

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS HERALD

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Twisted Oaks not insulated from Florida summer heat

Animal rescue redirects its services until it finds a cooler solution

By Don Coble
don@claytodayonline.com

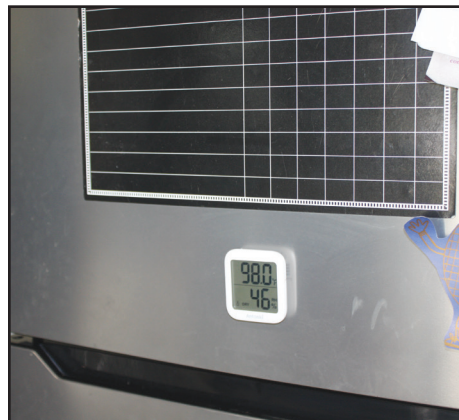
KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – Jessie Shekels didn't have to look at the thermometer on the refrigerator to know it was hot. The beads of sweat on her forehead and the whirring sounds of fans in the background were far more telling than any digital numeral.

The building that serves as the hub of services at Twisted Oaks Rescue is usually bustling with activity. It's where 75 families from Clay, Putnam and Bradford counties get food for their dogs and cats, spay and neuter care and reduced low-cost medical services.

Although she still receives plenty of donations for supplies and support, Shekels had to redirect many of those services for a relentless reason.

The Florida heat.

The metal building has air conditioning but no insulation. Even when the doors are open, the AC is running and all the fans are



The thermometer on the refrigerator says it all - it's 98 degrees inside Twisted Oaks Rescue.

on high, it's still nearly 100 degrees inside. The thermometer on the refrigerator proves it.

So Shekels made adjustments.

She's taking a "summer break" for the free pet food distribution because it's too hot inside the building to store donated food.



STAFF PHOTOS BY DON COBLE

Twisted Oaks Rescue's Jessie Shekels still hosts Loki's Lunchbox, a monthly wellness clinic.

The humidity and heat quickly turn bagged dry food into mush. Moreover, it's too hot for the volunteers.


"I think what we do is wonderful for the community, and I want to keep doing it," she said. "I want to do it smartly, efficiently and safely for the solunteers, but the heat is challenging.

"We put this up about two and a half years ago. We made improvements to it. We've never really asked for donations towards our building. My husband and I pay for it ourselves because this is our property."

The Shekels bought a \$1,700 air conditioner, but desperately need insulation. They


SEE HEAT, 9

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CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Book size
- 8. Indonesian Island
- 13. The Sopranos character
- 14. Plants often found in stews
- 15. Stern
- 19. Atomic #52
- 20. Often seen after a company name
- 21. Silk garments
- 22. Inhibiting hormone (abbr.)
- 23. Type of beer
- 24. Margarine
- 25. Throw lightly
- 26. Explains again
- 30. Raccoon-like animal
- 31. Sneaker parts
- 32. Platforms
- 33. Scored perfectly
- 34. Ones essence
- 35. Strikes with a firm blow
- 38. Makes tractors
- 39. Music term
- 40. Lack of energy
- 44. Vestments
- 45. ___ and feathers
- 46. Total
- 47. Gobbler
- 48. One with Japanese immigrant parents

CLUES DOWN

- 1. About visual sense
- 2. Part of a horses saddle
- 3. In a way, interchanged
- 4. Rocker's accessory
- 5. Very important person
- 6. It precedes two
- 7. Flavored
- 8. Musical notes
- 9. String instrument (slang)
- 10. Mister
- 11. Fine, light linen fabric
- 12. Absence of bacteria
- 16. Discounts
- 17. Area units
- 18. A description of ones life
- 22. Gazelles
- 25. Plumbing fixture
- 27. Makes especially happy
- 28. One side of something many-sided

- 29. Frosts
- 30. Defunct monetary unit of Guinea
- 32. Female animal species
- 34. School terms
- 35. Written law
- 36. Unpleasant aroma
- 37. Nuclear weapon
- 38. One who challenges
- 40. Opposite of first
- 41. Able to be utilized
- 42. Less interesting
- 43. Implants
- 45. Canister
- 48. Gestures
- 51. After B
- 52. Romanian monetary unit
- 53. Long-term memory
- 54. Cash machine
- 56. The Volunteer State



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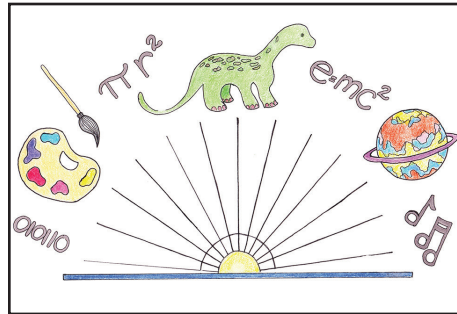
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Clay County readers design new library cards

For The Herald

FLEMING ISLAND — The Clay County Public Library System held an art contest in which winning designs would be featured as

limited-edition library cards during Library Card Sign-Up Month this September.

The theme for the art contest was “Adventure Begins at Your Library” which was also the reading theme for the summer.

Here are the four winners for each category:

- Fox A. in the five-and-under category
- Isaiah W. in the 6-11-year-old category
- Sophia C. in the 12-18-year-old category
- Sarah S. in the adult category
- Margaret P. in the professional category.



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OPINIONS & VIEWPOINTS

I need a vacation from the memories of my ill-fated vacation

By Don Coble
don@claytodayonline.com

I was supposed to be a little, if not a lot, hungover and sunburned right now. I should have lost at least one flip-flop, forgotten my sunglasses and maxed out at least one credit card on my vacation. But I never opened my suitcase or left the ground.

I was packed up with nowhere to go.

My run of bad luck actually started a few months ago. I wish I was so clever to make this up, but I'm not. This story takes a few months to tell, so be patient.

We had a bunch of community cats – the cat “ranchers” in our neighborhood said we couldn’t call them ferals – in our



Don Coble



backyard. So with the help of Martha King, we trapped five cats and took them to the Humane Society to be neutered. Later that day, we returned them. Later, we came to learn there actually were six community cats. We'll come back to that. It's an important part of the story.

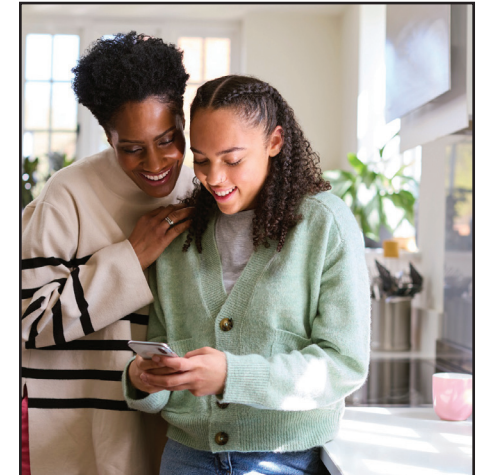
A couple weeks later, I decided to get away for a few days to Sint Maarten to

recharge. And for the first time, I wasn't going to take my laptop. I was planning for nothing but sunshine, a running bar tab and a trip to the French side of the island, where clothing is optional at the beaches (which is not an option for me). I like that side because it has soft, white, fluffy sand.

I was dreaming about my trip at the car wash one afternoon when I felt a huge thump. Although I was in the middle of the suds cycle, someone mistakenly took their car out of neutral and rear-ended me. How many of you have been in a collision just before the rinse cycle in a car wash?

Five days before my trip, we had our air conditioning ducts cleaned. The company used a suction device to clear out the dust, but it sucked so hard it collapsed our flexible ducts. Suddenly, we had no air conditioning when it reached 100 degrees for three consecutive days. Guess how long it took to get someone out to fix it? Three days. And while they were fixing it, one of them put his foot through the ceiling in the

SEE VACATION, 5



What you need to know about borrowing money for college

By StatePoint Media
For The Herald

College-related costs are at an all-time high, and while many parents harbor concerns about the expense, they value the education their child is receiving.

That's according to the April 2024 College Ave survey. The survey found that while 89% of parents of four-year college students believe a college degree is important for their child's future, 78% agree that paying for college is stressful.

"Families today are relying on a mix of sources to fund college, including scholarships, federal aid and grants, income and savings, and in some cases, private student loans," says Angela Colatriano, chief marketing officer at College Ave.

According to Colatriano, it's critical to understand the ins and outs of borrowing for college before taking out a loan. If you believe your family will take this path, here's everything you need to know:

Exhaust other options. Many experts agree that private loans only make sense once other financial aid options are exhausted. After filing the FAFSA (Free Ap-

SEE COLLEGE, 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.

Glade: (GLAYD) a noun meaning a grassy open space in a forest.

"She felt the most at ease outdoors, often taking delight in the peaceful glades she came across on her hikes."

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.

Vacation

from page 4

garage.

I was still determined to get to my favorite island, especially since I hadn't been there in 15 years. My flight to Miami was to leave at 6 a.m. on Wednesday. From there, I was supposed to land at SXM by 1:20 p.m. A half-hour later, I would be at the pool bar, where my favorite potions were served by "Sweet Laura," who's worked there for nearly 20 years.

The night before my flight, the sixth cat was in our house. She was pregnant. Five hours before I was supposed to leave, it



appeared her first kitten was breech because the first thing out was a tail. Off to the vet. He said to give it three hours, and if she doesn't deliver the kittens naturally, he'll do a C-section – for \$2,000. Two hours later, the first kitten was born. In the next three hours, four more oozed out. By then, my alarm to leave for the airport was to ring in 86 minutes.

Then I got a text saying my flight had been delayed by an hour. Then another text. And another. And another. Did you see the storm that hit South Florida?

Miami got 22 inches of rain, and it closed the airport for more than a day. I tried to use my cellphone to check the airline's website to see if there were seats to Sint Maarten on Thursday. I learned that if you want to

use Wi-Fi with that airline, you must pay for it, even if you're trying to reach the same airline.

After sitting for hours, we pulled back to a gate and unloaded. I waited another hour for my bag and took an Uber home.

I did get some good news. I was uncharacteristically polite when I talked with the airline and the resort, and they let me move the reservation without a charge.

When I got home, I wore an old Sint Maarten Piranha Joe T-shirt to pretend I was there. I checked out the kittens and held one in my hand. It chirped at me, and it was the first time in days that I smiled.

Then it peed on my T-shirt.

This Month in History

Five years ago, 2019

•Mayor Karen Lake of Keystone Heights surprised the city council members when she presented a privately funded city-wide survey she organized. Lake cited the survey results as her rationale for denying City Manager Scott Kornegay a salary raise. In a 4-1 decision, Kornegay was granted the 3% raise anyway, and Lake was the dissenting vote.

•The Board of County Commissioners denied approving the school board's half-cent sales tax resolution, saying it was concerned about the timing of the request and a lack of transparency on how the \$300 million proposal would be spent.

•The first phase of the First Coast Expressway, connecting Blanding Boulevard to

Interstate 10, began collecting tolls on July 13.

•A former Orange Park and Clay High teacher was sentenced to 11 years in federal prison for distributing child pornography. Christopher S. Potter, who used the screen name "Mr. Fireball," attempted to meet a 14-year-old girl for sex with an undercover officer using the Kik app.

10 years ago, 2014

•The southern end of Chaffee Road connecting to State Road 23 was closed as a part of the Florida Department of Transportation's First Coast Expressway Project

•Clay High junior Dakota Mahaffey became the fastest 16-year-old backstroke swimmer in the U.S. with his best 100-meter backstroke at the prestigious Bulldog

Classic Swim Invitational at the University of Georgia.

An internal investigation of how the Clay County Sheriff's Office could arrest the wrong woman twice in five months ended with four suspensions and new procedures at the agency. Sheriff Rick Beseler said sloppy police work was the root cause.

20 years ago, 2004

Officials with Clay County Fire Rescue donated a decommissioned 1981 GMC fire truck to a Panhandle's Calhoun County fire department. The 1,000-gallon-a-minute pumper was a big boost for the Kinard Volunteer Fire Department.

Clay County Habitat for Humanity held a parking lot party to raise awareness and recruit volunteers to help build homes for the less fortunate.

Clay County authorities investigated an apparent hit-and-run accident that

claimed the life of Jason Simmons, 22, of Orange Park.

30 years ago, 1994

Sheriff Scott Lancaster and staff celebrated the opening of the Clay County Sheriff's Office Middleburg sub-station at 1836 Blanding Blvd.

After three court trials, Assistant State Attorney Tim Collins announced he would not try Andre Clemons of Jacksonville a fourth time for murder. Clemons was charged with killing Kevin Eugene Baker, 29 while robbing a Winn Dixie store in 1991.

An investigation into possible theft involving the Clay County Sheriff's Explorer Post led to the arrest of Frank Joseph Spanarelli on grand theft charges. Spanarelli also was fired from his job as a corrections officer at the county jail.

College

from page 4

plication for Federal Student Aid), you'll receive a financial aid package from each school, which may include scholarships, grants and federal student loans. If your selected school is one of the 400 institutions requiring the CSS profile, submit that application to qualify for institutional aid. And, of course, don't forget to apply for private scholarships to access funds that don't need to be repaid.

Do the math. Federal student loans in the student's name offer unique benefits,

so if you do need to borrow, start there. If you decide that a private student loan or private parent loan is also right for your family, borrow only the minimum amount needed to save over the life of the loan. This is an excellent time to explore additional avenues for reducing your financing needs, such as renting textbooks and buying groceries versus paying into the school meal plan.

Understand loan costs. Unlike federal loans with fixed interest rates for all borrowers, private student loans offer fixed or variable interest rates. Shop around for a lender that doesn't charge origination fees, and learn the difference between fixed and variable interest rates. Use CollegeAve.

com's student loan calculator to understand a loan's overall cost and monthly loan payments.

Compare lender repayment options. Another factor to consider when shopping for a lender is repayment terms. Some lenders, like College Ave, let borrowers choose how long they want to repay their loan and whether to start making payments immediately or defer until after graduation. The important thing is to select a loan with budget-friendly terms and a monthly payment you can live with.

Apply with a cosigner. Private student loan lenders look at income and credit history to determine a student's ability to repay the loan. If approved, their credit his-

tory also impacts the interest rate they're offered. Many college students don't have an established credit history or sufficient income and may not get approved for a private loan. Your student can improve their chances of getting approved and securing a lower interest rate by adding a cosigner to their loan application. The cosigner should understand that they share equal responsibility for repayment if the student falls behind on payments.

Bottom line? Researching financial aid options, applying for scholarships, and being a strategic borrower can help your family get on with what matters most: preparing for a bright future.

South Florida reservoir feared to send pollution to St. Johns River

By Jack Randall
jack@claytodayonline.com

ST. JOHNS RIVER — “You can’t step in the same river twice” is a famous expression, although only partly applicable to Doctors Lake, because if you ever stepped foot in its bath-warm, lime-green waters this summer, last summer — or the summer before that — there is a chance you were ankle deep in a toxic algae bloom.

Doctors Lake, an inlet of the St. Johns, was issued a health advisory from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for blue-green algae toxins for the third consecutive summer.

Excessive concentrations of nitrogen and phosphorous are the nutrients that create the algae blooms, sometimes appearing as smelly green scum along the water’s surface. The sources come from fertilizer runoff, septic leakage, and sewage sludge, also known as biosolids, used in agriculture. Toxins produced by some algae blooms can cause rashes, stomach cramps, nausea, diarrhea and respiratory irritation.

Lisa Rinaman of the St. Johns Riverkeeper, an environmental advocacy group committed to protecting the ecology of Florida’s longest river and its inlets, is concerned about an upcoming development she believes will inevitably redirect polluted waters from



COURTESY OF THE SJRK

A team from the St. Johns Riverkeeper rode “The Kingfisher” to collect samples in Doctors Lake last May.

South Florida into St. Johns, intensifying the frequency of algae blooms along the 310-mile river body.

The development is called the Grove Land Reservoir, a \$400 million state-funded stormwater storage and treatment project planned at the headwaters of the St. Johns, which would redirect water flowing into the Indian River Lagoon by pumping 136 million gallons of water daily into the Upper St. Johns to alleviate the growing water demand in Central Florida.

The Marine Science Research Institute is at Jacksonville University. The environmental research center has aquariums with fish and turtles and even other researchers.

Rinaman expressed her concerns while standing next to a vertical map of St. Johns. Because the river flows north, she is concerned that whatever Grove Land releases into the watershed will pass Sanford, Palatka, Green Cove Springs, Fleming Island, Orange Park and Jacksonville.

Because the reservoir site is in an agricultural area, Rinaman and other environmentalists fear Grove Land will inundate the St. Johns with sewage sludge used as fertilizer in South Florida. Rinaman says South Florida currently trucks “tens of thousands of tons” of sewage to farmland in the reservoir’s nearby area.

“They will be forcing pollution from South Florida into the St. Johns River that will trickle down all the way downstream (north),” Rinaman said.

She said the FDEP voiced concerns about Grove Land’s increase in pollution loads, specifically phosphorus.

“If pollution is increased as projected, it will be a domino effect undermining water quality at the very source of the St. Johns,” she said.

The added nutrients Rinaman anticipates will be a boon for blue-green algae blooms at the detriment of aquatic and human health.

Submerged aquatic vegetation, such as eel grasses, could be severely impacted. Rinaman calls eel grasses the “kidneys of the river” due to their biofiltering properties. Much of the SJRK outreach involves cultivating more eelgrass. The team often sails south onboard their boat, the “Kingfisher,” to test waters along the St. Johns and check on growing grass beds.

The eel grasses, fish nurseries and manatee food, have been threatened by added nutrients from runoff and salinity from the Atlantic Ocean’s tidal influences. Rinaman said the dredging along the northern riverbeds has allowed ocean water to push further inland, and from the south, Grove Land will insemminate more nutrients.

The Grove Land project has been mired in mystery. According to the Florida Phoenix, “no state agency has even approved a permit for the privately owned Grove Land project,” and “the Legislature offered no bills or resolutions about Grove Land before stuffing this wad of taxpayer cash into the budget like a burglar cramming loot into a bag.”

Grove Land was pitched to the St. Johns River Water Management District last November as an alternative water supply for Central Florida. The reservoir would receive excess nutrient-rich water to prevent it from seeping into the already polluted Indian River Lagoon, with the added benefit of supplying water to Central Florida, where the aquifer has been overbooked and demand is rising. Grove Land is planned to be a 5,000-acre reservoir capable of storing 75,000 acre-feet of water and a 2,000-acre stormwater treatment area. Water will be treated and pumped fur-

SEE RIVER, 7

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River

from page 6

ther north to the St. Johns Upper Basin Canal, where it will begin its northerly journey to the Atlantic Ocean.

Flowing tangential to the St. Johns, the Indian River Lagoon was once regarded as North America's most productive estuary. However, nutrient-rich water flowing east cultivated toxic algae blooms, killing 75% of its seagrasses.

Grove Land is currently being used as a water farm. Before that, it was a citrus farm. The South Florida Water Management District pays Evans Properties, the landowner, to offload nutrient-rich water onto the water farm, which operates like a man-made wetland. The Florida legislature has directed the SJRWMD to purchase the water farm, which straddles the border between SJRWMD and SFWMD and is located near what was once Fort Drum, a former town located between Yeehaw Junction and Okeechobee.

Ron Edwards is the CEO of Evans Properties. He anticipates water starting to flow north in about 10 years.

"The Indian River Lagoon doesn't need any of that water. That's excess water that didn't used to go there before. If you guys can handle it through the St. Johns system, South Florida would be very happy," Edwards said during the meeting in November.

"By the time the water gets to Orlando in 10 to 15 years, the straws will be there to take it out," he said.

Grove Land supporters argue that reducing excess water flowing into the Indian River Lagoon and sending it to where it is needed is a win-win. Proponents also see the connection of the SJRWMD and SFWMD as a way to foster flexibility during dry and wet seasons. If SJRWMD is experiencing drought, SFWMD can offload its water to recoup falling shorelines, and vice versa. Jim Moir is the executive director of the Indian Riverkeeper, which has the same mission as the SJRK. Although his river has been named a beneficiary, he has concerns similar to Rinaman's.

"This is potentially going to exacerbate an already challenging flooding circumstance," Moir said.

Central Florida is located in the St. Johns' middle basin. For the water to get where it is needed, millions of gallons daily must flow downstream through the upper St. Johns. He is concerned about that hurdle.

"The drainage is complex. I don't believe the upper St. Johns needs water," Moir said.

"We need to be assured that it will be monitored and that the water quantity and

quality is known. It may flood horizontally (toward the Indian River Lagoon) if the control structures are not properly designed or accommodating," he said.

On June 26, the SJRK met with concerned citizens and environmental groups in Indian and Brevard counties to organize a joint citizen oversight effort to ensure whatever is permitted on the Grove Land property provides an "ecological lift" to both the St. Johns and the Indian River Lagoon.

Grove Land's proponents include its hired consultants, Hazen and Sawyer. During the November meeting, one consultant said the outflow to the upper St. Johns would contain phosphorous at a concentration of 10 parts per billion, which is 80 parts per billion less than what has been determined to be "critical." Rinaman argues Grove Land has "not provided reasonable assurances for pollution loads."

"Grove Land has not conducted a well-calibrated water quality model to provide a valid estimate, and neither has SJRK. Grove Land made assumptions that do not support their conclusions," Rinaman said.

"As a first step, SJRWMD must conduct a well-calibrated water quality model and Dynamic Model for Stormwater Treatment Area that is set up with the proposed Grove Land configuration," she said.

The \$400 million provision to the SJRWMD is one piece of Florida's total \$116.5 billion budget. The funding comes with stipulations that compel the District to pursue the project by buying the land and designing, building, and maintaining the Grove Land Reservoir. While SJRWMD must legally move forward with the project, the District says it retains latitude in how the objective will be completed.

"(There are) concerns with any big project. The District won't design or implement a project without ensuring that any flooding or pollution risks are addressed," said SJRWMD Chairman Rob Bradley, a former state senator.

The SJRWMD is adamant the project will be an environmental lift to both water districts. The District responded to Clay Today's public request: "The project includes measures to address nutrients and flooding and will undergo comprehensive reviews to ensure the project will not have any adverse impacts on the surrounding areas."

Bradley, too, is adamant: "Clay County won't be impacted at all."

"There were advocacy groups that opposed the Black Creek Water Resource Development Project. There are always naysayers. Now that the Black Creek project is almost a reality and people are beginning

to see the real benefits it will provide, you don't hear the negativity anymore. I suspect this new project will grow in popularity as the public sees its benefits. The District wouldn't move forward with a project unless it provides real benefits to our environment," Bradley said.

The Black Creek Restoration Project is a similar project that is localized in Clay County. The \$118 million project is still under construction and is anticipated to send up to 10 million gallons of excess water daily from the South Prong of Black Creek to Alligator Creek and into lakes Brooklyn and Geneva to replenish the Upper Floridan aquifer.

The residents of Keystone Heights have lauded the project, but others have argued that excessive pumping permits caused the issue in the first place. By draining the aquifer,

the lake water levels shrank in tandem.

This gets to another crux of Rinaman's argument. Even if the Grove Land project is a resounding success, it will supply an unquenchable thirst in Central Florida, allowing development to continue unimpeded.

"This is basically a public subsidy by taxpayers to fuel urban sprawl and harm the St. Johns River, our Florida springs, as well as potentially increase flood risk downstream," she said.

Rinaman says one body of water should not be sacrificed for another. She and other environmentalists in the oversight effort are organizing and preparing for the not-so-metaphorical floodgates to open. Their eyes are pointed upstream, toward South Florida, watching for whatever comes next to trickle down.



Nikita Narvab
Client Experience Manager



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Sheriff's Office creates its School Resource Department staff

By Don Coble
don@claytodayonline.com

FLEMING ISLAND — When the School Safety and Youth Programs Department staff met on Thursday, June 27, three of eight staff sergeants and lieutenants were conspicuously dressed in suits and ties instead of sheriff's office khaki greens.

That all changed three days later on July 1, when they officially moved from the Clay County District Schools Police Department

to the Clay County Sheriff's Office. The three — former CCSDPD Chief Kenneth Wagner, Jacob Saunders, and Mark Romano — are part of the sheriff's office's organizational staff. Wagner is a lieutenant; Saunders and Romano are sergeants.

Other department leaders are Director Patrick Golemme, Assistant Chief Jeremy Clark, Lt. Michael Kircher and Sgts. Michael Campbell and Andrew Koeler.

"The culture of our agency, the morale of our agency, is really driven by the sergeants



The Clay County Sheriff's Office set its School Safety and Youth Programs Department staff ahead of the 2024-25 school year. From left, it will be led by Director Patrick Golemme, Assistant Chief Jeremy Clark, Sgt. Jacob Saunders, Lt. Kenneth Wagner, Sheriff Michelle Cook, Sgt. Michael Campbell, Lt. Michael Kircher, Sgt. Andrew Koeler and Sgt. Mark Romano.



STAFF PHOTOS BY DON COBLE

Sheriff Michelle Cook meets with the newly created School Safety and Youth Programs Department staff before the first day of school on Aug. 13.

and lieutenants, period," Sheriff Michelle Cook said. "And I'm thrilled to look at this group because I know the kind of people you are. I know your personality, staying positive, holding people accountable, and working with all the young members of our agency."

"So you talk about what kind of agency we want to be five, 10, 15 years now, and it's right here in this room with all of you. I don't want you to forget the impact you will have on people's lives."

CCSO officially assumed responsibility for placing a deputy in every public school on July 1. The school board decided in 2019

to create a police force in 2019 in response to the 2018 mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High in Parkland. Last October, board member Erin Skipper suggested that the district use the sheriff's office because "we're in the business of education, not law enforcement."

The school board voted in November to disband its police department and put CCSO deputies back in its schools. The sheriff's office hired 25 of the former district police officers.

Teachers will return to their classrooms on Aug. 5, and students' first school day will be Aug. 13.

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Heat

from page 1

can install it, but they must use an indoor construction lift and insulation materials.

Since opening, Twisted Oaks has distributed more than 87 tons of pet food to the three-county community. It also hosts two wellness clinics a month and a 25-cat monthly transport for spay, neuter, and FVRCP vaccines.

“We need insulation and wall covering to keep it clean because we want to continue to provide some medical services to the community in our local area,” Shekels said. “I feel like it’s a really far reach, so I decided to pause to come up with a better plan.

“If someone owns an insulation company, we wouldn’t say no to any assistance. I don’t



Empty shelves doesn’t mean pets are going hungry in the Lake Region. The community is being re-directed to other animal rescues and food banks until Twisted Oaks Rescue is insulated.

have any of those connections in the community,” she said. “I want to be very honest with you; running a nonprofit and keeping a good reputation in the community is hard. I like to be very transparent about what we do here.

I love what we do, but the heat just is intense for everyone.”

The outreach hasn’t stopped; it’s shifted in a different direction. While Twisted Oaks can’t take individual donations, she still gets

large donations from businesses like Tractor Supply. When she does, she forwards them to other local animal rescues and food banks.

When community members ask for help, she refers them to the nearest rescue.

The heat has reduced the number of her wellness clinics provided by St. Francis Pet Care, lovingly called Loki’s Lunchbox, to the last Wednesday of the month. Pet owners must register in advance at TORcliniccoordinator@gmail.com. Twisted Oaks Rescue also accepts 25 cats on the third Wednesday of the month to be taken by Sheltering Hands in Ocala to be spayed, neutered and vaccinated. The pets are returned later in the afternoon and are returned to their owners. For more information, visit fixthmall.org.

Anyone with information can contact Shekels at twistedoaksrescue@gmail.com or text 262-623-7331.

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Summer blood shortages create emergency needs

For The Herald

FLEMING ISLAND – Blood donations have declined and blood usage at local hospitals has increased, which has led to a summer blood shortage. Without an adequate blood supply, patient care can and will be affected. LifeSouth Community Blood Centers is urging the community to donate now.

Summer is a difficult time for blood donations, and LifeSouth reports an emergency need for all blood types to help patients in local hospitals. LifeSouth supplies blood to 70% of Northeast Florida hospital beds through its service to many regional hospitals, including Baptist Medical Center Beaches, Baptist Medical Center Jackson-

ville, Baptist Medical Center Nassau, Baptist Medical Center South, Baptist Medical Center Clay County, HCA Florida Memorial Hospital, HCA Florida Orange Park Hospital, UF Health Jacksonville, UF Health North and Wolfson Children's Hospital. These hospitals rely on LifeSouth and LifeSouth blood donors to ensure blood is available before it is needed to help patients suffering from traumas, cancers and chronic illnesses.

It is a great time to become a blood donor, learn about their blood type, or learn about regular blood donors donating and bringing a friend. All donors will receive a \$20 e-gift card, double red cell, and platelet donors will receive a \$40 e-gift card and a mini-physical, including blood pressure, temperature, iron level and cholesterol screen.

LifeSouth encourages residents to help in one or more of the following ways:



CLAY TODAY ARCHIVES
LifeSouth Community Blood Center is located at 1605 County Road 220, Suite 160, on Fleming Island.

Make a blood donation. With only an average one-to-two-day supply available, it's more important now than ever to make sure blood is available for patients. LifeSouth welcomes regular and first-time donors to visit one of its donor centers, or find one of its signature red, white and blue buses to donate at a mobile blood drive.

Host a blood drive. LifeSouth welcomes the support of businesses, organizations, churches, professional groups and neighborhoods looking for a meaningful way to give back to the community. Contact LifeSouth District Community Development Coordinator James Skahn at jlskahn@lifesouth.org or (904) 586-5090 for more information.

Encourage a first-time donor. With a low percentage of the population participating in the blood donation process annually, the best way to make a difference is to encourage someone to donate with you at one of LifeSouth's donor centers or blood drives.

For additional information about donation or to find a blood drive near you, call LifeSouth toll-free at (888) 795-2707, visit www.lifesouth.org or download the LifeSouth app.

Appointments can also be made online. Information on mobile blood drives happening across the region can be found at www.lifesouth.org.

LifeSouth Center on Fleming Island is at 1605 County Road 220, Suite 160. Hours are: Monday and Tuesday, closed. Wednesday-Friday, 11 a.m.-7 p.m., Saturday-Sunday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

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The Kitchen of Clay County to open fourth location at The Mission of the Dirt Road



CLAY TODAY ARCHIVES

A man enjoys a meal at The Kitchen of Clay County in Orange Park. The nonprofit said it plans to open a fourth location in Keystone Heights in the fourth quarter this year.

For The Herald

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS — The Kitchen of Clay County has spent the last 15 years working to fight food insecurity in Clay County. After serving Clay County residents almost 20,000 meals last year, The Kitchen wants to do more.

“Right now, The Kitchen of Clay County is reaching residents with kitchens happening every Saturday in Orange Park, Green Cove Springs and Middleburg,” said Brian Knight, president of The Kitchen, “but if we are truly going to say we serve the residents of Clay County, then we need to reach as many residents as possible. And for that reason, we are working to open a fourth location in Keystone Heights.”

The Keystone Heights location will be hosted by The Mission of the Dirt Road at 7790 State Road 100 and will begin in the fourth quarter of 2024. While that is the expected opening date, Knight said a few things are needed.

“To open a new kitchen and operate it for a year, we need to raise \$2,000,” said Knight. “That money is used for plates, utensils and to-go containers. The other thing that a kitchen needs to run is volunteers. It’s our hope that Keystone residents, and even folks outside Keystone, will consider spending a Saturday giving back to the community they love.”

The new location will be a restaurant-style, sit-down location with volunteers serving the guests. All residents are welcome to come for a meal; no proof of need is

required. The Kitchen will also provide to-go meals for residents to take with them or share with others in the community.

The Kitchen serves at three partner locations — Sacred Heart Catholic Mission Church at 207 Palmetto Ave. in Green Cove Springs, Black Creek Methodist at 3925

Main St. in Middleburg and the Orange Park Senior Center at 414 Stowe Ave. Each Kitchen is open every Saturday between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Donations can be made through the organization’s website, thekitchenofclay-county.com, or through the donation site, Cheddar Up, at my.cheddarup.com/c/do-

nate-to-the-kitchen-of-clay-county-today.

More information on ways to donate or volunteer can be found at The Kitchen of Clay County’s website, thekitchenofclay-county.com. The Kitchen is a nonprofit organization with a 501c3 status, so all donations are tax-deductible.

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From camping to 'glamping'

One local business brings luxury to outdoor adventures

By Kyla Woodard
kyla@claytodayonline.com

CLAY COUNTY — Luxury and camping. These two words don't seemingly go together, yet they do in the best way — thanks to one local business.

Under the Stars Glamping Adventures has been putting "glamorous" in camping all over Northeast Florida since 2022.

Known as the Fairy Godmother of Glamping, Candice Stevens, her husband, John, and their family travel from place to place with the hope of helping others make lasting memories.

With their truck and supplies in hand, the unique but small, mobile family business travels frequently, leaving lavish setups in the backyards of many. From 13-foot to 23-foot bell tents, indoor sleepovers, lounges and picnics to a projector and vintage Shasta camper, glamping has never been so easy.

Stevens said the business idea came to mind following her and her family's frequent appeal to camping. She said they wanted to give other families that same experience.

"We just have a good time and wanted to get people to enjoy camping and take their kids camping and make memories," Stevens said.

Stevens and her husband initially wanted to purchase their own campground. However, Stevens said they decided to hit the road and go mobile instead, using others' property.

Stevens said she first pitched the idea on Facebook. After



STAFF PHOTO BY KYLA WOODARD

The mobile family business travels frequently, creating unforgettable memories for others.

getting positive responses, she and her husband decided to follow through with the idea. What she thought was just going to be a little fun money on the side turned into something much bigger.

"It turned into 'Hey, can we have our birthday party in the tent?,' 'Can we have a picnic in the tent?,' And, so, as people requested things, then I would buy them, or I would make them. And, so I worked full time for that first year and we just were growing the business and outgrow-

ing our home," Stevens said.

Soon, what was once a small area in their home ended up being two storage buildings' worth of supplies.

"We've just kind of grown by meeting the needs of what people want," Stevens said.

Stevens said the "glamorous" aspect of the camp setup was a way to ensure customers got the best experience possible. She said she didn't initially know that mobile glamping existed.

"I knew that glamping was a thing," Stevens said. "I didn't know that mobile glamping was a thing until I started the business."

The cozy but large setup, which includes one to 12 glamper tents and full-on lounge rooms, makes for an intimate experience.

Stevens said customers regularly book for milestone birthdays, graduation parties, retirement parties, bachelorette parties and even bridal showers.

Additionally, Stevens said the business does yoga and sound bath setups.

Stevens said she crafts her own pillows, robes, and sleep masks with names and the theme of the event for personalization.

"For example, a mom wouldn't have to have anything. Like, she doesn't need to go outside of me to have something for those kids to leave that birthday party and remember that event," Stevens said. "Because we always want to make it an unforgettable adventure for you."

Stevens said the set-up process begins with the customer booking an adventure on their website. She then contacts the customer to get more information. Stevens said the process can vary depending on what the customer is looking for.

"If you're wanting to go to a campsite and go camping at like a state park or a local campground, I'd ask you like 'what are some of the things that you're wanting?,' 'what kind of amenities are you looking for,'" Stevens said. "To make sure I fit you with the right campground and something that has availability."

From there, the customer booked the site, and Stevens said she set up everything they needed.

"You show up, you glamp, you leave. We come back in and take everything away, and you don't have to worry about anything," Stevens said.

SEE GLAMPING, 15

"We just have a good time and wanted to get people to enjoy camping and take their kids camping and make memories."

— Candice Stevens



Tent sizes range from 13 feet to 23 feet.

Glamping

from page 14

The business provides the camping chairs, chuck box, and all the camping items needed during the adventure. Stevens added that the same goes for a backyard setup.

Stevens added that customers can camp for one night up to a full week.

Stevens said the community's response to the business has been overwhelmingly positive.

"It's a lot of work what we do. And, when we leave a site set up, and the text messages that we get or if they come out while we're there and to see their faces light up and, they're like so grateful for what we've done it just really makes us feel so good inside," Stevens said.

SweetCaroline Spencer said she booked an adventure to celebrate her daughter's graduation, and the experience was lovely.

"It was simple, cute, and chic, and I loved it," Spencer said.

Spencer said before the experience she had never heard of glamping before.

"For me, glamping was staying in an RV or something like that. With all the amenities. Or, just staying in a hotel and pretending you were camping," Spencer said.

Tammy and Jay Weber also booked the experience for their daughter's graduation party and were impressed with how it came together.

"It was amazing. They really work hard at what they do and do their best to ensure everything is just perfect," Tammy Weber said.

Wendi Keeney said knowing that her daughter wanted to go camping for her 21st

birthday, she was a little leery of letting her go on her own.

"She's never, ever camped on her own. So, I couldn't be there because I was working, and I was a little worried about her biting off more than she could chew," Keeney said.

Keeney said she googled 'glamping' and

found Stevens and her husband. From there, she said she appreciated their hands-on approach.

And, with Stevens and her family not too far from her daughter on the same campground, Keeney said they were there to help.

"She went above and beyond to make that day special for my daughter," Keeney

said. Stevens said that she and her family hope to continue to share these special experiences with others in the future.

"We are determined to make sure that people have an unforgettable time. And, we go above and beyond to ensure you feel the value in your experience," Stevens said. "And you have an adventure you'll never forget."



Todd D. Shockley, DMD

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BCC meeting provides updates on new garbage services

By Kyla Woodard
kyla@claytodayonline.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS - Tuesday night's Board of County Commissioners meeting gave an update on implementing the county's new curbside garbage services.

Beginning on Oct. 1, FCC Environmental will handle all curbside collection services in the county.

Each household will be provided with a 95-gallon can, though residents can purchase another can if necessary. The board said 65-gallon cans will be available for smaller accommodations.

"There also is an opportunity if they need another cart. There'll be a charge for the cart and then a monthly service fee," said Jamey Wilkes, the Department of Environmental Services operations manager.

Wilkes said this is a big change for the county. The new collection assessment will be \$262 a year, a \$34 increase from before. The assessment will be billed on each resident's annual tax bill.

However, the change has been met with some opposition.

The new contract does not include

curbside recycling, which has upset many residents.

Following the county's Facebook post informing residents of the new change, many commented, noting that the new services will allow for "unnecessary waste filling the landfill" and an increase in cost for fewer services.

According to the county, in September of last year, the county's recycling processor raised the processing fee from \$6 a ton to \$85 a ton. The county said adding curbside recycling to the new 10-year contract would have significantly increased resident fees.

Wilkes said that residents can only drop off cardboard at any of the four Environmental Convenience Centers around the county and Rosemary Hill.

Garbage and yard waste will be collected on the same day. All waste must be placed at the curb before 6 a.m. on your scheduled pick-up day.

Only garbage in the can will be picked up, and the can lid must be closed, with the opening facing the road. Additionally, homes with paved roads must place their can at most three feet away from the edge, and those with unpaved roads must place the can at most three feet from the travelway.

Residents can start expecting deliveries starting on July 29.

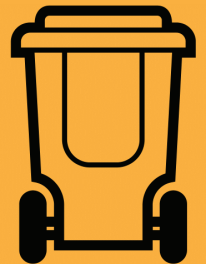
The county urges residents not to use the can until Oct. 1, as FCC Environmental will not begin collecting trash until then.

In other news, the Board of County Commissioners declared July Parks and Recreation Month.

In the official proclamation given at the meeting, the board recognized the facilities and their help in preserving the County's cultural, historical and ecological beauty.

PLEASE DO NOT USE THIS CAN UNTIL OCTOBER 1, 2024!

This can is for your new garbage service and will not be collected by the current hauler.



Important Information About Your New Garbage Services

Garbage and yard waste will be collected on the same day.

All waste must be placed at the curb before 6:00 a.m. on your scheduled day.

Garbage Collection Standards:

- Only garbage in the can will be collected and the can lid must be closed, and the opening must face the road.
- Your can must be no more than three feet from the paved road edge.
- For unpaved roads – the can should be no more than six feet from the travelway.

Yard Collection Standards:

- Your yard waste (vegetative material) will be collected the same day as your garbage, and crews will collect a maximum of 3 cubic yards each week. This is roughly 15 bags.
- Smaller items must be bagged. Branches and limbs must be cut to no longer than 4 feet and be no more than 4 inches in diameter. No one piece or bundle can weigh more than 50 pounds.
- For more information, visit our website at claycountygov.com/NewGarbageServices.

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STAFF PHOTO BY KYLA WOODARD

The BCC also officially declared the month of July as "Parks and Recreation month" at the meeting.

Team Rubicon: Going where the community needs them the most

By Don Coble
don@claytodayonline.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS — The job was monotonous. Open a box. Remove the contents. Assemble the parts. Add new pieces. Put the item back in the box. Repeat the process 530 times.

For most, the two-day project at the Clay County Fairgrounds would be too tedious. For members of Team Rubicon, it was a worthy mission because it benefited Clay County Fire Rescue.

“They approached us because they had a need, and we’re glad we could help,” said Mark Boyd, a former information officer with the U.S. Navy.

Such is the behind-the-scenes work of the nonprofit group of volunteers committed to helping with community projects and assisting with disasters.

Even as they helped Fire Rescue, they were already thinking about a possible



deployment to Texas in the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl. Team Rubicon, or “Grey-shirts” as emergency management organizations around the country know them, is a well-respected group because it is well-organized and has served a necessary role in removing debris after a disaster. It’s the grunt work nobody else likes to do.

“We work with community emergency managers,” Boyd said. “We work with other volunteer organizations to support whatever the needs are in that particular community. After Hurricane Beryl barreled through, now we are gearing up to support Southeast Texas and Louisiana.”

When they’re not responding to disasters, Boyd said Team Rubicon is eager to find community projects to “keep our volunteers engaged.”

The group helped pick up more than 20,000 wreaths at Jacksonville National Cemetery following Wreaths Across America last year. They also worked traffic control at the cemetery for Veteran’s Day and spent weeks helping in the aftermath of Hurricane Adalia in 2023. They helped the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service with its



STAFF PHOTOS BY DON COBLE

From left, Team Rubicon members Nancy Coltrin, Mark Boyd and Jean-Victor Brun spent two days working with Clay County Fire Rescue on a project at the Clay County Fairgrounds.

fire mitigation projects

The volunteers leverage their skills and experience to help a community prepare, respond and recover from a crisis and disaster.

They receive special training using equipment needed to remove debris, deliver food and water, and evacuate residents to safer grounds.

District 4, First Coast Metro, includes Clay, Duval, Nassau, Baker, Flagler, St. Johns, and Putnam counties. However, Boyd said the local group has traveled to other states to help after a storm.

Team Rubicon started with eight vet-

erans in 2010 following the earthquake in Haiti. William McNulty and Jake Wood led a medical team into Port-au-Prince three days after the earthquake, and they were overwhelmed to see the scale of the disaster and the desperate need for a better response.

Boyd said 14 years later, there are more than 160,000 members worldwide, including 1,200 in First Coast Metro.

“Our organization is made up mainly of veterans and first responders, but really, anyone can join,” Boyd said. “There are a lot of ways to get involved.”



Team Rubicon’s Mark Boyd said it’s important to keep volunteers “engaged” with community projects when they’re not responding to disasters.





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Keystone Heights' daylong Sounds of Freedom Fourth of July included parade, fireworks

By Don Coble
don@claytodayonline.com

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS - Nothing is more American than the annual Fourth of July

run/walk, parade, games, vendors, a day at Keystone Beach, music, and fireworks at Keystone Heights. The 56th Sounds of Freedom attracted people throughout the Lake Region, most attired in red, white and blue. In addition to the 5K run/walk, parade, and concerts by Duval County Line and the Shopping Mall Guerrillas, the popular event ended with a fireworks show over Lake Geneva.



SPORTS

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS

Steve Reynolds predicts historic year for Indians

By Randy Lefko
randy@claytodayonline.com

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – Keystone Heights High football coach Steve Reynolds likes that the Keystone Heights community cherishes their hometown football team and is seeing 2024 as return to his fanbase faith in his short coaching status.

“This is a great hometown sports town and not just for football,” said Reynolds, entering his second season as head football coach after nearly 20 years coaching at various levels of positions including Bradford County, Oakleaf High School and St. Johns Country Day School. “The parents and kids in this town are all about their kids and their sports. I think we have a solid core of kids coming back with a good attitude about giving the people in the stands a solid effort on every play.”

Reynolds finished with a 5-5 regular season record last year as head coach after being part of a deep playoff run two years ago followed by a 2-8 record under long



One offensive duo important to Keystone Heights success in 2024 in quarterback Baylor Ford and wide receiver Jackson Parmeter.

SEE INDIANS, 21

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Keystone Heights High boys weightlifting coach Lantz Lowery will take his impressive resume to Palatka High next fall to test his impressive formula for state titles.

KHHS Lowery leaving to coach at Palatka High

By Randy Lefko
randy@claytodayonline.com

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS - Five time state champion weightlifting coach Lantz Lowery announced he will leave Keystone Heights High to take a football and weightlifting position at Palatka High next fall.

“I want to see if the formula I used at Keystone Heights will work at Palatka,” said

Lowery, who won five state team titles; three in a row with a handful of individual state titles in his near 20 years as Indians' boys weightlifting coach. “When I became boys weightlifting coach many years ago, I was told I would never win anything at Keystone Heights.”

Lowery has been coaching for nearly 20 years at Keystone Heights with a brief year

SEE WEIGHTLIFTING, 20

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Weightlifting

from page 19

at Interlachen after getting the Indians' first state weightlifting title for Keystone Heights in 2014. Lowery, who won three state titles in a row since 2021, has accounted for nearly two dozen individual state titles with Keystone Heights having individual titles in the 1990s.

"We have won the district weightlifting title ever since the inception of districts, regions and then state," said Keystone Heights Athletic Director Chuck Dickinson, who brought Lowery on board as football coach in the early 2000s. "We won the Traditional region last year with Suwannee winning the Olympics in 2023, but we've won district and region titles for nearly 20 years."

Palatka has its own bucket load of state weightlifting titles dating back as far as 1987, with 39 individual titles in that span.

"I see the plaques and trophies all over Palatka and my challenge is to resurrect their powerhouse stature," said Lowery, now 60. "I get them to buy in, we lift against every Clay County school because that's the best county for weightlifting and I go from ground zero to state contender. That's the plan."

Lowery, also a long-time defensive football coach under Chuck Dickinson and recently with Steve Reynolds, is known as a fiery, emotional coach that inspires to build tough, strong athletes. Lowery was part of Keystone Heights' 2021 10-2 record with a region semifinal finish.



Left: Keystone Heights High boys weightlifting coach Lantz Lowery had plenty of quiet moments to motivate his team; here with powerhouse Colton Hollingsworth while, right, in 2022, Lowery and his boys won their second straight state title in dominant fashion.

"Lantz built a standard of excellence here both on and off the field and we wish him the same great success in Palatka as he delivered here," said Reynolds, who coached just weightlifting last year. "The kids here loved him and would compete at the highest level because of his passion for the sports he

coached."

For Dickinson, who has had Lowery at his side for nearly 25 years as football coach and as weightlifting coach, Lowery will be missed because of his knowledge of the sport he was coaching, plus his connection to the athletes under his tutelage.

Lantz Lowery File

2024: Class 1A Traditional Runnerups; Suwannee 43, Keystone Heights 30. State Champions: Trey Jeffries III (238)

Class 1A Olympics third place; Suwannee 53, South Sumter 45, Keystone Heights 21. State champions: Trey Jeffries III (238)

2023: Class 1A Traditional Champions, 41-35 over Suwannee. State champions: Brian Overton (169), Trey Jeffries III (219).

Class 1A Olympics runnerups, Suwannee 49, South Sumter/Keystone Heights 29. State Champions: Brian Overton (169)

2022: Class 1A Traditional champions, 55-17 over West Nassau. State champions: Ulysses Freed (154), Logan Williams (169), Mason Dicks (Unlimited) Class 1A Olympic Snatch champions, 44-20 over South Sumter. State Champions: Ulysses Freed (154), Bryar Schenck (183).

2021: Class 1A Weightlifting Champions, 37-30 over Mount Dora. State Champions: Zach Glover (139), Kade Sanders (169)

2014: Class 1A Weightlifting Champions, Tied 16-16 with Baker County. State Champions: none

Earlier Keystone Heights state champions: 154 Darrell Byrnes (1995), 154 Bear Snay (1998)

"Ask any coach of any sport, to win one state title is hard enough, to win three in a row is amazing, to win five, enough said," said Dickinson. "Lantz has done more for the kids of Keystone Heights that to win state

SEE WEIGHTLIFTING, 22



Left: Lantz Lowery was also a staple on the sidelines of the Keystone Heights football team that finished 10-2 with a region semifinal playoff game and a 50-0 blowout in their region opener. Right: State champion weightlifter Trey Jeffries, right, returned to double up with two more state titles in his senior season last year.





Fullback and linebacker Zane Leger is prototype big ball carrier and rugged tackler in tradition of Keystone Heights football.

Indians

from page 19

time head coach Chuck Dickinson. Dickinson stepped in after the 2022 season but remains as athletic director.

“Coach Dickinson has built a great foundation here that builds off of athletes that love this school,” said Reynolds. “We built the depth last year and did a lot of roster management to determine who plays where and a lot of kids who got on the field now have varsity reps under their belts.”

In his spring game against Interlachen and Ridgeview two weeks ago, Reynolds saw some old Keystone Heights toughness and resilience with Interlachen toughness play going for an 80-yard touchdown bomb, but Keystone Heights regrouping to take away wins against both teams.

“On that first play, I think, we had a blown coverage with a defensive player, Tallon Campbell, who has been a steady great player for Keystone Heights returning to the field and having a great game after that with plenty of great plays,” said Reynolds. “That was the essence of Keystone Heights football; live and die as a team.”

Keystone Heights’ offense displayed the same Indians toughness behind rugged running from fullback Zane Leger and tailback Colton Hollingsworth who repeatedly crashed the Interlachen defense to push to

a 28-14 halftime score for Keystone Heights. Damien Dunlap also put in some tough yards.

“They just buckled down and hammered the offensive line, led by our big guy at center Bryce Daniels and just moved Interlachen right down the field to answer their touchdown with one of our own very authoritatively,” said Reynolds. “That told me that this team could be special. Colton made great plays on defense though only about 150 pounds; probably our most explosive player.”

At quarterback, Baylor Ford opened the offense with strikes to Jackson Parmeter and even Campbell to keep the chains moving and put points on the board.

“Tallon showed the team a lot about the character of himself and the team wholeheartedly rallied around him,” said Reynolds. “That tells a lot about a team’s chemistry.”

Ford was thrown into the mix last year and gave a glimpse of his leadership.

“He could have a great season and showed that he won’t flinch,” said Reynolds, who finished with three straight regular season wins before losing 36-10 in region playoffs to Yulee. “Parmeter has a few interceptions with Campbell also.”

Reynolds is planning two or three 7 v 7 throwing competitions over the summer with June 19 going to Trenton for a jamboree-style morning with several teams and then June 25 evening a 6 p.m. match at



Steve Reynolds has plenty of players from their 50-0 playoff win two years ago in 2022 that will be seniors in 2024.



Keystone Heights running back Zane Leger will be load to take on off swing passes from quarterback Baylor Ford.

Fleming Island.

“Fleming Island gave us a call and they allowed us to see a level we don’t see often,” said Reynolds. “Trenton is a good teaching environment with plenty of different looks.”

Reynolds noted that individual camps have already been visited by players like Daniels, who just attended at FSU and Central Florida with another group going to Valdosta.

“Baylor, Jackson, Bryce, have been

scheduling camps coming up with guys like Jackson Herman, Luke Bacorn and Peter Bostich have been planning camps,” said Reynolds.

For August, Reynolds wants to see leadership and closeness as a team.

“They will be traveling a lot in groups to camps and I’ll get them to my house for hot dogs and stuff,” said Reynolds. “If I get five kids or 35 kids, it’s all good for the team. I want to see them putting the team up front.”

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