

# Bradford County Telegraph

USPS 062-700 — Starke, Florida

Thursday, Jan. 23, 2025

146th year, 28th Issue — \$1

## Area braces for record storm

BY DAN HILDEBRAN  
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The National Weather Service issued a freeze warning, a cold weather advisory, and a winter storm warning for Bradford, Union, and eastern Clay Counties as a record-setting winter storm approached the area at press time.

Bradford, Clay, and Union County school districts said their offices and schools would be closed on Wednesday, Jan. 22.

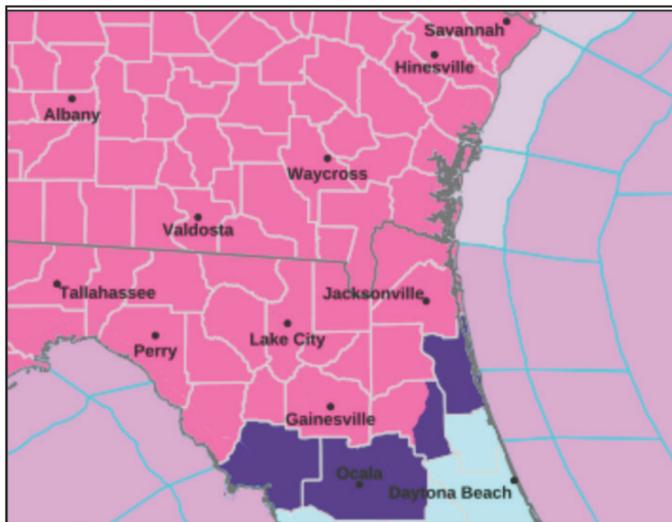
“After consulting with Emergency Management and reviewing the latest storm projections, we have determined that the timing of the storm’s impact in the morning will make it unsafe to transport students to school and for employees to commute to work,” said Clay officials, where the storm’s impact is expected to be the lowest. “As a result, all Clay

County District Schools and offices will be closed on Wednesday, January 22nd. We anticipate resuming normal operations on Thursday, January 23rd. Information regarding a make-up day for the missed instructional hours will be shared soon.”

In addition, government offices and many businesses have announced they will either close or have a delayed start on Wednesday.

The National Weather Service said it expected heavy mixed precipitation. “Total snow and sleet accumulations up to two inches and ice accumulations up to one-tenth of an inch for portions of northeast and northern Florida and southeast Georgia (are expected) from 7 p.m. Tuesday to 1 p.m. Wednesday,” the agency said.

It added that slippery road conditions were likely to create hazards during the Wednesday morning commute.



The National Weather Service’s Winter Storm Warning extends to Alachua and western Putnam counties.



## WORTH NOTING

### Democratic Women meet Jan. 23

The Democratic Women’s Club of the Lakes Area will meet on Thursday, Jan. 23. Membership fees are due, and members will be voting on the budget and action plan for the coming year.

There is a special election in Putnam County’s sixth district, and candidate Josh Weil will speak.

The meeting begins at 7 p.m. with doors opening at 6:30. All Democrats are welcome. Meetings are held at the Melrose Center, 309 S.R. 26 in Melrose. For further information, please contact 352-235-4161 or info@dwc-la.org.

### Mayor speaking to Historical Society

The Union County Historical Society will have as guest speaker, Ms. Melissa Hendrix, mayor of Lake Butler, on Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025, at 410 W. Main St., at 6:30 p.m.

Ms. Hendrix will give an update on what’s going on in the city of Lake Butler. She will also discuss upcoming projects and how the city is progressing in the right direction. Everyone is invited to attend.

### Chamber banquet tickets available

North Florida Regional Chamber of Commerce’s annual meeting and banquet is set for Saturday, Feb. 8. The social hour begins at 5 p.m. and the banquet begins at 6 p.m. at the Gov. Charley E. Johns Conference Center in Starke. The chamber will honor its Board of Governors and present special awards to deserving businesses and individuals. The Bradford County Education Foundation will also be raising funds through its live and silent auctions.

Tickets are \$90 each or \$850 for a table of 10 and must be purchased by Feb. 3 (Jan. 31 for payment by check). Sponsorship opportunities are available for the entertainment, bar, desserts, venue and more. For more information, please contact the chamber at 904-964-5278 or pam@northfloridachamber.com.

## Woman arrested for child’s death released on bond

BY DAN HILDEBRAN  
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The Bradford County mother arrested for manslaughter of a child on Jan. 3 was released on bail after the state filed an additional charge.

When deputies investigated the infant’s death in January 2024, the child’s mother, Ronnesha Flowers, then 31, told detectives she was breastfeeding one of her twins when she fell asleep. When she awoke, the infant was unresponsive, not breathing, and had blood coming out of his mouth.

The child was pronounced dead later that day.

One month later, the boy’s twin sister suffered what one law enforcement source called severe lifelong injuries under similar circumstances in which her sibling died. In December 2024, prosecutors accused the mother of aggravated manslaughter of a child for the boy’s death. After Flowers was arrested, the state filed an additional



Flowers’s attorney, Chief Assistant Public Defender Canaan Reuben Goldman (right), said that the victim may not have died of asphyxiation as Bradford deputies, citing a medical examiner’s report, claimed but rather because of a genetic condition. Also pictured, Ronnesha Flowers.

charge of child neglect with great bodily harm.

### Lawyer raises SIDS possibility

During a Jan. 15 hearing, Flowers’s attorney, Chief Assistant Public Defender Canaan Reuben Goldman, told Circuit Judge James Colaw that the boy may not have died of asphyxiation as Bradford deputies, citing a medical examiner’s report, claimed but rather because of a genetic condition.

“The children’s maternal grandparent... indicated there have been two previous sets of twins in the family where each of them has lost a twin due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome,” he said, “...meaning the children suddenly pass away under a year of age, meaning two months, and there’s no true explanation.”

See BOND, page 7



City of Lake Butler Public Works Director Sam Norris (far right) views water surfacing from a main break on Southwest 6th Avenue.

## Water main breaks in Lake Butler

BY DAN HILDEBRAN  
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Union County Schools dismissed students early Friday after a water main break prevented water service to City of Lake Butler customers.

City Of Lake Butler Public Works Director Sam Norris said the break was caused by a Florida Department of Transportation contractor taking soil borings on Southwest 6th Avenue directly in front of the city’s

waterworks facility.

“Obviously,” he said, “they bore sighted in the wrong spot. We had to do a shut off of the whole city.”

Norris expected the pipe to be repaired relatively quickly. However, he added that Southwest 6th Avenue would likely be closed over the weekend.

City Manager Kim Hayes added that once water service is restored, the city will issue a boiled water alert due to the drop in system pressure.

## Save Our Lakes members want answers on removal of trees

BY JENN SAMSEL  
Special to the Monitor

The January 14 Save Our Lakes Organization Meeting was well attended. Everyone eagerly anticipated the completion of the Black Creek Water Resource Development Project, designed to raise water levels on Lakes Brooklyn and Geneva.

The mayor of Keystone Heights, Nina Rodenroth, and City Council Member Christine Thompson were in attendance.

During the meeting at Keystone Heights’s First Baptist Church, Vivian Katz-James, the group’s president, updated SOLO members on the status of the Black Creek project, and the Lake Geneva Restoration Project, an effort to clear Geneva’s dry lakebed of brush and trees.

She also briefed the crowd on the proposed Keystone Beach Fishing Pier.

Katz-James said that on Monday, January 6, she attended the Clay

County Legislative Delegation hearing and gave a brief report to lawmakers on the progress of the Black Creek and Lake Geneva projects.

Instead of seeking financial assistance from the county commissioners and state legislators, she requested their full support to ensure the completion of her group’s effort to remove trees and brush from Geneva’s lakebed.

The lawmakers expressed complete support for the Lake Geneva initiative and said they are looking forward to the upcoming ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Black Creek project.

### Lake levels and Black Creek filtration system

Katz-James continued the meeting by discussing the current water levels of Lake Brooklyn and Lake Geneva.

See TREES, page 3



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# MLK Banquet honors the faithful & encourages those in the fight

BY MELISSA PYLE  
Special to the Telegraph

There was a celebratory atmosphere in the Gov. Charley E. Johns Conference Center on Saturday evening as the Concerned Citizens of Bradford of County held the 8th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Service Award Banquet.

The banquet honors the legacy of Dr. King's service and fight for justice by honoring those who give by deed and donation to the people of Bradford County. The evening began with a welcome by the emcee of the event, Elder Devon McKnight. Minister Charlie McCastle followed with prayer. All in attendance were then led in song by musical guest, Keith Taylor, singing "Lift Every Voice and Sing."

This year's Drum Major Award honorees were Glory Jackson, Mildred A. Griffin, Sherry E. Williams and the Rev. Dr. Cynthia J.W. Bailey. Bailey received this year's Key to the Community Award. Each honoree has an impressive impact by serving tirelessly in their field.

Jackson is a lifelong resident of Bradford and retired school board secretary. She is currently an advocate for the elderly and disadvantaged. She is active in various organizations, some of which are Santa Fe College Minority Scholarship Committee, poll inspector for the supervisor of elections and the RJE Alumni Association.

Griffin, a spry 91 years old, is known for using her amazing culinary skills to serve those around her. She has exemplified a life of service, the spirit of Dr. King and the mission of the CCBC by continuing to serve her Ebenezer Baptist Church community on the deaconess board, the choir and currently as a church mother. Griffin lives by her favorite scripture: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God."

Williams is the secretary of the Concerned Citizens, treasurer for RJE Alumni and member of



**Hawthorne Mayor Jacqueline Randall challenged attendees to stay in the fight and persevere in good works even when the fight doesn't always yield a win.**



**Mayor Andy Redding shared words of thanks and admiration to members of the Concerned Citizens of Bradford County at this year's MLK Banquet.**

Upward Bound Parent Advisory Board. Williams was also recognized by CCBC President Alica McMillian as a key person in assisting with the MLK Banquet. McMillian said that Williams' absence at last year's banquet, due to illness, was a huge reminder of how much she means to her personally and to the CCBC.

Rev. Bailey, has served, alongside her husband as pastor of Greater Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church since 2009. Bailey was recognized for her years of service to Bradford County. She also currently serves as Suwannee North District A.M.E. Women in Ministry treasurer and president of the East Conference A.M.E. Ministerial Alliance.

The evening was also a time to recognize the financial sponsors of Concerned Citizens. The list includes: (platinum level) Bradford County Commissioners, city of Starke, GFL Environmental Inc., (gold level) FPL, Woodward & Curran, (silver) Bowen & Bug Blocker Service, Folds Walker Attorneys at Law, Hampton Law, L&M Mobile Homes LLC, Linda Watkins, Carnell Williams, and the Bradford County Sheriff's

Office. Speaking on behalf of the city of Starke, Mayor Andy Redding shared some of the words of Dr. King that have encouraged him to be a better servant leader. "He who loves is a participant in the being of God," is the quote he spotlighted when thanking the CCBC for their love for the community. He said, "You make Starke and Bradford County a greater place. ... The Concerned Citizens keep that at the center of what they do, it's their love for the community."

Outside of the awards, the highlight of the evening was this year's keynote speaker, the Honorable Jaqueline Randall, mayor of Hawthorne. Randall has a long list of accomplishments, which include a master's degree in health care administration, specializing in patient advocacy in home health, creating Hawthorne's first strategic plan, and serving on Florida's League of Mayors, as NAACP education chair and as a mentor for Take Stock in Children.

Randall's challenging message focused on this year's event theme: "When we fight, we win." Randall went on to explain that after we experience a hard loss, we still must move forward.



**This year's Drum Major Award Recipients: (l-r) Rev. Dr. Cynthia J.W. Bailey, Sherry E. Williams, Glory Jackson and Mildred A. Griffin.**



**Financial sponsorship is key to the success of the CCBC and each sponsor was recognized with an award at the MLK Banquet: (front row, l-r) CCBC President Alica McMillian, Co-Chairs Janice Mortimer, and Glenda Ruise, (middle row Starke's Jimmy Crosby (accepting for Folds and Walker), Kate Ellison (accepting for Linda Watkins), Carnell Williams, Scott Roberts (accepting for GFL Environmental), Commissioner Carolyn Spooner (representing the Bradford County Commission), (back row) Byron Ramseur for the Bradford County Sheriff's Office, David McMillan of L&M Mobile Homes, Carol Saviak of FPL, Mayor Andy Redding of City of Starke, Starke's Drew Mullins (accepting for Woodward & Curran).**

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"What do you do when the fight doesn't yield a win?" she asked, and "How to move forward in the good work we do every day." She explained that the word fight doesn't represent violence but perseverance in setbacks. She said that sometimes in leadership, you can feel like your work is fruitless, but it's not about immediate results. It's about "setting an example and inspiring others."

Randall went on to explain her personal revelation in college that Dr. King was not superhuman, but he had struggles just like we all do. He was relatable. "His work came alive" when she understood she could also make a difference. She emphasized that we were all meant to live in community, saying to look at creation, "God designed it that way. ... Every dream needs a team." She encouraged older leaders to make room for the progress behind them, and said "If you aren't mentoring someone, you're in the way." To the younger leaders she said "Remain humble and teachable. ... Stay respectful even to those



**Musician Keith Taylor, pictured with Eldern McKnight, led attendees in "Lift Every Voice and Sing."**

who are able to help you but refuse to help you. ... Keep a clean heart and a renewed right spirit."

Randall's inspiring words were a perfect summation of all the CCBC does daily. Their goal is to serve all those around them and plant seeds in the next generation to make positive change in the world.

At the close of the evening, President McMillian thanked everyone for their attendance and gave a challenge to those who are not yet involved. McMillian said don't sit at home but serve because there is always more to be done.

McMillian gave a special thanks to the volunteers from Upward Bound and Twenty Strong for serving at the banquet. Also to banquet coordinator Louise Johnson, culinary team director Rosa Thomas, and to the various caterers from Delicious Country Cooking, Downtown Grill and Williamson's Food Store.

If you would like to learn more about volunteering with the Concerned Citizens of Bradford County, reach out for more information at [CCBC\\_inc@yahoo.com](mailto:CCBC_inc@yahoo.com).

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# Schools leader touts high school's success during MLK ceremony

BY DAN HILDEBRAN  
dan@bctelegraph.com

Concerned Citizens of Bradford County held its annual Martin Luther King Day ceremony on Monday, January 20, at the Governor Charlie E. Johns Conference Center.

The event featured an invocation by Bradford County Commissioner Carolyn Spooner, the audience singing "Lift Every Voice and Sing," the Pledge of Allegiance led by Makalyn Almore, and musical selections from the Greater Allen Chapel AME Youth Choir and Keith Taylor.

Glenda J. Ruise presided over the event.

## 'It's not about their sports'

Dr. Naima Brown, Vice President for Student Affairs at Santa Fe College, presented MLK Model Scholar Awards. She said the college oversees two federally funded TRIO programs at Bradford High School: Upward Bound and the Educational Talent Search. She said the two programs combined to help 156 Bradford High School students.

"Today, we are as a team honoring students in the SF TRIO program who are visioning and working towards a better future for themselves and for their community," Brown said. "It's not about their GPA. It's not



Concerned Citizens leaders (l-r) Alicia McMillian, Sherry Williams and Glenda J. Ruise.

about their sports. It's not about that. It's about these students having a vision, and we see them working towards it."

## Graduation rate and test scores up

Bradford County Superintendent of Schools Will Hartley delivered the keynote address at the event.

He started by recognizing the high school's athletic achievements, including a

resurgence in the school's boys and girls basketball programs, a new competitive cheer team, and the re-establishment of wrestling after nearly a decade-long absence from the school.

The superintendent also highlighted the high school's improving graduation rate, which he said had increased by over 11% over the past two years.

"Last year's state testing was some of the best that's ever happened in Bradford County," he added.

He said that after this year's midyear testing, he is seeing scores at or better than last year's scores.

## Cambridge program saves \$60,000 in tuition

Hartley also talked about the high school's Cambridge Program.

"We started our Cambridge Program because it is becoming harder for our students to get Bright Futures (Scholarships)," he said.

Hartley explained that the state is increasing the test scoring requirements for the Bright Futures program, making it more difficult for students to qualify. However, if a student passes seven Cambridge courses, that pupil qualifies for a 100% college scholarship.

"This past year was the first year of our program...and I don't think anyone involved expected the success that we saw," he said. "This was new to all of the teachers that were teaching the courses as well as the students."

Hartley reported that Bradford's Cambridge program scored a 70% pass rate for all courses.

"Ninety-six percent of the students that took at least one Cambridge exam passed," he added.

He said those results equated



Bradford County Superintendent of Schools Will Hartley delivered the keynote address at the event.

to \$60,000 in saved tuition for the students in the program.

Hartley also highlighted the district's College and Career Readiness class, which now includes a financial literacy component.

## Seeking money for new high school

Hartley said that the completion of Bradford Elementary School last year marked the first time in 27 years that a new school had been constructed in the county.

He added that he is returning to Tallahassee this year to advocate for a new junior-senior high school.

He said the district will apply to the state this week for the new campus, and he will make a presentation to state officials over the summer.

"They usually approve two to three districts," Hartley said. "Right now, I know there are only two districts that have applied."

The schools chief concluded his talk by appealing to parents and community leaders about the importance of school attendance.

"Seventy percent of our students who attended at least 90% of the school days were proficient last year," he told the crowd. "When our students are present, they are actually

getting a very good education in Bradford County. If all of our students were at least 90% in attendance, our district would easily be an "A."

Concerned Citizens President Alicia McMillian concluded the ceremony by thanking the event's sponsors and exhorting parents to take control of their households.

She also said her group advocates for the entire Bradford County community, not just the African American segment.

"When I say community, I don't just mean where we are housed at in Reno," she said. "Every one of our children, whether they are red, black, blue or green, we are trying to help you in motivation. If the parents can't help them, that's what we are here for."

McMillian also endorsed Hartley's work at the school district and described the measures she took to ensure his reelection in last year's Republican primary.

"I went and changed to Republican, and I voted for Will and then went back, and I changed back to Democrat," she said.

"We need to support those guys," she added. "He ain't perfect, but we ain't perfect."



MLK Model Scholar Award recipients from Bradford High School.

## TREES

Continued from page 1

She said, "For the month of December, rainfall was 1.71 inches. As of today, the year's total is 53.86 inches. The lake level for Lake Brooklyn is 111.8 feet, and Lake Geneva is 94.2 feet."

Katz-James said a few Save Our Lakes board members visited the Black Creek project's new treatment plant in Camp Blanding. She detailed the operations and presented an aerial view of the facility.

The Save Our Lakes Board members also toured the pumping facility.

"The process is coming along very well," she explained. There will be six filtrations, but only three will be used at a time. They will alternate between them. The first filtration system will be tested, and if all goes well, the operators will begin to fill the net two."

"If the testing goes well without glitches, we should see water flowing into Lake Brooklyn by March," she continued.

## Lake Geneva restoration

The hot topic of discussion for the evening was the status of the Lake Geneva Restoration Project.

Katz-James said, "Well, we are planning on hiring a consultant to help us move along the project faster. The consulting firm is fluent in working with the county, water management district, and Florida's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). We still have not received an answer from DEP, but we should be getting one soon."

She added that the plan now is for the county to apply for the permits.

She went on to mention that her organization would send letters to all of the approximately 450 Lake Geneva residents about an upcoming Save our Lakes meeting on Monday, January 30, at Trinity Baptist Church at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting will focus on removing the lakebed's trees and underbrush and will be attended by city and county officials.

"We want everyone to bring their questions to the meeting," she said, "or email me all your questions about the Lake Geneva Restoration Project."

## Questions about future Geneva water levels

The discussion about water levels was lengthy and technically involved. Many residents asked how much water Lake Geneva would have once the Black Creek project was completed. While there wasn't a definitive answer, some approximate figures were provided.

Scott Slater, Save Our Lakes board member, stated, "Once water flows in, we could be looking at 102 feet for Lake Geneva and 114 feet for Lake Brooklyn. That is not to include rainfall; that is only water pumping in. It would stop there, so there's room for any rain event like a hurricane."

Slater went on to explain, "There are four pumps, so when the creek is at a minimum water level, four pumps are pumping 10 million gallons of water a day to the treatment facility. Each pump pumps about 2.5 million gallons. Everything is computer-controlled, and there are filter screens in the creek on the intake because there are some special crayfish in that creek. And so those filter screens are designed so those crayfish can't clog the pumps."

Katz-James added, "This is something new which hasn't been done before, so we don't know exactly how much both lakes will gain long term, but we have general numbers according to testing we have done throughout the years."

## Concerns about tree removal

Continuing the meeting, the next topic was tree removal, an ongoing subject of much anticipation. When will the trees be removed?

Slater said, "We have good and bad news regarding the timber company. The longer we wait to get the trees removed, the more expensive it will be. We are trying to get the process moved as quickly as possible."

"We are hoping that in the January 30 meeting, D.E.P. will give us an answer not only on how many trees they will take out but also how far down in the lake they can cut," he added.

Unfortunately, while there wasn't an answer, the process is progressing.

Some residents expressed concerns about where the animals at Nelson Point would move to, in addition to the changes related to adding or removing docks.

## Fishing Pier

Finally, the new Keystone Beach Fishing Pier, which will comply with Americans with Disabilities Act standards, was discussed. A 2-D draft was presented at the meeting.

The current fishing pier would be replaced with a larger, wider, and longer one with a sitting area.

Katz-James mentioned, "We have a separate account just for the fishing pier, but we are looking for more donations. We don't have all the funds to pay

for the entire project yet, but we are close."

Lake Brooklyn and Lake Geneva are the two primary aquifer recharge areas in North Florida, supplying water to the region's residents. These two recharge areas are essential for Florida's water supply; the next closest recharge area is near Valdosta, Georgia.

**IMPORTANT TAX FILING INFORMATION**

The IRS announced it will begin accepting and processing tax returns on Thursday, Jan. 23, 2025. The **filing deadline to submit 2025 tax returns** or an extension to file and pay tax owed is **Tuesday, April 15, 2025**, for most taxpayers.

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## Raise follows Crosby's first evaluation

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD  
mark@bctelegraph.com

Jimmy Crosby's service as Starke's chief administrative officer received stellar reviews from city commissioners and a generous 20% pay raise.

From a salary set at \$90,000 when he signed his employment contract last September, plus the 5% raise given to all employees in October, the latest increase brings his annual pay to \$113,000.

Commissioners justified the amount as not only deserved. They said the city's salaries must be competitive with other municipalities.

The instrument prepared by the city's legal counsel included five categories for evaluation: communication with the commission, community relations, leadership ability, chief administrative officer effectiveness, and personal and professional traits.

Overall, Crosby exceeded expectations for four commissioners and was meeting the expectations of the fifth. All commissioners agreed he exceeded their expectations for communication with them and his effectiveness at managing his office. Pay raises recommended ranged from 7% to 20%. While his contract included post-evaluation raises of up to 10%, most commissioners agreed Crosby had earned 10% or more.

According to attorney Danielle Adams, Crosby's salary prior to

the raise was \$30,000 to \$50,000 less than the average salary paid for that position in other cities. Commissioners based their decision in part on this comparison.

Commissioner Scott Roberts said the salaries for the city's administrative positions need to be moving in this direction. Even adding 10% on top of the 10% contractual amount doesn't come close enough to where it should be, he said.

Roberts said Crosby and had also earned more compensation through his performance, exceeding expectations across the board, including his role in obtaining millions of dollars to fund local projects.

Commissioner Janice Mortimer agreed completely, saying an even higher amount would be justified just in exchange for the turnaround experienced in the city's finance department.

"Our finance department was in such a miserable state that we as a board, decision making people, we didn't know what our financial status was," she said.

Mortimer said Crosby was deserving, and while she didn't anticipate he would be seeking employment elsewhere, she and other commissioners agreed that moving toward a higher salary will help recruit and maintain highly skilled managers in the future. Mayor Andy Redding said it costs more to repeatedly change employees than it does to retain them.

In just the last year, Crosby resigned as city clerk and was hired back as the city's operations director working for the city manager. Then the commission split their duties, placing Crosby under contract to serve as chief administrative officer while Drew Mullins was named general manager for public works.

The decision to support the raise was unanimous, although Commissioner Danny Nugent was absent.

## Mullins previews year ahead

Commissioner Bob Milner asked about Mullins salary as well, but commissioners did not evaluate him at the same time. Need was expressed to do so.

Mullins discussed some of his goals for 2025. GIS mapping of city infrastructure will begin during the first quarter of the year. To aid in mapping the natural gas utility lines, the city is reapplying for a technical assistance grant, which will also supply leak detection equipment, he said. Marketing of the gas utility will begin this year as well.

Mullins' office is also preparing a grant application for rural energy improvements that would provide system upgrades, including electric metering and storm hardening. They are also working with the city's engineers for grants to move those on septic systems to the city's sewer system.

## Chase Brannan announces candidacy for state rep

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD  
mark@bctelegraph.com

Chase Brannan, a resident of north central Florida, has officially announced his candidacy for state representative in District 10. The district includes Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Union, and the northern portion of Alachua County. The seat is currently held by his father, Rep. Chuck Brannan, who will reach his term limit in 2026.

In his announcement, Brannan highlighted his strong ties to the region and his background in public service.

"My family history extends eight generations deep in Florida, especially in North Central Florida," he said. "Because of the conservative principles instilled in me since childhood, I understand the value of community work and service to others."

Brannan said his campaign would focus on advocating for conservative values and working to ensure that government serves the needs of District 10 residents. "I will always fight to ensure the government serves the people," he stated. "I strive to bring accessibility, conservative and rural values, and fairness to the citizens of North Central Florida."

Raised in Baker County, Brannan said he worked on the family farm, raising cattle for livestock shows and the market. His family has a history of public service. His grandfather served as a state trooper with the Florida Highway Patrol and as a deputy in the local sheriff's office. His father has over 30 years of law enforcement experience with the U.S. Marshal's Service and the Baker County Sheriff's Office. Brannan's mother was an educator and elementary school



Chase Brannan

principal before she passed, and his stepmother is a career prosecutor and former county judge.

"My family's legacy of public service is something I hold dear," Brannan said.

Brannan earned an Associate of Arts degree from Florida Gateway College, where he served as Student Body Senate President. He later transferred to the University of Florida, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in agricultural education and communication, with a minor in sales and management in agribusiness. While at UF, Brannan was involved in student government, serving as a senator on the Budget Committee, where he helped oversee a \$22 million budget.

He received several academic and leadership awards at the University of Florida, including the J. Wayne Reitz Scholar designation and the Sharon Connell Outstanding Service Award. He was also selected as a Florida Gubernatorial Fellow for the 2020-2021 term, where he worked at the Department of Business and Professional

Regulation during the COVID-19 pandemic, helping Florida businesses navigate the challenges of the pandemic. For his efforts, he received the Governor's Fellowship Award for Outstanding Leadership.

Brannan's political experience includes working for the executive office of Gov. Ron DeSantis in Washington, D.C., on federal relations. He also worked on DeSantis' reelection campaign in 2022 as a regional field director. Following the campaign, Brannan joined Florida Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis' reelection campaign as political director before transitioning to a role as director of intergovernmental affairs.

In addition to his political and professional experience, Brannan said he is a cattleman, a real estate business owner, and an active member of several organizations, including the Florida Farm Bureau, the National Rifle Association, and the Gator Club. He is also the president-elect of an area Gator Club.

Brannan said he is a lifelong conservative and expressed support for both Gov. Ron DeSantis and former President Donald Trump.

"I believe that with the right leadership and practical experience, we can make North Central Florida a place we can all be proud of for future generations," Brannan said. "I seek this office with an open mind to hear the issues of this district and strive to serve all my constituents."

Maintaining the region's rural way of life, preserving natural resources and addressing issues that impact local residents are all important to his campaign, he said.

## Clerk decision would be made by mail

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD  
mark@bctelegraph.com

Pending permission from the state, Starke's mail ballot referendum on the position of city clerk will move forward, and soon.

Starke voters are being asked if the city clerk position should continue as an elected position as called for in the city charter.

Starke commissioners have approved an ordinance calling for the referendum election to take place on April 8, posing the question as follows:

"Shall the City Charter be amended to remove any reference to the City Clerk and respective role and powers and allow the City Commission to appoint a Chief Administrative Officer to perform any duties of the former City Clerk position?"

Voters will vote either yes or no, but they will only do so by mail.

The commission opted for a mail ballot election as the quickest way to answer the question before qualifying begins for the city's general election in the fall. Qualifying for that election begins in June. Whether city clerk will be one of the positions open to election depends on the outcome of the referendum.

Resolutions on Jan. 21 placed the mail ballot election in the hands of

Supervisor of Elections Amanda Seyfang. But according to Seyfang, the state must approve the language and the dates before the referendum moves forward.

If that happens, her office will be mailing out ballots to registered voters in February. The mailouts begin Feb. 21 for voters overseas. Locally

ballots will be mailed Feb. 27. The election ends at 7 p.m. on April 8. At that time all ballots must be in the supervisor of elections office to be counted.

More specific information on the requirements to submit a qualified ballot will be available prior to the election.

Last year, voters approved the removal of the police chief position from the charter. The city clerk's position has been vacant since Jimmy Crosby resigned last year as well. He is currently overseeing those duties as chief administrative officer.

There has also been talk by the commission of a full review to modernize the charter and reflect changes in how the city operates. Any recommended changes would also be sent to the voters to decide.

## Franchise fee discussions will continue

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD  
mark@bctelegraph.com

An attempt to renew the discussion about electrical franchise fees was quick and indecisive last week.

Bradford County Commissioner Carolyn Spooner, who asked for the discussion to be added to the Jan. 16 agenda, said the board should be looking at ways to generate additional revenue as they hold workshops on next year's budget.

With only one of the two utilities serving unincorporated Bradford County residents willing to agree to a franchise fee, Chairman Danny Riddick and Commissioner Chris Dougherty didn't want FPL customers to

pay a fee that wasn't charged to Clay Electric customers.

This is where prior discussion of franchise fees ended.

Spooner pointed out there are already some customers inside Starke who are served by those utilities and pay a 6% franchise fee while customers outside the city limits do not. That fee, approved by agreement between the city of Starke and both utilities, helps fund city government.

"We're looking for ways in which we can generate additional revenue and so we should look at all of those means of possibility when we're not asking an enormous amount of money, a few dollars per month per customer. So, I think it's

something to put back on the floor to consider for further discussion, because we have a willing entity, and that's something that would help to enhance our revenue generation."

Dougherty's willingness to consider the fee depended on the willing participation of both electric providers. Riddick agreed but said they could talk about it further when the full board was present.

The budget workshop canceled earlier this month has been rescheduled for Jan. 28 at 5:30 p.m. Future budget workshop dates are March 4, April 1 and July 1. They will take place alongside the board's regular 10:30 a.m. meetings.

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# Application would conserve thousands of acres near lakes

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD  
mark@bctelegraph.com

The Bradford County Commission has supported the application by Roberts Capital Ventures for a state agricultural conservation easement on more than 1,000 acres between Crosby and Lake Sampson.

The application describes the 1,068 acres, which RCV acquired in 2020 for “speculative hold, personal recreational use as well as development of country homesites.” Mixed-use management of the property has included silviculture, timber management, wildlife preservation and recreation.

According to the application, “A large portion of the property is composed of natural forest, which had been seed-tree cut by the previous landowner; however, the area is now regenerating cypress, pine and hardwood providing a valuable wetland habit, ecosystem type and aesthetic qualities. The actively managed timber areas contain slash pine in a range of age classes which can be harvested to generate revenue to sustain the property.”

A letter to the state, identically prepared for the signatures of the County Chairman Danny Riddick, Sen. Jennifer Bradley and Rep. Chuck Brannan, summarizes the purpose of the application: “RCV would like to pursue an agricultural protection easement to prevent development of the property now and in the future that ensures the property remains under family

ownership for heirs, and if not, to be owned and maintained by like-minded foresters and farmers for the future. RCV also desires to protect the water resources and wildlife on the property in perpetuity as those resources contribute to the quality of both Lake Crosby and Lake Sampson.”

The letter of support was pulled from approval on the consent agenda for discussion, with Commission Carolyn Spooner asking about potential future ownership and development of the property as well as access to the lakes and other recreational uses.

Ramesh Buch, director of conservation acquisitions for North Florida Land Trust, was there to provide answers. Under the land’s current zoning categories, which includes residential and agricultural land, more than 100 development units would be allowed today, he said. As part of the conservation easement, he said the Roberts family wants to eliminate all but four of those units, reducing the development density.

“Now that four, ostensibly, is for the family. But if the family chooses, the current owner chooses not to build those four, the property can be sold to another owner outside of the family. The restrictions remain in place,” Buch said. No more than four units would be allowed, conserving the rest of the land.

As for public access, Buch explained the land is and would remain privately owned. Any access would be at the will of the

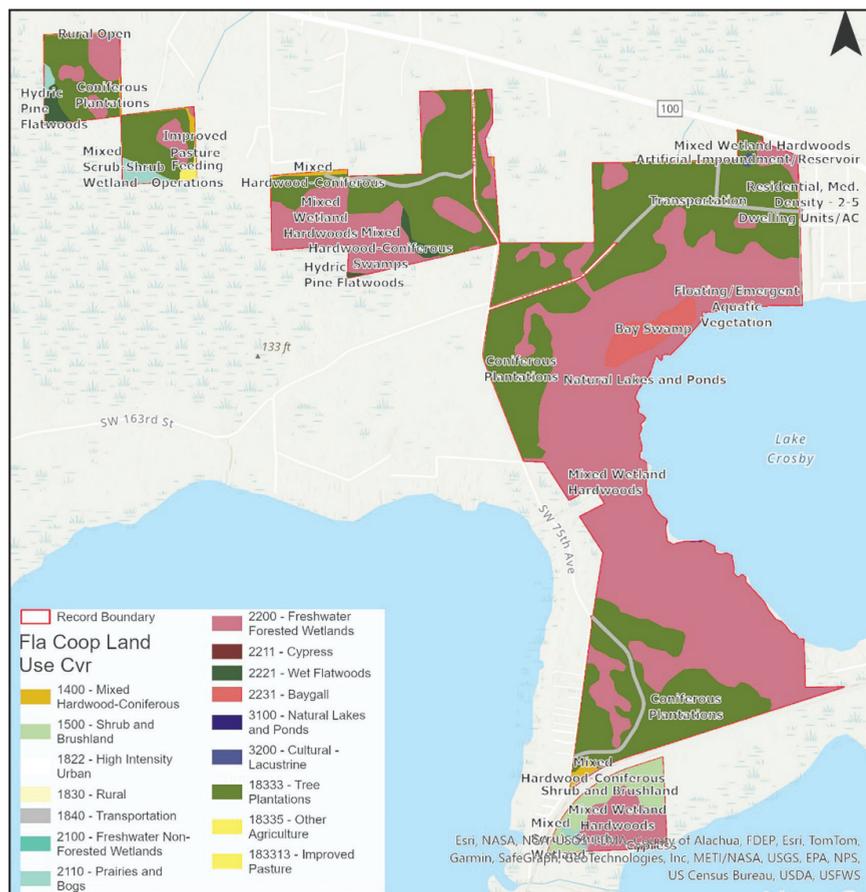
property owner. “The access that the public would enjoy to the property is whatever it has today,” he said. “It could increase if Mr. Roberts or the next owners wanted to allow it, but there is no guarantee that the public has access under a conservation easement, just like it doesn’t have a guaranteed access today.”

In addition to preserving the right to develop four units on the property, RCV also wants to retain the right to maintain agriculture and silviculture operations and monetize the agricultural areas to maintain the property and pay the outstanding mortgage. The conservation easement would also reduce the property tax burden, according to the application.

Restrictions would prohibit: subdividing the land for residential or other development; mining; commercial dairy or swine operations and confined animal feed lots; construction of billboards, satellite towers and commercial antennas; commercial water extraction other than the allowed residential agricultural and forestry uses; commercial recreational ATV facilities; and dumping of waste, trash and hazardous materials.

Any development that does take place would go through the county’s building and zoning office and be subject to the county’s land development regulations.

Following discussion, the commission approved the letter of support.



This map included with the conservation application shows the expanse of the property between Lake Crosby and Lake Sampson as well as the mix of timber and wetlands.

## Bradford wants clarity on use of funds

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD  
mark@bctelegraph.com

Bradford County cut a check for the \$4 million promised to Starke for the extension of water and sewer lines down State Road 16 but isn’t ready to hand it over.

County commissioners have asked for more communication about the progress of the project.

Starke requested the ARPA funding to extend utilities to the recently annexed site of a future mixed-used development. The pandemic response dollars are just one of several funding sources need to carry out the \$14.8 million project.

Chief Deputy Clerk Rachel Rhoden said the city recently requested the funds, which the county designated to the city in January 2023. Prior to issuing the check, she said they reached out to county auditors to see if there would be any additional reporting requirements for issuing a sum of that amount.

They suggested that the county considering entering a memorandum of understanding with the city that the funds be used for their intended purpose.

Rhoden thought it was a great suggestion, and she said

Starke Chief Administrative Officer Jimmy Crosby expressed willingness to provide ongoing expense reports showing how the funds were being spent.

Commissioner Carolyn Spooner said it was an excellent recommendation promoting accountability for such a large sum of money. Chairman Danny Riddick said another option would be to release the money in multiple draws as it was being spent.

But Commissioner Chris Dougherty said the county hasn’t seen any plans or heard any presentation from the city or its consultants about what specifically the \$4 million would pay for.

“This could be \$4 million towards a basket that goes into the wastewater treatment plant, and it’s not getting us any further to the bypass, which was what the plan was, to get infrastructure out to the bypass to create economic development opportunities,” Dougherty said.

He said he wanted that information before releasing any funds.

“I would like to see their consultant come to our meeting and discuss with us where that

money’s going, so that we know where that money is being spent. Because again, we could, we could put the 2 million that they have with the 4 million that we have — \$6 million — and never get one foot closer to that bypass because of the upgrades that they would need to do to their system to be able to take on any additional capacity coming from the future growth,” Dougherty said.

County Manager Scott Kornegay expressed confidence they could make that presentation happen at the next board meeting. Dougherty specifically asked for plans, and not just a presentation.

“I’d like to see where the additional pump stations are going, where the additional pipe sizes are being increased, what the current capacity is at the wastewater treatment plant and know if, in fact, that we’ll be able to take on additional capacity from any future economic growth and development. So, I think we’ve got the cart before the horse here,” he said.

In addition to the presentation, the county attorney will work on an agreement covering use of the funding.

## Letters

### Stop the speeding

Dear Editor,

I am writing to bring attention to a significant speeding issue within the city limits of Starke, hoping law enforcement and the city will take action immediately.

My husband and I reside on Water Street between Alligator Creek Bridge and the newly completed overpass. Despite the posted speed limit of 35 mph in both directions on this section of S.R. 100, it is evident that many vehicles, including tractor-trailers, cars and pickup trucks, are traveling at speeds ranging from 50 to 60 mph or higher.

The traffic in front of our home has turned into a dangerous, lawless racetrack, creating a high risk of severe injury or even loss of life. Throughout the day, we frequently hear drivers honking at others who adhere to the posted speed limit, further underscoring the disregard for traffic laws.

My son-in-law has previously reported this issue to the sheriff’s department, but to our knowledge, no action has been taken to address it.

There is a solution to reduce speed and create a safer experience for vehicles and pedestrians — a driver-feedback sign installed just west of Alligator Creek Bridge and another where drivers exit the overpass could reduce serious accidents and possible death. These signs are known to be effective in reducing speeds by increasing drivers’ awareness of their current speed, particularly in areas where speeding poses safety risks. Installation of such signs are the responsibility of the Florida DOT, while speed enforcement is the responsibility

of law enforcement. I respectfully urge law enforcement to take immediate measures to enforce the speed limit and prevent a potential tragedy on this stretch of Water Street. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share this concern through the Bradford County Telegraph. I hope this letter serves as a wake-up call to those in positions of authority whose responsibility is to enforce speed limits.

Sincerely,  
Dimple Overstreet

## Development partner talks leadership

BY DAN HILDEBRAN  
dan@bctelegraph.com

The Northeast Florida Economic Development Corporation’s strategic alliance business partner shared leadership insights and views on workforce development on a podcast targeting chief executive officers.

Amber Shepherd traced her professional path from a career services advisor for an Orange Park for-profit college to executive management global consulting to her current position on the Drop In CEO podcast, hosted by Deborah Coviello.

The Middleburg native described her upbringing in rural Clay County as poverty-stricken. “I literally grew up on a dirt road out in the middle of nowhere and progressed through my career to providing global business executive management consulting,” she recalled. “My mother worked 80 hours a week at a local convenience store.”

Shepherd also credited her mother with instilling a love for lifelong learning, which she said was a life-changing attitude.

“You have to learn to read and speak and communicate because that is something that no one can take away from you,” Shepherd said, recalling her mother’s advice.

Shepherd said she could identify with the students she helped while working at the college because “they were people that were similar to me in that they didn’t have that level of support in their lives, and I had the opportunity to become that support for them.”

She added that one of her primary roles became mentoring students and instilling confidence in them.

“What I found is a lot of these individuals suffered, a lot of times, from toxicity in the home,” she said. “They didn’t have those individuals in their homes that believed in them and provided them with confidence, and that’s what they needed from me, that person who said, I’m going to help you grow and achieve your next level.”

She added that helping people overcome self-doubt and the fear of rejection was a skill she carried into her successive role in counseling the chief executive officers of global corporations.

“CEOs also fear rejection,” she said, “and I think that that has been the greatest eye-opening experience.”

Shepherd drew parallels between students engaging in mock interviews and business leaders preparing to pitch ideas to potential investors.

“What I saw was a shift,” she said, “first, in their own minds, you have to believe in yourself before you can get anybody to believe in your product.”

### Informal leadership

Shepherd cited that, as one of her early career successes, her college regularly exceeded the 70% minimum placement level required by the federal government. She added that her graduate’s placement level sometimes approached 85%.

She also said her first job taught her the art of informal leadership because she had to lead staff and students at the college who were not accountable to her.

“In career service,” she said, “you are not a formal leader. You are an informal leader. You have to find a way to inspire and motivate change within these individuals so that they choose it for themselves. I couldn’t force somebody to go on a job interview. I couldn’t force them to write their resumes properly; I couldn’t force them to invest the time and energy it took to sit in front of me and let me critique you and make yourself vulnerable to me so that I can share how we can improve. I had to inspire them to receive it.”

### Easters in concert

Hope Baptist Church welcomes you to enjoy Jeff and Sheri Easter in concert on Friday, Jan. 24. Doors open at 6 p.m. and the concert begins at 7 p.m. There is no admission charge to attend, but a love offering will be accepted.

### Sanderson Homecoming

Sanderson Christian Revival Center will have Homecoming on Saturday, Jan. 25, at 5:30 p.m. featuring The Browders in concert. Dinner will follow. The church is located at 14302 Sapp Road in Glen St. Mary.

### New Year, New Thing, Same God

Join the Rev. Dr. Jacqueline Dupree and the Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church of Lawtey on Sunday, Jan. 26, at 4 p.m. The Rev. Sha’reff Rashad and congregation of New Mount Moriah A.M.E. Church of Jacksonville will render service. Everyone is invited.

See LEAD, page 7

### Phone and Internet Discounts Available to CenturyLink Customers

The Florida Public Service Commission designated CenturyLink as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier within its service area for universal service purposes. CenturyLink’s basic local service rates for residential voice lines are \$30.50 per month and business services are \$43.50 per month. Specific rates will be provided upon request.

CenturyLink participates in the Lifeline program, which makes residential telephone or qualifying broadband service more affordable to eligible low-income individuals and families. Eligible customers may qualify for Lifeline discounts of \$5.25/month for voice or bundled voice service or \$9.25/month for qualifying broadband or broadband bundles. Residents who live on federally recognized Tribal Lands may qualify for additional Tribal benefits if they participate in certain additional federal eligibility programs. The Lifeline discount is available for only one telephone or qualifying broadband service per household, which can be either a wireline or wireless service. Broadband speeds must be at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload to qualify.

CenturyLink also participates in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which provides eligible households with a discount on broadband service. The ACP provides a discount of up to \$30 per month toward broadband service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands.

For both programs, a household is defined as any individual or group of individuals who live together at the same address and share income and expenses. Services are not transferable, and only eligible consumers may enroll in these programs. Consumers who willfully make false statements to obtain these discounts can be punished by fine or imprisonment and can be barred from these programs.

If you live in a CenturyLink service area, visit <https://www.centurylink.com/aboutus/community/community-development/lifeline.html> for additional information about applying for these programs or call 1-800-201-4099 with questions.



# Statutes win Yard of the Month

BY BARBARA ANDERSON AND GINNY GEIGER  
Garden Club of the Lakes

Every yard has its own personality, reflecting the uniqueness of its owners. Greg and Teresa Locke have added much personality to their yard in just the two years they have lived at 4162 Southeast First Avenue.

Greg was quick to tell us that Teresa is the one behind their "theme." He digs holes and cuts the grass, and he also moves statues that are too heavy for Teresa.

Their theme is "statues with meaning," and it is a fun theme. Some of the statues were actually given names. First, there are two little boys, Justin and Heath, Teresa's two sons.

Because Teresa loves horses, she owned several over the years. You got it. They have two horse statues in their yard: Kelly and Lady, the names of her two favorite ones.

Then there is the rose garden, which we renamed "The Kissing Garden." Can you guess the name of the kissing couple? Oh, you are so clever! Yes, Greg and Teresa.

Of course, no yard should be without at least one guardian angel. Over the last several years, one of Teresa's aunts gave her two angel statues, which were



Roxie was their Red Nose Pit, who was their best friend for many years. When she died, they bought the statue to remember her (far right). The very neatest thing is that the statue is wearing Roxie's original collar.

placed near their front door. The angels have no names because no one names angels except God (or the writer of the TV show Touched by an Angel).

Saving the most special for last, there is Roxie, their Red Nose Pit, who was their best friend for many years. When she died, they bought the statue to remember her. The very neatest thing is that the statue is wearing Roxie's original collar. How special is that?

The Lockes moved here from

Jacksonville, where Teresa had lived since she was three. Once they retired, they wanted to move to our much quieter, smaller town near family. When they moved in, there were no plants or flowers in the yard except for some big, beautiful camellias that were now loaded with buds. It did not take long for Teresa to get to work. She and Greg planted hydrangeas, hibiscus, a Norfolk pine they dug up from their Jacksonville home, bougainvillea, and roses. It is a



The Locke's moved here from Jacksonville where Teresa had lived since she was three. Once they retired, they wanted to move to our much quieter, smaller town near family.

most warm and welcoming yard.

To be able to sit and enjoy their hard work and the resulting fun and beauty, they placed Teresa's 24-year-old swing in the yard under a very big, old oak tree. When asked what they did not like about their yard, Greg said without hesitation, "the oak." The limbs, leaves, and acorns are a constant source of work- and irritation when the acorns

hit their metal roof. But that oak and the swing make their "happy place," so Greg is willing to do the work it requires.

Since Greg enjoys playing golf, he is particularly glad they live on the golf course—even though it does require him to pick up golf balls (more work!). When we asked what they liked the most, Greg again was quick to say, "Our neighbors and the

whole neighborhood." What a very special answer, one we had not heard before. Wouldn't it be a more peaceful world if we all could say the same?

If you want to learn more about the Garden Club of The Lakes or nominate yourself or someone in the community for Yard of the Month, please call Pat Lorenzo at 904-728-9460.

# Students earn digital certifications

BY DAN HILDEBRAN  
Dan@BcTelegraph.com

The digital design instructor for Bradford High School said eight students passed the Adobe Certified Professional Photoshop Certification Exam.

Instructor Steven Djavaheri said the certification validates a student's proficiency in Photoshop for various tasks, including photo editing, graphic design, and digital art creation. It demonstrates their knowledge of the software's key features, tools, and workflows and their ability to apply best practices in real-world scenarios.

"Certified individuals are often recognized for their expertise, which can enhance their career opportunities in creative fields," he said.

Axel L. Markwich, Bryson Coal Hudson, Caleb Issac Barber, Chrishon Tycovey Sharpe, Isabel Claire Pritchett, Kyrstin Chloe Cornwall, Maialen Leiza-Otxandiano, and Tremeze Korin White earned the certification.

Student Jake Bradley Harris passed the Unity Certified User: Artist Certification exam.

"This is a very difficult coding certification," Djavaheri said. "The Unity Certified User Artist certification validates an individual's ability to create visually appealing and engaging content using Unity's tools and features. The certification demonstrates art asset management, scene content design, visual effects, and animation."

Djavaheri said that 11 more students passed the Adobe Certified Professional Photoshop test or the Microsoft ITS-103 certification exam during a different testing session.

Ashley Faith Mackey,



Jake Bradley Harris



Ashley Faith Mackey

Benjamin Blake Nugent, Branden Kyle Martin, Corey James, Hannah Cristine House, Justin Allen Wright, Justin Sean Byrd, Kyrstin Chloe Cornwall, Parviele Lashay Lee, Pedro Banda, and Samantha Marie Harrell earned those certifications.

Djavaheri said the ITS103 certification validates foundational IT support and services knowledge.

"It covers essential skills and concepts related to troubleshooting, customer service, networking, and basic



Parviele Lashay Lee, Instructor Steven Djavaheri and Corey James



Tremeze Korin White and Kyrstin Chloe Cornwall

system administration," he said. "This certification is designed for individuals looking to start a career in IT or enhance their understanding of IT support roles, demonstrating their ability to assist users and maintain IT systems effectively. It often serves as a steppingstone for more advanced certifications and career opportunities in technology."

Kimberly Stuckey was the proctor for the testing sessions.



Tremeze Korin White



Front: Branden Kyle Martin, Back: Justin Sean Byrd, Pedro Banda and Hannah Cristine House.



Maialen Leiza-Otxandiano and Bryson Coal Hudson



Axel L. Markwich and Isabel Claire Pritchett

## Greater Bethlehem's anniversary

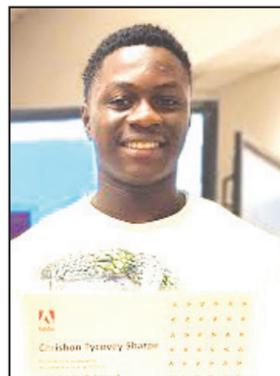
Greater Bethlehem FreeWill Baptist Church will be having its Church and Pastor's Anniversary Sunday, Jan. 26, at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Everyone is welcome to this homecoming celebration.

## Veterans Service Office closed

The Bradford County Veterans Service Office will be closed from Jan. 27 – Feb. 3. The Union County Veterans Service Office will be closed on Jan. 29. For more information, please call Barbara Fischer at 904-263-0647.



Benjamin Blake Nugent



Chrishon Tycovey Sharpe

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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

James Bowen, 25, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 12 for DUI and resisting an officer.

Thomas Bruce, 39, of Crescent City, was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 17 for hit-and-run.

Ezekiel Byrd, 23, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 17 for an out-of-county warrant.

Jason Chaplin, 49, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 14 for battery.

Tanner Hadsock, 20, of Alachua, was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 14 for reckless driving.

Branden Hall, 33, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 14 for failure to appear.

Sincere Hankerson, 20, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 16 for possession of drug equipment and possession of marijuana.

Phillip Hinson, 60, was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 12 for DUI.

Joshua Keen, 36, of Hawthorne, was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 15 for failure to appear.

Irma Kight, 70, of Starke, was

arrested by Bradford deputies on January 11 for a conditional release violation.

Crispus Knowles, 44, was arrested by FHP troopers on January 17 for driving with a suspended or revoked license and attaching a tag not assigned.

Alexis Letsche, 48, of Lawtey, was arrested by FHP troopers on January 11 for DUI and hit and run.

Payton Lewallen, 26, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 12 for child neglect.

Austin Melville, 27, of Starke, was arrested by FHP troopers on January 16 for driving with a suspended or revoked license and attaching a tag not assigned.

Ethan Murrell, 33, of Eidson, Tennessee, was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 17 for DUI and driving with a suspended or revoked license.

Courtney Parker, 36, of Waldo, was arrested by FHP troopers on January 12 for driving with a suspended or revoked license and DUI.

Paul Payne, 45, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 17 for driving with a suspended or revoked license.

### Union

Jordan DiPaul, 29, of Middleburg, was arrested by Union deputies on January 13 for an out-of-county warrant.

Brandon Hall, 33, of Starke, was arrested by Union deputies on January 14 for an out-of-county warrant.

Homer Hart Jr., 50, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on January 16 for fleeing and eluding.

Tony King, Jr., 36, a Department of Corrections inmate, was arrested by Union deputies on January 14 for smuggling contraband into a prison.

Lunetta Moore, 31, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on January 14 for a probation violation.

Ryan Plummer, 34, a Department of Corrections inmate, was arrested by Union deputies on January 14 for trafficking in amphetamine and smuggling contraband into a prison.

Corey Regar, 24, of Lake City, was arrested by Union deputies on January 14 for a probation violation.

Jeffrey Underwood, 41, of Trenton, was arrested by Union deputies on January 15 for grand theft of a firearm, vehicle theft, burglary, and grand theft.

Michelle Vaillancourt, 38, of Silver Springs, was arrested by Union deputies on January 15 for petit theft.

### Clay

Jason Giddings, 45, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on January 12 for exposure of sexual organs, resisting an officer, and lewd and lascivious behavior.

Brandyn Gooden, 21, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on January 16 for burglary of an unoccupied conveyance.

Michael Jaramillo, 21, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on January 12 for aggravated domestic battery with a deadly weapon and resisting an officer without violence.

Charles Mimm, 55, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on January 13 for aggravated assault with a deadly weapon without intent to kill and domestic aggravated battery with a deadly weapon.

Michael Molinaro, 38, of Keystone Heights, was arrested on January 15 for domestic battery.



Seabrook

## Pleads to three thefts

BY DAN HILDEBRAN  
dan@bctelegraph.com

A 30-year-old Starke man was sentenced to 120 days in jail and two years' probation after pleading to three thefts at Starke stores. The judge also gave him a stern warning.

Monte Seabrook, Jr. was already serving time in Alachua County for a felony theft charge when he appeared before Circuit Judge James Colaw for a December 10 hearing. According to court papers, the defendant stole 13 items from a Gainesville Walmart valued at \$163 on August 3 and was sentenced to 90 days in jail for the felony theft conviction.

Bradford deputies and Starke police caught Seabrook after he stole two cases of Natty Daddy Beer from a Starke Circle K on July 19 and two cases of Bud Light beer from Winn Dixie two days later.

Bradford deputies also accused the 30-year-old of stealing a lost wallet at Walmart on July 19. An employee had found the wallet and put it behind the customer service desk.

Store video showed the defendant entering the customer service area, walking behind the counter, and immediately leaving the area soon after an employee placed the billfold behind the desk.

The defendant reached a plea agreement with prosecutors for jail time and probation, which the judge told Seabrook was an unusual sentence in his favor.

"I'll go along with this plea," Colaw told the defendant, "but you and I won't have that type of conversation in the future. Most likely, you should view this as a last, last chance."

The judge added that for Seabrook to pick up four felonies across two counties in such a



Dejor Jaerail Hill, 34, of Starke (left), leaves a Bradford County courtroom with his lawyer, Robert Rush, after being sentenced to 10 years for aggravated battery and leaving the scene of a crash.

short time, the defendant should view the jail time and probation as his last chance to remain in the community.

"So, if you're back before me on a violation, I'll certainly judge it based on whatever circumstances are made known to me," the judge said. "But if it's proven that you willfully and substantially violated this probation, you should not expect necessarily to get another chance at supervision. You understand?"

## 10 years for ramming truck with ex-girlfriend

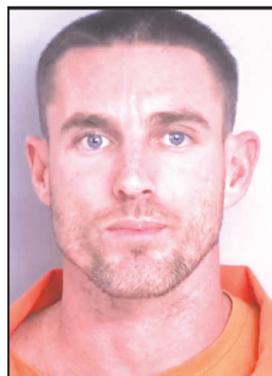
Dejor Jaerail Hill, 34, of Starke, was sentenced to 10 years in prison after pleading to ramming a truck in which his ex-girlfriend was a passenger.

According to court papers, the victims, a 37-year-old man and a 31-year-old female were parked in the man's pickup in front of the woman's home when Hill drove up to the Lincoln City residence and confronted the pair.

The couple drove off with Hill in pursuit. Once the pickup reached the intersection of Southeast 46<sup>th</sup> Place and Southeast 143<sup>rd</sup> Terrace, Hill drove his Ford Crown Victoria into the left front side of the pickup, causing substantial damage. The defendant then rammed the pickup a second time, forcing the victims into a ditch.

The truck's driver told deputies he got his vehicle out of the ditch, drove to a nearby Aldi, and called 911.

A deputy noted in a warrant affidavit that at the time of the incident, Hill was on felony probation and was prohibited from contacting his ex-girlfriend.



Dyal

In a plea petition approved by Judge James Colaw, Hill pleaded to one count of aggravated battery with a deadly weapon and to leaving the scene of an accident with property damage. The state dropped an additional charge of aggravated battery.

## Borrowed vehicle, didn't return it

A 32-year-old Hilliard man was sentenced to 23 days in jail and two years' probation after pleading to vehicle theft.

Tyler Blaine Dyal was also ordered to pay the victim \$500 in restitution.

According to a complaint, the victim told deputies that on June 28, 2023, she allowed the defendant to borrow her vehicle to purchase a drink at a local gas station. However, after Dyal failed to return the car, the victim called the sheriff's office.

The defendant's prior record includes grand theft auto, resisting an officer without violence, violation of an injunction, use or possession of drug paraphernalia, and polluting by commercial burning.

## BOND

Continued from page 1

Goldman added that according to deputies, his client told them that when she awoke, the child had blood coming out of his mouth.

"The oral, nasal blood is consistent with Sudden Infant Death Syndrome," he said.

Goldman also questioned the state's claim that Flowers was culpable for her son's death.

"They're saying that this should be culpable negligence in some factor because she, a mother of these children, has newborns and, within a month-and-a-half, falls asleep while trying to stay awake while in bed with her child in a very small house with many children in the house," Goldman said. "A tired mother of twins falling asleep."

Goldman said Flowers and her husband work in retail and earn just enough to support their four school-age children and three preschool-age children from a blended family.

## 'She's a great mother'

After Goldman spoke, Flowers's husband, Cedric Pittman, testified that he had no concerns about Flowers caring for the children.

"She's a great mother," he



Flowers's husband, Cedric Pittman, testified that he had no concerns about Flowers caring for the children. "She's a great mother," he said.

said. Pittman's mother, Valarie Pittman, also testified on Flowers's behalf.

Valarie Pittman testified that she had custody of the children for 10 months because of a Florida Department of Children and Families case. During that time, Flowers visited the home every day. The children's grandmother added that she had no concerns about the defendant caring for the children now.

"She was there to help me with her kids," said Pittman. "She was there till—to do what Mom does. She was there every day."

## State says investigation showed no genetic problem

Two more family members spoke on Flowers's behalf. One of them corroborated Goldman's claim that two children in the family died of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Assistant State Attorney Ryan King said he was unaware of any genetic component to the victim's death.

"I would just comment," he told Judge Colaw, "that based on the investigation, there's no evidence to suggest that this was some sort of syndrome or that there was anything other than what had occurred. Namely, in January, with the first twin, the defendant was feeding the child, fell asleep, and essentially awoke to find the child in a situation where the child had asphyxiated that caused death. Then, one month later, essentially to the day on February 22nd, the same thing happened. When law enforcement arrived, the defendant actually said, 'It happened again.' She fell asleep, causing smothering asphyxiation."

Colaw reduced Flowers's total bond from \$150,000 to \$50,000. The defendant later posted bond and was released from jail.

## Calvary Quartet at Bradford Baptist

Bradford Baptist Church (1640 S. Water St.) welcomes The Calvary Quartet on Saturday, Feb. 1, at 6 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

The Calvary Quartet, which has been performing gospel music for churches, Christian schools and evangelistic campaigns since 1994, consists of Founder/Manager Terry Snow (lead vocals), Erik Foster (baritone), John Harrett (tenor), Alex Foster (bass) and Scott Apple (pianist).

For more information, please call Bradford Baptist Church Pastor Rick Jackson at 904-964-

3708.

## Foster, adoption classes

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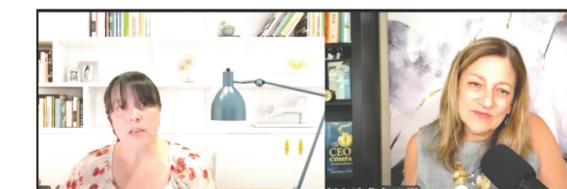
Continued from page 5

## Workforce development

Shepherd said that workforce development is critical in her current role as a partner with the economic development corporation because companies looking to locate in an area increasingly focus on the quality of workers for a potential workplace.

"They're looking at those school districts," she said of employers. "They're looking at the graduates."

When Coviello asked her how individual companies could improve their workforces, Shepherd recommended a rigorous orientation program that includes having all new employees work in roles that ingrain the employer's values and vision into the new hires. She said one example might be requiring all new employees



Amber Shepherd (left) spoke about her background, leadership, and workforce development on the Drop In CEO Podcast hosted by Deborah Coviello (right).

to spend time working as a receptionist or in customer service.

She added that when educators, business owners, and community leaders invest in the lives of students and workers, they not only improve their own organizations but also lift the entire community.

"Think about that little girl that grew up on a dirt road," she said. "The work you're doing in your organization has the power to permanently change that person's life and generations for hundreds of years. We can impact our community, our state, our nation for hundreds of years

## Sign up now for flea market

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 230 is holding a community flea market at the post home on March 1 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Each 15-by-15 space can be reserved for \$15. The auxiliary will serve a pancake breakfast as well as lunch. Contact 352-481-4483 for more information. The post home is located at 20370 E. Hawthorne Road (S.R. 20) in Hawthorne.



# Russ WADE

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## Bradford boys hoops team falls to Oakleaf

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Bradford High School almost got double-doubles from Jordan Cason and Breion Johnson, but the Class 3A Tornadoes had their seven-game winning streak snapped in a 72-54 loss to Class 6A Oakleaf on Jan. 18 in Orange Park.

Cason had 15 points, eight rebounds, four assists and two blocked shots, while Johnson added 10 points and nine rebounds.

Maliki Cobarris led the Tornadoes in scoring with 21

points, while Jy'Quez Cason and K.J. Taylor each had four points.

Cobarris also led the team in assists with five and steals with four.

Jy'Quez Cason added nine rebounds.

The Tornadoes (11-3) entered the game off a 65-64 road win over District 3-3A opponent Palatka on Jan. 14.

Bradford rallied from a 10-point deficit with 2:50 to play. With 10 seconds to play, the Tornadoes inbounded the ball at midcourt, with Cobarris driving to the basket and scoring the winning basket with 2 seconds left.

Cobarris finished with 20 points and eight assists, while

See BHS, page 9

## KHHS boys soccer team ends regular season with tie

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Aaron Wiley scored two goals for the Keystone Heights High School boys soccer team, which tied 3-3 against visiting Clay in the Indians' regular-season finale on Jan. 17.

Trenton Noble had a goal as well, while the Indians got one assist each from Wiley and Luke Brunt.

Keystone (11-5-3) went 1-0-1 in its previous two matches.

On Jan. 15, the Indians got three goals from Sammy Wacha

in a 9-1 win against District 4-3A opponent North Marion in Citra.

Brunt and Wiley each had two goals, while Noble and Ryder Thomas each added one.

The team got three assists from Brunt and one each from Noble, Thomas and Wiley.

Keystone traveled to play Episcopal on Jan. 16, with the teams finishing in a 2-2 tie.

The Indians trailed 1-0 at the half, but took a 2-1 lead in the second half before the host Eagles evened it up.

Brunt and Wiley each had a goal, with Brunt scoring his on a penalty kick.

Noah Jaramillo had an assist.

Keystone is the second seed in the District 4 tournament, which will begin Thursday, Jan. 23, at Santa Fe High School. The Indians have a first-round bye

and will play third seed Eastside or sixth seed Interlachen in a semifinal match on Tuesday, Jan. 28, at 5:30 p.m. If Keystone wins that match, it will play top seed Santa Fe, fourth seed North Marion or fifth seed Palatka for the championship on Thursday, Jan. 30, at 7:30 p.m.

## KHHS drops 2nd straight in girls soccer

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Keystone Heights High School was defeated 7-0 by host Episcopal on Jan. 16, giving the Indians their second straight loss in girls soccer.

Goalies Aspen Krohn and Xana Briley made 11 and five saves, respectively, for Keystone in its regular-season finale.

The Indians (13-6-3) entered the match off a 3-2 loss at Columbia on Jan. 14. Halea Lam scored both goals, with one coming off a Kaylee Park assist.

Krohn made 14 saves.

Keystone is the top seed in the District 4-3A tournament, which will be played at Keystone. The tournament began Jan. 22, but the Indians won't play until Monday, Jan. 27, when they'll face fourth seed Palatka or fifth seed Eastside in a 7:30 p.m. semifinal match. If Keystone wins that match, it'll advance to the championship on Thursday, Jan. 30, at 7:30 p.m., playing second seed Santa Fe, third seed Interlachen or sixth seed North Marion.

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## BHS is Region 1-1A cheer runner-up

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Bradford High School's competitive cheer team continues to improve every year, with the Tornadoes earning their highest-ever finish in region-level competition and earning their first-ever berth in the finals round at the Florida High School Athletic Association state-championship event.

The Tornadoes, who are in their third year of competitive cheerleading, traveled to Port St. Joe High School on Jan. 17 and finished as the Medium Non-Tumbling runner-up at the Region 1-1A meet. Bradford had a raw score of 72.60 and a final score (including point deductions) of 70.60 to finish behind defending state champion West Nassau (89.10 raw score,



Bradford High School's competitive cheer team finished as the Region 1-1A runner-up and will automatically advance into the finals round at the Friday, Jan. 31, state tournament in Lakeland. The team, coached by Jenna Hewett, consists of (alphabetical order) Skyla Bounacore, Kelsey Burgin, Jhailaa Coleman, Kaydence Crawford, Jakyiah Dean, Nivaiah Foster, Hayden Goodwin, Chloe Hales, Tenly Hardee, Ella Hense, Kylee Kerr, Lily Mercer, Amy Prescott, Summer Rhoden, Cadence Rowan, Aldon Sanchez and Myia Sanchez.

89.10 final score).

Bradford's scores at last year's region meet were 66.5 (raw) and 63.5 (final).

The Tornadoes qualified for state with its runner-up finish and earned the right to skip the state semifinal round and go straight to the finals round based on its raw score. The state meet will be held Friday, Jan. 31, at the R.P. Funding Center in Lakeland.

Crestview, which qualified for the semifinal round at state, had a higher raw score than Bradford at the Region 1 meet, but the Bulldogs' point deductions left them with a final score of 69.90,

which put them third behind the Tornadoes.

Placing fourth through ninth were Menendez (64.30/62.80), Maclay (61.20/61.20), Milton (59.90, 58.90), West Port (60.90/58.65), Eastside (61.60/57.60) and Ribault (59.20/55.95).

Menendez, Maclay, West Port and Eastside will all advance to the semifinal round at state.

Bradford, which has been to state every year since it began competing in cheerleading, competed in the semifinal round last year, placing eighth out of 10.

## BHS

Continued from page 8

Jy'Quez Cason had 21 points, eight rebounds, five assists and four steals.

Steven Carter and Jordan Cason each had nine points, with Cason adding five rebounds.

Johnson had six points and six rebounds.

The Tornadoes will travel to play Ridgeview on Thursday, Jan. 23, at 7 p.m. Bradford travels to play Trenton on Saturday, Jan. 25, at 5:30 p.m. and then travels to play district opponent Newberry on Monday, Jan. 27, at 7:30 p.m.



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# Obituaries

## Edward Bradford

Edward "Ed" Bradford died Tuesday, Jan. 14, 2025. He was born Feb. 13, 1947, in Eugene, Oregon. He retired from the Navy in 1985. He was preceded in death by his parents, Robert Bradford and Sarah (Lee) Bradford; and brother, Steven Bradford.

Survivors are his wife, Betty (Noonan) Bradford; niece, Sarah Bradford; and sister-in-law, Pat Bradford.

Friends are invited to gather at his home in Keystone Heights on Saturday, Jan. 25, from 1 p.m. until 3 p.m.

Arrangements are by Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home of Keystone Heights 32656 352-473-3176 www.jonesgallagherfh.com.

## Lamar Dean Jr.

Donald Lamar Dean Jr., 61, of Starke, passed from this life peacefully on Sunday, Jan. 19, 2025, at his home following an extended illness. Born in Jacksonville, he was a 1981 graduate of Osceola High School in Kissimmee. He had resided in Starke for the past four years, moving there from Middleburg. He worked as a truck driver for 34 years, having worked with five different companies and, most recently, with 10 Roads Express. He had also served the last 13 years as the minister of the Starke Church of Christ. In addition, he volunteered for 13 years with Florida Youth Challenge Academy. Years ago, he sang tenor with a gospel quartet. In his leisure time he enjoyed camping. He was preceded in death by a brother, Richard Twain Dean.

He is survived by his wife of 15 years and "best friend," Christa Dean of Middleburg; his mother, Helen Haddock McMath of Palatka; his father, Donald Dean and step-mother, Brenda, of Lawtey; two sons, Brett L. (Nicole) Dean of Crawfordville and Justin K. (Jenna) Dean of Hilliard; two step-daughters, Rebekah (Shawn) Prevatt of Gainesville and Megan (Joe) Fretwell of Middleburg; brother, Patrick (Dawn) Dean of Okeechobee; nine grandchildren, Wyatt Dean, Eli Dean, Cheyenne Dean, Logan Dean, Lane Dean, Landon Dean, Lawson Dean, Judah Prevatt and Jireh Prevatt.

Services celebrating his life will be at 11 a.m. Friday, Jan. 24, at the Starke Church of Christ, with Brother C.L. Overturf Jr., officiating. Burial will follow at 3 p.m. at Haddock Cemetery in Kings Ferry (Nassau County). The family will receive friends at the church on Friday, Jan. 24 from 10 a.m. until the time of services at 11 a.m. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be sent to FLYCA Ministry Program, c/o, Kingsley Lake Baptist Church, 6289 Mary Dot Lane, Starke, FL 32091. Memories and condolences may be expressed to the family at Lamar's Book of Memories at www.j-ofunerals.com.

Arrangements are entrusted to Johnson-Overturf Funeral Home in Palatka. PAID OBITUARY

## Richard Jernigan

Richard Eugene Jernigan, 80, of Ormond Beach and formerly of Interlachen passed from this life Friday, Jan. 10, 2025, at Advent Health Daytona Beach. A native of Miami Beach, he had resided in Ormond Beach since 2019, moving there from Interlachen, where he resided for eight years. He graduated from Forrest Park High School in Forrest Park, Georgia, where he played on the baseball team. He later served honorably in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. He received his bachelor's degree in accounting and business from West Georgia College. He worked 25 years with the State Department of Corrections, where he served as a correctional officer inspector. In his leisure time, he enjoyed golfing, the beach, watching all sports, and especially high school football. He was also an avid Georgia Bulldog fan. He was devoted to his family and especially to his grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents, George Washington Zessin and Hazel Pittman Zessin.

He is survived by his wife of 42 years, Kathleen "Kathy" Jernigan of Ormond Beach; three daughters, Jessica (Steve) Sayre of Jacksonville, Kathleen Jernigan of Ormond Beach and Casey Serrano-Prusinski of Ocala; a brother, Ken (Ann) Jernigan of Hawthorne; eight grandchildren, Maddie Sayre, Luke Sayre, Wyatt Sayre, Kendal Jones, Casey Whitehead, Emma Williams, Landon Serrano and Sofia Serrano; nephew, Jeff (Brenda) Jernigan; nieces, Beth (Joe) Rutherford and Jodie (Travis) Beckham; six great-nephews; a great-niece; and 16 great-great-nieces and nephews.

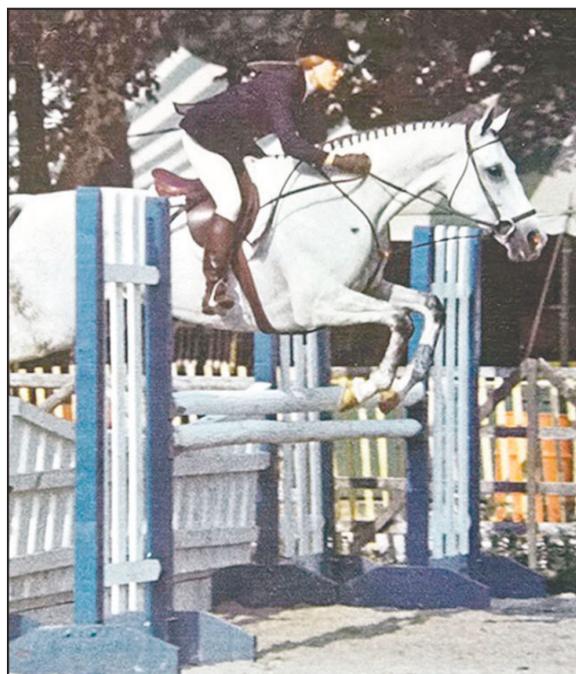
Private graveside services will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial donations be sent to Tribute Program, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, P.O. Box 1000, Dept. 142, Memphis, TN 38101-9908. Memories and condolences may be expressed to the family at Richard's Book of Memories page at www.j-ofunerals.com.

Arrangements are entrusted to Johnson-Overturf Funeral Home in Interlachen. PAID OBITUARY

## Glenn Polk

On Wednesday, Jan. 15, 2025, the world lost a beloved husband, father, and friend, Robert "Glenn" Polk. Born on Aug. 6, 1940, in Wauchula, he lived a life rich in experiences and love, departing peacefully due to natural causes at the age of 84. He was a graduate of Hardee County High School, spent five years in the Navy, and attended the University of Florida. He spent numerous years building a successful career in the farm equipment industry as a sales representative in mechanized agriculture. His dedication to his work reflected his belief in the importance of agriculture and his commitment to supporting those who fed our communities. Beyond his professional accomplishments, he was a man of great passions. He cherished the early mornings spent fishing and the thrill of hunting in the Florida wilds. Yet, nothing brought him more joy than the time he spent with his family. He was a devoted husband of 64 years to E. Marie Polk, and together they nurtured and raised three wonderful sons, Scott Glenn (Elise) Polk, Jason Lamar (Amy) Polk, and Randall LeRoy (Mindy) Polk, whose lives he enriched with love and laughter. He took immense pride in being a grandfather, treasuring each moment spent with his grandchildren, Courtney (Chris) Moody, Brett (Janelle) Polk, Brian (Ashley) Polk, Andrew Polk, Alisha (Adam) Gray, Rachel (Keith) Sweat, Caleb Polk, Jacob Polk, Bret Polk; and great-grandchildren, Chase, Callie, Ryan, Riley, Olivia, Emma, Jalon, Brendon, Logan, Kennedy, Kaidence, Konner, Emrie, Eli and Silas. He was preceded in death by his parents, Marvin L. Polk and Marie A. Polk; and his siblings, LeRoy Polk, Clarice Johnson, Dorice Albritton, and Betty Pace.

Glenn's legacy was honored Sunday, Jan. 19, with a ceremony that was held at 2300 Temple Ave., Starke, where family and friends gathered to celebrate his life, share stories, and remember the profound impact he had on those around him. Arrangements were by Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home of Starke, 904-964-6200. www.jonesgallagherfh.com. PAID OBITUARY



Mary Day-Petrano has quite an extensive list of accomplishments as a rider and offers her knowledge as she trains others in English riding.

## Day-Petrano to offer English-riding training in Starke

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

A child's wish turned into so much more for Mary Day-Petrano, who took the reins of opportunities presented to her at a young age and turned them into a successful career of riding and training horses as well as training riders.

Day-Petrano told her parents she wanted a horse. She eventually got that horse, which was the start of a long ride that has now taken her to Starke, where she will offer English riding lessons.

"I've been doing this a really long time," Day-Petrano said. "The first time I taught riding lessons was when I was 16."

What that amounts to now is 50-plus years of experience.

Day-Petrano said she considers working with children and ponies to be one of her areas of expertise. Another would be how to succeed at shows. She had a period of time in the mid-1970s where she achieved 44 wins and approximately 100 second-place finishes as well as some reserve championships.

It was part of a career that included hundreds of first-place finishes, a few hundred second-place finishes and approximately 100 championships and reserve championships.

"My specialty is winning at horse shows," Day-Petrano said.

Day-Petrano, who previously owned a farm in Hawthorne, now owns approximately 10 acres on 143rd Way (off C.R. 100A). She and her husband, David, who owns the barber shop next to the Starke Post Office, have been working on the land to ready it for

students. That work has included clearing land and building pens. It's still a work in progress that will include creating a course with jumps.

Students can learn such English-riding disciplines from Day-Petrano as equitation, hunter and show jumping. Equitation is how correct the rider's form is and whether the rider can execute technical jumping questions perfectly. Hunter is where the horse's/pony's form is judged as well as evenness of the horse's/pony's pace and how quiet the horse/pony is as well as suitability of the rider to the horse/pony. Show jumping is attaining the fastest speed and least number of faults (faults are assigned for knocking down jumps or refusals), where accuracy, in terms of perfect take-off spots and steady, even pace, is not required.

Day-Petrano said if a rider doesn't learn to be accurate in equitation and hunter classes, the rider might get hurt going at speed and higher jump heights.

David Petrano said his wife's level of expertise allows her to offer local riders the kind of training they'd receive at Palm Beach County's Wellington Equestrian Center.

"We can give Wellington-level lessons right here in Starke," David Petrano said.

It brings to mind a slogan Day-Petrano is considering for her soon-to-be website: No dreamer is too small, and no dream is too big.

The opportunity for locals to make their dreams come true

See HORSES, page 12

## Jason Waters

Jason Craig Waters, 48, of Macclenny passed away peacefully Saturday, Jan. 18, 2025, at Lumber City Care Center in Lumber City, Georgia. He was born in Jacksonville on Oct. 10, 1976, to his loving parents, James Waters and Linda Morgan Waters. From a young age, he loved sports. In his younger years he played football and, while in school, he played baseball. He was raised in Bradford and Baker counties and graduated from Baker County High School in 1995. Shortly after graduation, he furthered his education at Lake City Community College and the University of Central Florida, where he earned his associate's degree. While in school, he was dedicated to his career at Pizza Hut. He started as a waiter, later he served as a driver and then became assistant manager with much hard work and determination. He had an amazing personality, along with a smile, which certainly set him apart. He was outgoing and never met a stranger. When not working, he loved being outdoors and thoroughly enjoyed fishing and hunting with his dad and uncles, Mike, Danny and Wilbur. He loved baseball and football season; proudly supporting Detroit Lions football, Florida State Seminoles football, and Chicago Cubs baseball. He also enjoyed attending Taylor Church, where he was a longtime member. More than anything, Jason loved his family and enjoyed spending precious time with them. He was preceded in death by his mother, Linda Morgan Waters; maternal grandparents, Claude and Lorene Morgan; and paternal grandparents, James and Lois Waters.

He is survived by his loving parents, James and Barbara Waters of Macclenny; sister, Dana (Allen) Wood of Macclenny; brother, Chris (Sandra) Harvey of Macclenny; nephew, Garrett (Pauline) Wood; niece, Emily Harvey; best friends, Bobby Padgett and David Wisniewski; along with numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends.

A Celebration of Life will be held Saturday, Feb. 1, at 11 a.m. at V. Todd Ferreira Funeral Services Chapel, with Pastor Mark Woods officiating. Following the service, the family invites you to continue in fellowship with light hours d'oeuvres. In lieu of flowers, please make donations to help fund a cure in Jason's honor to Huntington's Disease Society of America, https://hdusa.org

Arrangements are under the care and direction of V. Todd Ferreira Funeral Services 250 N. Lowder St. Macclenny 32063. 904-259-5700. Visit www.ferreirafuneralservices.com to sign the family's guest book. PAID OBITUARY



## Card of Thanks

A Special Thank You!

My family and I will be forever grateful for all the love and kindness shown to us in the passing of the love of my life, Roy Jackson. We are thankful to each of you for the flowers, food, visits, prayers, cards, letters and kind words that were spoken. Roy loved his family, friends and all his customers. We plan to keep his store, Roy's Market, open and keep on making the famous "Roy's Sausage."

If we missed saying thank you personally to anyone, please accept this as a special thanks.

May God's blessings be on all of you!

Clifford Jackson and family



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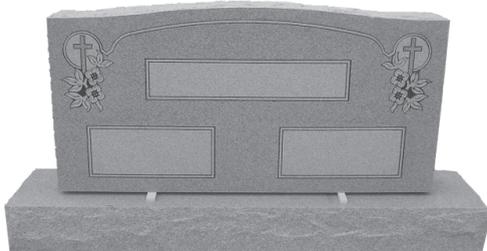


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now by calling 904-863-6047 or filling out a form online at tinyurl.com/starketax.

Appointments will be available on Thursdays from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. beginning Feb. 6.

Tax-Aide, the nation's largest free tax-assistance service, served 1.7 million taxpayers in 2024.

Taxpayers must present picture IDs for themselves and their spouses and provide a Social-Security card for all who'll be listed on a return. Tax-Aide volunteers gather personal information, including marital and household dependents, income, expenses and life events. All Tax-Aide volunteers sign an agreement to keep all taxpayer information secure, using it only to complete the individual's tax return.

Tax returns are completed by certified counselors and then reviewed for completeness and accuracy by a second certified counselor.

Taxpayers will receive paper copies of their returns, which will be filed electronically.

## BHS girls back on track with 37-32 win over Eastside Rams

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Bradford High School took advantage of Eastside's poor shooting in the fourth quarter, outscoring the visiting Rams 8-2 and winning 37-32 in a girls basketball matchup on Jan. 20.

Ar'Nayshia Griffin scored on a drive to the basket with 3:19 to play to give the Class 3A Tornadoes (13-4) the lead for good as Class 4A Eastside made just 1 of 14 field-goal attempts in the final quarter.

The win snapped a two-game losing streak for the Tornadoes.

Griffin, who finished with 23 points, scored seven points during a 9-0 run in the first quarter that helped send the Tornadoes into the second quarter leading 14-9.

The second quarter opened with Bradford outscoring Eastside 6-2, with all six points coming from Griffin. Three of those came off her second three-point of the game.

Eastside scored six straight points, including two off a turnover that pulled the Rams to within 20-17. Bradford turned the ball over again on an offensive foul, but the Rams gave the ball right back on a turnover of their own with 17 seconds remaining in the half. Ky'lee Johnson scored off an offensive rebound



Ar'Nayshia Griffin (second from right) puts up a shot underneath the basket against Eastside.

just before the buzzer to send the Tornadoes into halftime leading 22-17.

Bradford scored the first four points of the third quarter, with Griffin scoring off a Nyasia Lopey assist and then getting another basket off an Eastside turnover. The Tornadoes' Cherish Bing had a three-pointer, but the Rams made three of their own, which made it a 29-26 game in favor of Bradford.

The Tornadoes wouldn't score again, committing five turnovers (including two on the offensive end) as the Rams were able to take their first lead of the game and go into the fourth quarter with a 30-29 advantage over Bradford.

Eastside got a basket to open the final quarter, but would go 0 for 13 from the field the rest of

See HOOPS, page 13

## Bradford High junior Griffin reaches 1K career points

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Though the Bradford High School girls basketball team lost its second straight game on Jan. 18 to Oakleaf, the Tornadoes did have something to celebrate as junior Ar'Nayshia Griffin eclipsed 1,000 points for her career.

"It was very exciting," said Griffin, who after her 18-point effort against Oakleaf and 23-point effort against Eastside on Jan. 20 now has 1,036 career points. "It's something that's not really known (to happen) here."

Bradford Head Coach Sampson Jackson added, "It's a milestone many people don't get to."

Yet when Griffin saw it was within her reach prior to the season, she was ready to go get it. Reaching it in a game Bradford won would've been the icing on the cake, but the accomplishment was in no way diminished.

"That was my moment," Griffin said. "I'll always be proud of it. Of course, I wanted to win, but I'll just take my moments when I have them."

Griffin (through Jan. 20) has 393 points this season, averaging 24.5 per game. She has had six games in which she's scored at least 30 points, with a high this season of 43 in a 66-31 win over Suwannee on Jan. 13.



Bradford High School junior Ar'Nayshia Griffin has eclipsed 1,000 points for her career. She set the milestone during the Tornadoes' 42-38 loss to Oakleaf on Jan. 18. Griffin has more points this season than any other player for a Class 3A school (out of those whose stats are on MaxPreps).

In looking at players who've had their stats uploaded to MaxPreps, Griffin has the most points in Class 3A ahead of North Bay Haven Charter Academy's Kaylee Goodpaster, who has 384 points. Griffin's points-per-game average is third best in 3A behind Somerset College Prep's Khloe Rodgers (25.2) and Pine Crest's Isabella Sangha (25.1).

Griffin is ranked 12th in total points and 11th in scoring average when you combine all of the state's classifications. "I've been in the gym consistently this summer, getting more shots in and getting my confidence up," Griffin said.

Jackson said what Griffin does outside of games has been the key to her effectiveness.

"She's dedicated to working," Jackson said. "She's always willing to get into the gym and put in extra work, put in extra time. There are still areas she's trying to improve in — different areas related to the game — but I think just that time has allowed her to get comfortable with the ball in her hands and scoring."

Griffin said also gave credits to her teammates, saying, "They're just amazing. They give me the ball. They let me score. They let me do mine; I let them do theirs. We just play together."

# Legal Notices

Legals for the week of Jan. 23, 2025

## BRADFORD

### NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE

To satisfy the owner's storage lien, KO Storage LLC will sell at public lien sale on February 18, 2025. The personal property in the below-listed units, which may include but are not limited to: Household goods, boxes/totes/bags, clothing, bedding, tools and toys. The public sale of these items will begin at 10AM on February 11, 2025 and end at 10AM on February 18, 2025. The public sale will take place on [www.storageusa.com](http://www.storageusa.com). KO Storage of Starke - S Walnut St, 1650 South Walnut Street, Starke FL 32091, (952)-491-6837  
Time: 10:00AM CST  
B23, STONEMAN, MIKE, B51, Green, Cherish  
Public sale terms, rules, and regulations will be made available on [www.storageusa.com](http://www.storageusa.com). All sales are subject to cancellation. We reserve the right to refuse any bid. Payment must be by credit/debit card, we do not accept checks or cash. Buyers must secure the units with their own personal locks. To claim tax-exempt status, original RESALE certificates for each space purchased is required. By KO Storage LLC, 10301 Wayzata Blvd, Minnetonka, MN 55305. (952)-491-6837.

1/16 2tchg 1/23-BCT

### IN THE CIRCUIT COURT IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA PROBATE DIVISION

FILE NO.: 04-2025-CP-000004  
In re: THE ESTATE OF MARVINA LOUISE STALLINGS STEADMAN, also known as MARVINA LOUISE STEADMAN, MARVINA L. STEADMAN, and MARVINA S. STEADMAN, Deceased.

### NOTICE TO CREDITORS

The administration of the estate of Marvina Louise Stallings Steadman, also known as Marvina Louise Steadman, Marvina L. Steadman and Marvina S. Steadman, whose date of death was October 2, 2024, and whose Social Security Number is \*\*\*\*-

1463, is pending in the Circuit Court for Bradford County, Florida, Probate Division, the address of which is Bradford County Courthouse, 845 North Temple Avenue, Starke, Florida 32091. The name and address of the personal representative and the personal representative's attorney are set forth below.

All creditors of the decedent and other persons having claims or demands against decedent's estate on whom a copy of this notice is required to be served must file their claims with this Court WITHIN THE LATER OF 3 MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE OR 30 DAYS AFTER THE DATE OF SERVICE OF A COPY OF THIS NOTICE ON THEM.

All other creditors of the decedent and other persons having claims or demands against decedent's estate must file their claims with this Court WITHIN 3 MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE.

ALL CLAIMS NOT SO FILED WITHIN

### IN THE CIRCUIT COURT IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA PROBATE DIVISION

FILE NO.: 04-2025-CP-000003  
In re: THE ESTATE OF VIOLET LOUISE FORGETTE, also known as VIOLET L. FORGETTE and VIOLET FORGETTE, Deceased.

### NOTICE TO CREDITORS

The administration of the estate of Violet Louise Forgette, also known as Violet L. Forgette and Violet Forgette, whose date of death was May 26, 2024, and whose Social Security Number is \*\*\*\*-7787, is pending in the Circuit Court for Bradford County, Florida, Probate Division, the address of which is Bradford County Courthouse, 845 North Temple Avenue, Starke, Florida 32091. The name and address of the personal representative and the personal representative's attorney are set forth below.

All creditors of the decedent and other persons having claims or demands against decedent's estate on whom a copy of this notice is required to be served must file their claims with this Court WITHIN THE LATER OF 3 MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE OR 30 DAYS AFTER THE DATE OF SERVICE OF A COPY OF THIS NOTICE ON THEM.

All other creditors of the decedent and other persons having claims or demands against decedent's estate must file their claims with this Court WITHIN 3 MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE.

ALL CLAIMS NOT SO FILED WITHIN

### THE TIME PERIODS SET FORTH IN SECTION 733.702 OF THE FLORIDA PROBATE CODE WILL BE FOREVER BARRED.

NOTWITHSTANDING THE TIME PERIOD SET FORTH ABOVE, ANY CLAIM FILED TWO (2) YEARS OR MORE AFTER THE DECEDENT'S DATE OF DEATH IS BARRED.

The date of the first publication of this Notice is January 16, 2025.  
Personal Representative: Daniel Lee Stallings  
202 Mulberry Circle  
Crawfordville, Florida 32327  
Attorneys for Personal Representative: TAYLOR ARRUBLA HARDWICK P.A. By /s/Jennifer T. Arrubla James J. Taylor Jr. Florida Bar No. 334057 Jennifer T. Arrubla Florida Bar No. 98804 420 S. Lawrence Blvd. Keystone Heights, Florida 32656 Primary Email: Jennifer@tah-law.com 1/16 2tchg 1/23-BCT

### Branch Application Filing

Notification is given that First Federal Bank, 4705 US Highway 90 West, Lake City, Florida has filed an application with the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency on January 23, 2025, as specified in 12 CFR 5 for permission to establish a full-service branch office at 311 N Temple Avenue, Starke, Bradford County, Florida 32091. Any person wishing to comment on this application may file comments in writing with the Director for Licensing at 500 N. Akard St., Suite 1600, Dallas, TX 75201 or at [LicensingPublicComments@occ.treas.gov](mailto:LicensingPublicComments@occ.treas.gov) within 30 days of the date of this publication. To request a copy of the public portion of the filing, contact the Director for Licensing at 500 N. Akard St., Suite 1600, Dallas TX 75201 or email [Licensing@occ.treas.gov](mailto:Licensing@occ.treas.gov). Filing information may also be found in the OCC's Weekly Bulletin available at [www.occ.gov](http://www.occ.gov). 1/23 1tchg-BCT

### BUDGET WORKSHOP

THE PUBLIC IS HEREBY NOTIFIED that the Bradford County Board of County Commissioners will hold a workshop to discuss the 25-26 Fiscal Year budget on January 28, 2025, at 5:30 PM, inside the county commission meeting room, located in the north wing section of the Bradford County Courthouse, 945 N. Temple Avenue, Starke, FL. Said meeting location is secured — no firearms or weapons are permitted. 1/23 1tchg-BCT

### IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY GENERAL JURISDICTION DIVISION

CASE NO. 24000272CAAXMX

### PENNY MAC LOAN SERVICES, LLC, Plaintiff, VS. ELIZABETH MARIE COODY, et al., Defendant,

### NOTICE OF ACTION

To the following Defendant(s): ANY AND ALL UNKNOWN PARTIES CLAIMING BY, THROUGH, UNDER, AND AGAINST ESTATE OF GAYLA MARIE TAYLOR, WHETHER SAID UNKNOWN PARTIES MAY CLAIM AN INTEREST AS SPOUSES, HEIRS, DEVISEES, GRANTEEES, OR OTHER CLAIMANTS (RESIDENCE UNKNOWN) YOU ARE NOTIFIED that an action for Foreclosure of Mortgage on the following described property: LOT 7 AND NORTHERLY 1/2 OF LOT 6, BLOCK 27, LIVINGSTON, TRUBY AND COMPANY'S ADDITION TO STARKE, IN SECTION 28, TOWNSHIP 6 SOUTH, RANGE 22 EAST, AS PER THE PLAT RECORDED IN DEED BOOK J, PAGE 232, 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, on McCalla Raymer Leibert Pierce, LLP, Sara Collins, Attorney for Plaintiff, whose address is 225 East Robinson Street, Suite 155, Orlando, FL 32801 on or before a date which is within thirty (30) days after the first publication of this Notice in 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. WITNESS my hand and seal of this Court this 15th day of January, 2025. DENNY THOMPSON CLERK OF COURT OF BRADFORD COUNTY,

By: KANETRA JENKINS As Deputy Clerk

Publish In: Bradford County Telegraph Submitted by: MCCALLA RAYMER LEIBERT PIERCE, LLP 225 East Robinson Street, Suite 155, Orlando, FL 32801 Phone: (407) 674-1850 Email: [AccountsPayable@mccalla.com](mailto:AccountsPayable@mccalla.com) 24-10244FL

### IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY GENERAL JURISDICTION DIVISION

CASE NO. 24000272CAAXMX

PENNYMAC LOAN SERVICES, LLC, Plaintiff, VS. ELIZABETH MARIE COODY, et al., Defendant,

AFFIDAVIT OF CONSTRUCTIVE SERVICE UNKNOWN HEIRS & BENEFICIARIES (STATE OF FLORIDA) COUNTY OF ORANGE)

Before me, the undersigned authority, personally appeared, Sara Collins, Esquire, who, first being duly sworn, deposes and says:

1. Affiant is an attorney for Plaintiff in this action and is attempting to effectuate service of process by publication to enforce a legal or

equitable lien or claim to title or interest in real property within the jurisdiction of the court. §49.01 (1)(f), Fla. Stat. (2011).

2: Plaintiff has discerned that Defendant/Borrower, GAYLA MARIE TAYLOR, is deceased. The Death Certificate was recorded on 10/11/2024 in Official Records Book 2115 at Page 3. A copy of the Death Certificate is attached hereto.

3. Affiant believes that there are persons who are or may be interested in the subject matter of this action, whose names, after diligent search and inquiry, are unknown to affiant. Said unknown parties may claim an interest as heirs, devisees, grantees, assignees, lienors, creditors, trustees or other claimants, by, through, under, or against Defendant(s)/Borrower(s), or each of them, who are dead or not known to be dead or alive.

4. Affiant has made a diligent search and inquiry to discover the name(s) and residence(s) of, ANY AND ALL UNKNOWN PARTIES CLAIMING BY, THROUGH, UNDER, AND AGAINST ESTATE OF GAYLA MARIE TAYLOR, WHETHER SAID UNKNOWN PARTIES MAY CLAIM AN INTEREST AS SPOUSES, HEIRS, DEVISEES, GRANTEEES, OR OTHER CLAIMANTS in this action.

5. Affiant has attempted to locate Probate documents in Public Records. However, the names and residences of Defendants remain unknown.

6. Personal service of process cannot be had and constructive service of process by publication is necessary to effectuate service pursuant to Section 49.021(1), Florida Statutes. FURTHER AFFIANT SAYETH NAUGHT.

### VERIFICATION

Under the penalties of perjury, and pursuant to Fla. Stat. 92.525(1)(b) and (2), I declared that I have read the foregoing affidavit, and the facts stated in it are true on this 8th day of January, 2025.

BY: Sara Collins, Esq. McCalla Raymer Leibert Pierce, LLP Attorney for Plaintiff 225 East Robinson Street, Suite 155 Orlando, FL 32801 Phone: (407) 674-1850 Fax: (321) 248-0420 Email: [MRService@mccalla.com](mailto:MRService@mccalla.com) Fla. Bar No.: 53992

1/23 2tchg 1/30-BCT

### NOTICE OF INTENTION TO REGISTER FICTITIOUS NAME

Pursuant to Section 865.09, Florida Statutes, notice is hereby given that the undersigned: William Terry Brant, 1358 SE 5th Ave., Melrose, FL 32266, SOLE owner, doing business under the firm name of: Lake Region Health and Wellness Counseling, 1358 SE 5th Ave., Melrose, FL 32666 intends to register fictitious name under the aforesaid statute. Dated this 12st day of JANUARY A.D., 2025, in BRADFORD County.

1/23 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 January 2, 2025:

Circle H Ranch, Inc., 13055 SW 175th Ave, Brookler, FL 32622-2901 has submitted Water Use Permit application #218403-3, for modification to withdraw 0.5561 million gallons per day of groundwater for agricultural use. This project is located in Sections 5-8, Township 7S, Range 20E; Sections 1 and 12, Township 7S, Range 19E; Sections 25 and 36, Township 6S, Range 19E; Sections 30-32, Township 6S, Range 20E, 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 30, 2025 /tm

1/23 1tchg-BCT

## UNION

### THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES (THE DEPARTMENT) HAS RECEIVED A NOTICE OF INACTIVE STATUS FROM FLORIDACOMMERCE DECLARING THE UNION COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT INACTIVE UNDER CHAPTER 189, FLORIDA STATUTES.

The Department has found that the Union Soil and Water Conservation District was not in compliance with the audit and financial reporting requirements in Chapter 189, Florida Statutes, and proposes a certification determining that the continued operation of the District is not administratively practicable and feasible under the provisions of the Chapter.

The territory included in the Union County Soil and Water Conservation District is the same as the jurisdictional boundaries of Union County, Florida. This Notice shall be published once a week for two weeks. Any comments or objections to the proposed certification, or any claims against the assets of the District, must be filed with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Agency Clerk, 600 South Calhoun Street, Holland Building, Suite 254, Tallahassee, FL 32399; or by email at [AgencyClerk@fdacs.gov](mailto:AgencyClerk@fdacs.gov) not later than 60 days after the date of last publication.

1/23 2tchg 1/30-UCT

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## HORSES

Continued from page 10

arose a long time ago from a child's love for horses.

### Not just a fad

Day-Petrano said she asked her parents for a horse when she was 7. They didn't realize at the time how passionate she was about real, live horses, opting instead to give her toys to play with.

"My parents thought it was a fad, so they got me a bunch of Breyer plastic horses," Day-Petrano said.

She wasn't content with that. She collected clippings from racehorse magazines and became immersed in such details as the pedigrees of different horses and "who you'd breed with who to get the best racehorse."

At the age of 10, Day-Petrano was begging her parents to at least give her the opportunity to ride a horse.

"They started taking me to one of those places where you can rent a horse for an hour and ride," she said, adding, "It was in Michigan in winter in an indoor arena."

Day-Petrano finally got her horse, Buck, which was purchased from someone who worked for IBM with her father and was transferring to another location. Later, her parents bought her a foal named Brett (birthed at the facility where they were boarding Buck) as well as a horse named Possum, which replaced Buck.

Brett and Possum moved with Day-Petrano and her family when her father was transferred to North Salem, New York.

### Riding to success

In New York, Day-Petrano began taking English-riding lessons (as well as acquiring new horses, such as Coconut Crunch, or simply Coco, and a foal birthed by Possum named Dizzy Dancer). Her training incorporated more than riding.

"After the riding lessons, there was a big saddle rack and sponges and saddle soap and buckets," Day-Petrano said. "We all had to wipe off and clean our saddles and bridles."

She also broke her first horse at the age of 12.

It was also around that age that Day-Petrano would ride one of her horses on trails through the

woods that led from her house to a farm that hosted horse shows that she would participate in.

"Of course, there were all the riders who were really good and winning all the ribbons, and then there was me," she said. "I fell off a couple of times and stuff like that."

Day-Petrano told herself she wanted to one day be at the same level as those "really good" riders.

Training with someone who made the finals in the Medal and Maclay classes as a junior rider in 1963-65 would be a step in that direction. Day-Petrano began learning from Pam Hart, who as a trainer had students go on to compete at a high level. Hart trained under a notable rider as well — Victor Hugo-Vidal.

Hart trained an advanced student who was trying to qualify for the Medal and Maclay Finals at a show in New Jersey. However, the medal class didn't have enough riders in order to take place. That led to the entry of Day-Petrano and her horse Brett.

"I actually made it around the course," she said, "but it was about 6-inch higher jumps than I had ever jumped. I did well enough."

Hart said Day-Petrano needed a new horse, but Day-Petrano's parents didn't have a big budget with which to buy horses. Hart searched for off-track thoroughbreds at local farms and acquired a mare named Morning Mist.

Day-Petrano and Morning Mist qualified for the Medal and Maclay Finals in 1973. She said she did "pretty good" despite not having "the best equitation horse out there."

"It was a real honor to be able to qualify and be invited to compete," Day-Petrano said.

She eventually began training at Nimrod Farm in Weston, Connecticut, with Ronnie Mutch and Sue Bauer, whose riders were doing a lot of winning. As



The photos above and to the left show Mary Day-Petrano riding Piece O' Cake. The duo had quite a run of success during a period of time in the 1970s, with 44 wins, 100 second-place finishes and some reserve championships.



A view of some of the jumps that are being repainted or rebuilt on Mary Day-Petrano's property.

riders themselves, Mutch had won the Medal Finals (for the entire country), while Bauer was second/reserve champion in the Maclay Finals (for the entire country). Mutch also rode and trained with the United States Equestrian Team.

Day-Petrano said she showed up at the farm six days a week and sometimes every day of the week, which led to her getting a lot of riding experience. She was assigned eight ponies to ride daily. The animals belonged to people who couldn't show up every day to ride them.

"I turned into Ronnie's pony trainer," Day-Petrano said.

One day, Day-Petrano showed up at the farm and saw "the most gorgeous horse I've ever seen." It had been shipped there for training. Day-Petrano asked Mutch if she could ride the horse, which she discovered was "spunky." She got bucked off, but asked for another chance. She stayed on the horse's back and rode a little better.

With the help of her parents and her grandparents, Day-Petrano bought that horse, whose name was Piece O' Cake.

She began showing Piece O' Cake in the fall of 1973. She earned some first places and dozens of second places in shows in 1974.

Day-Petrano kept working with Piece O' Cake and "turned her into a great horse." That became evident after she competed in the Winter Equestrian Festival in Florida in 1975.

"I just hit this winning streak after the Winter Equestrian Festival. I think I won something like 44 first-place ribbons," Day-Petrano said.

She went on to win National Horse of the Year — the culmination of showing at approximately 100 top-level A-rated shows all over the Eastern and Midwestern U.S. Day-Petrano went up against many regions' top horses in the amateur-owner division. She described the national honor as "a marathon of winning over many, many top-level horses."

Day-Petrano eventually married and gave birth to a daughter. She worked with horses at a couple of places, but said it's hard to make a lot

of money in horses if you don't own a big farm. Therefore, when her father and stepmother moved to California, she moved there also to take advantage of her father's offer to help her go to college. She said a lot of horse trainers from wealthy families go to college, so she might as well do so, too.

"I felt a little outclassed, even though I was a great rider," Day-Petrano said.

It was one of two promises her father made to her. The other was to buy her a working equestrian center or leave her the money in his will to make such a purchase. Day-Petrano said at that time (1979), it would've amounted to approximately \$2 million.

Neither promise was fulfilled, though Day-Petrano admitted she believes her father is still alive and that she hasn't seen his will. However, it marked the next step in her journey, which included putting herself through college, training riders and competing in shows.

### School and horses

Day-Petrano, who eventually divorced her first husband, went to college and graduated with a degree in International Business Management as well as completing three foreign-language series of courses in Arabic, Russian and Spanish. She then applied for and was accepted into her college's business and law schools. She went to work earning a Juris Doctor-Master of Business Administration degree.

Once she was done with school, Day-Petrano wanted to buy a good horse and train it, but she didn't have the money to buy a good horse, so she bought a pony, thinking she'd train it, sell it and use that money to buy a horse. In the meantime, she found "a cheap place" to board the pony — a vineyard that had some horse stalls.

Unbeknownst to Day-Petrano, her daughter (now grown) had bought a horse, but it got to be too hard for her to handle. Her daughter asked her if she would take the horse, which was named Gulliver, and train it, but what Day-Petrano suggested was a swap. She'd take ownership of the horse, while her daughter

could have the pony, which was named Pebbles.

Day-Petrano wound up giving lessons to an 11-year-old girl who was brought to her attention by the owner of the vineyard where Pebbles was boarded. As time went on, she began training more and more children until she found herself giving lessons to 20-25 kids. While doing that, she and her daughter competed in shows with Pebbles and Gulliver.

The owner of another horse farm had a junior trainer leave her employ, so he approached Day-Petrano about coming to his farm. Day-Petrano said she could only do so much at the vineyard due to its limited number of stables, so she made the move.

Day-Petrano was still competing in shows, winning first- and second-place ribbons with Gulliver.

### Moving to Florida

The next move for Day-Petrano covered a greater distance, as she went from California to Florida. She did so because of an ad she saw posted by the Tampa Yacht and Country Club. In responding to it, she was told she'd be hired to train a girl and her ponies.

Day-Petrano said she thought the opportunity would be "a boost to her career," so she moved to Florida. However, she found out that the man who said he'd hire her had changed his mind. That led to Day-Petrano working as an understudy for a number of trainers.

"I was training and schooling all the horses of their customers that they were then taking to horse shows and winning with," Day-Petrano said. "I trained and schooled ponies that they then got big prices for and sold."

After doing that for a while, Day-Petrano bought the farm in Hawthorne.

"I was giving lots of riding lessons," she said. "I was giving them to University of Florida students, adults and kids."

Now, Day-Petrano is in Starke, moving there so her husband could be closer to his barbershop.

Wherever the location, though, Day-Petrano will continue feeding her passion for horses and passing it along to others. She can work with any level rider, but how much a rider wants to train is up to them, though Day-Petrano said a person isn't going to develop as a rider if they take training one day a week and don't have a horse to ride at home.

With that in mind, Day-Petrano provides discounts on her hourly rate dependent upon the number of lessons a person receives in a week.

"You want to encourage them to ride more," Day-Petrano said.

For more information, please call 727-237-6778 or send email to ponyhunterjumper@yahoo.com.

# The Matthews Museum (Bradford County Museum) Needs Volunteers!

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- \* Share interesting facts about Bradford County.
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To find out more

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The hiring of a lawyer is an important decision that should not be based solely upon advertisements. Before you decide, ask us to send you information about our qualifications and experience.

## BHS girls lose top-20 battle between district teams

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Newberry used a 13-2 fourth-quarter run to thwart the Bradford High School girls basketball team's rally as the visiting Panthers won 56-46 in a Jan. 17 matchup of District 3-3A teams.

Both teams entered the game in the top 20 of the Florida High School Athletic Association/MaxPreps Class 3A power rankings. Bradford was ranked 16th, while Newberry was 18th.

The Tornadoes got off to bad start, committing 10 turnovers in the first quarter. Bradford's Nichelle Brown scored the game's first basket, but it was one of only four field-goal attempts for the Tornadoes in the quarter. Newberry's Brandy Whitfield scored off her own steal, which was the start of a 10-0 Panthers run that also included baskets following steals by Sarah Beaulieu and Ariyah Debose.

Ar'Nayshia Griffin scored on a drive for Bradford to make it a 10-4 game, but the Panthers then went on a 9-2 run that included seven points from Jada Brown.

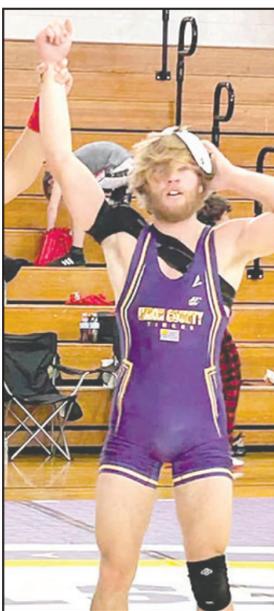
Bradford cut down on its turnovers in the second quarter, but continued its struggles from the foul line. The Tornadoes made 3 of 7 free throws in both the first and second quarters.

The Tornadoes scored the first five points of the second quarter, getting a pair of baskets from Griffin and a free throw from Brown, but a three-pointer from Newberry's Jada Brown gave the Panthers an 11-point lead. Newberry would hold a 10- to 11-point lead for most of the rest of the quarter, taking a 28-18 lead into the half.

Nyasia Lopey provided a spark for the Tornadoes at the start of the third quarter. She made 2 of 3 free throws after being fouled on a three-point attempt and then sank a three-point shot to make the score 30-23. Beaulieu answered Lopey's trey with one of her own to put the Panthers back up by 10.

It was 35-25 when Bradford closed out the third quarter with a 9-1 run that began with Griffin scoring on a drive to the basket. After a free throw by Newberry, Bradford's Wynter Barrington grabbed a rebound on the offensive end and put it back for a basket. Griffin had a backcourt steal and was fouled going to the basket, making 1 of 2 free throws. Griffin then had

See BATTLE, page 14



**Union County's Gavin Sparkman is no stranger to having his hand raised in victory. He wrestled his way to 100 career wins this past weekend. He and the rest of the Tigers team will host Gainesville and Interlachen on Thursday, Jan. 23, with weigh-in taking place at 5 p.m.**

## Tigers' Gavin Sparkman gets 100th career wrestling win

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Union County High School wrestler Gavin Sparkman earned his 100th career win at Baker County's Destruction Duals on Jan. 18.

Sparkman, wrestling in the 140-pound class, earned two wins by pin in the tournament, defeating Palatka's Blake Young in 1:03 and Baldwin's Ladon Hartwell in 32 seconds. Sparkman was also awarded a win by forfeit against Raines.

The tournament saw Union defeat Raines 54-18, Palatka 42-24 and Baldwin 45-17, while the Tigers lost 71-6 to eventual champ Ponte Vedra and 67-12 to St. Augustine.

In the match against Raines, Alec French (134-pound class), Jarred Bennett (146), Hunter Cruz (152), Akireon Boykin (159), Carsen Thomas (177), Gage Lewis (192) and Mason Fassett (217) were all awarded wins by forfeit. Wyatt Elixson (167) earned a win by pinning Cameron Carter in 4:59.

Elixson and Thomas each recorded pins in 57 seconds over their opponents in the Tigers' win over Palatka. Bennet, Cruz, Boykin and Breydan Peugh

(108) all had wins by forfeit.

Sparkman's victory in the win over Baldwin was one of six Union had by pin. French won in 1:15, Boykin in 55 seconds, Elixson in 35 seconds, Thomas in 1:38 and C.J. Ivey (192) in 55 seconds. Bennett recorded a 16-9 victory, while Peugh was awarded a win by forfeit.

## Hope boys make it 4 in a row with 67-39 win on Jan. 20

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Walker Munroe recorded led the team in points with 16, rebounds with five, assists with five and steals with four in the Hope Christian Academy boys basketball team's 67-39 win at Gainesville Community Christian on Jan. 20.

It was the fourth straight win for the Lions, who also got 14 points from Gunner Loftten, nine from Joelle Smith, eight from Brice Flint, six each from Mathew Galer and Zenik Patrick and two each from Rory Foster, Caden Hartzog, Mason Masciocchi and Griffin McCloud.

Smith shared the team high in steals with Munroe.

The Lions (8-6) were coming off a week in which they defeated Northside and Corinth.

Aiden Wilson and Masciocchi had 12 and 10 points, respectively, in a 44-36 win over visiting Northside on Jan. 14. Hope also got nine points from Loftten, seven from Munroe, four from Patrick and two from Hartzog.

McCloud had four rebounds, three assists and two blocked shots. He, Masciocchi, Munroe and Wilson each had two steals.

In a 59-45 home win over Corinth, Wilson led the team with 13 points, while Loftten and

Munroe each had 11. Masciocchi added eight points, while the Lions also got six from Patrick, three from McCloud and one from Foster.

Masciocchi and McCloud grabbed eight and six rebounds, respectively, while Loftten and Munroe each had two assists.

Wilson came away with three steals.

The Lions host Gainesville Community Christian on Saturday, Jan. 25, at 7:30 p.m. Hope then hosts games against Westwood Christian on Monday, Jan. 27, at 6:30 p.m. and First Assembly Christian on Tuesday, Jan. 28, at 6 p.m.

## Union Co. girls defeat HCA for 4 wins in a row

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Union County High School got 16 points from Gabrielle Moore in a 38-31 win at Hope Christian Academy in a girls basketball matchup on Jan. 17.

Iamorieah Williams scored nine points for the Tigers, who also got four points from Brooke Hunt, two each from Melinda Mabrey, Tessa Warren, Jamie Webb and Ivy Wilson and one from Naveah Warren.

Moore led the Tigers in rebounds with seven, while Hunt had a team-high three steals.

Hope got 18 points from Addyson Wilson. Autumn Hunt added five points for the Lions, who also got three points from Mackenzie McRaney and two each from Alyssa Hunt and Natalie Lowe.

It was the fourth straight win for Union (7-12), which saw its current streak begin with a 47-45 win over visiting Branford on Jan. 11.

Heaven Scott and Moore scored 19 and 11 points, respectively. The Tigers also got eight points from Hunt, four from Williams, three from Brianna Taylor and two from Aundria Phipps.

Williams and Moore grabbed seven and six rebounds, respectively, while Scott led the team in steals with six. Union also got three steals each from Hunt and Moore as well as two blocked shots by Williams.

Union defeated visiting Keystone Heights 32-30 on Jan. 14, getting 12 points from Hunt and 10 points from Moore. The Tigers also got five points from Williams, four from Scott and one from Mia Kent.

Williams had seven rebounds, while Hunt and Moore each had five.

The Tigers had 20 steals, with Scot and Williams coming away with five and four, respectively.

Williams and Faith Sirmones each blocked two shots.

On Jan. 16, Union traveled



**Gabrielle Moore and the Union County Tigers defeated Hope Christian for their fourth straight win.**

to play West Nassau, getting 23 points from Scott in a 41-28 win.

Hunt and Williams had seven and six points, respectively, while Moore and Sirmones each had two. Wilson added one point.

Williams and Moore grabbed seven and five rebounds, respectively, while Scott and Williams each had three steals.

Williams also blocked two shots.

Union will travel to play Lafayette on Friday, Jan. 24, at 6 p.m. On Tuesday, Jan. 28, the Tigers travel to play Baker County at 6 p.m.

## UCHS boys lose district hoops game to Fort White

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Gavin Jenkins scored 12 fourth-quarter points as the Union County High School boys basketball team whittled a 21-point deficit down to six, but the Tigers couldn't get past District 6-Rural opponent Fort White in a 53-46 loss on Jan. 18 that snapped a five-game winning streak.

It was a matchup of top-20 teams, with the Tigers and the Indians entering the game as the 13th and 16th teams, respectively, in the Florida High School Athletic Association/MaxPreps Rural Class power rankings.

The Tigers (8-3) trailed by five when Jacques McKenzie sank a three-point shot before halftime. Fort White (5-9) outscored Union 18-8 in the third quarter to

See UCHS, page 14

## HOOPS

Continued from page 11

the way.

The Tornadoes trailed 32-29 when Wynter Barrington made a free throw. Bradford then tied the score when Griffin grabbed a defensive rebound and dribbled the length of the court for a basket.

Following an Eastside possession in which the Rams missed three shot attempts, Griffin added her final points on her basket, which put Bradford ahead 34-32.

Brown added a free throw and a last-second layup for the game's final points. She finished with four.

Barrington and Bing each had three points, while Johnson and Kailyn Teal each added two.

Brown and Griffin each had five rebounds, with Brown also recording three assists.

Barrington and Griffin blocked three and two shots, respectively.

The Tornadoes entered the game off a 42-38 loss to Class 6A Oakleaf on Jan. 18 in Orange Park. Griffin scored 18 points, while Bradford also got seven points from Brown, six from Barrington, five from Bing and two from Lopey.

Barrington grabbed a team-



**Nichelle Brown (left) gets fouled on a drive to the basket in Bradford's win over Eastside.**

high 13 rebounds. Brown had seven, while Griffin and Lopey each had six.

Griffin blocked three shots.

Bradford, which was scheduled to play at Hawthorne on Wednesday, Jan. 22, at 7 p.m., will travel to play Trenton on Saturday, Jan. 25, at 4 p.m. The Tornadoes then play two home games against District 3-3A Newberry on Monday, Jan. 27, at 6 p.m. and Williston on Tuesday, Jan. 28, at 6 p.m.

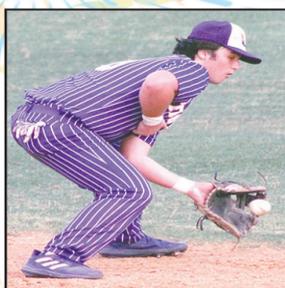


**Griffin McCloud and the Hope Lions have won four straight.**



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### HCA girls hoops team gets 1st win

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Hope Christian Academy earned the season's first win in

varsity girls basketball, defeating host Gainesville Community Christian 42-15 on Jan. 20.

The Lions (1-9) had come close to wins in recent games, losing by one point to Northside Christian on Jan. 14 and then by seven points to Union County High School on Jan. 17, before topping Gainesville Community Christian with 18 points and

seven steals from Addyson Wilson.

Aubriana Clark added 11 points, while the Lions also got six points from Morgan Cass, two each from Alyssa Hunt, Autumn Hunt and Natalie Lowe and one from Mackenzie McRaney.

Hope hosts Gainesville Community Christian on Saturday, Jan. 25, at 6 p.m.

### BATTLE

Continued from page 13

two consecutive baskets — the second off a Cherish Bing steal — to send the Tornadoes into the fourth quarter trailing 36-34.

Griffin scored the first basket of the fourth quarter, tying the

score for the first time since early in the first quarter.

The score was 38-37 in favor of Newberry when the Panthers went on a 13-2 run. Jada Brown scored six points during that span, which also included Newberry getting two baskets off turnovers.

Griffin scored 17 of Bradford's 28 second-half points and

finished with a game-high 30. Bradford also got nine points from Nichelle Brown, five from Lopey and two from Barrington.

Barrington led the team in rebounds with seven and blocked shots with four. Brown, Griffin and Lopey each had five rebounds, while Griffin also had three steals.

### UCHS

Continued from page 13

take a 41-26 lead.

Union trailed 47-26 in the fourth quarter before going on a 12-0 run. Jenkins and Adrian Manns each scored off rebound putbacks following turnovers. Another Fort White turnover led to a three-point basket by A.J. Chandler. Jenkins also had a two-point basket during the run, which also included two free throws by Jeppson Dang and one free throw by Manns.

Jayden Jackson made a three-point shot for the Indians before the Tigers scored five straight points — all by Jenkins. Jenkins had a basket and a free throw to cut Fort White's lead to nine. The Indians turned the ball over with 2:20 to play, which led to Jenkins scoring off an offensive rebound to make it a 50-43 game.

Fort White's Tafari Moe had a basket with 1:35 left to put the Indians up 52-43. Jenkins then went to the foul line, making 1 of 2 free-throw attempts. He rebounded the missed second attempt and put it back up for a

basket, leaving the Tigers trailing 52-46.

Those were the last points for the Tigers, who got 20 total points from Jenkins.

Union entered the game off a 66-32 win over visiting Keystone Heights on Jan. 14. McKenzie and Dang had 16 and 15 points, respectively, while Tyrese Chandler had 13.

The Tigers also got nine points from A.J. Chandler, seven from Bubba McGhee, four from Jenkins and two from Manns.

McKenzie and Tyrese Chandler led Union with six and five rebounds, respectively, while A.J. Chandler recorded eight assists and two steals.

Dang and McGhee each had three assists, while Jenkins and Erick Lasseter each had two steals.

The Tigers will travel to play Dixie County on Thursday, Jan. 23, at 7:30 p.m. Union hosts Interlachen on Friday, Jan. 24, at 7:30 p.m.

On Monday, Jan. 27, the Tigers host Middleburg at 7:30 p.m. Union then travels to play Baker County on Tuesday, Jan. 28, at 7:30 p.m.



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<p>SATURDAY 1/25 BRAVE THE DARK- 4:00 &amp; 7:00 (Downstairs) GLADIATOR 2- 4:00 &amp; 7:15 (Upstairs)</p>	<p>SUNDAY 1/26 BRAVE THE DARK- 4:00 &amp; 7:00 (Downstairs) GLADIATOR 2- 4:00 &amp; 7:15 (Upstairs)</p>

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