLE

From left, Matthew, Crystal and Joshua Chisholm now have a home in Green Cove Springs. True Vine Fellowship, Penney Retirement Center, Breaking Bread Ministry and Orange Park United Methodist Church James Boys all banded to help the family who lost their home and were forced to live in a shed or car. True Vine's Pastor John Sanders gave the family keys to their home.

with no means to pay the rent.

After fighting off the first eviction notice, the second one left her and her children without a home. Losing most of her belongings, Chisholm was forced to pick up and start anew.

"It's so hard to get out on your feet. I feel that Green Cove is lacking ... when it comes to transitional housing. Or, people who are homeless and need help, especially mothers with children," Chisholm said.

During the hot Florida summer, Chisholm fought the battles of homelessness in any way she could. Utilizing her family member's shed at one point, the three spent their time in the small space. Chisholm said it ultimately fell through.

Desperate to supply a roof over her and her children's head, Chisholm had no choice but to spend her days and

SEE HAPPINESS, 18

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Cook wants to continue 'mission' during second term as Sheriff

By Don Coble

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CLAY COUNTY – Sheriff Michelle Cook believes she's accomplished a lot in her first three years on the job, but she said she's just getting started.

"For me, it feels like a mission," she said shortly after filing for re-election. "I feel like I've brought integrity back to the agency, and I've fought every day to make this an agency that our community can be proud of. And I feel like there's more work to be done. I just don't feel like my work is done yet."

Cook was elected in 2020. The Republican primary will be on Aug. 20, 2024.

Since taking office, Cook said the CCSO has put more deputies on the street and has



Clay County Sheriff Michelle Cook will seek a second term after bringing back "integrity" to the agency.

embraced technology as a crime-fighting tool.

"We are going to continue to be tough on crime, yet implement smart programs to give people who want a pathway to making their life better," she said. "It's really about partnering with the nonprofits, churches, and the community, leveraging what they have and giving criminals a way out. Everybody in my jail is going to get out at some point. They're going back into the community. So how do we make them productive citizens so they do not re-offend and go back and care for their families and children?"

Cook partnered with Pastor John Sanders to support The Vineyard Transitional Center. Inmates are offered life-skill counseling and job training while they are incar-

cerated. Upon release, some will go to the center where they will start working jobs, continue with their transitional counseling, and live in a dormitory for five months to reduce the chance of recidivism.

Some of the other programs unveiled during her tenure include the implementation of the SaferWatch and Clay Watch programs.

The agency also launched a renovation project to repurpose the third floor of the administrative building to add between 80 and 100 beds for inmates.

Cook and newcomer Matthew O'Berry are Republican candidates, while former Sheriff Darryl Daniels has filed as a No Political Affiliation candidate. The deadline for filing is July 22, 2024.

Burke seeks re-election to continue fight against overdevelopment, environmental threats

By Lee Wardlaw

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GREEN COVE SPRINGS- While working towards setting policy at the County Administration Building during her current term, District 5 County Commissioner Kristen Burke is already gearing up for another bid for office.

Burke, who recently announced a re-election bid, said slowing down development to let infrastructure catch up is her top priority and will be her primary issue on the campaign trail.



Kristen Burke

"We need to conserve green areas, and we need to conserve our wetlands. We need to allow our infrastructure to catch up. 'Why didn't the county approve all of the infrastructure plans before approving all of the construction (of residential homes)?' is a question I hear from my (constituents) daily," she said.

Burke proposed the approval of a moratorium to not allow increased density in any of the new developments in the Lake Asbury Master Plan in 2021 to block any developer from increasing residential densities until 2022. The BCC voted last February to extend the moratorium for another year. The measure was twice approved unanimously.

"It was kicked down the road, and now

"We need to conserve green areas, and we need to conserve our wetlands. We need to allow our infrastructure to catch up. 'Why didn't the county approve all of the infrastructure plans before approving all of the construction (of residential homes)?' is a question I hear from my (constituents) daily.

– Kristen Burke

we are facing it. We have to think about the current and future needs of the county," Burke said.

Burke will combat overdevelopment if re-elected, instead looking toward well-planned "smart growth," but she will push forward to protecting the health of her constituents and environmental concerns.

That means continuing to fight against Stoneridge Farms' plan to develop the 900-acre property, the former site of Solite. The company ran an unhinged operation from the 1970s to the 1990s and is believed to be linked to cancer, illnesses and deaths of three generations of residents in the surrounding area.

"I want to continue to protect people in the area now and in the future," she said.

A fire station does not exist within five miles for some residents of her district and is in desperate need in the event of an emergency.

"If a major fire takes place, response times could be delayed. We need to ensure that fires are extinguished in a timely manner. Insurance rates (for residents) are affected by that as well," she said.

CCSO

from page 1

the more likely a tragic outcome.

Just last month, the Clay County Sheriff's Office was alerted an older woman had wandered away from a senior living center in the middle of the day. They feared the worst with temperatures and a heat index surpassing 100 degrees.

Deputies scoured Fleming Island. They used their K-9 unit and found the woman lying in a yard on Westover Road. She was overcome by heat and was transported to the hospital. She eventually recovered and returned home.

A new program at the sheriff's office will reduce the time it takes to find or identify people who wander.

Clay Watch is a databank to identify located and missing people in seconds, not hours. The program collects information like name, photo, age and unique habits, allowing deputies to identify anyone who appears lost and incapable of communicating. The same information can be sent to deputies when someone is reported missing.

"It was fortunate we found her when we did," said Clay County Sheriff's Office Lt. Michael Layne. "We had a great team out there looking. K-9 was involved. We did find her. She needed some medical treatment because it was super hot that day. It was like 100 degrees outside. She was an actual missing person. We were able to obtain a photo, which is good. Sometimes people reported missing don't have a photo."

Layne was tasked with creating the program a year ago. He studied Project Lifesaver in Pensacola and made up-

grades to fit the county's needs.

"This is for individuals with special needs due to mental and neurological disabilities and who reside within Clay County," Layne said. "So they proactively provide information, which helps us if they need special assistance in an emergency, and it is completely voluntary."

According to the Alzheimer's Association, 60% of individuals with dementia or Alzheimer's will wander off. In Florida, that means about 349,000 will stray away unnoticed from home. Nearly 72% are found by the next day, but the survival rate drops to 30% if they aren't found within five days. One in 14 don't make it home alive.

The organization also reported 13.6% of Floridians 45 and older have subjective cognitive decline.

"When we get the information, it's entered into the system," Layne said. "It's forwarded to dispatch, and they put a premise note in for the address so that a responding deputy may know that there's somebody there with a disability. Maybe they don't hear him banging on the door. Maybe we need to try something else. Maybe we need to call an emergency contact to check on him.

"A lot of these folks will be elderly, and we may get some calls to go do welfare checks. If we can't contact them, if they are in our system, we will already have emergency contact to call them and say, 'Hey, have you heard from your mom, your dad, your brother?'. Whoever it happens to be. So it could be hugely beneficial to us."

Layne said the agency will have notes on communicating with disoriented people. Some, particularly those with autism, don't like to be touched. Some prefer to write their thoughts instead of talking. Others may speak another language.

SEE CCSO, 14

CLAY TODAY

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Despite objections, taxpayers will likely foot bill for new Jaguars stadium

By A.G. Gancarski and Drew Wilson
For FloridaPolitics.com

New polling from the University of North Florida Public Opinion Research Lab indicates most voters don't want to spend up to a billion dollars in city money for the football stadium.

But, according to pollster Michael Binder, it may not matter.

"It's no wonder Duval County voters don't want to foot the bill for stadium renovations, but what's really interesting is their change of heart when given the ultimatum of a \$1 billion public investment or the Jaguars walking away. This is just one of several reasons that local taxpayers are going to end up shelling out an enormous sum of money for this endeavor," Binder said.

"As a Jaguars fan and North Florida resident, I truly enjoy seeing the Jags succeed on the field. It's bad enough we had to endure decades of a subpar product on the field, and now we're being asked to pay more out of our pockets – which will no doubt lead to price increases for tickets as well. Jacksonville city officials should sack this bad idea, which is corporate welfare that will benefit only the Jaguars — at the expense of everyone else."

When presented with a field of options, the runaway winning choice for respondents was to let the Jaguars buy the property and do the work themselves.

"Respondents were asked to choose which outcome they support the most from a list of different options, ranging from no public investment to spending \$1 billion of public funds. Unsurprisingly, 51% chose the Jaguars purchasing the land and paying for stadium renovations and sports district development with no public investment, with just 6% in support of the \$1 billion public investment currently being proposed by the Jaguars," the polling memo notes.

As Florida Politics first reported earlier this year, the Jaguars envision a heavy local investment in the stadium, with the Jaguars responsible for the sports district around it. The city government would primarily shoulder the stadium cost, which could be on the hook for anywhere between \$800 and \$934 million – two-thirds of the overall price tag. Meanwhile, the city would be expected to spend between \$75 million and \$100 million on the sports district.

Still, Americans for Prosperity-Florida

SEE STADIUM, 5

OPINIONS



Jaguars kick off stadium renovation pitch in Clay County

By Don Coble
Managing Editor

ORANGE PARK – Mark Lamping had the receptive audience last Monday to gain support for a new football stadium for the Jacksonville Jaguars.

His team played its regular season opener on Sunday, and more than 100 fans suffered heat-related issues. He said a new stadium would get fans out of direct sunlight and provide four passageways for cooler air to filtrate through the stands.

The team president met residents, many of whom were at Sunday's game, at the Thrasher-Horne Center as the Jaguars expanded its push for a new stadium beyond the Duval County line.

"You know, we had well over 100 heat-related incidents – 36 hospital transports," Lamping said. "That's not fair to have our fans have to experience that."

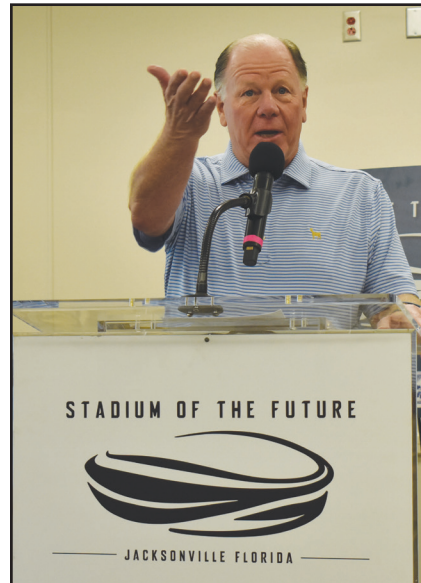
"That was about as bad as it gets."

The team and Jacksonville City officials opened negotiations last week for a new stadium. At 29 years old, EverBank Stadium is one of the oldest facilities in the National Football League that hasn't been renovated or replaced recently.

The expected cost is \$2 billion, with taxpayers and the Jaguars going 50/50 on the deal. The good news is despite having the biggest fanbase of season



Don Coble



On Monday, Jacksonville Jaguars President Mark Lamping brought his team's vision for a future stadium to the Thrasher-Horne Center. He said the biggest fanbase of season ticket holders is in Clay County, so he was enlisting suggestions ahead of a planned re-opening for the 2028 season.

ticket holders in Northeast Florida, Clay County won't have to pay a dime. It's Jacksonville's bill to pay.

But that doesn't shield us from the sun and humidity.

Heat continues to be the most significant concern. Sunday's temperatures reached 91 degrees, but a 54% humidity level prompted Jacksonville Fire Rescue to answer 110 calls – and send 36 to the hospital. Field temperatures surpassed 115 degrees.

When the Jaguars asked fans to complete a survey of what they wanted

SEE JAGUARS, 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.

Demur: (deh-mur) a verb that means to raise doubts or show reluctance.

"If you don't agree with the charge, your lawyer can demur."

This Week in History

Five years ago, 2018

- Mandy Sue Tedder was charged with seven counts of animal abandonment after a Clay County Sheriff's Office deputy found nine dogs left on a property in Middleburg.
- The Town of Orange Park ends negotiations with Clay County Utility Authority to sell its water and sewer services for \$20 million.
- Green Cove Springs Public Works Director Mike Null said falling trees, lightning and rodents caused recent power outages.

10 years ago, 2013

- The Clay County Sheriff's Office arrested 13 women and a man for soliciting prostitution and drug possession.
- Derrell Paul Emery Jr. is sentenced to 25 years for the shooting deaths of Leroy McDonald Jr. and Todd Allen Bradshaw Jr. in Oakleaf.
- St. Johns Country Day School celebrates its 60th anniversary with visits from alumnae and the son of its founding headmaster.

20 years ago, 2003

- Matthew Dombroski, 17, was the final suspect arrested by the Clay County Sheriff's Office for a home invasion of a Blairmore that ended with gunfire.
- Several Keystone Heights residents plead for help to repair roads that Hurricane Frances washed out.
- VFW Post 1988 in Green Cove Springs holds a candlelight vigil for soldiers still missing in action.

30 years ago, 1993

- The Board of County Commissioners appointed Florida Rep. Chance Irvine of Orange Park as the first chairman of the Charter Review Commission.

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.

Jaguars

from page 4

respondents said shade. Lamping said a proposed Viewscope roof would reduce heat by 10-15 direct sunlight degrees.

“It is raised both the north and the south ends, and it’s designed to take advantage of the prevailing winds to capture the wind and bring it inside the seating bowl,” Lamping said. “And it’s almost like it’s almost like an umbrella over the stadium, so it is not enclosed. One of the things we also do to encourage progressive airflow inside the stadium is that when you look at it, we cut big breezeways in each of the corners of the stadium.”

I’ve worked at EverBank Stadium more than 50 times, and I believe it needs a major facelift. The ramps are too narrow and the concourses are too narrow. When fans try to get out of the sun, they’re forced to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in the muggy concourse. To top it off, the selection of



food and drinks isn’t very imaginative.

Lamping said everything will change with a new stadium. He also was more specific on what fans can expect.

First, he said the current stadium will be renovated, not replaced. He also suggested the Jaguars are leaning toward playing home games at the University of

Florida during the one- or two-year construction project. Plan B would probably involve Camping World Stadium in Orlando.

New escalators and elevators are coming, along with renovated and 14 additional restrooms. There will be 220 points of sales for food and beverages – and a stipulation by outside vendors that they can’t increase their prices from what’s charged in their restaurants.

If approved by the city and at least 75% of NFL owners, construction will start in January 2026. The project will include a mixed-use neighborhood around the stadium, arena, ballpark and amphitheater.

Capacity will be 61,928, but with expandable seats behind removable sideline video boards, the stadium can seat 71,608.

Clay County will benefit from a stadium that can host Jaguars games, Florida-Georgia, TaxSlayer Bowl games, major concerts, international soccer and be part of the College Football Playoff National Championship rotation. And we will get it without paying for it.

History

from page 4

- The BCC votes 3-2 to deny a request to extend alcohol sales on Sundays.
- Two teens were arrested for vandalizing the band room with blue spray paint at Clay High.

40 years ago, 1983

- Sheriff Jennings Murrhee said 14 people were arrested on hashish, mari-

juana and amphetamine charges following a three-month investigation.

- Investigators continue to search for suspects following a break-in at the Clay County School Board Administration Building where computers, typewriters and calculators were damaged.

- Clay County Assistant Superintendent Martin Miller tells teachers, “It’s your nickel. You either want it or you don’t. You can take it or leave it” during contract negotiations.

Stadium

from page 4

is putting forward its best goal-line defense, trotting out the same arguments against public funding for professional sports venues that the organization honed during the 2010s, when stadium funding was a perennial issue in the Legislature’s budget-writing process.

“Since their inception, it seems as if the Jacksonville Jaguars have had more wins making taxpayers pay for their projects than victories on the field. We hope the Jacksonville City Council and Mayor Donna Deegan will stand up for taxpayers and oppose this new handout the team has proposed,” said AFP-FL State Director Skylar Zander. “As a Jaguars fan and North Florida resident, I truly enjoy seeing the Jags succeed on the field. It’s bad enough we had to endure decades of a subpar product on the field, and now we’re being asked to pay more out of our pockets – which will no doubt lead to price increases for tickets as well. Jacksonville city officials should sack this bad idea, which is corporate welfare that will benefit only the Jaguars — at the expense of everyone else.”

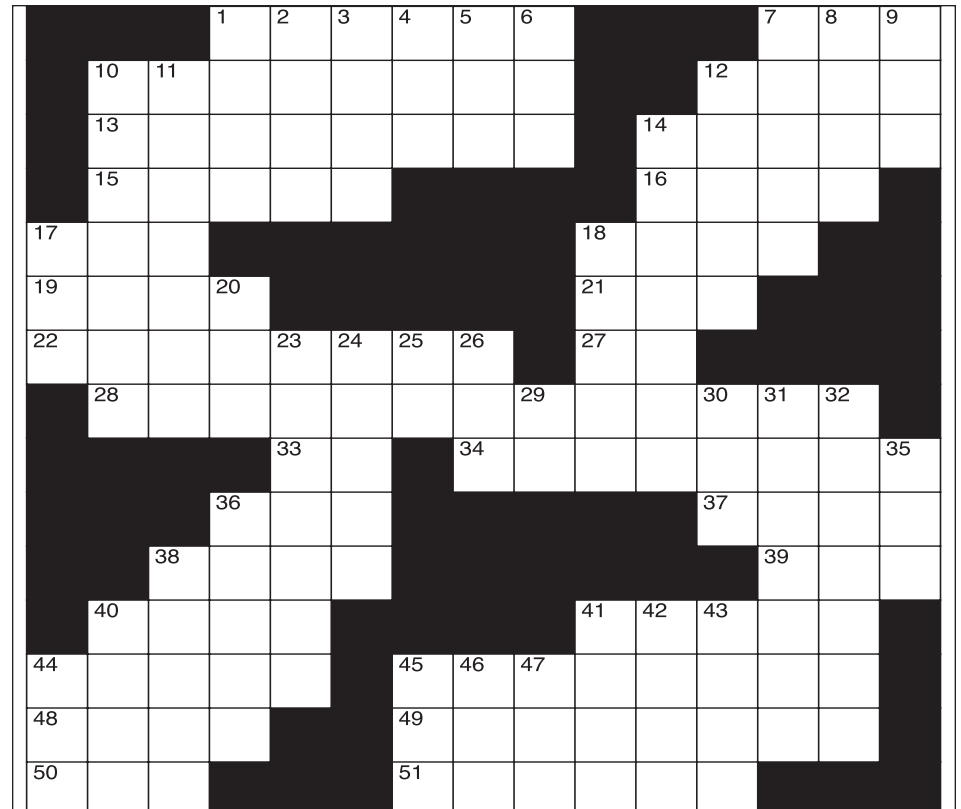
Happily for negotiators, local budget hawks turn chicken when confronted with the possibility of the team relocating.

“However, when asked whether they

would support the city spending \$1 billion if it meant the difference between the Jaguars staying in Jacksonville or moving to another city, 46% said yes, and 47% said no. Even among those who oppose spending any public funds on the project, 33% were willing to split the cost when faced with the possibility of losing the team to another city. Of those who initially said they’d support only \$250 million in public funds, 57% conceded to the higher cost when given this choice, and 72% of those who initially said \$500 million changed their answer in support of a \$1 billion investment.”

It will be up to the Jaguars and Mayor Donna Deegan to change their minds and move consensus. Based on this poll, there is a path.

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CLUES ACROSS

- Type of crayon
- Fashion accessory
- Most cerebral
- Incline from vertical
- Dependent on
- Broken in
- Strongly desires
- Mounted soldier
- Ad __: when necessary
- Cattle
- Ottoman military commanders
- __ student, learns healing
- Composed in poetic meter
- Promotional material
- Where people live
- Sodium
- Embarrassing
- Medical man
- Mother of Hermes
- One who saves the day
- Tooth caregiver
- Not clothed

CLUES DOWN

- Living quarters
- Horizontal passage
- Attacks
- Vietnamese offensive
- Midway between east and southeast
- Confined (abbr.)
- Book of Esther antagonist
- Port in Yemen
- CNN’s founder
- Type of bulb
- Prepare
- Promoted
- Dinner jackets
- Partner to cheese

- Nebraska city
- Human gene
- Pays no attention to
- Lowland South American plain
- Blood group
- Mauna __, Hawaiian volcano
- Atomic #37
- Unit of electrical resistance
- Jeweled crowns
- Nastiest
- Traditional cars need it
- Bowler hat
- Robust
- Not straight
- Stony waste matter
- Have an interest in
- Jacob __, journalist
- Maintains possession of
- Swiss river
- Average cost of market goods
- Spanish soldier: El __

Middleburg's Stilts trades banking career for education award

Economics, Government, U.S. History teacher selected as Warren Tracy Teacher of the Year

By Lee Wardlaw
lee@claytodayonline.com

MIDDLEBURG – In a major victory for the County School District, Breyana Stilts, an Economics, Government and U.S. History Teacher at Middleburg High, was recently selected as the Warren Tracy Teacher of the Year by the Florida Council for the Social Studies.

Stilts reflected on her journey to becoming an educator, how she instilled her unique teaching style in the classroom and the significance of bringing home the prestigious award to the county where she grew up.

Stilts never taught high school before being hired at Middleburg.

"I was shocked. This was only my first year at Middleburg. After hearing that I had won the award, I was honestly kind of thrown into a loop," she said.

Stilts transitioned from a four-year career in the corporate banking world at Wells Fargo as an Account Resolution Specialist. She had only been an educator for one year prior to winning the award. She taught Intensive Reading to middle school children from sixth to eighth grade in Duval County in 2021-22.

Despite her surprise, Stilts attributed her success to the relationships she built with her students and her strong support from her colleagues.

"I built a really great relationship with my kids and had a really strong support system with the Social Studies team here, but even they couldn't prepare me for the kids' reaction (to the classes I taught)," she said.

Stilts was nominated by to students, colleagues and parents. Above all, she credited her students for the honor.

"That means they're taking the extra effort. For some (students), it takes an effort just to get to school. To put in that extra effort and (take their time) to give a nomination is (impactful). They recognize how important this is to me," Stilts said.

"To me, that means they have a greater appreciation for this country's history than they did before. It means they take pride in their civic responsibilities and duties and actively participate in the community."

Stilts' teaching style is anything but traditional. She emphasizes a hands-on learning experience and ensures her students actively engage in their learning and exploration.



STAFF PHOTO BY LEE WARDLAW

Middleburg High's Breyana Stilts emphasizes real-life scenarios, like filing taxes, budgeting, calculating deductions, planning finances, registering to vote and analyzing political platforms in her classroom.

Instead of relying on traditional methods like textbooks and worksheets, she encourages movement and interaction in the classroom. "We don't do a lot of paper-based work or typical work that you would think of when you see a history book. We move around a lot. Yesterday, we had a gallery walk where we walked around and viewed (photographs) from the Second Industrial Revolution. We talked about the effects of communications and steel and how


they influenced that (era)," she said. Her teaching philosophy centers students at the forefront of their learning. Stilts believes that students must take charge of their education and be responsible for their learning.

"I can guide them, but they need to make it happen for themselves," she said.

Stilts' teaching style draws inspiration from her own experiences as a student.

SEE STILTS, 11

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Daniels' inspiring tactics leads to state honor

Orange Park teacher wins Florida Council for Social Studies Excellence Award



By Lee Wardlaw
lee@claytodayonline.com

ORANGE PARK – Justin Daniels, a veteran educator and cornerstone of the Orange Park High community, recently earned the prestigious 2023 Florida Council for Social Studies Excellence in Teaching Award.

Daniels, a longtime Standard and Advanced Placement Social Studies teacher and department chair, has amassed a large trophy case during his educational tenure. But no honor has been bigger than this one.

When asked about his reaction to winning statewide honor, the eight-year employee leads more than 10 teachers in his department, serves as boys' wrestling and girls' tennis coach, and expresses pride for earning the recognition.

"If you get a general award, like 'Teacher of the Year,' that's great, but it's even more amazing to be recognized for working hard in a subject that you're really passionate about, something that you've really dedicated your teaching expertise and poured your life into," he said.

Daniels' journey to excellence started in the county. The homegrown teacher graduated from Middleburg High, where his former educators inspired him.

"I had an incredible educational experience (at Middleburg). I had fantastic

teachers that (made me realize) that this could be a possible career path for myself," Daniels said.

The veteran educator credited his unique teaching style for helping him reach the big milestone.

"I approach my class every day with a sense of excitement. I'm transparent with the students. I'm honest with them," he said.

If they want to hear "stupid stories," Daniels tells them one. He replays scenes from "Buffalo Rider," a 1978 movie where half of the plot literally involves the character "Buffalo Jones" riding a buffalo. "I try not to take everything so seriously," Daniels said.

The jokes and laughter are all part of a hook to keep students engaged from the moment they walk into the classroom.

"When they walk into class, they ask, 'Are we going to see 'Guy on a Buffalo' today?' While it's irrelevant, they walked into my classroom and immediately engaged with me, which means they are ready for class. That's the whole point. I want them to be excited for class because what we're (learning) contains (immense) value," he said.

While very important, government and economics can be incredibly boring, which

Daniels admits.

"Those are the two most boring classes they will ever receive," he said.

"By any means necessary" is his only option. He said both subjects will transcend the rest of his students' lives after leaving the classroom. "They're building to become active citizens and learn to manage their money. Those are two things that will impact (my students) immediately and the world around them," Daniels said.

In his classroom, "busy work" carries a negative connotation and is crossed off students' to-do lists.

"There is a negative connotation with what 'busy work' is. I don't want to fill their life with that. (Instead), it should be work that is engaging," he said.

Just ask students how they feel in his classroom.

"Yesterday, we played a game, and a (child) said, 'Is class over?' And I said it's (already) been 40 minutes. He said, 'Man, that was so fast,' and I said, 'That's because we were doing something that is so engaging. It's not busy, it's active,'" Daniels said.

Building positive relationships that make a positive impact takes center stage.

"I went into administration for a bit,

SEE DANIELS, 11

STAFF PHOTO BY LEE WARDLAW
Justin Daniels brings a sense of excitement and honesty to challenge his students at Orange Park High to embrace learning social studies.



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Obituaries claytodayonline.com

Alyssa Eden Eulenfeld

Alyssa Eden Eulenfeld, 48-year-old daughter of Christine and Lindy Eulenfeld, sister to Aaron (Iriabel, Jake, Camilla, Iliriana and Benjamin). Sister to Bryant (Tara, Anna, Blakely and Calder). Aunts and cousins, Susan, Tanya, Beverly, Lenora, Linda, Ed, Frankie, Trish, Wendy, Stephanie and Donnie.

Alyssa passed away on September 10, 2023. She had family, friends, and loving caretakers at her bedside non-stop for the last two days of her life comforting and consoling her. Thank you to her caretakers Queen, Leslie, Alta, Shannon, Virginia, Delores, Randy, Christy. To family friends, Nathan and Noelle.



Alyssa Eden Eulenfeld

Thank you God for giving us this beautiful person to be a part of our lives. We are forever grateful to have had the opportunity to be her family. She taught all of us new strengths as we helped her through her life. We could not have done what we did for her without the family, friends, volunteers, caretakers, and others who helped make her life as wonderful as possible. There are too many to name. May Alyssa be remembered for bringing so much love into the lives of everyone who knew her.

Thank you to Dr. Stephen Lazoff, her pediatrician, who took a special interest in her care and helped us through many challenging times throughout her life.

Thank you to Isle Health Care staff for the care they provided for Alyssa. Thank you to Hospice, to her nurse Claire and her caretaker Venus who brought care, love and fun to her. Thank you to Sabrina who went with me for months to the hospital during Alyssa's recovery to start her morning with massage, breakfast and picking out some cute clothes for day. Together we chose decorations and decorated her room to make it look like home.

She loved everyone in her life and always came into a room with a huge smile and greeted everyone "Hey Guys!". She

blew kisses to everyone she knew.

Alyssa was born with developmental disabilities but that did not stop her from participating in all areas of life.

She was one of the first developmentally disabled kids to start awareness of inclusion of children with disabilities and go to day care, school, scouts, camps, community activities.

While she never had the ability to walk, when she was young, she could crawl everywhere. She loved going after her brothers and getting in the middle of whatever they were doing. Especially breaking their Lego creations. She loved getting junior mints from Bryant and flowers from Aaron.

She had adaptive equipment that we built to give her the opportunity to be as independent and included in as many activities as possible. Playground swing, an all-terrain beach chair to walk on the beach and go into the ocean, a crawler that held her securely to move around outside with neighborhood kids. She loved her Dad, Lindy, dropping her off the diving board in her swim ring and going down the water slides at Wild Waters with him. She especially loved Jimmy Buffett's music and dancing with her Dad.

Alyssa went to Clay County Schools and graduated from Middleburg High School. In order to attend classes that fit her needs, she needed a personal aide who would attend class with her and two teachers to accept her and to adapt their programs to her needs. Thank you, Patty Columbia, Mary Beth Radigan and Matt Cox for giving her those experiences.

She participated in the Doman Delacado patterning therapy for several years in hopes of increasing her physical and mental capabilities. Volunteers (50 people a week) were recruited from churches, high schools, Women's groups, local firefighters, police and of course family and friends. Thank you to all the volunteers who spent time with our daughter; they enhanced her life and ours and she enhanced theirs with her winning smile and great attitude. Alison, Carolyn, Betty and Fran were some of her most faithful patterning partners.

After her entry to the Health Care Center, Andrew provided massage therapy 2 times a week to relieve the pain she was experiencing. She also had PT provided

by Deb and Lori twice a week for 20 years. Thank you Andrew, Deborah and Lori.

Alyssa influenced many of the individuals that came to know her. Numerous people told us they chose their occupation as special education teachers, speech pathologists, nurses and occupational and physical therapists because of knowing Alyssa. Thank you Leigh Ann Wickstrom Townley, who won Special Education Teacher of the Year three times. She quoted her friendship with Alyssa as the deciding factor on what she wanted to do in life.

Alyssa had many friends and caretakers to assist her in life. They took her shopping, to concerts, movies, ball games and many other activities. She loved her time with these friends. Thank you Sherkina Roberts, her friend for the Saturday shopping, lunches and Alyssa's favorite red velvet cupcake dessert.

One of her most favorite activities in life was the "I am Special Camp" A week-long overnight camp at Marywood for disabled children that provided as normal an experience as possible for disabled children. She had teenage volunteers assigned solely to Alyssa all week to take her swimming, boating, horseback riding, and many other activities. She never wanted to leave! Thank you, Noelle for being her volunteer! Thank you to the Diocese of St. and all of the volunteers that made it happen. We are very grateful for her experiences.

Alyssa attended the "Daystar" disabled adult program at the Barco Newton YMCA for almost 20 years. She absolutely looked forward to it every day and she was one of the staff's favorites at the program. She was always excited to be wheeled around in the gym and greet the regulars. She loved blowing kisses to everyone. She loved to be the center of every activity and never met a stranger. Thank you Matt, Flo, Frankie, Colleen, Yvette, June, Julie, Rebecca and others who came to know her and love her.

In lieu of flowers, we ask that Donations be made to I Am Special Camp and the Day Star Program to assist them in continuing

their work for the disabled. Thank you, The Eulenfeld Family.

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



Renata M. Spitzner

Long-time resident of Green Cove Springs, Renata "Renny" Spitzner died peacefully in her sleep on September 11, 2023 at Greenoak Villa in Gainesville. Renny was 100 years old.



Renata M. Spitzner

As a wife, mother, grandmother, and good citizen, Renny had been actively involved in Clay County activities and events for many years. She had a very outgoing personality, and her long life had afforded her the opportunity touch many hearts in the community.

Arrangements are under the care of Phillip & Sons in Melrose. Please visit <https://www.phillipsonsf.com/obituary/Renata-Spitzner>.

Rena Croft

Rena Croft, 98, of Orange Park, FL, passed away September 16, 2023.

Please sign the family's online guestbook at www.broadusraines.com

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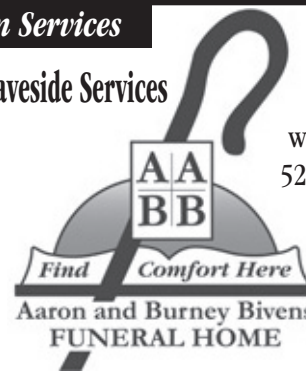


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Obituaries claytodayonline.com

Gerald Thomas Milan, Sr.

Gerald (Jerry) Thomas Milan passed away on September 16, 2023. He was born in Niagara Falls, New York on March 18, 1950, and lived in Orange Park, Florida since 1981.

Jerry was a graduate of Bishop Duffy High School, Niagara Falls, NY; received two Associates Degrees (Science and Arts) from Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ); and received his bachelor's degree in criminal justice from the University of North Florida.

Jerry enlisted in the United States Navy on October 28, 1968, as a Seaman Recruit, E-1, and he steadily advanced in rate to Senior Chief Yeoman, E-8. In April 1983, he received a commission through the Warrant Officer Program and was commissioned as a Chief Warrant Officer, W2. He retired from the Navy in 1988 as a Chief Warrant Officer, W3 after 20 years of active service.

Shore tours throughout his career included assignments at Naval Recruiting District, Buffalo New York; Basic Submarine School, Groton, Connecticut, where he graduated with distinction; Staff, Division



Gerald Thomas Milan Sr.

of Naval Reactors (where he worked for Admiral Rickover), U. S. Department of Energy, Washington, D. C.; and his last tour as Commanding Officer, Naval Brig, Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, FL.

Sea and foreign tours included the Naval Support Activity, DaNang, Republic of Vietnam; Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron FOUR, Patuxent River, Maryland; Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron FIVE on board USS INDEPENDENCE (CV-62); USS GEORGE BANCROFT (SSBN643) (GOLD); Staff, Commander, Submarine Squadron SIXTEEN, Kings Bay, Georgia; USS AMERICA (CV-66), Norfolk, Virginia; and USS SIMON LAKE (AS-33), Kings Bay, Georgia.

Jerry was awarded the Navy Commendation Medal with one Gold Star; Navy Achievement Medal; Navy Unit Commen-

eration; Meritorious Unit Commendation with one Bronze Star; Battle Efficiency "E" (Third Award); Good Conduct Medal with two Bronze Stars; National Defense Service Medal; Republic of Vietnam Service Medal with three Bronze Stars; Sea Service Deployment Ribbon with one Bronze Star; Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Unit Commendation with Gallantry Cross; Republic of Vietnam Civil Action Ribbon with Gallantry Cross; and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Ribbon. Additionally, Jerry was "Qualified in Submarines" and earned the right to wear Silver Submarine Dolphins and the Strategic Deterrent Patrol Insignia with two stars.

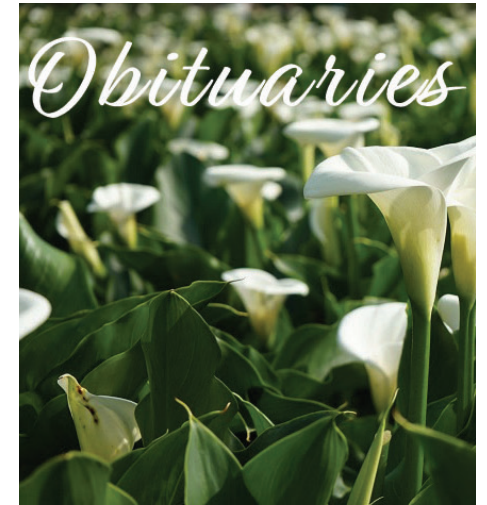
In January 1989, Jerry joined the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO), Department of Corrections as a Corrections Officer. He was promoted through the ranks to Lieutenant with his last assignment as the Training Lieutenant for the Department of Corrections. Jerry was in the first group of Certified Jail Managers (CJM) through the American Jail Association and the first CJM in the State of Florida. Jerry received numerous awards and letters of commendation while serving with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. He retired from JSO in January 2011 after 22 years of service.

Jerry was an avid golfer, had recorded four holes-in-one, and loved to play golf with his friends every week. He also volunteered at Clay Humane serving on the Board of Directors since January 2007. Jerry was instrumental in establishing the

"Pars fore Paws" golf tournament to help raise funds for Clay Humane.

He is survived by his wife, Gloria (McKinney) Milan; two daughters, Gloria Boyles, and Ronda Rusnak; two sons, Gerald Jr., William Rogers; six grandchildren; eleven great-grandchildren, two sisters, Maureen P. Carroll of Owings, Maryland; and Janet (Chuck) M. Callan of Fredonia, New York.

In lieu of flowers, please donate to Clay Humane, 2230 Filmore Street, Orange Park, FL 32065 in his name. (www.clay-humane.org)



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Annual Boston butt fundraiser off to smokin' start for Vineyard Transitional

STAFF PHOTOS BY DON COBLE

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – More than 60 Boston butts were sold during a presale event last Saturday where The Vineyard Transitional Center will soon house 12 released Clay County Jail inmates. A year ago, Pastor John Sanders and Joseph Smith sold 600 smoked butts, with the money supporting the center's building fund. He hopes to exceed that number this year. "It was a good turnout, so we're very pleased," Sanders said. "We want to get an early count on how many we're going to need this year." The old center was demolished after engineers said it would cost more to refurbish the building at 518 Pine St. than to build a new one. The center will provide housing and support for inmates who've already spent months in a transitional program in the jail. In addition to helping them find employment, Sanders said the men will be enrolled in classes to teach them life skills to reduce the chance of recidivism. Butts will be delivered to businesses on Nov. 17 and individuals can pick up their orders on Nov. 18 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Butts can be ordered at TheVineyard-TransitionalCenter.org or by calling Sanders at (904) 305-4641 or Smith at (904) 343-1869.



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For additional information visit chsfl.org/chefs

Daniels

from page 7

and being away from the classroom (I rediscovered) my purpose. Everything was constantly pulling me back into the classroom. I want to be amongst (the children), building positive relationships and impacting them. Social Sciences is a (subject) that will hold incredible value for the rest of their lives," he said. Students, teachers and parents (named and anonymous) have to nominate their teacher of choice for that individual to qualify. Daniels said his students' decision

to put him up for the award reflects they share the value of Social Studies with him.

"It's nice to see that they see value in this. It's (validating)," Daniels said.

Winning the Excellence in Teaching Award is not only a personal achievement for Daniels, but also reflects a storied winning tradition in the classroom in the county, he said.

"It's a testament to the long tradition of Clay County providing students with excellent opportunities, whether through social studies (or other subjects). The county's pathways to success are so immense," he said.

Stilts

from page 6

Stilts said Oakleaf High Principal Matthew Boyack, who taught her world history at Orange Park, made an everlasting impact.

"He had such an impact on me that I still remember how I felt in the classroom. That's the kind of classroom (environment) that I want to create," she said.

Middleburg Principal Martin Aftuck, who was Stilts' Principal at Orange Park while she was a student, also played an influential role, Stilts said.

Stilts expressed gratitude for the blessing she had the opportunity to work with fellow educators who molded her teaching style.

Her economics and government coursework focuses on preparing students for

real-life scenarios, like filing taxes, budgeting, calculating deductions, planning finances, registering to vote and analyzing political platforms. There is no greater honor than representing the county. "I don't think there's any greater than being able to represent (my) community," she said.

The hard work required to achieve the award is nothing new for Stilts. She earned her online Master of Library and Information Science from Wayne State in May while teaching children across Northeast Florida for the past two years. Her journey toward the award was not a one-time event but a continuing daily commitment.

"Every single day in the classroom is a testament to your teaching style. There are no missed opportunities. You have to come in every day and be ready to deliver

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MONDAY CLASSES October 2 - November 27 (no class 10/16)

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Art Appreciation	Freaky Florida	Pennies From Heaven
Bingo	Greeting Cards*	Rock n Roll
Book Club	Improv Comedy*	Ukulele*
Chair Yoga	iPhone/iPad	Walking to the River
Christmas Ornaments*	Jewelry Making*	Watercolors*
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TUESDAYS October 2 - November 28 - Bridge Playing 1:30-3:30

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Jennifer Bradley said legislature to tackle complex insurance problems

State Senator gives other updates at Bridge-to-Bridge Chamber function

By Lee Wardlaw
lee@claytodayonline.com

FLEMING ISLAND – Florida Sen. Jennifer Bradley (R-Fleming Island) highlighted property insurance concerns in her constituents’ districts last week at the Clay Chamber’s Bridge to Bridge Meeting.

Bradley also chairs the Civil and Criminal Justice for the Senate, providing deep, behind-the-scenes insights into the challenges home and property owners face in the district and the state and the steps Florida’s government takes to mitigate the issues.

Bradley talked about area and state politics, including upcoming delegation meetings in her seven-county territory encompassing a wide range of Northeast Florida, which also includes Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Lafayette, Levy, Suwanee, Union and portions of Marion. She said the county’s delegation meeting will be on Oct. 4.

The state’s budget is \$117 billion; if it were a country, it would have the No. 15 largest economy in the world. Bradley expressed confidence in a strong economy where revenues exceeded projections



STAFF PHOTOS BY LEE WARDLAW

Florida Sen. Jennifer Bradley (R-Fleming Island) addressed property insurance concerns and provided updates on legislative sessions at the Clay Chamber’s Bridge-To-Bridge meeting on Sept. 13.

and heading into the next legislative session, she expects a well-balanced budget, thanks to revenues and a fiscal approach to money management.

“We have the right reserves, and our very conservative approach to budgeting during COVID helped us. We had (rainy day) funds to be able to ride out the (recent) hurricanes,” Bradley said.

More than 200 pieces of legislation passed last year. Bradley said she “couldn’t remember another session that looked like that.”

Expectations are higher ahead of this year’s session. Bradley said that a primary focus would be a distribution of monies from Hurricane Idalia, noting the unique nature of this year’s storm, which hit a “very different” area of the state compared to Hurricane Ian last year.

Less-income residents in a largely rural area define the Northwest Florida region. She said those citizens have a distinct set of issues that need to be addressed regarding homeowners’ insurance.

“It’s not the sexiest issue, but it’s the issue I hear over and over again,” Bradley said. She then explained how the state landed in this predicament and the recent efforts that elected officials have taken to act.

Bradley highlighted her role on the Resiliency Committee in responding to Hurricane Ian. She stressed the importance of government and state assistance in helping homeowners rebuild, streamlining the permitting process and addressed the host of issues faced by communities impacted by natural disasters.

Bradley outlined the factors that contribute to the state’s current status of property insurance, with a history of cata-

strophic storms, smaller carriers and recent rising costs due to inflation counting as contributing factors.

“Florida is a very unique insurance market. (Residents) are described as living on a peninsula in the middle of a wind tunnel built on a sponge,” she said.

One of the significant cost drivers, Bradley pointed out, is reinsurance – insurance the insurance companies purchase. These reinsurers, primarily based in Europe, began raising their rates by 30-50% after witnessing the impact of recent storms. These rates are eventually passed on to consumers.

Bradley said insurance companies in the state have faced an average annual loss of \$1 billion annually in the last five years. Some insurance companies reached insolvency, bankrupting and leading to a significant shift of policies to Citizens’ Insurance.

In Clay County alone, there has been a nearly 53% increase in Citizens’ policies since 2019 – the number skyrocketing from 680 to almost 4,300, and total exposure shifting from \$84 million to \$1.7 billion.

Bradley also discussed the role of third-party actors, some of whom abuse Assignment of Benefits, in driving up rates. She said contractors in various parts of

SEE INSURANCE, 21



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From left, Commissioner Alexandra Compere joins Gov. Ron DeSantis and commissioners Betsy Condon and Kristen Burke during Monday's presentation of \$3.5 million in state funds for infrastructure projects in Clay County.

Gov. DeSantis presents BCC \$3.5 million for infrastructure projects

For Clay Today

CLAY COUNTY – Gov. Ron DeSantis awarded more than \$3.5 million to the Clay County Board of County Commissioners Monday through the Governor's Florida Job Growth Grant Fund for targeted infrastructure improvements.

Clay County's population has grown 35% in the last 10 years. These infrastructure improvements will directly support job growth in the manufacturing sector, creating approximately 170 new high-wage jobs upon completion.

"Florida's freedom-first and business-empowering policies draw manufacturers from across the globe to our state," DeSantis said. "Today's infrastructure award will connect the Clay County community with high-wage jobs, bolster Florida's manufacturing industry, and strengthen the nation's number one economy."

"The strategic investments made today

will ensure that Clay County can continue to grow and thrive at record pace," said Secretary of Commerce J. Alex Kelly.

The investment in Clay County builds on more than \$250,000 awarded to the city of Green Cove Springs for electrical line infrastructure upgrades, \$500,000 awarded to the Clay County Development Authority to construct 2.5 miles of asphalt road at the Camp Blanding Joint Training Center and \$700,000 to improve infrastructure in the City of Green Cove Springs. Strategic investments in Clay County have strengthened the community's workforce and infrastructure, attracting new business growth in key industries, like manufacturing.

The award will go toward infrastructure support in Clay County with the construction of a new half-mile section collector road, Pringle Road, and enhancements to a quarter-mile section arterial road, County Road 218.



Fleming Island National Guardsman gets new rank, responsibilities

LATHAM, N.Y. – Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general for the state of New York, announced the recent promotion of New York Army National Guard members in recognition of their capability for additional responsibility and leadership.

Dane Doyle from Fleming Island, assigned to the 222nd Military Police Company, was promoted to 1st lieutenant.



Dane Doyle

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are eligible for monthly pay, educational benefits (from the state and federal government), travel across the globe, technical and leadership training, health and dental insurance and contributions towards retirement programs similar to a 401(k).

For more information about the New York Army National Guard, visit www.dmna.ny.gov or www.1800goguard.com

The New York National Guard (New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs) is the state's executive agency responsible to the Governor for managing New York's Military Forces, which consists of nearly 20,000 members of the New York Army National Guard, the New York Air National Guard, the New York Naval Militia and the New York Guard.

UF/IFAS Extension offering session on yard debris, protecting waterways

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – The UF/IFAS Extension Office will host a gardening advice session on Monday, Sept. 25, at 11:30 a.m. The focus will be on how to dispose of yard debris and protect Florida waters.

The Extension Office is located at 2463 State Road 16.

For more information, call (904) 284-6355 or email whhobbs@ufl.edu.

Families affected by addictions invited to Recovery Celebration on Sept. 23

MIDDLEBURG – September is Recovery Month, a time to celebrate those recovering from addiction or other mental health issues. Clay Behavioral Health Center has set a Recovery Celebration for Saturday, Sept. 23.

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CCSO
from page 2

Executive directors at two assisted living, nursing and memory care facilities said Clay Watch can be an effective tool – especially for those still living at home.

“I think it’s a great idea for people that live at home for a person that might suffer from a disability or cognitive impairment,” said one director in Orange Park.

Since both facilities are corporately owned, neither could identify their residents or communities.

“I think it would help give those families maybe some peace of mind,” an executive from another Orange Park facility said. “I can see how that would be extremely useful for families who still have a loved one in their home who is potentially prone to wandering or getting lost or is not able to function out in the world on their own.”

Families can register at the Safety Initiatives tab at claysheriff.com. CCSO won’t share information from its database, Layne said.

“The first priority is if we found some-



body wandering to be able to ID them because there are there are hundreds of man hours that go into trying to identify folks,” Layne said.

“When we’re out trying to save a life, or find a child, or find somebody who’s missing a father, mother, brother, sister, that’s elderly that’s missing, it’s all about getting the right information in the hands as

fast as we can for these deputies. Every set of eyes out here is a force multiplier for us – deputies, firefighters, the general public. We want to get as much information as possible out to everybody as fast as possible.”

The program also could help prevent injuries and death to children affected by autism. Searches can pinpoint likely recov-

ery areas by knowing a person’s habits in advance.

“The scariest thing for me, and especially as a supervisor out here, is we only have a certain finite number of deputies, and autistic children tend to be attracted to shiny items, including bodies of water,” Layne said. “It seems like every neighborhood now seems like it has a retention pond. So, as soon as we get one of these calls, our priority response is to the house. The first couple of units are searching the house to make sure that a kid isn’t hiding. Kids love to play hide and seek. More often than not, we still find them in the house.

“But those first couple of units are checked in the house. Everybody else is headed to the nearest body of water, the closest playground-like the places we know they’re going to go.”

In 2018, a 7-year-old boy with autism drowned in a pond behind his apartment complex on Knight Boxx Road in Orange Park. “Those are horrible calls for us,” Layne said.

Layne said Clay Watch could help lead better outcomes when minutes matter most.

BUDGET SUMMARY								
CLAY COUNTY, FLORIDA - FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024								
*THE PROPOSED OPERATING BUDGET EXPENDITURES OF CLAY COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, FLORIDA ARE 12.0% MORE THAN LAST YEARS TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES.								
County Wide Services	5.5471							
Unincorporated Services MSTU	0.1477							
Law Enforcement MSTU-4	2.4014							
Fire Control MSTU-8	0.5048							
Challenger Center Development MSTU	3.0000							
ESTIMATED REVENUES	GENERAL FUND	SPECIAL REVENUE	DEBT SERVICE	CAPITAL PROJECTS	ENTERPRISE FUND	TOTAL ALL FUNDS		
Taxes:								
Ad Valorem Taxes - County Wide Services	5.5471	\$ 48,513,708	\$ 45,406,788	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 93,920,496	
Ad Valorem Taxes - Unincorporated Services MSTU	0.1477		\$ 2,264,052				\$ 2,264,052	
Ad Valorem Taxes - Law Enforcement MSTU-4	2.4014		\$ 37,083,240				\$ 37,083,240	
Ad Valorem Taxes - Fire Control MSTU-8	0.5048		\$ 8,145,120				\$ 8,145,120	
Ad Valorem Taxes - Challenger Center Development MSTU	3.0000		\$ 237,336				\$ 237,336	
Other Taxes		\$ 9,894,688	\$ 40,067,839	\$ -	\$ 3,008,006	\$ -	\$ 52,970,533	
Charges for Services		\$ 6,987,949	\$ 3,075,400	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,300,000	\$ 16,363,349	
Intergovernmental Revenue		\$ 25,247,787	\$ 11,860,302	\$ -	\$ 3,436,909	\$ -	\$ 40,544,998	
Judgements, Fines, and Forfeitures		\$ 11,793	\$ 744,110	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 755,903	
Miscellaneous Revenue		\$ 3,970,717	\$ 21,815,094	\$ -	\$ 3,729,000	\$ 1,875,600	\$ 31,390,411	
Permits / Fees / Special Assessments		\$ -	\$ 11,099,333	\$ -	\$ 13,096,289	\$ 25,601,031	\$ 49,796,653	
TOTAL SOURCES		\$ 94,626,642	\$ 181,798,614	\$ -	\$ 23,270,204	\$ 33,776,631	\$ 333,472,091	
Interfund Transfers		\$ 230,000	\$ 9,400,818	\$ 8,406,250	\$ 23,579,288	\$ -	\$ 41,616,356	
Non-Revenues		\$ 450,000	\$ 2,312,172	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 75,000	\$ 2,837,172	
Fund Balances / Reserves / Net Assets		\$ 61,397,354	\$ 84,651,517	\$ -	\$ 179,692,960	\$ 42,253,715	\$ 367,995,546	
Statutory Reserve (F.S.129.01)		\$ (4,731,328)	\$ (9,089,903)	\$ -	\$ (1,163,503)	\$ (1,688,831)	\$ (16,673,565)	
TOTAL REVENUES, TRANSFERS, & BALANCES		\$ 151,972,668	\$ 269,073,218	\$ 8,406,250	\$ 225,378,949	\$ 74,416,515	\$ 729,247,600	
EXPENDITURES								
General Government		\$ 44,155,279	\$ 35,284,400	\$ 8,406,250	\$ 13,004,556	\$ -	\$ 100,850,485	
Court Related Expenditures		\$ 1,813,449	\$ 5,656,645	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 7,470,094	
Public Safety		\$ 40,121,588	\$ 107,054,562	\$ -	\$ 15,455,568	\$ -	\$ 162,631,718	
Physical Environment		\$ 1,148,862	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 39,036,291	\$ 40,185,153	
Transportation		\$ 4,698,397	\$ 17,975,186	\$ -	\$ 124,742,196	\$ -	\$ 147,415,779	
Economic Environment		\$ 1,323,535	\$ 4,770,488	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,094,023	
Human Services		\$ 10,824,982	\$ 35,764,651	\$ -	\$ 10,800,000	\$ -	\$ 57,389,633	
Culture and Recreation		\$ 14,767,247	\$ 4,257,366	\$ -	\$ 4,236,283	\$ -	\$ 23,260,896	
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		\$ 118,853,339	\$ 210,763,298	\$ 8,406,250	\$ 168,238,603	\$ 39,036,291	\$ 545,297,781	
Interfund Transfers		\$ 9,332,573	\$ 32,283,783	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 41,616,356	
Fund Balances / Reserves / Net Assets		\$ 23,786,756	\$ 26,026,137	\$ -	\$ 57,140,346	\$ 35,380,224	\$ 142,333,463	
TOTAL APPROPRIATED EXPENDITURES, TRANSFERS, RESERVES & BALANCES		\$ 151,972,668	\$ 269,073,218	\$ 8,406,250	\$ 225,378,949	\$ 74,416,515	\$ 729,247,600	
Note: This table is non-inclusive of Lake Asbury MSBD Budget (\$1,139,140)								

Country Christmas moves from Apopka Drive to Elrod Farms

Expanded event to feature one million lights

By Lee Wardlaw
lee@claytodayonline.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – Matthew Mitchell, a 19-year-old Fleming Island resident and student at Florida State University, has long been a fan of Christmas. Filled with holiday spirit year-round, he's been hanging thousands of Christmas lights around his family's home since he was 14.

But this year, Mitchell wants to take the holiday cheer to the next level. He plans to hang more than one million lights, and the project got underway last Saturday, Sept. 16.

Walmart had its Halloween merchandise and candy on the shelves in August, but Mitchell's project is more than three months in advance.

So why is Christmas coming so early in Clay County?

It's all part of Mitchell's plans to take the holiday to a level never seen.



"We want to make history in Northeast Florida," he said. The job wasn't possible to do alone. Over 20 volunteers arrived at Elrod Acres on Saturday at 8 a.m. They didn't stop working until the end of the day.

Mitchell is the Founder of "A Country Christmas," a one-of-a-kind event at Elrod Acres, 3679 Thunder Road on Dec. 8-9 and Dec. 15-16. Santa Claus and other favorite characters, a live nativity scene with camels, goats, and donkeys and more will be on display.

"This is the only event like this in North-



STAFF PHOTOS BY LEE WARDLAW

Founder Matthew Mitchell, right, the Elrod family and volunteers began preparing the property for "A Country Christmas" on Saturday, which will feature more than one million lights.

east Florida. We want to make sure that every guest who comes through here has the most magical experience possible. We have (no other option) than to be out here three months in advance," Mitchell said.

Hanging the lights wasn't the beginning of the work. More than 300 pallets have been collected. Vendor huts will be created out of the pallets, occupying the barn's space, featuring food trucks, and taking on the theme of "a German Christmas market," with lights and garland creating the authentic feel of the holiday magic.

"It's going to be a whole new Christmas experience," Mitchell said.

The sugar cane field will be cleared for spectator seating, with hay bales replacing traditional bleachers. They will be arranged in a square and topped off with Buffalo Plaid Christmas blankets so patrons can sit down, eat, and feel the holiday cheer surrounded by relatives and their closest friends in the community while watching music and entertainment on the stage. That will be behind and to the left of the ambitious arrangement.

Elrod's "Cracker House" will offer jams, jellies and local honey, all while embodying rural Northeast Florida culture.

Mitchell hopes to have all of the lights up by November.

"It's going to be like walking into a Hallmark movie," he said.

The 20 friends and family helped last

weekend. As the weather gets colder, they won't stop working.

Chris Mason, a lift operator who cleared the way for Christmas lights to safely cross branches and limbs while sweltering in the September heat.

"Hard work pays dividends. We want to see (children's) eyes light up," he said. "We want to provide an experience that no family will ever forget," Mitchell added.

For the team, it's more than just about the lights; it brings the community together through holiday cheer.

"It's really just our true passion for the community," he said.

This isn't the first time Mitchell has experimented with holiday cheer. During the pandemic in 2020, Mitchell and his family convinced many of his neighbors to hold a block party-style event. More than 500 from the community attended the event.

He tried again in 2022, showcasing the "Apopka Drive Night of Lights" to the community in Middleburg. Thousands attended the event with food trucks, a petting zoo with favorite Christmas drinks and snacks and appearances by characters like Santa Claus.

Mitchell hung 65,000-70,000 lights on his house alone.

"That was just to test the waters. This is the first official year of (A Country Christmas)," he said.

NOTICE OF PROPOSED TAX INCREASE

The Clay County Board of County Commissioners has tentatively adopted a measure to increase its property tax levy.

Last year's property tax levy:

A. Initially proposed tax levy	<u>\$ 122,327,459</u>
B. Less tax reductions due to Value Adjustment Board and other assessment changes	<u>\$ 221,217</u>
C. Actual property tax levy	<u>\$ 122,106,242</u>
This year's proposed tax levy.....	<u>\$ 141,650,227</u>

All concerned citizens are invited to attend a public hearing on the tax increase to be held on :

Tuesday, September 26, 2023

5:05 p.m.

At

The Administration Building

4th Floor

477 Houston Street

Green Cove Springs, Florida 32043

A FINAL DECISION on the proposed tax increase and the budget will be made at this hearing.

Legal 85023 published September, 21, 2023 in Clay County's Clay Today Newspaper.

Orange Park man digs into St. Augustine's past

Robert Phillips part of archeology project

By Zeinab Faraj
For Clay Today

ORANGE PARK – Early on summer mornings, photographer Robert Phillips set out to work with professors Dr. Lisa Lee and Dr. James Davidson researching fossils and remnants in an archeology dig in St. Augustine. His job seemed simple: take photographs of the work that the scientists had found. However, Phillips more than loved the experience as the thrill of discovery combined with his love of photography made the long summer days melt away.

Phillips described the experience as “interesting and full of hard work. His routine consisted of waking up at around 5 a.m., packing his equipment into a truck, taking the hour-long trip from Orange Park to the site in St. Augustine, then lugging the equipment into a boat, and finally, trying to make sense of what the team of professors and students were finding.

He said the scientists were “determined” to figure out the “world back then... what it was truly like” through the artifacts



The only way to reach the island was by boat. The work was hot and tidiest, which led to Phillips needing a bag of ice on his head to cool off.

they would discover.

“We lived off of Gatorade and beef jerky, but we loved it,” Phillips said.

The team found various objects, like pieces of glass, metals, porcelain, musket balls, other weapons and even glass watches. To Phillips, the objects weren't fascinating, but rather the “stories each [object] had to offer.” He said taking pictures of these specimens and working with the archeologists made him understand the “small world that was around.”

He loved visualizing and understanding what society was like back then and comparing it to conditions today. In his opinion,



PHOTOS BY ROBERT PHILLIPS

The Lighthouse Archaeological Maritime Program research team members recently completed an excavation of buried ruins from Fort Mose in St. Augustine. Orange Park's Robert Phillips joined the effort and chronicled much of the work with his camera. Archaeologists found pieces of pots and dishes, but they weren't sure if they were left by residents from Spain, France, England or the first legally sanctioned free African settlers.

the most beautiful pieces the team found were Spanish pottery pieces as they contrasted the English pottery pieces, which he described as “different in patterns but similar in function,” which he explained is due to “human nature.”

“We use the same item to express ourselves differently,” Phillips said.

Phillips enjoyed watching the tenacious scientists explore and figure out the mys-

teries each object holds. Moreover, he enjoyed the “mystery” and constant growth of the field of archaeology as he explained that the objects are “still being analyzed. There is a lot that we still do not know, but that is the beauty of the archeology... it is a story within itself,” he said.

He hopes that in the future, more young people will get involved in this fascinating field.



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School News claytodayonline.com

Fleming Island's Musco graduates from Valdosta State

VALDOSTA, Ga. – Kiley Musco of Fleming Island earned the Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies from Valdosta State University.

Nearly 550 students completed their degree requirements at VSU during Sum-

mer Semester 2023.

Established in 1906, Valdosta State University is a premier comprehensive university that offers both a major university's extensive academic, cultural, and social opportunities and the small classes and close, personal attention of smaller institutions.

Orange Park's Yearwood on Kennesaw State's President's List

KENNESAW, Ga. – Jarod Yearwood of Orange Park was selected to the Kennesaw State University Summer 2023 President's List.

Majoring in Geography, Yearwood is among 971 undergraduate students named to the Summer 2023 President's List.

To qualify, students must achieve a 4.0 grade point average and complete at least

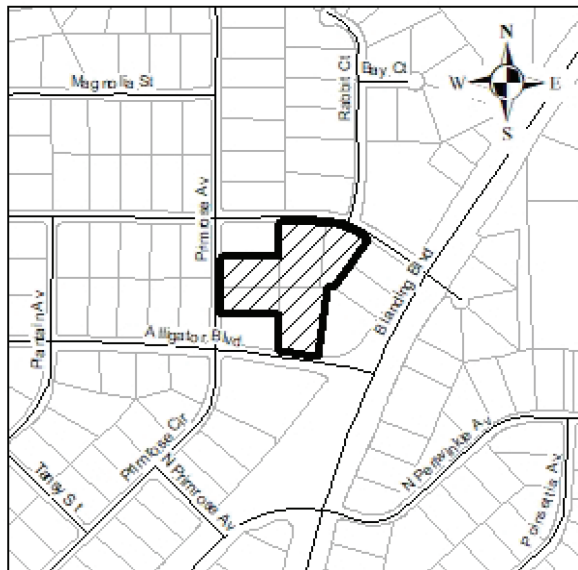
nine credit hours.

An innovative teaching and learning leader, Kennesaw State University offers undergraduate, graduate and doctoral degrees to its more than 43,000 students.

NOTICE OF PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE CLAY COUNTY 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

THE PUBLIC IS HEREBY NOTIFIED that the Planning Commission of Clay County, Florida, will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, October 3, 2023, at 5:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as can be heard, and that the Board of County Commissioners of Clay County, Florida, will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, October 24, 2023 at 5:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as can be heard. The hearings will be held in the Board of County Commissioners Meeting Room, 4th Floor, Clay County Administration Building, 477 Houston St, Green Cove Springs, Florida. The public hearings are scheduled for the purpose of considering the adoption of a small-scale amendment to the Future Land Use Map of the Clay County 2040 Comprehensive Plan. The ordinance adopting the proposed amendment is entitled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF CLAY COUNTY, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE CLAY COUNTY 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN INITIALLY ADOPTED PURSUANT TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 163.3184, FLORIDA STATUTES, UNDER ORDINANCE NO. 2018-31, AS SUBSEQUENTLY AMENDED, IN ORDER TO AMEND THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP TO CHANGE THE FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATION OF FIVE PARCELS (TAX PARCEL IDENTIFICATION #s 21-05-24-006700-186-00, 21-05-24-006700-187-00, 22-05-24-006700-194-00, 22-05-24-006700-193-00 and 22-05-24-006700-189-00), TOTALING APPROXIMATELY 7.54 ACRES, FROM RR (RURAL RESIDENTIAL) TO COM (COMMERCIAL); PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.



Interested parties may appear at the hearings and be heard with respect to the proposed ordinance. After the public hearings the Board may take immediate action on the proposed ordinance, or may continue its deliberations to a date, time and place then announced without publishing further notice thereof. A copy of the proposed ordinance is available for inspection by the public at the Clay County Planning and Zoning Division, Third Floor of the Administration Building, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays.

Pursuant to Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes, a person deciding to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at the hearings or at any subsequent hearing to which the Board has continued its deliberations is advised that such person will need a record of all proceedings and may need to ensure that a verbatim record of all proceedings is made, which must include the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person needing accommodations to participate in this matter should contact Clay County Risk Management by mail at P.O. Box 1366, Green Cove Springs, Florida 32043, or by telephone at (904) 278-4718, no later than three (3) days prior to the hearing or proceeding for which this notice has been given. Deaf and hard of hearing persons can access the telephone number by contacting the Florida Relay Service at 1-800-955-8770 (Voice) or 1-800-955-8771 (TDD).

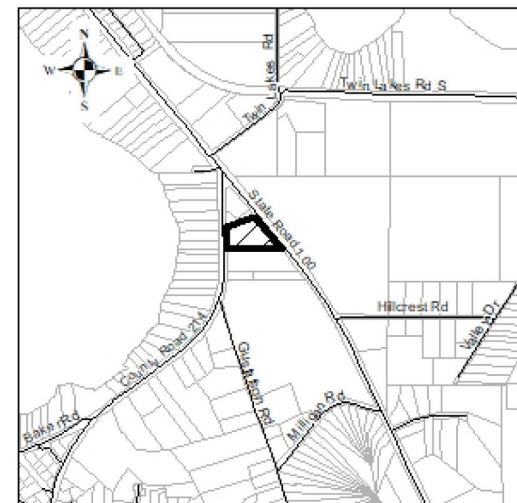
Clay County Board of County Commissioners

Legal 85031 published September 21, 2023 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper.

NOTICE OF PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE CLAY COUNTY 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

THE PUBLIC IS HEREBY NOTIFIED that the Planning Commission of Clay County, Florida, will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, October 3, 2023, at 5:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as can be heard, and that the Board of County Commissioners of Clay County, Florida, will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, October 24, 2023 at 5:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as can be heard. The hearings will be held in the Board of County Commissioners Meeting Room, 4th Floor, Clay County Administration Building, 477 Houston St, Green Cove Springs, Florida. The public hearings are scheduled for the purpose of considering the adoption of a small-scale amendment to the Future Land Use Map of the Clay County 2040 Comprehensive Plan. The ordinance adopting the proposed amendment is entitled:

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Interested parties may appear at the hearings and be heard with respect to the proposed ordinance. After the public hearings the Board may take immediate action on the proposed ordinance, or may continue its deliberations to a date, time and place then announced without publishing further notice thereof. A copy of the proposed ordinance is available for inspection by the public at the Clay County Planning and Zoning Division, Third Floor of the Administration Building, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays.

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Clay County Board of County Commissioners

Legal 85034 published September 21, 2023 in Clay County's Clay Today Newspaper.

Happiness

from page 1

nights in her car. Chisholm said that the same car had been running for three years with no air conditioning.

At a crossroads, Chisholm became desperate for change.

"I basically had, in my van, clothes and just basic necessities. Just what we needed. We were going to the food bank here in Green Cove, and they were helping me with toiletries and things like that," Chisholm said.

Between a rock and a hard place, Chisholm said her thoughts about the future began to become frightening.

"It got a little bit scary, as well. I would think, 'What am I going to do when it's time for the kids to go back to school?' A lot of thoughts were going through my mind at that time," Chisholm said.

Chisholm said she wanted to do better for her children. She said her boys were always questioning what their next step would be.

"It was very hard. I tried to keep a positive outlook through everything. I always told them, 'Don't worry. Things are going to happen,'" Chisholm said.

Wanting to save and protect her children from the feelings of despair, Chisholm tried to keep the weight off of them by ensuring that the hard times would not last long.

"When we were at the camp, we just



Crystal Chisholm has a place where she and her sons call home. Once homeless, several rallied give her a car, house, job ... and hope.

looked at it like, 'Oh, well, this is a camping trip for the summer, something we didn't get to do.' We always tried to look on the positive side," Chisholm said.

Searching for any opportunity for assistance, Chisholm came across Sanders and his ministry. From there, she took a leap of faith and reached out.

"I don't know if it was God or I don't know what it was. But I just happened to come across ... True Vine Transitional Center. I was thinking, 'I didn't know there was a homeless shelter or a transitional center in Green Cove,'" Chisholm said.

She said Sanders had called her back within a couple of days, wanting to meet

with her. Sanders said hearing her story really touched his heart.

"We sat there, and she told me everything she was going through. And, I told her, 'Let me see what I can do to help you out,'" Sanders said.

With the help of church congregation members and the Breaking Bread Ministry, Sanders said they came together to implement a plan of action.

Chisholm and her children stayed at Camp Chowenwaw for a couple of weeks. Following their time at the camp, the ministry funded their move to an extended-stay hotel in Orange Park.

All the while, Chisholm said she was met with another surprise: a new car. After attending church one day, Chisholm was presented with a Toyota mini-van by Sanders and his church congregation.

"That was just another blessing. So, I donated my car without the AC because it ran back to the church. I just felt like that was the right thing to do," Chisholm said.

Chisholm said her blessings continued to roll in with her life on the up. After having back surgery and getting released from her neurologist, she was able to begin searching for a job. Last month, Chisholm also began her new job at the Penney Retirement Community.

Penney Retirement Community CEO Teresa Scott said hiring Chisholm for the job was easy. Chisholm's story was initially brought to her by Sanders, and Scott said she was more than happy to help Chisholm get back on her feet.

"We had the housekeeping position open. So, she came out, she interviewed, she did really well, and we were able to employ her," Scott said.

As another surprise, Chisholm was given a new home as one last gift in what she calls 'A whirlwind of blessings'.

Walking through the doors of her new home, Chisholm said she was overwhelmed with emotions. On her first night in the home, she cried tears of joy.

"The kids were so excited about picking their rooms ... the spirits were high, everybody was having fun, laughing, everyone was giggly. It was just a great experience to be back in a home again," Chisholm said. Her boys, Joshua and Matthew, were gifted bicycles from Orange Park United Methodist Church James Boys. The same group refurbishes bikes to be given away during the J.P. Hall Christmas Party each December.

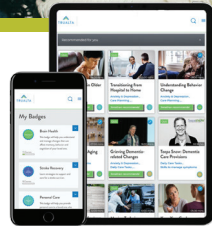
For what she has been through, Chisholm said she will forever be grateful for the love and support she received from her community. Throughout her struggles, Chisholm's faith kept her going, not only for her but for her children. And she said she hopes others in similar situations will do the same.

"I would like to say to anybody who is going through a hard time or struggling right now, just to hang in there. Reach out to every resource you can because someone is willing to help you. And, you're only going to get help if you're willing to help yourself," Chisholm said.



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The James Boys

Volunteer group use faith, hammers to help residents in need

By Lee Wardlaw
lee@claytodayonline.com

CLAY HILL – One volunteer group in Clay County is in high demand this fall.

The James Boys, affiliated with Clay County Habitat for Humanity, has been in “business” since 1995 and utilizes help from Orange Park Methodist and Highpoint Community churches.

On Monday, The James Boys resurrected a ramp for Linda Harris, a resident of Bluejay Road. They made quick work of the former ramp, which was deteriorating, eradicating and replacing the structure before the “lunch bell” rang.

Harris, who will now be able to enter and exit her mobile home safely, expressed immense gratitude in the group, whose impact was far-reaching, she said.

“The other (ramp) was falling completely apart. I have fallen a couple of times where the wood (was) rotting through, and my husband, who passed away, had a wheelchair, and it was harder for him to maneuver down the old one. This is going to be a (tremendous) help because I have a balance problem in my brain,” she said.

Harris connected with the James Boys after receiving several grants through Clay Cares, which initiated a series of home improvements. However, the monies did not



The James Boys come from a myriad of backgrounds, like the medical, engineering, and construction and other industries make short work of each job, typically finishing before lunchtime on Mondays and Wednesdays. They’ve been in operation since 1995.

cover enough for the ramp’s replacement, which would have cost her at least \$8,000 to replace.

“I wouldn’t have been able to afford that,” she said.

The continuing acts of kindness from the group have boundlessly impacted Harris’s countless other residents.

“It’s really nice that they care enough to come out and help people,” she said.

After finishing the job, the James Boys



STAFF PHOTOS BY LEE WARDLAW

The James Boys is a volunteer group working with Clay County Habitat for Humanity that builds wheelchair ramps for needy residents. On Monday, they reconstructed a ramp for Linda Harris, a resident of Clay Hill. After the job is completed, the James Boys christen the ramp with a prayer, holding hands in unison with each resident they serve. The group has served residents free of charge.



stuck to a tried-and-true tradition, inviting the homeowner outside to see their completed work and to join the group for a send-off prayer.

The power of a good deed creates a similar effect on volunteers.

“Let me tell you, it makes my day when people see the (finished product), and you see tears rolling down their face. Some people can’t even get out of their (mobile home) before we come to fix the ramp,” said Gray Chandler, a former employee of CSX who’s led the group for three years.

As the James Boys extend their services by helping residents regain mobility and independence, they continue to touch lives in the county. Elmer Posick, a former engineer with the Federal Treasury Department who retired in 2011, handles board cutting. He shared a heartwarming story about a rebuild from the James Boys that

allowed a 10-year-old boy who permanently used a wheelchair to travel freely to and from his home. “You should have seen that little boy’s look, thinking ‘I can get in and out of this house. I can go up and down this ramp all by myself.’”

Before the James Boys came in for assistance, he had to be picked up and carried in and out of his residence.

“I’ve never felt so blessed just to have this opportunity. We truly are doing the Lord’s work,” he said.

Providing an essential service to residents and woven into the fabric of the county community for nearly 30 years, the James Boys are in higher demand than ever. They built 51 ramps last year, and that number should grow.

“I think we’re on track to do more than that this year,” said volunteer Ken Kolz.



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Faith Walk

by Pastor Billy Register
True Life Church
Clay County

Is the Devil Real?

Have you ever wondered if the devil is real? Yes, we believe in the reality of a loving God and His presence among us, but does the devil really exist and attempt to impact our lives as well?

In Ephesians 6:12, the apostle Paul paints a vivid picture of the spiritual battle we face: "For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places."

This verse reveals a hidden conflict, where forces of darkness strive to undermine God's work. It acknowledges the devil's existence and teaches the importance of recognizing the spiritual realm's impact on our lives. James 4:7 offers us practical guidance in our encounter with the devil: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." This simple yet powerful advice emphasizes our ability to stand against the devil's schemes. By leaning on God's strength and truth, we can overcome temptations and lies that try to lead us astray. This verse empowers us to engage in the ongoing battle with confidence in Christ's victory. Reflecting on the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4, we gain insight into the devil's strategies. In the wilderness, the devil cunningly twisted truth to deceive Jesus. This account highlights the devil's persistence in attempting to derail God's plans. Jesus' response, grounded in scripture, demonstrates our means of defense – the Word of God. Through this narrative, we learn that even Jesus encountered the reality of the devil's temptations.

Acknowledging the reality of the devil doesn't lead us to fear, but to vigilance. It's about recognizing the unseen battles and understanding that the devil's tactics aim to hinder our spiritual growth. Yet, in Christ, we have the tools to stand strong.

By staying rooted in God's Word, we can resist the devil's schemes and navigate life's challenges with confidence. The God that will dwell in us if we allow Him is GREATER than any plot of the enemy! Remember and live with certainty what we find in 1 John 4:4, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

You can write the Pastor at pastor-billy@findtruelife.com.



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Green Cove Springs approves millage rate, budget for 2023-24

By Clay Today Staff

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – The City Council approved a 4.7 millage rate Tuesday night for the next fiscal year that will generate \$3.3 million in revenues, a 14.85% increase from last year's rolled-back rate of 4.1275.

In doing so, the city's fiscal year 2023-24 budget will be \$15,899,291, with the

largest expenses being \$4.7 million for the police department and \$3.9 million for public works. A millage rate is the amount assessed for each \$1,000 of value for non-exempt real property. The new budget goes into effect on Oct. 1.

The council approved a five-year capital improvement program from 2024 to 2028 in other businesses. The total cost of

the plan will be \$21,487,293.

The city spent months identifying long-term needs and revenue sources. The plan will address the Augusta Savage Arts and Community Center, information technology, parks, code enforcement, public works, equipment maintenance, police, electric, water, solid waste, stormwater and wastewater.

Town ranks five law firms in search for new attorney

By Lee Wardlaw

lee@claytodayonline.com

ORANGE PARK – The Town Council moved forward in replacing General Counsel Sam Garrison by ranking five law firms that filed for Requests of Qualifications,

The council pared the list to three, with Jody Lane Brooks earning the highest ranking. Vose Law was second, followed by Balch & Bingham in third.

Representatives from those three firms were invited to a special meeting on Sept. 27 at 5 p.m. where they will be asked to

participate in interviews with members. The process started when Garrison, who represents Clay County in the Florida House of Representatives and is a partner at Kopelousos, Bradley and Garrison, resigned in August.

"This was a very good task for us. There was a lot of reading and (working) to (identify) the correct solution. The entire council did a great job at it, and I want to thank all of you for what you did," said Mayor Randy Anderson.

Garrison addressed residents and his

colleagues during Attorney Reports before being given the ultimate sendoff from members during their comments.

Garrison thanked the council for their continued patience during his recent years serving constituents in Tallahassee, who showed graciousness by allowing him to attend meetings remotely when needed. Among countless of his other duties, including Committee meetings and more, most of Garrison's memories serving were good, he said.

Briefs

from page 13

"Our theme this year is Recovery is For Everyone: Every Person, Every Family, Every Community," said Irene Toto, CEO of Clay Behavioral. "Supporting people in recovery means lowering barriers to recovery support, creating inclusive spaces and programs, and broadening awareness of the need to reduce the stigma.

The Recovery Celebration will be from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Veterans Administration Office, 400 College Dr. It will include food trucks, a live DJ, local vendors, a Wall of Remembrance and information and support from Recovery Partners.

Groups sponsor the event Recover Together and Clay County Public Safety Community Paramedicine. Contact Glenn East at (904) 504-7723 for more information.

Challenge Enterprises' Uptown Hoedown to kick up a storm on Sept. 28

ORTEGA – Challenge Enterprise will host one of its biggest fundraising events of the year – The Uptown Hoedown – on Thursday, Sept. 28, from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

at the Timuquana Country Club.

The party at 4028 Timuquana Road in Jacksonville will include a night of "boots, food, beverages, silent auctions and good ol' country fun" to benefit the organization's programs that support individuals with intellectual, physical and developmental disabilities, all while helping families navigate Florida's eligibility services.

Tickets and sponsorships are available at challengeenterprises.org.

County looking for suggestions on its Gateway to Clay project

CLAY COUNTY – Residents living on or near Wells Road are encouraged to complete a survey to share ideas for the Gateway to Clay initiative.

The project is a partnership between public safety, government and businesses to improve Wells Road.

The survey is available at claycounty.gov/community/gateway-to-clay.

Senior Games returning to Jacksonville for 10 days

JACKSONVILLE – Senior athletes are

invited to register for the Jacksonville Senior Games from Sept. 29 to Oct. 8.

Seasoned athletes 50 and older can compete in an Olympic-style event with competitive and novice classes.

The Florida Sports Foundation sanctions the games and are a qualifier for the Florida Senior Games State Championships.

Being healthy and active is not only important for physical and mental well-being. This is why the Forever Fit 50 and Beyond: Jacksonville Senior Games offers non-physical games and activities and plenty of social events that allow our participants to renew friendships, create new ones, and share experiences. Events include 5K road race, powerlifting (bench press and deadlift), 5K and 10K cycling, singles and doubles table tennis, singles and doubles bowling, bridge, basketball free throws and spot shots, swimming, singles and doubles tennis, golf, Chinese Mah Jong and singles and doubles pickleball.

For more information about the 2022 Forever Fit 50 and Beyond: Jacksonville Senior Games, call (904) 255-5667 or email adultsvcs@coj.net.

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PHOTO BY DONNA CONVERSANO

Revelers shook their booties last week to celebrate Clay Humane Society's 45th anniversary at the Clay Theatre.

Clay Humane celebrates its 45th anniversary with Studio 45 Disco Party

For Clay Today

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – Clay Humane recently marked its 45th anniversary with a themed “Studio 45” party in a dazzling display of glitter and glam. Giving a nod to the iconic NY nightclub, Studio 54, this groovy disco party had attendees boogying the night away to support the Society’s vital work.

The Clay County Humane Society, a community pillar for nearly half a century, hosted the Disco Party on Sept. 9 at the historic Clay Theatre.

Guests arrived dressed to impress in their disco-era best, sporting bell-bottoms, sequined dresses, and platform shoes. The event’s decor transported everyone back to the 1970s, with neon lights, disco balls and a dance floor that beckoned partygoers to strut their stuff.

As the sounds of the Bee Gees filled the air and glittering disco lights cast their enchanting glow, Clay Humane unveiled its visionary “Unleashing A Legacy” capital campaign. This initiative aims to raise \$10 million to construct a state-of-the-art animal center which will expand the Society’s veterinary facilities, increase community initiatives and enhance educational programs.

“We are committed to our mission of providing compassionate care to animals and empowering our community to do the same. The ‘Unleashing A Legacy’ campaign

is our next step in fulfilling this mission,” said Executive Director Linda Welzant. “We wanted to celebrate this milestone in style and felt it was the perfect time for this exciting news.”

The party featured DJ Shawn Woolman from Party Solutions Entertainment, who played disco classics, keeping the dance floor packed throughout the night. Attendees showcased their best dance moves, proving that age is just a number when it comes to grooving to the disco beats. And what “Studio 45” party would be complete without roller skating, a woman in a giant martini glass and Elvis!

In addition to the music and dancing, the event included a silent auction and “Boozehound Raffle” with the lucky winner taking home a wagon full of their favorite libations.

The evening also featured a heart-warming video, giving a glimpse of the 45-year history and showcasing the incredible impact of the organization’s work.

As the dance floor cleared and the lights dimmed, the echoes of disco music and laughter lingered in the air, a testament to the enduring spirit of compassion that fuels the Clay County Humane Society.

The Anniversary Party was a night to remember, celebrating the organization’s incredible history while paving the way for an even brighter future. Here’s to 45 years of love, hope, and wagging tails, with many more to come.



National Society Daughters of the American Revolution join Orange Park’s Constitution Week observation

ORANGE PARK – From left, Sophia Fleming Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, joined Committee Chair Terri Dobbs and Orange Park Mayor Randy Anderson after the Town passed a resolution proclaiming Sept. 17 through 23 as Constitution Week. The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution urges Americans to reflect on the U.S. Constitution during September’s annual observance in honor of this foundational document of national governance.

Insurance from page 12

claims, contributing to the litigious nature of the market. She assured the Florida Legislature has been actively working to address these challenges. She cited recent legislation aimed at curbing AOB and implementing litigation reforms.

She also expressed reservations about certain aspects of these reforms, like the provision where each party pays their attorney fees in insurance dispute cases.

With the recent developments and ongoing efforts in Tallahassee, Bradley

expressed hope for property insurance rates in the state during the next five to 10 years.

“The idea is to stop the bleeding and get the rates to stay steady in the meantime. Then, the hope is that rates will stop going up, and we can bring in more (well-capitalized) companies to the state and prices start to go down,” she said.

She encouraged residents whose insurance companies dropped to consult with their agents. Bradley said addressing property insurance in the state is a complex endeavor and officials in Tallahassee are working toward a more stable and sustainable market.

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Police Briefs claytodayonline.com

Child exploitation sting leads to arrest of Jacksonville man

ORANGE PARK – A sting conducted by the Clay County Sheriff's Office and other state and federal agencies led to the arrest of a Jacksonville man who used his computer to arrange sex with children.

Reginald Renaldo Jefferson, 29, was charged with using a computer to seduce or lure a child for sex, traveling to meet a minor for sex, attempting to flee law enforcement and using his cellphone to facilitate a felony.



Reginald Renaldo Jefferson

According to the affidavit for arrest, deputies with Operation Shining Light contacted Jefferson on Aug. 3 and 4. He agreed to meet a 14-year-old "child" at Kingsley Avenue and Blanding Boulevard for a "qv," which stands for a "quick" sexual encounter.

Operation Shining Light is a task force to unite organizations to fight against child exploitation and human trafficking.

When deputies attempted to make a traffic stop of Jefferson to arrest him, he drove around the squad car and tried to elude around the Blanding and Loch Rane Boulevard area. Fearful for motorists and pedestrians, CCSO terminated the chase.

He eventually was caught on Hogan Road in Jacksonville on Sept. 18.

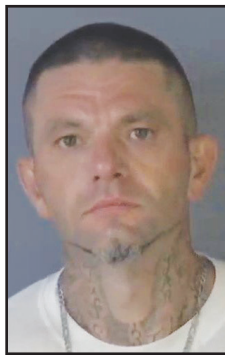
Jefferson's bond is \$400,012.

Trespassing call leads to drug bust for Palatka couple

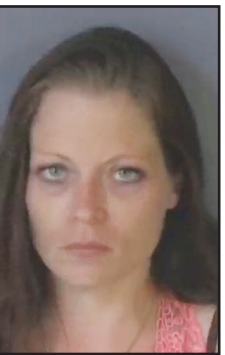
GREEN COVE SPRINGS – Deputies responding to a trespassing call on Sept.

13 wound up arresting a couple on drug charges.

Nicole Marie Brown, 32, of Palatka, was charged with possession of morphine, methamphetamine and drug paraphernalia, as well as trafficking fentanyl, while Danny Scott McGuirt, 38, of Palatka, was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia and resisting law enforcement after deputies found them parked in an open lot on Country Road 209. When deputies entered a gate, McGuirt attempted to run but was quickly apprehended.



Danny Scott McGuirt



Nicole Marie Brown

According to the arrest report, a search of the car unveiled a morphine pill, pipes, syringes, fentanyl and methamphetamine.

Brown's bond was set at \$158,011, while McGuirt is being held without bond.

Woman arrested for getting into car left running in parking lot

MIDDLEBURG – A homeless woman was arrested on Sept. 13 for trying to take a car left running in a convenience store parking lot.

Shelby Leigh Clark, 49, was charged with armed robbery and grand theft auto after a Clay County Sheriff's Office deputy said she got into a BMW that was left running with the keys in the ignition while she was inside the store. When the owner re-

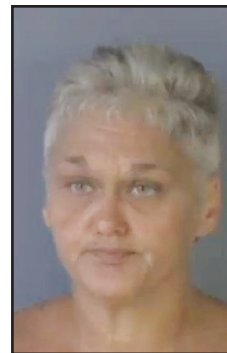
turned, she found Clark inside the car.

The victim said she didn't find anything missing from the car after Clark left the scene.

When deputies stopped Clark, she said she got into the car "because she wanted to get out of here." She also told CCSO she was having premonitions that something bad was going to happen.

Clark was charged with armed robbery since she had a knife.

Her bond was set at \$15,006.



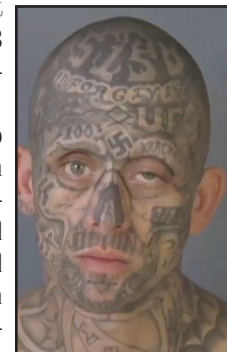
Shelby Clark

White Supremacist, Keystone woman indicted on firearm, drug charges

JACKSONVILLE – U.S. Attorney Roger B. Handberg announces the return of an indictment charging Danny Ray Boree, 38, and Angela Denee Lynch, 47, both from Keystone Heights, with conspiracy to possess with the intent to distribute 26.3 grams of methamphetamine.

Boree has also been charged with possessing a firearm as a convicted felon. Boree and Lynch each face a minimum mandatory term of five years and up to 40 years in federal prison for each of the drug offenses. Boree faces up to 15 years imprisonment for the firearm offense.

The indictment also notifies Boree and Lynch that the United States intends to forfeit a Raven Arms pistol traceable to the firearm offense. Boree was arrested on Sept. 8 and ordered detained. Lynch was arrested on Sept. 11.



Danny Rae Boree

According to the indictment and court proceedings, Boree is a member of The Unforgiven, a violent white supremacy gang. From an unknown date, but at least through June 2023, Boree and Lynch conspired to possess and distribute methamphetamine.

On June 8, Boree and Lynch were stopped at the corner of Swarthmore Drive and Dennison Avenue after the deputy saw Boree sitting in the passenger seat without a seatbelt. During the stop, the deputy noticed a hatchet on the dashboard. According to the arrest report, when Boree was asked if there were any other weapons in the car, he said: "There might be." When Boree exited the car, the deputy said they saw him "manipulate an object in his waistband" that contained methamphetamine. CCSO also found three smaller baggies containing fentanyl and cocaine in his front pocket.

According to the indictment, Boree and Lynch possessed with the intent to distribute more than five grams of methamphetamine, and Boree also possessed a firearm. At the time of the drug offenses, Boree had previously been convicted in state court in Florida of 10 felonies, including battery on a law enforcement officer, resisting an officer with violence and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

As a convicted felon, Boree was prohibited from possessing a firearm under federal law. Boree had been released from the Florida Department of Corrections in January 2023 for his last firearm conviction.

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.

This case was investigated by the Clay County Sheriff's Office and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives – Jacksonville Office. Assistant U.S. Attorney Kevin C. Frein will prosecute it. Assistant U.S. Attorney Mai Tran will handle the forfeiture.

Arrests & Bookings claytodayonline.com

(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, Sept. 19

Charlie I. Manning, 36, Middleburg, VOP-battery of person 65 or older, VOP-felony battery

Christopher A. Minorics, 48, Middleburg, battery on law enforcement officer, resist/obstruct/oppose law enforcement

Danielle M. Ray, 36, Middleburg, viola-

tion of injunction against stalking

Mickie I. Brantley, 51, Keystone Heights, battery

Kenneth E. Harris, 54, Middleburg, battery by strangulation

Ayden D. Winston, 22, Green Cove Springs, shoplifting

Walter H. Perez, 18, Oakleaf, burglary, grand theft auto

David E. Groman, 57, Middleburg, domestic battery

Jason S. Dubose, 44, Green Cove Springs, FTA-violation of injunction for protection against domestic violence

Gennard Cavainolo, 53, Green Cove Springs, FTA-DWLSR

Wilfredo D. Rivera, 55, Green Cove Springs, violation of pre-trail injunction for

protection against domestic violence

Jarel P. Walker-Webb, 19, Green Cove Springs, violation of jail rules

Steven E. Smeltzer, 62, Middleburg, battery

Monday, Sept. 18

Brittany R. Jones, 43, Green Cove Springs, two counts trespassing

Robert A. Watford, 65, Fleming Island, DUI with BAL .15 or higher

Cleiton Souza, 21, Orange Park, driving without license

Benjamin Sanabria, 40, Green Cove Springs, FTA

Carol C. Glass, 57, Orange Park, burglary, grand theft auto

Scott C. Becker, 60, Fleming Island, battery, trespassing

Reginald R. Jefferson, 29, Jacksonville, use of computer to solicit/lure child, traveling to meet child for sex, failure to obey law enforcement, use of two-way commu-

nication device to facilitate felony

Michelor Justin, 30, Green Cove Springs, FTA-DWLSR

Dwight D. Robinson, 42, Orange Park, trafficking-methamphetamine/amphetamine, possession-fentanyl, possession-ammunition/firearm by convicted felon

Carllis L. Pitts, 32, Middleburg, DWLSR

Meighan K. Rosier, 42, Green Cove Springs, non-support

Sunday, Sept. 17

Edward H. Matthews, 51, Green Cove Springs, FTA-DWLSR

Matthew M. Walker, 36, Orange Park, possession-fentanyl, grand theft auto

Angelica D. Wilson, 27, Orange Park, possession-drug paraphernalia

Eugene T. Wright, 40, Orange Park, child abuse

Quirrien M. Sanders, 25, Green Cove Springs, FTA-DWLSR



The Ultimate Elvis Christmas to make rockin' stop on Dec. 3

ORANGE PARK – Get ready to shake, rattle, and roll this holiday season because “The Ultimate Elvis Christmas” concert is coming to the Thrasher-Horne Center on Dec. 3.

This spectacular event features none other than The Ultimate Elvis Champion, Cote Deonath, alongside the world-renowned Infnit-E Tribute Band. This unforgettable concert will transport you back in time to the golden era of rock and roll, complete with all your favorite Elvis hits and a festive twist of classic Elvis Christmas tunes.

From “Blue Christmas” to “Suspicious Minds,” Cote Deonath’s electrifying performance will have you tapping your feet and singing along to every note. Come and experience “The Ultimate Elvis Christmas” concert for yourself and join in on the holiday cheer. It’s a night you won’t want to miss. Tickets, which start at \$25, are available at the box office or thcenter.org.

Shen Yun to make stop at Thrasher-Horne on Jan. 16

ORANGE PARK – Shen Yun takes you on an extraordinary journey through 5,000 years of divinely inspired culture. The group asks guests to join them for a show filled with courage, wisdom, light, and hope.

Experience Shen Yun at 7:30 p.m. at the Thrasher-Horne Center on Jan. 16.



Tickets at \$80 are available at the box office or thcenter.org.

Exquisite beauty from the heavens, profound wisdom from dynasties past, timeless legends and ethnic traditions all spring to life through classical Chinese dance, enchanting live orchestral music, authentic costumes, and patented interactive stage and backdrop integration.

Revisit a time when scholars and artists sought harmony with the Tao, or the “Way” of the universe, and when divine beings walked upon the earth to inspire humanity. Be prepared for a theatrical experience that will take your breath away.

Thrasher-Horne hosting Plain White T’s on Sept. 23

ORANGE PARK – Since emerging in 1997, the GRAMMY Award-nominated multi-platinum Chicago quintet – Tom Higgenson [vocals], Tim Lopez [lead guitar, vocals], Mike Retondo [bass], and De’Mar Hamilton [drums] – has amassed an enduring, engaging, and enigmatic catalog, spanning two gold-certified offerings like “All That We Needed” (2005) and “Every Second Counts” (2006) and unshakable anthems such as the double-platinum “1,2,3,4” and platinum “Rhythm of Love.”

The band will play many of their hits on Sept. 23 at 8 p.m. when they appear at the Thrasher-Horne Center. Tickets are available at thcenter.org or at the box office.

Among the discography, “Hey There Delilah” went quadruple-platinum, topped the Billboard Hot 100, and earned a pair of 2008 GRAMMY Award nominations in the categories of “Song of the Year” and “Best

Pop performance by a Duo or Group with Vocal.”

Along the way, the five-piece logged countless miles on the road in front of sold-out crowds in nearly every corner of the globe. After a whirlwind tour cycle supporting 2015’s “American Nights,” the guys hunkered down and began writing the ideas that would eventually comprise Parallel Universe, slated for an August 2018 release.

Disney Junior’s Costume Palooza! to appear on Oct. 1

The three-time Pollstar-nominated Disney Junior tour is back with Disney Junior Live On Tour: Costume Palooza!

The show brings beloved Disney Junior characters and favorite Marvel Super Heroes live on stage for a jam-packed, concert-style show with singing, dancing, acrobatics and more.

The tour will make a stop at the Thrasher-Horne Center on Oct. 1 at 4 p.m. Tickets, which start at \$29, are available at thcenter.org.

It will feature favorite songs from hit Disney Junior series and new original music. Mickey, Minnie and their pals are preparing to throw a huge costume party, but mysterious green rain, wind, and smoke keep interrupting the fun. Can Spidey and his Amazing Friends help save the Costume Palooza?

Come join the party and see Mickey, Minnie, Goofy, Doc McStuffins, the Puppy Dog Pals, Bo from Firebuds, Ginny from SuperKitties, and Marvel’s Spidey and his Amazing Friends LIVE on stage.

Aaron Lewis, St. Michael’s Soldiers Rock the Box 3 to honor heroes

ORANGE PARK – St. Michael’s Soldiers presents Rock the Box 3, a Free Night of Music for our Heroes, on Oct. 7 at 7:30 p.m. A maximum of two free tickets are available for troops and veterans, hospital and front-line Workers, first responders, teachers and linemen. For tickets, visit thcenter.org.my.salesforce-sites.com.

The night of music will include Joshua Henry and Aaron Lewis.

You must submit ticket requests and receive tickets for entry; free tickets will not be available at the show. Tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Please purchase tickets if you want to pick out a seat location or guarantee a seat. If you are interested in buying tickets starting at \$89, visit thcenter.org.

St. Michael’s Soldiers is dedicated to the support of the deployed men and women of the U.S. Military.

Lonestar to shine at Thrasher-Horne on Oct. 20

ORANGE PARK – Dean Sams (keyboards, acoustic guitar, background vocals), Michael Britt (lead guitarist, background vocals), Keech Rainwater (drums) and Drew Womack (lead vocals, guitar) are taking a fresh look at all 10 of their chart-topping country songs.

The streak started in 1996 with the band’s second single, the rock-edged “No News,” and continued with the following year’s “Come Cryin’ to Me” and “Everything’s Changed.” The band’s quadruple-platinum 1999 album Lonely Grill spawned four No. 1 hits (including the beloved global smash “Amazed”) and established Lonestar as music’s preeminent pop-country band—a status they’d maintain through the 2000s and beyond.

Lonestar will play many of their iconic hits on Oct. 20 at the Thrasher-Horne Center. Tickets, which start at \$29, are available at thcenter.org.

Arrests

from page 22

Oreste M. Rojas, 34, Orange Park, felony domestic battery by strangulation

Brandy M. Greene, 44, Orange Park, battery

Holly L. Rochau, 42, Fleming Island, aggravated battery

Wilfredo D. Rivera, 55, Middleburg, violation of injunction for protection against domestic violence

Saturday, Sept. 16

Timothy R. Murphy, 43, Middleburg, DUI

Kyle T. Culliton, 33, Green Cove Springs, possession-cocaine, possession-controlled substance

David M. Carter, 57, Orange Park, FTA-DWLSR

Adonica S. Kelley, 48, Fleming Island, possession-cocaine

Taylor R. Gonzalez, 30, Fleming Island, DUI

Michael Z. Wright, 36, Keystone Heights, child abuse

Friday, Sept. 15

Jason A. Daniel, 32, Green Cove Springs, FTA-DWLSR

Cecilio D.J. Pizarro, 36, Fleming Island, shoplifting

Dwight D. Robinson, 42, Orange Park, trafficking-methamphetamine, deliver/sell-opium

Victor P. Martin, 47, Fleming Island, out of state fugitive

John J. Fennell, 31, Orange Park, trespassing

Thursday, Sept. 14

Jeremy D. Declue, 35, Middleburg, driv-

ing without license

Geoffrey F. Levonitis, 32, Fleming Island, DUI

Corry J. Preston, 34, Middleburg, violation of release conditions, FTA-contempt of court-violating injunction against phoning/communicating with victim

Paul R. Bircher, 34, Green Cove Springs, VOP-battery

Wednesday, Sept. 13

Justin C. Wilbur, 35, Middleburg, possession-marijuana, possession-drug paraphernalia, DUI, refusal to submit to BAL test, DWLSR

Nicole M. Brown, 32, Green Cove Springs, possession-morphine, trafficking-fentanyl, possession-methamphetamine, possession-drug paraphernalia

Danny S. McGuirt, 38, Green Cove Springs, possession-drug paraphernalia, resist/obstruct/oppose law enforcement

Jeremiah L. Perkins, 33, Orange Park, FTA-failure to register vehicle

Amanda M. McHale, 32, Middleburg, possession-controlled substance

Ronnie D. Smith, 35, Keystone Heights, trespassing

Kendall R. Hachez, 35, Green Cove Springs, two counts VOP-community control

Eric W. Kudlesky, 42, Green Cove Springs, two counts VOP-community control, two counts FTA-possession-controlled substance, FTA-possession-marijuana, FTA-possession-drug paraphernalia

Kimberly P. Bridges, 26, Green Cove Springs, VOP-armed robbery

Shelby L. Clark, 49, Middleburg, armed burglary of auto, grand theft auto

Deshawn J. Pollard, 28, Orange Park, domestic battery with bodily harm

Fighting to find inner peace

Anderson cruises to point-boxing victory at Smiley's tournament

By Don Coble
don@claytodayonline.com

ORANGE PARK – Mike Anderson finds inner peace every time he throws a punch. He feels a sense of calmness with every jab and emotional tranquility with each up-percut.

The Fleming Island Cruiserweight was in his happy place last Saturday, competing at the International Kickboxing Federation-Point Muay Thai Kickboxing and Boxing tournament at Smiley's Academy of Martial Arts on Wells Road.

Anderson said fighting is a necessary outlet that helps him from a complicated past.

"I basically fight not to hurt anyone or feel mad or aggressive," he said. "It's more of an outlet for me. I would say I may have had a troubled past or things that did not go well in my life. But when I do the martial arts or I'm in there fighting, this makes me feel a part of something and makes me feel like nothing else matters. You know, so all my worries go away.

"You know, if I'm ever in bad situations, I just work it out in a different way besides just lifting weights or going to run outside."

Ulysses Moore of Orange Park also posted a division victory by beating Jacksonville's Jenzal Menzezz in the Men's Novice Super Cruiserweight competition.

Most of the fighters are early in their careers. Some aspire to be in the Mixed Martial Arts or Ultimate Fighting Championship. Anderson, however, competed in the full contact Combat Night in Jacksonville on May 6. He defeated Conaan Prichard in his first MMA amateur appearance. His next fight will be on Nov. 4.

While expecting to compete in Muay Thai kickboxing, Anderson beat Jacksonville's Ivan Slaughter in the championship fight to win the 190.1-to-200-pound Point Boxing division.

"I kind of wanted to lean more towards the kickboxing, but I ended up putting on the boxing match, which is fine because I would say I've done martial arts for maybe 11 years," Anderson said. "I've done kick-



STAFF PHOTOS BY DON COBLE
The Jacksonville IKF point-boxing attracted 49 fighters at Smiley's Academy of Martial Arts in Orange Park. The first round of the Boy's Novice Modified Muay Thai class for Welterweights included a victory by Vernon Peterson against Rocky Losco and a win by Prince Abdullah against Brett Saylor. Fleming Island Cruiserweight Mike Anderson, right in red, also won the Point Boxing class by beating Ivan Slaughter.



boxing and boxing, and then for about six years now with MMA – full contact, being in the cage."

Anderson, who operates Better Me Fitness on Blanding Boulevard in Orange Park, was one of 49 fighters from 15 divisions at the event. His motto at Better Me Fitness is "Be Better, Not Bitter."

Anderson has trained with James Smi-

ley for nearly six years. That's where he got the courage to transition more into MMA.

"I was a little nervous getting into the MMA because I broke my leg really bad," he said. "In 2006 I shattered my tibia and fibula in half and fractured my ankle. I was kind of nervous being in that kind of sport. But going to Smiley's gave me the confidence I needed to learn how to protect it



and not put myself at risk."

Other Modified Muay Thai point sparring results last Saturday included Jeremiah Berkey (Jacksonville) defeating Prince Abdullah (Gainesville) in Boys's Welterweight; Kyle Bricks (Starke) d. Luis Ryce (Jacksonville) in Men's Light Cruiserweight; Matthew Morales (Fernandina Beach) d. Vernon Peterson (Kissimmee) in Men's Light Welterweight; Jonathan Correa (Jacksonville) d. Ethan Sharpe (Jacksonville) in Men's Welterweight; Ryan Redfern (Jacksonville) d. Kevin Veen (Jacksonville) in Men's Novice Light Middleweight; Troy Head (Jacksonville) d. Benjamin T. Mills (Yulee) in Men's Novice Cruiserweight; Jayden Castro (Port Orange) d. James Berkey (Jacksonville) in Men's Middleweight; Christian Johnson (Port Orange) d. Austin Doyle (Jacksonville) Men's Heavyweight; and Angelo Fernandez (Jacksonville) d. Joshua Spence-Lehmann (Gainesville) in Men's Light Heavyweight.

In boxing point sparring, Rolando Castillo (St. Augustine) d. Luis Velez (Orange Park) in Boy's Super Cruiserweight; Anthony Nelson (Jacksonville) d. Logan Kramer (Jacksonville) in Middleweight; Troy Head (Jacksonville) d. Benjamin T. Mills (Yulee) in Men's Novice Cruiserweight; and Kervens Francois (Valdosta, Georgia) d. Brandon Gavinovich (Saint Johns) in Boy's Novice Middleweight.



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GAME OF THE WEEK
Bolles @ Oakleaf 7 p.m.

Keystone vs. Interlachen
Ridgeview @ Beachside
Orange Park @ Nease

Middleburg vs. Ribault
Clay @ Taco Creek
Fleming Island @ Titusville



STAFF PHOTO BY RANDY LEFKO

Retired Middleburg High girls volleyball coach Carrie Prewitt returned to her home gym after a 30-year career to be celebrated with the naming of the gym after her. Prewitt, a 30-plus year coach for the Lady Broncos, was on hand for the Middleburg vs. Fleming Island home game.

Gym named for Prewitt; Forkum forges ahead

Panthers rock JJVA Invite

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

MIDDLEBURG - Two eras of volleyball at Middleburg High crossed paths Thursday night as a former coach, Carrie Prewitt, was honored for her decades of commitment, and a new coach, Meredith Forkum, jet-bolted her team to one of the more decisive wins in her short career.

"Felt like it was like a blink of an eye and it was over," said Prewitt, who spent nearly 30 years in the Middleburg gym with a plethora of district and region titles and numerous Final Four finishes. "I was never expecting this because you don't do something like this expecting days like today."

Prewitt, who has been succeeded at

the coach position by Forkum, a former player of hers and also a more recent assistant coach, noted that her lifespan has centered around the gym.

"I kind of realized the other day that for the past 30 years, I've spent more time in this building than in any building in my lifetime," said Prewitt. "Recently, I have taken time to take care of my mom, did some hiking in the final years and spent time with my kids and grandkids."

As for the celebration, which featured a ton of alums, friends and family members who flew in from around the country to share the moment, Prewitt, who was presented a huge portrait by Middleburg Athletic Director Casey Thompson and Principal Martin Aftuck, was toured around the gym to see her door display above the entrance way plus a huge ban-

SEE PREWITT, 29

The Foys take the win from Golden Eagles

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

OAKLEAF - Oakleaf High running back Chris Foy II rumbled for 228 yards on the Fleming Island defense to lead his dad's Knights football team to a 24-14 district win over Fleming Island in a hotly contested clash between the two juggernaut teams.

"They said he wasn't battle-tested for a game of this magnitude," said Foy, of his son, who came with him from Andrew Jackson High School where he built a win-deprived program into the region playoffs in two of his three years. "He told me don't they know I played in the region playoffs in both varsity years? I think he made a



STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO

Oakeaf High defensive back Jordin Pryce, in white, steals end zone pass attempt to Fleming Island wide receiver Trace Burney in first-half action of Knights' 24-14 district win Friday night.

SEE KNIGHTS, 28



PHOTO COURTESY OF FLORIDA SOUTHERN COLLEGE ATHLETICS

Mussante wins first college cross country race

Middleburg High cross country standout Emma Mussante, right in red, won her first ever college cross country race this weekend with a winning effort in Alabama. See more cross country coverage, page 31.



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Athlete Of The Week



Oakleaf High junior running back **Chris Foy II** ran 28 times for 228 yards with one pass for 33 yards to lead the Knights to a 24-14 district win over Fleming Island. Both teams were undefeated prior to the game.



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Keystone Heights quarterback Baylor Ford orchestrated a 49-0 win for the Indians while, center, Orange Park running back Josh Johnson continued his rugged running for Raider win at Melbourne. Ridgeview travels to Beachside to push for second win.

Whew! Breathe! The season's second half begins

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

OAKLEAF - With an epic Oakleaf vs. Fleming Island contest now decided, the trek to playoff spots starts this week.

"We lost, we did some things bad, but we can correct it," said Fleming Island coach Chad Parker. "It's a long season and a loss here and there for both of us is critical. We both have big schedules ahead of us."

The road of "Big" travels to Titusville for Fleming Island, a 4-0 record and a team that puts points on the board with wins of 21, 27, 49 and just 16 in Friday's 16-10 win over Palm Bay. Titusville has not played a massive schedule with a win over 2-1 Yulee most notable.

Stats-wise, Titusville has a strong run on offense with 223 yards rushing per game, but just 85 via air.

Senior quarterback Josiah Allen has 310 yards passing with four scores and just one interception plus a 55 percent completion rate.

The lead rusher is senior Nate Lopez with 334 yards; just 83.5 yards per game with four touchdowns.

Parker has more to worry about with Bartram Trail (2-1, loss to Mainland 28-24), Lake Minneola (1-2-1; losses to unbeaten Manatee and Vanguard) and Man-

darin (4-0) up after Titusville. Mandarin rolls with scores of 43-21 over Fletcher, 42-35 over Bolles and 50-20 over Riverside with a 30-0 pounding of Atlantic Coast last week. No snoozing for the Eagles.

For Oakleaf, the rugged road is home for three of four with Bolles and Bradford sandwiching a road trip to Creekside and Buchholz after Bradford. That's a gauntlet in itself. Bolles (1-3) is still dangerous with the likes of Toblin and Hoekstra knowing the Clay County aura.

Creekside is dangerous with Bradford and Buchholz both machines of football. Buchholz is throwing down scores of 41-13 over Columbia, 53-31 over Riverview Sarasota and 35-0 over Eastside with a 49-20 over Creekside last week. No, let up with the coach's retirement from Whittemore.

Middleburg, a 35-0 loss to Ponte Vedra, needs a spark and coach Ryan Wolfe says changes are coming. Ribault (3-1) at Middleburg won't be a cakewalk and Wolfe has to act fast.

Clay (3-1) is on the fast track to be the Wild Card story of 2023 with Coach Kyle Kennard getting his guys high-energy and motivated with a revenge match with Toco Creek (2-2) a road trip. Toco Creek passes but also gets intercepted with nine between the QBs. One guy, Julio Santiago is the target with 30 catches and five scores. Toco Creek is kind of Clay-like with tough

wins and tough losses; Matanzas (20-14) and Bishop Kenny (23-20).

Beachside (3-1) invites a resurgent Ridgeview team in after a 51-point win with the Panthers rumbling on the ground; Hutchinson and Marshall, against Gateway. Coach Bryan Arnette had a week off with the guys to correct things and could have a two-game win streak at the end of the day.

Orange Park, 2-2, after a 28-13 win over Melbourne (0-4) is getting efficient with sophomore quarterback Gabe Taylor comfortable throwing; 3TDs, 9 of 21, but 3 picks, and that's a big three with the speed on his outskirts.

Taylor stayed calm in the second half with the Raiders down 13-7 to put up 21 points; two bypasses, one from RB Joshua Johnson about 30 yards. Johnson is slowly (or fast if you watch him) becoming an elite-level running back with big size and breakaway speed. Keep slinging it.

Keystone Heights (1-2) got a five-turn-over night on defense with three fumble recoveries and two interceptions; one a pick-six by defensive lineman Jackson Herman, to beat Bell 49-0 for coach Steve Reynolds's first win as head coach. Reynolds has one more game (0-4 Interlachen) to have his guys ready for a Bradford road trip. Keystone Heights also got a kickoff return for a score from Jackson Parmeter.

Flurry of flags hinder Broncos

By Ray Dimonda
Correspondent

PONTE VEDRA - With the Middleburg Broncos still looking for the first 2023 season win; they made their way into the Shark Tank at Ponte Vedra getting off on the wrong foot.

"We can't even get everybody lined up," said Middleburg High head football coach Ryan Wolfe, after watching his Broncos implode with 11 penalty flags hindering any Middleburg effort on the field. "We have everybody moving around, messing with their pads, messing with shirts and we can't even get lined up to start the football game."

After losing the toss and the Sharks deferring to receive until the second half, the Broncos lined up for the first play from scrimmage only to get charged with a delay of game. The Sharks took advantage of 11 Bronco penalties on their way to amassing five unanswered passing touchdowns as the Broncos suffered a 35-0 road-game shutout loss.

With district play less than two weeks away, Wolfe knows it's time to pull some levers and change things up.

"I think we are going to have to hit the drawing board and figure out what we're

SEE BRONCOS, 26



CORRESPONDENT PHOTOS BY RAY DIMONDA
Middleburg defensive end Tucker Cody, No. 8, yells after recovering a fumble in a scrum during the Ponte Vedra game. With Cody is defensive end B.J. Carter.

Clay's blitz package secures district win

By Mike Zima
Correspondent

GREEN COVE SPRINGS - Clay linebacker Javaris Roberts led a dominant defensive effort in the second half as the host Blue Devils pulled away from Gainesville for a 35-14 victory on September 15.

The win in Clay's first District 3S-4 game of the season improves the Blue Devils' record to 3-1. Gainesville falls to 0-4, 0-1 in the district.

After Gainesville quarterback Kane Smith, who ran for a game-high 76 yards, led the Hurricanes to two touchdowns in the first half, the Blue Devils clamped down on him over the final two quarters.

"Smith was hurting us with his legs and with the long ball," said Clay head coach Kyle Kennard. "We made a couple of adjustments and shut them out in the second half. I am very proud of the defense."

The Blue Devils blitzed their linebackers much more in the third and fourth quarters, preventing Smith from finding running lanes when he dropped back to throw.

"They could not stop us from blitzing up the middle, so we just kept doing it," said Clay weakside linebacker Javaris Roberts. "We wanted to beat the front up, and keep everything in front of us in the back."

Clay was without starting strongside linebacker Jay'Shawn McCloud, and Roberts admitted that he felt the need to play harder and better without his teammate. The junior made the play of the game with under a minute to play in the third quarter and the Blue Devils trying to hang on to a

20-14 lead. Smith, facing a fourth and goal from the Clay nine-yard line, faded back to pass. Roberts rushed up the middle and pushed through the block of Gainesville running back David Wilbon. Smith tried to evade Roberts by scrambling to his left, but Roberts chased him to the sideline and sacked him by the ankles, turning the ball over on downs. Gainesville never threatened again.

"Roberts has got a motor that is second to none," Kennard said of his defensive captain. "He is a great tackler in space."

Kennard made an adjustment on the offensive side as well. After Landon Chadwick, last week's hero with three touchdown passes in Clay's come-from-behind 42-41 victory over Orange Park, threw 12 passes in the first half, run-first quarterback Merrick Rapoza played almost exclusively in the second half. While the move did not pay immediate dividends in a scoreless third quarter, Rapoza and the Blue Devils appeared to wear down the Hurricanes as the game wore on. Junior Antonio Thomas took a wide receiver screen pass 40 yards to begin a drive from the Clay 20-yard line. Rapoza then converted a third and one with a quarterback sneak. Two plays later, Rapoza faked a handoff to Iyen Addison running left, ran right and, pinballing off of tackle attempts by two Hurricanes, wobbled into the end zone from 11 yards out to extend the hosts' lead to 26-14. Rapoza called his own number again on the ensuing two-point conversion, a read option that made the score 28-14.

Rapoza finished with 39 yards rushing



STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO

Clay High quarterback Landon Chadwick has had the hot hand for the Blue Devils' offense along with running back Geno Addison, a late transfer that has proven to be a valuable asset to the Blue Devils' offense.

and two touchdowns, having capped an 89-yard march with a quarterback sneak from the one-yard line on the first possession of the game.

"With the looks they [Gainesville] were giving us, we felt like we could spread them out and run the quarterback," Kennard said of the decision to play Rapoza. "We base the decision on who we think will be most effective given what the defense is doing."

Addison scored two touchdowns in the second quarter for Clay. The freshman gave the Blue Devils a 13-7 lead on a four-yard run over right tackle one minute into the second quarter and took a swing pass from Chadwick 14 yards, holding the ball over the goal line as Gainesville's Tony Perryman held his feet in the field of play at the 3:44 mark.

Addison finished with 56 yards on 15

carries, taking nearly all the snaps at running back.

"He is going to be a phenomenal player," Kennard said of Addison. "He is a freshman, and he is already pretty good."

Addison, who credits lessons from his older brother, sophomore Geno Addison, for his success, is surprising even himself with his varsity success.

"When I first started, I thought I would only get a few reps, but I proved myself and I keep getting them," he said.

Geno Addison scored the clinching touchdown with under one minute to play, taking a handoff over right guard from two yards out.

Clay travels to Toco Creek (2-2) on September 22, looking to avenge a 26-21 defeat at the hands of the Class 2S Toros in 2022.

Broncos

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doing wrong," said Wolfe, now 0-3 with a makeup game on October 4 against Bishop Kenny (weather). "I don't like players going both ways, but we are just going to have to slow it down and have a few players go both ways. What we are doing now just isn't working."

The Broncos did have several individuals who made great plays such as a huge sack by defensive end Tucker Cody for a loss of several yards. A great late-game showing from running back Lawson Padgett whose grit made up for his five-foot seven-inch size. Good gains by running back Jaden Boyd, and great middle-run stops by linebacker Austin Cruce. The issue is having all the players on the same page at the same time.

As a team, the Broncos could only gather a total of 135 yards, converting only a single third-down play. A Middleburg fumble and a Ponte Vedra intercepted pass

were both converted for touchdowns by the Sharks.

Asked about the halftime adjustments, quarterback Carson Stewart said, "I knew I just had to keep my head up, tried to pick my chin up and focus on the mistakes I made in the first half." About his positional leadership as the quarterback, Stewart said "I tell them to keep their heads up. Don't let their heads stay down. Keep them in the game so they don't give up and we keep trying to put some points on the board. It's about listening to the coaches and what they have to say, what they tell me they see so I can fix it and do better on the next set of downs." Stewart finished only able to gather 78 passing yards compared to 185 yards through the air for the Sharks. Stewart had several passes on target and dropped by the receivers.

At the half, Wolfe told his players, "We can't lay down. We have to go out and fight. How we play in the second half is how we will go the rest of the season. I at least want to see my guys go down fighting rath-



Middleburg High running back Jaden Boyd looks for a sliver between two Ponte Vedra tacklers in the Broncos' 35-0 loss on Friday.

er than just laying down."

The bright spot was the second half Bronco's defense only allowed a single Shark score.

"We have to hit the drawing board,"

said Wolfe. "We have to go figure out some personnel. We're a mess right now and it is going to take a little while to fix it. We have the right guys to fix it, so we just have some work to do."

Knights

from page 25

statement today.”

With the Knights exercising their mammoth-sized offensive line against the Fleming Island defense with quarterback Brandon Wallace, Jr., directing traffic, Oakleaf kept the ball moving between Foy’s challenging runs off tackle, Wallace’s jaunts out of the pocket and swift passes in the flat.

“This game was personal,” said Oakleaf offensive lineman Chase Johnson. “We met them at the Jags offensive line challenge and we won that. It wasn’t anything fancy; just muscle on muscle and we let it rip.”

After a first quarter of little action, Fleming Island made the first move toward the Oakleaf red zone, at the 11-yard line. Still, Oakleaf safety Jordin Pryce stepped in front of wide receiver Trace Burney for an end zone interception to thwart the drive just before the end of the first quar-



STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO

Oakleaf High All American linebacker Shaquille Quarterman, left of referee, takes in the coin toss prior to Oakleaf vs. Fleming Island football clash on Friday. Quarterman is a linebacker for the NFL Jacksonville Jaguars.



Oakleaf wide receiver Michael Conner crosses goal line with touchdown pass play against Fleming Island.

ter. “I was on it the whole way and when I saw the receiver go across the middle, I could see the quarterback’s eyes,” said Pryce. “My coach told us he likes number three with his passes.”

For Fleming Island coach Chad Parker, the interception surprised his team but also shifted the momentum.

“We score there and it’s a different game,” said Parker. “Three times in the red zone and no score. We beat ourselves; two missed field goals, a second and two flags, next snap over the quarterback. Instead of second and two, we are second and 20.”

Foy II immediately blasted 28 yards on his first carry behind guard Chase Johnson to answer the turnover as the second quarter started with Oakleaf near midfield.

Wallace carried to the Fleming Island 32 with Foy crashing behind center Quory Ambrose to the 11 with a second handoff getting first down at the six. Wallace rolled into the end zone with a flag for holding



Oakleaf’s offensive line, led by center Quory Ambrose, gave running back Chris Foy II enough room to run for 228yards and one touchdown in 24-14 win over Fleming Island.



Fleming Island quarterback Cibastian Broughton broke for a 70 yard run to the Oakleaf 10 yard line that led to late touchdown by running back Tyler Beverly.

bringing the ball back out to the 16. Another bash put the ball on the one-inch line but another flag pushed Oakleaf backward as Fleming Island put their big-boy defense; center Braden Cunningham, guard Kevin Reyes, and guard Joey Couch on the field

for a match of girth on the goal line with Wallace losing his helmet on the plunge attempt to force a field goal for Oakleaf by Andrew McDaid and a 3-0 lead.

Off a screen pass on second and 16, quarterback Cibastian Broughton connect-

ed with wideout Devaen Boykin who broke for a 70-yard score to answer the Oakleaf field goal.

“It was a challenge for me because of all the talk about their quarterback,” said Wallace. “Chris was running great; the offensive line was doing their job, and that opened our offense.”

After a blooper kickoff put Oakleaf at midfield, two carries by Foy; 12 and 17 yards, put Oakleaf at the Fleming Island 30. Wallace calmly waited for wideout Micheal Conner III to out-flank Fleming Island’s defense with a scoring pass and Oakleaf reclaimed the lead 10-7 with 4:38 in the half.

Pryce slapped away a pass attempt to Aiden Postemski with two minutes in the half to thwart a red zone shot for Fleming Island. Foy II broke off a 35-yard run to the Fleming Island 22 as Oakleaf looked to add one more score before the half. Wallace scored from 11 yards out with 28 seconds to go to give Oakleaf a 17-7 lead and plenty



Oakleaf offensive line coach Bubba Horne reacts to fourth quarter touchdown.

of momentum into the lockers.

Postemski nearly broke the ensuing kickoff before getting snagged at midfield with 22 seconds to go.

Oakleaf blocked a field goal in the third to maintain their lead.

Fleming Island got into the Oakleaf red zone after the kickoff, but an errant snap put the offense at the 27 with a second and goal. Broughton sprinted into the end zone, but a holding flag put the ball back at the 16 with 41 seconds in the third.

An option to Beverly got snuffed by linebacker Neal Whyte with Broughton throwing short in the end zone to Calvin Johnson. A fourth down at the 12 put kicker Patrick Sirdevan in but the kick was wide left to end the third period.

Broughton, though bottled up for most of the game, nearly sliced the game from Oakleaf with a 72-yard run to the Oakleaf nine with 4:34 on the clock with running back Tyler Beverly bouncing off tackle to score the game at 24-14.

“We still had a shot, even that late,” said Parker. “Cibastian plays to the final whistle.”



Middleburg High retired volleyball coach Carrie Prewitt gets a portrait of herself prior to Broncos game against Fleming Island in commemoration of the gym being named Carrie Prewitt gymnasium. Right: former Middleburg High volleyball stand down Meredith Forum, a recent assistant coach under Carrie Prewitt, takes over for the program and brings many of Carrie Prewitt's fiery sideline exchanges to the huddles.



Prewitt

from page 25

ner on the outside wall of the gym's main doors.

"I hope that the things that I put into it, like the hard work, the dedication, the commitment to the players, things like that are what I hope they think about when they walk through the doors," said Prewitt. "If they put those kinds of expectations on themselves knowing the history of the athletes before them, then that's something I would be proud of."

For Forkum, in a county rivalry game with a 7-1 Fleming Island High team that also featured a first-time, alum coach in former Fleming Island High standout Amy Schermerhorn, the game was a typical great rivalry game in the Bronco gym that made her mentor smile.

"Coach Prewitt always prepared us for games like this in her long history here and I think this year's team is very aware of that," said Forkum, who saw her team, led by hitter Connor Rahn's 12 scoring kills with Brooke Forkum, Meredith's junior daughter, adding nine at the net, to a 3-0 win over the Golden Eagles (now 7-2).



Left: Middleburg setter Olivia Callipo is key to Broncos attack at the net with her precise sets to the net. Right: Fleming Island center hitter Rauly Eason got to her 500 scoring kill this week.



"Those two are our team leaders and they showed why. Sophomores Kate Lowery, five kills, and Camden Rahn also played well in the very loud gym."

Middleburg's record improves to 8-3; ranked fourth in 5A, with recent wins over Orange Park and Oakleaf in county play with the teams' three losses; 7A-Doral Academy (now 8-4, 20-8 region finalist last year), 3A-Trinity Christian Academy (now 14-2, 25-4 last year region finalist)

and 5A-Jensen Beach (now 13-2, 29-3 5A state champion last year), coming in the Nike Invitational Tournament in Tampa early in the season.

For Fleming Island, junior Savannah Jackson tapped out eight scoring kills to lead the Golden Eagles with Emily Topp and Rauly Eason adding four a piece; Eason with three blocks also.

Schermerhorn has guided her Golden Eagles to wins over Fletcher and Creekside thus far with Christ's Church Academy with their lone loss to Buchholz on August 24. Eason and Jackson have been the 1-2 punch at the net with 81 and 64 kills apiece with Samantha Rupert at 54 kills.

On the schedule for Fleming Island is Bishop Kenny (4A Final Four last year, 5th in 4A 2023), Orange Park and Ridgeview to end September with top contenders. The Ridgeview game will be a good benchmark game as Middleburg and Ridgeview are dominating their district 4-5A but will not play each other in regular season play and Fleming Island is a solid late-season common foe. Ridgeview, 8-1, ranked third in 5A, with astounding play up front from Haley Robinson, finished with a silver medal at the JJVA River City Classic with the Panthers losing a 2-1 match to Trinity Christian Academy, ranked 13th in Florida and fourth in 3A. The second-place finish was the highest ever for Ridgeview in the prestigious tournament.

"We are getting great play in our defen-

sive back with our Oakleaf transfer Sydney Little," said Ridgeview High coach Steven Henry. "She was a little tentative at first coming in as a senior and not wanting to take a spot, but she is too good (20-25 digs a game) to keep off the court."

Ridgeview advanced through the tournament with wins over 2A-Christ's Church Academy (now 7-5, 2A Final Four last year), Satellite (now 9-4), a Puerto Rico team; Colegio Evangelico Capitan Correa, and 4A-Bolles (7-5). The Puerto Rico team was the defending tournament champion, but was without the size of last year, according to Henry.

Ridgeview is led at the net by Robinson's 81 kills and 52 blocks with Brianna Adams adding 45 kills and Kennedy Baugh with 16 blocks.

Ridgeview coach Steven Henry's schedule gets no rest with a road game to 4A-Bishop Kenny (8-4) on Thurs., Sept. 21, a Friday noon game against Episcopal and then Fleming Island at home Tues., Sept. 26.

"We want to control our games to our strengths," said Henry. "I've seen a few Fleming Island games, but no Middleburg games yet. I try to keep that one a secret so we don't get ahead of ourselves. We block big up front and execute our scoring plays."

Around the county, also at the JJVA River City High School Classic, Orange Park was with one loss until Middleburg came to the Raiderdome, but the Lady Raiders rebounded to finish at 4-1; wins over St. Augustine, Keystone Heights, Belleview and Effingham (GA) (8-2 overall), Clay finished 2-3 with wins over Keystone Heights, St. John Paul II (4-7 overall), Keystone Heights finished 1-4; win over Sandalwood (2-9 overall), Oakleaf finished 4-1; wins over Nease, Sandalwood, St. John Paul II and Newberry (8-3 overall).

St. Johns Country Day School sits at 5-3 with three recent wins over Beaches Chapel, Duval Carter and Harvest Community. The Spartans, led by Brynn White's 63 kills and 15 blocks set up for a gauntlet week with Global Outreach Charter (6-3) on Mon., Sept 18 with Orange Park on Tues., Sept 26 and Ridgeview on Wed., Sept. 27, both on the road.

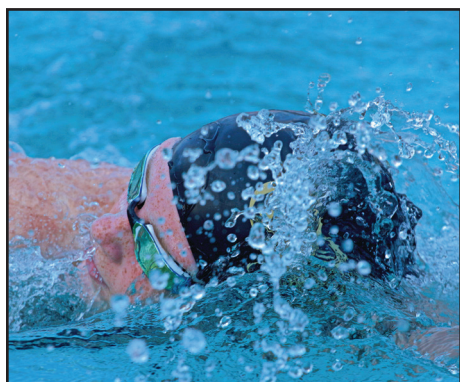


Ridgeview girls volleyball team finished second at the JJVA River City classic invitational this past weekend. The Lady Panthers, powered by senior hitter Haley Robinson, are now 8-1 and are ranked third in class 5A.

Clay, Oakleaf splash out some fast times

STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO

Clay High's swim team hosted the Oakleaf High swim team in a dual meet last week at Rolling Hills in Lake Asbury. Both teams showed off fast times in events as area swimmers started to gear up for districts.



Former Clay High defensive back Jarvis Lee, Jr., who played three years as a Blue Devil before graduating from the IMG Academy in Bradenton, is now a freshman defensive back and special teams player for the University of South Florida. Shown is Lee on punt coverage against the University of Alabama at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa. Alabama won 17-3.

STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO

Former Ridgeview High wrestler Logan Keester is now a sideline cheerleader for the University of South Florida and got to see the University of Alabama football team on Saturday in Raymond James Stadium. Keester, like nearly 75,000 football fans, also got a drenching late in the first half that caused a weather delay of the game. Keester is pictured with teammate Tatum Taylor in the downpour.

Clay, Ridgeview repped at USF vs. Alabama



TOWN OF PENNEY FARMS BUDGET SUMMARY

October 1, 2023 through September 30, 2024

THE PROPOSED OPERATING BUDGET EXPENDITURES OF THE TOWN OF PENNEY FARMS ARE 5.1% MORE THAN LAST YEAR'S TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES.

	GENERAL FUND	WATER FUND	SEWER FUND	TOTAL
ESTIMATED REVENUES				
Ad valorem taxes, 4.4535 mills	\$ 105,155	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 105,155
Franchise and utility taxes	116,500	-	-	116,500
State and local grants	2,752,612	-	-	2,752,612
State and county shared revenues	286,500	-	-	286,500
Charges for services	61,500	137,910	207,800	407,210
Interest and other	50,400	33,675	30,725	114,800
Total estimated revenues	3,372,667	171,585	238,525	3,782,777
Beginning cash	928,400	358,000	132,000	1,418,400
Total estimated revenues and balances	\$ 4,301,067	\$ 529,585	\$ 370,525	\$5,201,177
APPROPRIATIONS AND RESERVES				
General governmental services	\$ 337,823	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 337,823
Culture/ Recreation	18,328	-	-	18,328
Water/ Garbage service	-	171,585	-	171,585
Sewer service	-	-	203,233	203,233
Transportation	202,303	-	-	202,303
Capital outlays	2,800,904	-	-	2,800,904
Debt service	-	-	35,292	35,292
Total appropriations	3,359,358	171,585	238,525	3,769,468
Reserves	941,709	358,000	132,000	1,431,709
Total appropriations and reserves	\$ 4,301,067	\$ 529,585	\$ 370,525	\$5,201,177

THE TENTATIVE, ADOPTED, AND/OR FINAL BUDGETS ARE ON FILE IN THE OFFICE OF THE ABOVE MENTIONED TAXING AUTHORITY AS A PUBLIC RECORD.

Rebecca Stratton second at Embry-Riddle Invitational



STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO

St. Johns Country Day School junior Rebecca Stratton, here in front at the Clay County Cross Country Invitational, rode that momentum of her first win to a second-place finish a week later at the Embry-Riddle Invitational in Daytona Beach.

DAYTONA BEACH - With renewed confidence from a win at the Clay County Cross Country Invitational a week ago, St. Johns Country Day School junior Rebecca Stratton ran a strong second place by just 20 seconds at the Embry-Riddle Cross Country Classic in Daytona Beach amidst a bucketload of cross country action around the southeast United States.

Stratton, second in 21 minutes, 30.10 seconds to Melbourne High's Hannah Harris's 21:10.80 on the hilly, undulating course at Embry-Riddle, led her Lady Spartans team to a third-place team finish with Melbourne and Orangewood Christian both putting four runners each in the top 10 to get the top two spots.

St. Johns got an 18th-place finish from Kate Staten, an improving seventh grader.

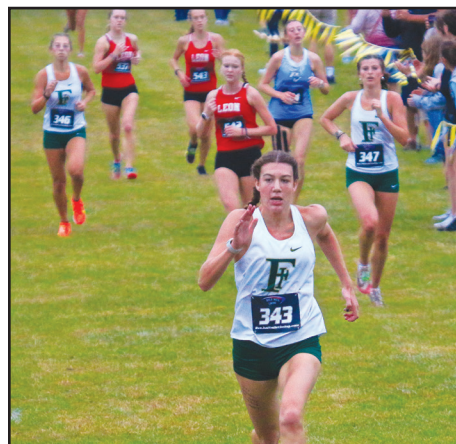
For the Spartan boys, fifth in team points, senior Richard Nichols was sixth

in 18:12.3 to winner Trenton Riley of Melbourne who won in 17:31.5.

In the men's college race, Oakleaf High grad A'Jani Stokes, now at Flagler College, placed third in 27:32.50 for the 8K (4.97 miles) circuit.

Middleburg High grad Logan Moore, now at Florida State College Jacksonville, was 40th in 30:25.50.

In the girl's college race, Middleburg High's Kayleigh McWatters, a three-sport athlete for the Broncos, was 31st in 22:43.00.



Fleming Island High sophomore Brooke Reynolds, here sprinting to finish at last year's region championship, had the top finish for Golden Eagles at Katie Caples Invite at Bishop Kenny. Reynolds is also a top swimmer for Fleming Island High.

FIHS Myers third at Caples XC

JACKSONVILLE - In a unique nighttime start, Fleming Island senior cross country runner Graham Myers negotiated the stadium lighting around Bishop Kenny High School to take third in the annual Katie Caples Invitational elite boys race held



PHOTO COURTESY OF FLAGLER COLLEGE ATHLETICS
Former Ridgeview High cross country runner Joel Nesi had a top area finish for the college race at the Mountain Dew Classic at the University of Florida.

Saturday night.

Myers, second in 3A last year in cross country, finished in a pack of four runners that all broke 16 minutes and were separated by just nine seconds. Myers finished third in 15:56.75 with the 1-2 going to Buchholz teammates Riley Smith and Evan Fleming in 15:50.40 and 15:54.74.

For Fleming Island also, John Keester IV, finished eighth in 16:18.22.

Bolles won the boy's team title 81-85 over Buchholz with Buchholz fifth runner in at 59th while Bolles had their top five in the top 25. Fleming Island finished with 180 points.

Fleming Island's girl's team finished 12th in the elite race led by sophomore Brooke Reynolds at 24th in 20:14.19. Lake Highland Prep seventh grader Annabella Tomasic won in an astounding 17:48.82.

Nesi ups Guy at Mountain Dew XC

GAINESVILLE - In a return to a high school state meet that featured six Clay County runners about five years ago, two of those five; Joel Nesi, then of Ridgeview, and Alex Guy, then of Keystone Heights, got to duke it out in college Friday at the University of Florida's Mountain Dew Classic

on the Mark Bostick Golf Course.

Nesi, now at Flagler College and holder of numerous program records, bested Guy, now at Florida Southern and also a program record holder in numerous events, with a 30th place finish in 25:07.24 for the five miles while Guy was 44th in 25:20.84.

In the girl's race, Fleming Island High grad Emma Millson, who had a season-ending injury in her junior season, but stormed back as a senior and earned a spot on the University of North Florida team, ran a scintillating 18:07.10 split for 32nd place in the Mountain Dew for the three-mile course.

Also running, for North Florida, was former Fleming Island High standout Kameron Wallizada who finished 121st in 26:58.1.

Also in the girl's race, Oakleaf High standout Sierra Barrera, now at Florida A & M University, finished 102nd in 20:12.10. Barrera, a state meet qualifier last year in cross country and track, had a minor injury for track and did not compete at the state meet.

Barrera, in her first cross country meet for FAMU on Wed., Sept. 13 was third at the TCC (Tallahassee Community College) Open in 20:47 and was named the Southwestern Athletic Conference Runner of the Week. FAMU's women's team was second in the meet.

MHS Mussante gets first first XC

Middleburg High grad Emma Mussante earned her first collegiate cross-country victory with a top finish at the Falcon Classic at Montevallo (AL), the site of the 2023 NCAA South Region championships in November.

Mussante, a junior, led the Lady Mocs to the team win among 16 teams with an 18-minute, 4.63-second split which is the seventh-best time for the FSC program. Mussante's win was the first individual win in the program since 2013. FSC won with just 18 team points; 15 being a cross country shutout.

NOTICE OF PROPOSED TAX INCREASE

The Town of Penney Farms has tentatively adopted a measure to increase its property tax levy.

Last year's property tax levy:

A. Initially proposed tax levy	\$ 94,156
B. Less tax reductions due to Value Adjustment Board and other assessment changes	(2,735)
C. Actual property tax levy	<u>96,891</u>
This year's proposed tax levy	<u>\$110,688</u>

All concerned citizens are invited to attend a public hearing on the tax increase to be held on:

September 27, 2023

7:00 p.m.

At

Penney Farms Town Hall

4100 Clark Ave.

Penney Farms, Florida

A FINAL DECISION on the proposed tax increase and the budget will be made at this hearing.

Legal 85452 published September 21, 2023 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper.

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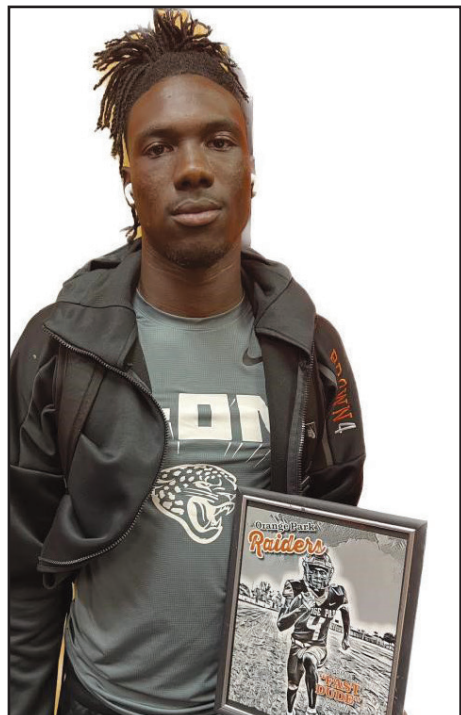
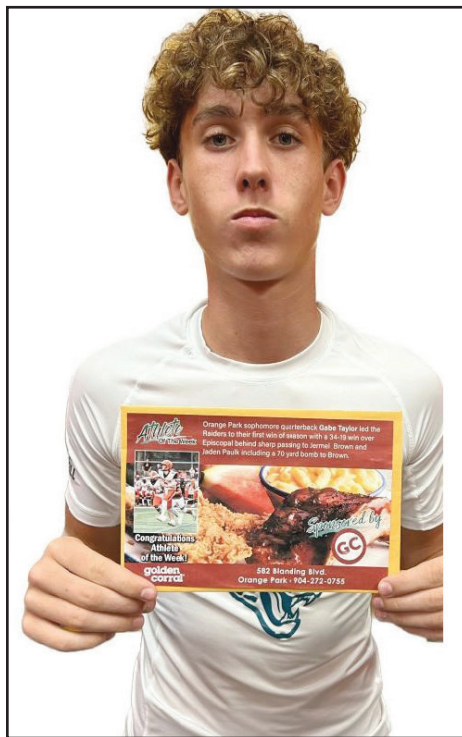


Junior High Football Action



Athlete Of The Week

Sponsored by



What's HEALTH

GOT TO DO WITH IT?

SEASON THREE PREMIERES SEPT 23

SAT AT 4PM & SUN AT 9PM

on WJCT News 89.9

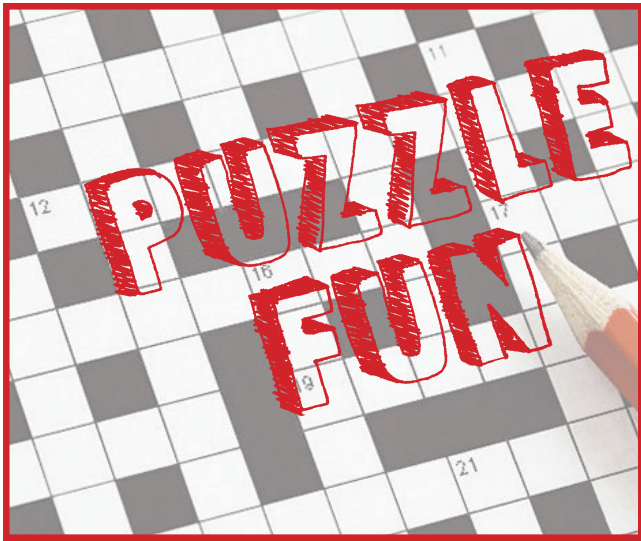
Also available on wjct.org & the WJCT App

WJCT **89.9** News

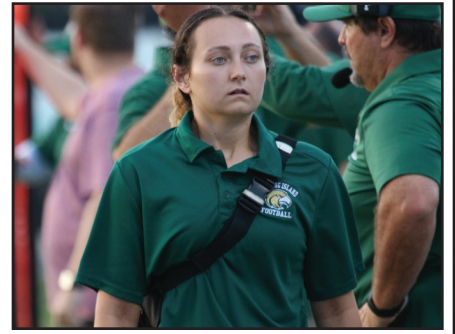


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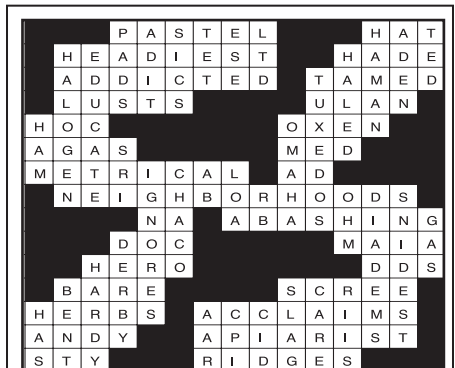


7	4	3	6	5	2	1	8	9
5	1	2	3	9	8	4	7	6
8	9	6	1	4	7	3	2	5
2	6	4	7	8	9	5	1	3
1	5	8	2	3	6	9	4	7
3	7	9	4	1	5	2	6	8
4	2	5	8	7	3	6	9	1
9	8	1	5	6	4	7	3	2
6	3	7	9	2	1	8	5	4



Look of anxiety

Fleming Island High football athletic trainer Annie Gibbs has faces of anxiety as she watches the Fleming Island vs. Oakleaf football game on Friday.



7	4	3	6	5	2	1	8	9
5	1	2	3	9	8	4	7	6
8	9	6	1	4	7	3	2	5
2	6	4	7	8	9	5	1	3
1	5	8	2	3	6	9	4	7
3	7	9	4	1	5	2	6	8
4	2	5	8	7	3	6	9	1
9	8	1	5	6	4	7	3	2
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⊙ ✱ ☼ ☽ ☿ ♁ ♃ ♅ ♇ ♉ ♋ ♌ ♍ ♎ ♏ ♐ ♑ ♒ ♓ ♀ ♂ ♃ ♅ ♇ ♉ ♋ ♌ ♍ ♎ ♏ ♐ ♑ ♒ ♓ ♀ ♂
CRYPTO FUN
 ☽ ☾ ☿ ♁ ♃ ♅ ♇ ♉ ♋ ♌ ♍ ♎ ♏ ♐ ♑ ♒ ♓ ♀ ♂
 Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Solve the code to discover words related to mold awareness.
 Each number corresponds to a letter.
 (Hint: 25 = E)

- A. 4 18 7 16**
Clue: Structure fungi can form
- B. 4 6 7 16 25 1**
Clue: White type of mold
- C. 4 18 6 17 5 20 21 25**
Clue: Dampness
- D. 10 21 25 13 5 8 25**
Clue: Inhale/exhale

Answers: A. mold B. mildew C. moisture D. breathe

WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to mold.

TRWHOOG

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

Answer: Growth

Guess Who?

I am an actor born in England on September 10, 1960. I lived in England, Nigeria and the U.S. as a child. I am known for "Pride & Prejudice" as well as "Bridget Jones' Diary." I won an Oscar for a role about a stuttering monarch.

Answer: Colin Firth

MOLD & MILDEW WORD SEARCH

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

WORDS

- ACREMONIUM
- ALLERGEN
- ALTERNARIA
- ANTIMICROBIAL
- ASPERGILLUS
- ATTIC
- BASEMENT
- BATHROOM
- BIOCIDE
- CLEAN
- CONTAMINANT
- DAMP
- DEHUMIDIFIER
- FUNGI
- HUMIDITY
- HYPERSENSITIVITY
- MILDEW
- MOLD
- MUSHROOM
- MYCOTOXIN
- PATHOGEN
- REMEDIAE
- SPORES

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

CLAY COUNTY LEGAL NOTICES

adoption of the above named child, L.C., who was born on February 7, 2023. You are hereby commanded to appear before the Honorable Angela M. Cox, at the Clay County Courthouse Juvenile Dependency Courtroom, 825 North Orange Avenue, Green Cove Springs, Florida, at the hour of 2:00 p.m. o'clock on October 3, 2023 A.D. for a trial on this termination of parental rights petition. You must appear at the hearing on the date and time specified. FAILURE TO PERSONALLY APPEAR AT THIS TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS TRIAL CONSTITUTES CONSENT TO THE TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS OF THIS CHILD. IF YOU FAIL TO APPEAR ON THE DATE AND TIME SPECIFIED YOU MAY LOSE ALL LEGAL RIGHTS TO THE CHILD NAMED IN THE TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS PETITION FILED IN YOUR DEPENDENCY CASE. If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Please contact the Court ADA Coordinator at (904) 255-1695 or crlntnp@coj.net at least 7 days before your scheduled court appearance, or immediately upon receiving this notification if the time before the scheduled court appearance is less than 7 days; if you are hearing or voice impaired, call 711. WITNESS my hand as clerk of said Court and the Seal thereof, this 23rd day of August, 2023. Tara S. Green as Clerk of Said Court By: Denise Haselwood AS Deputy Clerk Legal 82510 Published 9/7/2023, 9/14/2023, 9/21/2023 and 9/28/2023 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper

NOTICE OF ACTION FOR PATERNAL AUNT'S JOINT PETITION FOR ADOPTION AND PETITION FOR TERMINATION OF MOTHER'S PATERNAL RIGHTS:

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FOURTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN AND FOR CLAY COUNTY, FLORIDA Case No.: 2023-DR-000358 Division: In re: The Adoption of KATHERINE LEAH VAN KEUREN and CAROLINE SABRINA VAN KEUREN, Minor Children. Jimmie Nitka 7144 Paul Howard Dr Jacksonville FL 32222 YOU ARE NOTIFIED that an action for Paternal Aunt's Joint Petition for Adoption and Termination of Mother's Paternal Rights has been filed against you and that you are required to serve a copy of your written defenses, if any, to, Stephen Doty, Esq, 7545 Centurion Pkwy Suite 105, Jacksonville FL 32256, on before 20 days of publication of service, and file the original with the clerk of this Court at 825 North Orange Ave, Green Cove Springs, FL 32043, before service on Petitioner or immediately thereafter. If you fail to do so, a default may be entered against you for the relief demanded in the petition. Copies of all court documents in this case, including orders, are available at the Clerk of the Circuit Court's office. You may review these documents upon request. You must keep the Clerk of the Circuit Court's office notified of your current address. (You may file Designation of Current Mailing and E-Mail Address, Florida Supreme Court Approved Family Law Form 12.915.) Future papers in this lawsuit will be mailed or e-mailed to the addresses on record at the clerk's office. Instructions for Florida Supreme Court Approved Family Law Form 12.913(a)(2), Notice of Action For Family Cases With Minor or Dependent Child(ren) (06/18) WARNING: Rule 12.285, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure, requires certain automatic disclosure of documents and information. Failure to comply can result in sanctions, including dismissal or striking of pleadings.

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT By: Rebecca Crews Deputy Clerk Legal 81971 Published 8/31/2023, 9/7/2023, 9/14/2023 and 9/21/2023 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR TAX DEED

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN: KEYS FUNDING LLC - 2021, the holder of the following certificate has filed said certificate for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and the names in which it was assessed are as follows: Certificate No.: 2496/2021 Legal Description: LOT 6 BARRINGTON ESTATES U-3 AS REC O R 2703 PG 1446 Parcel ID No.: 020525-008970-005-06 Opening Bid Amount: \$13,555.29 Physical Address: 1830 HOLLOW GLEN DR, MIDDLEBURG Classification: SINGLE FAMILY Name in which assessed: STEVEN M EVERETT & LORI L EVERETT Said property being in the County of Clay, State of Florida. Unless said certificate shall be redeemed according to law, the property described in such certificate shall be sold to the highest bidder online on the 4th day of October, 2023 at 9:30 A.M at www.clay.realtaxdeed.com. Dated this 2nd day of August, 2023 TARA S. GREEN Clay County Clerk & Comptroller Clay County, Florida By: Christina Spadea Deputy Clerk Legal 78558 Published 8/31/2023, 09/07/2023, 09/14/2023 and 09/21/23 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper.

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR TAX DEED

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN: IDE TECHNOLOGIES INC, the holder of the following certificate has filed said certificate for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and the names in which it

was assessed are as follows: Certificate No.: 1102/2021 Legal Description: (SUBJ TO CONSV ESMT PER O R 3131 PG 863 & 2862 PG 1259)PT OF S&T4R24 & S1T4R24 AS REC O R 3247 PG 970 Parcel ID No.: 010424-005524-018-16 Opening Bid Amount: \$1,239.69 Physical Address: OAKLEAF PLANTATION PKWY, ORANGE PARK Classification: CNVR/ESMT Name in which assessed: FHOP LLC Said property being in the County of Clay, State of Florida. Unless said certificate shall be redeemed according to law, the property described in such certificate shall be sold to the highest bidder online on the 4th day of October, 2023 at 9:30 A.M at www.clay.realtaxdeed.com. Dated this 2nd day of August, 2023 TARA S. GREEN Clay County Clerk & Comptroller Clay County, Florida By: Christina Spadea Deputy Clerk Legal 78557 Published 8/31/2023, 09/07/2023, 09/14/2023 and 09/21/23 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT the Clay County Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (Committee) will hold and conduct a public hearing on Thursday, October 19, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. in the Board of County Commissioner's Meeting Room, 4th Floor, Clay County Administration Building, 477 Houston Street, Green Cove Springs, Florida, for the purpose of consideration and comments on the Committee's Local Housing Incentive Strategies Report (Report). It is expected for the Committee to approve its evaluation and recommendations outlined in the Report, which will then be presented to the Clay County Board of County Commissioners (the Board) at an upcoming Board meeting. A copy of the evaluation and tentative Committee recommendations will be available for public inspection between

the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, exclusive of legal holidays, in the SHIP Program's Office located on the 3rd Floor of the Clay County Administration Building at 477 Houston Street, Green Cove Springs, Florida 32043 or by calling the SHIP Program at (904) 278-4700. As a recipient of State Housing Initiative Partnership funds, the Board adopted Clay County Ordinance 93-8 on March 23, 1993, as codified in the Clay County Code, which as created the Committee in accordance with Section 420.9076, Florida Statutes. The Committee is responsible for reviewing established policies and procedures, ordinances, land development regulations, and the adopted Comprehensive Plan. The Committee shall recommend specific actions or initiatives to encourage or facilitate affordable housing while protecting the ability of the property to produce its value. The Committee is required to submit an annual report to the Board and the Florida Housing Finance Corporation that includes recommendations by the Committee or the implementation of affordable housing incentives in the areas set forth in Section 420.9076 (4)(a)-(k), Florida Statutes. All interested persons are invited to attend the public hearing and be heard. Pursuant to Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes, any person who desires to appeal any decision with respect to any matter considered at the public hearing or at any subsequent hearing to which the Committee has continued its deliberations will need a record of all proceedings and may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which must include the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person needing accommodations to participate in this matter should contact Clay County Risk Management by mail at P.O. Box 1366, Green Cove Springs, Florida 32043, or by telephone at (904) 278-4718, no later than three (3) days prior to the hearing or proceeding for which this notice has been given. Deaf and hard of hearing persons can access the telephone number by contacting the Florida Relay Service at 1-800-955-8770 (Voice) or 1-800-955-8771 (TDD). Legal 82370 Published 9/21/2023 in Clay County's Clay Today newspaper



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local laws. We are not responsible for ad content. Ads are subject to approval by the publisher.

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4 week \$40 \$72	4 week

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ESTATE & GARAGE SALES \$21

BUSINESS & SERVICE DIRECTORY

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Care provider needed for two young children. Must have valid drivers license. Wells Landing, Orange Park. Please call 904-418-2710 or 904-710-4343

Pigs for Sale

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Craft Fair

Mary Queen of Heaven Church 9401 Staples Mill Drive, Jax Will be hosting a craft fair on **Sat, October 21st 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.** Vendor applications are available by contacting Anitra at mqhccwcraft@outlook.com

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