



# Bradford County Telegraph

USPS 062-700 — Starke, Florida

Thursday, Feb. 8, 2024

145th year, 30th Issue — \$1

## Union commission reacts to discovery of shredded documents

BY TRACY LEE TATE  
Special to the Times

The Union County Board of County Commissioners has already had two meetings in February and has not even held their regular monthly meeting. Both of these meetings have been prompted by the release of the report in the investigation by the State Attorney's Office into the professional activities of County Coordinator Jimmy Williams.

The investigation report was released on January 25, and shows some violations of Florida Building Codes, county Land Development Regulations, a possible conflict of interest, and official misconduct, but nothing of a criminal nature.

The investigation was requested by Union County Clerk of Court Kellie Hendricks Rhoades and Finance Director Pam Woodington.

The board had already called for a special meeting for Monday, Feb. 5, to discuss whether or not Williams should be fired, but an emergency meeting was called, on two hours' notice, on Thurs. Feb. 1, to deal with a questionable situation.

A county worker, Vicky Barron, had discovered shredded material in the commission office and called Commissioner Mac Johns about it. Johns called Rhoades, who called County Attorney Russ Wade, who advised that a special meeting be called to decide if Williams, as well as Board Secretary Diane Hannon, Building Department Secretary Denise Clemons, and Building Administrator Wilson Whidden, be suspended until the board could discuss what was to be done. The meeting was called for 3:30 p.m. on Feb. 1, and all five commissioners were in attendance.

Wade opened the session, stating that the meeting set for Feb. 5 would still be held as scheduled and that the topic at the Feb. 1 meeting needed to be restricted to the discovery of the shredded material.

He said any discussion and motions

needed to be restricted to that topic and that, should the board vote to declare the meeting an emergency, there would be no need to provide time for public comment. Johns made the motion, seconded by Commissioner Willie Croft, that the meeting be declared as an emergency, and the vote passed 4-1, with Commissioner Jimmy Tallman calling the meeting "ridiculous" as he cast the dissenting vote.

Johns described why the meeting had been necessary and called Vicky Barron to the speaker's podium to relate what she had told him. Barron is in charge of the cleaning and basic maintenance of the county offices and courthouse, including emptying trash receptacles in the offices. She told the board that she found shredded papers in the trash receptacle under the paper shredder in the commission office, which is not a regular occurrence. She emptied the receptacle and threw the bag away, then thought better about it, retrieved it, and called Johns. In light of the recent investigation, Johns said he thought that the clerk should be made aware of the situation. Barron then turned the bag over to Rhoades, who kept it in her office. Johns asked that the bag be brought into the commission meeting room, and when that was done, he said he was surprised and pleased that the bag (shredded material) was so small (a tangled, loose mess of shredded paper not much larger than a football). Johns then asked Barron who was in the office when she was there, and she said Board Secretary Diane Hannon and Building Department Secretary Denise Clemons.

Tallman asked Johns why there was such a concern about shredded paper. Tallman added that it was his understanding that the investigation was complete and that the State Attorney's office had taken what they needed already. He questioned the need for an emergency meeting.

See DOCS, page 6



## Commission reacts to State Attorney's report

BY TRACY LEE TATE  
Special to the Times

In a special meeting on Feb. 5, scheduled to deal with the issues concerning County Coordinator Jimmy Williams and to entertain the possibility of discharging him from his position, the Union County Board of County Commissioners heard more information than they were anticipating. They granted Williams an extension on his suspension with pay until they could look into some matters themselves and also to allow Williams to have more time to prepare his defense against his accusers and the recently released report on the State Attorney's investigation of the matter.

### Different standards are applied

About 50 county residents came to the meeting, overflowing the commission meeting room into the

courthouse hallway. Only four people spoke during the public comment section of the meeting.

Lindsey Reddish again reminded the board of her Sept. 20, 2023, email to board members in which she cited her research concerning the matter.

"It was ignored," Reddish said. "I was, and am, concerned for the county and am glad to see my allegations verified. I have said that different standards are applied depending on the employee, and I wonder if this is the standard of the board. If so, then the board is setting a precedent for the citizens of the county."

Next to speak was Fred Sirmones, Jr., who began by telling board members that he never claimed to be a commissioner in Lake Butler, as was apparently reported in a television news report. He then offered his comments on the situation faced by the county.

See REPORT, page 6

## Sheriff says fifth grader died by suicide

### 'We're all in shock'

BY DAN HILDEBRAN  
dan@bctelegraph.com

Bradford County Sheriff Gordon Smith said a fifth grader at Starke Elementary School was found dead from a suicide early Wednesday, Jan. 31.

"We are all in shock," the sheriff said about the incident. "It's tragic, not only for the family but also for our detectives, the students, the staff at the school, and our entire community."

Smith said the girl's mother called 911 around 6:45 Wednesday morning. He said the mother discovered

the student while attempting to make sure she was getting ready for school. He added that deputies tried to revive the girl but were unsuccessful.

Smith said his investigators, so far, have uncovered no evidence of bullying at school or abuse at home. He added that the investigation is ongoing.

"We are looking at grades, attendance, the whole nine yards," he said.

Smith added that his investigators had viewed a video of a fight the girl was involved in that resulted in her suspension, the suspension of the other fighter, and the person who recorded the video.

He characterized the video as one of a fight and not of bullying, pushing back on rumors surrounding

the girl's death.

The sheriff said the school has offered counseling to students and staff on the Weldon Street campus.

"They are doing all the right things," he said.

Smith added, however, that the one question everyone is asking may never be answered.

"We all want to know why, and we may never know why," he said. "I am at a loss for words for why a 10-year-old would do that."

*If you or someone you know needs mental health resources and support, please call, text, or chat with the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline or visit 988lifeline.org for 24/7 access to free and confidential services.*

## Chamber honorees include RV park, Autry, Gianas

BY DAN HILDEBRAN  
dan@bctelegraph.com

The North Florida Regional Chamber of Commerce named one of the area's newest enterprises as its business of the year and recognized the contributions of two community members who died in 2021 and 2023 during its awards banquet.

Bradford County Fire Chief Ben Carter emceed the February 3 gala at the Gov. Charles E. Johns Conference Center.

Leisa Sims of It's Your Day Bridal decorated the facility in the event's theme: Lights, Camera Action depicting the red carpet, and the glamor of an Oscar awards show. Downtown Grill catered for the banquet, and Genius Entertainment hosted a dance after the ceremony.

As in prior years, the Bradford County Education Foundation raised money for its projects during the event, announcing winners of two raffles it held for vacation stays at the beach and in the mountains. A third drawing featuring a 10-by-10 shed was postponed because not enough



(L-R) Chamber Past Chair Brad Bishop, Evan Douglas, Ken Loyd, Chamber President Pam Whittle, Vincent Esson, and Brad Carter after presenting the Keystone Heights RV Park with the Chamber's Business of the Year Award.

tickets were sold for the raffle.

Carter noted that his role in the event signaled a milestone in his family's involvement in the awards banquet.

"My grandfather, Maxi Carter, Jr., was the emcee for this event 50 years ago," he said. And my father, Brad Carter, was the emcee for this event

30 years ago."

Carter applauded the business communities of the Chamber's three-market areas.

"Hats off to the entrepreneurs who turn obstacles into opportunities faster than Clark Kent changes into his tights," he said. "But the real stars of the show here tonight are the award

winners. Later in the program, we will recognize the true titans of our community. They're not just receiving awards; they're getting business Oscars, Grammys, and maybe even a few golden spatulas for flipping the script on success."

See CHAMBER, page 7



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## WORTH NOTING

### Brooker reunion Feb. 16

Brooker Elementary and Junior High School alumni, staff and families from 1942 through 2021 are invited to a reunion that will take place Feb. 16, 2024, at Belle Oaks Barn in Brooker.

Join the "Brooker Elementary (& Junior High) Alumni" page on Facebook for more information, or contact Sondra Bothwell (Green) at bsegarrett@aol.com, Suzanne McRee (Dyal) at mcreesd@gmail.com or Patsy Pullen at easyace7@yahoo.com.

### Food distribution at RJE

A communitywide food distribution hosted by Feeding Northeast Florida and True Vine Ministry will take place Wednesday, Feb. 14, at 8:30 a.m. at the RJE Complex on Pine Street in Starke.

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

### Church of God food distribution

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

### Spades and bingo tournament

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

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

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

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

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

### Shrove Tuesday at St. Mark's

St. Mark's Episcopal Church at 212 N. Church St. in Starke will hold its annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper on Feb. 13 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Donations of \$8 for adults, \$4 for children 4 to 11, children 3 and under eat free. Donations are used for outreach and programs.



### Dinner and assistance for landowners

A multiagency event will showcase assistance for landowners in Baker, Bradford, Clay and Union counties as well

as surrounding areas. Programs for technical help, best management practices, conservation and more will be highlighted by the USDA/NRCS, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation, the Florida Forest Service, UF/

IFAS Extension, the North Florida Land Trust, Alachua Conservation Trust, and Bradford, Clay and Gilchrist Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Representatives will be on-hand to discuss available programs. The event will be held Thursday, Feb. 15, at 6 p.m.

at the Gov. Charley E. Johns Conference Center in Starke. Dinner provided thanks to the Clay County Farm Bureau and Toro Ag. Space is limited: RSVP by calling UF/IFAS Extension Bradford County at 904-966-6299.

### Help preparing your taxes for free

United Way of North Central Florida is hosting VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) at the Bradford

Community Resource Hub, 1080 N. Pine St. in Starke, on Thursday, Feb. 15 and March 21, from 10 a.m. to noon.



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# First vote on potential new assessments scheduled

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD  
mark@bctelegraph.com

With the advertisements placed, Bradford County commissioners are ready to hold the requisite public hearing launching the implementation of special assessment fees for fire and emergency medical services.

The vote on Feb. 15 will not impose any assessments. It is the first step in the process of notifying the public of the board's intent to pursue this method of fee collection beginning with the tax bills mailed in November 2024.

This move by the board is not a surprise as commissioners have discussed many times it is a last resort to fund a full-time fire rescue service, which remains largely unfunded despite raising property taxes to the 10-mill cap.

Lowering property taxes is another of the commission's goals, and both promoting economic growth and diversifying revenue sources are part of the plan for doing so.

The unknown remains how much each assessment will cost property owners, and that will depend on the analysis of the consultants at Bryant Miller Olive, the same firm that made the calculations in 2018-19.

Then it will be up to the commission to do what it hasn't been able to do because of both public and political opposition, and that is vote in favor of the special assessments. Voters have succeeded in defeating a fire assessment in the past, which hasn't prevented some commissioners from feeling pressure to put it back on the ballot and letting the public decide again.

Commissioners were reluctant to let the county manager in 2019 hire a consultant for a special assessment study and went no further than the resolution they are considering again next week.

A lot has changed since then, and since 2001 when the public voted down a \$45 fire assessment. The county fire departments were volunteer-based. The revenue would have paid for trucks, equipment and perhaps training. By 2018, the cost of adding full-time firefighters began adding up.

Now the county has a full-time fire department that supports EMS under the Bradford County Fire Rescue umbrella. The assessment calculated to fund the fire department in 2019 was more

than \$145 per residential dwelling unit. The consultant also looked at an assessment for emergency medical services, which came to more than \$160 per dwelling unit.

These were the maximum amounts the commission could have levied in 2019. Commissioners could have adopted lower amounts as well, only partially closing the funding deficit in both departments.

Bryant Miller Olive's calculations were based on apportioning the cost of fire and EMS services by demand. Finding around 60% of the calls for service originating from residential addresses, 60% of the cost of funding the service was apportioned to those properties.

Commercial properties were not charged by building unit but by square foot — 23 cents per square foot for fire and 17 cents for EMS.

When it came to vacant properties, they were only assessed for the fire fee because vacant properties typically don't generate calls for EMS. The fire charge recommended was around \$65, but the charge did not apply to agricultural properties. That means timber companies that own thousands of acres in

Bradford County would not pay the assessments. Other exempt properties include government properties and, if the commission chooses, churches and nonprofits.

Municipal governments can opt in or out of the county collecting special assessments within their corporate limits. Starke was included in the 2019 EMS study but not in the fire assessment study because the city has its own fire department. If, however, Starke commissioners don't agree to the collection of a special assessment, a lot of potential revenue for the county would be left on the table. Thousands of households would be free from the assessment, but so would all the commercial square

footage that is concentrated in the city limits.

Even with the limitation, the consultant told the commission in 2018 that special assessments tend to be fairer and more equitable than property taxes, which a large percentage of the population can be immune from paying because of low property values and multiple tax exemptions.

A special assessment is not a fee that can be avoided by rejecting the service. Like taxes, special assessments are mandatory. Once imposed, all affected property owners are responsible for paying them. But special assessments are different from taxes in that the revenue is earmarked for a specific purpose and cannot

be used for anything else, as is the case with the county's garbage assessment.

The resolution before board on Feb. 15 will serve as notice that the board intends to collect the assessments on the upcoming tax bill. Nothing, however, is finalized until the rate structure is revealed and collection method decided. Every affected property owner will be notified by mail of a final public hearing, after which the commission will finalize its decision in the coming months.

The next meeting of the Bradford County Commission will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 15.

## February highlights career technical education

Students and faculty at North Florida Technical College will join others across the nation during the month of February to celebrate Career and Technical Education Month. CTE Month is recognized to celebrate and highlight the value of CTE and the achievements and accomplishments of CTE programs across Florida.

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For more information about North Florida Technical College, visit [www.nftc.edu](http://www.nftc.edu) or call 904-966-6764.

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For more information call 386-431-1732.

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# Lake Region

## Planning for Keystone's centennial continues

BY DAN HILDEBRAN  
dan@bctelegraph.com

**KEYSTONE HEIGHTS**—A board member preparing for Keystone Heights's 100th birthday told the Rotary Club that her organization wants to partner with other Lake Region community groups in celebrating the milestone.

Deirdre Murphy said planning for the event began in 2019 but was interrupted for two years due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

She added that the group's first step was to organize a non-charitable nonprofit organization that could solicit funds for the celebration.

The Friends of Keystone Heights, Florida, Inc. board members are herself, Tina Bullock, Kerry Collins, Dave Rodenroth, Debbie Beals, Kim Willis, Ginger Lee, Steve Hart, Fred Goetzman, and David Kirkland.

Murphy said that her organization wants to coordinate with other community groups in the Lake Region to observe the city's 100th year. She explained that her group is hopeful that when other organizations produce events throughout 2025, they will incorporate the city's centennial as the theme for those functions.

"So, to give you an



Friends of Keystone Heights board member Deirdre Murphy shows the Rotary Club a calendar featuring historic landmarks in Gainesville. She said her group hopes to produce a similar product, marking the 100th anniversary of Keystone Heights. Photo: Dan Hildebran.

example, the 4th of July, the theme would hopefully be...all about the heritage of Keystone," she said. "So, when you hear: Oh, (their parade float) won closest to the theme, then you'll know what we're referencing."

Murphy said her group is also looking to produce merchandise that will highlight the city's centennial, like calendars and t-shirts. She showed the Rotarians a calendar featuring historic landmarks in Gainesville as an example.

"We want people to keep these as kind of memorabilia," she added. "So, you know how you go to a rock concert

and buy (a T-shirt)? We want that t-shirt to be the Keystone Heights logo and then on the back maybe the pavilion or the beach or something about historic Keystone Heights, and that people can, 10 years later, if you're still wearing that shirt, you can recall: 'Oh my gosh, that was when we had our hundredth anniversary.'"

*Get involved— Attend the Friends of Keystone Heights, Florida's next meeting at 10 a.m., Feb. 22, at the Keystone Heights Beach Pavilion or text Deirdre Murphy at 352-281-3026.*

## Garden Club, mayor lead Arbor Day planting

BY ANDI BLOUNT  
Garden Club of the Lakes

Adults often extoll the virtues of trees. We know trees are beautiful, help clean the air, and have many other environmental values. But, when young children describe these benefits, you realize there's hope for our world. Children spoke out at a recent Florida Arbor Day event at the Keystone Heights Elementary School.

To encourage awareness of the importance of trees, the Garden Club of the Lakes plans an annual educational program or tree planting.

This year, the Garden Club Arbor Day committee chair, Brenda Frysinger, reached out to the Keystone Heights Elementary School faculty to see if there was interest in a tree-planting ceremony.

Not only were they interested, they recruited the new 4-H director, Jennifer Jones, to involve her students. Then Frysinger contacted the City of Keystone Heights to ask Mayor Nina Rodenroth to issue a proclamation recognizing this holiday. City officials readily agreed to participate.

On Friday, January 19, Mayor Rodenroth read an official Florida Arbor Day proclamation as students and school faculty gathered with several Garden



Garden Club of the Lakes members Marian Norris (right) and Debi Laferriere help students plant a six-foot maple tree at Keystone Heights Elementary School to celebrate Arbor Day.

Club members to plant a maple tree on school grounds. The tree was donated by Cyndi and Randy Duncan, who brought the six-foot tree and planting materials to the school.

Several students read interesting facts about the benefits of planting trees, and they all enjoyed trying their hand at shoveling dirt into the hole. School staff had prepared the



Garden Club of the Lakes members (l-r) Elisabeth Summers, Cathy Huffman, Andi Blount, Carol Levine, Mayor Nina Rodenroth, Marian Norris, Debi Laferriere and Cyndi Duncan.

grounds.

Garden Club president Marian Norris helped the enthusiastic students add soil enrichment. Her theme for the club is to "Protect and respect our Earth and local environment through action, advocacy, and caring."

The event was just one of many ongoing Garden Club of

the Lakes projects. The group is a civic organization open to members of the Lake Region community. The club meets on the second Thursday of the month, September through May, at 10 a.m. at Faith Presbyterian Church, midway between Melrose and Keystone Heights on State Road 21. The club is

proudly affiliated with the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs and National Garden Clubs.

Florida's Arbor Day is the third Friday of January. Although nationally, Arbor Day is always the last Friday in April, several states celebrate during other appropriate planting seasons.

## 2 take Keystone Council seats

BY DAN HILDEBRAN  
dan@bctelegraph.com

**KEYSTONE HEIGHTS**—Two residents who applied to be appointed to the city council last October will join the city's governing body later this year.

Last fall, the city council selected Dan Lewandowski to fulfill the unexpired term of council member Bobby Brown, who resigned for health reasons.

Council members said Lewandowski's previous experience as a council member from 2015 through 2018 swayed

them in selecting the retired Air Force Colonel and current educator for the Seat 3 post.

Councilman Tony Brown was the only council member who favored another candidate: Elston Kussler. Brown added that he voted for Kussler because Brown asked Kussler to apply for the post.

Lewandowski and Kussler were the only candidates to file for council seats during the April 9 election. Lewandowski filed to run for Seat 3, the office he currently holds. Kussler filed to run for Seat 5, held by Steve

Hart, who announced that he is not seeking re-election.

Since no one else qualified for the seats, both men will take office after the April 9 election.

The April ballot will also include a proposed amendment to the city's charter, which would bring the Keystone Heights Airport under the direct control of the city council and convert the airport's current governing body into an advisory committee.

*Get involved: Register to vote at RegisterToVoteFlorida.gov.*



Students display a City of Keystone Heights Arbor Day proclamation Mayor Nina Rodenroth (center) read during the observance.

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# New bank president aims for growth, stability and community involvement

BY DAN HILDEBRAN  
dan@bctelegraph.com

The new president of DLP Bank is an experienced growth manager and said he can expand the Starke-based financial institution while improving customer service and meeting the lending needs of Bradford and Union Counties.

Tom Fontaine grew the last bank he led by nearly six-fold. He said his immediate goals for DLP are to provide stability to the bank, shepherd the business through a major technology upgrade in the spring and deepen the business's roots in its communities.

Fontaine was raised in Wellesley, Massachusetts. After graduating from the University of Vermont, he worked at an investment management firm before landing his first community banking job at Middlesex Savings Bank as a credit analyst.

He then signed on as a workout consultant, turning around failing firms.

"That lasted for about a year and a half," he recalled. "You basically went into companies and laid everybody off."

Since he left Middlesex on good terms, he returned to the savings bank with \$1 billion in assets, where he stayed an additional five years.

"I realized that I really wanted to take on some management role within the bank," he said, "which wasn't readily available. People were not leaving positions; it was kind of an old, staid community-based bank."



**"The Shop-with-a-Cop fundraiser was amazing. It brought tears to my eyes to see these kids who wouldn't have had a Christmas if it wasn't for us. That's why I joined this company." - Tom Fontaine, DLP Bank president.**

## Growing the bank

He took an opportunity at Bank Boston, which merged with Fleet Bank right after he joined.

Fontaine said that while he picked up valuable skills with the huge financial institution, he realized his heart was in community banking. He was on the board with the CEO of Wellesley Cooperative Bank at the Wellesley Community Center, and the CEO asked him to join the smaller organization.

"At that time, it had one branch with 12 employees and \$60 million in assets," recalled Fontaine. "My loan portfolio at Bank Boston was bigger than

the whole bank, but I saw this amazing opportunity."

He added that the opening appealed to his entrepreneurial side, and he thought he could take what he learned at Bank Boston and apply those strategies at the smaller depository.

"So, I started growing the bank," he said. "It was more of a savings and loan, but I transformed it into more of a commercial bank. I brought them all the commercial lending expertise, commercial depository services."

Fontaine joined Wellesley Cooperative Bank in 1999. In 2006, he was promoted to president, and three years later, he became CEO.

In the first 10 years he was at Wellesley, the bank's assets grew from \$60 million to \$200 million and opened a second location.

"We were in a very affluent town," he said. "Even though we were the hometown bank, I think we were in number six or seven in market share. We were still completely irrelevant, frankly."

Fontaine told his board that for Wellesley to become relevant in its market, it needed to raise capital.

"The only way we could do that, we were (a non-profit) mutual, was to convert the bank to a public company," he said. "So, in January 2012, we fully converted to a public company. We raised about \$22 million from our depositors, and then that gave me the capital to grow the bank."

"So, we started opening locations and hiring really good people, which I love to do," he continued, "building out teams,

rebuilding the board, and we grew the bank from \$250 million in 2012 to just under \$1 billion in 2019."

Wellesley's board then faced the realization that many other small and regional banks have struggled with since the 1990s. It realized that to get the best return for shareholders, the bank should seek a buyer rather than pursue further profitability, which would take too long.

"They'd been in the stock for eight years," Fontaine said of the bank's investors. "They were patient and were happy with the performance, but they were exerting some pressure, and I realized it was probably time to consider a transaction."

"I've always considered myself a very shareholder-friendly executive," he added. "It's their money."

The bank's leadership negotiated a sale with Cambridge Trust Company, and Wellesley's shareholders got \$125 million in 2020 for their \$22 million investment in 2012.

The two banks closed the deal at the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

"We did it completely remote," recalled Fontaine, "which was just an amazing feat by both companies. Everybody was remote except for the branches, and the only people in the branches were at the drive-ups."

Fontaine remained with Cambridge for two-and-a-half years. He was already eyeing Florida as a retirement destination when the opportunity at what is now DLP Bank came up.

"I think the stars aligned for

me to be able to come here with a great opportunity and also be in a place where I want to be for the rest of my life," he said.

## Growth opportunities

Fontaine said DLP Bank is an exciting opportunity for him with tremendous growth potential. However, the growth opportunities lie outside of the bank's current markets.

"As you know, there are 5,000 people here in Starke," he said. "I think there are 3,000 people in Lake Butler. There are limited opportunities for the kind of growth that the shareholder base of DLP Bancshares is expecting."

The bank president is convinced he can improve customer service and upgrade the banking experience for its Bradford and Union County customers while simultaneously expanding the bank's footprint, initially with locations in St. Johns and Duval Counties.

"We will do lending across the country," he added, "and then I think eventually we're going to bolt on the wealth management and trust business. That's down the road."

Fontaine said that while looking for growth on the other side of the St. Johns River, he and the bank's leadership will stay focused on Bradford and Union Counties.

"We've been really clear with the community, and I'll continue to be clear with the community that this community bank is very important to us," he said. "We want to continue to serve these

communities better than they have been served in the past."

Fontaine said the bank will undergo a major technology update in April.

"We are way behind from a technology standpoint," he said. "That will help, and I think will present a much better banking experience to the clients here. And it will afford us the ability to grow significantly beyond Bradford and Union Counties."

"I believe that with technology," he added, "we can actually give them a better, faster experience, response time, et cetera, that will meet their needs, but also allow us to be more efficient in how we service those needs."

## 'We're here for you.'

Fontaine has been with the bank for around 90 days, and he said he is grateful for the community welcoming him with open arms.

He added that turmoil, uncertainty, and anxiety come with an ownership change. He said that his primary goal now is to provide stability and to correct some misconceptions that have arisen about the bank.

"I think there's a fear that because we were bought by DLP Bancshares in St. Augustine, we're all going to move everything there," he said. "That's not what's going to happen."

See BANK, page 8

# Hometown coffee shop a family affair

BY MELISSA PYLE  
Special to the Telegraph

Call Street welcomed Starke's newest coffee shop on Feb. 1 when the doors of Hometown Grounds officially opened. Customers were welcomed through the doors of the new establishment, which resides in the former location of Sapp Station Coffee.

Like many quaint coffee shops, the scents of fresh brewed lattes and baked pastries filled the air, but the real story was brewing behind the scenes, years ago and thousands of miles away.

New co-owners Amy Polk and Rachel Sweat are a part of a large, blended family. Rachel refers to Amy as her "bonus mom." Polk married Sweat's father, Jason Polk, 18 years ago. Jason, a Bradford native and son to Glenn and Marie Polk, married Amy, originally from Lake City, and the two began cultivating life and family together in Bradford. Amy planted her roots in Bradford and quickly became a hometown girl.

As the years moved on, the Polk family enjoyed serving on annual mission trips to Honduras for about 10 years. It was on one of these trips where Rachel, then just sixteen, fell in love with coffee and what it represents. It wasn't just the taste of coffee that was the biggest draw, but the way in which it created community among the people they had come to serve. The Polk family saw that even with the language barrier, there was a clear path to communication when people came together to share coffee in a welcoming space. This sense of community planted the seeds for a future coffee shop into their hearts and minds.

As the years passed, life had many twists and turns for both Amy and Rachel. Rachel grew up, started a family and worked as a pharmacy technician at Madison Street Pharmacy. Amy and Jason began to have visions of travel and empty nesting as Jason's 26 years of working with the canine unit of the Florida Department of Corrections was ending. But as Amy would tell you, God had other plans — a very exciting and unexpected second act in the form of a 5-year-old little boy.

They adopted Bret, who is now 10. He joined the large blended and extended family, becoming the youngest sibling of four and an instant uncle to Polk's 10 grandchildren. Amy and Jason are thankful God changed the trajectory of their lives by sending Bret into the picture.



Co-owner Amy Polk, son Bret, and Co-owner Rachel Sweat are excited to pour some Hometown Grounds Goodness into the Starke Community.

Bret is one of many reasons they wanted to open the local shop.

Bret was born with a rare genetic disorder called Rubenstein-Taybi Syndrome. Amy said while his condition brings a lot of challenges, it also brings great blessings because one of the unique characteristics of people who have this syndrome is a personality encompassed by continuous joy. Bret is one of the smiling faces you will probably see when you visit the shop. As co-owner, Amy is there a lot, and the shop will also serve as a school room for Bret's homeschool lessons.

Both Rachel and Amy see the shop as an investment in the futures of their own families as well as the community. They want the people of Bradford to see Hometown Grounds as a welcome, open door to people from all walks of life and backgrounds.

The shop has a small play area that includes a chalkboard, toy kitchen and children's books so parents of small children can sit and enjoy adult conversation while their little ones play. Other possible offerings envisioned for the future at the shop are things like homeschool hours, craft days, afterschool tutoring and maybe even afterhours coffee parties for adults. The idea is to make the shop a landing place for meeting a friend or having a creative place to go, all while enjoying one of the various menu items ranging from coffee to fruit infused energy drinks. Some of which have the name "Tornado" as a tribute to the public school mascot. The shop has already invested in local vendors by

offering honey from Starke's own Townsend Honey Farm and serves up a unique blend of Florida coffee curated by Lucky Goat Coffee of Tallahassee.

Polk and Sweat have been working hard to bring their long-held dream of a coffee shop to life and they are thankful to their army of family members and friends. Many who have come alongside them and continue to make it happen daily. One such friend is Shana Sapp, owner of the much-loved Sapp Station. Polk said Sapp has been so encouraging throughout this process and she is very appreciative of her support. Polk knows how much the Starke community loved Shana and her Sapp Station Coffee, and she hopes they will feel just as at home when they stop by Hometown Grounds.

Polk and Sweat are working tirelessly to add their contribution to the growing community of Starke. As the new owners move forward in serving the people of Bradford, they would happily tell you their business goal comes from their personal motto which is "to use your life to pour into others."

Hometown Grounds is open daily during the month of February from 6 a.m.-4 p.m. but times may adjust in the future, depending on demand. To get more information regarding hours, menu items, and upcoming events, visit the shop's website at [hometowngrounds.com](http://hometowngrounds.com) or find them on Facebook or Instagram at [Hometown Grounds Coffee Co.](https://www.instagram.com/hometowngrounds)

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# UNION COUNTY

## Schools recognize business partners



At the January school board meeting, the school district was honored to recognize Elixson Lumber Company for its continued support for the students of Union County. Justin Elixson was presented a plaque of appreciation and the gratitude expressed on behalf of the school district. Elixson Lumber Company has been a longtime supporter of athletic teams and extracurricular activities for the district and is always a willing and helpful partner when it comes to serving the needs of our students. The Union County School District is appreciative of the support and generosity shown by Elixson Lumber Company towards the students of Union County.



At the January school board meeting, the school district was honored to recognize Spires IGA Market for its continued support for the students of Union County. Mike Spires was presented a plaque of appreciation and the gratitude expressed on behalf of the school district. The support provided to students and programs by Spires continues the legacy of support from the Spires family. The district is grateful for his partnership and the generational support that positively impacts many students each year. The Union County School District is thankful for the support of Spires IGA Market and the dedication is regularly displays towards the students of Union County.

## DOCS

Continued from page 1

Sheriff Brad Whitehead agreed with Tallman that the matter was of no concern as the State Attorney's office had already taken the documents they needed, and the investigation was over.

Commissioner Donna Jackson said that Rhoades had called her regarding an issue of concern, and she spoke with Clemons about the shredded paper. Clemons said she had been cleaning up her desk and work area and had personal paperwork like bank statements, that she had shredded.

Jackson said she also had a conversation with Whiddon concerning the incident.

"I did not get the sense I was being lied to," Jackson said.

Jackson said she saw no reason to suspend Hannon, Clemons, or Whiddon, but she felt she needed to look into the matter more closely and would agree to a suspension with pay for Williams for 30 days or until the Feb. 5 meeting.

Johns made the motion to suspend all four, and the motion failed 2-3, with Tallman, Jackson, and Commission Chair Channing Dobbs casting the dissenting votes.

Jackson then made a motion to suspend Williams with pay for 30 days until the scheduled meeting, and the motion passed 3-2, with Tallman and Dobbs dissenting.

Tallman spoke to the board, saying there were still items in the investigation report that needed to be cleared up, as well as some errors and inaccuracies.

"If someone has a black eye from all this, it is the board, not

Jimmy Williams," Tallman said. "There is another force driving all this, and it needs to be brought out."

When asked if Williams would be allowed to attend the Feb. 5 meeting while on suspension, Wade said he had conferred with the county's outside council and that Williams should be allowed time on the agenda for him and his attorney to speak as needed. He said how their testimony would be handled would be determined at the meeting.

## Valentine's deliveries at Union Co. High

Deliveries to Union County High School will be accepted on Wednesday, Feb. 14, in the media center from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Signs will be posted directing you to the east entrance of the media center.

All deliveries must have students' first and last names and their grade levels attached.

If there are several gifts for one student, items must be attached, tied together or placed in a gift bag in order for delivery.

No glass containers or vases will be permitted. No latex balloons will be permitted. Mylar and/or foil balloons are acceptable, but will not be allowed on school buses.

Any food delivered to schools must be individually wrapped, and sealed or in a sealed box/container.

Students will receive their items during seventh period or the last period of the day.

## REPORT

Continued from page 1

"If a \$95 fee (which Williams failed to pay when he acquired a permit for a power pole – but which has now been paid) is not paid, then the fine for this is double the cost. It happens every day."

Sirmones mentioned that he felt that Commissioner Mac Johns was the driving force behind the investigation and reminded commissioners that Johns himself is currently under investigation for ethics violations.

"He wants Jimmy Williams out of his position," Sirmones said. "I, on the other hand, realize his (Williams) value and want to keep him where he is."

### Just make a decision

Melissa McNeal stated that she had attended county commission meetings regularly and had become concerned that the alleged problems with Williams had taken so much of the commission's attention and focus that other, much more important, things were being given less attention – specifically fire services and broadband.

"I don't know if Jimmy Williams intentionally made missteps, but I wish the board would put aside all personal

emotions and motives and just make a decision."

Brady Clark, the information technology specialist for the county, spoke next, stating that he was simply a third party that did not want to be involved and that he held no evidence or opinion on the matter. Still, he felt some things should be said.

"Jimmy Williams is an honorable man in his treatment of me as a vendor, and he has always been fair and honest with me, even if he does haggle over some of my prices," Clark said. "I am bothered by the fact that the State Attorney's investigators did not call on me or my staff. I have a lot of evidence based on the spreadsheet used by the building department, and much of it is in the form of files that I have backed up and kept the records. I have a great deal of electronic data, and I do not want to see someone lose their job over an incomplete investigation."

Commissioner Donna Jackson said she would be interested in seeing the backed-up files from July through December of last year, and Clark said he had at least some of them, probably quite a few. County Attorney Russ Wade then asked Clark to stop the destruction of all back-ups (they are deleted after a specific time) until the current matter was settled, and Clark agreed.

### Mickey Mouse political stuff

State Attorney Brian Kramer admitted that there may have been some documents that his investigators did not collect.

Commissioner Channing Dobbs noted that sending a subpoena to get IT records was not protocol.

Kramer said the subpoenas go to a person; his office sends them to the person in charge of those records, not to a department.

"It is possible that the custodian of the records, in this situation Clerk of Court Kellie Rhoades, just picked and chose what records they sent," Kramer said.

Jackson then asked Rhoades if she knew about the back-ups, and she answered that she was "not aware they went back that far."

William McDaniel then came to the podium to speak for Williams. He said he had worked with Williams in a testing lab and could attest that tests and inspections were for reference to specifications only. He said that he was sure that Williams had no criminal intent and just operated in a way that happened most of the time.

"Jimmy worked for 22 years with FDOT, and his integrity is not in question," McDaniel said. "The investigation does not show his intent to commit a crime. If

there needs to be a fine, make him pay it. There is no conflict of interest here. Don't cripple somebody that is just trying. This is all a joke, taking up time over a \$95 fee. It should have been handled by the commission – it's all nothing but Mickey Mouse political stuff."

### Clearly a case of defamation of character

After the public had made their comments, next on the agenda was Williams' attorney, Joseph Williams (no relation). He had much to say about the matter.

"It is very clear that this appearance is on short notice," Williams said. "We have a 28-page report on the investigation that took about 90 days to produce by trained investigators. We are not prepared to fully present a defense. This is clearly a case of defamation of character."

He showed the board a screen of an internet news report that incorrectly said Williams was guilty of forging paperwork; words never used in the report.

"There is a conflict in the county government, a struggle," the attorney said. "I believe this building department issue is just a means to run my client out of his job."

The attorney said he could show evidence that the data used in the report was not actual. He said it was rare that all permit requirements were completed at one time and that delays were at the building official's discretion.

"Mr. Whiddon did not treat Jimmy any different than he has many others," he said. "Whiddon can allow work to start prior to issuance of a building permit under Florida law. Some discretion is allowed on both sides. What this is all about is that it is not OK for Jimmy Williams, but it is OK for everyone else. It's all political – the Clerk of the Court is upset with my client for doing his job. That he noticed and commented on 19 meetings for which the minutes had not been done or posted (as is required by Florida law), that \$100,000 allocated to the county for courthouse security, which the clerk was responsible for, was not acted upon within the time constraints and so was recalled by Tallahassee. That over \$100,000 in payments to vendors were delinquent for not being paid, and Jimmy had to run them down and ask that they be handled. This did not satisfy the clerk. The real complainant here is the clerk, and she went to Gainesville with an associate to

lodge the complaint."

The attorney continued, "All of the subpoenas seem to have been done to the clerk, and there is a conflict of interest in that the clerk is the complainant and participated in the investigation. The clerk lived in her house for three or four months without a certificate of occupancy – but is it okay for her?"

### The commission makes the final decisions

The board then moved on to a discussion of the investigation. Wade informed it that the alleged charges were "a regulatory authority issue" and that it was a matter for the Department of Business and Professional Regulations. Commissioner Jimmy Tallman asked Wade to distinguish between a county coordinator and a county manager. Wade reported that Union County was one in which the board governed the county administration. A county coordinator was someone hired by the board, not to be the chief executive. He said that the position had very little authority, and they confirmed Williams' next comment that "the commission makes the final decisions."

### Situation way out of hand

Johns said he had been asking for Williams firing for some time. He cited his reasons as being asked by Williams to do things not in his scope and that Williams interfered with his ability to do his job. He mentioned a \$190,000 grant for the recreation department (for a ballfield and ADA sidewalks) that he was not informed of – Johns has stated previously that the main reason he ran for his seat on the board was because of his long-time interest in recreation. Tallman responded by mentioning the \$97,000 grant Williams had secured for insurance and the many more he has gotten for the county to improve the parks.

"Jimmy has multiplied the amount we pay him 100-fold," Tallman said. "This is what we stand to lose. People in the county are afraid of us losing Mr. Williams. Everyone needs to understand that all decisions are the board's, not Jimmy's. I am disgusted with this fight with the clerk. I just want everyone to do what is right each and every time."

Johns admitted that the situation had gotten "way out

of hand" and recommended continued suspension to stop all the accusations.

Williams' attorney then spoke up, saying he wanted to make a general objection to the summary and statements made.

Jackson then spoke to her fellow board members.

"I came in at the last part of this and have had to play catch-up," Jackson said. "I spent three hours talking with Denise Clemons last Sunday after church; I have read the report and other documents and have formulated opinions on other conversations. I have been told by impartial witnesses how hard Jimmy works for the county and how effectively he is lobbying to get us funds. The building inspector gives grace to get a septic permit; I was told this by a friend who is a contractor. Jimmy told me he could not get a notice of commencement because to apply required a septic permit number. He said he wanted to see if a septic tank existing on the property could be used but would still have to get a permit. This is a conflict for me because I love what he has done for this county but am upset by what he has not done."

Tallman added that by Whiddon's "grace," he was letting building move on in the county, which was necessary because he only worked two days a week.

### My client has proof

Williams' attorney summed up the situation. "These things you all feel strongly about are the reason for you to take time and give my client time to address the issues," he said. "My client has proof he needs to gather and deserves the time to do it."

Tallman made a motion to grant Jimmy Williams 30 days to defend himself, rebut the report and other accusations, and then decide on his future employment. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Willie Croft and passed the board unanimously.

At the end of the meeting, Johns asked Wade if the county had a labor attorney and would like to see him at the next meeting.

"Jimmy started his defense tonight...but I still want him terminated," Johns said.

Jackson also asked Wade to have the labor attorney evaluate the process involved in dealing with the current situation and received the answer that they have offered to conduct an investigation.

Johns made a motion to approve this, seconded by Croft and passed unanimously.

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## CHAMBER

Continued from page 1

### Bradford County's second largest 'city'

After the dinner, Carter started the awards presentations with the chamber's business of the year.

In its first two years, the Keystone Heights RV Park, located in southern Bradford County, was racking up recognition as a quality destination. In its third year, the park was designated as one of the country's top 100 by the Good Sam Campground Network, a feat Park Manager Ken Loyd said had never been achieved.

The facility opened in 2020 with 190 sites. Three years later, it had tripled its number of sites, and its population, with around 70% staying year-round, was nearly equal to that of the City of Keystone Heights.

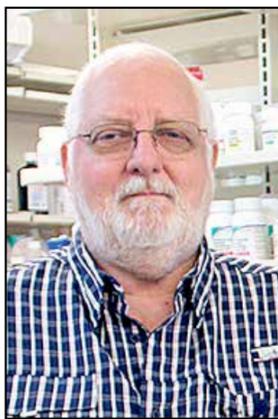
If the park were a city, it would be Bradford County's second largest, and if the county's municipalities were ranked by median household income, the RV Park would likely come in at Number 1.

Surrounding restaurants, golf courses, and other businesses have testified to the benefits of the residents' spending.

"They're looking for activities," Loyd told a local civic group about the facility's campers last April. "They're looking for nice day trips; they're looking for nice restaurants. They're looking for nice grocery store facilities to get them what they need without driving to Gainesville or Jacksonville. They're always looking for new things and get very excited when they see news like Popeye's building in Keystone Heights."

Carter said the park has created over 150 jobs since its conception.

The fire chief added that proprietor Vincent Esson had hired local employees, vendors, and business providers instead



**Bobby Autry**



**Dr. Peter Gianas**

of looking at potentially cheaper online or out-of-area options.

Carter said that in a contribution that was near and dear to his own heart, Esson donated money to the county for the Speedville fire station.

"More recently," Carter added, "Vincent has yet again displayed his dedication to the betterment of this community by donating additional funds to build living quarters at the Speedville fire station."

Carter said that according to Capital City Bank President Patricia Evans, Esson has met with other existing and potential business owners in the region to share his guidance and expertise so that their business can get off to the right start and flourish as much as his.

Esson thanked his wife Michelle, his family, Loyd, and his business partner Alan Wallace for helping the enterprise succeed.

"I want to thank Evan Douglas, our general contractor, for believing in us, believing in me," he said. "When times were tough, he was the only contractor around. Thank you, Evan."

Esson also thanked the chamber and county officials for their support, pointing out Sheriff Gordon Smith and the board of county commissioners.

"I want to thank the commissioners for trusting in me," he said. "Once they gave me that permit, I remember they

said, 'Hey, don't let us down.'"

### The compassionate pharmacist

Carter said the town pharmacist has become a trusted partner to members of their communities who rely on their help and advice.

"Bobby Autry was born for this role, and he maintained the trust of thousands of local citizens who became more like his family members," Carter said. "If you needed a prescription after hours due to a family emergency, Bobby was always willing to take the phone call. He would also be the guy who was willing to deliver needed prescriptions to your door at any hour of the night."

Carter said Autry was best known for his time behind the counter at Mitchell's Drugstore on Starke's Call Street.

"You could receive advice regarding your over-the-counter medical needs," Carter said, "pick up needed supplies, savor a milkshake at the old-fashioned fountain, and shoot the bull with your buddies while enjoying lunch."

Carter said that Autry was a symbol of the independent, community pharmacist who was a public servant, a pharmaceutical mayor of sorts.

"At Mitchell's Drugs, you were always able to talk to Bobby about your medical needs

regardless of your station in life or your ability to pay," Carter said. "Bobby was always calm, soft-spoken, and reassuring. Care and compassion were his trademarks."

Carter said Autry worked for nearly a half-century at local hospitals, nursing homes, other retailers like CVS and Madison Street Pharmacy, and most recently, with his son Jim at North Florida Pharmacy in Keystone Heights.

"In Keystone Heights, he willingly assisted the most vulnerable in their time of need," Carter said. "His love for his customers was only exceeded by his passion for his family and his friends."

### Champion of rural healthcare

Carter said Dr. Peter John Gianas was born in Wellsville, New York, and after attending medical school at Johns Hopkins University and George Washington University, opened a private practice and began work at Shands at Starke in 1983.

His career included serving as medical director for Alachua County Fire Rescue, Bradford County EMS, Bradford County Fire Rescue, Clay County Fire Rescue, Union County EMS, Gilchrist County Fire Rescue, Starke Fire Rescue, Santa Fe Community College EMS programs, and the Florida Gateway EMS training program.

Carter added that Gianas served on the Area Healthcare Center Board of Directors and the International Trauma Life Support Board of Directors.

"Dr. Gianas worked with ITLS for more than 20 years, including serving as medical director for the Florida chapter," Carter said. "Among his accolades was winning the ITLS Jackie Campbell Award, the organization's highest honor. The global nonprofit works to prevent death and disability through education and emergency care."

The Florida Rural Health Association posthumously awarded Gianas the Wendell

Rollason Award. Carter said the award is presented to individuals who have provided an enduring contribution to rural healthcare.

The fire chief added that Gianas was posthumously awarded the Maryland Crook EMS Pioneer Award by the State Department of Health, recognizing individuals who have advanced EMS through visionary leadership.

"In the EMS system," Carter said, "Dr. Gianas advocated that it shouldn't matter if you were in the biggest city or the smallest in the state; you deserved the same level of healthcare. He didn't just believe that. He truly made that his life work. He made many trips to other countries to perform charity work, further demonstrating his passion for equal healthcare."

Carter said it is difficult to put into words the legacy Gianas left in rural North Florida.

"Over the years, he has been a mentor, teacher, caregiver, friend, and father figure to countless individuals from his tenure in the emergency room to his time spent as medical director for multiple EMS agencies," the fire chief said. "Dr. Gianas leaves behind a legacy of compassion for his patients and superior healthcare in rural communities. His legacy is carried on daily by those fortunate enough to have trained under him. The number of lives positively impacted by Dr. Gianas is unfathomable."

### We now know why he never came home

Carter then handed the microphone to Virginia Autry, who said she has always been honored to be her husband's wife.

"And tonight, more than ever," she said, "I'm so honored to be married to such a giving man, a lover of people."

Gianas's cousin, Dean Giopulos, emphasized the friendship between the two honorees.

"They were truly the best of

friends," he said. "They loved each other dearly, and I have faith that both of those men right now are either looking down at us, and they're either laughing, or they're pretty darn upset with us."

Giopulos added that the physician's family often wondered why he never returned to his hometown in New York.

"The more that we've been down here and the more that we've been able to be around you people, it's easy to see why he had the level of commitment to this area that he did," the physician's cousin said. "He truly loved you all, and it's a testament to who you are as a people and what you all believe in."

### Chamber leadership honored

Chamber President Pam Whittle recognized two outgoing board members for their service to the business group. Lindsey Reddish missed the event because of sickness. Whittle gave Dale Woodruff a plaque recognizing his leadership in the chamber.

She also thanked the organization's 2024 Board of Governors, which includes Chair Jeff Oody, Past Chair Brad Bishop, Treasurer Chris Page, Chair-Elect Brad Smith, Rhonda Hamilton, James Eison, Steve Futch, Scott Kornegay, Justis Smith, Denny Thompson, and Jennifer Whitehead.

Oody said that the area will continue to see economic expansion over the coming year and that the chamber will be an active participant in that growth.

"If you've looked up and down 301 in Starke and on 100 headed toward Lake Butler and Keystone, you see a lot of dirt that's turning over," he said. "Well, the chamber's going to be there in cooperation with the county and the city, and we want you all to be a part of it."



## Alachua County Solid Waste and Resource Recovery

**Gus Olmos, P.E. Director**  
[gus@alachuacounty.us](mailto:gus@alachuacounty.us)  
Tel: (352) 548-1242

February 12, 2024  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### BRADFORD COUNTY TOXIC ROUND-UP EVENT COLLECTS HAZARDOUS WASTE

**STARKE**, (February 12, 2024) – 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 17 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 2023, close to 9 TONS of waste (17,985 pounds) was collected and neutralized at the Bradford County event alone. The Alachua County Household Hazardous Waste department processed 90 TONS of hazardous waste in 2023 from the Toxic Round-Up mobile collection events combined; including 18,034 pounds of e-scrap, 92,288 pounds of paint, 23,895 pounds of used oil, 7,205 pounds of batteries and 3,500 pounds of pesticides.

A total of nine Toxic Round-Up events are scheduled for 2024 serving residents on the following dates: Gilchrist (2/3), Lafayette (2/10), Bradford (2/17), Baker (2/24), Union (3/2), Dixie (3/9), Columbia (3/23), Putnam (4/6) and Nassau (4/20).

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
- Used Vegetable Oil
- Sharps in hard plastic containers (syringes, needles, lancets, insulin pens, used or unused)

# 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

Donna Alane Bates, 59, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 30 for battery and failure to appear.

James Alfred Baxley, 35, of Sparr was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 31 for larceny.

Chase Stephen Beverly, 32, of Jacksonville was arrested on February 2 by Bradford deputies for stalking.

Terrell Keon Brown, 30, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 31 for out-of-county warrants.

Sandra Elaine Castellese, 33, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 29 for failure to appear.

Joseph Benedict Croughin, 29, was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 30 for failure to appear.

Gunnar Lee Foster, 30, of Jacksonville was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 31 for failure to appear.

Robert Olin Fulgham, 49, of Lawtey was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 1 for possession of drugs, trespassing, and driving with a suspended or revoked license.

Jamie Kay Griffin, 25, of Starke was arrested by Starke Police on February 1 for a probation violation.

Breunna Ne'shay Hayes, 23, of Tallahassee was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 28 for DUI.

Cassie Devon Herring, 45, of Sanford was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 1 for DUI.

Katrell Montan Hubbard, 27, of Palmetto was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 1 for failure to appear.

Hollie Ann Johnson, 42, of Hampton was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 31 for an out-of-county warrant, possession of drugs, and possession of drug equipment.

Parviele Lashay Lee, 39, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 1 for an out-of-county warrant.

Demetrius Devon Lewis, 30, of Middleburg was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 28 for resisting an officer.

Daniel Perez-Beltran, 39, of Jacksonville was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 27 for driving with a suspended or revoked license.

Jared Russell Rice, 35, of Keystone Heights was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 1 for failure to appear.

Michael Wayne Roberts, 38, of Keystone Heights was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 28 for failure to appear.

Dallas Dalton Robinson, 21, of Starke was arrested by FHP troopers on February 1 for an out-of-county warrant.

Shanice S. Singleton, 31, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 29 for an out-of-county warrant.

Cristina Anne Thomas, 43, of Raiford was arrested by Bradford deputies on February 2 for an out-of-county warrant.

Pamela Yvonne Watson, 51, of Alachua was arrested by Bradford deputies on January 31 for failure to appear.

### Union

Cody Wayne Andrews, 32, of High Springs was arrested by Union deputies on January 29 for fleeing and alluding, reckless driving, possession of drugs, possession of drug equipment, and driving with a revoked or suspended license.

Carlton John Carpenter, 52, of Lake Butler was arrested by Union deputies on February 1 for an out-of-county warrant.

Jasmine Sierra Janice Copeland, 24, of Lake Butler was arrested by Union deputies on January 30 for failure to appear.

Alexander Ella Farrouzer, 30, was arrested by Union deputies on February 3 for disorderly intoxication and resisting an officer.

Daniel Ray Hall, 14, of Lake Butler was arrested by Union deputies on January 31 for felony burglary and felony larceny.

Ashton Raymond Pierce, 15, of Lake Butler was arrested by Union deputies on January 31 for felony larceny and felony burglary.

### Clay

Douglas Darwin Nelson, 29, of Keystone Heights was arrested by Clay deputies on January 31 for simple battery.

John Cody Rabe, 34, of Keystone Heights was arrested by Clay deputies on February 2 for simple battery.

## Six arrested in drug investigation

BY DAN HILDEBRAN  
dan@bctelegraph.com

The Union County Sheriff's Office said investigators and deputies, along with members from the Union and Bradford Drug Task Forces, arrested six people before and during a search warrant in Raiford after a months-long investigation.

The agency said officers conducted a search warrant on Friday, January 26 that resulted in the arrests of Wesley Harold Lewis, 55, of Raiford, Gregory S. Barton, 39, of Baker County, and Tara L. West, 34, of Raiford. Also detained due to the investigation were Jeffery Andrews, 37, of Raiford, Doris "Wendy" Rewis, 48, of Raiford, and Mark Calvin Griffis, Jr., 34, of Raiford.

The defendants were arrested on a variety of drug and weapons charges, except Barton, who was arrested on a probation violation warrant. The agency said Griffis's

arrest resulted from the drug investigation. However, he was not charged with a drug-related crime but rather for burglary and dealing in stolen property.

"Intelligence in this undercover drug operation shows that Lewis was a major drug dealer for our area, and this arrest helps us further our mission on zero drug tolerance for Union County," the agency said. "Sheriff (Brad) Whitehead reaffirmed his commitment to continue to pursue drug dealers in Union County, Florida."

The office added that Union Correctional Institute and Reception Medical Center K-9 Units and Baker County Sheriff's Office Investigators participated in the operation, which occurred off County Road 229 about two-and-a-half miles north of Raiford.

## Jail for driving with a revoked license

Thomas Mitchell Edwards, 72, was initially stopped on January 17, 2022, near Starke's Tractor Supply for a driver's license violation and was arrested on an additional drug charge after Bradford deputies found crack cocaine in his pants pocket.

Three months later, he pleaded to possession of cocaine and was sentenced to 13 days served, followed by six months' community control and 30 months' probation.

On January 3, 2024, an Alachua deputy stopped Edwards while the defendant was driving a truck for work. According to a violation report, the defendant's license had been permanently revoked after several DUI convictions.

On January 16, Circuit Judge James M. Colaw sent Edwards to county jail for 120 days with 23 days' credit for time served and reinstated Edwards's probation with the original termination date.

## Stalked woman, put air tag in her car

Bradford deputies arrested a 32-year-old Lawtey man after they said he followed a woman to Orange Park and tracked her with an Apple air tag.

Chase Stephen Beverly was arrested on February 2.

According to an arrest report, the victim said she went with her co-workers to a Clay County bowling alley and saw the defendant at the bar. She left the facility due to the defendant's presence, but the 32-year-old momentarily blocked her vehicle from leaving the parking lot.

She and her co-workers then proceeded to Buffalo Wild Wings near the Orange Park Mall, and the victim saw Beverly parked in the mall's parking lot with the lights on his motorcycle turned off.

She then received a notification that an air tag was near her phone, and she discovered the tracking device in her vehicle's glove box.

The victim told deputies she and Beverly have never been in a romantic relationship and that she has told the defendant she does not want to be in a relationship with him.

Beverly admitted to deputies that he put the air tag in the woman's car, claiming that he worked on the vehicle and put the tracking device in it in case someone stole it in the future.

## BANK

Continued from page 5

Fontaine also said the bank has had to work through some bad loans it made in the past.

"Those are biting us," he said. "Those are tough. We're working them out, and we've taken a lot of losses in the past year to try to get some of that behind us."

The banker added that because of the ownership change and modernization of some of the bank's practices, some people think the bank has lost sight of its original mission.

"Unfortunately, I think the

community now thinks we don't want to lend to them, and that's not true," he said. "We just want to lend to the right people."

Fontaine said he had just met with a Union County trucking company.

"I would lend to them all day long," he said. "I'd love to have a thousand of them. Good, honest people who run a nice business."

Fontaine said the DLP Bank's new owners have been generous with the bank's employees and have embraced contributing to the community.

"They've been very philanthropic with our own employee base and with the

community," he said. "The Shop-with-a-Cop fundraiser was amazing. It brought tears to my eyes to see these kids who wouldn't have had a Christmas if it wasn't for us. That's why I joined this company."

Fontaine said that through the ownership change, the working out of previously made bad loans, and the other improvements made to the bank, he wants one message to get out to Bradford and Union Counties residents.

"I'm trying to tell the community," he said, "we're here for you."

## Sheriff was victim of fraud

BY DAN HILDEBRAN  
dan@bctelegraph.com

Bradford County Sheriff Gordon Smith talked to the Keystone Heights Rotary Club about fraud prevention, and he told the civic group that when it comes to white-collar crime, he can speak from experience.

"I have fallen victim," he said. "I have changed my debit card three times because of fraud."

The sheriff said consumers must remain vigilant, even when on a night out.

"That pretty little waitress that comes by my table and gets your card, and she goes back there to pay for your meal," he said. "They go click, click, and before you've left the restaurant, they've ordered an Amazon package to be delivered to the vacant apartment next to them."

The sheriff said that recently, his agency has handled several credit card frauds committed by fast food restaurant employees working the drive-through window.

Smith said one overriding rule applies when attempting to prevent online fraud.

"Never, never," he said, "and I'm going to say this again, and I can't stress it enough: never use a debit card for online purchasing."

"The good thing with a credit card is you can dispute the transactions, and they're not emptying your bank account," he added. "They don't have direct access to your bank account."

The sheriff said he recently received a call from a bank security official asking him if he was in Mexico.

"I said, no, no, I'm not in Mexico," adding that someone had obtained the information off his Apple credit card and was making purchases south of the border.

"I had a credit card, which is the Apple card that I use, and they froze it, and of course, it takes about 10 days to get it all straightened out," he said.

Smith also recommended using a single credit card for



**"If you have a droid phone, we hack those every day. It is not easy to get into an iPhone. It's one of the hardest, and they don't cooperate with you. They believe in your privacy." - Bradford County Sheriff Gordon Smith. Photo: Dan Hildebran.**

better tracking and security.

"Find one major credit card and use that card," he said. Don't use four or five credit cards and your department store card because guess what you're doing? You're missing something. If you use that one card all the time, then you can check it pretty easily."

He added that consumers should check the activity on their cards frequently.

"I check mine every couple of days," he said.

The sheriff emphasized the need to verify the legitimacy of online sellers and the need to be wary of deals that seem too good to be true.

"We dealt with a guy at the Department of Corrections," Smith recalled. "Stopped him. We ran the car, and it came back stolen. He has his bill of sale. He found this nice ride on Facebook Marketplace. He went there and gave the guy cash, which the car was worth probably in the neighborhood of nearly \$40,000, and he was able to get it for \$17,000."

"I can tell you a local person

right here in Keystone," the sheriff said, recalling another case. "Bought both his kids a new car and himself a new car. One of them had to have work done on it. We found out all three were stolen. He was out nearly \$80,000."

Smith said that with the assistance of federal agents, his investigators located the fraudster in Pennsylvania.

"This guy was selling online," he said. "If it's too good to be true, it is."

Smith also said the proliferation of data brokers and the selling of personal information is a security threat to residents.

"When I run an election campaign, I use a device or a source that tells me everything about you," he said. "What magazines do you order? You may be a registered Democrat, but you're a subscriber to the NRA magazine. I'm probably going to target you. It would scare you if I pulled it up right now to see what people that are running for office have access to."

Smith also advised against getting lazy with passwords. "Interesting fact," he said. "The word 'password' and '1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6' are the two most common passwords in the world."

Smith also said security-conscious people use iPhones rather than Androids.

"If you have a droid phone, we hack those every day," he said. "It is not easy to get into an iPhone. It's one of the hardest, and they don't cooperate with you. They believe in your privacy."

"We love to catch a bad guy, and he's got a droid phone because a lot of them use burners and throwaways and don't want to keep the same number," he added. "Droids are so simplistic because there's no proprietary to it."

Smith also discussed phishing scams and the importance of updating security software regularly.

## State could have a check waiting for you

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD  
mark@bctelegraph.com

Did you know there could be tens, hundreds, even thousands of dollars out there waiting for you, and you only have to know where to look?

According to the Florida Department of Financial Services, there is more than \$234 million in unclaimed funds belonging to Floridians.

Housing deposits, refunds, insurance claims and more from a variety of sources is waiting to be claimed. Millions of dollars of that money belongs to people in Bradford, Union and Clay counties — nearly \$1.2 million in the 32091 area code alone.

The search is as simple as typing your name and searching the database at FLTreasureHunt.gov. You can narrow the search

by entering address information. (There is also a security feature which will ask you to identify objects in order to prove you are not a robot trying to access the database.)

If your name pulls up a match for your address, click on the account number and you will be told the type of property held and who reported it. You will also have a chance to file a claim to receive it.

While impossible to reproduce a complete list, a quick search for common names found more than 30 hits for people named Crawford with Starke addresses, including account numbers for a Christopher, Jeremiah, Kenneth and Vivian. There were multiple accounts for an Angela Miller and a Seth Miller, plus 14 other Millers..

It's not just individuals with property to claim. Businesses can also find themselves listed.

According to the website, "Unclaimed Property assets are held by business or government entities (holders) for a set period of time, usually five years. If the holder is unable to locate, re-establish contact with the owner and return the asset, it is reported and remitted to the Florida Department of Financial Services, Division of Unclaimed Property."

Searching takes very little time, but could result in a nice surprise. There is no statute of limitations on unclaimed property, and property can be reclaimed through the website free of charge.

Happy treasure hunting!

## February sobriety checkpoints announced

During the month of February, the Bradford County Sheriff's Office will be conducting sobriety checkpoints in one or more of the following locations: U.S. Highway 301 and Market Road, S.R. 100 West, S.R. 100

East and Southeast 109th Street, Southeast S.R. 21, S.R. 16 and Southwest S.R. 231.

## Get help quitting

Quitting tobacco isn't easy. Finding help should be. If you're ready to quit, join the next Tools to Quit Tobacco group. Virtual options by computer and phone are also available.

This free, one-time two-hour group will give you tips on how to deal with triggers and withdrawal symptoms and how to prevent relapse. You'll also receive up to four weeks of free nicotine patches, gum or lozenges.

This group more than doubles your chance of quitting for good. Pre-registration is required. Call 866-341-2730 to reserve your spot.



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# Rural Counties Day: meeting lawmakers face to face

**BY CLIFF SMELLEY**  
Telegraph Staff Writer

Seeing is believing.

It's not that lawmakers from Florida's large counties don't believe in the existence of smaller, rural counties, but what do they really know about them?

That's what Rural Counties Day is about.

Every year, people representing rural counties set up booths in the courtyard at the Capitol in Tallahassee, giving out souvenirs and/or food items and taking the chance to talk to others about their counties as well as some of their counties' needs.

Bradford County resident Patricia Evans, the president of Capital City Bank in Bradford and Clay counties and a member of the Rural Counties Day planning committee, said, "I really am excited about the event, to have everyone here

championing for one cause, one mission and one team — our rural counties."

Of Florida's 31 designated rural counties, 28 attended this year's event, which occurred on Jan. 25: Bradford, Union, Baker, Calhoun, Columbia, Dixie, Franklin, Gadsden, Gilchrist, Glades, Gulf, Hamilton, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Holmes, Jackson, Lafayette, Levy, Liberty, Madison, Nassau, Okeechobee, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor, Wakulla and Washington.

It's become an event that's drastically different from the inaugural one in 2019, when only three counties participated.

"It's wonderful," said Bradford County Manager Scott Kornegay, who was attending the event for the fifth time. "This was Rep. Bobby Payne's idea in the beginning. It has grown year after year to what you see now.

It's really a good opportunity for rural counties to come together in Tallahassee and meet our lawmakers and make them aware of our needs."

Payne, who represents District 20 (Putnam and parts of Clay, Marion and St. Johns), said his idea for such an event was to "make sure people understand what rural counties mean to Florida."

"We know rural counties are the backbone of Florida," Payne said. "Rural counties bring so much to the table. A good friend of mine — Adam Putnam — always said, 'How do you get to a metropolitan or urban area? You have to drive through a rural community.'"

In the case of Rural Counties Day, the rural communities go to Tallahassee. Jimmy Williams, Union County coordinator, said the visible, physical presence is huge.

"You can talk to these people by phone or by email, but looking in their eyes and talking face to face really means something to them," said Williams, who was attending for the fourth year. "It shows you care."

Jimmy Crosby, the clerk for the city of Starke who was also attending for the fourth year, said, "There's nothing like a visual. This is one great visual for big-city folks to recognize their neighbors. I think that's great."

Evans, who's been involved with the event since its inception, said when she sees the turnout, she always thinks about those first two years when not many counties participated. Though the event's participation increased its second year, it still consisted of less than 10 counties in 2020.

Now, it has been three straight years of 20-plus counties.

"When the courtyard's empty (after the event), I always try to make myself stand and just reminisce for a few minutes," Evans said.

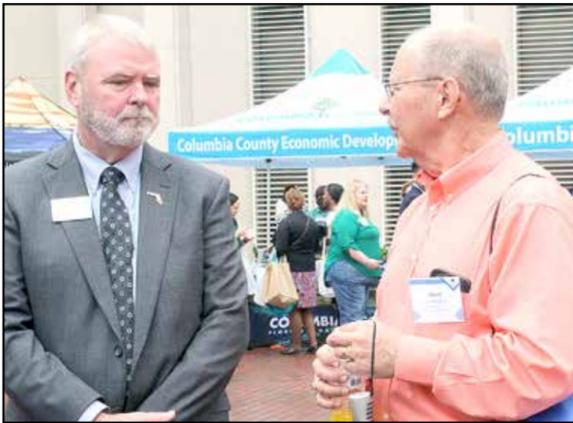
The event in the Capitol courtyard is always preceded by a legislative session the night before. Evans said 100 people attended the reception prior to the first Rural Counties Day. This year's reception was attended by more than 370.

"This is awesome," Evans said. "To be able to help bring Bobby Payne's vision to fruition has been an honor."

City of Starke Commissioner Janice Mortimer has attended Rural Counties Day. It has been exciting for her to see the event's growth, but she also loves the fact that it seems to be having



Rep. Bobby Payne (center) is pictured with the inaugural Bobby Payne Florida Rural Counties Advocacy Award, which was presented to him by Putnam County Commission Chairman Larry Harvey. Payne is pictured with members of the Rural Counties Day planning committee (l-r): Dana Jones of Putnam County, Pam Whittle and Patricia Evans of Bradford County and Darryl Register of Baker County.



Bradford County Manager Scott Kornegay (left) visits with Keystone Airport Board Chairman David Kirkland in the Capitol courtyard.



Union County Coordinator Jimmy Williams (right) shakes hands with Hamilton County Commissioner Richie McCoy.



Arc of Bradford Executive Director John Williams (foreground) strolls through the Capitol courtyard as he checks out the booths of the 28 counties in attendance.

benefits locally.

"I think it's really starting to have an impact on the legislative decisions that we're seeing," Mortimer said. "The city of Starke got some pretty nice appropriations last legislative session. Hopefully, this year will turn out just as good."

"I think it's great. I'm really happy to see the city of Starke and Bradford County be a part of this."

Talking to people in person can have a positive impact, as Williams said, but so, too, can giving out something that people will remember you by. Like food.

Strawberry shortcake is available at the Bradford County booth every year, courtesy of the Downtown Grill's Chrissy Thompson and her restaurant staff. This year, 1,500-1,700 visitors to the Bradford booth could not only learn where Bradford County is, but also get a taste of something the county takes pride in.

"At least we know that this many more people no know where we are and kind of what we're famous for — our strawberries and our community," Thompson

said. You never know how something as simple as accepting a piece of strawberry shortcake can affect a future decision.

Thompson, who's also involved with Starke's Downtown Merchants Association, said,

**See RURAL page 15**

## Mentoring group will benefit from bingo-spades fundraiser

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

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

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

Team entry fees for the spades

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

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

For more information, please contact Edrick Hamilton at 904-364-0868 or 12gibt.12gip@gmail.com.

## Rescheduled Starke Kiwanis poker tourney is March 22

The Kiwanis Club of Starke's Jan. 19 Patsy Welch Memorial Poker Tournament had to be postponed and is now scheduled

for Friday, March 22, at The Downtown Grill. Registration begins at 6 p.m., followed by play at 6:30 p.m.

Buy-in is \$60, which includes high hand and refreshments.

Cash prizes are awarded for first, second and third places.

## DAR accepting applications for scholarship

The Col. Samuel Elbert Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, will award the \$1,500 Betty Warren Memorial Scholarship to a deserving student who has completed 24 hours at Santa Fe College.

Applications may be obtained from Patricia Landon at the Santa Fe College Andrews Center in Starke or Karen Lake at the Santa Fe College Watson Center in Keystone Heights.



Kateyln T. Hardwick, Esq



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**BRADFORD COUNTY EVENT NOTICE!**

## TOXIC ROUND-UP

(9 AM - 3 PM)  
**SAT. FEB. 17, 2024**

Bradford County Courthouse Parking Lot

945 N TEMPLE AVE.  
STARKE, FL 32091

This service is **FREE** to residents, and is provided to small businesses for a small fee. Residents can contact Bennie Jackson, Bradford County Solid Waste, at 904-966-6212; or by email at bennie\_jackson@bradfordcountyfl.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 Bradford County Commission are sponsoring a project to collect, recycle, treat and properly dispose of these household hazardous wastes:

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

## UCHS reaches finals at state cheer meet, BHS competes in semifinals

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Union County High School had the second-highest score in the semifinals round, which put the Tigers in the finals, where they placed seventh at the Florida High School Association Class 1A state cheerleading meet on Feb. 3 at R.P. Funding Center in Lakeland.

The Tigers, who competed in the medium non-tumbling division, had a raw score of 76.8 in the finals and finished with a final score of 72.8, which factored in four penalty points. Union' score consisted of three parts: 26.6 in building, 29.1 in cheer and 21.1 in overall.

West Nassau was the champion with a final score of 90.6, followed by Weeki Wachee (85.5), West Shore (83.6), Keys Gate (82.8), Pompano Beach (77.2) and Parker (76.5).

The finals round consisted of seven teams.

In the semifinals round, Union trailed only Pompano Beach. The Tigers had a score of 79.4 (29.1 building, 28.6 cheer, 22.7 overall, 1 penalty point), while Pompano Beach had a score of 79.6.

Bradford was eighth out of 10 teams with a score of 74.2 (28.7 building, 26.6 cheer, 20.9 overall, 2 penalty points).

The Tornadoes finished ahead of Rickards (72.7) and Master Academy (70.3).

Placing third through seventh were Parker (76.8), Newberry, 76.5), Ridgeview (76), Four Corners (75.4) and Interlachen (74.4).

## KHHS girls advance to regionals, boys just miss out

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Keystone Heights High School struggled to set itself up for shots on goal in a 5-0 loss to P.K. Yonge in the District 4-3A girls soccer championship match, which was played Jan. 30 in Williston.

Goalie Aspen Krohn made 17 saves for the second seed Indians.

Xana Briley also played in goal, making four saves.

Top seed P.K. Yonge (13-3-3) was led by Faith Hardy's three goals.

Keystone (12-6-1) received an at-large berth in the Region 1 playoffs. The Indians are the eighth seed in the eight-team region and traveled to play number-one seed P.K. Yonge in a quarterfinal match this past Tuesday.

If Keystone defeated the Blue Wave, it will travel to play either fourth seed North Bay Haven (17-4) or fifth seed Maclay (11-5-2) in a semifinal match on Friday, Feb. 9, at 7 p.m. A win there would put the Indians in the Region 1 championship match on Wednesday, Feb. 14, at 7 p.m. Keystone would play on the road against second seed Florida High (13-4), third seed Episcopal (12-6-1), sixth seed Wolfson (9-7-3) or seventh seed Pensacola Catholic (12-6-1).

The boys team at KHHS narrowly missed out on qualifying for regionals, finishing ninth in the Florida High School Athletic Association's Region 1-3A power rankings. Providence was ranked eighth, earning the last at-large bid. The Stallions (9-6-3) had a rating of 3.834, while the Indians (13-3-2) had a rating of 3.743.



Marcus Chever (left) pulls up in the lane for a basket in Hope's 65-44 win over Westwood Christian.

## Hope boys win 65-44 to move record to 17-3

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
Telegraph Staff Writer

It was an eight-point differential when the two teams met on Dec. 19, but the Hope Christian Academy boys



Aiden Wilson sets up for a three-point shot.

basketball team recorded a bigger win in the second meeting on Feb. 5, defeating visiting Westwood Christian (Live Oak) 65-44.

A three-point basket by Aiden Wilson and a two-point field goal by Julio Casielles late in the second quarter helped send the Lions (17-3) into the half leading 43-25.

The Lions' defensive pressure was heavy to start the third quarter, forcing the Warriors into three early turnovers. A Wilson steal led to a basket by Marcus Chever to put Hope up by 20 points.

Hope also came up big in rebounding. Frazier and Jude Hanson rebounded two early missed shots by Westwood. Frazier scored off an offensive rebound to make it a 47-27 game. Chever then grabbed a rebound on the defensive end and dribbled the length of the court for a basket and a 22-point lead.

Frazier had a basket following a defensive rebound by Hanson, while Wilson rebounded a

## UCHS boys began district tournament play on Tuesday

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Union County High School had no trouble advancing to the semifinals of the District 6-1A boys basketball tournament, defeating Bell 74-22 in a Feb. 6 quarterfinal game.

The fourth seed Tigers (12-10) will now take on top seed Newberry (14-7) in a semifinal game on Thursday, Feb. 8, at Fort White High School. Tip-off time wasn't known by deadline.

Second seed Hawthorne (14-4) and third seed Fort White (16-5) will play in the other semifinal.

The championship game will be played Saturday, Feb. 10, at Fort White.

Thomas Williams scored 19 points in the first half against Bell (3-22) as the Tigers outscored the Bulldogs 51-12. A pair of three-pointers by Williams and Gavin Jenkins put the Tigers up 9-0. Jayden Jenkins rebounded a



Thomas Williams (right) scored 23 points in the Tigers' 74-22 District 6-1A quarterfinal win over Bell.

missed free throw and scored to later make it a 13-0 game.

Jayden Jenkins scored eight points in the first quarter as Union built a 23-9 lead.

The final basket of the opening quarter, which was scored by Gavin Jenkins, was the start of

See DISTRICT, page 12



Jayden Jenkins (center) scored 12 points in Union's District 6-1A quarterfinal win.

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-Rick Sewell



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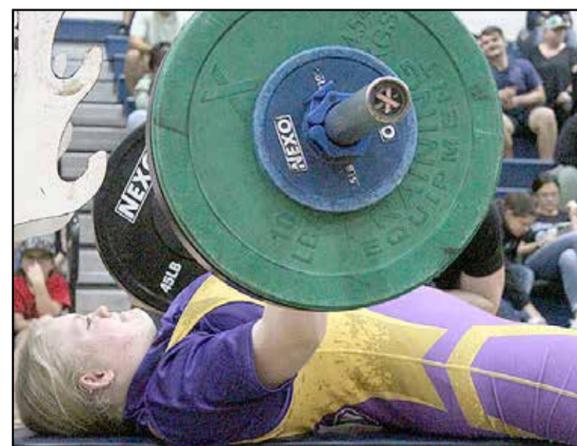
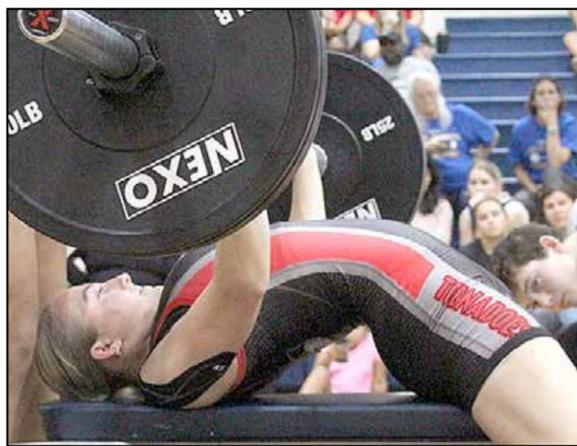
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Rylie Blankenship had the best bench-press total (125) in the 119-pound class to win the Region 2-1A title.

Chloe Still was the runner-up in the 139-pound class and earned an at-large bid to the state.

Alexia Cyr won the Region 2-1A championship in the 169-pound class to qualify for the state finals.

## 4 to compete at state finals for BHS, KHHS and UCHS

### Bradford's Blankenship wins region, makes state again

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Bradford High School's Rylie Blankenship won the traditional championship in the 119-pound class at the Feb. 3 Region 2-1A girls weightlifting meet at Chiefland High School and will be the 'Tornadoes' lone representative at the state finals.

Blankenship actually tied with West Nassau's Savannah Cothren, with each finishing with a 240-pound overall total, but Blankenship earned the championship and the automatic state-qualifying berth that comes with it due to the weigh-in tiebreaker. She weighed in at half a pound less than Cothren.

During the clean-and-jerk competition, Blankenship had a successful lift of 115 on her first attempt. However, she missed her second and third attempts, which were at 125 pounds — a total she successfully lifted at the previous week's District 6 meet. That left Blankenship in fourth place heading into the bench press.

Blankenship needed a strong performance in the bench, and she got it. She did 115 on her first attempt and then lifted a personal record of 125 on her second attempt. Blankenship was unsuccessful on her third attempt at 130, but her 125 was the best bench total in the class by 5 pounds. She was one of only three lifters in the 119 class to surpass 100 pounds on the bench.

The state finals will be held Saturday, Feb. 17, at R.P. Funding Center in Lakeland. Blankenship will lift during the first flight, which begins at 9 a.m.

Bradford had two other lifters earn points, which were awarded for placing in the top six. Raelynn Moore placed sixth in the 119 class with a 215 total (105 clean and jerk, 110 bench), while Brianna Brooks was sixth in the unlimited class with a 300 total (130, 170). Brooks' bench and clean-and-jerk totals were both 5 pounds greater than what she did at the District 6 meet, while Moore made a 10-pound improvement in the bench from districts to regionals.

The Tornadoes finished with nine team points, which put Bradford in eighth place.

Brooks was the closest to earning an at-large bid to state

See BHS, page 12

### KHHS' Still is Region 2-1A runner-up, makes the list for state

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Keystone Heights High School's Chloe Still earned an at-large bid to the Class 1A girls weightlifting state finals after finishing as the runner-up in her class in the traditional event at the Region 2 meet, which was held Feb. 3 at Chiefland High School.

Still, who competes in the 139-pound class, had a clean and jerk of 140 and a bench press of 145 to finish with an overall total of 285. She was 10 pounds away from winning the championship.

Her clean-and-jerk total was 5 pounds greater than what she lifted at the previous week's District 6 meet.

The state finals are Saturday, Feb. 17, at R.P. Funding Center in Lakeland. Still will lift in the first flight, which begins at 9 a.m.

At-large state berths were determined by comparing the totals of the second- through 10th-place lifters at the state's four regional meets. Keystone's Cadie Bowles fell 5 pounds

shy of qualifying in both the traditional and Olympic events.

Bowles, who competes in the 101 class, placed sixth in the Olympic event with a 155 total (65 snatch, 90 clean and jerk) and was seventh in the traditional event with a 175 total (90 clean and jerk, 85 bench). Her bench, snatch and clean-and-jerk totals were all 5 pounds better than what she did at the district meet.

Keystone had five lifters (including Bowles) who earned points in the Olympic competition. The Indians finished with 13 points, which tied them for sixth with Bolles and Father Lopez.

Ashlynn Brown and Kenly Chitty each had a 240 total to finish tied for third in the 154 class. Due to the weigh-in tiebreaker, Brown was the official third-place finisher, while Chitty was fourth. Brown did 120 in both the snatch and clean and jerk, while Chitty had a 100 snatch and a 140 clean and jerk. Each lifter improved by 5 pounds in the snatch from the district meet, while Chitty also improved her clean and jerk by 5 pounds.

Kourtney Marsh had a fourth-place total of 190 (80, 110) in the 119 class, with her snatch total being 5 pounds greater than what

See KHHS, page 13

### UCHS has 2 state qualifiers, including Region 2-1A champ Cyr

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Alexia Cyr won a championship in the traditional event at the Feb. 3 Region 2-1A girls weightlifting meet at Chiefland High School and is one of two Union County High School lifters who'll compete at state.

Cyr finished in a three-way tie atop the 169-pound class as she, Newberry's Dalia Johnson and Pierson Taylor's Teriauna Carruthers each had an overall total of 285. Cyr weighed in at 1 pound less than Johnson and approximately 3 pounds less than Carruthers, which gave her the class championship and the automatic bid to state.

In the clean-and-jerk competition, Cyr had a 135 total, which was 10 pounds better than what she lifted at the previous week's District 6 meet. That put her in second place heading into the bench press. Carruthers and Johnson each had a clean and

jerk of 145.

Cyr, who had a 160 bench at the district meet, did 150 on her first attempt, but was then unsuccessful on attempts of 155 and 160. Still, she had the second-best bench total in the class and was able to finish tied with Carruthers and Johnson, who each had a bench total of 140.

The state finals will be held Saturday, Feb. 17, at R.P. Funding Center in Lakeland. Cyr will lift in the second flight, which begins at 3 p.m.

Union's Riley Gibson will compete at state as well after earning an at-large berth. At-large berths were determined by comparing the totals of the second- through 10th-place lifters at the four regional meets.

Gibson placed third in the 119 class at the Region 2 meet, but actually had the second-best overall total of 235 (110 clean and jerk, 125 bench). Her bench total was 5 pounds greater than what she lifted at the district meet.

If Gibson's overall total was 5 pounds greater, she would've tied champion Rylie Blankenship of Bradford and runner-up

See UCHS, page 13

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# Obituaries

## Joan F. Canova

Mrs. Joan F. Canova, 88, of Starke passed away Saturday, Feb. 3, 2024, at Haven Hospice in Gainesville. She was born March 16, 1935, in Waycross, Georgia to John William and Fredre (Hutchinson) Furlong. After graduating from high school, her family moved to Starke, where she served as secretary at Starke Elementary School for a few years. She and George Alderman Canova were married in November of 1959. They lived at Kingsley Lake for many years. Throughout her life, she served as pianist, organist, and accompanist in various churches. In addition to serving in churches, she taught private piano lessons with end-of-the-year formal recitals. Her level of professionalism was evident throughout the events. Music was her world! In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband of 37 years, George Alderman Canova Sr., and a brother, Max Furlong.

Survivors are a daughter, Cindy Canova; and a son, George (Cheryl) Canova Jr., both of Starke. She was lovingly called "Ma" by grandsons, William "Parker" Hinson (Rebecca Armstrong) and Christopher "Hunter" Hinson; along with great-grandchildren, Keira Joelle Armstrong-Hinson, Jase Hunter Hinson, and Hollis Cash Hinson.

A graveside memorial service and interment will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 17, at Kingsley Lake Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts can be made to Haven Hospice, 4200 NW 90th Blvd., Gainesville, 32606.

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

PAID OBITUARY



## Harold Cottom

Harold "Butch" V. Cottom III, 68, of Keystone Heights died at home Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024. He was preceded in death by his daughter, Crystal Cottom.

Survivors are his wife, Barbara (Tuten) Cottom; seven children; and numerous extended family members.

There are no services scheduled at this time.

Arrangements are by Jones-Gallagher Funeral Homes, 340 E. Walker Drive, Keystone Heights 32656. 352-473-3176. www.jonesgallagherfh.com

## Carolyn Francis

Mrs. Carolyn D. Francis, 93, of Hampton passed away at her home on Friday, Jan. 19, 2024. She was born June 11, 1930, in Hartford County, Connecticut to Darwin and Ellen (Marsh) Davis. She was a retired banker and a member of the Starke Presbyterian Church. She enjoyed crafts, painting, and cross stitching along with watching her favorite shows on the television. In addition to her parents; she was preceded in death by her husband, Robert Francis; their daughter, Cindy Norman; and granddaughter, Brandi.

She leaves behind her children, Thomas "Tommy" Francis and Martha Van Vleet, both of Hampton. Also left behind are grandchildren, Tahra, Bobby Lee, Jeremy; great-grandchildren, Hailee, Hailynn, MckAylan, Ashlenn, Kendall, Gavin, Nalani and Kawena; along with great-great-grandchildren, Penelope, Austin, Kolby, and Trace.

There will be memorial service held at 1 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24, at Starke Presbyterian Church. Interment will be at a later date at the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts can be made to either the Heart Association or Diabetes Association.

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

PAID OBITUARY

## Rufus Jefferson Sr.

Rufus Jefferson Sr., 73, of Lake Butler, transitioned from this life on Thursday, Feb. 1, 2024, at his home.

Survivors are his children, Janice (Andre) Ross of Lake Butler, Valerie Jefferson of Saint Paul, North Carolina, and Rufus (Keturah) Jefferson Jr. of High Springs; and a host of family and friends.

Memorial services will be at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 10, at Greater Elizabeth, Missionary Baptist Church, Lake Butler. Interment will be at Fort Call Cemetery, Worthington Springs.

Arrangements are under the care of Combs Funeral Home, Lake City, Florida



## Kassidy Carter

Kassidy "Kass" Ember Carter (Atwood), 10, of Starke passed away on Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2024, at her residence. She was born in Orange Park on July 5, 2013, to her loving mother, Kari Marie Carter. She was raised in Kingsland, Georgia and recently relocated to Starke. She loved to explore and loved nature and sunflowers. She loved all animals, especially frogs, lizards, dogs, and cats, and even wanted to own a farm or zoo one day. She was certainly a girly girl and loved having her nails painted, using cosmetics, and being beautiful just like her mom. She also enjoyed traveling and liked to collect Squishmallows. She was currently in the fifth grade at Starke Elementary School. More than anything, she loved her family and enjoyed spending time with them. She was so very loved and will be deeply missed by her family and friends. She was preceded in death by her paternal grandfather, William F. Atwood Jr.

She is survived by parents, Kari Carter and William Atwood of Starke; brother, Tristan Carter; maternal grandparents, Krissy Wigg Massey of Kingsland, Georgia and Robert (Lisa) Massey of Palatka; paternal grandmother, Elizabeth Atwood of Starke; aunts and uncles, Kyle (Amari) Massey of Kingsland, Georgia, Jared (Payton) Massey of Leesburg, and Avery Atwood and Jessica (Robert) Morgan of Starke; and many cousins, extended family members and friends.

A Celebration of Life was held on Tuesday, Feb. 6, at Morgan Road Baptist Church with Pastor Gerry Hunter officiating. The family received friends an hour prior at the church.

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

PAID OBITUARY



## William Criss Jr.

William Franklin Criss Jr. of Starke died Tuesday, Jan. 30, 2024. He was preceded in death by his father, William Criss Sr.; grandparents; and an aunt and an uncle.

Survivors are his parents, Stephen (Jani) Wall; sisters, Hannah Criss and Charity (Travis) Roberts; and many extended family members.

His memorial will be Saturday, Feb. 10, at 2 p.m. at The Salvation Army in Gainesville.

## Margaret Pombier

Margaret A. Pombier, 92, of Jacksonville, passed away peacefully at her home on Saturday, Feb. 3, 2024. She now joins her loving husband, James, who predeceased her in death on Feb. 6, 2018. She was born in Lansing, Michigan on Jan. 21, 1932, to James and Mary Cretcher, both of whom were teachers. She grew up in the Midwest, as her parents were teaching in various high schools and colleges. She graduated from Albion College with a teaching degree, and then met the love of her life, James O. Pombier, a U.S. Marine. They married in 1952 and had five children, traveling throughout the country while James served in the Marines for 20 years. She was very busy raising their five children and working as a teacher while James was absent for long periods of time serving in the military. After retiring from the military, they eventually settled in Michigan (Battle Creek and Lansing), where James began a long and distinguished career with Western Southern Life that eventually took them to Panama City and then Jacksonville, where they remained for the remainder of their lives while enjoying many visits from their children and grandchildren for many years who were all the joy of their lives. She was preceded in death by her parents, James R. Cretcher and Mary (Wooton) Cretcher; her brother, James R. Cretcher; and sister, Judith A. (Cretcher) Enos.

She is survived by her five children, James (Terri) Pombier of Madison, Wisconsin, Mary Hoffman Rabb of Jacksonville, Patricia (Lowel) Nash of Lansing, Michigan, Linda (Sam) Drelles of Leland, Michigan, and Philip (Lexa) Pombier of Starke; along with 15 grandchildren; great-grandchildren; and many very special nieces and nephews and great-nieces and nephews; and a very special life-long friend, June Smith of Georgia.

Throughout her long life, Margaret was a very sweet, kind and loving wife, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, and friend to everyone. She is remembered for her wonderful sense of humor that came out of nowhere. She was one of those special people who never had an unkind word to say about anyone or anything, a true role model who set the highest example for her family. We are all forever grateful for her dedication to her family and their happiness, and she was a true model of patience and kindness. She will be missed by all those who have been blessed by her life comprising of over 92 years. Her daughter Mary was by her side and her loving caregiver for many years after the passing of James Pombier, who she also cared for with compassion and humanity and the family is forever grateful. She will be laid to rest with her loving husband, James, at Jacksonville National Cemetery at a later date.

PAID OBITUARY



## HCA

Continued from page 10

Warriors miss and, like Chever earlier, drove all the way to the other end of the court for a basket, putting Hope ahead 53-27.

Dalton Thomas' offensive rebound and score helped send the Lions into the final quarter with a 56-35 lead.

The fourth quarter began with a rebound putback by Noah Gaffney, while the game ended on a steal and score by Walker Munroe.

Wyatt Gauthier had two defensive rebounds in the final quarter, while Gaffney, Munroe, Thomas, Wilson and Griffin McCloud each had one.

Hope had a 12-0 record on the season before losing 56-51 on the road against Jacksonville's

First Coast Christian on Jan. 19.

The Lions bounced back with two straight wins on the road, defeating Ocala's First Assembly Christian 53-45 on Jan. 23 and Trenton's Riverside Christian 67-44 on Jan. 25.

First Coast Christian defeated the Lions again, this time winning 72-65 in overtime on Hope's home court.

After a 64-30 road win over Gainesville Christian Community on Jan. 29, Hope lost 65-61 to host Old Plank Christian on Jan. 30 in Jacksonville.

The Lions entered the Feb. 5 Westwood game off a 65-59 road win over Valdosta, Georgia's Open Bible Christian on Feb. 2.

Hope hosts High Springs' First Christian on Thursday, Feb. 8, at 7 p.m. and then hosts Brunswick Christian on Monday, Feb. 12, at 5:30 p.m.

## DISTRICT

Continued from page 10

a 19-0 run. Williams had the first three baskets of the second quarter, with one field goal coming from beyond the three-point arc. After Blake McCoy made a free throw, Williams had another basket to make the score 35-9. Jayden Jenkins added a basket and then came up with a steal, which led to a basket by Williams. Williams was fouled on the play and made the awarded free throw.

Bell finally got on the scoreboard in the quarter with a free throw, but that was followed by a three-pointer by McCoy off a Jayden Jenkins assist. McCoy

would score again off an Erick Lasseter steal.

Kam Paytee and Jeppson Dang hit consecutive three-pointers to end the half with Union leading by 39.

The second half went quick with a running clock. Williams had two third-quarter baskets to finish with a game-high 23 points. Jayden Jenkins added a basket and finished with 12 points.

Dang scored six points in the fourth quarter and finished with nine points.

Gavin Jenkins also had nine points, while the Tigers also got six from McCoy, four from Johnte Nichols, three each from Paytee and Aaron Griffis, two each from Isaiah Folaji and R.J. Odom and one from Deonte Jones.

## BHS

Continued from page 11

for Bradford. If her overall total had been 15 pounds greater, she would've advanced.

At-large qualifiers were determined by comparing the totals of the second- through 10th-place lifters at the four regional meets.

The Tornados' Addison Thornton placed 10th in the 199 class. She had a 270 total (125, 145), improving from the district meet by 5 pounds in the clean and jerk and by 15 pounds in the bench press. She had the fourth-highest bench total in the class.

Blakeleigh Smith had a 235 total (110, 125) in placing 11th in the 154 class. Her bench total was 5 pounds greater than what she did at the district meet.

Kelsie Cochran also competed for Bradford, finishing with a 215 total (110, 105) in the 169 class. Her clean-and-jerk total was 5 pounds greater than what she lifted at the district meet.

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**Jada Hankerson (left) dribbles toward the basket in Bradford's 61-32 win over Fort White. It was the Tornadoes' last game prior to the District 2-3A tournament.**

## Bradford girls hoops team ends regular season with 29-point win

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
Telegraph Staff Writer

Jada Hankerson scored 12 points in the first quarter as the Bradford High School girls basketball team built a double-digit lead it would never relinquish in a 61-32 win over visiting Fort White on Feb. 1.

Hankerson, who led all scorers with 21 points, scored the first nine points of the game, with two of those baskets coming off Ar'Nayshia Griffin assists.

A three-pointer by Kayla Evans put the Tornadoes up 12-2. Griffin later added a score off a rebound putback, followed by a Hankerson three-pointer. Griffin then recorded the assist on a basket down low by Ajjiah Jackson as Bradford built a 19-5 lead.

Griffin, Hankerson and

Jackson each had a basket in the final stages of the opening quarter as the Tornadoes took a 14-point lead into the second quarter.

Bradford struggled from the field in the second, going more than five minutes without any points. Finally, with 2:31 to play in the half, Nichelle Brown scored off a Griffin assist. That was the start of a 10-5 run, which featured Hankerson and Destiny Crum each making a three-point shot. Griffin also scored off an offensive rebound as the Tornadoes went into halftime leading 35-19.

Griffin had seven rebounds in the first half.

It was a 17-point game in the third quarter when Bradford went on a 14-4 run. It began with Jackson scoring on a drive to the basket, while Kha'Myra Hankerson scored off a Griffin assist. Evans made 2 of 3 free-throw attempts after being fouled on a three-point shot. After Griffin grabbed a defensive rebound and went the length of the court for a score, Jada Hankerson was fouled on a three-point shot, making 1 of 3 free throws for a 46-22 lead. Hankerson then came right back and made a three-point basket.

An Evans steal led to a basket by Brown, sending the Tornadoes into the fourth quarter leading 51-24.

Brown scored four points in the fourth quarter, which ended with Evans scoring off a steal.

Griffin finished with 10 points, while Evans and Brown had nine and eight, respectively. Bradford also got six from Jackson, five from Crum and two from Kha'Myra Hankerson.

Bradford (15-7) is the third seed in the three-team District 2-3A tournament and were scheduled to play a semifinal game against second seed P.K. Yonge (11-7) at P.K. Yonge on Wednesday, Feb. 7, at 7 p.m. If the Tornadoes won, they'll travel to Ocala to play top seed Trinity Catholic (14-9) for the championship on Friday, Feb. 9, at 7 p.m.



**Connor Guy scored eight points in Keystone's 49-44 win over Bronson.**

## KHHS boys hoops team gets back into the win column

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Keystone Heights High School snapped a six-game losing streak in defeating visiting Bronson 49-44 in a boys basketball game that ended the regular season on Feb. 2.

It was a two-point game in favor of the Indians entering the second quarter, but Keystone was able to outscore the Eagles 24-16 to take a 42-32 lead into the fourth quarter.

Keystone got nine points from Garrison Teague, eight from Connor Guy, seven from Andru Siemer, six each from Bryce Hollingsworth and Zeke Pelham, five from Cartez Daniels and four each from Darrion Grady and Bryant Kubisiak.

The Indians (8-13) are the sixth seed in the six-team District 5-4A tournament, which is being hosted by Santa Fe High School. Keystone played third seed North Marion (10-12) in a quarterfinal game this past Tuesday. If the Indians won, they'll play

second seed Santa Fe (10-13) in a semifinal game on Thursday, Feb. 8.

Saturday, Feb. 10, is the championship game.

Tip-off times were not available by deadline.

## BHS drop last regular-season home game

BY CLIFF SMELLEY  
Telegraph Staff Writer

A five-point game in the third quarter turned into a rout as visiting Fort White went on a 26-0 run in defeating the Bradford High School boys basketball team 65-34 on Feb. 1.

Race Black and Damarion Hankerson each scored five points for the Tornadoes in a competitive first quarter. A Black three-pointer tied the score at 9-9. Fort White, which entered the game fifth in the Florida High School Athletic Association's Class 1A power rankings, went back on top, but the Bradford tied it again when Keith Taylor scored off a Hankerson assist. Mattox Burgin then put the Tornadoes on top 13-11, but the Indians' Jayden Jackson answered.

A Hankerson three-pointer sent Bradford into the second quarter leading 16-13.

Fort White scored nine of the first 11 points of the second quarter. A Burgin basket left Bradford trailing by two late in the half, but the Indians' Darion Brinson scored the final five points to send Fort White into halftime leading 27-20.

After the Indians scored the first basket of the third quarter, Burgin received a Taylor pass and drained a three-pointer. Taylor then grabbed a rebound on the defensive end and threw a pass downtown to Burgin, who scored to make it a 29-25 game.

The Indians scored six straight points before Hankerson made a three-point shot that left Bradford trailing 35-28.

Breion Johnson had the game's



**Mattox Burgin hangs in the air for a shot against Fort White in Bradford's regular-season home finale.**

next basket, which pulled the Tornadoes to within five.

Fort White then went on its big run, sparked by Brandon Demartino. Demartino made back-to-back three-pointers, while a steal by Darion Brinson

led to another Fort White basket. Demartino then sank another three-point shot to put the Indians up 46-30.

Three turnovers led to points as Fort White entered the fourth quarter leading 53-30.

The run continued as the Indians scored the first eight points of the final quarter. Hankerson ended the Bradford drought with a three-point basket.

Hankerson and Burgin finished with 12 and 11 points, respectively. The Tornadoes also got five from Black, four from Johnson and two from Taylor.

Bradford ended the regular season with a 67-33 loss at Creekside on Feb. 3. The Tornadoes (7-16) now prepare to play a semifinal game against P.K. Yonge (11-12) in the District 2-3A tournament on Thursday, Feb. 8, at 7 p.m. at P.K. Yonge. Bradford is the fourth seed, while P.K. Yonge is the top seed.

If the Tornadoes win, they'll travel to play either second seed Trinity Catholic (8-15) or third seed Interlachen (13-12) for the championship on Saturday, Feb. 10, at 7 p.m.

## UCHS

Continued from page 11

Savannah Cothren of West Nassau and been awarded the championship due to the weigh-in tiebreaker.

Gibson will lift in the first flight at the state meet, which will begin at 9 a.m.

The Tigers' Emma Handley also competed in the 119 class, finishing in a three-way tie for 12th and officially placing 14th with a 200 total (100, 100). Both

bench and clean-and-jerk totals were 5 pounds greater than what she did at districts.

Holly Halfacre was 14th in the 110 class with a 180 total (100, 80), while Tai Allen was 17th in the 129 class with a 225 total (115, 110). Allen had a 5-pound improvement in both the bench and clean and jerk from her totals at the District 6 meet.

The first- and third-place finishes by Cyr and Gibson resulted in Union placing seventh in the team standings.

## KHHS

Continued from page 11

she did at the district meet.

Paige Harrington was fifth in the 183 class with a 235 total (95, 140). She was 10 pounds away from earning an at-large state berth.

The Indians also had the following results in the Olympic event: Alivia Richardson 10th in the 101 class with a 135 total (60, 75), Madison Sapp 14th in the 110 class with a 160 total (65, 95), Still eighth with a 220 total (80, 140), Morgan Wilson 11th in the 169 class with a 205 total (85, 120), Raegan Lee 17th in the 169 class with a 190 total (85, 105), Lily Mitchell 11th in the 183 class with a 205 total (85, 120) and Ava Herman 12th in the unlimited class with a 235 total (100, 135).

Herman improved in the

snatch from the district meet by 10 pounds, while Lee improved her snatch total by 5 pounds. Mitchell did 5 pounds more in the clean and jerk than she did at the district meet.

In the traditional event, Keystone had three lifters besides Bowles earn seventh-place finishes in Chitty, Harrington and Herman.

Chitty had a 250 total (140 clean and jerk, 110 bench) and tied for sixth, but the weigh-in tiebreaker resulted in her official seventh-place finish.

Harrington finished in a three-way tie for sixth place with teammate Mitchell and Wolfson's Auria Kemp, but Kemp was awarded the official sixth-place finish due to the weigh-in tiebreaker, while Harrington and Mitchell were seventh and eighth, respectively. Harrington had a 205 bench and a 140 clean and jerk, while Mitchell had a 140 bench and a

120 clean and jerk. Mitchell's clean and jerk improved by 5 pounds from the district meet.

Herman finished in a four-way tie for seventh (and was officially seventh) in her class with a 290 total (135 clean and jerk, 155 bench). Her bench total was 10 pounds greater than what she did at the district meet.

Keystone also had the

following results: Marsh ninth with a 205 total (110, 95), Wilson 10th with a 245 total (120, 125), Brown 12th with a 235 total (120, 115), Lee 12th with a 230 total (105, 125) and Richardson 13th with a 140 total (75, 65).

Brown and Marsh each had a 5-pound improvement from the district meet in their bench total.

# JBS Jackson

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*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*  
*John 14:6*

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**496-3079**

### Tri-County Classifieds

Bradford County  
**Telegraph**

Lake Region  
**Monitor**

UNION COUNTY  
**TIMES**

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40 Notices

**EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY.** All real estate advertising in this newspaper is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 in which makes it illegal to advertise "any preference, limitation or discrimina-

tion based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin, or an intention to make any such preference, limitation or discrimination." Familial status includes children under the age of 18 living with parents or legal custodians, pregnant women and people securing custody of children under 18. This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate in which is in violation of the law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertised in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis. To complain of discrimination, call HUD toll-free at 1-800-669-9777, the toll-free telephone number for the hearing impaired is 1-800-927-9275. For further information call Florida Commission on Human Relations,

Lisa Sutherland 850-488-7082 ext. #1005

**50 For Rent**

WE HAVE 2 OR 3 bedroom MH, clean, close to prison. Call 352-468-1323

NEWLY RENOVATED 2BR/2BA SW, 3BR/2BA DW Lake Butler. No pets. 18 acres for sale. Starke-Lake Butler. 1-678-438-6828

2BR/1BA MH \$900/mo., 3BR/2BA \$1100/mo., 3BR/1BA \$1000/mo. in Raiford. Lawn care included. No smokers, no pets. 1st/last & security deposit required. Leave message or send text if no answer. 904-662-3735.

3735.

2BR/1BA single family. Carport & utility room. 1st, last and security deposit. Starke, close to hospital. 904-364-6602.

**65 Help Wanted**

LIBRARY TECHNICAL ASSISTANT 1- Circulation. The Bradford County Public Library is accepting applications for a full time Library Technical Assistant 1 to work in the circulation Department of the Library. This person in this position works with peo-

ple of all ages is required cash handling experience is preferred. Some experience working in a Library is preferred. The starting salary is \$15.75 per hour. Applications can be picked up at the Library Circulation Desk beginning on Thursday, February 8, 2024 and must be returned to the Library by 2:00 pm on Friday, February 23, 2024. Bradford County is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

## Set Right Mobile Homes

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904-964-4214  
TDD/TTY 711

Accepting Applications!  
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\*This institution is an equal opportunity provider, and employer.\*  
\*Equal Housing Opportunity\*

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# Legal Notices

Legals for the week of Feb. 8, 2024

## BRADFORD

**NOTICE OF INTENT TO USE UNIFORM METHOD OF COLLECTING NON-AD VALOREM SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**

The Board of County Commissioners (the "Board") of Bradford County, Florida (the "County") hereby provides notice, pursuant to Section 197.3632(3)(a), Florida Statutes, of its intent to use the uniform method of collecting non-ad valorem assessments for more than one year to fund annual costs incurred by the County in providing fire protection and emergency medical services. The uniform method allows for the collection of non-ad valorem assessments, sometimes referred to as special assessments, on the annual property tax bill mailed each November by the county tax collector. The Board will consider the adoption of a resolution electing to use the uniform collection method, commencing in November 2024, at a public hearing to be held at 6:30 p.m. on February 15, 2024, at the County Commission Chambers located at 945 North Temple Avenue, Starke, Florida 32091.

Such resolution will state the need for the levy and will contain a legal description of the boundaries of the real property subject to the levy. The non-ad valorem assessments may be levied within the entire County; provided, however, that the imposition and collection of non-ad valorem assessments from any incorporated area of the County shall be subject to the consent by ordinance of the governing body of the affected municipality as required by section 125.01(1)(g), Florida Statutes. The resolution does not impose any assessments, it only preserves the County's ability to collect assessments on the annual property tax bill beginning in November 2024, if the Board takes additional steps before then to impose fire protection assessments. Such additional steps include public hearing and mailed notice at least twenty (20) days before the public hearing to all owners of real property subject to the assessments. Copies of the proposed form of resolution are on file at the office of the County Manager, 945 North Temple Avenue, Starke, Florida 32091. All interested persons are invited to attend the public hearing. In the event any person decides to appeal any decision by the Board with respect to any matter relating to the consideration of the resolution at the referenced public hearing, a record of the proceeding may be needed and in such an event, such person may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the public hearing is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence on which the appeal is to be based.

In accordance with the American with Disabilities Act, persons needing a special accommodation of an interpreter to participate in these proceedings should contact the County Manager at (904) 966-6327, at least 48 hours prior to the time of the hearing.

Board of County Commissioners of Bradford County, Florida  
1/18 4tchg 2/8-BCT

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 8TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA  
CIVIL DIVISION:  
CASE NO.: 2023-CA-0356  
U.S. BANK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, Plaintiff,  
Vs.  
HEATHER RENEE SCRIMSHAW A/K/A HEATHER SCRIMSHAW; FLORIDA HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION; JEDIDIAH JAMES SCRIMSHAW A/K/AJEDIDIAH SCRIMSHAW; UNKNOWN TENANT IN POSSESSION OF THE SUBJECT PROPERTY, Defendants.

NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE SALE NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to an Order or Final Judgment entered in the above styled cause now pending in said court and as required by Florida Statute 45.031(2), DENNY THOMPSON as the Clerk of the Circuit Court shall sell to the highest and best bidder for cash at the, east front door of the Bradford County courthouse, 945 North Temple Ave, Starke, FL., 11:00 AM on the 23 day of May, 2024, the following described property as set forth in said Final Judgment, to wit:

THE EAST 100 FEET OF THE WEST 1/2 OF THE SOUTHEAST 1/4 OF THE NORTHWEST 1/4 OF THE NORTHEAST 1/4 OF SECTION 34, TOWNSHIP 5 SOUTH, RANGE 22 EAST, BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA PROPERTY ADDRESS: 2647 NW 210 STREET, LAWTEE, FL 32058

IF YOU ARE A PERSON CLAIMING A RIGHT TO FUNDS REMAINING AFTER THE SALE, YOU MUST FILE A CLAIM WITH THE CLERK NO LATER THAN THE DATE THAT THE CLERK REPORTS THE FUNDS AS UNCLAIMED. IF YOU FAIL TO FILE A CLAIM, YOU WILL NOT BE ENTITLED TO ANY REMAINING FUNDS. AFTER THE FUNDS ARE REPORTED AS UNCLAIMED, ONLY THE OWNER OF RECORD AS OF THE DATE OF THE LIS PENDENS

MAY CLAIM THE SURPLUS.

If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in a proceeding, you are entitled to be provided with certain assistance at no cost to you. Please contact the ADA Coordinator, Alachua County Family and Civil Justice Center, 201 East University Avenue, Gainesville, FL 32601 (352) 337-6237 at least 7 days before your scheduled court appearance, or immediately upon receiving this notification if the time before the scheduled appearance is less than 7 days. If you are hearing or voice impaired, call 1-800-955-8770 via Florida Relay Service. Dated this 24 day of January 2024. By: /s/ Lindsay Maisonet Lindsay Maisonet, Esq. Bar Number: 93156 Submitted by: De Cubas & Lewis, P.A. PO Box 5026 Fort Lauderdale, FL 33310 Telephone: (954) 453-0365 Facsimile: (954) 771-6052 Toll Free: 1-800-441-2438 DESIGNATED PRIMARY E-MAIL FOR SERVICE PURSUANT TO FLA. R. JUD. ADMIN 2.516 eservice@decubaslewis.com 19-00743

2/1 2tchg 2/8-BCT

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA

File No# 04-2024-CP-000011 IN RE: THE ESTATE OF CLAYTON PATRICK PERRY JR., DECEASED.

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
The formal administration of the estate of CLAYTON PATRICK PERRY, JR., who died on February 9, 2023, is pending in the Circuit Court of Bradford County, Florida, Probate Division, the address of which is the Clerk of the Circuit Court, 945 N. Temple Avenue, Starke, FL 32091. The names and addresses of the PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE and attorney are set forth below.

All creditors of the DECEDENT and other persons having claims or demands against the DECEDENT'S estate on whom a copy of this NOTICE is required to be served must file their claims with this COURT WITHIN THE LATER OF THREE (3) MONTHS AFTER THE TIME OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE OR THIRTY (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 the DECEDENT'S estate must file their claims with this COURT WITHIN THREE (3) MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE.

ALL CLAIMS NOT FILED WITHIN THE TIME PERIODS SET FORTH IN SECTION 733.702 OF THE FLORIDA PROBATE CODE WILL BE FOREVER BARRED. NOTWITHSTANDING THE TIME PERIODS SET FORTH ABOVE, ANY CLAIM FILED TWO (2) YEARS OR MORE AFTER THE DECEDENT'S DATE OF DEATH IS BARRED.

The date of first publication of this NOTICE TO CREDITORS is February 1, 2024.

CHRISTOPHER LEE PERRY PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE 20264 Wolf Springs Court Clermont, FL 34715 Respectfully submitted, VeRonica R. Owens, Attorney At Law, P.A. By: /s/ Peter Penrod, Esq. Fla. Bar No.: 70235 Peter@OwensPenrod.com 189 South Lawrence Boulevard Keystone Heights, FL 32656 2000 Henley Road, Suite B Middleburg, FL 32068 | Telephone: (352) 473-5000 Attorneys for PETITIONER

2/1 2tchg 2/8-BCT

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 8TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA

CIVIL DIVISION:  
CASE NO.: 2022-CA-0105  
U.S. BANK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, Plaintiff,

Vs.  
UNKNOWN HEIRS, BENEFICIARIES, DEVISEES, ASSIGNEES, LIENORS, CREDITORS, TRUSTEES AND ALL OTHERS WHO MAY CLAIM AN INTEREST IN THE ESTATE OF KATHLYN D. SANDERS; BRADFORD COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS; FLORIDA HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION; UNKNOWN TENANT IN POSSESSION OF THE SUBJECT PROPERTY, Defendants.

NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE SALE NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to an Order or Final Judgment entered in the above styled cause now pending in said court and as required by Florida Statute 45.031(2), DENNY THOMPSON as the Clerk of the Circuit Court shall sell to the highest and best bidder for cash at the, east front door of the Bradford County courthouse, 945 North Temple Ave, Starke, FL., 11:00 AM on the 30 day of May, 2024, the following described property as set forth in said Final Judgment, to

wit:  
LOT 28, KNIGHTS REPLAT, ACCORDING TO MAP OR PLAT THEREOF RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 3, PAGE 54 OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS OF BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA, LYING AND BEING IN SECTION 21, TOWNSHIP 6 SOUTH, RANGE 22 EAST, BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA. PROPERTY ADDRESS: 102 HERLONG ST, STARKE, FL 32091 IF YOU ARE A PERSON CLAIMING A RIGHT TO FUNDS REMAINING AFTER THE SALE, YOU MUST FILE A CLAIM WITH THE CLERK NO LATER THAN THE DATE THAT THE CLERK REPORTS THE FUNDS AS UNCLAIMED. IF YOU FAIL TO FILE A CLAIM, YOU WILL NOT BE ENTITLED TO ANY REMAINING FUNDS. AFTER THE FUNDS ARE REPORTED AS UNCLAIMED, ONLY THE OWNER OF RECORD AS OF THE DATE OF THE LIS PENDENS MAY CLAIM THE SURPLUS.

If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in a proceeding, you are entitled to be provided with certain assistance at no cost to you. Please contact the ADA Coordinator, Alachua County Family and Civil Justice Center, 201 East University Avenue, Gainesville, FL 32601 (352) 337-6237 at least 7 days before your scheduled court appearance, or immediately upon receiving this notification if the time before the scheduled appearance is less than 7 days. If you are hearing or voice impaired, call 1-800-955-8770 via Florida Relay Service. Dated this 24 day of January 2024. By: /s/ Lindsay Maisonet Lindsay Maisonet, Esq. Bar Number: 93156 Submitted by: De Cubas & Lewis, P.A. PO Box 5026 Fort Lauderdale, FL 33310 Telephone: (954) 453-0365 Facsimile: (954) 771-6052 Toll Free: 1-800-441-2438 DESIGNATED PRIMARY E-MAIL FOR SERVICE PURSUANT TO FLA. R. JUD. ADMIN 2.516 eservice@decubaslewis.com 19-00743

2/8 2tchg 2/15-BCT

**COMMISSION MEETING**  
THE PUBLIC IS HEREBY NOTIFIED that the Bradford County Board of County Commissioners will have a board meeting on February 15, 2024, at 6:30 PM inside the county commission meeting room, located in the north wing section of the Bradford County Courthouse, 945 N. Temple, Avenue, Starke, FL. A copy of the meeting agenda may be obtained from the Bradford County website: www.bradfordcountylg.com. Said meeting location is secured – no firearms or weapons are permitted.

2/8 1tchg-BCT

**PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE**  
CareerSource Florida Crown will hold an Executive Committee Meeting Date: February 20, 2024, (Tuesday) Time: 11 a.m. Place: Teleconference & CareerSource Board Room-1389 US Hwy 90 W Ste 170/Lake City, FL Call In: 1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago) Participant ID: # Meeting ID: 3962013193 Passcode: 944786 Join Zoom Meeting https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3962013193?pwd=bnRSL3JocTFlOZlHWWU9tUGJKZStvQT09

It is advised that you call in as well as log in via the computer application. The public is invited to attend. Notice has been made of this meeting, through publication, to comply with the "Government in the Sunshine Law". All CareerSource Florida Crown public meetings are listed on the CareerSource Florida Crown web site at www.careersourcefloridacrown.com. CareerSource Florida Crown is an Equal Opportunity Employer/Program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities using TTY/TDD equipment via the Florida Relay Service at 711. Contact Jeff Geering at 386-755-9026 X 3221.

If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the board, agency, or commission with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearing, he or she will need to record the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, he or she will need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

2/8 1tchg-BCT

SUBJ: CIS Deployment.  
"Public notification that a Contraband Interdiction System will be deployed at Florida State Prison. Those in the surrounding community should be aware there is potential for service interruptions during deployment."

2/8 1tchg-BCT

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

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the ordinance, which title hereinafter appears, will be considered for enactment by the City Commission of the City of Starke, Florida, hereinafter referred to as the City Commission, at a public hearing on February 20, 2024 at 5:30 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard, in the City

Commission Meeting Room, City Hall located at 209 North Thompson Street, Starke, Florida. A copy of said ordinance may be inspected by any member of the public at the Office of the City Clerk, City Hall, located at 209 North Thompson Street, Starke, Florida, during regular business hours. On the date, time and place first above mentioned, all interested parties may appear and be heard with respect to the ordinance. The title of said ordinance reads, as follows:

**ORDINANCE NO. 2024-05 AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF STARKE, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE FUTURE LAND USE PLAN MAP OF THE CITY OF STARKE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO AN AMENDMENT OF 50 OR LESS ACRES OF LAND, PURSUANT TO AN APPLICATION, 1S231201A, BY THE PROPERTY OWNER OF SAID ACREAGE, UNDER THE AMENDMENT PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED IN SECTIONS 163.3161 THROUGH 163.3248, FLORIDA STATUTES, AS AMENDED; PROVIDING FOR A CHANGE IN THE LAND USE CLASSIFICATION FROM RESIDENTIAL, MEDIUM DENSITY (MORE THAN 2 TO LESS THAN OR EQUAL TO 8 DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE) TO COMMERCIAL ON CERTAIN LANDS WITHIN THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF THE CITY OF STARKE, FLORIDA; PROVIDING SEVERABILITY; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE**

All persons are advised that if they decide to appeal any decisions made at the above referenced public hearing, they will need a record of the proceedings, and that for such purpose they may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. Persons with disabilities requesting reasonable accommodations to participate in this proceeding should contact the Office of the City Clerk at 904.964.5027 or via the Florida Relay Service 800.955.8770 (voice) or 800.955.8771 (TTY) at least 48 hours prior to the date of the public hearing.

2/8 1tchg-BCT

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

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the ordinance, which title hereinafter appears, will be considered for enactment by the City Commission of the City of Starke, Florida, hereinafter referred to as the City Commission, at a public hearing on February 20, 2024 at 5:30 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard, in the City Commission Meeting Room, City Hall located at 209 North Thompson Street, Starke, Florida. A copy of said ordinance may be inspected by any member of the public at the Office of the City Clerk, City Hall, located at 209 North Thompson Street, Starke, Florida, during regular business hours. On the date, time and place first above mentioned, all interested parties may appear and be heard with respect to the ordinance. The title of said ordinance reads, as follows:

**ORDINANCE NO. 2024-06 AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF STARKE, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE ZONING MAP OF THE CITY OF STARKE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE, AS AMENDED; RELATING TO THE REZONING OF LESS THAN TEN CONTIGUOUS ACRES OF LAND, PURSUANT TO AN APPLICATION, Z 23-07, BY THE PROPERTY OWNER OF SAID ACREAGE; PROVIDING FOR REZONING FROM SINGLE FAMILY, MEDIUM DENSITY DISTRICT (R-1C) TO HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL DISTRICT (B-3) OF CERTAIN LANDS WITHIN THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF THE CITY OF STARKE, FLORIDA; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE**

All persons are advised that if they decide to appeal any decisions made at the above referenced public hearing, they will need a record of the proceedings, and that for such purpose they may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. Persons with disabilities requesting reasonable accommodations to participate in this proceeding should contact the Office of the City Clerk at 904.964.5027 or via the Florida Relay Service 800.955.8770 (voice) or 800.955.8771 (TTY) at least 48 hours prior to the date of the public hearing.

2/8 1tchg-BCT

**NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR TAX DEED**

Notice is hereby given that MID-FLORIDA DEVELOPMENT LLC the holder of the following certificate, has filed said certificate for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and names in which it was assessed are as follows:  
Certificate Number: 801  
Year of Issuance: 2020  
Parcel Number: 03311-0-0000  
Case Number: 04-2024-TD-002  
Description of Property: Lot 1, Block 11, of Livingston-Truby & Company's Subdivision of the Northeast Quarter of the North-East Quarter of Section

28, Township 6 South, Range 22 East, as per the plat thereof recorded in the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Bradford County, Florida, in Original Plat Book 1, on page 41. Name in Which Assessed: BERTHAL DADE  
Name on last tax roll, if different: DADE BERTHA L ESTATE % LILLIAN L TAYLOR  
All said property being in the County of Bradford, State of Florida. Unless such certificate or certificates shall be redeemed according to law the property described in such certificate or certificates will be sold to the highest bidder at the BRADFORD COUNTY COURTHOUSE, STARKE, FL on the 04/10/2024, at 11:00 AM, or any subsequently scheduled sale date.

Denny Thompson, Clerk Of The Circuit Court Bradford, County, Florida  
BY: Kyrath Smith, Deputy Clerk  
Contact the Tax Deed Office at 904-966-6280 to obtain the amount necessary to redeem.  
DATED: February 5, 2024  
DATE OF PUBLICATION: FEBRUARY 8th, 2024 / FEBRUARY 15th, 2024/ FEBRUARY 22nd, 2024/ FEBRUARY 29th, 2024

2/8 4tchg 2/29-BCT

## UNION

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA, CIVIL DIVISION

CASE NO. 23000011CAAXMX U.S. BANK TRUST NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, NOT IN ITS INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY BUT SOLELY AS OWNER TRUSTEE FOR RCF 2 ACQUISITION TRUST, Plaintiff,

vs.  
LLOYD S. HEDMAN, JR. A/K/A LLOYD S. HEDMAN A/K/A LLOYD HEDMAN A/K/A LLOYD SONDEE HEDMAN, JR.; TAMMY J. HEDMAN A/K/A TAMMY B. HEDMAN A/K/A TAMMY HEDMAN; UNKNOWN TENANT NO. 1; UNKNOWN TENANT NO. 2; and ALL UNKNOWN PARTIES CLAIMING INTERESTS BY, THROUGH, UNDER OR AGAINST A NAMED DEFENDANT TO THIS ACTION, OR HAVING OR CLAIMING TO HAVE ANY RIGHT, TITLE OR INTEREST IN THE PROPERTY HEREIN DESCRIBED,

Defendant(s).

**NOTICE OF SALE PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 45 NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** pursuant to an Order or Summary Final Judgment of foreclosure dated January 17, 2024, and entered in Case No. 23000011CAAXMX of the Circuit Court in and for Union County, Florida,

wherein U.S. BANK TRUST NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, NOT IN ITS INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY BUT SOLELY AS OWNER TRUSTEE FOR RCF 2 ACQUISITION TRUST is Plaintiff and LLOYD S. HEDMAN, JR. A/K/A LLOYD S. HEDMAN A/K/A LLOYD SONDEE HEDMAN, JR.; TAMMY J. HEDMAN A/K/A TAMMY B. HEDMAN A/K/A TAMMY HEDMAN; UNKNOWN TENANT NO. 1; UNKNOWN TENANT NO. 2; and ALL UNKNOWN PARTIES CLAIMING INTERESTS BY, THROUGH, UNDER OR AGAINST A NAMED DEFENDANT TO THIS ACTION, OR HAVING OR CLAIMING TO HAVE ANY RIGHT, TITLE OR INTEREST IN THE PROPERTY HEREIN DESCRIBED, are Defendants, I will sell to the highest and best bidder for cash on the Front Steps of the Union County Courthouse, 55 West Main Street, Lake Butler, FL 32054, 11:00 a.m., on May 2, 2024, the following described property as set forth in said Order or Final Judgment, to-wit: PARCEL OF LAND LYING AND BEING SITUATE IN SECTION 8, TOWNSHIP 6 SOUTH, RANGE 18 EAST, UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA, BEING MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: COMMENCE AT THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF SAID SECTION 8, AND RUN S. 02°25'03" E. ALONG THE WEST LINE OF SAID SECTION 8 A DISTANCE OF 913.81 FEET; THENCE RUN N. 86°45'38" E. A DISTANCE OF 71.48 FEET TO THE INTERSECTION WITH THE EAST RIGHT -OF -WAY LINE OF COUNTY ROAD NO. S-245 AND TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING OF THE HEREINAFTER DESCRIBED PARCEL OF LAND; THENCE CONTINUE RUNNING N. 86°45'38" E. A DISTANCE OF 195.43 FEET; THENCE RUN S. 05°33'50" E. A DISTANCE OF 390.19 FEET TO THE INTERSECTION WITH THE NORTH RIGHT -OF -WAY LINE OF COUNTY ROAD NO. S-241-A; THENCE RUN S. 86°44'06" W. ALONG SAID NORTH RIGHT -OF -WAY LINE A DISTANCE OF 190.34 FEET TO THE POINT OF CURVATURE OF A CURVE TO THE RIGHT; THENCE RUN NORTHWESTERLY, CONTINUING ALONG SAID NORTH RIGHT-OF-WAY LINE OF COUNTY ROAD NO. S-241-A; AND ALONG THE EAST RIGHT-OF-WAY LINE OF COUNTY ROAD NO. S-245, ALONG THE ARC OF A CURVE CONCAVE NORTHEASTERLY AND HAVING A RADIUS OF 50.00 FEET, THROUGH A CENTRAL ANGLE OF 94°57'00", AN ARC DISTANCE OF 82.86 FEET, SAID ARC BEING SUBTENDED BY A CHORD. HAVING A BEARING OF N. 45°47'24" W. AND A DISTANCE OF 73.70 FEET, TO THE POINT OF TANGENCY; THENCE RUN N.

81°41'06" E. CONTINUING ALONG SAID EAST RIGHT -OF -WAY LINE, A DISTANCE OF 336.91 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING, LYING AND BEING SITUATE IN UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA. TOGETHER WITH THAT CERTAIN DOUBLE WIDE MOBILE HOME DESCRIBED AS 1998 MERI, #S FLHMLCB135917048A & B, TITLE #S 71559242 AND 71559241 ANY PERSON CLAIMING AN INTEREST IN THE SURPLUS FROM THE SALE, IF ANY, OTHER THAN THE PROPERTY OWNER AS OF THE DATE OF THE LIS PENDENS MUST FILE A CLAIM BEFORE THE CLERK REPORTS THE SURPLUS AS UNCLAIMED. THE COURT, IN ITS DISCRETION, MAY ENLARGE THE TIME OF THE SALE, NOTICE OF THE CHANGED TIME OF SALE SHALL BE PUBLISHED AS PROVIDED HEREIN. DATED at Lake Butler, Florida, on January 29, 2024. KELLIE HENDRICKS RHOADES As Clerk, Circuit Court CRYSTAL NORMAN Deputy Clerk Diaz Anselmo & Associates, PA. Attorneys for Plaintiff P.O. BOX 19519 Fort Lauderdale, FL 33318 Telephone: (954) 564-0071 Service E-mail: answers@dallegal.com

2/1 2tchg 2/8-UCT

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING CONCERNING A SPECIAL EXCEPTION AS PROVIDED FOR IN THE UNION COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA, SERVING AS THE BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT OF UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA, that, pursuant to the Union County Land Development Regulations, as amended, hereinafter referred to as the Land Development Regulations, objections, recommendations and comments concerning the special exception, as described below, will be heard by the Board of County Commissioners of Union County, Florida, serving as the Board of Adjustment of Union County, Florida, on February 19, 2024, at 5:50 p.m. or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard, in the Board of County Commissioners Meeting Room, County Courthouse, located at 55 West Main Street, Lake Butler, Florida.

SE 24-01 a petition by Dawn McCarthy and Jeffrey McCarthy, to request a special exception be granted as provided for in Section 4.5.5 of the Land Development Regulations, to permit a conference center within an AGRICULTURAL (A-4) zoning district, in accordance with a petition dated December 12, 2023 and a site plan dated December 22, 2023, revised on January 2, 2024, to be located on property described, as follows:

A parcel of land lying in Section 13, Township 5 South, Range 20 East, Union County, Florida, more particularly described, as follows: The South 1/2 of the Southwest 1/4 of said Section 13, Containing 80.00 acres, more or less. At the aforementioned public hearing, all interested parties may be heard with respect to the special exception. Copies of the special exception are available for public inspection, at the Office of the Board of County Commissioners, located at 15 Northeast First Street, Lake Butler, Florida, during regular business hours.

All persons are advised that if they decide to appeal any decision made at the above referenced public hearing, they will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, they may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceeding is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. Persons with disabilities requesting reasonable accommodations to participate the proceedings should contact Dianne Hannon, Secretary to the Board of County Commissioners at 386.496.4241 or via email: at least 48 hours prior to the meeting. If you are hearing or speech impaired, please contact the Florida Relay Service at 1.800.955.8770 or 1.800.955.8771.

2/9 1tchg-UCT

## LAKE REGION

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC AUCTION**  
Notice is hereby given that pursuant to the Florida Self Storage Facility Act Statutes (Section 83.801, 83.809), Lake Area Storage, LLC, will sell the following items to the highest and best bidder on Monday, February 26, 2024 at 9:00 A.M. (EST) at 7101 SR 21, Keystone Heights, Florida 32656: Unit# 351, containing misc. household items.

2/8 2tchg 2/15-LRM

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC AUCTION**  
Notice is hereby given that pursuant to the Florida Self Storage Facility Act Statutes (Section 83.801, 83.809), Lake Area Storage, LLC, will sell the following items to the highest and best bidder on Monday, February 26, 2024 at 9:00 A.M. (EST) at 7101 SR 21, Keystone Heights, Florida 32656: Unit# 344, containing misc. household items.

2/8 2tchg 2/15-LRM

## Bradford County Telegraph

USPS 062-700

Published each Thursday and entered as Periodical Postage Paid at Starke, Florida under Act of March 3, 1879.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to: Bradford County Telegraph

131 West Call Street • Starke, Florida 32091  
Phone: 964-6305 • P.O. Drawer A • Starke, FL 32091

John Miller, Publisher

Editor: Mark J. Crawford  
Sports Editor: Cliff Smelley  
Advertising: John R. Tillman  
Typesetting: Mary Goodge  
Advertising & Newspaper Prod: C. Hurston  
Bookkeeping & Classified Adverts: Heather Wheeler  
Bookkeeping Asst: Mary Goodge  
Front office Asst:



Subscription Rate in Trade Area  
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\$26.00 six months  
Outside Trade Area:  
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\$26.00 six months

## Lake Region Monitor

USPS 114-170

Published each Thursday and entered as Periodical Postage Paid at Keystone Heights, Florida under Act of March 3, 1879.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to: Lake Region Monitor

P.O. Drawer A - Starke, FL 32091  
131 W. Call Street - Starke, FL 32091  
Phone: (904)964-6305 • Fax: (904)964-8628

John Miller, Publisher

Editor: Dan Hildebran  
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Subscription Rate in Trade Area  
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Outside Trade Area:  
\$52.00 per year;  
\$26.00 six months

## UNION COUNTY TIMES

USPS 648-200

Published each Thursday and entered as Periodical Postage Paid at Lake Butler, Florida under Act of March 3, 1879.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to: UNION COUNTY TIMES

131 W. Call Street • Starke, FL 32091  
uctimeseditor@gmail.com  
904-964-6305 • fax 904-964-8628

John Miller, Publisher

Editor: Mark J. Crawford  
Advertising: John R. Tillman  
Typesetting: Mary Goodge  
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\$52.00 per year;  
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Bradford County Commissioner Diane Andrews (far left) and Marty Shaw of Coldwell Banker Smith and Smith Realty (second from left) chat with visitors and hand out strawberry shortcake at the Bradford County booth during Rural Counties Day in the Florida Capitol courtyard.

**RURAL**  
Continued from page 9

“Even if they just drive through (Bradford County), maybe they’ll realize we have strawberries and say, ‘Let’s stop.’”

Evans said people in Tallahassee do remember the strawberry shortcake. She received text messages from people asking if the desserts would be available again this year.

In coordinating the music for this year’s event, Evans said a lobbyist she was talking to told her, “I met you last year. I told you those were the best

strawberries I’ve ever had in my life. You all gave me the history of the Bradford County berry. I’ll never forget that.”

Bradford isn’t the only county that takes part in Rural Counties Day with the hopes of tempting taste buds. Other food offerings included breakfast burritos at the Hardee booth, clam chowder at the Levy booth, sausage (by itself or in jambalaya) at the Gadsden booth, prime-rib sliders at the Okeechobee booth and oysters at the Wakulla booth.

“It’s almost like a little fair — a mini fair, really,” Crosby said.

Crosby tasted something for the first time, courtesy of the Washington County booth —

possum. He laughed and said no when asked if it tasted like chicken.

“It was pretty good,” Crosby said, adding, “It’s got its own taste. It’s worth trying one time anyway.”

Evans said that is one of the highlights of Rural Counties Day — the members of rural counties get to have new experiences, too, from visiting each other’s booths. Evans, who enjoys camping with her husband, Joey, said she learned of two campsites at state parks that she had never been to while attending last year’s Rural Counties Day.

She also picked up an “amazing” fishing lure at the

Hamilton County booth.

“I caught the biggest red I’ve ever caught in my life oof their lure,” Evans said.

Mortimer said, “I really enjoy the camaraderie between the different counties. We’re not competing against each other. Everybody’s just highlighting what their area is known for, which I think is good.”

At the reception prior to this year’s Rural Counties Day, the inaugural Bobby Payne Florida Rural Counties Advocacy Award was presented to its namesake by Putnam County Commission Chairman Larry Harvey in honor of Payne’s “vision, leadership and many years of dedicated service on behalf of rural counties.”

“Your unwavering commitment to our mission and your tireless effort have been an inspiration to all of us,” Harvey said.

Payne attributed the success of Rural Counties Day to the members of the planning committee, saying, “They have made this thing happen year after year. I just show up.”

Besides Evans, the members of the planning committee are Bradford County’s Pam Whittle (the president and CEO of North Florida Regional Chamber of Commerce), Dana Jones (president of Putnam County Chamber of Commerce) and Darryl Register (executive director of Baker County Chamber of Commerce).

The reception also included the presentation of the Rural Champion Award to Rep. Jason Shoaf of District 7 (Dixie, Franklin, Gulf, Hamilton, Lafayette, Liberty, Suwannee, Taylor, Wakulla and parts of Jefferson and Leon).

The signature sponsors for Rural Counties Day 2024 were Florida Power and Light and Columbia County Economic Development. Platinum sponsors were Capital City Bank, Comcast, Conexon, Duke Energy and North Florida Professional Services, while gold sponsors were David Melvin Engineering, Liberty Partners



People are always drawn to Bradford County mascot “Brad Ford Berry” everytime he makes an appearance at Rural Counties Day. Brad Ford Berry is pictured with Gadsden County Economic Development Director T.J. Lewis at this year’s event.



City of Starke Commissioner Janice Mortimer (foreground) checks out Hardee County’s booth, while Mortimer’s friend, Tallahassee resident Sylvia Williams (background, left) chats with Kristi Schierling.

of Tallahassee, LLC, Locklear Florida Regional Councils and Associates, Mosaic, North Florida Economic Development partners.

Sponsorship for the event totaled \$31,500, which helped lower the costs for renting booth space and attending the reception.

Clay Electric Cooperative Inc., Florida Economic Development Council, Jones Edmunds and



Starke Vice Mayor Andy Redding (left) visits with Mia Mauldin, the director of Hamilton County’s Tourist Development Council.



Manning the Union County booth at Rural Counties Day are (l-r) Emergency Medical Services Director Toby Witt, Human Resources/Administrative Assistant Michaela Clemons, County Commissioner Willie Croft and County Coordinator Jimmy Williams.

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# TAX REFUND



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