

# KEYSTONE HEIGHTS HERALD

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## Proposal made to get Keystone Airport off septic system

By Jack Randall  
jack@claytodayonline.com

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – The Airport Utility Feasibility study, which estimates the cost of converting the Keystone Heights Airport from a septic to sewer system to be \$22 million, was presented at the city council meeting on April 1.

The analysis began in 2022 and was funded by the city council, which contributed \$110,000, and the airport authority, which contributed \$25,000.

Currently, the Keystone Heights Airport uses well water for drinking and septic disposal for its wastewater.

The feasibility study stemmed from conversations with Clay County Utility Authority about extending a water and sewer line to the airport. AECOM, a consulting firm, prepared the report, which Bill Prange presented.

“It makes sense that if CCUA or another entity were to extend water and sewer to the airport, it would need to be designed

and sized to serve any other development that might occur along the same corridor,” Prange said.

The report examines three types of water – potable, wastewater and fire protection – each with its own pressure and flow demand.

Prange said the estimated maximum demand for potable water would be 117 gallons per minute, and waste water would be 100 gallons a day. Fire protection would be dynamic – 2,250 gallons a minute at 20 psi at the low end and 6,000 gallons a minute at 109 psi at the high end.

The St. Johns River Water Management District said it would permit 864,000 gallons a year for fire protection from the Florida aquifer.

Prange said the demand for fire protection water, including fire sprinklers as an example, exceeds CCUA’s current capabilities. He said the airport must seek an independent fire protection water system.

SEE AIRPORT, 10



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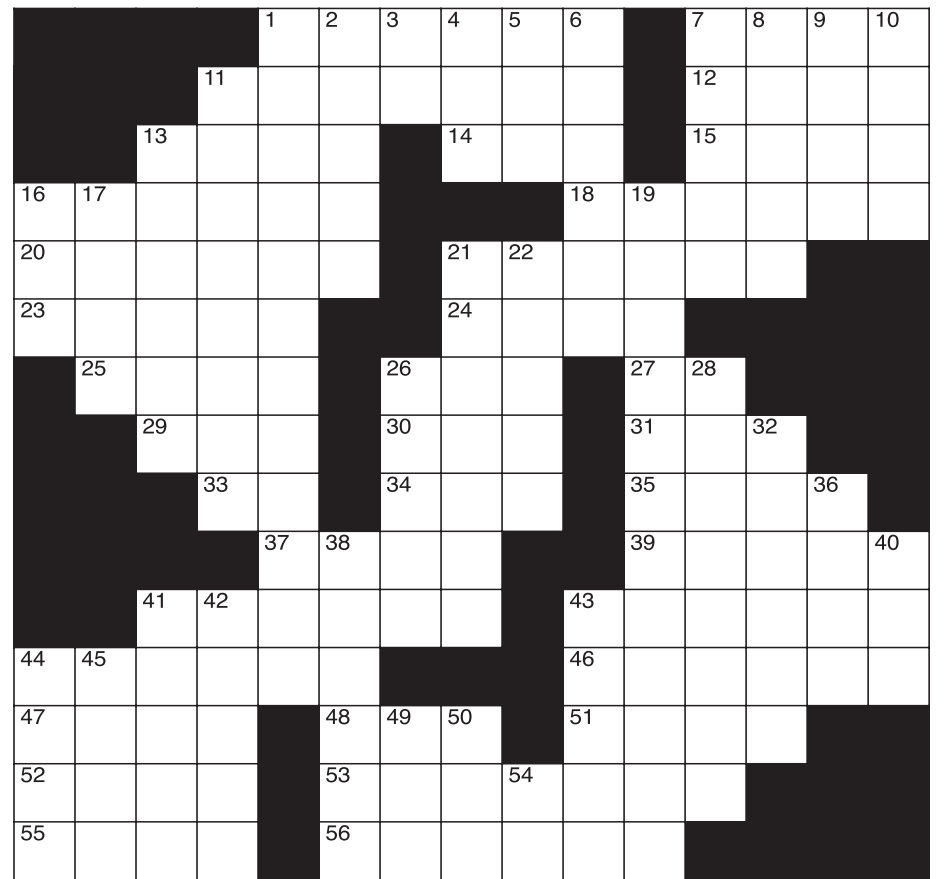


# PUZZLE FUN

## Get Scrambled

Unscramble the words to determine the phrase.  
erhmots yda

*Answer: Mother's Day*



**CLUES ACROSS**

- 1. Membrane around the lungs
- 7. Perennial trunked plant
- 11. Upper side of a building
- 12. Count on
- 13. W. Samoan monetary unit
- 14. Much \_\_\_ About Nothing
- 15. Freedom from difficulty
- 16. Person for whom something is named
- 18. Filled with lead
- 20. Against
- 21. Upper surface of the mouth
- 23. Belgian painter James, 1860-1949
- 24. Miri or Dafla
- 25. Alaskan gold rush town
- 26. \_\_\_ Lanka
- 27. Touchdown
- 29. Theater stage scenery
- 30. A slight amount
- 31. Of she
- 33. Designated hitter
- 34. Lemon or lime drink
- 35. Expel in large quantities
- 37. 4840 square yards

- 39. Sharpened a knife
- 41. Birch bark, dugout & outrigger
- 43. Yellow winter melon
- 44. Admirer
- 46. Hands on hips
- 47. Afrikaans
- 48. A flat cushion or mat
- 51. European hop
- 52. Initial poker wager
- 53. Linking together
- 55. Precipitation
- 56. Satisfying an appetite

**CLUES DOWN**

- 1. Synthetic wood finish
- 2. Soils
- 3. After E
- 4. Reptile genus
- 5. A long thin implement
- 6. Greek god of light
- 7. Goody
- 8. Duane \_\_\_\_: NY pharmacy
- 9. Other, different
- 10. In a way, looked
- 11. Liberated by payment of a

- demand
- 13. Body trunks
- 16. Adam's wife
- 17. Actor Sean
- 19. Of major consequence
- 21. Festival processions
- 22. Tolerate
- 26. Look at with fixed eyes
- 28. Take a deposition from
- 32. Rechristen
- 36. "Dragnet" actor Jack
- 38. \_\_\_\_ Christi, TX
- 40. Taoism
- 41. Coon cat
- 42. Former U.S. Senator
- Spector
- 43. Sleeping room on a ship
- 44. Essential oil from flowers
- 45. "Church lady" Carvey
- 49. Professional nursing group
- 50. Telegraphic signal
- 54. Atomic #22

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First 100 days in office:

# Charlie Van Zant reflects on new job as Keystone City Manager

By Jack Randall  
jack@claytodayonline.com

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – Charlie Van Zant Jr. was hired as the new city manager in January. More than 100 days into his new job, he said time flies when you're having fun.

"I'm loving it and the great people I work with. It's rewarding to give back to the community I grew up in," Van Zant said.

"The people are the highlight of the job, such as interacting with citizens and working with the public works – great guys. They do a good job keeping the city looking welcoming."

One of Van Zant's first tasks as city manager was purchasing the lot on the intersection of State Roads 100 and 21, which was finalized on April 1.

Van Zant said his role as city manager has changed the pace from previous jobs, notably as Superintendent of Clay County District Schools and Lieutenant Colonel of the Florida National Guard. With those past two positions, in particular, Van Zant relied on his managerial style to delegate tasks.

He said a small community like Keystone Heights with a smaller staff requires a more hands-on approach. As city manager, his goal is to execute the city council's vision,

especially they develop a strategic plan in the coming months. He said he fostered a professional relationship with each city council member, and they knew each other previously before he was hired for the job.

"None of us didn't know each other," he said.

Van Zant's father was Councilmember Tony Brown's pastor. He is neighbors with

SEE CITY, 10

SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Charlie Van Zant Jr. stands with his family.



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**OPINIONS & VIEWPOINTS**

**Now that Clay Regional Sports Complex is done, let them come**

**By Don Coble**  
Managing Editor

MIDDLEBURG – Civic and elected leaders believed the sports teams would come if they built the Clay County Regional Sports Complex.

And they will.

The demand for the eight multipurpose fields on State Road 21, a mile north of SR 16, has been so intense the county's parks and recreation department has already had to juggle its schedule to keep up with demands.

A college lacrosse tournament for last weekend was rescheduled for later, which will make this weekend's Jaguars NFL FLAG



Don Coble



NFL FLAG PHOTOS

The first event at the Clay County Regional Sports Complex will involve nearly 1,000 children, followed by as many as 500 adults a day later in the Jaguars NFL FLAG Adult Region Tournament.

Regional Tournaments the first events for the \$7 million complex.

There will be 97 teams from 11 different divisions for children 9-through-13 competing in five-on-five games on April 13. Winners of each division will advance to the NFL FLAG Championships in Canton, Ohio, on July 18-21.

Then, on July 14, the NFL FLAG Jaguars Adult Regional Tournament will be played at the complex.

The two-day event will attract about 1,500 people. One of the rules for NFL FLAG is if a team has to travel more than 60 miles, it must book a local room through the league.

Not bad for an opening weekend.

"Tourism had an increase of nearly 10% in generated fees, which all add up to about nearly \$300 per household in funding," said County Commissioner and Chairman of the Tourist Development Council. "That's money that our citizens don't have to pay

**SEE COMPLEX, 5**



**Picking the right plants, locations for your yard**

**By StatePoint Meda**  
For The Herald

The perfect landscape may start with a healthy, lush lawn, but for interest and depth, you'll also need to consider the surrounding plants.

Thankfully, it's easy to make considerable improvements to your backyard life using professional tips. Landscape designer Doug Scott has partnered with lawn care equipment manufacturer Exmark, to offer these tips for selecting and installing plants that will beautify your outdoor living areas.

**Choosing plants**

- Choose plants well-suited for your specific growing conditions. Knowing your growing zone is important. However, you should also be mindful of how conditions like sun exposure can change as you move around your yard.

- Choose the right size plants for the space. Remember that what you're planting today is much smaller than what it will be once it's matured. Always read a plant's care label to understand its optimal growing conditions and size at maturity.

- From a design perspective, think about texture, layers and drifts. When addressing the overall texture of your planting beds, choose plants that vary in form, size, color and leaf structure. This will create greater interest and a more visually appealing and enjoyable space in which to spend time.

**SEE YARD, 5**



**Word OF THE MONTH**

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.

**Occlude:** (UH-klood) a verb meaning to hide or obscure from prominence or view.

*"The moon will occlude the sun completely during a total solar eclipse."*

**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. We look forward to hearing from you!

**Opinions ...**

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



## Complex

from page 4

because visitors come into our county. They have a great experience, spend their money in hotels and shops. Those are tax dollars from their transactions, services and benefits. Remember that about sports tourism, tourism in general. It's nice for them to visit, leave their money, and then go home. That's the way it works."

The county partnered with Airstream Adventures to attract events in 2020. Headed by longtime sports marketing professional Alan Verlander, Airstream landed contracts for events like Motosurf, Inspire National Dance Competition, Minor League Golf Tour, American Cornhole League tournament, First Coast Rugby Classic Tournament, USA Cycling, Kayak Bass Fishing, Florida Roundnet (Spike Ball) Tournament and the Sunshine State Games.



Verlander was behind the NFL FLAG contracts, and he's already booked the Florida Prep Lacrosse Showcase, the United Flag Football League Championship and Spike the Ball Regional Championship. He said he's currently negotiating to bring two more Florida Lacrosse Showcases,

seven-on-seven and five-on-five regional football championships, another United Flag Football League Championship, Collee Lacrosse Spring Break Round Robin, United Rugby Championship, High School and Middle School Cross Country Meets with more than 1,000 runners and Punt, Pass and

Kick Championships.

The complex was officially opened on April 5. The first phase includes eight multi-purpose fields, restrooms, a three-quarter-mile walking trail and paved parking for 350 cars. Five of the fields are lighted. The fields can host soccer, lacrosse, flag football, field hockey, spike ball and ultimate disk golf.

Carlton Construction President Matt Carlton said it took "approximately 30,000 man-hours" to complete the project.

The 250-acre complex borders land owned by the North Florida Land Trust. County Director of Tourism Kimberly Morgan said the county and NFLT will partner to build trails through the wilderness.

But make no mistake: Clay County Regional Sports Complex is good for business.

"Florida sports tourism also supports nearly one million part-time and full-time jobs throughout the state every year," Cella said. "And we want Clay County to get our fair share of that business."

## This Month in History

### Five years ago, 2019

- The Clay County Agricultural Fair was highly anticipated to bring in 130,000 visitors and \$52 million to the local economy.
- The Cummer Museum's Mason Gallery closed the six-month exhibition, "Augusta Savage: Renaissance Woman." It featured sculptures, paintings, photographs and letters from Savage, the world-renowned artist born in 1892 in Green Cove Springs.
- A bill allowing Florida drivers to be pulled over for texting while driving emerged from its final committee after the House State Affairs Committee approved the measure.

The bill would eventually be signed into law.

- Randy Anderson was newly elected onto the Orange Park Town Council. Currently, he has served as the town mayor since 2021.

### 10 years ago, 2014

- Steve Howard, who ran unopposed, and Eugene Nix, who defeated incumbent Marge Hutton, were both sworn into office at Orange Park Town Hall. Howard was voted in as the new mayor of Orange Park.
- The Lakeside Junior High's boys and girls track teams win the Clay County Champion-

ship.

- The Board of County Commissioners hired attorney Michael Kahn to help prevent the adult entertainment industry from taking root in Clay County.

### 20 years ago, 2004

- Clay County Sheriff Scott Lancaster characterized a grand jury review into agency misappropriation of funds was not an indication of guilt but "a welcome sign that the process of review is nearing conclusion."
- Robert Page and Deborah Ricks were elected to the Green Cove Springs City Council.
- AmeriCredit closed its branch in Clay County. Employees were handed out boxes for their belongings and severance packages

based on length of employment.

### 30 years ago, 1994

- Clay County Agricultural Fair President Marvin Wilhite said the 8th annual fair hit new attendance records with upwards of 105,000 guests attending that year.

### 40 years ago, 1984

- The Clay County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to prohibit topless dancing in establishments where liquor was sold. Commissioners said the measure was proactive and intended to head off any push to offer nude or semi-nude establishments in Clay County.

## Yard

from page 4

For a lush look, think about layers when considering composition. Much like in a painting, you should have a background, middle ground, and foreground layers. Your background layer should consist of taller evergreen shrubs to provide something alive and green to look at all year long, no matter what's happening in front of them. Your middle ground layer should be lower than the background layer to create interest and is

where you can add a contrasting evergreen shrub or pop of color with a perennial plant. Finally, your foreground layer should help transition the planting beds to your lawn space. You can accomplish this with smaller perennials, evergreens, annuals or creeping ground covers.

When addressing drifts, read the plant labels to know how large they'll grow. This can help ensure plants grow in together as they mature but are not overcrowded.

### Installing them

1. Dig a hole that's about two times the

diameter of the pot your plant's being transplanted from and about the depth of the pot.

2. Mend in compost or soil conditioner to give your plant the organic material it needs to thrive. If you'd like, add slow-release fertilizer and mix well.
3. Place your plant in the hole, ensuring it sits at or above the level it did in the pot.
4. Backfill with soil, stopping to add water when the hole is about halfway full.
5. Fill the rest of the hole with soil, then firmly press down.
6. Soak your plant with more water.
7. Finish by adding mulch, ensuring it's

pulled away from the base of your plant.

Scott offers more insights in "How to Choose Plants for Landscaping," a recent episode of "Done-in-a-Weekend Projects," an original series from Exmark. To watch the video, visit Backyard Life, part of a unique multimedia destination focusing on helping homeowners make the most of outdoor spaces.

"Now that you have the inspiration and know-how needed to choose and install plant material, you can create landscaping that reflects who you are and how you'd like to live outside," Scott said.



# NWS Jacksonville renews Clay County's StormReady Certification

For The Herald

CLAY COUNTY – The National Weather Service - Jacksonville presented Clay County Emergency Management with its renewed StormReady Certification.

The NWS StormReady program prepares communities with the communication and safety skills needed to save lives and property before, during, and after a weather event. StormReady communities are better prepared to save lives from severe weather through advanced planning, education and awareness.

StormReady takes a grassroots approach to assisting communities with developing plans to handle all kinds of extreme weather.

Communities involved in the program are encouraged to take on new, proactive approaches to improving local hazardous weather operations.

The NWS inspected the Emergency Management program, interviewed staff, reviewed plans, and examined community outreach and preparedness education. Historically, we have held this certification and are proud to continue to be recognized with this distinction. To be StormReady, a community must:

Establish a 24-hour warning point and emergency operations center

Have more than one way to receive severe weather warnings and forecasts and to alert the public

Create a system that monitors weather conditions locally

Promote the importance of public readiness through community seminars

Develop a formal hazardous weather plan, which includes training severe weather spotters and holding emergency exercises.

Angie Enyedi with the NWS Jacksonville presents, EMS Manager Tim Devin and Clay County Manager Howard Wanamaker with the StormReady Certification.



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# Councilmember Hart surprised with plaque after decade of service

By Jack Randall  
jack@claytodayonline.com

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – Monday, April 1, was Councilmember Steve Hart’s last day as an elected official for the city council.

The city staff had a surprise – and it wasn’t an April Fool’s joke. It was a genuine, emotional token of appreciation.

Hart was presented with a plaque commemorating his decade of public service. Each member of the city council said Hart would be missed.

Hart served as vice mayor when Councilmember Tony Brown was mayor. When Brown was out sick and seeking treatment, Hart often stepped up.

“To say it has been a pleasure to work with you would be an understatement,” City attorney Rich Komando said.

Hart was described as someone who put the needs of the community front and center. Komando said that out of all the city council members or legislatures he worked with, Hart was unique.

“You did something I had never seen before. You introduced legislation on the city council, talked with community members, heard that they were opposed, and then came back to the next city council meeting to vote against your own legislation,”



STAFF PHOTOS BY JACK RANDALL

Keystone Heights City Councilman Steve Hart receives a plaque as a token of appreciation on his last day April 1 after serving on the city council for a decade.

Komando said.

“It happens,” Hart said.

One of Hart’s cornerstone achievements was founding the Keystone Heights Heritage Commission, which Mayor Nina Rodenroth previously served on.

“I had a good group of people to work with,” Hart said.

“It’s good to serve with dedicated people.”



Keystone Heights City Councilman Steve Hart, Mayor Nina Rodenroth and city attorney Rich Komando.



## Clerk of Court hosting Passport Day event April 27

ORANGE PARK – Spring is here and summer is on its way, so there is no better time to prepare for a cruise or to plan a trip to a foreign land. Now is your chance

to get your new passport application processed by one of our expert clerks without having to take a day off work during the week.

The event will be at the Clerk of Court’s

Orange Park Branch at 1590 Park Ave. in Orange Park on Saturday, April 27, from 8 a.m. to noon.

A passport is an internationally recognized travel document attesting to the holder’s identity. The Clerk of Court is the local government agency that may accept applications for passports and send them to passport services designated by the Secretary of State where they are reviewed and returned by mail. Standard processing takes four-to-six weeks; expedited takes about two-to-three weeks.



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# Around the Moon and back: The Moon Tree

Planted in Keystone Heights' backyard roughly 40 years ago

By Jack Randall  
jack@claytodayonline.com

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – On Jan. 31, 1971, Apollo 14 launched into outer space, and two astronauts rode Command Module “Kitty Hawk” down onto the rocky lunar surface.

Astronaut Stuart Roosa – and about 500 seeds – remained circling in the Moon’s orbit.

The three astronauts splashed down in the Pacific Ocean nine days later. Roosa’s seeds were then distributed nationwide, and many germinated into healthy, full-sized “Moon trees.”

Keystone Heights has its own Moon tree, standing tall on the corner of Lawrence Boulevard and Oriole Street, near the library and the city hall.

Only about 100 accounted for Moon trees in the United States.

Bob Byrnes was the one who brought the “out of this world” tree back to Keystone Heights, and actually, it was an unexpected gift.

Byrnes has always been an avid gardener. One day, he was browsing through a magazine article when he stumbled upon an article about Dr. Bob Hayes, a geneticist and researcher with the U.S. Forest Service, select-



Bob Byrnes pointing to the display board in front of the Moon Tree.

ing trees to have a more beautiful fall color.

In 1982, Byrnes contacted Hayes and drove to his home in Gulfport, Mississippi. The two hit it off great (as all gardeners do), and Byrnes was invited to spend the night.

Then, Hayes invited him to his nursery, eager to show him a prized possession.

“It was the Moon Sycamore. By then, the seed had germinated into a sizeable sprout,” Byrnes said.



The Moon Tree in Keystone Heights on the corner of Lawrence Boulevard and Oriole Street

“He appreciated my interest. He said, ‘You need to have this plant!’” Byrnes said.

Hayes himself received the seed from the University of Florida.

The two gardeners traded plants (as all gardeners do) and Byrnes drove the sizable sapling back home.

The tree was planted in its current location in 1984, roughly 40 years ago. Byrnes

SEE MOON, 9

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## Moon from page 8

attributes that to Leona Terry, a previous Keystone Heights City Clerk.

"I met her. I gave her the tree. We discussed putting it some place on the property."

Byrnes said Terry was indispensable not just for the Moon Tree, but for many trees in city limits.

"She was involved in forestry. She got Keystone Heights certified as a Tree City. If you drive around, you'll see a sign that says, 'Tree City.' That was because of Terry."

A municipality must meet the standards set by the Arbor Day Foundation to be a Tree City. There are about 3,400 Tree Cities throughout the U.S. Several ideas for the Keystone Heights Parks Master Plan have been proposed. One idea was to make the Moon Tree a distinguished focal point in the community by adding seating arrangements and lights around the tree's base or canopy.

Councilmember Dan Lewandowski has expressed an interest in cultivating the next generation, the "Child of the Moon Tree," so that history can be preserved in case the city's beloved sycamore suffers an unexpected ailment. Originally, the scientific purpose behind the Moon Trees was to discern whether exposure to outer space and harsh radiation would have any effect on the seeds. Today, the tree is strong and sturdy. Byrnes hopes the tree stays healthy and growing for many years.

"They're pretty tough plants. I seldom see any disease or insects with the sycamore. It's one of the most distributed trees in the country. There're not many places it won't grow," he said.

Even after a trip around the Moon.

# Believing in Girls celebrates largest graduating class at PACE

For The Herald

ORANGE PARK – PACE Clay marked a significant milestone on Wednesday, March 27, when it hosted its highly anticipated Believing in Girls Luncheon. This event, known as the largest community fundraiser of the year, attracted more than 150 guests, including local professionals, businesses, and community leaders, all converging to show their support for girls in their community, including Sheriff Michelle Cook, former Florida Sen. Rob Bradley, Superintendent David Broskie, Keystone Heights Mayor Nina Rodenroth and School Board Vice-Chair Mary Bolla.

This year's event was exceptional, with the recognition of 18 seniors, constituting the largest graduating class yet. Their achievements served as a testament to the transformative impact of Pace Clay's programs.

"This year, Pace Clay focused on three important enhancements to our work: first, community engagement, especially volunteerism; second, career development," said Genelle Thomas, Pace Executive Director. We now offer onsite ASVAB, PSAT, SAT, and CLT



PACE Senior Synclair and Dabree Amrine-Jones, Reach Therapist and Retired Senior Chief.

testing, numerous college and trade school tours, job shadowing opportunities, and role modeling from community professionals. We do all this to ensure our girls have a path to success after Pace, allowing them to be employed and self-sufficient. And third, family engagement. We believe our girls are more successful when we partner with their

families.

"Therefore, we launched a new Family Night series and have begun to increase family support efforts. This year, our academic outcome measurements show that 100% of girls who transitioned from Pace Clay this year improved academically based on course completions, grades, and standardized testing scores."

Pace Clay's commitment to fostering this supportive community was evident in their expanding reach. Currently serving 55 girls in their Day Program on a newly constructed campus and 35 girls through their Reach Program, which provides vital mental health therapy in nine Clay County Schools, the organization continues to make significant strides in its mission.

At the heart of the luncheon was a profound belief in the power of community support. Every girl, it was emphasized, deserves a network of encouragement and empowerment to realize her full potential. This sentiment resonated deeply as speakers and participants alike shared stories of resilience, growth and triumph.

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## City

from page 3

Mayor Nina Rodenroth.

Van Zant moved to the city in 1981. Before he could propose to his wife, Stephanie, he had to take her back to his hometown as if to say, "This is who I am. This is where I come from." His upbringing in Keystone

Heights is a fundamental aspect of who he is.

He was a pilot during his service in the military. He said, on occasion, he would fly for two hours, swoop down at the Keystone Heights airport, grab a coffee and return to the skies. He was deployed to Afghanistan, where he supported navigation operations.

Van Zant is excited about the city's centennial next year. He wants to preserve the city's history and expand new horizons.

"This is a brand-new chapter. I've always

been mission-focused. Applying for city manager felt like the right thing to do. Citizens deserve every bit of attention as I have with every student or soldier," he said.

He says there is an open-door policy as city manager.

"If someone often comes into the office, I'll recognize the voice. Everyone's input is valuable. I am honored to serve the citizens of Keystone and welcome their input."

## Airport

from page 1

If implemented, Prange said the entire project could cost between \$22 million and \$23 million.

Councilmember Dan Lewandowski, who has a background in aerospace engineering, said he was impressed with the comprehensiveness of the proposals' technical analysis. But he was concerned with the price tag. Prange said that CUA may be willing to contribute financially, now that it has actual figures regarding the airport's water needs. He also said the city council could take advantage of grants that financially assist efforts to retire septic systems and remove small well systems.

"Certainly, a plan like this helps us go after those kinds of sources if we show we have a plan and how much it's going to cost. We have a much greater chance of winning money than if we have no plan at all. So, this is a really great start," Lewandowski said.

Because residents of Bradford County benefit from the airport, which is located on the county line, Lewandowski said it would be beneficial to reach out to them for their cooperation as well.



**KEYSTONE DENTAL**  
TODD D SHOCKLEY DMD PA

**Todd D. Shockley, DMD**

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# Concert on the Green 2024 Student Poster Contest winners

*For Clay Today*

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – Concert on the Green auditions and submissions for the Young Artist Competitions for 2024 are in!

Students competed in the Art/Poster Contest and in the Music Instrumental and Music Vocalist categories. Concert on the Green awards scholarships to young artists in amounts up to \$1,000, as well as cash prizes and school grants that support music and art.

Since its inception in 1987, Concert on the Green has awarded more than \$400,000 to support students gifted in art and music. For more information, please reach out to paulacog22@gmail.com.



First place: Colette Jones, eighth grade, Lakeside Junior High 'The Colors of Our Community', Teacher Sandra Wiggains. Second place: Harlie Wilson eighth grade, Lake Asbury Junior High 'The Festival', Teacher Desiree Stone Third place: Amelia Cobb, 8th Grade, Lakeside Junior High 'The Colors of Music', Teacher Sandra Wiggains.



First place: Graham Johnston, 12th grade, Fleming Island High 'The Hornist', Teacher Michael Green  
 Second place: Aaliyah Anna-Lee Mota, 12th grade, Fleming Island High 'Warm and Cool Music', Teacher Michael Green  
 Third place: Kalia Polete, 12th grade, Fleming Island High 'Musical Art', Teacher Michael Green



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## Winning the fight against human trafficking

Law enforcement agencies make significant progress in first year

By Don Coble  
don@claytodayonline.com

The seven law enforcement agencies and the U.S. Attorney's Office that make up the Northeast Florida INTERCEPT Task Force reunited last week to report the first-year success of their program to target those suspected of human trafficking and child exploitation.

In one year, the group got 21 convictions, which led to 18 sentences of more than 148 years in prison.

"These agency executives formed a board together to put this together," said Clay County Sheriff's Office Undersheriff Ron Lendvay, Chairman and Executive Board member of the NEFL INTERCEPT.

"So, this is a true group effort and a team, not just spearheaded by a particular agency. INTERCEPT work to combat these crimes is



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Law enforcement members who make up NEFL INTERCEPT released the results of their first-year effort to battle human trafficking and child exploitation.

difficult, dangerous, detail oriented and very technical, but it's absolutely vital to keeping our young and vulnerable safe from exploitation. All the partners you see here today are committed to working together as the intercept Task Force to amplify our successes, erase jurisdictional boundaries, and take a regional approach to protecting the vulnerable in Northeast Florida," Lendvay said.

The task force consists of the Clay, St. Johns, Jacksonville, Nassau and Putnam county sheriff's offices, Homeland Security Investigations-Jacksonville and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

The group organized on March 2 last year. Since then, the contributed deputies have investigated 663 cyber tips from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, initiated 583 investigations and issued 85 search warrants. They've examined 224 electronic devices and 6.3 million images and

videos containing more than 75,000 videos and images of child sexual activity.

"The focus of INTERCEPT is human trafficking and online, online sexual exploitation of children," Lendvay said.

"Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud or coercion to obtain some labor or commercial sex act from another. The key element in human trafficking cases is not the movement of the victim but rather the exploitation of that thing. "The online sexual exploitation of children manifests itself in various forms, from online enticement to the distribution of child sexual abuse material to sextortion. Online enticement involves an individual communicating with a child over the internet with the intent to commit a sexual offense. Offenders who traffic child sexual abuse material share photo and video files across the internet and dark web and victimize the child each time the image of the

reviews is shared.

"Sextortion occurs when a minor has shared an explicit themselves with someone they mistakenly trusted, who then blackmails them into producing additional sexual content, meeting for sexual activity, or paying to keep their images from being shared. The disturbing reality is that the web-based platforms and applications we use daily to connect and share information, including social media, online gaming and email, are all used for illegal and illicit purposes," Lendvay said.

Florida Rep. Sam Garrison (R-Fleming Island) helped secure \$1 million in funding in the current budget for NEFL INTERCEPT for a forensic lab.

"Our brand is family. We believe in a culture of life and that every life and child matters," he said. "We're going to fight for those kids, especially the ones that are forgotten, the ones that find themselves in these situations."

Middle District of Florida U.S. Attorney Roger Handberg is responsible for prosecuting many of the offenders. He singled out three cases – two from Clay County – as successes from the program's first year.

He mentioned the 20-year sentence for former Orange Park Athletic Association softball coach Andrew Lynn Overheul, who was caught using his cellphone recording a 12-year-old girl taking a shower at his house. When investigators from CCSO seized his phone, they found "hundreds" of other images of girls, Handberg said.

Another case involved former JSO offer Alejandro Carmona-Fonseca, who was sentenced to 12 years for attempting to entice a 16-year-old boy to send inappropriate photos after meeting him at the Lake Asbury gym.

"The work that you are doing is saving lives, and it's resulting in victims being rescued and offenders being brought to justice," Handberg said. "The Northeast Florida INTERCEPT Task Force did not hit the ground running; they hit the ground sprinting.

"There's much that I can say about the dedication of the investigators and prosecutors who tackle these disturbing and often heartbreaking cases. I'll simply say to them, 'Thank you.' Thank you for the hard work that you do. Thank you for the long hours and late nights that you put into investigating your cases."

There have been 31 arrests and 16 indictments for child exploitation and human trafficking in the past year. There also have been eight arrests resulting from sexual battery, bestiality and video voyeurism, according to NEFL INTERCEPT figures.

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# Community

## CCDS Student Art Show premieres April 26-27

ORANGE PARK – The 35th Annual Clay County District Schools Student Art Show will be on Friday and Saturday, April 26-27, at the Thrasher-Horne Conference Center.

Doors open at 4 p.m. on Friday, and the opening celebration begins at 6 p.m. Saturday, doors open at 10 a.m. and the awards ceremony begins at 5 p.m.

In addition to wonderful art displays, students and families can explore the Family and Community Engagement room, watch student artists working on their craft, hear and see performances while viewing artwork, and more. This event is free and open to the public.

## Wreaths Across America mobile education exhibit April 26

FLEMING ISLAND – Wreaths Across America at Jacksonville Memorial Gardens is proud to announce a local stop for the WAA Mobile Education Exhibit national

tour.

The MME started its tour at WAA Headquarters in Maine and will be on Fleming Island on Friday, April 26 at Sacred Heart Catholic Church at 7190 U.S. Highway 17 for a scheduled event that is free and open to

the public.

“The goal of the Wreaths Across America Mobile Education Exhibit is to bring communities together and teach about the organization’s mission,” Karen Worcester, Executive Director of WAA.

She said, “The exhibit serves as a mobile museum, educating visitors about the service of our nation’s heroes and serving as an official ‘welcome home’ station for our

nation’s Vietnam veterans.”

WAA is a nonprofit known for placing wreaths on veteran’s headstones at Arlington National Cemetery. However, in 2023, the organization placed millions of sponsored veteran wreaths at over 4,100 participating locations nationwide. Wreaths Across America Mobile Education Exhibit to Fleming Island.



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# Golden Years Gala NOMINEES

The 17th annual Windsor Ortega Golden Years Gala will be celebrated on Wednesday, May 8, 2024. The Gala recognizes older adults for outstanding volunteer service in Clay County. This is a wonderful way to say "Thank You!" by celebrating someone you know for their extraordinary efforts. The categories are as follows: Ernie Cohen Lifetime Achievement Award, Volunteer Man of the Year and Volunteer Woman of the Year. In addition to recognizing the nominees, we will be awarding the Shepherd's Center Outstanding Service Award. Senior adults are important to the community. They are a generation of high values, strong work ethic, commitment, integrity, generosity, and loyalty. Older adults are a wonderful example to all, showing that true fulfillment is to share their time and talents through service.

The Gala will be held at Sullivan Hall, 7190 U.S. Highway 17 S, Fleming Island, Wednesday, May 8. Breakfast will be served at 8:30a.m. There will be a live and silent auction and awards program. Tickets are \$50; please call (904) 269-5315 to order yours today. The event benefits Shepherd's Center of Orange Park, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit which provides education for older adults to improve their quality of life. The award-winning educational program focuses on health, wellness, art, information technology, and history.

A listing of the nominees and the Shepherd's Center's Outstanding Service Award winner with a summary of their activities follows.

## Ernie Cohen Lifetime Achievement Award

### Nancy C. Keating

Nancy has demonstrated commitment to people of all different abilities, faiths, colors, backgrounds, and status. She has been an active member of the Green Cove Springs Rotary Club since 1990 and was the first female member of the club. Nancy has worked tirelessly to raise funds for the Clay High School Scholarship Fund. She is also currently the chairperson for the Annual Rotary Swine and Dine which benefits many local non-profits. Nancy has given countless hours to the Clay County Special Olympics organization and serves the Sacred Heart Church as a eucharistic minister. She was instrumental in the Food Pantry becoming the successful organization it is today. She is also a member of 100 Women Who Care, board member of PET Florida, and Rotarians for the Development of Youth. Nancy C. Keating is a deliberate, dedicated and loving person whose good works and caring demeanor have been quietly and thoughtfully practiced for over 50 years in Clay County.



Nancy C. Keating

### Bea Robinson

Over the past 35 years, Bea has been a steadfast pillar of support, witnessing the growth and evolution of The Clothes Closet and Food Pantry. At the remarkable age of 90, Bea (a Clay County resident for 72 of those years) stands as a testament to unwavering commitment and compassion, embodying the spirit of volunteerism. Bea's journey began as she stepped into the community in a caregiving role for The Clothes Closet and Food Pantry's founder, Madeline Moore. As clients walk through the front door, Bea is at her sorting table meticulously evaluating donations with a warm smile, humming a song, ready to hug

or take a moment to pray with a client or volunteer. She is always there offering a comforting presence to those seeking assistance. Bea Robinson exemplifies the true spirit of volunteerism, a spirit driven by empathy, resilience and an unwavering commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of others. Her impact is imprinted on the very fabric of the organization, and her legacy will continue to inspire generations to come.



Bea Robinson

### Charlotte Sarro

Charlotte has been a dedicated client of the Middleburg Senior Center, as well as a constant volunteer for over 20 years. Charlotte helps with activities and meals, and her giving attitude and enthusiasm is contagious. Charlotte relocated to Florida to be closer to family and began attending the Middleburg Senior Center. She soon found herself volunteering in many different areas of the center starting with the kitchen, until she found the one, she genuinely loved - calling Bingo! She loves seeing older people pay attention and knows this helps keep their minds fresh and focused. Charlotte shared, "I really love how excited they get when they win and get a prize!" The bingo participants love Charlotte too. They love her personality and spirit.



Charlotte Sarro

## Woman of the Year

### Linda Ashley

Linda has been a volunteer with Community Hospice & Palliative Care since 2017. As a former social worker, Linda understands the needs that may arise, and she has made herself available night or day. In 2016, she helped coordinate the hospice program at Penney Farms. Having come full circle, she is now a dedicated and loving volunteer for patients and families dealing with end-of-life situations. She is also a Community Educator for Advance Care Planning and Honoring Choices. In Linda's words, "I have loved every minute of helping patients and families at the most important time of their lives."



Linda Ashley

### Kay Earhart

Kay's enthusiasm and dependability to serve on committees, work on projects, and attend district and state meetings, set her apart from the crowd as a leader in the Orange Park Women's Club. From 2021 to 2023, as President of the club, she led the "Chairs for Charity" campaign. Kay also introduced the first annual charity gala at the Orange Park Women's Club in the fall of 2022 benefiting the Mercy Support Services Building Fund. She currently serves as the First Vice-President of the Orange Park Women's Club as well as House Chair, overseeing all maintenance at the club. Other positions she has tackled through the Orange Park Women's Club



Kay Earhart

include chairing the International Committee, chairing the Community Service Program for Education and Libraries, and organizing a Christmas bazaar which benefited students at risk in Clay County. She loves to garden and has found an avenue to share that enjoyment with like minds in an outreach program that promotes gardening and environmental education for schools and the community. Kay is not just a spectator, but a participant in her community!

### Joyce Hall

Joyce volunteers her time with the Pink Ribbon Symposium by finding locations, marketing the event, and organizing door prizes for 70-100 people. This event encourages and supports breast cancer survivors. She has also served as chairperson of the Orange Park Ladies Connecting, providing program direction, marketing, and speaking for the group which encourages and inspires women. Joyce heads up the Christmas party for Teen Challenge, filling Christmas baskets and donating formal to women. She also donates clothing to their thrift store. She encourages small groups, mentors through Bible studies and ladies' groups, and inspires others through her group speaking. She donates thousands of items including clothing and Avon products to additional clothes closets and food pantries.



Joyce Hall

### Ruthie Jennings

When you walk into the Orange Park Senior Center, you immediately feel a sense of fun, happiness, and well-being. Part of this fun and happiness is Ruthie Jennings who is the Bingo caller, Karaoke DJ, and all-around helper of whatever needs to be done. Ruthie helps create an atmosphere of family and makes the activities not only well attended (often over 70) and fun, but also beneficial to seniors'



camaraderie with each other and socialization during the various activities. Ruthie does all this while being the 24/7 caretaker to her mom who often attends with her. Ruthie is a "Jack of all Trades" and can always be someone management depends on to lend a hand with whatever they need.



Ruthie Jennings

Ruthie, grandmother of 9, including one set of twin grandsons who are Florida Police Officers. They keep the peace, and so does she at the Senior Center. She is respected and loved by all the seniors and management staff.

**Liliana Kinmonth**

Lily has been a volunteer at The Way Free Medical Clinic for over 8 years. Her roles have included working the front desk, triage, and translation for Spanish speaking patients.



Liliana Kinmonth

Through the Catholic Council of Women at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, she has also supported several non-profit groups including the Bear Essential Diaper Program, Diamond Nursing Home, Clay County Food Pantry, Charles E. Bennett Title 1 Elementary School, and the Clothes Closet. Lily is a member of the Military Vehicle Preservation Association, an educational group whose mission statement is "History in Motion" that provides support for veterans. She has also worked with the First Coast Car Council, raising money for the Ronald McDonald House, for over 10 years. As her supervisor Cathy at The Way Free Clinic says, "Dependability, inspiration, enthusiasm - she has it all and then some."

**Sadako Long**

At Advent Lutheran Church, Sadako serves as a member of the Stewardship Board, the Endowment Committee, the quilters group, and as Chair of the Tellers. Previously she served as the treasurer of the church council. The quilts she has helped create have been gifted to Habitat for Humanity, hospitalized



Sadako Long

church members and new moms, as well as Lutheran World Relief. As First Vice-President of the Garden Club of Orange Park, Sadako edits an award-winning yearbook. She is Treasurer of the Hummingbird Garden Club and Arranger Guild, manages the club's website, and serves on the Publicity Committee which designs and sets up displays. Sadako helps make wreaths for the Historical Society Veteran's Day programs at Magnolia Cemetery and designs flower arrangements to decorate Clarke House on Carrie Clarke Day. Sadako is a cheerful and dependable worker and is ready and willing to volunteer for any and all opportunities.

**Man of the Year**

**Galen Bills**

Galen Bills has been a CORE volunteer with Clay County Habitat for Humanity since 2009. He has helped build over 60 homes for individuals and families in need. He also builds wheelchair ramps with the James Boys through Orange Park Methodist Church. He has personally served over 200 individuals in the county and volunteered over 10,000 hours of his time with Clay County Habitat for Humanity. Driven by a passion for hands-on work and a commitment to giving back, Galen found the perfect outlet at Clay County Habitat for Humanity. He loves being able to build homes for other people and seeing the homes built come to life has been truly inspiring. Amy Clay, Habitat's Volunteer Coordinator, shares, "Galen is an unsung hero at Clay Habitat, humbly, quietly, and precisely going about his work. His keen attention to detail has prompted him to start a project over from scratch more times than he would have liked. However, it speaks to his care, dedication, and integrity to ensuring that a Habitat homeowner will receive a quality home, done right."



Galen Bills

**Bob Donnellon**

Bob Donnellon is an example of everything a volunteer should be kind, thoughtful, enthusiastic, and loving. Bob is a member of several non-profit organizations including St. Luke Catholic Church. Bob is there most days, and volunteers in many capacities including serving as Eucharistic Minister to the homebound, which allows him to bring communion to anyone who is unable to attend worship. In this position Bob witnesses situations that call for action. He assists those who are medically fragile, widows, or those who have limited abilities by organizing groups who cut grass, do yard clean-ups, build wheelchair ramps, paint houses, and make minor repairs. Bob works at

St. Luke's food pantry, organizes a group who donates food to homeless Middleburg High School students, assists with dinner baskets for "Operation Blessing". He is also the main chef for dinners run by the Knights of Columbus. Finally, in Bob's spare time, he creates memorial flag boxes to honor deceased veterans and first responders.



Bob Donnellon

**Kenneth Johansen**

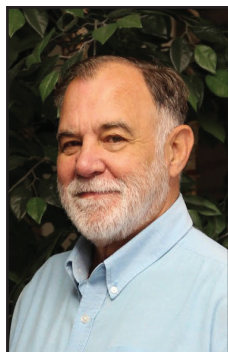
Ken volunteers at Advent Lutheran Church, Shepherd's Center of Orange Park (SCOOP), and Camp Chowenwaw. He is past president of Advent Lutheran's Church Council and currently serves as liaison from the Stewardship Board to the Endowment Committee. He has taught a Bible study class for ten years and is a singer with the Awaken Worship Team. Ken is a deacon and served as lector and assistant minister. He is a trained Stephen Minister at the church which allows him to spend one-on-one time with a grieving parishioner, providing support. At SCOOP Ken is a co-facilitator for the Current Events class. He spends 6-8 hours preparing each of the sessions he teaches on political issues. As a park naturalist, Ken served as a docent in the Nature Center at Clay County Camp Chowenwaw Park. Ken enjoys sharing his knowledge with everyone he meets!



Kenneth Johansen

**John Merrill**

John is known for his good will and desire to help others throughout the area. He volunteers through the James Boys, a group of men who build wheelchair ramps to the homes of people who are not able to pay contractors to install ramps. He even helped rebuild the deck of one of the recipients. After completing the rebuild, John stayed to remove all the trash and loaded it into his truck, making two trips to the landfill. John has also volunteered his time and resources to the Thanksgiving Feast



John Merrill

of Plenty put on by five Orange Park Churches. John is a woodworker, and his skills are well known by those in his community. John is happiest when there is a job to be done. John's good neighbor attitude and approach to tackling projects sets him apart from others.

**Dave Neal**

Dave volunteers at The Shepherd's Center of Orange Park, Orange Park Rehab and Nursing Center, and Orange Park Athletic Association Baseball. He is a volunteer teacher at the Shepherd's Center where he shares the rock 'n roll hits of the 1960's and 1970's. He hands out information he has researched on songs, artists, and the events that shaped the music of that time. Every other week he visits Orange Park Rehab and Nursing Center to share his music with the residents which brings many to a lively remembrance of songs they know and enjoy sharing why it meant something special to them. Dave also loves baseball; he coaches a 10-11-year-old All Star team at OPAA. He teaches them the basics of baseball as the pitching coach and serves as a role model to these youth. Dave's love of music and baseball provides him the perfect outlet for his volunteer service. Lamar Smith



Dave Neal

**Lamar Smith**

Lamar is the Green Cove Springs Senior Center's "handy man." He does anything that needs to be done, cleaning, maintenance and much more. The senior center serves around 55 clients per day. Lamar shows appreciation to the seniors he serves, and they do the same to him. His positive attitude is contagious as he greets and works with clients. Lamar saw a need for his skills when he was a client of the center, and he stepped into a volunteer role. Lamar will tell you that his favorite part of the day is putting a smile on someone's face.



Lamar Smith



*Shepherd's Center of Orange Park  
Outstanding Service Award*

**Katy Kearson**

Katy recently completed her term as the Board Chairman for the Shepherd's Center of Orange Park during 2023. She also serves on the Fun Committee to schedule additional events each month, and the Gala Committee that plans the annual fund raiser to honor our volunteers. Besides serving on various committees, she attends a wide variety of classes to learn, enjoy, and fellowship with others. Katy is an active member of the Orange Park Woman's Club where she chairs the Health & Wellness Committee which works to support Ronald McDonald House, Lion's Club, Breast Cancer Awareness, Heart Month, mental health, and many other worthwhile projects. In addition, she is involved in the Civic Engagement and Outreach Committee and the Education and Libraries Committee. She frequently represents the club at the Orange Park Town Council meetings. The Orange Park Methodist Church plays a huge role in Katy's life, from the Logan Chapel Sunday School class, Sunshine Chair for the Women's Circle, Wednesday night dinner and Bible Study, and the breakdown of altar flowers for shut-in members. She stays current through the Federated Republican Women of Clay County, attending monthly meetings at Club Continental. Last but not least she is a season ticket holder to the University of Florida football games. (Go Gators!) Katy's high energy and spirit of giving are amazing gifts for the many organizations in which she is involved!



Katy Kearson

The Shepherd's Center is honored to tell these amazing volunteer stories and honor these older adults at the Golden Years Gala. Our hope is that you will be inspired by these stories to share your time and treasures with the community.

# Salvation Army's Empty Bowls returns April 23

**By Jack Randall**  
*jack@claytodayonline.com*

MIDDLEBURG – Give a meal, get a meal – that's the idea behind the 18th Annual Empty Bowls charity drive.

The \$20 ticket grants you entry to the luncheon on April 23 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Orange Park United Methodist Church Family Life Center, where you will receive an artisan bowl handcrafted by talented students at Lake Asbury Junior, Oakleaf and Ridgeview highs and St. Johns Country Day School.

Since the bowl is a decorative piece, the hot soup will be poured into a separate container. The soup varieties will include chicken noodle, chili, broccoli and cheddar and vegetable. Each serving also comes with a side of bread and water.

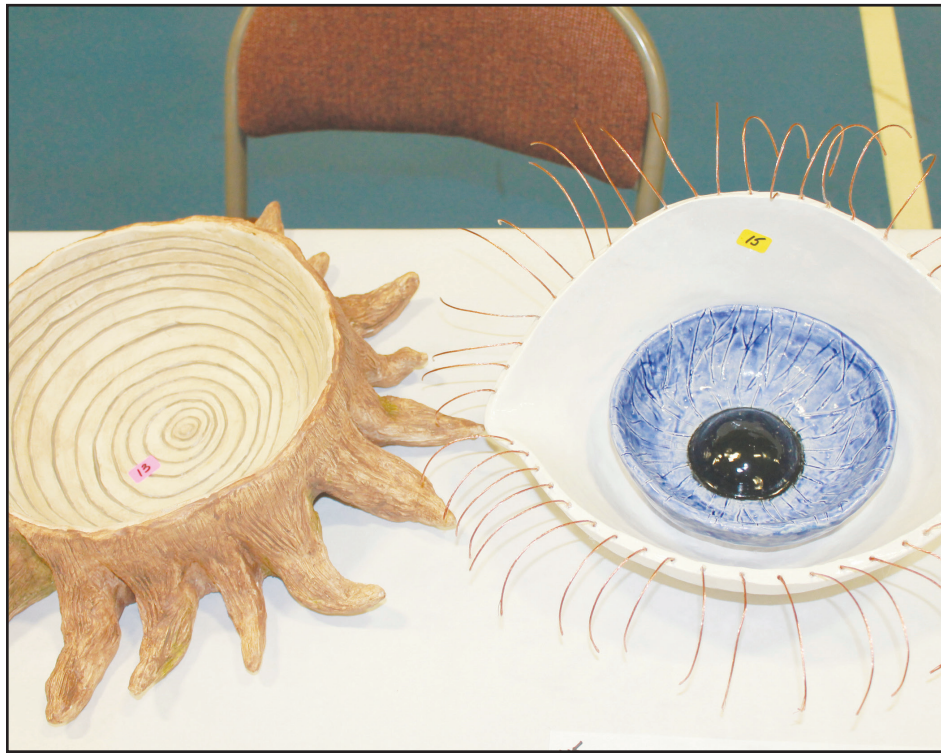
"The idea is to emulate the typical soup kitchen so that you can eat like someone who may be homeless. It raises awareness for food scarcity," Nina Wunderlich, President of the Salvation Army Woman's Auxiliary of Clay County, said.

The \$20 ticket will help fund the food pantry at the Salvation Army, which helps feed the less fortunate in the community. Empty Bowls event will also have a silent auction and bake sale, which will raise money for the Salvation Army.

"Clay County has always been supportive," Wunderlich said.

The event is sponsored by the Salvation Army Woman's Auxiliary, Vystar Credit Union and McDonald's of Orange Park. Superintendent David Broskie will be the guest speaker.

The church is located at 2042 Reed St.

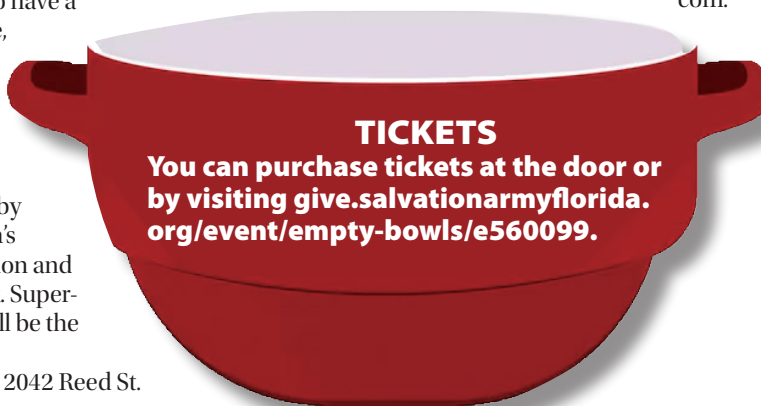


Handcrafted artisan bowls like these will be given to each person.

For more information, call (904) 276-

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# SPORTS

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### BOYS REGION WEIGHTLIFTING

# Indians up for battle for fourth state title

By Randy Lefko  
 randy@claytodayonline.com

LIVE OAK - Keystone Heights High's boys weightlifting team saw the eyes of the Tiger; more the Bulldog, in battling state champion contender Suwannee High School at the region 2-1A championships held Saturday at Suwannee High School.

"Right now, they are the better team with a lot of returners from last year's squad," said Keystone Heights High coach Lantz Lowery, as he cruised through the Suwannee High gym taking notes on his Indians squad bent on pushing for an astounding fourth straight state title after finishing second to Suwannee at Saturday's event. "They have the seniors, we have young kids willing to battle and the state meet will be a show of character. Things happen here that won't happen at state because it is a bigger arena and more at stake."

Lowery, second to Suwannee in Olympics by an 83-40 slate with two champions; Wyatt Van Zant at 139 and Trey Jeffries at 238, and second in Tradition by a closer 59-40 score with Ben Ulsch at 169 and Jeffries as champions.

In Class 2A last year, Suwannee won the Olympics team title with Keystone Heights taking the Traditional.

Suwannee, on the other hand, had four champions in traditionally and five champions in Olympics.

"We will go home, clean up our techniques and hope for some luck at state to beat them," said Lowery. "We like where we

SEE LIFTING, 20

STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO

A key contenders for state titles in weightlifting this week is Ben Ulsch, Keystone Heights.



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# Lifting

from page 19

are. We do what we do and that puts pressure on everyone.”

For Middleburg, in their Region 1-2A championships at Choctowhatchee High School on Thursday, the Broncos scrappy lift team finished a tough fourth in Traditional behind Choctowhatchee and Baker County up top with a 46-30 tab with Middleburg fourth at 24 just behind Fort Walton Beach at 25 with Josh Senear at 169 and Gage Isbell at Unlimited winning individual titles. Senear won by five pounds over Chance Jenkins of Arnold High and by 45 pounds over Fleming Island's Tyler Beverly. Isbell won by 10 pounds over Jalil Griffin of Choctowhatchee.

In Olympics, Fleming Island, with Kevin Reyes winning Unlimited, edged the Broncos 20-17 for fifth place with Choctowhatchee and Baker County again going 1-2, 59-28, with Arnold and Fort Walton Beach at third and fourth.

Fleming Island's Tyler Beverly, in 169, and the defending Olympics champion, finished second to Arnold's Chance Jenkins by 15 pounds in total while Reyes won by body weight over Landon Rome of Choctowhatchee in what will be two key battles at the Class 2A championship meet in Lakeland.

Area schools fared well in Olympics with Middleburg's Jammes Harris second in 119, Ridgeview's Jayden Campbell third

at 129 with Clay's Zerek Migliore fourth; Middleburg's Trent Robinson second at 139; Ridgeview's Dondoza Roberts sixth at 154 ahead of Middleburg's Daniel Raines by five pounds; Orange Park's Bryce Sagar fifth at 169, Fleming Island's David Smith fourth at 183; Middleburg Kolton Frew third at 199; Fleming Island's Dehmir Jackson third at 219 with Middleburg's Cody Tucker at sixth; Ridgeview's Braylon Hawkins third at 238 and Middleburg's duo of Charles Little and Luke Green finishing fifth and eighth at Unlimited with Clay's Yadniel Rivera Burgos ninth.

In Traditional at the region 1-2A meet, at 119, Harris finished fourth; at 129, Migliore finished second by 25 pounds with Ridgeview's Campbell just five pounds away in fourth; at 139, Middleburg's Robinson was third; at 154, Fleming Island's Aidan Johanssen finished second with Ridgeview's Roberts fifth; Fleming Island's Beverly was third also at 169 with Orange Park's David Lava fifth and Orange Park's Gavin Gapinski seventh; Middleburg's Kolton Frew was fifth at 199 with Fleming Island's Dehmir Jackson seventh at 219; Ridgeview's Braylon Hawkins was seventh at 238 and Gage topped Unlimited with Reyes third and Little eighth.

At the Region 1-3A at Navarre High School, Oakleaf finished sixth in Traditional and Olympics with Elijah Shevchook taking the individual title at 154 and finishing second in Olympics.

Pace High edged Spruce Creek in both disciplines with a 44-35 win in Traditional with Oakleaf scoring 11 points and Pace won a tighter 46-43 slate in Olympics with Oakleaf scoring 10.

The Shevchook duo of Elijah and younger brother Noah took top-three finishes with Noah Shevchook taking second in 129 in Traditional by just 30 pounds and then taking third in Olympics by just five pounds behind runner-up Sam Lewis of Nease; 420-415.



Keystone Heights defending state champion Trey Jeffries is primed and well ahead of his competition in chase for second title.

At 154, Elijah Shevchook finished second by 15 pounds; 490-475, to Niceville's Brendan Giddings while winning the Traditional title by 15 pounds with a 550 ahead of Jacob Adkins of Spruce Creek's 535 total.

For Keystone Heights, in Olympics with Suwannee dominating the top spots, the Indians pushed for maximum team points with multiple top 10 finishes from Tyson Baxter; fifth at 119 Olympics; Jed Tisdale

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Sat., April 20: 1A-2A 9 a.m. start  
(119-169 1A)/183-Unl 2A)  
Awards when completed  
Sat., April 20: 3 p.m. (1A 183-Unl/2A  
119-169)  
Awards when complete

and Colton Hollingsworth at 129, fourth and seventh; Van Zantt and Declan Shine at 139, first and ninth; Davin Adams at 154, fourth; Ben Ulsch and Layton Wright at 169, second and 10th; Kyle Perkins at 183, fifth; Zane Leger at 199, seventh; Jayden Goodman and Bryson Wester at 219, third and seventh; Jeffries and Jackson Herman at 238, first and fourth; and Tyler Duncan and Brayden Wester at Unlimited, third and seventh.

In Traditional, Keystone Heights proved more formidable with Baxter fourth, Tisdale and Hollingsworth third and seventh; Van Zantt and Shine second and ninth; Adams fourth with Damien Dunlap eight at 154; Ulsch winning 169; Kyle Perkins and Clayton Shaw eighth and ninth at 183; Zane Leger seventh at 199; Goodman and Wester second and third at 219; Jeffries and Brayden Hall first and eighth at 238 and Duncan and Wester fifth and seventh at Unlimited.

“More top 10 finishes, more chances to pressure other lifters,” said Lowery. “That’s our formula. We need five or 10 pounds at state past our maxes and others missing at their shots and the game changes.”

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# Orange Park Raiders 'slide' past Keystone Indians (again)

By Ray Dimonda  
Correspondent

ORANGE PARK - Orange Park pitcher Robert Barnett would anchor the Raiders defense through all seven innings on the hill, striking out four and working with catcher Devon Moore who protected home plate like Fort Knox.

After going all 21 outs, only one batter away from hitting pitch count, Barnett talked about his change-up pitch that no Indians seemed to get a handle on.

"It's always been one of my best pitches," said Barnett. "The change-up and my slider, I've always been dominant with that and my fastball almost as my secondary pitch. We've never 2-0'ed Keystone. Usually, 1-1 or they sweep us. This win is really special."

Even with the visiting Keystone Heights High Indians getting eight runners on base, including the fifth inning with bases loaded, the Raiders would keep the Indians to a single run in Friday night's 3-1 home win.

"We'll take ugly wins over pretty wins every single day," said Orange Park Head Coach George Eldridge. "Tonight, we got a really good pitching performance from Robert Barnett, some clutch defensive plays, and we know this is a big win for us, a bounce-back. One of the things we are stressing to them right now is to pick each other up. If a guy makes a mistake, don't pound on him, that's my job. Keystone had a tough loss last night just like we did. It's tough to bounce back from those."

Coming into tonight's game, Keystone Heights was coming off a loss to the Buchholz Bobcats, only the third loss of the season. Last week, the Indians were riding a 10-game win streak when the Raiders played the Indians in Keystone Heights to hand



Orange Park third baseman Josh Taylor left, tags Keystone Heights' Andru Siemer in Raiders 3-1 win on Friday.



Orange Park's Caleb Richardson looks into his helmet after collision at second base with Keystone Heights' Brady Kerlin in Raiders' Friday win.

them their only March loss. This was the first time in anyone's memory that Orange Park swept the series between the two teams.

The Raiders got going early with Yaziel Del Valle, the first batter up, getting walked by the Indians, then Tyson Cruz driving Del Valle home with a line drive to center to put the Raiders on the board 1-0 in the bottom of the first inning.

At the top of the fourth, things looked like they were heating up for the Indians. With a walk to put Austin Smith on, Austin Musgrove doubled, pushing Smith to third base. With no outs, Brady Kerlin hit the ball back to the pitcher who got the ball to Moore at home plate to snuff out the advancing runner, one out. On the next play, a fly ball to right field was rocketed home to Moore for another play at the plate, then a turned double play to third to retire the inning.

With two outs in the top of the fifth inning, Keystone's Andru Siemer grounded to the shortstop who couldn't get a handle on the ball. Siemer then stole second base, setting himself up in scoring position. With two strikes and two outs, Alex Addington blasted a shot to center field scoring Siemer, putting some life into the Indian dugout. The Indians would load up the bases and look to finally get ahead of the Raiders, only to have their hopes dashed on a fly out to left field to retire the top of the inning, 1-1.

As quickly as the Indians turned up the wick to tie the game, the Raiders responded. With Nehemiah Stephenson dinking a single to get on first base with two outs, Del Valle singled down the third base line to put runners on first and second base. Robert Barnett followed with a fly ball to left, scoring Stephenson. With an overthrow at the plate,

SEE BASEBALL, 22

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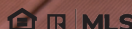
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