

# KEYSTONE HEIGHTS HERALD

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## Foreign affairs: Keystone Heights HS students inducted



PHOTO COURTESY OF KEYSTONE HEIGHTS HS

Spanish group members (from left): Aubrey Nelson, Marli Hemphill, Natalie Layfield, Alyssa Townsend and Ryder Thomas

By Jenn Samsel  
For Clay Today

Not every day does a group of students master a language and truly shine in their skills. Only a privileged handful earns this prestigious honor yearly, making it a remarkable achievement.

On Friday, Feb. 28, the 21st Annual Induction Ceremony of the French Honor Society, La Société Honoraire de Français, took place alongside the inaugural induction of the Spanish Honor Society, La Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica: La Luz de Keystone Chapter, in Keystone Heights. All told, there were 13 students inducted into the French Honor Society and six students into the Spanish Honor Society.

The ceremony included previous inductees reciting the motto in French and then passing a candle to each new member. After receiving their candle, the new members recited the motto for the first time, after which they would receive a certificate and a pin.

Additionally, graduating seniors were presented with a special medal.

"The students receive a ribbon with a pin which has the French flag and the American flag, as a symbol of our friendship with France with the year on it," said Brenda Velez, a Keystone Heights HS French teacher who oversees the French Honor Society.

"The students can put it on their college applications to stand out amongst all the other people competing to get to those few spots when they enter college. They can also put it on scholarship applications for the same reason to be chosen, plus they have proof that they are an honor student, which makes them a scholar recipient, and then job applications to show that they are the top student because they received hundreds of applicants.

"There are only 13 people that are

**SEE FOREIGN AFFAIRS, 6**

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### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

There are four differences between Picture A and Picture B.



Answers:  
1. Extra plant on right 2. Squirrel in background  
3. Flowers in blue pot 4. Missing plant on cart

## GUESS WHO?

I am a country singer born in Texas on April 29, 1933. I grew up in the aftermath of the Great Depression and played music for money to avoid picking cotton. I wrote my first song at age 7 and had many country hits throughout my long career. I also am an activist and actor.

Answer: Willie Nelson

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CLUES ACROSS

1. Take heed  
5. One's superior  
9. Prepped meat  
11. Tighten anew  
13. Type of textile fiber  
15. Animalistic  
16. When you hope to get somewhere  
17. Offender  
19. Former NYC mayor Ed  
21. Type of cryptocurrency  
22. Mauna \_\_, Hawaiian volcano  
23. Herring-like fish  
25. Popular PBS program  
26. Congressman (abbr.)  
27. Flightless Australian birds  
29. Defrosted  
31. Prior Yankee sensation Kevin  
33. Nasal mucus  
34. Some are southern  
36. A place to construct  
38. Popular beer brand  
39. Shouts of farewell  
41. Network of nerves  
43. Make a mistake  
44. Showed old movie  
46. Body parts  
48. A divisor  
52. Congressional investigatory body  
53. Papers  
54. Most unnatural  
56. Judge the worth of something  
57. Makes sounds while sleeping  
58. Which  
59. Hungarian Violinist

CLUES DOWN

1. Pages  
2. Head pain  
3. A loud utterance  
4. Large brown seaweed  
5. Hulu's chef Carmine  
6. Greek mountain  
7. Made final  
8. Bar  
9. Tai subgroup  
10. What you eat  
11. Teaches again  
12. Small constellation  
14. Type of berry  
15. Cows fattened for meat  
18. A way to hoof it  
20. Exaggerated a role  
24. About two  
26. Long upholstered seat  
28. What employees earn  
30. Fiber from a coconut husk  
32. Digits  
34. Polish by rubbing  
35. Liquid body substances  
37. Furniture with open shelves  
38. Edible part of a chicken  
40. Satisfy  
42. Tool used to remove  
43. Icelandic poems  
45. Swiss village  
47. Drunks  
49. Evergreen plant genus  
50. Light precipitation  
51. Ribosomal ribonucleic acid  
55. An informal debt instrument

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OPINIONS & VIEWPOINTS

# New to Clay, they say? Mercy, I know the feeling

By Jim Luksic  
Managing Editor

It was only my third day on the job when trusty colleague Don Coble invited me to Mercy Support Services.

The purpose: Clay SafetyNet Alliance was hosting its monthly assembly for “New to Clay” nonprofits. When Don mentioned, “There will be some people there you ought to meet,” he was spot-on but understated his sales pitch.

At first, I had thought the gathering would be a standard meet-and-greet wherein 15 to 20 folks sip coffee, make small talk about organizations, and then exchange business cards with “contact info.”

As it turns out, my assumption couldn’t have been more delusional. The first indication of what was to come at Mercy Support Services occurred outside, where the



Jim Luksic

modest-sized parking lot was chockablock with vehicles three rows deep into the adjacent grass.

The get-together took me by storm in a positive way – not an easy thing to do.

For the uninitiated (which included me until late February): Clay SafetyNet Alliance is “a network of Clay County faith-based nonprofit, local government agencies” that provide social services; moreover, it operates in conjunction with Shaping Clay enrichment programs.

As I waited in the lobby for my coworker Don to arrive, it wasn’t two minutes before Janey Fox greeted me.

Rather than merely say, “Hi, welcome” before moving on – but Janey took time to converse and handed me a sign-up sheet to provide my name, occupation, email address and so forth. The extra effort was a clear sign those involved were genuinely interested in welcoming newcomers and keeping us in the loop.

Several dozen attendees were mingling before the business, which set up shop in a spacious room with occupied chairs wall to wall.

While striving to shoehorn myself into one of the few remaining seats, a woman asked, “Are you Jim?” Instead of turning around to see if she was addressing somebody of the same name, I nodded as we exchanged pleasantries.

The lady was Don’s dutiful wife, Nancy, who had saved a chair for me.

That morning’s surprises would continue: After a brief opening prayer, all attendees – whether scheduled guest speakers or not – stood up and introduced themselves. It dawned on me the domino effect would soon reach my corner, where I literally rose to the occasion as the new face of Clay Today’s editorial department.

The interactive approach broke the ice; any preconceived tension was thawed.

It wasn’t long before I sensed the meeting and organizations were better than advertised. Everybody was sincerely concerned with helping one another improve the county and its residents

One by one, the nonprofits’ representatives described their services and mission while answering questions from curious

SEE NEW TO CLAY, 5

# This Month in History

## Five years ago, 2020

- Sheriff Darryl Daniels pulled his proposal to keep Clay County Sheriff’s Office deputies in Clay County schools from the Board of County Commissioners agenda meeting Tuesday night, paving the way for the school board to create its own police force and ending weeks of back-and-forth between Daniels and the school board.
- Keystone Heights High has earned the first College Board Advanced Placement Computer Science Female Diversity Award for achieving high female representation in AP Computer Science Principles.
- While only a few short-term rental properties like AirBnB homes have popped up locally, more could be on the way as the council recently learned Florida law does not allow municipalities to ban these types of rental businesses.

## 10 years ago, 2015

- Where seven-year-old Somer Thompson’s life was taken, another form of life will grow. As she hinted at without confirming last month, Diena Thompson announced March 16 that the Somer Thompson Foundation is moving ahead with plans to turn the home where her daughter was killed into a community garden. On Feb. 12, the former home of killer Jared Harrell was burnt to the ground as part of a training exercise spearheaded by the Orange Park Fire Department.
- When St. Johns County resident John Risler turned 64, he was faced with having to understand and then maneuver something that had previously been foreign to him – Medicare. Now a volunteer with ElderSource, northeast Florida’s Area on Aging agency, he helps seniors overcome the same fear he once had.



# Word OF THE WEEK

Word of the Week is a feature that aims to help readers boost their vocabulary in a meaningful way that has practical application. Each week, our editorial staff presents a word, its definition and its use in a sentence.

**Vespertine:** (VES-per-tahyn) an adjective meaning active or occurring in the evening.

“The pub is lovely in the daytime, but it comes alive when the vespertine crowd arrives after supper.”

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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 Jim Luksic at [jim@claytodayonline.com](mailto:jim@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.

NEW TO CLAY  
from page 4

audience members.

A few of those good Samaritans in the house: Associates from T.E.A.M. Dad, which mentors and empowers new fathers; UF Health Jacksonville Dr. Leon Haley's Brain Wellness Program, which helps military veterans and first responders who sustained concussions; and Florida Epilepsy Alliance, whose health professional YaSheika "Ya Ya" Solomon gave insightful tips about how to react to seizures (for starters, it's a matter of TRUST).

For upward of two hours, the room was teeming with meaningful discourse. The gathering was a treasure trove of philanthropy – not to mention a goldmine of story ideas – on full display.

The meetings occur on the "third Thursday of each month," which means the next one – if my smartphone's calendar is accurate – will be March 20. If you were me, you wouldn't hesitate to attend and chime in.

Keystone Heights Heritage fest a nostalgic celebration



PHOTO BY JENN SAMSEL

Visitors check out a Keystone Heights Fire Dept. display during the city's Heritage Festival on March 8-9.

By Jenn Samsel  
for Clay Today

Keystone Heights invited everyone to embark on a nostalgic journey during its Heritage Festival celebrating the city's rich history and unforgettable moments that have

shaped the community over the decades.

On Saturday, March 8, and Sunday, March 9, the Keystone Heights Heritage Committee showcased various historical museum pieces at the Keystone Heights Pavilion.

The exhibition highlighted the town's

history, featuring key elements such as the Keystone Heights Fire Department and the Keystone Heights Inn, which were the display's main focal points.

The event unfolded over two dynamic days, spotlighting an impressive lineup of four inspiring speakers.

On Saturday, Christine Arnold, chair of the Keystone Chronicles and Heritage, discussed the history of Chautauqua, a social movement in the United States that lasted until the mid-1920s. She delivered a vibrant and engaging presentation.

"Keystone needs a museum, and this was a way to display the fact that we need it, to show what we have, and to bring Chautauqua back," Arnold said.

"You can't buy history, and Keystone Heights was designated the permanent Chautauqua, the winter Chautauqua of the South. It's about everybody gathering in our community and many relocating from other states, which helped build this fab-

SEE HERITAGE FEST, 11



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FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
from page 1

eligible, so it's pretty elite," Velez said. To be selected for this award and inducted, a student must have completed two years of the language, an A grade, be in the second year or second semester, and have an overall GPA of 3.2. The French program began in 2004 and has continued since. The Spanish program has now become part of the induction, starting in its first year. "I wanted them to be recognized, and they ought to be recognized for their achievement. Next year, we'll offer Spanish three and so forth, so they can complete the four years, because

one of the things that Florida offers students is a complete four years of a world language -- either Spanish or French or any other language -- during their high school, which is the seal of biliteracy by the state of Florida," said Spanish teacher Diana Scarborough. Students who earn this type of achievement can receive scholarships, get into prestigious colleges, and apply for jobs, showing employers they can speak more than one language. A table of French and Spanish foods was available for all families attending the ceremony.



Additional group members (front row, from left): Kherrington Norman, Skylar Brown, Antonia McCormick, Schiley Starling, Evie Hallberg, Lili Zielinski, Tinleigh Gubics, Briley Kendrick, Braelyn Zurek, Ryleigh Spivey, Kenly Chitty, Alexis Mitola, Alexys Schleeter, Kayden Westberry, Kyra Cogley; (back row) Dominick Rodgers, Savannah Hem, Olivia Griffin, Owen Richards, Lilliana Booth, Gloria Gilmore, Hunter Sheppard, Maddox Hay, Christian Boulet, Rena Reddish, Ava Herman, Benjamin Mann, Brandon Nagle, Jack Poncher, and Wesley Poncher. (Students not pictured: Joshua Blank, Vaeda Blumberg, Dallas Decrosta, Ethan Franklin, Christopher Gray, Heather Jarzynka, Hailyn Knight, Katelyn Kruegar, Ashly McCarvthy, Will Ross)

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# Feat of Clay: State Forest trees appear to please



**By Randy Reagor**  
*For Clay Today*

MIDDLEBURG — After returning from my cycling trip to Jennings State Forest, I told my wife, “I think I know where Clay County got its name - the road to the entrance is made of clay!”

Without looking up from her Kindle, my wife replied, “You might want to do some research. It is probably named after a person.”

Alas, it is named after famous American statesman Henry Clay, but my enthusiasm for trail biking was not dampened.

Although the entrance at Live Oak Lane is sand and clay, it wasn’t too soft, so I had little difficulty traversing the first half mile.

Then it became hard-packed clay and gravel, which is what the main trails I’ve ridden in northeast Florida forests comprise.

After I reached the end of the road, I returned to one of the side streets, Artesian Farms Road, a great area to see birds. I say that because it runs beneath power lines, and as bird watchers know, those areas attract hawks, falcons, and other raptors. I wasn’t disappointed because Cooper’s hawk landed roughly 100 yards before me about a half mile down the road.

Then, as if to say, “I’m here too,” a wild turkey scooted in front of me a stone’s throw away.

The road became a little more difficult

**SEE FEAT OF CLAY, 9**

FEAT OF CLAY  
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because of loose sand, and I also encountered the only real hill on my journey, requiring me to gear down two clicks on my bike. After breathing heavily, I turned onto Three Bridges Road, probably my favorite part of my outing.

Side trails can often be sandy and hard to traverse. Three Brides wasn't. It was hard-packed with little loose sand, and most of it was as easy as cycling on clay. Jennings has 15 biological communities, and this area was mostly pine and completely shaded.

When I turned down Skeleton Key Road, I was startled by several robins and a

white-tailed deer. Seeing the deer so close confirmed what I already knew — you can get closer to wildlife on a bicycle because you don't shake the ground like you do on foot.

If side trails don't interest you, I suggest Bell Cemetery Road, which I took back to my car. If you're feeling adventurous, take the Rattlesnake Road loop.

Like many city-dwellers, part of the appeal of a place like Jennings is seclusion, and it didn't disappoint. This part of the forest was the first area I saw people, though I'm not sure they saw me.

Oh, well. Back to the city and streets not made of clay.

**When you go:**

- Make sure your bike tires are at least 28mm wide. Gravel riders prefer widths around 40mm or more for grip and stability on uneven surfaces.
- If you have a Bazon (bike bottle holder), ensure it fits snugly because it might bounce out. I suggest using a metallic bottle, because you'll hear it.
- Print out a map of the trail. Although the roads and trails are marked, it's a good idea.

For more information, visit: [fdacs.gov/Forest-Wildfire/Our-Forests/State-Forests/Jennings-State-Forest](https://fdacs.gov/Forest-Wildfire/Our-Forests/State-Forests/Jennings-State-Forest).



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# Consumers eggs-asperated by shortage, costs

Thousands of chicks sold as residents start constructing chicken coops

By Don Coble

MIDDLEBURG — Yvette Musgrove was talking to a customer when another opened the door at her Yum: A Southern Market. The door was triggered with an animal-sounding alarm to let her know somebody was entering her cozy market of knick-knacks and homemade bakery delectables.

Musgrove took a slow gaze at the door and mumbled.

“That door alert will be changed before I go home,” she said.

The sound of a chicken clucking or a rooster crowing every time the door opened suddenly seemed personal, as if they were laughing at her financial despair.

There’s nothing funny about the price of eggs jumping from \$28 a case for 30 dozen to \$230, Musgrove said.

Added to the prices of cream cheese and flour tripling in the last couple of years and the prices of butter and sugar doubling, Musgrove said she was going to use Sunday and Monday, the days her shop was closed, to decide which items to drop from her menu, which items to raise prices

on and which new items will require fewer eggs.

“How are you supposed to make a living when you lose money every day? If you raise your prices, the sad part is salaries haven’t raised as much as our prices have gone up,” Musgrove said. “We can only raise our prices so much, or we don’t have any customers. I’m not anchored by a Publix or a Walmart, so people that come here have to consciously make a decision to come in here.”

## Passing the costs to customers

Laws prohibit restaurants and bakeries from using eggs from homegrown or family farms. They must use sourced eggs delivered from a supplier.

Waffle House made the difficult decision on Feb. 3 to add a 50-cent surcharge for every egg, and that led to others adjusting their pricing. Considering the price of an egg has increased by 56 cents in the last three years, that’s probably a bargain.

When asked if customers have noticed a change, one server said, “All day, every



STAFF PHOTOS BY DON COBLE

Eggs seem to nest in a bed of money.

day.”

Huddle House charges an extra 50 cents for each egg, while the Black Creek Café was forced to charge 50 cents for an egg order. Denny’s announced on Tuesday an additional charge for egg-based dishes. It’s a \$2 value menu selection that now costs \$2.99.

Local breakfast spots like Sunrise to Sunset in Green Cove Springs, Maple Street Biscuits on Fleming Island, Nicole’s On the River in Orange Park, Kelly’s Country Kitchen in Clay Hill and Cracker Barrel and Metro Diner in Orange Park have not raised their prices or imposed surcharges.

Grumpy’s in Middleburg hasn’t changed any of its pricing, but owner Dell Hoard says that may soon change.

“Eggs are definitely becoming a challenge,” he said. “It’s come to the point where we may have to change our prices. A box of eggs costs us \$120. That’s more than twice what we used to pay, and our food vendor said it won’t go down. If anything, it’s only going to go up.”

Hoard said each box contains 15 dozen, and his location uses as many as 30 boxes a week.

“We have to do something about it. We can’t keep taking a hit like that,” he said.

“You want to keep the price at a point where people still want to eat out. We buy in bulk, so we get a fair price.”

Consumers are feeling the pinch at the grocery store. The price for one doz-

**SEE EGGS, 14**



Judy Underwood said her three Lavender Orpington chickens are like family members. Each chicken produces an egg a day, and she said the key is to make sure they are kept safe, fed and live in clean conditions.



Yum: A Southern Market owner Yvette Musgrove said the cost of eggs has increased from \$28 a case to \$230 a case in the last three years.

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from page 5

ulous event. This is where you can come to learn so many things and have lessons given by an artist or an author,” she explained.

Thom Parham spoke in the afternoon about the Maple Leaf Shipwreck National Landmark. He discussed the artifact conservator of one of America’s most significant Civil War archaeological sites.

On Sunday, the Rev. Carey Morford from the Mission of the Dirt Road spoke about Growing Gratitude, while Marilyn Young, the Extension Program assistant, discussed Native Plants and Trees.

The Keystone Heights Heritage Commission Chautauqua 2025 Pop-Up Museum

um featured a sampling of historic neon signs, furniture, miscellaneous items and multiple pictures displayed throughout the Pavilion, allowing visitors to travel down memory lane from a century ago. Plus, a highlight was their special guests, local Octogenarians -- including a couple in their 90s -- who shared precious memories from their early days of living in Keystone Heights. “What a treat,” Keystone Heights Mayor Nina Rodenroth said.

Despite less-than-ideal weather over the two days, the event saw a substantial turnout.

The Keystone Heights Heritage Commission advocates establishing a permanent museum in Keystone Heights, so everyone can appreciate its history and artifacts.

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## EGGS

from page 10

en Grade A large eggs on Monday, Feb. 24, was \$8.19 at Winn-Dixie, \$5.99 at Publix, \$5.97 at Walmart, \$6.49 brown free-range at Fresh Market, \$9.99 pasture-raised at Fresh Market and \$4.99 cage-free at Fresh Market. Fresh Market has a two-dozen limit, but there were no eggs on the shelves.

### The reason for nationwide shortage

Why are eggs so expensive?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the pandemic and inflation played a role, but the real culprit was the outbreak of bird flu, a highly transmissible and fatal strain of avian influenza.

The outbreak started in 2022 and became the largest in U.S. history. By Feb.

18, it affected more than 162 million birds. More importantly, it affected more than 126 million egg-laying birds, including chickens, which forced farmers to kill their flocks.

Fewer eggs and the lack of egg-laying chickens or a cure for the bird flu resulted in higher prices or the prospect of prices dropping in the foreseeable future.

### Getting eggs straight from the source

Homeowners found a way to beat high prices by turning their backyards into mini barnyards so chickens can lay eggs.

At Russell Feed and Farm Supply in Middleburg, the demand for chicks has far outweighed their supply. The store received 500 chicks on Feb. 5, which were gone before the close of business. They got another 500 a week later, and they were gone before they closed the doors.

"People are tired of paying so much, so they feel it's easier just to get their chicks and raise them if they're able," cashier

Stacy Duncan said.

Judy and Jim Underwood have had chickens for years. Judy grew up on a farm, and they decided years ago against paying for eggs.

"They taste much better than the store-bought eggs," Judy said. "They're much richer."

Judy said the new chicken owners probably don't know they won't be ready to lay eggs for six to eight months. The nationwide shortage is expected to last at least that long since new flocks are so young.

The Underwoods have three Lavender Orpington chickens, each producing an egg daily.

"If you don't wash the membrane off the outside of the egg, they can last a couple of weeks before you need to put it in the refrigerator," Jim said.

"The chickens are like pets for us," Judy said. "If you tell them something, they understand. If you ask them if they want a treat, they line up. If I sit down in my lawn chair, they'll jump up in my lap."



Cashier Stacy Duncan at Russell Feed and Farm Supply on County Road 218 in Middleburg said when the popular store receives a shipment of 500 chicks, they are all sold before the store closes, with nobody buying more than 12.

Former Clay County Commissioner Gayward Hendry used to get one call a month about people interested in buying chickens or eggs.

"I had eight calls in one week," he said. "Everyone wants to raise their chickens now. It's not that hard. Just keep them fed and keep predators away from them."

### Adjusting to an egg-free future

When Yvette Musgrove returned to work on Tuesday, two things were different: The price of her eclairs increased from \$6.50 to \$7, and the door chime was a dog barking.

"I know 50 cents doesn't seem like a lot, but it's a lot to me," Musgrove said.

"I got with my employees, and we started working on some egg-free recipes. We could use liquid eggs, but they don't taste the same. Everything that goes out of here has my name on it. I won't send anything out of here that isn't good. We survived COVID. We survived the construction on College Drive. This one really hit us hard, but we'll work our way through it.

"But you have to ask, when it will end?"

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# Construction won't detour Safe Animal Shelter

Roadwork on County Road 220 keeps rescue behind barriers



Traffic barrels, Detour and Road Closed signs direct the community away from the Safe Animal Shelter, which is on left with the yellow sign.



Leighton gets a kiss from Winnie, one of the eight puppies that came from Bradford County.

By Don Coble  
don@claytodayonline.com

MIDDLEBURG – The 55-gallon orange traffic barrels and Road Closed signs suggest otherwise, but Safe Animal Shelter Executive Director Sandy Summerton said it's

perfectly all right to ignore the barricades. The county's first no-kill animal shelter is trapped behind a wall of confusion, frustration and construction signs on County Road 220 between Knight Boxx Road and the bridge over Little Black Creek. The county said a road-widening project to four lanes will take 16 months, which

means Summerton's crew of volunteers will rely on word of mouth, social media and print media to remind the community they still accept dogs and cats and have plenty for adoption. CR 220 will be closed from Chief Rid-  
**SEE ANIMAL SHELTER, 16**

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Safe Animal Shelter Executive Director Sandy Summerton holds Winnie. She said the no-kill shelter expected a drop-off in adoptions due to construction on County Road 220. While it has affected operations, it hasn't been as dire as expected.

**ANIMAL SHELTER**  
from page 15

ought Trail to Knight Boxx until May 2026, which means the only way to get to Safe

Animal Shelter is to continue westbound on CR 200 past Knight Boxx and the Road Closed sign then make a U-turn 100 yards past the entrance.  
Another option is to make a right-turn

from Knight Box – though a sign at the intersection states “No right turns” – and make the same U-turn.  
“People are having difficulty finding us, because it says, ‘Local traffic only’ or ‘No thru traffic,’” Summerton said. “They’re not realizing that they can still come and see us. So, keep coming. Please tell everyone to keep coming to us.”  
The lobby is filled with puppies the shelter recently received from Bradford County, while the back wall is filled with caged cats.  
“We don’t have a lot of kittens on site, so when it gets into kitten season, we’ll probably have a lot,” Summerton said. “Right now, we can get all the dogs moving out. We’re getting a lot of dog adoptions, but the puppies just came in the other day, so we have a lot of puppies right now.”  
The shelter has talked with the construction company weekly about placing a digital sign at the intersection to inform the public that the shelter is open and driving around the closure is allowed.  
We’ve asked for the sign every week



One of eight puppies rescued from Bradford County.

since they started,” she said. “They said it’ll be here the next week. So far, it’s still not here.”  
The project started on Jan. 20.  
The shelter is open Tuesday through Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. To see dogs and cats that are available for adoption, visit [safeanimalshelter.com](http://safeanimalshelter.com).



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# Calendar of Events

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**OLD FASHIONED FARM DAY** at Penney Farms will be on March 22 from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. in and around Martina C. Kohler Park, off Clark Ave. by the Town of Penney Farms Historical Museum. There will be entertainment, games, contests, food trucks, historical farm equipment, exhibits, demonstrations, antiques and classic cars.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS** will meet on March 25 at 4 p.m. at 477 Houston St., Commissioners Meeting Room in the Administration Building, fourth floor.

**KEYSTONE HEIGHTS CENTENNIAL SPRING FLING** will be on March 28 and hosted by Friends of Keystone Heights.

**HOGS FOR DOGS** is on March 29 at 9:30 a.m. to benefit Clay County Humane Society. The motorcycle ride starts at Adamec Harley-Davidson, 1520 Wells Road, Orange Park, and will include stops at Cheers on Park Avenue in Orange Park, Cheyenne Saloon in East Palatka, Watering Holt at Smith Lake in Keystone Heights, Roger That Wings and Things in Green Cove Springs and end at Whitey's Fish Camp on Fleming Island. Cost is \$30 a rider. Register by March 1, and a rider is guaranteed a T-shirt and a goodie bag. Event includes food, music, raffles and prizes. Register at clayhumane.org or call (904) 276-7729.

**KEYSTONE HEIGHTS CENTENNIAL SPRING FLING** will be on March 29 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Keystone Heights Airport. Event will feature bounce houses, car show sponsored by Keystone Heights Rotary Club, craft vendors, food trucks, fantastic fire brigade, MHD Rockland plane tour of P-3 and entertainment by Raftus Brown and the Melrose Horns. Coolers and alcohol are prohibited.

**TURN TO STONE: A TRIBUTE TO ELO** will be on March 31 at 7 p.m. at the Thrasher-Horne Center. Tickets, which start at \$29, are available at the box office or at thcenter.org.

**ORANGE PARK TOWN COUNCIL** will meet on April 1 at 7 p.m. at Town Hall Council Chambers, 2042 Park Ave.

**GREEN COVE SPRINGS CITY COUNCIL** will meet on April 1 at City Hall Council Chambers, 321 Walnut St., at 6 p.m.

**CLAY COUNTY AGRICULTURAL FAIR** will open April 3 from 2-10 p.m. at the Clay County Fairgrounds. Sugar Ray and Uncle Kracker will perform at Cattleman's Arena at 7 p.m. Advance gate admission tickets and a \$500 Super VIP Pass for all concerts can be purchased at the Clay County Fair Box Office, online

at claycountyfair.org or by calling (904) 284-1615. Opening day tickets are \$5 for adults; unlimited rides armbands are \$17. Reserved concert seats range from \$20-\$150.

**CLAY COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD** will meet on April 3 from 6-9 p.m. at the Teacher Training Center, Fleming Island High, 2233 Village Square Pkwy.

SEE EVENTS, 21

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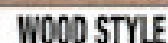
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GATE River Run 15K

## New record highlights River Run international return

KHHS Alex Guy top local finisher

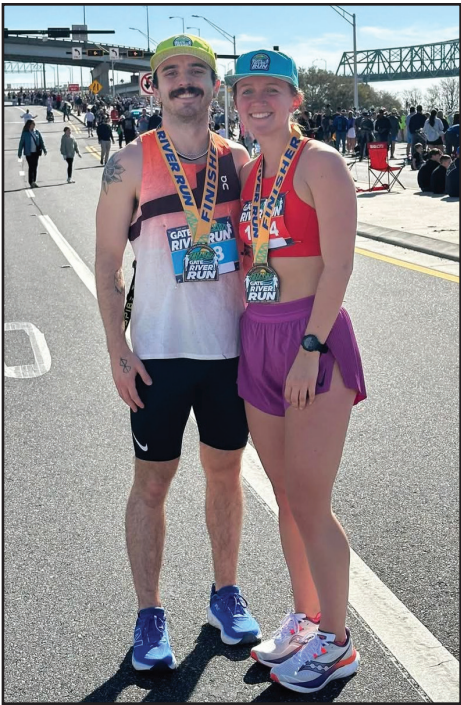
By Randy Lefko  
randy@claytodayonline.com

JACKSONVILLE - With a return to international runners competing in the GATE River Run 15k road running race in and around downtown Jacksonville, Kenyan Wesley Kiptoo answered the call of race director Doug Alred and delivered a record setting performance with Calli Hauger-Thackery from the United Kingdom making her best effort to elude Kiptoo to the finish line in her winning effort.

Kiptoo, a 25-year-old Iowa State University cross country standout and NCAA Indoor 5,000 meter champion in 2021, passed Hauger-Thackery on the down side of the infamous Hart Bridge then cruised into the finish line in a record setting 42 minutes, 10 seconds to break Todd Williams 42:20 previous record.

Hauger-Thackery, 32, followed Kiptoo with her win in the womens elite race with a 47:24 split which was just off the 2014 course record of 47:00 set by Shalana Flanagan.

Despite the invite to international runners, five American runners; led by by



Former Keystone Heights High cross country and track runner Alex Guy, now a graduate runner from Florida Southern College, had the best local finish at the Gate River Run 15K with a ninth in age group run in 52:37. With Guy is friend Karah McElhone, 21, who also ran the race finishing seventh in the 20-24 age group.

second place finisher Brian Barraza, 29, of Houston, an Olympic Trials 3,000 Steeplechase athlete, in 42:51.

Area runners with outstanding runs included; in mens 20-24, collegians Alex Guy of Keystone Heights High and a record setting cross country runner for Florida Southern College, finished ninth in 52:37; Matthew Stratton, a St. Johns Country Day School state cross country and track champion and now a runner at the University of Florida, was 12th in 53:37; Joel Nesi, 23, a Ridgeview High state cross country and track athlete, who recently finished a record setting career at Flagler College, was 13th in 53:41. James Snipes, 22, also from Ridgeview High state cross country, finished 33rd in 1:03:31 with Christian Mayfield, 20, of Orange Park High and now at Florida State College Jacksonville's national team, finished 36th in 1:03:43.

In the womens 14-19, St. Johns Country Day School senior Rebecca Stratton finished fifth in 1:05:48 to earn kitchen table supremacy off big brother Matthew Stratton (12th in 20-24) with Fleming Island High sophomore Eve Schlotthauer, 14, 11th in 1:08:36.



Fleming Island Pavement Killers running club member Vanessa Lain, 51, finished admirably with friend Cinzia Rothrock, behind in white, 52, with Rothrock outsprinting Lain at the finish to take 57th to Lain's 59th.

SEE RIVER RUN, 20



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RIVER RUN  
from page 19



STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO  
Gate River Run 15K record-setting champion Wesley Kiptoo, No. 77, runs with Pat Tierney of Pennsylvania in early miles of Gate River Run 15K on Saturday. Kiptoo won with 42:09 time to beat American Todd Williams record of 42:20.

In 13 and under girls, St. Johns had their pair of standouts in Kate Staten, 13, in third in 1:16:29 and Ella Rose Hanna, 13, in sixth, in 1:17:21.

Boys 13 Under got a third from Judson Myers, 13, in 1:02:09.

In womens 20-24, Fleming Island High

graduate Mei Chiang, 20, finished 18th in 1:10:09. Gary Myers, Judson's 52 year old dad, was sixth in 50-54 in 57:52.

In 40-44, Fleming Island's Alma Nick, 42, was eighth in 1:08:30 with Mae Barker, 47, and a top ultra distance runner, getting eighth in 1:08:44. Barker is also a St. Johns Country Day School cross country mom to Ella Rose Hanna.

In 50-54, Fleming Island stalwart Britta Fortson, 52, was sixth in 1:11:28.

In 55-59, Dena Gaucher, 57, and Annette Shannon, 55, both of Fleming Island, duked it out with Gaucher 17th in 1:19:35 outgunning Shannon at the finish, in a 1:19:48.

In 65-69, athlete psychologist Joni Neidigh, 65, willed her way to a 16th place finish in 1:35:21.

In 75-79, Annette Stevenson, 78, took eighth in 2:16:66 with husband taking pics at finish line.

In 80 and over, Barco Newton YMCA early morning swimmer Judy Lind, 80, strolled in at 2:35:20 in seventh place to outduel Orange Park's Marie Bendy, 82, in eighth at 2:39:34.

In male 14-19, Benjamin Hale, 19, from FSCJ and son to FSCJ cross country coach Jody Hale, was third in 55:16.

In male 35-39, Orange Park's Chris



Former St. Johns Country School cross country champion and now a University of Florida runner Matthew Stratton, 20, finished 12th in 53:37.

Howard, 38, was eighth at 57:26.

In 40-44, Fleming Island's Jakob Irwin, 40, finished fifth in 59:16.

In 45-49, former Magnolia Point Golf instructor Tim Cooper, 47, was age group champion in 52:44.

In 65-69, Fleming Island's John Martin, 66, was 10th in 1:15:32.

In 80 and over, Orange Park High retired teacher and track coach Doug Barrows, 81, was 12th in 2:31:22.

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# Massey scores 9Ks vs Bronco Bats

Tuesday: FIHS loses 12-11 8th to Creekside (7-1)



STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO  
Middleburg High softball had plenty of baserunners on board, here with Bayleigh Girgis, who had two doubles, on second with Mika Wesley sitting at first base in Broncos 7-1 win over Keystone Heights.

By Randy Lefko  
randy@claytodayonline.com

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS - Four doubles by the Middleburg High batting lineup spelled bad news for the Keystone Heights softball team as the Broncos won a 7-1 county matchup to earn their sixth straight win after a three loss skid ended February, albeit, those three losses to state champion Trenton, state runnerup Branford and 6A region finalist East Lake High before starting their streak with an 11-0 win over 3A



Keystone Heights second baseman Bella Cumbo tosses grounder scoop to first base. region finalist Episcopal.

“Our outfield was under water yesterday and we had to move our home game against Trenton,” said Middleburg coach Ashley Houston. “We always invite the best teams to play us. Keystone Heights is always a playoff contender.”

Against Keystone Heights, Middleburg’s bats exploded early with Kerra Clarida doubling KK Hagan to third and Emma Ward singling in two runs from there. Isabel Pifer singled and moved on a Mallory Ficklin sacrifice bunt, but Keystone Heights pitcher Kadence Massey whiffed Cloey Ballinger and popped out Caylee Johnson to stop the quick strike.

Massey and Ballinger on the mounds traded blows in the ensuing innings to keep

the score 2-0 even with Middleburg getting a double from Bayleigh Girgis in the fourth but Massey strikeouts out two more batters.

Keystone Heights got their run in the fourth with Amberlea Wagner singling, Audrey Cisco sacrifice bunting and Kaleigh Marquart hitting a line drive to left fielder Mallory Ficklin that got away and scored Wagner.

The top of the Middleburg batting lineup charged to the front with Clarida singling, Ward doubling and Pifer blasting a fly ball to left field for a Clarida run with two more hits pushing the Bronco baserunners around the horn to a 5-1 lead.

In the sixth, a second double from Girgis, a Mika Wesley single and a Hagan fly ball scored the game 6-1 before relief pitcher Lily Bennett got three whiffs for Middleburg in the bottom of the sixth.

Girgis struck again with an RBI single in the seventh to finish the Middleburg scoring.

Middleburg, now 8-3, has Yulee (3-1), Creekside (7-1), Baker County (7-1-1) and Fletcher (3-3) up next.

Keystone Heights, 4-4, has Ponte Vedra (7-1), Fort White (7-3) and Columbia (9-3) to finish March.

Note: Fleming Island was tied 8-8 with Columbia in the seventh in their game on Wednesday, March 12. Fleming Island up 11-8 top of eighth against Creekside. Creekside three run homer in sixth put score at 8-7 Fleming Island. Double from

Ashley Madine scores Wilson to 10-8 Fleming Island in eighth. Single to Victoria Vasquez scores Madine to 11-8. Walk, then two strikeouts for Fleming Island pitcher Brooke Wilson in eighth. Walked three, fourth walk, now 11-9. New pitcher Fleming Island, Arianna C. Wild pitch 11-10. Creekside single, two runs score, up 12-11.

## EVENTS

from page 17

**FREE MEDICAL CARE** will be on April 3 from 4-6:30 p.m. at Lake Area Ministries Food Pantry, 131 NE Commercial Cir., Keystone Heights. Offered by the Emmanuel Project, care is open to children and adults who uninsured who are within 300% of the 2024 U.S. federal poverty guidelines.

**FREE HOT MEALS** will be served on April 3 from 4-6:30 p.m. while they last at Keystone Heights Methodist Church, 4004 State Road 21.

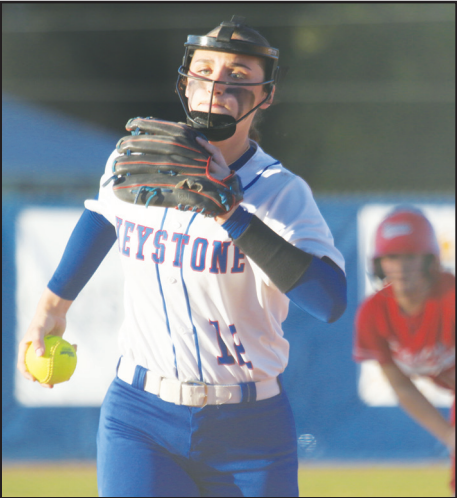
**A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD** will be at the Thrasher-Horne Center on April 3 at 10:30 a.m. Tickets, which start at \$19, are available at the box office or at thcenter.org. Groups of at least 10 are \$10 each.

**CLAY COUNTY AGRICULTURAL FAIR** will continue April 4 from 11 a.m.-11 p.m. at the Clay County Fairgrounds. Clint Black will perform at Cattleman’s Arena at 7 p.m. Advance gate admission tickets and a \$500 Super VIP Pass for can be purchased at the Clay County Fair Box Office, online at claycountyfair.org or by calling (904) 284-1615. Special gate tickets for Fiesta Family Friday are \$30 for two adults and as many as four children, \$9 for seniors and additional children 6-12, and children 5 and younger are free; unlimited rides arm-bands are \$32. Reserved concert seats range from \$20-\$100.

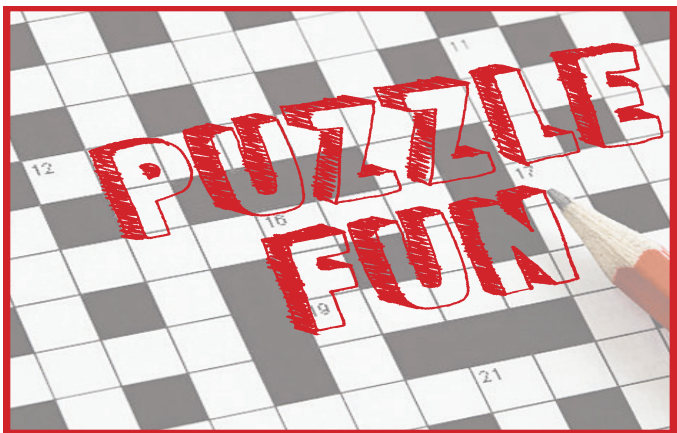
**MATH FIELD DAY** will be on April 5 at Oakleaf High, 4035 Plantation Oaks Blvd., from 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m.



Keystone Heights pitcher Kadence Massey stayed busy on and off the mound with this bunt scoop and throw.



Keystone Heights pitcher Kadence Massey fires away with Middleburg baserunner behind her. Massey had six strikeouts against tough Middleburg batting lineup.



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

Level: Intermediate



Solve the code to discover words related to a home office.  
Each number corresponds to a letter.  
(Hint: 16 = E)

- A. 26 5 3 1 25 18 16 20**  
*Clue: Work device*
- B. 20 16 3 5 18 16**  
*Clue: In a distant location*
- C. 4 5 25 24 16 4 5 11 22**  
*Clue: Place of residence*
- D. 1 20 8 10 6 26 2**  
*Clue: Free of being disturbed*

Answers: A. computer B. remote C. household D. privacy

### WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to working from home.

F E C O I F

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

Answer: Office

### GUESS WHO ?

I am an actress born in Louisiana on March 22, 1976. I was a fashion model at age seven. I had a breakout role as a party girl who sets her sights on Harvard Law School. I won several awards for playing a country star with an equally famous husband.

Answer: Reese Witherspoon

### REMOTE WORK WORD SEARCH

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

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

### WORDS

ANNUALIZED  
ASYNCHRONOUS  
CLOUD  
COMMUNICATION  
COWORKING  
DIGITAL  
FLEX TIME  
FREELANCE  
FULLY  
GIG ECONOMY  
GLOBAL  
HOURS  
HYBRID  
LOCATION  
MESSAGE  
OFFSHORING  
REMOTE  
SOFTWARE  
SOLOPRENEUR  
TEAM  
TELECOMMUTE  
VPN  
WORKLOAD  
WORKPLACE

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

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

# Classifieds

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MESSAGE TO ADVERTISERS

All ads are non-refundable. Please check your ad copy the first week of publication. We will only apply credit for the first run and credits are subject to approval of the publisher. If ad is canceled prior to the first insertion cancellation must be made by classified deadline of Monday by noon. Ads must comply with Federal, State a

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

DEADLINE MONDAY NOON

LINER ADS

All line ads are 4 lines, 20-25 characters per line. Additional lines may be purchased. All rates are NET.

PRIVATE PARTY COMMERCIAL

1 week \$14.50	1 week \$23
2 week \$24	2 week \$40
3 week \$32	3 week \$56
4 week \$40	4 week \$72

EMPLOYMENT SPOTLIGHT

Ads are \$27 per column inch with a minimum of 2"

ESTATE & GARAGE SALES

\$21

BUSINESS & SERVICE DIRECTORY

1.5" x 2" \$80 for 4 weeks  
1.5" x 3" \$160 for 4 weeks

Cost includes online at: [claytodayonline.com](http://claytodayonline.com)

We buy Guitars

We Buy Vintage Guitars! Looking for 1920-1980 Gibson, Martin, Fender, Gretsch, Epiphone, Guild, Mosrite, Rickenbacker, Prairie State, D'Angelico, Stromberg. And Gibson Mandolins / Banjos. These brands only! Call for a quote: 1-866-307-5421

Garage, Yard & Estate Sales

A lot furniture, bikes, street strider, 1000lb trampoline, 22ton log splitter, 18"open drum sander, dvds, vhs videos, X2 speck X 4.0 horsepower pumps, tools, water tubing- ski equipment, cloths, various species of wood slabs. Some kline dried others air drying, and a lot more.....

This will occur this weekend March 14,15, and 16th.

Friday 14th will be from 0900 to 1400.

532 Arthur Moore Dr.

Green Cove Springs 32043

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WATER DAMAGE CLEANUP & RESTORATION: A small amount of water can lead to major damage in your home. Our trusted professionals do complete repairs to protect your family and your home's value! Call 24/7: 1-866-782-4060. Have zip code of service location ready when you call!

Don't Pay For Covered Home Repairs Again! Our home warranty covers ALL MAJOR SYSTEMS AND APPLIANCES. We stand by our service and if we can't fix it, we'll replace it! Pick the plan that fits your budget! Call: 1-888-521-2793

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Call today and receive a **FREE SHOWER PACKAGE PLUS \$1600 OFF**

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**1-855-417-1306**

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Make the smart and **ONLY CHOICE** when tackling your roof!

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Expires 12/31/2024 **MADE IN THE U.S.A.**

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# ADS

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repairs. No fuss. Any condition. Easy three step process: Call, get cash offer & get paid. Get your fair cash offer today by calling Liz Buys Houses: 1-844-877-5833

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