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Lake Region Monitor

USPS 114-170 — Keystone Heights, Florida

Thursday, July 17, 2025

52nd Year — 10th Issue — \$1

150% tax increase voted down

*Electric franchise tax
would have increased
from 4% to 10%*

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
Dan@BcTelegraph.com

Clay County Commissioners, during their July 8 meeting, voted down a proposed increase in the county's electric franchise tax, which would have nearly tripled the levy from 4% to 10%.

Commissioner Jim Renninger, who supported the increase and was outvoted 4-1, argued that the utilities franchise tax was fairer than property taxes because only property owners directly pay ad valorem taxes. He said "everybody" pays for electricity.

Board Chair Betsy Condon declared her opposition to the increase in two prior public meetings.

She said that many of the residents in her western Clay County district are senior citizens on fixed incomes who have to make difficult choices between paying their electric bills and having their prescriptions refilled.

Commissioner John Sgromolo criticized Clay Electric Cooperative, which he said sent out

communications that undermined the county's efforts to raise the tax.

He called the nonprofit utility's efforts to kill the franchise tax increase "underhanded" and accused the utility of hypocrisy because it recently raised rates on its members.

"They cited that their rate increase was because of inflation," Sgromolo said. "They put out a post on Facebook on June 3 that said they're paying 79% more for poles, 150% more for underground cable, 219% more for pad-mount transformers, and 121% more for overhead wire."

Sgromolo added that the Clay County Utility Authority is considering a 3.75% increase in water rates and a 3.75% increase in wastewater rates for its upcoming fiscal year.

The commissioner then went down a laundry list of cost increases the county has observed over the past few years.

"Fire Station 11 was quoted in 2018 and 2019, at \$250.30 per square foot," he said. "The per square

foot cost of Fire Station 20 in 2024 was \$614.59. That's a 143% increase per square foot."

Sgromolo said road resurfacing went for \$127,000 per mile in 2022 and jumped to \$209,000 per mile in 2024, a 64% increase.

He also cited the county's construction of Atlantis Drive in 2022, which cost \$7.3 million per mile. Spenser Industrial Drive, built two years later, cost \$15.1 million per mile, a 105% increase. He added that a road grader was priced at \$237,000 in 2021, but by 2025, it had increased to \$328,000, representing a 47% increase.

The county collected \$4.9 million in utility franchise tax revenues in 2024. The 10% rate would have yielded \$12.3 million.

Earlier in the day, during a budget workshop, Assistant County Manager Troy Nagle presented commissioners with 26 proposed budget cuts for the upcoming year, totaling \$6.2 million.



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WORTH NOTING

Market at Melrose

The Market at Melrose Farmers and Crafts Sale takes place the second Saturday of the month from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Mossman Hall in Melrose, 310 S.R. 26. The market features local artists, homemade crafts, one-of-a-kind gifts, a farmers market, plants and animals.

Taco Tuesday at Hawthorne Post

American Legion Post 230 in Hawthorne is hosting Taco Tuesday on Aug. 12 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. For \$5, choose soft or hard tacos and salad with chips and salsa. The post is located at 20370 SE Hawthorne Road.

Assistance for veterans

An American Legion Post 56 Service Officer is available to assist veterans by providing information concerning available benefits and other needs. Walk-ins are available at the American Legion Hall on Edwards Road in Starke every Wednesday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., or call Al Hunter at 407-494-9694 for an appointment. Legion membership is not required for this free service.

Summer Heat services at True Vine

True Vine Ministry of Starke will be hosting Summer Heat 2025 services. Services will take place July 24 and 25 at 7 p.m. nightly. Bishop Thomas Cave III, senior pastor of the Lord's Temple City of Refuge Ministries of Hastings, Florida, will be the featured speaker. The public is cordially invited to attend.

True Vine is located at 422 N. Saint Clair Street in Starke.

Twins in ATV crash, sister killed

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
Dan@BcTelegraph.com

An early Sunday crash claimed the life of a 30-year-old woman and left her twin brother with serious injuries.

Friends of the family identified the deceased woman as Dakota Thacker.

According to the Florida Highway Patrol, the ATV was traveling east on State Road 100 near State Road 26 around midnight when a car rear-ended the four-wheeler.

A passenger in the ATV, Dalton Thacker sustained serious injuries and was transported to a hospital.

A 17-year-old female in the other vehicle was not injured.

Teacher arrested for obscene photo to Bradford Middle School student

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

A former Bradford Middle School teacher turned himself in to Bradford deputies after a judge issued a warrant for his arrest.

Matthew Dawson Watson, 26, was arrested for obscene communication to a minor via a computer and an authority figure soliciting or engaging in a romantic relationship with a student. Both charges are felonies.

According to a warrant affidavit, School Protection Officer Tyler Oliver notified Bradford Detective Hayley Flynn about an alleged inappropriate relationship between Watson and a student in February.

A Florida Department of Children and Families investigator provided the Bradford detective with a statement submitted through DCF's online portal describing the relationship.

The redacted affidavit indicates that the student and Watson engaged in several text and image exchanges on Snapchat and TikTok, culminating with Watson sending the victim a photo of his penis.

The victim reacted by telling Watson that she was getting uncomfortable, and Watson responded by writing that he was deleting all his social media profiles, except for Facebook.

"They never spoke online again," Flynn wrote in the report.

The student also indicated that she had no relationship with Watson after the photo exchange "other than passing him in the hallway."

The DCF investigator reported that she interviewed Watson, who told her the only social media apps he was on were Facebook, Instagram, and a few

dating apps.

When asked about Snapchat, the 26-year-old told the DCF investigator he deleted his Snapchat account in November, around Thanksgiving, due to his ex-girlfriend having his login and causing him issues on his account.

The instructor also denied ever communicating with a student on social media.

"Watson advised he had never had any sexually explicit conversations with any student, nor had he ever sent any pictures of any part of his body to any students," wrote Flynn, relaying the account of the DCF investigator.

Flynn then contacted the victim and another individual. The victim turned over her phone to the detective.

The victim repeated to Flynn the claims she had made to the DCF investigator, confirming that the teacher sent her a picture of "his thing."

Flynn then obtained search warrants for Watson's phone and Snapchat accounts, which revealed he had lied about not having a Snapchat account in December.

"While executing a search warrant of Watson's residence," wrote Flynn, "a 'love letter' was found inside Watson's wallet. The letter was written by (redacted) to him and displayed heart symbols with (redacted)."



Matthew
Watson

Katz-James steps down as Save Our Lakes president



Save Our Lakes board members Left to right: Scott Slater, Glenda Harper, Diane Bennet, Vivian Katz-James, Chandler Rozear, and Webb Farber.

BY JENN SAMSEL
Special to the Monitor

Save Our Lakes President Vivian Katz-James informed members of the organization during their July 8 meeting at St. William Catholic Church that she had stepped down from her leadership role.

The longtime lakes advocate introduced the 2026 officers, with Scott Slater becoming the organization's new President, Chandler Rocher as Vice President, and Diane Bennett as Secretary. Katz-James will remain on the board and serve as treasurer.

Later in the meeting, Slater addressed the concerning issue of declining water levels in Lake Brooklyn. He stated that the lake

has receded by approximately three feet, primarily due to an ongoing lack of rainfall and increased water consumption by residents for activities such as lawn irrigation.

Slater emphasized the urgent need for the community to adopt more sustainable water usage practices to preserve this vital natural resource and ensure the lake's health for future generations.

He urged residents to be mindful of their consumption and highlighted the significant impact of individual efforts on the overall well-being of Lake Brooklyn. He continued by proposing the idea of using reclaimed water for future water use.

Gov.: Blanding could house 2,000 immigrants

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
Dan@BcTelegraph.com

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said the Camp Blanding Joint Training Center near Starke could house as many as 2,000 illegal immigrants, making it one of the largest such facilities in the U.S.

Now, the Adams County Detention Center in Natchez, Mississippi, holds approximately 2,000 detainees. However, Charlton County, Georgia, is in the process of expanding the Folkston ICE Processing Center with a projected capacity of 3,000. That

facility is 75 miles north of Camp Blanding. In addition, Florida's newest immigrant detention center could equal the capacity of the Charlton County facility.

Earlier this month, DeSantis joined President Donald Trump for the opening of a detention center 50 miles west of Miami dubbed "Alligator Alcatraz."

Both Trump and DeSantis emphasized the facility's remoteness, situated in a swampy area surrounded by reptiles. The new center was built in eight days and features more than

200 security cameras, over 28,000 feet of barbed wire, and 400 security personnel. Officials said the South Florida center could hold 3,000 detainees.

The governor said the state is now selecting vendors for the Camp Blanding expansion.

He added that because Florida is the only state that requires all law enforcement to participate in immigration enforcement, the Sunshine State accounts for between 15% and 20% of daily immigration arrests.

The projected capacity of the Camp Blanding detention center would be lower than the combined capacities of Florida State Prison and Union Correctional Institution, which is 2,926.

Blanding's history as a detention site reaches back to 1942, when the camp served as a German prisoner of war camp.

One thousand POWs were housed within the post, and its leadership supervised an additional 3,000 German POWs in branch camps throughout Florida.

Weekly deadline is Monday at 5 p.m. • Phone 904-964-6305 • Fax 904-964-8628

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Twins in ATV crash, sister killed

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
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A passenger in the ATV, Dalton Thacker sustained serious injuries and was transported to a hospital.

A 17-year-old female in the other vehicle was not injured.

New River Baptist celebrates 192 years

New River Baptist Church, located at 16703 SW 144th Ave. in Brooker, will be having its 192nd Homecoming Celebration service on Sunday, July 20, at 10:30 a.m.

New River Baptist Church is the second oldest existing Baptist church in the state of Florida having been founded in 1833. You are invited to be a guest for services on that exciting day. Sunday School classes begin at 9:15 a.m. followed by the morning worship service at

10:30 a.m. Following the morning service will be a covered dish lunch in the fellowship hall. Come see what God has been doing and bring a dish to share at the fellowship. For more information, please call 352-485-1246 or 904-796-2359.

American Legion breakfast

American Legion Post 56 will hold its monthly breakfast at the post on Saturday, July 19, at 8 a.m. All Veterans and their families are invited to attend.



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UNION COUNTY

4-H teaches the art of homesteading

BY ANGELINA BOUDY AND
MEGAN DANIEL
Union County 4-H

During the week of June 16, a three-day camp titled Jr. Homesteaders was held at the Union County Extension Office in collaboration with Lafayette County 4-H.

With a growing interest in self-sufficiency, the camp aimed to teach youth about the history of homesteading and how those practices continue today.

From gardening and beekeeping to cooking, woodworking, and raising animals, homesteading offers a unique way to connect with the outdoors and take greater control over what ingredients are used in food and household products.

Throughout the week, participants engaged in hands-on activities that brought the past to life—cooking their own meals, playing traditional games, and making candles and soap. The camp also included field trips to local establishments to explore the history of homesteading in Florida.

Homemade lunch,



Shaw Daniel and Writ Griffis competing in an old-fashioned sack race.

checkers and 'Old Yeller'

To kick off the week, youth received an overview of homesteading's origins in the 1800s and learned about how cattle ranching helped shape farmsteads in both the American West and Florida. Campers then tried their hand at being homesteaders by preparing a

homemade lunch that included creamed corn, green beans, jam, butter, and biscuits. This experience helped them appreciate the time and effort involved in home-cooked meals and the importance of knowing where their ingredients come from.

Because early homesteaders didn't have access to modern technology, campers also learned how children entertained themselves in the past. They played sack races, marbles, checkers, and chess—classic games that would have filled time on the homestead. Later that day, youth learned about the value of dairy cattle and goats as milk sources, then paired up to make homemade vanilla ice cream in a bag. They capped off the day by watching Old Yeller, gaining insight into daily life on a homestead.

Beef, bees and browsing the museum

On the second day, youth

toured North Florida Custom Meats, where Jimmy Tallman shared a behind-the-scenes look at meat processing from start to finish. Campers observed each stage of the butchering process and learned about the importance of treating animals humanely before and during the slaughter process to produce high-quality meat.

Back at camp, participants then discovered the important role of bees in growing food and made rolled beeswax candles. They also created goat milk soap to take home. A highlight of the day also



Rhett Kunze enjoying the chicken coop at Dudley Farms State Park.



Colt Williams and Jenson Tetstone silking and creaming corn.

included watching chicks hatch from an incubator to learn more about how homesteaders raised poultry.

The second day of camp concluded with a visit to the Union County Historical Museum. Ms. Jean Brannen led a tour showcasing farm equipment, cooking tools, and household items once found on early homesteads. Youth also learned about the turpentine industry's significance in Florida during the late 1800s and early 1900s. They enjoyed browsing old photos and newspaper clippings highlighting 4-H's long history of teaching practical life skills such as animal care and showmanship.

Historic farm site, Poe Springs

To wrap up the week, campers visited Dudley Farm Historic State Park in Newberry, FL—a preserved 1880s-era farm and National Historic Landmark. Youth walked original paths that once connected Newberry, Archer, and Gainesville, used by ranchers to move cattle between towns. They explored the Dudley family's home, viewed antique kitchen tools and farm equipment, pumped water from a well, saw cracker cattle, and watched a blacksmith demonstration.

The final stop of the week was Poe Springs, where youth cooled off with a refreshing swim—just like homesteaders may have done after a hard day's work.

By the end of the week, participants not only learned about homesteading but also experienced what it was like to live as a homesteader.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this camp a success. Our 4-H'ers surely enjoyed their journey back in time and left with a new appreciation for homesteading and living off the land.



Kimber Williams, Atticus Allen, and Emerson Ogden are hand-pumping water from an old pitcher pump at the Dudley Farm Historic State Park in Newberry. Mr. Mark Harrison, Hudson Matts, Ella Griffis, Kylie Harrison, and Lola Allen are observing.

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In 2 Corinthians 5:17 the Bible says, "If any man (person) be in Christ they have become New Creatures or Creations, old things have passed away; behold all things have become new." Paul is talking about a person who has received Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. When you were born-again you did not get a new body, you will one day, but you still have the same body you had before you were born-again. You didn't get a new mind when you were born-again, you have the same mind you had before you were born-again. That is why the Bible tells us in Romans 12:2 "..... be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Your mind was not born again but your spirit has been made brand new, you are a New Creation in Christ Jesus. So, according to the Bible the New Birth is the rebirth of the human spirit. In St. John 3:6, Jesus said "that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit."

We may not be able to tell immediately what has happened on the inside of a person when born-again, because it takes place in the human spirit. However, if a person walks in the light of what they have, it will become obvious in the process of time. Now, when a person is saved, born-again, that person should obey the Bible and be water baptized. Water baptism is a command but water baptism does not save you. Water baptism is actually a symbol or a public confession or testimony to oneself and others of what has already taken place on the inside.

In St. John 3:5, Jesus said, "...except a man be born of the water and of the spirit, he/she cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." Jesus is actually talking about the water of the New Birth. Jesus is not talking about water baptism. Jesus is talking about a person's spirit being recreated by the Holy Spirit. The water He is talking about in this verse is the water of the Word of God. I want to show you a few scriptures that will prove that to you and then you can get your Bible and study this for yourself. Ephesians 5:26 says, "that He might sanctify and it (the church) with the washing of the water by the Word." St. John 6:63 says, "It is the Spirit that quickens, the flesh profits nothing; the Words that speak to you are Spirit and they are life." "St. John 15:3 says, "You are already clean because of the Word I have spoken unto you." St. John 17:17 says, "Sanctify them by Your truth, Your Word is truth." 1 Peter 1:23 says, "Being Born-Again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever." Now, the born-again child of God must believe the Word of God and begin to walk accordingly. Study God's Word and pray. Begin to walk and live in the spirit and be conformed to the Word of God as you receive light. Next week we will begin to look at the next steps we are to take to grow spiritually and become mature in Christ. Always remember, salvation in Christ is not the end, it is the beginning of a new life, eternal life with Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, a Spirit life. I encourage you to get in the flow and grow.
Blessings,
Pastor Rick

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Dancing with purpose: KCDA celebrates 20 years with a bold new vision

In a world where only one in five small businesses make it to the 20-year mark, Kelly Christie Dance Academy has not only stood the test of time in Union County — it's flourished, grown and reimagined itself.

Having recently celebrated its 20th anniversary season, the beloved studio has rebranded as KCDA School of Musical Theater and Dance, ushering in a new era filled with expanded offerings, deepened community impact, and a continued legacy of excellence.

"Rebranding as KCDA School of Musical Theater and Dance reflects who we are today — a place where students can grow in every area of performance," said Kelly Christie. "We're not just teaching technique; we're shaping storytellers and confident individuals."

Founded in 2005 by Christie, an accomplished dancer, choreographer and teacher, the academy reflects her lifelong dedication to the arts. She began training in dance at an early age in classical ballet, jazz and lyrical styles. Her passion for movement and performance continued through college, where she pursued dance and theater coursework at the University of Florida while earning a master's degree in speech-language pathology. That dual expertise — artistic and academic — has shaped KCDA's unique blend of creative expression and personal development.

"I've always believed in the power of communication — whether it's through words or movement," said Christie. "Both help young people find their voice, build confidence, and express who they are."

For the past two decades, KCDA has provided dance



Emily Hann and Kate James (l-r) and other students performing a piece from the Broadway show "Sweet Charity."

training in ballet, lyrical, contemporary, jazz and acrobatic dance. Christie has also choreographed many musical theater pieces for students and adults. In addition to running her studio, she served as choreographer/instructor of the Gainesville Christmas Festival for numerous years. This large-scale, vastly popular Broadway-type production reached an estimated audience of around 10,000 annually.

One of KCDA's long-standing strengths is its connection to the professional dance world. The academy regularly hosts masterclasses with professionals, who have danced with prestigious companies, performed in national and international tours, and appeared on Broadway.

"Our students get to learn directly from pros who've lived it," Christie said. "It's motivating and deeply enriching. We're very proud to have professionals as part of our team to offer students a first-hand look at the demands and rewards of a career in the performing arts."

Christie's commitment to artistic excellence and proper technique has provided a solid foundation for her students. Several alumni now have careers as professional dancers, others have been awarded college scholarships in dance, and still others have auditioned and been accepted in specialized programs and conservatories to further build their skills.

The academy's reach also extends beyond the studio and



Adalynn Southwell, Raelynn Dobbs, June Brooks and Rachael Norris perform a classical ballet number called "Tarantella."

stage. Last month, the KCDA Global Impact Ministry Group completed its third international mission trip, traveling to Costa Rica to share the love of Christ through dance. Students performed, led workshops and engaged in community outreach, using movement as a powerful tool for connection and ministry.

"Our international service projects, as well as those in Florida and other states, and in our own community are always transformational for those we visit and for our students and their parents," Christie said. "They see how their art can make a real difference in people's lives."

As KCDA enters its third decade, it remains firmly rooted in its founding values: excellence in the arts, personal growth and a heart for service. "This rebrand isn't just a new name," Christie said. "It's a reflection of everything we've built and everything we're becoming. KCDA is more than a school — it's a home for creativity, faith and transformation."

To introduce its new musical theater program, the school is offering a summer workshop July 21–24, with age-appropriate classes in musical theater for students in second through 12th grades. Additionally, a ballet

fundamentals class is available for prekindergarten through first grade students. Later this summer, open auditions for KCDA's winter production of "Don Quixote" will take place on Friday, Aug. 23, from 10 a.m. to noon. Roles are available for dancers, actors and extras, with opportunities for performers of various age and experience levels.

To register for the July summer workshop, or learn more about auditions for "Don Quixote" or KCDA's 2025-26 season, email kcchristiedance@gmail.com.



A group of young library patrons decorated summer hats and bags at Bradford County Public Library.



Joelle Hammond smiles after completing the final colorful touches on her hat.



Melody Adams tests out her newly decorated hat, while her brother JJ adds black to his colorful summer cap.

Summer style at the library

Energy conservation project rejected

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
mark@bctelegraph.com

The Bradford County Commission decided not to move forward with the proposed energy conservation project or an RFP process involving Schneider Electric at their July 1 meeting.

After discussion and legal advice about procurement concerns, the commission reached a consensus to explore alternative, smaller-scale or in-house solutions for facility repairs and energy savings rather than pursuing the larger project with Schneider Electric. This will include finding ways to cut costs at the jail, which has the government's highest utility bill.

After months of work, Schneider Electric previously presented a project aimed at modernizing county facilities, reducing long-term energy costs, and leveraging federal incentives for renewable energy.

The project would have addressed deferred maintenance needs at key county buildings, including the courthouse and jail. The plan called for repairing and replacing aging roofs, upgrading lighting to energy-efficient LEDs, and installing solar panels to offset electricity costs.

The total project cost was \$3.6

million, but with a large federal tax credit for solar installation and a \$350,000 contribution from the county's ARPA funds, the net cost would be reduced to \$2.45 million. Over 30 years, presenters projected the project would save the county \$6 million, with a positive return on investment expected after 14 years.

Commissioners weren't ready to commit, and attorney Rich Komando raised issues about procurement, saying the way didn't the project was brought to the county did not conform with the idea of "piggybacking" off another county's contract, which required receiving the same

product for the same cost. To properly consider a proposal, the county should advertise a request for proposals from all interested companies.

But rather than move forward with additional proposals, the consensus was to begin addressing deferred maintenance problems one at a time. Commissioner Carolyn Spooner wanted the county to continue looking at alternatives such as solar power generation, which could reduce the jail's light bill.

Schneider will be paid for its work delivering a plan to the board. The previously stated amount was \$34,000.



Bradford High Class of 1964
Will meet at Cedar River Restaurant (Starke) on Thursday, AUG. 14, 2025 at 1 PM.
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At our last meeting we decided to meet every four months instead of every three months.
Please let **Jerome Kelly** 352.538.0741 OR **Eugenia Whitehead** at 352.745.1828 know if you plan to attend so we can let the restaurant know how many. **BE THERE!**



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Lake Region

Removing barriers to success Keystone Rotary begins new year

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
Dan@BcTelegraph.com

The director of the Community Partnership School at Keystone Heights High School spoke to a Lake Region civic club on July 9.

Isaac Morford told the Keystone Heights Rotary Club that his job is to remove barriers so students can succeed.

The Community Partnership School at the Orchid Avenue campus is one of 50 across Florida that aims to provide resources to economically disadvantaged students.

The four pillars of the partnership are wellness support, family and community engagement, expanded opportunities, and collaborative leadership.

The Children's Home Society, the oldest nonprofit organization in the state of Florida, leads the partnership school. Other participants are the Clay County School District, Aza Health, and Santa Fe College.

Morford held up the Community Partnership School in Jefferson County as an example of how partnerships, like the one he leads, can make a significant difference.

The state took over the poor-performing school district, with one school for K through 12th-grade students, a few years ago, and turned the district over to a charter school company.

Morford said that after one year, the charter school company gave up.

"And so, the community partnership school program was brought in two years later," he said. "And now they're an 'A' school. That's not saying it was the magic of the Community Partnership school, but it is saying that we are

really focusing on the whole student, the whole community, the whole family, and we are seeing results statewide."

Morford said that one of the primary goals of his group this year was to increase attendance among students at Keystone Heights High School.

"We ended up getting up to 92% this year," he said. "That's a 3% increase. That's massive. When we're talking about students showing up at school, on average, that is every student in school showing up about five or six more days. That's pretty huge."

Morford said Camp Boost is another of the partnership's projects. The summer camp, which was going on at the time of Morford's talk, helps students transition from elementary school to junior high.

He added that 16 incoming seventh graders and three model students were at Camp Immokalee as he spoke.

The camp equips participants with coping tools, personal hygiene tips, social interaction skills, and other resources that help them get through high school.

"Today they're going to be getting a hygiene presentation on how to not be the smelly kid in class and how to take care of

yourselves and set yourself up on the right foot," he said.

Morford said Camp Boost is now in its fourth year. He added that prior participants are outperforming their peers in attendance and other measurements.

Morford added that his organization is focusing on supporting students in math.

"Math's a difficult one because if you miss skills in elementary school, you need those skills, but it's not directly affecting the math homework that's due tomorrow, as far as the student sees it."

Morford said he is trying to help students catch up in math who have fallen behind.



Isaac Morford told the Keystone Heights Rotary Club that his job is to remove barriers so students can succeed.

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
Dan@BcTelegraph.com

The Keystone Heights Rotary Club launched its 2025-2026 year with a dinner at the Lake Santa Fe home of Scott and Diane Kornegay on June 28.

District 6970 Governor Dale Moe swore in the 2025-2026 board, including President Todd Beals, who is beginning his second year leading the group.

Beals recognized Richard Segall as the 2024-2025 Rotarian of the Year, citing Segall's efforts

to secure a water resource grant for a school in Uganda.

Moe awarded Scott Kornegay his eighth Paul Harris Fellow pin, representing \$8,000 in cumulative contributions to the Rotary Foundation.



District 6970 Governor Dale Moe with the 2025-2026 Keystone Heights Rotary board of Directors (l-r) Todd Beals, Gen. Jim Eifert, John Raimer, Betsy Condon, Ginger Lee, and Scott Kornegay.



Heather Davis presents President Todd Beals with a memento thanking him for his service as the club's president in 2024-2025.



District 6970 District Governor Dale Moe presents Scott Kornegay with his eighth Paul Harris Fellow pin.



Left: District 6970 Governor Dale Moe (left) swears in Keystone Heights Rotary President Todd Beals, who is beginning his second year leading the group.

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Crime

Recent arrests in Bradford, Union and Clay

The following individuals were arrested recently by local law enforcement officers in Bradford, Union, or Clay (Keystone Heights-area) counties. All defendants are considered innocent until convicted in a court or until pleading guilty or no contest. Information in this report is from law enforcement agencies and court documents, which are public records.

Bradford

Johnathan Altman, 37, of Raiford, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 11 for battery.

Bit and scratched during argument

Katherine Baker, 29, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 6 for battery. According to an arrest report, the victim told deputies that during an argument, the defendant bit him on his right forearm and scratched him behind the ear. “Visible signs of injury were observed on the victim’s person,” wrote Deputy Brian Haddock in the report.

Stole bag of chips from Wawa

Alyssa Barr, 25, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 10 for larceny, possession of cocaine, possession of drug equipment, and failure to appear. According to an arrest report, a store employee reported the alleged theft, and Deputy T. Lovell reviewed store video of the incident with a manager. “The camera footage showed the female later identified as Alyssa Barr taking chips and exiting the business without paying,” wrote the officer. Another deputy located Barr, along with a male companion at the 301 Plaza. A third officer located a rock-like substance on the defendant. “The substance was field tested and yielded a presumptive positive for cocaine,” reported Lovell. “Alyssa was also in possession of a glass pipe with a white residue. Through my training and experience, the glass pipe is commonly used for ingesting illegal narcotics.”

Raymond Beck, 64, of Ocala, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 7 for a probation violation.

Caitlin Bess, 24, of Gainesville, was arrested by Lawtey police on July 8 for possession of drug equipment, driving with a suspended or revoked license, and resisting an officer.

Shouted obscenities from balcony

Jamaal Brown, 38, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 8 for disturbing the peace and resisting an officer. In an arrest report, Deputy Zachary Jones wrote that law enforcement was called to the Pecan Tree Apartment Complex in response to a disturbance. “Upon arrival,” Jones reported, “BCSO Deputies witnessed Jamaal Brown yelling obscenities from the second floor of one apartment building at (two victims) who were sitting down on the front porch of their apartments across the driveway. This occurred in the early hours of the morning when the apartment complex was otherwise quiet.” Jones added that both victims provided sworn statements attesting to the fact that Brown had been yelling obscenities and disturbing their night for an extended period. “When BCSO Deputies attempted to lawfully detain and handcuff Brown,” Jones continued, “Brown repeatedly pulled away and resisted law enforcement’s lawful commands



Katherine Baker

Alyssa Barr

Jamaal Brown

Christine Clardy

and efforts by snatching his arms away and attempting to grab BCSO deputies’ arms and hands.”

Brendan Cato, 19, of Jacksonville, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 6 for possession of drugs.

Michelle Ferrer, 42, of Lake City, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 9 for failure to appear.

Counterfeit charges dropped

Adam Glisson, 43, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 8 for fraud. According to a warrant affidavit, an employee of a Sunoco gas station told deputies that on October 9, 2024, the defendant bought \$10 worth of gas from the business and paid for the fuel with a counterfeit fifty-dollar bill, accepting two 20s as change. The day after deputies arrested the 43-year-old, the State Attorney’s office dropped the charge. Yelsin Gonzalez, 25, of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, was arrested by Lawtey Police on July 11 for driving with a suspended or revoked license.

Devin Griffis, 35, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 8 for possession of marijuana and possession of a weapon by a convicted felon.

Cory Harp, 37, of Talladega, Alabama, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 11 for driving with a suspended or revoked license, possession of a controlled substance without a prescription, and DUI.

LaJames Jamison, 37, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 10 for possession of drug equipment and a probation violation.

Stole children’s bicycle

Charles Jones, 49, of Hampton, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 9 for burglary and larceny.

According to court papers, the defendant entered the yard of a Saratoga Heights residence without permission and stole a children’s bicycle valued under \$750.

Palacios Ocampo, 45, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 11 for DUI.

Tracy Pruitt, 59, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 8 for driving with a suspended or revoked license.

Sold cocaine near RJE

Nathan Thomas, 43, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 10 for possession of cocaine and selling cocaine within 1,000 feet of a childcare facility or school. According to an arrest report, the defendant sold 1.1 grams of crack cocaine to a confidential source for \$60 from his Lamar Street residence, which is approximately 390 feet away from the RJE Center on Pine Street.

Dane Willis, 43, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 8 for driving with a suspended or revoked license.

Union

Drugs found during traffic stop

Kristy Clemons, 43, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on July 9 for possession

of a controlled substance without a prescription. According to an arrest report, the defendant was a passenger in a vehicle operated by a driver with a suspended license. During a traffic stop, Deputy Clyde Barringer reported that he could smell marijuana in the vehicle and began a search. During the search, he found four grams of marijuana in Clemons’s purse, 3.79 grams of methamphetamine in a plastic bag in the front passenger door, and methamphetamine within a red, styrofoam cup in the vehicle’s center console.

Jordan Ditullio, 19, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on July 9 for transmitting child pornography and sexual battery on a person between 11 and 18 years old.

Joey Herndon, 38, of Lawtey, was arrested by Union deputies on July 13 for an out-of-county warrant.

Jason Keenan, 43, was arrested by Union deputies on July 8 for lewd and lascivious behavior on a victim between 11 and 18 years old, and sexual battery on a victim between 11 and 18 years old.

Threw bag of cucumbers in his face

Emily McMinn, 44, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on July 13 for battery. According to an arrest report, the defendant and victim had been arguing, and law enforcement had been called to their residence twice before they responded to the call for the battery. The victim told deputies he asked McMinn to remove her belongings from the refrigerator, and she threw the vegetables at him. “While speaking with (the victim),” wrote Deputy Austin Kazmierski in the report, “I noticed slight redness to the right side of his face, consistent with the allegations.” McMinn told the officer that the victim was close to a garbage can and she intended the cucumbers to land in the trash. “The distance from the garbage can to the refrigerator is approximately 7 feet, and Emily indicated she ‘tossed’ the bag in that direction,” the deputy wrote. “Emily advised that she became upset due to (the victim) threatening to involve other family members in the matter.”

Thomas Smith, 27, of Raiford, was arrested by Union deputies on July 8 for coordinating with others in the theft of \$3,000 or more.

Sold meth near church

Anthony Williams, 44, of Worthington Springs, was arrested by Union deputies on July 7 for using a two-way communications device to facilitate a felony, possession of a controlled substance without a prescription, and selling methamphetamine within 1,000 feet of a church. According to a sworn complaint, on April 19, the defendant sold 9.79 grams of methamphetamine to a confidential source from the defendant’s home, which is within 1,000 feet of Morningstar Baptist Church.

Clay

Marckell Adkins, 24, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on July 11 for domestic battery.

Knife involved in

Union students record improvements in Spring assessments

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
Dan@BcTelegraph.com

Lake Butler Elementary School, Lake Butler Middle School, and Union County High School all recorded advances in the state’s Spring assessments. Students in grades 3 through 10 took the state FAST reading assessment, while children in grades 3 through 8 took the math assessment. In addition, middle and high school students took end-of-year assessments in Algebra I, Geometry, Science, Biology, U.S. History and Civics.

Reading: everybody up

Superintendent Mike Ripplinger said 60% of the district’s third and fourth graders scored proficient in reading, an improvement from last year’s 58%. Fifty-one percent of fifth through eighth-grade students were proficient, up from 48% last year. More high school students made the proficiency cut this year, improving from 53% to 55%. “Overall, the district increased from 51% to 54% students being proficient in grades 3 through 10 from 2024 to 2025,” Ripplinger said.

Math- elementary students way up, middle school down

In math, 75% of third and fourth-grade students scored at levels 3, 4, or 5, designating them as proficient. That is up from 65% the previous year. “At LBMS, 59% of students in 5th through 8th grade were proficient as opposed to 61% last year,” Ripplinger said. “Overall, the district increased from 60% to 64% students being proficient in grades 3 through 8 from 2024 to 2025.

Algebra- high school slips, but still above state average

The superintendent reported that 8th-grade Algebra 1 scores at the middle school increased from 86% in 2024 to 89% this year. At Union County High School, Algebra 1 students scored a 50% passing rate, which was down from last year’s 56% but still higher than the state’s 34% passing rate for the same grade-level students. “Likewise,” Ripplinger said, “the passing rate for Geometry this year at UCHS was 52%, while the state’s average for the same grade-level students was 47% passing.

Science – considerable gains

In science, students at the middle and high schools scored gains in 5th, 8th, and 10th grades. “LBMS 5th grade students saw an increase from 34%

proficiency in 2024 to 41% proficiency in 2025,” Ripplinger said. “Eighth grade nearly doubled its performance from last year’s 29% proficiency to 56% this year, beating the state average of 49%.” The high school gained in biology with end-of-course scores, earning a 78% proficiency rate, eclipsing last year’s 75% proficiency and surpassing the state average of 64%.

Civics and History – middle school holds, high school improves

This year, the students in 7th-grade Civics at LBMS held steady at 75% proficiency, which was the same mark as last year, while still outpacing the state average of 71%. Students who took the U.S. History end-of-course exam at UCHS rose from last year’s 75% success rate to 81% this year, exceeding the state average of 71%.

Team effort

Ripplinger credited a team effort of students, teachers, parents, and administrators with the improvements in the Spring assessment. “The dedication and countless hours of preparation by teachers and administrators, in addition to the support of parents and the efforts by the students, are the key reasons for the successes enjoyed during the 2024-2025 school year,” he said.

Dump truck and car collide, fuel spill shuts down road

BY JENN SAMSEL
Special to the Monitor

A serious traffic crash occurred in Keystone Heights on Thursday, July 10th, at 1:18 PM. A dump truck collided with a car, leaving the car damaged on all sides and causing oil to spill on the road from both vehicles. As a result, State Road 100 was closed in one direction for several hours. According to Clay County Fire Rescue, one person was transported to the hospital with serious injuries. The cause of the accident is currently unknown.



Car crashes into Melrose home

BY JENN SAMSEL
Special to the Monitor

A serious car accident in

Melrose left one person in critical condition and shut down portions of State Road 26. The Melrose Fire Department reported a single-vehicle accident in which the driver likely experienced a medical emergency before crashing into a home.

The patient was transported to a trauma center by rescue personnel. The accident occurred at approximately 10:14 a.m. on Tuesday, July 8, in Alachua County.



Kristy Clemons



Charles Jones



Emily McMinn



Jordan Saylor



Nathan Thomas

battery

Christine Clardy, 64, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on July 10 for battery on a person 65 years or older and resisting an officer without violence. According to an arrest report, the victim told deputies that Clardy had consumed half of a bottle of tequila throughout the day and had injured him. The heavily redacted arrest report also referred to a knife, and Deputy David Justice reported that he observed a “freshly bleeding skin tear” on the victim’s left forearm. “When I advised the defendant she was being placed under arrest,” wrote Justice, “she

resisted my attempts to take her into custody. She sat down inside her vehicle in the driveway, where her interview was conducted, and stated (redacted). The defendant had to be physically picked up out of the passenger seat where she was sitting and removed from the vehicle.” Justice claimed Clardy resisted his attempts to handcuff her.

Turned in by ex

Jordan Saylor, 33, of Palatka, was arrested by Clay deputies on July 6 for an out-of-county warrant and possession of a controlled substance without a

prescription. According to an arrest report, the defendant’s ex-girlfriend told deputies Saylor had been threatening her. She also informed officers of the 33-year-old’s whereabouts and told him he had an outstanding arrest warrant. According to Deputy Oliver Castillo, two deputies knocked on the front door of the residence where the defendant was staying. When Saylor ran out of the back door, Castillo detained him. A search of the defendant during the arrest yielded 0.59 grams of methamphetamine within a cigarette box in one of Saylor’s pockets. Jeramiah Tarver, 31, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on July 8 for being a fugitive from justice.

A look back: UCHS wins state titles in 1995, 2005

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

With it being 2025, the Telegraph-Times-Monitor presents a look back at Union County High School sports highlights in years ending in "5."

The following are teams/individuals who won state championships or finished as state runners-up at the state level. Please note that the years in question included numerous other state-level participants as well as highlights at the district and regional levels.

Any omission of a state champ/runner-up is inadvertent.

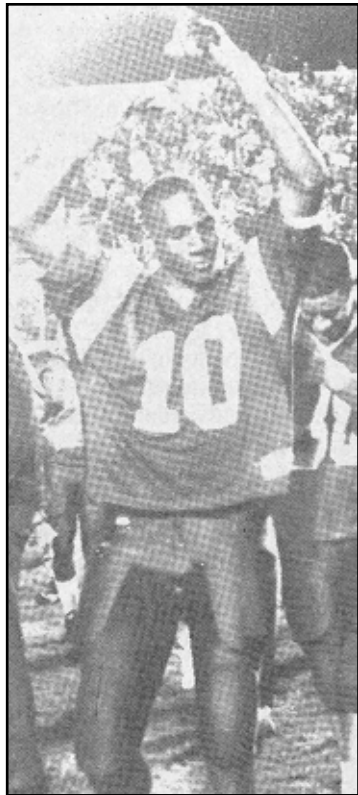
UCHS repeats as football champ in '95

Union's 1995 football season appeared remarkably similar to the 1994 season in which the Tigers won their first-ever state championship. In 1994, the Tigers won their four postseason games by an average score of 37-15. In 1995, the average score was 36-14.

Union defeated LaBelle in the 1995 state-championship game, with LaBelle's field goal on the final play of the first half preventing the Tigers from winning by another shutout after defeating Bishop Verot 21-0 in 1994. Still, it was another big win, with UCHS defeating LaBelle 28-3.

The Tigers, who had their first perfect regular season since 1974, had quite an opportunistic defense in 1995, recording 17 turnovers in the postseason.

Union's postseason run looked as if it was going to begin with a barn burner. The Tigers played Newberry and found themselves in a 14-14 battle after one quarter



Dexter Edwards celebrates after the Tigers defeat LaBelle 28-3 in 1995 for their second straight state title.

of play.

It may have appeared to be anybody's ball game, but it was all Tigers after the opening quarter as Union outscored Newberry 42-12 to win 56-26.

Ben Myers and Sean Warren had touchdown runs of 18 and 5 yards, respectively, in the first quarter. A three-touchdown second quarter saw Bennie Alexander score twice — first on a 9-yard run, and then again on a 36-yard pass from Andrew Zow. Myers also had a 3-yard touchdown run in the quarter.

Alexander and Patrick Hampton, who rushed for 107 yards on nine carries, scored in

the second half on touchdown runs of 14 and 15 yards, respectively. Adrian Weeks scored on a 36-yard pick-six.

The Tigers came up with three interceptions in all.

Matt Ward successfully kicked the extra point after each score. (He went 18 for 18 in the Tigers' four postseason games.)

Zow completed eight of 13 passes for 211 yards, with Chris Stalnaker catching three passes for 88 yards.

The Tigers were outgained in their second-round matchup (323 yards to 303), but their defense rose to the occasion when it had to, creating turnovers on three drives in Union territory to help them defeat Jefferson County 28-12.

Antonio Jonas and Sean Warren had interceptions to end two promising Jefferson County drives, while Gerard Warren recovered a fumble, which was the result of a Weeks sack, to end another potential scoring drive.

The defense also got two interceptions from Dexter Edwards.

Zow rushed for 74 yards on four carries, scoring touchdowns

on runs of 7 and 65 yards. He also completed four of eight passes for 66 yards, throwing a 28-yard touchdown pass to Hampton.

Alexander had a score on a 4-yard run.

Myers rushed for 87 yards on 17 carries and caught two passes for 32 yards.

Up next for the Tigers was a state semifinal game against the team that almost tripped them up in 1994. This year, however, Union scored the first 21 points and defeated Baker 30-13.

It was a quick start for the Tigers, with Sean Warren being a big reason for it. First, Warren scored on a 61-yard pass play from Zow. He then intercepted passes on Baker's next two possessions. Union scored following each turnover, getting a 1-yard touchdown run from Gerard Warren and a 5-yard touchdown reception by Myers.

Zow added a 2-yard touchdown run, which was set up by Hampton's 92-yard kickoff return, while Alphonso Griffin and Gerard Warren teamed up for a sack in the end zone for a safety.

Myers rushed for 158 yards on 19 carries.

Zow completed just three of 11 passes, but those completions were good for a total of 86 yards.

Union earned the right to play for another state championship, this time against LaBelle. The Tigers created five turnovers defensively and got three touchdowns

from Hampton in a 28-3 win.

Punt returns of 58 and 21 yards by Alexander led to touchdowns in the second quarter. One came off a 3-yard Sean Warren run, while the other was the result of a 34-yard pass from Zow to Hampton.

LaBelle scored its only points — a 43-yard field goal — on the final play of the first half.

All five LaBelle turnovers occurred in the second half. A Sean Warren interception eventually led to Hampton's 3-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter that put the Tigers ahead 20-3, while a fumble recovery by Griffin led to Hampton's 5-yard touchdown run. Alexander's pass to Edwards on a two-point play capped the scoring.

Curtis Perry had a fumble recovery as well for Union, which also got interceptions by Zow and David Bennefield.

Zow completed six of 13 passes for 115 yards. Hampton caught one pass for 34 yards, while Stalnaker caught one for 30 yards.

Myers rushed for 70 yards on 13 carries, while Hampton had 63 yards on 12 carries.

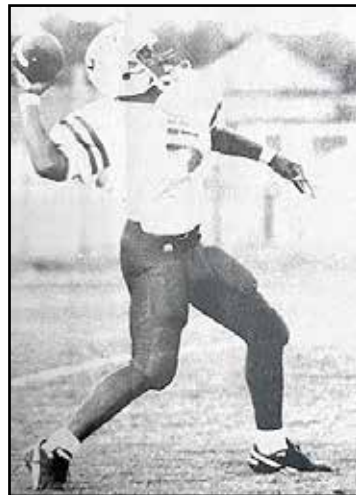
The win capped a 14-0 season. Those wins were part of an eventual 26-game win streak (a state record at the time) as Union would go on to win a third state championship in 1996.

Jenkins, 4x1 team earn 3 titles in 1995

The boys 4x100m relay



The 4x100m relay team of (l-r) Wayne Moore, J.R. Jenkins, Bennie Alexander and Melvin Noisette won a state title for the second straight year in 1995.



Andrew Zow was the quarterback for the Tigers' 1995 state-championship team.

team won the second of three consecutive state championships for Union in 1995, while J.R. Jenkins earned two individual titles at the Class 3A finals.

Jenkins teamed up with Bennie Alexander, Wayne Moore and Melvin Noisette to run a winning time of 42.97 seconds in the relay. The team won the

See UNION, page 13



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Starke, FL 32091

For Sale!



- FORMER BANK BUILDING!**
- Located in the heart of Lake Butler
 - Almost 9000 Sq Ft interior space
 - Outside parking space

300 W Main Street
Lake Butler, FL 32054



What to do about bears in unexpected areas

Spring and early summer mark a general increase in activity for Florida's black bears after limited movements in winter. During this time, juvenile bears could be spotted in unexpected areas as they leave their mothers' home ranges.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission shares this annual reminder that the best thing to do if you see a bear — whether in an unusual spot or not — is to give it plenty of space and never approach or

feed it.

“Juvenile or yearling bears (between the ages of 1.5 and 2.5) disperse from their mothers' home ranges in spring and summer,” said FWC Bear Management Program Coordinator Mike Orlando. “Yearlings can sometimes temporarily find themselves in places people wouldn't expect to see bears as they pass through in search of new areas of their own to settle down. As long as people keep their distance, these bears typically move along on their own.”

Bear sightings tend to increase this time of year in suburban and urban areas, including in cities like Jacksonville, Orlando, Tampa and other more-highly populated areas around the state.

Seeing a bear in a neighborhood is not necessarily cause for alarm, but it is important that people give it space and secure food attractants so that bears do not linger in the area. Feeding bears can make them lose their natural fear of people. It is illegal in Florida to intentionally feed bears or leave out food or garbage that will attract bears.

Black bears are not generally aggressive, but like any wild animal, if they feel threatened, they can become defensive. Dogs have been involved in over half of the incidents of people getting injured by bears in Florida. When walking dogs, keep them close to you — ideally on a non-retractable leash — and be aware of your

surroundings, which is good practice for preventing conflicts with any wildlife. Before letting your dog out at night in your yard, flip lights on and off and bang on the door to give bears and other wildlife a chance to leave the area.

As bears become more active this time of year, they cross more roadways. For your own safety and to avoid hitting bears and other wildlife, remember to slow down when driving, particularly on rural highways at dawn or dusk. Watch for road signs identifying bear crossing areas. Each year in Florida, an average of 300 bears are killed after being hit by vehicles.



The FWC's Bear Management Program held a press event at the Tallahassee Museum to demonstrate the use of bear-resistant garbage containers. Photo by Tim Donovan/FWC.

See BEARS, page 9

★★★★★*Highly Rated Local Businesses!*★★★★★

Teal Tile Carpet One 131 N Cherry St, Starke, FL 32091 (904) 964-7423 CARPET ONE FLOOR & HOME “High quality in every way!!!! Product was great. Workmanship was great. Pleasant staff. Just a pleasure to work with. Highly recommend!”	 PRITCHETT TRUCKING, INC (386) 496-2630 1050 SE 6th Street, Lake Butler, FL 32054	Rivers Flowing Church 22610 Hwy 301 N Lawtey, FL 32054 Welcome to Rivers Flowing Church— where the river of God never runs dry! SUN: 10AM WED: 7PM
Robert's Insurance 986 N Temple Ave, Starke, FL 32091 (904) 452-7784 ROBERTS INSURANCE EXPERIENCE, SERVICE & GREAT RATES “The insurance agency helps keep the insurance prices down.” “Always a great place to visit and get help!”	Durrance Pump 864 N Temple Ave STE C, Starke, FL 32091 (904) 964-7061 “Great set of guys that came. Found my issue. Quick work. Started a second issue and came right back and made the changes...”	DLP Bank 811 S Walnut St, Starke, FL 32091 (904) 964-7830 DLPbank “Very welcoming bank. They learn and know you by name and will not stop until they have helped with whatever your needs maybe. I love this bank.”
Clifford Z. Johnson Jr. Inc (863) 812-8198 20 years of experience! Screen Rooms, Patio Covers, Leak Repairs, Home Repairs	Hometown Health & Wellness 260 S Lawrence Blvd, Suite 101 Keystone Heights, FL 32656 (352) 664-7702 HOMETOWN Health & Wellness “Very knowledgeable and responsive, would definitely recommend them”	Craig Falstreaux Heating & Air, Inc 228 S Walnut St, Starke, FL 32091 (904) 964-2241 “We have used them twice for emergency situations on the weekend. They are fast and helpful. They do charge a weekend/holiday fee but I think that is fair. It is an efficient family business as far as I can tell.”
Town & Country Vet Clinic 1051 S Water St, Starke, FL 32091 (904) 964-6411 “We couldn't be happier with the care our dog Chevy received here. The whole team is kind, flexible, and took the time to answer all our questions. You can tell they truly care about the animals. Prices are very reasonable, and the service is top-notch. Huge thanks to Abby— she's amazing! Highly recommend!”	The Chiropractic & Injury Clinic of Starke 601 E Call St, Starke, FL 32091 (904) 964-8018 “Amazing staff and doctor! Very satisfied. They were able to squeeze me in the same day and get me feeling almost back to normal in minutes.”	Andrews Site Prep (386) 867-0572 Services 20 different counties! “Very responsive and they were able to pull the permit and have the well done only within a couple weeks. They hands down have the best quote around no matter how far out you are.”
 WORLEY CONSTRUCTION & ASSOCIATES, INC. GENERAL & MARINE CONTRACTING STATE LICENSED GENERAL CONTRACTOR 352-481-2255 www.worleyconstruction.net CGC 060228	Lake Area Heating and Air 7415 State Rd 21, Keystone Heights, FL 32656 (352) 473-9595 Formerly Mike Bertie Heating and Air, Serving Keystone Heights and surrounding areas since 2008.	Bradford County Eye Center 292 Lafayette St, Starke, FL 32091 (904) 964-8076 “My experience at Bradford County Eye Center was amazing. The staff was attentive and provided exceptional care. Would highly recommend!”
Sporting Chance 218 N Temple Ave, Starke, FL 32091 (904) 964-7434 “The owner sat down with me and helped me find a logo for my husband's company and then designed the shirt with logo and name. She also took time to explain the different shirt and ordering options. I also got a deal on the Gator items at 70% off.”	Parrish Mobile Welding LLC (904) 263-2223 “Wyatt was referred to me for some welding work I needed done.. He was incredibly polite, thoughtful and straight forward. He understood quickly what I needed done, showed up when he said he would, even though he mentioned he was 1 minute late, and completed the job quickly and efficiently.. I recommend Wyatt without reproach..”	Phillip McDonald Plumbing 740 S Orange St, Starke, FL 32091 (904) 964-3737 “The work crew from Philip McDonald's. Plumbing, along with the back office staff, were courteous, on time, and came in at the budget we agreed to. When we ran to any discrepancies or any hold ups, they worked diligently to get the job taken care of.”
JBS Jackson Building Supply “Serving Our Community For Over 60 Years” • LUMBER & BUILDING MATERIALS • HAND & POWER TOOLS • PAINT, LADDERS & SUPPLIES • HOME & FARM HARDWARE • ELECTRICAL & PLUMBING SUPPLIES • BATHROOM VANITIES • METAL ROOFING & SHINGLES • HOT WATER HEATERS • DOORS & WINDOWS • LAWN & GARDEN STARKE US-301S 964-6078 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 LAKE BUTLER 145 SW 6th Ave. 496-3079	Starke Golf & Country Club 15501 NE 14th Ave, Starke, FL 32091 (904) 964-5441 “It's a lot of fun. Can't beat the price.”	Bradford County Sheriffs Office 945-B N Temple Ave, Starke, FL 32091 (904) 966-6161 Sheriff, Gordon Smith “We Care” “I need to take a minute to recognize my jail command team, the people I'm surrounded by. Each unique and strong in their own areas. There is nothing anyone asks of them they don't do and almost always with a smile. They take care of business and take care of people at the same time.”
★★★★★<i>YOUR AD COULD BE HERE!</i> CALL 904-964-6305 TODAY! ★★★★★		

A look back: BHS wins state titles in ‘55, ‘65, ‘75, ‘85, ‘95



The 1955 BHS track and field team won the state championship. Pictured are: (front, l-r) James Harrell, Jimmy Hazen, Wayne Wooten, Townsend Strickland, Jimmy Weldon, Arthur Locke, Jimmy Hobbs (manager), (middle, l-r) Clifford Martin, Robert Humphries, Stanley Clark, Freddie Stephens, Kenneth Elder, Dennis Mathews, (back, l-r) Coach J.C. Hobbs, Bobby Ferguson and Billy Moore.

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

With it being 2025, the Telegraph-Times-Monitor presents a look back at Bradford High School sports highlights in years ending in “5.”

The following are teams/individuals who won state championships or finished as state runners-up at the state level. Please note that the years in question included numerous other state-level participants as well as highlights at the district and regional levels.

Any omission of a state champ/runner-up is inadvertent.

Tornadoes win boys track, field title in ‘55

A decade before Bradford won the first of two consecutive state championships in football, the Tornadoes proved to be the state’s best in track and field, winning the Class A title in 1955.

Bradford, which had two individual champions in Bill

BEARS

Continued from page 8

If you have bears in your area, follow these basics to help prevent conflicts with bears:

—Secure food and garbage. Store garbage in a sturdy shed or garage and then put it out on the morning of pickup rather than the night before. If not stored in a secured building, use a bear-resistant container. Secure commercial garbage in bear-resistant dumpsters. Protect gardens, beehives, compost and livestock with electric fencing. Pick ripe fruit from trees and bushes and remove fallen fruit from the ground.

—Remove or secure bird and wildlife feeders. If wildlife feeders are left up, only put enough food out for wildlife to finish eating before dark and make feeders bear-resistant.

—Never leave pet food outdoors. Feed pets indoors. If feeding pets outdoors, only put food outside for short time periods and bring in leftover food and dishes after each feeding.

—Clean and store grills. Clean and degrease grills and smokers after each use. If mobile, store them in a secure shed or garage.

—Alert neighbors to bear activity. If you see a bear, let your neighbors know. Share tips on how to avoid conflicts with bears. Encourage your homeowner’s association or local government to institute bylaws or ordinances to require trash be kept secure.

Having conflicts with bears? FWC staff are here to help. Call the North Central Region office in Lake City at 386-758-0525.

If you spot an injured, orphaned or dead bear, feel threatened by a bear or want to report someone who is either harming bears or intentionally feeding them, call the FWC Wildlife Alert Hotline at 888-404-3922.

More information is available at MyFWC.com/Bear, where you can access the “Guide to Living in Bear Country” brochure. Find additional ways to avoid conflicts at BearWise.org. Florida and 43 other states support BearWise, an innovative program that helps people learn ways to responsibly live around bears.

up more than seven points against just one opponent (New Smyrna in a 51-14 win).

The playoffs consisted of only a state-semifinal round and then the championship game. The Tornadoes got two touchdown runs from quarterback Donnie Falcon in defeating Auburndale 14-0 in the state semifinals.

A Jim Godwin fumble recovery set up the first score. Mickey

Agner had runs of 8, 12 and 15 yards before Falcon scored on a 7-yard run.

Falcon’s 8-yard touchdown run in the second quarter was set up by his own 13-yard run.

Auburndale cut into the lead in the third quarter after intercepting a pass and returning it 26 yards to the Bradford 9-yard line. Auburndale later threatened to score again before the Tornadoes’ Leaton Morgan had an interception.

In all, Bradford’s defense created four turnovers.

In the 39-0 win that captured the state-championship trophy, the Torandoes’ defense recovered three fumbles and held Hardee to minus-3 yards of offense in the first half.

While Hardee was struggling offensively in the first half, with just nine plays from scrimmage, the Tornadoes scored three touchdowns. Bradford later equaled that touchdown output in the game’s final 10 minutes.

Agner led a ground attack that amassed 245 yards. He had 15 carries for 83 yards.

Falcon, who added 65 rushing yards on 10 carries, completed 15 of 21 passes for 226 yards and three touchdowns. He also had a touchdown run.

Falcon’s favorite target was tight end Eddie Douglas, who caught seven passes for 112 yards and two touchdowns.

Agner put the first score on the board when he bulled his way into the end zone from 10 yards out, capping a six-play, 46-yard drive.

The next two scores came on Douglas’ touchdown receptions. The first covered 10 yards, while the second was off a 29-yard catch.

Douglas’ second scoring catch ended a 74-yard drive on which he caught a total of three passes for 66 yards.

Hardee threatened to score in the third quarter, driving to the Bradford 11 before the Tornadoes rose to the challenge defensively and made a stop.

16-yard scoring run by David Shannon.

Crews lifts way to state title in 1975

Mike Crews, a junior, won a state championship for Bradford in weightlifting in 1975, placing first in the 148.75-pound class with a state-record 510-pound total. Crews had a 265 bench press and a 245 clean and jerk. The clean-and-jerk total broke Brad Carter’s BHS record by 5 pounds.

Bradford is football runner-up in 1985

Bradford’s 1985 football team put together an undefeated regular season for the first time since 1966 and also made it to the state-championship game for the first time since 1966 as well. The Tornadoes, though, couldn’t add another state title to the ones won in 1965 and 1966, losing 28-20 to Bartow in the Class 3A finale.

The Tornadoes shut out six opponents during the regular season and won those 10 games by a combined score of 272-36.

Bradford’s first-round playoff opponent was Citrus, a team it had beaten 18-0 during the regular season. This time, the contest went into overtime, with the Tornadoes winning 14-7 on a 10-yard touchdown reception by Andy Jones.

A 16-6 win over Godby put Bradford into the state-championship game against Bartow. The Tornadoes had missed scoring opportunities in the 28-20 loss, coming away empty on two drives inside the Bartow 10-yard line.

The Tornadoes struck first, receiving the opening kickoff and driving 70 yards on seven plays. Jones’ 13-yard touchdown run capped the drive, putting Bradford up 7-0.

Bartow countered with a 71-yard drive that culminated in an 11-yard touchdown run that evened the score.

Another long drive by the Tornadoes followed, with Jones scoring on an 8-yard run. The six-play, 75-yard drive put Bradford up 13-7.

Bartow took the lead for good on a 44-yard touchdown pass and successful extra point.

The Tornadoes recovered a fumble at the Bartow 27-yard line. Jones lost 3 yards on a rushing attempt, but Mike Chappell came back with a 20-yard reception for a first-and-goal at the 10. A run for no gain and two incomplete passes forced Bradford to settle for a field-goal attempt, which was no good.

Bartow went up 21-13 on a 21-yard pass play. The Tornadoes threatened to close the gap on a 66-yard drive that took them to the Bartow 10, but the result was another missed field goal.

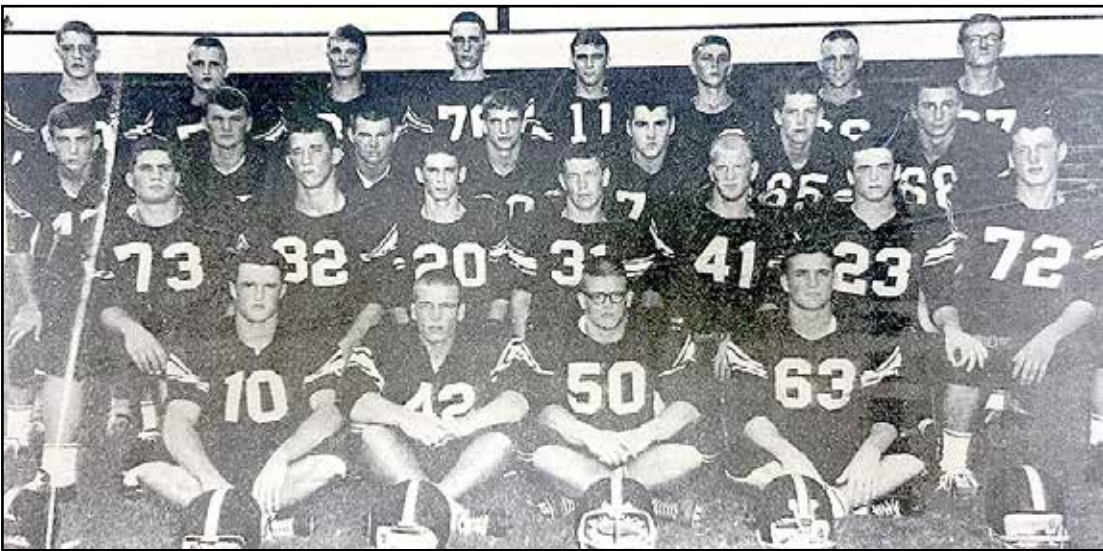
Bradford fell behind 28-13 when Bartow scored on a 66-yard pass.

The Tornadoes’ Frank Long threw a long touchdown pass himself, connecting with Todd McLeod on a 53-yard play that made it an eight-point game.

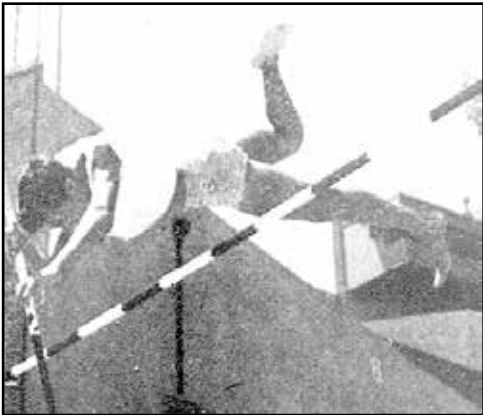
Bradford’s Aaron Matthews recovered a fumble with 3:51 to play, but the Tornadoes were unable to cash in.

The Tornadoes finished the year 12-1, outscoring opponents 322-77.

Long wins state, Sapp is a runner-up



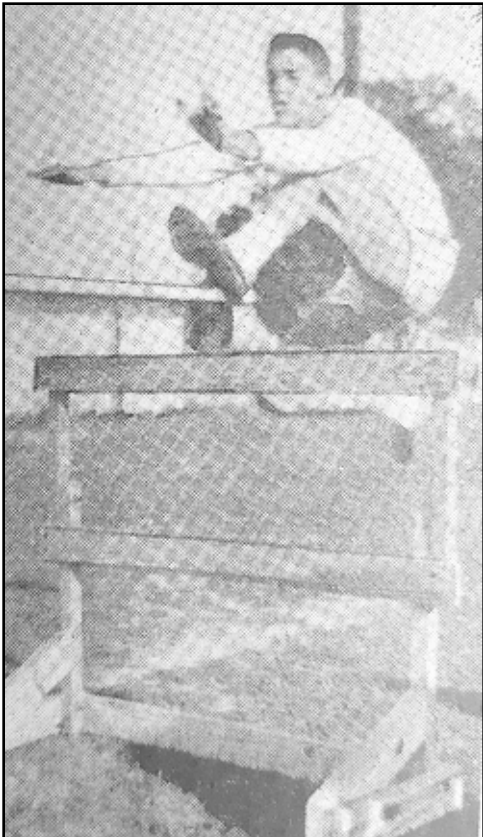
The 1965 Class A state-champion Tornadoes: (front, l-r) Donnie Falcon, Dwight Elder, Butch Redding, Steve Tilley, (second row, l-r) Jim Godwin, Eddie Douglas, Richard Crews, Calvin Varnes, Mickey Agner, Douglas Conner, Ronnie Tomlinson, (third row, l-r) Harry Hatcher, David Shannon, Roger Chilson, Randy Joyner, John Spengler, Jimmy Blackshear, Eddie Stancil, (back, l-r) Marlie Sanderson, Wayne Blankenship, Joey Reese, Andy Mayton, Larry Connell, Ronnie Newman, Leaton Morgan and Johnny Bradley.



Robert Humphries was the state runner-up in the pole vault.



Annice Williams won the state title in the 1600m in 1995. It was her second straight state championship in the event. She’d go on to win it a third time in 1996.



Townsend Strickland won the state championship in the 180-yard hurdles.

respectively. Bright also had 18 rebounds.

Jackson added six points, followed by Lewis with five, Austin and White with four each, Hampton with three and Walker with one.

Bradford advanced to the state semifinals, overcoming Bright’s first-half foul trouble an eight-point halftime deficit to defeat Orlando Jones 70-61.

Jones’ Andrea Gaines scored 20 first-half points, but she was held to five in the second half.

Austin and Griffin scored six and five points, respectively, to help the Tornadoes take a 63-59 lead with 1:57 remaining. Bradford then made 5 of 6 free throws, with Jackson going 4 of 4.

See BHS, page 11

Legal Notices

BRADFORD

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA PROBATE DIVISION
File No. 25000071CPAXMX
IN RE: ESTATE OF RUDOLPH MCGREGOR
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
The administration of the estate of RUDOLPH MCGREGOR, deceased, whose date of death was November 24, 2024; File Number 25000071CPAXMX, is pending in the Circuit Court for Bradford County, Florida, Probate Division, the address of which is Post Office Box 340, Starke, FL 32091. The names and addresses of the personal representative and the personal representative's attorney are set forth below.
All creditors of the decedent and other persons having claims or demands against decedent's estate, on whom a copy of this notice is required to be served must file their claims with this court WITHIN THE LATER OF 3 MONTHS AFTER THE TIME OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE OR 30 DAYS AFTER THE DATE OF SERVICE OF A COPY OF THIS NOTICE ON THEM.
All other creditors of the decedent and other persons having claims or demands against decedent's estate must file their claims with this court WITHIN 3 MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE.
ALL CLAIMS NOT FILED WITHIN THE TIME PERIODS SET FORTH IN SECTION 733.702 OF THE FLORIDA PROBATE CODE WILL BE FOREVER BARRED.
NOTWITHSTANDING THE TIME PERIOD SET FORTH ABOVE, ANY CLAIM FILED TWO (2) YEARS OR MORE AFTER THE DECEDENT'S DATE OF DEATH IS BARRED.
The date of first publication of this notice is: July 10, 2025.
Derek B. Alvarez, Esquire - FBN: 114278
DBA@GendersAlvarez.com
Anthony F. Diecidue, Esquire - FBN: 146528
AFD@GendersAlvarez.com
Whitney C. Miranda, Esquire - FBN 65928
WCM@GendersAlvarez.com
GENDERS ALVAREZ DIECIDUE, P.A.
2307 West Cleveland Street
Tampa, Florida 33609
Phone: (813) 254-4744 Fax: (813) 254-5222
Eservice for all attorneys listed above: GADeservice@GendersAlvarez.com
APRIL TISDALE MCGREGOR

Personal Representative
22335 SE 5th St.
Lawtey, FL 32058
7/10 2tchg 7/17-BCT

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE
To satisfy the owner's storage lien, KO Storage LLC will sell at public lien sale on August 19, 2025. The personal property in the below-listed units, which may include but are not limited to: Household goods, boxes/ totes/bags, clothing, bedding, tools and toys. The public sale of these items will begin at 10AM on August 12, 2025 and end at 10AM on August 19, 2025. The public sale will take place on www.storageasures.com. KO Storage of Starke - S Walnut St, 1650 South Walnut Street, Starke FL 32091, (952)-491-6837
Time: 10:00AM CST
A21, Wilson, Kelley, A49, Only, Precious Angel, A52, Whittaker, Edward, B37, Alldredge, Blake, B40, Jones, Paul
Public sale terms, rules, and regulations will be made available on www.storageasures.com. All sales are subject to cancellation. We reserve the right to refuse any bid. Payment must be by credit/debit card, we do not accept checks or cash. Buyers must secure the units with their own personal locks. To claim tax-exempt status, original RESALE certificates for each space purchased is required. By KO Storage LLC, 10301 Wayzata Blvd, Minnetonka, MN 55305. (952)-491-6837.
7/17 2tchg 7/24-BCT

IN THE CIRCUIT CIVIL COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA, IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY
CIVIL DIVISION
Case No. 24000267CAAXMX
Division
AMERICAN NEIGHBORHOOD MORTGAGE ACCEPTANCE COMPANY, LLC
Plaintiff,
vs.
MCKENZIE ASHTON GRACE SANTOS AND UNKNOWN TENANTS/OWNERS.
Defendants.
NOTICE OF SALE
Notice is hereby given, pursuant to Final Judgment of Foreclosure for Plaintiff entered in this cause on June 23, 2025, in the Circuit Court of Bradford County, Florida, Denny Thompson, Clerk of the Circuit Court, will sell the property situated in Bradford County, Florida described as:
COMMENCE AT THE NORTHEAST

CORNER OF THE WEST 1/2 OF EAST 1/2 OF NORTH 1/2 OF SOUTHEAST 1/4 OF NORTHEAST 1/4 OF SECTION 29, TOWNSHIP 6 SOUTH, RANGE 22 EAST, AND RUN SOUTH ALONG THE EAST BOUNDARY LINE OF SAID WEST 1/2 OF EAST 1/2 OF NORTH 1/2 OF SOUTHEAST 1/4 OF NORTHEAST 1/4 A DISTANCE OF 340 FEET TO A POINT OF BEGINNING; THENCE RUN SOUTH 75 FEET, THENCE RUN WEST 100 FEET, THENCE RUN NORTH 75 FEET, THENCE RUN EAST 100 FEET SAID ABOVE DESCRIBED LAND LYING AND BEING IN THE WEST 1/2 OF EAST 1/2 OF NORTH 1/2 OF SOUTHEAST 1/4 OF NORTHEAST 1/4 OF SECTION 29, TOWNSHIP 6 SOUTH, RANGE 22 EAST, BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA, EXCEPT EAST 15 FEET THEREOF DEEDED TO CITY OF STARKE FOR STREET RIGHT OF WAY.
And commonly known as: 421N POLK ST, STARKE, FL 32091; including the building, appurtenances, and fixtures located therein, at public sale, to the highest and best bidder, for cash, at the east front door of the Bradford County Courthouse, on **September 25, 2025** at 11:00 A.M.
Any persons claiming an interest in the surplus from the sale, if any, other than the property owner as of the date of the lis pendens must file a claim before the clerk reports the surplus as unclaimed.
Dated this July 11, 2025
By: /s/ David R. Byars
David R. Byars
Attorney for Plaintiff
Invoice to:
David R. Byars
(813) 229-0900 x
Kass Shuler, P.A.
1604 N. Marion St.
Tampa, FL 33602
ForeclosureService@kasslaw.com
7/17 2tchg 7/24-BCT

Notice of Self Storage Sale
Please take notice Safe and Easy Self Storage located at 7192 SE 9th Ave Starke FL 32091 intends to hold a sale to sell the property stored at the Facility by the below list of Occupants who are in default at an Auction. The sale will occur as an online auction via www.lockerfox.com on 8/7/2025 at 10:00 AM. Unless stated otherwise the description of the contents are household goods, furnishings and garage essentials. La'Kia S. Radford unit #198; Amber G Bennie unit #35. This sale may be withdrawn at any time without notice. Certain terms and conditions apply. See manager for details
7/17 2tchg 7/24-BCT

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF BUNCOMBE
IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
DISTRICT COURT DIVISION
JUVENILE DIVISION
IN THE MATTER OF:
25JT000022-100
M.K.D.P.
Minor Child.
TO: **JASON WALDON, RESPONDENT FATHER**, of one female bi-racial child, born March 7, 2019, in Haywood County, North Carolina, to K.L.F.
TAKE NOTICE that a pleading seeking relief against you has been filed in the above-captioned action. The nature of the relief sought is as follows: Termination of parental rights to M.K.D.P., the minor child, pursuant to North Carolina General Statute, 7B-1111.
You are required to make defense to such proceedings no later than August 26, 2025, said date being forty (40) days from the publication of this notice, and upon your failure to do so, the Buncombe County Department of Health and Human Services, Petitioner, will apply to the Court for the relief sought.
If you are indigent, you are entitled to appointed counsel. You may contact the Buncombe County Clerk of Superior Court, Juvenile Division, District Court 4C 60 Court Plaza, Asheville, NC 28801 immediately to request counsel. Any counsel appointed previously and still representing you in the underlying juvenile matter regarding the minor children shall continue to represent you unless otherwise ordered by the Court.
THIS, the 17th day of July, 2025.
JACK DENSMORE, ESQ.
BCDHHS
PO BOX 7408
ASHEVILLE, NC 28802
828-250-5500
7/17 3tchg 7/31-BCT

BUDGET WORKSHOP
The City of Lawtey will be conducting a budget workshop on Thursday, July 24, 2025, at 6 p.m. at Lawtey City Hall, 2793 Lake St., Lawtey, FL 32058.
All interested parties are invited to attend.
7/17 1tchg-BCT

LAKE REGION

**City of Keystone Heights
Request for Proposal (RFP)**

Tennis Court Demo and Build Project
Issue Date: July 8, 2025
Response Due Date: July 28, 2025
Project Location: Keystone Heights, Florida
Project Site: 555 S Lawrence Blvd. Keystone Heights, FL 32656
1. Project Overview - The City of Keystone Heights is soliciting sealed proposals from qualified contractors for the demo existing battery of two tennis courts and rebuild. measuring **110 feet by 1200 feet (13,200 square feet)**.
2. Scope of Work - The awarded contractor shall provide all labor, materials, tools, and equipment necessary to complete the following scope:
Mobilization - Transport and prepare all equipment, materials, and personnel to and from the job site.
Demolition
Removal and disposal of existing courts (110'x120') asphalt tennis courts.
Remove existing fence around perimeter
Demo of existing light poles
Base Course - A base course of lime rock having an average thickness of 6" shall be placed on the subgrade and properly graded and compacted following a 1" in 10' slope. Base will rolled and laser graded
Asphalt - A one and one-half (1 ½) inch thick surface course of S3 hot-mix asphalt (Type III) shall be placed over the base course. (The paved area will be several inches larger than the finished asphalt dimensions so that all sides of the courts can be sawed to straight and square edges with an asphalt saw)
Saw Cut - Courts will be saw cut along perimeter to have clean cut edge.
Equipment - Two (2) sets of standard, external wind 3" O.D. tennis post sleeves will be installed in concrete. Provide and install two (2) sets of tennis net posts and two (2) tennis nets installed.
Prep - Scrape the court's surface of all dirt, debris, and loose material.
Sanding - Machine sand the surface of court as necessary to smooth and repair any uneven areas
Bird Baths - Apply outdoor court grade patching materials to all patch areas to bring each area flush with surrounding asphalt
Patching - Using outdoor grade compounds:
One application will be made to each "birdbath". This will reduce water depth for faster drying times but may not eliminate all water ponding.
Cover and fill any rough areas of asphalt
The edges of all patches will be

scraped or ground smooth so that patches are not visible through the finished surface
Light sanding on edges to smooth down.
Leveling Course - Apply two coats of sand-acrylic resurfacer mix over the entire surface of the courts with a broad squeegee according to manufacturer's recommended coverage rates.
Texture and Finish Courses - Apply two successive coats of outdoor court grade filler coat (sand-filled acrylic color coating) to the entire area of the courts with a broad squeegee according to manufacturer's recommended coverage rates according to specifications.
Finished colors-Owners choice of any two manufacturer's standard colors
Lines- Paint two(2) sets of regulation two-inch white playing lines for tennis courts.
Clean Up- Remove all excess materials and debris for job after completion. Restore any damage to lawn areas.
Fencing – Reinstall existing fencing
*Please provide alternate pricing for new fencing and lighting for the courts.
3. Proposal Requirements - Proposals must include the following: Company name, address, and contact information
Proof of licensing and insurance
Experience and qualifications with similar projects
Project timeline and estimated start date
Detailed cost breakdown for each of the above 15 line items
Warranty information, if any
4. Evaluation Criteria - Proposals will be evaluated based on:
Compliance with the scope of work
Relevant experience
Proposed cost
Timeline
References
5. Submission Instructions - Proposals must be received no later than **July 28,2025. Submit proposals to:**
City of Keystone Heights
Beau Wright (wright@keystoneheights.us)
555 S Lawrence Blvd Keystone Heights, FL 32656
Late or incomplete proposals may not be considered.
6. Questions - Direct all questions regarding this RFP in writing to: Beau Wright (wright@keystoneheights.us)
352-473-4807
Questions must be received by: **July 21, 2025**
7/10 2tchg 7/17- LRM

Bradford Telegraph: covering the news since 1879

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Rutherford B. Hayes was serving as the nation's 19th president, with William A. Wheeler occupying the role of vice president.

The constitution of California was ratified.

Frank Woolworth opened his first store in Utica, New York.

Milk was sold in glass bottles for the first time.

New York City's Gilmore's Garden was renamed Madison Square Garden.

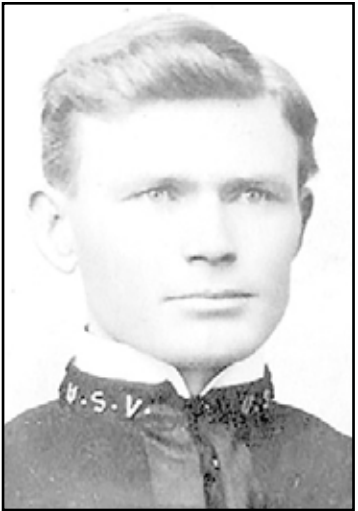
Thomas Edison tests the first practical light bulb, which lasts 13.5 hours before burning out. He then demonstrates incandescent lighting to the public for the first time in Menlo Park, New Jersey.

Notable births include Albert Einstein and Will Rogers.

The year was 1879, which also included the publication of the first issue of the Florida Telegraph, which would later undergo several name changes in becoming the Bradford County Telegraph.

Bradford County's weekly newspaper has never missed a publication date since, evolving along with other newspapers in terms of style, content and equipment.

Surprisingly, what hasn't changed much is ownership. Eight individuals — individually and as partners — have owned the paper. Two men — Eugene S. Matthews (who began with a partner) and then his son, Eugene L. Matthews — ran the paper for a combined 80 years, while Eugene L. Matthews' son-in-law John Miller has been the owner for 52 years, with the first 20 of those years as co-owner along with Matthews' son-in-law Bobby Ferguson.



Eugene S. Matthews (pictured) and Ben J. Farmer bought the Telegraph in 1893. Matthews became sole owner in 1898 and continued to run the paper until it was bought by his son, Eugene L. Matthews, in 1933.



Eugene L. Matthews bought the Telegraph in 1933, taking over ownership from his father, Eugene S. Matthews. The younger Matthews owned the paper for 40 years.



Eugene L. Matthews (center) is pictured with sons-in-law John Miller (left) and Bobby Ferguson. Miller and Ferguson bought the paper from Matthews in 1973. Miller has been the sole owner since Ferguson's death in 1993.

the paper from his father in 1885 for \$500 in cash and a \$500 promissory note that was to be paid in one year's time. The younger Moore's time of ownership was brief, however. I.C. Webb, a former teacher, who had purchased property on Kingsley Lake, became a partner, with the masthead of the Jan. 8, 1887, issue bearing the names of Moore and Webb as publishers. In April of that same year, Webb bought out Moore's interest.

Webb made the final name change approximately a year later, announcing in the April

13, 1888, issue that the paper was now the Bradford County Telegraph, named after "the county which fostered it in its youth and supported it as it became older."

The office moved farther west on Call Street, finding a new home in the second story of a brick building built by N.J.

Jones. Jones operated a store on the ground floor.

Webb continued operating the paper for the next six years, during which time he let it be known that he might be induced to sell it. Col. W.T. Weeks, a longtime clerk of the circuit court in Bradford County, wrote to an old friend to let him know the newspaper might be for sale. That friend was Eugene S. Matthews.

Telegraph welcomes 2nd father-son duo

Matthews, who grew up in Providence when that area was still part of Bradford County, bought the Telegraph in 1893, serving as owner/publisher for 40 years. His newspaper experience began at the age of 10 when he was a printer's devil (an apprentice who performed various tasks) at the Gainesville Daily Bee, where he learned to set type by hand. He worked

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Bradford County Telegraph
USPS 062-700
Published each Thursday and entered as Periodical Postage Paid at Starke, Florida under Act of March 3, 1879.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
Bradford County Telegraph
131 West Call Street • Starke, Florida 32091
Phone: 964-6305 • P.O. Drawer A • Starke, FL 32091
John Miller, Publisher

Subscription Rate in Trade Area
Area\$52.00 per year:
\$26.00 six months
Outside Trade Area:
\$52.00 per year:
\$26.00 six months

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Sports Editor: Cliff Smelley
Advertising: John R. Tillman
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Advertising & Newspaper Prod: Macie Hamilton
Bookkeeping & Classified Adverts: Heather Wheeler
Bookkeeping Asst: Mary Goodge
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P.O. Drawer A - Starke, FL 32091
131 W. Call Street - Starke, FL 32091
Phone: (904)964-6305 • Fax: (904)964-8628
John Miller, Publisher

Subscription Rate in Trade Area
\$52.00 per year:
\$26.00 six months
Outside Trade Area:
\$52.00 per year:
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Editor: Dan Hildebran
Sports Editor: Cliff Smelley
Advertising: John R. Tillman
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USPS 648-200
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uctimeseditor@gmail.com
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John Miller, Publisher

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Editor: Mark J. Crawford
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Bookkeeping & Classified Adverts: Heather Wheeler
Bookkeeping Asst: Mary Goodge
Front office Asst:

Post-accident life all about moving forward for Trull

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

To those who don't know him or know of his story, watching Ryder Trull stepping into the batter's box or taking to the pitcher's mound is simply watching a young person play a game he loves.

It's more than that, though. Much more.

In late August 2024, Trull was lying in a hospital under heavy sedation and on a ventilator. The question at that time wasn't, "When will he suit up again and play ball?" It was, "Will he survive?"

"It's a complete miracle that he's doing what he's doing right now and doing it as well as he's doing it," said Ryder's mother, Casey.

He sustained a brain injury and received facial fractures from being in a vehicular crash, but has recovered from everything except an injury to his left eye, which he now has no vision in.

Through it all, Trull's mantra has been to keep looking forward. Yes, he was in a bad crash, and yes, he could've died, but that's all in the past.

Casey said Ryder has always been determined. What he determined when he was in the hospital was that he was going to get back out onto the baseball diamond.

"I was ready to get out of the bed," said Ryder, a rising sophomore at Keystone Heights High School. "Honestly, the whole time I was just thinking about baseball. Baseball was the only thought on my mind. I was ready to play baseball."

It's also more than that. Ryder fully acknowledges that his survival and recovery goes beyond what doctors did.

"It shows that God brought me



Ryder Trull is approaching the one-year mark of an accident that almost claimed his life. The loss of vision in his left eye is the only lingering effect, but he hasn't let that stop him from living his life to the fullest, which includes playing baseball.

back for a reason," Ryder said. Ryder had many people praying to God on his behalf — family, friends and people the family didn't even know, Casey said.

"It really helped us to keep going," Casey said. "People who came up and prayed — that really comforts you and kind of gives you a peace about things and what's going on."

Ryder said, "I thought it was cool. It just showed how much people cared."

A difficult time

Casey and her husband, Bryan, found themselves in a position no parent wants to be in — hearing a child was injured and in the hospital.

It wasn't just Ryder. His sister, Bryanna, was involved as well. However, Casey and Bryan were told that it seemed she would be OK, with doctors monitoring her

for a concussion and its effects. "Then they told us what was going on with (Ryder) — the brain, the bleeding and swelling," Casey said. "Honestly, it just seemed like a whirlwind. Almost a blank"

Doctors were covering a lot of ground with the parents, who found all the information difficult to process. Fortunately, Casey and Bryan had friends who worked at the hospital, who acted as sort of a go-between.

"They were able to kind of translate what was going on and help us and kind of talk to the doctors a little better than we could because they knew the process and knew how to tell us, 'OK. This is what is happening. This is what you need to expect and what you need to do.'

"That was a blessing." While that helped, seeing Ryder lying in a bed and not moving was, of course, difficult.

"He's always been energetic, going from nothing to 90," Casey said. "He couldn't do that. He couldn't do anything."

For someone used to going 90 miles per hour, his recovery and rehabilitation took too long for his liking.

"I hated going slow, but I had to," Ryder said.

Coming off the ventilator, being weaned off medications and moving were all things that took time. Casey said God was thanked for each small step forward.

"Every little thing was a big deal," Casey said, alluding to such things as the first time Ryder sat up in bed, the first time he got out of bed and stood and the first time he walked.

Casey said Ryder was in the hospital approximately two weeks before he began walking. "Before you knew it, he was trying to shove doctors out of the way, saying he could do it on his own," Casey said.

Ryder, who was in the hospital from Aug. 27 until Sept. 17, needed only one surgery, which reconstructed his left eye socket. When he was told he was going to lose the sight in the eye, Ryder said he accepted that it was just something he'd have to get used to.

"It's not that bad when you think about it," he said. "I'm used to it now, so it kind of feels like I have two eyes. I don't know how to explain it."

If you talk to Ryder, you get the sense he's taken everything in stride and that it doesn't bother him much. He does admit it was difficult to adjust to having sight in just one eye, but in the same breath, he says a positive came out of it in that he's become a better hitter in baseball.

"It kind of taught me to keep my head down, or I wasn't going to hit the ball," Ryder said.

Casey said, "He hasn't been aggravated or mad or down in

the dumps or anything like that. He's always so positive."

Returning to normal life and baseball

A hospitalization followed by rehab had Ryder behind in his studies. He said he didn't do anything for a month after his return home — other than throw a baseball around with his father — but then it was time to devote time to school. His first two semesters of the 2024-25 year were done at home.

Despite having to catch up that first semester, he wound up with a 3.0 GPA.

"He did really well," Casey said. "The teachers were great working with him."

Ryder returned to the KHHS

campus to start the third semester. He noted he had a 3.5 GPA that semester, which he maintained throughout the rest of the year.

"It was good," Casey, a teacher at KHHS, said of seeing her son back on campus. "I work up there, so I could see him."

Of course, his friends and fellow students wanted to talk to him about all that he had gone through. Ryder said his thought was always, "Dude, it's over. Just let me play some baseball now."

Baseball. It's the one thing he's always looked forward to. In the hospital, in rehab — playing the sport he began when he was probably 3 years old has kept him going.

It was approximately two months after he returned home that he began playing again, though he and his father would go to the fields every night

before that.

"I kept telling him, 'I'm so ready to play.' He said, 'Not yet.' After a little while, he started seeing the growth, that I was starting to get back into it," Ryder said.

A thrill for Dad, for sure, but he was just happy his son was still alive. Ryder said his father told him it didn't matter if he was never able to play baseball or any sport again. Ryder's response? "I'm playing baseball. I don't care."

When he first resumed playing, he didn't play in the field. He batted only.

"It was kind of stressful because I wasn't hitting the ball like I usually do," Ryder said. "I wasn't striking out a crazy

See TRULL, page 13

BHS Continued from page 9

Griffin scored 19 points, while Bright, who picked up four fouls in the first half, finished with 13. Lewis scored 10 points, followed by Jackson with eight, Hampton and White with seven each and Austin with six.

The state-championship game went into overtime, with Bradford scoring opening the extra period with an 8-2 run en route to defeating Shanks 61-59 to win the title.

Bradford trailed for most of the second half, but a basket by Austin with 23 seconds remaining gave the Tornados the lead. A basket by Shanks with seven seconds remaining forced overtime.

It was 61-59 in favor of Bradford with seven seconds left in overtime. Bright missed the front end of a one-and-one

opportunity at the foul line, with Shanks grabbing the rebound and having a chance to win or tie and force another overtime. Jackson, though, came away with a steal for the Tornados, sealing the win.

Bright, the co-MVP of the state tournament, poured in 22 points, while Lewis had 10 points and 12 rebounds.

Griffin and Hampton, who scored nine and eight points, respectively, and joined Bright on the all-tournament team.

Bradford also got four points from Jackson.

Walker, Williams run to state titles in 1995

Bradford celebrated two individual state championships in track and field in 1995, with Shameka Walker and Annice Williams winning the Class 4A titles

in the 800m and 1600m, respectively.

It was a repeat performance for Williams. She placed first at state in the 1600m as a sophomore competing in the Class 3A finals in 1994 and went on to capture a third straight title at the Class 4A finals in 1996.

Williams also won the Class 4A state championship in cross country in 1994.

In 1995, Williams won a district title in the 1600m with a time of 5:42. She then ran 5:18.03 to place first at the regional level and went on to win state with a time of 5:11.26.

Walker, as a freshman, captured what would be the first of two consecutive state titles in the 800m by running a time of 2:21.13. That followed her district-championship time of 2:31.70 and regional-championship time of 2:26.07.



Bradford's 1995 state-championship girls basketball team: (front, l-r) Shameka Walker, Regina Wright, Lakevia Clark, Charlotte Griffin, Temika Hampton, (back, l-r) Head Coach Harvey Lofton, Yemeako Fountain (scorebook keeper), Nikki Jackson, Tonika Bright, Marlena Lewis, Angie Davis, Catrice White, Lakeisha Austin and Assistant Coach Shari LaRue.

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UNION COUNTY
TIMES

Classified

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Obituaries

Rhonda Alvarez

With deep sadness and enduring love, we announce the passing of Rhonda Sue Alvarez, who entered eternal rest Wednesday, July 9, 2025. Born Dec. 4, 1971, Rhonda was a loving daughter, devoted mother, proud Nana, and a constant source of strength for those blessed to know her. She was the proud and loving mother of three daughters, Meghan Miscally (husband Jared Johns); grandchildren, Kensley and Harper, Breianna Vanzant (husband Dean Shireman); and grandchildren, Tucker and Baylor, and Kirstyn Key. Known to her grandchildren as “Nana,” Rhonda found her greatest joy in being with her family. Her warmth, humor, and nurturing spirit made her a safe place and guiding light for all who loved her. Whether she was cheering on her grandchildren, offering words of wisdom, or simply lending a listening ear, Rhonda was the heart of her family. She is now reunited in Heaven with her brother, Randy Alvarez, and her presence here on Earth will be missed beyond measure.

She is survived by her parents, Julia Alvarez and Owen Alvarez, who raised her with love, faith, and the importance of family—values that Rhonda carried with her every day of her life. She also leaves behind a host of nieces, nephews, extended family, and friends whose lives she touched deeply.

A service to honor and celebrate her life was held Tuesday, July 15, at Pine Level Baptist Church in Starke. A family visitation was followed by funeral services. The family is grateful for the continued love, prayers, and support during this time of loss. In honor of Rhonda, please carry forward the love, laughter, and strength she gave so freely. “Her wings were ready, but our hearts were not. Forever our Nana, our mother, our friend.”

Archer-Milton Funeral Home is honored to serve the Alvarez family during this difficult time. 386-496-2008 www.archerfuneralhome.com

PAID OBITUARY



Ricky Alvarez

William “Ricky” Richard Alvarez, 60, passed away peacefully Wednesday, July 9, 2025, surrounded by loved ones. Born on May 7, 1965, Ricky was a beloved son, husband, father, brother, uncle, and friend who touched the lives of many with his kind heart, sharp wit, and unwavering loyalty. He had a deep love for family and always made time to celebrate life’s big and small moments with those closest to him. He had a special bond with his many nieces and nephews, who admired him and will carry forward his memory with love and pride. A hardworking and humble man, he was known for his dependable nature and willingness to help others. Whether lending a hand, sharing a story, or cracking a well-timed joke, Ricky brought warmth and comfort wherever he went. He was preceded in death by his brother, Randy Alvarez, with whom he is now joyfully reunited with in Heaven.

Ricky is survived by his devoted parents, Owen and Julia Alvarez. He also leaves behind his cherished sister, Rhonda Alvarez; his wife, Angie Alvarez of Tennessee; and his son, Andrew Lane (Hope), also of Tennessee, a loving “Papa” to their children, who brought him immense joy and laughter and many nieces and nephews that loved him dearly.

A memorial service to honor and celebrate his life was held Tuesday, July 15, at Pine Level Baptist Church in Starke. Family visitation was followed by the funeral service. Graveside service will immediately followed at Conner Cemetery. Though he may be gone from our sight, Ricky will forever remain in our hearts. His spirit lives on through the love he gave and the memories we will cherish always.

Archer-Milton Funeral Home is honored to serve the Alvarez family during this difficult time. 386-496-2008 www.archerfuneralhome.com

PAID OBITUARY



Janet Anderson

Mrs. Janet Massin Anderson, 73, of Fleming Island, died Wednesday, July 9, 2025, at Haven Hospice Custead Care Center. Her career as an attorney began with the State of Florida working with the Guardian Ad Litem Program. She was preceded in death by her parents; and husband, Chief Warrant Officer Donald Francis Anderson who was serving with the United States Navy.

Survivors are her daughter Caitlin Anderson Choate and fiancé Lonnie Olive of Starke; and sister Cheryl (Seymour) Abramowitz; many nieces and nephews; and her special beagle, Lucy.

There are no scheduled services at this time.

Arrangements are under the care of Helm-Gallagher Funeral Home, 1811 Idlewild Ave., Green Cove Springs, 32043. www.helmgallagherfh.com

Keith Copeland III

Keith Bernard Copeland III, 74, of Keystone Heights died Saturday, July 5, 2025 following a long illness. He proudly served in the United States Marine Corps. He was preceded in death by parents: and brother, Harold Copeland Jr.

Survivors are his wife, Judith (Cook) Copeland; children, Tina Lee (Steve) Kolito, Keith B. Copeland IV and Jason Todd (Jessica) Copeland; sister, Darlene Owens; brother, Wendell Copeland; sister-in-law, Judy Copeland; and extended family.

There are no scheduled services at this time.

Arrangements are by Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home, 340 E. Walker Drive, Keystone Heights, 32656. 352-473-3176. www.jonesgallagherfh.com.

Robert Craven

Robert Warren Craven, 54, of Starke, died Sunday, July 13, 2025, at North Florida Regional Hospital in Gainesville. He was born Oct. 7, 1970, to the late Robert Cadle and Sandra Craven. A lifelong resident of Bradford County, he enjoyed fishing, playing pool, and spending time with those he loved most, his family and friends. He was known for his kind heart and strong work ethic. He will be deeply missed by all who knew him. He was preceded in death by his parents.

He is survived by his brother, Raymond (Amanda) Craven; nephews, Kevin Davis and Austin (Erica) Davis; niece, Brittany Davis; and extended family members.



Jeffery Lancaster Sr.

Jeffery Michael “Bo” Lancaster Sr., beloved husband, father, and friend passed away Saturday, July 5, 2025 at the age of 40. He was born on Oct. 1, 1984 in Orange County, he found the love of his life and built built a life, rooted in love, laughter and strong family bonds. He accomplished his dream of owning a business, Lancaster and Kennedy, LLC, in Starke. Family was everything to him. He was preceded in death by his mother, Teresa Lynn Lancaster; his “Nanny,” Betty Ruth Lancaster; sister, Betty “Betty Boo” Lancaster; stepmother, Christine King; sisters, Alyssa Morris and Lynsey Lancaster; and brother, Steven Lancaster.

Jeffery is survived by his loving wife, Michele “Brat” Lancaster; his daughters, Daria Thornton of Starke, and Hailey Lancaster of Orlando; and his “mini-me”, his son, Jeffery Lancaster Jr.

Jeffery’s legacy lives on in the hearts of all who knew him, all his favorite songs that he made a playlist for the people he loved the most, his children, and all the memories he left behind. He will be deeply missed and forever loved and remembered. Always forever and a day!

PAID OBITUARY



Linda Perreault

Linda Frances Siedzik Perreault, 80, died Wednesday, July 9, 2025. She was born on Oct. 4, 1944 in Rhode Island, She dedicated her professional life to the health industry. She was preceded in death by Dante Carbone and Florence Carbone

Survivors are her husband, Albert Perreault; daughter, Lisa Siedzik; son, Stephan Siedzik; son-in-law, Chad Hubbard; and grandson, Kyle Siedzik. She will be deeply missed by her family and all who had the privilege of knowing her.

Arrangements are by Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home, 340 E. Walker Drive, Keystone Heights, 32656, 352-473-3176

NEWS

Continued from page 10

for other Gainesville papers until moving to Ocala, where he met and befriended Wallace Stovall. Stovall, with his brother, published the Marion Free Press. Stovall, who eventually became publisher of the Tampa Tribune, persuaded the 16-year-old Matthews to become editor of the Foster Park Independent, a small paper printed in Lake Weir.

Matthews established the Dunnellon News in approximately 1880 after that town became a booming mining center after the discovery of phosphate. He wrote of his opposition to the state’s convict-leasing system, but he rubbed many readers the wrong way in the process, including a wealthy citizen who leased prisoners and then sub-leased them to mine operators. The mining interests were powerful enough to hurt the newspaper’s sales, so Matthews sold it and returned to Ocala.

When Weeks wrote to Matthews regarding the Telegraph, Matthews went to Starke, which he had never visited before. Though he grew up in Providence, a trip to Starke at that time would be by horse-drawn transportation over poor roads. Plus, there were no bridges spanning New River at that time, so it was not a trip people often made.

Matthews arrived in Starke in January 1893 and was surprised to find an old friend in Ben J. Farmer, who learned the newspaper trade alongside Matthews in Gainesville. Farmer, who was employed as a printer for Webb, begged Matthews to take him on as a partner in the purchase of the Telegraph. The two men struck a deal to buy the paper of \$1,050 — \$350 down, with the balance to be paid at the end of the year.

The Matthews-Farmer partnership continued until 1898,



Eugene L. Matthews (right) conducts an interview.



Sterling Moore (left) served as editor of the Telegraph when it was started by his father, William. The younger Moore bought the paper in 1885, took on I.C. Webb as a partner two years later and then sold his interest to Webb.

when Farmer sold out his interest and moved to find work farther south.

In the early 1900s, a hard-fought battle resulted in saloons being voted out of Starke. J.D. Crabb, proprietor of the Red Light Saloon on West Call Street, closed and left town in disgust. Matthews bought the vacated building from the estate of Dr. J.L. Gaskins for \$800. That building still houses the Telegraph’s printing press and

archives today.

In 1933, Matthews’ son, Eugene L. Matthews, a Columbia School of Journalism graduate, purchased the paper. It was not the best of times to operate a business. During the Great Depression, the new Telegraph owner bartered subscriptions in exchange for eggs, sweet potatoes and syrup. The younger Matthews was quoted in the Telegraph’s centennial issue as saying,

“But, of course, we were glad to accept these items because many people were going hungry in those days.”

The Telegraph earned numerous awards during the younger Matthews’ ownership, but he was most proud of a community service award received in 1954, the result of the Telegraph’s role in effecting changes for the better in Starke. The paper published photos of unsightly shacks and other eyesores and published stories on such topics as low teacher salaries and the scarcity of books in the public library.

Matthews created a questionnaire, “Do You Dare to Rate Your Town?” In a 1956 All Florida Weekly story, he said, “I took the questionnaire to a good cross-section of the community. My suspicions were confirmed by 86 men, women and alert, young people. In their opinion, Starke didn’t make a passing grade. I ran the questionnaire and the opinions of this group right on our front page. The Telegraph started the ball rolling.”

Some of the results included highway beautification projects by the local garden club, the renovation of the old USO building and a zoning ordinance to eliminate auto junkyards and other eyesores.

Community service awards “show the paper is fulfilling its reason for being,” Matthews was quoted as saying in a 1958 Florida Press story.

Like his father, Matthews served as owner/publisher for 40 years. He sold the Telegraph to sons-in-law Bobby Ferguson and John Miller in 1973. Ferguson, who was married to Matthews’ daughter Mary Agnes, passed away Feb. 9, 1993, at the age of 54. Miller, who is married to Matthews’ daughter Anne, continues to serve as owner/publisher.

Information for this story was taken from a centennial special the Telegraph published on July 26, 1979.

Celebration of Life July 17

Celebration of Life

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at



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UNION

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championship at the preceding district meet as well.

Union, which finished third in the overall team standings, got first-place finishes from Jenkins in the 110m high hurdles and 300m intermediate hurdles with times of 14.59 and 39.66, respectively.

Brown is a state-champ lifter in 2005

Union won one state championship in 2005, which came courtesy of Jeremy Brown in weightlifting.

Brown won the Class 1A title in the 219-pound class, finishing

25 pounds ahead of Nease’s Charlie Kirschman. He had a 370-pound bench press and a 310 clean and jerk for a 680 total. The clean-and-jerk total was a personal record.

The road to state began at the district (sub-sectional) meet, with Brown winning his class with a 680 total. His 375 bench press left him trailing Interlachen’s Adrian Lumpkin by 5 pounds, but Brown then had a best clean and jerk of 305 (a personal record at that time), while Lumpkin’s best clean and jerk was 295. That gave Brown a 5-pound advantage in the overall total.

Brown placed first again at the Section 4 meet with a 650 total (345 bench press, 305 clean and jerk).

TRULL

Continued from page 11

amount of times, but I was still striking out. It kind of like showed me I still needed to put in the work, that I still had more stuff to do to get back to where I was.”

Casey said Bryan was “extremely proud and grateful” to see Ryder playing baseball again. She, as you might expect from a mother, was a little nervous.

“I was more worried and concerned that he was already back out there,” Casey said.

Of course, as time has gone on, it does Casey’s heart good to see her son doing what he loves.

“Every time he goes out there, it’s surreal and such a blessing,” she said. “It’s almost hard to believe that he’s right back out there, doing great and not missing a beat.”

Ryder was able to make appearances in nine games for the KHHS varsity team this past season. He got chances as a courtesy runner and scored two runs on the season. Ryder got one at-bat in a 10-0 win over Eagle’s View on April 8, hitting a two-run single that enforced the mercy rule in the sixth inning. He also got to play some in right field in that game, recording a put out in the fifth inning.

This summer, Ryder has been a part of the Melrose 16U All-Stars team that won the state championship. He batted 4 for 9 with four RBI in three games. In a 10-0 win over DeBary — the team’s first tournament game — Ryder batted 2 for 3 with three RBI.

Ryder pitched in relief in two of those games. He gave up one hit and one walk, while striking out one in 1.2 innings in the 10-0 win over DeBary and earned the save in the 5-3 championship win

over Orange Park, allowing no hits and no walks, while striking out two in the final 1.2 innings.

“That was good,” Ryder said of the team’s state championship. “but that’s been accomplished before. My next goal is to win the regional tournament and be the first team to make it to the World Series. That’s going to be even bigger.”

The regional tournament began this past Tuesday (July 15).

Ryder participated in spring football at KHHS and was the starting quarterback in the varsity team’s spring jamboree. He won’t continue to play, however, after being advised against doing so by his neurologist.

That was tough to hear because he likes Head Coach Steve Reynolds (who was his PE coach when he was in elementary school) and Assistant Coach Jakob Alvarez and was looking forward to being a part of their team.

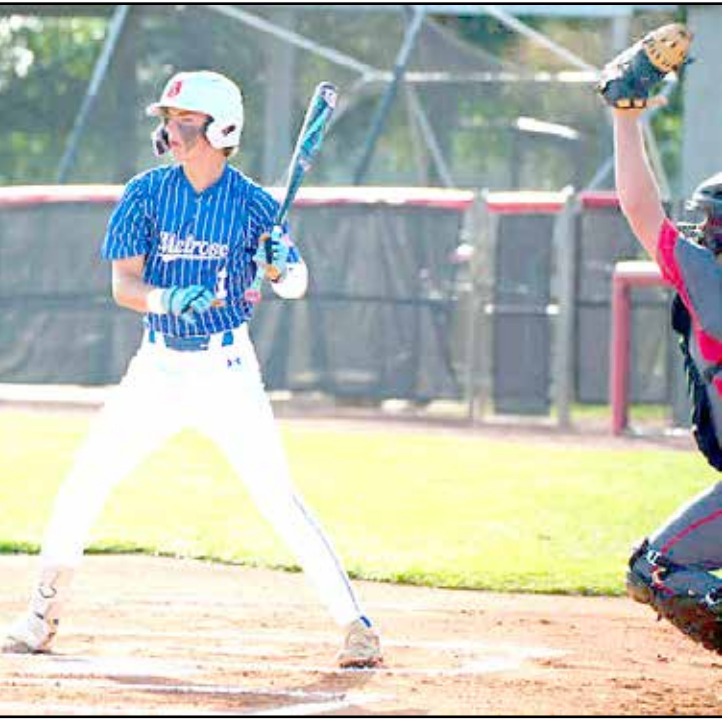
“I really wanted to play for them and my teammates, but my goal is to play some college baseball,” Ryder said. “I feel like (playing football) was a huge risk of me getting hurt. I don’t want that to happen.”

Ryder not only wants to play college baseball. He’d love to get an opportunity in Major League Baseball. Ryder said he’s got a good fastball, noting he’s increased his velocity from 76 to 83, and he feels good about his curveball, changeup and cutter.

“I want to be on the mound,” Ryder said. “I feel like I control the game and I’m what matters the most on how the game goes.”

Life changes

Yes, it’s back to life as usual for Ryder, but that’s not to say that aspects of his life haven’t changed. For one, he’s learned to not always assume you have a tomorrow.



Ryder Trull doing what he loves — playing basaeball. He couldn’t get onto the diamond quick enough after his accident.

“Don’t take a day for granted because tomorrow, something could change,” he said.

The accident, of course, reinforced for Ryder and his family how important it is to appreciate those moments spent with family.

“I think it really just solidifies and tightens our views on family and how important it is to spend as much quality time as we can with each other,” Casey said.

Another result of the accident is that Ryder has strengthened his relationship with God, accepting Jesus Christ as his savior and getting baptized.

“That’s always a huge thing when any of your kids make that decision because, really, that’s the most important one,” Casey said.

Ryder said, “(The accident) kind of like opened my eyes

a lot. If I was to have died in the hospital, I would’ve gone to Hell.”

Finally, Ryder has come to embrace the positives in life and not dwell on the negatives. Once something negative happens, it becomes the past — something Ryder doesn’t dwell on. He encourages others to do the same.

“Don’t look back,” Ryder said. “Look forward. Look for what is next to come.

“Have a goal in mind and try to achieve that goal. After you achieve that one, do another one. You just keep going forward.”

For someone who’s overcome an obstacle that’s greater than most of us may ever face, that’s certainly good advice.



Patrick Hampton (center) scored three touchdowns in the 1995 state-title game.



J.R. Jenkins (left) won both hurdle events for the Tigers at the 1995 state track-and-field meet.

Join Bradford TD Club for a chance to win Red Seats

The 2025 high school football season is just around the corner, and you could score a pair of reserved “Red Seats” at David Hurse Stadium by joining the Bradford Touchdown Club.

To have a chance to win the two seats, you must join the club or renew your membership by July 31.

If you’re the winner, and you already have Red Seats, the touchdown club will cover the cost of your seats.

Visit the “Bradford Touchdown Club, Inc.” Facebook page for a link to join and to keep up with club news.

Community for Schools Bingo Night is July 28

Bradford Community for Schools will be hosting a fundraising Bingo Night on Monday, July 28, at The Downtown Grill in Starke.

Doors open at 5 p.m., with play beginning at 5:30 p.m.

To play is \$20 cash for 10 games. The last game is

blackout for \$100.

All bingo proceeds, as well as 20 percent of the food and beverage sales, will go to Bradford Community for Schools, a nonprofit with the mission of surrounding students with a caring community of support and empowering them to reach their full potential and achieve success in life.

Community for Schools connects with students in sixth-12th grades and enables at-risk youth to access a broad range of needed social and educational services.

Volunteer mentors are always needed to help students succeed. Please call 904-966-6004 if interested.

Starke Kiwanis poker tourney set for July 18

The Kiwanis Club of Starke’s next Patsy Welch Memorial Poker Tournament will be held Friday, July 18, at The Downtown Grill. Proceeds will benefit the Bradford Middle School boys basketball program.

Registration begins at 6 p.m., followed by play at 6:30 p.m.

Buy-in is \$60, which includes high hand and refreshments.

Cash prizes are awarded for first, second and third places.

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Iowa State cornerback Jontez Williams, a 2022 Bradford High School graduate, was named to the Preseason All-Big 12 Team, which is voted on by media.

The redshirt junior is of three Iowa State defensive players on the team.

Williams led Iowa State and tied for third in the conference with four interceptions in 2024.

The 5-11, 200-pound defensive back is coming off a season in which he received second-team All-Big 12 and Associated Press All-Big 12 honors. His interceptions occurred in four consecutive games (20-0 win over Houston on Sept. 28, 43-21 win over Baylor on Oct. 5, 28-16 win over West Virginia on Oct. 12 and 38-35 win over UCF on Oct. 19), making him the first Iowa State player since Ronnie Osborne in 1982 to record at least one interception in four straight games.

In his first season as a starter, Williams also had 46 tackles, with a season-high 11 (six solo) in a 21-3 win over North Dakota on Aug. 31.

Another standout game for Williams was a six-tackle effort in the win over West Virginia.

Williams has 52 tackles (25 solo) in two seasons. He played in all 13 games his freshman year, making two starts.

The Cyclones had the first 10-win season in their 133-year history in 2024. They would go on to win an 11th game after defeating Miami 42-41 in the Pop-Tarts Bowl, finishing the season 11-3.

It was a good bowl game for Williams, who shared the team high in tackles with eight.

As of now, Williams and the Cyclones are scheduled to appear on national television four times in 2025: Aug. 23 Aer Lingus College Football Classic vs. Kansas State in Dublin, Ireland, at noon on ESPN, Aug. 30 vs. South Dakota at 3:30 p.m. on Fox, Sept. 6 vs. Iowa at noon on Fox and Sept. 13 vs. Arkansas State at 4 p.m. on ESPN 2.

Iowa State’s Oct. 4 game at Cincinnati will feature two former Tornadoes. Manny Covey, a 2023 BHS graduate, is a redshirt sophomore running back for Cincinnati.



Jontez Williams (left) makes one of his four interceptions in 2024. The BHS graduate, who plays for Iowa State, is a Preseason All-Big 12 selection. Photo courtesy of Iowa State Athletics.

City of Lake Butler recognizes community leaders



Right: Lake Butler Vice Mayor Rondoll Huggins presents Vicky Johns with a plaque of appreciation in recognition of her and her husband’s Mac Johns leadership in Union County youth sports.



The ACORN Clinic’s Taylor Casey (right) accepts a plaque of appreciation from Lake Butler Mayor Melissa Hendrix on behalf of the clinic’s executive director, Tina Lloyd, and Vulcan Materials. Vulcan donated sand for the city’s Lakeside Park beach. Lloyd solicited the donation of the material, which was trucked from the Keystone Heights-area sand mine to Lake Butler by Andrews Site Prep.

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