

# KEYSTONE HEIGHTS HERALD

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By Don Coble  
don@claytodayonline.com

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – It’s called Impact Clay Train for a reason. It’s a collection of impactful services, much like a row of train cars, that rumbles into county areas needing the most help.

And to kick off the new year like never before, Impact Clay will roll into Keystone Junior/Senior High on Jan. 18 with its train ... and a tractor-trailer filled with food from Feeding Northeast Florida and the United Way of Northeast Florida, all in part of a massive food bank program in the county to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

“Ultimately, we are having food distributed in Keystone Heights, Green Cove Springs, the Town of Orange Park,” said Impact Clay CEO Connie Thomas, “but the big event will be in Keystone.”

The Keystone Height event follows the December record turnout at Grove Park Elementary in Orange Park. With a semi-filled with food to be distributed two days ahead

## Train stops in Keystone Heights Jan. 18

Event coincides with MLK Day

of MLK Day, Keystone Heights is likely to surpass Grove Park attendance.

“As far as food is concerned, absolutely,” Thomas said. This will be the biggest ever. And I have to say Celebration Church is a part of that. You know, they’re our food partner, so they will be making sure the food is distributed not only there, but also in the Town of Orange Park at the same time, on the same day.”

Food also will be distributed at Vera Francis Park in Green Cove Springs by Food for Clay County.

When Impact Clay started the Train initiative, they couldn’t imagine its impact on Keystone Heights, Orange Park and Clay Hill. It grew to be so popular that they expanded their monthly stops to include Green Cove Springs this year.

Families will receive nearly a shopping cart full of food at Keystone Heights and Orange Park, said Brooke Davies, Impact Clay’s Director of Community Development. She said that because the nonprofit wanted to ensure they could sufficiently feed a family



CLAY TODAY STAFF

As long as the hot food lasts, anyone attending the Clay Impact Train stop at Keystone Heights Junior/Senior High on Jan. 18 between 10 a.m. and noon can enjoy a free healthy meal.

for more than a few days, they will only have enough food for the first 150 families at both Keystone Heights and Orange Park.

At Keystone Heights, however, other

customary Impact Clay Train free services will be available, like:

- Increased mobile access to health-

SEE IMPACT, 11

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PUZZLE FUN

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

There are four differences between Picture A and Picture B.

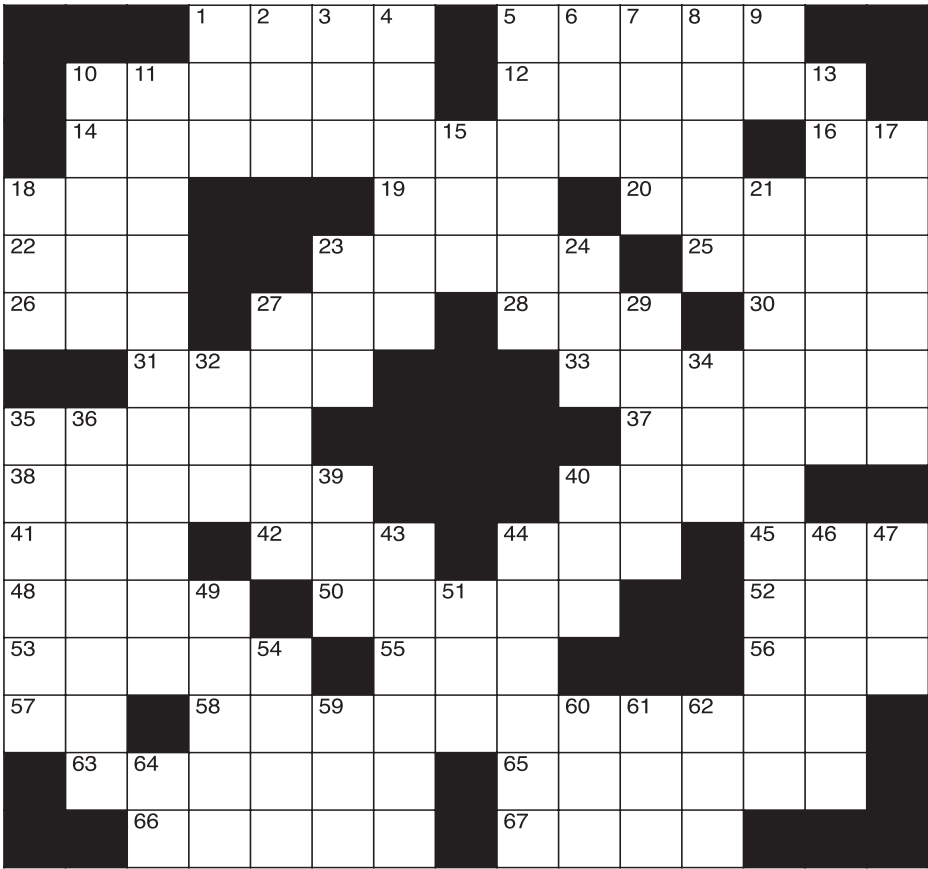


Answers:  
1. Wire not poking through spot in tile 2. Measuring tape is moved  
3. Man is missing glasses 4. There is a knob on the right cabinet

GUESS WHO?

I am an actor born in Australia on January 13, 1990. Before becoming an actor, I worked in the construction industry. I am best known for a prominent role in "The Hunger Games" series, as well as my high-profile marriage to a pop singer.

Answer: Liam Hemsworth



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CLUES ACROSS

1. Tropical Asian plant
5. Yankees' slugger Judge
10. Helps to preserve food
12. Plant disease
14. One who predicts
16. Equally
18. Burundian franc
19. Pouch
20. Arizona city
22. Surround
23. Hard, heavy timber
25. Witnessed
26. They —
27. French river
28. A way to drink
30. Small constellation
31. Peruse a written work
33. Type of hound
35. Plant of the goosefoot family
37. Evade or escape
38. A way to confine
40. Volcanic crater
41. Weekday
42. Women's service organization (abbr.)
44. Local area network
45. Sensory receptor
48. Posted

CLUES DOWN

1. Body art
2. Boxing's GOAT
3. Film for posterity (abbr.)
4. Prayer
5. Calculating machine
6. Keyboard key
7. Outburst
8. Man-eating giants
9. New Hampshire
10. Type of sword
11. Counting
13. Pants style
15. Political action committee
17. U.S. government legislative branch
18. Civil Rights Act component

21. Contractors take one
23. Spanish soldier
24. A person's brother or sister
27. Expressed pleasure
29. Song of praise
32. Shock treatment
34. Patti Hearst's captors
35. Counteract
36. Goes over again
39. Popular Dodge truck
40. Male adult
43. A part of a river where the current is very fast
44. Rope used to lasso
46. Become less intense
47. Subway rodent
49. Lead alloy
51. Japanese honorific title
54. Advise someone
59. Famous NYC museum
60. Ocean
61. Cathode-ray tube
62. Cologne
64. It starts with these two

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OPINIONS & VIEWPOINTS

NIL, transfer portal threatens future athletic landscape

By Don Coble  
Managing Editor

NIL. Those three letters mean Name, Image and Likeness. It sends shivers down the spines of true college sports fans because it is leading them down a dangerous road. Through partnerships and sponsors, college athletic programs can pay athletes above the table instead of in secret. Players can profit from personal education-related payments and go to the highest bidder. And, as of last April, it allows players to jump from school to school without consequence. For loyal alumni, it means rosters will be constantly changing. For example, at the University of Miami, 6-foot-5 sophomore guard Jakai Robinson stopped long enough to play 17 games last year before entering the transfer portal for the fifth time.



Don Coble



Keep in mind that associations, not state-funded departments, run athletic programs. Tax dollars don't pay for college coaches or NIL budgets. A program generally starts with a NIL budget and "pays" players. According to an attorney in Tallahassee, six former basketball players at Florida

State, Seminoles coach Leonard Hamilton failed to pay them \$250,000 in NIL Rising Spear Collective compensation last season. UNLV quarterback Matthew Sluka quit the team after three games this season after he claimed the Rebels owed him \$100,000 in NIL money, and quarterback Jaden Rashada left the University of Florida for Georgia after he claimed head coach Billy Napier owed him \$13 million in NIL money. NIL is so out of control that former UCF coach Gus Malzahn lost \$17.5 million to take the offensive coordinator job at Florida State to close the Knights' checkbook. By quitting UCF before June, he lost \$13 million in guaranteed money and had to pay the Knights \$6 million for breaking his contract. He will make \$1.5 for the Seminoles. He considers it money well spent. "The job description of a head college football coach has changed dramatically in the last two years with everything – transfer portal to collectives to agents and everything that goes with that," Malzahn said. "I'm just an old-school football coach." NIL played a significant role in driving

SEE NIL, 5

How to use color to be more productive, creative

By StatePoint Media  
For The Herald

For many people, the start of a new year is the time to get serious about projects large and small. But if you're struggling to buckle down or having trouble coming up with ideas, you may be surprised to learn that by leaning into color and the science behind it, you can hack your way to a more productive and creative 2025. Studies have shown that colors can powerfully affect the mind and body, impacting how we feel and think. Specific colors can do everything, from lowering your heart rate to improving your memory. There are many ways to harness the power of color science, from painting the walls of your home office and adding plants into your workspaces to even selecting your writing tools wisely. When it comes to boosting your productivity and creativity, here's how to harness the power of color science for writing:

Unleash your creativity

Did you know purple is a powerhouse for creative thinking? Reach for a lighter shade when you need a fresh idea for this year's school fundraiser or if you're meeting with your work teammates for a crucial brainstorming session. Want to add some drama or personality to your next presentation? Darker shades of purple have an aura of luxury, mystery and sophistication. They can be used strategically in presentations and hand-written communications to project these qualities in your work and ideas. Stuck on a seemingly unsolvable problem? Lighter shades of purple help break through writer's block and open a world of possibilities. Reach for the G2 Purple Creativity pack to help you whenever you need a flash of inspiration. Comprised of purple hues, use this color pack to fuel your creative spark when making visual art, writing poetry or composing music, or whenever you need to unleash your inner visionary.

SEE COLOR, 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. **Quieten:** (KWAI-ih-tñ) a verb that means to make or become quiet and calm. "Harvey plugs his phone in across the house to quieten his bedroom at night."

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.



NIL  
from page 4

Nick Saban off the sidelines. It made some players more focused on making a buck instead of teamwork. Football was supposed to be about running and passing, not balance sheets.

Saban expressed his disgust with the system recently on “The Pat McAfee Show,” saying:

“The first year we had name, image and likeness, four or five years ago, we had \$3 million, and everybody was happy. Then, the next year, it was seven. Then the next year it’s

10. Then this year, it’s 13. Now they’re looking at 20. I mean, where does it end? And the people who are supporting this, they get no benefit for it. And I’m sure that there’s going to be some instances in the future where those people don’t want to continue to support players that aren’t there.

“Guys are looking to where can I develop value right now and more about what can I get instantly in terms of getting in the portal or going to another school,” Saban said. “No one talks about the college experience anymore. Nobody talks about graduation, all these things are probably important to the future.”

Basketball’s Caitlin Clark, who certainly helped define NIL when she played at Iowa, earned endorsements from Nike, State Farm, Panini and Gatorade when she played in college. She said by the time she graduated, she told Travis and Jason Kelce’s “New Heights” Podcast the NCAA’s current approach on the NIL and transfer portal essentially has no rules or oversight.

She called the transfer portal “egregious” and likened it to a trend of free agency – especially in football – a “minor league.” She believes when athletes jump around, it reduces amateurism, which makes sports fun for athletes and fans.

One solution may be to use a mix of the

current and the old system when transferring. In the past, unless a school signed a waiver, an athlete had to wait a year before being eligible to play. Perhaps an athlete should be allowed to transfer once without penalty. If an athlete wants to transfer again, they must wait a year to play.

And as far as NIL is concerned, paying all athletes a stipend might be best. Put \$300 a week in the pocket of every player so they can go on a date, buy a hamburger, and save money to buy an airline ticket for the holidays.

That way, payments to the superstars will go back to under the table like the old days.

This Month in History

Five years ago, 2020

- Dr. James Larson retired from Clay Behavioral Health Clinic after serving there for 45 years.
- Delilah Rae Gilio was born at 12:43 a.m. at the Orange Park Medical Center on Jan. 1 to be the first baby of 2005.
- Clay Electric Foundation donated \$15,000 to Magnolia Point Women’s Club to support it’s Maggie’s Meal Program to feed hungry children in schools.

10 years ago, 2015

- Claude Dean Kelly, known as the “Father of the Clay County Fair,” passes away at the age of 98.
- Tara Green, the Clay County Clerk of Court and Comptroller, stops offering weddings at the courthouse because her office isn’t staffed to handle the demand.
- The Florida Department of Transportation allocates \$3 million to line the median of Park Avenue between the Duval County line and Kingsley Avenue with trees and other landscaping improvements.

20 years ago, 2005

- Rick Beseler is sworn in as the 27th Sheriff of Clay County.
- The Green Cove Springs City Council took its electric utility company off the market after receiving only one bid deemed favorable by council members. Clay Electric offered \$6.75 million for the facilities, \$357,000 for its inventory and \$157,000 for its equipment.

30 years ago, 1995

- Capt. Richard L. Dugger of Keystone Heights joined the Clay County Sheriff’s Office as the jail administrator. Dugger, who’s been in corrections since 1964, worked at

the Putnam County Jail.

- State Rep. John Thrasher of Orange Park and State Sen. Jim Horne touted legislation ensuring the murder of a child be treated as seriously as the murder of an adult.

40 years ago, 1985

- The Board of Commissioners debated possibly establishing a Clay County Transit Authority to improve public transportation.
- The Green Cove Springs City Council considered appealing the state’s decision to reject a \$675,000 community development block grant application to build a golf course, swimming pool and equestrian center north of Governors Creek.

Color  
from page 4

Unlock your productivity

Blue is a strong choice for generating ideas and evoking peace, making it a helpful color to employ when you must stay calm and confident in facing a challenge. The G2 Blue Productivity pack features curated hues of blue to give you an arsenal of tools for tackling different tasks.

Lighter shades of blue can help you hone in on the details, so if you’re balancing your household budget, making your daily to-do list, or proofreading your work, use a light blue pen to do it. Because darker blues aid in problem-solving under pressure, you can lean into these shades for tasks like delivering a wrap-up report to your supervisor on a deadline, working out an equation during a timed test, or taking notes during a call.

Color science can also help you in other

areas of your life. That’s the idea behind the new G2 Boost Collection from Pilot Pen. Each pack of pens is offered in a range of hues within one color family to keep your projects organized and is designed to fuel your writing, self-empowerment and self-expression.

Shades of green can achieve more inner balance, while pinks can be used to adopt a more optimistic mindset. To learn more about reaching your goals with writing tools, visit [powertothepen.com/g2-boost](http://powertothepen.com/g2-boost).

Whether you’re a visionary who has trouble getting started or is raring to go but needs a great idea, color science and the right writing tools can help you amplify your innate talents, harness new skills, and maximize your mindset to unlock your potential.





# KH Council selects aviation veteran Buck Burney for Airport Authority seat

By Don Coble

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – After receiving four applications to fill the vacant District 5 seat on the Keystone Airport Authority, the City Council selected Buck Burney during its Jan. 6, Monday night meeting.

Burney is a regional manager with Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and is a member of several aeronautical boards for high school programs.

He also has experience with the Federal Aviation Administration as the Director of Operations for the Florida National Guard and Commander of Tyndall Air Force Base near Panama City.

He said working with the airport authority would be a “great opportunity to give back to our city and community with my background in aviation, leadership and 10 years working with Embry-Riddle Aeronau-

tical University.”

Burney also is the Vice Chairman of Fire Watch/Stand Against Veteran Suicide in Clay County. The organization works with the Clay County Commission and the Veterans Services to assist local veterans in times of emotional distress.

The council also considered applications from Matthew O’Berry, Colin D. Phillips and Paul R. Hamilton.

Burney’s term will run until the end of 2027.

## In other news:

- The council recognized the Keystone Heights varsity golf team for its Class A State Championship, proclaiming the team “serves as an inspiration to future generations of athletes in our community, proving that dedication, focus, and teamwork lead to success.”



The Pro Watercross Series will return to Lake Geneva on July 17-18. The series applied for an event permit with the Keystone Heights City Council on Monday, Jan. 6.

- The council also received an application for the return of the Pro Watercross Series on July 17-18 at Lake Geneva.

Monday’s agenda was so extensive that

the council decided to break it into two sessions. They reconvened Monday, Jan. 13, to complete their business.

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# CCFR offers hot safety tips during cold weather

CLAY COUNTY – In January, Clay County Fire Rescue responds to more emergencies related to the cold temps, including extension cable fires (from overloading outlets with devices like space) and carbon monoxide poisoning incidents (potentially stemming from unvented space heaters).

## Here is a breakdown of those safety tips:

- Inspect devices regularly check all electrical appliances and cords for damage. Replace any that show signs of wear and tear.

- Properly ventilate to ensure fireplaces and wood stoves are properly vented to the outside and have chimneys cleaned annually.

**Install Alarms:** Install and maintain smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, testing them monthly.

- Keep the area clear. Keep flammable materials at least three feet from heaters, and never leave them unattended.

- Have a Safety Plan: Clay County Fire Rescue also encourages families to sit down with children to talk about home fire safety and to immediately call 911 if a fire does happen.

“People are going to want to stay warm,

so they’re going to be using more space heaters, more fireplaces, so we do see an increase in house fires,” said CCFR Chief David Kuykendall.

“For extension cords, those are temporary usage. No heater should be plugged into those for long periods. They should be plugged directly into the wall outlet.”

Heating systems and kerosine lamps can also increase the home’s carbon monoxide (CO), especially during the winter when doors and windows are closed, which prevents gases from escaping. Residents should have a working CO detector and smoke alarm and remember to test and change batteries every six months.

Kuykendall suggests residents have a fire extinguisher ready if a fire does happen.

“You should also have a fire extinguisher, know where it is, and how to use it,” he said.

Kuykendall also stresses the importance of regularly maintaining heat-emitting devices and appliances.

“I wish everyone would service their heaters – their fireplaces,” he said.

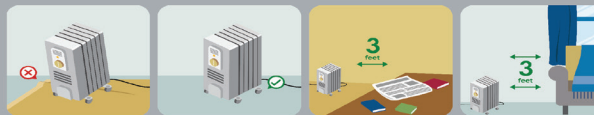
According to the U.S. Fire Administration, confined fires, specifically those confined to chimneys, flues, or fuel burners, account for 77% of residential building heating fires.

## Portable Heater Fire Safety



**Follow these portable heater tips to help prevent winter fires and to stay safe this winter season.**

Place space heaters on a solid, flat surface. Keep them at least three feet from things that can burn.



Check your space heater for cracked or damaged cords and plugs. Plug space heaters directly into wall outlets, don't use an extension cord or power strip.



For more information and free fire-safety resources, visit [www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov).

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**Knocking down an eyesore to improve intersection at SR 100, 21**

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – What were the city’s biggest eyesores and trouble spots were reduced to rubble and removed last week when the old KFC and China Chef restaurant on the corner of State Roads 100 and 21 was demolished. The City of Keystone Heights bought the property for \$250,000 with plans to build a safer right-hand turn lane onto S.R. 100 from northbound S.R. 21. The building has been abandoned for years. It’s been blamed for several accidents at the intersection because it partially blocks the view of northbound drivers on S.R. 21. Additional plans exist to add downtown parking and realign crosswalks.



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## Nonprofit provides confidential support for law enforcements' mental health

For The Herald

JACKSONVILLE – Law Enforcement Appreciation Day was Thursday, and it was a time to recognize the brave men and women who supported us during our worst days. This recognition comes at a critical moment, as the holiday season often sees a surge in 911 calls, placing more significant emotional strain on law enforcement officers. After the holidays, many first responders grapple with the cumulative stress of responding to crises during one of the year's busiest and most challenging times.

These pressures contribute to a growing mental health crisis among law enforcement officers. According to Blue H.E.L.P., more than 1,000 officers in the U.S. have died by suicide

since 2018, including eight in Florida in 2024.

In recognition of this day, a leading Florida behavioral health system highlights critical resources available to support these heroes during their most difficult times. LSF Health Systems' First Responder Peer Support Program serves 20 counties across Northeast and Northern Central Florida, providing first responders and their families access to confidential, no-cost mental health services. Individuals can connect with a trained peer specialist by calling 211 and identifying as a first responder within 24 hours.

"After one of the busiest and most emotionally challenging times of the year, first responders must have time to decompress and process what they've experienced," said Dr. Christine Cauffield, CEO of LSF Health



Systems. "On this special day, we want to honor them properly while reminding them of the services available to support their mental health."

While many law enforcement agencies offer internal peer support services, some officers may feel uneasy discussing personal struggles within their department. This program provides a trusted alternative where first responders can seek help without fear of judgment. About 2,000 first responders have

called 211 seeking services ranging from basic needs referrals to getting connected to a peer specialist since the program began in 2022.

"I've known deputies and officers who have taken their own lives, and too often I've heard the same things afterward: 'I never knew,' or 'If only they had told me they were struggling, I would have helped,'" said Victor Gualillo, chief of Atlantic Beach Police. "Now, they're no longer with us. We owe it to them to improve things for the next generation."

First responders – or their family members – can visit [StayFitforDuty.org](http://StayFitforDuty.org) for more information or call 211 to identify themselves as first responder. LSF Health Systems is a behavioral health managing entity contracted by the Florida Department of Children and Families. It oversees behavioral healthcare for people who face poverty and are without insurance. For more information, visit [lsfhealthsystems.org](http://lsfhealthsystems.org).



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Another one of the free services is check-ups offered by the Emmanuel Project.

Impact  
from page 1

care to bring services closer to residents, especially those in underserved or remote areas. This improves access to medical care and health information, reducing barriers to seeking medical help.

- Early intervention and prevention to conduct regular check-ups, provide health and mental health education, and provide outreach programs to identify health issues early and promote preventive measures to reduce healthcare costs.
- Chronic disease management for individuals with chronic conditions to provide ongoing support and monitoring, helping patients manage their conditions more effectively and reducing hospital admissions.
- Improved health literacy to educate communities about healthy lifestyles, nutrition, and disease prevention so that they can make informed decisions about their health.
- Mental health and addiction support to address mental health and addiction issues, providing counseling, support, and referrals to appropriate services for those in need.
- Hygiene support units comprised of laundry, shower and hair services are often unaffordable or not available in remote locations. Not only do these services reduce the risk of illness, but they also raise the mental well-being of residents who often see

themselves as undesirable.

- Technical support mobile technology units bridge the gap for locations that lack Wi-Fi services. They also provide hands-on support for residents who cannot afford computer equipment, lack the knowledge to apply for benefit services, and have difficulty reading or communicating.
- Reduced disparities to underserved communities where mobile care teams can help reduce disparities in healthcare and social services access and outcomes, ensuring everyone has access to quality care.
- Community building can foster community and social support, positively impacting overall health and well-being for generations.
- Addressing physical and mental health issues earlier and reducing emergency room visits, mobile care teams can lead to cost savings for individuals and the healthcare system.
- Other services include free books, snacks, connecting with other public services and haircuts.

According to Impact Clay, the effectiveness of mobile neighborhood care teams must depend on factors like proper planning, collaboration with local stakeholders, funding, and the specific needs of the community they serve. The impact of such teams can vary from one location to another.

For more information, visit [impactclay.org](http://impactclay.org).

Reinhold Foundation  
accepting Celebrate  
Clay Award applications

For The Herald

FLEMING ISLAND – The Paul E. and Klare N. Reinhold Foundation, Inc. is accepting applications for the 2025 “Celebrate Clay” awards, a community service awards program recognizing remarkable organizations and individuals serving the Clay County community.

As much as \$100,000 in cash awards, ranging from the \$1,000 Category Awards to the \$15,000 Paul E. Reinhold Community Service Award, will be presented at the 2025 “Celebrate Clay” awards breakfast on April 22. A panel of judges will vote on the best projects of 2024 to determine the recipients of the cash awards.

All 501 (c) 3 nonprofit groups, including school and church outreach groups that provided services to Clay County residents in 2024, are encouraged to apply.

“Celebrate Clay” is a program to support the ongoing efforts of the charitable organizations in the community working to strengthen and enrich Clay County. Details and applications are available at [www.reinhold.net](http://www.reinhold.net). The application deadline is Jan. 31.

For more information, contact Amy Parker, Executive Director, at (904) 269-5857 ext. 404 or [aparker@reinhold.net](mailto:aparker@reinhold.net).



Paul E. Reinhold Community Service Award winner Mission of the Dirt Road winner and founder Carey Morford accepts her 2024 award from George Egan.

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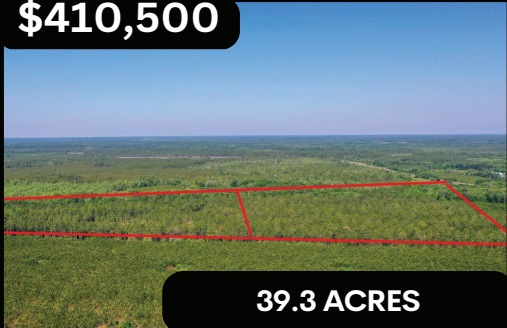


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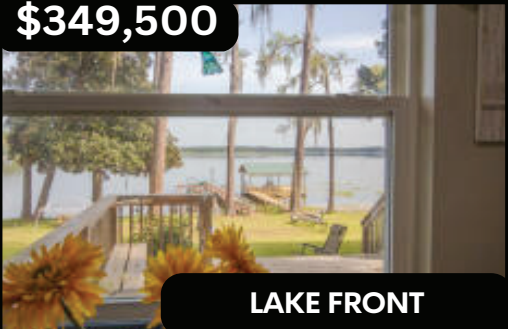
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# Trixie and Butterball

Young farmers gear up for this year's Clay County Agricultural Fair livestock auction

By Kyla Woodard  
kyla@claytodayonline.com

CLAY COUNTY — Raising the perfect swine and steer is the ultimate endgame for students preparing for this year's Clay County Agricultural Fair.

During the fair's annual livestock showing, 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA) youth from all over the county compete to auction off their animal projects to potential buyers. In an experience of lessons showcasing business and the pork and beef markets, the students tested their leadership and responsibility skills.

Leading up to auction day in April, Clay Today will highlight some of these young



STAFF PHOTOS BY KYLA WOODARD

In addition to documenting their progress, students in the program are also tasked with getting involved with community activities, volunteer work and writing letters to some potential buyers.



This is their second year participating in the program, and they said they've gained much knowledge surrounding how to care for livestock.



Anson Bivins and his pig, Trixie. Below: Ansley Bivins and her pig, Butterball.



farmers and their project journeys.

This week, we follow Ansley and Anson Bivins and their pigs, Butterball and Trixie.

The two siblings have been raising the pigs since November.

This is their second year participating in the program, earning awards in last year's event, including the Silver Clover and 4-H Blue Awards.

The two said they had gained much knowledge in caring for their livestock this go-around.

"I get to learn a lot of new, great things that I haven't experienced in the past," Anson said. "I feel like it could help me do better in life."

They venture out to the pens daily to feed, clean, weigh and bond with their swine. During the cold winter season, they also said they make sure to line each of their pens with wood shavings to keep them warm.

Ansley said that being with her so often, she has learned some new facts about Butterball already, including a tell-tale sign to know she's excited.

"You see her shaking her tail, that means [she's] very excited," she said.

In addition to documenting their progress, students in the program are also tasked with getting involved with community activities, volunteer work and writing letters to some potential buyers.

Another plus for them— using their earnings towards college savings — where they both said they plan to head.

The auction will be held in April at the J.P. Hall Livestock Arena. All buyers can bid as low as \$1 a pound for swine.

If you want to purchase Trixie or Butterball at this year's sale, email [kellyhampshire\\_3@yahoo.com](mailto:kellyhampshire_3@yahoo.com).

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# Agriculture Commission's Rural and Family Lands Protection Program application cycle opens

For Clay Today

CLAY COUNTY – Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson announced the opening of an application cycle for landowners to apply to the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program.

The program partners farmers and ranchers through rural lands protection easements to preserve working agricultural operations that contribute to Florida's economy and produce our food and fiber. Landowners can now submit their applications online through Jan. 29. The department will review the applications for eligibility.

More information on the program and the application process can be found at [FDACS.gov/RFLPP](http://FDACS.gov/RFLPP).

"Florida's working agricultural lands are not just fields and pastures — they sustain our economy, nourish our communities, and protect our natural resources," Wilton said. "The Rural and Family Lands Protection Program is a testament to the critical partnership between the state and our farmers and ranchers, ensuring these lands remain productive and vibrant for future generations. I encourage landowners to apply and join us in safeguarding Florida's agricultural future."

The Spurlin Farm in Green Cove Springs was a new applicant from the 2023-24 cycle.

Established in 2001 with the passage of the Rural and Family Lands Protection Act, the program has successfully preserved more than 196,000 acres of working agricultural land, with over 130,000 acres preserved during Commissioner Simpson's administration.

The program recognizes that working agricultural lands are essential to Florida's economic future. Agricultural lands are increasingly threatened by urban development. To counter this trend, the program

partners with farmers and ranchers to ensure sustainable production practices while protecting natural resources. These easements serve as safeguards against

future development, allowing agriculture operations to continue contributing to Florida's economy and producing food, timber and other resources vital to its prosperity.



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# Former Girl Scout Camp leaves a hole in neighborhood's dreams

Plans continue on development of RV Park despite objections

By Don Coble  
don@claytodayonline.com

MIDDLEBURG – Peter Perry never thought he'd miss hearing otters splashing in the Black Creek North Fork at 4 a.m. until the playful sounds disappeared.

Another resident along Lazy Acres Road used to feed heads of cabbage to manatees during mating season as they meandered along the creek in the springtime, but they haven't been seen in four years.

The only sounds through the whispery moss-draped oaks are the low, rumbling groans of dump trucks hauling dirt in and out of the old North Fork Girl Scout Camp.

One of the common sites along the creek now is an orange-colored sludge that stains retaining walls and a thick layer of dust that layers lawn furniture, cars, boat docks and mailboxes.

North Fork Land Holdings is developing the 207-acre camp into a rental park for recreational vehicles. How many spaces will be available, how many will have access to Black Creek and what impact it will have on the creek and the surrounding environment remains unanswered to the residents who've called that portion of Black Creek home for years.

"What sad is, we don't know what's going on, and nobody seems to care," said Mystique Matson. "It seems like it changes all the time. We can't get an answer."

Ancient City Land Management con-



Since construction started on the RV Park at the former Girl Scout Camp, Orange sludge now plagues portions of the Black Creek North Prong.



STAFF PHOTO BY DON COBLE

As many as 150 dump trucks haul dirt in and out daily at the new North Fork Land Management RV Park site of the old Gateway Council Girl Scout Camp in Middleburg.

roversially bought the camp from Gateway Girl Scouts on Sept. 24, 2019, for \$3.7 million with a plan to use a portion of the property for a camp and dig a 50-foot-deep, 60-acre borrow pit to sell the dirt to the Florida Department of Transportation for overpass buildup on the First Coast Expressway.

Gateway Girls Scouts sold the property because it owed a monthly \$25,000 note after they obtained a \$4.4 million mortgage.

The Clay County Zoning and Planning heard more than two hours of public comments from residents along Lazy Acres Road, Long Bay Road and Sunrise Farms Road, who argued the development would add dangerous heavy equipment traffic and threaten the creek and the local environment. Others said another borrow pit between Green Cove Springs and Keystone Heights led to water level drops in the Lake Region and forced the St. Johns River Water Management District to redirect water 17 miles from Black Creek's South Prong to replenish Lakes Brooklyn and Geneva.

The board voted, 7-0, to deny the request, although their vote was only a suggestion that would be passed to the Board of County Commissioners.

Ancient City also said it would turn the site into an outdoor recreation site and allow Gateway to use the facilities after it upgrades, said Ancient City CEO and President Dan Laubacker.

For now, until the two sides work out a new long-term lease agreement, Scouts will only be able to use the Jacoby Center near



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Trees at the Girl Scout Camp have been bulldozed and burned to make room for as many as 242 to 453 RV sites.

the camp's entrance, which has office and meeting space. Jacobs said that Scouts will likely also be limited to the Jacoby Center during renovations, which have not been scheduled.

The upgrades didn't materialize.

It was zoned for 42 high-value homes to be built around a large manmade lake to create a unique upscale development, but that never materialized.

Ancient City also said it would turn the site into an outdoor recreation site and allow Gateway to use the facilities after it upgrades. Ancient City CEO and President Dan Laubacker said this.

Until the two sides work out a new long-term lease agreement, Scouts will only be able to use the Jacoby Center near the camp's entrance, which has office and meeting space. Jacobs said that Scouts will likely also be limited to the Jacoby Center during renovations, which have not been scheduled.

The upgrades didn't materialize.

Ancient City then took a different approach by turning to the St. Johns River Water Management District and the Army Corps of Engineers to gain approval for its plan for a borrow pit by assuring they would abide by all water and environmental guidelines.

Apparently, much of the soil they attempted to sell to FDOT wasn't suitable for roadway construction, so it was returned to the site.

Ancient City became North Fork Land

Management, and a new plan was created to build a rental RV park. A plan filed with the Clay County Planning and Zoning Section calls for North Fork to create 174 RV sites using a new land development code amendment called the Rural Event Venue. That allows for conditional use as the site is at least 50 acres, there are at least 12 RVs for each acre, a minimum 50-foot buffer zone from surrounding properties, and nobody can stay in one location for more than 180 days. The North Fork property easily satisfies all of those requirements.

Paperwork filed with SJRWMD lists the number of possible RV sites as 453, while other documents use the figure 242.

Attempts to contact Laubacker in 2019, 2020 and 2024 were unsuccessful.

"We're concerned that people are going to come here, and they're not going to treat it as their home," said Rebecca Antweiler. "It's not just a few people. We're talking about 1,000 people."

Matson said Black Creek has a no-wake zone from the Blanding Bridge to the RV park. She wonders how many of the out-of-town RV renters will abide by it.

"This is our home," she said. "We're already dealing with gray water. It's supposed to be brown. The water management district tested it and said they weren't concerned about the discharge. Again, it's like nobody cares. We have these huge dump trucks speeding up and down the road all day, back and forth. Nobody's listening to us. Nobody's telling us anything."



# Petco Love awards Safe Animal Shelter \$20,000 for new play yard

MIDDLEBURG – Safe Animal Shelter received a \$20,000 grant investment from national nonprofit Petco Love to support their lifesaving work for pets in Clay County and Northeast Florida.

Petco Love is a national nonprofit that is leading change for pets by harnessing the power of love to make communities and pet families closer, more substantial, and healthier. Since its founding in 1999, Petco Love has invested nearly \$400 million in adoption and other lifesaving efforts. Petco Love helps find loving homes for pets in partnership with Petco and more than 4,000 organizations — like ours — across North America, with more than 6.9 million pets adopted and counting.

“Our investment in Safe Animal Shelter is part of more than \$12 million in investments recently announced by Petco Love to power local organizations across the country as part of our commitment to create a future in which no pet is unnecessarily euthanized,” said Susanne Kogut, president of Petco Love. “Our local investments are only part of our strategy to empower animal lovers to drive lifesaving change alongside us. We launched Petco Love Lost, a free national lost and found database that uses patented photo-matching technology to simplify searching for lost pets.”

“Thanks to the incredible support of Petco Love, we’ve been able to transform our front play yard into a much more functional space,” said Safe’s Executive Director Sandy Summerton. “What was once a single yard is now three separate play areas, each enclosed by a secure six-foot fence.

“This renovation has been a game-changer, allowing more of our dogs to enjoy outdoor time simultaneously and allowing the public to see them in a fun, playful setting instead of confined to kennels.

“Outdoor time is so important for the well-being of our dogs. It gives them a chance to stretch, socialize, and simply be dogs. While they’re in the yards, we also work with them on basic commands and provide opportunities for free play, which helps enrich their lives and prepares them for adoption.

“Thank you, Petco Love, for helping us create a brighter, more engaging environment for our furry friends!”

Safe Animal Shelter is a nonprofit organization working to reduce the number of cats and dogs euthanized in Clay and Duval counties and Northeast Florida.



Safe Animal Shelter became Clay County’s first no-kill shelter in 1991 to provide housing for more homeless pets until they could find a forever home.

Since its inception, it has provided loving care to more than 27,000 cats and dogs until they were adopted into loving homes. In 2024, it accepted 1,918 dogs and cats and found homes for 1,914.

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# 'If It Don't Twang'

## Chad Eagan blazes his musical journey with new song

By Don Coble  
don@claytodayonline.com

OAKLEAF – Chad Eagan wasn't looking for international stardom and untold wealth when he cut his first record two months ago. Not that he would turn down the notoriety, but the reason for preserving his words, music and emotions for eternity was grounded in a more self-serving reason.

"I just want to be heard," he said.

Chad is a stylist at Bleach Please Salon on Wells Road who maintains a fully booked schedule during the day, and his regulars often wait weeks for an appointment.

Hair is what he knows, but singing is his passion. And after singing everyone else's music, the Oakleaf crooner decided to do something alone.

Eagan went to rocketsongs.com (Original Songs for Original Artists), where aspiring artists can buy music and lyrics from aspiring songwriters. The agreement gave Chad complete rights to the song, and



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Chad booked three hours at the Greenteam Media recording studio, but he had "If It Don't Twang" recorded in 45 minutes.

in return, they both agreed to share any possible royalties.

"I've been thinking about doing this, releasing this project on my own song," Chad said. "I've been getting booked for all these shows, and I'm tired of always doing cover songs. I wanted something I could put out there and say it's mine. I just went online. I started looking. I was listening to all these demos and those songs and came across 'If It Don't Twang,' and I was like that's it. It's great."

Chad set up three hours of recording time at Jacksonville's Greenteam Media on Nov. 18, but he only needed 45 minutes to turn the project into a song. Now, it's available on 21 streaming platforms, including Spotify, Amazon, YouTube, iHeart Radio and Apple.

"I was looking for a country song because that's what all my bookings have been," Chad said. "That song let me lean into



The engineer at Greenteam Media recording studios liked what he heard.



Chad Eagan's "If it Don't Twang" is available for download at 21 streaming services.

it.

Over the last few years, I've kind of gotten away from country because I connected with stuff that had a little more soul. I just kind of went back to my roots. It's taken a few months to catch up, but I realized you can't wait for a break. You have to make your own break. When I started with music and singing publicly, it was country."

A year ago, Chad was one of 68 who competed in the Jax Idol competition. He survived weeks of eliminations to finish second. He said he doesn't plan to compete this year and will concentrate on finding another song to record.

Chad will sing four songs at the Rising Star Showcase on Jan. 25 at 7 p.m. at the Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park and Campground in Live Oak. He will be one of 14 artists to appear. A few will then be invit-

ed to Nashville to perform at Jason Aldean's Kitchen and Rooftop Bar.

Chad is also scheduled to open for Chuck Wicks at Suwannee Music Park on Feb. 8.

"I'm not looking to be the next Kenny Chesney or Tim McGraw," he said. "I just want to hear my music out there because I enjoy it. I guess I get just as much satisfaction out of that as if I were a huge celebrity. I want to be heard. I want to say, 'Hey, I have music out there. Listen to it.'"

"I'm not chasing stardom. If it just happens, I'll accept the blessing if the right ears hear it and it opens the door. But I'm not out chasing Hollywood or Nashville.

"But, it does feel good having strangers come up and be like, 'Hey, you're that guy.'"

And it's even better when they tell him they heard his song.

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# Williamsons closing family grocery store to seek life adventures

By Don Coble  
don@claytodayonline.com

MELROSE – The bucket list is long. Uninterrupted time with his granddaughter. The Grand Canyon. The USS Arizona. Visiting Redwoods National Park. Yellowstone. Mount Rushmore. Feeling the mist of Niagara Falls on his face. Sleeping in.

Bruce Williamson can't remember the last time he took a vacation, much less focusing on anything other than running the family's Williamson's Food Store.

That will change soon. There's a deal in place to sell the store on the corner of State Roads 21 and 26 at the end of the month. If all goes as planned, he and his wife, Charlene, will have two months to sell the remaining inventory and turn the keys to the new owner.

Since the grocery items are being sold, it's not likely it will remain a grocery. Bruce said he doesn't know what the prospective owner will do with the property.

After working 14 to 16 hours every day, he knows he's ready to move on.

"My father was the original owner. He opened it in 1972, and he passed away in 2018," Bruce said. "I asked Paul [Seay, meat cutter] what he wanted to do, and he said he wanted to work as long as possible. He announced he would be retiring on Feb. 10 because his knees were getting bad. I said when he leaves, I'm going with him."

Williamson's has been the cornerstone of the Melrose community for generations. Grandchildren watch Bruce and Paul cut meat at the back of the store the same way Bruce's father, Romie, did it.

Longtime customers posted their feelings about the store closing on a website dedicated to news about Melrose.

"I have nothing but love for the Williamson family and all that they brought to this community," Brian Moore wrote. "I'm saddened to hear they will be closing, but I sincerely hope Bruce enjoys a much-deserved retirement."

"This past week, I picked up the freshest, most tender cube steak (Paul prepped it 5 minutes before I bought it), and it made for a delicious early family Christmas meal," said Deborah Collins Strickland. "We love you Williamson's. You'll be tremendously missed!"

"Been going there since I was a kid, brought my kids in there," Jessica Ramirez wrote. "Praying someone takes it over and



STAFF PHOTOS BY DON COBLE

Bruce Williamson looks forward to spending time with his granddaughter and traveling the country after he completes the sale of Williamson's Food Store.



Bruce said Paul made 200 pounds of breakfast sausage before Christmas, which sold out in three days. The store's reputation for its fresh-cut meat extends well into the four corners of Clay, Bradford, Alachua and Putnam counties. The butcher shop must make fresh sausage in 100-pound increments. Bruce and Paul will turn their meat-grinding machine off in less than a month for good.

"I'm sure my wife will find things for me to do at home," Bruce said. "I'm ready to find out."

What the Williamsons want to do most is spend time with their granddaughter. She lives near Dayton, Ohio, and they've only seen her four times.

"They flew here for Christmas and arrived on Tuesday," Bruce said. "I was so busy; I didn't even see her until Thursday. I can't wait to spend more time with her."

"I haven't been on a vacation in years. There are places I want to go and things I want to see. I want to see it all."

And start working down a bucket list that's been a lifetime in the making.



Williamson's meat cutter Paul Seay has worked at the iconic store for nearly 40 years. He will retire on Feb. 10.

makes it another local grocery store."

Paul has been in the grocery business since 1964 and at Williamson's for nearly 40 years.

"We specialize in things that a lot of stores don't, and we take time with the customers," he said. "I see how the meat industry has changed over the years, with people not cooking like they did 30 years ago, eating lots of fast food. But we're still hanging in there trying to please the customers."



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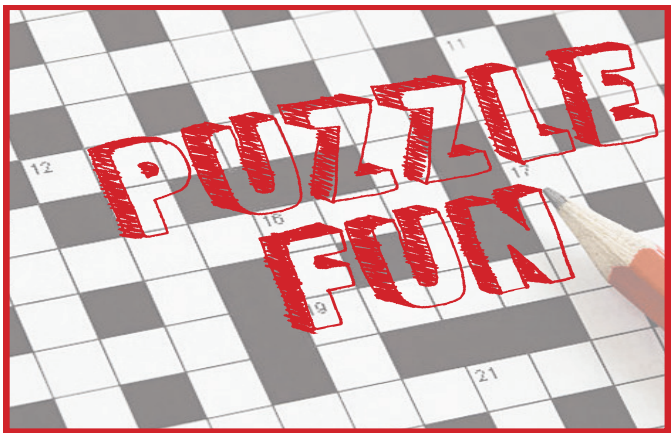
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Level: Advanced

VISIT FLORIDA  
showcases county  
with promotional video

CLAY COUNTY – The county’s tourism team is proud to announce the release of VISIT FLORIDA’s “60 Seconds in Clay County” video. Clay County was one of the destinations selected for this feature — a special thanks to VISIT FLORIDA and Cycle Now Media for this production. It was challenging to narrow down the experiences throughout the County to showcase in just 60 seconds; however, we ensured that each of our seven “neighborhoods” was featured.

“We had been talking with VISIT FLORIDA recently about ways to become more engaged and use some of their resources, and quite frankly, tell the story of Clay County on their site,” said Kimberly Morgan, Director of Tourism and Film Development. “They made the decision they needed more content on Clay County. We were ecstatic they selected us.”

Morgan extended a heartfelt and huge thanks to the wonderful local business owners who worked with the county and the residents, family, and friends who explored Clay County during the video shoot. Without local businesses, we have no products or stories to market. The video was posted on the following channels: Facebook - @ClayCtyTourism; Instagram – ExploreClay; and YouTube – ExploreClay. You can also download the ExploreClay app in your app store.

The video will be used in Clay County Tourism’s destination marketing efforts locally, nationwide, and globally through its marketing initiatives and those of our marketing partners. Tourism is why the state doesn’t have a state income tax, saving Clay County residents nearly \$300 in annual tax savings.

CRYPTO FUN

Solve the code to discover words related to skating.  
Each number corresponds to cooking.  
(Hint: 24 = E)

- A. 13 15 18 20 24  
Clue: Thin metal on skate
- B. 2 9 24 24 15 1  
Clue: Rolling devices
- C. 15 18 22 24 1  
Clue: Tie up shoes
- D. 1 25 24 24 20  
Clue: Fast pace

Answers: A. blade B. wheels C. laces D. speed

WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to skating.

RLLREO

Answer: Roller

GUESS WHO ?

I am an actor born in Australia on January 13, 1990. Before becoming an actor, I worked in the construction industry. I am best known for a prominent role in “The Hunger Games” series, as well as my high-profile marriage to a pop singer.

Answer: Liam Hemsworth

AT THE RINK

WORD SEARCH

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

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

WORDS

- AXEL
- BLADE
- BREAKAWAY
- CHECK
- COAST
- COMPETITION
- DISCIPLINE
- EDGE
- FLIP
- HOCKEY
- ICE
- JUMP
- LIFT
- NOVICE
- PROGRAM
- RINK
- ROLLER
- SEASON
- SINGLES
- SKATING
- SPEED
- SPIN
- WARMUP
- ZAMBONI

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



# SPORTS

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## Two 'Dream Teamers' meet Duke, Ole Miss players

Former OPHS great  
Kendy Charles visits

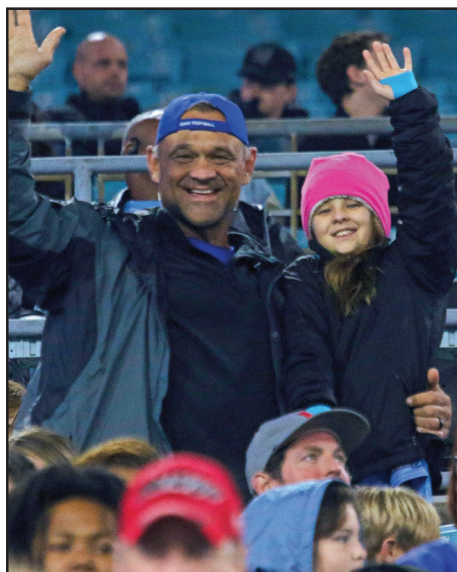
By Randy Lefko

randy@claytodayonline.com

JACKSONVILLE – For nine-year-old Kasey Ladd, the journey has been since she was just two years old while for Te'Von Berry, a 16-year-old senior at Ridgeview High School, his journey has been quick and surprising, but, for both, the excitement of seeing some of college's biggest, fastest and strongest football players seemed to bring more smiles in one day than possible.

"We grant dreams to children that are battling critical illness that live in north Florida," said Ashley Smith, the Dreams Come True Dream Manager for Wednesday's Meet the Dreamers celebration at Everbank Field in Jacksonville as part of the TaxSlayer Gator Bowl festivities with an opportunity to be on the field for the Duke vs. Ole Miss football game on Thursday. "We look every year to find 12 children to be on our Dream Team. For some of these children, their diagnosis has them unable to play team sports or that their condition does not allow contact sports."

For the Dream Teamers on Wednesday, two from Clay County included Ladd, who was with parents Michael and Jessica, and



Right: Michael and Kasey Ladd wave from the stands at the TaxSlayer Gator Bowl. Former Orange Park high football standout Kendy Charles, now a defensive end for Duke University, took time to visit with 9-year-old Kasey Ladd. Ladd, who is a leukemia survivor, and her dad Michael with wife Jessica visited everbank Field on Wednesday before the TaxSlayer Gator Bowl football bowl game as part of a Dreams Come True celebration.

little brother Finn, and Berry, who was with his parents Andrea and Te'Von, Sr. Ladd, diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia for Kasey at the age of two and recently declared a survivor and, for Te'Von, who at age 16 and while working out with his dad, complained on knee pain and then shoulder pain, was found to have Osteosarcoma, a

bone cancer just a year ago.

"We do a cross-section of children from area towns to bring everybody together to represent what we do best as a community," said Smith, 10 years as the Dream Manager in north Florida. "We have children here today with birth defects, some sort of cancer, injuries from accidents, heart conditions and

kids still doing chemotherapy, some that have finished their therapy a few years ago. They come here for the camaraderie and fellowship that they don't get during therapy. They get to feel like a kid again."

Kasey Ladd, who commented that she

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Ridgeview High senior Te’von Berry, who had blood cancer diagnosis in 2023, was also part of the Dreams Come True celebration at Everbank Field with mom and dad Te’Von, Sr., and Andrea. The Berry family also enjoyed a little tailgating before the TaxSlayer Gator Bowl between Duke and Ole Miss.

Dreams  
from page 21

had a handful of friends at the Dream Team meet and greet, said the chance to be able to be up close with the very big college football guys was exciting.

“I want to meet the biggest guy on the team,” said Kasey Ladd, who was also enjoying chats with the Ole Miss cheerleaders. “These are guys that are some of the very best athletes in the country. That’s a big deal.”

For Micheal Ladd, who detailed his family’s shift in family focus to Kasey’s diagnosis at age two, the Dream Team opportunities sometimes make the grind of his daughter’s plight just a reminder that his family is not alone.

“The family is always under stress with appointments, therapy and just knowing your daughter has a potentially fatal disease, Dreams Come True gave her a trip to Disneyworld to just let the family let go of some stress and do family stuff,” said Ladd, who along with son Finn, has two teenage daughters; Hannah and McKenna, one at Clay, one at Fleming Island high schools. “They partnered with Give Kids the World and we were there for a week. She is also going to the Boggy Creek organization for camping this summer.”

Ladd, who retired as a Clay County Emergency Manager, commented that his wife, Jessica, took on the duties of home-

schooling Kasey as a more intensive and structured school day.

“She was with her 24/7 with the therapy so the home school was the next step,” said Ladd. “They even organized a field trip to Boston to see some historical places, including clam chowder.”

Jessica Ladd was a frequent volunteer in the school system and chose to home-school Kasey along the way. Kasey’s diagnosis came about after a car accident that got a blood panel done afterward that showed some raised blood levels.

“She had fevers for a week straight and no test could nail it down,” said Jessica Ladd. “Followups got no results, but the car accident, as we checked her out at the emergency room, they found her numbers had bottomed out. From there, they confirmed the Leukemia.”

Micheal Ladd said his daughter’s recovery may have had some Divine and Family Intervention. “Of course, the medical input is going to be a big part, but we tried to keep a positive environment around her, our family got really close and we found, with the Dream Team community, that we weren’t alone,” said Ladd. “That helps to know when we felt bad and I have heard some of the athletes here talk about the bravery of these kids when they feel bad in practice or in a game, that these kids remind them that they don’t have it as bad as they feel. It’s a very unique bond between the kids here and the

athletes are affected every bit as much as the kids.”

For Andrea Berry, August 2023 was a key changing point in her, her husband and Te’Von’s family’s life.

“In August 2023, he started complaining about pain in his knee, we got an XRay just thinking his working out with his dad may have done something like a pulled muscle or tendon, but they saw something on the XRay right above his knee,” said Andrea. “We saw an oncologist and they told us it was a cancerous tumor. In September 2023, he started chemotherapy and some surgeries to remove part of his knee where he has some metal implants now.”

For Dad, Te’Von, Sr., the impact of his son’s diagnosis was like a punch in the stomach. “He was complaining about his knee pain and I just thought we may have gone too hard in the gym,” said Te’Von, Sr. “It hits you right in the heart when your seemingly healthy son is told he has cancer.”

Te’Von’s love of sports, especially basketball, came out when he got to ask a few questions about Duke defensive end Kendy Charles, an Orange Park High Raider football All-Stater. When asked about playing against his Ridgeview football team, Charles recollected that he played a few games, even an upset. “Ridgeview beat us one time in the three times I think we played them,” said Charles, a fifth-year player for Duke’s defense. “I would just say you have to go after

your dreams and keep working hard.”

For Te’Von, who plans to attend Florida A & M University when done at Ridgeview, his inquiry to Charles about college life got some laughs from his parents.

“You just have to manage your time right and stay in the books,” said Charles, who finished his first four years at Liberty University with a degree in sports management before finishing his college football at Duke. “You have to cherish your college time and you will make the most friends in your lifetime. Have fun, study hard, and make a lot of friends.”

For Kasey Ladd, meeting not only Kendy Charles was a blast, but having Ole Miss offensive tackle Cam East, a 6’-8”, 325-pound athlete, visit her table was equally exciting.

“I wasn’t allowed to play until my freshman year in high school because I was much bigger than the other kids,” said East. “I’ve been getting filmed up on the Kendy Charles guy for Duke (Orange Park High grad) who may be lining up right in front of me.”

Charles admitted to Ladd that his first reason for football, as a junior high athlete, was honestly to make more friends.

“I noticed that a lot of the other kids were friends with the football players and I thought that I had to do that to make friends,” said Charles, who attended Orange Park Junior High School. “In college, the football teams are kind of a big deal on campus, too.”



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