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Clay school board member under fire for rant about race, ethnicity

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
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The chair of the Clay County School Board said one of her colleagues should consider resigning after posting a video to Facebook in which he said about African Americans, “80%, they’re being nasty, they’re being rude, they’re being problematic, always trying to fight, always disrespecting. So why would I want to be around people like that?”

The Clay News and Views website published the now-deleted social media post from school board member Robert Alvero’s account.

In the video, the Cuban immigrant, elected to the school board in 2024, stated, “I have had 80% more negative experience with the African American community in this country than with white people. That being said, it doesn’t mean I haven’t had good experiences with African American people. I have met a lot of great African American people, and I am still friends with them because they’re good, decent people, but that’s the 20% of the people I have met.”

Alvero added that because of his personal experience, he understands the views expressed by far-right political commentator Nick Fuentes, who, according to multiple sources, has promoted white nationalism, Christian nationalism, antisemitism, Holocaust denial, and other extremist views.

“I understand where Nick Fuentes is coming from,” Alvero states in the 1-minute, 22-second

video, which appears to have been recorded from a vehicle. “Also, about what Nick Fuentes says, that everybody has a little bit of racism in them. I agree. I am Cuban. And sometimes I feel I am racist against my own people because we have our own personality, our own culture that a lot of other people don’t like. I learned how to be an American. So right now, I’m not even similar to my own race, so that’s why sometimes I don’t like to be around them.”



Screenshot from Clay News and Views showing a post by Clay School Board member Robert Alvero.

Clay GOP: Resign

School Board Chair Erin Skipper released a statement saying that she was aware of Alvero’s comments. She said she hoped Alvero “does the right thing and considers resigning.”

Skipper added that she plans on bringing up Alvero’s comments during the Jan. 8 school board meeting.

In its own statement, the Clay County Republican Party Executive Board demanded Alvero’s immediate resignation.

“Clay County elected officials should always hold themselves to a higher standard and represent all people regardless of ethnicity,” wrote Rhonda Jett, the executive board’s chair. “The remarks that were made do not reflect what our community exemplifies.”

State official wants answers

Florida Commissioner of Education Anastasio “Stasi” Kamoutsas directed Alvero to appear before the State Board of Education on Jan. 21 to explain his conduct.

See ALVERO, page 6

Millions more awarded for local infrastructure projects

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
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On the heels of Starke’s announcement of more than \$23 million awarded for its water system improvement and extension project comes the announcement of millions more for Bradford, Union and Keystone Heights.

More than \$311 million has been awarded to 37 Florida communities, 32 of which were rural cities and counties. Gov. Ron DeSantis announced the awards, which will be paid for out of the Rural Infrastructure Fund as well as the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Infrastructure Repair Program.

The latter of two programs is aiding communities impacted by major storms in 2023 and 2024. That includes Bradford County, which is receiving more than \$5.95 million for Southwest 163rd Avenue between Southwest 75th Avenue and Southwest 101st Avenue. According to Bradford County Public Works Director Jason Dodds, the road received significant damage when Tropical Storm Debby



According to the airport, the construction of the runway extension will begin in late 2026 and finish in late 2027.

passed by in 2024, resulting in multiple road closures.

The grant will allow Bradford to structurally reinforce the roadway by adding base and pavement and reestablishing the roadside swales by regrading and adding erosion protection.

The Keystone Heights Airport’s award will also pay for pavement — a \$2.95 million extension to Runway 2. Funded through the Rural Infrastructure Fund, the award will expand the runway from 75 feet to 100 feet wide, improving operational efficiency, capacity and

accommodating a broader range of aircraft, according to the airport.

“This project is a phenomenal opportunity for the Keystone Heights Airport. The airport’s core role revolves around military training in large aircraft such as the C-27, C-130 and P-3 Orion aircraft. Widening of the secondary runway allows for operations in a wider range of weather conditions and enhances safety margins for all types of private, business and military aircraft operating at the Keystone Heights airport. The widening project also intends to attract aeronautical development on the north side of the secondary runway,” said Airport Manager Craig Coon.

Finally, Union County is getting a share of the disaster recovery dollars. The county was awarded more than \$1.4 million to construct a hardened public safety communications tower and upgrade the county’s current emergency dispatch system.

“These infrastructure projects will help make Florida more prosperous, more resilient, and better prepared to weather any storms that may come our way,” Gov. DeSantis said.

Union County’s top story in 2025: Mark Harrison named Florida’s Teacher of the Year

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
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Florida Commissioner of Education Anastasio Kamoutsas announced on July 17 that Union County High School economics and American Government instructor Mark Harrison was the 2026 Florida Teacher of the Year.

In a news release, the Education Department said Harrison was selected from among five Teacher of the Year finalists through a rigorous selection process.

“Mark sets the example of how a talented and dedicated teacher makes all the difference for his students,” Kamoutsas said in the release. “Not only is he dedicated to their academic success, but he also helps his students excel outside the classroom through the Civics and Debate team, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and driving the school bus every morning.”

Harrison will receive a \$50,000 award and will also serve as the Christa McAuliffe Ambassador for Education for one year, advocating for students and representing Florida’s teaching community.

The Education Department said Harrison was selected from over 175,000 teachers statewide.

“He just connects with people”

Union County Superintendent of Schools Mike Ripplinger said he experienced pure joy and exhilaration when Harrison was announced as the winner.

“This is the first time since 1967 or 68 that a small school district has had a Teacher of the Year,” he said. “Dixie County was the last one around 1968. Mark Harrison is an amazing individual in all aspects of his life. To have him not only represent Union County, but the State of Florida for education, I couldn’t think of anyone better.”

The superintendent said that after the ceremony and in the days following, the honoree was coming to terms with the impact of the award.

“He’s still trying to figure out what’s going to happen over the next year as he tours the State of Florida,” Ripplinger said. “It’s still sinking in.”

The superintendent added that although all five finalists for the award are outstanding educators, Harrison’s willingness to go above and beyond for his students sets him apart.

“From elementary, middle, and high schools,” Ripplinger said, “driving the bus, adult ed experience, he just connects with people.”

“If you’re around Mark Harrison for



Union County High School teacher Mark Harrison is awarded Florida’s Teacher of the Year during a July 17 ceremony in Orlando.

less than five minutes, you’re going to make a connection,” he continued. “It doesn’t matter what age, and I think that came out during the interview process.”

A gift to be a part of their journey

Harrison just completed his third year at the high school. Previously, he spent 18 years teaching third grade at

Lake Butler Elementary, and this year, taught some of the same pupils he had instructed a decade ago.

“That’s really the biggest thing for me,” Harrison said in a Times interview earlier this year. “Understanding that even though some of these kids are 18 and some of them are taller than me, they’re the same person inside that I knew when they were eight.”

“And that was the thing about being

See UNION, page 7



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WORTH NOTING

Collection site closings

Bradford County’s solid waste collection sites will be closed for New Year’s on Jan. 1 and 2. They will reopen Saturday, Jan. 3, at 10 a.m.

Bill Rice at Bradford Baptist

Bradford Baptist Church (located on S.R. 100, 1.3 miles east of U.S. 301) welcomes Bill Rice Ranch evangelist Bill Rice III and family members on Sunday, Jan. 4, for Sunday school at 10 a.m. and the morning service at 11 a.m.

One of the Bill Rice Ranch’s key missions is offer free camps to deaf youth at its Murfreesboro, Tennessee, location.

For more information, please call Pastor Rick Jackson at 904-964-3708.

DAR chapter meets Jan. 5

The Col. Samuel Elbert Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, will meet on Monday, Jan. 5, at 10:30 a.m. at Keystone Heights City Hall.

As part of the chapter’s support of veterans, the program will be presented by Matt Cole (or his assistant), who will discuss how GPS is being used to identify the graves at Keystone Cemetery. The GPS mapping will enable families to identify graves quickly and allow DAR to locate those veterans’ graves to be honored for their service to this country.

Anyone interested is welcome to attend.

Purchase pavers in Rosenberg Garden

The Woman’s Club of Starke is honoring longtime member Della Rosenberg and offering personalized brick pavers to be placed in the Rosenberg Garden. These pavers make meaningful gifts for weddings, anniversaries, Christmas and memorials.

For details, please contact Cleo Elder at 904-796-7427 or Charnelle Whittemore at 352-235-1825.

Yesterdays Festival at Gold Head

Gold Head Branch State Park Yesterdays Festival will be Saturday, Jan. 31, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with family fun for everyone. There are hayrides, kids’ games, hands-on activities, historic demonstrations, including cross-cut saw, real cannon fire, re-enactors, old tractors and live music. The event is free to the public, with the gate fee of \$5 per vehicle. For more information email Yesterdays@FriendsofGoldHead.org.





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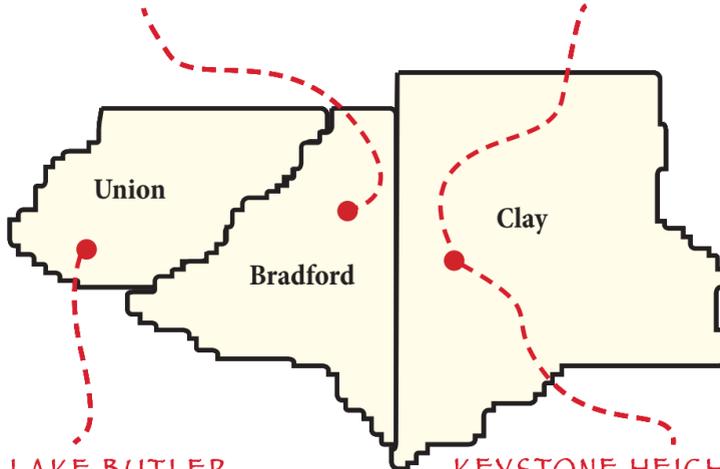
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Construction permits slip but more housing on the way

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
mark@bctelegraph.com

Starke had more commercial building permits pulled in 2025 than new housing permits.

The seven single family homes were one-fifth the number permitted last year, although that number had been inflated by the 21 rental homes constructed in the Sandcastle Pines development on North Westmoreland Street.

But Starke has more housing to come. The site plan for the City Walk development planned for East Call Street has been approved. Those 45 townhouses aren't the only townhouses coming either. According to Starke's building department, the land being cleared at the corner of State Road 16 and Weldon Road is for an additional 40 townhouses.

Unlike City Walk, which will offer a rent-to-own program at market rates, the townhouses in the as-yet unnamed development will be affordable housing. New River Place, the 80 apartments planned for Thomas Street, is also an affordable housing project.

The number of new housing permits elsewhere in the county was also down from 85 to 65 in 2025. The majority remain in the Starke or Lake Region (Keystone Heights and Melrose) zip codes, with Hampton leading the other areas.

In addition to houses, however, there were once again more than 90 mobile homes installed around the county, including a couple in the city of Starke.

Starke's eight commercial permits included the recently opened Express Oil Change, but also the city's new music pavilion, the expansion at the health department and work at the county's equipment yard. There were also eight commercial remodels, including First Federal Bank, the nursing school at North Florida Technical College and the recently opened Papa Johns.

Outside of Starke, the county permitted a new gun range at the Keystone RV Resort, a quick lube at Murray Ford and the living quarters at the Sampson City Fire Rescue station.

A new station is coming to

Brooker as well, and as Starke continues to identify funding sources and complete plans for its utility extension down State Road 16, construction should begin, eventually tying the city to potentially hundreds of new homes and accompanying businesses.

January sobriety checkpoints announced

During the month of January, the Bradford County Sheriff's Office will be conducting sobriety checkpoints in one or more of the following locations: U.S. Highway 301 and Market Road, S.R. 100 West, S.R. 100 East and Southeast 109th Street, Southeast S.R. 21, S.R. 16 and

Southwest S.R. 231.

Catholic Charities.

Union County food distribution

Food is distributed in Union County at the Hal Y. Maines Community Center on the third Thursday of each month from 9-10:30 a.m. or while supplies last. The center is located at 155 NW Third St. in Lake Butler. The giveaway is sponsored by Florida Gateway Foodbank and

LB VFW hosts bingo

Lake Butler VFW Post 10082 has bingo on Thursdays at 7 p.m. The VFW is located off C.R. 231 just outside of Lake Butler. Look for the sign on the left (coming from town).



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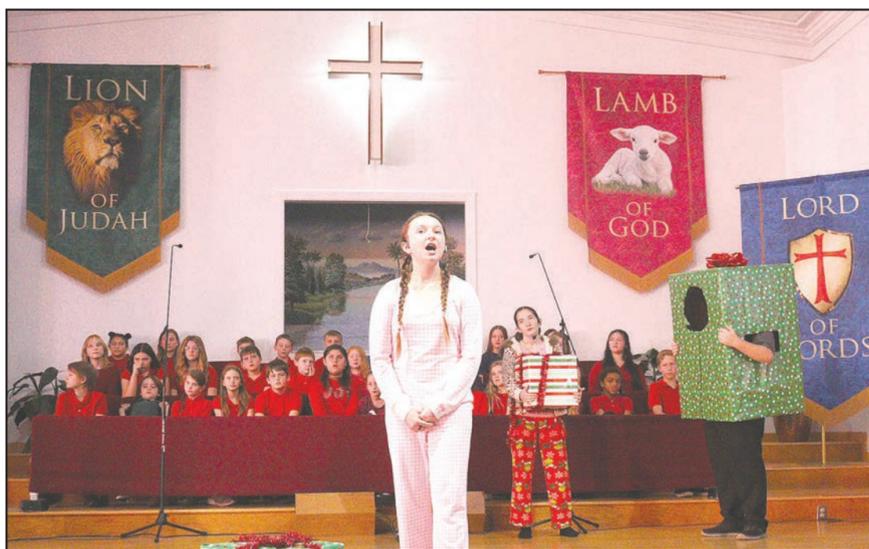
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Hope students share 'Christmas Spirit' with audiences



Hope Christian Academy students performed the musical drama "Christmas Spirit" before two audiences on Dec. 12. Pictured are (l-r) Kylie Icard (innkeeper's daughter) and Ryan Langieri (Roman soldier) along with Rainey Norman, Kinsley Bagwell, Lenora Scott, and Abigail Nance (the grandmother) who were transported to "Christmas Past" and "Christmas Present" to witness the birth of Jesus.



HCA ninth grader Kinsley Bagwell performed two solos, "The Meaning of Christmas" and "The Meaning of Christmas Reprise." Christmas "Present" (pictured in the large gift box) was played by HCA senior Adam White. Sitting behind the cast are 3rd - 6th grade ensemble and choir who sang, "Worthy," "The Busiest Time of the Year," "Down to the Manger," "O Come, O Come Emmanuel," "O Wondrous Night," and other festive carols.

We wish you & your family a Healthy, Happy & Prosperous New Year!

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"O, Wondrous Night" was performed by eighth graders (l-r) Abbie Leon and Grace Amis as a duet for verse 2, and also fourth grader Willa Molina (solo, verse 1).



HCA seventh grader Dawson McNeese performed "Carol of the Bells."

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Gordon Smith
Sheriff



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Kenny Clark



"O Come, O Come Emmanuel" was performed as two solos by fifth graders Emma Frazier and Bailey Baker (not pictured).



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What We Believe
The word of God is inspired: The holy scriptures, both the Old and the New Testament are inspired by God. The word of God is infallible and the authoritative rule of faith and conduct. It is the revelation of God to man. (2 Timothy 3: 15-17; Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:21)
There is one True God. God has revealed Himself is the eternal self-existent one. He is the Great "I AM". He is the creator of all and the Redeemer of the human race. The Lord our God is One Lord and a Trinity of three persons; the Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43: 10-11; Matthew 28:19; Corinthians 13:14).

The Salvation of Man:
Man by voluntary transgression fell and incurred both spiritual and physical death. Spiritual death is separation from God. The human race is lost and needed a Redeemer to bring them back into relationship and fellowship with God. (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:6). Man's only hope is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Salvation is through the blood of Jesus Christ alone. Salvation is received through repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus. Man is justified by grace through faith and receives eternal life becoming an heir of God. Man must be born again by receiving Jesus Christ as personal savior. Jesus is the only way to God (Luke 24:47; John 3:3; Romans 10; 8-13; Ephesians 2:8; Titus 3:4-7).

Church Ordinances:
Water Baptism is an ordinance of the Church and is commanded by the Scriptures.
Water baptism by immersion declares that the new believer has died with Christ and that they have been raised with Him to walk in the newness of Life. Holy Communion consist of bread and the wine and is the symbol of expressing our sharing and divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:4; Corinthians 11: 23-24)

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit:
All Believers are entitled to and should seek and expect to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. With the baptism a person is endured with power of the Christian life and service. The experience is distinct and subsequent to a person being born again. The initial physical evidence is witnessed by the sealing with other tongues as the Holy Spirit gives utterance. (Acts 2:4; 10:44-46; 19:5-6; Corinthians 14:2; 4: 14-15)

Divine Healing:
Divine Healing is an integral part of the Gospel and is included in the atonement of Jesus Christ. Healing is the privilege of all believers. (Isaiah 53:1-5; Matthew 8:16-17; Acts 10:38; James 5:14-15; 1 Peter 2:24)

The Blessed Hope:
We believe in the resurrection of those who have fallen asleep in Jesus and their translation together with those in Christ who are alive and remain unto the coming nod of the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Romans 8:23; Titus 2:13; 1 Corinthians 15: 51-52).

Available Services and Ministries:
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Worship Services: Sundays 10 AM
Wednesday 7 PM
Youth Service: Awaken Youth every Wednesday 7PM
Young Adults: Spoken 4 (ages 18-39)
Last Tuesday of Each Month 6:30 PM

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Local pastor says unhealed pain may block your destiny

BY MELISSA PYLE
Special to the Telegraph

Pretina Hutchinson says her life began with deep struggles, ones she thought she had overcome, but as each year unfolded, she felt like something was holding her down, blocking her destiny. Hutchinson began to realize that the “something” was unprocessed trauma, hanging around her soul like a weight around her neck, dragging her away from her full potential. The unprocessed pain was becoming a stumbling block in her life, a burden she would eventually call a “Destiny Blocker”.

This is what inspired the title of her new book. A story born out of her own healing process and now her life’s mission. A mission to see others experience the same physical, emotional and spiritual deliverance so they too can truly succeed in life.

Hutchinson, now a pastor and licensed mental health counselor, said that despite her outward appearance of success, she recognized patterns of poor relationship choices, fear and pleasing people that continued to repeat themselves. She said “the devil uses people, strategies, family, friends, lovers, even spiritual leaders to create confusion, delay, deception and soul ties to bind us.” She says these things can cause people to feel trapped in negative patterns.

Hutchinson said as she began confronting her pain, she had to face the trauma that began in her childhood. She described her childhood as nonexistent, because as the oldest of five children, her mother needed her to help in caring for her younger siblings. She was like an extra mother, a “little adult.” She said she later realized this was a family cycle and at the time she’d assumed that was how all families functioned. She remembers

cooking her first meal at just nine years old. She said in her world, if she could provide help by working, she received validation and love, but if she performed poorly, punishment. She says she did what many children do in these circumstances, they don’t live life, they survive. She attributes this early trauma to her later struggle with people pleasing at all costs, a trait that would eventually land her in toxic relationships. She said she has learned that “broken people attract broken people.”

Eventually, her mother left the home, leaving Hutchinson feeling abandoned and burdened by the task of helping her father raise her 5-year-old twin brothers. Despite all the difficulties she was determined to graduate from Bradford High School, which she did. She said all the stress at home caused her to struggle to keep her grades up, but God gave her a drive to graduate.

Hutchinson also shared the painful reality that throughout her childhood she was subjected to other abuses at the hands of people she should have been able to trust. These abusers caused her to feel shamed and worthless. She said through all these struggles, her one saving grace was her father and his mother, each encouraged her to forgive others, even the abandonment she’d experienced. She said her grandmother taught her that unforgiveness is like cancer and will destroy a person from the inside out. She recalls that stories from the Bible, like that of Joseph in Genesis, encouraged her faith and reminded her that “What the devil meant for evil, God will use for good.”

As Hutchinson grew to adulthood, she experienced failed relationships, she attributes those failures to her own brokenness that needed healing.



Local pastor and counselor Pretina Hutchinson’s story of deliverance, along with tools to help others heal are shared in her new book “Destiny Blockers.”

That healing would only come through recognizing the root of her problem: learned behaviors and misguided love. Hutchinson said, “We see with our heart, it shows our mind what to see.” So, if a person is operating from a damaged heart, they don’t see

clearly. She referred to Proverbs 4:23, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; For out of it are the issues of life.”

Hutchinson said to begin healing, a person needs to confront their pain by asking themselves why. Why do I

follow these patterns? As she recognized her own “why” and began to work toward a new life, one with a better understanding of how her painful past had shaped her insecurities and incessant people pleasing. She was able to finally walk towards true healing, and as Jeremiah 29:11 says, “to give you a future and a hope.”

This renewed hope was reignited when Hutchinson turned 50 last year and says it has been her new beginning. She wants to turn her pain into purpose by following what she feels is her mission, offering faith based mental health to the community. She wants people to know they can experience “deliverance” no matter what they may have experienced, but first, they need to get to the root of the problem. She said many people need help discovering the “why” at the root of their depression or other mental health crisis. She says if they begin to understand the causes, they can begin to accept God’s unconditional love and healing.

This concept is also part of her mission at Jesus Christ Deliverance Ministries and the purpose behind her new book, “Destiny Blockers,” in which she gives her real, raw, story, along with practical steps for the reader to begin processing their own trauma. Hutchinson says the book is short and powerful,

and it’s a piece of her soul She says writing the book was part of her own restorative journey and prays it can help many people who have struggled.

Hutchinson’s book, “Destiny Blockers,” can be purchased at Barnes and Noble and on Amazon.

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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

Thomas Gerald Alderman,

64, of Hampton, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 23 for DUI.

Richard Gilbert Boyd, 62, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 21 for criminal mischief and possession of cocaine.

Dantron Shontell Cameron, 40, of Baldwin, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 20 for an out-of-county warrant.

Rodney James Geiger, 39, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 24 for aggravated assault with a weapon and resisting an officer.

Mark Allen Geoghagan, 65,

of Melbourne, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 20 for DUI.

Devin Shane Griffis, 35, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 22 for resisting an officer and failure to appear.

Brea Legree Hankerson, 32, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 21 for DUI.

Linda Denise Hankerson, 45, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 20 for possession of a weapon, burglary, dealing in stolen property, and larceny.

Elani Mae Harris, 29, of Tampa, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 23 for twelve counts of cruelty toward a child and one count of child neglect.

Edna Miles, 75, of Jacksonville, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 26 for DUI.

Aurora Ledawn Warren, 44, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 26 for resisting an officer.

Jackson Todd Willis, 49, of Naples, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 20 for two out-of-county warrants.

Union

Marie Evette Black, 44, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on December 16 for failure to appear.

Gerald Burnsed, 61, a Department of Corrections inmate, was arrested by Union deputies on December 22 for premeditated first-degree murder.

Terrance Allan Fountain, 35, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on December 21 for aggravated battery on a pregnant person.

Timmy Lamont Jenkins, 44, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on December 15 for two probation violations.

John Erkson Keen, 43, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on December 17 for three probation violations.

Jo Lynn Tenario, 42, of Ballinger, Texas, was arrested by Union deputies on December 19 for possession of a controlled substance without a prescription and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Michael Anthony Vinci, 38, of Raiford, was arrested by Union deputies on December 19 for a probation violation.

Clay

Andrew Alan Ables, 26, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on December 26 for resisting an officer, fleeing or attempting to elude a law

enforcement officer, driving with a suspended or revoked license, and leaving the scene of a crash involving injuries.

Patricia Mary Evelyn Brightwell, 27, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay

deputies on December 20 for domestic battery.

Daniel Pierson, 51, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on December 22 for aggravated battery and battery.

ALVERO

Continued from page 1

“It is unclear to me how an individual entrusted with the oversight of educating over 39,000 students in Clay County could speak in such a way,” the state official wrote in a letter to Alvero. “This is even more concerning considering almost 7,000 (17.8%) of Clay County’s students are African American, and the district is filled with many hardworking African American teachers, school leaders, bus drivers, cafeteria staff, and other employees. I can only imagine their deep disappointment during this holiday season on learning of your views.”

Alvero’s attorney, Anthony Sabatini, said his client would not appear before the state board. “They have no authority to summon or reprimand or anything,” the attorney told First Coast News. “So, he requested him to show up. Obviously, Mr. Alvero would never waste his time appearing before a board that has literally no authority whatsoever on him, and so no, he won’t be there.”

Damage control

In a follow-up Facebook video, the school board member said he did not intend to offend anyone.

He added that in his original

video, he was reflecting on his experiences as a Cuban immigrant living in downtown Jacksonville.

“I was saying that during my time there, I faced many negative interactions, including being called names and even physically assaulted,” he said. “But I also met many good decent people, people who remain my friends today. I want to clarify that these experiences are personal and didn’t mean to be generalized. Not everybody’s the same. It was meant to say people’s characters are not defined by their visual characteristics, life experiences, or socioeconomic standards. We as people are divisive.”

He added that as a Christian man, he loves everyone.

“Regardless of their race, I recognize that I could have expressed my thoughts more clearly, and I sincerely apologize if I offended anyone. That was never my intention. I believe actions speak louder than words, and I treat everyone with respect. My friendships are based on the content of their character, and that should be for everyone.”

Sabatini characterized criticism of his client as “ridiculous.”

“ANY adverse state action taken against Alvero in an attempt to punish him & force him into adopting politically correct viewpoints, will be responded to with a lawsuit for First Amendment Retaliation,” he said in a Facebook post.

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UNION

Continued from page 1

in third grade—you never get to see how the end works out,” he continued. “It’s such a gift to be able to come up here to the high school and see how their journey ends and be a part of it.”

Other top stories in Union County in 2025 were,

Lake Butler recovers from financial disaster

Auditors for the City of Lake Butler gave the municipality a clean opinion for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, marking another positive step after a former city manager left the local government in financial difficulty.

City commissioners fired Dale Walker in 2023 before his fourth anniversary leading the city.

A forensic audit commissioned by the municipality concluded Walker overspent the city’s budget by over \$1 million, including misspent ARPA funds, resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other spending irregularities uncovered by auditors were nearly \$14,000 in state sales tax paid by the city, which local governments are not required to pay, and \$19,000 in alcoholic beverages.

Other issues listed by auditors were improper financial oversight of spending, expenditures over budget with no commission approval, depletion of fund balances, no balance sheet reconciliations with adequate financial documentation, unreconciled bank statements, including credit card statements, and a lack of adequate emergency funds.

During the commission’s July 15 meeting, Brendan McKitrik with James Moore and Company, stated that the accounting and budget problems associated with the Walker period had been corrected.

Mayor Melissa Hendrix said that current City Manager Kimberly Hayes is a penny-pincher who scrutinizes every expenditure.

According to the financial statements, the city’s net financial position increased by over \$2 million from 2023 to 2024, while liabilities dropped by \$1.7 million.

Auditors also noted that the city was planning to replace its 50-year-old sewer treatment plant at a cost of approximately \$38 million, which is being financed by state grants and loans.

The city’s financial statements also noted that at year’s end, Lake Butler was renegotiating its wastewater contract with the Department of Corrections.

New elementary school’s funding approved

The first of three years of funding for a new Lake Butler Elementary School survived Gov. Ron DeSantis’s veto pen on June 30, clearing the way for the state to fund one-third of the \$88.5 million project in the upcoming fiscal year.

Last September, Superintendent Mike Ripplinger successfully lobbied the Florida Department of Education’s Special Facility Construction Committee to rank the school as the state’s top school construction project.

The superintendent said \$64.6 million would fund the construction of a new pre-k through fifth-grade school, \$19.6 million would provide money to demolish and renovate the current school for other uses, \$2.2 million would renovate the middle school gym, and \$2.1 million would finance moving the district’s administrative offices to the current elementary school campus.

Aubrie Muse wins Miss Union County High and is named valedictorian

A Union County High School senior dual-enrolled at Florida Gateway College claimed the 2024-2025 Miss Union County High School title after highlighting a World War II-era icon that symbolized the emerging role of women in the

workforce.

Aubrie Muse donned the blue jumpsuit and red polka dot scarf made famous in the 1942 “We Can Do It!” poster that symbolized women’s role in manufacturing during the war.

During the pageant’s theme-wear competition, the 17-year-old struck the famous pose of Rosie pulling up a shirt sleeve and flexing a bicep. Co-host Mia Kent said Muse wanted to honor the famous icon who empowered women to be strong and confident and to enter the workforce while the nation’s men were away fighting the war. he pageant, Muse graduated as the class of 2025’s valedictorian.

Code enforcement emerges in city and county government

Lake Butler and Union County officials grappled with code enforcement issues in 2025, with both groups of officeholders complaining about residents living permanently in backyard sheds, RVs, and campers.

In February, county commissioners appeared hesitant to set up a code enforcement regime, with Mac Johns stating he believed most residents did not want it.

Commissioners Donna Jackson and Melissa McNeal both commented that they did not want invasive code enforcement, and Jackson clarified her position.

“I have no issue with people living in a travel trailer because they cannot afford anything else,” Jackson said. “I just want a way to make sure that they have safe electric hook-ups and correct, sanitary sewer hook-ups and are paying county taxes just like other residents. They also need to be paying taxes to compensate for the county services they use.”

County Attorney Russ Wade said that under current law, RVs cannot be used as permanent residences, with the exception of use on a building site while a home is being built. A temporary permit can be used for this for a period of six months, with an option to be renewed if required. He noted that temporary hardship permits for mobile homes are also available to allow the placement of a mobile home on a single-residence zone lot for use by a family member. He stated that there is no provision of “mother-in-law suites” in the county.

However, the following month, commissioners responded to a complaint about a Providence-area landowner renting tiny houses through Aitbnb.

During the March 17 meeting, Wade told commissioners the complaint points to a long-debated subject in the county—whether commissioners should establish a code enforcement apparatus.

“Are we prepared to get into the code enforcement business, and if so, do we want to enforce it by investigating this particular complaint?” he asked. “It’s really a budgetary resource question, I think, more than anything.”

The attorney added that while it is easy to demand compliance with the county’s land use and zoning rules, enforcing those demands would be expensive and time-consuming without a formal code enforcement structure that utilizes a magistrate to adjudicate cases.

In November, Jackson pressed her colleagues about tent, shed, camper and RV dwellers who pay no solid waste or EMS assessments, yet benefit from those county services.

She then proposed hiring an employee or contractor to locate unassessed campers and sheds used as permanent dwellings and charge the parcels the additional assessments.

Jackson added that, according to Sheriff Brad Whitehead, a significant number of 911 calls are coming from unassessed sheds and campers.

“A lot of the call volume that’s generated, that’s using your tax dollars, is going to these makeshift, thrown-together RV camps,” she said. “That’s hard to hear.”

“Everybody screams they don’t want code enforcement,” added Board Chair Channing Dobbs. “That’s because they ain’t got (an RV encampment) next to their house.”

Lake Butler officials also complained about the structures, giving City Manager Kim Hayes the green light to start code enforcement proceedings against

residents living in campers, sheds, and travel trailers.

Hayes said that before she started enforcing the city’s rules regarding such living arrangements, she wanted to check with commissioners, anticipating many complaints.

“Because me riding around,” Hayes told commissioners, “I have seen a lot of that. So, before I touch on that one, just that one’s going to upset a lot of people. There are a lot of people living in campers, and there are a lot of people living in sheds.”

Mayor Melissa Hendrix said that at one point, former Mayor Jack Schenck made daily rounds to inform residents of the city’s rules.

“We got it cleaned up,” Hendrix said, “but now they’re coming back, and it’s not really fair to the rest of us who are paying our taxes and paying our bills, and then they’re piggybacking off of that.”

Hayes said some people living illegally in campers have hooked up to the city’s sewer system and are using Lake Butler utilities free of charge.

The city manager also said many Lake Butler homeowners are renting their backyard sheds and campers.

Both Hayes and Hendrix stated that they have observed backyard structure residents discharging raw sewage into ditches.

Lake Butler splash park a mess

Lake Butler’s splash park, located within Lakeside Park, remained inoperable and closed for most of the year.

City Manager Kim Hayes told the city commission during its May 20 meeting that the engineers who originally installed the splash park now refuse to touch the facility.

“Matter of fact,” she added, “we can’t even get them to call us back.”

Hayes said that because so many people have repaired, modified, and switched parts, replaced pumps, and rewired the park’s circuitry since its original construction, the engineers said they will not touch the project now.

Mayor Melissa Hendrix said that the current problem with the facility is that water pumps keep burning out.

“It used to be a three-phase,” she said, “and they went and took it out and put in a one-phase. That’s why it keeps burning up, right? It’s not strong enough.”

Hayes said that different people have worked on the splash park through the years.

“Everybody came up with their own ideas, I guess all these years, and it is a mess,” she said. “Just to be honest with you, I can’t find anybody who will touch it. We’re trying to find some motors.”

Vice Mayor Rondell Huggins told his colleagues he wanted to know how much the city had spent on repairs before investing additional funds into the park.

“We’ve spent a lot of money on that,” he said. “I love the kids, and I wish I had that when I was down there when I was a kid. It was just light sand and a lot of black water. But is it really worth it to keep getting somebody to go in there and make a repair, or should we start from the ground up? Maybe we can apply for a grant or something.”

Public Works Director Jason Dodds told commissioners that a Starke-based plumbing company is evaluating the park. He said he would present options to the commission at its next meeting.

During the November 18 commission meeting, Hayes reported that the Starke-based plumbing contractor had installed two pumps at the facility, but that the new devices failed to produce enough pressure to make the park usable. Hayes said the contractor was at a standstill on the project and that she planned to contact a Jacksonville firm that supplied parts for the park when it was built.

“He said he’s going to look at what’s happened and see how it’s been redesigned, and he’s going to look, and he said it might be something where we can just get the parts that we need to fix it the way we need to, rather than redesign something,” the city manager reported.

School district loses 200 students, tightens budget by cutting 40 jobs

Along with other school districts across the state, Union County struggled with the aftermath of Florida’s Personalized Education Program and Family Empowerment Scholarships.

The state’s Personalized Education Program is a scholarship that funds educational savings accounts for homeschool parents. It reimburses them for money they spend on their children’s education, up to around \$8,500 per student, depending on grade level.

The Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options provides around \$8,000 a year to families of private school students.

Clay County Superintendent of Schools David Broskie said the two programs drained \$30 million from his district’s revenues in 2024-2025, and Alachua County School District leaders said its district took a \$6.5 million hit in state funding for the same period.

In Union County, a net loss of 57 students created a \$500,000-plus budget gap. In response, the school board eliminated 40 jobs and discontinued its Tiger’s Den preschool, renting the facility to a private operator.

Ripplinger reported that some homeschoolers returned to Union County public schools in 2024-2025, particularly 12th-graders who wanted to experience the traditional senior year and walk with their class at graduation.

He also said the district is adjusting to homeschooled students participating in public school activities, like clubs and sports.

Ripplinger said that the district will charge homeschool parents whose students participate in his district’s extracurricular activities beginning in 2025-2026.

Impact initiative launches

Around 100 community and business leaders gathered at Pine Grove Barn on Shadd Farms on Wednesday, May 4, for the inaugural meeting of the Union County Impact Initiative.

Organizer Tina Lloyd said she thought of bringing together the group after attending a meeting in Alachua about how that community addressed mental health needs and the demand for other social services.

“I said, Union County needs something like this,” she recalled thinking, “because there are a lot of things that you, this group, are probably not aware of.”

Lloyd then recalled another recent meeting in which a school district employee revealed that there are 134 children registered with the school district as homeless.

“That was very eye-opening to me,” Lloyd said. “And then you try to think, How can we give to support that? If people don’t know, how can they support it?”

Lloyd introduced the group of women who helped her organize the event: Demetris Thomas of Lake Butler Hospital, Ann Hendricks, president of the Lake Butler Woman’s Club, Alexandra Pritchett of Nextran and president of the Lake Butler Rotary Club, Lisa Huggins, a Rotary member and an owner of CTC Delicious Barbecue, Mendy Whitaker of Shadd Trucking and a founding member of United for a Cure, Rotarian Amanda Fort of the Union County Housing Authority, Taylor Casey of the ACORN Clinic, and Terry Jarvis of Culture House Church.

Lloyd said she initially intended to launch the Union County Impact Initiative with a small meeting at Gather, Jennifer Thomas’s Main Street coffee shop and meeting venue.

“We put it on Facebook and within three hours we had 50 people registered,” Lloyd said,

“so, it’s like, okay, well let’s do this another way.”

Lloyd said she hoped local businesses would drive the impact initiative.

She gave attendees a folder of handouts, one of which explained how businesses could contribute to strengthening the community, such as creating jobs, donating goods, services, or space, promoting health and wellness, being a voice in the community, supporting education and youth development, and championing equity and inclusion.

Deal makes 1/3 of county off limits to development

The head of Union County’s Economic Development is sounding the alarm over a recent land deal between Weyerhaeuser and the state, which he said could hinder the county’s future industrial growth.

Bob Cotgreave said a series of sales and conservation easements would shut off the northern one-third of Union County to business development.

The deal, setting aside 78,000 acres, completes the Ocala-to-Osceola Wildlife Corridor.

County Coordinator Jimmy Williams added that he was eyeing the northern part of the county for future industrial zoning, far from the county’s primary residential areas, and close to the New River landfill in Raiford.

Williams said he envisioned warehouses or manufacturing facilities near the landfill, with easy access to Interstate 10 and other developments in Baker County.

“There are a lot of things that can work together out there in an industrial area in that mindset on State Road 229 north just before the Baker County line,” he told county commissioners on July 7. “You’re just moments from I-10 also, and that’s just forest land, which would be ideal for a 50-acre fenced-in area, maybe making computer chips or something, or warehousing, or something like that, for growth of jobs in the county, and revenue sources. This corridor has taken that off the table at this time as far as we know.”

Cotgreave said that future conservation easements could set aside land as far south as Butler Lake.

Williams told commissioners that in his view, the best way to approach the issue is in coordination with other counties and with the state’s small counties coalition.

Williams and Cotgreave said their biggest complaint is that state officials did not consult with the impacted counties before striking the deal, neglecting to consider the economic impact of setting aside such large parcels of real estate.

Williams told commissioners he has already talked to Bradford County officials about the issue and will bring it up with other county officials soon.

Hospital ranked as 5-Star facility

Lake Butler Hospital has earned a 5-star quality rating from the National Rural Rating System. The designation is the

Bradford jail reports in-custody death

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

The Bradford County Sheriff’s Office said one of its inmates died while in custody on December 23. In a news release, the agency said that after being alerted to a non-responsive inmate, “Deputies began attempting life-saving measures and requested assistance from both jail medical staff and Bradford County Fire Rescue, both of which responded to the scene and continued attempting life-saving measures. Ultimately, the inmate was pronounced deceased.”



Harper

The inmate was identified as James Michael Harper, a 44-year-old being held on charges of domestic battery, domestic battery by strangulation, and false imprisonment.

The office added that the Florida Department of Law Enforcement is investigating the incident.

highest possible score under the performance metric.

The hospital had maintained a four-star rating for about eight months before reaching the top tier, according to Cynthia Coulter, chief clinical services officer.

“It’s our patients, so I would have to say a huge thank you to all of our employees and our providers and the care that they provided to our patients,” Coulter said about the achievement.

The rating is based on Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems scores, which are national, standardized surveys sent to patients after discharge that ask about their hospital experience, including the care they received, food quality, and interactions with providers.

“It’s totally based on the patient’s experience,” Coulter said of the 5-star rating.

She added that the hospital has focused on staff education and training, quality measures, patient safety, pharmacy services, and dietary offerings to improve the patient experience.

Coulter oversees all clinical departments at the hospital, including radiology, laboratory services, rehabilitation, nursing, case management and pharmacy. An independent healthcare technology firm, Press Ganey, administers and analyzes patient surveys for the hospital.

“There’s been excitement with our staff because of the recognition,” Coulter said, “and we’ve had a big celebration for our staff to thank them for all that they do.”

The administrator said next up for the facility is a construction project to renovate its building and HVAC system. Some staff will temporarily relocate to a new administrative building during renovations.



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Concerned Citizens hold annual toy giveaway

BY JENN SAMSEL
jenn@bctelegraph.com

On Dec. 20, hundreds of kids and families attended the RJE Toy Giveaway Annual Christmas Event, organized by the Concerned Citizens of Bradford County, held at the RJE Center in Starke.

"We have such great people involved in making this assistance possible. I want

to thank the community for everything you've done not only this year, but the previous years before, and hopefully for the future," said Alica McMillan, President of the Concerned Citizens of Bradford County.

According to Chrissy Thompson, City Clerk of Starke, the RJE Toy Giveaway served 150 children this year.

Attendees enjoyed hot dogs,

burgers, coleslaw, baked beans, and desserts.

Numerous toys and bicycles were distributed during the event to ensure that children in the community felt included this holiday season.

More than 25 bikes were raffled off, and donations were generously provided by various companies and organizations, including George Roberts Insurance, Murray Ford, Downtown Grill, Nicky's Beauty Bar, the City of Starke, and several local churches, such as True Vine Outreach Ministry, Macedonia Baptist Church in Hampton, and New Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church.

These contributions helped brighten the season for many families in the community.



Janice Mortimer, Glenda Ruise, Madison Almora, Chrissy Thompson, Mary Hill Louise Johnson, Alica McMillan and Carnell Williams



Jamar Carter shows off his new bike.



Left: Robert Banks, Rosa Thomas, Sandra Damps



Right: Paula McCloud family



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BHS has state qualifiers in cheer team, lifter Ray in 2025

The following is a look at the high school varsity teams and individuals that won championships or were runners-up at the district, regional or state levels, earned medals in state competition or that qualified to participate in regional and state competitions in 2025. Any omissions are unintentional.

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Bradford High School had one team and one individual qualify for the state finals in their respective sports, while two teams won district-championship trophies in 2025.

Cheer team, lifter Ray compete at state

The competitive cheer team earned its highest finish at state, placing third in Medium Non-Tumbling at the Class 1A finals. Bradford, in its third year of competitive cheer, had a score of 77.80 (29.6 building, 28.4 cheer, 19.8 overall, 1 penalty point), which left the Tornadoes trailing West Nassau (87.60) and Keys Gate (80.20). It was West Nassau's fifth straight state title.

Bradford entered the state finals off a second-place finish at the Region 1 event. The Tornadoes had a score of 70.60 to place behind West Nassau (89.10). The Tornadoes' raw score of 72.60 allowed them to



The third-place Medium Non-Tumbling team at the Class 1A state finals: (front, l-r) Myia Sanchez, Skyla Bounacore, Amy Prescott, Lily Mercer, (middle, l-r) Madison Sapp, Cadance Rowan, Tenly Hardee, Kelsey Burgin, Kaydence Crawford, Nivaiah Foster, Jhailaa Coleman, (back, l-r) Kylee Kerr, Jakyiah Dean, Aldon Sanchez, Hayden Goodwin, Chloe Hales, Ella Hense and Summer Rhoden.

skip the semifinal round at state and go straight to the finals for the first time ever.

Girls weightlifter Timya Ray gave Bradford its other state-level participant in 2025. She was the unlimited class runner-up at the District 6-1A meet in the traditional event (bench press, clean and jerk) with a 300-pound total and sixth-place finisher at the Region 2 meet with a 315 total. At state, Ray was 13th with a 315 total.

Ray was just one of eight

lifters who qualified to move on from the district meet.

Kolee Lemire, Brandy Hall and Destiny Randolph advanced as runners-up in their classes. Lemire had a 185 total in the 110 class, Hall had a 210 total in the 129 class and Randolph had a 230 total in the 199 class.

Also qualifying for regionals were Kellsie Cochran, with a third-place total of 245 in the 183 class, Hailey Redding, with a fourth-place total of 205 in the 129 class, Blakeleigh Smith,

with a fourth-place total of 210 in the 139 class, and Mallory Frazier, with a fifth-place total of 195 in the 139 class.

Flag football wins 1st ever regional games

Bradford won its third straight district title in flag football, but also won its first-ever regional playoff game. The Tornadoes would win a total of two regional games before their season came to an end in the Region 1-1A championship game.

The Tornadoes' path to the District 4 championship game began with a 53-0 win over Newberry in a semifinal game. Ar'Nayshia Griffin returned two interceptions for touchdowns, while on offense, she threw touchdown passes of 46 yards to Rhianna Davis and 6 and 22 yards to Cherish Bing. Griffin also rushed for a 21-yard touchdown.

Nichelle Brown returned two punts for touchdowns, with the scoring plays covering approximately 35 and 45 yards.

Brown also caught three passes for successful one-point conversion attempts following touchdowns. Bing and Kaylee Devore each caught a pass for two more successful conversions.

Griffin finished with more than 130 yards passing, while Bing and Davis each had more than 40 yards in receptions.

Bradford won the District 4 championship by defeating Santa

Fe 14-0.

Griffin, who was 19 of 36 for 178 yards, completed touchdown passes of 24 and 30 yards to Bing. The quarterback also connected with Brown on a two-point conversion attempt.

Bing finished with five receptions for 72 yards, while Brown had eight catches for 59 yards.

The defense got interceptions from Bing, Davis and Griffin.

Bradford won its first-ever regional playoff game, defeating Keystone Heights 37-9 in the quarterfinal round.

Griffin, who was 10 of 16 passing for 150 yards, completed touchdown passes of 7 yards to Davis and 63 yards to Brown. She also rushed for a 2-yard score, while also returning an interception approximately 15 yards for a defensive touchdown. Griffin had three interceptions in all.

Brown had a 15-yard touchdown run as well as a successful three-point conversion run.

Devore and Nyasia Lopey each caught a pass for a successful two-point conversion attempt.

The Tornadoes, the third seed in the region, defeated second seed University Christian 18-7 in the Region 1 semifinals. Griffin threw touchdown passes of 18 and 19 yards to Brown while also rushing for a 1-yard score.

Griffin, who completed 14 of 22 passes for 110 yards, also put an end to a University scoring



Timya Ray lifted her way to state, competing in the unlimited class.

threat by intercepting a pass at her own 1-yard line.

Brown finished with six receptions for 65 yards.

The Tornadoes ended their season with a 14-3 record, losing 14-0 to number-one seed Florida High in the Region 1 championship game.

Football team wins district championship

The football team had no trouble winning the District 5-2A championship, defeating Keystone Heights, Newberry, Palatka and Santa Fe by a combined score of 138-14. Those four wins were part of a 9-1 regular season, with the only loss coming against Class 6A Mandarin by seven points.

Cy Cubbedge threw 12 touchdown passes in the four

See BHS, page 11

Legal Notices

Legals for the week of Jan. 1, 2026

BRADFORD

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 8TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA
CASE NO.: 04-2025-DP-000006
IN THE INTEREST OF:
A.L.B. DOB: 4/8/2017,
B.B. DOB: 3/8/2020,
MINOR CHILDREN
NOTICE OF ACTION
TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

TO: Alyssa Barr, address unknown
YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that the State of Florida, Department of Children and Families, has filed a Petition to terminate your parental rights and permanently commit the following children for adoption: **A.L.B. born on 4/8/2017 and B.B. born on 3/8/2020.** You are hereby commanded to appear on **Tuesday, January 27, 2026, at 1:30 PM** before the General Magistrate Bridget Baker at the Bradford Courthouse, 945 North Temple Avenue, Starke, FL 32091, for an **ADVISORY HEARING. FAILURE TO PERSONALLY APPEAR AT THIS ADVISORY HEARING CONSTITUTES CONSENT TO THE TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS OF THESE CHILDREN. IF YOU FAIL TO APPEAR ON THE DATE AND TIME SPECIFIED, YOU MAY LOSE ALL LEGAL RIGHTS AS A PARENT TO THE CHILDREN NAMED IN THIS NOTICE.**

If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Please contact the ADA Coordinator, 201 E. University Avenue, Room 414A, Gainesville, FL 32601 at (352) 337-6237, at least 7 days before your scheduled court appearance, or immediately upon receiving this notification if the time before the scheduled appearance is less than 7 days; if you are hearing or voice impaired, call 711.

WITNESS, my hand as Clerk of said Court and the Seal thereof, this 1st day of December, 2025.
Denny Thompson, Clerk of Court
By: Ramona Jefferson
As Deputy Clerk
12/11 4tchg 01/01/26- BCT

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA
CASE NO.: 04-2025-CA-326
JOHN M. MILLER as TRUSTEE of the REVOCABLE TRUST OF JOHN M. MILLER, U/A/D 7/16/1980, Plaintiff,
VS.
CONSTANCE HURSTON & CYNTHIA S. BROWN, Defendants.

NOTICE OF ACTION
(Publish in Bradford County Telegraph)
TO: Constance Hurston
Last Known Residence: 409 Lakeshore Drive, Starke, Florida

32091
YOU ARE NOTIFIED that an action to foreclose a mortgage on the following property in BRADFORD County, Florida:
Bradford County Parcel ID Number: 00804-0-03600
Lot 36 of LAKEWOOD UNIT NO. 1 according to the plat thereof recorded in Plat Book 3, Page 58 of the public Records of Bradford County, Florida.

Has been filed against you and you are required to serve a copy of your written defenses, if any, to it on Charles Daniel Sikes, P.A., Plaintiff's Attorney, at 817 MacMahon Street, Starke, Florida 32091, within (30) days of the first date of publication, and file the original with the clerk of this court either before service on Plaintiff's attorney or immediately thereafter; otherwise a default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint or petition.
DATED December 9, 2025
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT
BY: KANETRA JENKINS
Deputy Clerk
12/11 4tchg 1/1/26-BCT

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA
CASE NO.: 04-2025-CA-435
THE BRADFORD COUNTY TELEGRAPH, INC., Plaintiff,
Vs.
GGG INNOVATIVE SERVICES, LLC Defendant.

NOTICE OF ACTION
(Publish in Bradford County Telegraph)
TO: SMD BILLING MANAGEMENT, LLC, as registered agent for GGG INNOVATIVE SERVICE, LLC, Last Known Residence: 320-A South Walnut Street, Starke, FL 32091

YOU ARE NOTIFIED that an action to foreclose a mortgage on the following property in BRADFORD County, Florida:
Bradford County Parcel ID Number: 03142-0-00000
A Parcel of land and lying partly in Block 30 of the Original Town of Starke as per Plat recorded in Deed Book N, Page 759 of the Public Records of Bradford County, Florida and partly in the Southeast 1/4 of the Southwest 1/4 of Section 28, Township 6 South, Range 22 East of said County, said Parcel bring more particularly described as follows:

Commence at an iron pipe located at the Northeast corner of said Block 30 and run South 17 degrees 20 minutes and 18 seconds West, along the Easterly boundary thereof and the Westerly boundary of the Right-of-Way of Thompson Street, 124.22 feet to a set 1/2 inch Iron Rod (LB4012) for the Point of Beginning. From the Point of Beginning thus described continue South 17 degrees 20 minutes and 18 seconds West, along said Westerly boundary 154.85 feet to a found 1/2 inch Rebar (Welch & Assoc); thence North 71 degrees 56 minutes 19 seconds West, 104.51 feet to a found 1/2 inch Iron Rod (Welch & Assoc); thence North 72 degrees 24 minutes 34 seconds

West, 31.63 feet to a found 1 inch Iron Pipe (NO ID); thence North 70 degrees 25 minutes and 24 seconds West, 72.56 feet to a found 1/2 inch Iron Pipe (NO ID) located on the Easterly boundary of the Right-of-Way of Walnut Street (60foot R/W); thence North 16 degrees 36 minutes and 18 seconds East, along said Easterly boundary 271.21 feet to a found 1/2 inch Iron Rod (NO ID) located at an intersection with the Southerly boundary of the Right-of-Way of South Street (60 foot R/W) and the Northerly boundary of said Block 30; thence South 73 degrees 37 minutes and 52 seconds East, along said Northerly & Southerly boundaries 76.17 feet to a found 1/2 inch Iron Rod (#5098); thence South 16 degrees 44 minutes and 25 seconds West, 124.09 feet to a set 1/2 Iron Rod (LB4012); thence South 73 degrees 34 minutes and 50 seconds East, 134.67 feet to the Point of Beginning.

Has been filed against you and you are required to serve a copy of your written defenses, if any, to it on Charles Daniel Sikes, P.A., Plaintiff's Attorney, at 817 MacMahon Street, Starke, Florida 32091, within (30) days of the first date of publication, and file the original with the clerk of this court either before service on Plaintiff's attorney or immediately thereafter; otherwise a default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint or petition.
DATED: December 9, 2025
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT
BY: KANETRA JENKINS
DEPUTY CLERK
12/11 4tchg 1/1/26-BCT

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA
CASE NO.: 2019-DR-631
Division:

BRANDON LEE, Petitioner
and ASHLYN WALL Respondent.

NOTICE OF ACTION FOR MODIFICATION OF PARENTING PLAN
TO: ASHLYN WALL, 1854 SR 230 EAST, STARKE, FL 32091

YOU ARE NOTIFIED that an action for MODIFICATION OF PARENTING PLAN has been filed against you and that you are required to serve a copy of your written defenses, if any, to it on BRANDON LEE, whose address is 5494 HAMPTON VILLAS DRIVE, HAMPTON, FL 32044 on or before January 8th, 2026 and file the original with the clerk of this Court at 945 N. Temple Avenue, Starke, FL 32091 before service on Petitioner or immediately thereafter. **If you fail to do so, a default may be entered against you for the relief demanded in the petition.** Copies of all court documents in this case, including orders, are available at the Clerk of the Circuit Court's office. You may review these documents upon request. You must keep the Clerk of the Circuit Court's office notified of your current address. (You may file Designation of

Current Mailing and E-Mail Address, Florida Supreme Court Approved Family Law Form 12.915.) Future papers in this lawsuit will be mailed or e-mailed to the addresses on record at the clerk's office.
WARNING: Rule 12.285, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure, requires certain automatic disclosure of documents and information. Failure to comply can result in sanctions, including dismissal or striking of pleadings.
Dated: December 15, 2025
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT
BY: KANETRA JENKINS
Deputy Clerk
12/18 4tchg 1/8/26-BCT

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA
CASE NO.: 2025CA000399
MIDFIRST BANK, Plaintiff,
VS.
MARGARET M. SILCOX; JASON L. SILCOX; et al., Defendant(s).

NOTICE OF ACTION
(Publish in Bradford County Telegraph)
TO: Tri-Star Lending Group
Last Known Residence: 1500 Lee Rd Orlando, FL 32810

YOU ARE NOTIFIED that an action to foreclose a mortgage on the following property in Bradford County, Florida: THE FOLLOWING DESCRIBED LAND LOCATED IN THE COUNTY OF BRADFORD, STATE OF FLORIDA, TO-WIT: THE EAST ONE-HALF OF THE FOLLOWING DESCRIBED PARCEL OF LAND: COMMENCE 200 FEET WEST OF THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF THE WEST 1/2 OF SOUTHEAST 1/4 OF NORTHWEST 1/4 AND RUN SOUTH 517.4 FEET FOR POINT OF BEGINNING. THENCE CONTINUE SOUTH 170 FEET WEST, 419 FEET TO EAST RIGHT-OF-WAY OF STATE ROAD 200; THENCE NORTH ALONG ROAD 170 FEET, EAST 406.75 FEET TO POINT OF BEGINNING, LYING AND BEING SITUATED IN SECTION 10, TOWNSHIP 6 SOUTH, RANGE 22. TOGETHER WITH A 2003 MOBILE HOME WITH VIN #S FLHML2F157826979A & FLHML2F157826979B, AND TITLE #S 88078260 & 88078319.

has been filed against you and you are required to serve a copy of your written defenses, if any, to it on ALDRIDGE PITE, LLP, Plaintiff's attorney, at 401 W. Linton Blvd. Suite 202-B Delray Beach, FL 33444, on or before December 16, 2025. Dated on December 16, 2025. As Clerk of the Court
BY: KANETRA JENKINS
As Deputy Clerk
12/25 2tchg 1/1/26-BCT

COMMISSION MEETING
THE PUBLIC IS HEREBY NOTIFIED that the Bradford County Board of County Commissioners will have a board meeting on January 6, 2026, at 9:30 AM inside the county commission meeting room, located in the north wing section of the Bradford County Courthouse, 945 N. Temple Avenue, Starke, FL. A copy of the meeting agenda may be obtained from the Bradford County website: www.bradfordcountyfl.gov. Said meeting location is secured – no firearms or weapons are permitted.
1/1/26 1tchg-BCT

SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
PUBLIC NOTICE OF APPLICATION
Notice is hereby given that pursuant to Chapter 373, Florida Statutes, the following application for permit was received on December 4, 2025: The Chemours Company FC, LLC, PO Box 753, Starke, FL 32091-0753 has submitted an application to modify Water Use Permit number 2-007-216459-5, authorizing a maximum average daily use of 0.0066 million gallons of groundwater for industrial use. This project is located in Section 24, Township 5S, Range 22E, in Bradford County.

Interested persons may comment upon the application or submit a written request for a staff report containing proposed agency action regarding the application by writing to the Suwannee River Water Management District, Attn: Resource Management, 9225 C.R. 49, Live Oak, Florida 32060. Such comments or requests must be received by 5:00 PM within 14 days from the date of publication. No further public notice will be provided regarding this application. A copy of the staff report must be requested in order to remain advised of further proceedings. Substantially affected persons are entitled to request an administrative hearing, pursuant to Title 28, Florida Administrative Code, regarding the proposed agency action by submitting a written request after reviewing the staff report.
PUBLISH: no later than January 2, 2026 /tm
1/1/26 1tchg-BCT

SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
PUBLIC NOTICE OF APPLICATION
Notice is hereby given that pursuant to Chapter 373, Florida Statutes, the following application for permit was received on November 21, 2025: Toms High on the Hog Real Pit BBQ, Inc., 500 International Parkway, Lake Mary, FL 32736 has submitted an Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) application number ERP-007-231354-6. The project is located in Bradford County, Sections 11 and 14, Township 8 South, Range 22 East, and includes 73.0 acres of total project area. Interested persons may comment upon the application or submit a written request for a staff report containing proposed agency action regarding the application by writing

to the Suwannee River Water Management District, Attn: Resource Management, 9225 C.R. 49, Live Oak, Florida 32060. Such comments or requests must be received by 5:00 PM within 14 days from the date of publication.

No further public notice will be provided regarding this application. A copy of the staff report must be requested in order to remain advised of further proceedings. Substantially affected persons are entitled to request an administrative hearing, pursuant to Title 28, Florida Administrative Code, regarding the proposed agency action by submitting a written request after reviewing the staff report.
PUBLISH: no later than January 2, 2026 /tm
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LEGAL NOTICE
BRADFORD COUNTY TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED COORDINATING BOARD
BUSINESS MEETING

The North Central Florida Regional Planning Council announces a business meeting to which all persons are invited.
DATE AND TIME: January 13, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.
PLACE: Bradford County Emergency Operations Center Board Room located at 945 N Temple Ave # B, Starke, Florida
DIAL IN NUMBER: Toll free 1.888.585.9008
CONFERENCE CODE: 864 183 272
GENERAL SUBJECT MATTER TO BE CONSIDERED: **To conduct the regular business of the Bradford County Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board.**

For additional information or to obtain a copy of the agenda interested persons may contact: North Central Florida Regional Planning Council, 2009 NW 67th Place, Gainesville, Florida 32653-1603; franson@ncfrpc.org or 352.955.2200.

Any person may submit written or other physical evidence which he or she intends to offer into evidence during the business meeting to Lynn Franson, Senior Planner, at North Central Florida Regional Planning Council, 2009 NW 67th Place, Gainesville, Florida 32653-1603; or franson@ncfrpc.org. Pursuant to the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person requiring special accommodations to participate in this meeting is asked to advise the agency at least 2 business days before the meeting by contacting 352.955.2200. If you are hearing or speech impaired, please contact the agency using the Florida Relay Service, 1.800. 955.8771 (TDD) or 1.800. 955.8770 (Voice).

If any person decides to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at the meeting, he/she will need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceeding is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence from which the appeal is to be issued.
1/1/26 1tchg-BCT

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Obituaries

Donna Nooney

Donna Marie Nooney, 61, went to be with our Lord on Monday, Dec. 15, 2025.

She is survived by her husband, William Nooney; children, Michael (Sephania) Johnson, Chris (Kayla) Johnson; and Cody (Courtney) Johnson; siblings, Bryan (Beth) Boettcher, Michele (Victor) Brazile, Cheryl (Billy) Martinelli, and Marion (Joe) Good; grandchildren, Sierra Johnson, Alyssa Johnson, Colson Johnson, Adelyn Johnson, Penelope Johnson, Riley Brinkley, Scott Nelson and Charleigh Johnson; her best friends, Jennifer Bradbury and Joanne Davenport; and her fur baby, Ellie Mae.

There will be a celebration of life at a later date at the home of Billy and Donna, 8017 Forest Hills Road, Melrose.



PAID OBITUARY

Patricia Pruitt

Patricia Gayle Pruitt, lovingly known as Patty, went to be with her Savior on Thursday, Dec. 4, 2025, at St. Vincent's in Middleburg. Born March 22, 1948, in Kingsley Lake, she was radiant with life, characterized by her bubbly disposition, infectious laughter, and a heart that embraced everyone around her. She possessed a rare quality; she never met a stranger, extending warmth and friendliness wherever her path took her. A proud graduate of Ocala High School, she journeyed through a vibrant career that saw her nurturing her organizational talents in many secretarial positions over the years. She devoted her expertise to the Union County Courthouse, Lake Butler Apparel, Badcock in Starke, state of Florida at PRIDE, Countryside Animal Hospital in Alachua, ultimately concluding her professional chapter by managing the Dance Barn in Alachua before retiring in 2005. Her deepest affections lay rooted in her faith, her family, and the glorious memories woven throughout her life. Kingsley Lake was more than merely a backdrop to her childhood; it was her sanctuary, a comforting refuge where she cherished countless hours swimming and diving, embracing the joy of life in its purest form. Her love of the lake inspired a book to be written called Patty Gayle and the Legend of Kingsley. Beyond the water's embrace, her passions flowed through music, where she would often grace the piano, share her melodious voice in song, or sway in dance. Her heart danced to the tunes of Elvis and twinkled with her affection for collecting treasures adorned with lions and tigers. Her community was an extension of her family, being a longtime member of First Baptist Church in Lake Butler prior to becoming an active member of River of Life Church in Starke, where she treasured her relationships with other believers. She now reunites with her parents, James Moser and Callie Strickland; and her dear sister, Vera.

She leaves behind many who cherished her dearly. Mike Pruitt of Starke, her devoted husband of 50 years, stood as her partner through all of life's blessings. Her children, John Michael (Jennifer) Pruitt of High Springs, Rick (Michelle) McLaughlin of Lake Butler, and Cindee Pruitt of Lake City; her grandchildren: Brittany, Jonathan, Joey, Heather, Ricky, Scotty, Callie, and Charlee; along with six great-grandchildren who were all a sparkle in her eye. She also leaves behind her brother, Bob (Sharon) Haag of Warner Robbins, Georgia.

Family and friends will gather for a Celebration of her life on Saturday, Jan. 31, 2026, at the Lake Butler Community Center from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m.

In honoring the life of Patricia Gayle Pruitt, we reflect on a woman who filled her world with warmth, laughter, and an unwavering faith. Archer-Milton Funeral Home is honored to serve the Pruitt family during this time. 386-496-2008 www.archerfuneralhome.com

PAID OBITUARY

Gary M. Spencer

Gary M. Spencer, 71, passed away in Starke on Friday, Sept. 26, 2025. He is survived by his son, Bill (Catherine) Spencer; and daughter, Tania (Tony) Courchaine. His body was donated to Science Care.

Weightlifting highlights '25 for KHHS

The following is a look at the high school varsity teams and individuals that won championships at the district, regional or state levels, earned medals in state competition or that qualified to participate in regional and state competitions in 2025. Any omissions are unintentional.

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Keystone Heights High School won 27 individual and five team district championships in 2025, with the boys and girls weightlifting teams combining to win 29 of those titles.

The boys team produced a state champion in Elijah Mize and a total of seven individual medals at the state meet.

Keystone won both the Olympic and traditional championships at the District 8-1A boys meet, earning seven individual titles in Olympic and five individual titles in traditional.

Every lifter qualified for regionals in Olympic, traditional or both.

The Indians had an Olympic score of 104 to place ahead of Father Lopez, which had 63 points.

Olympic winners were Mize with a 315-pound total in the 119-pound class, Colton Hollingsworth with a 350 total in the 129 class, Clark Byrnes with a 400 total in the 154 class, Kyle Perkins with a 505 total in the 199 class, Trase Wooden with a 465 total in the 219 class, Brayden Wester with a 460 total in the 238 class and Jackson Herman with a 535 total in the unlimited class.

Olympic runners-up were Dylan Currington (119 class) with a 290 total, Aiden Nobles (129) with a 290 total, Brayden McCall (154) with a 390 total, Layton Wright (169) with a 415 total, Talon Lybarger (183) with a 375 total, Zane Leger (199) with a 430 total, Logan Madden-Moore (219) with a 400 total and Pete Bostic (238) with a 425 total.

Caleb Alvers (139) and Andrew Snider (unlimited) had third-place totals of 260 and 375, respectively.

Placing fourth were Connor Mooneyham (139) with a 250 total and Brodyn Adams (169) with a 325 total. Hunter Crumpton (183) had a sixth-place total of 320.

In traditional, Keystone had a winning team score of 82 to



Keystone won the District 8-1A team championship trophies in both Olympic and traditional. The two trophies are held by two of the team's individual champions: Trase Wooden (bottom row, fifth from left) and Kyle Perkins (bottom row, fourth from right).



Keystone Heights High School won both the district Olympic and traditional team championships for the third year in a row. The Indians qualified 14 individuals in each of the Olympic and traditional events at the Feb. 1 Region 2-1A finals.

finish ahead of Crescent City, which had 41 points.

The Indians' traditional champions were Mize with a 415 total, Hollingsworth with a 420 total, Damien Dunlap (154) with a 480 total, Perkins with a 590 total and Wester with a 560 total.

Runners-up were Currington with a 340 total, Wright with a 475 total, Lybarger with a 455 total, Leger with a 550 total, Wooden with a 500 total, Bostic with a 510 total and Herman with a 590 total.

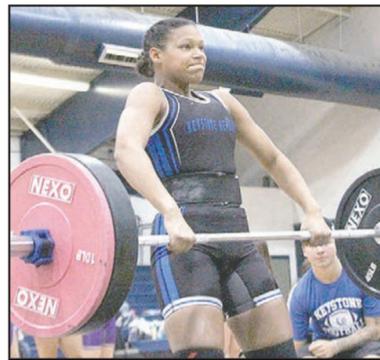
Placing third were Nobles with a 345 total, Jagger Lancaster (154) with a 445 total and Madden-Moore with a 475 total.

Other results: Adams with a seventh-place total of 405, Alvers with a seventh-place total of 305, Crumpton with an eighth-place total of 385, Mooneyham with an eighth-place total of 295 and Snider with a 10th-place total of 430.

At the Region 2 meet, Keystone won the Olympic team championship with a score of 56, finishing ahead of Williston, which had 48 points.

Four individuals won Olympic titles to automatically qualify for state: Mize with a 320 total, Hollingsworth with a 370 total, Perkins with a 495 total and Herman with a 530 total.

At-large Olympic state qualifiers were Wright with a second-place total of 420, Leger with a second-place total of 470, Currington with a third-place total of 295, Nobles with a third-place total of 300, Byrnes with a fourth-place total of 410, Wooden with a fourth-place total of 480, Wester with a fourth-place total of 450, Bostic with a sixth-place total of 420 and Madden-Moore with an eighth-place total of 420.



Chloe Still won district titles in Olympic and traditional and earned a state berth in traditional with a second-place finish at regionals. She placed 10th at state.

Keystone had a team score of 42 to finish second in traditional behind West Nassau, which had 44 points.

Mize and Hollingsworth won their classes with totals of 425 and 440, respectively.

At-large state qualifiers in traditional were Leger with a second-place total of 575, Perkins with a third-place total of 565, Wester with a third-place total of 570, Herman with a third-place total of 600, Dunlap with a fourth-place total of 470, Wright with a fourth-place total of 490, Currington with a fifth-place total of 340, Lancaster with a sixth-place total of 460, Bostic with a sixth-place total of 510 and Nobles with an eighth-place total of 335.

Mize would go on to win the state championship for his class in traditional with a 400 total.

Keystone was third as a team in traditional with a score of 13, finishing behind Fort White (27) and Baker (20).

Two besides Mize earned medals in traditional — Hollingsworth with a second-place total of 425 and Leger with a sixth-place total of 565.

Wester finished one spot shy of receiving a medal with a seventh-place total of 585.

Five other lifters finished in the top 10 — Currington, Lancaster and Perkins, who were all eighth, Wooden, who was ninth, and Dunlap, who was 10th.

The Indians were third as a team in Olympic with 13, placing behind Fort White (24) and Williston (16).

Hollingsworth and Herman had third-place totals of 355 and 525, respectively, while Mize placed fourth with a 310 total.

Wright also earned a medal with a fifth-place total of 425.

Finishing one spot shy of earning a medal were Currington with a 290 total and Byrnes with a 400 total.

Five other lifters finished in the top 10 — Perkins and Madden-Moore, who were both eighth, Wester, who was ninth, and Nobles and Bostic, who were both 10th.

Girls weightlifting dominates district

The Indians captured the Olympic and traditional championships at the District

6-1A girls weightlifting meet. Keystone had a score of 93 in Olympic to place ahead of Baldwin, which had 46 points, and posted a score of 72 in traditional, which put the Indians 33 points ahead of Union County.

Winning individual titles and automatic regional berths in Olympic were Cadie Bowles (110 class) with a 180 total, Alyssa Sanford (119) with a 195 total, Kaylee Park (129) with a 205 total, Ashlyn Brown (154) with a 260 total, Morgan Wilson (169) with a 230 total, Paige Harrington (183) with a 225 total and Ava Herman (unlimited) with a 250 total.

Four of the five lifters who were runners-up earned at-large regional berths: London Williams (101) with a 115 total, Natalie Layfield (129) with a 195 total, Kaiya Thompson (139) with a 190 total and Lily Mitchell (183) with a 210 total.

Also earning regional berths were third-place finishers Aubrey Miller (110) with a 160 total and Jaden Fernandez (119) with a 170 total.

Winning their classes in traditional were Bowles with a 205 total, Park with a 230 total, Still with a 310 total, Mitchell with a 255 total and Herman with a 305 total.

Earning at-large regional berths were Brown with a second-place total of 265, Williams with a third-place total of 130, Miller with a third-place total of 175, Sanford with a third-place total of 205, Thompson with a third-place total of 225, Makenzi Brinson (154) with a third-place total of 250, Wilson with a 270, Harrington with a fourth-place total of 245 and Raegan Lee (169) with a fifth-place total of 245.

Still was her class runner-up in traditional at the Region 2 meet with a 305 total. She was one of three to earn at-large bids to state in the traditional event, joining Herman, who had a fifth-place total of 315, and Park, who had a seventh-place total of 240.

Brown earned a state berth in Olympic with a third-place total of 250.

At state, Still finished in the top 10 with an eighth-place total of 315. Herman and Brown had

See KHHS, page 13

Curtis A. "Lex" Sanders Attorney at Law

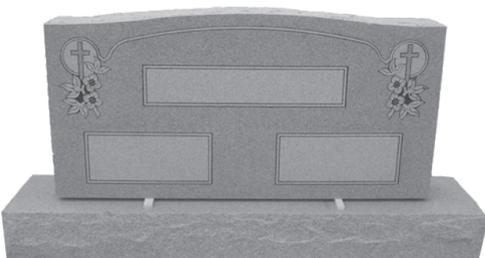


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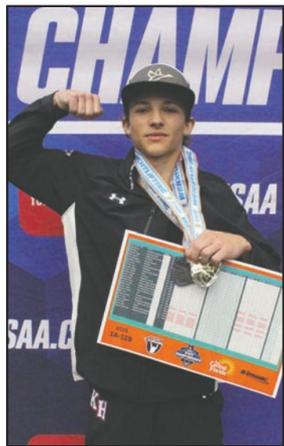
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ABOVE LEFT: Elijah Mize flexes with the two medals he earned at state. He won the 119-pound traditional championship and was fourth in Olympic. LEFT: Mize competes in the snatch at state.

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Bradford celebrates winning the District 4-1A championship — its third title in a row. Pictured (l-r) are Principal Chris Coffey, Izarriya Desue, Kailyn Teal, Ar'Nayshia Griffin, Amaya Watts, Tatyanna Brown, Ny'Asia Lopey, Rhianna Davis, Cherish Bing, Nichelle Brown, Head Coach John Staples, Kaylee Devore and Athletic Trainer Brad Morgan.

BHS
Continued from page 9

district wins. Kemontae Nixon caught six of those scoring tosses, while Elijah Lawrence and Chase Phillips each caught two. Jordan Cason and Peyton Jones each caught one touchdown pass against district competition.

Iyen Addison had four touchdown runs in the district wins, while Keshawn Kennedy, Jackson Parmeter and Raimond Pedro each had one.

Cason returned a kickoff for a touchdown in one district game, while kicker Tyler Sapp was 17-for-17 on extra points and connected on a 45-yard field goal.

Bradford's defense got one score in a district game, with Parviele Lee making a tackle for a safety.

The defense had eight turnovers in the district games — fumble recoveries by Lee, Malachi Aldridge, Jy'Quez Cason, Jayden Hudson and Nate Ramond and interceptions by Montrez Aldridge, Jordan Cason and Maliki Cobarris.

The Tornados began the postseason in a big way with a 55-6 win over Avon Park in the Region 2 quarterfinals.

Jarrell Harris, who rushed for 70 yards on nine carries, had touchdown runs of 6, 9 and 10 yards. Jaden Mosley, who had 75 yards on eight carries, scored on a 1-yard run, while Phillips had the game's first score on a 58-yard run.

Cubbedge, who was 11 of 17 for 66 yards, threw a 6-yard touchdown pass to Jordan Cason, while Jy'Quez Cason scored on a 55-yard punt return.

The defense had interceptions by Cobarris, Caiden Carn and Grayson McClellan. McClellan took his pick 39 yards for a

touchdown.

Sapp converted on seven of his eight extra-point attempts.

In the Region 2 semifinals, the Tornados got two late interceptions by Carn and Jy'Quez Cason in a 24-14 win over Berkeley Prep.

Carn returned his interception 35 yards for a touchdown with 2:42 to play, while Cason's pick occurred with 2:06 to play.

Bradford led 17-7 at the half, getting a 1-yard touchdown run from Cubbedge, a 51-yard touchdown pass from Cubbedge to Cason and two extra points and a 37-yard field goal from Sapp.

Sapp finished 3-for-3 on PATs. Cubbedge completed 12 of 20 passes for 161 yards, with Jordan Cason finishing as the leading receiver with three catches for 59 yards.

Addison rushed for 117 yards on 26 carries.

The win set up a showdown with postseason nemesis Cocoa, which defeated Bradford in the state semifinals in 2022 and in the state-championship game in 2023. The Tornados hosted the Tigers for the Region 2 championship, rallying to tie the game at 10-10 with 2:51 to play, but Cocoa drove 62 yards for the winning touchdown to defeat Bradford 17-10.

Bradford trailed 10-0 before Addison scored on a 5-yard touchdown run with 3:28 to play in the third quarter. Sapp added the PAT to make it a three-point game.

Sapp tied it up when he kicked a 31-yard field goal.

Cocoa, which hadn't scored since a 27-yard field goal at the 1:55 mark of the first quarter, won the game on an 8-yard touchdown run with 51 seconds remaining.

Cubbedge completed 15 of 32 passes for 128 yards.

Jones caught six passes for 55

yards, while Phillips had three catches for 41 yards. Nixon added two receptions for 20 yards.

Bradford finished the season with an 11-2 record.

3 boys lifters win conference titles

Though not competing in the Florida High School Athletic Association, the boys weightlifting team did get to celebrate three individual winners at the Football Weightlifting Conference championships.

Bradford finished as the team runner-up behind Union County.

Daniel Banda won the 154-pound class with a 440-pound total, while Brian Clifflin won the 219 class with a 545 total. Bryce Daniels posted a 620 total to win the heavyweight class.

Three lifters placed second: Jackson Parmeter, with a 440 total in the 169 class, Cayden Carter, with a 545 total in the 199 class, and Jy'Quez Cason, with a 480 total in the 219 class.

Jeremiah McKenzie (199 class) and Jacob Ferguson (heavyweight) had third-place totals of 505 and 530, respectively.

Maliki Cobarris (129) and Jordan Cason (169) had fourth-place totals of 230 and 385, respectively, while the following placed fifth: Brayden Smyth (154) with a 390 total and Tyler Schaeffer (183) with a 435 total.

Wrestling team has 3 district runners-up

Wyatt Acevedo, Daniel Banda and Miguel Rivera all placed second in their respective weight classes at the District 4-1A wrestling meet.

Acevedo, after a first-round bye, went 2-1 in the 144-pound class, pinning two straight opponents in times of 1:40 and 2:33 to reach the championship match.

Rivera had byes in the first two rounds of the 150 class. He earned a 17-2 win by technical fall to reach the championship match.

Banda, after a first-round bye, pinned two opponents in 5:16 and 2:34 to reach the championship match in the 157 class.

The three wrestlers earned the right to advance to the Region 1 meet. Acevedo went 2-2, with his two wins coming by pins in 2:43 and 28 seconds. Rivera and Banda each went 1-2, with Rivera earning his win with a

4:54 pin and Banda earning his with a 16-1 technical fall.

Jonathan Armstrong, who was fifth at the District 4 meet, wrestled in the Region 1 meet as an alternate, going 0-2 in the 126 class.

Armstrong was fifth at the district meet, pinning two opponents in 53 seconds and 2:40 and finishing 2-2.

Hoops teams are district runners-up

Both boys and girls basketball teams were runners-up in their district tournaments, with the girls team earning a regional-playoff berth.

The girls team began District 3-3A tournament play with a 66-54 win over Palatka. Bradford used an 18-0 third-quarter run to take the lead for good.

Ar'Nayshia Griffin and Nichelle Brown, who each scored six points during the run, finished with 23 and 18 points, respectively. Cherish Bing scored 16 points, while Bradford also got six from Kailyn Teal, two from Ky'lee Johnson and one from Nyasia Lopey.

The Tornados shot 60 percent from the field in the championship game, but 30 turnovers limited their scoring opportunities in a 53-47 loss to Newberry.

Baskets by Bing and Brown tied the score at 45-45 in the fourth quarter, but Bradford committed eight turnovers the rest of the way and never scored again until Griffin made a basket with less than 30 seconds to play.

Griffin and Brown had 18 and 17 points, respectively. The Tornados also got eight points from Bing and two each from Johnson and Teal.

Bradford lost 44-32 to Rutherford in the Region 1 quarterfinals, ending its season with a 14-9 record.

Griffin had 17 points, six

Bryce Daniels and two of his teammates won their weight classes at the Football Weightlifting Conference championships.



rebounds and three steals, while Brown had eight points and three steals. Bradford also got two points each from Bing, Teal and Wynter Barrington and one point from Lopey.

The boys team began its District 3-3A tournament with a 52-30 win over Palatka. Bradford never trailed, getting 17 points from Maliki Cobarris, nine from Jordan Cason, six each from Breion Johnson and K.J. Taylor, five from Steven Carter, three from Kyren Green, two each from Caiden Carn and Jy'Quez Cason and one each from Jackson Parmeter and Bryston Williams.

The Tornados then became just the latest team to lose big to Newberry, which defeated Bradford 75-38 in the district championship game. It was Newberry's sixth straight win by at least 30 points.

Jordan Cason led Bradford with 18 points, while Cobarris had 10. The Tornados also got four points from Taylor and two each from Carn, Johnson and Jy'Quez Cason.

The Tornados didn't earn an at-large regional berth, so their season ended with a 16-5 record.

Lee makes region in track and field

Parviele Lee was a participant in the Region 1-2A track and field meet after earning a fourth-place finish in the District 4 meet.

Lee competed in the shot put, placing fourth at the district meet with a distance of 42 feet, 9.75 inches and 16th at the regional meet with a distance of 41-3.

Girls team member Nyasia Lopey earned the right to compete at the regional level with a fourth-place distance of 31-9.5 in the triple jump at the district level.

Besides Lee and Lopey, Bradford also got points at the district meet from Justin Hall, who had a sixth-place distance of 19-0 in the long jump, and Elijah Lawrence, who had an eighth-place time of 23.42 seconds in the 200m.

Qualifying for regionals in wrestling were (l-r) Daniel Banda, Wyatt Acevedo and Miguel Rivera. They were all district runners-up.



Running back Iyen Addison (left) follows lineman Ridge Bradley against district opponent Palatka. Bradford went 4-0 in District 5-2A and advanced to the Region 2 championship game before losing to Cocoa.

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UCHS' Whitehead and Bethea shine at state in 2025

The following is a look at the high school varsity teams and individuals that won championships or were runners-up at the district, regional or state levels, earned medals in state competition or that qualified to participate in regional and state competitions in 2025. Any omissions are unintentional.

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Union County High School student-athletes won six district titles and three regional titles in 2025, but the biggest story of the year was Eva Whitehead winning her second state championship in the 200-yard individual medley at the Class 1A swimming finals.

Whitehead's quest to repeat officially began at the District 2 meet. She placed third in the 200 IM with a time of 2:06.98 and also swam a fifth-place time of 1:05.93 in the 100 breaststroke.

At the Region 1 meet, Whitehead won the 200 IM with a time of 2:02.53. She had a third-place time of 1:04.58 in the 100 breaststroke and earned the right to compete at state in that event as well.

Whitehead, who accepted a scholarship to swim for the University of Alabama, completed the repeat by swimming a winning time of 2:00.01 in the 200 IM at state, placing her ahead of Bolles' Ella Gotham, who had a time of 2:01.63.

It was almost a two-championship performance from Whitehead, who was the runner-up in the 100 breaststroke with

a time of 1:03.09. That left her trailing Fort Lauderdale NSU University School's Nyila Di Sarno, who won with a time of 1:02.68.

Whitehead became the sixth UCHS student-athlete to successfully defend a state title and the first to do so since boys weightlifter Christian Simmons in 2023.

Bethea wins district, region titles and earns medals at state finals

Whitehead wasn't the only UCHS student-athlete to earn two medals in state competition. Girls track and field team member Amia Bethea did so as well after an outstanding season in the 100m and 200m.

Bethea won both races at the District 4-2A meet, running the 100m in 11.99 seconds and the 200m in 25.45. She beat Eastside's KeAisha Williams in both events, with Williams running times of 12.49 and 25.99.

The 4x100m relay team, which Bethea was a member of, also did well enough to advance to regionals with a third-place time of 51.46. The team also consisted of Holly Halfacre, Faith Sirmones and Brianna Taylor.

Halfacre earned individual regional bids with a third-place distance of 32 feet, 1 inch in the triple jump and a fourth-place distance of 16-2.5 in the long jump.

Though not qualifying for regionals, Melinda Mabrey scored points with a seventh-place distance of 26-5 in the shot put.

Union didn't have any regional qualifiers on the boys side, though C.J. Ivey and the 4x800m relay team each fell one spot shy of advancing. Ivey placed fifth in the discus with a distance of 110-3, while the 4x800m team of Ashton Bunkley, Clayton Cason, Joseph Harris and Gavin Smith ran a fifth-place time of 10:12.90.

The Tigers had two sixth-place finishes, with Edward Durant throwing 104-5 in the discus and the 4x100m team of Jesse Chakin, Gavin Jenkins, Bo Thomas and Jabari Young running a time of 44.13.

Ivey earned a point in the shot put with an eighth-place distance of 36-7.75.

At the Region 1 meet, Bethea won the 100m with a time of 11.93, which broke her school record and put her ahead of Paxon's Jaida Callahan, who had a time of 12.20.

Bethea was the runner-up in the 200m with a time of 24.85, finishing behind Jackson's



Amia Bethea ran to district championships in the 100m and 200m. She was the 100m champ and 200m runner-up at regionals and earned medals in both events at state, placing fifth in the 100m and seventh in the 200m.

Danielle Hagans, who had a time of 24.70.

Though Bethea was the only state qualifier, the Tigers did get a 10th-place finish from Halfacre with a distance of 33-0.25 in the triple jump and a 10th-place finish from the 4x100m team, which had a school-record time of 51.17.

Bethea broke her school record in the 100m again at state, running a fifth-place time of 11.87. That earned her a medal, as did her seventh-place time of 25.14 in the 200m.

4 girls weightlifters compete at state meet

The girls weightlifting team was the District 6-1A runner-up and produced two individual district champions and four state qualifiers.

Union had a score of 39 to finish behind Keystone Heights, which had a winning score of 72 at the district meet.

Riley Gibson and Taley Smith won their weight classes to earn automatic regional berths. Gibson had a 245-pound total in the 119-pound class, while Smith had a 300 total in the 169 class.

Earning at-large regional bids were Holly Halfacre (119-pound class) with a second-place total of 210, Alexia Cyr (139) with a second-place total of 280, Briana Haight (169) with a second-place total of 285, Emma Handley (129) with a third-place total of 205, Allaya Blocker (unlimited) with a third-place total of 260 and Gracie Manning (154) with a fifth-place total of 205.

At the Region 2 meet, Gibson won her class with a 245 total, automatically qualifying for state.

At-large state berths were earned by Cyr with a third-place total of 290, Smith with a fifth-place total of 300 and Haight with a sixth-place total of 290.

Gibson and Smith each placed ninth at state with totals of 255 and 310, respectively. Cyr had a 295 total, while Haight had a 300 total.

The season also included Gibson and Cyr earning second- and third-place finishes, respectively, at the inaugural Rural Classification State Championship Invitational.

6 wrestlers advance from district to region

Wyatt Elixson and Gavin Sparkman won their weight classes and were two of six wrestlers to qualify for regional competition after their performances at the District 4-1A meet.

Sparkman took first in the 138-pound class defeated two opponents after first- and second-round byes. His first win was a 13-0 major decision. Sparkman then pinned an opponent in 1:04 in the championship match.

Elixson went 3-0 after a first-round bye in the 165 class. He had pins of 2:13 and 1:41 before winning the championship by a 9-5 score.

Three wrestlers earned the right to advance with third-place finishes. Breydan Peugh went 2-1 in the 113 class, with wins by a 19-3 technical fall and a 1:27 pin, while Hunter Cruz went 3-1 in the 150 class, with all of his wins occurring by pins of 1:04, 1:10 and 3:16. Carsen Thomas went 3-1 in the 175 class, getting wins with a pair of pins (47 and 45 seconds) and a 16-11 decision.

C.J. Ivey qualified for regionals as well with a fourth-place finish in the 190 class. He had one win, pinning an opponent in 1:22.

At the Region 1 meet, Elixson, Sparkman and Thomas each went 1-2, while Ivey and Peugh each went 0-2.

Boys weightlifting team wins conference

The boys weightlifting team won the Football Weightlifting Conference championship, with four lifters earning first-place finishes.

Union had a team score of 54 to finish ahead of runner-up Bradford, which had 42 points.

Natwon Richardson won the 119-pound class with a 260-pound total, while Drew Simmons took first in the 139 class with a 400 total.

Wyatt Elixson and C.J. Ivey won the 169 and 199 classes, respectively. Elixson had a 465 total, while Ivey had a 565 total. Placing second were Jason Buie (129 class) with a 265 total, Canaan Harris (139) with a 345 total and Phoenix Bryant (238) with a 515 total.

Alec McClellon and Rhett Prevatt placed third and fourth, respectively, in the 154 class with totals of 500 and 395.



Riley Gibson was a district and regional champion in the 119-pound class. She placed ninth at state.



LEFT: C.J. Ivey was one of four winners at the Football Weightlifting Conference championships. BELOW: Union celebrates winning the team championship trophy.



Qualifying for regionals in wrestling were (l-r) Wyatt Elixson, Breydan Peugh, C.J. Ivey, Gavin Sparkman, Carsen Thomas and (not pictured) Hunter Cruz. Elixson and Sparkman were district champions.

Three lifters besides McClellon earned third-place finishes: Jesse Chaikin (183) with a 465 total, A.J. Rivera (219) with a 450 total and Edward Durant (238) with a 460 total.

Union had four place fifth: Wyatt Bradley (169) with a 375 total, Matthew Rogers (199) with a 470 total, Ayden Adkins (219) with a 365 total and Ramsey Schenck (heavyweight) with a 405 total.

Volleyball team is district runner-up

The volleyball team won its first two matches in the District 6-Rural tournament before falling in the championship match to Branford, the number-one team in the state.

Union first defeated Taylor County 3-0 (25-11, 25-8, 25-16) in the quarterfinals, getting 11 kills from Jaily Simmons and nine kills from Morgan Smith. Mallory Waugh added seven kills.

Indi Knox led the team in digs with seven, while Bella Johns.

Johns and Waugh each had five service aces, while Simmons had four.

Abby Williams and Waugh recorded 14 and 12 assists, respectively.

The Tigers, who were seeded third in the tournament, then defeated second seed Lafayette 3-0 (25-22, 25-18, 25-15) in a semifinal match, getting 13 kills and three blocks from Simmons.

Smith had nine kills, while the Tigers got 10 digs from Knox. Waugh added seven digs to go along with 11 assists.

Williams led the team in assists with 13.

Union lost 3-1 (25-13, 21-25, 25-17, 25-18) to Branford in the championship match. Simmons had 12 kills, while Knox and Waugh had 10 each. Smith added eight kills.

Simmons and Lydia Waugh had four and three blocks, respectively, while Smith and Mallory Waugh each had two.

Johns led the team in digs with 25, while Union also got 12 from Mallory Waugh, nine each from Knox and Bayley Staier and eight each from Simmons and Williams.

Williams recorded 27 assists. The Tigers earned an at-large berth in the Region 3 playoffs and faced Lafayette in a semifinal match. Union got 14 kills and 10 blocks from Simmons in winning 3-0 (25-17, 25-22, 25-22).

Knox and Smith had 10 and

nine kills, respectively, while Johns led the team in digs with 18. The Tigers also got 12 digs from Knox, 10 digs from Staier and seven digs from Mallory Waugh.

Williams and Mallory Waugh recorded 13 and 11 assists, respectively.

Union's season would end with a 21-9 record after a 3-1 (24-26, 25-21, 25-14, 25-14) loss to Branford in a semifinal match. Branford would go on to win the state championship.

Tigers make regionals in baseball, softball district tourney semifinal losses

The baseball and softball teams didn't get the chance to play for their district championships, but they did get to extend their seasons with at-large regional berths.

Union was the second seed in the District 6-Rural baseball tournament, but lost 4-2 to third seed Branford in a semifinal game.

Jeffrey Brugh was the only Union batter with more than one hit, going 2 for 4, while Kacen Thomassen had one RBI.

Union earned the second seed in the Region 3 playoffs and got a rematch with Branford in the semifinals. The Tigers swept the Bucs in the best-of-three series, winning 9-1 and 12-0.

Pitcher Bo Wilson earned the win in the first game, giving up three hits and one run in 4.1 innings. Brezdyn Browning threw the final 2.2 innings, allowing two hits.

Devin Diggs batted 2 for 3 with a double and three RBI. Erick Lasseter and Jake Walker each had one RBI.

Union also scored two runs on errors, one run on a passed ball and one run on a wild pitch.

The Tigers got a complete-game effort on the mound from Lasseter in the second game, which ended after five innings. Lasseter allowed only one hit.

Lasseter also had a stellar game at the plate, batting 3 for 3 with three RBI.

Walker drove in four runs, including three off a double in the fourth. He finished 3 for 3.

Brugh went 3 for 4 with three RBI, while Trenton Klein was 3 for 3 with one RBI.

Thomassen hit two doubles, while Lasseter hit one.

See UCHS, page 13



Eva Whitehead stands on the podium as the Class 1A 200 IM state champ. It was her second straight title in the event.



Eva Whitehead almost swam to two state championships, finishing as runner-up in the 100 breaststroke.

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UCHS

Continued from page 12

The series win put the Tigers into the Region 3 championship series against Lafayette, the team that put an end to Union's season the past two years. The Hornets did it again, sweeping the series with 7-2 and 2-1 wins.

Union trailed by just one run in the first game until Lafayette pushed four runs across in the bottom of the sixth.

The Tigers loaded the bases with no outs in the seventh. Evan Roberts was hit by a pitch, while Brugh and Lasseter both walked. The next two batters were put out on foul pop-ups, while a strikeout ended the game.

Lasseter was the only Union batter with multiple hits, going 2 for 3. The Tigers got one double each from Diggs and Klein.

In the second game, Union put two runners on with one out in the seventh, but Lafayette was able to turn a double play to end the game with the 2-1 victory.

Lasseter hit an RBI single in the sixth.

The Tigers ended their season with a 14-16 record.

Union's softball team earned the third seed in its district tournament, but the Tigers fell in their first game, losing 6-0 to Branford in the semifinal round.

The Tigers entered the tournament off a four-game stretch in which they scored 29 runs, but they were held to four

hits by Branford. Leanne Dicks had two of those hits in three at-bats.

Union earned the fourth seed in the Region 3 playoffs, but fell 4-2 to top seed Madison County in a semifinal game.

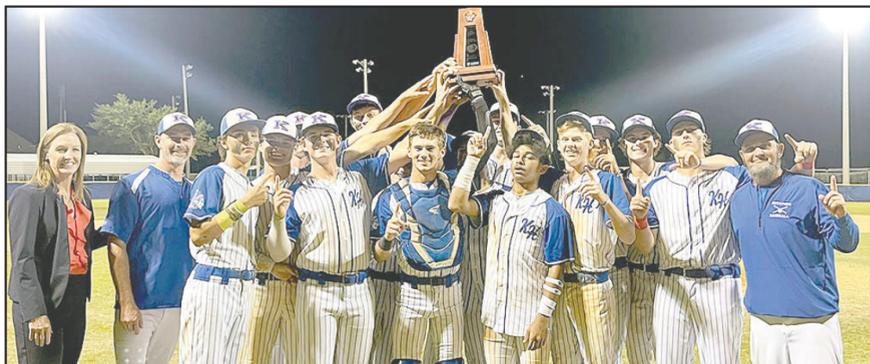
It was 4-1 going into the final inning. Shyla Crowe hit a run-scoring double to make it a two-run game. Union had two

runners on with one out, but two strikeouts ended the game.

Crowe, Dicks and Courtney Manning each went 2 for 3, accounting for all of Union's hit.

In the circle, Crowe gave up one earned run and four hits in a complete-game effort.

The Tigers ended their season with a 17-9 record.



Keystone players, pictured with Principal Laurie Burke (far left), Assistant Coach Anthony Giurate (second from left) and Head Coach Chris Roach (far right), hold the District 4-2A championship trophy — their first such trophy since 2021.

KHHS

Continued from page 10

totals of 310 and 250 in their respective events.

Baseball team wins 1st district title in 4 years

Keystone scored a total of 25 runs in two tournament games in winning its first district championship in baseball since 2021.

The Indians began District 4-2A tournament play with a 13-6 semifinal win over Interlachen. Keystone scored five runs in each of the first two innings to build a 10-2 lead.

Tallon Campbell, who batted 2 for 2, and Ethan Franklin each had three RBI. Guage Barry, Tyler Brinson and Austin Smith each had one RBI.

Smith batted 2 for 4, while Destin Harnage went 2 for 5.

Franklin earned the win, giving up two hits and two unearned runs through the first five innings. He had seven strikeouts.

The Indians rallied from an early deficit to defeat Trinity Catholic 12-5 in the championship game. Trinity scored five runs in the top of the third to take a 5-2 lead, but Keystone answered with five runs in the bottom of the inning. Harnage hit a two-out, two-run single that gave the Indians the lead for good.

Harnage, who went 3 for 4, finished with three RBI, while Smith, who batted 3 for 3, led the team with four RBI.

Barry earned the win, pitching five innings and allowing five runs on eight hits. He had seven strikeouts.

Ty Mitzel threw a no-hitter over the final two innings, striking out three of the six batters he faced.

Keystone was held to a total of four hits by Bishop Snyder in losing two games of a best-of-three Region 1 quarterfinal series.

The Indians held a 3-1 lead after three innings in the first game, but would lose 8-3. Bishop Snyder scored four runs in the fourth to go up 5-3.

Bishop Snyder pitcher Cole Dennis struck out eight and allowed one hit through six innings as the Cardinals defeated Keystone 9-0 in the series' second game.

Keystone ended its season with a 19-9 record.

Thomas wins 2 district titles in track and field

The Indians' final district championships, which all occurred during the winter and spring seasons, were earned by boys track and field member Ryder Thomas. Thomas won the 1600m with a time of 4:43.34 and the 3200m with a time of 11:06.25 at the District 4-2A meet. He edged out a pair of Eastside runners (Joseph McDonalds in the 1600m and Benjamin White in the 3200m) to claim his titles.

The top four finishers in each event automatically qualified for regional competition. The boys team got a second-place finish

from Jamari Turner in the high jump with a height of 5 feet, 9.75 inches, a third-place finish from Luke Lewis in the javelin with a distance of 105-5, a fourth-place finish from Hunter Sheppard in the 1600m with a time of 4:53.86 and a fourth-place finish from Baylor Ford in the long jump with a distance of 19-11.5.

Olivia Griffin and Kaylee Park earned automatic regional bids for the girls team, with Griffin running a third-place time of 2:30.77 in the 800m and Park running a third-place time of 16.93 seconds in the 100m hurdles.

Griffin and Park teamed up with Christine Djavaheeri and Ashly McCarthy to earn an at-large regional berth with a fifth-place time of 4:32.32 in the 4x400m relay.

Xana Briley placed fifth in the javelin with a distance of 73-4, which earned her an at-large regional bid, while Griffin was an at-large qualifier in the 400m with a 10th-place time of 1:08.74.

None of the Region 1 participants qualified for state, but Park did earn a top-10 finish by running a ninth-place time of 16.72 in the 100m hurdles.

Softball, volleyball teams are runners-up in their districts

The softball team played for a district championship after defeating P.K. Yonge 7-4 in the semifinals of the District 5-2A tournament.

Keystone led 7-0 after four innings, with the Blue Wave scoring all of its runs in the final inning.

Kadence Massey drove in three runs, while Chloe Still and Amber Wagner each drove in two.

Audry Cisco pitched a complete game, striking out 10.

In the championship game, Keystone pushed two runs across in the seventh to even the score, but Newberry would win 4-3 when a batter was hit with the bases loaded in the bottom of the eighth.

The Indians trailed 3-1 with two runners on with two outs when Massey drove an 0-1 pitch into center field for a double that tied it up.

Massey, Wagner and Bella Cumbo had all of Keystone's hits, with each going 2 for 4.

Wagner hit an RBI single for the Indians' first run.

Massey struck out nine in a complete-game effort in the circle.

The Indians earned an at-large Region 2 berth, but saw their season come to an end with a 4-2 quarterfinal loss to Trinity Catholic.

Keystone fell behind 3-0 in the first and was held to just three hits by Trinity pitcher Caylee Barbe, who struck out nine.

Still and Wagner each scored a run on an error.

Keystone ended its season with a 9-17 record.

The volleyball team played for a district championship, too, reaching the District 5-3A final with a 3-1 (10-25, 25-19, 25-13, 25-21) semifinal win over Crescent City.

Mia Rivera recorded 21 kills to go along with two blocks and two service aces.

Rachel Blank and Bralee-Kate Chester each had two blocks as well, while Blank and Kadence Massey each had two aces.

Massey and Bella Cumbo led the team in digs with 10 and nine, respectively, while Kaleigh Marquart recorded 24 assists.

Keystone played Newberry for the district title, losing 3-0 (25-22, 25-14, 25-23).

Marquart had 22 assists, while Rivera led the team in kills with 12 and digs with eight.

Blank and Marquart had four and three aces, respectively.

The Indians earned an at-large Region 2 berth, but were defeated 3-0 (25-9, 25-12, 25-11) by Montverde Academy in the quarterfinal round.

Rivera had six kills as Keystone ended its season with a 17-11 record.

2 wrestlers advance past district tourney

Atreyu Contes and Mikey McCall earned the right to participate in regionals with their performances at the District 5-1A wrestling meet.

Contes was the runner-up in the 113-pound class. After a first-round bye, he earned a 4-2 win to reach the championship match, where he was pinned by his opponent.

McCall placed fourth in the 138 class. After a first-round loss and a second-round bye, he pinned an opponent in 45 seconds before losing by a technical fall in his final match.

At the Region 2 meet, Contes fell one win shy of qualifying for state. He strung together three wins after a first-round loss, pinning an opponent in 1:50 and defeating two others by scores of 7-0 and 8-0. Contes was pinned in the consolation semifinals, coming up one round short of reaching the third-place match.

McCall went 0-2 at the meet.

Cross country teams advance to regionals

Both boys and girls cross country teams qualified for regionals with top-eight finishes at the District 2-2A meet.

The boys, who placed seventh out of 18 teams, were led by Noah Yara, who was 26th out of 163 with a time of 17:43. Ryder Thomas was right behind him, finishing with a 29th-place time of 17:47.

Hunter Sheppard and Hunter Gray placed 36th and 43rd, respectively, with times of 17:57 and 18:16, while Ryeland Wahl was 77th with a time of 19:36.

Jason Parales and Gavin Morford would also move on with the team to regionals. Parales had a time of 20:21, while Morford ran a time of 20:53.

Keystone was eighth in the girls team standings and was led by Ryleigh Thomas, who was 30th out of 131 with a time of 20:24. Melody Tyre had a 45th-place time of 21:29.

Tessa Gray and Olivia Griffin were 69th and 79th, respectively, with times of 23:37 and 24:40.

Kirsten Lavin had a time of 26:01, while Bailee Morris and Clara Beth Robinson had times of 26:01 and 28:36, respectively.

Ryleigh Thomas came the closest to earning a state berth at the Region 1 meet, placing 38th out of 116 with a time of 20:42. She was the seventh-highest placing individual not on a state-qualifying team. The top four individuals who aren't on state-qualifying teams earn the right to move on.

Tyre finished five spots behind Thomas, running a 43rd-place time of 20:53, while the girls team also had the following results: Gray 22:33, Griffin 23:47, Lavin 25:46, Moris 26:01 and Robinson 26:58.

The boys team was led by Yara and Sheppard, who placed 37th and 38th, respectively, out of 116. Yara's time was 17:20, while Sheppard's was 17:22.

Yara and Sheppard had the ninth- and 10th-best times among individuals not on state-qualifying teams.

Gray ran a 54th-place time of 17:47.

Other Keystone boys results were Thomas 18:27, Parales 19:48, Wahl 20:05 and Morford 20:40.

Boys soccer and flag football teams receive at-large region berths

Though not able to reach the District 4-3A tournament championship match, the boys soccer team earned an at-large regional berth.

Keystone lost 3-1 to Eastside in the district semifinals, getting its lone goal from Kipton Spence, who scored off a Sammy Wacha assist.

The Indians earned the seventh seed in the Region 1 playoffs, making it their first regional trip since 2020. Keystone played

second seed South Walton, losing 6-2 in the quarterfinals.

Keystone rallied from a 2-0 deficit, with Noah Jaramillo scoring off an Aaron Wiley assist and Wiley scoring off a Wacha assist.

South Walton scored a goal to lead 3-2 at the half and then added three goals in the second half.

The Indians finished their season with an 11-7-3 record.

Like the boys soccer team, the flag football team didn't reach its district-championship game, but still earned a bid to the regional playoffs.

The Indians opened play in the District 4-1A tournament with a 26-14 quarterfinal win over Palatka. Aleo Horton threw two touchdown passes to Ashlyn Brown and returned an interception approximately 70 yards for another touchdown.

Horton, who was 10 of 19 passing for 148 yards, also completed a touchdown pass to Alex Papaianou and had

two successful runs on one-point conversion attempts. She finished with 55 rushing yards on 15 carries.

Brown caught four passes in all for 53 yards.

The Indians lost 20-6 to Santa Fe in the semifinals, but were able to continue their season in the Region 1 playoffs. Keystone gained more yards than their quarterfinal opponent, Bradford, but lost 37-9.

Keystone trailed 22-0 before a fumble into the end zone led to a safety, giving the Indians two points.

Horton was 18 of 37 passing for 162 yards, while also rushing for 73 yards on nine carries. Still, the offense didn't get into the end zone until Bradford had scored all of its points. Papaianou caught a 6-yard touchdown pass, with Horton running into the end zone on the successful one-point conversion attempt.

The Indians ended their season with a 9-9 record.



Ryder Thomas (out in front of the pack) won district championships in the 1600m and 3200m. He was also a member of the regional-qualifying cross-country team

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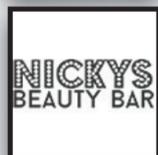


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KHHS names Cameron Porch new head football coach

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Cameron Porch isn't deterred by programs that are in the midst of struggles. For him, it's an opportunity.

His current opportunity is to turn around the fortunes of the Keystone Heights Indians. Porch was announced as the program's new head football coach on Dec. 17.

"I'm really excited," Porch said. "I'm more excited than I've been in a long time."

Porch takes over for Steve Reynolds, who resigned after three seasons to pursue a career change.

"We are excited about Porch's past success in building strong programs and great relationships," KHHS Principal Laurie Burke said. "He is ready to meet everyone and is ready to get to work for KHHS."

Porch, whose last head-coaching stint was at Trenton (2022-24), is from Interlachen.

"To me, it really feels like going home," he said.

At Keystone, Porch said he'll have more time to spend with his family as well as more time to devote to the job.

"I'm excited to not have to drive an hour and a half to work every day," he said.

He's also excited about attempting to change the direction of a program that went 2-18 the last two seasons after winning six games in 2023. The Indians went 0-10 in 2025.

"I appreciate a challenge," Porch said, adding, "I appreciate the reward of the turnaround and building a program."

Porch's first head-coaching job occurred at Bronson, which had nine straight losing seasons prior to his arrival. The Eagles went 2-8 his first season in 2012, but then improved to 5-5 in 2013 and 6-4 in 2014.

Clay County was Porch's next head-coaching destination. He coached Ridgeview from 2016

through 2018. The Panthers had three straight losing seasons prior to his arrival. After going 0-10 in Porch's first season, Ridgeview went 6-4 in 2017 and 5-5 in 2018. Porch earned a Florida Athletic Coaches Association District Coach of the Year award in 2017.

Porch left Ridgeview to take a coordinator's position at a school in Georgia, but he returned to the Sunshine State a year later, taking the head-coaching job at Mount Dora High School in 2020. After two years there, in which the Hurricanes went 4-14, Porch went to Trenton.

Trenton went 15-27 in the four seasons prior to his arrival. After going winless there his first year, Porch guided the Tigers to a 5-5 season in 2023 and then a 5-8 season in 2024. Trenton won four of its final six games in 2024, including a 2-1 mark in the Rural Class' Division B playoffs (now the Florida Invitational Tournament). Trenton, the eighth

seed in the 12-team Division B tournament, beat ninth seed Sneads and then top seed Baker to reach the tournament's semifinals before losing to fifth seed Dixie County.

Porch spent this past season as Baker County's offensive coordinator.

The Indians' new coach said that in turning around a program, one key is to build from the weightroom out. He's ahead of the game in that regard at KHHS, where the sport of weightlifting is popular. The Indians won three straight Class 1A state championships in 2021 (traditional), 2022 (traditional and Olympic) and 2023 (traditional) and has produced 11 individual state champions since 2021.

Mount Dora, coached by Porch, was the state runner-up to Keystone in 2021.

"That's encouraging that that's already a thing," Porch said of weightlifting at KHHS.

Porch said other keys to turning a football program



Keystone Heights High School announced Cameron Porch as its new head football coach with this graphic posted to its athletic social-media accounts.

around are convincing kids who haven't been playing to play and generating excitement. The excitement is already there for Porch, who said he's "ready to get started."

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2. Can you tell me what benefits from the Florida Air National Guard have helped you the most?
I would say that the education benefits have been the most helpful. Prior to enlisting I was having trouble finding somewhere I could study and get Certifications without spending vast amount of money. Since enlisting I've been able to take several classes and I am preparing to take multiple certifications and commence my first year on college.

3. Can you talk about some of the new skills you have learned in the Florida Air National Guard that have helped you in the civilian work force?
Thanks to the experiences that the Florida Air National Guard has granted me I've been able to learn a variety of new and useful skills. I was able to learn the networking and cyber security. These are skills I use daily especially in my pursuit of a carrier in the IT field. Another very important skill that we learn no matter what job you have is communication. This has been by far the most advantageous skill I've learned. Its helped me through all aspects of the work force.

Respectfully,
AIC Yomar Perez
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Bradford girls rally to defeat Ed White 40-37 in overtime

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Ar'Nayshia Griffin scored 20 of the Bradford High School girls basketball team's 25 points in the third and fourth quarters, helping the Tornadoes rally from a 10-point halftime deficit and defeat Ed White 40-37 in overtime on Dec. 23 in the Orange Park High School Christmas Classic.

A three-pointer by Kaiya Thompson put the Tornadoes (7-5) up 8-6 in the first quarter. Bradford, which went scoreless in the second quarter wouldn't make another basket until Thompson hit another three-point shot at the 5:23 mark of the third quarter.

Bradford entered the second half trailing 19-9. Griffin made two free throws for the first points of the third quarter, while Thompson's three-pointer made it a 21-14 game.

A free throw by Griffin and basket by Cayson Hampton pulled the Tornadoes to within four points. Two baskets by Griffin kept the margin the same as Bradford entered the fourth quarter trailing 25-21.



Ar'Nayshia Griffin (left) scored 52 points in two games at the Orange Park Christmas Classic. She had all but eight of the team's 31 points in the second half and overtime in a win over Ed White.

Ed White struggled at the foul line, missing seven of eight

attempts to start the fourth quarter.

Griffin scored all of the Tornadoes' fourth-quarter points. She made a free throw for her team's first point and then scored a basket when she grabbed a defensive rebound and went the length of the court. Griffin sank a three-point shot at the 4:47 mark to put Bradford ahead 27-26 — the Tornadoes' first lead since the first quarter.

The Commanders were able to take a three-point lead before Griffin put Bradford back on top with a basket, making the score 31-30 with 1:03 left in regulation.

After Ed White tied the score, Griffin went 3 of 6 from the foul line, making it a 34-31 game.

The Commanders' Lyrick Hewitt came away with a steal and was fouled, putting her at the free-throw line. She made 1 of 2 attempts, but a teammate rebounded the second miss and was fouled putting up a shot with 1.2 seconds on the clock. Two made free throws tied the score at 34-34 and sent the game into overtime.

A basket and a free throw put

the Commanders up 37-34, but they wouldn't score again.

Griffin scored on a drive to the basket before Thompson knocked down her third three-pointer of the game to put Bradford up 39-37.

Griffin scored the final point on a free throw with 13 seconds remaining, giving her 27 points for the game. Thompson had nine points, while Bradford also got two from Hampton and one each from Wynter Barrington and Ky'lee Johnson.

Barrington and Griffin led the team in rebounds with 14 and 11, respectively. Barrington also had a team-high three steals, while Griffin and Johnson each had two.

Griffin also added three assists.

Bradford's first game in the two-day tournament was a 61-51 loss to St. Johns Country Day on Dec. 22.

The Spartans made seven

three-pointers in the first half and went on a 14-3 run to close out the second quarter, giving them a 36-19. Kendall Proffitt made four of those three-pointers and scored 19 of her game-high 35 points in the first half.

After back-to-back three-pointers by Griffin and Hampton, the Tornadoes' got a two-point basket and free throw from Griffin to whittle the margin down to 10 in the third quarter.

Griffin scored 12 of Bradford's 17 third-quarter points.

A basket by Griffin and two free throws by Nyasia Lopey made it a 49-42 game in the fourth quarter. Johnson then had a layup off a Griffin assist to leave the Tornadoes trailing by five.

Proffitt scored consecutive baskets off Bradford turnovers to put the Spartans up 53-44. After a Griffin basket, the Spartans

scored six straight points to go up by 13.

Griffin had two baskets — including a three-pointer — to help bring the final margin to 10.

After scoring just four points in the first half due to being on the bench because of foul trouble, Griffin finished with 25. She also grabbed seven rebounds and came away with three steals.

Jayda Sambolah scored seven points, while Hampton and Lopey each had six. Kailyn Teal and Johnson added four and three points, respectively.

Barrington grabbed seven rebounds and blocked two shots, while Sambolah had six rebounds.

The Tornadoes, who played in a tournament at Eagle's View Academy on Dec. 29-30, will return to action on Monday, Jan. 5, with a road game against Palatka at 7 p.m.

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Back Row Left to Right: Emergency Management Specialist Noah Tinsler, Kim Howard, Cat. Josh Luke, Sheriff Gordon Smith, Right Beside Gordon Smith - is Chris Page, Right Behind Chris - is Joey Kennedy, Casey Jackson, Regina Gillyard, Susan Nicklas, **Behind Those Three are** Jessica Brown, Taylor Johnson, Kenedy Elder

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