

Bradford County Telegraph

USPS 062-700 — Starke, Florida

Thursday, Dec. 26, 2024

146th year, 24th Issue — \$1

Fire fee workshops scheduled

First resolution passed

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
mark@bctelegraph.com

Bradford County Commissioners relaunched the fire assessment process last week, approving a resolution allowing the county to pursue collecting the fee via property owners' tax bills.

The vote has not imposed any new fee yet. It is just a first step in the process.

Commissioners approved the same resolution at the beginning of 2024, but by August a majority of them voted against collecting the fee. Now the 2024 resolution has expired, hence the need to approve a new version for 2025.

The special assessment would raise revenue to fund the county's fire department, but based on prior discussions, commissioners are not interested in setting the fee high enough to fund 100% of that budget — a projected \$4.85 million, according to the study released last May. Full funding would have required more \$300 a year from each residential household and 20 cents per square foot for each commercial or other nonresidential building.

Commissioners have never supported imposing a fee that high. The final resolution which was defeated 4-1 on Aug. 6 contained a \$167 fee for households and 11 cents per square foot for nonresidential properties. It also contained exemptions for disabled veterans and low-income households living at or below the federal poverty level. Churches and other nonprofits would have been exempt as well.

Commissioners wanted the public to know their Dec. 19 set nothing in stone. At the same time, commissioners have acknowledged the need to raise adequate revenue from diversified sources to pay for desired services. They have also said another source of revenue might allow them to lower property taxes, which are still set at the 10-mill cap.

There were no public comments during last Thursday's hearing for the resolution. Citizens will have additional opportunities to learn more, ask questions and express themselves before any final decision is made. Commissioners also have questions and want to learn more. Three fire assessments workshops for commissioners and the public have been scheduled:

- Feb. 4 at 10:30 a.m.
- March 18 at 5:30 p.m.
- May 6 at 10:30 a.m.

Each of these dates is on a Tuesday and before the final public hearings, which will take place on May 15 and June 17. If the board is going to vote for or against the fee, it will take place at the public hearings.

The commission is alternating these discussions with budget workshops, which will take place alongside their 10:30 a.m. board meetings on Jan. 7, March 4, April 1 and July 1. Commissioners and staff agreed to start the process early next year and are doing so.

Merry Christmas



Three smiles tell you how fun Holidays with Heroes is. Andrew Johnson (center) of the Bradford County Sheriff's Office shops with Bradford Elementary students Terri Faison (far left) and Andre Rivera. The event, formerly known as Starke Shop with a Cop, took place Dec. 17-18 at Walmart of Starke and consisted of students from Bradford, Lake Butler, Lawtey and Starke elementary schools. See pages 10, 14 and 15 for more.

Lake Region honors veterans with wreaths

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

Keystone Heights-area residents placed Christmas wreaths on the graves of veterans during the area's Wreaths Across America observance.

A color guard from Keystone Heights Junior-Senior High School presented the colors, and girls from the American Heritage Girls chapters at Gadara Baptist Church and Friendship Bible Church led the crowd in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2.7 million wreaths

Master of ceremonies, Mark Alexander, recalled the history of the Wreaths Across America movement.

He said the ceremony's founder, Morrill Worcester, was inspired when



Lt. James F. Taylor

the 12-year-old paper boy won a trip to Washington, D.C., and visited Arlington National Cemetery.

The teenager's father owned a wreath company.

"It moved him in such a special way," said Alexander, "that he decided when he inherited the company from his father that he would get something very special started, and he did that in 1992 with the first wreaths, 5,000 of them being placed at Arlington in the old section."

From there, the wreath laying grew to 2022's event, in which 2.7 million wreaths were placed in 3,702 locations.

"Every state in the US and its territories participate in this event," Alexander said, adding that the event has now gone international as overseas cemeteries with American service members' remains also participating.

See WREATHS, page 4



Girls from the American Heritage Girls chapters at Gadara Baptist Church and Friendship Bible Church led the crowd in the Pledge of Allegiance.



WORTH NOTING

Bradford Legislative Delegation hearing announced

State Sen. Jennifer Bradley, chair of the Bradford County Legislative Delegation, announced that the annual delegation hearing has been scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 8, at 3:30 p.m. The hearing will be held at The Bradford County Commission meeting room, 945 N. Temple Ave. in Starke.

The legislative delegation holds a public hearing each year to afford local officials, members of the public and other interested parties the opportunity to present legislative proposals or express opinions on state issues.

The Bradford County legislative delegation includes Sen. Bradley (R-Fleming Island) and Rep. Chuck Brannan (R-Macclenny). The 2025 regular session of the Florida Legislature will convene on Tuesday, March 4, in Tallahassee.

For additional information, or to be placed on the agenda for the hearing, contact Bradley's office at 850-487-5006, or email her staff at Hefley.Katelyn@flsenate.gov.

Collection site closings

Bradford County's solid waste collection sites will close on Tuesday and Wednesday, Dec. 24 and 25, for Christmas. They will reopen on Thursday, Dec. 26, at 10 a.m. The will also will close on New Year's Day, Jan. 1, but reopen at 10 a.m. on Thursday, Jan. 2.

Food distribution

A communitywide food distribution hosted by Farm Share and True Vine Ministry will take place Tuesday, Dec. 24, at 10 a.m. at True Vine Outreach Ministry in Starke.

Food boxes often include fresh produce, deli and bakery items, dairy and some meats. Inventory is subject to change based on availability. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



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Clay school board reverses course on public comments policy

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

Clay County School Board members reverted back to their previous policy of videoing public comments after proposing

to turn off cameras during a previous meeting.

During their December 2 workshop, board members agreed to turn off the video cameras for public comments unrelated to an agenda item for school board

meetings. However, the panel reversed itself in a December 17 workshop, reverting to its previous policy.

During the latter workshop, a school board staff member read a statement from board member

Michele Hanson, who was not at the work session. In the statement, the board member representing the Lake Region and Middleburg area said she wanted to retain last year's policy of holding public comments immediately

before the superintendent's presentation, with an open mic and cameras recording the comments. Hanson apologized for any confusion about the new policy and emphasized that she opposed censorship.

"Mrs. Hanson also wanted everyone to know that she is adamantly against any type of censorship of public comments

See POLICY, page 5

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Not pictured: Diane Andrews.

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Hope Christian's students present 'Different Kind of Christmas'

Hope Christian Academy hosted two performances Dec. 6 of "A Different Kind of Christmas," featuring high school drama students and elementary students for the music portion.

Hope Christian's music director, Crystal Minix, said, "Our 2024 Christmas Program featured a joyful celebration of the holiday season, showcasing the talents of students from kindergarten through 6th grade. Students performed a variety of festive songs using handbells, singing and worshipping. The finale [was] energetic songs with motions, bringing Christmas to life through movement and music. The program was a heartwarming



Soloist Kingsley Bagley performed "Mary, Did You Know?"

performed in a HCA original drama, "A Different Kind of Christmas," which was written with input from the HCA Drama class of 2020.

"Due to the shutdown that we were enduring at that time, our students were unable to perform the play before an audience and had to settle for a miniature performance to their parents in the cafeteria. The play is a brief view into the life of Mary, owner of a small town diner that has been in her family for generations. The pandemic has greatly hindered her business and she begins by praying that God will meet her needs on this day," León said.

way to celebrate the reason for the season, Jesus!" Adina León directed and



Posing in character is the HCA cast of the original play: (l-r seated): Director Adina León (as Danielle, a young widow) and Abbie León (Robyn, a young teen), (back row) Natalie Lowe (cast), Adam White (narrator), Elisabeth Amis (Ms. Angela Johnson), Jude Dugat (officer Jesus Santiago), Lesly Salvidrez (college student), Abigail Nance (cast), and Joanne Abbott (Mary, the restaurant owner).

Starke joins Economic Development Corporation

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
mark@bctelegraph.com

Starke has joined the Northeast Florida Economic Development Corporation, agreeing last week to financially support the corporation's work to bring new businesses and jobs into the county.

The commission voted 3-1 on Dec. 17 to pay the EDC's \$10,000 membership fee. This is the highest investment tier, with tiers starting at \$250 for individuals and nonprofits, and \$500-\$1,000 for businesses.

Commissioners have been weighing whether to spend public funds without knowing specifically how the city would benefit. Commissioners Janice Mortimer and Danny Nugent also wanted a commissioner or other city representative to be more engaged in the EDC's decision making.

The corporation's bylaws prohibit elected officials from having a seat on the board of directors. Also, elected officials are obliged to operate in public, creating a conflict with the corporation's need to keep certain discussions with business owners and developers private.

City commissioners and administrators have been invited to attend EDC meetings but would not be allowed to listen in when privacy is required. While some members also sit in the EDC's board of directors and vote on corporation business, the city of Starke will not.

The decision — which was originally postponed until January — was not unanimous, with Nugent voting against paying for membership. Mortimer gave her blessing to move forward with a vote in her absence, according to Jimmy

Crosby, chief administrative officer. She previously indicated her support would hinge on the city having an ex officio (nonvoting) seat on the board.

In the prior meeting on Dec. 3, Mortimer recognized that the city commission would have a final say in many economic and development matters in the city, telling Shepard, "You can't bring

a business into our city without the city making some kind of accommodations."

According to Shepard, benefits for the city's membership include:

- direct marketing of Starke properties.
- inclusion of city staff with

See JOIN, page 5

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WREATHS

Continued from page 1

"So, it's pretty significant that we have a nationwide event like this at this time."

We are honored to know you

Keystone Heights Mayor Nina Rodenroth asked the audience to appreciate the freedoms they enjoy at the cost of veterans who sacrificed their lives.

"We can raise our children to believe as we do," she said. "We can travel from one end of this great nation to the other and not have to ask for permission to go. We are free to vote for whomever we feel should be in government office, and we answer to no one but our own feelings. We have the right to succeed. We have the right to fail at whatever endeavor we wish to pursue."

The mayor acknowledged that in addition to the veterans buried at the Keystone Heights cemetery, many in the crowd also sacrificed to preserve the freedoms of Americans.

"We thank those who gave their lives to keep us free, and we shall not forget them," she

said. "Today, many of you here are veterans of wars and conflicts that America has had to fight to protect the innocent and the oppressed. America has always been the first nation to stand up for the freedom of people from around the world. Many of you here today have answered that call and served your country well. We are here today to thank you. As your mayor and on behalf of the City of Keystone Heights, we are honored to know you."

The girl of his dreams

Keynote speaker Lt. James F. Taylor told the audience that he moved to the Lake Region from Perry five months ago.

The retired Air National Guard chaplain told the audience about a fellow Perry resident, Ed Sheffield.

He said Sheffield was captured by North Korean and Chinese forces during the Korean War and spent 37 months in captivity.

"He survived a hundred-mile death march in which 105 of his fellow soldiers did not survive," said Taylor. "And despite having been shot, bayoneted, and having a broken back, you just had to know Mr. Ed. He survived

subfreezing temperatures and all of those things. He survived hunger and torture. But instead of being armed with a rifle, he became armed with a pick and a shovel. And during those three years, he went from 185 pounds to less than a hundred pounds."

Taylor, the Senior Pastor at Keystone Heights Methodist Church, added that Sheffield said he survived the ordeal partly due to the toughness instilled into him during his rural, North Florida upbringing.

"He kept his mind busy while in captivity," added Taylor. "He told me that he built houses in his mind while he had that pickax and that shovel. While doing all that work, he kept his mind busy by thinking about how many trees and how many board feet he could get per tree and what kind of house he could build, and that's how he kept his mind busy."

Taylor said the POW also recalled boyhood memories of hunting wild hogs in his native Taylor County and dreamed of marrying a beautiful blonde girl when he returned home.

Upon his return to Florida, the City of Perry celebrated his repatriation with Ed Sheffield Day.

Taylor said that during the festivities, the honoree spotted a beautiful blonde member of the high school glee club named Jamie.

She was literally the girl of his dreams.

"After the celebration," Taylor continued, "Jamie walked up to the bench where Ed was sitting and said, 'Welcome home, my name is Jamie,' and that's how it all started."

The couple was married for 70 years, but it wasn't until 20 years into their marriage that Sheffield told his bride about his earlier vision of her while in captivity and that he had picked her out of the glee club crowd before she introduced herself to him.

"Mr. Ed passed away this August," Taylor said, "and I had the honor and privilege of officiating at his ceremony. I'm hoping that today someone in Tallahassee is placing a wreath at his marker."

Prayed all night for her Daddy

Taylor also drew on his Middle East deployment, recalling that his daughter, now in her twenties, told him she spent an entire night praying for him when she was two after her mother told her that Taylor's unit was under attack.

"She told me that night she lay in bed, and she prayed all night for her Daddy and her Daddy's airman and her Daddy's soldiers," Taylor said. "She shared that with me for the first time just this past week, and I just thought, it's not just about the veterans, it's not just about the ones that go, it's about the families, the spouses and the kids. It's about the ones that are at home."

Taylor reinforced the importance of supporting families by recounting the story of Army Sgt. Scott C. Rose, who died in a Blackhawk helicopter crash near Tikrit, Iraq, in 2003.

Seven people died in the crash, and Taylor was assigned to collect and catalog the personal effects of the deceased.

"We had the bodies at the morgue, and we were going through personal effects, putting them in the Ziploc bags and tagging everything," Taylor recalled. "There was a young man, and his name was Scott Rose. He was an Army warrant officer. And in his front pocket, in his flight suit, there was a picture of a young girl, a baby. Her name was Megan Louise Rose, a little baby he had never met."

Taylor said that the infant had been born after Rose left on deployment.

"That little girl is probably all grown up now, and she grew up without her Daddy," Taylor said. "I think of her almost every day and have prayed for her all these years."



Karlee Walker, a seventh grader at Bradford Middle School, places a wreath near the marker of Milton J. Humpries, Sr., a chief master sergeant in the U.S. Air Force who served in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Humpries died in 1989 at the age of 65.

"I pray someone is placing a wreath at Scott Rose's marker today," Taylor said. "What a beautiful statement it is that we think of them. Knowing that they are remembered is the kindest gesture we can offer them and their families."

Foster, adoption classes

Looking to make a difference in the community? Call Partnership for Strong Families today at 352-213-7219 to enroll in a foster and adoption class for parents.



Ltc. Mark Alexander said Wreaths Across America was started by Morrill Worcester, who, as a 12-year-old, was inspired by a trip to Arlington National Cemetery.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

from Our Family to Yours on this Joyous Holiday

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Christmas is surely a time of giving, as is evidenced by the giving or exchanging of many gifts. When we think about Christmas giving we need to remember, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," (John 3:16). God gave that we might believe on His Son and have a place in Heaven. Jesus paid our sin debt and rose again to show that His payment was enough. However, if we reject what He gave, we have a place in Hell.

Christmas needs to be a time for receiving, for no one can give a gift unless it is received. The Bible says that the Gift of God, His Son, Jesus, "came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God. Even to them that believe on his name; Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:11-13) Christmas is a time of happiness, as evidenced on the face of many. Happiness depends on happenings and can be short lived — to gain real Joy and Peace this Christmas, why not right now receive the greatest gift ever given, The Lord Jesus Christ? Jesus loves us and invites us to believe in Him. If you have not made this commitment, you should right now receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. If you have just now received Him...you can know the real Joy of Christmas for the first time. For those of us who already know Him — may we be drawn to a closer walk this Christmas.

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JOIN

Continued from page 3

executive business leader visits to Bradford.

- promotion of commercial and residential development for Starke properties.
- representation of Starke, by the EDC, in the global marketplace, conferences and summits, as well as state level events.
- inclusion in the search for grant opportunities.
- strategic advisory for economic development.
- reduced rates for relevant economic development grant writing and project management.
- letters of support for city's local, state and federal initiatives.

EDC will also keep city commissioners updated with quarterly presentations and monthly activity email reports.

Shepard has assured the commission that even without a direct vote in the corporation's

activities, the city's input will be essential to their work.

"Every executive that comes to this community, I bring them to Mr. Crosby's office so that we can have that meeting, have that conversation, and make sure that it's a good fit for the community," Shepard said during the Dec. 3 meeting.

The \$10,000 fee covers a year's membership. Continued support will depend on results and whether commissioners think their investment was money well spent.

Editor's note: A previous story referred to the Northeast Florida Economic Development Corporation as the Northeast Florida Economic Development Partnership, a similarly titled but separate entity that also works on growing the economy throughout the region. We apologize for the error. Additionally, Bradford County Telegraph is a member of Northeast Florida Economic Development Corporation.



BCSO and FCCD play Santa for Head Start

Bradford County Sheriff's Office thanked the local chapter of Florida Council on Crime and Delinquency for once again inviting staff volunteers to provide a child's Christmas through a program called "Angel Tree Kid." BCSO also thanked the staff at the Head Start for allowing them to spend some time with these smiling faces. Housed at the RJE complex, the Head Start offers early education to young children to help prepare them for kindergarten. The Bradford County Sheriff's Office and Florida Council on Crime and Delinquency play Santa for this group of youngsters every year. FCCD is a nonprofit corporation made up of personnel from multiple agencies that promotes high professional standards, thereby serving the public through the prevention and reduction of crime and delinquency. Sheriff's staff pictured are Deputy Paul King, Grace Andrade, Christy Milligan, Amanda Hinds, Col. Brad Smith, Melanie Chalker, Capt. Dawn McKinley. Mary Taylor from FCCD joined them. ECS staff pictured are Kenya Hendrieth, Martina Sawyer and Rebeckah Crawford, and the children include Kentrell Jonas, Jailey Jenkins, Lyndell Hampton III, Ky'aire McNeal, Cayleigh Griffith, Makenna Vega, Akym Carter and Ethan Gainey.

POLICY

Continued from page 2

and feels there is great value in what every constituent has to say, whether the board agrees or disagrees with what is being said," said a staff member reading from Hanson's written statement.

Board member Beth Clark, who recommended the policy change during the December 2 meeting, told board chair Erin Skipper that she had received only one phone call about the change.

"I did not receive any emails," she said, "and you would think, since I brought (the policy

change) to the table, that I would've gotten some emails, and I didn't."

Clark said the new policy is not censorship. She added that some school boards do not allow public comments on issues other than those on the board's agenda.

"And some counties, including Pasco, do not allow the limelight on people who give misleading information," she told her colleagues. "And that's all this is. It's misleading information. With some of the general comments."

The board member, who represents Orange Park, added that students are embarrassed when misleading information about their district, particularly alleged book banning, is released

on national media outlets.

She said that under her public comment proposal, everyone who wants to speak on a non-agenda topic may still address the board.

"(A district staff member) will still be taking notes," she argued. "Our meeting would be on the record. All we're doing is turning off the cameras, so the national stage can't emulate that and put it out there, so that our students hear about this and are embarrassed and laugh."

Board chair Erin Skipper argued for keeping the cameras on during general public comments. She added that school board members are responsible for correcting misleading information from the public, just as Superintendent David Broskie

corrected the record after some speaker complaints during prior school board meetings.

"It's up to us as public officials to say, Hey, that's not what is actually happening. This is what's happening."

Clark was the only board member wishing to turn the cameras off for general public comments. Skipper said the board would return to its prior policy.

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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

Trenton Edsall, 22, of Interlachen, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 16 for possession of drugs.

Jacquelyn Hernandez, 37, of Hampton, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 19 for child neglect.

Crystal Keen, 40, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 17 for an out-of-county warrant.

Carrie King, 39, of Hampton, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 16 for possession

of drugs and possession of drug equipment.

Maria Lacson, 66, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 14 for DUI.

Jennifer Rhoden, 38, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 19 for burglary and larceny.

Omar Salinas, 31, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 19 for failure to appear.

Cristian Sullins, 24, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 17 for failure to appear and an out-of-county warrant.

Krystena Taylor, 30, of Hampton, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 20 for failure to appear.

Deniese Tyson, 52, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on December 18 for fraud.

Union

None reported.

Clay

Angel Coakley, 41, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on December 17 for burglary.

Christopher Gilstrap, 24, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on December 18 for possession of marijuana, possession of drug equipment, resisting an officer, and loitering.

Lisa Grenia, 32, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on December 15 for felony domestic battery by strangulation.

Anthony Madron, 39, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on December 18 for fraudulent use of a credit card.

Michael Perry, 38, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on December 17 for battery.

Zachary Woolard, 34, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on December 14 for DUI.

Letters

Grateful for giving

Dear Editor:
Operation Christmas Child National Collection Week 2024 has come and gone. Another amazing year of shoebox collection transpired at the Trinity Baptist drop-off location in Keystone Heights.

Joyful giving aptly describes our Lake Area. I clearly saw this through Operation Christmas Child, an evangelistic ministry of Samaritan's Purse. I am the team leader for the Keystone Heights central drop-off location. The 2024 global goal is 12 million shoeboxes filled with school supplies, hygiene items and fun toys. Shoebox gifts have been delivered to over 170 countries since 1993. The incredible number of 5,933 shoeboxes poured in locally to bless poor children all around the world! Five other drop-off locations for the Santa Fe region also transported their cartons of shoeboxes to us. The grand total amounted to 15,665 shoeboxes! After inspection at the Atlanta Processing Center, these gift boxes will be delivered overseas. Through the "Follow Your Box" tracking system, we already know that some of our shoeboxes will be delivered to Cameroon, Honduras, Democratic Republic of Congo, and hard-to-reach areas. An army of volunteers is required to pack, collect, inspect, and deliver shoeboxes to the delighted children, many of whom have never received any gift before.

I am thankful for each hand involved locally in this worldwide ministry. I am always thrilled to see the donors come in with exciting testimonies. Our community unequivocally rises to the occasion. Stores and restaurants advertised with colorful posters. Starke Beall's Outlet Store donated empty shoeboxes to wrap and pack. Red and green decorative OCC shoeboxes were offered at Clyde's Cozy Corner Café and Johnny's Bar-B-Q. Johnny's famous sign shared the location and dates for the collection of the gift boxes.

McDonald's once again donated Happy Meal toys as fillers. Ladies crocheted hats and purses. Handmade, embroidered dresses found their way into some shoeboxes. Hundreds of handmade, wooden cars and even some yo-yos added fun to the gift boxes. The Lake Region Monitor published photos

and articles. forty-two volunteers served to collect, count and cartonize the shoeboxes at the drop-off over eight days. Strong men loaded 407 cartons onto three semi-trailers. Deserving recognition are the 34 churches and Christian ministries, two civic groups, and 13 individuals and families who joyfully packed the shoeboxes. They came from 13 locations: Gainesville, Hampton, Hawthorne, Jacksonville, Keystone Heights, LaCrosse, Lawtey, Melrose, Middleburg, Penney Farms, Raiford, Starke, and Waldo.

Moments of reflection with prayer were offered as each individual or group came in with their gift boxes. It did not matter if it was one box or 100 boxes; we prayed over each and every one because each gift box represents one child who will receive it and also hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

Sacrificial donors, you did another marvelous job! You are helping to change the lives of 5,933 boys and girls, ages 2-14. Our global world has allowed us to touch the lives of many children in desperate need of hope. Many emails were received this year from recipients of shoeboxes living in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Southeast Asia, and South Sudan. Liam in Cote d'Ivoire shared, "It is with joy I received my gift. I still have my shoebox. I guard it carefully." Praise's father in Cote d'Ivoire shared, "It is with love we received the wonderful treasure."

We are the hands and feet of Jesus when we give these amazing gifts. Pray for the children who will receive our shoeboxes packed in 2024. Imagine the looks of awe as the children open these treasure boxes! Whenever the shoeboxes arrive, it is Christmas! We celebrate each beautiful shoebox packed in this region with a caring heart. A sincere thank you from my heart to each donor. Merry Christmas!

*So very grateful,
Diane Michel
Team Leader Keystone Heights
Central Drop-off Location*

Operation Christmas Child

Group praises tobacco policy

Dear Editor:
In a display of commitment to student health and well-being, the Union County School District has adopted a very strong policy that covers 13 of the 15 criteria recommended by the Bureau of Tobacco Free Florida over the past

three years. These criteria aim to create a healthier environment for students, staff, and visitors, reflecting a broader national movement towards stringent tobacco control measures.

These policy provisions encompass a wide range of initiatives, from prohibiting the possession, use, and sale of tobacco products on school grounds to ensuring that tobacco prevention education is a staple in the curriculum. The policy provisions also include the prohibition of tobacco industry gifts and the promotion of tobacco-free environments, echoing the robust frameworks supported by organizations like the CDC and the American Lung Association.

There have been many efforts by Union County SWAT youth and Tobacco Free Union members to educate the community and decision makers on the importance of these policies. According to research by the Department of Health and Human Services, by including measures that provide access to cessation resources and narrow exceptions to support instructional activities, the district is fostering a supportive environment for those trying to quit tobacco use. This aligns with national efforts to promote cessation and reduce disparities in tobacco use, particularly among people who use tobacco at higher rates.

The Union County School District's proactive stance is a beacon of progress in the fight against tobacco use. By setting such a comprehensive framework, the district is not only protecting the health of its current students but also paving the way for a healthier future. This initiative serves as a powerful example of how local action, driven by informed and passionate advocates, can lead to significant public health advancements.

The adoption of this policy marks a significant victory in the ongoing battle against tobacco, but the true success lies in their effective implementation. As the Union County School District moves forward, there is a valuable opportunity to ensure that the policy is not only enforced but also fully integrated into the school culture. This effort will not only protect the health of current students but also create a lasting legacy of a tobacco-free environment for future generations. Let's seize this moment to turn policy into practice and make our schools the healthiest they can be. Go to tobaccofreeunioncounty.com to join Tobacco-Free Union and for more information.

*Sincerely
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SPIRES MARKET

January sobriety checkpoints announced

During the month of January, the Bradford County Sheriff's Office will be conducting sobriety checkpoints in one or more of the following locations: U.S. Highway 301 and Market Road, S.R. 100 West, S.R. 100 East and Southeast 109th Street, Southeast S.R. 21, S.R. 16 and Southwest S.R. 231.

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Bradford County Telegraph **Lake Region Monitor** **UNION COUNTY TIMES**

Architect for Townsend Building restoration approved

TRACY LEE TATE
Special to the Times

The Lake Butler City Commission met on Dec. 17 for its monthly meeting, approving a project architect agreement with MLD Architects for the grant-funded Townsend Building restoration project.

The funding is provided by the state, with the total project budgeted at \$64,500. The project will be expedited to meet grant requirements, and the expected completion date will be on or before June 30, 2025.

The project will proceed in three phases. The first phase is the much-needed replacement of the building's roof. The new roof will, as closely as possible, duplicate the appearance of the building's original roof but will use modern materials to do so. Phase one will be completed first, before any other items, due to the critical nature of the roof, and to ensure that there will be sufficient grant funds. More problems may be discovered when the old roofing material is removed, which might increase the project's budget.

Phase two will proceed as soon as the roof work is finished. In this phase, 12 windows will be replaced with new windows matching the historic appearance of the original building. Once again, this phase will be completed before the third and final phase is begun in case of cost-over-budget issues.

Phase three, remaining funds allowing, will remove the current flooring material and replace it with woodgrain ceramic tile to appear historically authentic

on the second floor only (where the Union County Historical Museum is located).

When all of the work is completed, the building will resemble the original appearance of the structure when it was first constructed.

Good news and bad news

Later in the meeting, City Manager Kimberly Hayes gave her monthly report to the board, which included some good and bad news for the city.

The FRDAP grant, which was requested for work on Lakeside Park and Splash Park was denied because of the misplacement of a map in the application. Hayes was informed by grant administrators that there was so much competition for grants in this cycle that small mistakes were not overlooked and used as a criterion for denying applications.

Hayes also reported that the city's application for a \$250,000 Rural Infrastructure Fund grant had also been denied. The money was earmarked for a new water tank for the soon-to-be-built new water treatment plant. Lake Butler Mayor Melissa Hendricks commented to fellow commissioners that the denial meant that the city would either have to find other grant funding for the tank or make some cuts in the budget to find the money.

Hayes had good news, however, concerning the FDOT SCOP grant funds to pay for the paving/repaving of SW 8th Pl, SW 1st Dr, SE 7th St and SE 3rd

St. The applications were made using an old plot of the city streets and both 3rd and 7th. At the time the roads were originally constructed there were no homes located on them, and now, with the homes in place, the road has unofficially moved away from these houses. The grant has been approved and all that will be required is a vote by the board to declare the current road locations as the official ones.

Hayes discussed two other items with the board, both pertaining to historical signage removed from two city buildings during the previous city administration. The first building discussed was the dedication signage on the community center at Lakeside Park. The building was originally dedicated as the Hal Y. Maines Community Center, with bronze plaques inside and out and also on the side stating the correct name. After the fire at the center a few years ago the letters on the side were removed and not replaced during the repairs. A request had been made that the side name be restored, with a higher quality of letters. This would be an expense to the city and the board decided not to fulfill the request at this time. The second issue concerned the name of the historic Townsend building, which, according to city documents dating back to the donation of the building to the city, is supposed to be named the Townsend Green Building after the donor. Since the donation agreement expressly stipulated the name, the board voted unanimously to replace it with the correct wording.



Woodmen Life brought a big check to the event and presented it to the organizers. Pictured are (l-r) Union County American Legion Post #153 Adjutant Brian Reagan, Catherine Reagan, Tina Lloyd, Brad Elixson (presenting the check), Lake Butler Womans Club President Ann Hendricks and the honorable Judge Mitchell Bishop (commander of Post #153).

Lake Butler Woman's Club supports Christmas Toys for Tots

BY TRACY LEE TATE
Special to the Times

The people of Union County once again took the opportunity to demonstrate their generosity and caring for others by participating in the Lake Butler Woman's Club luncheon on Dec. 3, 2024, the benefits of which will go to support the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program.

The program, founded in 1947, works to supply toys for children who otherwise would not find anything under the tree

on Christmas morning.

About 75 people came to the historic Woman's Club to dine on chicken and rice, potato salad, and an array of desserts. All made a \$10 donation to support the program, and some of the attendees also contributed 35 new, unwrapped toys to be given out to children in the county.

Brad Elixson, with Woodmen Life, presented the club with a check for \$1,000 to help purchase toys. The Woman's Club raised about \$2,600 in

donations. The funds will be used for Union County American Legion Post #153 and Woman's Club members to buy toys. Women's Club members will also be on hand when the toys are distributed to children in over 1,500 areas.

Sponsors for the luncheon were Woodmen Life, Palm RV Parks, Union County American Legion Post #153, the Union County Helping Hands and Hearts Society, and the Lake Butler Woman's Club.

Positive role models influenced Rotarian to pay it forward

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

One of the newest members of the Keystone Heights Rotary Club said three of the best decisions in his life were influenced by role models. Now, he wants to return the favor by guiding young people through their teenage and young adult years.

Brent Bathurst is a senior tax manager with the Providence, Rhode Island-based CPA firm of Kahn, Litwin, Renza & Co. Ltd. The 76th-largest CPA firm in the U.S., KLR recently opened a branch in Bradenton, and Bathurst works remotely from his Lake Region home for the company.

Bathurst said he was raised in a rough West Jacksonville neighborhood.

"My childhood was mostly baseball and martial arts," he recalled, "and I was very fortunate to go to a private school because of the neighborhood. Most of the people who grew up in the neighborhood that I came from didn't fare too well in their lives. A couple did. Most of the time, it was because they joined the military or their families moved away."

He'll probably end up in prison

Bathurst said one of his friends joined the Army and returned later to the Wesconnett neighborhood a changed man.



Brent Bathurst speaks to the Keystone Heights Rotary Club about his career and about the value of mentors and role models.

"He was one that was always in trouble," the CPA recalled. "He was someone that everyone said he'll probably end up in prison and all those kinds of things. But once he joined the Army, his life completely turned around. Now he's a pilot in Alaska, takes people on hunting trips and he's retired from the Army. He was a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne. When he came back from, I think it was his first deployment, we were talking, and he told me, the

best thing you can ever do is get out of this neighborhood as fast as you can."

Bathurst said the encounter had a profound impact on his outlook.

"I remember being very, very proud of him," Bathurst said. "A lot of pride to see someone that everybody thought was going to be a bottom-of-the-barrel kind of person go off and make something of his life and come back with a completely different perspective."

Bathurst followed in his friend's footsteps, telling an Army recruiter that he wanted to jump out of airplanes with a combat unit and leave Jacksonville as soon as possible.

"About a week later, I was on a bus to basic training."

Deployed to Bagdad in 2008, Bathurst said he dreamed of becoming a Green Beret and pursuing a federal law enforcement career.

However, a severe hearing loss during his Bagdad deployment disqualified him from those aspirations.

College was for 'other people'

Bathurst said an accounting career had never entered his mind while considering other life options. He added that no one in his immediate family had gone to college.

"College wasn't really something you thought about,

and you thought that was for other people, people who come from money, and that's just the norm," he remembered.

However, he did have a distant cousin who was a hedge fund manager, and as Bathurst looked at his cousin's life, he liked what he saw.

"He had a plane," the speaker recalled. "I thought that was really cool. I was like, oh, it looks like you can make a pretty good profession for yourself in the world of finance."

While taking some accounting classes in college, Bathurst discovered a fascination with tax law.

"And that's when I changed course and decided I was going to become a CPA and enter the profession doing tax returns," he said.

After finishing his military service, bachelor's degree, and additional classes required for the CPA exam, Bathurst landed his first job at a Jacksonville CPA firm.

Fell in love with the girl and her hometown

While acclimating himself to the 16-hour days of tax season, Bathurst met a Keystone Heights girl and fell in love with both the woman and the area.

He said that after convincing his future wife to marry him, he moved to the Lake Region

and began the one-hour-plus commute up State Road 21 and into the grind of Blanding Boulevard and Jacksonville traffic.

The CPA switched to a Gainesville firm to lighten the commute and then to an Australian-based bank with investments in the U.S. That change required him to resume his drive back to Jacksonville.

Initially, the move to private equity had him working with the world's largest infrastructure fund. The bank then designated him as one of its partnership tax

specialists because partnership tax law was complex and involved big impacts.

Bathurst said that around five years later, he missed the fulfillment of interacting with individual clients. He recalled that he once saved his company \$30 million by discovering an error. But because his firm was so big, the savings didn't impact the company much.

One of his colleagues had joined KLR, and his oldest child

See MENTOR, page 8

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REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ) FOR CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT SERVICES FOR NEW UNION COUNTY JAIL IN LAKE BUTLER, FLORIDA

The Union County Board of County Commissioners is requesting written responses from qualified construction firms to provide professional At-Risk Construction Management Services for the Budgeting and Construction Phase on the new proposed Union County Jail (Phase 2 and 3 of the new Public Safety Complex). Facility is to include demolition of site elements and sitework. The approximate budget for construction and all other activities is \$13,870,100.00.

The complete Request for Qualifications (RFQ) information page can be obtained from the Union County, Florida website – <https://unioncounty-fl.gov/advertisements-notice-and-rfps/> or by emailing Dir. Timothy Allen at allentc@unionsheriff.us.

RFQ's due by January 13, 2025

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Lawtey and Starke parade day and night



Everleigh and Makayla Rodriguez were all bundled up and in high holiday spirits as they waited for Starke's annual Christmas Parade to begin.



Santa and Mrs. Claus hitched a ride on one of Bradford's Fire & Rescue trucks to wish parade goers a Merry Christmas.



Victory Chapel's manager scene float reminded everyone about the reason for the season.



Cousins Raylan Kirkland and MJ Molina enthusiastically waved and shouted, "Merry Christmas", to every one in the parade. The duo had been playing in the park when they were pleasantly surprised by the morning Christmas parade in Lawtey on Saturday.



LOGO Church of Lawtey had a snowy float that showered parade goers with snow, snowballs, and candy!



Chenise Williams of Lawtey brought the Christmas Candy Magic with bags of candy ready to be given to parade goers!

Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow! It was a chilly Saturday morning, but perfect for a snow themed parade float!



Chemours wowed parade attendees with their beautiful Christmas tree float.



Bayless Highway Baptist Church would win any gingerbread house contest with their life sized decorated gingerbread house and gingerbread man!

MENTOR Continued from page 7

had grown up and left home, leaving Bathurst surprised at how fast the child had grown up and left.

"My last three kids are all

teenagers, and five years from now, all of our kids are adults, and it's going really quick," he recalled. "So, I decided I've got to do something that puts me back at home more, gives me more time with my family, and gives me the fulfillment that I'm looking for in the long term."

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, many CPA firms realized their staff could work remotely. At the same time, the number of students sitting for the CPA exam fell by 30% and has not recovered, leaving the accounting profession short on staff.

"So, KLR became very appealing to me," Bathurst said. "One, because I can come back home to Keystone, work remotely, and still have a successful career. And two, it's kind of a middle-ground type of firm. That's something that's very important to me. If I'm going to come back to public accounting, I want to be able to serve people in my community. I want to be able to serve small businesses and be able to offer my services locally without giving up the resources and the areas of tax law that I like to practice in a larger corporate setting. They kind of fit that niche perfectly."

It doesn't take much to impact a life

Bathurst said that as he looked back on his life, he could see the value of more experienced

friends guiding him to good decisions, from his neighborhood buddy who influenced him to join the Army to his cousin in the finance industry to his former co-worker who landed at KLR.

Now, he wants to return the favor by guiding young people to make wise choices.

"I think mentorship is probably what's most important," he said. "You need someone that you look up to. You need a role model. I think that's where a lot of children are coming out of these rough environments. They don't have a good role model." Bathurst said that besides the people who influenced him in significant career decisions, he has also been guided by other role models at church, on the job, and in the military.

He added that for children raised in families where going to college is "for other people" and living a prosperous and fulfilling life appears out of reach, young

people need additional life examples to follow.

He said he volunteered in a mentoring program in Gainesville and is looking for similar opportunities in the Lake Region.

He said it doesn't take much to impact a young life, adding that he didn't even have a relationship with his cousin who lived in Ohio.

"But I heard stories about him, and I began asking, How did he do that, and how can I do that?" Bathurst recalled. "I needed a motivator, a spark, and that's what role models and mentors do. They give you hope. They show you that you can do it, and some offer to walk with you during your journey."



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Bradford 4-H hosts a delicious competition in Holiday Bake-Off

Bradford County's 4-H program held its Holiday Bake-Off, consisting of 30 entries that gave judges some tough decisions to make. Pictured are some of the participants: (front, l-r) Nicholas Ward, Shawn Ward, Noah Morris, Jaydin Borgner, Jarin Borgner, Cassidy Brown, Audrey Frank, (back, l-r) Shayna Durrance, Regan Broome, Luke Sapp, Bryce Cadle and Sophie Elkins. In Appetizers, Zion Tyson was the top Junior 4-H member and earned Best Overall, while Jaden Hendrieth was best in Intermediate and Kandan Crawford best in Senior. Leon Greenfield was the top Junior and Best Overall in Bread. The Cakes category had Intermediate 4-H member Sophie Elkins earning Best Overall, while Zion Tyson and Bryce Cadley were tops in Junior and Senior, respectively. Senior 4-H member Eli Sapp earned Best Overall in Candy, while Senior member Jaydin Borgner earned Best Overall in Pies. In Cookies, Intermediate member Nicholas Ward earned Best Overall, with Audrey Frank and Kandan Crawford having the top Junior and Senior entries, respectively.

Bird's-eye view of law enforcement

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Talk about show and tell. Members of the Alachua County Sheriff's Office aviation unit talked about their career with Bradford Middle School students who are in North Florida Technical College's Criminal Justice class, landing their helicopter on the field behind the school to do so.

The visit from Chief Pilot Richard Bray and Lead Tactical Flight Officer Scott Caley was part of David Bukowski's effort to cover the different aspects of law enforcement for students in Criminal Justice. Bukowski, who's a member of the Bradford County Sheriff's Office, teaches the class.

In other words, law enforcement isn't solely jumping in a car and chasing down criminals. Sometimes, you can jump in a helicopter.

"I'm a sworn law-enforcement deputy, just like your school-resource officers here," Caley said. Then, pointing toward the helicopter, he added, "That's my patrol car. I basically do

See AIR, page 11



ABOVE: Dillon Taylor gets an up-close look at the Alachua County Sheriff's Office aviation-unit helicopter.



LEFT: Brayden Binczak crouches down for a better look inside the cockpit.

Highly Rated Local Businesses!

Turners Automotive & Transmission
135 Commercial Cir, Keystone Heights, FL 32656
(352) 473-3404

"These guys are great, we were camping at the state park when the check engine light came on. They found the problem, got the part on time did the work at a good price; plus they helped getting me to and from my camp site. If I lived up there I most certainly would become a regular."

Durrance Pump
864 N Temple Ave STE C, Starke, FL 32091
(904) 964-7061

"Quick response and great price! They don't nickel and dime you at all. They tell you a straight up price and that's what the bill is. I definitely recommend using them for your well! Cameron is super knowledgeable and pleasant to deal with."

Miller HVAC Services, Inc.
(904) 626-0963
Serving Northeast FL

"I have used Miller's HVAC services for many years, one of the only companies that you call and they actually answer the phone and show up and do what they said they would do. They have fair prices and their service is phenomenal. I highly recommend them."

Andrews Site Prep
(386) 867-0572
Services 20 different counties!

"I am really happy with their performance. They installed a new well and septic for me and they literally did it in a day. The team in the office is very friendly and professional."

JBS Jackson Building Supply
"Serving Our Community For Over 60 Years"

- LUMBER & BUILDING MATERIALS
- PAINT, LADDERS & SUPPLIES
- ELECTRICAL & PLUMBING SUPPLIES
- METAL ROOFING & SHINGLES
- DOORS & WINDOWS
- HAND & POWER TOOLS
- HOME & FARM HARDWARE
- BATHROOM VANITIES
- HOT WATER HEATERS
- LAWN & GARDEN

STARKE US-301S 964-6078
Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6

LAKE BUTLER 145 SW 6th Ave. 496-3079

Phillip McDonald Plumbing
740 S Orange St, Starke, FL 32091
(904) 964-3737

"This is the only plumbing company we will use moving forward. We purchased a home last year and it's had many plumbing and septic issues. The staff is really nice, responsive and quick with repairs. I know we can count on them anytime something goes wrong with the plumbing and septic system in our home. I highly recommend using them for any plumbing needs you may have. Definitely 5 star service!"

Robert's Insurance
986 N Temple Ave, Starke, FL 32091
(904) 452-7784

"The insurance agency helps keep the insurance prices down."
"Always a great place to visit and get help!"

Teal Tile Carpet One
131 N Cherry St, Starke, FL 32091
(904) 964-7423

"Teal Tile did a great job installing my LVP in my new home. Valerie and Mary are awesome at working with you to make your dream home flooring ideas come to life!"

Hearing Aids Today
450 S Lawrence Blvd, Keystone Heights, FL 32656
(352) 877-4471

"Super friendly and informative staff. Really went into details with my mother!"

DLP Bank
811 S Walnut St, Starke, FL 32091
(904) 964-7830

"I called up there asking for information and spoke with Regina. She was very sweet and helpful."

Pressure Perfect Massage
By Lana Taylor
7426 State Rd 21, Keystone Heights, FL 32656
(859) 415-3886
pressureperfectmassage.square.site

"Lana is the best deep tissue therapist I have ever used! She is so intuitive as to where I need her to focus on. Definitely a gift she has. Her massages leave me feeling so much better without being sore the next day. I highly recommend her!"

Stor-Mor of Starke
12046 US-301, Hampton, FL 32044
(386) 339-7543

"Excellent service, the gentleman Braxton is super easy to work with, helped with every single detail I have no issues with my purchase this is best place to deal with in the area! 10/10 would recommend!"

Bradford County Eye Center
292 Lafayette St, Starke, FL 32091
(904) 964-8076

"Had a great visit today. Everyone was friendly and very caring and explained everything very well. Looking forward to my next visit."

The Chiropractic & Injury Clinic of Starke
601 E Call St, Starke, FL 32091
(904) 964-8018

"Amazing experience! Everyone is so nice and patient, and the reception is absolutely amazing. I love going here and will definitely be back. If I could rate them 10 stars I absolutely would!"

Craig Falstreux Heating & Air, Inc
228 S Walnut St, Starke, FL 32091
(352) 792-4426

"Our air went out on a HOT saturday, called and left a voicemail and Craig called me back within just a few minutes. He was there in the next 30 minutes and had it back up and running! Call them for all your A/C needs!"

Hometown Health & Wellness
110 Nightingale St, Keystone Heights, FL 32656
(352) 664-7702

"I have gone here multiple times to see both Jen and Bryan. I love that the location is close to home, they are open various hours to fit your schedule but most of all I love the small town feel when you walk in the door! You are welcomed and made to feel at home. I am very happy with all services I have received and am so thankful."

GT Plumbing Lic. #RF11067979
4050 L.M. Gaines Blvd, Starke, FL 32091
904-796-7228
GTPlumbing.com

- New construction
- Septic tank & drain field installation
- Building, sewer, & drain repair
- Bathroom, shower, & kitchen remodels
- Service calls • Back flow certified

T.E.S. Rentals
2000 N Temple Ave, Starke, FL 32091
(904) 452-0888

"Fantastic service. Used the compact track loader and grapple on a small access job and it was perfect! Highly recommend."

C & S Site Prep
22787 NW 34th Ave, Lawtey, FL 32058
(352) 235-1210

Land Clearing, Driveway, Culverts, Excavation, Ponds, House Pads, Drainage, Grading, Erosion Control, Dirt, Lime Rock, Asphalt, Sand, Crushed Concrete, 57 Stone

Bradford County Sheriffs Office
945-B N Temple Ave, Starke, FL 32091
(904) 966-6161

"I need to take a minute to recognize my jail command team, the people I'm surrounded by. Each unique and strong in their own areas. There is nothing anyone asks of them they don't do and almost always with a smile. They take care of business and take care of people at the same time."



200-plus children celebrate 'Holidays with Heroes'

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

More than 200 elementary students from the public schools in Bradford and Union counties got an early start on Christmas as they participated in a shopping spree and made some new friends in the process as part of the newly named Holidays with Heroes event, which was held Dec. 17-18 at Walmart in Starke.

What was once known as Shop with a Cop, which began in 2005 as part of a

Starke Police Department effort, is now coordinated by Bradford County Emergency Management Director Brad Witt and the Bradford County Sheriff's Office as part of its Bradford Sheriff Charitable Foundation. Thanks to donations, 240 children from Bradford, Lake Butler, Lawtey and Starke elementary schools each got the chance to spend \$125 as they shopped alongside members of law enforcement and other agencies.

"We are so thankful for the community," Witt said. "When we do things like this, they stop up time and time again. We received so many donations and had so many people just eager to participate."

Regarding the name change, Witt said, "You look around, and the cops are outnumbered now."

That has been the case for years, as the Starke and Lawtey police departments and the Bradford and Union sheriff's offices combined were unable to provide enough escorts for the number of children participating. Children find themselves shopping alongside personnel from various agencies, with the Florida Department of Corrections providing the bulk of the escorts.

Witt said you even have county commissioners and school-board members stepping in to help make children's Christmas wishes come true.

"We've got all kinds of individuals coming out and participating in this," Witt said. "It's so much more than Shop with a Cop now."

The intent is the same — to reward children who have a need, but who are doing the right things in school. School personnel are responsible for selecting the students who take part.

"The teachers know these kids," Witt said. "They know what their needs are and what their issues are and stuff like that."

"They did a wonderful job like they always do of sending us kids for this event."

Some students know exactly what they want and lead their



Cynthia Sibley of Florida State Prison (center) shops with Starke Elementary students AmberLynn Bryant (far left) and Jeffrey Lancaster.

Lawtey Elementary's Tayvianna Albritton gives thought to which aisle she wants to lead escort Bradford County Emergency Management's Noah Tinsler down.



Lake Butler Elementary's Bryson Mielke (left) and his escort, Cheyenne Whitesides of Reception and Medical Center, scan the shelves for that perfect toy.



Jacob Vandigo (left) of Union Correctional Institution helps Starke Elementary's Mason Kapellan take inventory of his basket.



Shaun Burgin (center) of the Bradford County Sheriff's Office shops with Bradford Elementary students Aleina Crews (far left) and Cynthia Miller.

escorts to the aisles where they can find it. Others are almost overwhelmed as they look around and make decisions on what to get.

Whichever category the student falls in, you can almost be sure that he or she has a smile on their face.

"The most fun is just seeing the kids have a good time," Witt said.

Amid all the law-enforcement and other personnel on site, you'd think the Grinch would lay low. However, he was there (courtesy

See HEROES, page 14



LEFT: Starke Elementary's William Arenz (left) and escort Jessica Wadden of Florida State Prison have a bit of fun while shopping

BELOW: Bradford Elementary students Ella Rought (center) and Rosalia Cogan (far right) shows off some of the toys they picked out while shopping with Jana Bennett of the Bradford County Sheriff's Office.



LEFT: Starke Elementary's Dakota Hurst (right) has picked out a unicorn with the help of escort Tiffany Herrin of Florida State Prison.

BELOW: Lawtey Elementary's Dawson Castellese (right) shows off a gaming headset he selected with escort Greg Jackson of the Florida Forest Service.



KEEP FLORIDA BEACHES & PARKS TOBACCO FREE

Cities and counties can keep our beaches and parks safe, healthy, and clean of debris, including cigarette butts and vape cartridges, by implementing local tobacco free parks and beaches policies, thanks to a recent update to the Florida Clean Air Act.

Communities can protect public health and be part of a cleaner Florida.

For more information on how to get involved, visit TobaccoFreeFlorida.com/get-involved.





Tornadoes are 1st in the Battle in the Alley

Bradford High School's competitive cheer team took first place in its annual Battle in the Alley, defeating visiting Fort White. Nivaiah Foster was the Jump winner, while the stunt group winners were Foster, Skyla Bounacore, Lily Mercer and Amy Prescott. It was the third competition of the season for the Tornadoes. The team's first event was the 11th annual Central Florida Cheer Challenge Stunt Off at Newberry, where the Tornadoes were second overall and just a 17th of a point away from being grand champion. Bradford then took first place in the Medium Tumbling Division at the Baker County Wildcat Scratch. Pictured above are: (front row, l-r) Myia Sanchez, Bounacore, Prescott, Mercer, (middle row, l-r) Summer Rhoden, Foster, Jhailaa Coleman, Cadence Rowan, Kelsey Burgin, Tenly Hardee, (back row, l-r) Chloe Hales, Aldon Sanchez, Hayden Goodwin, Ella Hense, Kaydence Crawford, Kylee Kerr and Jakyiah Dean.

AIR

Continued from page 9

everything they guys on the ground do. I do it from the air at a different vantage point."

Caley said his main job is to monitor calls and determine whether any of them would benefit from aviation assistance.

"Scott's kind of selling himself a little bit short," Bray said. "His job is way more important than mine. I'm like a bus driver or an Uber driver. He does everything else."

Bray said besides flight-safety training, someone like Caley would have to go through five or six months of training to learn how to operate the helicopter's two camera systems. Their education would also include aviation terminology, weather and using night-vision goggles.

In other words, it's different from becoming a member of law enforcement who works on the ground.

"They have to do a lot of things beyond what a patrol deputy has to do, and they have to do it while they're flying around in a circle," Bray said, adding, "It's a lot of specialized training."

Caley said the unit can assist in a variety of scenarios, including searching for missing suspects or missing people in general and providing assistance with things such as vehicular wrecks.

High-definition cameras allow aviation members to observe details from a great distance, with infrared technology allowing the cameras to be used at night and to record temperatures, enabling them to determine such things as type of clothing a person is wearing or if the person is wearing glasses.



Zachary Boulris (right) takes a look at the Alachua County Sheriff's Office Aviation Unit helicopter. ACSO Aviation Chief Pilot Richard Bray is also pictured.



Alachua County Sheriff's Office Aviation Unit Lead Tactical Flight Officer Scott Caley (far left) talks about some of the features of the unit's helicopter with students Ty'anna Riley, Treasure Barrington and Keyden Drayton.

Legal Notices

Legals for the week of Dec. 26, 2024

BRADFORD

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE
To satisfy the owner's storage lien, KO Storage LLC will sell at public lien sale on January 21, 2025. The personal property in the below-listed units, which may include but are not limited to: Household goods, boxes/ totes/bags, clothing, bedding, tools and toys. The public sale of these items will begin at 10AM on January 14, 2025 and end at 10AM on January 21, 2025. The public sale will take place on www.storage treasures.com. KO Storage of Starke - S Walnut St, 1650 South Walnut Street, Starke FL 32091, (952)-491-6837. Time: 10:00AM CST
A15, Rhoden, William, A21, Wilson, Kelley, A48, Wallace, Marisa
Public sale terms, rules, and regulations will be made available on www.storage treasures.com. All sales are subject to cancellation. We reserve the right to refuse any bid. Payment must be by credit/debit card, we do not accept checks or cash. Buyers must secure the units with their own personal locks. To claim tax-exempt status, original RESALE certificates for each space purchased is required. By KO Storage LLC, 10301 Wayzata Blvd, Minnetonka, MN 55305. (952)-491-6837.

12/19 2tchg 12/26-BCT

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA PROBATE DIVISION
File No. 2024-0131-CP
IN RE: ESTATE OF JAMES M. LILLICO
Deceased.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
The administration of the estate of James M. Lillico, deceased, whose date of death was October 20, 2024, is pending in the Circuit Court for Bradford County, Florida, Probate Division, the address of which is 945 N. Temple Ave. Starke, FL 32091. The names and addresses of the personal representative and the personal representative's attorney are set forth below.
All creditors of the decedent and other persons having claims or demands against decedent's estate on whom a copy of this notice is required to be served must file their claims with this court ON OR BEFORE THE LATER OF 3 MONTHS AFTER THE TIME OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE OR 30 DAYS AFTER THE DATE OF SERVICE OF A COPY OF THIS NOTICE ON THEM.
The personal representative has no duty to discover whether any property held at the time of the decedent's death by the decedent or the decedent's surviving spouse is property to which the Florida Uniform Disposition of Community Property

Rights at Death Act as described in ss. 732.216-732.228, Florida Statutes, applies, or may apply, unless a written demand is made by a creditor as specified under s. 732.2211, Florida Statutes.
All other creditors of the decedent and other persons having claims or demands against decedent's estate must file their claims with this court WITHIN 3 MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE.
ALL CLAIMS NOT FILED WITHIN THE TIME PERIODS SET FORTH IN FLORIDA STATUTES SECTION 733.702 WILL BE FOREVER BARRED.
NOTWITHSTANDING THE TIME PERIODS SET FORTH ABOVE, ANY CLAIM FILED TWO (2) YEARS OR MORE AFTER THE DECEDENT'S DATE OF DEATH IS BARRED.
The date of first publication of this notice is December 19, 2024.
Attorney for Personal Representative:
Stephen M. Witt
Florida Bar Number: 231916
PO Box 2064
LAKE CITY, FL 32056-2064
Telephone: (386) 755-2863
Fax: (386) 752-1732
E-Mail: stephen@attorneywitt.com
Secondary E-Mail: carey@attorneywitt.com
Personal Representative:
Christopher J. Lillico
1064 SW 242nd Terrace
Newberry, Florida 32669

12/19 2tchg 12/26-BCT

LEGAL NOTICE
BRADFORD COUNTY TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED COORDINATING BOARD
BUSINESS MEETING
The North Central Florida Regional Planning Council announces a business meeting to which all persons are invited.
DATE AND TIME: January 7, 2025 at 11:00 a.m.
PLACE: Bradford County Emergency Operations Center Board Room located at 945 N Temple Ave # B, Starke, Florida
DIAL IN NUMBER: Toll free 1.888.585.9008
CONFERENCE CODE: 864 183 272
GENERAL SUBJECT MATTER TO BE CONSIDERED: To conduct the regular business of the Bradford County Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board. For additional information or to obtain a copy of the agenda interested persons may contact: North Central Florida Regional Planning Council, 2009 NW 67th Place, Gainesville, Florida 32653-1603; godfrey@ncfrc.org or 352.955.2200.
Any person may submit written or other physical evidence which he or she intends to offer into evidence during the business meeting to Lynn Franson, Senior Planner, at North Central Florida Regional Planning

Council, 2009 NW 67th Place, Gainesville, Florida 32653-1603; or godfrey@ncfrc.org.
Pursuant to the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person requiring special accommodations to participate in this meeting is asked to advise the agency at least 2 business days before the meeting by contacting 352.955.2200. If you are hearing or speech impaired, please contact the agency using the Florida Relay Service, 1.800. 955.8771 (TDD) or 1.800. 955.8770 (Voice).
If any person decides to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at the meeting, he/she will need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceeding is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence from which the appeal is to be issued.
12/26 1tchg BCT

NOTICE OF ENACTMENT OF AN ORDINANCE BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF STARKE, FLORIDA

The City of Starke, Florida will hold a City Commission Meeting on January 7, 2025 at 5:30 pm at City Hall, 209 North Thompson Street, Starke, Florida 32091 during which the second reading and a vote will occur for the following ordinances:
ORDINANCE NO. 2025-01
AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF STARKE, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE STARKE FIREFIGHTERS' RETIREMENT SYSTEM, CHAPTER 78, ARTICLE IV, DIVISION 3, AS AMENDED, BY AMENDING SECTION 78-171 "DEFINITIONS" BY ADDING A DEFINITION OF "CANCER"; BY AMENDING SECTION 78-182, "ELIGIBILITY FOR DISABILITY RETIREMENT" BY ADDING THAT CANCER IS PRESUMED TO HAVE OCCURRED IN THE LINE OF DUTY; AND BY AMENDING SECTION 78-185, "BENEFITS PAYABLE TO BENEFICIARY UPON MEMBER'S DEATH" BY PROVIDING THAT DEATH FROM CANCER HAS OCCURRED IN THE LINE OF DUTY; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION, SEVERABILITY, AND CONFLICTS; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.
ORDINANCE NUMBER 2025-02
AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF STARKE, FLORIDA CALLING FOR A REFERENDUM QUESTION TO BE PLACED BEFORE THE QUALIFIED ELECTORS OF THE CITY OF STARKE AT THE NEXT SPECIAL ELECTION WHICH IS SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 8, 2025; PROVIDING CHARTER REFERENDUM QUESTION DETERMINING WHETHER TO ADOPT THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CHARTER FOR THE CITY OF STARKE; PROVIDING FOR THE FULL TEXT OF THE PROPOSED AMENDED CHARTER FOR THE CITY OF STARKE; PROVIDING FOR REQUISITE BALLOT LANGUAGE;

12/26 1tchg-BCT

PROVIDING FOR REPEAL OF ALL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.
These ordinances are available for public inspection at City Hall, 209 North Thompson Street, Starke, Florida 32091. Interested parties may appear and have an opportunity to be heard at the meeting with respect to the proposed ordinances.
12/26 1tchg-BCT

NOTICE OF ENACTMENT OF ORDINANCE BY THE LAWEY CITY COUNCIL

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the ordinance, which title hereinafter appears, will be considered for enactment by the City Council of Lawtey Florida, at a second public hearing on January 6, 2025 at the City Council Meeting at 7 p.m. or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard, at Lawtey City Hall, 2793 Lake Street, Lawtey, Florida. All interested parties are invited to attend.
AN ORDINANCE RESCINDING AND REPLACING RESOLUTION 97-03; ESTABLISHING A FIVE MEMBER CITY RECREATION DEPARTMENT AND THE MANNER AND DURATION OF APPOINTMENT OF EACH BOARD MEMBER; ESTABLISHING RESPONSIBILITY OVER MANAGEMENT OF CITY PROPERTY BEING UTILIZED FOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES; REQUIRING THE PREPARATION OF A RECOMMENDED ANNUAL BUDGET TO THE CITY COUNCIL; AUTHORIZING THE APPOINTMENT OF A CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD AND THE PROMULGATION OF BYLAWS AND RULES; REQUIRING ANNUAL REPORTS; ESTABLISHING CRIMINAL PENALTIES FOR THE POSSESSION AND USE OF ALCOHOL IN OR ON CITY RECREATION FACILITIES; PROVIDING A SEVERABILITY CLAUSE; PROVIDING A REPEALING CLAUSE; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.
Persons with disabilities requesting reasonable accommodations to participate in the process should contact Lawtey City Hall at 904-782-3454 prior to the hearing.
12/26 1tchg-BCT

William Chad Anderson
4534 S.W. 84th Trail
Lake Butler, FL 32054
YOU ARE NOTIFIED that an action for Supplemental Petition for Modification of Timesharing and Child Support has been filed against you and that you are required to serve a copy of your written defenses, if any, to it on Maria Aguila, Esq. Attorney for Petitioner at 2318 Park Street, Jacksonville, Florida 32204 email: maguila@immigrationlawfla.com, phone: 904-385-9377 on or before January 1, 2025, and file the original with the clerk of this court at: Union County Courthouse, 55 West Main Street, Room 103, Lake Butler, FL 32054 before service on Respondent or immediately thereafter. If you fail to do so, a default may be entered against you for the relief demanded in the petition.
Copies of all court documents in this case, including orders, are available at the Clerk of the Circuit Court's office. You may review these documents upon request. You must keep the Clerk of the Circuit Court's office notified of your current address. (You may file Designation of Current Mailing and E-Mail Address, Florida Supreme Court Approved Family Law Form 12.915.) Future papers in this lawsuit will be mailed or e-mailed to the address(es) on record at the clerk's office.
WARNING: Rule 12.285, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure, requires certain automatic disclosure of documents and information. Failure to comply can result in sanctions, including dismissal or striking of pleadings.
Dated: December 4, 2024
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT BY: C. HOLLINGSWORTH
DEPUTY CLERK
12/12 4tchg -01/02/2025 UCT

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA, IN AND FOR UNION COUNTY PROBATE DIVISION
IN RE: THE ESTATE OF: ROGER JOSEPH AUGER, Deceased.
12/26 2tchg 1/2/25-UCT

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
The administration of the estate of ROGER JOSEPH AUGER, deceased, whose date of death was October 2, 2024, File Number 63-2024-CP-000039, is pending in the Circuit Court for Union County, Florida, Probate Division, the address of which is 55 West Main Street, Lake Butler, Florida 32054. The names and addresses of the Personal Representative and the Personal Representative's attorney are set forth below.
All creditors of the decedent and other persons having claims or demands against decedent's estate on whom a copy of this notice has been served must file their claims with this Court ON OR BEFORE THE LATER OF THREE MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE OR THIRTY DAYS AFTER THE TIME OF SERVICE OF A COPY OF THIS NOTICE ON THEM.
All other creditors of the decedent and other persons having claims or demands against decedent's estate must file their claims with this Court WITHIN THREE MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE.
ALL CLAIMS NOT FILED WITHIN THE TIME PERIODS SET FORTH IN §733.702 OF THE FLORIDA PROBATE CODE WILL BE FOREVER BARRED.
NOTWITHSTANDING THE TIME PERIODS SET FORTH ABOVE, ANY CLAIM FILED TWO (2) YEARS OR MORE AFTER THE DECEDENT'S DATE OF DEATH IS BARRED.
The date of first publication of this notice is December 26, 2024.
LOREN RHOTON, ESQ.
Personal Representative
412 East Madison Street, Suite 1111
Tampa, FL 33602
(813) 226-3138
Email: rhotonl167@msn.com
NEAL WEINSTEIN, ESQ.
412 E. Madison Street, Suite 1111
Tampa, Florida 33602
(813) 223-2792
Attorney for Personal Representative
Florida Bar No. 241474
Email: nealwesq@hotmail.com
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Advertising: John R. Tillman
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Obituaries

Luis Chavarria

Luis Alberto Chavarria, a beloved son, brother, and cherished uncle, passed away peacefully at his home in Lake Butler on Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2024. Born on Aug. 10, 1959, in Blytheville, Arkansas, Luis was a radiant spirit who never met a stranger. His warm personality and infectious smile made him a cherished presence in the lives of those fortunate enough to know him. He was deeply passionate about his hobbies, enjoying the thrill of collecting antiques and thrift shopping, pursuits that brought him great joy and satisfaction. However, it was his dedication to his family that truly defined him. He loved his family immensely and took pride in fostering strong connections with each member. He was preceded in death by his mother, Maria Chavarria, whose memory he carried with him throughout his life.

He is survived by his beloved brothers, Antonia Jr., David, John, Joe, Stanley, Ramiro, and Paul Chavarria; his devoted sisters, Thelma, Maria, Rosa, Anna, Diana, Yolanda, Olga, and Norma; as well as his father, Antonio Chavarria Sr. He was also an adoring uncle to numerous nieces and nephews who admired him greatly.

In honor of his life and legacy, a graveside service will be held at Dekle Cemetery in Lake Butler on Monday, Dec. 23, beginning at 3 p.m., with the service concluding at 4 p.m. He will be deeply missed and fondly remembered by all who knew him.

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



PAID OBITUARY

Jason Elixson

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of Jason Elixson, who left this world on Sunday, Dec. 15, 2024, at the age of 53, in Worthington Springs. Born on March 22, 1971, in Lake City, he lived a life brimming with dedication to his family, kindness, joy, and a hug for everyone he met. Jason had over 30 years of experience as a building and roofing contractor and was the owner of Jason Elixson Construction. More than just a craftsman, he was an artist who took great pride and satisfaction in every project he undertook, leaving a lasting mark on the homes of many in the community. With talents extending beyond his profession, he was also the beloved music director at Providence Village Baptist Church, where he was a lifelong member. A graduate of Union County High School in 1989, his spirit always reflected his fun, loving, and patient nature. He was the rock of his family and devoted to the loved ones who surrounded him. Frequently found holding babies, there was always a big smile on his face. He enjoyed many hobbies over his lifetime, including basketball, guns, golfing, guns, bowling, motorcycles, guns, hunting, fishing, archery, guns, and guitars. He was preceded in death by his mother-in-law, Carol Lynda Emery; and his nephew, Joseph DiMillo.

Jason leaves behind a loving family who will continue to carry his love and legacy with them, his beloved wife of 20 years, Erin; their three children, Quentin, Celia, and Farrah Elixson; his father and mother, Clifford and Willene Elixson; siblings, Stacy (Joey) Harden, Justin (Layla) Elixson, and Brandon (Jori) Elixson, all of Lake Butler; father-in-law, Quentin Emery; sisters-in-law, Leah (Mark) Somers of Acworth, Georgia, and Carrie Emery of Bunnell; brother-in-law, Ryan (Audra) Emery of Bunnell; 30 nieces and nephews; and six great-nieces and nephews. Though they mourn his departure, Jason's family finds comfort in the treasured memories they have shared, the laughter that echoed in their home, and the unconditional love he gave so freely.

Friends and family were invited to pay their respects during visitation on Friday, Dec. 20, followed by a funeral service on Saturday, Dec. 21. Both were held at Sardis Baptist Church in Worthington Springs.

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

PAID OBITUARY



H.H. Plotts Jr.

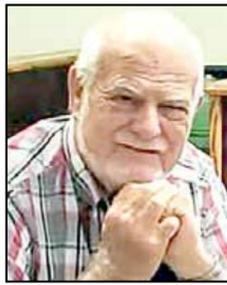
H.H. "Bud" Plotts Jr., 82, "the Force of Nature," died peacefully Thursday, Dec. 12, 2024, surrounded by his family at Haven Hospice in Lake City. After Dad took his last breath, we rejoiced that he was out of pain, standing up straight, and face-to-face with his Savior, Jesus Christ. Dad said earlier in the day, "There is a time to live, and a time to die, and I've lived a good, long life, and I am ready to die." Because of his saving knowledge of Jesus, there was no fear of what was to come; just peace, grace, love, joy and an excitement to see his Savior and his daddy again. He was born and raised in Miami and attended Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina on a football scholarship, where he completed his bachelor's and master's degrees in industrial arts. He spent his summers in Mentone, Alabama, first as a camper, and then as a camp counselor at Camp Cloudmont. He roamed the woods and taught shooting, bivouacking, and archery, while sometimes having an opportunity to traverse to the DeSoto Falls on camp horses with his buddies for a midnight swim. His parents operated a lodge in Mentone during the summer months, the DeSoto Lodge. It was at the Lodge that he met and fell in love with one of the summer employees, a petite brunette named Elizabeth O'Connell. Bud and Liz married in 1964 and moved to St. Petersburg to make their home and start their family. He became an industrial arts teacher in the Pinellas County School System for 30 years. He taught high school students, and college students at the University of Tampa, and hosted adult-education woodworking classes. They made their home in St. Petersburg for over 30 years, welcoming and raising two daughters, Cynthia and Cathleen. After retirement, he and Liz moved to Union County, where he worked the land on a beautiful hay farm on the Santa Fe River. He raised cattle and donkeys, and built a log cabin, which features a boardwalk to the river using wood from trees he cut down, milled, dried, and prepped as building materials. He and Liz lived in the log cabin while Bud built the main house on the property, using materials he sourced or created. Living and building on this land was a dream he thought he'd never experience, and he was grateful to God every day to walk and work the property. He was happiest building both things and people. He loved all the outdoor sports and took the time to mentor and teach others who wanted to learn from him. We called him the "Force of Nature" because it seemed he could look at, or dream of something, and build it better than anyone could imagine. He loved taking time with people to help them grow in their relationship with Christ or teaching them new skills. He was an encourager and a rock to many. If you needed him, he always made himself available. He was a deeply beloved son, brother, father, grandfather, uncle, mentor, and friend. He was a stand-in paternal figure to many, an engineer and an artist. An excellent farmer, and someone you could always count on. He was preceded in death by his father, H. H. Plotts Sr.; his mother, Eleanor Spofford Plotts; and nephew, Michael Elliott.

He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Liz Plotts; brother, Randy Plotts; daughters, Cindy (Charles) DiMarco and Cathy (Bart) Wheeler; two grandsons, C.J. DiMarco and Colin DiMarco; as well as many nieces and nephews who he loved dearly.

A celebration of his remarkable life will be held Saturday, Jan. 4, at 10:30 a.m. at Sardis Baptist Church, 3915 Main St., Worthington Springs, 32697. A reception will follow at the church. In his memory, and in lieu of flowers, donations can be made to New Life Solutions, 1910 East Bay Drive, Largo 33771

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

PAID OBITUARY



William Weldon

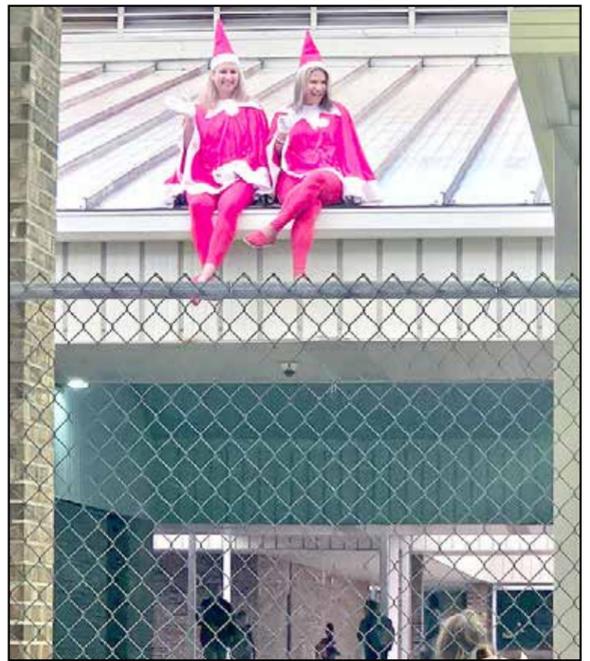
The family of William Albert (Billy) Weldon of Tavares is saddened to announce his passing on Sunday, Dec. 15, 2024, at the age of 90 years. He was born on Oct. 5, 1934, in Starke, to Gladys and Steven A. Weldon. He served in the U.S. Army and Merchant Marines before becoming a trooper with the Florida Highway Patrol and retiring after 30 years. He loved the outdoors and was an avid hunter and fisherman.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 65 years, Pennie; daughters, Elana (Kenny) Williams and Angie (Chuck) Ross; three grandchildren, Kimberly (Ryan) Albert, Emily (Hunter) Elliot and Chaise Ross; three great-grandchildren, Audrey, Weston and Blaire; a sister, Martha Weldon Alogna; and many nieces and nephews.

To commemorate his remarkable life and the memories we cherish, services were held at Celebration Baptist Church of Leesburg, 25321 US Highway 27, The Plantation Road, Leesburg, 34748, with a viewing followed by the funeral. All who knew him were welcomed to join in celebrating the life of a man who was loved deeply and will be greatly missed. Billy's final resting place will be at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell. In lieu of flowers you may donate to Compassionate Care.

Arrangements entrusted to Beyers Funeral Home of Leesburg. Online condolences may be made at www.beyersfuneralhome.com

PAID OBITUARY



Up on the rooftop...

Starke Elementary School Assistant Principal Michelle Ware (left) and Principal Laurén Morgan took Elf on a Shelf to a whole other level when they welcomed arriving students during the Dec. 19 parent drop-off.



Ar'Nayshia Griffin (center) puts up a shot between two Hawthorne players.

BHS girls beat 1A state champ 47-39

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Ar'Nayshia Griffin scored 10 points as part of a 14-2 second-quarter run that gave the Bradford High School girls basketball team a lead it would never relinquish in a 47-39 win over defending Class 1A state-champion Hawthorne on Dec. 18 in Starke.

It was the seventh straight win

for the Class 3A Tornadoes (8-2).

Bradford got off to a rough start, missing its first seven field-goal attempts and turning the ball over five times as the Hornets built a 7-0 lead. Khamyra Hankerson finally put the Tornadoes on the board with a three-pointer at the 2:13 mark of the first quarter.

A couple of baskets by Nichelle

See HOOPS, page 13

KHHS soccer teams enter break off wins

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Keystone Heights High School played its last boys and girls soccer matches of 2024, with both teams winning.

The girls team got six goals and one assist from Kayden Huntley in defeating District 4-3A opponent Palatka 8-0 on Dec. 19 in Palatka. It was the third straight win for the Indians (10-4-2), who are now 4-0 against district competition.

Kayle Buchanan and Kaylee Park each had one goal and one assist.

Taylor Buchanan led the team in assists with three.

Dallas Da'Crosta and Alyssa Townsend each added one assist. Goalie Aspen Krohn made two saves.

The boys team picked up its fourth straight win, getting goals from Luke Brunt off a corner kick and a penalty kick in defeating visiting Class 5A Middleburg 2-1 on Dec. 19. Keystone improved

its record to 9-4-1.

Keystone's girls team will return to action first after the holiday break with a home game against Ridgeview on Tuesday, Jan. 7, at 7:20 p.m.

Both teams will travel to play Newberry on Wednesday, Jan. 8. The girls match will start at 5 p.m., followed by the boys match at 7 p.m.

BHS boys bounce back from loss

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Bradford High School had a winning streak snapped in boys

basketball, but the Tornadoes rebounded by defeating host Union County 60-49 on Dec. 19.

The Tornadoes (5-2) got 22 points, 10 rebounds and four assists from Jordan Cason, while Jy'Quez Cason had 14 points and 13 rebounds.

Bradford also got 11 points from K.J. Taylor, six points from Maliki Cobarris, five points from Steven Carter and two points from Kyren Green.

Green was the third on the team in rebounds with nine. Stats for Union (3-2) weren't available by deadline.

The Tornadoes entered the game off a 60-57 loss at P.K. Yonge on Dec. 18. Bradford led 16-8 after the first quarter and held a five-point lead at halftime before being outscored 41-33 in the second half.

Cobarris poured in 18 points to go along with seven rebounds and seven assists, while two players had double-doubles: Breion Johnson with 13 points and 14 rebounds and Jordan Cason with 10 points and 10 rebounds.

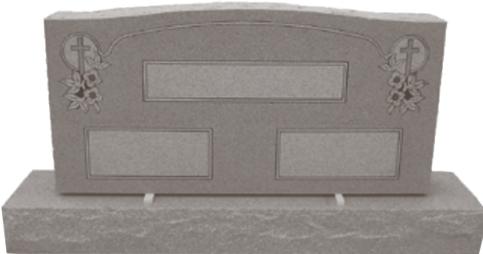
Steven Carter had six points, while Taylor and Jy'Quez Cason each added five.

Taylor also grabbed eight rebounds.

Bradford had won four straight prior to the loss.

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Nichelle Brown (left) scores on a layup in the first half of the Tornadoes' win over Hawthorne.

HOOPS

Continued from page 12

Brown helped Bradford go into the second quarter trailing by just one point.

Hawthorne went up 13-11 before the Tornadoes scored 14 of the final 16 points of the first half. The run began with Brown scoring off a Hankerson steal. Griffin made a free throw and then knocked down a short jump shot to put Bradford up 16-13. Hankerson missed a layup attempt after her own backcourt steal, but Brown was there to grab the rebound and put it back for a five-point lead.

Griffin kept the run going. She made a free throw and then scored off an offensive rebound. She was fouled on the shot and made the awarded free-throw attempt to put the Tornadoes ahead 22-13.

The Hornets finally scored, but Griffin sank a three-point shot late in the half to send Bradford into the locker room leading 25-15.

Bradford was outscored 14-8 in the third quarter, with half of Hawthorne's points coming at



Ar'Nayshia Griffin gets fouled while taking a shot underneath the basket.

the foul line. Hankerson scored off her own steal and also added a basket off a Griffin assist to help the Tornadoes stay in front.

The Hornets' T'Myrah Carter drove the baseline for a buzzer-beating basket that made the score 33-29 in favor of Bradford going into the fourth quarter.

Hawthorne went 3 of 11 from the field in the fourth quarter and turned the ball over seven times.

One of those turnovers — a steal by Cherish Bing — led to a three-pointer by Griffin for the quarter's first points.

Griffin had eight points in the final quarter. She went 3 of 3 at the foul line after getting fouled on a three-point shot and added a two-point basket off a Brown steal. She also drew a charge late in the game.

The effort helped Griffin finish with a game-high 21 points. Brown and Hankerson had 15 and nine points, respectively, while Wynter Barrington added two.

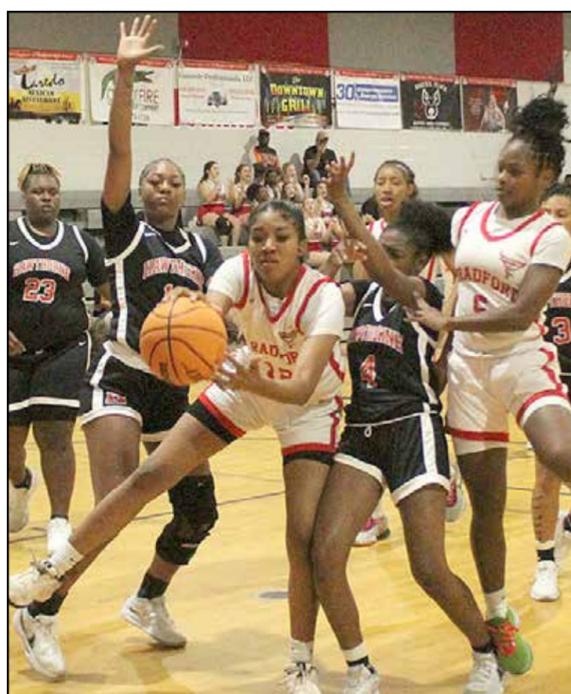
Griffin has now posted a double-double in every game but one. She grabbed a team-high 10 rebounds and also had three assists.

Barrington and Brown had eight and five rebounds, respectively, with Brown also recording four steals and a team-high four assists.

Hankerson led the team in steals with seven.

During its current win streak, Bradford is defeating teams by an average score of 59-37.

Griffin scored an average of 25 points in those seven games while also averaging 12 rebounds



Wynter Barrington (third from left) fights for a rebound.

and four assists.

Brown has been averaging 15 points per game since the streak began.

The Tornadoes have collectively had approximately 90 steals in their last seven games.



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65 Help Wanted
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HEROES

Continued from page 10

of a costumed member of one of the participating agencies), getting pushed in a basket and stealing toys from other baskets.

It was all in fun, though, as he promptly returned the items, although some of the children were bold enough to take him to task for being so mean.

Witt admitted there are always some things that can go better the first time a new agency steps in to take control of something, as the Bradford County Sheriff's Office has done with Holidays

with Heroes. He said for the most part, though, it was an easy transition.

The credit for that goes to the Starke Police Department and Barry Warren.

"They laid the groundwork," Witt said, adding, "We're just proud to keep this great tradition going."

In his 12 years in Bradford County, Witt missed participating in only one Shop with a Cop.

"It's been something I've always looked forward to," he said. "Now, to be a part of putting it on — it's an honor and a privilege."



LEFT: Bradford Elementary students Alainah Rodriguez (left) and Nina Rought show off the T-shirts students received from the Bradford County Sheriff's Office.

BELOW: Starke Elementary's Allison Harper (right) is escorted by Celia Evans of Union Correctional Institution.



Holidays with Heroes gets thumbs up from Lawtey Elementary's Nova Corby (right), who's shopping with Bradford County Fire Rescue's David Weeks.



Lake Butler Elementary students Raelynn Dobbs and Ramsey Kay Wallace are loading up their basket with the help of Eli Rogers of the Union County Sheriff's Office.



Starke Elementary's Parklyn Luke (right) shows off a Barbie set she picked out with her escort, Olive Tierney of Union Correctional Institution.



Starke Elementary's Jarvis Morabito (left) thinks about what item to pick while being escorted by Mark Perkins of Baker Correctional Institution.



Starke Elementary's Bristol Hurst (right) enjoys shopping with Adrian Cannimore of Florida State Prison.



Lake Butler Elementary students Zayden Jones and Arylah Jones have fun watching Jennifer Amit of Union Correctional Institution try out The Upside Down Challenge Game, which flips your vision upside down when you look through the viewer.

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Starke Elementary's Massiah Merricks (left) leads the way, with his escort, Dawn McKinley of the Bradford County Sheriff's Office, pushing his basket.

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Heroes have a heart for children at Christmastime



Starke Elementary's Chloe McKnight (right) and escort Gabriel Hyzer of Florida State Prison ponder whether an electric car is a possibility.



Lake Butler Elementary's Haven Hankerson (right) shows off a doll she picked out with her escort, Scott Konkel of the Bradford County Sheriff's Office.



Bradford Elementary's Justin Owens (left) looks over the different Jurassic World Dominion dinosaur masks with his escort, Antonia Judkins of Florida State Prison.

BELOW: Owens tries on a mask as Judkins looks on.



Lake Butler Elementary students Delilah Light and Eli West enjoy a post-shopping meal at Subway with Greg Jackson of the Florida Forest Service.



Starke Elementary's Colton Chappell (right) has picked out an Adventure Falcon Roleplay set with his escort, Samantha Holt of Union Correctional Institution.



Bradford Elementary's Rosalia Cogan (left) has a thing or two to say to the Grinch about stealing presents.



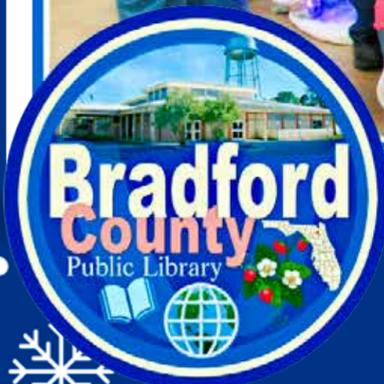
Lake Butler Elementary's Keon "Liam" Williams gets an assist from Florida State Prison's Julie Beighley as he selects a toy.



Rick Robinson of Baker Correctional Institution follows his two shoppers, Bradford Elementary students Davi Silva (left) and Tymeia Vega.

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