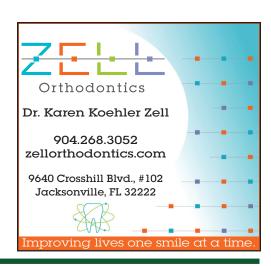
THE CAKILEAF Serving Oakleaf, Argyle, & Western Clay County-



THURSDAY MARCH 27, 2025

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Oakleaf High spreads Mickey magic with Disney Dinner

By Kyla Woodard kyla@claytodayonline.com

OAKLEAF — In the spirit of Disney, theater students at Oakleaf High School became animated characters on Saturday, March 15.

The group hosted their fourth annual Disney Dinner Theatre, dedicated to bringing a sprinkle of pixie dust to local children

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As guests entered the school cafeteria, they were escorted to their table by some familiar faces including Ariel from The Little Mermaid, Mama Odie from the Princess and the Frog or even the Genie from Aladdin

As guests were served dinner, 35 students portrayed classic Disney characters and mixed and mingled with them, creating a personable experience with some well-known faces.

The event also featured actors performing a showcase of 29 songs. From belting with Anna and Elsa during "For the First Time in Forever" and escaping the guards with Aladdin during "One Jump Ahead" to training with popular Disney villains during the Mulan classic "I'll Make a Man out of You," guests were fully enthralled in the experience.





STAFF PHOTOS BY KYLA WOODARD





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Crew of the Polly L on the hunt



STAFF PHOTOS BY DON COBLE

The Polly L is a lift boat with a 10-ton crane that can stay at sea for as many as 120 days, excavating the ocean floor for treasure.

By Don Coble

don@claytodayonline.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS — Kip Wagner got bored and was scouring the beach between Fort Pierce and Sebastian Inlet, where nobody believed anything of significance was hidden among the dunes and sea oats, when he suddenly heard a ping.

He used a mine sweeper, because portable metal detectors were difficult to use and not widely available.

"The story that I heard was, he was tenacious, a very, very meticulous guy," Michael Bozeman said. "He retired, got tired of hanging out in little beach bars, and started walking down the beach after a storm. He found a trail and started finding coins with this thing (mine sweeper). He found a concentration of coins coming up on the beach. He got a boat, and within a month or so, he found a couple of million dollars' worth of silver and gold. You know, it's a pretty crazy story."

That was 66 years ago, in 1959. But Bozeman's search for treasure continues.

As the captain of Green Cove Springsmoored Polly L, he knows the sea beckons with a never-ending promise of intrigue and mystery. Years of misses are part of the life of being a treasure hunter, because it just takes one strike to make history.

"We don't sell a promise to find treasure," Bozeman said. "We sell adventure."

Bozeman works for Amelia Research and Recovery, which Middleburg's Doug Pope owns. They met 17 years ago.

"He gave me his card and said, 'Anytime you want, come on down, you can go to work because we need somebody, we need somebody to go to work,'" Bozeman said. "He had this ship that takes a lot of work. They were working her hard, and this boat was really going downhill. When I came aboard, I was chipping rust, and I'm still chipping rust."

The Polly L is a lift boat with a 10-ton

crane, which means it has four pontoons that can raise the working platform. It has an excavator and can dredge through a sluice box that can operate 24 hours a day. Since the pontoons can raise the deck above the waves, and there are comfort able quarters, it can stay at sea for as long as 120 days, which saves time with no daily commutes.

Being at sea doesn't guarantee striking riches, however. The most famous treasure hunter is Mel Fisher. He found the Spanish galleon Nuestra Senora de Atocha that sank in the Florida Straits in the Florida Keys during a 1662 hurricane.

Fisher's find was worth approximately \$400 million — the State of Florida kept \$100 million of the treasure, and Fisher's family kept the rest. It took Fisher more than 16 years to find the shipwreck, and he motivated his crew by telling them, "Today's the day."

Pope has been looking for other ships from two 1715 Spanish Treasure Fleets for 19 years. The ships were loaded with gold and silver from Havana and sank along the Florida coast, lost in a hurricane headed from the New World to Spain.

Pope leased a nine-mile-long and two-mile-wide swath of ocean from the south-ern tip of Amelia Island from the state after small piles of coins were found on the shoreline.

The process starts with a GPS antenna on the crane head, which is equipped with a magnetometer that detects anomalies like nails and silver coins from 300-year-old Spanish ships.

From there, the crew uses two 238-inch bow thrusters powered by 300-horse-power diesel engines to propel water to the ocean floor and bedrock.

"In a 15-to-20-minute period, it moves a lot of material. After that, a diver will see what the berm looks like. How big is the berm? We go down to the clay. Once we

Fraternity chapter seeking Talent Hunt participants

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity's PSI Mu Nu chapter requests submissions for Talent Hunt, which is slated from noon to 4 p.m. Saturday, April 12.

Categories include dance, music, visual art, and dramatic interpretation (rap, poetry and monologue).

Video submissions must be received by noon March 29. Send submissions to pmntalenthunt@gmail.com



Polly L Capt. Michael Bozeman of Lake Asbury.

found a cannon on top of the clay," Bozeman said

Then the ship moves a few feet left or right and the process starts anew.

Remember, the search field near Amiela Island is 18 square miles.

"The reason they found small piles of coins is some of the crew washed up on shore, and they had coins in their pockets," Bozeman said. "There is a lot of research that goes into this."

Amelia Research and Recovery believes in preserving historical data and protecting the environment. While some criticize the recovery of artifacts, the crew of the Polly L thinks it can be accomplished by following established archaeological guidelines and reporting procedures.

"If we find something, we call the state

SEE POLLY L, 5



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Oakleaf student honored as a 'young hero'



STAFF PHOTOS BY KYLA WOODARD

Clay County Sheriff Michelle Cook presented Oakleaf Junior High School student Nevin Luna with the Student in the Spotlight award, an initiative dedicated to recognizing young people who have done great things in their community.

By Kyla Woodard

kyla@claytodayonline.com

OAKLEAF -- Oakleaf Junior High School student Nevin Luna received recognition on Wednesday for an "extraordinary" act of bravery.

In the presence of Oakleaf Junior High staff, local officials and family, Clay County Sheriff Michelle Cook presented Luna with the Student in the Spotlight award, an initiative dedicated to honoring young people who have done impressive things in their community.

Luna was spotlighted for taking swift action following a severe medical emergency, where he called 911 and stayed

with the victim until help arrived.

Cook said Luna is one of the most exceptional cases that she's met since beginning the initiative. She said seeing a young person know exactly what to do during a crisis is exceptional.

"A lot of adults freeze. They don't know what to do, they don't know who to call," she said.

"To have a teenager, not only know what to do, but also to stay calm in an emergency situation and calm the people that were involved in the incident, is truly extraordinary."

Luna was presented with a special sign, certificate, Sheriff's Office water bottle and a Sheriff's Office coin -- which Cook said



Luna was spotlighted for taking swift action following a severe medical emergency, where he called 911 and stayed with the victim until help arrived.

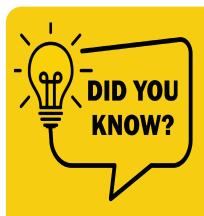
she doesn't give away often.

Oakleaf Junior High Principal Wilnitra Dixon said that at the school, honor, integrity, value and excellence are championed. She said Luna showcased all of those traits on that day.

Other speakers who showed their appreciation for the young hero were Matt

Boyack, director of Safety and Security for Clay County Schools, and a UF Health/TraumaOne Jacksonville representative.

UF Health/TraumaOne Jacksonville also presented Luna with a certificate, a challenge coin and a special patch.



Clay Today will test your knowledge weekly and provide interesting facts on various topics.

This week, our focus is the Clay County Agriculture Fair, straight from its website: In the early 1970s, community leaders got together with Jesse Godbold, Clay County Agricultural agent, and decided the county's agricultural identity and heritage were worthy of being showcased for county residents. Among those forward thinkers who dreamed up the fair was Claude Kelly, now identified as its "father." The dream took shape in 1972, when the county purchased 28 acres of land for the Clay County Agriculture Center through a sizable donation by the Paul E. Reinhold family. In the late 1970s, a group of citizens and community leaders formed the Clay County Fair Association; they were granted a state charter in 1982. The first fair was held from March 31 to April 4, 1987.

Winn-Dixie beefs up Our Fair Cares support



STAFF PHOTOS BY DON COBLE

From left: Bailey Rider, Mike Finnick, Ashley Havens and Steven Land are supporting Our Fair Cares for this year's Clay County Agricultural Fair.

By Don Coble

don@claytodayonline.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – The home office thought store manager Mike Finnick made a mistake when he ordered 100 cases of vegetables for Winn-Dixie.

He assured them it was no mistake, because with the help of his store associates, most were going to wind up in a bin headed to the Clay County Agricultural Fair as part of Our Fair Cares on Tuesday, April 8.

Each Winn-Dixie store is granted a community project, and Finnick always targets the fair. Anyone bringing canned goods and non-perishable goods to support the Clothes Closet and Food Pantry of Orange Park or pet and school supplies for Clay County Animal Services or Clay County Educational Foundation will be admitted for \$5 – a \$10 savings from the \$15 adult admission

In addition to Our Fair Cares, his store will sponsor the Taste the Fair Day on Monday, April 7. Patrons bringing a Winn-Dixie receipt can enter the fair for just \$7.

On both days, the Green Cove Springs store will have a booth at the front gate with coupons and swag for its customers.

"A year ago, Winn-Dixie put collection boxes at all of our Clay County stores and that really increased our numbers," Finnick said. "I also challenged our managers to get our associates behind this, because it's so important to help the Clothes Closet and Food Pantry."

Finnick said customers donated 80 cases – 1,920 cans – of vegetables at his store a year ago. He said this year's goal is to donate 100 cases or 2,400 cans. "They thought I made a mistake when I ordered 100 cases, but I believe our community will donate 100 this year."

Bins were delivered to local stores 25 days before the opening ceremonies on Thursday, April 3. Some bins were already filled in the first week and scheduled to be emptied.

"The Fair was incredible last year," said Clothes Closet and Food Pantry President Mandy Nelson. "It was such a blessing. We served 11,997 people last year, and the fair donation went a long way to helping the people in Orange Park and Fleming Island."

Winn-Dixie stores are making donations easy by selling canned goods at the register, just a few feet from the bins. Cans are stacked at the register, reminding customers of the food drive.

"We shattered donation records last year, but our goal is to beat that,' Finnick said. "The fair and our community are vital to us, so we get behind this."

Last year's collection shattered fair records. Nearly four tons were dropped off at the front gate, making it challenging for volunteers to move the items into a warehouse and distribute them to the food pan-



STAFF PHOTOS BY DON COBLE The Our Fair Cares collection bin at the Green Cove Springs Winn-Dixie is almost filled after five days.

try, animal control and education founda-

"Last year's Our Fair Cares was a huge upgrade from the past," said Tasha Hyder, the fair's executive director. "Our goal this year is to surpass it again. It just keeps getting bigger every year. This is one of our favorite projects."

Winn-Dixie also sponsors Taste the Fair, wherein patrons can get in for \$7 if they provide a receipt from a store at the box office. Finnick's store will have a booth at the main gate, where he and associates will greet fairgoers with coupons and swag.

Clay students build on knowledge at Construction Day



Oakleaf High's Elizabeth and Gage

By Don Coble

don@claytodayonline.com

JACKSONVILLE – More than 100 students from the Clay County District Schools attended the Construction Career Day Northeast Florida event Thursday at the Jacksonville Equestrian Center to get a hands-on experience from companies throughout Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia.

They experienced how big machinery worked, how technology and engineer-

ing applied to infrastructure projects and were immersed in the importance of safety applications.

Gage attended the expo last year, but the Oakleaf senior said he learned new things on his second visit.

"I learned how to operate some heavy machinery," he said. "I took a bunch of flyers to consider some of the opportunities."

Another Oakleaf student, Elizabeth, said she didn't realize there were so many different types of dirt.





Capt. Michael Bozeman operates the 10-ton crane.

POLLY L

from nage 2

and make sure we get a state-certified archeologist on board," Bozeman said. "When they do archeological digs on land, they create a grid. It's different on water, but we kind of do that by mapping each hole with the long/lat (longitude and latitude)."

Bozeman said the state must clear all treasure found. If it's a piece unique to the Florida collection, the state can remove it from the find. What it doesn't keep is returned to the treasure hunters.

"This industry has supplied everything in Tallahassee in the Natural History Museum," Bozman said.

There is a reason Florida's East Coast is known as the Treasure Coast. In 1715, Spanish ships loaded with gold, silver, pearls, diamonds and other jewels sank and were dispersed from Amelia Island to South Florida by a hurricane. The estimated treasure value that hasn't yet been recovered is more than \$400 million.

"It's out there," Bozeman. "Somebody's going to find it."

The Polly L has been looking for 19 years.

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Keystone Heights tops county iron teams



STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO

Oakleaf High 154 lifter Noah Shevchook gets steady with 295 pounds above his head to win his Clay County Championship title by a ton of weight.

By Randy Lefko randy@claytodayonline.com

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS - After a decade of dominance as repeat boys state weightlifting champions, the Keystone Heights High boys weightlifting team answered the bell for yet another Clay County Championship double team title as the Indians scored team titles in both disciplines; Olympics and Traditional, on Friday in their own gym.

"Kids know to come to our weightlifting team, you have to be ready to work," said Keystone Heights coach Steve Reynolds. "This program is somewhat storied with former coach Lantz Lowery setting the standard very high. We just want to continue that legacy."

For the Indians, with three individual champions in the Olympics format; Colton Hollingsworth at 129, Layton Wright at 169 and Jackson Herman at Unlimited, the team scores finished with the Indians topping 3A Oakleaf 59-42 with Fleming Island close in third with 40 points with Middleburg just a point off with 39. The final three

were Clay (24), Ridgeview (15) and Orange

In Traditional, with Keystone Heights landing four golds; Elijah Mize at 119, Hollingsworth at 129, Kyle Perkins at 199 and Trace Woodsen at 219, the Indians piled on with 62 points over Oakleaf's 51 and Middleburg's 40 for third. The next four teams were Clay (34), Fleming Island (17), Ridgview and Orange Park with eight aniece

In one of the more impressive performances of the day, Oakleaf High junior Noah Shevchook, who joined older brother Elijah on the podium at state last; Elijah state champion at 154 in Traditional and third in Olympics, and Noah third at 129 in Olympics and Traditional, totaled a massive 610 pounds to win in Traditional.

"I just think about all the times me and my brothers worked out together and what it meant," said Shevchook, after a clean and jerk of 295 in the 154 weight division at the Clay County Championship on his second try after success a 285 and a near miss at his first try at 295. "I want to bring home a state title like my brother and may-

be get a second one next year."

Shevchook's 610 total was only bettered by Unlimited's Eli Iscoa from Clay at 615 and Middleburg Trent Pavlus with a 610.

In the Olympics scoring Shevchook totaled 520 to win by 110 pounds over Fleming Island's Austn Davis with 219, 238 and Unlimited the only weight groups better than Shevchook's total.

"I've been eating fish, chicken and white rice since last year to keep lean and strong," said Shevchook, who earned top Olympics and Traditional lifter titles as well. "It's all about doing the work."

County champions in Olympics were, from Oakleaf, Ray Williams at 119 330-310 over Keystone Heights' Elijah Mize; from Keystone Heights at 129, Hollingsworth 350-335 over Ridgeview's Edward Silva; from Oakleaf at 139, Gentle Clark over Middleburg's Ashton Harp 420-350; Keystone Heights' Layton Wright over Middeburg's Mason Peevy 420-410 at 169; Fleming Island's Brady Digman over Middlburg's Wein Sulph 475-470 at 183; Fleming Island's Griffin Vollertsen over Keystone Heights' Kyle Perkins 495-485

at 199; Fleming Island's Dehmir Jackson over Keystone Heights Trase Wooden 540-480 at 219; Oakleaf's Ethan Simons over Keystone Heights' Brayden Wester 580-440 at 238, and Keystone Heights Jackson Herman over Middleburg's Trent Pavlus 540-510 at Unlimited.

In Traditional, county champions were Keystone Heights Elijah Mize over Oakleaf's Ray Williams 410-405 at 119; Keystone Heights' Colton Hollingsworth over Oakleaf's Daniel Israel 430-400 at 129; Oakleaf's Gentle Clark over Clay's Zerek Migliore 495-445 at 139; Oakleaf's Noah Shevchook over Keystone Heights Damien Dunlap 610-465 at 154; Oakleaf's Christian Rodriguez over Oakleaf's Brenton Matlock 550-495 at 169; Middleburg's Sam Craven over Fleming Island's Brady Digman 575-520 at 183: Keystone Height's Kyle Perkins over Keystone Heights' Zane Leger 585-560 at 199; Keystone Heights Trase Wooden over Orange Park's J Jenning 540-510 at 219; Oakleaf's Ethan Simons over Keystone Heights Brayden Wester 605-555 at 238, and Clay's Eli Iscoa over Middleburg's Trent Paylus 615-610 at Unlimited.

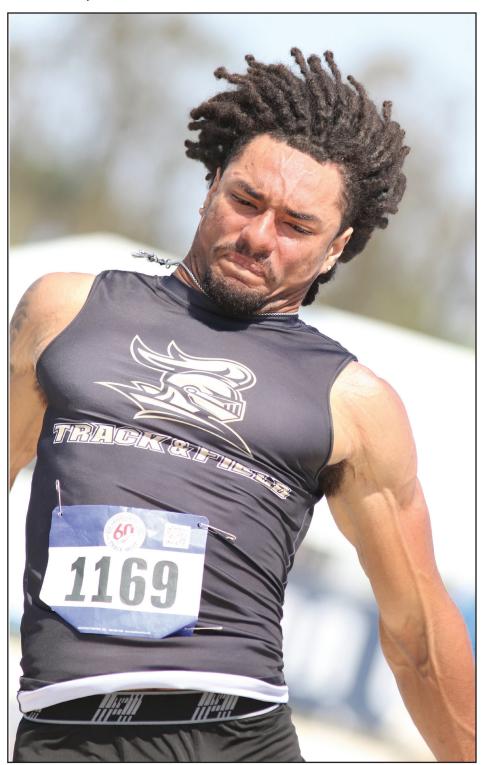


Oakleaf High weightlifter Christian Rodriguez blasts some energy before winning his 169 pound weight division at the Clay County Championships held Friday at Keystone Heights.



OHS Collins, FIHS Shavers jump to busy weekend

Bob Hayes/Creekside track invites



Oakleaf High jump specialist Devin Collins floats into the long jump pit with second place leap of 23'-2.75", then finished third in the 200 meters in 21.45 seconds.

By Randy Lefko randy@claytodayonline.com

JACKSONVILLE - Oakleaf High senior Devin Collins and Fleming Island High junior Mikayla Shavers were the two top double dippers over the weekend with both achieving outstanding track finishes at back-to-back track meets at Creekside High Friday night and at the Bob Hayes Invitational at the University of North Florida on Saturday afternoon.

Shavers, a twice triple jump state runnerup by less than an inch both times for the Golden Eagles in her short two years of track since dominating as a middle schooler at Green Cove Junior High, won her specialty by nearly three feet at the Bob Hayes Invite with a 39 foot, 3.25 inch landing ahead of her nearest challenger at 36'-9.75".

In the long jump at Bob Hayes, Shavers finished third with a 17'-10.75" leap while, on Friday, Shavers stretched out her legs with a fourth in the Creekside High Friday Night Lights Invitational 100 meters in 12.51 seconds just behind Ridgeview's Oja Riggs in third at 12.39. Riggs has become a noticable force in the sprints locally with her double win at the Panther Invite a few weeks ago on her home track at Ridgeview High.

For Devin Collins, a senior multi-event athlete for Oakleaf, his long jump was the top seeded length coming and the sprint-er-flyer hit his first jump fast and at altitude to hit a 23'-2.75" leap to finish just behind Christian Langford of Hughes who won at 23'-9" winning jump. Hughes High athletes and Collins battled throughout the steamy morning at UNF.

Collins finished up his day at the Bob Hayes Invite with a third in the 200 meter final at 21.45 after qualifying with a 22.06. Hughes senior Maurice Gleaton won that event at 20.64.

Collins competed in the 100 meters, finishing with an 11.11 for 10th and out of the final round with teammate Malachi Warthen 25th in 11.41. Fleming Island's Sebastian Cruz hit 22.38 in the 200 for 11th and 11.29 in the 100 for 16th. The 100 was won in 10.01 by Gleaton of Hughes.

Highlights for the Bob Hayes Invite including two top 10 finishes in the elite 800 and the open 3200 from Fleming Island junior Brooke Reynolds; sixth in the 800 in 2:24.78 and second in the 3200 in 12:00.21 with Ridgeview junior Emily Turner fourth in 12:28.92.

Oakleaf sprinter Rayna Lawson was fifth in prelims of the 100 in 12.46, then

SEE INVITATIONAL, 8





INVITATIONAL

from page 7

sixth in the final in 11.93.

Oakleaf's Jelani Chester ran a fast 2:01.95 to take second in the open 800 at Bob Hayes, while, in the elite final, Chester's 2:01.95 would have finished sixth in the race won in 1:57.59.



Keystone Heights javelin thrower Luke Lewis warms up for javeling at Bob Hayes Invite on Saturday. Lewis finished with 110'-9" toss.



STAFF PHOTOS BY RANDY LEFKO Fleming Island jump specialist Mikayla Shavers leaps to third place long jump in early rounds at Bob Hayes Invitational before dominating the triple jump with a three foot winning gap.



Fleming Island sprinter Sebastian Cruz blasts away from field in Bob Hayes Invitational 100 prelims. Cruz was 10th in 100 and 11th in 20.



Oakleaf High shot putter Mykel Mayo grimaces with put at Bob Hayes Invite. Mayo finished with 38'-10.50" put.

At Creekside, top area 800 finishers were Jack Pugh of Fleming Island, sixth in 2:03.13 with Ridgeview's Braidyn Matz eighth in 2:04.41.

Orange Park hurdler Nethan Verger dropped a 14.27 for fourth in the 110 high hurdles after a 14.97 in prelims for fifth. Fleming Island Jarius Rodgers, a sub-15 finisher coming in to the meet, was 10th in 15.36.

In shot put, Oakleaf's Rayna Autry, a sophomore, finished sixth with a 35'-.25" put while teammate Mykel Mayo was 33rd in shot for the boys.

In javelin, Oakleaf's Emmett Eggert

finished with a 135'-3" throw for 16th. At Creekside, Eggert hit a 144'-7' throw for seventh in javelin.

In the 100 at Creekside, Oakleaf's Malachi Warthen ran a 10.99 for seventh in the 100 then finished eighth in the 200 with teammate Rodney Townsend, Jr., third in the 200 in 221.6. Townsend also doubled up with a 52.20 split in At Creekside, Ridgeview high jumper Steven Yamamoto-Henrichs won the event with a 6'-1" leap.

Oakleaf's 4 x 100 boys relay posted a fast 42.88 split for second at Creekside, then posted a 42.39 at Bob Hayes for 10th.

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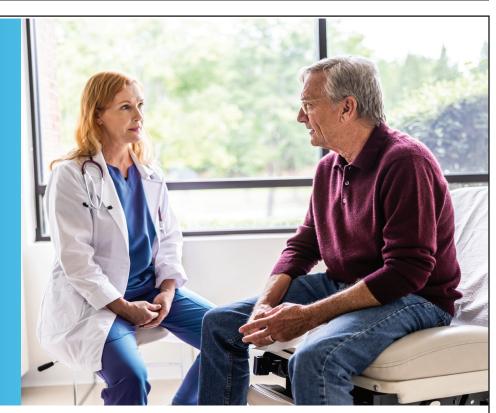
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