



WORKS OF ART

- Pages 9

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VOL. 1, NO. 12 • THURSDAY, JULY 20, 2017

Board tackles issues from Van Zant era

By Eric Cravey
 KHHERald.com

FLEMING ISLAND – Old issues from the previous school superintendent's administration continue to linger with the Clay County School District.

At the school board's June 29 meeting, the board wrestled with whether or not to pay legal bills for former school superintendent Charlie Van Zant Jr. and whether to re-hire the lobbyist that was contracted with under Van Zant's tenure as well.

Board member Ashley Gilhousen asked that the agenda include an item to discuss whether to re-hire lobbying group Southern Strategy Group, which the district had paid \$5,000 a month to represent it in Tallahassee. Gilhousen then made a motion, which was seconded by board member Betsy Condon, in order to begin debate on the issue.



Gilhousen cited a one-time \$1 million appropriation in fiscal year 2016 that she credits Southern Strategy Group with procuring for the district as the main reason the contract should be renewed.

"I think it's important that we have a steady presence in Tallahassee during the legislative session. In the past, it's paid off to the tune of \$1 million, which has over and above paid for itself, so I think it's an

SEE BOARD, 10



STAFF PHOTO BY KILE BREWER

Keystone Heights band One Eyed Cat performs on the Artisan's Way front porch July 7 during the gallery's celebration of the monthly First Friday gallery crawl event. See story on page 6.

New fire station coming to Keystone Heights

By Jesse Hollett
 KHHERald.com

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – When Hurricane Matthew barreled over the Eastern Seaboard last October, many in the county fled unfortified homes to shelters and other safe havens.

So did Keystone's firefighters.

The current base for Keystone Height's firefighters is a 900 square foot house modified with a rescue bay at its rear. So, when the hurricane blew through, Clay County



Fire Chief Lorin Mock said those firefighters had to evacuate to a more secure location and modify their response to the hurricane. However, a new firehouse could change all of that.

By the end of the year, county officials hope to break ground on a \$2 million facility located at 7390 State Road 21 in Keystone Heights.

"This will allow [firefighters] to operate as an independent base," Mock said. "It will

SEE FIRE, 10

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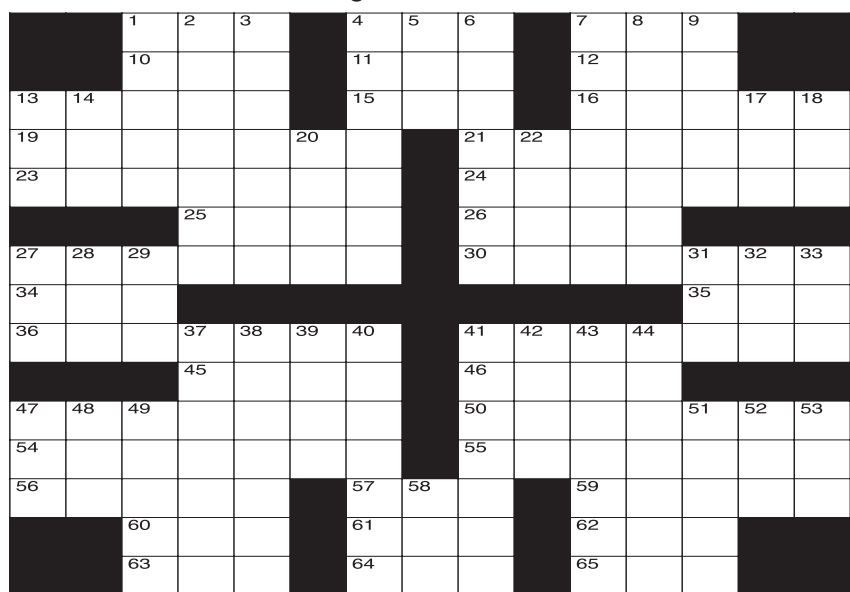
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Crossword Puzzle

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CLUES ACROSS

- 1. ___ fi (slang)
- 4. Former CIA
- 7. Parts per billion (abbr.)
- 10. Fermenting vat
- 11. News organization
- 12. Paddle
- 13. Agent in alchemy
- 15. Small amount
- 16. Wholeness
- 19. Suppliers
- 21. Type of head pain
- 23. Canadian province
- 24. Jiminy is one
- 25. Shelf
- 26. Diarist Frank
- 27. Honored
- 30. Boat race
- 34. Cash machine
- 35. Linguistic theory (abbr.)
- 36. Highway material
- 41. Gracefully slender
- 45. Not often found
- 46. Baghdad is its capital
- 47. Deriving from Asia
- 50. Large, veterinary pills
- 54. Boxer
- 55. Give the right to

56. Iranian city

- 57. Body part
- 59. A citizen of Iraq
- 60. Australian bird
- 61. Consume
- 62. A basketball hoop has one
- 63. Bar bill
- 64. Not wet
- 65. Midway between east and southeast

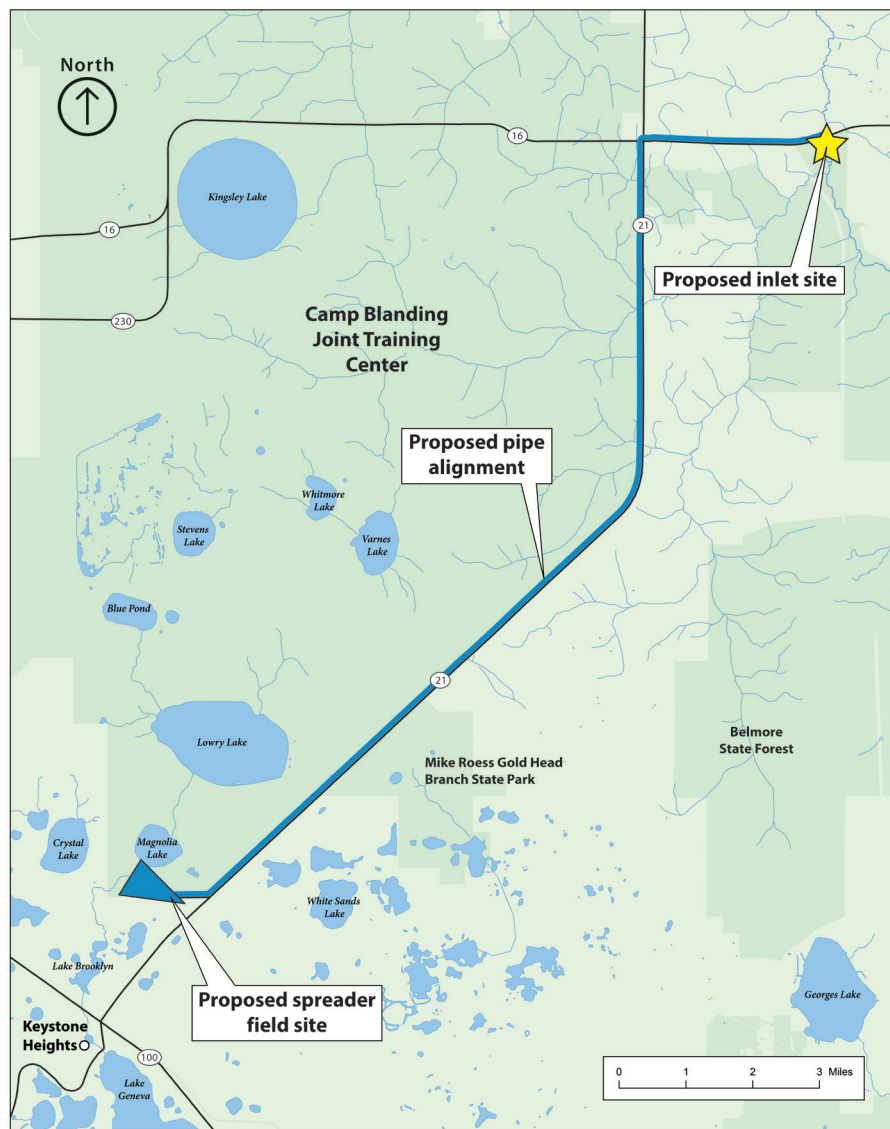
CLUES DOWN

- 1. Shorttail weasel
- 2. Type of sword
- 26. Diarist Frank
- 27. Honored
- 30. Boat race
- 34. Cash machine
- 35. Linguistic theory (abbr.)
- 36. Highway material
- 41. Gracefully slender
- 45. Not often found
- 46. Baghdad is its capital
- 47. Deriving from Asia
- 50. Large, veterinary pills
- 54. Boxer
- 55. Give the right to

20. Make angry

- 22. Greek mythological character
- 27. Used on driveways
- 28. Relating to the ears
- 29. Doctors' group
- 31. Chinese philosophical principle
- 32. Stomach
- 33. A particular period
- 37. Coin of ancient Greece
- 38. Place to clean oneself
- 39. One of the Great Lakes
- 40. Ruled
- 41. State of being free
- 42. Fe
- 43. Soup cracker
- 44. Escorts
- 47. Credit term
- 48. Institute legal proceedings against
- 49. Put within
- 51. New Jersey is one
- 52. Red deer
- 53. Type of whale
- 58. Swiss river

Black Creek Water Resource Development Project



This map shows the proposed Black Creek pipeline path from Penney Farms to Keystone Heights. Source: SJRWMD.

Black Creek project gets green light

By Jesse Hollett
KHHerald.com

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – The St. Johns River Water Management District has approved a contract with an engineering firm for a multi-million dollar project to pipe water from the flood-prone Black Creek near Penney Farms to Lake Magnolia in Keystone Heights.

The District approved a design bid from Jacksonville-based engineering firm CDM Smith and will now move to negotiate a contract. Their design work will be due by 2019.

“The board’s action today is the district’s first major step in the biggest water resource development project ever in northeast Florida,” said Ann Shortelle, executive director of the St. Johns River Water Management District. “The Black Creek Water Resource Development Project has far-reaching

benefits and is truly an all-around win for the region.”

The project would capture water when levels are high along Black Creek. Excess water would travel through a proposed pipeline along State Roads 16 and 21 to a spreader field near Lake Magnolia on Camp Blanding property.

The water would then travel down Alligator Creek, which would increase the water levels of all bodies within the Etonia Chain of Lakes – which include the ailing Lake Geneva and Lake Brooklyn.

Approximately 75 percent of the time, the Black Creek Water Resource Development Project will capture flow in the creek above a predetermined threshold.

The pipeline would have a 10 million gallon transmission capacity. The project’s main goal is to recharge the upper Floridan

SEE PROJECT, 12



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Fighting our modern-day slavery

By Rep. Vern Buchanan
FloridaPolitics.com

At a time when America faces serious challenges, it is imperative that Washington put aside partisan hostility in favor of common-sense solutions that move our state and nation forward.

Some people argue that it's not possible to reshape the dialogue to a more public-spirited approach, but I believe that Florida can lead by example – working together to do what is right. That's my goal as chairman of a diverse, 29-member Florida congressional delegation that includes Republican U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, Democratic Sen. Bill Nelson, 16 Republican House members and 11 Democrats.



Rep. Vern Buchanan

A prime example of our bipartisan resolve occurred last week when the Florida delegation held an official hearing to tackle the growing problem of human trafficking – a form of modern-day slavery.

Florida ranks third in the nation, behind California and Texas, in the number of reported trafficking cases and it experienced an alarming 54 percent increase last year. Children account for more than half the cases of human trafficking, a crime in which the victim is abducted or recruited for sexual exploitation. It can also involve illegal organ harvesting and forced labor.

At the hearing I co-chaired with Democrat Alcee Hastings of Fort Lauderdale, we spoke with several Florida experts on ways to combat this vile and monstrous crime.

One of the witnesses was Elizabeth Fisher, founder and head of Selah Freedom, a national anti-sex-trafficking nonprofit based in Sarasota. Ms. Fisher briefed the members on her group's efforts to help more than 2,000 young women in the Suncoast region. She also shared the harrowing story of a Bradenton girl who was trafficked from 11 years old up until she was 26.

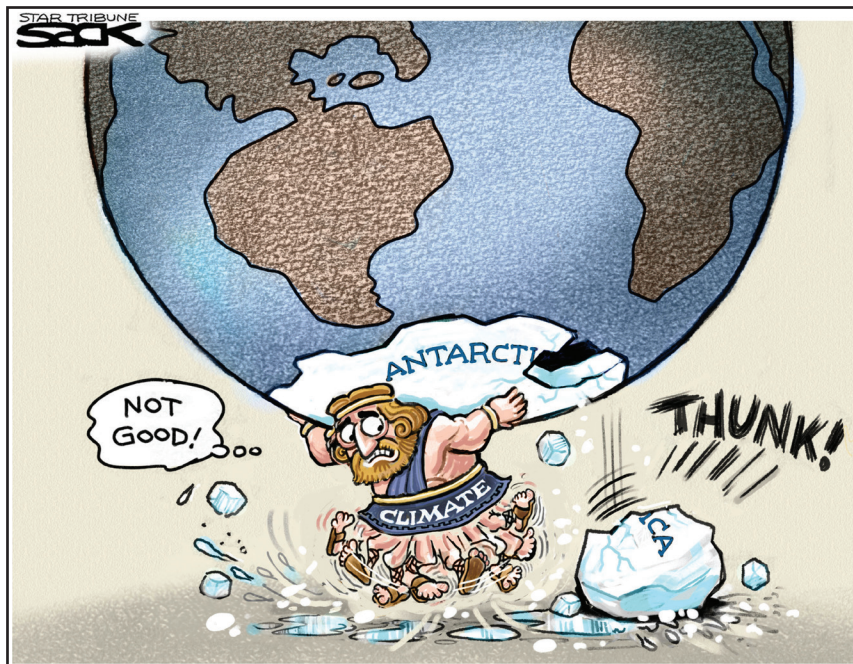
The scope of the global problem is staggering: 27 million people are caught in the modern slave industry, which turns billions of dollars in profits for the heinous individuals behind these crimes.

This is an issue that demands immediate action. Several of the witnesses offered constructive suggestions to confront the problem. Ms. Fisher told us that Congress should focus on helping victims reclaim their lives, given that demand for services is tripling annually.

Another witness at the hearing, Dr. Suzanne Harrison with the Florida State University College of Medicine, noted that training in the medical community is essential to treat the girls and young women who "go unrecognized in clinics and emergency rooms.

Congress should take these suggestions

SEE SLAVERY, 5



From the editor

Lawmakers get low marks on Sunshine Law

The Clay County School District may be one point away from being an "A" District this year, but our legislative delegation did not fare so well on recent grades they received for part of their performance.

Sen. Rob Bradley (R-Fleming Island) received a C-plus, while Rep. Travis Cummings (R-Orange Park) and Rep. Bobby Payne (R-Palatka) both received a D-plus in a ranking of how well they supported the state's Sunshine Law in this year's Florida Legislature.

Based on information compiled by The Florida Society of News Editors, more than half of Florida's state lawmakers received a "D" or "F" grade on the first Sunshine Scorecard.

The Scorecard was produced using information from the Tallahassee-based nonprofit First Amendment Foundation on how well lawmakers supported legislation that added exemptions to public records and meetings laws in 2017. None of the state's 160 legislators received an "A" grade and only nine earned a B. There were 71 Cs, which is considered average. And half of the legislators received a subpar grade, with 77 Ds and three Fs.

The Legislature passed a near-record number of Sunshine Law exemptions this year, adding to more than 1,100 exemptions added over the years. Every exemption makes government shady and accessible to the voters.

The Legislature passed 17 new provisions – and reauthorized six others – that create carve-outs in the state's Sunshine Law, according to the Foundation, which advocates for transparency in government and annually tracks Sunshine-related legislation.



Eric Cravey

Based on information compiled by The Florida Society of News Editors, more than half of Florida's state lawmakers received a "D" or "F" grade on the first Sunshine Scorecard.

The number of exemptions this year is the second-most since 1995 – five fewer than the record 22 exemptions lawmakers passed in 2014, said Barbara Petersen, president of the Foundation.

Petersen said these attempts to weaken government transparency in Florida are bi-partisan. For example, it was State Rep. Cynthia Stafford (D-Miami) who sponsored a "witness protection bill" that would shield the identities of murder witnesses for two years after the crime. Stafford said the bill was needed to stop what she called "the no-snitch mentality."

Regardless of these bills' perceived merits, each one slowly chips away at Florida's transparency, which had served as a model for the nation.

"The vast majority of the bills we track are justified, and we take a neutral position on them, or we work to make them such that we're neutral," Petersen said.

Petersen also said these exemptions chip away at the Florida Constitution.

"We agree that the requirements of our famed Sunshine Law can be an inconvenience for government officials at times. But the right of Floridians to oversee their government and hold it accountable for its actions – a right imbedded in our constitution – far outweighs such minor annoyances," she wrote one politician in a letter.

And it's not only the Sunshine Law

SEE SUNSHINE, 5

Word of the week

Word of the Week is a new 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.

Feckless: An adjective meaning, "weak or ineffective."

"Sylvia could not rely on her feckless son to take out the garbage."

This Month in History

5 years ago, 2012

- Thirteen-year-old Rebecca Grinsel of Fleming Island – with the aid of her dog Kane – won the Top Conformation Junior Handler Award from the American Belgian Tervuren Club making her the No. 1 junior handler of Belgian Tervurens in the country.

- Officials estimated more than \$4 million in damages were done to almost 600 Clay County homes by Tropical Storm Debby.

- After a three-year search, the Clay County Sheriff's Office arrested Benjamin Rex Moats, 29, for running a psychedelic mushroom grow operation in his apartment near Orange Park. Police seized 169,000 psilocybin mushrooms, 41,000 inoculating mushrooms and 13,000 sport syringes.

10 years ago, 2007

- Green Cove Springs City Manager Don Bowles said he would not resign while an investigation was underway to determine if he broke the city charter by not living inside the city limits as required.

- Officials estimated more than \$4 million in damages were done to almost 600 Clay County homes by Tropical Storm Debby.

- Builders working in the Oakleaf Plantation community reported that the 4,000th-home had been built in the 6,400-acre master planned development that begins in Duval County and heads south into Clay County.

20 years ago, 1997

- Miss Florida State University, Candace Rodatz, a 1994 Middleburg High alum, was preparing to compete in the June 28 Miss Florida Pageant in Orlando.

- The first officer-involved shooting for the Clay County Sheriff's Office since May

SEE HISTORY, 5

History

from page 4

1995 ended in the death of Richard J. Sandt of Orange Park who pulled a .22-caliber handgun on officers.

•Rescuers with the Clay County Sheriff's Office failed to save Patricia Allen, 40, when she and her husband James Allen fell off their boat in Black Creek. James was saved, but his wife drowned.

30 years ago, 1987

JByrons Inc. looked to hire 80 employees for its new store in the Argyle Village Shopping Center.

•Scott Cameron Dreyer, 19, of Orange Park, was captured in Middleburg where he had been hiding out after escaping from the Jacksonville Community Correctional Institution where he had been part of a work-release program.

•Sheriff Jennings Murrhee said Richard Allen Webb, 29, of a Canis Drive Address near Orange Park was charged with armed robbery after an investigation at the Jax

Liquors store on Blanding Boulevard.

40 years ago, 1977

•The Clay County School Board voted in a special session to purchase approximately 55 acres known as the Jennings property near Middleburg for a proposed new high school site. The final purchase price was not disclosed pending a survey of the tract.

•Virgil Fox, director of the Clay County Development Authority, said the old airfield at the World War II-era Navy base in Green Cove Springs could, according to a study, be transformed into a viable airport for North-east Florida.

•A second attempt in 15 months by Louis Huntley to install gas pumps at his Huntley Jiffy Store at 1890 Kingsley Ave. in Orange Park was shot down by the county's Planning and Zoning Board.

•Two months before classes were set to begin, Moosehaven decided not to lease pasture land it owned on the corner of DeBarry and Gano Avenues to St. Johns River Community College to locate its first-ever Orange Park campus.

History

from page 4

exemptions that created issues for the 2017 Florida Legislature. Last minute budget negotiations – specifically education funding – were shrouded in secrecy and the House, in particular, advanced several highly consequential Sunshine exemptions that – although many didn't pass – sought to gut the spirit of the Constitution's open government guarantees.

One unsuccessful far-reaching exemption would have let two local elected officials meet in secret about government business without having to let the public know or having to disclose what they discussed. House Bill 843 made it to the House floor, but failed in an unprecedented outcome.

Now, back to Clay County's lawmakers.

Cummings and freshman lawmaker Payne voted identically on the seven bills used to produce the Sunshine Scorecard.

They voted yes on the following bills: HB111 would hide IDs of murder victims, SB118 would hide criminal histories, HB441 adds court clerk liability protection, SB1018 required telling the public about major pollution and HB7093 hides employees' families' info. Both also voted on

HB351, which would hide college president searches, but the bill died in the Senate Education Committee and HB843, which would let two board members meet privately, but the bill failed to make it out of the House. Both lawmakers received three points each for voting on HB441 and SB1018.

Meanwhile, Bradley received nine positive points for voting no on HB 111, yes on HB 441, yes on SB1019 and yes on HB7093.

Hopefully the scorecard will cause lawmakers to think twice before further closing the door on open government in Florida, but I'm not holding my breath. To read the scorecard, go online at <http://floridafaf.org/sunshinescorecard/>.



Making a Better World at the Library

MELROSE – Patrons of the Melrose Public Library branch recently got to put their minds and hands together as part of an innovative new program called a "Mini Maker Space."

The July 7 event used 30-minute stations to give kids different outlets to use both their cognitive skills as well as learning by working with their hands. The program was part of the library's "Build a Better World" summer reading program. "It was really cool to see how the kids used their brains and their imaginations to achieve their goals," said volunteer David Smith, who was in charge of one of the "tech" stations. The program featured a portable 3D printing lab, a coding station, a mural painting session, a visor and scratch art booth, a collage-making table, and a sock puppet craft – all in one jam-packed event. The booths were manned by some of the Library volunteer staff, who aided in all of the creating. "The turn-out was great and it was clear that the kids were thoroughly enjoying themselves," said Sheree Sims, branch manager of the Melrose Library. The "Mini Maker Space" program was spearheaded by Jeremy Yates, special projects coordinator at Putnam County Library System, who has been working on implementing the program at each branch.

Slavery

from page 4

to heart as it moves to address human trafficking.

I have co-sponsored bipartisan legislation, the Abolish Human Trafficking Act, to increase penalties for perpetrators and give law enforcement more tools to treat human trafficking like organized crime.

I also voted for the Put Trafficking Victims First Act, a bill that provides federal grants to train prosecutors on how to best protect victims and investigate human trafficking. It also provides assistance for trauma care and mental health services to victims. The proposal is currently awaiting

action in the Senate.

Too often, the subject of human trafficking flies under the radar and only receives mainstream attention when it appears on the movie screen. We must continue the fight, not as Republicans or Democrats but as Americans, to raise awareness and combat this abhorrent crime against women and children in our communities. The time to act is right now.

U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan, serving his sixth term, represents Manatee County and parts of Sarasota and Hillsborough counties. He is also a senior member of the House Ways and Means Committee. His column appears courtesy of FloridaPolitics.com.

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Artists hope to keep Artisan's Way going

By Kile Brewer
KHHerald.com

MELROSE – June Beverly first set foot in Melrose when she was 13-years-old. Beverly, a young aspiring artist, graduated from Melrose High School “many moons ago,” as she puts it, and then left to pursue a life of art.

After attending art school in Sarasota, and traveling around the county, she found herself back in Melrose in the 1990s to be with her family. She never expected to move back to her hometown, but once she was back, it felt right. Melrose has an atmosphere that supports the artist’s mind, so she stayed.

“It’s just magic,” Beverly said. “People are just drawn here. There are so many musicians, writers, visual artists – it’s incredible.”

After becoming part of the Melrose artist community, Beverly lived her life for about a decade before founding the Shakerag gallery in an old church building in Melrose with a group of like-minded artists from the area. The idea was to promote local artists while enjoying the heart of historic Melrose.

“It’s a little piece of Old Florida that hasn’t changed much,” Beverly said.

The gallery got some attention and saw some early success, so Beverly and her compatriots began inviting local musicians out to perform evening shows at the gallery, and then made arrangements to turn Shakerag into a licensed nonprofit.

Meanwhile, Beverly and her friends in Melrose had become regulars at a local coffee shop, owned by two motorcycle-riding



STAFF PHOTOS BY KILE BREWER

Blues Brothers statues greet visitors to Artisan’s Way gallery in Melrose, a representation of the gallery’s love for live musical acts which are featured each Wednesday during their weekly coffee talks.

women, until the two women were involved in a motorcycle crash that took both of their lives.

“We all got to talking because we missed that coffee shop,” Beverly said. “Eventually we decided ‘Why don’t we do a coffee talk?’ and that’s how we started.”

Shakerag would start hosting weekly Coffee Talk events on Wednesdays, featuring a different musician from the area. This became their calling card and the concept has followed them for more than a decade, as



Customized pocket watches hang on display at the Silver Linings Gift Shop that is housed within Artisan’s Way gallery in Melrose. Owner Kitty Korth works at the gallery’s front desk during their hours of operation on Wednesdays and weekends.

they eventually moved out of the church to “the yellow house” down the street, and then after a year in the yellow house they moved again. This time, they landed in the historic Hilton House in Melrose at the corner of State Road 26 and Hampton Street.

The gallery at the Hilton House is currently known as Artisan’s Way, but the concepts created by Shakerag drive the business model. The gallery hosts weekly coffee talks on Wednesday mornings from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m., in addition to weekly First Friday Art

Walk events from 5 p.m. until 9 p.m. on the first Friday of every month. They also feature the work of local artists-in-residence and rotating shows of area artists’ works. At the front of the gallery is the Silver Linings Gift Shop, and the shop’s owner and Artisan’s Way co-founder Kitty Korth.

“Everybody calls this the happy place,” Korth said of the gallery and shop where she works. “The Coffee Talk is our big thing, for a lot of people that’s the only time they get out of the house every week.”

Artisan’s Way has been in operation for about four years now, but might start scaling back as they have found themselves devoid of any sort of general manager for the gallery. According to their website, the Artisan’s Way organization will no longer operate out of the Hilton House, but the gift shop, First Friday Art Walk events, and Wednesday Coffee Talks will continue. Beverly hopes they can find someone willing to take control of the organizational and managerial aspects of the gallery to support more rotating gallery shows and events, but for now things will slow down slightly.

“We’re hopeful it will continue,” Beverly said. “Artisan’s Way has been a blessing for the neighborhood, and everyone seems to enjoy it.”

For more information on contributing to Artisan’s Way, or to inquire about a position as general manager of their gallery, they can be contacted in person during regular business hours, by email at info@artisansway.org, or by phone at (352) 639-0730.



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State continues reviews for resentencing

By **Jesse Hollett**
KHHerald.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – It was just five days after Christmas 1997, when police discovered Shannon Holzer's body in a wooded area near her abandoned car, partially clothed and riddled with nine stab wounds.

Holzer had been on her way to deposit money from her place of employment, Buddy Boy's, a small convenience store in St. Johns County, when she offered to give a ride to John Calvin Taylor II to Green Cove Springs to retrieve a rental car.

Several co-workers saw Taylor in her vehicle. She dashed away their concerns.

He "was harmless," she said. "I'll be fine. Don't worry about it. I'll be back in a minute."

Police discovered six stab wounds in her heart the following afternoon and another three in her lungs. According to state records, a forensic pathologist at the trial concluded each stab could have been fatal, and that Taylor made the initial wound while Holzer was sitting in her car. What police didn't find was the \$6,000 co-workers said she was on her way to deposit.

Taylor had that. He deposited \$1,700 into his bank account, went to a local bar

and racked up a tab buying random patrons drinks. He tipped the bartender two \$100 bills on a \$200 tab and left.

Police arrested Taylor the next day for an unrelated burglary in his mobile home. He was in boxer shorts at the time.

On those shorts, police found bloodstains that matched Holzer's DNA.

Two years later, a jury sentenced Taylor to death. It was a split jury, a 10-2 decision. Now, 20 years later, Taylor and other Clay County murderers will see a resentencing due to retroactive changes in Florida's death sentence.

The changes stem from the outcome of the 2016 U.S. Supreme Court ruling known as *Hurst v. Florida*.

The case established that Florida's current death sentencing scheme was unconstitutional because it limited juries to an advisory role, which violated inmate's trial by an impartial jury promised under the Sixth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Previously, Florida courts decided capital punishment by a simple majority. Now, states are required to impose the death penalty by a unanimous jury.

This ruling applies retroactively, meaning even 20-year-old cases decided by a non-unanimous jury will now go back to lower courts for a new penalty phase.

Another Clay County murder case that will get a resentencing hearing in the wake of the *Hurst* decision is that of David James Martin of Jacksonville, who was convicted in the 2008. Martin was convicted of bludgeon-

ing Jacey McWilliams, 24, and dumping her body in a wooded area near Middleburg. He was given the death penalty after a jury voted 10-2 and not unanimously.

Criminal justice experts say that of the 395 prisoners currently on Florida's death row, nearly 150 of them qualify for resentencing hearings under *Hurst*.

Of those, 35 of them are within the Fourth Judicial Circuit, which is made up of Clay, Duval and Nassau counties.

"I'll use one word – chaos," said retired Supreme Court Justice Gerald Kogan of Miami in describing what the aftershock of the *Hurst* ruling in Florida. "It's just a mess."

Prosecutors, some of whom argued these cases years prior, will resentence the cases with a new jury while maintaining their normal caseload. Each of these cases must be reinvestigated and presented in full by both the prosecution and the defense.

Because these cases will receive new penalty phases exclusively, jurors will not decide on guilt, rather jurors will decide on the punishment.

The state recognizes a life sentence if even one juror votes no to capital punishment. Fourth Judicial Circuit State Attorney Melissa Nelson said she has already heard new mitigating factors and evidence from defense attorneys arguing older cases while the state goes through the process of identifying which cases they will again seek capital punishment on, and which and they will commute to life sentences.

The *Hurst* ruling may also effect current

proceedings. In late April 2016, the State of Florida filed a notice to seek the death penalty in the case of Bobbi Lee White and her husband Joseph Lloyd White for the alleged murder of a Jacksonville man whose remains investigators found inside a torched van in Jennings State Forest.

Last July, Bobbi's attorney filed a motion to block the state from pursuing the death penalty due to the change in death penalty guidelines.

Joseph's public defender has yet to file any such motion.

While the State Attorney's Office has not yet identified even a cursory price attached to these coming proceedings, Nelson said the figure will be significant.

"Each [case] will be slightly different... but I think after we go through one, we will have a high figure associated with the cost of resentencing," Nelson said.

While taxpayers might pay the price for the *Hurst* ruling, Nelson said survivors and loved ones of the dead will pay the true cost.

"We are calling them sometimes 30 – in one case 40 years – in many cases 20 years after the fact, and explaining what this new law means and walking them through the process," Nelson said. "They deserve, and obviously the community deserves, for us to make timely decisions – but certainly the next of kin do."

The State Attorney's Office will complete preliminary decisions on which *Hurst*-qualified cases they will seek the death penalty on by Saturday.



Melissa Nelson



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Senior center gets upgrades

By Jesse Hollett
KHHerald.com

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – Every afternoon harkens back to school lunch periods – the white tile and laminate lunch tables under plates of food, standing shoulder to shoulder with the usual suspects.

The only difference is, for some, those years are eight decades gone. The pleasure of a shared meal remains, however, for visi-

tors to the Keystone Heights Senior Center who religiously attend daily lunch service.

Soon, these regulars will be able to enjoy their meals in new scenery, due to a \$15,000 grant through Clay Electric that has allowed the Senior Center to update their kitchen and serving stations.

Center officials have spent about \$8,000 since they began last year. Officials have enlarged a serving window that leads out from a secluded kitchen area so far, built a new



STAFF PHOTOS BY JESSE HOLLETT

A work in progress, the senior center will be able to serve more guests after the remodeling project is completed.



Seniors sit around at lunch time chatting with old and new friends.

café style countertop and knocked out an adjacent wall to the cafeteria area to make the serving area friendlier.

Ultimately, center officials hope to complete the café corner near their convection oven to serve meals faster and with a bit more ‘Southern style.’

Center officials said it’s the least they can do for the seniors whose days are made by the companionship they receive from their daily visits.

“It’s wonderful that they can have a place to come every day and know that they’re going to be treated with love and respect,” said Senior Center Director Laverne Lanier.

The Senior Center serves roughly 50 patrons daily, not including those they deliver hot meals to through its Meals on Wheels program. Prior to Lanier, the Senior Center

sat underutilized, and only served seven citizens.

With the full house that attended a recent Friday lunch service, it’s hard to imagine small crowds ever chowed in these halls.

“The center is my life,” said Herb Veith, a German immigrant and senior center regular. “If it wasn’t for this center, I don’t know what I’d do. I’m not just bragging, that’s the truth. We love it here.”

“I’ve seen several out of state Senior Centers, and this is the best one in terms of fellowship,” said Darlene Dornbusch, 70. “The friendship is tremendous. If it wasn’t for this place, I would be homebound.”

For those that are homebound, the center delivers through the Meals on Wheels program. However, the center has suffered from low participation in this program, Lanier said.

Many come to the center via Clay Transit buses. The Meals on Wheels program is run mostly by volunteers who use their own vehicles.

“A lot of them don’t get out,” said Jennifer “Bubbles” Bailey, a volunteer who helps deliver the food for the Meals on Wheels program. “It feels good to have a life again. Even me – this has changed my life, coming up here.”

The center does its best to attempt to get the seniors out in the world. It holds small field trips to local attractions whenever possible. They attend the Clay County Agricultural Fair every year and recently went to the State Ravine and Gardens in Palatka for site seeing. Lanier said it’s important to not only get the seniors out of their homes to socialize, but to ensure that the seniors also get out of Keystone Heights when they can.

Uncertainty looms over future federal funding for programs such as these around the country, however. The proposed federal budget would slash two key Community Development Block Grants that states and localities often use, in part, to support Meals on Wheels programs.

However, Meals on Wheels programs are often supported through donations and other funding sources, so Lanier said she isn’t concerned currently, and intends to continue moving forward to increase services to the seniors in her area.

The final step in the building process is naming the café. Lanier said she is soliciting ideas from the residents who will make use of the café. A current top contender is the ‘S.T.A.R.S Café.’

“It means Seniors Together After Retirement,” she said. “I love that one.”

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Turning wood into artistry

By Kile Brewer
KHHerald.com

MELROSE – As a young boy, Bill Smith attended high school woodshop class, where he first came into contact with a wood lathe in 1952, turning out a lamp. Smith wouldn't work with wood for decades after high school, but, 60 years later, he still has the lamp, and now uses a wood lathe almost constantly.

His second project on a wood lathe was another lamp, this time a floor lamp, which he made around 1990. It was at this time he discovered the new hobby, and by the year 2000 he was using a lathe pretty frequently.

"This kind of work is a great thing to do when you're retired," Smith said. "It's habit forming. When I'm working, I forget about the world."

For his wooden creations, including vases, bowls and even Christmas tree ornaments, Smith, a resident of Star Lake near Hawthorne, uses mostly local wood. His lathe has seen almost every variety including holly, oak, bay, cypress, rubber tree and sweet gum. He doesn't really pay for wood because people are always bringing it to him for free in exchange for a project or two.

"I had a guy ask if I could make him two candlesticks if he would bring the wood, so I agreed," Smith said.

When the man returned with the wood he had brought a whole truckload.

Smith also finds stumps and waste logs



STAFF PHOTO BY KILE BREWER

Woodworker Bill Smith gives a wood turning demonstration at Artisan's Way during this month's First Friday festivities in Melrose.

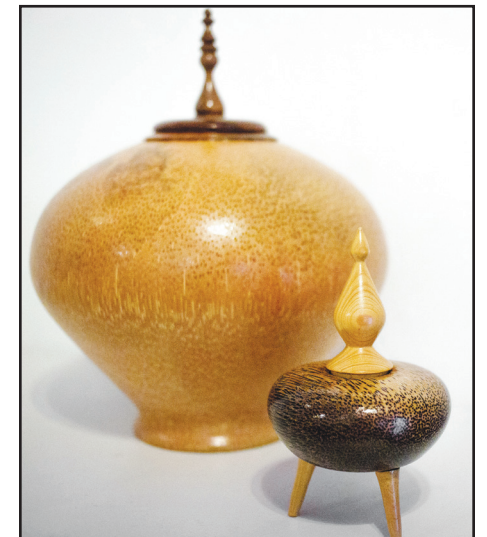
that have been cut down by crews on roadsides, including a bit of exotic rosewood that he found lying by a road in Orlando. Smith knows his wood, and can spot even the most hidden piece of hardwood from his pickup truck when traveling around Florida.

Aside from the traditional hardwood construction, with the occasional outliers such as rubber tree and sweetgum, Smith also uses a material that doesn't see much attention from the broader woodworking

community – palm trees.

"Palm is harder to turn because the inside is mushy," Smith said. "But I still use it because it's beautiful when you get through with it."

The humble craftsman shows off his palm projects with pride, their surfaces absent of the long winding grains found in other wood. The palm is speckled and spotted, it takes on the appearance of pottery when finished with lacquer, it is also much



Two vases sit for sale at Artisan's Way in Melrose. The vases, made on a lathe out of palm trunks, were created by area woodworker Bill Smith.

lighter in weight than other woods.

Since realizing his love for lathe work, Smith has been a member of the Central Florida Woodturners, a club that is based out of Orlando that has anywhere from 50-80 members at a given time. Smith uses this as a place to go when he just wants to talk wood with a handful of others as interested in the somewhat obscure hobby as he is.

SEE ART, 11

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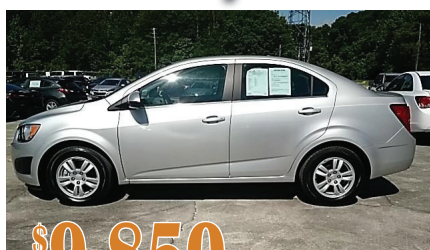
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Sunday service 10:30am
Wed. 7:00pm

The Church Courageous

205 SW Magnolia • Keystone
904-263-3613
Sunday service 10:30am

Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church

3760 S.E. State Rd 21 • Keystone
Sunday service 11:00am

Community Church of Keystone Heights

345 SE Palmetto • Keystone
352-473-4182
Sunday service 10:00 am

Faith Presbyterian Church

2738 S.E. State Rd 21 • Keystone
Sunday service 11:00am

First Baptist Church of Keystone Heights

550 E. Walker Dr. • Keystone
352-473-7201
Sunday service 10:30 am
Wed. 6:30pm

Freedom Baptist Church

7207 State Rd 21 • Keystone
352-473-2778
Sunday service 10:00 am • Wed. 7:00pm

Fresh Start Fellowship

7191 State Rd 21 • Keystone
352-473-6550
Sunday service 10:00 am & 6:00pm
Wed 6:00pm

Friendship Bible Church

1155 Orchid Ave. • Keystone
352-473-2713
Sunday service 10:30am & 6:00pm

Gadara Baptist Church

6779 County Road 315C • Keystone
352-473-3615
Sunday service 11:00am & 6:00pm
Wed. service 6:30pm

Hope Baptist Church

3900 S.E. State Road 100 • Starke
352-473-4188
Sunday service 10:45am

Keystone Heights Christian Church

3528 SE State Rd 21 • Keystone
352-473-0620
Sunday service 10:30am • Wed. 6:30pm

Keystone Heights First Assembly of God

8025 Hwy 100 • Keystone
352-473-3432
Sunday service 10:30am • Wed. 7:00pm

Keystone Heights Presbyterian Church

4002 State Rd 100 • Keystone
352-448-9440
Sunday service 10:00am

Keystone United Methodist Church

4004 S.E. State Rd. 21 • Keystone
352-473-3829
Sunday service 8:00am, 9:15 & 11:00am

Lake Hill Baptist Church

5165 County Rd 214 • Keystone
352-476-4191
Sunday service 11:00am & 6:00pm

St. William Catholic Church

210 SW Peach St • Keystone
352-473-4136
Sat. service 5:00pm • Sun. 9:00 am

Trinity Baptist Church

3716 SE State Rd 21 • Keystone
352-473-7261
Sunday service 8:30am & 11:00am
Wed. 6:30pm

Cross Point Church

Meets Park of Palms chapel
677 Hebron Ave • Keystone
352-473-4545
Sunday service 10:40am

Trinity Episcopal

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352-475-2177
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Wed. 6:00pm

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Fire

from page 1

have a generator and meet current code requirements, so from that perspective we'll be able to meet the needs of the community from that facility without needing to relocate or modify our response. I think what they'll get is a facility that's better suited to meet their needs, obviously if those existing facilities is in a hurricane."

The county intends to sandwich the facility on a narrow piece of property between Hersey Realty and Keystone Heights Insurance.

Due to the property's slim tract, the facility will be two stories and include a traditional fire pole – something rarely seen in modern facilities.

The existing fire station in Middleburg still has a fire pole.

At the current facility, when a call

comes in, the firefighters must cross the street to get to the facility that formerly housed the Keystone Heights Volunteer Fire Department. There, one of the bays holds their fire engine.

Mock said the entire situation just isn't optimal.

"It's obviously not a very good arrangement," Mock said. "The building is nowhere near up to code, and walking across the street to go on call is nowhere near ideal."

In 2000, the county upgraded the staffing in Keystone. The number of firefighters currently sits at five.

Mock said the county has been working on getting a new fire station in the area for about two years. With this station, and a new station being erected in neighboring Bradford County, Mock said he's confident that, more than ever before, area residents and firefighters will have a proper facility to meet their needs, especially as the county expects a population boom between now

and 2040 brought about by the First Coast Expressway. The county revoked the Keystone Heights Volunteer Fire Department's credentials in 2013. Prior to that, volunteers worked side by side with county firefighters and offered Explorer programs for Keystone Heights' youth to participate in daily affairs and learn the ends and outs of public service.

A lawsuit sprung out of the Board of County Commissioner's decision to shut down the volunteer department, which forced volunteers to give up their rights to provide emergency services. Thereafter, fire and rescue services fell solely on the Clay County firefighters to provide.

The building the volunteers occupied at the time seemed like a good candidate for a permanent fire station within the city, but fire officials soon found that to retrofit the building to code would be nearly impossible and began the process of identifying a new facility.

Board

from page 1

important thing that we pursue in the best interest of our district," she said.

Board member Mary Bolla characterized the lobbying contract as an "extravagance right now" as she was the first to speak on Gilhousen's motion. She said when she went to Clay Day during the legislative session, she was somewhat conflicted as to why the district's lobbying firm didn't reach out to prep the school board on the issues that would impact the district in this year's session.

"The update, for instance, on House Bill 7069, I got most of that from the lobbyist for St. Johns County because of our consortium with them," Bolla said.

Condon spoke next and defended re-hiring Southern Strategy Group.

"I would like to see us renew it, but I would like to see us come up with some very specific goals – working with our superintendent – for some things that we ask for," Condon said.

Condon said the Clay Board of County Commissioners' legislative wish list was very specific and "they got almost everything on their list."

"I think there can be good gained from the right group with the right strategy, but I understand your concerns as well," Condon said.

Gilhousen made one last push for the lobbying firm before the full board voted on her motion.

"I think that part of what was missing from this last session was a dialogue between the elected members of our board and our superintendent and the lobbyist firm. So, I think maybe a regular workshop where we're checking in and developing those goals together will be a healthy relationship," Gilhousen said.

When it came time for a vote, Gilhousen's motion failed 2-3 with her and Condon voting yes and board members Janice Kerekes, Carol Studdard and Mary Bolla voting no. The board voted 3-2 on May 19, 2016 – when Van Zant was still superintendent – to hire the firm with Kerekes and Studdard voting no at that time.

In other business:

The school board voted 3-2 to pay some \$4,600 in outstanding legal bills the district received since January 2017 on behalf of Van Zant in his defense of a Florida Commission on Ethics complaint filed last August by former Keystone Heights Principal Susan Sailor. Sailor claimed Van Zant had plagiarized an academic paper she wrote for the district and used it as a class assignment for his online master's degree.

On June 14, the issue was dismissed by Florida Commission on Ethics as it found no reasonable cause for the complaint.

However, the district this year has already paid \$2,756 in legal bills that were not brought to the board for approval.

School Board Attorney David D'Agata said he brought the issue to the board's attention because it "has the power of the purse" and that this specific ethics charge did not arise from Van Zant's official duties as superintendent. However, D'Agata said a separate complaint with the Inspector General alleging Van Zant was complicit in allowing high school principals to place students in ESE in order to beef up the district's graduation rate was under the purview of Van Zant's tenure and, as such, those bills were paid.

"This is not Mr. Van Zant's personal checkbook," said Chairman Janice Kerekes.

After about a 30-minute discussion, the board voted 3-2 to pay Van Zant's legal bills on a motion by Mary Bolla that was seconded by Ashley Gilhousen. Kerekes and Studdard – having frequently disagreed with many of Van Zant's policy actions while superintendent – voted against the motion.

"The sun'll come out tomorrow," Studdard said. "Life goes on."

The school board voted 4-1 with Gilhousen voting no to approve the personnel consent agenda item governing appointments, reappointments, transfers, redesignations, retirements, resignations and concluded employments. Board member Betsy Condon pulled the item for discussion, but when the vote came to approve the item, she voted yes and said, "Please know, I want to support the other teachers" on the list. A previous motion to kill the agenda item failed on a 2-3 vote.

Before the vote, Gavin Rollins, a former school district administrator, spoke to the board in dismay regarding his employment status after returning March 1 from an ap-

proximately 12-month deployment with the Florida Army National Guard. He stopped short of accusing the district of unfair treatment to veterans.

In January, Rollins said he emailed Davis "respectfully requesting" adequate reemployment upon his return and said he would have been willing to return as an administrator, "but I wanted to be good employee so I stated that I would be willing to take a social studies teaching position in a full-time capacity as adequate employment if an administrator position was unavailable," Rollins said.

After his return, in early April, Rollins was placed at Keystone Heights High School as an instructor with the school's Army JROTC program.

"I didn't want the ROTC position and I protested but they responded by saying take this temporary position and I would be guaranteed placement as a social studies teacher in the fall. I was told that the ROTC position was my only option for re-employment, so I agreed on the basis of that promise," Rollins said.

Superintendent Addison Davis said it's his job to make sure the district is being consistent in its human resources practices.

"So, no different than anyone else, once you resign an administrator position, which this is the first time on the record, that I've ever heard about protesting the resignation. I actually didn't even know the resignation was in place until I asked in the last two weeks about school year's over, I need this employee to come back to the district, because I may have some tasks to fulfill their employment until June 30," Davis said.

Under the federal Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, employers are required to provide adequate employment to service members when they return from deployments if possible.

Rollins' contract ended June 8, the same day all Clay County annual contract teachers' contracts ended. Davis said Rollins, who has a temporary certification in social studies, can come back to the district as a social studies teacher in the fall if a principal chooses to offer him a position in the district.

The next school board meeting is Aug. 3 at 6 p.m. at the Teacher Training Center at Fleming Island High.



Hawthorne-based woodworker Bill Smith demonstrates how a lathe works at Artisan's Way gallery in Melrose.

Art

from page 9

"The good part about belonging to a club is that turners will tell you how they do what they do," Smith said.

Though this isn't always out of good nature, but rather a challenge to see if their peers can recreate something they have made. The club supports healthy competition among the master woodworkers from within its ranks.

Smith's work is displayed and sold out of Artisan's Way gallery and gift shop in Melrose. The works are sold under "W. Custer Smith," a name he took to differentiate himself from the multitude of other Bill Smiths

in the world. All the pieces are contained in a large room within the gallery and priced extremely reasonably for the work that goes into some of the sculpted pieces of wood.

In addition to selling his work, Smith is known to show off his skills during First Friday events in Melrose. He has given demonstrations for turning wooden tops on a lathe three separate times at Artisan's Way during the monthly Friday evening festivities.

The collection of wooden objects created by Smith is perpetually growing, as Smith can't keep himself out of his shop.

"Some days I go up to the shop in the morning and don't come in until after dark," Smith said. "My wife will eventually come tell me I have to come in and eat."

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Students told 'challenges are opportunities'

By Tierney Harvey
KHHerald.com

ORANGE PARK – Saryn Hatcher walked up to the podium on the Thrasher Horne Center for the Arts stage on June 13 and took a selfie with the Florida Youth Challenge Academy director, deputy director and Class 32 cadets. Hatcher said he took the picture for his 74-year-old father, who taught him about public speaking.

"My father did a lot for me, so I thank him every time I give a presentation," said Hatcher, the FLYCA principal and School District of Clay County drop-out prevention administrator.

Like many cadets at the military-style alternative high school, Hatcher experienced trouble at home growing up. FLYCA helps

at-risk students 16-18 years old who lack credits or have been expelled or dropped out of high school. The June 13 ceremony celebrated cadets' graduation from the five-and-a-half-month residential phase of the program.

"My father asked me to share my story in the future," Hatcher said. "My father also said to me, 'Tell the young people how you were able to focus and still earn your high school diploma, when kids teased you about your mother or the fact that you lived in so many different cities with all your aunts.'"

In a speech he called "Taming Your Burdens," Hatcher told cadets about his mother's struggle with schizophrenia and not having a permanent home or enough to eat. He now has a doctorate degree in instructional technology and distance education and

years of experience in the Navy.

Hatcher described life in the 1970s for seven-year-old "Baby Boy," his older brother and their young mother. He went on to reveal he was speaking of his own life. He said his mother struggled after a divorce and moved the family from city to city to stay with her sisters. His mother spent periods living on the streets. The boys' aunts had children of their own, and there was often not enough food for all of them.

Eventually, Hatcher and his brother ended up with their aunt, Big Mama. When their mother wanted to move again, Big Mama said the boys deserved to have a home, and legally adopted them. When their mother found out, she was furious.

SEE YOUTH, 14

Project

from page 2

Aquifer through the bolstering of Lake Geneva and Lake Brooklyn, which are aquifer recharge areas.

Approved during the 2017 Florida legislative session, the project comes with \$13.3 million in current legislative appropriations and an expected completion year of 2021. Estimates have put the project's total cost at \$44 million.

"I was [at the SJRWMD board meeting] yesterday and actually spoke to the agenda item, and we're just incredibly excited and very, very thankful to our legislative representatives...for all the hard work they did."

– Scott Kornegay, Keystone Heights City Manager Scott Kornegay

Legislators have earmarked \$5 million a year from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund as recurring payments to complete the project. Voters approved the Florida Land and Conservation Initiative – Amendment 1 – in 2014 to divert 33 percent of net revenue from the existing excise tax on documents to the Land Acquisition Trust Fund.

The fund was developed to acquire and improve beaches, wildlife habitats, conservation easements and drinking water resources

"I was [at the SJRWMD board meeting] yesterday and actually spoke to the agenda item, and we're just incredibly excited and very, very thankful to our legislative representatives...for all the hard work they did," said Keystone Heights City Manager Scott Kornegay. "We're looking forward to the project getting underway."

Senator Rob Bradley (R-Fleming Island) along with Rep. Bobby Payne (R-Palatka) championed the legislation during last session. "Amendment 1 created a revenue stream that will allow water resource protection projects of this magnitude to move forward, and I applaud my colleagues in the Florida Senate for supporting our funding request," Bradley said. "I am very excited about the benefits of this project to meet the future water supply needs of Northeast Florida and to replenish the lakes in Keystone Heights."

Kornegay said the city would have a celebration when the lake levels rise to where they were decades ago.

"I don't know about a ceremonial dive," he said, "but we'll certainly celebrate."

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Schools one point away from 'A' district letter grade

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – The Clay County School District was one point away from being named an "A" District in recent scores released last week by the Florida Department of Education for the 2016-2017 school year.

The state calculates school grades annually based on up to 11 components, including student achievement and learning gains on statewide, standardized assessments and high school graduation rate. Clay County improved in percent of possible points earned, moving from 57 percent ("B" letter grade) to 61 percent ("B" letter grade), one point shy of the "A" school rating (62 percent).

Clay County District Schools now has 12 "A" schools, an increase of five schools from the 2015-2016 academic year. Three schools improved from a "C" letter grade to "A" or "B" ratings. Lake Asbury Junior High demonstrated remarkable improvements jumping from a "C" to an "A" school, a 101-point

increase.

Ridgeview Elementary made significant gains by increasing 134 points, moving from a "B" school to an "A." Overall, Clay County now ranks 12th in state in percent of possible points earned, moving up eight spots from last year.

"The release of school grades demonstrates Clay County District Schools is moving in the right direction to become a Top 10 and "A" school district. These improvements are based on the hard work and commitment exhibited from our teachers, support staff, school leaders, students, and parents. Clay County Schools will continue to focus on providing on-going, high quality, and relevant experiences for our students as we seek to offer a world-class education. Overall, I am excited about our future and continuing to Elevate Clay," said Superintendent Addison Davis.

Clay County Schools with Greatest Improvement

School Names	Point Increase
Ridgeview Elementary School	+134
Lake Asbury Junior High School	+101
Paterson Elementary	+ 92
Middleburg High School	+ 88
Orange Park Elementary School	+ 76
Keystone Heights Elementary School	+ 73
Coppergate Elementary School	+ 68
Fleming Island Elementary	+ 67
Lakeside Elementary School	+ 66
S. Bryan Jennings Elementary School	+ 64
Orange Park Junior High School	+ 62

Clay County Schools All Letter Grades

School Grade	2015-16	2016-17	+/-
"A"	7	12	+5
"B"	19	19	0
"C"	14	11	-3
"D"	0	0	0
"F"	1*	1*	0

*The "F" is OPPAA Charter School



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What Does Conservative Investing Mean to Older Investors?

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On one hand, you may not want to invest as aggressively in stocks as you did when you were younger and had many years of employment ahead of you. You just don't have as much time to overcome the inevitable downturns in the financial markets – and when you're retired, you don't want to be forced to sell investments when the price is down.

On the other hand, if you primarily own

investments that offer little growth potential but greater stability of principal – such as certificates of deposit and U.S. Treasury securities – you may not be able to keep ahead of inflation. So, even during retirement, you will need to seek some investments that can provide you with rising income.

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Designated as a Clay County school, the Florida Youth Challenge Academy is funded by the Clay County School District, the Florida Department of Children and Families, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice and the Florida National Guard.

Youth

from page 12

"She did the unthinkable. She actually took gasoline and burned Big Mama's house down," he said. Everyone got out, he said, but, "Baby Boy was still stuck in a closet, frozen with fear. He couldn't get out."

He said his cousin went back in the house to save Baby Boy – which was Hatcher. His mother was arrested for arson and placed in a mental institution for the criminally insane. Hatcher eventually went to live with his father and began rebuilding his life.

Hatcher said his father told him, "Let the young people know what you were thinking when you were actually homeless." He said, "Tell them what it felt like when you had to eat mustard sandwiches and you stayed focused when all thought everything was lost for you and your brother."

"Well, cadets, let me tell you what it felt like to eat mustard sandwiches," Hatcher said. "It was horrible. I hated it. Every day of my life, I hated it."

His message to the cadets was clear – like him, they can overcome their circumstances and reach success. He urged the teens not to define themselves by their struggles.

"Although it was now over 30 years ago when this took place, the scars and the burdens are still here. They're still here," he said. "They're just hidden from you."

"Before our mother died years ago, she actually earned her college degree with honors in business administration, and told both her now-adult sons, 'If I can do it with all my burdens, there's no excuse for you,'" he said.

The auditorium applauded and cheered. "There's no excuse, cadets," he said.

FLYCA Director James Ransom told cadets that challenges are opportunities. He left the podium and sat on the edge of the stage, speaking directly to the cadets as they sat in the orchestra pit area.

"Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life," Ransom told cadets, reciting from Proverbs.

The graduation featured a performance from the school's drill team as well as marching and chanting as each of four platoons brought their flags to the stage.

"This is a day that we all look forward to because it's all about the journey these young men and young ladies have taken over the five-and-a-half months," Ransom said.

FLYCA is a cooperative effort between the Department of Education, department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Children and Families, Clay County District Schools and Department of Military Affairs and the Florida National Guard.

The program, which is voluntary, allows cadets to earn a GED or high school credits to catch up with high school class.

Teens are taught discipline as well as leadership and job skills. Cadets spend at least five hours a day in academic classes and get each up morning to take part in physical fitness, much like military training.

The graduation ceremony recognized the 163 cadets out of the 195 who entered the program five-and-half months ago.

"Many cadets were lost along the way," said Abby Vazquez, deputy director.

Three cadets left at the request of their parents, 25 were terminated for unacceptable behavior, one left for medical reasons, one did not return from placement pass

and two left for other reasons, according to Vazquez. Eight did not show up on the first day.

Many scholarships and awards were given out, including three \$1,000 Construction Career Days scholarships. The Maj. Gen. Ronald O. Harrison Leadership Award went to cadet Rhett Butler, who was also honored for his community service hours. Ezekial Benjamin took home the Most Improved Cadet Award. The Class 32 valedictorian was Austin Kaplan and the salutatorian was Travis Hupp.

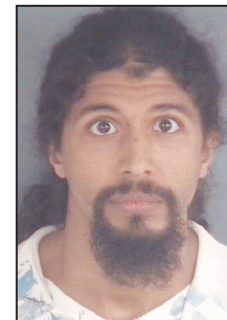
The Mentor of the Year Award was given to Patricia Laster, who was unable to attend the graduation. Ransom said that as the Class 32 cadets graduate from the residential phase, the Class 31 cadets were completing the end of the post-residential phase.

The quasi-military alternative high school program started in July 2001 and there are 40 similar programs nationally, he said.

Operation Sunrise Keystone Heights ends in six arrests on 21 charges

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – Information and tips gathered from Sheriff Darryl Daniels' monthly Neighborhood Walks led to several arrests on July 12.

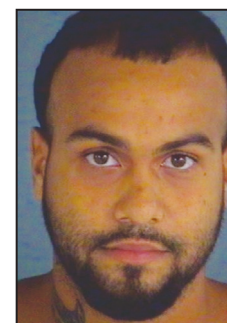
Detectives executed three narcotics search warrants at three homes in High Ridge Estates in Keystone Heights. They arrested six people on 21 drug-related charges during what was dubbed "Operation Sunrise Keystone Heights." Anthony Carazo, 31, was charged with three counts of possession of marijuana with intent to sell, possession or delivery of an altered firearm, Shaun Keen, 38, was charged with three counts of possession of marijuana with intent to sell or manufacture, Augustino Morales, 25, was charged with four counts of possession of marijuana with intent to distribute, Randall Charles Ward Jr., 29, was charged with two counts of the sell and delivery of cocaine, Samantha



Anthony Carazo



Shaun Keen



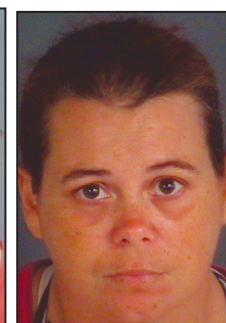
Augustino Morales



Randall Ward Jr.



Samantha Fallatik



Shawna Tracey

Leigh Fallatik, 29, faces one count of sell and delivery of cocaine and Shawna Michelle Tracy, 38, faces one count of possession of not more than 20 g. cannabis. "We continue to send a strong message to those who commit crimes and sell drugs in Clay County. You have options. You can stop what you're doing. You can leave Clay County or you can go to jail. We will come and get you," Daniels said. "Our Neighborhood Walks are making a difference in helping us reduce crime."

Daniels did not disclose the actual amount of drugs or their value from the sting operation.

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- (3) A description of the nature of the malfunction or failure of illumination of the outdoor light
- (4) Sufficient contact information to include your name, address, telephone number, account number (if a Clay Electric Cooperative member) and email address (if using the online form)



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Keystone alum finish strong in college softball

Waters, Maynard excelling for Stetson, Toledo

By Randy Lefko
KHHERald.com

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS –Two former Keystone Heights High School softball standouts; Kelsey Waters and Ashley Maynard, garnered some post-season accolades after standout seasons for Stetson University and University of Toledo, respectively, in 2017.

Waters, who finished a stellar four years at Stetson in Deland, was selected for a second year as a First Team All-Sun Conference outfielders for the Hatters with two A-SUN player of the week selections for the 2017 season. Waters also was selected for the A-Sun Honor Roll. Maynard was lethal with her batter for the Hatters with team-leading statistics for batting average (.317), slugging percentage (.513), on-base percentage (.412), home runs (15), total bases (220), walks (67) and stolen bases (49) in her varsity play. Waters blasted 12 career triples to rank second all-time in Stetson softball history.

For Maynard, at Toledo as a junior catcher, transferred from Southeaster University in Florida to play at Toledo the past two seasons with her junior year starting 31 of 45 games for

SEE SOFTBALL, 19



PHOTO COURTESY STETSON UNIVERSITY
Keystone Heights High School softball standout Ashley Waters finished up her four year varsity college playing days with a second All-Sun Conference selection. Waters was a big bat for the Lady Hatters of Stetson University in Deland.



PHOTO BY RAY DIMONDA

Ryder Thomas, 8, gets through the finish chute of the Our Country Day 5K run race held July 4 in Keystone Heights. Thomas finished 13th overall with a time of 24:23.

Collins, Creamer win Our Country 5K

By Ray DiMonda
KHHERald.com

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS - Area runners took a 3.1 mile trek through the neighborhoods of Keystone Heights prior to July 4 festivities as the annual Our Country Day 5K race kicked off a day of celebrations around downtown Keystone Heights.

Top finisher for the race was Ryan Collins of Keystone Heights who held off overall female winner Anne Elise Creamer as she was a handful of steps

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All County softball

Sweatt a maestro of the mound

By Randy Lefko
KHHERald.com

OAKLEAF – All softball fans have to remember is 44-1 and that's not a score. That's the runs scored versus runs scored against for the Oakleaf High region to state championship playoff run this season.

From April 4 to the final inning of the season, Oakleaf High pitcher Kelsey Sweatt was a maestro on the mound as she orchestrated 57 consecutive innings of scoreless softball until the state title game where Wellington scored a solo run.

For her amazing run, Sweatt is named as the Clay Today All County softball player of the year for a second straight year. One thing added to Sweatt's arsenal this year; a changeup.

"I trusted my defense more," said Sweatt, who gave up just seven earned runs in regular season play plus the playoff run to score at 0.48 earned runs average and an 11-2 overall record with 109 strikeouts. "I didn't have as many strikeouts, but the ERA was lower."

Sweatt added to her resume with a sterling performance in the prestigious Kissimmee Klassic invitational softball tournament near mid-season that earned Oakleaf a first-ever Klassic title and a Most Valuable Player trophy for Sweatt.

Behind Sweatt was an array of defenders; both infield and outfield, that formed one of the stingiest run-prevention systems in Florida.

Around the horn, on defense and on the Clay Today All County First Team were Oakleaf High teammates Baylee Goddard at third base, Mika Garcia at shortstop and Alex Acevedo at second base. Goddard, committed to NCAA runnerup University of Florida, is only a sophomore while Garcia and Acevedo graduated and will bring their games to West Florida and FAU in the fall.

At bat, the trio formed the nucleus of the Lady Knights offensive arsenal with all three over .350 batting average, Garcia with two homers, Acevedo with 33 runs batted in and Goddard scoring 28 runs.

"Alex was our clutch player and was incredibly smart on the bases," said Oakleaf High coach Christina Thompson. "Garcia is easily the best shortstop in Clay County, if not northeast Florida. She makes ESPN plays look easy. Baylee led the county in homers last year, but did not have as many this year though she has .365 with 28 runs. While some kids from other teams may be batting over .500 and mine are .350, my

SEE 5K, 18

SEE ALL COUNTY, 18

County

from page 15

argument is look at the competition (we) are facing.”

The two non-Knights on the first team infield include Clay pitcher Morgan Crutcher and Clay High's Sydney Lewis at first base who was an area leader in runs batted in with 43 and also scored the most run-producing bunts for Blue Devil coach Matt Lewis.

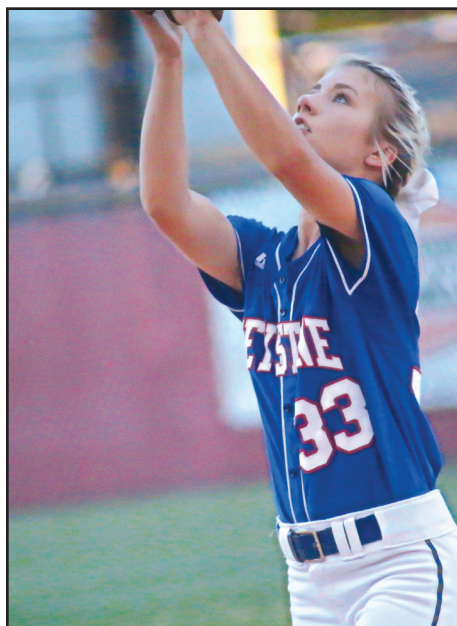
“Sydney is a gamer who grinds everyday and works harder than anyone and was our go-to player anytime,” said Lewis. “She led our very young and inexperienced team and made a ton of great plays for us. Morgan was stellar with more seven inning games than any pitcher in the area with 135 strikeouts and a 15-4 record.”

Behind home plate, Oakleaf High senior Haley Willis was a key part of the success of Sweatt with her targeting and pitch selection with two home plate blocks critical in the state final game against Wellington.

“She is the best framing high school catcher I have ever seen,” said Thompson, who noted Willis is heading to Pensacola State College. “Willis was also second in batting average at .438.”

In the outfield, speed was the name of the game in centerfield with ultra-fast Tracey Ferguson manning the big field and teammate Rebecca Koskey holding down right field.

“Tracey hit the game-winner in Kissimmee and combines a cannon arm, great speed and great range,” said Thompson. “Rebecca has been solid since her freshman year with five homers this year and was a solid number three in our batting lineup with our best batting average.”



Lady Indians land plenty of All County nods

Keystone Heights High softball had a banner year with a district title and a region playoff berth thanks to Clay Today All County selections, clockwise from left, Molly Crawford at shortstop, Bre Wells at first base and Megan Moncrief at pitcher. Outfielder Ashleigh Jennings was a first team selection.



Player of the year: Kelsey Sweatt

All County Softball

First Team

Pitcher: Morgan Crutcher, CHS, freshman

Catcher: Haley Willis, OHS senior

First base: Sydney Lewis, CHS junior

Second base: Alex Acevedo, OHS senior

Shortstop: Mika Garcia, OHS senior

Third base: Baylee Goddard, OHS sophomore

OF: Ashleigh Jennings, KHHS junior

OF: Tracy Ferguson, OHS senior

OF: Rebecca Koskey, OHS junior

Second Team

Pitcher: Megan Moncrief, KHHS junior (97 K, 16-7 record, 1.69 ERA, led Indians to district title)

Catcher: Bailey Story, KHHS junior (.426 batting average, 43 hits 17RBIs, Jacksonville U. commit)

First base: Angela Agurkis, OHS junior (5 Homers, transfer from Bishop Snyder)

Second base: Allison Byrd, CHS senior (Moved from first base, very dangerous base runner)

Shortstop: Mady Lanoux, FHS senior (.404 BA, five double plays)

Third base: Hailey Stone, CHS junior (.366BA)

OF: Chloe Chambers, RHS freshman (.368BA, 27 Runs, 29RBIs, 1HR)

OF: Destiny Pacetti, OHS junior (split with Kistler in left field, .364 BA)

OF: Carrington Robinson, OPHS senior

Honorable Mention

KHHS: Skylar Rollins 2B (Jr. .446 BA, 7 SB, 236 RBI); Kaitlyn Cline OF (Sr. .347 BA, 34 H, 27 RBI); Bre Wells 1B (Sr. .355BA, 2HR, 19 RBI, .969 Fld %), Molly Crawford SS (Jr. .396BA, 38 H, 12SB, 3HR, 6 doubles)

In left field, Keystone Heights also had a speedster in junior Ashleigh Jennings who combined stellar tracking skills with a .475 batting average with 30 stolen bases making her a legit weapon with just three fielding errors on her slate.



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Dunnings together for Chicago

By Randy Lefko
KHHerald.com

CHICAGO – Clay High baseball got a fleet-ing double-dose of Major League Baseball luck with the connection of the Dunning brothers; Dane and Jake, as the Chicago White Sox recently put the two flamethrowing pitchers together in their minor league system, but the moment lasted just three months.

Dane Dunning, 22 years old and six years younger than Jake, joined his brother in the White Sox farm league with the Winston-Salem Dash at the MLB High-A level in May and responded with five in-nings of shutout ball en route to a 1-0 Dash win over the Lynchburg Hillcats of Virginia. Dunning is listed as a top 10 prospect in the Chicago White Sox farm league, according to a White Sox Top Prospect Report of July 7 on Chicagonow.com.

Jake Dunning, drafted by the San Francisco Giants in 2009 in the 33rd round, was signed to a minor league contract with the Chicago White Sox on March 5, 2017, but was released June 29 from their Charlotte affiliate. On June 17, he was injured before being released in June. Dunning, who played college ball at Indiana and also Florida State College at Jacksonville, did make it to the

Majors and pitched for the Giants in 2014 and 2013, but has incurred injuries recently.

Dane Dunning, who pitched masterfully for the Low-A Kannapolis Intimidators in North Carolina, reported to Winston-Salem with a recent White Sox Minor League Pitcher of the Month award for April with the hard-throwing slinger allowing just three hits and one walk with five strikeouts in his Dash debut.

Dunning, drafted by the Washington Nationals 29th overall in the second round out of the University of Florida, but traded recently to Chicago for an outfielder, has not allowed an earned run in 30.1 innings between Kannapolis and Winston-Salem. His last earned run was April 8 against Lake-wood in a game with Kannapolis.

After being drafted by the Nationals last year, Dunning's last session with brother Jake was some off-season throwing and catching over the summer.

In an article in the Chicago Tribune by Colleen Kane, Dunning commented that Jake offered experience advice to his younger brother.

"(He told me) that I can only control what I can control, to not stress about things that happen during the game, because anything can happen," Dane Dunning said. "That's one of the biggest things when you



Jake Dunning



Dane Dunning

(He told me) that I can only control what I can control, to not stress about things that happen during the game, because anything can happen. That's one of the biggest things when you get runners on or it's a tight situation, you still have to throw strikes. You still have to let your defense make plays."

– Dane Dunning

get runners on or it's a tight situation, you still have to throw strikes. You still have to let your defense make plays."

Dane Dunning's last two outings at Kannapolis ended with a 2-0 record, a .35 ERA and 33 strikeouts with just two walks.

After eight years in the San Francisco Giants organization mostly as a reliever, Jake

Dunning, now a free agent, joined the Sox as a minor-league free agent this offseason and is with Double-A Birmingham. He appeared in 29 games with the Giants in 2013 with a 2.84 ERA in 25.1 innings pitched with 16 strikeouts and 20 hits allowed and one game in 2014.

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5K

from page 15

spot, her battle was with area running Tim Searle, who wound up third.

"I was running with the third-place guy (Tim Searle) for a while, I think he goes to Keystone Heights High. He was pointing me in the right direction and we were having a good time and then I kind of broke off him to try and catch the first-place guy but I didn't really know how far away he was," said Creamer, second in 19:36 with Searle, 16 and a runner at Keystone Height High School, third in 20:22.

In the end, the benefits of the race, according to Kiwanis 5K committee member Tina Bullock, were to several projects in the Keystone Heights area.

"The proceeds from the race goes to



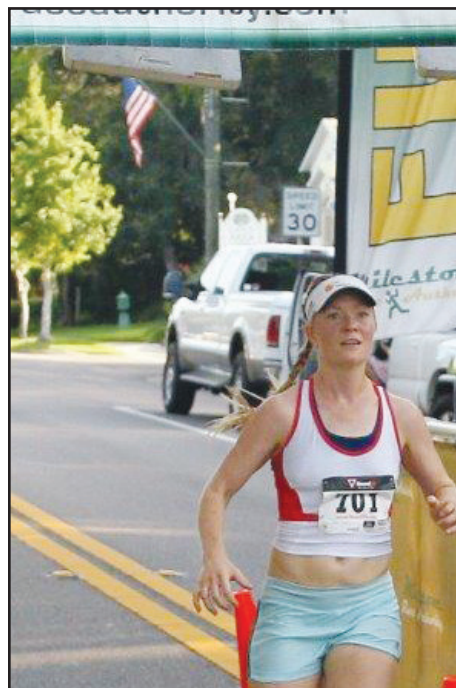
Keystone Heights runners Karl Legrand, No. 629 and Ethan Sapp, No. 29, take off at start of Our Country Day 5K race held July 4. Legrand finished in 24:43 for 15th overall while Sapp finished eighth in 23:43.



Keystone Heights runner Sarah Stephens is colorful on red, white and blue as she crosses the finish line in 32:17 for 40th place overall.



Fifth place overall finisher Ruby McHugh powers in with a time of 22:36 to take a top 10 overall place in the Our Country Day 5K in Keystone Heights on July 4.



Women's champion Anne Elise Creamer nearly caught the overall winner, Ryan Collins, with her fast 19:36 split that got her second overall.

several projects," said Bullock. "A portion goes to the area food bank; The Lake Area Ministries, and then part of it goes to our Kiwanis Youth Projects that support our clubs at the schools such as Terrific Kid, Key Club, Builders Club at the Junior High and High School, and Key Kids at the Elementary School. We also do a Terrific Kid Program at four schools in the area where we present a packet of goodies that a teacher has recognized in every grade level."

Finishing out the top 10 finishers were Aaron Verbeelen in fourth in 22:19; Ruby McHugh in fifth in 22:36; Larry Williams in sixth in 23:36; Luke VanZant in seventh in 23:40; Ethan Sapp in eighth in 23:43; David Golden in ninth in 23:50, and Matthew Markel in 10th in 23:54.



Twelve-year-old Daniel Natirboff strains to get in for 28th place in 28:13.

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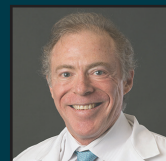
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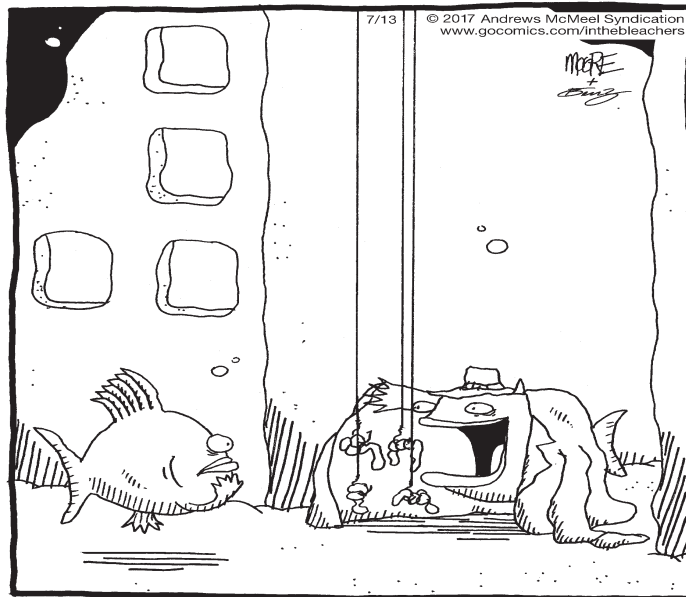
In The Bleachers



Non-Sequitur



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Ziggy



Softball

from page 15

Rockets. Maynard led the Rockets with 16 walks for the season behind eight hits, seven runs batted in and four runs scored. Against Morehead State in March, Maynard had her best game with three hits; one a double.

As a sophomore, Maynard appeared in 50 games with 43 starts with 13 RBIs and two homers with a season-high eight putouts in a game against Buffalo. Maynard ranked third on the team with 118 putouts.

Waters led Stetson in triples with 56 and homers with six for 2017 while hitting safely in 34 games and punching up four runs batted in against South Dakota.

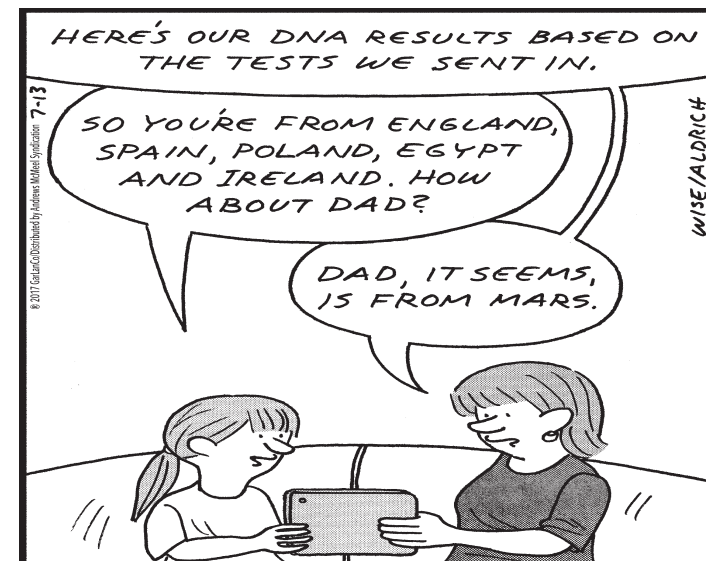
Waters also had a 15 game hit streak from February through March.

In A-Sun statistics, Waters was second in the league in batting at .392, slugging percentage at .636 and on-base percentage at .473.



Keystone Heights High School graduate Ashley Maynard transferred from Southeastern University and played two solid years at the University of Toledo as catcher.

Real Life Adventures



UNIVERSAL Sudoku Puzzle

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★☆

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

SOLUTION:

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

State officers charge woman with forging documents, more

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – The Clay County Sheriff's Office has arrested a Keystone Heights woman who has been wanted since October 2016 for allegedly forging veterinary documents used in the sale of dogs.

Police arrested Sheila Kay Topp, 51, on July 11 at 4 p.m. when she turned herself in to the CCSO at its Green Cove Springs headquarters. She faces two counts of presenting forged official certificates, three counts of criminal use of personal identification, two counts of the transfer of ownership of an animal without official certification of veterinarian inspection.

The investigation began October 25, 2016 when an officer with the state Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement contacted a law enforcement officer for the state Department of Agricultural and Consumer Services regarding what officers believed to be a fraudulent health certificate issued from Baldwin Animal Clinic in Baldwin, Fla. west of Jacksonville.

During the investigation, the clinic's owner, Robert Engle, told investigators that he did not issue the fraudulent certificate nor given anyone else permission to use the certificate or his veterinarian license number.

On November 9, 2016, investigators were led to Topp's home in Keystone Heights to "obtain a statement and review documents pertaining to the sale of dogs," states the arrest warrant. However, when police approached the home, no one answered the door, but heard dogs barking from inside an air-conditioned garage. Investigators left Topp a voice mail asking her to call them back.

When she finally did call the officers back, investigators stated, "I received multiple telephone calls from a woman who identified herself as the defendant. She was very irate, harassing and refused to cooperate in any way."

After booking in the Clay County Jail, Topp was released on \$35,015 bond.

Man bites officer during attempted hospital escape

ORANGE PARK – A Keystone Heights man was arrested after attempting to escape from Orange Park Medical Center and allegedly biting a deputy.

The Clay County Sheriff's Office arrested Brandon James Haugdahl, 28, on July 8 at 12:30 a.m. after he cracked a glass door while

attempting to escape Orange Park Medical Center and then attacked a law enforcement officer.

According to the report, Haugdahl was being held at Orange Park Medical Center after being held under the Baker Act. The man attempted to escape the medical hold and cracked a glass door with his shoulder. A deputy from the Clay County Sheriff's Office attempted to stop Haugdahl when the two fell to the ground and Haugdahl bit the deputy on his forearm.

Following medical release from OPMC, Haugdahl was handcuffed and transported to Clay County Jail. He faces two felonies for vandalism of \$1,000 or more and for attacking a law enforcement officer. Haugdahl is being held on \$30,000 bond with a court date set for August 16.



Brandon Haugdahl

Officer-involved shooting injures shooter

MELROSE – Officials said the 47-year-old Melrose man that was wounded June 23 in a deputy-involved shooting has been released from at UF Health Shands Hospital in Gainesville and officially charged in the case.

According to the Clay County Sheriff's Office, George Robert Nelson was firing his shotgun in the yard at a home on Lake Echo Ridge Drive. When deputies arrived, Nelson came outside and pointed the gun at one of the deputies. Neither of the two deputies who went to the home were injured in the incident and both were placed on administrative leave, which is standard procedure.

The deputies fired and hit Nelson multiple times. He was airlifted to the hospital about 2:15 p.m.

As is standard practice in police-involved shootings, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement is currently investigating the shooting, according to CCSO spokeswoman Angela Spears.

On July 7, Nelson was transported from UF Health hospital in Gainesville to the Clay County Jail where he was booked on two felony charges in connection with the shooting. He faces one count each of aggravated assault on a law enforcement officer and discharging a firearm in public. His bond has been set at \$105,002 and he has a court date on Aug. 9.



George Nelson



The Beat is a look at some of the crime activity reported to the Clay County Sheriff's Office in the previous month. Included here are arrests, police briefs and crimes reported by and involving Lake Area residents in the past 30 days until press time.

Sunday, July 2

Angela Lloyd, 40, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Simple Domestic Battery

Wednesday, June 28

Bruce Donley, 24, Melrose, CCSO, Domestic Battery

Monday, June 26

Thomas Moore, 33, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Grand Theft \$300-4,999

Saturday, June 24

Sherry Edwards, 52, Keystone Heights, CCSO, DUI

Clay Glenn, 24, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Simple Battery

Friday, June 23

Erik Brooking, 37, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Domestic Battery

John Louis Huston, 30, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Grand Theft \$300-4,999

Thursday, June 22

Timothy Anderson, 26, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Simple Domestic Battery

Sunday, June 18

Jamie Strahan, 50, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Violate Injunction for Protection

Saturday, June 17

Michelle Gaddy, 40, Lawtey, CCSO, Fugitive from Justice, Possession Cocaine
Joseph McCrary, 53, Lawtey, CCSO, Controlled Substance by Fraud

Friday, June 16

Elmer Cox, 50, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Simple Battery-Domestic

Thursday, June 15

John Louis Huston, 30, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Grand Theft Auto

Wednesday, June 14

Jeffrey Cooper, 52, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Violate Probation - Community Control
John Louis Huston, 30, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Burglary
Beau Smith, 23, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Simple Battery

Monday, June 12

Amy Sellers, 38, Melrose, CCSO, DWLSR, No Vehicle Registration
Caleb Stewart, 18, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Vandalism \$200-999

Wednesday, July 12

Anthony Carazo, 31, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Three Counts of Possession of Marijuana With Intent to Sell, Possession or Delivery of an Altered Firearm

Samantha Fallatik, 29, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Sell and Delivery of Cocaine
Shaun Keen, 38, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Three Counts of Possession of Marijuana With Intent to Sell or Manufacture
Augustino Morales, 25, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Four Counts of Possession of Marijuana With Intent to Distribute

Shawna Tracy, 38, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Possession of Not More Than 20 g. Cannabis
Randall Ward, 29, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Two Counts of the Sell and Delivery of Cocaine

Tuesday, July 11

Sheila Topp, 51, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Two Counts of Presenting Forged Official Certificates, Three Counts of Criminal Use of Personal Identification, Two Counts of Transfer of Ownership of an Animal Without Official Certification of Veterinarian Inspection

Sunday, July 9

Aaliyah Lee, 21, Starke, CCSO, Simple Battery

Saturday, July 8

Brandon Haugdahl, 28, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Violence on Officer Firefighter EMT, Vandalism \$1,000 or More

Friday, July 7

George Nelson, 47, Melrose, CCSO, Aggravated Assault on a Law Enforcement Officer, Discharging a Firearm In Public

Wednesday, July 5

Hope Moody, 19, Starke, CCSO, Possession of a Controlled Substance, Cocaine Possession, Drug Equipment Possession

Tuesday, July 4

Stavien Counts, 40, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Habitual Traffic Offender

Monday, July 3

Timothy Anderson, 26, Keystone Heights, CCSO, VOP - Conspiracy to Sell Manufacture or Deliver a Controlled Substance
Dail Lewis, 25, Keystone Heights, CCSO, Simple Domestic Battery



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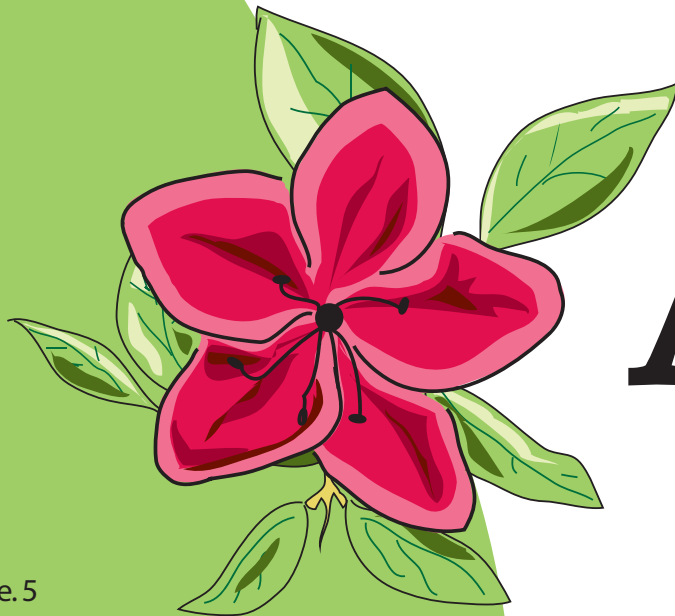
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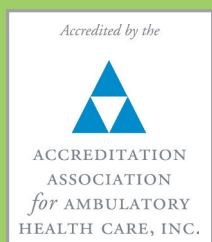
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