

# Bradford County Telegraph

USPS 062-700 — Starke, Florida

Thursday, Jan. 25, 2024

145th year, 28th Issue — \$1

## Mother left baby alone in car for 6 hours

STARKE — Gainesville police arrested a 30-year-old Bradford County woman after accusing her of leaving her child alone in her car for six hours.

According to the Independent Florida Alligator, Darneshia Stephens, 30, was arrested at the Parklands Rehabilitation Care Center in Gainesville, where she works.

According to the report, a witness spotted the child in the nursing home's parking lot and went inside to find the vehicle's owner.

The witness went back to the parking lot to find the baby covered in feces with pill bottles within reach.

Stephens told officers she thought the baby was okay because she periodically checked on the child throughout the day and left toys and food in the vehicle. She added that she usually takes the child to daycare but could not on the day of the incident.



According to the Independent Florida Alligator, Darneshia Stephens, 30, was arrested at the Parklands Rehabilitation Care Center in Gainesville, where she works. Photo: WCJB.

## Caught with 25 grams of meth

A 26-year-old Starke man was sentenced to seven years in prison after pleading to trafficking in phenethylamines, possession of a weapon by a convicted felon, and driving with a suspended license.

According to an arrest report, a Bradford deputy stopped Cody Michael Jones near the intersection of Starke's Orange and Weldon Streets after a covering over the defendant's tag made the plate unreadable.

Deputy Paul King wrote in the report that dispatch notified him that the defendant's license had been suspended 10 times. While conducting a search of Jones' silver Ford pickup, the officer found a loaded Glock

0.45 caliber firearm and a plastic bag containing 26.85 grams of methamphetamine.

King reported that Jones had just been released from prison after serving time for a probation violation and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

The defendant told King he was unaware of the gun and drugs in his truck and blamed a passenger he had just dropped off for leaving the items in his vehicle.



Cody Michael Jones



## WORTH NOTING

### Gold Head Friends present Yesterdays Festival

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Mike Roess Gold Head Branch State Park, and the Gold Head Friends group, present the 18th annual Yesterdays Festival on Saturday, Jan. 27, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Come on down to this unique, affordable, and family friendly event. The festival is free to attend with the purchase of park admission, \$5 per vehicle, up to eight people in a vehicle.

Meet hobbyists, collectors and enthusiasts, as well as professional museum curators, archivists and historians. Antique cars, tractors, tools and weapons of all kinds will be on display in the picnic area. Take a tour of the park, guided by a park ranger. Churn butter, grind corn, feel the heat of antique camping lanterns, and watch cast iron cooking over a wood fire. Live music will be performed on stage throughout the day. The Third Florida/Thirty Fifth Mass. Heritage company will perform weapon firing demonstrations and the The Kirby-Smith SCV Camp 1209 will fire confederate weapons and cannon. Replica of the Hunley Submarine will be on display as well. Storytime and kids activities available throughout the day.

Food will be available from local vendors. A silent auction will be ongoing throughout the day in the park recreation building.

A scenic drive through the park's rolling sandhills will lead to the picnic area where the festival takes place.

For additional information, contact the park at 352-316-4286 or visit [www.FloridaStateParks.org/mikeroess/](http://www.FloridaStateParks.org/mikeroess/).

### Spades and bingo tournament

Join 12 Guys in Bow Ties and 12 Girls in Pearls in celebrating the month of Love with its Spades Tournament and Bingo Fundraiser at the Downtown Grill on Tuesday, Feb. 13, from 4 to 7 p.m.

Teams enter the spades tournament for \$50, and the winning team will win half the entry fee pot. Maximum of 20 teams ages 18 and up. Enter by Feb. 6. Pay via Cash App to \$12GMentoring of PayPal to 12gibt.12gip@gmail.com.

Play 10 games of bingo with a \$20 card, and \$5 for each additional card. There will be prizes for every winner, including gift cards, cakes and more.

All proceeds benefit the mentoring program, including 20% of all food sales, so if you don't want to play, come dinner and the entertainment.

For more information, contact Edrick Hamilton at 904-364-0868.

## Positive growth in graduation rate for local counties

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD  
Telegraph Editor

Florida's record-setting year for high school graduation rates included remarkable improvement in Bradford and Union counties.

The state's graduation rate reached a new high of 88% for the 2022-23 school year. According to the Florida Department of Education, this was an increase of 0.7 percentage points over the previous school year and a 1.1 percentage point increase over the pre-pandemic graduation rate in 2018-19.

(School years 2019-20 and 2020-21 are an exception. During the pandemic years, graduating rates were higher because graduating classes were exempt from statewide, standardized assessment requirements.)

The state also pointed to greater success graduating members of multiple subgroups, including a 4.9 percentage point increase for students with disabilities, a 0.9 percentage point increase for economically disadvantaged

students, and a 1.7 percentage point increase for Black students.

Bradford and Union both experienced lower graduation rates immediately following the pandemic, but in 2022-23, Union surpassed its pre-pandemic rate and Bradford is on its way. (An asterisk denotes pandemic years.)

Bradford County	
2018-19	87.7%
2019-20*	88.2%
2020-21*	85%
2021-22	76.1%
2022-23	82.5%

Bradford High graduated 175 of 212 students in the cohort. This included 82.7% of its 52 Black seniors, 74% of 50 ESE seniors and 75% of 64 at-risk seniors.

Union County	
2018-19	84.4%
2019-20*	79.6%
2020-21*	88.3%
2021-22	77.8%
2022-23	85.9%

Union County High graduated 146 of 170 students in the cohort. This included 86.4% of its 22 Black seniors, 73% of 37 ESE seniors and 70.8% of 24 at-risk seniors.

Clay County came within one percentage point of besting its pre-pandemic graduation rate.

Clay County	
2018-19	91.9%
2019-20*	93.4%
2020-21*	92.7%
2021-22	89.9%
2022-23	90.9%

Keystone Heights High graduated 176 of 194 students in the cohort, for a 90.7% graduation rate, just slightly lower than the county average. The school did not have a large enough group of Black students in the cohort to include in the ranking. The school did graduate 54.5% of its 11 Hispanic seniors, 97.1% of its ESE seniors and 77.1% of 35 at-risk seniors.

## Tops in state recognized by school board



The 2023-24 UCHS JROTC Raider Team was recognized for their State Championship accomplishment at the Union County School Board Meeting on Jan. 16. This was a five-event competition, and the team had two first-place, two second-place and one-third place finish for the overall state championship. Pictured (l-r) are Union County School Superintendent Mike Ripplinger; Cadet Jamaal Reynolds; Cadet Davien Presley; Cadet Gavin Sparkman; Cadet Matthew Ring; Cadet Cason Forbes; 2023-24 Raider Team Commander Cadet Mackenzie Ring; Army Instructor Chief Warrant Officer 4 (Retired) Derek Brown; Cadet Aiden Bell; Cadet Isabelle Kirsten; Sr. Army Instructor Lieutenant (Retired) Colonel Kevin Steverson; 2023-24 Tiger Battalion Commander Cadet Brooke Burgess; Cadet Chloe Harris; Cadet Hunter Smith; Cadet Jordon Clarke; Cadet Carli Trent; Cadet Stacey Parks; Cadet Samantha Thompson. Not pictured: Cadet Michelle Lacey.



# Hotel fire victims need help

*Red Cross provided housing for a week. That funding is running out.*

**BY DAN HILDEBRAN**  
General manager

STARKE—A local nonprofit is assisting 15 of the 20 families displaced by a Sunday, January 14 fire at a Starke apartment complex. Financial support from the Red Cross helped get the victims through the first week, and now the impacted families need more assistance to continue recovering from the fire that left them homeless.

JoAnna Weldon, CEO and founder of Answers Health and Resource Facility said her organization is helping many of

the victims and that the situation is still fluid.

“We’ve met with each individual family,” she said. “We got clothing sizes from them and what other financial means they have access to. We put a list out on Facebook about the specific items the families need.”

Weldon added that volunteers are now processing donated items, and the families will return to Answers next week for assistance.

Weldon said her organization was not set up to help 20 families in a sudden emergency. However, she said other groups are equally ill-equipped to handle the crisis.

She said the county’s emergency management department is set up to handle large-scale emergencies like a hurricane, and the Red Cross is equipped to help single families

who lost everything in a fire, but neither group has the resources lined up to assist 20 families get their lives back together after a residential fire.

Weldon added that the Red Cross did provide each family with a cash stipend, which allowed the victims to get hotel rooms for a week. She said those funds will run out on Sunday, January 21.

She added that other groups have assisted Answers with helping the families.

In an email to supporters, she thanked First Baptist Church of Starke, the American Red Cross, Kingsley Lake Baptist Church, the Bradford Food Pantry, the Madison Street Baptist Church Clothes Closet, Cross Church, Rags to Riches Thrift Store, and LifeSpring Church for joining the recovery effort.

“We are looking for temporary, emergency housing,” Weldon said. “That would buy some time.”

She added that she is working with government officials to obtain FEMA funds for the victims. However, if that aid ever materializes, getting the funds to the victims will take some time.

Answers is continuing assistance to the victims and has started a special fundraising campaign to continue the support.

People can help in the



Answers shared this photo showing how churches have responded to help feed families who lost their homes.

effort by going to the Answers website: <https://findanswersnow.org>, clicking the “Giving” tab in the upper right corner, clicking “Custom” under Make Greatest Need.” a donation, and writing Starke

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# HOPE holds homecoming



Hope Christian Academy crowned their 2023-24 royalty during homecoming week, Jan. 8-12. Seniors Jude Hanson and Danielle Thomas (pictured above) were crowned king and queen during the annual ROAR celebration. Class skits, sliming, class competitions, food, fun dress-up days, the Dylan Drew bleacher dedication, and basketball games were all part of the annual event.



Hope Christian Academy's varsity boys basketball team won the school's homecoming game against Corinth Christian Academy of Jasper, remaining undefeated. The score was 79-52, with other homecoming wins going to the Hope middle school girls (28-12) and middle school boys (22-16). (Varsity girls played one another when their opponent canceled.) Pictured above are seniors Jude Hanson on the left, and on the right, Tavian Frazier, Marcus Chever and Zach Hansen.



Junior class representatives Alyssa Hunt and Aiden Wilson



Freshman class representatives Autumn Hunt and Griffin McCloud



Sophomore class representatives Sydni Faulk and Adam White



Eighth grade class representatives Katie Ann Justus and Rory Foster



Seventh grade class representatives Allyssa Wilson and Jacob Elmore

## Fresh food Jan. 27

Gleaners Dispatch Inc. and Lifeline Ministries are working together on a fresh food giveaway set for Saturday, Jan. 27, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The location is 325 N. Christian Street in Starke.

## Church of God food distribution

Starke Church of God by Faith is distributing food on the first and third Thursdays each month. The Feb. 1 and 15 giveaways will take place from 10 a.m. to noon at the church, 730 Old Lawtey Road in Starke.

## Community prayer planned Feb. 1

River of Life Church will host community prayer on Thursday, Feb. 1, beginning at 6 p.m. The church is located at 2225 N. Temple Ave. in Starke.

For more information, please contact the Starke Church of God by Faith prayer team at 904-964-9396.



Senior candidates Angelica Barnett and Michael Neese



Senior candidates Carlene Carr and Wyatt Gauthier

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# Lake Region

## Tropical oasis wins Yard of the Month

BY BARBARA ANDERSON  
AND GINNY GEIGER  
*Garden Club of the Lakes*

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS — Those of you who know Ginny Geiger, even if only casually, know that she is never without something to say — well, almost never. Barbara Anderson witnessed something seen only by a few — Ginny being speechless.

You will be, too, if you ever get to ride by 7024 Crystal Lake Road, where this month's yard of the month is located. Better yet, ride out on the lake to see what Barbara described as a tropical oasis. You really won't believe

you are in Keystone Heights.

Even if only casually, those who know the yard's owner, Buck Burney, will agree that he is one of the most interesting people we have met in a long time.

Buck and Nan have traveled to so many places and done so many things that maybe someday they will write a book, but for now, we will share a bit about the Burney's Tropical Oasis.

It is hard to miss this place with a lovely water fountain (you really must go by at night to see it all lit up) in the middle of a pond where Koi and bass are calmly swimming around. If you look closely, you will see three small

waterfalls in the background.

Around the pond are various ferns and Sylvester Palm trees — all right up close to the road. Who would ever guess that 36 gallons of water are pumped through the system every hour?

Most all of the work in this beautiful place was done by Buck himself. He began hand-digging and building this awesome water display four years ago, which took him a year and a half.

But it doesn't stop there! Buck drove us around to the backyard in his golf cart to see an amazing tropical island open up right there in his backyard. That is when Ginny was speechless! What is there to say when you



Buck, a retired fighter pilot, now works with Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, where he can carry out the couple's goal of life coaching through aviation.



It is hard to miss this place with a lovely water fountain (you really must go by at night to see it all lit up) in the middle of a pond where Koi and bass are calmly swimming around. If you look closely, you will see three small waterfalls in the background.

are standing in the middle of a tropical island complete with a 20-foot Bird of Paradise, Sea Grapes, varying types of palm trees, Hawaiian Ti plant, huge rocks, a monster-sized piece of driftwood, beautiful sand, a boat ramp going out to a small island, and beautiful Crystal Lake as the backdrop. They call it the Palm Tree Paradise. Need we say more?

The description of this property is nothing compared to Buck and Nan's reason for doing all of this work to have such a beautiful place.

"We wanted to create a resort atmosphere where people can come to find peace, relax, reduce stress, and focus on real-life issues," Buck said.

The Burneys host several retreats, many for young people. The couple's goal is to help

guests "fuel their dreams" through life coaching. They do this not only using their beautiful property but also through the world of aviation.

The day we visited with Buck (Nan was at work), he was preparing to host over 100 young people from a few churches. He had four-wheelers lined up, jet skis gassed up, and volleyball nets set up for a most exciting weekend. The guests were going to stay at Camp Montgomery.

Buck, a retired fighter pilot, now works with Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, where he can carry out the couple's goal of life coaching through aviation. Nan is a high school volleyball and softball coach in Jacksonville, a perfect opportunity to work with young people in many meaningful ways.

This property is actually an Airbnb, which is booked mainly by the same people every year. We did not see any chance of just calling and scheduling a week at this "resort," even though it would be a glorious experience. Buck and Nan live next door in a beautiful place as well.

Even though the pictures could never do it justice, we tried to give you a feel for the beauty of this paradise. You will just have to grab a boat or jet ski and see the "island" for yourself. Driving by on the road will be an experience, too. Don't miss it!

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

## KH Elementary was biggest recipient of school district sales tax

BY DAN HILDEBRAN  
*General manager*

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS — The new cafeteria, media center, and classroom suites at Keystone Heights Elementary School topped the list of projects the Clay County School District funded with the half-penny sales tax approved by voters in 2020.

Assistant Superintendent of Operations Bryce Ellis told board members during a January 4 school board meeting that of the \$40 million spent so far with the surtax, \$21.4 million went to the Southwest Pecan Street campus improvement.

In November 2020, voters approved a 30-year, half-cent sales tax for district infrastructure needs. The district branded the

new program EdFirst.

Ellis said collection of the new levy began the following January, and a citizens committee was to oversee purchases made with the new revenue stream.

Ellis said the EdFirst committee meets quarterly to review projects and ask questions about how the sales tax money is spent.

EdFirst committee members from the Lake Region are Karen Lake and Edward "Smitty" Huffman.

The assistant superintendent said officials initially hoped to collect \$13.5 million yearly from the surtax. However, because of increased consumer spending and population growth, the district collected \$15 million in the first year and \$17.8 million

in the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2023. For the current fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, the district is forecasting sales tax receipts of \$21.5 million.

The total revenue the district has received from the surtax now stands at \$47.2 million, and total expenditures for the EdFirst tax now stand at just under \$40 million.

Jeff Nelson, the chair of the EdFirst Committee, said his panel reviewed surtax receipts and disbursements made with the funds, and he appeared before the board to validate the district's assertions of EdFirst revenues and expenditures.

"Every time that Bryce comes in, she brings in the project managers, she brings in business affairs, they all explain to us



The new cafeteria, media center, and classroom suites at Keystone Heights Elementary School topped the list of projects the Clay County School District funded with the half-penny sales tax approved by voters in 2020. Photo: Scorpio Construction.



Kateyln T. Hardwick, Esq



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in the simplest of terms where the money came from, where it went to, and it's there in black and white," Nelson told board members.

Bryce told board members that the public can view the projects funded by the surtax. However, when I attempted to view the projects on the district's website, a message appeared stating that I had to request access to the data. I asked for access but never received a notice that the district approved my request.

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## Annexed land will have room for residential and commercial development

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD  
Telegraph Editor

STARKE — The city of Starke is proceeding with the rezoning of land recently annexed into the city limits.

The land is being brought into compliance with the city's future land use and zoning maps, but it is also being prepared for future development.

The 180-plus acres at the intersection of State Road 16 and the Starke bypass is the site of a future multiuse development, according to Gerry Dedenbach of CHW Professional Consultants, who represented landowner Osceola Timber Company during the annexation process last year.

On Jan. 16, the commission approved the first reading of an ordinance to change nearly 140 acres on the future land use map from county low-density residential development to city high density residential development. If approved on final reading, the development density at the site would go from two dwelling units per acre to eight to 20 dwelling units per acre.

It was accompanied by an ordinance to convert the zoning from county rural residential to city multifamily, high-density residential. The category allows a variety of multifamily housing types, including townhouses.

At the same time, the other 40 acres was approved on first reading to go from county low-density residential to city commercial, with the zoning category being highway commercial like much of the U.S. 301 corridor through town. Building and zoning official

Kevin Powell told the city commission nothing has been set in stone as far as the development of the property. The portion of the land closest to the highway could be developed commercially, with residential dwellings in the background. A new road network would provide ingress and egress to properties within the development so traffic won't be turning directly into a commercial property from S.R. 16.

"There again, there's no talk of what they're going to develop in there, how they're going to develop there. This is just trying to establish what the property can be used for in the future," Powell said.

Any plans will undergo site plan review and approval, but Powell predicted it would be a few years before that happens.

In the meantime, Starke and Bradford County have both pledged million in federal and state funds to extend water and sewer service to serve that area.

Final approval of the land use and zoning changes should take place in February.

## Grocery developers apply for rezoning

Starke has also advertised another commercial rezoning that should come before the commission next month.

The application would rezone the 7.8 acres that sits at the corner of S.R. 16 and Weldon Street. It was acquired by R3 Ventures-FL Inc. last October. The applicant has requested the land be changed from single-family residential development to highway commercial.

According to state incorporation records, the three Rs behind R3 are Randy, Ryan and Robert Holihan of Belle Isle, Florida. They make up RH Development Group, which father and son Randy and Ryan formed in 2020.

According to their website, they have helped develop more

than 40 grocery-anchored shopping centers and 4.2 million square feet of retail space.

## Bradford signing up families for reading initiative, free books

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD  
Telegraph Editor

Parents and guardians with pre-K through fifth grade children are encouraged to visit [www.newworldsreading.com](http://www.newworldsreading.com) and sign up for one of the upcoming reading events at locations throughout the community.

Florida's New World Reading Initiative is a program to put books into the hands of students and help them achieve grade-level reading proficiency.

In addition to a free book at the event, families will also eat dinner and participate in reading activities.

Each event is free, but registration is required.

Florida legislators created the New World Reading Initiative in 2021 to serve eligible public and charter school students. The University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning administers the program. A department in the College of Education, the center strives to improve the quality of teaching, learning and childcare through research and innovative developments.

The program is open to any pre-K students who are not yet meeting age-appropriate standards according to FAST Star Early Literacy, and kindergarteners through fifth-graders in public or charter schools who are not yet reading on grade level.

Participants can receive new books monthly. Parents can choose the types of books their



Bradford School-Related Employee of the Year for transportation and maintenance is Tonya Barnhart. She is pictured above (second from left) with Superintendent Will Hartley, Transportation Supervisor Louette Smith and Operations Director Jeff Edison.

child would like to read, and books are available in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole or braille. Through fun and practical activities, students' reading confidence can improve. Parents can assist at home by practicing with the books their children collect in their personal home library.

Bradford County School District is promoting the initiative through several local programs and began with events at Starke and Lawtey elementary schools. There is an event at Madison Street Baptist Church on Jan. 25, followed by Starke Church of God by Faith on Feb. 21, Bradford Elementary School on March 5, Bradford County Public Library on March 18, the District boardroom on April 9 and First Church of Starke on April 11.

The events are hosted by the Bradford County Education Foundation. There will be a presentation about the program for parents and guardians, books and activities for kids, and dinner

for all. The meal will be served from 5:45-6:15 p.m., followed by reading and activities until 7:15 p.m.

All you need to do is register at [www.newworldsreading.com](http://www.newworldsreading.com).

For more information, please contact Lila Sellars at 904-966-6018 or [sellars.lila@mybradford.us](mailto:sellars.lila@mybradford.us).

## Projects continue as Starke receives additional infrastructure funding

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD  
Telegraph Editor

Construction of sewer system improvements recently moved from a Washington Street project near the high school to Weldon Street off State Road 16.

The work will continue to and

then down Todd Road, according to City Manager Drew Mullins. Work will follow over on State Road 100 and near Alligator Creek.

Mullins said "decrepit" lines are being relined, repaired or replaced.

He further said the city would coordinate with the school district and contractor on the time frame for resurfacing Washington Street following the latest repairs.

From reconstruction at the sewer plan to the replacement and revitalization of water and wastewater collection lines, the city has multiple projects in various stages of development and execution. The funding sources, including grants and loans, are coming from several different pots. The city manager and finance department are working on a detailed compilation to help keep track.

Among the latest awards was \$2.5 million from the state

See PROJECT, page 7

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# UNION COUNTY

## Riding Club honors award winners

BY TRACY LEE TATE  
Special to the Times

LAKE BUTLER — The Union County Riding Club held its annual Awards Dinner on Friday, Jan. 12, 2024, at the First Christian Church of Lake Butler.

About 50 club members and their guests enjoyed a buffet-style meal prepared by the club members and then recognized the club's standouts for the year.

The event was attended by members of the Bennett family, descendants of J.P. Bennett, who founded the club in 1947. Bennett's son Joe was the event's guest of honor, and he spoke about his father and how the club had begun. He said his father started the club at his home, then moved it to its present location in 1952. Bennett, Sr. was a horseman and rode both for enjoyment and in his work.

J.P. Bennett was the town marshal in Lake Butler for four years when he was young (in the mid-1940s). The town could not afford a car for its marshal, so he patrolled on a little buck-skin horse named Jim.

"Jim was both my father's transportation and his squad car," Joe Bennett told the club members. "He even caught a



The 2024 Union County Riding Club Princess and Queen (l-r) Farrah Elixson and Cailyn Boggs.

speeder with him one time. He saw the car speeding and cut cross-town and caught up with him at the gas station."

Bennett, Sr. was deputized by Union County Sheriff John Whitehead and remained a deputy for most of his life. Much of his service to the community was conducted from horseback, although his son was not sure how people were arrested and taken to jail.

After Joe Bennett spoke, Club President Gary Cothorn announced the awards.

First recognized were the club's Princess, Farrah Elixson, and Queen, Cailyn Boggs, who were crowned and given fresh flower bouquets. Next came the division awards for club members who participated in club activities throughout the previous year. Winners were gifted with tack and horse care



The award winners for the riding club youth division: (l-r) Sadie Croft, Callen Collins, Farrah Elixson, Addyson Kelly and Naomi Croft.

supplies, with the top two in each class receiving riding club belt buckles and the winners of each division receiving brand-new saddles.

The honorees were called in reverse order, with the winners named last.

In the Youth Division, Sadie Croft received fifth place honors, with Callen Collins taking fourth place. Farrah Elixson placed third, with Addyson Kelly in second. Naomi Croft was the

winner of the division.

Cadence Collins placed sixth in the Teen Division, with Emmy Croft in fifth place. Maddie Croft took fourth place, with Cuyler Collins taking third. Second place went to Syndi Faulk, and the category winner was Celia Elixson.

In the Adult Division, Christy Huntley took third place honors, with Summer Andes placing second and Brian Lagassee taking top honors. In the Senior

Division, Cherri Ohmer took fourth place, Gary Cothorn placed third, Janice Parrish took second, and Tracy Whitley took top honors.

Other awards given included the Most Improved Rider (Addyson Kelly), the Workhorse Award (Bobbi and Steve Faulk), the Harlis R. Ellington Memorial Award (Christy Huntley), and the J.P. Bennett Memorial Award (Shannon Croft).



In the Teen Division there were six honorees: (l-r) Cadence Collins, Emmy Croft, Maddie Croft, Cuyler Collins, Syndi Faulk and Celia Elixson.



In the Senior Division Cherri Ohmer, Tracy Whitley, club President Gary Cothorn and Janice Parrish all received awards.

## Two city seats to be decided in June

BY TRACY LEE TATE  
Special to the Times

LAKE BUTLER — Two Lake Butler City Commission seats will be up for election in June 2024, with both incumbents running to retain their seats on the board.

Mayor David Stegall plans to run for Seat One on the board again. This will be his second term if elected. Commissioner Rondoll Huggins will be running for his first full term — he has held the seat since a special election called in April 2023 to fill Seat Two, left empty by the resignation of Jack Schenck late in 2022.

The Lake Butler City Election will be held on June 25, 2024, at the Hal Y. Maines Community Center at the lake. The election will be administered by Union County Supervisor of Elections Deborah Osborne, using state-of-the-art electronic voting equipment to make the counting of the votes quick and accurate. At the last city election, there was a delay in getting the results while the ballots were hand-counted several times by election officials. This year, the board decided to go with the available technology, which will produce accurate results in less than an hour after the polls close. As a

municipality in Union County, the city can use the services of the county elections office through an interlocal agreement, paying only the actual costs to that office for the service.

Anyone interested in running for either of the seats will need to keep some information and dates in mind. To run for a city office, a candidate must have been a registered voter in the City of Lake Butler for the past six months, so it is already too late for them to meet this requirement if they are not already registered. To vote in the election, a voter must register before 5 p.m. on May 28, 2024. Qualifying dates are from noon on April 15, 2024, until noon on April 19, 2024. Before qualifying, a candidate must file a Form DS-DE9, Appointment of Campaign Treasurer and Designation, before their campaign account may be opened, before the candidate spends any money on their campaign, and before they are allowed to collect petition signatures if choosing that option for qualifying. Candidates must also file a Form DS-DE84, Statement of Candidate, within 10 days of opening their campaign account. These forms are available at the Union County Supervisor of Elections office, 175 West Main St. in Lake

Butler.

During the qualifying period, a candidate must pay a qualifying fee equal to one percent of the salary of a city commissioner (\$10,674.56 salary, the fee is \$106.75) and turn in either 20 signatures or pay an additional \$25, all of which must be paid out of their campaign account. If using signatures, the candidate must pay the elections office office \$10 per name for signature verification, to be paid out of their campaign account. The candidate will also take a loyalty oath during the qualifying period. Before qualifying, a candidate must complete Form 6: Full and Complete Disclosure of Financial Interests online.

After completing the qualifying regimen, the candidate can receive contributions of no more than \$1,000 per contributor and none less than five days before the election), make and post signs, and perform other normal candidate activities. They should keep up with their campaign treasurer and make sure that the required reports are made on time and that all campaign expenses are made out of their campaign account. Any questions can be addressed to the elections office in person or by phone at (386) 496-2236.

## City hopes to avoid manual recounts

BY TRACY LEE TATE  
Special to the Times

LAKE BUTLER — The City of Lake Butler decided to allow Union County Supervisor of Elections Deborah Osborne and her staff to run the upcoming city election (June 25, 2024) with the technology she uses for the county elections in hopes of avoiding the controversy that arose from the last special election where the elections office administered the process but the electronic voting machines were not used, and there were several manual recounts of ballots necessary to arrive at the winner.

Vice-Mayor Melissa Hendrix made a motion to allow Osborne to use the office's DS200 electronic counting machine to arrive at the accurate determination of the winners. The motion passed the commission unanimously.

The meeting was much shorter than has been usual of late, lasting less than an hour. Only one citizen spoke during the public comments segment of the meeting — Lisa Huggins, representing the Lake Butler Woman's Club, inquiring about the process and procedure of installing two culverts on the clubhouse property. Commission

members told her they would see that the process was reviewed and that someone would contact her about what needed to be done.

The board unanimously approved the second amendment to the city budget for the year, effective Jan. 16, 2024. The amendments were necessary to move funds from an area where they were not needed to an area where they were (when a budget is written, it predicts where money will be needed, and adjustments must be made to move the money where there is more needed than predicted, from an area where less was needed). City Finance Director Dave Mecusker prepared the amendment. Commissioner Anette Redman made a motion to approve.

The commission heard a report from City Attorney John Maines concerning the new Form 6 financial disclosure document required by the state. The document requires a level of disclosure that many officials throughout the state have found to be intrusive, and the requirement has led to the resignations of numerous elected officials (since if they refuse to

comply, they must resign or be removed from office). Among those resigning because of the new requirements are four of five members of the McIntosh City Council, the mayor and entire city council of Reddick, two city commissioners in Daytona Beach, and the vice-mayor of Naples. As it stands, none of the elected officials in the city have voiced any consideration of resigning.

During comments by the commission, Hendrix reminded the board that the Lake Butler Woman's Clubs' annual Valentine Luncheon would be held on Feb. 13 at the clubhouse

## UCHS Class of '74 reunion

Union County's Class of 1974 will celebrate 50 years on Saturday, June 22, 2024. Save the date. The reunion will take place at 3 p.m. at Lake Butler Community Center. Additional details are forthcoming.

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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

Joshua Edward Anspch 36, of Callahan was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 19 for possession of marijuana and possession of drug equipment.

Robert Dwayne Bowman, 46, of Lawtey was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 16 for failure to appear.

Sherry Lynn Burks, 35, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 16 for possession of drugs and possession of drug equipment.

Christopher Lee Chastain, 38, was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 19 for possession of cocaine, driving with a suspended or revoked license, and possession of drug equipment.

Lula Annette, Clark, 65, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 16 for selling or delivering opium and possession of synthetic narcotics.

Matthew Justin Ellis, 38, of Brooker was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 16 for selling or delivering opium and possessing or delivering opium.

Luke Paul Fluder, 30, of Saint Elgin, Illinois, was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 19 for hit-and-run, driving with a suspended or revoked license and resisting an officer.

Rico Kashif Foggy, 35, of Jacksonville was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 18 for a probation violation.

Terry Ray Gaskins, 54, of Lawtey was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 16 for driving with a suspended or revoked license and attaching a tag not assigned.

Chasity Shianne Hannah, 40, of Lawtey was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 13 for a probation violation.

Regina Eunice Hilliard, 56, of Lawtey was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 16 for possession of drugs and selling drugs.

James Jermaine Jackson Holmes, 52, of St. Petersburg was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 19 for possession of drugs, possession of marijuana and possession of drug equipment.

Horace Edward Jenkins, 52, of Alachua, was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 16 for DUI, resisting an officer, possession of cocaine, and possession of a weapon by a convicted felon.

Veronica Williams Jenkins, 46, of Lawtey was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 16 for selling drugs, possession of drugs, and possession of cocaine.

David Carlos Johnson, 35, of Keystone Heights was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 18 for aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

Jorgeluz Lopez Alvarez, 23, of Jacksonville was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 17 for failure to appear.

Chase Lawrence McGee, 26, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 16 for trafficking in drugs.

Donnie Risby, 64, of Starke

was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 14 for aggravated battery and kidnapping.

Susan Rehberg Smith, 61, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 17 for possession of cocaine and selling cocaine.

Leon Alexander Stevens, 48, of Starke was arrested by Starke Police on January 13 for possession of cocaine, possession of drugs, resisting an officer, disorderly intoxication, fraud – impersonation and being an out-of-state fugitive.

Monica Denise Thomas, 36, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 18 for DUI, possession of drugs, and smuggling contraband into a correctional facility.

Wesley Dylan White, 31, of Lawtey was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 16 for delivering or distributing drugs.

### Union

Vertince Green, 36, of Worthington Springs was arrested by Union deputies on January 17 for an out-of-county warrant.

Mary Jacqueline Marshall, 42, of Lake Butler was arrested by Union deputies on January 19 for an out-of-county warrant.

Doris Juanita Rewis, 48, of Starke was arrested by Union deputies on January 18 for selling drugs.

### Clay

Robbie Lee Dormindy, 52, of Keystone Heights was arrested by Clay deputies on January 14 for a probation violation.

Sean Patrick McNamara, 55, of Keystone Heights was arrested by Clay deputies on January 16 for criminal mischief and burglary.

## 18 months for fleeing in squatted SUV

STARKE – A Bradford County man was sentenced to 18 months in prison after pleading to fleeing and eluding in a squatted GMC Yukon.

According to an arrest report, Colton Wesley White, 21, was arrested after Bradford Deputy T. Lovell spotted the defendant's squatted SUV traveling 90 mph in a 50-mph zone westbound on State Road 16 near the eastern Starke city limit.

Lovell reported that after he activated his emergency lights, the vehicle took off and turned right onto Northeast 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue toward the Starke Golf and Country Club.

The deputy lost sight of the suspect. The chase began at 9:23 p.m. A witness where the chase began told another deputy that the suspect vehicle was a white, squatted SUV that passed her home at a high rate of speed and was very loud.

"Based on the information given, I had previous knowledge of a white GMC Yukon that was lifted in the front and lowered in the rear that resided on Southeast County Road 230-A," wrote the officer in the report. "I arrived at the residence...where at the rear of the house, a white GMC Yukon was located."

Lovell added that the defendant's mother lived next door, and after he detained White, his mother asked to speak with him, which the officer allowed.

"While Colton's mother was speaking to him," Lovell wrote, "he spontaneously uttered to his mother that he had just gotten off work and was trying to beat his probation curfew."

The defendant's prior convictions include burglary, petit theft, and grand theft of a firearm.

Squatted trucks first appeared in California when Baja racers discovered that the impact of landing a jump was reduced by lowering the back and raising the front of their vehicles.

Pickup owners in North Carolina adopted the innovation as a cosmetic modification, which is also known as the Carolina Squat, Carolina Crawl, and Bulldog. The fad gained traction in the Tarheel State and spread to South Carolina before going nationwide.

By June 2023, both Carolinas had outlawed the modification because of safety concerns.

## Choked, punched woman, aimed weapon at another

STARKE — A 45-year-old Bradford County man was sentenced to 180 days in jail after pleading to using his foot to choke a woman and later pointing a handgun at the vehicle she was in and punching her in the face.

Judge James M. Colaw adjudicated Seth Micah Norviel guilty on January 16 and sentenced him to two years' drug offender probation in addition to the jail time, crediting the defendant for 152 days served.

Norviel pleaded to evidence tampering, domestic battery, felony domestic battery by strangulation, aggravated assault with a deadly weapon without intent to kill, and a pretrial release violation.

According to a June 23, 2023, arrest report, one victim told deputies that two nights prior, she and the defendant were in bed when they got into an argument. The woman claimed that during the dispute, Norviel stood up, grabbed the headboard, and put a foot on her throat, preventing her from breathing.

On the date of the arrest report, a second woman said she drove Norviel's partner to the couple's home to drop a dog off, and while the two were parked in the front yard, she saw a green dot on her vehicle and her person.

"(The victim) stated she observed a figure in the living room where the green dot was originating," wrote Deputy Paul King, who added that Norviel denied pointing a weapon at the driver of the vehicle and denied putting his foot on his partner's throat two days prior.

King said that Norviel appeared intoxicated, and that King found marijuana plants inside a shipping container in the defendant's backyard. A detective later found a .40-caliber handgun in the shipping container with a green dot scope on it.

According to a September 2, 2023, arrest report, the victim's former partner told Bradford deputies she allowed the defendant to come to her residence after they spent time together at a friend's house earlier in the day.

"(The victim) stated when they got home, Seth accused her of wanting to sleep with another man," wrote King in the report. "The accusation escalated into a verbal argument. During the argument, Seth became irate and began punching (the victim) in the face, causing her injuries."

King added that he observed scratches, swelling, and bruising on the woman's face, especially under her left eye.

"(The victim's) nose also appeared to be disjointed," he reported.

King wrote that, according to the victim, she called 911 during the attack, and while she was on the phone, Norviel took the phone from her and hid it. Deputies later found the device under a mattress. When King first arrived at the residence, he spotted Norviel in a hallway through a glass in the door and saw the defendant run into a bedroom. The victim said Norviel made her hide in a closet because of a no-contact order the court had previously issued.

## She just wanted to help mom

STARKE — A 22-year-old Starke man was sentenced to 12

months' probation for hitting his girlfriend and dragging her back into their home after she left to help her mother move "some stuff."

Holden Race Goodwin was also ordered to enter a batterers intervention program, undergo random drug and alcohol screenings, and have no hostile contact with the victim.

Goodwin, who pleaded to misdemeanor battery, was arrested on October 25, 2024. According to a complaint filed ten days earlier, the victim told deputies that when the defendant arrived home, she informed him she needed to go to her mother's to help her move some items.

"Goodwin responded by becoming verbally aggressive and forbidding (the victim) from leaving," wrote Deputy Michael Gillick in the complaint. "(The victim) told Goodwin she was going to bed and attempted to leave the residence through the back door. Goodwin heard the door open, exited the front door, and ran around the residence to stop her."

The officer added that Goodwin grabbed the victim's right arm and dragged her up the steps. He also hit her in the mouth, causing swelling in her mouth and face.

Gillick reported that the couple has at least one child in common.

## Men fight over speaker

STARKE—Deputies arrested a 24-year-old Hampton man after witnesses said he fought a household member over a large speaker and used the device to strike and injure the victim.

Jarred Tra'kel Mason was

arrested for battery on December 29.

According to an arrest report, Mason called law enforcement to the Hampton Lake area to get the speaker back from a woman with whom he lived. He told a deputy that he was returning to Georgia and wanted the device back.

The officer advised Mason that possession of the speaker was a civil matter and left the scene. The deputy later returned after witnesses reported the assault.

Witnesses and the victim said that after Mason's encounter with the deputy, the defendant demanded the speaker back and fought with the victim over the device. During the fight, Mason struck the victim with the speaker.

The victim told Deputy Cody Wells that Mason grabbed his arm in the driveway, hit him in the face and torso, kicked him, and struck him with the sound device.

## 2 years for passing fake \$100 bill

STARKE—A Tampa man was sentenced to 24 months in prison after admitting to paying for a pillow at Starke's Bealls Outlet with a counterfeit \$100 bill.

Steven Brad Powers, 36, pleaded to uttering forged bills.

According to a Florida Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement complaint, store video showed the defendant purchasing a large black décor pillow on June 20, 2022, using a counterfeit \$100 bill and receiving \$81.82 in change.

An investigator for the Florida Department of Agriculture and

Consumer Services wrote that the defendant used the same practice at multiple locations in Florida to launder counterfeit bills.

"The suspect takes low-priced products and purchases them with counterfeit currency," wrote the investigator. "Steven Brad Powers was arrested on March 13, 2023, for an unrelated offense and was charged with being in possession of 10 counterfeit \$100 notes."

The defendant's previous convictions include driving with a suspended or revoked license, possession of less than 20 grams of marijuana, resisting an officer without violence, criminal mischief, fleeing and eluding, DUI, failure to appear, and burglary of an unoccupied dwelling.

## Tried to get refund for stolen garden hose

STARKE—A 25-year-old Starke man was sentenced to 6 months' probation after pleading to grabbing a garden hose from a Walmart shelf and then asking for a refund on the item.

I'van Tyrese Sargeant pleaded to petit theft.

According to an arrest report, a store loss prevention officer told Starke police that the defendant entered the business with a \$64 receipt for a garden hose, walked to the retailer's home and garden section, and obtained a hose priced at the same amount. He then walked to customer service and requested a cash refund for the hose he grabbed off the shelf.

# Mandatory 10-digit dialing before new area code launch

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD  
Telegraph Editor

The region's new 324 area code overlay will launch in February.

In 2022, the Florida Public Service Commission approved the additional area code to accommodate the demand for new numbers in Jacksonville and surrounding communities.

The area code 324 will be overlaid in the same northeast Florida region covered by the 904 area code, which includes all or part of Nassau, Duval, Baker, Bradford, Clay, St. Johns and Union counties.

Because two area codes will serve the same geographic area,

a new 10-digit dialing procedure will be required. Dialing all 10 digits of the phone number will be necessary to complete a call. The area code, once unnecessary when making a "local call," will now be essential.

Beginning Jan. 29, callers must dial all 10 digits, even when making calls in the same area code. If you dial seven numbers, a recording will instruct you to hang up and dial again using your area code.

This will take place in advance of numbers being issued with the new 324 area code. New lines will be assigned that area code beginning Feb. 26.

Please note that the new dialing

procedure may require some automatic dialing technology to be updated. Examples include life safety systems, security systems, call forwarding settings, voice mail services, etc., if they are currently programmed to dial a seven-digit telephone number.

Please note:  
—your telephone number, including your current area code, will not change.

—the price of a call will not change due to the overlay.

—a local call will remain a local call regardless of the number of digits dialed.

—you can still dial services like 911 using three digits.

## PROJECT Continued from page 5

of Florida for the wastewater collection system improvement project. The funding was part of \$210 million package awarded to multiple communities through the Water Quality Improvement Grant Program.

The grant funded 27 statewide projects that will reduce harmful nutrients in Florida's waterways. The awards include septic-to-sewer projects, wastewater treatment upgrades, stormwater projects, wastewater improvement projects and a regional agricultural project.

According to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the selected projects will reduce total nitrogen loading by more than 1 million cumulative pounds per year, which will help to reduce harmful algal blooms.

The additional funding was critical for Starke. According to

Mullins, the collection system improvements taking place are part of a project that included moving and upgrading the Call Street lift station and making SCADA security and control improvements. When bids were received for the package, the lowest was around \$2 million more than the original budget, which was already over \$5 million. The city needed the additional grant funding to cover the difference.

As of its last meeting, the city of Starke is also seeking additional funding from the State Revolving Fund Loan Program to pay for compliance with revisions in lead and copper service line rules for public water systems. The commission also approved an agreement with Woodward and Curan for engineers to prepare an inventory of waters lines that need to be addressed. The five-phase project will cover service line inventory through the development of the replacement plan at a projected cost of \$417,000 over 12 months.

Engineers will also be working on a vulnerability assessment for the city to determine concerns resulting from climate change. Vulnerabilities include increased rainfall and flooding. The eight-month project has a budget of \$114,000. Starke was recently awarded funds from the Resilient Florida Program Planning Grant for the project.

Other projects the state funded in north Florida through the Water Quality Improvement Grant Program included \$1.1 million for Alachua County's Newnans Lake system hydrologic restoration project; \$1.1 million for a septic-to-sewer project on County Road 236 in High Springs; more than \$1 million for a second phase of High Springs' wastewater treatment facility expansion and wetlands project; \$2.56 million for a septic-to-sewer and reuse project in Live Oak; and \$5 million for Suwannee River Water Management District's Agriculture Regional Water Quality Initiative.



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# Forgette celebrates 100th birthday

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
Telegraph Staff Writer

It may not have felt like it to her, but it was a special day for Starke's Violet Forgette, who found herself surrounded by family, friends, balloons and flowers at Cedar River Seafood in Starke to celebrate her 100th birthday.

"I just feel like I always feel," Forgette said. "I don't feel any different."

Forgette uses a walker to help her get around, but other than the decline in her eyesight, she said she has no major ailments. She said she doesn't make regular visits to the doctor. She just goes when she feels she has to.

"I'm blessed," she said. "I've always had really good health. I haven't had anything wrong with me."

Forgette was born and raised in Jacksonville. She said she enjoyed playing outdoors. That included roller skating.

"I roller skated every year when it got cold," Forgette said. "It was too hot in the summertime."

She thought she was going to be an only child until her brother, Tom, was born. He was 7 years younger than her.

"He was a good man," Forgette said. "He's gone to be with the Lord now, but I tell you, he was my mainstay."

As is often the case with



Violet Forgette of Starke celebrated her 100th birthday on Jan. 19. She was joined by family and friends for a meal at Cedar River Seafood in Starke. Photos by Cliff Smelley.

siblings growing up, they quarreled despite their love for each other. Forgette recalled a

funny incident later in life when she said something in front of her mother about how she and Tom fought a lot with each other as children. Her mother asked, "You did?"

"She was there," Forgette said, laughing. "How she didn't hear us fussing, I don't know."

Forgette graduated from Landon High School, which ceased to be after the 1964-65 school year, transitioning to Landon Middle School. (The school has since become a magnet school — Julia Landon College Preparatory Leadership Development School.)

"I lived only two blocks from it," Forgette said of the school building, which was built in 1926.

Jacksonville was home until Forgette married Everett Marvin Stallings, who was a Marine. Due to his service, the family made several moves over the course of about 10 years.

"Every three years...I packed up the four kids and the cat and the dog, and we took off," Forgette said, adding, "I was used to it. It didn't bother me a bit. I enjoyed living different places and meeting different people."

Forgette met Stallings (now deceased) when he was stationed at Naval Air Station Jacksonville.

"He was a good man. He really was," Forgette said. "He was fun to be with."

Forgette gave birth to four children: Marvin Steadman, Dan Stallings, Richard Stallings and Melanie Dyer.

"Early on, I wanted to get married and have four children," Forgette said. "I did it."

God has always been a big part of Forgette's life. Finding a church home was important every time the family moved.

"The first thing we'd do (after moving to a new home) is we'd go to church that first Sunday," Forgette said. "You'd always meet nice people. It was just good."

Forgette taught Sunday school and attended First Baptist Church of Starke.

"It was my life," she said.

Two of Forgette's children are still living: Marvin Steadman and Dan Stallings. She lives with Steadman.

"She's a jewel," Forgette said of her daughter. "I don't know what I'd do without her, to be honest with you. She's so good to me."

Forgette credits Steadman for the birthday celebrations she enjoys.

"I never think about (my birthday) until it comes," Forgette said. "Marvina is in charge of it."

She may not think of her birthdays until they arrive, but Forgette did admit to somebody at that Jan. 19, 2024, was worth having a celebration on. After



Violet Forgette (seated) is pictured with her birthday cake, balloons and gifts. She is joined by her son Dan Stallings and daughter Marvinna Steadman.

all, how often does one celebrate being 100 years old?

Such longevity often prompts media outlets to pose the question: "What is the secret to your long life?"

Of course, there is no secret.

"You just live each day as it comes," Forgette said.

And with each day comes giving thanks to God.

"I know that the Lord has blessed me," Forgette said. "I couldn't have done anything without Him."

Forgette may not feel like she's as old as she is, but, with a twinkle in her eye, she said, "I'll try to remember I'm 100 and behave accordingly."



Violet Forgette (right) receives a kiss from Evelyn Fleck.

## New Worlds Initiative, BCEF helping children receive books

Through the efforts locally of the Bradford County Education Foundation, families in Bradford County can learn about Florida's New Worlds Reading Initiative at various events, which are free to attend.

New Worlds Reading Initiative delivers free books to children in grades 1-5 (as well as pre-K) monthly.

Six upcoming events will be held locally so that families can learn more. Each child will take home a new book. Dinner will be provided from 5:45 p.m. until 6:15 p.m., followed by reading and activities until 7:15 p.m.

The schedule of events is as follows:

—Thursday, Jan. 25, at Madison Street Baptist Church in Starke.

—Wednesday, Feb. 21, at Church of God by Faith in Starke.

—Tuesday, March 5, at Bradford Elementary School.

—Monday, March 18, at Bradford County Public Library in Starke.

—Tuesday, April 9, at the Bradford County School Board meeting room in Starke.

—Thursday, April 11, at First Church of Starke (formerly First United Methodist Church of Starke).

All you have to do to attend is register at [bradfordschools.org](http://bradfordschools.org) or on the Bradford County School District Facebook page.

For more information, please contact Lila Sellars at 904-966-6018 or [sellars.lila@mybradford.us](mailto:sellars.lila@mybradford.us).

## BCEF selling chances to enter 3 prize drawings

The Bradford County Education Foundation is holding a drawing for three prizes, with the winners being announced at the Saturday, Feb. 3, North Florida Regional Chamber of Commerce annual meeting/banquet.

Two prizes are vacation packages. One (donated by Carrie Crews) is a four-day, three-night stay at The Blissful Bear cabin in Ellijay, Georgia, while the other (donated by Drew Reddish) is a seven-day stay in October at Ocean Gallery Condo in St. Augustine.

Tickets to enter the drawings for the vacation packages are \$50

each, with 100 tickets only being sold for each.

The third prize is a 10x10 storage shed, donated by Frank Sheffield. Tickets to enter the drawing are \$100 each, with 200 total being sold.

Tickets for either drawing can be purchased at Capital City Bank in Starke or from any BCEF board member: Cheryl Canova, Christina Cornwell, Sheryl Dixon, Brenda Donaldson, Justin Durrance, Matt Dyal, Lisa Gault, Will Hartley, Vorease Jones, Keith Kirby, Sarah Long, Dimple Overstreet, Paula Register, Lila Sellars, Leisa Sims, Chrissy Thompson, Brenda Thornton, Kara Wainwright and Eugenia Whitehead.

You can also reach out on the Bradford County Education Foundation Facebook page.

The Bradford County Education Foundation is a nonprofit organization that was

established in 1990 by citizens to support the county's schools.

## Mentoring group to benefit from Feb. 13 bingo-spades fundraiser

A bingo fundraiser/spades tournament will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 13, at the Downtown Grill in Starke to benefit the student mentoring group 12 Guys in Bow Ties and 12 Girls in Pearls.

To play bingo, it's \$20 for a card in each of the 10 games. Extra cards can be purchased for \$5 each. Prizes will be awarded to all winners.

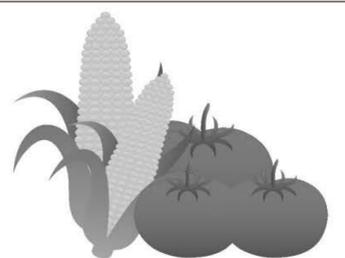
The spades tournament (for ages 18 and up) will consist of up to 20 teams at an entry fee of \$50 per team. First place wins 50 percent of the entry fee total. The tournament format is Big Joker, Lil Joker, Deuce of Diamonds and Deuce of Spades.

Team entry fees for the spades tournament must be paid by Tuesday, Feb. 6, via CashApp (\$12GMentoring) or PayPal (12gibt.12gip@gmail.com). Team registration will take place at 3:45 p.m. on the day of the tournament.

Twenty percent of food purchases will be donated toward the mentoring group as well, so even if you don't play bingo or spades, show up and enjoy the entertainment.

For more information, please contact Edrick Hamilton at 904-364-0868 or [12gibt.12gip@gmail.com](mailto:12gibt.12gip@gmail.com).

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- **Create & keep good jobs.** Small local businesses are the largest employer nationally and account for the vast majority of job growth. Growing local businesses mean more jobs for residents and more taxes to invest in our own communities, churches, schools and groups.

SUPPORT • STRENGTHEN • BUILD OUR COMMUNITY



Zeke Malphurs was the best pound-for-pound lifter at the Powerlifting America Jacksonville Open Championships. Pictured (l-r) are Cash Cox, Dustin Griffis, Malphurs and Bryan Griffis. Malphurs and Cox both train with Bryan and Dustin Griffis at Raiford Wreckshop.

## Malphurs is top lifter at Jan. 20 Jacksonville Open Championships

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
Telegraph Staff Writer

Zeke Malphurs of Lake Butler set three state records and won the Raw Sub Junior class at the seventh annual Powerlifting America Jacksonville Open Championships, which were held Jan. 20 at Steel Mill Crossfit and Gym in Fleming Island.

Malphurs, a 16-year-old who trains with Bryan Griffis at Raiford Wreckshop, compiled a 1,234.6-pound total, which put him in first place by 518.1 pounds.

He did more than win his class. Malphurs, who weighs 178 pounds, was named the meet's best pound-for-pound lifter.

"He's something else," said Griffis, nothing that it was Malphurs' first competition in more than a year.

In the squat, Malphurs did totals of 391.3 and 407.9 before his best attempt of 424.4. Griffis believes Malphurs could've done 450 if he had attempted it.

Malphurs bench pressed 314.2 after starting out at 303.1.

After a 479.5 total on his first deadlift attempt, Malphurs was unsuccessful on his attempt of 496. He attempted the total again on his final attempt, which was good.

Malphurs, a sophomore, began training with Griffis when he was in eighth grade. He trained alongside such lifters as Brianna Bracewell (née Jordan), Courtney Comer and Mihailya Reeves — lifters who've all won championships in powerlifting and in high-school competition.

See LIFT, page 10

## Hope boys hoops team is undefeated

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
Telegraph Staff Writer

The Hope Christian Academy boys basketball team improved to 12-0 with a 65-27 win over host Northside Christian on Jan. 18.

It was the largest margin of victory for the Lions since they opened the season with a 78-47 win over Hart 2 Hart on Nov. 27. It was the sixth time Hope has defeated an opponent by more than 20 points.

Hope hasn't been tested much this season, with only five games being decided by single digits. The Lions' closest victory was 53-52 against First Assembly Christian on Dec. 5. That's just one of two losses First Assembly has suffered this season.

The Lions played First Assembly again this past Tuesday.

For the season, Hope is scoring an average of 61 points per game, while opponents are averaging 43 points.

Hope's average margin of victory is 18 points.

The Lions travel to Trenton to play Riverside Christian on Thursday, Jan. 25, at 7:30 p.m. They then return home to play Jacksonville's First Coast Christian on Friday, Jan. 26, at 7 p.m.

Hope begins a three-game road stretch on Monday, Jan. 29, when it travels to play Gainesville Christian Community at 7 p.m. The Lions travel to Jacksonville to play Old Plank Christian on Tuesday, Jan. 30, at 7 p.m., followed by a Friday, Feb. 2, game at Valdosta, Georgia's Open Bible Christian at 7 p.m.

This year's team consists of Julio Casielles, Marcus Chever, Luke Drew, Brice Flint, Tavian Frazier, Noah Gaffney, Mathew Galer, Wyatt Gauthier, Zach Hansen, Jude Hanson, Lance Lofton, Mason Masciocchi, Griffin McCloud, Walker Munroe, Dalton Thomas and Aiden Wilson.



Bradford's Mattox Burgin (right) goes up for a shot as teammate Mikey Oliver looks on. Keystone's Bryce Hollingsworth (background) is also pictured. Photos by Cliff Smelley.

## BHS girls follow up KHHS win with defeat of Suwannee

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
Telegraph Staff Writer

Ar'Nayshia Griffin outscored the entire Suwannee team as the Bradford High School girls basketball team defeated the visiting Bulldogs 65-27 on Jan. 18.

Griffin scored 30 points for the second game in a row.

It was also Bradford's second win in a row after losing two straight.

Jada Hankerson got off to a hot start for Bradford (10-7), scoring off a wide-open layup after Griffin won the opening tip. Hankerson then made a three-pointer before getting another basket off a steal, putting the Tornadoes up 7-0.

Suwannee (8-5) missed its first six field-goal attempts before getting on the board, courtesy of a basket by Zjamyah Wilson.

Griffin scored nine of the game's next 17 points, beginning with a three-pointer. She and Hankerson combined for 18 first-quarter points as Bradford went into the second quarter leading 19-7.

Bradford went cold from the field for a brief stretch after a basket by Khamyra Hankerson, missing five straight shot attempts. A rebound putback by Ajjayah Jackson put an end to that and was the start of a 14-2 run to close out the first half. Griffin scored two straight baskets and then assisted on a basket by Destiny Crum. Griffin made 1 of 2 free-throw attempts after getting fouled on a drive to the basket before Kayla Evans drained a three-point shot. Jada Hankerson's layup off a Griffin assist sent the Tornadoes into halftime leading 35-11.

The Tornadoes scored the first 10 points of the third quarter. Griffin had two consecutive baskets during that span, which also included Jackson scoring off an offensive rebound, drawing a foul and making the awarded free throw.

See BHS, page 10

## BHS take 68-51 win over KHHS

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
Telegraph Staff Writer

A 15-2 run that began in the latter stages of the third quarter was enough to help the Bradford High School boys basketball team overcome a 20-plus-point, 20-plus-rebound performance by Keystone Heights' Garrison Teague in a 68-51 win on Jan. 19 in Starke.

Both teams entered the game off two-game losing streaks, but eight points by Race Black during the late run helped the Tornadoes (6-9) pull away.

The Indians (7-10) built an early 9-2 lead, with Teague scoring his team's first six points — all off offensive rebounds.

Bradford's Damarion

Hankerson made a three-pointer and was also fouled on a three-point attempt, making two free throws to help the Tornadoes make it 12-7 in favor of Keystone. The Indians closed out the first quarter by scoring five of its final seven points, with Teague scoring off another offensive rebound and Darrion Grady scoring off a steal and making the free-throw attempt he earned for getting fouled on the play.

Hankerson scored the first eight points of the second quarter. He made his second three-point shot of the night and was then fouled on a three-point attempt following a Keystone turnover, which also saw the

See HOOPS, page 12

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If you would like to sponsor our event, please reach out to a Rotary member or call President Matt Dyal (904-364-6072). Tickets will be given out when sponsorship is purchased.

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# Keystone girls defeat Lake Butler 20-6 in SMAC tourney

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
Telegraph Staff Writer

Third seed Keystone Heights defeated sixth seed Lake Butler 20-6 in the quarterfinals of the Suwannee Middle Athletic Conference girls basketball tournament on Jan. 22 in Keystone.

Keystone's season would come to an end with a loss to second seed Williston in the Jan. 23 semifinals.

The Indians scored six points in the opening quarter. Raven Bastin had a steal that eventually led to her jump shot for the first points of the game. Briethen



Raven Bastin prepares to put up a shot for Keystone in the Indians' SMAC quarterfinal win over Lake Butler. The Indians' season ended in the semifinal round. Photos by Cliff Smelley.

Cooper added the second basket, followed by Taylor Hall scoring after a steal by Alexandra Papaioannou.

Maria Papaioannou had the

only basket in the second quarter as Keystone went into halftime leading 8-0.

Keystone had a couple of steals to start the third quarter,

with Alexandra Papaioannou scoring off one by Cooper to make it a 10-0 game. The Indians got baskets from Bastin and Cooper to go up 14-0 before Lake Butler's Alayah Jefferson finally put her team on the board.

Cooper scored off her own steal, while Alexandra Papaioannou had a basket off an offensive rebound to send the Indians into the fourth quarter leading 18-2.

The Tigers scored the first four points of the final quarter, getting two free throws from Latoya Hampton and a basket by Ivy Wilson, which was set up by Graci Jenkins' steal.

Maria Papaioannou had the last score of the game.

Cooper led Keystone with six points, while Bastin, Alexandra Papaioannou and Maria Papaioannou each had four. Hall added two points.



Lake Butler's Tessa Warren (left) dribbles past Keystone's Andrea Brody.

# BHS

Continued from page 9

Griffin had three of her 10-plus rebounds at the start of the fourth quarter. She rebounded a Suwannee missed shot, dribbled the length of the court and put up a shot, which didn't go in. She grabbed the rebound and missed another shot attempt, but again rebounded the miss, this time putting it back in for a basket and

a 55-16 lead.

The final quarter began with six straight points by Griffin, who finished the quarter with 10.

Jada Hankerson was the team's second-leading scorer with 15 points. Bradford also got seven points from Jackson, five points from Khamyra Hankerson, three points each from Crum and Evans and two points from Kailyn Teal.

Bradford entered the game off a 69-38 win over host Keystone Heights on Jan. 16.

The Indians (1-16) got five points each from Alana Anderson and Yasmin Bryant and trailed by only three entering the second quarter. Bradford got 10 points from Jackson and eight points from Griffin in outscoring Keystone 18-8 for a 35-22 halftime lead.

Griffin scored 13 points in the fourth quarter in finishing with her game-high 30. Jackson and Crum had 16 and 10 points, respectively, with Bradford also getting six from Khamyra

Hankerson, four from Jada Hankerson, two from Nyasia Lopey and one from Teal.

Keystone made six three-pointers, getting two each from Bryant and Riley Shuford. Bryant led the Indians with eight points, while Anderson and Daisy Hubbard each had seven. Shuford finished with six, while Keystone also got four from Kenley Shepherd and three each from McKinlee Kirkland and Kadence Massey.

# LIFT

Continued from page 9

Griffis said those three lifters took Malphurs under their wings.

Since he began training with Griffis, Malphurs has made tremendous strides physically. He's also improved mentally. Griffis said in the first-ever competition Malphurs took part in, he missed all three of his bench-press attempts and still had the deadlift and squat events to compete in. Griffis told Malphurs he had to get out of his own head and quit overthinking everything. All he had to do was replicate what he was doing in the weight room every day with

Griffis.

Malphurs finished that meet having all successful lifts in both the deadlift and the squat.

"After that meet, his confidence started rising," Griffis said.

Malphurs drew a lot of attention at the recent Jacksonville Open Championships. Once people became aware that he was setting records, they gathered around the platform when he was lifting, taking photos and video and congratulating him.

There was a time when it all probably would've been overwhelming and affected his performance, but not now.

"He was smiling the whole time," Griffis said.

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# Obituaries

## William Bright

William "Bill" Bright, passed away in hospice on his 86th birthday in Lake City. Born on Jan. 17, 1938, in Sevierville, Tennessee, he led a remarkable life filled with love and laughter. He dedicated 27 years to serving his country in the Navy. He retired as a Master Chief with honor and grace. Upon retiring from the Navy, he embarked on a new adventure as the proud owner of Bill's Appliance Repair. For over two decades, he fixed appliances with skillful hands and an ever-present smile. He had an endearing personality that charmed everyone who crossed paths with him. With a mischievous sparkle in his eyes, he was a natural jokester who found immense pleasure in making others laugh. People naturally gravitated toward him for his warmth, kindness, and lighthearted spirit. Fishing and hunting were lifelong passions that gave him immense enjoyment. He was preceded in death by his wife of 44 years, Joyce Bright; his daughters, Janet Thompson and Joan Lintz; brothers, Frank, Lee, Paul, and Darryl Bright; and granddaughter, Michelle.

He is survived by his son, Jimmy Pugh of Jacksonville; grandchildren, Aaron, Monica, Joshua, Michael, Michelle, and Mallory; numerous great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren; and his sister, Charlotte (Cord) Price of Tennessee.

A visitation ceremony to celebrate his life will take place Tuesday, Jan. 30, at 11 a.m. at Faith Baptist Church in Lake Butler. This will be followed by a funeral service at 12 p.m. He will be laid to rest with military honors immediately following the service at McKinney Cemetery. Pastor Ralph Durham will officiate the services.

Arrangements are under the care and direction of Archer-Milton Funeral Home. 386-496-2008 www.archerfuneralhome.com



PAID OBITUARY

## Lynn Crossway

Mr. Lynn "Gator Bait" Crossway, 66, of Lawtey, passed away at his home unexpectedly Saturday, Jan. 20, 2024. He was born Sept. 16, 1957, in Verona, New York to Eugene and Doris (Hill) Crossway. He was a retired car hauler and he enjoyed riding his motorcycle and watching NASCAR and Florida Gator football. In addition to his parents; he was preceded in death by his wife of 33 years, Linda (Nolan) Crossway.

His survivors are five children, Annie "Chosen One," Jennifer, Adam, Gary, and Candice; along with three brothers, Wayne, Gene, and Donald. He was lovingly called "Pawpaw," "Grandpaw" and "Crapaw" by 11 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

A Celebration of Life will be announced at a later date. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to local VFWs, Soldiers Freedom Outdoors in Melrose, American Legion Post #250 in Middleburg, Florida BACA-7Bridges or the American Cancer Society.

Arrangements are under the care of Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home, 620 E. Nona St., Starke 32091. 904-964-6200. www.jonesgallagherfh.com



PAID OBITUARY

## Mark Davis

Mark C. Davis, 56, passed away on Saturday, Jan. 20, 2024, surrounded by his family after a brave battle with cancer. He was born on June 17, 1967, in Buckhannon, West Virginia to Helen Lousie Lewis. In 1974, his family moved to Starke, and it has been home ever since. He graduated from Bradford County High School and went to work in sawmills as a lumber grader. His work ethic was unparalleled, and he took great pride in his profession. He was a friendly and kindhearted individual who loved to bring joy to others through humor. He had a knack for telling "dad jokes" that always brought smiles to the faces of those around him. He also thought of himself as a ladies' man and affectionately dubbed himself "Big Papa." Never one to shy away from putting in the effort, he was a true example of selflessness. He enjoyed hunting, but spending time with his grandsons brought him immeasurable happiness. He was preceded in death by his brothers, Luther Hosey II and Sidney James Hall Jr.

He will be deeply missed by his loving family and friends. He is survived by his mother, Helen (Ray) Griffis of Starke; daughters, Jennifer (L.J.) Forsgren of Lake Butler and Kelli (Kathryn) Davison of Lake City; adored grandsons, Lucas and Liam Forsgren and Malachi Davis; siblings, Allen Davis of Lake Butler, Perry Don Davis of Lake City, Samantha Jamison of Brunswick, Georgia, and Kalynn Hosey of Buckhannon, West Virginia; his faithful dog, Nuggett; and a host of West Virginia family.

To honor his memory, visitation will be held on Friday, Jan. 26, beginning at 1:30 p.m., with the memorial service following at 2 p.m. The services will take place at Iglesia Cristiana Misionera Bautista, 4926 SW 107th Lane, Lake Butler, 32054. His final memorialization will be by cremation under the care and direction of Archer-Milton Funeral Home. 386-496-2008 www.archerfuneralhome.com



PAID OBITUARY

## Carolyn Francis

Mrs. Carolyn D. Francis, 93, of Hampton died Friday, Jan. 19, 2024.

Survivors are her children, Thomas "Tommy" Francis and Martha Van Vleet; and numerous extended family members.

Memorial services will be at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 24, at Starke Presbyterian Church. Interment will be at a later date at the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell.

Arrangements are under the care of Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home, 620 E. Nona St., Starke 32091. 904-964-6200. www.jonesgallagherfh.com

## Ray Griffis

Ray F. Griffis, 92, of Starke, passed away at his home Friday, Jan. 19, 2024. He was born Dec. 13, 1931, in Starke to Eugene and Ada (Prevatt) Griffis. He started his career in the National Guard, retiring following 36 years of service. He then began his second career working at Camp Blanding and retiring as their CSMS. He enjoyed golf and college football, especially the Florida Gators. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his first wife, Hazel (Sullivan) Griffis; their daughter, Ada Louise Griffis; and his sister, Hazel Jolin.

Survivors are his wife, Helen Griffis of Starke; children, Karen Shepherd of Keystone Heights and Andy (Beth) Griffis of Starke; along with a brother, Clifton Griffis of Starke. Also left behind are four grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; and additional family members and friends who will miss him dearly.

A visitation will begin at 10:30 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 25, at the DeWitt C. Jones Chapel. Funeral services will follow at 11 a.m., with Mr. Ricky Griffis officiating. A private interment will follow at Keystone Heights Cemetery.

Arrangements are under the care of Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home, 620 E. Nona St. Starke 32091. 904-964-6200. www.jonesgallagherfh.com



PAID OBITUARY

## Gloria Holmes

Gloria Nell Howard Holmes passed away quietly at home after an extended battle with pulmonary fibrosis on Sunday, Jan. 14, 2024. She was a beloved mom, grandmother, great-grandmother, sister, sister-in-law, aunt, cousin, and friend. Gloria "Sugarnell" was born June 27, 1934, as the oldest child of William Shands Howard and Opal Baxter Howard during the Great Depression. She married her "Jimmy," who joined the Marine Corps and whisked her away to spend 23 years and 32 house moves until his retirement in 1972. They then returned to their hometown of Lake Butler. She worked as a bookkeeper, kindergarten teacher, secretary, college instructor, and owner (three locations) of fabric stores. She retired at the age of 50 and went on to care for her aging relatives and parents. She was a member of Crosspoint Baptist Church in Middleburg. She was preceded in death by her husband of 66 years, Capt. James David Holmes, USMC; her sister, Ila (Skip) Woodington; sister-in-law, Fran Douglas Howard; and her grandson, David Lowell Shadd.

She is survived by her three daughters, Janice Ramos of Middleburg, Kathy Ritchie of Lake Butler, and Jeannie (Tim) Carson of Fleming Island; seven grandchildren, Crista Green and Ryan Green both of Middleburg, Hazen Willis, Jennifer (Brian) Dampier, and James Willis all of Alachua, Brandon (Crystal) Craig and Jared Cody (Krystal) Craig both of Lake City; great-grandchildren, Gage Jimenez, Troy French, Aubrey Propes, Dalton Dampier, Emily Dampier, Kiley Craig, Aubree Craig, Arya Craig, Raelyn Craig, Reagan Sterling, Bebo Sterling, and Caris Craig; sister, Barbara (Edward) Carter and brother, Shands (Lori) Howard, both of Lake Butler; and numerous beloved nephews, nieces, and cousins from all areas of Alabama, Georgia, and Florida.

A Celebration of Life will be held Tuesday, Jan. 30, at Harmony Free Will Baptist Church, Lake Butler. The family will receive friends for a visitation beginning at 10:30 a.m., with the service following at 11 a.m.

Arrangements are under the care and direction of Archer-Milton Funeral Home. 386-496-2008 www.archerfuneralhome.com



PAID OBITUARY

## Charlotte Marchetti

Charlotte Harris Jones Marchetti, at the age of 91, went to her heavenly home on Monday, Jan. 8, 2024, at the home of her son, Seeber Jones, in Starke. She was born on Dec. 15, 1932, in Worthington Springs to the late Sebe Harris and Ruby Thelma Thompson Harris and was their only child. She will be remembered by her family for her faith in God and the example she set for her children and grandchildren to follow the Lord. She was a longtime member of Grace Baptist Church of Starke and faithfully served there for many years. Family was very important to her and her house was always open for family and friends to gather and make memories. Many of her days were spent with family, enjoying days at the beach or lake. She also loved to work in her flower garden, travel with her friends, bowl and shop and took every opportunity to go fishing. She was preceded in death by her parents; husbands, Merrill H. Jones and Richard Marchetti; and her daughters, Janice Goolsby, Connie Harrington and Karen Jones.

She is survived by her sons, Seeber (Diane) Jones of Starke, Keith (Patricia) Jones of Dunnellon; and her grandchildren, Pam (Bobby) Martin, Randy (April) Goolsby, and Michelle Jones, all of Starke, Jennifer Keys (Tavis) Russell of Fleming Island, April (Shane) Joye of Clover, South Carolina, Christie (Jamie) Hosford of Homosassa, Ashley (Chad) Evans of Blanchard, Oklahoma, and Ryan (Brittany) Harrington of Gainesville. She was lovingly called "Nanny" by 17 great-grandchildren and 15 great-great-grandchildren; and a host of extended family and friends.

A Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, Jan. 27, at 1 p.m. at the River of Life Church of God, 2225 US Hwy 301-S. The family will receive friends an hour prior to the service. In lieu of flowers, please donate to Community Hospice, St. Jude's Children's Hospital or the Wounded Warriors Project in memory of her.



PAID OBITUARY

## Daniel Rigano

Daniel Rigano of Lake Butler passed away peacefully, after complications following surgery, on Friday, Jan. 19, 2024, at 11:27 a.m., with his wife and children at his side. He is now with our Heavenly Father. He was born on Feb. 16, 1962, in North York, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and became a proud U.S. citizen on March 20, 2008. He loved cooking, movies, board games, and spending time with his loving family.

He left behind his loving wife, Louanne Arlene Rigano (64), of 31-plus years; and two children, Daniel Salvatore Rigano (30) and Amelia Margaret Francesca Rigano (22), also of Lake Butler.

A Celebration of Life service will be held Saturday, Jan. 27, at 10 a.m. at Fellowship Baptist Church in Raiford, officiated by his nephew, Nicholas Burke.



PAID OBITUARY

## Marlowe Smith

Marlowe Leroy Smith, 88, of Alachua, passed away on Monday, Jan. 15, 2024, at the VA Hospital in Gainesville. He was born on Nov. 22, 1935 (1934 according to his Army documents) in Lincolnton, North Carolina. At the age of 15, after earning money from delivering newspapers, he hopped on a bus and headed to Florida. He was able to get as far south as High Springs. From there, he walked to Alachua and asked the jailer if he could stay a few nights at the jail. Those few nights turned into nearly a lifetime of calling Alachua home. A few years later, he was attending the theater in Alachua when he sat beside a young lady.

After sharing popcorn and a ride home, they began dating and three years later, in 1956, he married the love of his life, Mary Sue Wilson. He was working at Copeland Sausage when he was drafted into the United States Army. After serving several years, he returned home and began working as an electrical laborer for HT Dressler. He had his hands in everything; he was a volunteer fireman and eventually Fire Chief for the city of Alachua. He owned and operated the Maytag store in downtown Alachua, and in 1968, he opened Marlowe Smith Electrical, which he owned and operated for over 30 years. Outside of work, his passion was racing. He helped build the Ellenville Speedway and owned many race cars over the years. He also enjoyed camping and traveled across the country camping. He was a faithful attendant of New Oak Grove Baptist Church for many years. He was preceded in death by his parents; and eight siblings.

He leaves behind his wife of almost 68 years, Mary Sue Smith of Lake Butler; children, Wade (Lu Ann) Smith of Alachua, Pamela Dampier of Alachua, and Blair (Robin) Smith of Rocky Top, Tennessee; six grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; one great-great grandchild and a second on the way; siblings, Reed, Marie, and Shirley, all of North Carolina; and numerous extended family also survive.

A funeral to honor his life was held on Saturday, Jan. 20, at New Oak Grove Baptist Church with Brother Terry Elixson, pastor, officiating. The family received friends for visitation prior to the service. He will be laid to rest with military honors at Forest Grove Cemetery.

Arrangements were under the care and direction of Archer-Milton Funeral Home, Lake Butler. 386-496-2008. www.ArcherFuneralHome.com

PAID OBITUARY

## HOOPS

Continued from page 9

Indians' bench get assessed with a technical foul. Hankerson made all three free-throw attempts that were awarded for getting fouled and then made both technical free throws, tying the score at 17-17.

The Tornadoes later held a 24-19 lead, with Mattox Burgin scoring off a baseline drive and Breion Johnson scoring and making a free throw.

A 6-for-6 stretch from the foul line, with Teague going 4 for 4 and Zane Leger going 2 for 2, helped the Indians stay close.

A rebound putback by Burgin gave Bradford a 29-25 lead, but Leger would answer for Keystone to make the halftime score 29-27.

Bradford got back-to-back baskets from Mikey Oliver and Burgin to open the third quarter, but the Indians then scored five straight points. Leger sank a jump shot before Grady went to the foul line, making 1 of 2 attempts. Teague rebounded the missed free throw and put it back in for a basket, leaving Keystone trailing 33-32.

Teague finished with 22 rebounds.

Black answered Teague's score with a three-pointer, but



Keystone's Garrison Teague pulls down one of his 22 rebounds.

Keystone then got a free throw from Bryant Kubisiak and a turn-around jumper by Teague.

The Tornadoes then went on a 10-2 run to close out the third quarter. It began with a Black basket. Black then had a steal, which led to a basket by Keith Taylor. After Keystone got one free throw each from Andru Siemer and Teague, Bradford knocked down back-to-back three-pointers by Hankerson and Black, making the score 46-37.

Bradford's run extended into the fourth quarter, which opened with another three-pointer by Black. Burgin was then fouled on a drive to the basket, making both free throws for a 51-37 lead.

Burgin and Oliver scored seven and eight points, respectively, in the fourth quarter to help the Tornadoes maintain a double-digit lead.

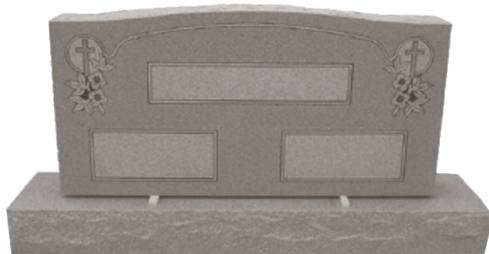
Black and Hankerson led the Tornadoes in scoring with 16 points each. Burgin and Oliver finished with 13 and 10, respectively.

Bradford also got eight points from Taylor and five points from Johnson.

Teague led all scorers with 24 points. The Indians also got 10 from Leger, nine from Grady, six from Bryce Hollingsworth and one each from Kubisiak and Siemer.

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# LBMS boys defeat BMS to advance to SMAC final

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
Telegraph Staff Writer

Tyrese Chandler and Garrison Smith combined to score 16 points in the second half as the

had the first basket of the game, while Damarion Dodd scored off a Caiden Carn steal to put Bradford ahead 4-2. A basket by Dylan Ruise would later put the

Baskets by Andersen-Davis, Chandler and Merrie put the Tigers ahead 20-8.

Bradford then scored five straight. Slocum got a basket and made the awarded free throw for getting fouled, while Ruise scored off a turnover.

The Tigers' A.J. Chandler had the last basket of the half as Lake Butler went into the locker room leading 22-13.

A basket and free throw by Tyrese Chandler put Lake Butler ahead 27-16 in the third quarter. Andersen-Davis then grabbed a defensive rebound, dribbled the length of the court and dished the ball off to Smith for a basket and a 13-point lead.

The Tornados opened the fourth quarter with a 7-2 run. Mekos Henderson had a three-pointer to get it started. Slocum scored off an offensive rebound, while Ruise scored off a turnover, leaving the Tornados trailing 33-26.

Lake Butler didn't allow Bradford to get any closer.

Andersen-Davis, Smith and Tyrese Chandler led the Tigers with 12 points each. Lake Butler also got five points from Merriex, four from A.J. Chandler, two from Harold and one from Gavyn Smith.

Bradford was led by Ruise and Slocum, who each scored eight points. The Tornados also got seven from Carn, six from Henderson and two each from Dodd, Brilan Clifflin and Kaedan Parks.

Fort White, the seventh seed, won the opening tip and scored, but the rest of the game was all Tigers. Garrison Smith made three three-pointers en route to scoring 11 in the first quarter. Harold had seven points in the quarter as Lake Butler took a 25-point lead into the second quarter.

The Tigers continued to roll. Andersen-Davis scored off a Dempsey Rike steal. Another turnover led to a three-pointer by A.J. Chandler and a 38-8 lead.

Tyrese Chandler scored off two consecutive turnovers to close out the first half, with Lake Butler leading 45-10.

Harold and Smith each finished with a game-high 12 points. Andersen-Davis had eight points, while A.J. Chandler, Tyrese Chandler and Gavyn Smith each scored seven.

The Tigers also got six points from Darrell Merriex and two from Rike.

Bradford outscored Keystone Heights 34-10 in the first half en route to a 53-20 win in the quarterfinals.

The Tornados outscored the sixth seed Indians 18-5 in the first quarter, with Carn making two three-pointers and scoring eight points. Ruise had six points in the quarter.

Carn had four points in the Tornados' 16-point second quarter as he would go on to finish as the game's leading



Lake Butler's Tyrese Chandler (third from right) goes up for a shot in the lane. Photos by Cliff Smelley.



Lake Butler's Jackson Andersen-Davis (foreground) and Bradford's Dylan Ruise chase after a loose ball.

Lake Butler Middle School boys basketball team never relinquished its lead in defeating Bradford 48-35 in the semifinals of the Suwannee Middle Athletic Conference tournament on Jan. 23 in Keystone Heights.

The second seed Tigers will play for the championship on Thursday, Jan. 25, at 7 p.m. at Keystone Heights High School.

Third seed Bradford scored six of the game's first nine points. The Tornados' Terrence Slocum

Tornados up 6-3.

The Tigers, who had a first-round bye, evened it up on a Smith three-pointer. It was the start of an 11-0 run to close out the quarter. Smith added two free throws and then forced a backcourt turnover, which led to a basket by Cayden Harold. Cadenz Merriex had a basket off a Smith steal, while Jackson Andersen-Davis scored off an offensive rebound, sending Lake Butler into the second quarter leading 14-6.

## LBMS, BMS advance off double-digit wins

Reaching the semifinals was no problem for Lake Butler or Bradford, who recorded big wins in the Jan. 22 quarterfinals.

The Tigers scored 32 points in the first quarter of what was an eventual 61-16 win over Fort White.

# BMS girls to play for SMAC title after 34-19 win over P.K.

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
Telegraph Staff Writer

Takayla Barnes had a strong first half in helping give the Bradford Middle School girls basketball team a 10-point lead, while Cayson Hampton's strong second half helped the Tornados defeat P.K. Yonge 34-19 in the semifinals of the Suwannee Middle Athletic Conference tournament on Jan. 23 in Keystone Heights.

The top seed Tornados will now play for the championship on Thursday, Jan. 25, at 6 p.m. at Keystone Heights High School.

Consecutive baskets by Hampton and Kamari Haygood sent Bradford into the second quarter leading 10-6.

Barnes made two free throws after getting fouled on a shot to start the second quarter. She added three baskets to help the Tornados build a 20-10 halftime lead. Barnes had eight points in the quarter and 13 in the half.

Hampton scored off a Kaliyah James steal for the first points of the third quarter. James later scored off an offensive rebound, while Jaleigha Bolden scored off a Barnes steal. Hampton knocked down a jump shot following another turnover as Bradford took a 28-12 lead into the final quarter.

P.K. Yonge, the tournament's fifth seed, committed 50 turnovers in all.



Cayson Hampton (center) drives to the basket. Photo by Cliff Smelley.

Hampton scored off her own steal early in the fourth quarter as she finished with eight points in the second half and 10 for the game.

Barnes led Bradford with 13 points, while Wynter Barrington had five. Bolden, Haygood and James each added two points.

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#### 2. Can you tell me what benefits from the Florida Air National Guard have helped you the most?

*The National Guard Pass, as well as EDD, Education Dollars for Duty, are the programs I have utilized most since joining the Florida Air National Guard. The ability to employ EDD funds, which cover the full cost of tuition and fees for any public college in the state of Florida, gave me the opportunity to complete my Office Specialist Certificate as well as currently enroll in an AS Accounting program. Next fall semester I plan on transferring to a FL university complete a bachelor's degree, where EDD will continue to cover tuition and fees. While on TDY in Montana, we were allotted some time over the weekend and a group of us were able to visit Yellowstone National Park. It was breathtakingly beautiful, truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, which I would not have had if it weren't for joining the Florida Air National Guard.*

#### 3. Can you talk about some of the new skills you have learned in the Florida Air National Guard that have helped you in the civilian work force?

*Working in the Florida Air National Guard, I have developed numerous skills in the areas of inventory tracking, cargo palletization, C-17 load configurations, and even k-span construction. However, by far the most beneficial capability that has been of service to me in the civilian work force has to be the leadership skills I have gained. I would say I was somewhat effective as a leader before joining, but the Guard has given me a fresh perspective and my mentors in the unit have been remarkable in demonstrating better ways to lead my fellow Airmen.*



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Starke Branch - 2460 Commercial Dr.

**Wiley leads Keystone boys soccer team to 8-0 victory over Trinity**

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
Telegraph Staff Writer

Aaron Wiley scored five goals for the Keystone Heights High School boys soccer team, which concluded the regular season with an 8-0 win over visiting Trinity Christian on Jan. 16.

Wiley also recorded two assists for the Indians, who improved to 12-2-2.

Luke Brunt, Bryce Huntley and Noah Jaramillo each scored one goal, with Brunt and Jaramillo also recording one assist each.

Sammy Wacha led the team in assists with three.

Keystone earned the number-two seed in the District 4-3A tournament, which is being hosted by Williston. The Indians

played a quarterfinal match against seventh seed Interlachen on Wednesday, Jan. 24. If Keystone won, it will play third seed Williston or sixth seed Fort White in a semifinal match on Monday, Jan. 29, at 7 p.m.

The championship match is set for Wednesday, Jan. 31, at 7 p.m.

Keystone is eighth in the Florida High School Athletic Association's Region 1-3A power rankings and ranked 37th in Class 3A overall.

**KHHS girls soccer team ends regular season with 3 straight wins**

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
Telegraph Staff Writer

Ella Hutchins scored two first-half goals for the Keystone Heights High School girls soccer team, which concluded the

regular season with a 2-1 win over visiting Columbia on Jan. 19.

Halea Lam had one assist, while Aspen Krohn made 15 saves in goal.

It was the third straight win for the Indians, who entered the match off an 8-0 win at Eastside on Jan. 17. Alyssa Townsend scored three goals, while Kayle Buchanan and Alea Horton each had two. Madison Brinson added a goal as well.

Keystone got one assist each from Lam, Townsend and Ashly McCarthy.

Krohn made five saves.

Keystone (10-5-1) is the second seed in the District 4-3A tournament, which is being hosted by Williston. The Indians played seventh seed Fort White in a quarterfinal match on Wednesday, Jan. 24. If Keystone won, it'll play third seed Williston or sixth seed Branford in a semifinal match on Friday, Jan. 26, at 7 p.m.

The championship match is set for Tuesday, Jan. 30, at 7 p.m.



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