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Starke and Lawtey have upcoming votes
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Bradford County Telegraph

USPS 062-700 — Starke, Florida

Thursday, Feb. 20, 2025

146th year, 32nd Issue — \$1

Sentenced for allowing dog to starve to death

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

A 23-year-old Middleburg man was sentenced to three years' probation after pleading to failing to feed a dog tethered to a mobile home, resulting in its death.

Aaron Luke Stephens pleaded to animal cruelty and resisting an officer.

According to an arrest report, Bradford deputies were called to a Lincoln City address after evicted renters of a mobile home refused to leave.



Aaron Stevens and his lawyer, Donald B. Mairs, watch as Assistant State Attorney Ryan King addresses Circuit Judge James M. Colaw.

Still alive but could not move

In the report, Deputy Glen Ward, Jr. wrote that he told the residents they had to leave immediately.

"While they went inside to gather some items," wrote Ward. "I checked the side of the trailer, where I observed a black dog tied to the trailer tongue with a walking leash, severely skinny and in distress. The animal was still alive but could not move."

mobile home.

"Aaron stated he knew the dog was out there but didn't want the dog," wrote Ward in the report. "Aaron stated he tried to feed the dog and did not call for any medical treatment for the dog. Mark Stevens also denied ownership of the dog and knew the dog was outside. James stated he knew the dog was outside and had been in the same place since Saturday. James said he was going to take the dog to the vet today but admitted to not getting the dog medical help in spite of knowing it was in that condition."

The deputy reported that when he and other officers tried to handcuff the three defendants, Aaron Stevens walked away and pulled away when a sergeant tried to restrain him.

Ward wrote that the trio surrendered three additional canines at their residence. He added that McLoon kicked one of the dogs in the side after the white bulldog became aggressive toward an animal control officer.

"All four dogs were taken to Animal Services for evaluations," wrote Ward. "The black dog had to be



"I checked the side of the trailer, where I observed a black dog tied to the trailer tongue with a walking leash, severely skinny and in distress. The animal was still alive but could not move." — Bradford County Deputy Sheriff Cpl. Glen Ward, Jr.

put down by Animal Services due to the dog's condition while on-scene."

Charges of animal cruelty are pending against Mark Stevens and James McLoon. (See related stories.)

See CRUEL, page 7

Saving Florida's springs

This month, Alligator Creek Garden Club will host Ryan Smart, executive director of Florida Springs Council, who will speak on a topic everyone has a stake in: the health of Florida's springs and what we can do about it.

The public is invited to attend Thursday, Feb. 20, at 2 p.m. at the Bradford County Senior Center, located at 1805 N. Temple Ave. (north U.S. 301 in front of the health department). There will be refreshments, a door prize drawing and plant exchange.

For more information, call Tracy Meadows at 904-585-6692 or Pat Caren at 352-339-3673.

Lifeline food giveaway Saturday

Lifeline Ministries will hold a food giveaway on Saturday, Feb. 22, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 325 N. Christian St. in Starke.

Black History service at True Vine

The community is invited to attend True Vine Ministry's Black History Month service, which will take place at 11 a.m. on Sunday, Feb. 23. The service will include renditions, dancing, singing, etc., to commemorate and pay homage to some of the greatest African American leaders and pioneers.

The church is located at 422 N. Saint Clair St. in Starke. All are invited.

County breaks ground on Sampson City fire station housing

BY JENN SAMSEL
Special to the Telegraph

On Feb. 14, construction officially began on the upgraded housing for full-time firefighters at Sampson City's Fire Station 90.

The Bradford County Board of County Commissioners, Sheriff Gordon Smith, and Fire Rescue members gathered with friends and family to commemorate the new facility's groundbreaking.

County Manager Scott Kornegay credited Smith for obtaining the money for the station's upgrade when his office took over fire rescue in 2020.

"It means the world to me," said County Commissioner Diane Andrews of the station's upgrade, "because it's providing safety for the citizens of this area, and to these men and women that do this job, we owe such a deep gratitude because...every time they load in that truck, every time they report to anything, they're putting their own lives on the line."

She continued, "I am so excited



County officials and others celebrate the beginning of construction for Station 90 living quarters: (l-r) Cody Cash, Mark Williams, Sheriff Gordon Smith, Commissioner Chris Dougherty, County Manager Scott Kornegay, Fire Chief Ben Carter, Commissioners Diane Andrews and Carolyn Spooner, BCFR Division Chief Dylan Rodgers, and Fire Marshal Chris Cooksey.

about this project getting done, and it's a nice living quarters for them."

Fire Rescue Chief Ben Carter said, "It is an honor to stand before you all here today as we break ground on what will soon be a permanent

and modern fire station here at the Sampson City Fire Station, in the Sampson City community, Bradford County Fire Rescue Station Number 90. Our firefighters and paramedics have operated out of a mobile home

for years, doing their best with limited space and resources. But today, we take a significant step forward. Thank you all for being here today to celebrate this milestone."

Policy change: School volunteers would be fingerprinted

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
mark@bctelegraph.com

Last week, Bradford County School Board members were informed of a proposed policy change requiring an even higher level of scrutiny for volunteers in their schools.

Operations and Safety Director Jeff Edison presented the revised language during a Feb. 10 workshop, which included the requirement that many school volunteers be fingerprinted as

a part of their background checks.

Minimum screening requirements would continue to require screening the volunteer's name or other identifying information for criminal history or presence on a sexual offender or predator data base.

However, "volunteers who will be working with students without direct supervision from school personnel, whether on or off campus — including during day trips or overnight trips — must meet Level 2 screening

requirements," which are listed in Florida law.

Those screening requirements include fingerprinting for local, statewide and federal criminal history checks as well as checks on sexual offender and predator databases. According to statute, the background investigations must ensure that volunteers have not been arrested for (awaiting final disposition), found guilty of, or entered a guilty or no contest plea to a number of serious

crimes. These include fraud, burglary, theft, arson, battery, abuse, child negligence, elderly exploitation, kidnapping, sex crimes, drug crimes, or any other violent crime, whether resisting arrest, vehicular manslaughter, aggravated assault, etc.

All volunteer athletic coaches will go through Level 2 screening, according to the proposed policy.

See SAFETY, page 2



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SAFETY

Continued from page 1

Responsibility for processing volunteers falls on the district's human resources department, but the cost of fingerprinting will not. Edison recommended the

district not absorb what would be a large cost. Fingerprinting cost is approaching \$90 per person, according to Human Resources Director Aimee Ferguson, and the district has close to 200 volunteers.

Fingerprinting will require forethought on the part of volunteers, as well, since the

checks can take five to seven days on average to be returned.

Ferguson said volunteers are reappraised every year, but the fingerprinting would be good for five years. They are in the process of moving employee and volunteer records to the Agency for Healthcare Administration system, which will unite school districts and other agencies like the Department of Children and Families. The district would be alerted if there is a change in someone's status.

The public hearing on this and other policy changes will take place Monday, March 10, at 5:01 p.m. in the boardroom at the district offices.

Other proposed policy revisions to purchasing and grant administration requirements reflect updates in federal guidelines, with the revisions

drafted by attorneys with the North East Florida Educational Consortium.

Tax-Aide scheduling appointments for free tax assistance for the elderly

Elderly taxpayers can receive free assistance in filing through the AARP Foundation's Tax-Aide program, which will have volunteers working at the Bradford County Public Library. Taxpayers don't need to be AARP members to receive assistance.

Volunteers will begin offering assistance in February, but you can schedule an appointment now by calling 904-863-6047 or filling out a form online at tinyurl.com/starktax.

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

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

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

to complete the individual's tax return.

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

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

COG food distribution

Starke Church of God by Faith and Farm Share's upcoming food distribution is Thursday, Feb. 20, from 10-11:30 a.m. This is a drive-thru distribution. The church is located at 730 Old Lawley Road in Starke. (Distribution times depend on delivery times.)

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SATURDAY 2/22 CAPTAIN AMERICA: BRAVE NEW WORLD- 4:00 & 7:00 PADDINGTON IN PERU- 4:00 & 7:00	SUNDAY 2/23 CAPTAIN AMERICA: BRAVE NEW WORLD- 4:00 & 7:00 PADDINGTON IN PERU- 4:00 & 7:00

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BRADFORD COUNTY TELEGRAPH • LAKE REGION MONITOR • UNION COUNTY TIMES



(L-R) Front row: Savannah Thompson, Cason Forbes (Tiger Battalion Commander), Natalie Piggott (Tiger Battalion Command Sergeant Major and Drill Team Commander), Isabelle Kirsten, Chloe Harris, and Hunter Smith. Middle row: Phoenix Forbes, Lillie Lane, Carli Trent, Adrianna Clarke, Ronni Castleberry, Ayleanna Reeves, and Jamaal Reynolds. Back row: Alexis Wills, Cameron Corcho, Ariel Waters, Lillyan Gaskin, Parker Franck, William Frank, Kaesin Ingram, and Harbor Belot.

UC cadets win events at recent meet

BY CARLI TRENT
Cadet Public Affairs Officer

On Feb. 1, the Union County High School JROTC Drill Team traveled to Matanzas High School in Palm Coast for the first

drill meet of the season.

After weeks of practicing and dedication, our team placed first in the Female Color Guard and Female Individual Exhibition. The team placed second in several

other events, including the Male Mixed-Armed Platoon, Female Armed Squad, Male Mixed-Armed Squad, and Female Unarmed Squad.



Perfect test takers: (l-r) Alexander Kaye, Jacob Brown, Grant Lawson, Julia Zurfluh, Aashna Patel and Amy Prescott. Not pictured: Ka'darius Holley.

These BC students had perfect scores

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
mark@bctelegraph.com

Sherree Alvarez, Bradford School District's director of grants and resources, carried out her favorite task last week in recognizing students who achieved perfect scores on end-of-year exams for the 2023-24 school year.

Each spring, depending on their grade level, students take their final progress monitoring FAST exam in English language arts and math as well as statewide assessments in science and other end-of-course exams.

The seven Bradford students who achieved a perfect score also received special recognition from the Florida Department of Education.

"This is an extraordinary achievement, and we're so proud of these young scholars," Alvarez said.

She read from a letter from Education Commissioner

Manny Diaz Jr.: "I am writing to congratulate you on your exemplary performance in the spring assessments. You achieved a perfect score. I'm very proud of your accomplishment, and I commend you on your hard work to achieve this level of success. I would like to encourage you to strive for academic excellence and inspire those around you to do the same. Your exceptional achievement is an example to others of the success that can be attained through working hard and caring about your education."

The students recognized were Jacob Brown, Ka'darius Holley, Alexander Kaye, Aashna Patel, Grant Lawson, Julia Zurfluh and Amy Prescott.

Jacob had a perfect score on the third grade FAST mathematics assessment.

Cadarius had perfect scores on eighth grade science and English language arts.

Alexander had a perfect score on the sixth grade FAST mathematics assessment. (He received two perfect score certificates last year.)

Aashna had a perfect score on the eighth grade mathematics assessment.

Grant had a perfect score on the civics end-of-course exam.

Julia had a perfect score on the ninth grade English language assessment.

Amy had a perfect score on the eighth grade science assessment during the 2022 school year, but her award was lost in the shuffle. She was recognized along with the students from 2023-24.

In addition to the students, Alvarez recognized the parents and family members who are supporting their education.

"We know the commitment to education starts with them," she said.

Union's Tallman honored

BY TRACY LEE TATE
Special to the Times

On Monday night, Feb. 17, the Union County Board of Commissioners honored a recently retired commissioner for his years of service to the county and the many contributions he made during his 16 years as a commissioner.

Jimmy Tallman has been attending meetings since his retirement – he says it is a habit. His record of attendance at meetings bears this out, as the only meeting he missed during his four terms in service were just prior to his retirement and due to his hospitalization after a serious accident. His only other missed meeting was in November, the exact meeting where commissioners planned to honor him. Everything was tabled – put on hold – until the next meeting, which was shortened by threatening weather bringing icy roads, so it was tabled again. The whole recognition was supposed to be a surprise, and oddly, given Tallman's reaction, it still was, after two months' delay and at least 30 people knowing about it.

Tallman was called to the front by Board Chair Channing Dobbs during the meeting and told that the commission had a plaque for him commemorating his service. The plaque was read and given to Tallman, who then was asked to pose for a picture with the board. Before he was allowed to return to his seat, he heard the reading of a resolution to officially rename the Union County Agricultural Educational Building to the James A. Tallman Agricultural Education Building.

Tallman was instrumental in securing the grant funding to make the construction of the building possible and working through numerous problems encountered in the construction process. He has a history as both a commissioner and as a farmer, rancher and meat processor, of supporting the county's young people and agriculture. The facility houses the UF/IFAS Extension offices, which provide 4-H to county youth, and serves as a home base for the activities for the Union County Livestock Association, which runs the fair activities annually.



Retired Union County Commissioner Jimmy Tallman

Stated in the proclamation, "the Board of County Commissioners finds that it is fitting that the agricultural education center that began as Commissioner Tallman's dream should bear his name."

Tallman was obviously touched by the recognitions and posed again with the board members and Union County 4-H Extension Agent Meagan Daniel for another photo.

Union brush fire risks increasing

BY TRACY LEE TATE
Special to the Times

It is very dry in Union County at present, creating a situation where brush fires are occurring more frequently than usual. As of press time, a burn ban has not been declared for the county but is a definite possibility if the dry conditions persist.

According to figures provided by Union County Fire Department Public Information Officer Mickey Foster, there were 22 brush fires reported in 2024, but already in 2025 there have been 19. These included small brush, garbage, yard waste, fields and other miscellaneous fires.

EMS/Fire Director Toby Witt said that, despite all the rain, the hurricanes that passed through the area recently hurt the situation more than helped it. In addition, the recent frosts

have killed vegetation, which has dried out and become more potential fuel.

"The storms created a lot of debris, all of which has not been cleaned up," Witt said.

The trick to preventing brush fire is not difficult, Witt said. Cleaning up all debris on a property, getting all burns approved by forestry, checking the weather forecast, and postponing the burn if wind is predicted. Fire should be limited to eight feet in diameter; anything larger requires a permit. Fires are required to be at least 25 ft. from the home on the property and 150 ft. away from the neighboring properties. Burn barrels should be used whenever possible. Local restrictions on burning should be determined. Yard waste may be legally burned, but it is illegal to burn household waste and trash.

The greatest key to fire safety is to consult with the Division of

Forestry when planning a burn. For a fire over 8 ft. in diameter, foresters will often access the area and inform the person responsible for the burn on what mitigation will be needed on site should any problem occur.

To help protect your home, gutters should be kept cleaned out and leaves and other yard debris removed. Dead landscaping plants should be removed from the vicinity of the home. Outside water sources should be available, equipped with hoses long enough that any point around the home may be reached with water. Shovels should be kept handy to move debris and smother fires.

For more information about preventing brush fires, check out the Fire Wise page on the Florida Department of Agriculture's website.

Democratic Women Meet Feb. 27

The Democratic Women's Club of the Lakes Area will meet on Thursday, Feb. 27, at 7 p.m. (doors open at 6:30). Co-founder and Director of the Cultural Arts Coalition, and Environmental and Climate Justice Chair of the Alachua County Branch of the NAACP, NKwanda Jah will speak about issues of climate justice. All Democrats are welcome. Meetings are held at the Melrose Center, 309 S.R. 26 in Melrose. For further information call 352-235-4161.

Food distribution at True Vine

A communitywide food

distribution hosted by Farm Share and True Vine Ministry will take place Tuesday, Feb. 25, at 10 a.m. at True Vine Outreach Ministry in Starke.

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Letters

Was it worth it?

Dear Editor:

I know this happened a long time ago. If someone has a different story or just wondered what happened to us, this is it. We were born on 40 acres on Geiger Road. In 1965, our dad, Sumpter Earl "Buster" Geiger, got sick and sold two 10-acre tracts, more or less, on a handshake and let the two people make payments. He passed away right after that. Whether payments were paid to the full amount we have no idea.

So, here's a young mother, whose husband had just passed away, with five young children, ages 6 months to 10 years, wondering what we are going to do. The old lady across the street with a son tricked my mom into giving them our 20 acres and house and took it to the bank and used it as collateral down payment on a loan. We ended up losing our 20 acres and home.

I remember the lady's name and doubt she is still alive.

Maybe the son or someone that he bragged to is alive. Do you ever wonder what happened to the five young kids? Four ended up in an orphanage 200 miles away, and one was adopted.

I'm wondering, what did you use the money for, was it worth stealing 20 acres and a house for? Were you ever worried that you were going to get caught for stealing? Did you marry? Did you tell your wife that you stole 20 acres and a house from a widow who had five small children and had them kicked out?

A few years ago, some of the property went into foreclosure. I called the gentleman and told him that was some of our property from 1965 and I would like to buy it, but we couldn't make a deal. Still wondering to this day, what did you need so bad you had to steal our property and ruin six lives? Why didn't you use your mom's property as collateral and just have left us alone? We were screwed and our lives were ruined.

Sincerely,
Rupert Geiger

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Work in progress wins Yard of the Month

BY GINNY GEIGER AND
BARBARA ANDERSON
Garden Club of the Lakes

You will not find a Yard of the Month sign for this month's winner. However, the pictures in this article will help you understand why.

For several years, Ginny has frequently driven by this yard, which only had a new house and lots of dirt, unplanned greenery, and junk.

Current owner Chris Askew said the best word to describe the yard was "barren". Ginny had enjoyed watching Chris and Kathy Askew build a wooden fence along the side of their property, install a driveway, lay wooden beams along their driveway, put down rocks between the driveway and the fence, plant shrubs along the fence, lay sod on parts of their yard, landscape the very front of their house/porch with rocks, plants and grass, and plant other shrubs around the yard. Building "our little paradise" was their goal.

As Ginny watched with much curiosity, she wondered what they would do next. Then there appeared a large area in the yard between their house and the road. There was a black tarp on the ground bordered by more wooden beams. Now that did it for her. She had to know what they were doing. But she couldn't just walk up, knock on the door and ask them.

So, she thought they could be the Yard of the Month and follow them to see the end product of all their intense labor. But it certainly was not noteworthy



Chris and Kathy Askew love to travel. With that in mind, their plans have to consider their being gone for periods when their yard will have to take care of itself.

for its beauty. Another Garden Club member suggested we use a yard she had found that was a "work in progress" to follow up in a year to see what they did. So that's exactly what we did.

As we have always said, "Behind every yard, no matter what it looks like, there is a family inside with a truly interesting story." The Askews proved us right once again.

Their story began long ago and is most interesting, but we will focus this article on their last three years – the time they have lived in this beautiful home. When a realtor showed them this place, it was built and ready to move in. They immediately fell in love with it and the acre of

land where it is located.

Then the work began. When we used the word "work", they quickly corrected us. They both agreed that this was a hobby and gave them a lot of pleasure. Now remember all that "work" that Ginny saw every time she drove by? Well, Chris had a neat way to describe how they did it – Labor: Chris – 90% to Kathy – 10%; Ideas and design: Kathy 90% to Chris 10%.

Chris's past knowledge of yards, growing, and weather was learned in North Carolina and Idaho, Kathy's in North Dakota. Fast forward to Keystone Heights, Florida. They started by planting things they knew about and were most disappointed

when they all died.

Not only were they not used to the heat, unusual cold, and the rain, but they also had to deal with sugar sand, sand spurs, and rather significant erosion problems. Rocks, drainage, and sod have been their plan of attack. At this point, it seems they are winning, with a few exceptions where the erosion is still winning.

The news is not all bad. In the front yard, a few green plants are still alive, mostly hibiscus. But when we saw their back yard, there were more signs of life. Several varieties of honeysuckle were growing along their back fence. Lavender, calla lilies, and a variety of flowering plants were still green. For several of our Garden Club members, their 35 milkweed plants would be exciting. And for other members, their bee hives would spark interest. Chris and Kathy harvest the honey and give some of it away. We were the lucky recipients of a jar.

What are their plans? To deal with the sugar sand, they are scraping off four to six inches of that stuff and replacing it with dark dirt. Then, in the big area covered with the black tarp, they will plant trees, including crepe myrtles, their favorite: magnolias, and other flowering trees. A large shed is also in the plans.

Chris and Kathy love to travel. They have traveled to all 50 states, 35 of which they have gone together. With that in mind, their plans have to consider their being gone for periods when their yard will have to take care of itself.



For several years, Ginny has frequently driven by this yard, which only had a new house and lots of dirt, unplanned greenery, and junk.



When we saw their backyard, there were more signs of life. Several varieties of honeysuckle were growing along their back fence. Lavender, calla lilies, and a variety of flowering plants were still green.

So, why did we choose this yard as Yard of the Month? We want to encourage you to keep going, no matter how bleak or barren your yard looks. We want you to know there is hope, and we want you to realize that beautiful yards don't happen overnight. They take time, lots of love, and hard work.

What will the Askew's yard look like when we revisit them in a year? Stay tuned.

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

Keystone Heights City Council covers projects and events

BY JENN SAMSEL
Special to the Monitor

The city of Keystone Heights held its second monthly meeting on Monday, Feb. 4. Several items were discussed on the agenda.

First, the Freedom 5K event, a food truck, and a pop-up museum were approved.

The discussion regarding the Airport Authority was focused on the Firm. The Airport Authority is collaborating with the Firm.

Heritage Commission

The Heritage Commission meeting was brief. "We immediately received applications for the empty seats," said Christine Arnold, Chair of the Heritage Commission.

The Commission moved its meetings to Tuesday, as Thursdays have become busy for many people.

Save Our Lakes update

Scott Slater, a Save Our Lakes board member, spoke

briefly about the treatment plant, followed by information on the Lake Geneva Restoration Project and the fishing pier. There was considerable discussion regarding the fishing pier.

The meeting held on January 30 at Trinity Baptist Church was a success, with several hundred residents attending in support of the Lake Geneva Restoration Project.

Slater stated, "We received numerous positive comments and emails after the meeting regarding the presentation content and information provided to the residents."

"DEP has already given their input to the Water Management District, and the consulting firm that we've hired is working with Clay County in drafting the language for that permit, the things that are necessary for that permit to be approved in a timely manner," he said.

They are currently waiting for county and grant funds to complete the project.

According to Slater, once these funds are obtained and secured, they will finalize the draft and submit it to the Department of

Environmental Protection for approval.

Friends of Keystone Heights

In November, the Friends of Keystone Heights will host their second gala, the Mayor's Ball. Last year's event had an incredible turnout.

Deirdre Murphy, a Heritage Commission member and member of the Friends of Keystone Heights, expressed, "We also decided that it would be really nice, even if only temporarily, to have banners at the beach and at the downtown entrance to commemorate the 100th-year celebration."

They will also host a Spring Fling on Saturday, March 29, at the Keystone Heights Airport, which will be open to the public as a family-friendly event. Lastly, there will be a fourth-grade field trip.

Keystone Heights Mayor Nina Rodenroth stated, "The only thing I wanted to add is to be here when we're talking about this, and you all saw how Green Cove Springs has those nice little

flags on their street lights in town for their 150th, for us to look into this 100th celebration for our city for this year, that can be hung on our streets."

2025 Events

Next, Drew Bell, Executive Assistant for Events, discussed the upcoming events planned for 2025 in Keystone.

They have been focusing on building a strong community, which is largely volunteer-based.

The events include a Spring Concert, Spring Fling, a pop-up museum, open mic nights, Bark in the Park, Pro Watercross, a Memorial Day Ceremony, a July 4th celebration, a potential August concert, a Fall Festival, Boo on the Boulevard, a Veterans Breakfast, a Veterans Ceremony, the Mayor's Ball, the Parade of Trees, a Christmas Market, and a Christmas Parade. More details are on the City of Keystone Heights website under the events section.

Heritage Commission Applicants

There were four applicants for the Heritage Commission: Matthew O'Berry, John Silva, Samantha Key, and Kimberly Wills. Matthew O'Berry and John Silva were present at the meeting, each giving their speech.

Ultimately, John Silva and Kimberly Wills were awarded positions on the Heritage Commission.

Cemetery Presentation

Matt Cole delivered an elaborate presentation on why the city should upgrade its cemetery. Transitioning from the current plot system to a digital tracking system would be a much-needed improvement. The new system lets customers choose their plots and view all available options digitally. With a user-friendly interface, customers could visit

the cemetery and quickly locate their chosen spots. Currently, only a physical map is provided, and the custodian ensures that all veterans' plots are adorned with flags and flowers to honor those who lost their lives in war.

He stated, "When I take that map out there, I'll find a plot that looks to appear to be open on the map, and then I have to come back and make sure that that plot wasn't sold back when, as simple as somebody not marking a highlight or something simple like that. I haven't run into too much trouble with that. Still, this system will allow us to upgrade to where I'll be able to go out there with a laptop, show those folks what these, you know, the available plots, give them to the sites, I'll be able to double-check on-site, saving time, and professionalism, is upgraded on there, plus we can't print maps right now."

Currently, they pay an annual license fee of \$750.

He emphasized to the council members how critical it is to ensure that every veteran is recognized and never forgotten, especially during occasions such as Memorial Day or Veterans Day, when flowers are placed on their grave sites.

The council members unanimously agreed to upgrade the system.

ADA Ramp / Fishing Pier

The budget for the new fishing pier has become a hot topic, as it has exceeded the initial estimates. The proposed design is expected to cost \$54,000, excluding materials.

The fishing pier will be constructed using a combination of concrete and wood, ensuring it remains compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act standards.

Some council members expressed a desire not to prioritize ADA compliance; however, others argued that neglecting this issue could lead to higher costs in the future. If the pier were to be redesigned later

or a complaint regarding ADA compliance was filed, the city could face additional expenses or even a lawsuit. Ultimately, most council members agreed that maintaining ADA compliance would provide long-term benefits for the community.

The fishing pier may also include the addition of ADA parking spaces.

They remain hopeful for a completion date by July 4 that aligns with the operational Treatment Plant, Lake Geneva's restoration, and the fishing pier's completion.

There will be a follow-up with the board in March.

Mentor for City Clerk

The City Council is looking for a mentor to help with the city clerk's office. They are considering contacting the Bradford and Palatka clerk offices and proposing Betsy, the secretary of the Northeast Florida League of Cities, as a potential mentor.

Mrs. Silva also mentioned that she sent a request to the Florida Association of City Clerks months ago, asking them to assign a mentor.

Other topics

For the canvassing board, the mayor and the city clerk will each appoint one member, and they are looking for one citizen member and one alternate. Mr. Evan Stanley has been nominated as the citizen representative and the alternate selection will be addressed in the next meeting.

The topic of the golf course was postponed, and more discussion of the course will be held during the March meeting.

Councilman Tony Brown's final meeting will take place in March. Elections for his position are scheduled for April.

Clay County Sheriff's Office Assistant Chief Chad Ricks spoke briefly about two new officers attending the city meetings.

The next meeting will occur on March 3 at 6:00 p.m.

Democrats meet Feb. 24 Lawtey food giveaway

The Bradford County Democratic Party will meet in person on Monday, Feb. 24, at 7 p.m. All registered Democrats are welcome and encouraged to attend. The meeting will be held

at the Capital City Bank conference room, U.S. 301 North in Starke. For further information, please contact bradfordcodec@gmail.com.

A communitywide food distribution hosted by Feeding Northeast Florida and True Vine Ministry will take place Wednesday, Feb. 26, at 9 a.m. at the Philadelphia Baptist Church in Lawtey.

THE ORIGINAL BRADFORD • UNION • CLAY COUNTIES		
REGIONAL CHURCH DIRECTORY		
Supported by Nearby Local Businesses, Services & Merchants who encourage you to		
Worship in the house of the Lord... Somewhere this week!		
JBS JACKSON BUILDING SUPPLY <i>"I am the way, the truth & the life. No one comes to the Father but through me" John 14:6</i> Starke 904-964-6078 Lake Butler 386-496-3079	ROBERT'S INSURANCE EXPERIENCE, SERVICE & GREAT RATES Starke Keystone Heights Middleburg Lake Butler 904.964.7826 352.473.7209 904.282.7665 386.496.3411 www.georgerobertsins.com	Bryan's ACE Hardware Starke 904-964-4642 Melrose 352-475-2400 Keystone Hts 352-473-4006
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Clay Electric Cooperative, Inc. Competitive Rates, non-profit, right here in your community A Teachstone Energy Cooperative Keystone District Office 352-473-4917 • clayelectric.com	After Church on Sunday Come to Powell's Dairy Freeze "Home of the Foot Long Steak" Stop by for Ice Cream on Wednesday Night! US 301 NORTH • STARKE, FL	Come Worship with us STARKE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH Church • Saturday 11:00 a.m. School • Saturday 10:00 a.m. 1649 W. Madison St • Starke, FL
DOUGLAS BATTERY OF STARKE We rebuild starters, alternators, generators. Auto • Marine • Cycle Batteries 407 N. Temple • 964-7911	REGIONAL OUTREACH HERE thousands weekly 904.964.6305 classes@bctelegraph.com	Morgan Road Baptist Church 3784 NW CR 233 Starke Sunday Morning Worship 11am Sunday School 9:45am Sunday Evening Worship 6pm 964-4422 Wednesday Evening 7pm

Clerk decision going to Starke voters

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
mark@bctelegraph.com

Starke's mail ballot referendum on the position of city clerk is moving forward with the first ballots being mailed out on Friday.

Those will be the ballots for uniformed and overseas citizens. Domestic ballots will be mailed beginning next Thursday, Feb. 27. Books close of voter registration March 10.

The election ends at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, April 8. At that time all ballots must be in the supervisor of elections' office to be counted.

There is a single issue on the ballot. Starke voters are being asked if the city clerk position should continue as an elected position as called for in the city charter.

Commissioners have posed the following question:

"Shall the City Charter be amended to remove any reference to the City Clerk and respective

role and powers and allow the City Commission to appoint a Chief Administrative Officer to perform any duties of the former City Clerk position?"

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

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

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

There has also been talk by the commission of a full review to

modernize the charter and reflect changes in how the city operates. Any recommended changes would also be sent to the voters to decide.

Lawtey special election set

Lawtey voters will fill a seat on the city council in a special election on Tuesday, April 1. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Two candidates qualified to run for the seat last month. Kendra Butler Griffin is an educator at Bradford Middle School. Joshua Bell works in student services at the Santa Fe College Andrews Center.

The successful candidate will finish the final year of Councilwoman Emily Hoffman, who resigned last December citing personal circumstances and life changes.



Photos: City of Starke.

Demo makes way for more parking

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
mark@bctelegraph.com

The remaining structure on the former Badcock Furniture building in downtown Starke was demolished Monday.

City commissioners approved the move last August.

The primary retail building was demolished in 2016 to create additional public parking downtown. The city acquired the property several years earlier in a development agreement with Badcock, which needed a utility extension when the business moved south of town. (The business has since closed.)

The remaining building was left and considered for multiple uses including public restrooms, an employee gym and record storage.

After inspection, Starke Chief Administrative Officer Jimmy Crosby (then operations director), said the building wasn't worth the cost



of refurbishment. He told the commission even to serve as a warehouse would require approximately \$350,000. Instead of that investment, staff recommended demolishing the structure to make way for additional parking. The commission agreed, and so the parking lot on the property will be properly finished to better reflect the improved streetscape under the railroad overpass.

Call to lower speed limit opposed

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
mark@bctelegraph.com

Bradford County Commission Chairman Danny Riddick says residents in his district want the speed limit lowered on County Road 18, but not everyone agrees.

In January, Riddick asked commissioners to support his request for the sheriff and county manager to explore lowering the speed limit on C.R. 18 from U.S. 301 to Edith Ellen Estates from 45 mph to 35 mph.

Now that there are sidewalks along the highway, Riddick said residents have asked him about lowering the speed limit for public safety. He said that would be consistent with other highway residential areas with sidewalks. In Speedville, he said, the speed limit is 35 mph.

By the Feb. 4 meeting, the request was receiving pushback from the public and other commissioners. Charles Baker of Hampton spoke, opposing the change and saying the speed limit was 45 mph when the county sought funding to construct sidewalks. If it's unsafe now, it was unsafe then, he said.

Riddick said his interest was based on emails and phone calls from residents.

"There has been quite a few more homes built, and so that's why," he said. "I'm not saying we are, we ain't, but I just asked the sheriff and Mr. Kornegay please look into it and give us some advice."

Baker said more rural roads have even higher speed limits

and no one is getting killed on sidewalks.

"All I'm doing is just what the constituents asked me to do," Riddick said. "We'll do the study, and then however it comes out. Believe me, I'm not looking for a battle with anybody."

Later in the meeting, others weren't comfortable with commission involvement. Commissioner Diane Andrews suggested traffic enforcement over speed limit changes, saying the commission is not the agency to be making those decisions. Commissioner Chris Dougherty said he agreed.

"I think this is a law enforcement issue," he said. "We need to get the sheriff involved, the patrols involved."

Dougherty said there needs to be a deterrent if people are speeding.

Traffic at RaceTrac

Jim DeValerio also had comments about issues at County Road 227 since the RaceTrac travel center opened. He said watching the project develop, he had hoped the intersection would be widened. As it stands, if people trying to turn from 227 on to 301 don't leave room for people turning off of 301 and into the RaceTrac, then traffic backs up onto 301.

"If it's not in your plans, I would ask that it get on your radar, because I think we're growing, and you're going to want the extra space. I don't know how you widen it, or put

a turn lane in, or how you handle that, but I think it would help down the road," DeValerio said.

Bradford Public Works Director Jason Dodds said there are plans to improve the intersection, including widening 227 by 5 feet on each side. That cannot be done until a new cross drain is installed under 227. Stalling things was the developer's change of contractors, but on Feb. 18 Dodds said that work should begin next week. Traffic could be interrupted, but work shouldn't require more than three days to complete.

Also complicating matters was the timing of the traffic signal. The signal was relying on overhead detection since resurfacing work on 301 also milled the traffic loops beneath the highway's surface. The loops will be restored as work continues, Dodds said. In the meantime, adjustments were made with the goal of alleviating congestion.

Protect, serve and save: Overpass would be named for heroes

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
mark@bctelegraph.com

Starke wants to name the railroad overpass on State Road 100 for heroes far and wide.

Heroes Memorial Overpass would honor military veterans, law enforcement, firefighters, paramedics and other emergency responders.

Commissioner Danny Nugent, himself a veteran, brought the idea to the rest of the commission last month after speaking with members of the local American Legion. He was in Washington on business Feb. 4 and could not be present for the approval of the resolution.

The idea was the name the overpass in honor of all veterans and not a single individual. Other commissioners were surprised by the abrupt presentation of the idea on Jan. 21 and commented on the lack of time to consider the request, not that anyone expressed disapproval. Ultimately, through discussion, it was decided the honor belonged

to others as well, including law enforcement, correctional officers and emergency responders.

Mayor Andy Redding suggested the name include the word heroes, and Commissioner Janice Mortimer, also a veteran, suggested Heroes Memorial Overpass, recognizing military and other public safety personnel.

There was some additional discussion about how the inclusive change would be received by veterans, but Mortimer distinguished the line between being open to opinions but not getting stuck trying to appease everyone. Redding said it is the commission's responsibility to do its best for the greatest number of people.

Chief Administrative Officer Jimmy Crosby will take the resolution approved Feb. 4 and work with local legislators and the Florida Department of Transportation to formalize the naming.

Sign up now for flea market

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 230 is holding a community flea market at the post home on March 1 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Each 15-by-15 space can be reserved for \$15. The auxiliary will serve a pancake breakfast as well as lunch. Contact 352-481-4483 for more information. The post home is located at 20370 E. Hawthorne Road (S.R. 20) in Hawthorne.



Alachua County Solid Waste & Resource Recovery

Gus Olmos, P.E. Director
gus@alachuacounty.us
Tel: 352-548-1282

February 12, 2025
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BRADFORD COUNTY TOXIC ROUND-UP EVENT COLLECTS HAZARDOUS WASTE

STARKE, (February 12, 2025) – The Alachua County Household Hazardous Waste Department in partnership with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Bradford County Commission will sponsor a FREE "Toxic Round-Up" collection event to properly dispose of and/or recycle common household waste items that cannot be collected curbside. Residents can bring hazardous waste items to the **Bradford County Courthouse parking lot located at 945 N. Temple Ave. on Saturday, February 22 from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.**

Household hazardous waste can be toxic to the public and pose a threat to our environment if improperly discarded. In 2024, close to 12 TONS of waste (23,431 pounds) was collected and neutralized at the Bradford County event alone. The Alachua County Household Hazardous Waste department processed over 121 TONS of hazardous waste in 2024 from the Toxic Round-Up mobile collection events combined.

A total of nine Toxic Round-Up events are scheduled for 2025 serving residents on the following dates: Gilchrist (2/1), Lafayette (2/8), Bradford (2/22), Baker (3/1), Union (3/8), Dixie (3/15), Columbia (3/29), Putnam (4/12) and Nassau (4/19).

Please use the following as a helpful guideline for items that **will** be accepted:

- Aerosol cans
- Antifreeze
- Automotive Fluids – Brake Fluid, Automatic Transmission Fluid, Lubricants, etc.
- Batteries – Automotive Batteries, Lead-Acid, Ni-Cd, Rechargeable, etc.
- E-Waste – Computers, TVs, Microwaves, Radios, and other Electronic Waste.
- Fluorescent Lamps and Tubes, CFL & LED Bulbs
- Household Cleaners, Degreasers and Solvents
- Fertilizers, Pesticides and Insecticides (Solid or Liquid)
- Paint, Paint Thinner, and Other Waste Paint Related Materials
- Propane Tanks
- Fire Extinguishers
- Non-Controlled Pharmaceuticals (Pills and Liquid) & Over-the-Counter Medications
- Gasoline, Fuels
- Used Oil & Used Oil Filters, Shop Rags & Absorbents
- Flares and Ammunition

5620 NW 120th Lane ■ Gainesville, Florida 32653
Tel: (352) 374-5245 ■ Fax: (352) 337-6244
www.AlachuaCountyHazWaste.us

Galentines: A celebration of friendship on Valentine's Day

BY AMBER J. CRAFT
Special to the Telegraph

For the fourth year in a row, the Bradford County Public Library hosted its much-anticipated Galentines Luncheon on Friday, February 14th. The event, which took place at Tony's Italian Restaurant, has become a staple for women in the community looking to celebrate Valentine's Day in a warm, friendly, and fun atmosphere.

Spearheaded by Kathy Paddock, the library's coordinator of activities, the luncheon offered an opportunity for women to come together, enjoy delicious food, and build lasting friendships.

The Galentines Luncheon originated as a way to provide women with an alternative way to celebrate Valentine's Day. While the holiday is traditionally associated with romance, the luncheon offered a fresh take on the holiday, focusing on friendship and camaraderie instead.

Around 20 attendees filled the eatery. The event featured a specially curated Valentine's menu designed to delight. Specials included chicken carbonara served with heart-shaped pasta, lobster ravioli served with shrimp, prime rib served with garlic mashed potatoes, and seafood pescatore served with a four-ounce lobster tail, mussels, clams, and shrimp.

From starters to dessert, attendees enjoyed meals that were as festive as they were flavorful.

Paddock, who has been the driving force behind the Galentines Luncheon since its inception, is known for her ability to bring people together. As the library's coordinator of activities, she is passionate about creating spaces where people can socialize, connect, and make new friends.

For many attendees, the luncheon has become an annual tradition.

The Galentines Luncheon is open to women of all ages,

and each year, the event draws a diverse crowd. For some attendees, it's an opportunity to reconnect with old friends, while for others, it's a chance to meet new people. Whether they're there for the food, the conversation, or simply to celebrate the day with others, all attendees leave with full hearts and full stomachs.

The spirit of the event goes beyond just Valentine's Day. It's about fostering connections and building a strong sense of community among women.

With its warm and welcoming atmosphere, the Galentines Luncheon has quickly become a cherished event for many in the community. Whether you're a regular or attending for the first time, it's a wonderful way to spend Valentine's Day celebrating friendship and connection.

"I look forward to the Galentines Luncheon every year," said one attendee from last year's event. "It's such a great way to celebrate Valentine's



Foreground (l-r): Kimberly Cohen, Elizabeth Snyder, and Kayla Craft smile for the camera.

Day without the pressure of traditional expectations. Plus, I've made some great friends over the years."

The Galentines Luncheon is just one of many events hosted by the library throughout the year that aims to bring women in the community together. Another popular event is their Friendsgiving Luncheon, held

annually at the Downtown Grill on Thanksgiving. The Friendsgiving event offers a similar opportunity for women to gather and share a meal in the spirit of friendship and community.

These events provide a space for women to relax and enjoy each other's company, whether they're new to town or have

been part of the community for years. It's all about creating opportunities for fun and friendship.

For more information about the Library Galentines Luncheon or other upcoming events, contact the library at 904-368-3911.



At front table (l-r) are Ellie Barger, Lia Reynolds, Caleb Barger, Parent Tia Reynolds, and Sawyer Reynolds.

Library hosts Valentine's Day cardmaking event for homeschoolers

BY AMBER J. CRAFT
Special to the Telegraph

The Bradford County Public Library's new Homeschoolers Imaginarium program is continuing to bring local homeschooling families together, with its latest event on February 12.

Homeschoolers ages 4 to 17 gathered at the West Pratt Street facility to create Valentine's Day cards using a variety of art supplies, including paints, markers, and crayons.

The Imaginarium program, led by Kathy Paddock and Amy Turney, is designed to give local homeschoolers a chance to form friendships and collaborate on creative projects. The program debuted in January, with approximately 22 attendees, and the Valentine's Day event drew a similar crowd.

According to Paddock and Turney, the idea was to create a space where homeschoolers could come together and socialize.

One challenge with homeschooling is the lack of day-to-day interactions with other children that traditional schools provide. The Imaginarium program aims to bridge that gap.

The first event, held in January, was a success. Students participated in arts and crafts while meeting other



Kathy Paddock (left) co-leads the library's Imaginarium program, which is designed to offer local homeschoolers a chance to form friendships and work together on creative projects.

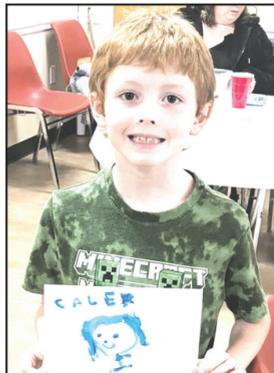
homeschoolers in the community. This second event, centered around making Valentine's Day cards, aimed to continue building connections among homeschool families and foster creativity and camaraderie.

Providing a space where kids feel like they're part of something can also help them build relationships.

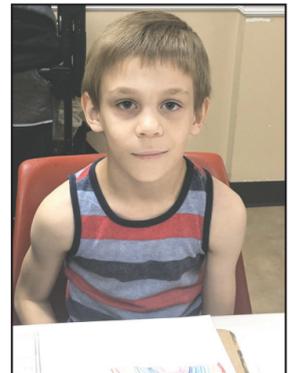
In addition to the Homeschoolers Imaginarium program, the library offers a range of programs for children of all ages. The library's goal is to provide a welcoming environment where young people

can engage in fun activities while meeting new friends. The event series is still in its early stages, but the library hopes to expand it further in the coming months as word spreads throughout the local homeschooling community.

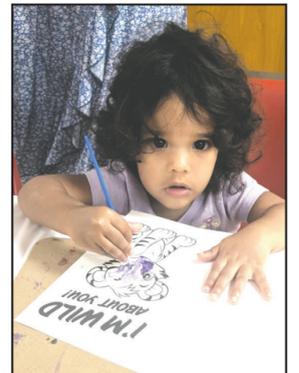
Parents interested in getting involved or learning more about upcoming events can visit the library's program calendar or stop by during library hours. The team encourages more homeschool families to join, as the program offers a unique way for children to engage in both education and social development outside of the home.



Caleb Barger shows off his completed project.



Gabriel Schwarzrock, 7, starts his project.



Sarah Harrison, 2, begins her card.

Valentine's weekend in the Lake Region

BY JENN SAMSEL
Special to the Monitor

Love was in the air this past weekend, with four events occurring in the Keystone Heights and Melrose communities. There was something for everyone celebrating Valentine's Day.

On Friday, February 14th, the Mission of the Dirt Road kicked off their "Valentine's Celebration" at noon, enjoying snacks, drinks, and holiday desserts with community members, making everyone feel loved and special.

The Dirty Pallet hosted "Killer Date Night." Although most attendees were single, the event was open to anyone who wanted to join.

Each participant was tasked with painting a character from Jason or Scream and a love-themed saying beside



Mossman Hall in Melrose hosted a "Valentine's Dinner and Dancing Date Night Fundraiser" event featuring dinner, dancing, and music.

it. Everyone had a great time creating their spooky Valentine's artwork.

Mossman Hall in Melrose hosted a "Valentine's Dinner and Dancing Date Night Fundraiser" event featuring dinner, dancing,

and music. The dinner menu included chicken, pulled pork, brisket, sweet potatoes, coleslaw, mac and cheese, cornbread, and desserts.

See HOLIDAY, page 7

**UNION COUNTY
EVENT
NOTICE!**

TOXIC ROUND-UP

(9 AM - 3 PM)
SAT. MAR. 8, 2025

Union County Road
Solid Waste Department
(by RMC West Unit)

**15285 SW 84TH ST.
LAKE BUTLER, FL 32054**

This service is **FREE** to residents, and is provided to small businesses for a small fee. Residents can contact Lamar Griffis, Union County Solid Waste, at 386-496-2180; or by email at solidwaste@unioncounty-fl.gov for more information. Businesses can call the Hazardous Waste Collection Center at 352-334-0440 for pricing.

**DON'T SEND IT TO THE LANDFILL!
BRING IT TO US.**

ALACHUACOUNTYHAZWASTE.US

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Union County Commission are sponsoring this project to collect, recycle, treat and properly dispose of household hazardous wastes including but not limited to:

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| • Fertilizers | • Gasoline/fuels | • Corrosives | • Solvents |
| • Paints/paint thinners | • Fluorescent lamps | • Propane tanks | • Batteries (all types) |
| • Radiator fluid | • Electronics | • Medications | • Household cleaners |
| • Used oil/lubricants | • TVs/Computers | • Aerosol cans | • Used cooking oil |
| | • Insecticides | • Pesticides | |

Crime

Recent arrests in Bradford, Union and Clay

The following individuals were arrested recently by local law enforcement officers in Bradford, Union or Clay (Keystone Heights-area) counties. All defendants are considered innocent until convicted in a court or until pleading guilty or no contest. Information in this report is from law enforcement agencies and court documents, which are public records.

Bradford

Bohdana Boyd, 35, of Gainesville, was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 8 for DUI.

Justin Braley, 34, of Interlachen, was arrested by FHP troopers on February 9 for driving with a suspended or revoked license.

Pedro Carter, 22, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 14 for battery.

Richard Davis, 49, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 9 for a parole violation.

David Glasgow, 42, was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 8 for DUI.

James Greenwood, 59, of Hampton, was arrested by

Bradford deputies on February 14 for a sex offender violation.

Timber Henley, 24, of Raiford, was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 12 for driving with a suspended or revoked license, possession of drugs, and attaching a tag not assigned.

Ward Mabbitt, 43, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 14 for a probation violation.

Christopher Mitchell, 34, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 9 for an out-of-county warrant.

Sidney Moore, 36, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 10 for a probation violation.

Garces Muerlo, 41, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 11 for stalking.

Joshua Padgett, 32, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 11 for driving with a suspended or revoked license.

Tracy Pruitt, 59, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 8 for battery and resisting an officer.

Fernando Rivera, 27, of Tampa, was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 10 for vehicle theft and driving with a suspended or revoked license.

Jeremy Smith, 44, of Brooker, was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 12 for driving with a suspended or revoked license and attaching a tag not assigned.

Trent Smith, 32, of Jacksonville, was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 11 for a probation violation.

Torsten Troutman, 48, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 14 for a probation violation.

Union

Amber Cox, 36, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on February 15 for an out-of-county warrant.

John Gibbs, 48, of Starke, was arrested by Union deputies on February 15 for battery.

Clay

Monica Bravo, 48, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on February 13 for trespassing.

Brian Fernandez, 44, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on February 12 for vandalism with over \$200 in damage.

Melanie Poirier, 50, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on February 8 for a probation violation.



McLoon

renters refused to leave. There deputies discovered an emaciated dog, which animal control later put down due to advanced stages of starvation. A prosecutor said that McLoon was the most culpable for the animal's death because he previously served prison time for the same charge.

Feces and urine coming out onto the floor

In August 2022, McLoon was sentenced to 22.95 months in prison after pleading to 39 counts of animal cruelty and confinement of animals without sufficient food or water.

According to a Palatka Daily News Report, McLoon was arrested at his Interlachen home after his probation officer visited the house and reported potential animal neglect to the State Attorney's Office.

When Putnam County Animal Control and Department of Corrections officers served a January 2022 arrest warrant on McLoon and Patricia Desrosiers, 57, they found 29 dogs on the property. Two were chained outside at the front of the home, one unable to stand, and was later euthanized because, according to the sheriff's office, had a hematoma abdomen which caused its lungs to not function correctly.

Officers found eight more dogs outside, six of which were in cages covered with dog feces and urine. Two others were tied to a tree. One was emaciated and tangled in its restraints, and the other had a small shelter.

"The dogs located in the back bedroom were covered in feces and had no access to clean water," one deputy reported according to the newspaper. "There were so much feces and urine from the two cages it was coming out onto the floor beside the cages."

The Palatka Daily News added that in 2019, McLoon surrendered nine dogs to Putnam County Animal Control after being accused of animal neglect.

discussed discovery in the case with the defendant.

"As far as it's hard to communicate with me, Your Honor," the lawyer continued, "I'm busy, and what I do for everyone is I give their families... the ability to call and make an appointment with my assistant. My assistant knows that when somebody's family calls and wants to make an appointment, to put it on my calendar, which is what his sister eventually did."

Edwards explained that the defendant's sister told him to request a mental health evaluation for her brother.

"At this point in time," Edwards told the judge, "based on the evaluation in a previous case by a (public defender) that he had in Putnam (County) where he was found competent to stand trial by two different evaluators, and also my obligation not only to this court but to my oath and to the Fourth Bar when it comes to the rules governing a request for competency evaluation, I have declined to do that."

Offer: 3 years in prison

Assistant State Attorney Ryan King told Colaw that his current offer to resolve both the animal cruelty charge and subsequent drug charges is 36 months in prison followed by 24 months of drug offender probation.

Fending off interruptions by McLoon, Colaw told the defendant that since this is only his second case management hearing before the judge and Edwards has met with him four times, "that's pretty involved."

"I don't know that you would probably get that level of contact with a lot of attorneys in that short period of time," the judge continued.

Colaw told McLoon he saw no evidence of ineffective representation. He told the defendant he could hire a private attorney or represent himself; otherwise, Edwards would remain on the case.

The defendant responded that his sister would hire private counsel.

pleaded to animal cruelty and resisting an officer and was sentenced to three years' probation.

The following week, McLoon indicated to Judge James M. Colaw that he intended to take his case to trial.

On February 12, Colaw, based on a report from a forensic and clinical psychologist, ruled that Mark Stevens had been diagnosed with Mild Intellectual Disability and Substance Abuse Disorder.

He ordered the defendant into the custody of the state agency and scheduled a status review of the case on August 27.



Perkins

Argument over beer leads to choking

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

A twenty-year-old Hampton man was sentenced to three years' drug offender probation and 71 days' time served in jail after pleading to choking a household member and scratching the victim's face.

Zachary Wayne Perkins pleaded to battery on a person aged 65 years or older and resisting an officer.

According to an arrest report, the victim told deputies he and the defendant argued over beer in the victim's refrigerator, with the victim telling Perkins he could not have the brew and the defendant taking a beer out of the fridge and popping open the can.

The victim responded by yanking the can away from Perkins, pouring out its contents into the kitchen sink, and telling the defendant to get out of his house.

After the 20-year-old responded by sitting on a couch and saying "no," the victim put Perkins' belongings on the front steps of the home and repeated his demand.

"Zachary then got up off the couch, pushed (the victim) down, scratched his face and then started choking him," wrote Deputy Devin K. Jones in the report. "(The victim) was able to get free from Zachary's grip. Zachary ran out of the house."

Jones reported that he located Perkins in a field near two houses away from the crime scene. The defendant had wrapped himself in a sheet "to make it so deputies could not contain him," according to one officer.

After Jones and another deputy stripped Perkins of the sheet, utilized multiple taser drive stuns between Perkins' shoulder blades, delivered a knee strike to the defendant's left hip, and pried his arms from underneath his body, they handcuffed and detained him.



CRUEL

Continued from page 1

'What I'm reading is atrocious'

During a January 29 hearing, Aaron Stevens's attorney, Donald B. Mairs, and Assistant State Attorney Ryan King presented a plea agreement to Judge James M. Colaw. The agreement specified probation, 87 days in jail with credit for 87 days already served, completion of an anger management class, a mental health evaluation, and 100 hours of community service. The agreement left it up to the judge whether or not to withhold adjudication of guilt.

"What I'm reading is atrocious," Colaw told the lawyers as he viewed court

documents. "Just awful. But I know there are three individuals, so I don't know if the others have involvement too."

King answered that three defendants were charged with animal cruelty and that, in his view, McLoon was the most culpable, having served time in prison for the same offense.

King added that Mark Stevens also has a criminal history, but Aaron Stevens does not.

Mairs told Colaw that his client owned one of the other dogs seized by animal control but not the black dog that died. The lawyer said Aaron Stevens's dog was a red pointer in "good shape" when officers took control of the canines.

The judge sentenced Stevens according to the terms of the plea agreement. He adjudicated Stevens guilty on the misdemeanor resisting charge and withheld adjudication for the

felony animal cruelty charge.

Accused dog killer demands new lawyer

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

A 52-year-old Bradford County man accused of starving a dog to death asked a judge to assign a new public defender to his case.

James McLoon was one of three men arrested on animal cruelty charges on November 4, 2024.

According to an arrest report, Bradford deputies were called to a mobile home off Southeast 44th Avenue, also known as Steel Mill Road, in the Lincoln City neighborhood after evicted

He don't want to work with me

During a February 5 hearing, the defendant told Circuit Judge James M. Colaw that his court-appointed attorney, Eddie Edwards, failed to communicate with him or his sister, preventing him from preparing an adequate defense.

"It took my sister three months to get a hold of him," McLoon told the judge. "And when she did get a hold of him, my sister told me he had an attitude towards her."

"He don't want to work with me," McLoon added. "I just don't want him to be my attorney. I want to take this to trial. He is not the one I want to (go to) trial with."

Edwards told Colaw that he has met with the defendant four times since his arrest on animal cruelty charges. The assistant public defender added that he communicated a plea offer to the state made to his client and

Mark Stevens

Incompetent in dog's starvation

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

One of three men arrested for starving a dog to death on November 4, 2024, was ruled incompetent to defend himself in court and will spend the next six months confined in a facility run by Florida's Agency for Persons with Disabilities.

Mark Anthony Stevens, 21, was arrested along with Aaron Luke Stevens, 23, and James McLoon, 52, after Bradford deputies discovered a neglected dog at their Lincoln City mobile home during an eviction.

Animal Control later euthanized the dog due to advanced stages of starvation.

On January 29, Aaron Stevens



The Mossman Hall serving staff (l-r) Amy Stanley, Carissa Williams, Barb Jennings and Cindy Berry.

HOLIDAY

Continued from page 6

Square dancing followed, and several groups joined to learn this energetic dance style. The band Mason Via and The Sandhill Cranes String Band provided the music. Around 50 people attended, raising approximately \$750.

"Mossman Hall's first post-purchase fundraiser, Valentine's Day Dinner & Dance Date Night, was a huge success," said Amy Stanley, President of Mossman Home Preservation Foundation, Inc. She also thanks the co-chairs and the team.

On Saturday, February 15th, the Keystone Heights Woman's Club hosted a "Paint Your Partner Date Night." Seven couples were



On Feb. 15, the Keystone Heights Woman's Club hosted a "Paint Your Partner Date Night." Seven couples were tasked with painting each other.

tasked with painting each other. The reveal was quite hysterical.

"It was so much fun. I don't think I've laughed this hard in a long time. Great time, great food," said Josh and Cristen

Beck. "It was fun. We had a good time. Good bonding experience," said Deidra and Dale Trimble.

Russ WADE

Attorney at Law

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

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Bradford Elementary's Clark is district's SRE of the Year

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Jo Clark doesn't seek the spotlight, but sometimes your actions can't help but place you in it.

Clark was voted as Bradford Elementary's School-Related Employee of the Year and was announced in December as the Bradford County School District's SRE of the Year.

The honor comes after having worked just two years in the school district.

"I was surprised — honored, humbled and surprised," Clark said.

Being named Employee of the Year certainly wasn't something she was striving for.

"I just want to do the job," she said.

Bradford Elementary Principal Cassie Melvin said how Clark does her job makes her school lucky to have her.

"We are so blessed to have Ms. Jo at Bradford Elementary," Melvin said. "I knew from the moment she came in for an interview that she was going to fit right in. She is one of the most compassionate people I've ever met. There isn't a day that goes by that she isn't greeting

staff members or students with a smile."

Clark is in the perfect place in which to reveal those smiles. Her desk sits in the hallway behind the front office and across from the clinic. It's a high-traffic area that allows her the chance to see so many students and co-workers.

As for her job, it's almost a question of, "What doesn't Clark do?" She assists in the clinic and with attendance and data entry. Melvin said Clark is also the point person for the food program, ensuring that students in need receive food bags weekly.

"Sometimes, I'm at the front desk," Clark said. "It's just wherever they need me."

Melvin said you'll even find Clark mentoring students if the opportunity arises. That's no surprise if you talk to Clark, because for her, the job is all about the students.

"I just love the kids," said Clark, who is no stranger to working with children. She did so for more than 20 years in music ministry at Madison Street Baptist Church, which has been her church home for approximately 30 years.

Perhaps it's appropriate to

mention her church because Clark said Bradford Elementary is the place where God wanted her to be after working in retail for 30 years. In fact, the only place she applied for a job was the Bradford County School District.

"This is where I felt the Lord was leading me," Clark said.

Clark grew up on a farm in Webster in Sumter County. When she married Bo Clark, Starke became her home.

Starke was already Bo's home. People knew who he was and followed his exploits on the football field for Bradford High

School and then the University of Florida.

"I was always 'Bo's wife,'" Clark said.

As someone who prefers to be in the background, that was OK, but she did have to change somewhat due to working in retail.

Clark worked at the Sears Catalog Store in Starke with Harold "Bish" Bishop and Wanda Bishop. She said Wanda told her, "Jo, you have to talk to people."

She must've done OK after

See CLARK, page 13

Highly Rated Local Businesses!

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292 Lafayette St, Starke, FL 32091
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Phillip McDonald Plumbing
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(904) 964-3737



"Quick professional courteous price was very reasonable would recommend!"

Turners Automotive & Transmission
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(386) 339-7543



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(352) 792-4426



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945-B N Temple Ave, Starke, FL 32091
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INDEX

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 40 Notice | 57 For Sale |
| 41 Vehicles Accessories | 58 Building Materials |
| 42 Motor Vehicles | 59 Personal Services |
| 43 Rv's & Campers | 60 Secretarial Services |
| 44 Boats | 61 Scriptures |
| 45 Land for Sale | 62 Vacation/Travel |
| 46 Real Estate Out of Area | 63 Love Lines |
| 47 Commercial Property Rent, Lease, Sell | 64 Business Opportunity |
| 48 Homes for Sale | 65 Help Wanted |
| 49 Mobile Homes for Sale | 66 Investment Opportunity |
| 50 For Rent | 67 Hunting Land for Rent |
| 51 Lost/Found | 68 Rent to Own |
| 52 Animals & Pets | 69 Food Supplements |
| 53 Yard Sales | 70 Money to Lend |
| 54 Keystone Yard Sales | 72 Sporting Goods |
| 55 Wanted | 74 Computers & Computer Accessories |
| 56 Trade or Swap | |

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February 21-23, 2025
8 am to 5 pm

Obituaries

Paul Altstatt

Paul Gene Altstatt, 78, passed away Monday, Feb. 10, 2025, at UF Health Shands in Gainesville, returning home to be with Jesus. Born in Weleetka, Oklahoma on Feb. 22, 1946, to the late Earl E. Altstatt and Irene Leffler Altstatt, Paul was raised in Hanna, Oklahoma, where he attended the local school. He dedicated 20 years of his life to working on the pipeline and an additional 17 years at Winn-Dixie. His passions included reading his Bible, perusing his hometown newspapers, the Indian Journal, watching football, fishing, working with horses, and, most notably, playing the lottery with a lucky streak of wins. Though he spent the majority of his life in Hanna, Oklahoma, surrounded by family and friends, he relocated to Florida in 1993, where he resided until his passing. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his brother, Ronnie Joe Altstatt; and his nephew, David A. Luke.

He is survived by his sister, Rebecca (Joe) Bogard of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; sister-in-law, Anne I. Altstatt (of the late Ronnie Joe) of Middleburg; nephew, Samuel D. (Sheila) Altstatt of Fort McCoy, who also served as his caretaker; nieces, Toni Luke (of the late David A. Luke) of Middleburg and Sandra A. (Jim) Hansen of Orange Park; and nephew, Joseph R. Altstatt of Keystone Heights. In addition, he is survived by 26 great-nephews and 27 great-nieces, all of whom held a special place in his heart.

A graveside service was held at Black Creek Cemetery on Friday, Feb. 14, with Rev. George Palmer officiating.

Arrangements were by Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home of Keystone Heights. 904-964-6200 www.jonesgallagherfh.com. To send flowers or a memorial gift to the family of Mr. Altstatt, please visit our sympathy store.

PAID OBITUARY



Nettie Griffin

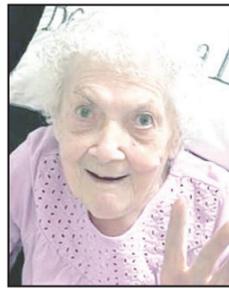
Nettie Ruth Griffin, born Jan. 13, 1930, in Stewart, Mississippi, passed away peacefully from natural causes on Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2025. She was a beloved mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother who filled her family and friends' lives with love, laughter, and ever-ready sass and wit. She was known for her kind heart, her love for Jesus and her passion for spending time with loved ones, traveling, food, puzzles and, of course, her beloved dogs. Throughout her life, she dedicated herself to helping others as a therapy aide at Tacachale, Sunland in her tenure in Florida, where her compassion shone brightly. She was preceded in death by her husband, Wesley Griffin; her parents, Louis and Cordie Breazeale; four sisters; and four brothers.

She leaves behind her cherished family, daughter, Phyllis Griffin; grandsons, Rick (Heather) Henderson, Travis (Jennifer) Henderson; and great-grandchildren, Rachelle (Garry) Campbell, Caroline Henderson, and Jack Henderson; and great-great-grandchildren, Wyatt Campbell and Dalton Campbell. They will hold her memory close and remember her infectious spirit and unwavering support.

A memorial service will be held to celebrate her life on Saturday, July 12, at 11 a.m. at Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home in Starke. The family will receive friends one hour prior to the service at the funeral home. Family and friends are invited to join in honoring a wonderful woman who loved deeply and lived life to the fullest. She will be missed dearly, but her legacy of love will continue to inspire all who knew her. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Big Bend Hospice, 1723 Mahan Center Blvd., Tallahassee, FL 32308.

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

PAID OBITUARY



Elsie Carlton

Elsie Lorene Carlton, a beloved mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, passed away Monday, Feb. 3, 2025, at North Florida Regional Medical Center in Gainesville. Born on Aug. 23, 1937, in Arran, she was the daughter of Hayward and Lois Louise Rose Linzy. Throughout her life, she demonstrated a profound commitment to her family and her work. She dedicated many years of her career as a nurse at the Northeast Florida State Hospital, where her loving but strong-willed personality shone through in her care for others. Her nurturing spirit extended beyond her professional life into her personal passions. She found joy in reading, solving puzzles, cross-stitching, crocheting, and quilting, pursuits that reflected her creativity and dedication. She was preceded in death by her loving husband of 39 years, Ernest D. Carlton Sr.; daughter, Cynthia Thornton; son, Durant Carlton; granddaughter, Karen Carlton; grandson, Randy Carlton; her parents; and five siblings, Tommy Linzy, Betty Dees, Ben Linzy, Kenny Linzy, and Wanda Sapp.

She leaves behind her son, Ricky Carlton; his wife, Dana; along with her grandchildren, Wendy (St. Claire) Sefcik, Melissa (Dail) Carlton, Joey (Carrie) Carlton, and Dustin Norman. She was also a proud great-grandmother to Savannah, Grace, Tucker, Wade, Mason, Bailee, and Robert. Additionally, she is survived by her sister-in-law, Virginia Linzy.

A graveside service will be held on Saturday, Feb. 22, at Sapp Cemetery in Raiford, beginning at 2 p.m. Pastor Randall A. Griffis Sr. to officiate. Family and friends are welcome to gather and pay their respects as they celebrate the remarkable life of Elsie Lorene Carlton.

Her cremation and service are under the care of Archer-Milton Funeral Home. 386-496-2008 www.archerfuneralhome.com

PAID OBITUARY



Daniel Milling

On February 14, 2025, Daniel Irvin Milling, lovingly known as "Superman," left this earthly home and entered into the loving arms of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He passed peacefully at Terrace Health Rehabilitation in Gainesville surrounded by family and the grace of God. He was born Feb. 6, 1937, in Avon Park, to John Ernest and Eunice Irene Milling, who have gone before him. He was also preceded in death by his beloved stepson, Earl Cox. A hardworking man with a heart of gold, he was always ready to lend a helping hand to those in need. In his younger years, he worked in the orange groves of South Florida before dedicating 23 years as a third-class heavy equipment operator for the city of Gainesville until his retirement in 1988. A man of simple joys, he found peace and happiness in the beauty of God's creation. He loved to fish, work on lawnmowers, watch NASCAR, shoot pool, and, most of all, spend precious time with his beloved family and friends. His kind spirit, unwavering strength, and deep love for those around him will forever remain in the hearts of those he touched.

He is survived by his children, who were his greatest pride and joy, Dale Milling of Norwalk, Ohio, Mickel Milling of Slidell, Louisiana, Paul Prentiss of Alachua and Tammy (Jacob) Wilkerson of Worthington Springs. He was also a cherished grandfather to five grandchildren and to nine great-grandchildren. While we mourn his passing, we find comfort in knowing that he is now at peace in the presence of our Lord, rejoicing in eternal life. His faith was his foundation, and we take solace in God's promise: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." – 2 Tim. 4:7

A visitation will be held Thursday, Feb. 20, at 2 p.m., followed by a Celebration of Life service at 2:30 p.m. at Sardis Baptist Church in Worthington Springs. Family and friends are invited to gather and honor his memory, sharing in the love he so freely gave.

Daniel's cremation and memorial is under the care and direction of Archer-Milton Funeral Home. 386-496-2008 www.archerfuneralhome.com

PAID OBITUARY



Charles Eatmon

Charles "Charlie" Eatmon, 66, born Jan. 18, 1959, in Lake City, passed away peacefully at his home on Thursday, Feb. 13, 2025. He grew up in Lake City and attended Columbia County High School, where he graduated in 1978. He then spent 25 years of his career as a correctional officer at RMC, before retiring in April 2008. After retirement, he found joy in farming, riding motorcycles, hunting, and fishing. His enthusiasm for the outdoors was not only personal, but also extended to his community, as he volunteered at Bradford Sportsmen's Farm since 2015. He was preceded in death by his father, George Dewey Eatmon; his mother, Eloise Chambers Williams; brother, Lynn Eatmon; and daughter, Lindsey Eatmon.

He is survived by his loving wife, Wendy Eatmon; daughter, Summer Eatmon; and son, Ryan (Lauren) Lee. He was a proud grandfather to three grandchildren, India Stevens, Jessa Lee, and Colton Lee. He will also be remembered by his three sisters, Carol Eatmon (Vaughn) Smith, Norma (Pat) Naber, and Frankie Eatmon (Mark) Johnson; his three fur babies, Bo, Brandy, and Big Man; and a host of nieces and nephews.

A visitation was held Saturday, Feb. 15, at Archer-Milton Funeral Home in Lake Butler. A graveside service will be held at a later date.

Archer-Milton Funeral Home was honored to once again serve Wendy and the Eatmon family. 386-496-2008 www.archerfuneralhome.com

PAID OBITUARY



Tommy Raulerson

Tommy Hue Raulerson, a loving father, brother, and dedicated service member, was born Sept. 2, 1943, in Lake City. He passed away peacefully from natural causes on Monday, Feb. 10, 2025, surrounded by his cherished memories and the love of his family. He was a man of many passions. He was an avid lover of hunting and fishing and affectionately known as "Tinker Tom" for his ability to repair and build a variety of items. He proudly served in the U.S. Air Force for 22 years, a chapter of his life that shaped his character and commitment. After his military service, he continued to serve his community as a Theresa volunteer firefighter and a warehouse supervisor at Camp Blanding for 16 years, where he was known for his hard work and dedication. He was preceded in death by his loving wife of 50 years, Bonnie Raulerson; his parents, Daniel B. Raulerson and Lucille Raulerson; as well as his brother, Robert Raulerson.

He leaves behind his three devoted daughters, Sonya (Tony) Ringler of Jacksonville, Lee Ann (Eric) Mason of Starke, and Tina Raulerson of Live Oak. He is also survived by six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren, who will cherish their memories together. He will be deeply missed, but his spirit will forever remain in the hearts of those who knew and loved him.

Visitation was held Saturday, Feb. 15, at DeWitt C Jones Chapel of Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home in Starke. Interment will be private at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Wreaths Across America, PO Box 249, Columbia Falls, ME or The American Heart Association, 7751 Baymeadows Road E. #106, Jacksonville, 32256.

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

PAID OBITUARY



Alfredo Rodriguez

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of Alfredo Edil Rodriguez, 87, beloved father of six, grandfather, and cherished friend, who passed away peacefully on Saturday, Jan. 11, 2025. He was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico Sept. 16, 1937, and lived a life filled with dedication, love, and service. A proud Vietnam War veteran, he served his country with honor, and his legacy of bravery and sacrifice will never be forgotten. After returning home, he became a business owner, known for his hard work and integrity. In addition to his career, he was a passionate farmer, finding joy and peace in working the land and cultivating plants, a hobby that brought him much comfort in his later years. Above all, he was a devoted father to his six children, who were the light of his life. His grandchildren were a source of immense pride and joy, and he cherished his role as a grandpa, always ready to share his wisdom, love, and laughter. His passing leaves a void in the hearts of all who knew him, but his spirit will live on through his children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and the many lives he touched throughout his journey. He will be remembered for his strength, his kindness, and his unwavering commitment to those he loved.

He is survived by his children, Waleska, Wanda, Armando, Alfredo, Luis, and Janette; 13 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren; and many other family members and friends.

A memorial service will be held at Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home on Saturday, Feb. 22, at 12 p.m., where family and friends can gather to honor his memory.

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

PAID OBITUARY



Ernest Stewart

Ernest Clayton Stewart, 76, passed away peacefully on Thursday, Feb. 13, 2025, at the VA Hospital in Gainesville. He was born Feb. 2, 1949, in Gainesville, where he would grow into a man whose life was marked by service and dedication, all with a spirit of joy. He exemplified the ideals of duty and honor during his six years of service in the U.S. Army, bravely serving as an air-defense artilleryman in Vietnam. His valor in combat earned him the esteemed Purple Heart. Following his military service, he continued to uphold his commitment to his country by serving a decade with the Florida National Guard.

As a lifetime member of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, he embodied patriotism. After his time in the army, he worked for the Gainesville Cab Company as a mechanic and, later, as a delivery driver for AmeriGas. However, it was in truck driving, a career that spanned over three decades, where he truly found his calling. He was with Liberty Trucking as a local driver and also embarked on long hauls with J.B. Hunt. He traversed the highways, each mile traveled telling stories of his encounters. He was a man of boundless generosity and love, always putting others before himself. His vivacious personality shone brightly; he had an innate ability to make friends wherever he went. People gravitated toward him, drawn by his joyful demeanor and intelligence that reflected in every conversation. He thoroughly enjoyed reading and was an avid fan of the UCHS Tigers and the Florida Gators, wearing his loyalties proudly. He was preceded in death by his parents, Henry and Elsie Stewart; his son, Rocky Stewart; and his siblings, Henry Stewart, Grace Jenkins, and Laura Davis.

He leaves behind his devoted wife of 24 years, Sarah Stewart, whose companionship enriched his life immeasurably. He cherished moments spent with his daughters, Amy (Wayne) Hendricks and Shema Stewart; alongside his 11 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren; as well as friends of his grandchildren he would claim as his own. He is also survived by his four loving sisters, Annette Griffin, Sharon Joines, Diane (John) Robbins, and Judy (Tommy) McCullough.

Services to honor his life were held Wednesday, Feb. 19, at Archer-Milton Funeral Home, with a visitation followed by a funeral service. Immediately following the services, he was laid to rest with military honors at Midway Cemetery. Brother Brain Reagan officiated.

Archer-Milton Funeral Home was honored to serve the Stewart family during this time. 386-496-2008. www.archerfuneralhome.com

PAID OBITUARY



Constance Tanner

Constance "Connie" Renee Tanner, 75, born May 26, 1949, in Fort Myers, passed away Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2025, at Magnolia Ridge Health and Rehab after an extended illness. She began working in banking before transitioning to a full-time housewife, dedicating her life to her loved ones. Her passion for family and commitment to her household were evident to all who knew her. A longstanding member of Olena Baptist Church, she was very active in her church community, embodying the values of friendship and support that she held dear. In her leisure, she found joy in dining out and traveling with her beloved husband, Bart Tanner, with whom she shared an enduring partnership of 55 years. Together they created lasting memories, enjoying adventures that enriched their lives and connections with one another. She was preceded in death by her husband, Bart Tanner; and her parents, Fred and Vivian Thomas.

She is survived by her loving sister, Beverly (Tommy) Greenwood; her sons, Christopher (Donna) Tanner and Randy Tanner; along with six grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

Services to celebrate her life were held Saturday, Feb. 15, with a visitation at Archer-Milton Funeral Home in Lake Butler. This was followed by a graveside service at Philippi Baptist Church Cemetery in Lake City.

It was the pleasure of Archer-Milton Funeral Home to serve the Tanner family once again. 386-496-2008 www.archerfuneralhome.com

PAID OBITUARY



John L. Tennant

John L. Tennant, 92, of Keystone Heights, passed away Friday, Feb. 7, 2025. He was born on Feb. 10, 1932, in Tampa. He grew up in Miami, received his high school degree from Thomas Edison and then graduated from Georgia Tech in 1954 with a degree in civil engineering. He served two years in the Army and was stationed in California and Taiwan (formally Formosa). He was married to his "Georgia Peach," Pat S. Tennant, in 1955, and they celebrated 68 years together before her passing in 2023. "Dad/Papa" was a tinkering engineer and inventor, a constant learner and adventurer. He was known for his stories, loved his wife well, was a good provider and gentle teacher. He volunteered in Methodist churches throughout his life in many ways and loved serving in the clown ministry, AKA "Mr. M. T. Head", and teaching Sunday School.

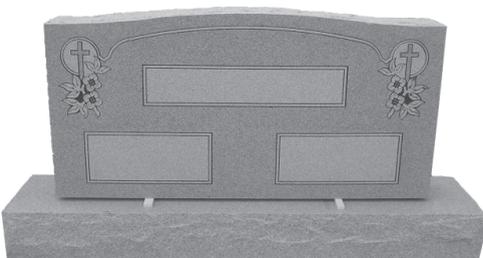
He will be missed by his son, John L. Tennant III; his daughter, Elizabeth T. (David) Bolton; and his son, Thomas G. Tennant. Papa's memory will also be cherished by his granddaughter, Loren B. (Steven) Light; his grandson, Adam B. (Taylor) Bolton; and his great-grandsons, Samuel Light, David Light and Michael Light.

A celebration of life will be held Saturday, Feb. 22, at 11 a.m. at Keystone Heights Methodist Church, 4004 State Road 21, SE, Keystone Heights, 32656. Following the service, a luncheon will be provided. In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests donations to be made to the organization John volunteered for and supported, Mobility Worldwide - Florida - Penny Farms, PET Florida, P.O. Box 919, Penny Farms, FL 32079. Phone: 904-284-5495. <https://mobilityworldwide.org/affiliates/florida-penny-farms/>

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Matthews Museum accepts donation from Rayonier

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

The Eugene L. Matthews Bradford County Historical Museum added to its collection, thanks to a donation of artifacts by Rayonier Historian and Senior Information Technology Manager Scott Golding on Jan. 31.

"That's wonderful," said Chuck Kramer, a museum docent. "He's our new best friend."

Golding presented items that were found on a tract southeast of Starke. One was a piece of salt-glazed pottery believed to date back to the latter half of the 19th century, while two items were pieces of Native American pottery believed to be 500-1,000 years old.

Also included in the donation was a railroad spike that has been attributed to the rail line that carried supplies to Camp Blanding as it was being built, from 1939 through 1941.

"These artifacts connect us to the past and enrich our understanding of this region's history," Golding said. "Rayonier is proud to support the Matthews Historical Museum in preserving and sharing these treasures with the community."

Golding said Rayonier has discovered another batch of artifacts that he'd be happy to donate as well — fragments of items that appear to be from a turpentine camp.

Kramer accepted the items from Golding, with Museum Co-Chairs Jim and Arlette Love, Rayonier Public Relations Manager Jane Wilder and Santa Fe College Vice President for Advancement and Chief Philanthropy Officer Sherry Houston in attendance.

Santa Fe College allows the museum to occupy a portion of the second floor of its Cultural Building at 201 E. Call St. in Starke.

"We always thank Santa Fe College," Kramer said. "They've been wonderful to us. We've been here since the '90s. No rent. They give us the heat, the air-conditioning. They come and vacuum. We like it."



Chuck Kramer (right) shakes hands with Rayonier Historian and Senior Information Technology Manager Scott Golding after Goldman presented a donation of artifacts to the Eugene L. Matthews Bradford County Historical Museum.

Prior to the donation of the artifacts, Kramer gave Golding, Houston and Wilder a tour of the museum. Besides the items on display, the museum features panels that display historical text and photos.

Though the room the museum occupies isn't large, Kramer said, "We're so proud of it."

"Even though it's a small space, we have so much history (here)," Kramer said.

The museum is named after a former owner/publisher of the Bradford County Telegraph. Matthews, who succeeded his father, Eugene S. Matthews, as the head of the newspaper was known for chronicling Bradford County's history. It was said he never threw anything away, believing that everything would have some historical value. Kramer said people would joke with Matthews, asking, "Why don't you open up a museum?"

A centerpiece of the museum is Matthews' Telegraph office, which was disassembled, walked down the street and reassembled based on photographs.

Kramer said he was happy

that Matthews, who passed away Dec. 11, 200, was able to see the museum become a reality. Matthews was there at the museum's opening on March 1, 1997.

"You could see his face beaming," Kramer said.

If you've never visited the museum — or would like to again — it's open (dependent upon docent availability) the second and third Tuesdays of each month and the third Wednesday of each month from 3 p.m. until 5 p.m.

Kramer said the museum could always use more volunteers to serve as docents. Docents greet visitors and ask them if they'd like a guided tour as well as answering any questions visitors have. Docents have a notebook at their disposal that includes the answers to common questions as well as detailed information on each museum display.

If you're interested in being a docent or would like to find out more information about the museum, please call Kramer at 904-364-6977.



Matthew Stafford gave up three hits and struck out 13 in the Tornadoes' 3-0 win over Covenant.

BHS' Stafford strikes out 13 in 3-0 victory

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Avery Burgin drove in two runs, while pitcher Matthew Stafford struck out 13 in the Bradford High School baseball team's 3-0 win over Covenant School of Jacksonville on Feb. 14 in Starke.

Stafford, who allowed only three hits, put the exclamation mark on the Tornadoes' first win by striking out three straight after he hit the leadoff batter in the top of the seventh.

Bradford (1-1) had two outs with no one on in the bottom of the first when Ryder Thompson hit a double. Cannon Sapp, with a 2-1 count, took two straight balls to walk and keep the inning going. After Thompson advanced to third on a wild pitch, Burgin drove the second pitch he saw into center field, scoring both runners.

The Tornadoes threatened to score in the second. Stafford walked with one out and no one on. Kyler Hall entered as a courtesy runner, stealing second and, after Bradford's second out, advancing to third on a wild pitch. A fly out ended the inning.

Covenant had a runner in scoring position in the third when Ryne Fennel hit a one-out single and then stole second. Stafford struck out two straight to leave him stranded.

See BHS, page 12

KHHS and UCHS girls lifters finish in top 10 at Class 1A state meet

A total of 8 from Bradford, Keystone and Union compete at the Feb. 15 event

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Keystone Heights High School's Chloe Still and Union County's Riley Gibson and Taley Smith missed out on earning medals, but they placed in the top 10 at the Feb. 15 Class 1A girls weightlifting state finals in Lakeland.

Still competed in the 139-pound class of the traditional event, finishing eighth out of 20 with a 315-pound total. She went 3 for 3 on all of her bench-press attempts, with her best total being 165. Still missed only one of her clean-and-jerk attempts, with her best total being 150.

It was a 35-pound improvement (15 in the clean and jerk and 20 in the bench) on her overall total from last year's state finals, in which she placed 14th, competing in the same weight class.

Gibson placed ninth out of 20 in the 119 class in the traditional event with a 255 total, which was a 35-pound improvement from last year. She was successful on all three clean-and-jerk attempts, with her best total being 120. Gibson missed only one bench-press attempt and had a best total of 135. If she had been successful on her attempt at 140, she would've placed seventh.

At last year's state meet, Gibson competed in the same weight class and was 19th with a 220 overall total, improving her clean and jerk by 15 pounds and her bench press by 20 pounds.

Smith, who was making her first appearance at state, placed ninth out of 18 in the 169 class in the traditional event with an overall total of 310 (150 clean and jerk, 160 bench press).

The top six in each weight class received medals.

Union's Alexia Cyr was making her second straight appearance at state. She placed 12th out of 20 in the 139 class in the traditional event with a 295 total (140, 155). Like Gibson, she was successful on all three of her clean-and-jerk attempts and missed only one bench attempt.

Cyr, who competed in the 169 class last year, improved both her clean and jerk and bench press by 5 pounds at the 2024 state meet.

The traditional event also included Bradford's Timya Ray, Keystone's Ava Herman and Union's Briana Haight. Haight had a 300 total (135, 165) in the 169 class, while Ray and Herman had totals of 315 and 310, respectively, in the unlimited class. Ray had a 150 clean and jerk and 165 bench, while Herman's clean-and-jerk and bench totals were 150 and 160, respectively.

Keystone's Ashlyn Brown competed in the 154 class in the Olympic event. She finished with a 250 total that consisted of a 115 snatch and a 135 clean and jerk.

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Chuck Kramer (foreground) takes the opportunity to give a brief tour of the museum to Raynoier's Scott Golding (background, left) and Santa Fe College Vice President for Advancement and Chief Philanthropy Officer Sherry Houston.

Play raises \$5K-plus for Starke Woman's Club

The Woman's Club of Starke's performance of "Drinking Habits" raised \$5,800 to support its community initiatives.

A group of community players — Nancy Alvarez, Sheila Barnes, Tami Curtis, Buz Dyal, Jordan Dyal, Timmy Faulkner, Marty Rhoden, Johanna Torrence and Cheri Wall — performed the play, which was written by Tom Smith. The comedy/love story was presented to a sold-out



Tami Curtis (left) and Marty Rhoden act out a scene in "Drinking Habits."

crowd all three nights (Jan. 17-19) of its performance.

Money raised will be distributed to organizations such as Bradford Community for Schools, The Chesed House

and Villages of Hope. The club will also help feed the hungry, partner with the Bradford County Sheriff's Office and support Bradford schools' band programs.

The club is looking to expand its outreach to other civic projects in the community, such as raising awareness of human trafficking, bringing love to nursing homes by providing socks and cards for holidays such as Valentine's Day.

Please contact Membership Director Lisa Rodgers at 904-364-6377 if you're interested in joining the club.

If you have any fundraising ideas, please contact Fundraising Director Cleo Elder at 904-7967427.

For additional information about the club, you may contact President Sheila Barnes at 352-235-2143.



Pictured during a performance of "Drinking Habits" are (l-r) Buz Dyal, Nancy Alvarez, Jordan Dyal, Cheri Wall, Sheila Barnes, Marty Rhoden, Timmy Faulkner and Tami Curtis. Johanna Torrence (not pictured) also performed in the three-night fundraising event for the Woman's Club of Starke.

The Matthews Museum (Bradford County Museum) Needs Volunteers!

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To find out more

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(904) 964-5001 or (904) 364-6977





Zoey Marshall shows off some recent first-place medals.

Marshall earns 6 wins in track and field events

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Lake Butler's Zoey Marshall won all three track-and-field events she competed in at the Feb. 9 Florida Youth Indoor Championships in Gainesville and at the Jan. 18-19 Jimmy Carnes Youth Invitational in Gainesville.

Marshall, a member of Supreme Performance Athletics Club who competes in the 12-year-old division, won the 200m at the Florida Youth Indoor Championships with a time of 25.92, while her winning time in the 400m was 59.83.

Her third win occurred in the long jump with a distance of 4.57 meters.

At the Jimmy Carnes event, Marshall took first in the 200m and 400m with times of 26.43 and 58.84. She won the long jump with a distance of 4.49.

Bradford girls season ends with 44-32 loss at Rutherford

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Despite committing 30 turnovers and shooting 11 of 28 from the field, the Bradford High School girls basketball team played second seed Rutherford close before ultimately losing 44-32 in a Region 1-3A quarterfinal game on Feb. 13 in Panama City.

The Tornadoes (14-9) trailed 9-5 after the first quarter and 23-16 at halftime. When the third quarter ended, Bradford still trailed by seven points.

It was the fifth loss for Bradford in its last six games.

Ar'Nayshia Griffin led the Tornadoes in scoring with 17 points and in rebounds with six. She and Nichelle Brown shared the team high in steals with three each.

Brown scored eight points, while Bradford also got two points each from Wynter Barrington, Cherish Bing and Kailyn Teal and one point from

Nyasia Lopey.

Barrington was right behind Griffin in rebounds with five.

Rutherford (21-3) played third seed Newberry (17-6) in a semifinal game this past Tuesday. Newberry, which defeated Bradford for the District 3 championship, advanced by defeating sixth seed Jackson 65-55.

Indians lose in Region 1-3A boys soccer quarterfinal

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

A Keystone Heights High School boys soccer team looking for just its second win in six matches had its season come to an end with a 6-2 loss to host South Walton in a Region 1-3A quarterfinal match on Feb. 11.

The seventh seed Indians (11-7-3) fell behind 2-0, but were able to even the score, with Noah Jaramillo scoring off an Aaron Wiley assist and Wiley scoring off a Sammy Wachua assist.

South Walton (15-3-5), which was the region's second seed, scored another first-half goal to take a 3-2 lead going into the break. The Seahawks then added three goals in winning their fifth straight match.

The Seahawks host third seed Florida High (13-3-3) in a semifinal match on Friday, Feb. 14.

Keystone, which went 1-3-2 in its final six matches, was making its first regional appearance since 2020.

Wiley finished his senior season with 33 goals, which is the most by any player in Class 3A who's had his stats uploaded to MaxPreps. Eastside's Jonas Traktuev finished his season with 31 goals, while Calvary Christian's Drew Mullins, whose team is still playing, is third with 28 goals.

The Indians' Luke Brunt, who's also a senior, recorded 16 assists, which ranked him third in Class 3A. Wiley had the fifth most assists with 13.

Cowboys signing up for spring league

The Bradford County Athletics Association is signing up for its spring league, which is open to ages 6-12.

Sign-ups will be held from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays at 1080 Pine St. in Starke. The fee is \$50.

Players will have free use of helmets and pads, though they must provide their own cleats and practice outfits.

For more information, please call 904-861-4759 or 352-256-0359. You may also visit the association's Facebook page (Bradford Cowboys Athletic Association).

KHHS softball home opener to be dedicated to Coach Ollie

Friday, Feb. 21, will be a special night for the Keystone Heights High School softball program. The varsity Indians will play their first regular-season game, but they'll also be dedicating the game to the late Ollie Powell.

Powell, who passed away Nov. 19, 2024, coached for more than 10 years at KHHS. He also coached as part of the Keystone Recreation Association.

Those who had the opportunity to play for or with Powell are invited to be a part of this honor. Please show up at 6:30 p.m.

The game against Baker County will start at 7 p.m.

KHHS defeats Rams for 2nd straight win

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Keystone Heights High School's baseball team scored 12 runs in the fifth and sixth innings in defeating host Interlachen 16-2 in six innings on Feb. 17.

The Indians (2-2) led 4-0 going into the fifth, which began with a Tyler Brinson triple. One out later, Ty Mitzel walked. Brinson scored on a sacrifice fly by Ethan Franklin, while Destin Harnage and Andrew Wilson both walked to load the bases. Aiden Screen walked, while Austin Smith and Tallon Campbell were both hit by pitches, forcing a total of three runs in. Brinson came back up to bat and walked to bring home another run. An error on a ball put into play by Barry scored the inning's final run, putting Keystone up 10-0.

Brock Screen led off the top of the sixth with a double and scored when the Rams committed an error on a line drive hit by Harnage. Harnage scored on a wild pitch before Wilson and Smith both reached on singles. Wilson eventually scored on a passed ball. After Campbell walked, Brinson and Barry hit back-to-back doubles, with Brinson's pushing one run across and Barry's scoring the final two runs.

Brinson finished 2 for 3 with two RBI, while Mitzel went 2 for 4.

Barry had two RBI, while Campbell, Franklin, Harnage, Smith and Aiden Screen each had one. Mitzel, who started, and Harnage each pitched two innings, giving up no runs and no walks. Mitzel allowed one hit and struck out two, while Harnage gave up no hits and struck out four.

Brinson and Campbell each pitched one inning and gave up one hit each. Brinson, who walked none, struck out two.

Keystone opened the season with two straight losses,

beginning with an 8-6 game against Clay on Feb. 11 in which the visiting Blue Devils scored all of their runs in the final three innings.

Keystone took a 4-3 lead with a two-run fifth. One run scored on an error, while the other was the result of Wilson getting hit by a pitch with the bases loaded.

The Blue Devils had a big sixth inning, scoring four runs on five walks (two with the bases loaded) and a single.

Wilson, who went 2 for 3 with three RBI, hit a two-run double with two outs in the bottom of the seventh, but a pop-up to first ended the Indians' rally.

Barry and Smith each finished 2 for 4, with Smith driving in one run.

Brinson had an RBI as well. Starting pitcher Barry allowed no runs, four hits and one walk through 2.2 innings. He had four strikeouts.

Keystone hosted St. Joseph Academy on Feb. 12, with the Flashes scoring three runs in the first of what was a 3-1 loss for the Indians.

St. Joseph took advantage of two singles, a walk and two errors to score its runs.

The Indians had two runners on with two outs in the fifth, with Campbell and Brinson each hitting a single. Barry walked to load the bases before Campbell scored on a wild pitch. A strikeout ended the inning.

Keystone had two on with one out in the sixth, with Wilson walking and Aiden Screen hitting a single. The Flashes then turned a double play to get out of the inning.

Campbell reached on an error to lead off the bottom of the seventh. Brinson drew a walk, with both runners then advancing on Mitzel's sacrifice bunt. A strikeout and a fly out ended the game.

Keystone finished with only three hits.

Mitzel, who started on the mound, allowed eight hits and two walks, while striking out seven in five innings.

Harnage threw the final two innings, giving up one hit and no walks. He had three strikeouts.

The Indians picked up their first win on Feb. 14, with Franklin and Smith each hitting a two-run single as part of an eight-run eighth inning as Keystone defeated host Baker County 9-1.

Franklin earned the win, giving up one hit and one walk, while striking out six through five innings.

The Indians scored first when Barry hit a double to lead off the top of the third, advanced to third on a Brock Screen sacrifice bunt and scored on a balk.

Baker tied it up in the fourth. The Wildcats' first two batters walked, while the third hit a single to load the bases. Kaiden Burned then hit an RBI single.

The Wildcats still had no outs when starting pitcher Barry, who allowed three hits, was relieved by Franklin. Franklin struck out the first two batters he faced. A ground out then ended the inning.

Keystone threatened to score in the sixth. Smith and Campbell hit back-to-back singles with one

out. A ground out and a fly out, however, left them stranded.

Barry hit a single to lead off the seventh. He advanced two bases on a sacrifice bunt by Franklin and a ground out by Harnage. He was caught stealing home for the inning's third out.

The Indians' big eighth inning began with Wilson hitting a triple. After a strikeout and a Smith walk, Campbell hit an RBI single. Brinson walked to load the bases. Two runs came across when Mitzel was hit by a pitch and Barry walked. Franklin then hit a single that plated two runs and put Keystone up 6-1.

Keystone loaded the bases again when Harnage singled. After a fly out, Aiden Screen walked to force a run in. Smith then drove the final two runs in with a single.

Campbell finished 3 for 5, while Barry went 2 for 3.

Harnage and Smith each went 2 for 4.

The Indians host North Marion on Thursday, Feb. 20, at 6:30 p.m. and then travel to play Middleburg on Friday, Feb. 21, at 7 p.m.

On Monday, Feb. 24, Keystone hosts Ridgeview at 7 p.m. before traveling to Alachua on Wednesday, Feb. 26, to play Santa Fe at 7 p.m.

Big night from pitchers, Walker leads to win for UCHS

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Kacen Thomassen and Trenton Klein combined to throw a no-hitter, while Jake Walker drive in six runs in the Union County High School baseball team's 16-2, five-inning win over host Dixie County on Feb. 13.

Thomassen started and threw four innings, giving up two walks and striking out five. Klein allowed no walks and struck out one in pitching the final inning.

The Bears' first run resulted from an error and a wild pitch, while they scored their second on two errors.

Union (2-1) fell behind 1-0 before scoring four runs in the third. Two errors allowed Jeffrey Brugh to reach and then score, while Walker drove in his first run on a single. With the bases loaded, Ayden Androlevich ground into a double play, but Erick Lasseter scored on the play, while Walker advanced safely to third. Bo Wilson entered to run for Walker and scored on a passed ball.

The Tigers led 5-2 before pushing 11 runs across in the fifth. They loaded the bases with one out, with Thomassen getting hit by a pitch, Brezdyn Browning hitting a single and Brugh walking. Klein hit a sacrifice fly that scored courtesy runner Devin Diggs. After Lasseter drew a walk, Walker, who finished 4 for 4, hit a bases-loaded double that scored all three runners.

Union loaded the bases again after Foster Smith was hit by a pitch and Androlevich walked.

Thomassen was hit by a pitch to force a run in, while the Tigers' final run occurred when Smith scored on a passed ball.

Klein, Lasseter and Thomassen all finished with one RBI each.

Union entered the game off an 8-7 win over visiting Baker County on Feb. 11.

A three-run first inning that put the Tigers up 3-2 included an RBI double by Klein and an RBI single by Smith.

The Tigers increased their lead to 7-2 with a four-run second. With two outs and no one on, Klein and Lasseter hit back-to-back singles. Smith reached on a dropped third strike, which allowed Klein to score. Union then got consecutive singles from Walker and Thomassen, with Walker's hit scoring one run and Thomassen's scoring two.

Baker tied the game with a five-run third, that included the Union defense turning a 6-4-3 double play (shortstop Browning to second baseman Walker to first baseman Androlevich).

In the bottom of the third, the Tigers had two outs and no one on. Brugh hit a single and then scored on a Klein double.

Klein went 3 for 4 with two doubles and two RBI. Brugh also went 3 for 4, while Lasseter and Walker each went 2 for 4, with Walker driving in one run.

Thomassen finished with two RBI.

Lasseter pitched the final 4.1 innings, giving up no runs, two hits and one walk. He struck out five.

The Tigers played Nease this past Tuesday and will travel to play West Nassau on Thursday, Feb. 20, at 7 p.m. Union returns home to play Williston on Friday, Feb. 21, at 7 p.m.

BHS

Continued from page 11

Bradford put its first two batters on in the bottom of the fourth, with Sapp walking and Burgin hitting a single. The Tornadoes were unable to capitalize, with two batters striking out and a baserunner getting caught in a rundown.

The Warriors' Logan Kogut hit a double to lead off the top of the fifth. After Stafford struck out the next batter, Kogut went to third on a passed ball. Stafford then struck out another batter. Fennel did draw a walk to keep the inning going, but a fly ball to right fielder Kaedan Parks resulted in the third out.

Ryland Rike hit a one-out double for Bradford in the bottom of the fifth. He advanced to third on a Patrick Pendarvis ground out and scored the final run on an error.

Rike and Burgin each finished 2 for 3.

The Tornadoes played Gainesville this past Tuesday and were scheduled to play at Yulee on Wednesday, Feb. 19, at 6:30 p.m. Bradford hosts Interlachen on Friday, Feb. 21, at 7 p.m. and then hosts Hilliard on Monday, Feb. 24, at 7 p.m.

On Tuesday, Feb. 25, the Tornadoes travel to play Hamilton County at 6 p.m.

Legal Notices

Legals for the week of Feb. 20, 2025

2/13 2tchg 2/20-BCT

File No. 2025-CP-000009
CALIN MARIE COATES,
Deceased.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

The administration of the estate of CALIN MARIE COATES, deceased, whose date of death was SEPTEMBER 24, 2024, is pending in the Circuit Court for BRADFORD County, Florida, Probate Division, the address of which is 945 N. TEMPLE AVE, STARKE, FL 32091. The names and addresses of the personal representative and the personal representative's attorney are set forth below.

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

All other creditors of the decedent

and other persons having claims or demands against decedent's estate must file their claims with this court. WITHIN 3 MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE. ALL CLAIMS NOT FILED WITHIN THE TIME PERIODS SET FORTH IN FLORIDA STATUTES SECTION 733.702 WILL BE FOREVER BARRED.

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

A Personal Representative or curator has no duty to discover whether any property held at the time of the decedent's death by the decedent or the decedent's surviving spouse is property to which the Florida Uniform Disposition of Community Property Rights at Death Act as described in ss. 732.216-732.228, applies, or may apply, unless a written demand is made by a creditor as specified under s.732.2211.

The date of first publication of this notice is: February 13, 2025.
MATTHEW MCCONNELL, Esq.
Florida Bar No. 126161
Attorney for Personal Representative
Dickman Law Firm
Post Office Box 111868
Naples, FL 34108
T: 239-434-0840
F: 239-434-0940
matthew@dickmanlawfirm.org
STEPHEN COATES
Personal Representative
104 SE 28th St
Melrose, FL 32666

2/13 2tchg 2/20-BCT

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE
To satisfy the owner's storage lien, KO Storage LLC will sell at public lien sale on March 18, 2025. The personal property in the below-listed units, which may include but are not limited to: Household goods, boxes/totes/bags, clothing, bedding, tools and toys. The public sale of these

items will begin at 10AM on March 11, 2025 and end at 10AM on March 18, 2025. The public sale will take place on www.storage-treasures.com.

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Time: 10:00AM CST
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Public sale terms, rules, and regulations will be made available on www.storage-treasures.com. All sales are subject to cancellation. We reserve the right to refuse any bid. Payment must be by credit/debit card, we do not accept checks or cash. Buyers must secure the units with their own personal locks. To claim tax-exempt status, original RESALE certificates for each space purchased is required. By KO Storage LLC, 10301 Wayzata Blvd, Minnetonka, MN 55305. (952)-491-6837.

2/20 2tchg 2/27-BCT

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BHS' Murphy is Bradford district's Teacher of the Year

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Teacher Audrey Murphy was used to being around “short humans,” as she put it, so she was a little apprehensive about being around “tall humans.”

She has obviously transitioned quite fine to Bradford High School, having been named the district's Teacher of the Year in just her second year at the school.

“I was very shocked because I had really good competition,” Murphy said, adding, “It's an honor. It was unexpected.”

BHS Principal Chris Coffey said Murphy has been a “phenomenal” addition to the school.

“She comes to us with a wealth of experience in the district,” Coffey said. “Just her knowledge of different systems and processes has been really helpful for us. She's a go-to person for just about everything. When people have questions about something, she's one of the first people that comes to their mind as far as who to reach out to and who they think can help them out.”

Until moving to BHS for the 2023-24 year, Murphy had spent her entire career at what was formerly known as Southside Elementary School, which she began teaching at full-time in January 2000.

Coffey said when Murphy arrived, you would've never known she had no secondary level experience. He credits that to the work she put in to successfully adapt.

“Whatever she can do to learn more about the tasks she's been given, she's going to do, and she's going to do without being asked,” Coffey said.

Murphy admitted she was anxious about her new job.

“I was a little nervous coming to the high school because kids have facial hair and are almost grown up,” she said. “They're

almost to adulthood.”

Murphy said Superintendent of Schools Will Hartley reminded her she'd know a lot of the students, having taught them previously.

“When I got here and saw familiar faces, I was like, ‘OK. I can do this. I know a bunch of these kids.’ A lot of them remembered me,” Murphy said.

Murphy is the curriculum resource teacher at BHS, working with teachers in their classrooms as well as one-on-one with students in small groups. She's also the Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education Program exams coordinator.

That's not all.

“We're a little shorthanded, so we're throwing some extra things in there,” Murphy said, “but at the end of the day, it's doing whatever we need to do to make kids successful.”

Teacher-minded

Murphy can remember being in charge of a pretend classroom at the age of 6 in her home in Lawtey. Her students were dolls and plush animals.

“My dad had a chalkboard on the wall in our bedroom,” she said. “I knew how to spell the word ‘toe,’ so I named one of my students ‘Toe’ because I knew I could write that.”

As a student in a real classroom, Murphy said she took note of her teachers and how well she thought they did their jobs. She would imagine how she'd do things if she was in their shoes.

“I think I've always been teacher-minded,” she said.

The idea of going into education solidified as a student at BHS. Murphy had her eye on being an administrator, but she knew she'd have to start out as a teacher. She would go on to earn her bachelor's degree through Saint Leo University.



Bradford High School's Audrey Murphy (left) was named the Bradford School District's Teacher of the Year. Murphy, who is pictured with Superintendent of Schools Will Hartley, is in her second year at BHS after teaching at the former Southside Elementary.

She still has hopes of becoming an administrator eventually. She's one class away from earning her master's degree.

While in college, Murphy had the opportunity to shadow Becky Reddish, who was the principal at BHS. Murphy said Reddish allowed her to help with projects and see if she would really like working as an educator.

“That was really nice,” Murphy said. “I've just been in love with the classroom and kids ever since.”

Murphy said what impressed her about Reddish was her leadership style.

“She was professional all the time,” Murphy said. “She had a way of letting you know what you needed to know with grace. She could give you the hard truth, but with grace.”

“I wanted to do that when I got into a position of leadership — to be able to have hard conversations, but still have them in a loving way.”

Murphy's college internship took place at Southside Elementary in Lisa Gault's third-grade classroom.

“She had a lot of good advice, especially on how to build relationships with kids,” Murphy said.

Building relationships is something Murphy has always

strived to do, whether it's with elementary students or high school students.

“I really feel like teachers need to establish a relationship where kids understand that you're their teacher — that there is a job to do — but you do care about them as humans,” she said. “Whether they're short humans or tall humans, with facial hair or without, they're still just human beings. We don't know what goes on outside of the seven hours we have them here at school. We just have to build positive relationships so that they want to be here.”

An ‘amazing’ start to teaching career

Murphy, who did some substitute teaching before becoming a full-time teacher, had a dream of teaching at Lawtey Elementary, which was three blocks from her childhood home.

Southside, however, was where she was meant to be.

“God had different plans,” Murphy said. “I ended up at Southside. It was amazing.”

She began teaching second grade and said she became part of a strong team of other second-grade teachers, who supported each other so that they could

be the best they could be in the classroom.

“It got me into what I feel is one of my strengths — helping teachers work together, collaborating so that you're not alone in doing this and doing all this hard work by yourself, while also making the best experience for all of our kids.”

Murphy places an emphasis on “our kids,” saying, “I always felt like it was ‘our kids,’ not ‘your class’ and ‘my class.’ What are we doing to help all of them?”

Murphy also taught first grade and was an ESE teacher in which she mainly taught fifth-graders. As a Title I teacher, she did interventions for students in K-5. Murphy also coordinated K-5 after-school tutoring.

While she was still teaching second grade, Murphy had a stint as reading coach, a position she shared with another second-grade teacher.

No matter what role Murphy filled at Southside, she was not hesitant to go off campus to help students. In fact, she said her colleagues joked that she was always the first one to jump when going on a home visit was brought up.

“They didn't come to school? Let's stop by their house. I don't have a fear of going to an unknown neighborhood,” Murphy said. “I will go knock on a door. I've tested kids on their front porch because they missed school, and they needed to have whatever required testing done.”

“Whatever's best for the kids. That's what it all comes down to.”

Doing what's best for BHS students

Murphy now finds herself doing her part to ensure success for an older group of students — students who are preparing to become adults.

“I feel like whatever we're doing on this campus — or any campus in Bradford County schools — is impacting our community for the future,” she said. “We're setting up kids for success, whether they stay here in Bradford County, or they leave and go somewhere else. At the end of the day, we've tried to provide them the best education that we can.”

Coffey said Murphy is a person who doesn't let obstacles deter her and her colleagues from that mission.

“She's always got the most positive outlook about everything,” Coffey said. “Any situation or any kind of hurdle we come to, it's, ‘OK. This is where we're at. What are we going to do to fix it? What are we going to do to improve?’”

“She's just so optimistic and a cheerful person to be around.”

What Coffey has seen in Murphy is someone who truly cares about the students, whether it's concerning their academic performance or some other aspect of their lives.

“She loves our kids,” Coffey said. “She'll do anything and everything for them. I've seen her have a number of tears over different situations with kids just because she has a big heart.”

That big heart led to a big-time honor bestowed upon her by her peers, though being recognized as Teacher of the Year almost makes Murphy uncomfortable.

“I don't like to be the center of attention, but I do appreciate it,” she said.

Coffey said though Murphy is in just her second year at BHS, the honor was well-deserved.

“That just goes to show the respect that she's gained from everybody on this campus and from everyone within the district,” he said. “She's just an unsung hero. We're just really fortunate for her to be here. It's a better place because she's here.”

CLARK

Continued from page 8

that, because she said Bish used to tell her, “Once (Wanda) said that, it's like you never stopped talking.”

Clark next worked at Denmark Furniture. She remembered how understanding S.G. Denmark and his son, Steve, were when she explained that her family had to be her priority.

“When I first interviewed with Steve and S.G.,” Clark said, “I told them, ‘I'm a wife and mother first. Then I'll be a dedicated employee.’”

Clark said she never had to miss any events with involving her children.

Her children were also like Steve Denmark's children.

“He always said we were family,” Clark said. “He and my husband had become best buds.”

When Denmark decided to open a Sears Hometown Store in Starke, he named Clark its manager. She had been working alongside him for 17 years.

The Sears Hometown Store opened in October 2009 and consistently earned Five-Star Excellence Awards as well as Premier status, which it enjoyed since 2013. In 2018, the Starke store was named the top Sears Hometown Store in the country.

However, the corporate office filed for bankruptcy in 2022, which led to the eventual closing of the store.



Bradford Elementary School's Jo Clark (center) is recognized as the Bradford district's Employee of the Year by Principal Cassie Melvin (far left) and Superintendent of Schools Will Hartley.

Clark didn't want to take on the same level of responsibility that comes with managing a retail business. With her husband having passed away Jan. 15, 2022, she figured it was time to slow down.

She still wanted to do something, though, and appears to have found her niche at Bradford Elementary School.

“Of course, I love it being close to home, but I love being able to help with the kids,” Clark said, adding, “The endless hugs are so loving and sweet.”

The smiling face that Melvin talked about could be interpreted as demonstrating Clark's love for her job. That is true, Clark said, “It's an awesome environment. Everybody here is wonderful.”

The smiles could be the result of the love she has for children.

Yet she also smiles for another reason: it might just be the thing a child needs.

“That may be the only smile they see that day,” Clark said, explaining that you never really know what's going on in a child's life away from school.

If Clark has her way, she'll continue to show up at Bradford Elementary School with smiles for as long as she can.

“I told them the other day, ‘Look, I'll do my best not to die at my desk, but I'll work here until I die.’ You don't need to sit home and stagnate,” Clark said. “As long as I can be a blessing and do my job, there's no place I'd rather be.”



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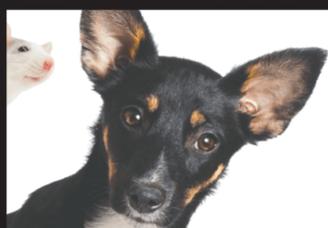
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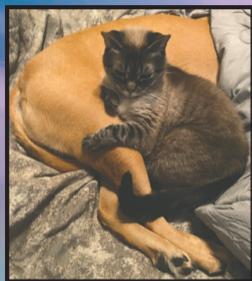
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Our Cat Nina was best friends with Rex, our dog and a wonderful cat to the rest of the family.



My sweet Chichi he was my best friend. He was the best companion I could ever ask for. He loved riding in the semi with his daddy. Some of his best buddies are William Holloway, Jennifer Moyer, Nick Vedock, William Vedock, and Katie Marett
9/11/10-10/31/23



Mac gave us so much joy over the past 16 years. We love and miss him so much.

*You will forever be
in our hearts.*