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Bradford County Telegraph

USPS 062-700 — Starke, Florida

Thursday, February 10, 2022

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Chamber presents 4 awards at annual banquet

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer

The North Florida Regional Chamber of Commerce's annual banquet returned after the pandemic prevented the 2021 event from taking place, and it was with the pandemic in mind that led to the Bradford County Public Library being honored as the Business of the Year.

Four awards in all were presented, with Courtnie Douglas selected as the J.E. Tomlinson Businessperson of the Year, Beth and John Ryan Tillman selected as the Eugene L. Matthews Citizens of the Year and Priscilla Sparks selected as the Judy Becker Volunteer of the Year.

Pam Whittle, the president and CEO of the chamber, said when it came to selecting the Business of the Year, she and her committee thought about how the library served the community during this time of pandemic. As Whittle said, having a book to read was a way of escaping what was going on in the world.

"Our team decided that we are very proud of the work our library does," Whittle said.

In the chamber's 2022 "Starke Life" publication, Robert Perone, the library director, was quoted as saying, "We've noticed an increase in people returning to the library. It's not just regulars, either. We've signed up an unprecedented number of people for library cards and renewals. Returning to the library has been a sign of normalcy that so many people



The Bradford County Public Library received the chamber's Business of the Year Award. Pictured (l-r) are Pam Whittle, chamber president/CEO and the library's Robert Perone (director), Kimberly Crawford, Misty DuBose, Bennett Kilgore, Debbie Geiger, Kathy Paddock, Mary Canupp, Cyndy Weeks, Amy Turney and Jill Barnett. Library staff not pictured are Curtis Burkhardt, Maria Fuentes, Melanie Jackson and Angela Quinn.

missed."

The library's online opportunities for access to eBooks and audiobooks have been popular, too, as well as checking out Playaway machines that are pre-loaded with materials.

Various programs and children's storytime eventually returned after the initial onset of the pandemic, while library staff continued to assist people with various needs.

"With everything going on, my staff never stopped providing for people," Perone said. "They went above and

beyond to make sure someone could fill out paperwork they needed. We turned over rocks to find specific books that people wanted."

Whittle said a library isn't often thought of as a business, but like any business, it has salaries and bills to pay.

"We want to say thank you," Whittle said. "Thanks for being a part of our community."

See AWARDS, page 7



Carol Milner shows off the \$50 she won by paying \$20 to pick a mystery prize.



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NOTING

Help send BHS girls weightlifters off to tourney

Bradford High School invites the community to help support the girls weightlifting team, which will be leaving Friday, Feb. 11, for the state tournament at Port St. Joe High School.

The team will be departing at 9:30 a.m. Well-wishers are encouraged to line up along U.S. 301 in front of BHS with signs and/or loud voices.

Eight team members qualified to compete at state. They'll be attempting to give the school its first-ever state championship in girls weightlifting.

February 24 meeting on franchise fees

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
Telegraph Editor

STARKE — Bradford County is advertising a special meeting to present its proposal to collect a franchise fee from Clay Electric Cooperative members and receive public feedback.

Having raised property taxes to a full 10 mills this year, county commissioners are exploring other ways to raise revenue to fund public services, in particular Bradford County Fire Rescue.

A franchise fee of 1% to 6% could be added to electrical bills of unincorporated Florida Power & Light and Clay Electric customers with the consent of those utilities.

FPL has expressed its willingness. Clay Electric wants the hear what its customers have to say.

Franchise fees are a way of paying the county/taxpayers back for any cost incurred for the use of public right of way. In reality, the county would use the revenue to offset the cost of public services. The revenue could also lower the amount of annual special assessments that could be approved to pay for fire rescue.

The fees are already collected in Starke and other local municipalities to fund city governments.

According to a letter Clay Electric sent to its members, they would pay

See FEES, page 3

CBS to televise races at Keystone Beach

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
Monitor Editor

GREEN COVE SPRINGS — The organizer of an upcoming racing event at Keystone Beach Park said coverage of the event will wind up on a sports cable channel.

Alan Verlander of Airstream Ventures told the Clay County Tourist Development Council on Wednesday, Jan. 26 that the April motorized surfboard and motorized skateboard competitions will be videotaped and broadcasted as a half-hour program on a CBS sports network.

Keystone Heights City Manager Lynn Rutkowski told the city council earlier that the motorized surfing

event will draw competitors from around the world.

It's basically a jet ski surfboard," Verlander explained about the water-based races. "They're on a surfboard with a jet propeller that is the same propeller as a jet ski. And then the skateboard competition, it's an electric skateboard and your controller's in your hand and you go through all these loops and all that kind of stuff."

During the same meeting, Verlander said demand for water venues is strong with many water-based events, particularly fishing tournaments looking for venues.

KHHS to honor Mattox at baseball classic

Keystone Heights High School will host the Alan Mattox Preseason Baseball Classic on Tuesday, Feb. 15, honoring the longtime head coach who retired following last season.

Play begins with Clay taking on Palatka at 4 p.m., followed by the Indians, under new Head Coach Chris Roach, taking on Fort White at 7 p.m.

Mattox, who'll be present, will be honored between the two games.

In 29 seasons at KHHS, Mattox compiled a 466-319 record. He led the Indians to 10 district championships and 17 regional playoff appearances. Keystone advanced to the Final Four three times off regional championships and finished as a state runner-up twice.

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Where does Union County stand on the phosphate issue now?

BY TRACY LEE TATE
Times Editor

LAKE BUTLER — The conflict between a group of four families who have joined together in an attempt to mine phosphate in Union County and the government and people of the county is approaching its sixth year and most people who find themselves along for the ride to see how it all turns out seem to be beginning to feel the need to ask, “Are we there yet?”

To recap the issues from the start seems appropriate.

The initial proposal came with much PR and fanfare as the mining company, HPS Enterprises, worked to “sell” the county on the idea that phosphate mining was a wonderful thing to do. They touted a “revolutionary new process” that would make land recovery after the strip mining of the mineral more efficient and effective.

Union County Commissioners responded by doing their job — researching the issue and discovering a potential danger to the residents of the county. They decided they needed more time to look into the matter, so they declared the first, of three, moratoriums on the acceptance by the county of any applications for a mining permit.

The county examined its current regulations on mining and land use and found them to be lacking, so they sought the help of the North Florida Regional Planning Council to see if there needed to be any updates to the land use regulations.

With the assistance of the North Florida Regional Planning Council, Union County began working on its land use regulations in an attempt to create a series of controls on mining activities in the county. After three years of a moratorium prohibiting the

acceptance by the county of any application for a mining permit, the amendments and changes to the land development and use regulations were put into place just a few months prior to the filing.

In October 2018, HPS Enterprises II, LLC filed a suit against Union County for relief from the (then) recently adopted land use regulations which it said would create a burden on the company and its use of its lawfully owned property, citing the Bert J. Harris Jr. Private Property Rights Protection Act (1995) as their legal precedent. The act is a provision purposed for the protection of businesses from governmental persecution and sanctions.

In the complaint, HPS lead attorney D. Kent Safriet, with the firm Hopping, Green and Sams, sought relief from what is called in the complaint, “inverse

condemnation.” The complaint stated that it is seeking relief through state judicial remedies, as required by Florida law, before taking the next step and filing in federal court. The suit alleged “unconstitutional taking” of land whose use is controlled by the new LDRs.

In a claim made possible by the Harris Act, HPS sought payment of \$298,750,000.00, plus attorney fees and costs, from the county for damages in October 2018. HPS did offer to remove this claim and to waive any right to damages incurred since “the initial adoption of the County’s illegal moratorium and Plan Amendment” if the county would immediately issue mining approvals for the property and pay its attorney fees and costs.

According to the suit, “the County’s adoption of the Plan Amendment inordinately burdens the Property by directly restricting the development potential of the Property as a phosphate mine such that the Landowner is now directly restricted or limited in the use of the property.” It goes on to claim that the amendments will make HPS unable to “attain its reasonable, investment-backed expectation for the existing use of the property.” The claim made is that the land use amendments will restrict HPS to using only 341 acres of the 2,757.6 acres it originally planned to mine, an

87% reduction.

The suit goes on to state that the county’s actions have “imposed a loss in fair market value” of the property of \$298,750,000. It is also stated that “the county’s actions have deprived the landowner of substantially all economically viable use of its Property,” despite the fact that said property has seen past use as pasture, crop and timber land, presumably as a part of a profit-motivated business venture. In addition to this, on the website of the Union County Property Appraiser, there has been no change in the assessed value of any of this property to reflect its value for mining.

The suit requested that the court, in this case the circuit court of the Eighth Judicial Circuit, grant a judgement against the county for compensation under the Harris Act including an award of “costs, pre-judgement interest, reasonable attorney’s fees and other such relief” the court deems appropriate and that the county be ordered to pay full compensation, including the above mentioned costs. The summons for this lawsuit was filed with the court on March 8, 2019 and served on the board on March 14, but no court date was set.

On March 8, 2019 attorneys for Union County formally filed a motion to dismiss the above suit, citing seven defects in the

suit. HPS’s attorneys, with the firm Hopping, Green and Sams, filed an opposition to the county’s motion to dismiss on April 16, 2019.

The case came before Eighth Judicial District Judge Denise Ferrero on June 26 in the main courtroom in the Union County Courthouse and these alleged defects were discussed by both sides at length. Present at the hearing were James Jack Taylor representing HPS and David A. Theriaque, S. Brent Spain and County Attorney Russ Wade representing Union County.

Ferrero heard the case and said she would study the matter and then make her decision in the matter. A few weeks after the hearing, she requested a number of items from the county pertaining to the matter, especially the newly implemented land use regulations. On March 6, 2020, the Union County Board of County Commissioners received notice of the judge’s decision in the matter.

On the request for compensation under the Bert Harris Act, which the county asked to be dismissed, was found to be valid by the court. The decision does not deal with whether or not the county will be ordered to pay HPS the nearly \$300 million it plans to ask for, but simply that HPS’ claim is “legally sufficient,” meaning that it is sufficient to be heard as a valid case in the future.

In the matter of the second count dealt with in the hearing, HPS’ claim for inverse condemnation was declared “not ripe,” meaning that at the present time the case was not ready for consideration because it rests upon contingent events in the future that may not happen as expected or which may never happen. This count was dismissed on the grounds of this lack of “ripeness.”

The end result left the county open for a suit made by HPS for the \$298,750,000 in lost property value it claims as a result of the new land use regulations. Of

See UNION, page 6



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Elections chief: no excuse for skipping primaries

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
Monitor Editor

GREEN COVE SPRINGS — The Clay County Supervisor of Elections recently declared that when Clay County residents are disappointed in their government officials, they have no one to blame but themselves.

“Sometimes we have to be honest,” Chris Chambless wrote in a news release, “maybe it is not them, but we the people. Remember, good government never goes out of style.”

Chambless complained that based on prior elections, voter turnout for the 2022 primary will likely not exceed 80% in the county, meaning that 32,000 Clay voters probably will not vote in the Aug. 24 primary, headlined by the governor’s race. “Why will they not vote?” he asked. “I have heard many reasons, and most of them boil down to ‘convenience.’”

The supervisor listed the most common excuses he has heard for skipping elections, including difficulty in registering, an inability to get to the polls, inadequate information about



Chambless

candidates and a lack of personal identification necessary to cast a ballot.

“At no other time in history, has voter registration been more convenient and accessible,” he said.

Chambless added that with 10 days of nine-hours-a-day early voting and with voting -by-mail available, the excuse of not being able to get to the polls rings hollow.

“When reviewing the options available to all voters, I do not think voter access is the problem,” he wrote.

Chambless also wrote that individual candidate information is available on his own website, as well as at public libraries.

“It is hard to not be an informed voter if one has that desire,” he added. “Lack of information is not the problem.”

Chambless said that in addition to driver licenses and identification cards issued by the state, his office accepts 10 additional forms of voter ID, including debit and credit cards. He also said that people without proper ID can still vote.

“If you do not bring proper ID, you can still vote using a provisional ballot,” he wrote. “As long as you are eligible and voted in the proper precinct, your provisional ballot will count, provided the signature on your provisional ballot matches the signature in your registration record. Access to proper identification is not the problem.”

Clay Electric trustees draw no opposition

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
Monitor Editor

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS — Clay Electric trustees Jo Ann R. Smith, Carl Hagglund and Karen Hastings all qualified to run for reelection to the board of trustees, while no one else qualified to run for the seats during district meetings earlier this month.

Smith’s District 8 covers Levy, Southern Marion and Lake counties.

She was an assistant secretary for marketing and inspection services for the U.S. Department of Agriculture from 1989 to 1993.

Smith was first elected as a trustee in 2012.

Hagglund represents the Keystone Heights district (District 1), which includes Clay County south of State Road 16, in addition to western Putnam County.

He is a co-op retiree and was first elected to the board of trustees in 2013.

Hastings represents District 9, which includes Volusia and Flagler counties, in addition to the southern portions of Putnam and Marion counties. She is a retired realtor and has served as a trustee since 1995.

Each year, three of the co-op’s nine board seats are up for reelection.



Hagglund, Photo by Clay Electric Cooperative



Hastings, Photo by Clay Electric Cooperative



Smith, Photo by Clay Electric Cooperative

FEES

Continued from page 1

on average an additional \$4.26 a month, or \$51.12, a year, if the fee negotiated was 3% of their bills. Of course, the higher the bill, the higher the additional fee. The co-op estimates the county would raise approximately \$344,000 a year from the fee.

Clay Electric will have members present at the special meeting to determine members’ opinions of the proposed franchise fee.

When a franchise fee was proposed in 2000, Clay Electric sponsored a telephone survey of 250 of its members. Sixty-six percent expressed they were strongly opposed, and only 8% were fully or somewhat supportive of the fee.

An even smaller percentage supported a special tax assessment. Others said the county should find another method of raising revenue, while 32% said there should be no additional tax of any kind.

When the co-op could not be convinced to negotiate in 2000, the county considered suing for the revenue, but a split commission decided not to pursue the costly lawsuit.

It remains to be seen how things will go 22 years later, but Bradford County plans on releasing its own information regarding the proposed franchise fee and how the revenue would be used, and then follow up on that at the commission’s special board meeting.

The special board meeting will take place Thursday, Feb.

24, at 6:30 p.m. in the county commission meeting chambers at the Bradford County Courthouse (north wing).

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Clerk: Bradford spending more money than it makes

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
Telegraph Editor

STARKE — County Clerk Denny Thompson delivered a budgetary reality check to county commissioners Monday, saying the county cannot continue spending at the current rate with no new sources of recurring revenue.

Commissioners have raised taxes and held departmental spending back, and they continue to consider enacting new fees, but the truth is that the budget is balanced on federal relief funds that will eventually run out.

Thompson, while not intending to say much, said quite a lot about the county’s finances. Comparing the current spending rate to the amount of revenue raised through property taxes, he said, the county would need to raise an additional 20% to fund the budget.

“I don’t want there to be any wondering, guessing about this, but to fund what we’re at right now, we would almost have to be at 2.1 mills above our maximum millage rate we’re at now at 10 mills. We’d have been at 12.1 mills,” he said.

To achieve that, the board would have to declare the county a Municipal Service Taxing Unit. Alternatively, it could add special assessments to annual tax bills for specific services (Municipal Services Benefit Unit).

“Please be mindful going into budget season that, whether it’s a franchise fee or whatever, it’s going to take a 20% increase over what ad valorem taxes are now to fund the budget we have right now,” Thompson said.

“So, Mr. Clerk, that’s with all the effort that’s gone into all the cuts that’s been made? So, we continue in this county, our expenditures continue to rise and our revenue either stays where it is, or it goes lower?” Chairman Chris Dougherty asked.

If you look back just five years, whether its operational or

personnel costs, Thompson said you can see the difference. Even a little bit here and there adds up over time. Every time the board approves another \$100,000 in spending, it has raised the county’s budget by 1%, the clerk said.

“Every time you approve a piece of equipment that’s \$100,000, \$200,000 —which is great to have. — but that \$200,000 is 2% of the already approved budget that’s getting approved extra.”

Dougherty said even providing what he considers a limited level of public services is not working out mathematically.

“We have to crawl before we walk,” Thompson said. Tough decisions must be made.

“We’ve made a lot of tough decisions. I think we’ve put those decisions on each department,” Dougherty said.

“We’re still upside down,” Commissioner Kenny Thompson said.

“We’ve been saying it for years, and it just doesn’t work. So where the hell is the money going in this county?” Dougherty asked.

Commissioner Carolyn Spooner asked for the clerk’s analysis, and Clerk Thompson gave examples such as high health insurance costs and

offering higher starting pay for some positions than much larger counties.

“We’re off kilter in several areas,” he said, inviting commissioners to sit down with him for a closer look, including at what other counties spend on law enforcement, fire rescue and public works.

“There’s hundreds of things here that nobody wants to change. Nobody wants to get cheap insurance. Nobody wants to sacrifice anything. I’ve sacrificed. I love this county,” he said. “I feel like we’re doing a disservice to the people of Bradford County — maxed out at 10 mills and we need 20% more. That’s a disservice to everybody in this audience. That’s a disservice to everybody in this county.”

Deputy Clerk Rachel Rhoden said the finance department is working on a detailed spreadsheet to be presented for the first time next month that will analyze revenue and spending in each department, including where money is being pulled from to cover expenses.

Instead of “kicking the can further down the road,” Thompson asked the board to do what it needs to do to balance the budget.

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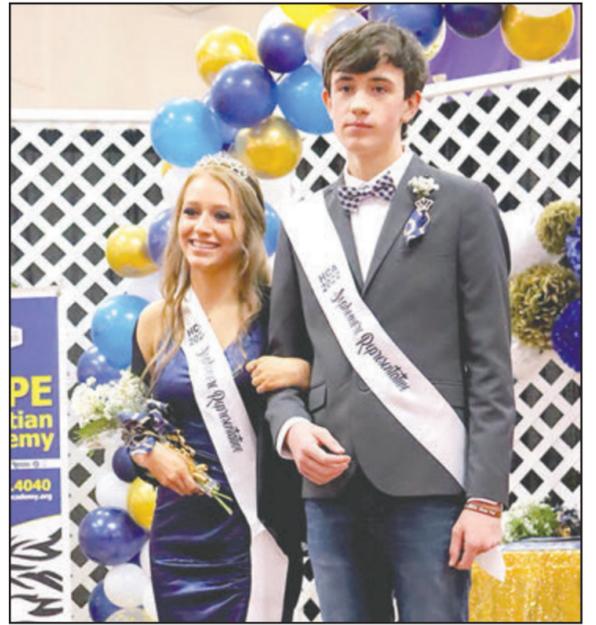
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Sophomore representatives Carly Beggs and Jude Hanson.



Junior representatives Bethany Burgess and Alex Brantley.



Key Club representatives were Jadie Clark and Trayven Chandler.

Hope Christian Academy celebrated Homecoming the week of Jan. 24–28. Their week was filled with Spirit Days featuring Senior Citizen Day, Flannel Day, Gold and Blue Day, Class Color Day and Pajama Day. Students also competed in door and banner decorating contests. The senior class once again won for the most overall spirit throughout the week and their homecoming participation. Students representing organizations and classes were presented in front of the student body, staff, parents/guardians and guests, with the special event culminating with the crowning of a new king and queen. They were also presented during their homecoming game. Pictured above are Queen and King Dakota Cedar and Simon Hanson. Pics by Virginia Denmark.



(L-R) Representing the HCA Senior Class were Emma Snyder, Madison Dibernardinis, Queen Dakota Cedar and Lydia Morgan.



Newly crowned Simon Hanson with fellow seniors Eduardo Marrero, Kody Griffis and A. J. Brown.



Representing Hope Christian Academy's National Honor Society were Haley Sheppard and Brooke McCloud.



Hope Christian Academy first-grader Emma Frazier was a stand-out during Spirit Week's Senior Citizen Day. Pic by Theresa Frazier.



Even HCA staff like Malena Hanson (pictured in a selfie) participated in the HCA Homecoming Spirit Day events.

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Musical reunion planned

There will be a reunion of Debra Bailey's former music and chorus students on Saturday, Feb. 12, from 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. in the Lake Butler Middle School cafeteria. Bailey would love to see her students from the 1980s and 1990s.

Bailey and her husband, Stan, never had children of their own, so now as they approach their Bailey would like to touch base again with some of "her kids" from the past. She will be bringing pictures, programs and memories to share from those days. She hopes to be able to play portions of some of the



Music teacher Debra Bailey in 1990 and today.



Music teacher Debra Bailey in 1990 and today.

concerts, programs and musicals she directed as well.

Perhaps there will be some community singing, too.

Former students Joel Norman,

Amanda (Pinder) Moore, Josh Singletary and Stacey (Thornton) Kingsbury are helping with the event.

Rooterville animal sanctuary brings covered wagons to its overnight offerings

As glamping continues to grow across the United States, one of the biggest opportunities is for agri-tourism, where farmstays allow guests to stay overnight and experience life on a working farm.

One of the latest farms to join the flock of U.S. farmstays is the Florida-based Rooterville, a 20-acre farm that cares for hundreds of rescued farm animals, including pigs, chickens, cows, goats and more. Rooterville has added two PlainsCraft Covered Wagons to its offerings, allowing potential visitors looking for ways to experience what it's like to stay on a farm an opportunity to be inspired by the stories of the animals that have been rescued here.

Rooterville is a nonprofit dedicated to rescuing, caring for, and providing a permanent home to farm animals of all types. Founded by Elaine West in 2004, Rooterville was born when a breeding sow named Stella was rescued from a factory farm and nursed back to health on its 5-acre farm.

"This farm is truly a labor of love for me," West said. "While we believe it's already an incredibly serene and wonderful place to visit, we think the wagons are perfect for this beautiful space. The wagons will be near our pastures, where a horse and several cows graze, so they can go to sleep and wake up feeling the peace we've intentionally created here at Rooterville. We are working to make this a truly special experience for our guests."

Rooterville continues to grow as it provides a home to animals and gives guests an unparalleled experience. West recently moved the farm to a new location in rural Melrose. Visitors are welcome at the farm and tours include a chance to feed snacks to pigs, capture photos and more. And now, visitors can go glamping on its grounds — thanks to Elaine's addition of two PlainsCraft wagons — for an unforgettable experience. These wagons are currently available for overnight stays.

"We are thrilled that Elaine chose our wagons as an opportunity to give her visitors a high-quality glamping experience," said Dennis Steinman, founder and CEO of



The "Hog Heaven" wagon has a king-sized bed for romantic getaways, while "The Herd" features a king-sized bed and two bunkbeds for family stays. "Visitors will be able to enjoy the animals and nature, including our bald eagles, here at Rooterville Animal Sanctuary when they stay with us. All proceeds help us care for the rescued animals at Rooterville," founder Elaine West said. Once electrical hookups are complete, the wagons will be available to rent through their website. www.rooterville.org.

PlainsCraft Covered Wagons. "We know this was a major purchase for a nonprofit like Rooterville, but we know the wagons will be a worthwhile investment. We're seeing agri-tourism continue to grow in the glamping community as campers look for unique experiences to enjoy alongside their overnight

stays. An animal sanctuary like Elaine's is going to be a massive draw for the new age of campers who support and live by the same ethical practices Rooterville follows. We're excited to see her farm continue to grow and are proud to be a part of its success."

The VIRUS

Maybe this virus is a wake-up call. World wide it affects us all.

Lord give us the wisdom

to fight this thing through it all.

Magnify thou name, for every disease there is a cure.

His very presence the special lure.

Let's band together against this foe

and seek His help as we go.

Sent from God, He is here.

He will save us from our fear.

This virus will pass, we will see God still reigns.

Oh Glory Be!

~Henry Hodges
Lawtey, FL



Commission thanks newest member

Starke City Commissioner Scott Roberts, who joined the board last year, was recently honored for his prior work for the city — nearly 30 years to the city's employee pension board. Roberts chaired the board, and Mayor Janice Mortimer called his service unprecedented. Roberts (center) is pictured with fellow board members (l-r) Shannon Smith, Wilbur Waters, Mortimer and Danny Nugent.

JROTC drill team meet in Lake Butler

The Union County High School JROTC Drill Team is hosting an invitational drill meet for Northeast Florida Army JROTC schools at Tiger Stadium on Saturday, Feb. 12. There are 9-10 different schools represented, and their teams will be competing in many different events. The event will start at 8:30 a.m. and will run till 3 p.m. All are welcome, and there is no cost to attend.

Junior youth basketball registration

Register for Concerned Citizens of Bradford County's 2022 Junior NBA Spring Youth Basketball program from Feb. 15-24 at the RJE gymnasium Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6 to 7:30 p.m. The registration fee is \$45.

Leagues include Kiddie from 4-6, Minor from 7-10 and Junior from 11-14. They play from March through May. Families attending games will follow COVID-19 guidelines,

including wearing face coverings and having their temperature checked.

Upcoming food distribution

A communitywide food distribution hosted by Feeding Northeast Florida and True Vine Ministry will take place Tuesday, Feb. 15, at 9 a.m. at the Bradford County Fairgrounds and Tuesday, Feb. 23, at 10 a.m. at True Vine Ministry in Starke.

Food boxes often include fresh produce, deli and bakery items, dairy and some meats. The inventory is subject to

change based on availability. Tell a friend or a neighbor. The distribution is free and open to the public. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Food distribution Feb. 17

The next food distribution at Starke Church of God by Faith will be Thursday, Feb. 17, from 10 a.m. to noon. Food distributions are the first and third Thursday of the month. The church is located at 730 Old Lawtey Road in Starke.

IMPORTANT TAX FILING INFORMATION

The IRS announced it will begin accepting and processing tax returns on Monday, Jan. 24, 2022. The filing deadline to submit 2021 tax returns or an extension to file and pay tax owed is Monday, April 18, 2022, for most taxpayers.

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Dove nominated and award winning Tribute Quartet from Nashville, Tennessee, which includes local talent Josh Singletary, will be in concert at

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Saturday, February 12 at 7 PM
Sunday, February 13 at 11 AM & 5 PM

The church is located 1 mile south of Raiford on SR-121 on the right. For more information call 386-431-1732

Crime

Recent arrests in Bradford, Union and Clay

Jan. 29 through Feb. 4

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

Jonathan Kegan Bach, 27, of Perry was arrested by Bradford deputies on Feb. 4 for a probation violation.

Colbey Ian Baker, 18, of Starke was arrested by Starke police on Feb. 3 for possession of drugs, possession of marijuana and destroying evidence.

James Alfred Baxley, 33, of Ocala was arrested by Starke police on Jan. 29 for larceny.

Julie Marie Bennett, 51, of Hampton was arrested by Bradford deputies on Jan. 31 for resisting an officer and a probation violation.

Willie Berry, 71, of Lawtey was arrested by Bradford deputies on Jan. 29 for lewd and lascivious behavior.

Desmond Isaiah Bonnett, 22, of Jacksonville was arrested by Bradford deputies on Feb. 2 for criminal mischief with property damage, burglary and larceny.

Amber Lynn Bruce, 38, of Keystone Heights was arrested by Bradford deputies on Jan. 31 for a probation violation.

Gregory Leon Dent, 60, of Brooker was arrested by Bradford deputies on Jan. 29

for driving with a suspended or revoked license.

Andre Bernard Dommon, 46, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on Feb. 3 for contempt of court.

Joseph Richard Holder, 57, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on Feb. 4 for driving with a suspended or revoked license.

Thomas Andrew Hollifield, 31, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on Feb. 4 for child cruelty.

Keith Howard Kelly, 63, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on Jan. 30 for resisting an officer, driving with a suspended or revoked license and resisting an officer.

Aaliyah Lu'gina Lee, 26, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on Feb. 3 for a probation violation.

Zazhary Vernon Mitchell 34, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on Feb. 2 for a probation violation.

Ashlle Nicole Norwood, 36, of Jacksonville was arrested by Lawtey police on Jan. 30 for fleeing and eluding and resisting an officer.

Jessica Kay Ortiz, 36, of New Port Richey was arrested by Starke police on Feb. 4 for an out-of-county warrant.

Dustin Edison Padgett, 27, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on Feb. 4 for DUI and driving with a suspended or revoked license.

Asha Latonya Rhines, 37, of Starke was arrested by Starke police on Feb. 2 for selling cocaine, possession of cocaine, possession of marijuana and using a two-way communications device while committing a felony.

Leslie Marie Thornton, 38, of Lawtey was arrested by Bradford deputies on Feb. 2 for a

conditional release violation.

Justin Clayton Todd, 45, of Lake Butler was arrested by Bradford deputies for attaching a tag not assigned to a motor vehicle.

James Allen Williams, 29, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on Feb. 2 for an out-of-county warrant.

Union

Harold Lewis Brooks, 45, of Alachua was arrested by Union deputies on Feb. 3 for disorderly conduct.

Kristy Denise Clemons, 39, of Lake Butler was arrested by Union deputies on Feb. 3 for a probation violation.

Lorenzo Laverne Gilmore, 21, of Jacksonville was arrested by Union deputies on Feb. 2 for possession of marijuana and possession of narcotics equipment.

Heriberto Rodriguez Jr., 37, of Jacksonville was arrested by Union deputies on Feb. 4 for a probation violation.

Robert Earl Stoutamire III, 29, of Lake Butler was arrested by Union deputies on Feb. 3 for trespassing and resisting an officer.

Kelly Ann Thornton, 37, of Lake Butler was arrested by Union deputies on Feb. 4 for vehicle theft.

James Allan Williams, 29, of Starke was arrested by Union deputies on Feb. 3 for a probation violation.

Clay

Douglas Darwin Nelson, 29, was arrested by Clay deputies in Keystone Heights on Feb. 1 for battery.

John Cody Rabe, 34, was arrested by Clay deputies in Keystone Heights on Feb. 3 for battery.

Clay commissioners skeptical over cat population plan

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
Monitor Editor

GREEN COVE SPRINGS — Clay County commissioners discussed upcoming funding levels for their trap-neuter-and-return cat policy during a Jan. 25 meeting, with several commissioners wondering if they should continue the program.

Chairman Wayne Bolla said the policy, now funded by \$75,000 a year, has not been effective in reducing the county's community cat population.

He added that with an estimated feral cat population of between 30,000 and 60,000 he gets many complaints from residents about stray cats.

"I don't get a lot of calls about dogs," he said. "I get a lot of calls about cats."

Does it work or not?

Bolla also said that county staff has told him in the past that the plan, in which stray cats are trapped, neutered, and then released back into the same neighborhood in which they were captured, does not work.

"I don't know what we can do with this," he said, "but if the program works, let's quadruple the funding and get it fixed once and for all, at least make a dent in it. If it doesn't work, let's figure out what else does."

Cameron Moore of the University of Florida's Maddie Shelter Medicine Program assured Bolla and the rest of the board of county commissioners that trap-neuter-and-return is the most effective cat population control program available.

"We can definitely provide you with a lot of research that shows that it does work," she said. "We've never had a community that has implemented this program and then decided: No, that's it. We're going to go back to the old ways because it does not work."

Moore added that Clay County's northern neighbor has experienced success with the idea.

"I also started our community

cat diversion program in Duval County," she said, "and back then people thought we were crazy. But really it has made a dramatic difference in the amount of nuisance complaints that we've had and the number of cats that are entering our shelter."

"We've been doing this for 20 years and it really hasn't worked," Bolla told Moore.

"It has," Moore replied, adding the county should increase its funding level to see better results.

Community cats

Commissioner Jim Renninger asked Moore about the argument that trap-neuter-and-return fosters the formation of cat colonies.

"There's an opposing opinion that (says trap-neuter-and-return) draws in feral cats from other sources because now they have a place to live and food and warmth and all that," he said, and so, it magnifies the problem."

"We actually don't refer to them as colonies anymore," Moore replied. "That has a really negative connotation. There are groups of cats and they do live everywhere in our communities. What does happen is we have a lot of people out there that are feeding cats. We have people who are allowing cats to go in and out of their houses. We have cats that are born in the community that don't belong to anyone, so there are cats out there in the community and what we have found is that trap-neuter-and-return or shelter-neuter-and-return is the only proven method to actually make any kind of positive impact on the number of cats that are out there."

Moore added that trap-neuter-and-return prevents groups of cats from forming.

"If we sterilize and vaccinate them, they're not going to be adding to the population, we're increasing our community's immunity to rabies because we're vaccinating all of them and we're preventing those unnecessary births," she said.

Moore added that trap-neuter-and-return prevents groups of cats from forming.

"If we sterilize and vaccinate them, they're not going to be adding to the population, we're increasing our community's immunity to rabies because we're vaccinating all of them and we're preventing those unnecessary births," she said.

Moore added that trap-neuter-and-return prevents groups of cats from forming.

Return or release

Renninger also said that Orange Park residents have told him they don't want trapped, stray cats returned to their neighborhoods, adding that residents will not trap the animals if they know the felines will be returned to where they were captured.

He asked Moore if the program could be modified so that trapped cats could be released elsewhere, rather than returned to the neighborhood in which they were trapped.

"Where are you going to release them?" Moore asked Renninger. "There is no magical farm that you can put 30,000 cats on. The cats are already embedded in this community. They have people who care for them, whether they will admit it or not, because they do not want to get in trouble with the county. The county does not have language in its ordinance that supports a community cat program, so it is often underground."

Moore added that one contributing factor to a growing cat population is that owners of domesticated felines often let their animals outdoors, exposing them to the possibility of breeding.

"Half of Americans let their cats outside," she said. "We would encourage that people keep their pets indoors because it's the safest, but trying to control people is like trying to herd cats."

Trevor Thomas Live at Lake Hill Baptist

Lake Hill Baptist Church of Keystone Heights will host Christian entertainer Trevor Thomas on Sunday, Feb. 13, at 11 a.m. A love offering will be accepted, and the Valentine's themed dinner on the grounds will follow. Please bring an Italian covered dish and join the fellowship following the service.

There will be no Sunday School service that morning.

UC considering options for funding EMS/Fire departments

BY TRACY LEE TATE
Times Editor

LAKE BUTLER — The Union County Board of County Commissioners is looking at a couple of options to raise funds to provide for the cost of Emergency Medical Services and the Union County Fire Department. Plans for the two services include, if funds can be found, hiring some full-time paid firefighters to make the department more responsive and also provide insurance rate advantage to residents.

Two years ago the commission put a one-cent sales tax increase on the ballot to allow the voters to decide if they would agree with it — with the money to be earmarked for emergency services.

The referendum was approved by the voters by more than 60%, but the matter fell victim to the lack of communication between the state (who changed the laws on how the matter was to be handled) and local government (which had many office closures and employee issues during the first pandemic of COVID-19).

Now, everyone is on the

same page and the board is preparing to discuss and vote on an ordinance that is the first step in putting the matter on the ballot for the mid-term election in November. This must be done due to state regulations requiring that an ordinance be approved and the referendum placed on the ballot at least 120 days prior to the date of the election. There are other requirements that must be met as well. Other new requirements include an audit of how the money will be used and opportunities for input from the community.

"The commissioners decided to let the citizens decide the matter," said County Coordinator Jimmy Williams.

The county is getting ready to implement the measure, but whether or not it will actually be done remains to be seen. Commissions and Williams are also looking at another way to raise the funds — a special assessment on commercial properties, a practice that was done away with more than a decade ago. At a January workshop tabled the issue of the assessment until Williams could gather information on how much the assessment would raise

for the departments and he will report back to them at their next meeting.

It's a numbers game and, at this time, no one really knows which way the county will decide. Commissioners are just "covering all the bases" so they can make an informed decision on which option to pursue. Either way, the citizens will benefit from improved and enhanced services that can help them to assure their quality of life and safety.

UCHS yearbook sales

Union County High School is selling old yearbooks. Each yearbook costs \$10 and can be purchased at the front office from Wesley Smith. The following years are available: 1985, 1989, 1990, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2016, 2017.

Please call the front office at 352-448-5204 to check on the availability of the yearbook you want to purchase.

UNION Continued from page 2

course, the amount requested in the suit will include all HSP's legal and court fees for the action as well.

In apparent preparation for this action, attorneys with Hopping, Green and Sams filed the latest in a long line (since the phosphate issue began) of public records requests with the county, transmitted to the county on March 10, 2020. This request asks for "any and all public records since September 18, 2018, related to or concerning phosphate mining in Union and/or Bradford counties," and "any and all public records since September 18, 2018, related to or concerning HPS Enterprises II, LLC." The law firm included a guarantee of reimbursement for copying fees for the requested documents, but no such offer for the county employee hours that fulfilling this request will require — the county will have to pay for those it seems.

Finally a date was set for a case management hearing on the Bert Harris Act claim. On Feb. 10, 2021 the case management for HPS Enterprises vs. Union County, FL was held, under the authority of Judge Robert Groeb. The case was held as a Zoom meeting, as are most cases in the age of COVID-19. D. Kent Safret was on hand representing HPS while David A. Theriaque and Russ Wade were there representing Union County.

Safret was quick to state that he felt that the case was ready for trial, while Theriaque said he believed that he and Wade were still in the first round of discovery in preparation of the case. He made several points about the upcoming case, such as looking at planners, engineers and other experts. He also said he believed that the court would need to consider the mine as a whole, despite the fact part of it is located in adjacent Bradford County.

The judge agreed that the case seemed to be in a "pretty preliminary stage right now". Wade then added that he felt time would be needed to consult with and retain a number of expert witnesses on the more technical aspects of the case.

Safret quickly responded that he did not think any expert witnesses were necessary since HPS had already done an impact study and the allegation that the county had changed the comprehensive land use plan specifically to prevent the mining was the primary issue. He said he would like to set a date at that time, and then either party could ask for an extension with good cause.

Groeb said he wanted to set a "hard and firm" trial date when he did so, with very few acceptable reasons for any extensions.

"When I set a date it is pretty much a drop dead date," Groeb said.

Groeb said he would adjourn the case management session for 90 days and then bring everyone back to the table to set a hard and fast date. During further discussion, Safret revealed that he was looking for a two part trial, the first half before the judge alone, then a second part with a jury to decide the extent of the damages. The judge then decided to set the date for the decisions on the initial trial for May 26, 2021, adding that, given the judicial backup, a trial date set then would most likely take place 9-12 months out.

Discussion then moved to the expected duration of the trial. Safret said he did not feel that it would take more than three days, while Theriaque and Wade said they were looking at two or three weeks, as they expected to have multiple expert witnesses. This would require a set-aside of 8-10 days in the judicial calendar, with more days to be added if necessary.

Groeb said he had been on the bench for 11 years and had not even tried this type of case (a Bert Harris Act action) but he felt like it would probably take about 10

days. He said that he had not indication that the courts would be back to normal by the time the trial date would come around, 12 months or more from then, and that, from what he was hearing from the Florida Supreme Court, the trial would probably be held on Zoom. He added that he hoped the trial could be conducted with all the player in the courtroom, in person.

Since the time of the above action, the county and HPS Enterprises has entered into what has become a series of mediation sessions between county representatives, those from HPS and legal representatives from both sides. The purpose of these talks is to attempt to reach an agreement between the two entities and avoid a lengthy, and costly, trial. So far, there have been two such sessions, with a third set for April 2022.

Certain legal sessions, such as those held for mediation, are closed to the public and the press (allowed under Florida law to protect both parties from jurors who might come to the trial, should one be necessary, who may have formed opinions on the matter before being presented with the case and its evidence, as well as for other issues). As such, it is not possible for the Times to obtain or present any information on how, if at all, the sessions are proceeding. Numerous sessions are not uncommon in such a complicated case and are not a sure indication of just how the discussion is proceeding. Such information will be available only when the case is either "settled" through mediation of come to trial and decided there.

So, Union County, we are not "there yet" and no one seems sure of when that destination will be reached, or even exactly what it will be. As of now, the Times has no new information as to when the matter will be settled, one way or the other, or even when it will come to trial (if that is necessary). All we can do is wait and see.



RUSS WADE

Attorney at Law

620 East Main Street
Lake Butler, FL 32054
(Across from Subway Plaza)

386-496-9656

Probate • Family • Wills • Adoption • Litigation • Corporate

LEGALS

Continued from page 7

feet, West 167 feet, South 26.31 feet, West 201 feet to Point of Beginning. Except R/W and except Northerly one-half.
OR 433 PG 59
Denny Thompson
Clerk Of The Circuit Court
Bradford County, Florida
BY: LISA BRANNON
Deputy Clerk
DATED: January 31, 2022

2/3 4tchg 2/24-BCT

NOTICE OF SALE

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to the Florida Self Storage Facility Act Statutes (Section 83.801 – 83.809); Santa Fe Storage of Waldo. Will sell for CASH to the highest bidder on Storageauctions.net for location at 15540 NE HWY 301, Waldo, County of Alachua, Florida; ending at 2:00 PM on Wednesday, the 16th day of February; 2022, and continuing day to day thereafter until sold: the household goods and misc. contents of the following:

0B043 Catie Lee Patton
0B048 Blake Rawls
0B051 Johnathon Nugent
0C034 Philip Salmon
0C039 Michael Kennedy

2/3 2tchg 2/10-BCT

NOTICE OF SALE

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to the Florida Self Storage Facility Act Statutes (Section 83.801 – 83.809); Santa Fe Storage of Starke will sell for cash to the highest bidder on storageauctions.net for location at 1630 North Temple Ave, Starke, County of Bradford, FL, at 2:00 pm on Wednesday, the 16th day of February; 2022 and continuing day to day thereafter until sold: the household goods and misc. contents of the following:

0A010 Deana Dodson- Campbell
0E005 Denny Bowers
0G024 Henrietta Butler
0I022 Denny Bowers
0I041 Jennifer Carey

2/3 2tchg 2/10-BCT

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR TAX DEED

Notice is hereby given that SHIRLEY R PICKFORD REVOCABLE TRUST the holder of the following certificate has filed said certificate for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and names in which it was assessed are as follows:

Certificate Number: 827
Year of Issuance: 2014

Parcel Number: 02843-0-02004
Case Number: 04-2021-TD-0022

Description of Property: SEE ATTACHED LEGAL DESCRIPTION Name in Which Assessed: LOYAL E ALDRIDGE JR & LISA W ALDRIDGE

shall be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and names in which it was assessed are as follows:

Certificate Number: 827
Year of Issuance: 2014

Parcel Number: 02843-0-02004
Case Number: 04-2021-TD-0022

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All of said property being in the County of Bradford, State of Florida. Unless such certificate or certificates shall be redeemed according to law the property described in such certificate or certificates will be sold to the highest bidder at the BRADFORD COUNTY COURTHOUSE, STARKE, FL on the 13th day of April 2022, at 11:00 AM, or any subsequently scheduled sale date.
Denny Thompson,
Clerk Of The Circuit Court
Bradford County, Florida
BY: Kanetra Jenkins
Deputy Clerk
DATED: February 1, 2022,
Legal Description: 02949-0-00312
The West 150 Feet of the South 1/2 of Lot 12, Block C, Blanding Subdivision, as per plat thereof recorded in Plat Book 2, Page 58 OG Public Records of Bradford County, Florida.

2/3 4tchg 2/24-BCT

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR TAX DEED

Notice is hereby given that SHIRLEY R PICKFORD REVOCABLE TRUST the holder of the following certificate has filed said certificate for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and names in which it was assessed are as follows:

Certificate Number: 878
Year of Issuance: 2014

Parcel Number: 03292-0-00000
Case Number: 04-2021-TD-0025

Description of Property: SEE ATTACHED LEGAL DESCRIPTION Name in Which Assessed: TRACEY A COLEMAN & NEIL A COLEMAN

shall be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and names in which it was assessed are as follows:

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Year of Issuance: 2014

Parcel Number: 03292-0-00000
Case Number: 04-2021-TD-0025

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from individual Certified Public Accountants or their firms to provide professional accounting oversight assistance, managerial advice, and budgetary guidance to the City Clerk and city staff presently providing finance, accounting, and budgetary services to the city.
The proposals shall be submitted in a sealed envelope with the words "CPA Financial Services" clearly marked on the outside of the envelope and received by the City Clerk at Starke City Hall located at 209 North Thompson Street, Starke, FL 32091 by noon, 12 pm (EST) on Monday, February 14, 2022. The city assumes no responsibility for responses not properly marked. Interested parties should send an email to: lterry@cityofstarke.org to request a detailed copy of the RFP.

2/10 1TCHG-BCT

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING CONCERNING A SPECIAL EXCEPTION AS PROVIDED FOR IN THE CITY OF STARKE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE

BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD OF THE CITY OF STARKE, FLORIDA, SERVING AS THE BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT OF THE CITY OF STARKE, FLORIDA, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to the City of Starke Land Development Code as amended, hereinafter referred to as the Land Development Code, objections, recommendations and comments concerning the special exception, as described below, will be heard by the Planning and Zoning Board of the City of Starke, Florida, serving as the Board of Adjustment of the City of Starke, Florida, at a public hearing on February 21, 2022 at 6:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard, in the City Commission Meeting Room, City Hall located at 209 North Thompson Street, Starke, Florida.

SE 21-01, an petition by H. Timothy Gills, Esq. of Shuts and Bowen LLP, as agent for Belco Enterprises, to request a special exception be granted as provided for in Section 4.99 of the Land Development Code, to permit a package liquor store within a COMMUNITY COMMERCIAL (B-2) zoning district, in accordance with an petition and site plan filed on November 4, 2021 to be located on property described, as follows:

A parcel of land lying in Section 28, Township 6 South, Range 22 East Bradford County, Florida. Being more particularly described, as follows: Commence at the intersection of the South right-of-way line of State Road 100 (Madison Street) with the West the right-of-way line of Bay Street; thence South 25°40'38" West 462.53 feet, along the West the right-of-way line of said Bay Street to the North right-of-way line of Lafayette Street; thence South 89°01'10" West 152.34 feet, along the North right-of-way line of said Lafayette Street to the Point of Beginning; thence South 89°01'10" West 242.81 feet, along the North right-of-way line of said Lafayette Street to the East right-of-way line of Orange Street; thence North 01°22'50" West 333.45 feet, along the East right-of-way line of said Orange Street; thence North 01°00'16" East 278.73 feet, along the East right-of-way line of said Orange Street; thence North 50°03'29" East 6.56 feet to the South right-of-way line of said State Road 100 (Madison Street), said Southerly boundary being on a curve concave to the South and having a radius of 542.96 feet; thence Easterly, along said Southerly boundary and along the arc of said curve, 85.92 feet, as measured along a chord having a bearing of South 75°56'07" East, to the end or said curve; thence South 71°23'50" East 391.55 feet, along the South right-of-way line of said State Road 100 (Madison Street); thence South 23°00'00" West 508.66 feet to the North right-of-way line of said Lafayette Street and the Point of Beginning. Containing 4.54 acres, more or less.

The public hearing may be continued to one or more future dates. Any interested party shall be advised that the date, time and place of any continuation of the public hearing shall be announced during the public hearing and that no further notice concerning the matter will be published, unless said continuation exceeds six calendar weeks from the date of the above referenced public hearing.

At the aforementioned public hearing, all interested parties may appear to be heard with respect to the amendment. Copies of the petition are available for public inspection at the City of Starke Zoning Department, located at 209 North Thompson Street, Starke, Florida, during regular business hours.

All persons are advised that if they decide to appeal any decisions made at the above referenced public hearing, they will need a record of the proceedings, and that for such purpose they may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

Persons with disabilities requesting reasonable accommodations to participate in this proceeding should contact the Office of the City Clerk at 904.964.5027 or via the Florida Relay Service 800.955.8770 (voice) or 800.955.8771 (TTY) at least 48 hours prior to the date of the public hearing.

2/10 1tchg-BCT

acre) to COMMERCIAL on property described, as follows:

A parcel of land lying in Section 21, Township 6 South, Range 22 East, Bradford County, Florida. Being more particularly described, as follows: Commence at the Southwest corner of the East 1/2 of Block One South, Range 3 West of the Simon J. Temple's Subdivision, as recorded in the Public Records of Bradford County, Florida, for the Point of Beginning; thence South 73°27'00" East 200.00 feet to the Southwest corner of the right-of-way line of Lewis Street; thence North 16°28'59" East 435.00 feet, along the West right-of-way line of said Lewis Street; thence North 73°27'00" West 200.00 feet; thence South 16°28'59" West 435.00 feet to the Point of Beginning. Containing 1.79 acres, more or less.

AND
A parcel of land lying in Section 21, Township 6 South, Range 22 East, Bradford County, Florida. Being more particularly described, as follows: Commence at the intersection of the centerline of the CSX Transportation Railroad and the centerline of Market Road; thence North 72°00'00" West 1,053.20 feet to the West right-of-way line of U.S. Highway 301 (State Road 200); thence South 18°01'20" West 225.00 feet; thence North 72°00'00" West 347.27 feet to the East right-of-way line of Lewis Street and the Point of Beginning; thence South 17°58'50" West 435.03 feet; thence North 72°00'00" West 50.00 feet to the West right-of-way line of said Lewis Street; thence North 17°58'50" East 435.03 feet; thence South 72°00'00" East 50.00 feet to the Point of Beginning. Containing 0.50 acre, more or less. All said lands containing 2.29 acres, more or less.

The public hearing may be continued to one or more future dates. Any interested party shall be advised that the date, time and place of any continuation of the public hearing shall be announced during the public hearing and that no further notice concerning the matter will be published, unless said continuation exceeds six calendar weeks from the date of the above referenced public hearing.

At the aforementioned

7 BHS football players take part in National Signing Day

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer

Seven Bradford High School football players signed letters of intent on National Signing Day (Feb. 2), surpassing the five who signed last year.

“That was always our goal, to get kids into college, to give them this opportunity,” former BHS Head Coach Brian Tomlinson said.

Two signed with Division I FBS schools, with quarterback Amari Jones is taking his talents to FIU, while defensive back Jontez Williams is going to Iowa State University.

Linebacker Sincere Hankerson is going to Division II school Lenoir-Rhyne University (Hickory, North Carolina), while Babson Park’s Webber International University, an NAIA school, is getting three Tornadoes: offensive lineman Nathaniel Bowlan-Smith, linebacker Chris Strong and running back Isaiah Wilcox.

Wide receiver Triavez Hankerson will be attending Butler Community College in El Dorado, Kansas.

“It’s a big accomplishment,” Triavez Hankerson said of seven BHS players signing letters of intent. “Everybody isn’t signing today. Some people don’t get offers, or they aren’t good enough. I’m just thankful I’m one of them.”

Jones said, “It means a lot. We’ve all worked for this.”

Tomlinson, who returned to the school to watch the players sign during a ceremony in the BHS auditorium, said he and his staff made it a priority to change a mindset that was prevalent at the time of his hiring.

“When I got here, the stigma was, ‘No one goes to college from Bradford.’ They can’t say

that anymore,” Tomlinson said. Strong said, “It’s possible. Anything is possible.”

FBS Tornadoes

Dontae Balfour, a 2021 BHS graduate, signed with North Carolina last year. Bradford will add two more players to FBS schools, with Jones going to FIU and Williams going to Iowa State.

Williams will be joining the Big 12’s Cyclones as a defensive back. He recorded 27 tackles (12 solo) and had three interceptions in 2021, while also playing wide receiver and catching 34 passes for 653 yards and four touchdowns.

Iowa State Head Coach Matt Campbell, during a Feb. 2 press conference, said, “We evaluated Jontez’s film late in the recruiting process and were thoroughly impressed with the versatility and competitiveness he displayed, not only on the football field, but also as a basketball player.”

The 5-11, 185-pound DB described getting Iowa State’s offer as “amazing.”

“I’m really excited. I’m ready to get there and work,” Williams said.

Williams said the Iowa State coaches give off a “family vibe.” In describing his visit to Iowa State, he said, “Everything about the school is amazing.”

Seeing how Jack Trice is remembered on campus made an impression on Williams. Trice, for whom the stadium is named, was the only Black player on Iowa State’s 1923 team. The lineman was injured during his first game, which would prove to be his only game. He died several days after the game due to internal bleeding.

Iowa State is the only FBS

school to have a football stadium named after an African-American.

Williams said he suspects the biggest transition for him will be “getting prepared for the college life.”

“I’m just ready to get there and see how it is,” he said. Tomlinson believes Williams has what it takes to make his mark, saying, “He’s going to go and do good things there. They’re getting a tremendous athlete.”

Williams said this opportunity is what he’s worked for, but it’ll still almost be hard to believe when he suits up as a Cyclone for the first time.

“It’s going to feel surreal,” he said. “It’s going to be a dream I’m stepping into, but as reality.”

Playing college ball is the dream of so many. The FIU Panthers are making it come true for Jones, a 6-3, 205-pound quarterback.

“I’ve been dreaming about this since I was a little kid playing football,” Jones said, adding, “It’s hard to put into words how I’m feeling right now, but I’m excited.”

Jones said a couple of other schools were in the mix for his final choice, but FIU just proved to be the best fit for him after he made his visits and talked to his family.

He likes the fact that FIU is “in the heart of Miami,” saying, “Everything in Miami is nice.” What really helped him make his choice, though, was that FIU felt like a place that would feel like home. Like Williams, Jones, too, used the words “family vibe” in describing how he felt upon visiting his future school.

“I felt comfortable down there,” Jones said of his visit. “I didn’t feel like a recruit. I felt



Bradford High School football players who took part in National Signing Day were: (front, l-r) Isaiah Wilcox, Triavez Hankerson, Jontez Williams, (back, l-r) Sincere Hankerson, Chris Strong, Nathaniel Bowlan-Smith and Amari Jones. Photo by Cliff Smelley.

like I was already a part of the program.”

In one season at BHS (after playing the previous year at Valdosta High School in Georgia), Jones completed 148 of 262 passes for 2,287 yards and 19 touchdowns. He had only six interceptions.

Jones also rushed for 371 yards and seven touchdowns on 67 carries.

“When I look at my game, I think I can do it all,” Jones said. “I can run the ball. I can throw it.”

“I’d probably say to get better at the next level, I’ve got to get bigger, stronger and faster. It’s not high school anymore. Everybody’s a grown man. I might be 18 playing with 22- and 23-year-olds.”

Tomlinson said, “He did great things on the field, but I think what FIU is getting is a tremendous leader as well.”

Jones can’t wait to start experiencing life as a college football player.

“I’m ready for it,” he said. “I’m just ready to get out there and get to work.”

Hankerson taking talents to Division II

Sincere Hankerson will be suiting up for the Lenoir-Rhyne Bears. He’s looking forward to doing for them what he did for the Tornadoes as a 6-2, 216-pound linebacker/defensive end.

“I’m going to try to dominate just like I did here,” said Hankerson, who recorded 52 tackles (27 solo) for BHS in 2021 — fourth best on the team.

Hankerson is grateful for the opportunity, saying, “I’d like to thank God for giving me this chance. Without Him, this wouldn’t be possible. I’m

just happy and excited I get to accomplish my dreams.”

Hankerson said he toured the Lenoir-Rhyne campus on Jan. 29. He liked what he saw of the classrooms and said he liked the weight room and cafeteria as well. Plus, he had the chance to eat with the whole coaching staff. More than anything, the school just felt right.

“It felt like home,” Hankerson said.

Hankerson said the school’s coaches told him they like his physicality and his quick reaction times. In assessing what he needs to do to successfully transition to college ball, Hankerson said, “I need to improve my coverage skills and use my hands more.”

Tomlinson said Hankerson has “grown tremendously as a young man.” He expects Hankerson

See SIGN, page 11

KHHS girls are District 4-4A runner-up, earn playoff berth

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer

Keystone Heights High School trailed for the majority of the game and fell behind by 26 points in the third quarter before ultimately losing 58-46 to top-seed Dunnellon in the District 4-4A girls basketball championship game tonight at North Marion High School.

Despite not earning the automatic qualifying berth that comes with winning a district championship, the third-seed Indians (19-5) will advance to the Region 1 playoffs, earning the fourth and last at-large spot. Keystone will play a Region 1 quarterfinal game at Bishop Kenny (22-4) on Thursday, Feb. 10, at 7 p.m.

Bishop Kenny is the number-one seed in the eight-team region, while Keystone is seeded eighth.

In the District 4 championship game, the Indians trimmed a double-digit deficit to nine late in the second quarter when Kiley Channell made a foul-jumper as well as two free throws. Dunnellon (24-3) got a three-pointer from Alecia Larry, while Channell hit another free throw, making the halftime score 32-21 in favor of the Tigers.

Madi Mitzel hit a short jumper for Keystone to start the third quarter, but Dunnellon then scored 17 straight points during a stretch in which the Indians went 0 for 15 from the field and committed eight turnovers.

Cold shooting plagued Keystone much of the night. The Indians made just 5 of 20 field-goal attempts in the opening quarter as Dunnellon was able to build a 10-4 lead.

Keystone Head Coach Jessica Carter said this season’s tendency has been that her team has at least one player who’s knocking down shots, even if others are struggling, but that just wasn’t the case against Dunnellon.

“We had a lot of open shots. We always have one of our girls on. There’s always at least one or two,” Carter said, adding, “The chips just didn’t fall our way.”

Channell and Mitzel finished with 15 and 10 points, respectively. The Indians also got eight points from Dezaray Bright, six points from Lindsay Qualls, four points from Emma Rogel and three points from Yasmin Bryant.

If Keystone wins its Region 1 quarterfinal game against



Keystone’s Madi Mitzel (right) grabs a rebound in front of Dunnellon’s Jada Hayes in the Indians’ 58-46 loss in the District 4-4A championship game. Photos by Cliff Smelley.

Bishop Kenny, it will travel to play a semifinal game against either Paxon or South Walton on Tuesday, Feb. 15, at 7 p.m.

2 wins put Indians in tournament final

As the third seed, the Indians needed to win two games on consecutive nights to reach the District 4 championship game.

First, Keystone defeated

sixth-seed Santa Fe 48-23 in the quarterfinals on Feb. 1. Channell and Rogel scored 11 and nine points, respectively, followed by Bright with seven, Bryant with six, Mitzel and Qualls with five each, Kasey Valentine with three and Jaynell Hill with two.

That put the Indians in the Feb. 2 semifinals against an opponent that has been a stumbling block the past two years. North

See KHHS, page 14



Hope hoops it up for homecoming

Hope Christian Academy celebrated homecoming last week, with its basketball teams playing on Jan. 28. In a close contest, the HCA varsity boys had their 11-game winning streak snapped by Trenton’s Riverside Christian, which defeated the Lions 62-58. Roshad Jackson (foreground, left) goes up for two of Hope’s points, while teammate Kody Griffis (background, far right) looks on. Photos by Virginia Denmark.



Hope Christian’s varsity girls basketball team almost got the win on homecoming, losing 17-15 to Madison’s New Testament Christian. Lydia Morgan (far left) battles for possession of the ball as fellow senior Madison Dibernardinis (far right) looks on.



DUKES LEGAL, P.A.

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Obituaries

Daniel Byrd

JACKSONVILLE Daniel "Dewey" Allen Carl Byrd, 36, of Jacksonville, died on Friday, Feb. 4, 2022. He was born on Aug. 20, 1985 in Jacksonville to Reginald D. and June Rena (Deese) Byrd and grew up in Starke. He was preceded in death by his parents.

Survivors include his son, Parker Allen Byrd; daughter, Peyton Renee Byrd; brothers, Randy Travis (Denise) Byrd of Jacksonville, Jake Warren of Jacksonville, Michael Crawford of Gainesville, Spencer Byrd of Jacksonville, and Reggie Byrd of Mayo; sisters, Danielle Denise (Will) Scaife of Melrose, Paula (Roy) Waters of Jacksonville, Pam Padgett (Grady) of Maxville, and Alexis Warren (Tanner) of Jacksonville; along with numerous nieces and nephews.

Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 12, at Long Branch Baptist Church in Maxville with Pastor Terry Ryan officiating. Interment will follow in Crosby Lake Cemetery in Starke. Visitation with the family will be held one hour to services at the church.

Arrangements are entrusted to the care of Blackburn-Curry Funeral and Cremation, 380 N. Lowder St., Macclenny. 904-259-2806.

Walter Frick

STARKE Walter Jerome Frick, 95, formerly of Starke, passed away Thursday, Dec. 9, 2021 at Haven Hospice E.T. York Care Center in Gainesville.

Memorial services will be on Saturday, Feb. 12 2 p.m. at the DeWitt C. Jones Chapel of Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the American Legion Post 56, 715 W. Edwards Road, Starke, 32091.

Arrangements are by Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home of Starke. 904-964-6200.

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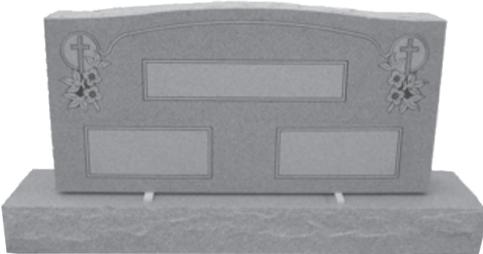
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Thomas Jones

LAKE BUTLER Thomas L. Jones, 92, of Lake Butler, passed away on Thursday, Feb. 3, 2022, at E.T. York Care Center in Gainesville. He was born March 21, 1929, in Utica, Mississippi to the late Robert Jessie and Lottie Mae Matthews Jones. He worked for O'Steen Brothers as a mechanic until his retirement. His favorite pastime was fishing. He also enjoyed gardening and taking trips to the mountains. Most of all, he enjoyed time with his family; especially his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents; his wife, Annie Mae Tetstone Jones; his son, Darryl Jones; 12 brothers; and five sisters.

He is survived by his sons, Ray (Lauri) Jones, Larry (Kim) Jones; Terry Jones, and Tommy Jones; his daughters, Debora Goodman (Terry Lynn) and Dee (Jeff) Gaskill; daughter-in-law, Kelly Jones; brother, Gerald Jones; sisters, Ruth Norman, Mary Smith, Sandra Torres, and Hazel Shivers; grandchildren, Larry Jr., Michelle, Justin, Bobby, Colby, Darren, Matt, Travis, Mason, Kelsey, and Blake; great-grandchildren, Arric, Mecca, Tevin, Landyn, Payton, Bentley, Kevin, Victoria, Axel, and Tyce; and numerous nieces and nephews.

A service to honor him was held on Wednesday, Feb. 9, at Archer-Milton Funeral Home in Lake Butler. He was laid to rest beside his wife at Dedan Cemetery in Brookier.

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

PAID OBITUARY

David Lawson

STARKE David Ewell Lawson, 81, of Starke passed away Thursday, Feb. 3, 2022 at his residence. He was born on Aug. 18, 1940 in Auburndale to the late Marvin L. and Sarah (Welch) Lawson. He was a lifelong resident of Bradford County. He was a lifetime active member of Madison Street Baptist Church where he was a former deacon, Sunday school teacher, and treasurer. Prior to retirement he was the owner/operator of Lawson Paint and Body Shop. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his siblings, Henry Lawson, Pamela Dyal, and Sally Groves.

Survivors are his wife of sixty-two years, Patricia (Cogdill) Lawson of Starke; children, Cindy (Dan) Hildebran of Starke, Lisa (Jason) Sasser of Pace, and Tricia (Johnnie) Clark of Starke; brother, Marvin "Sonny" Lawson of Starke; grandchildren, Hilary (Tony) Arcuri, Tyler (Ashley) Hildebran, Hannah (Kevin) Reddish, Clint Collins, Chelsey Collins, Abbie (Cory) Tucker, John (Laci) Clark, and Karen (David) Hall. Also left are 12 great-grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were held at Madison Street Baptist Church on Monday, Feb. 7. Interment followed at Crosby Lake Cemetery with Rev. Charles Warren and Rev. Richard Cason officiating. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Madison Street Baptist Church Building Fund, 900 W. Madison St., Starke, 32091.

Arrangements are by Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home of Starke 904-964-6200 www.jonesgallagherfh.com

PAID OBITUARY

Carolyn McLeod

BRYCEVILLE Carolyn Carter McLeod of Bryceville, died in the early morning hours, Thursday Jan. 27, 2022, from complications that arose from a surgery the day before. She was 74 when she went home to be with the Lord. She was born in Huntington, West Virginia and grew up in Ohio. She moved to Florida when she was 18. She loved the Lord Jesus, and was a member of the First United Pentecostal Church of Jacksonville. She was preceded in death by her parents, Paul and Vivian Carter of South Point, Ohio.

Survivors include her husband, Elliott McLeod of Bryceville; two daughters, Carolyn Christine Beverly of Bryceville and Michele Shinholser of Raleigh, North Carolina; a brother, Clyde Carter of South Point, Ohio; a sister, Patricia Jordan of Middleburg; three grandchildren, Christina Carrasco of Copperas Cove, Texas, Cody Shinholser and Lance Shinholser of Raleigh, North Carolina; and three great-grandchildren, Aaron, Isaiiah, and Lilyana Carrasco of Copperas Cove, Texas.

The viewing was Wednesday, Feb. 2, at Archer-Milton Funeral Home in Lake Butler. The funeral was held Thursday, Feb. 3 also at Archer-Milton Funeral Home with a small graveside service at Elzey Chapel Cemetery.

Arrangements were entrusted to Archer-Milton Funeral Home, Lake Butler. 386-496-2008. www.ArcherFuneralHome.com

PAID OBITUARY

Jeremy McRannolds

LAKE BUTLER Jeremy James McRannolds, 45, of Lake Butler, passed away on Friday, Jan. 28, 2022, after he lost his fight with COVID19. He was born on Aug. 4, 1976, in Traverse City, Michigan, to Geraldine (Laub) and James McRannolds. After graduating high school, he moved to Florida to be with family. He worked for the Department of Corrections before moving into the auto industry where he specialized in sales. For the past nine years, he worked for the Morgan Group/Roundtree Moore family. He was very active. He enjoyed the outdoors, loved going to the gym, collecting knives, and the Detroit Lions football. He also loved to sit down with a good book, especially Louis L'Amour. He was a member of Faith Baptist Church. He was preceded in death by his sister, Rachel McRannolds Weisenborn; and his maternal grandparents, Gerald and Barbara Laub.

He is survived by his wife of 22 years, Melody McRannolds of Lake Butler; his children, Jacob, Aidan, and Peyton McRannolds all of Lake Butler; and a niece who was more like a daughter, Tiphonie Durham; parents, Jim (Donna) McRannolds of Fernandina Beach, Geraldine (Bill) Gardner of Ft. Pierce, and stepdad, Mark A. (Beth) Hendrickson of Portage, Michigan; siblings, Lindsey McRannolds and Carrie (Joey) Knowles, both of Fernandina Beach, Billy (Shanda) McRannolds of Puyallup, Washington, Hannah (Johnny) Oliver of Fernandina Beach, and Mark W. Hendrickson of Ft. Pierce; brother-in-law, Harry Wiesenborn; and his parents-in-law, Rev. Ralph and Linda Durham; numerous nieces, nephews, and extended family also survive.

A funeral to celebrate his life will be held on Saturday, Feb. 12, at 3 p.m. at Archer-Milton Funeral Home. The family will receive friends for a visitation beginning at 2 p.m. at Archer-Milton Funeral Home, Lake Butler. 386-496-2008. www.ArcherFuneralHome.com

PAID OBITUARY

Roy Miller

STARKE Roy Francis Miller, 81, of Starke, went to his heavenly home on Saturday, Feb. 5, 2022 at Ascension St. Vincent's Clay County with his loving wife by his side. He was born in Rockbridge County, Virginia to the late Melvin Miller and Lula Maybush. He enlisted in the United States Navy as soon as he was of age and graduated high school in the Navy. He proudly retired from the Navy after 25 years of serving his country as a mechanic. In September of 2000, he married his beautiful bride, Elizabeth Dagg, and they spent 21 wonderful years together. He spent most of his life residing in Virginia. However, 12 years ago he and Elizabeth decided to take on a new adventure and relocate to Starke. He became a member of Bayless Highway Baptist Church where he served and worshiped, Jesus Christ. And he joined American Legion Post 56. He had a love for antique cars; and had the privilege to own a variety of them throughout his life. He enjoyed gardening and keeping up with his yard, making sure it always looked nice. More than anything, he loved his family and will be missed by all who knew him. He was preceded in death by his parents.

He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth D. Miller of Starke; daughter, Melody (Podge) Corbin; stepchildren, Kenny Craun of Florida, Paula Craun, Reta (Robert) Crissman, and Marsha (Steve) Grimm all of Virginia; sisters, Darlene (Donald) Propst and Etta Campbell both of Virginia; numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

A memorial Celebration of Life will be held on Thursday, Feb. 10, at 2 p.m. at Archie Tanner Memorial Chapel.

Arrangements are under the care and direction of V. Todd Ferreira Funeral Services and Archie Tanner Memorial Chapel, Starke. 904-964-5757. Visit www.ferreirafuneralservices.com to sign the family's guest book.

PAID OBITUARY

Shirley Moore

STARKE Shirley C. Moore, 84 of Starke, passed away in Gainesville on Friday, Feb. 4, 2022. She was born in Woodbine, Georgia on May 4, 1937 to the late David Francis and Ella Mae "Miller" Cottle. She was a great cook, enjoyed taking trips to the mountains, and attending her 1955 high school class reunions. She was also a longtime member of the First Baptist Church of Starke, where she enjoyed attending Sunday school. She was preceded in death by her husband, Leonard Moore Sr; her parents; brothers, Edgar Cottle, Marion Cottle and Wilton "Buddy" Cottle; and her great-grandson Denlen Conner.

She is survived by her son, Leonard (Beth) Moore of Starke; daughter, Diann (Tommy) Outlaw of Starke; sister, Winifred "Winnie" Drury; grandchildren, Brian Outlaw, Rachel (Michael) Conner, Kelly (Monica) Outlaw, Jessica (James) Feltner, Casey (Denise) Moore, Drew (Kristyn) Moore and Ethan (Brandi) Moore; and 21 great-grandchildren.

Funeral services were held at First Baptist Church of Starke on Tuesday, Feb. 8, with Pastor Roman Alvarez and Pastor Harry Hatcher officiating. A visitation preceded the services. A private burial will take place at Crosby Lake Cemetery.

Arrangements are by Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home, 620 E. Nona St., Starke. www.jonesgallagherfh.com

PAID OBITUARY

Doris Sandberg

STARKE Doris Lee Sandberg, 90, passed away peacefully at her home on Saturday, Jan. 29, 2022. She was born July 4, 1931, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She worked for over 55 years as a scrub nurse. She had a caring heart and thoroughly enjoyed serving her patients. She was married to the love of her life, Jess H. Sandberg Jr., for 72 years until his passing. She was active in the Starke community and in her church, Sante Fe Mennonite Church. She was preceded in death by her husband.

She is survived by her son, Jess Hansen III; her daughters, Marcella (Lonnie) Thomas of Michigan and Janice (Bill) Criss of Waldo; six grandchildren; nine great-children; and one great-great-grandchild.

A service was held on Thursday, Feb. 3, at her church, Sante Fe Mennonite Church. She will be laid to rest next to her husband at the church cemetery.

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

PAID OBITUARY

Mary Stephens

GAINESVILLE Mary Elizabeth Stephens, 78, of Gainesville, passed away peacefully at her residence with her loving family by her side. She was born in Jacksonville on Dec. 13, 1943, to the late Lawrence E. Dugger and Cora Rye Dugger. She was raised in Raiford and graduated from Bradford High School in 1961. Shortly after high school, she married her high school sweetheart, John Cecil Stephens Jr. on April 20, 1962. She was a devoted wife, loving mother and grandmother, who enjoyed being a homemaker. She was a proud military wife and blessed mother who loved tending to her family's needs. She and John moved numerous times; from Italy to Germany, and throughout the United States until settling in Iowa, where they resided for over 20 years. After John's passing, she relocated to Melrose to be closer with her daughter and she has been in Gainesville for the past seven years. She enjoyed traveling, sewing, and dancing; but, most of all, she loved spending time with family and friends and especially enjoyed her sweet grandbabies. She was preceded in death by her parents; her loving husband of 35 years, John Cecil Stephens Jr.; a son, John Cecil Stephens III; and brothers, Leonard Dugger and Richard Dugger.

She is survived by her loving daughter, Kathy (Jason) Castor of Gainesville; sisters, Jean (James) Thomas of Orange Park and Peggy Dugger of Nashville, Tennessee; sisters-in-law, Kathy Dugger of Fleming Island, Emma Dugger of Tallahassee, and Vonda Gayle Stephens of Starke; grandchildren, Brittany Cassatt, Courtney Neuzil, Brittany Castor, Joshua Castor, and Sadie Stephens; along with many great-grandchildren she was blessed with.

A Celebration of Life will be held in the near future.

Arrangements are under the care and direction of V. Todd Ferreira Funeral Services and Archie Tanner Memorial Chapel, Starke. 904-964-5757. Visit www.ferreirafuneralservices.com to sign the family's guest book.

PAID OBITUARY

In Memory

Happy heavenly
birthday, Mom!

Love,

Kelly, Kathy, Christine



Obituaries

SIGN Continued from page 9

to keep working hard, while enjoying the game at the same time.

"Even when times get rough, he's going to have that smile on his face," Tomlinson said.

That smile will probably be even bigger when he steps onto the field for the first time as Lenoir-Rhyne Bear.

"It's going to feel amazing," Hankerson said.

Tornado trio at Webber International

Three of Bradford's college signees won't be total strangers to their soon-to-be college teammates as Nathaniel Bowlan-Smith, Chris Strong and Isaiah Wilcox will all be attending Webber International University in Babson Park, which is approximately 60 miles southwest of Orlando and 70 miles east of Tampa.

"I think that's going to be huge, having three guys down there who'll be able to lean on each other and understand what each one is going through and things like that," Tomlinson said.

Strong said, "It feels good knowing I'm going to know people down there. I'm not going to be alone, really. I'm going to have a good environment. I'm going to be safe. I'm going to have people to trust."

Bowlan-Smith, a 6-3, 245-pound offensive lineman, was interviewed about his signing and profiled in the Jan. 20 issue of the Telegraph-Times-Monitor. Tomlinson said it was fun to watch Bowlan-Smith, who transferred to Bradford his senior season, develop as a player after playing nothing but six-man football at Hope Christian Academy. The fact he's getting a chance to play college after just one year of 11-man football is impressive.

"That says a lot about his work ethic," Tomlinson said. "He had a goal, and he accomplished it."

Strong, a 6-2, 200-pound linebacker, said it's hard to believe he just signed a letter of intent and will soon become a college student-athlete.

"It's like I was just in sixth grade," he said. "It's crazy."

Strong, who recorded 50 tackles (32 solo) in 2021, is thankful for the opportunity, saying, "Not everybody gets this chance. I'm really blessed by the Lord, my family and my people for helping me get this opportunity."

Webber coaches like how fast he gets off the ball and how hard he hits, Strong said. He believes his intensity and drive will be assets at the next level. When asked what he needs to work on, Strong said, "I think my (pass) coverage. I'm going to have to improve in that."

Strong said success also depends upon him staying focused. He's certainly focused now as he's eagerly waiting to become a Webber Warrior.

"I want that time to come," Strong said.

When reflecting upon his time to come, Wilcox, a 5-9, 180-pound running back, said, "It's amazing just to continue my journey after high school." He added, "It's crazy. I'm just thankful."

Wilcox, who rushed for 216 yards and one touchdown on 62 carries in 2021, said Webber was

an attractive option because it's in Florida and approximately two hours from home. He also likes the school's offering of business classes as he intends to major in that field.

Webber coaches like his power and speed, Wilcox said, adding, "I need to get my legs stronger and get a little faster."

So, what's it going to feel like when he gets his first chance to put his skills on display as a Webber Warrior?

"It's going to feel good," Wilcox said.

In talking about Bowlan-Smith, Strong and Wilcox, Tomlinson said, "They're not afraid to work. They'll get dirty. They'll do whatever it takes to get the job done."

Hankerson to join strong juco program

Triavez Hankerson, a 6-4, 187-pound receiver, will be going to El Dorado, Kansas, to become part of a program with quite a history of recent success. Butler Community College is the nation's top junior college program since 1998 in terms of wins, winning percentage, national championships and final national rankings. The Grizzlies won national championships in 1998, 1999, 2010/3, 2007 and 2008 and have been in the championship game nine times since 1998.

Hankerson admitted he was getting discouraged last season by the fact he wasn't getting any offers, but they eventually came. Butler coaches made the trip to Starke to visit with him, which made an impression on Hankerson, who committed a couple of days before National Signing Day.

"That's where I want to be at," he said, adding, "It's just a good feeling to have right now. I'm just ready to get everything started."

Tomlinson said Hankerson, who caught nine passes for 132 yards and two touchdowns last season, has a skill set that could lead to great things in the future.

Ruby Tanner

MILTON Ruby Lee Tanner, 80, of Milton, passed away on Saturday, Jan. 29, 2022, at West Florida Hospital in Pensacola. She was born in Georgia to the late Luther and Ida Koon Sexton. She was raised in Lake City, where she met the love of her life, Archie M. Tanner, after graduating high school. Archie and Ruby were happily married and together they lovingly raised their beautiful daughter, Lucretia. They resided in Lake City for a season until making Starke their forever home in the mid 1970s. She enjoyed tending to her family and all their needs, and was called into a different role when she and Archie established Archie Tanner Funeral Home in 1976. They proudly served Bradford County and the surrounding communities for many years. She was a leader by nature and was able to manage and assist Archie with various funeral home tasks, but she was most passionate about her family, especially her grandson, Ryan and great-grandson, Kaleb. She loved her family dearly and certainly enjoyed precious time with them. She was preceded in death by her parents; her beloved husband of 32 years, Archie M. Tanner, LFD; three brothers, R.V. Sexton, L.M. Sexton, and Phillip Wade Sexton; and two sisters, Mittie Nelson, and Mary Beth Crews.



She is survived by her loving daughter, Lucretia (Howard) Tanner Kistler of Milton; sisters, Shirley (Hugh) Dampier of Lake City, Betty (Rodney) Sistrunk of Fanning Springs, and Charlotte (Donnie) Ammons of Lake City; her grandchildren, Ryan (Brandy Locke) Kistler and Kristen Kistler; and great-grandchildren, Kaleb Kistler, Gaberyll, Ellie, Elijah, Aiden, Justice, Gabby and Silas.

A private graveside Celebration of Life will be held at Memorial Cemetery in Lake City, with Rev. Hugh Dampier officiating.

Arrangements are under the care and direction of V. Todd Ferreira Funeral Services and Archie Tanner Memorial Chapel, Starke, 904-964-5757. Visit www.ferreirafuneralservices.com to sign the family's guest book.

PAID OBITUARY

Doris Thomas

LAWTEY Doris Ann Thomas of Lawtey passed away Wednesday, Feb. 2, 2022 after a brief illness. She was born in Worthington Springs on April 24, 1955. She was a member of Philadelphia Missionary Baptist Church, Rev. Charles L. Green Jr., Pastor. She attended Consolidated High School in Union County and graduated from Tower High School in Decatur, Georgia. She also attended Santa Fe College in Gainesville.



She leaves to cherish her memories: two sons, Quentin (Monica) Thomas of Starke and Jeremy (Tiffany) Thomas of Jacksonville; four grandchildren that she adored, Jada Thomas, Jaleel Thomas, Jeremy Thomas and Jael Thomas.

Memorial services will be held on Saturday, Feb. 12, at 2 p.m. at the Raiford Community Center, Winton St. (Highway 121), Raiford, with Rev. Charles L. Green, Eulogist.

PAID OBITUARY

Jarvis Williams

LAKE BUTLER Jarvis Labarron Williams, 44, was called home on Friday, Jan. 28, 2022. He was a resident of Fort Pierce. Jarvis was a graduate of Union County High School (Class of 1996). He was employed as a truck driver.



He leaves to cherish his precious memories: a daughter, Abriyia Monique Williams; his parents, Geraldine W. Harris, Jake Barron (deceased), Jimmie Williams (deceased), and Elaine Williams Lee; brothers, Arnold Williams, Freddie (Shirley) Harris; sisters, Stephanie (Henry) McDonald, Aurilla Williams; a host of aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins and sorrowing friends; and his companion, Chenethia Williams.

A life celebration will be held 11 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 12 at Victory Christian Center, 705 S.W. Sixth St., Lake Butler, with Rev. Patrick Maxwell, pastor, Apostle Adrian Weeks, eulogist, officiating. The family has requested that the funeral cortege assemble at the church at 10:45 a.m. Public visitation will be held on Friday, Feb. 11, from 4 p.m. until 6 p.m. at J. Hadley Funeral Home, 2030 N. Temple Ave., Starke 904-368-0210. The staff would like to request, that all resolutions be emailed only to jhadleyfh@aol.com. CDC guidelines will be enforced. Everyone must wear a mask.

PAID OBITUARY

Tamara Williams

Tamara Ellerson Williams, 46, of Sumter, South Carolina, died on Sunday, Feb. 6, 2022 at her residence. Born in Ocala, she attended the local schools of Bradford County and graduated from Bradford High School. She was a member of New Bethel Baptist Church in Starke, where she served as the Sunday school secretary and loved singing in the choir.

She is survived by her mother, Rev. Ester B. Kelly; sons, Trent Smith, Montrez Ellerson, and Jeremy Williams; daughter, Gracen Williams; and a host of aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins and many sorrowing friends.

Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 12, at New Bethel Baptist Church, 901 Keller St., Starke with Rev. Abie Williams, presiding, and Rev. Alvin Green, eulogist. Interment will be held at Oddfellow Cemetery in Starke under the direction of Haile Funeral Home Inc. The Repose for friends will be held on Friday, Feb. 11, from 3 p.m. until 5 p.m. at the Carl D. Haile Memorial Chapel/Haile Funeral Home Inc., 802 N. Oak St., Starke, 904-964-7905. Face masks are required for the funeral service and visitation.

PAID OBITUARY

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"Like I told several coaches during the recruiting process, his ceiling is way up there," Tomlinson said. "I just think he's scratched the surface. He's going to do great things."

Hankerson said Butler coaches like his size and speed. Now, he needs to work on getting stronger and even faster, he said.

When he thinks about what it'll feel like the first time he steps onto the field as a college player,

Hankerson said, "I'm going to be a little nervous. Probably after that first play, I'll be good and ready to go."

Tomlinson believes Hankerson will eventually have a first-time experience at another college after playing at Butler.

"In a couple of years, he's going to have another signing day," Tomlinson said. "Somebody's going to get a good one."

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SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 2022 • 9 AM - 3 PM
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This service is **FREE** to residents, and is provided to small businesses for a small fee. Residents can contact Bennie Jackson, Bradford County Solid Waste, at 904-966-6212 (bennie_jackson@bradfordcountyfl.gov) for more information. Businesses can call the Hazardous Waste Collection Center at 352-334-0440 for pricing.

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	• Insecticides	• Pesticides	

Happy Valentine's Day



Pastor Brian Reagan and his wife, Cathryn, have been married since October 1999.

Valentine's Day part of an eventful 23 years for the the Reagans

BY TRACY LEE TATE
Times Editor

Cathryn and Pastor Brian Reagan both have both had interesting and eventful lives both before and after they married.

Cathryn was born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama, growing up in a military family. After high school she worked as a florist and event planner, doing original floral designs. She also was a cheerleader for the local arena football team, the Birmingham Fire, for one and one-half seasons.

Brian grew up on the "eastern plains of Colorado," in a town called Brush. He said the area was all "cornfields and cattle," and he grew up working in the hayfields. He got his calling to the ministry when he was in kindergarten and began to preach at age 12 and attended college to become a minister. He attended Amridge University (formerly Southern Christian University) for his undergraduate studies, then moved on to Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, to earn his Master of Divinity. After that he wandered from his planned path.

"The Lord allowed me what I wanted," he said of his decision to join the United States Marine Corp. "After seeing on a larger scale the incongruity of the people in charge I walked away from the church and joined the military, but then later walked away from that as well. I learned a lesson from all this, however. Everything is corrupt and broken down, you just must do your part where you are."

Brian and Cathryn both ended up living in Texas in the late 1990s. They were both involved in Internet chat rooms during the infancy of social media. He posted a photo of himself, taken in front of the Tower of Terror at Universal Studios, taken by his biological mother (he had been adopted at nine days old). Cathryn was attracted and recognized his military bearing. They began to chat and, four days later, she "set the hook," as he called it. She thanked him for the conversations, saying it was so nice to talk with a "seemingly intelligent" man.

He took exception to the term "seemingly" and fumed about it for several days. Soon after, however, the "hook" worked as he informed her that she was going to be his wife. They continued talking for the next five months, then finally met face-to-face in June 1999. They married in October of the same year.

When the first married, he worked in sales, selling Ford trucks and Lincoln Mercury cars. He said that, at that time, he had no interest in returning to the church. The couple then moved to Colorado and he got a position in the restaurant business.

Cathryn was baptized about a month after they married because he said he "did not want to live in a divided house." They stayed with his grandparents and Brian was quickly told by his grandmother that he "was not doing what he was supposed to do." They prayed about it and his grandmother decided to give him a little nudge in the right direction — she started getting a publication that contained a

"Want Ads" section for churches seeking pastors and kept leaving it around the house where he could see it frequently.

One day Brian picked up the ads and started reading them. He said he found an ad from a church on the West Coast who wanted a pastor who could sing baritone, with a wife who could sing alto. The ad rubbed him the wrong way.

"I told Cathryn that I was going to have to break a promise I had made her and go back to the pulpit," he said. "I knew that was a church that needed help, badly. And just that morning in church the pastor had been preaching about God needing men to stand in the gap (Ezekiel 22:30)."

As it turned out, the couple did not go to the West Coast, but ended up in Missouri. He had began visiting churches within a 12-hour drive of their home and had been talking with a church in Missouri. He decided to visit a church in Ft. Campbell, KY and the people at the Missouri church asked him to stop by on his way home.

When he started home from Kentucky, he got into terrible road construction and traffic in Missouri, with it taking he and Cathryn eight hours to cross a state that would normally take four. Brian decided that they would not make the stop, but they could not find the contact information for the church, so they decided to go to the town and call. When the go to the town they went to the city hall and the police station and found out who they needed to call. It was then they found the book containing the contact information — right on top of the things in the trunk. Brian talked with the people at the church and he and Cathryn moved to Missouri the following Halloween. They stayed 21 months.

After Missouri, Brian served churches in Arkansas (six years), then in Texas (nine years) and, most recently, came to the Lake Butler Church of Christ. The couple will have been here four years in May. Brian said it was interesting he ended up in Lake Butler because 28 years before he had been friends with a man from here. He and Cathryn arrived in May of 2018 and he preached his first sermon the Sunday after Mother's Day.

When asked whether he was in Lake Butler to stay, Brian said it was not in decision.

"I go where God says to go and where I am told is the next duty station," he said. "I can say I have no immediate plans and also that I can honestly say that I like it here and have never seen such a high concentration of nice, kind, giving and loving people than those I have found in Union County."

Cathryn says she is also willing to go where they are called. She said that when she was in her teens, she dated a young man who got the calling and they broke up and that she had not wanted to be a preacher's wife. Today, she said she loves her husband and is at peace with what his calling entails.

"It is not always easy, but I have always trusted in God and also follow where I am led," she said.

See REAGANS, page 15

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KHHS girls soccer team just misses out on playoffs

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer

Keystone Heights High School was the first team out in qualifying for the Region 1-3A girls soccer playoffs, which begin Tuesday, Feb. 8.

The champions of the four districts in Region 1 automatically qualified for the playoffs: P.K. Yonge, which defeated Keystone for the District 4 title, Bolles, Maclay and North Bay Haven Academy. The four highest-ranked teams in the region outside of those champions earned at-large berths. Those went to Wolfson, Providence, Episcopal and Florida High.

Florida High, ranked seventh in the region ahead of eighth-ranked North Bay Haven, earned the last at-large spot ahead of Keystone. The Indians (15-6-3) were the ninth-ranked team in Region 1.

Tigers' Caleb Crawford wrestles way to 6th at Rotary Invitational

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer

Union County High School participated in the Feb. 4-5 Clay Rotary Wrestling Invitational at Clay High School, with Caleb Crawford earning a sixth-place finish in the 160-pound class.

Crawford's first match resulted in him pinning North Bay Haven's Jack Hauck in 54 seconds. He was then pinned in 1:45 by Orange Park's Trevion Sermons, which put him into the consolation bracket.

It was then three straight wins for Crawford. He pinned Bishop Snyder's Joseph Miranda in 2:18 before defeating Episcopal's John Fernandez 6-4. Crawford then pinned Bartram Trail's Aydan Nguyen in 3:34.

The pin over Nguyen set up a rematch with Sermons, with the Orange Park wrestler winning again, this time by an 11-3 major decision. Sermons went on to win the third-place match.

Crawford dropped into the fifth-place match, which was won 4-2 by Fletcher's Josh Dalro.

Rodney Barnett earned three wins for the Tigers in the 145 class. He was pinned in 2:51

by Bartram Trail's Preston Pena before winning three straight. He pinned Riverside's Cedric Livingston in 1:04 and Ponte Vedra's Alexis Valencia in 42 seconds before winning by forfeit over Oakleaf's Gavin Bamber. Barnett was then pinned in 2:57 by Terry Parker's Jeff Brown.

Ethan Shea and Danny Thornton each had two wins in the 138 and 195 classes, respectively. Shea pinned Key West's Shane Levallee in 3:15 before earning another win by forfeit. Thornton pinned Menendez's Charles Hadley in 24 seconds and Bishop Snyder's Matthew Carmona in 1:31.

Ian Halfacre (132 class), Colin Hadlock (170) and Alexander Cortese (182) each pinned an opponent. Halfacre defeated Space Coast's Chris McDonald in three minutes, while Hadlock needed just 29 seconds to pin North Bay Haven's Joseph Cox. Cortese pinned University Christian's Mehki Ellis in 3:24.

BHS boys basketball team defeats Madison 47-44

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer

Four players scored in double figures as the Bradford High School boys basketball team concluded the regular season with a 47-44 win over host Madison County on Feb. 5.

The Tornadoes (10-10) outscored the Cowboys 20-8 in the fourth quarter.

Chalil Cummings scored 13 points, while Amari Jones and Jontez Williams each had 11. Williams added five rebounds, four steals and three assists.

Dae'Jon Shanks scored 10 points and had eight rebounds, five steals and four assists.

Torin Brazell added two points and nine rebounds.

Bradford entered the game off a 61-55 win over visiting North Marion on Feb. 1.

The Tornadoes got 11 points each from Cummings and Robbie Simmons-Godwin, nine points each from Williams and Shayne Davis, six points from Keith Ardley, five points each from Jones and Hunter Crawford, three points from Bernard Nichols and two points from Jametrius Pringle.

Davis led the team in assists with four, while Cummings and Jones each had three.

Cummings, Jones and Simmons-Godwin each grabbed four rebounds.

Bradford, the top-ranked team

in Region 3-1A and the ninth-ranked team overall in Class 1A, was scheduled to play a semifinal game in the District 6 tournament on Wednesday, Feb. 9, at 6 p.m. The Tornadoes, who are the tournament's top seed, were to play either fourth-seed Union County or fifth-seed Fort White.

The tournament, which is being hosted by Bell High School, concludes with the championship game on Friday, Feb. 11, at 7:30 p.m. If the Tornadoes are in that game, they will play second-seed Bell, third-seed Dixie County or sixth-seed Branford.

The champion earns an automatic berth in the Region 3 playoffs.

UCHS boys enter district tourney off 6 straight wins

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer

Three players scored in double figures as the Union County High School boys basketball team concluded the regular season with its sixth straight win, defeating visiting Middleburg 51-30 on Feb. 4.

The Tigers (11-11) played a District 6-1A quarterfinal game this past Tuesday against Fort White. Union and Fort White are the fourth and fifth seeds, respectively, in the tournament, which is being hosted by Bell High School.

If Union defeated Fort White, it went on to play top-seed Bradford in a Wednesday, Feb. 9, semifinal game.

The championship game is scheduled for Friday, Feb. 11, at 7:30 p.m.

In the win over Middleburg, the Tigers got 14 points and eight rebounds from Curran Webb, 12 points and three steals from Quinten Rawls and 10 points and six rebounds from Thomas Williams.

Gavin Jenkins added seven points and five rebounds, while Cole Andersen-Davis, Jay Cohen, Tahj Merriex and Dayviontae Thompson each scored two points.

Union played three games in all last week, which began with a 64-43 win over visiting Keystone Heights on Feb. 1.

The Tigers trailed 17-14 before outscoring Keystone 29-3 in the third quarter.

Jenkins scored 15 points,

while Rawls and Williams had 14 and 13 points, respectively. Union also got eight points from Andersen-Davis, six points from Merriex, four points from Webb and two points each from Cohen and Thompson.

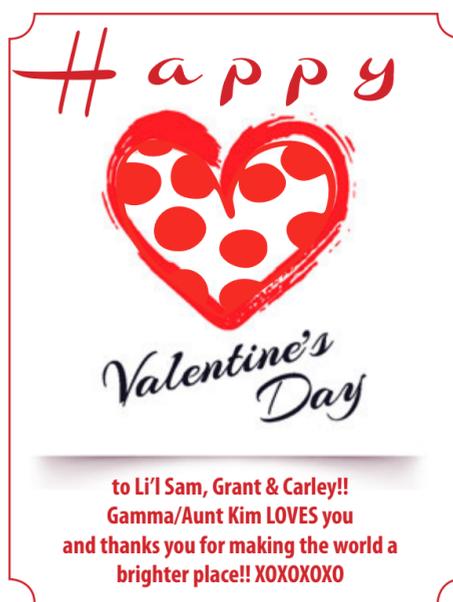
Merriex also recorded seven assists.

Webb grabbed a team-high nine rebounds, while Andersen-Davis and Williams had eight and seven, respectively. Jenkins added five rebounds.

On Feb. 3, the Tigers got 14 points and 11 points from Webb in defeating visiting Interlachen 50-48.

Williams led the team in scoring with 15 points. He and Andersen-Davis, who had four points, each grabbed a team-high six rebounds.

Jenkins scored 12 points, while Rawls added five.



11th annual chili cook-off is set for Feb. 19

Calling all chili chefs to fire up your crockpots, create your best chili recipe and bring it to Kingsley Lake Civic Center Saturday, Feb. 19. There will be cash prizes for first, second and third place, but more importantly, the winners get bragging rights until next year. Contestants, please register by call or text to 404-441-8427, or email klpoaflorida@yahoo.com. Leave your name and a contact phone

number. All KLPOA members and neighborhood residents are invited to dine on these tasty chili creations, salad and dessert. There is no charge, but donations are appreciated. Contestants need to arrive at 5 p.m. with their chili in crockpots. Dinner and socializing will begin at 6 p.m. The Civic Center is located at 6110 Kingsley Lake Drive.

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Congratulations to Class of 2022 Bolles Linebacker, Deklan Dougherty!

Deklan will continue his academic and athletic career this upcoming fall at Butler University in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Deklan signed his Letter of Intent on National Signing Day, along with 31 other student athletes from The Bolles School.

"It has always been my passion to play football at the next level. After my family and I toured the campus and met with the coaching staff, we decided Butler is a great institution for me to excel both academically and athletically," he said.

Deklan is the son of Chris and Tiffany Dougherty and the brother of McKenzie Dougherty.



LEFT: Deklan Dougherty presents his letter of intent to play football for Butler University in Indianapolis, Indiana.

BHS girls fall in title game, miss out on regional playoffs

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer

It was a near miss for a championship and a playoff berth for the Bradford High School girls basketball team, which lost

43-40 to top-seed Fort White in the District 6-1A title game on Feb. 4 in Fort White.

Fort White and District 5 champion Madison County earned the two automatic playoff

berths in Region 3. Lafayette and Hilliard, who were the two highest-ranked teams excluding Fort White and Madison County, earned the region's two at-large berths.

Bradford, which was the second seed in the District 6 tournament, ended up being ranked one spot shy of qualifying for the playoffs. The Tornadoes (9-11) finished fifth in Region 3, with Hilliard, as the fourth-ranked team, taking the last at-large spot.

add points in the latter stages of the second quarter, but Dixie missed two free throws, while Bradford missed three. That sent the teams into halftime with the score still standing at 13-9.

Approximately five minutes elapsed in the third quarter before that score changed, with the Tornadoes' Aniyah Carroll finally ending the drought with a transition basket that put Bradford ahead 15-9.

A free throw by Blye and a

basket by Hankerson allowed the Tornadoes to go into the fourth quarter leading 18-12.

Bradford scored the first five points of the fourth quarter, two coming off a Blye basket after she rebounded a missed free throw.

Hankerson, who led all scorers with 12 points, made three field goals in the final quarter. One gave the Tornadoes a 25-16 lead. Dixie then score five of the next seven points to pull to

within six, but Hankerson then hit a pull-up jumper at the foul line. That was followed by a basket by Carroll to make the score 31-21.

Blye finished with eight points, while Carroll and Ajiyah Jackson each had four. Nichols added three points.

The Tornadoes got 10 rebounds from Blye, while Jackson grabbed seven.

Hankerson had 10 steals.



LEFT: Jada Hankerson (right) drives to the basket between Dixie County's Lacie Medlin and Breanna Boyd in the Tornadoes' 31-23 win over Dixie County in the District 6-1A semifinals. BELOW: Santee Blye (center) takes a shot in traffic against Dixie County. Photos by Cliff Smelley.



BHS defeats Dixie in semifinal round

It certainly wasn't pretty, but the Tornadoes did what they needed to do to put themselves in the District 6 championship game, defeating third-seed Dixie County 31-23 in the Feb. 3 semifinals.

Both teams had their struggles shooting and handling the ball. The game featured more than 40 turnovers, while the Bears connected on only seven of 46 field-goal attempts.

Bradford wasn't much better from the field (13 of 44), but the Tornadoes did make six of nine field-goal attempts in the fourth quarter, getting the crucial points they needed to hang onto their lead and get the win.

The Bears missed their first eight field-goal attempts, but the game was tied 2-2 until Bernaria Nichols made a three-pointer. Bradford never gave up the lead after that.

Each team committed five turnovers at the start of the second quarter, but Santee Blye finally put points on the board with a basket to put the Tornadoes ahead 9-4. Breanna Boyd answered with a basket for the Bears, who later added three points on free throws to make it an 11-9 game.

Before Dixie could get any closer, Bradford's Jada Hankerson scored off her own steal to make it 13-9.

Each team had the chance to

KHHS Continued from page 9

Marion had defeated Keystone in the 2020 and 2021 district tournaments.

This year, Keystone rallied from an 18-8 first-quarter deficit to defeat second-seed North Marion 52-35, prompting Carter to exclaim afterward, "The curse is over!"

"We knew this was going to be a hard game," Carter said. "I mean, they're a great team. A great team. (Stephanie Brown) is a great coach."

The Colts (12-9) scored the game's first six points and took a 12-2 lead on a jumper by E'niah Tensley. When Briana Garcia scored on a runout in the latter stages of the first quarter, the North Marion had built an 18-8 lead. A free throw by the Indians' Channell made the score 18-9 going into the second quarter.

"We were down, but never did you see my girls arguing," Carter said.

Instead, the Indians began outplaying the host team, outscoring the Colts 17-4 in the second quarter. The tone was set early with a steal by Mitzel — the first of 11 turnovers Keystone created in the quarter.

Mitzel and Bright scored the first baskets of the quarter off offensive rebounds. After a basket by North Marion's D'Nhia Johnson, Rogel sank a three-pointer for Keystone, making the score 20-16.

Rogel's basket was the start

of an 8-0 run, with five of those points coming from Mitzel. She scored off a Rogel assist following a steal by Channell and made a free throw to make it a 20-19 game. Mitzel then scored off an offensive rebound to put Keystone up 21-20 with 2:14 remaining in the half.

Johnson put the Colts back up after a pair of free throws, but the Indians took the lead for good on a three-pointer by Qualls. A rebound putback by Rogel sent Keystone into halftime leading 26-22.

The Indians didn't let North Marion get back into the game in the second half, outscoring the Colts 16-6 in the third quarter, which featured a pair of three-pointers by Channell and Rogel.

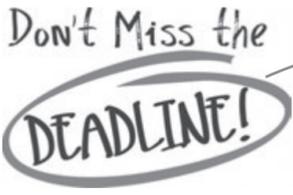
"We do not let up," Carter said. "We just keep going and going."

When it was all said and done, the Indians had a 17-point victory, getting 12 points from Rogel, nine each from Mitzel and Qualls, eight each from Channell and Bright, four from Rachel Roth and two from Yasmin Bryant.



Kiley Channell (left) gets fouled on a drive to the basket.

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website at cityofstarke.org. Applications can be returned in person or by mail to the above address or emailed to Ltery@cityofstarke.org. Closing Date: February 11, 2022. The City of Starke is an EOE/ Drug Free Workplace.

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Rural Counties Days: one voice at the Capitol

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer

Florida's rural counties may be small, but their voices can make a big noise, especially when they're combined into one.

That's the idea District 19 Rep. Bobby Payne had in working with others to create Rural Counties Days, an annual event in which rural-county officials gather in the courtyard of the

Florida State Capitol.

"We decided the best thing we could do for rural communities is bring them together in Tallahassee for an opportunity to meet their legislators and for an opportunity to have an impact here in Tallahassee," Payne said at this year's event, which was held Jan. 26-27.

If this year's event is any indication, Florida's rural counties are buying into Payne's vision. The event grew from three participating counties at its inaugural event in 2019 to nine counties in 2020. After a year's absence due to COVID-19, the 2022 event consisted of 22 counties: Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gadsden, Gilchrist, Glades, Gulf, Hamilton, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Jackson, Levy, Madison, Nassau, Okeechobee, Putnam, Suwannee, Union, Wakulla and Walton.

"I'm humbled by the fact that this event has grown so much," Payne said. "I think your presence shows the need for the opportunity to band together and network together to say that we are rural counties."

Patricia Evans, the president of Capital City Bank's Starke and Keystone Heights branches who also serves on the Rural Counties Days planning committee, said, "Everybody has really understood the power that comes from everyone partnering together and having that one voice, one message, one vision represented at one time."

The event began with a reception the night of Jan. 26, attended by 300 people. Then, on the morning of Jan. 27, each county set up a tent in the Capitol courtyard, offering trinkets, information about their counties or just conversations for anyone who wanted to stop by.

"I love this," said Bradford County Commissioner Diane Andrews, who was witnessing the event for the first time. "This is an opportunity for the people from the rural counties to mingle with the people who are making the laws and who can help us."

Union County Commissioner Ryan Perez was at the event for the first time as well.

"We're smaller communities,

but when we come together, it makes our voice heard, and it makes it a lot louder," Perez said. "Even though we're small, we're strong when we're united."

"It's really great to see this and be a part of it."

Several members of Concerned Citizens of Bradford County attended as well. The group's president, Alica McMillian, said they made the trip to talk to legislators as they seek appropriations to complete the renovation of the R.J.E. gymnasium.

"We're a small county," McMillian said. "Ultimately, it seems the big counties get all the attention and everything, but as my mother used to say, 'The squeaky wheel gets attention.' Even though we're small, we're the squeaky wheel."

"We want to let them know that Bradford County is on the map."

Andrews found the people she met to be receptive. Several gave her their cards and asked how they could be of help to Bradford County. Some even took photos of her ID and promised to call her.

"That means the world. It means that they've heard us," Andrews said. "I feel really good that we accomplished what we came to do, to let them know that we're out there and we need their help."

Perez said, "It's different whenever you're in front of the people who are behind making the decisions. Any chance you get to talk to them in person, to grab them and pull them aside and really advocate for your constituents and their concerns here in Tallahassee is great."

Evans said the event is also a chance for people from the various rural counties to talk to each other, getting advice on what's worked and not worked in their efforts to get support from legislators.

"There was some really good networking going on," Evans said of this year's event.

The event also featured food, with Tallahassee-area Posey's providing 1,000 free fried-fish dinners and the Bradford County tent giving out 1,200 free strawberry shortcakes. Wakulla



Bradford County Commissioner Carolyn Spooner (left) serves up strawberry shortcake to a happy customer.



Bradford County Commissioner Diane Andrews (right) pays a visit to Union County Commissioner Ryan Perez at his county's tent. Photos by Cliff Smelley.



Rep. Bobby Payne recognizes Bradford County mascot "Brad Ford Berry," who proved to be a hit with the crowd, posing for numerous photos. Brad Ford Berry was brought to life by North Florida Regional Chamber of Commerce President/CEO Pam Whittle.

County, a first-time participant, also served up raw oysters, with loud applause coming from that tent periodically in response to someone trying an oyster for the first time.

"We make a real impact by

See RURAL, page 16



Chris Page, the North Florida Regional Chamber of Commerce treasurer, ladles strawberries onto shortcake.

REAGANS

Continued from page 12

Since their two children are grown, the couple spends time not only on church activities, but also in the community. Brian

is the Commander of the Union County American Legion and the President of the Lake Butler Rotary Club. Cathryn is the current second vice-president of the Lake Butler Women's Club, the leader of the local TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly)

chapter and a coordinator with the local SAFE (Stuffed Animals for Emergencies) chapter – a program that provides stuffed animals to law enforcement, fire and rescue personnel as aids to calm children in emergency situations. Both love being

involved in the community and both said they were very happy to be each other's Valentine.



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RURAL

Continued from page 15

"If you serve food, they will come."

As it turned out, the Senate that very day passed a bill designating strawberry shortcake as the state's official dessert.

"Perfect timing," Evans said. "It was meant to be."

The strawberry shortcakes, which were made and delivered by Starke's Downtown Grill, were a big hit, bringing smiles to the faces of so many of the people who stopped by to get the desserts.

"Chris was astounded by how excited everybody was to get the strawberry shortcake," Evans said of Community State Bank of Starke's Chris Page, who helped assemble the desserts. "They were truly excited and grateful."

That wasn't the only form of strawberry related excitement in the Capitol courtyard. Pam Whittle, the president of the North Florida Regional Chamber of Commerce who's also on the Rural Counties Days planning committee, donned the chamber's "Brad Ford Berry" costume, which caused many people to stop in their tracks so they could get a picture taken with the big, smiling berry.

"She was fantastic," Evans said. "That was so much fun to watch."

Having a vision, making it a reality

Payne, in addressing the Capitol courtyard crowd on Jan. 27, related how he had the vision of Rural Counties Days approximately four years ago.

"The reason we started it was we realized that rural counties could have a bigger voice in Tallahassee," Payne said. "We realized you can have a voice and meet your legislators, and that counties and different associations can network together, sharing your opportunities — not to be in competition with each other for appropriations dollars, but to have a bigger voice."

"Thank you for being here and having an impact on Tallahassee today."

Payne credited the event's planning committee — Evans, Whittle, Darryl Register (executive director of the Baker County Chamber of Commerce), Jenny Anderson (Florida Institute of Government) and Mike Rycko (Florida Institute of Government) — as "the engine that's pulled all this together," but District 5 Sen. Jennifer Bradley took the chance to give kudos to Payne.



Rep. Bobby Payne receives strawberries from members of the Bradford County contingent. Pictured (l-r) are Jimmy Crosby, Alica McMillian, Leslie Crosby, Carolyn Spooner, Patricia Evans, Bob Milner, Pam Whittle, Payne, Chris Page, Diane Andrews, Meghan O'Brien, Janice Mortimer and David Kniseley.

"Bobby, you deserve so much credit for this vision to bring all of rural Florida together," Bradley said. "When we get here as a group, it makes our voice louder inside the building. The entire Capitol sees the strength of rural Florida, and they see how we come together."

District 21 Rep. Chuck Clemons thanked Payne for his vision, saying the event is responsible for coalescing rural counties "into a force to be reckoned with legislatively." Clemons said whereas a county like Miami-Dade needs a "Trailways bus" to take all of its representatives and senators to Tallahassee, counties like Dixie and Gilchrist, which are in his district, have one representative and one senator.

"It's very important that we speak with a united voice. I'm really happy that you're here today," Clemons said, adding, "Remember: When you come back next year, bring some friends with you."

The event increasing from three participating counties to nine from 2019 to 2020 was exciting, of course, but Evans said it was threatening to become too overwhelming for the committee members, most of whom have full-time jobs and wear many hats on top of that.

"We contracted North Florida Economic Development Partnership to help us in organizing the event," Evans said. "It was the best money we've ever spent. We were able to go out and find sponsors."

Thanks to sponsors of this year's event, counties had to pay only \$750 to participate as opposed to the \$1,500 they had to pay in the past.

Besides North Florida Economic Development Partnership, this year's sponsors were Enterprise Florida, Charter Communications, North Florida Professional Services, Clay Electric Cooperative Inc., Comcast, The Goodman Company, Florida Rural Economic Development Association, Locklear and Associates, Opportunity Florida, Seminole Electric Cooperative



Patricia Evans (far left) hands out Bradford County strawberry shortcake.

Inc., Apalachee Regional Planning Council, Florida Regional Councils Association and CAS Governmental Services, LLC.

With the support of North Florida Economic Development Sponsorship, Evans had more time to take in the event as opposed to staying busy making sure everyone was where they needed to be and "putting out fires." It was an enjoyable opportunity for someone who was part of the first-ever Rural Counties Days meeting, which consisted solely of Evans, Payne and Joe Pickens, a former Florida representative and current president of St. Johns River State College.

"I was able to stand back and kind of watch and observe,"

Evans said, adding, "It just able to help (Payne) pull off his makes me proud that we've been vision."



Bradford County Superintendent of Schools Will Hartley (left) and Union County Sheriff Brad Whitehead have a chat in the Capitol courtyard.



Union County Commissioners Ryan Perez and Lacey Cannon (background, l-r) chat with a visitor to their tent.



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Starke Mayor Janice Mortimer and members of Concerned Citizens of Bradford County visit with Chris Doolin of the Small County Coalition of Florida. Pictured (l-r) are Mortimer, Glenda Ruise, Sherry Williams, Doolin, Carnell Williams, Alica McMillian and Sandra Demps.



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