

Bradford County Telegraph

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144th year, 24th Issue — \$1

Walker says it's business as usual in Lake Butler

BY TRACY LEE TATE
Times Staff Writer

LAKE BUTLER — Despite a month of questions and uproar at city meetings, City Manager Dale Walker said that everything that is going on is simply business as usual for a small city.

In an interview Feb. 2, Walker said that the spending being highlighted by Commissioner Melissa Hendrix is nothing irregular or improper. He also explained several of the items which had been brought up in the recent meetings.

On the topic of employees putting lunch on their city credit cards, Walker said this was standard practice when an employee was out of town on a work-related matter.

"Governmental accounting is not like a personal checking account," Walker said. "If the employee is out of town on city business and lunch time rolls around, he or she is technically working during their lunch break and it is alright for them to charge their lunch on the city card."

In regard to the shoe policy, which until recently allowed all employees \$100 per year to put towards work shoes, Walker said when he took over as city manager the policy only benefited workers requiring steel-toe boots (which are rather expensive). In fact this was the intent of the policy when it was drafted several years ago. The policy was considered discriminatory by several workers who did not have to purchase special

safety shoes, and they complained. Walker said he avoided the complaints about discrimination by simply extending the policy to cover all of the employees. The policy has now been done away with.

Uniforms are another issue that has come up in commission discussions after several charges for jeans, purchased at the Oaks Mall, were found on city credit card receipts.

"We had a clothing contractor that provided uniforms but the employees were constantly complaining about the smell, that the uniforms were not clean and that the fit on the pants was too loose to allow working around mowers and other machines to be done safely," Walker said. "We decided that jeans, shirts and hats would be suitable

uniforms and present a suitable appearance and a better impression, so we set an amount for each employee required to wear them and they were allowed to make purchases to fill their uniform needs. They are responsible for any repairs needed to the clothing and keeping it laundered as needed."

Walker said the cost seemed like more as it was money being spent "up front," rather than annually, but that all was within the budget for each worker. He said the episode cited where Public Works Director Cody Douglas purchased several pairs of jeans did not mean he was buying them all for himself. He was, Walker said, buying for several employees while he was in Gainesville.

See WALKER, page 2

4-H job offered, now on hold

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
Telegraph Editor

STARKE — Edrick Hamilton would already be serving as Bradford County's new 4-H extension director except for the discovery of statutory requirements governing the hiring process.

Hamilton is well known for his service to Bradford County schools. He has most recently been working as the behavioral resource teacher at Southside Elementary School, and he is the founder of the 12 Guys with Bowties 12 Girls with Pearls youth organization, which mentors participants and teaches them the value and rewards of community service. Countless hours have been spent mentoring these kids over the past seven years, and on other voluntary efforts at the school and on the executive board for Leadership Florida. He's also planning a run for school board.

"I work hard for my community," he told county commissioners on Feb.

7. Last September, the opportunity to become the county's next 4-H agent presented itself, and he called it the answer to his prayers — offering him a new leadership position to advance his career and provide opportunities for his family.

Hamilton said he interviewed three times and was offered the position last November. He accepted on Dec. 2 and subsequently informed his supervisors at Southside that he was set to start his new job on Feb. 1.

On Jan. 30, Hamilton said he received a text message that the University of Florida had halted the hiring process based on a request from the Bradford County Commission.

On Jan. 19, the commission had approved a late addition to the agenda — a resolution requesting the University of Florida to present three qualified candidates to the commission so the commission may select the next 4-H agent. It is the process set forth in

See 4-H, page 3

Next KH mayor seeks unity

Nina Rodenroth was the only candidate to qualify

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
Telegraph Staff Writer

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS — The next mayor of Keystone Heights said her top priority after taking office will be to improve communication and encourage unity within municipal government.

Nina Rodenroth was the only candidate to qualify for mayor. She will be sworn in later this year.

Rodenroth and her husband, Dave, moved to Keystone Heights five years ago after living in Jacksonville for 32 years.

They purchased the home of Keystone Heights founder John J. Lawrence on South Lawrence Boulevard.

"Dave wanted to retire, and we were looking for somewhere outside the city limits or Duval County, and he found this great little property," she

recalled. "We love this little town."

Stepping into a Hallmark movie

Rodenroth said she and her husband faced some uncertainty before moving to the Lake Region. They both had corporate jobs which required them to travel around the country, and both were used to the conveniences and inconveniences of a large-city lifestyle.

"You kind of don't know what to expect because we've lived in the fast track for so long, traveled all over the United States," she recalled. "He and I both did our jobs, and had the traffic, and schedules, and this and that. Well, we moved here, and it's just a quaint place, and everything's so easy: just a couple red lights. Plus, it had additional things that we were just not expecting. It had more restaurants to go to. I mean, Keystone had pretty much everything we needed."

See MAYOR, page 5



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WORTH NOTING

Pink and Red Event for women's health

On Saturday, Feb. 18, the Florida Department of Health is hosting a Pink and Red Health Event for women from 1 to 4 p.m. in the Starke Downtown Square in observance of American Heart Month.

Precision Imaging will be on site to perform free mammograms. (Preregistration is required at TheBeautifulGateInc.com). The UF Mobile Unit is expected to be present for pelvic exams and wellness checks. There will be free screening for blood pressure and diabetes, plus a wealth of health education.

Bradford County Faith Community Center and The Beautiful Gate Inc. are partnering with the health department for this event. For more information, please call 904-964-7732, ext. 1600.

Food distribution at True Vine

A communitywide food distribution hosted by Farm Share and True Vine Ministry will take place Tuesdays, Feb. 14 and 28, at 10 a.m. at True Vine Outreach Ministry in Starke.

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

School board workshop and meeting

Bradford School Board members will hold a workshop on policy changes and project priorities at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 13, followed by their regular meeting at 6 p.m. The boardroom is at 501 W. Washington St. in Starke. These meetings are open to the public and an agenda will be available online prior to the meeting at www.bradfordschools.org.



The Miss Union County High School contestants following a night of pageantry. Pictured are: Emma Jeffers, Cailynn Boggs, Karleigh White, recent Miss UCHS Karly Ann Raulerson, reigning Miss UCHS Kindall Johnson, runner-up Reagan Robinson, Sydney Box and Kadence Adams.

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Bradford manager tours Chicago lab

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
Telegraph Staff Writer

STARKE — Bradford County Manager Scott Kornegay toured the Oracle Innovation Lab near Chicago on Jan. 30 and 31.

Joining Kornegay on a team representing Florida were Sara Hand, CEO of Spark Growth, and Scott Winston, CEO of Built to Scale.

The learning session showcased connected technologies, their tactical use, and how to promote digital equity for all.

The day-long event focused on the benefits of public-private collaboration using the New American Model for Digital Infrastructure and connected technologies to advance and connect the United States



The visit could lead to additional partnerships between through public partnerships and private investment.



Bradford County Manager Scott Kornegay speaks during a tour of the Oracle Innovation Lab near Chicago.



The tour included a digitally connected police car (above), as well as a model of the community of the future.

the county and Oracle. “Bradford County is a prime candidate to showcase the value proposition that digital infrastructure and connected innovation can drive transformational economic development,” said Hand. Kornegay said he first worked with Hand while he was executive director of the Lake Region Development Corporation, whose mission is to

improve the area’s economy and quality of life.

When the tour’s organizer asked Hand to identify a community leader who could represent their organization and had a history of collaboration benefiting a region, she said Kornegay was an obvious choice.

Oracle opened its Deerfield, Illinois innovation lab 30 miles north of Chicago in 2019. The 40,000-square-foot facility

features demonstration space for construction technologies, including robotics and cloud data integration.

The Austin, Texas-based software company has several innovation labs around the country, each focusing on a specific industry. They allow organizations to integrate new technologies with Oracle’s software products.

WALKER

Continued from page 1

Other questions have been put forth concerning hiring practices, particularly for the contract to keep the spray field mowed and raked. It turns out that he inadvertently hired relatives of the public works director – a fact that he did not know.

“I am not from here and have not been here very long and I do not have the advantage of personal knowledge of all of the local people, so I do not always know who is related to who and in what way,” Walker said.

As for the project to acquire a hotel for the city, that project has hit a snag. Although the feasibility study came back positive for the communities ability to support a hotel, the anonymous private investor who would have paid part of the cost has pulled his support – a deal-breaker with the hotel chain considering locating in the city.

The hotel was estimated to bring \$150,000 in bed tax and another \$150,000 in sales tax to the city annually.

On the topic of offering to pay for a college education for any city employee who wants to attend, Walker said, “Nothing

benefits everybody. How many are really going to go and stick with it.”

As to the book club membership for several employees, he said, “These books are given to the senior employees to read and then be discussed. They are all professional development books and I have seen improvements in the senior staff since they started reading them.”

Walker said that, when he was first hired, he was told by the city commission that they wanted to see economic development and growth for the city and that is the goal he set for himself from the start. What he did not know was the general resistance to change and growth among the citizens.

“If you don’t want growth then the city will die,” Walker said.

During his four years as city manager, Walker said he has applied for and been awarded more than \$40 million in grants for the city and several hundred thousand dollars in appropriations. Just the amount of the grants provides \$20,000 worth of value to each resident of the city. His focus has been on infrastructure, as he says the city must have a firm infrastructure base in order to be considered as a location for new businesses

that will bring jobs and economic development. By securing grants and other funding sources, Walker said the actual cost to the city is very small – less than 1%.

Walker said he considers what has been going on recently to be handled in an unprofessional manner and that his lack of comments to the discussions has been because of that. He said he has done nothing wrong in the course of his job and that, contrary to comments made in the meetings, the city has an outside entity looking after its welfare. He did speak to the Lake Butler Rotary Club recently and answered there questions about the recent problems.

“You don’t get very far here without somebody looking at what you are doing,” Walker said. “We have the city auditors looking over our shoulders and then James Moore CPA is overseeing the ARPA fund reporting. Every charge made by an employee must have the receipt turned in, with the explanation written in it for what was paid or purchased. The same is true for invoices.

“We are following standard government spending and accounting practices and no one is doing anything unethical or wrong,” Walker said.

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<p style="font-weight: bold; color: white;">Saturday 2/11</p> <p style="font-size: 10px; color: white;">Knock at the Cabin - 4:00 & 7:00 (Upstairs)</p> <p style="font-size: 10px; color: white;">80 for Brady- 4:15 & 7:15 (Downstairs)</p>	<p style="font-weight: bold; color: white;">Sunday 2/12</p> <p style="font-size: 10px; color: white;">Knock at the Cabin - 4:00 (Upstairs)</p> <p style="font-size: 10px; color: white;">80 for Brady- 4:15 (Downstairs)</p>

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Camp Blanding opens rehabilitated officer's club

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
Telegraph Staff Writer

CAMP BLANDING—Florida National Guard officials held a ribbon cutting ceremony for Camp Blanding's Officer's Club during a Thursday, Feb. 2 ceremony at the post.

Cooper Hall is named after Gen. Ralph Walker Cooper, the man who led the construction of the post before World War II.

Maj. Gen. James O. Eifert, Florida's adjutant general, hosted the event, which also included Cooper's daughters: Gay Cooper Nightingale and Marion Cooper Stevens.

Bradford and Clay County officials attended the event, including Clay County Commissioners Jim Renninger and Alexandra Compere, Bradford County Commission Chair Diane Andrews and Vice Chair Carolyn Spooner, Clay County Manager Howard Wanamaker, Bradford County Manager Scott Kornegay, Bradford County Sheriff Gordon Smith and Starke Assistant Police Chief Col. Barry Warren.



The one-and-a-half-story, Tudor Revival Officer's Club was designed to be the focal point of the post.



Maj. Gen. James Eifert said Ralph W. Cooper was the chief engineer at Camp Blanding during its construction. Also pictured are (l-r) Gay Cooper Nightingale and Marion Cooper Stevens.

The gem of Camp Blanding

Eifert said that in 1939, military leaders began moving Camp Foster, the current site of Naval Air Station Jacksonville, to Camp Blanding to become a World War II mobilization and training site for two National Guard divisions.

He added that the initial list of buildings included five caretaker houses, one steel garage, two steel warehouses, two administrative buildings, four officer latrines, eight battalion enlisted latrines, 32 mess halls, and one Officer's Club.

"Even on the brink of war," he said, "the senior leadership understood the need for camaraderie and fellowship and hence the building before you."

Eifert said the Officer's Club was one of the first buildings constructed on Camp Blanding in 1940. He noted that, unlike the other buildings on the post that were designed with a simple layout and built with concrete block or steel, the Officer's Club

was designed by prominent Jacksonville architect Fred Bucky.

"Mr. Bucky designed this one-and-a-half-story, Tudor Revival building to be the focal point on the post," Eifert said.

The general added that in 2015, the 80-year-old structure with collapsing floors and corroded wiring was no longer safe.

He said he inspected the building in 2019.

"It was bad," he said. "It was in bad shape."

Eifert said that after several delays, exacerbated by COVID

and supply chain shortages, officials are now reopening what he called the gem of Camp Blanding.

10,000 buildings, 824,000 soldiers

Ralph Walker Cooper enlisted in the Florida National Guard in 1922 at the age of 17. After a short break in service, he rejoined the guard in the 265th Coast Artillery Battalion as a second lieutenant in 1929.

Eifert said Cooper was an engineer by trade and

was appointed as the state quartermaster in 1939 with the daunting task of moving the Florida National Guard training site from Camp Foster in Jacksonville to Blanding.

"He was the chief engineer for the highly successful development, design, and construction of Camp Blanding as a World War II military training facility," Eifert said, "and later ensured the preservation and retention of this beautiful Camp Blanding as the Florida National Guard's primary training post."

"It's hard to believe now,"



Gay Cooper Nightingale, on behalf of Cooper's family, presented Eifert with an officer's baton that was previously given to her father.

he continued, "but by 1940, over 10,000 buildings were constructed here to include a 2,000-bed hospital, and nearly 22,000 workers were hired from around the country for the construction, and Starke became the largest city in the state."

Eifert said nearly 824,000 soldiers trained at Camp Blanding during World War II.

"This would not have been possible without the extraordinary planning and skills of General Cooper," he said.

In 1944, then-Major Cooper was deployed to the European Theater, serving as a ground liaison officer with the Sixth Army Group.

After the war, Cooper returned to Florida, where he held several successive positions of responsibility culminating in his assignment as the assistant adjutant general, where he served

until his retirement in 1965.

"In addition to his service in the Florida National Guard," Eifert said, "he went on to be the chairman of Flagler Hospital, the president of the St. Augustine Rotary Club, the executive director of the St. Augustine Aviation Authority, the executive director of the St. Augustine Bicentennial Committee the commander of the Military Order of World Wars and the head engineer for the construction of the Jacksonville International Airport."

After Eifert's remarks, Gay Cooper Nightingale, on behalf of Cooper's family, presented Eifert with an officer's baton that was previously given to her father.

Cooper's two daughters and Eifert cut a yellow ribbon at the building's entrance to conclude the ceremony.

4-H Continued from page 1

the Florida Statutes. The law states the commission will make the selection, not the extension office or university.

This took place after Hamilton resigned from his job at Southside and just days before he was expecting to begin working for the extension office.

"As the head of a household, I rely on this job and was told everything was a go for me. This last minute notice put my family and me in a bind. I have 4-year-old son to take care of," he said.

Had it not been for an extension of his employment at Southside through the first

of March, Hamilton would be without a job.

"As a qualified candidate who supports this community, I applied for the job, I was offered the job, I accepted the job and did nothing wrong, yet I'm going through what I'm going through today without this job," he said.

He said he was the best candidate for the position and asked the board why it took them so long to act, when he was offered the job in November.

Hamilton had several supporters at the meeting, and one of them was Extension Director Samara Purvis. A former 4-H extension agent herself, Purvis discussed the importance of 4-H during a presentation on the extension office's activities. Summing

up, she said 4-H is important to Bradford County and she hoped they could move forward with the selected candidate so they could continue doing great things.

Commissioner Carolyn Spooner said their new legal representation brought the statute requirements to the board's attention. On the other hand, an agreement was made prior to passing the resolution, she said.

"We're impacting the life of a person who has been a pillar of our community," she said, asking the board to reconsider moving forward with the extension's hire.

"I would greatly appreciate that," Purvis said.

The board may take up the issue again at a future meeting.





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Spoooner receives prestigious recognition

Bradford County Commissioner Carolyn Spoooner is the recipient of the 2023 Pinnacle Award, which recognizes those who have achieved professional accomplishments throughout an extensive career and are role models for others to attain similar success.

The award was presented at this year's Jacksonville Image Awards, which were created to honor and celebrate achievements of individuals and organizations in the African American community.

Spoooner was one of three people considered for the award.

According to the biography published by News4Jax, Spoooner — the daughter of the late Willie and Louiza Brown of Starke — is the first Black female county commissioner for Bradford in more than 150 years. She is also a former mayor and city commissioner for the city of Starke.

"She understood the importance of education from the age of 4 when



Commissioner Carolyn Spoooner (center) was also recognized Tuesday for her work in support of the Community Health and Wellness Resource Hub by Iana Patterson and Aime Oody with the Bradford County Health Department.

her local kindergarten was discontinued. She asked, 'Why cut kindergarten when it was her turn to start school?' She then asked her mother to teach her to read and write. At 14, she was appointed to teach adult Sunday school. At 16, she got neighbors to sign a petition to help get street signs and Lincoln City's first paved road.

At 17, she organized a peaceful protest to get equal rights for Black students attending Bradford High School.

"She completed Bethune-Cookman College's four-year psychology program in three years, then completed a two-year specialist program at the University of Florida, receiving her master's and specialist

degrees in counseling.

"She returned to Starke to work in her community, providing over 40 years of service in the fields of mental health and substance abuse. She organized a crime prevention program and was recognized by the Department of Corrections for her leadership and fight against crime. She received two

gubernatorial appointments. The first, was the MLK Jr. Celebration Commission and she organized the first MLK Jr. Celebration for Bradford which continues today. The second was the Bradford Historical Board of Trustees which executed a lease to Santa Fe College for 99 years for \$1, paving the way for the local college branch for Starke.

"She has provided 22 local students with college scholarships. She is a children's book author, poet and songwriter. She helped pave the way for African Americans to obtain equal justice for all to serve in local government for the city of Starke, Bradford School Board and Bradford County Board of County Commissioners."

Bradford County Commission Chairwoman Diane Andrews congratulated Spoooner at Tuesday's commission meeting.

"You're always helping people, and it is a pleasure serving with you and calling you my friend. So, congratulations, well deserved."

"To God be the glory," Spoooner said. "I am deeply honored. I love my community very much, and I love God more, and I thank him for the privilege of serving."

Inaugural Black History Month celebration hosted by local organizations

Jacksonville's World of Nations Festival event planner brings talents home

River Life Studio, Bradford Environmental Forum, Concerned Citizens of Bradford County Inc., and Alligator Creek Garden Club invite the public to celebrate the rich history of Bradford County's Black communities at the 2023 Black History Month Celebration — Legacy March. The event will be held on Saturday, Feb. 11, from 12–5 p.m. at Old Rec, 908 Florida St. (corner of Florida and Pine) in Starke.

Black History Month, established in 1926 by historian Dr. Carter G. Woodson, annually celebrates the achievements and contributions of Black Americans to American life.

The Legacy March, which is the theme for the event, is the brainchild of Starke resident, Ok Sun Burks, the event's coordinator. For 20 years Burks helped plan the popular African Village pavilion at Jacksonville's World of Nations festival. It is her studied advocacy of Black American and African cultures that fuels her enthusiasm for "giving back to the community that gave me so much."

"The inspiration for this event came to me as a self-appeal of what could I do in my community," said Burks. "The neighborhood where I live and grew up used to be alive with folks, families and thriving businesses. After 50 years some institutions, i.e. churches, barber shops, hairdressers, and a funeral home remain, while small but thriving stores, bars, restaurants, motels, dry cleaners, etc. have disappeared."

Attendees will experience dancing, stories, drumming, and arts and crafts. They can shop with vendors of African and African-inspired attire, accessories, toiletries, books, plants and foods. There will be opportunities to learn about past and current heroes and heroes of Bradford's Black communities.

Additionally, the Legacy March offers an opportunity for attendees to create a keepsake collage of family photos that will be exhibited during a moment of silence to honor residents of the past. All materials for this activity, except copies of pictures, will be provided at no cost.

River Life Studio, a sole proprietorship operated by Ok Sun Burks, and co-sponsors Bradford Environmental Forum, Concerned Citizens of Bradford County Inc., and Alligator Creek Garden Club are hopeful that the communities of Bradford County will join as stakeholders in celebrating Black History Month for years to come.

For more information, contact Ok Sun Burks at osburks@icloud.com or 754-703-6678.

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CareerSource plans full return soon

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
Telegraph Editor

STARKE — CareerSource North Central Florida plans to reopen a Starke location soon near the Bradford County Courthouse.

Bradford County commissioners voted to approve a lease of two suites in the courthouse annex at 925 N. Temple Ave. (between the courthouse and the former Pizza Hut). Alachua County commissioners are set to vote on the agreement at their meeting on Feb. 14, according to CareerSource NCFL CEO Phyllis Marty.

The agreement includes a monthly payment of \$1,800 to Bradford County and extends

through Sept. 30, 2025.

Until then, Marty said staffers will be providing services on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Community Health and Wellness Resource Hub at the Bradford County Faith Community Center, 721 Old Lawtey Road in Starke. Hours are from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

CareerSource serves some of the county's neediest residents. Staff members assist clients with filing for unemployment, building their resumes, job searches and referrals, applying for food stamps and cash assistance, applying for utility and rental assistance, income-based education assistance and other important services.

Prior locations have included downtown Starke, Bradford

Square shopping center and the former vo-tech. ADA compliance issues led to an end of the lease downtown, leaving CareerSource employees without a base of operations. There was a brief arrangement for office hours at the Bradford County Public Library, but that didn't work out. According to the library, CareerSource staff stopped showing up.

Pending the approval of the Alachua commissioners, CareerSource will begin moving equipment and assessing needs the following week. They are shooting for a soft opening in early March, with a full-scale grand opening coming later, around the first of April.



Leaders of the second battalion and third squadron of the 54th Security Force Assistance Brigade pose with a State of Florida flag that will accompany them on their mission. Also pictured (center) is Ashley Cook, senior regional director for Sen. Marco Rubio

MAYOR

Continued from page 1

Rodenroth said she is not alone in appreciating the qualities of the Lake Region. She said that after one of her neighbors from Jacksonville visited her a few times, the neighbor remarked that she felt like she was stepping into a Hallmark movie every time she visited Keystone.

"Well, they sold their house a year ago and moved out on Silver Lake," Rodenroth said. "She's four miles from us."

Both Rodenroths recently turned 70, and the couple will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary this year.



Nina Rodenroth

provider.

"I was part of the diagnostics division for most of that career in a variety of leadership roles," she said.

Before working for Abbott, she spent another 26 years as a specialized lab technician and electron microscope technician at UF Health in Jacksonville, the University of Georgia and Mary Washington Healthcare in Virginia.

Rodenroth said one skill she developed during her career will come in handy as she works within Keystone Heights government. She calls it managing without authority.

"Because of my role with Abbott and the different positions I've had, many times, I was in a situation where people didn't report to me, but I was involved in leading them and mentoring them and getting results with specific goals in mind," she said. "So, I'm armed with some of that knowledge and capability. After 26 years, it kind of gets drilled into your body."

Other priorities

Rodenroth said her second priority as mayor will be meeting

with each business owner within the city, getting their priorities and concerns.

"I want to come back with input from them to the council and let us take those data points, siphon them down and finalize them," she said.

Rodenroth added that she anticipates each business will have one top priority in addition to subordinate concerns.

"I'll funnel those ideas, share them with the council, and see if there's anything we can do to support those requests," she said.

The future mayor added that she still wants to support the projects the Heritage Commission began while she chaired the panel, particularly the education initiatives, promoting the Lake Region's history to students.

Rodenroth said she also plans to network with area nonprofits, other municipal leaders in the state, and other government leaders in the county and region.

However, her top priority will be to foster teamwork and cooperation at city hall and develop a healthy and positive relationship with City Manager Lynn Rutkowski.

"I think that is critical to the success of our town," she said. "I feel like our community deserves that."

A disconnect

Rodenroth has served on the city's Heritage Commission for three years and took over as chair last year. She said that as she worked with the city council and observed the panel, she saw an opportunity to serve.

"Overall, I did sense a little bit of a disconnect," she recalled. "There could probably be a little bit more team: how they work with the city manager and her team."

"And I kind of felt like there might be a spot there for me to try to help to mend and to bring them all together because to me, anytime you have a group together like that, you're certainly better as a team than you are as individuals," she added.

Rodenroth said her 52-year healthcare career taught her to bring together people with different backgrounds and competing priorities.

She retired from Abbott Laboratories on Jan. 6, after a 26-year career with what she calls the world's largest healthcare

Believer's dropping BOMB

Believer's Outreach Ministry's Blessing, or BOMB, is a giveaway taking place Saturday, Feb. 18, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Please bring any gently used, clean items to giveaway that day

as a blessing to someone else. Volunteers are also needed to assist at the giveaway.

The church is located at 8736 S.R. 21 in Melrose.

IMPORTANT TAX FILING INFORMATION

The IRS announced it has begun accepting and processing tax returns on Monday, Jan. 23, 2023. The **filing deadline to submit 2022 tax returns** or an extension to file and pay tax owed is **Tuesday, April 18, 2023**, for most taxpayers.

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Crime

Recent arrests in Bradford, Union and Clay

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

Bradford

Jailen Stephan Bass, 23, of Melrose was arrested by Bradford deputies on Jan. 28 for disturbing the peace and resisting an officer.

Jamaal Latrivas Brown, 36, of Starke was arrested on Jan. 28 for battery and resisting an officer.

Fight leads to shooting

Calvin Jerrod Butts, 38, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on Feb. 3 for attempted murder.

According to an arrest report, the victim told Starke police that he and Butts were in a physical altercation in the area of 802 Oak Street in Starke.

“(The victim) stated that after he beat Butts up, he walks away from

Butts heading towards his mother’s residence,” wrote Detective Hunter Redding in a sworn complaint. “(The victim) stated that Butts proceeds to follow him to the Old Lawtey Road address which is 0.6 miles away. (The victim) stated that when he arrives at the address he turns around, and Butts discharges a firearm, which he believes was a 9mm handgun, at

him striking him in the left chest area and right arm.”

Redding added that a nurse at UF Health Shands told him the victim was shot in the left chest and right arm, and the bullet that entered his right arm is lodged near the elbow.

Ashely Morgan Crawford, 34, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on Feb. 3 for a weapons offense.

Cell phone causes domestic violence

Jennifer Davis, 32, of Hampton was arrested by Bradford deputies on Jan. 29 for aggravated battery.

According to an arrest report, the defendant took a family member’s phone away from him to see if he had been cheating. As the encounter continued, Davis threw the phone at the victim, striking him on the back of the head, struck him on the right side of his body with a metal chair, threw a shaker cup at him and attempted to stab him with a corkscrew.

“(The victim) advised (Davis) then pushed him outside of their residence and threw his keys at him,” wrote reporting officer Cody Wells.

Wells added that at the request of both parties, he allowed them to speak to one another while the defendant was in the back of his patrol car.

“(The victim) was speaking to Jennifer when she spontaneously uttered she will not hit him anymore if he can help her not be in trouble.”

Donald Lee Fleming, 46, of Gainesville was arrested on Jan. 31 for a probation violation.

Shane Patrick Mroz, 29, of Starke was arrested on Feb. 3 for battery.

Hannah Marie O’Steen, 20, of

Lawtey was arrested on Jan. 29 for battery and criminal mischief with property damage.

Eddie Gene Padgett, 35, was arrested by Bradford deputies on Jan. 30 for failure to appear.

Joshua Dean Padgett, 30, of Hampton was arrested by Bradford deputies on Feb. 3 for a probation violation.

Dawn Michelle Pinholster, 52, of Starke was arrested by Starke police on Feb. 2 for being an out-of-state fugitive.

Jimmy Lynn Pugh, 62, of Lake Butler was arrested on Feb. 3 for driving with a suspended or revoked license and driving an unregistered vehicle.

Lauren Marguerite Seaman, 30, of Hampton was arrested on Feb. 3 for burglary and criminal mischief with property damage.

Menietha Patricia Spencer, 59, of Starke was arrested by Starke police on Jan. 31 for a probation violation.

Jimea Alise Tyson, 24, of Starke was arrested by Bradford deputies on Jan. 28 for aggravated battery.

Aaron Angelo Williams, 33, of Lawtey was arrested by Lawtey police on Feb. 2 for an out-of-county warrant and for driving with a suspended or revoked license.

Brian Kevin Young, 27, of Jacksonville was arrested on Feb. 3 for a probation violation.

Union

Kimberly Wyvonne Belcher, 39, of Ft. White was arrested by Union deputies on Feb. 4 for disorderly intoxication.

Angered over dog nearly being hit

Bernie Jacob Boyette, 57, of Lake Butler was arrested by Union deputies on Feb. 1 for assault and battery.

According to an arrest report, the victim told deputies that she was shooting hoops at a Worthington Springs park when the defendant approached her about almost running over his dog three days ago.

“Boyette stated that he would slit her throat,” wrote arresting officer Jason L. Lepanto. “Boyette continued yelling at her and stepping closer towards her when she would attempt to back away from him. (The victim) said that Boyette pushed her so (she) hit him. Boyette then struck (the victim) several times with a closed fist causing her nose to bleed.”

Lepanto wrote that the defendant denied threatening the victim and that she pushed him first, causing him to fall down. Boyette admitted to hitting the victim while he was on the ground in self-defense.

The deputy added that an independent witness corroborated the victim’s claims and that he unsuccessfully tried to break up the fight.

Two Union County Fire-Rescue personnel also heard the fight from their nearby station and separated the two parties until deputies arrived.

Anthony Kyan Carlo, 28, of Lake Butler was arrested by Union deputies on Feb. 5 for a probation violation.

Lydia Angelica Dillow, 40, of Lake Butler was arrested by Union deputies on Feb. 1 for trespassing.

Crystal Monique Garcia, 29, of Lake Butler was arrested by Union deputies on Jan. 31 for trafficking in opium and smuggling contraband into a prison.

Stephen Daniel Haskell, 30, of Ft. White was arrested by Union deputies on Jan. 27 for a probation violation.

Harold David James II, 39, of Lake Butler was arrested by Union deputies on Jan. 31 for an out-of-county warrant.

Kassie Lynn Reid, 32, of Lake Butler was arrested by Union deputies on Feb. 2 for possession of drugs, failure to appear and a probation violation.

Clay

High Ridge man stabs girlfriend to death

William Frederick Burroughs, 32, of Keystone Heights was arrested by Clay deputies on Feb. 3 for murder, aggravated battery and domestic battery.

According to a Clay County Sheriff’s Office social media post, the sheriff’s office received a 911 call at 8:35 p.m. from a female on Auburn Avenue telling dispatchers she was being attacked by her boyfriend.

“When deputies arrived at the home, inside, they found three victims—a female victim with multiple stab wounds to her body, a male victim with a stab wound to his back, and a third victim, whom (the defendant) assaulted,” the agency said.

The office added that both stabbing victims were transported to a hospital where the female victim died.

“During the attack, the male and now deceased female victim attempted to intervene and protect the third victim who did not have any stab wounds from William Burroughs,” the office said.

Michael Wayne Castor, 62, of Keystone Heights was arrested by Clay deputies on Jan. 31 for petit theft.

Kady Leigh Freeman, 30, of Keystone Heights was arrested by Clay deputies on Feb. 3 for failure to appear.

Jose Antonio Lozano, 42, of Keystone Heights was arrested by Clay deputies on Jan. 28 for driving without a valid license.

Shot at deputies, deer head

Mark Anthony Rageth, 35, of Keystone Heights was arrested by Clay deputies on Feb. 1 for aggravated assault on a law enforcement officer.

According to an arrest report, deputies responded to a County Road 214 address after a report of gunfire.

They attempted to make contact by knocking on the door of the home announcing themselves as law enforcement.

“At this time both deputies heard movement within the residence in the back left corner of the residence,” wrote arresting officer Zachary M. Phillips. “Both deputies repositioned themselves behind a camper on the back left corner of the residence. Both Deputies advised over the radio they heard gunshots coming from inside the residence.”

The officers then retreated and waited for additional deputies to arrive. “Once the defendant was secured, bullet holes were observed on the window facing where both deputies had taken cover,” added Phillips.

Deputies contacted the defendant via cell phone and persuaded him to surrender. He walked out of the home carrying his phone in one hand and an alcoholic beverage in the other.

Phillips wrote that deputies searched the home after arresting the defendant.

“Upon completion of the sweep, they advised the following observations: a mounted taxidermy deer head hung on the wall with...holes which would appear to be bullet holes. A large amount of spent shell casings, rifle and pistol, and three firearms on the bed in the master bedroom.”

Charles Justin Bailey White, 36, of Keystone Heights was arrested by Clay deputies on Jan. 29 for driving with a suspended or revoked license- habitual offender.

Michael Raymond Williams, 35, of Keystone Heights was arrested by Clay deputies on Jan. 30 for trespassing.

Forged check, stole car and credit card, sold stolen gun

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
Telegraph Staff Writer

STARKE— A 34-year-old Starke woman was sentenced to 14 months in prison after pleading to forging a check, stealing her mother’s car and credit card and selling a stolen gun.

Angela Maria Dawn Maddix pleaded no contest to the July 29, 2022, offense of forgery of a bank check, the Aug. 7, 2022 offenses of vehicle theft and credit card theft and the July 22, 2022, offense of dealing in stolen property.

According to court papers, a



Maddix

family member of the defendant’s told Starke police that Maddix had volunteered to take his light bill to the City of Starke because the family member had just gotten out of the hospital.

“Angela took an additional check out of (the victim’s) purse and took it to Community State Bank and cashed it,” reporting officer Courtney Personette wrote. “(The victim) did not give Angela permission to take a check and cash it... (The victim) only gave permission for Angela to take a check to the City of Starke town hall to pay the light bill.”

An employee of the bank told police the defendant made three attempts to cash the check at the bank’s drive-through.

“(The witness) stated that the first check was made out for the City of Starke, and they did not accept it,” wrote the officer. “Angela then crossed out the City of Starke and wrote in her own name, and they did not accept that check either. Angela then came through the drive-through for the third time and cashed (the victim’s) check for two hundred and sixty dollars.”

In a separate report, police wrote that after a Starke man reported three guns stolen from his home in August, they received information from Bradford deputies that a Keystone Heights man became suspicious after purchasing a firearm from Maddix.

The buyer told police he purchased the 0.22-caliber from Maddix for \$100. A few days later, Maddix contacted the buyer, saying the person who gave her the gun was being investigated for theft, and Maddix was uncertain if the weapon had been stolen. The buyer called law enforcement, which traced the gun to the August theft.

On Aug. 7, the defendant’s mother reported to police that the defendant had stolen her bank card and 2012 Hyundai Accent.

Four hours after the victim initially called police, she called back again, saying Maddix was back at her house. Police found the defendant in a detached structure on the victim’s property.

Letters

Wrong priorities

Dear Editor:

A recent story about city of Lake Butler spending is countered by a story that their water main broke two times in one day. It would seem that the focus on spending should be more about what the town manager and public works director are doing to improve the infrastructure than about how much money was spent on Christmas cards for employees and candy for meetings, don’t you think?

It appears from the city website that the town manager is winning awards for budget presentations for several years in a row and, that he and the public works director have garnered \$40 million in grant money to improve the city’s infrastructure.

Maybe this pro-active Councilwoman Hendrix is cutting off her proverbial nose to spite her face?

Sincerely
David Hodges

Glad it’s over

Dear Editor:

The phosphate mine is dead! This is such great news! After over six years of working to stop the phosphate mine, victory was finally reached Thursday night! Carol Mosley summed up everything in an article on Facebook. What she didn’t mention was that she

spent thousands of hours doing research, making and studying public records requests, writing articles, speaking at commission meetings, and most importantly, never giving up!

Carol performed a yeoman’s job! While there were many people involved in opposing and working on killing this asinine project, Carol deserves a tremendous amount of gratitude and credit for her unending dedication! Thank you, Carol!

In the paper, you will see a picture of some of those involved. I was surprised to see that some county commissioners are in the picture. Most of them sat by and did little to support or even listen to Carol, hiding behind a “quasi-judicial” order that allowed them to remain silent. Even worse, they let the county manager, county attorney, Hampton attorney, school board attorney (all the same person) do nothing! He ignored requests, or provided little information or misinformation when it was requested from him. It appeared he had something to hide and was protecting the “mine.”

Thank you, Scott Kornegay, for taking this matter seriously and reviewing the facts to protect our county.

Many others in Bradford, Union, Alachua, and Baker counties participated in protecting our county, and all deserve a standing ovation and round of applause. Bradford County is in your debt! I am so glad this appears to be over, and the residents of Bradford County prevailed!

Sincerely,
Tom Germano

VFW fundraiser

VFW Post 10082 is having a fundraising dinner on Friday, Feb. 10, at 6:30 p.m. They will serve grilled/smoked chicken with all the fixings. The recommended donation is \$10 a plate. Please call 904-263-0647 to reserve your plate. Takeout is also available.

2023 BECOMING A CANDIDATE SPECIAL ELECTION

FOR CITY COMMISSIONER CITY OF LAKE BUTLER

APRIL 4, 2023

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* SEAT #2 UP FOR ELECTION *

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Special Election
April 4, 2023

The City of Lake Butler will hold a Special Election on Tuesday, April 4, 2023, to fill City Commissioner Seat #2 vacated by the resignation of Jack Schenck.

To qualify for this position, you must have been a resident of the City of Lake Butler for the past six months and you must be a registered voter.

Qualifying dates: February 13, 2023 - February 17, 2023, Noon Monday till Noon Friday. Qualifying will take place at the Supervisor of Elections Office located at 175 W. Main St. Lake Butler.

Qualifying Fee

1% of Commissioner’s Salary	\$106.74
Qualifying Fee	\$ 25.00
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The Union County Supervisor of Election will be holding this Special Election for the City of Lake Butler. For candidate information or questions call the Supervisor of Elections at (386) 496-2236



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North Florida Regional Chamber Banquet celebrated with medieval flare

BY MELISSA PYLE
Telegraph Staff Writer

The North Florida Regional Chamber of Commerce held its annual banquet and meeting on Saturday evening at the Charley E. Johns Conference Center in Starke. The theme this year was Medieval Times, and Chamber President Pam Whittle and her team brought the banquet to life.

Each guest was welcomed into a whimsical world decorated with suits of armor, dragons, a throne backdrop, and a feast with a roasted pig as the main dish. The feast was catered by The Downtown Grill, one of many local and regional businesses that sponsored the event.

The banquet began with Whittle welcoming and thanking all community leaders, business owners and elected officials for their faithful support. The evening spotlighted the Chamber Board of Governors, including outgoing Chairman Dale Woodruff and new Chairman Brad Bishop. Departing board members Helen Hersey and Doug Reddish were presented with a commemorative clock.

Whittle smiled and said they were given clocks in exchange for the time given to the chamber. The biggest highlight of the evening was the presentation of awards. First, the Judy Becker Volunteer of the Year Award was given to Joey Evans. Evans was unable to attend, but Whittle said although Evans was not able to receive his award in person, she wanted to read what she wrote about him because he was very deserving of the praise. Whittle said Evans is "always ready to roll up his sleeves whenever anyone needs help. He's given monetary donations, (most of the time anonymously and without fanfare) and given even more valuable sweat equity." Whittle said many people don't realize how Evans is not only at events to help his wife, Patricia, but many times he initiated the volunteer effort.

Whittle also recognized how the couple is always looking for ways to "build a sense of community in our small rural neighborhood." Whittle said Joey is "the salt to Patricia's pepper."

The second award of the evening was the J.E. Tomlinson Businessperson of the Year presentation. Whittle asked former board member, and daughter of this year's award recipient, Amber Crawford to introduce her father, Avery Roberts. Crawford spoke highly of her dad and his lifelong commitment to the community. Crawford said, "Roberts is a sixth generation Floridian ... has always had a passion for the agricultural industry." Roberts is a family man, married to his high school sweetheart, Twyla, for 39 years. Roberts serves not only as CEO of Roberts Companies, but operates multifunctional ranches, is an active member of various local chambers of commerce and serves on multiple boards. These include the Foundation for Florida Gateway College Executive Board, the Suwannee Valley Community Foundation Board and the Esther King Memorial Scholarship Board, among others. He is also the current president elect of the Florida Forestry Association.

Roberts has established multiple scholarship funds including the Union County Scholarship fund. Robert's daughter summed up his service best when she said, "I personally know how much he loves this community and its people, and it's been my privilege my entire life to witness him very



Williams Jewelry was awarded the 2023 NFRCC Business of the Year award. Pictured (l-r) are Lexi Ethridge, Kelsey Joyner, Vicki Forsyth, Tracy Moore, Jade Massey and Kaleigh Brown.



Departing Board Member Doug Reddish, pictured with President Pam Whittle, was awarded a clock for all of his time spent on the NFRCC.



Avery Roberts received the J.E. Tomlinson Business Person of the Year award. He was introduced by his daughter, Amber Crawford, who gave a heartfelt message of praise and thanks to her dad. Pictured: NFRCC Treasurer Chris Page, Avery Roberts, Amber Crawford and Chamber President Pam Whittle.



Volunteer of the Year Joey Evans with Chamber President Pam Whittle.



President Pam Whittle, recognized the NFRCC Board of Governors: (l-r) Steve Futch, Jeff Oody, Lindsey Reddish, James Eison, Treasurer Chris Paige, President Pam Whittle, 2022 Chair Dale Woodruff, 2023 Chair Brad Bishop and Brad Smith. (Not pictured: Justis Smith, Denny Thompson and Rhonda Hamilton.)



Bradford County School Superintendent Will Hartley surprised BHS Football Coach Jamie Rodgers with the Regional Coach of the Year Award.



The eye-catching team from Bradford Eye Cente posed on the stage centerpiece, which also doubled as a photo spot for attendees. Pictured (l-r) are Cassidy Morgan, Rachel Baier, Haley McElhenny, Dr. Michael Schlofman, Laura Schlofman, Dr. Jenifer Presnick and Kyle Presnick.

generously giving of his time to better our region."

The final award of the night, the Business of the Year Award, was presented to Williams Jewelry. Williams Jewelry has been in Starke for over 70 years. Whittle recognized that over the years Williams Jewelry has moved around Starke into various locations, most recently into a beautiful new building on Call Street. Even with all the moves, one thing has stayed the same, they have always served their customers with "quality customer service and merchandise."

Whittle went on to describe the nostalgic impact Williams has had on many in Bradford County. "There was a time in Starke when if you were getting your ears pierced, you were going to Williams Jewelry. Or better yet, if you were completing your junior year of high school, you were headed to Williams Jewelry to get that class ring. Now in this generation, they are 'TikToking' at Williams Jewelry, selling jewelry in California!"

She said Mr. and Mrs. Williams could never have imagined such a thing for their local family

business. Whittle thanked Vicki Forsyth for her continued commitment to the community while also honoring the legacy of her family. Forsyth was joined by her Williams Jewelry staff to receive the award.

The evening was also a fundraising event for the Bradford County Education Foundation. There was a silent auction and raffle for items, including a television as well as an ATV donated by the sheriff's office and a Dodge Charger donated by the Starke Police Department. Sheriff Gordon Smith and School Superintendent Will Hartley were the comic relief of the event when they went up for auction as personal car washers. They were sold to the highest bidders for a St. Patrick's Day carwash where each promised to dress as a leprechaun to wash the vehicles.

The banquet was a successful celebration due in part to several local businesses. Whittle gave special thanks to the evening's sponsors: VyStar Credit Union, Community State Bank, and special thanks to the businesses who supplied many of the medieval decorations that made the evening a magical experience. Leisa Sims of It's Your Day, Riches Place, and Underhill's Forge loaned many costumes and props to make the atmosphere authentic.

Before the evening closed with dancing, there was a recognition of the NFRCC Board of Governors: Chairman Brad Bishop, Treasurer Chris Page, Rhonda Hamilton, James Eison, Steve Futch, Jeff Oody, Lindsey Reddish, Brad Smith, Justis Smith and Denny Thompson.



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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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Robert and Barbara Barksdale celebrate 76 years of marriage

BY BOBBIE SUE O'BRIAN
Special to the Telegraph

On Sept. 26, 1927, Robert Cody Barksdale was born in Ocala, Florida. Three days later, on Sept. 29, Barbara Bryant Horne was born in the small town of Reevesville, South Carolina. Fortunately, Robert was older, because at a young age Barbara had decided that her husband should not be younger than her!

Barbara's father worked for Seaboard Railroad in South Carolina and was eventually transferred to Capitola, Florida. After a while, Mr. Horne became the depot agent in Hampton where he and his wife remained while their five children grew up. Robert's parents met in Dunnellon, Florida, and, after marrying, opened a clothing store in Inverness. During the Great Depression the Barksdales and their young son moved to Union County where they helped on the family farm. Eventually Robert's parents moved to Starke for their jobs.

Barbara went to school in Hampton through the eighth grade, and then rode the bus to Bradford High School. Robert was already a student at BHS when, one day he was standing at one end of the hallway when he saw what he still describes as "the prettiest girl I had ever seen" at the other end of the hallway. It wasn't love at first sight because both were dating others. However, by the time they were seniors, they were together.

After graduation, Barbara attended Florida State College for Women in Tallahassee and Robert joined the U.S. Coast Guard. His service in the Coast Guard didn't last very long because World War II ended shortly after he enlisted. Barbara attended FSCW for a year and then began working for Southern Bell in Jacksonville. Robert also ended up in Jacksonville, attending Massey Business College. At the end of the day, they enjoyed meeting for dinner, then afterwards they headed to their separate boarding houses. On cold, wintry nights they particularly enjoyed the hot chili at Woolworth's.

Robert and Barbara wed at the First Baptist Church in Hampton



Robert and Barbara Barksdale



The happy couple on their wedding day.



The Barksdales at Gold Head in 1945 and a recreation of the moment in 2013.

on Feb. 9, 1947. Barbara's mother owned a grocery store in Hampton and both of her parents were well-known in their community. Likewise, Robert's parents were well-known in Starke because they owned Barksdale's Department Store. Their wedding was a big event with many in attendance

with some guests having to stand outside in the freezing cold.

The Saturday night before their Sunday wedding was extremely cold with temperatures in single digits! Because of the freezing weather, Mr. Waterson, who was in charge of utilities, turned off the water supply to all of Hampton to keep the pipes from freezing

and bursting. The reception was held at Barbara's parents' home, and since there was no running water, the groom's parents came to the rescue and hauled in water from Starke! Robert and Barbara spent their honeymoon touring several Florida cities and tourist attractions.

Their first home was a nice

three-bedroom house on West Madison Street. They both worked at the family department store until their first baby, Bobbie Sue, was born. Barbara's primary job then became homemaker and nurturer. Three years later a son, Robert Jr. (Robby), joined the family, and then four and a half years after him, Vicki completed their family.

Throughout his high school years, Robert was an usher at the Florida Theatre, eventually becoming the film projectionist. He also occasionally projected throughout his young adult life. Then, in the early 1960s, he and Barbara had the opportunity to purchase the theater. So, in January of 1962, Barbara was back in the business world again assisting her husband in running the theater. Robert worked at both the department store and theater for the next four years, until his mother retired, and Barksdale's Department Store was sold to Eagle-DeVane.

The Barksdales were hard workers and did everything necessary to keep the theater in business. They were always there to greet customers, sell tickets, work behind the candy

counter, and be film projectionist when necessary. When the theater wasn't open for business, they spent many hours cleaning, doing maintenance, driving to Jacksonville for films, concession supplies, and cleaning items, and fulfilling many other behind-the-scenes responsibilities.

In 1964 they built and opened the 301 Drive-In Theatre, south of Starke on U.S. Highway 301. Although a builder was hired, Robert was hands-on in its construction, even climbing up the very tall poles to attach many 4x8 sheets of plywood that made the large screen.

The Barksdales eventually purchased additional theaters: one in Marianna, Florida, one in Eufaula, Alabama, and several in Tennessee. In 1977, Barbara and Robert left the Florida Theatre and 301 Drive-In in the capable hands of their daughter and son-in-law, Lee, and Vicki Sparks, and moved to Humboldt, Tennessee, to run three of their theaters. As the years passed, the Barksdales sold the Florida Theatre to their daughter and her husband. Now, Justin and Priscilla Sparks have followed in the family tradition and currently run the Florida Theatre.

Although they loved the theater business for many years, the Barksdales sold their remaining theaters one by one, eventually retiring when they were in their 80s. Robert and Barbara worked together for 46 years, offering movie entertainment and tasty popcorn to their customers.

After living in Tennessee for 35 years, the Barksdales returned to Starke in 2012. The family loves having them nearby once again. Their three children all live in Starke. Vicki's son, Justin, and his family are also Starke residents, as well as Robby's son, Matthew, and his family. Robby's son, Ben, lives in Keystone Heights, and his eldest son, Cody, and his family live in Jacksonville.

The family enjoys getting together for birthdays and special occasions and are excited to be celebrating the 76th anniversary of this wonderful couple who started it all on a very cold Sunday afternoon in February of 1947.

Bradford High Teacher of the Year is district honoree

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
Telegraph Editor

When he graduated from Bradford High School, Stephen Brown couldn't have predicted he'd be back there working as one of the most celebrated teachers in the school district.

Brown was named Teacher of the Year by his peers at the high school, and more recently learned he won the districtwide Teacher of the Year award as well.

"When I won on the high school level, I was shocked. And then when I won at the district level, I was elated. I cried in front of all my co-workers," he said.

Superintendent Will Hartley made the announcement during a luncheon right before the Christmas break.

"It was just a warm feeling. I feel incredible. I've never won an award like this ever in my life, and this has been a wonderful moment for me. For my students," he said.

His worthiness for the honor is as evident as his passion for and commitment to his students. Brown began working at Bradford High as an English teacher six years ago. Education hadn't been his plan until a UF professor nudged him in that direction. No push was needed when the opportunity arose to work with ESE students, however. He was inspired by his mother Kim's nearly 20 years of working at The Arc of Bradford.

"Special needs individuals have always been part of my life," he said. "I've found my calling."

Brown teaches a self-contained classroom of 13 students with various needs.

"They're my world. They

make everything worth it," he said.

"Working with special needs individuals is just my passion. They are individuals that don't learn the same way. They act a little differently, and sometimes people just write them off for that. But in my classroom, they're celebrated. They learn and they're champions, and they're brilliant. My classroom gives them the opportunity to shine and to be those incredible geniuses that they can be. They're brilliant kids, and they have a unique way of showing it. If I get to bring that out in them, that's the best thing in the world."

"Mr. Brown is phenomenal in his classroom and students grow leaps and bounds.," Principal Angela Tomlinson said. "Not only is he intune with their everyday needs he is well aware of their long-term goals. In addition, he has a plan to get them all to those goals and safety nets for when they need them. Mr. Brown has a great personality and it shows when you walk in his room. His environment is always welcoming and thriving. He truly believes in teaching from bell to bell with all students. Excuses are not an option!"

Brown is both teacher and head of the high school's ESE department. There is a large number of ESE students at BHS, most included in general education classrooms. They are assisted by a team of teachers as committed as Brown to creating individualized education plans and providing "push-in" services.

Particularly helpful to Brown are the paraprofessionals who assist in his classroom — Susan Taylor, Joan Perez and Janet

Townsend. They are integral to his success and the success of the students, he said.

Brown describes himself as a lifelong learner who loves educating himself and others. He said he's an avid runner. He's also a new homeowner learning to decorate. He loves cooking up vegetarian meals, and he plays seven guitars — one at a time, of course.

He has a proud family, including his mom, Kim, who hails from New Orleans; his dad, Johnny, who is a construction foreman from Starke; his twin brother, Jonathan, an insurance salesman; and an older brother, Gino, who is also in construction.

They lived in Lake Butler for several years before moving to Starke, which is where Brown has spent most of his life.

"I enjoy living in Bradford County. I always wanted to come back and give back to my community. I feel like I have and this award ... it just gives me more of a passion to keep doing what I'm doing and to get better at what I'm doing."

Brown strives to better himself, continuing his education to build upon his teaching credentials.

"When you get special needs individuals, you don't know what you're going to get and how they function. So, you've got to have as many tools in your toolbox as you can."

Brown said he believes in the power of education and hopes to represent the state as Florida's Teacher of the Year. Whether it's a trade school, community college or post graduate degree, he said education can change the trajectory of one's life, just like his.

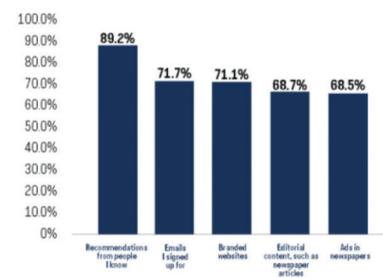


Stephen Brown, second from the left, is pictured with Superintendent Will Hartley, Principal Angela Tomlinson and Assistant Principal Chris Coffey.

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A 50-plus-year marriage started with friendship in wartime

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer

got its start a long way from Bradford County.

You'd think Cupid's arrows would have a hard time finding their marks in the midst of the Vietnam War, but Mickey and Tuyet Bath are proof that not even mortar and artillery rounds could prevent him from bringing two people together.

It's a story of a Florida boy meeting a Vietnamese girl, the two getting married and then making a life for themselves and raising a family in the Sunshine State. The Baths, who live in the Brooker-Graham area, will celebrate 53 years of marriage in August.

As Mickey put it, "Things seem to have worked out," though neither he nor Tuyet can really tell you how one thing led to another.

"I really don't know when we fell in love," Tuyet said.

She explained that they became friends first.

"Then, one day, we're talking about, 'Let's get married,'" Tuyet said.

Coincidentally, with Valentine's Day approaching, it was on Feb. 14 that Tuyet arrived via plane to Florida, having left her home country behind her to start married life in earnest. Yet the day held no special significance for her at that time.

"It wasn't different from any other day because we don't have Valentine's Day in Vietnam," Tuyet said. "It was actually a year later before I knew that (Feb. 14) was Valentine's Day."

A life occupied by working in healthcare, raising two daughters (Patricia Bath and Christina Harris) and spending time with five grandchildren (Gabe Cook, Gavin Cook, Kendall Cook, Reagan Harris and Rylie Harris)

A couple of 'kids' meet at an A camp

Mickey and Tuyet Bath first laid eyes on each other in 1969 at a Special Forces A camp in the Mekong Delta. Mickey was serving in Special Forces, while Tuyet was working at the camp as a nurse. She had actually been there for two years before Mickey showed up. Army doctors trained Tuyet and other young, Vietnamese women to be nurses.

"Our camp was probably about 10 miles from the town she grew up in," Mickey said.

Mickey said Tuyet probably spoke better English than the interpreters the Army was relying upon. That was because of practice.

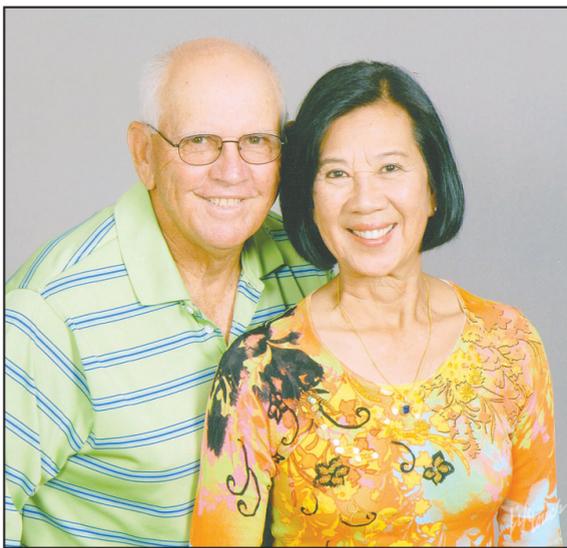
And Charles Schulz's Peanuts books.

"She said one of the guys (at the camp) told her, 'You're going to learn to speak English.' So he handed her Charlie Brown and made her sound out the words," Mickey said.

Tuyet said, "I think that helped me, but I didn't know what I was reading for a long time."

She had the option to take English in high school, but Tuyet chose French instead, which seemed the more reasonable choice because of the French influence on Vietnam. She said she told herself, "I'm never going to speak English."

When they met, Mickey was 21, while Tuyet was 20. Tuyet asked Mickey who he was when she first saw him. He introduced himself and said he was the camp's new weapons man. Tuyet responded by saying, "You're



Mickey and Tuyet Bath turned a friendship during wartime into what will be 53 years of marriage in August.

just a kid. What are you doing here?"

"She always called me a kid," Mickey said.

Tuyet said, "Actually, we called each other 'Kid' for many years."

Perhaps it was a good thing being a "kid," as it actually led to Mickey spending time with Tuyet.

"As the youngest guy on the team, one of my jobs was to escort Tuyet to her hometown to buy groceries," Mickey said, adding, "Every two or three days, we'd have to run down to her village. She'd buy bread and fruit and stuff to supplement our diet with."

At the camp, they'd eat every meal together.

"We were just friends for a long time," Tuyet said. "We talked every day."

Mickey said at some point, some of those talks must've been about getting married. All he can remember specifically is that the camp they were at was going to close. He was going to another camp on the Cambodian border, while Tuyet was going to a hospital at Mickey's company headquarters. Mickey said Tuyet told him, "Gosh, we're never going to see each other again." His response was, "Well, we'll just get married."

Of course, in a time of war, if a helicopter is needed, it can't be spared to fly someone to his wedding. Mickey, who was being accompanied by his brother Ronnie, who was also serving in Vietnam, had to wait until a helicopter became available.

While waiting for Mickey to arrive, Tuyet said she made the remark, "Well, it could be we're going to have a wedding without a groom."

Personnel from the hospital Tuyet worked at were going to fly to Mickey's camp, find him and bring him back, but just as

A break from war to get married

Mickey was busy with his service duties, so he didn't have much involvement in his wedding other than being a part of it.

"She had to do all the wedding planning by herself," Mickey said of Tuyet. "She even made a suit for me."

Mickey said his boss was OK with him getting married and said he would provide a helicopter to fly Mickey to Tuyet's village. The wedding would be held at her home.

"It was a crazy thing because helicopters didn't normally go to my village," Tuyet said.

See BATH, page 15

Valentine's Wishes

Been married over 30 years and still on our honeymoon! (Wow!) Love you, Sheila!

From Henry

Happy Valentine's Day to my wife, Shirley Sewell; kids; and Jessie Berry!
From Rick Sewell



For Valentine's Day, I'm sending you hugs, kisses, and wishes you'll like. You're the world's most awesome grandmother and I hope that Valentine's Day is full of delight!
Love, Jay

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NFTC Digital Design Academy preps students for success

Editor's note: In recognition of Career Technical Education Month, the Telegraph will present a series of stories on North Florida Technical College.

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer

Bradford High School students and Bradford Middle School eighth-graders learn how to work with the Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator programs as part of the Digital Design Academy at North Florida Technical College, but they also benefit from information that will serve them well no matter what career path they choose.

Teacher Donna Harris said

part of her program consists of a career section in which students learn about the various opportunities within the career of digital design, such as marketing and photography.

That's just part of the section. "They actually fill out a resume," Harris said. "We create resumes. We actually fill out a job description on Indeed. They do get told no when they figure out their age, but they do actually apply for actual design jobs just to get the feel of it.

"We also do a whole section for two weeks on applying to colleges that offer design programs. They actually really do have to log in and fill the application out."

Students also get to work on what are called soft skills.

"The soft skills are your customer-service skills," Harris said. "How do you speak to the public? How do you apply for a job? How do you answer a telephone? What is a question someone would ask during an interview? How do you answer some of the harder questions?"

Harris said she'll have her students role play as part of a mock job interview.

It's part of preparing students for future success, no matter their career path. In fact, Harris said she has a student who basically takes her class so he can learn about applying to college online. He intends to pursue a career in

nursing.

That's OK with Harris. As a vocational teacher, her goal is to help students find out where their talents lie and how to achieve their goals, no matter what career field it is.

"That's what we're trying to do here, for them to know what skills they do have and what jobs they are interested in," Harris said. "My job, basically, is not to teach them, but to help them find the resources to get them there. That's really what vocational training is all about — finding the resources to get them there."

Harris is a big believer in the value of vocational education,

See DESIGN, page 15



Jakari Dean works on a design in the Digital Design Academy at North Florida Technical College. Photos by Cliff Smelley except where noted.

Legal Notices

Legals for the week of Feb. 9, 2023

UNION

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING CONCERNING AN AMENDMENT TO THE UNION COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA, SERVING AS THE PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD OF UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA, AND THE LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY OF UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT, PURSUANT TO SECTIONS 163.3161 THROUGH 163.3248, FLORIDA STATUTES, AS AMENDED, AND THE UNION COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, AS AMENDED, OBJECTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS CONCERNING AN AMENDMENT, AS DESCRIBED BELOW, WILL BE HEARD BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA, SERVING AS THE PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD OF UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA, AND THE LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY OF UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA, AT A PUBLIC HEARING ON FEBRUARY 20, 2023 AT 5:55 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, Z 23-01, AN APPLICATION BY JIMMY MATTHEW, TO AMEND THE OFFICIAL ZONING ATLAS OF THE LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS BY CHANGING THE ZONING DISTRICT FROM AGRICULTURAL-4 (A-4) TO INDUSTRIAL, LIGHT AND WAREHOUSING (ILW) ON PROPERTY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: A parcel of land lying in Section 1,

Township 6 South Range 19 East, Union County, Florida. Being more particularly described as follows: Commence at the Southeast corner of the West 1/2 of the Northwest 1/4 of the Northeast 1/4 of said Section 1; thence South 88°46'20" West 2,080.10 feet for the Point of Beginning; thence North 42°43'50" East 230.84 feet; thence South 88°46'20" West 210.00 feet to the Easterly right-of-way line of State Road 121; thence South 42°43'50" West, along the Easterly right-of-way of said State Road 121, a distance of 230.84; thence North 88°46'20" East 210.00 feet to the Point of Beginning. Containing 0.81 acre, more or less. The public hearing may be continued to one or more future dates. Any interested party shall be advised that the date, time and place of any continuation of the public hearing shall be announced during the public hearing and that no further notice concerning the matter will be published, unless said continuation exceeds six calendar weeks from the date of the above referenced public hearing.

At the aforementioned public hearing, all interested parties may appear to be heard with respect to the amendment.

Copies of the amendment 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 in this proceeding should contact Dianne Hannon, Secretary to the Board of County Commissioners at 386.496.4241 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting. If you are hearing or speech impaired, please contact the Florida Relay Service at 800.955.8770 (voice) or 800.955.8771 (TTY).

2/9 1tchq-UCT

NOTICE OF ENACTMENT OF ORDINANCE BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE ORDINANCE, WHICH TITLE HEREINAFTER APPEARS WILL BE CONSIDERED FOR ENACTMENT BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA, AT A PUBLIC HEARING ON FEBRUARY 20, 2023 AT 6:00 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. A COPY OF SAID ORDINANCE MAY BE INSPECTED BY ANY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC AT THE OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, LOCATED AT 15 NORTHEAST FIRST STREET, LAKE BUTLER, FLORIDA, DURING REGULAR BUSINESS HOURS. ON THE DATE, TIME AND PLACE FIRST ABOVE MENTIONED, ALL INTERESTED PERSONS MAY APPEAR AND BE HEARD WITH RESPECT TO THE ORDINANCE. THE TITLE OF SAID ORDINANCE READS, AS FOLLOWS: AN ORDINANCE OF UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA, RELATING TO

AN AMENDMENT OF LESS THAN 50 ACRES OF LAND TO THE FUTURE LAND USE PLAN MAP OF THE UNION COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, PURSUANT TO AN APPLICATION, CPA 23-01, BY THE PROPERTY OWNER OF SAID ACREAGE, UNDER AMENDMENT PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED IN SECTION 163.3161 THROUGH 163.3248, FLORIDA STATUTES, AS AMENDED; PROVIDING FOR CHANGING THE FUTURE LAND USE CLASSIFICATION FROM AGRICULTURE-4 (LESS THAN OR EQUAL TO 5 DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE, EXCEPT AS PROVIDED FOR IN POLICY 1.2.2) TO INDUSTRIAL OF CERTAIN LANDS WITHIN THE UNINCORPORATED AREA OF UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA; PROVIDING SEVERABILITY; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE
The public hearing may be continued to one or more future dates. Any interested party shall be advised that the date, time and place of any continuation of the public hearing shall be announced during the public hearing and that no further notice concerning the matter will be published, unless said continuation exceeds six calendar weeks from the date of the above referenced public hearing.

All persons are advised that, if they decide to appeal any decisions made at this public hearing, they will need a record of the proceedings and, 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 Dianne Hannon, Secretary to the Board of County Commissioners at 386.496.4241 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 (voice) or 1.800.955.8771 (TTY).

2/9 1tchq-UCT

NOTICE OF ENACTMENT OF ORDINANCE BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE ORDINANCE, WHICH TITLE HEREINAFTER APPEARS WILL BE CONSIDERED FOR ENACTMENT BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA, AT A PUBLIC HEARING ON FEBRUARY 20, 2023 AT 6:00 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. A COPY OF SAID ORDINANCE MAY BE INSPECTED BY ANY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC AT THE OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, LOCATED AT 15 NORTHEAST FIRST STREET, LAKE BUTLER, FLORIDA, DURING REGULAR BUSINESS HOURS. ON THE DATE, TIME AND PLACE FIRST ABOVE MENTIONED, ALL INTERESTED PERSONS MAY APPEAR AND BE HEARD WITH RESPECT TO THE ORDINANCE. THE TITLE OF SAID ORDINANCE READS, AS FOLLOWS: AN ORDINANCE OF UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA, AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 95-4, AS AMENDED; RELATING TO THE REZONING OF LESS THAN TEN CONTIGUOUS ACRES OF LAND, PURSUANT TO AN APPLICATION, Z 23-01, BY THE PROPERTY OWNER

OF SAID ACREAGE, TO AMEND THE OFFICIAL ZONING ATLAS OF THE UNION COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS; PROVIDING FOR REZONING FROM AGRICULTURAL-4 (A-4) TO INDUSTRIAL, LIGHT AND WAREHOUSING (ILW) OF CERTAIN LANDS WITHIN THE UNINCORPORATED AREA OF UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA; PROVIDING SEVERABILITY; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE
The public hearing may be continued to one or more future dates. Any interested party shall be advised that the date, time and place of any continuation of the public hearing shall be announced during the public hearing and that no further notice concerning the matter will be published, unless said continuation exceeds six calendar weeks from the date of the above referenced public hearing.

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53 B Keystone Yard Sales
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65 Help Wanted
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Obituaries

John Britton

John Davis "Grandad" Britton, 97, of Keystone Heights, passed away Friday, Feb. 3, 2023, at Roberts Care Center in Palatka. He was born in Greenville, Tennessee, Aug. 11, 1925, to William Roy and Mary Emily "Molly" (Davis) Britton. He was a proud World War II veteran, serving from 1943 with the 97th Division Army Units XVII and XVIII, and was honorably discharged from active duty in 1946, and from inactive duty in 1949. Prior to retirement, he was employed with United Electric in Jacksonville as a journeyman electrician for 43 years. In retirement he loved gardening and visiting his family and friends. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his wife, Helen F. (Dugger) Britton; two brothers; five sisters; and special friends, Clifford and Minnie Johns.

He is survived by two sons and their spouses, James (Sheila) Britton and Michael (Carol) Britton; grandchildren and their spouses, Lisa Kay (Michael) Moss, Amy (Michael) Mendoza, and Mathew Britton; along with great-grandchildren, Darrin Willette Jr., Alivia Kay Willette, Mary Katherine Bessent, Magdalena Mendoza, Cassandra Mendoza; and a host of friends (He said everyone he met was special.)

Funeral services were held Tuesday, Feb. 7, at Hope Baptist Church with Brother Ron Kimbrell and Dr. Larry Strickland officiating. Graveside services and interment followed at Keystone Heights Cemetery.

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



Grace Buckley

Grace Noma Buckley, 91, of Keystone Heights (formerly of Starke), passed away Sunday, Feb. 5, 2023 at St. Vincent's Riverside Hospital. She was born on July 4, 1931 in Raiford to the late Marion and Martha (Wilkinson) Crews. She was a member of First Baptist Church of Starke and a member of their PieceMakers Prayer Quilt Ministry. She loved children and taught Sunday school at various churches for over 45 years. She enjoyed sewing, quilting, crocheting, and playing her piano, but her greatest joy was spending time with her family. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband of 60 years, Gary "Buck" Buckley; siblings, Delyne (Bobby) Pearson, Esther (Bill) Harrell, Frank Crews, M. L. (Inez) Crews Jr. and Herbert (Irene) Crews.

Survivors are her children, Martha Buckley (Stan) Boyette of Starke, Linda Buckley (David) Carter of Keystone Heights; her sister, Sarah Albert of Jacksonville; and her sister-in-law, Winnie Crews of Starke. Also left are her grandchildren, Blake (Casey) Thomas of Keystone Heights, Lisa (Javier) Brito of Jacksonville Beach, Monica (Philip) Pombier of Jacksonville Beach, Thomas Boyette of Lake Butler, and Shawn (Brittany) Boyette of Lake Butler; 10 great-grandchildren; and one great-great grandchild.

Funeral services will be held at the DeWitt C. Jones Chapel on Thursday, Feb. 9, 1 p.m. with interment following in Long Branch Cemetery.

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



Jessica Horn

Jessica Cassandra Horn, 34, of Keystone Heights passed away Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023, in Starke. She was born in Jacksonville on Feb. 19, 1988, to David and Annalisa (Hatten) Phillips. She graduated in the Class of 2006 from Keystone Heights High School and served in the United States Army Reserves. She was employed with Windsor Manor Health and Rehabilitation in Starke as a Certified Nurse's Assistant and was currently taking American Sign Language classes to obtain her ASL certification. She was a member of the Kol Simcha Messianic Congregation in Gainesville and loved spending time with her daughters and family.

She leaves behind two beautiful daughters, Valiena Horn, 14, and Kaylee Ann Horn, 13; parents, David Arnold and Annalisa Marie (Hatten) Phillips, all of Keystone Heights; three siblings, Mark Phillips of North Carolina, Elizabeth Murphy and Christina Phillips, both of Keystone Heights; maternal grandfather, Jerry Hatten of Texas; and paternal grandmother, Nedra Phillips of Keystone Heights. Also left behind is her fiancé, David Michelle of Keystone Heights; and numerous family members and friends that will miss her dearly.

The family will receive friends Monday, Feb. 13, from 5 p.m. until 7 p.m. at the funeral home chapel. Graveside services will be held at 11 a.m., Tuesday, Feb. 14, with Rabbi Tony Arroyo officiating. Interment will be at Gadara Cemetery.

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



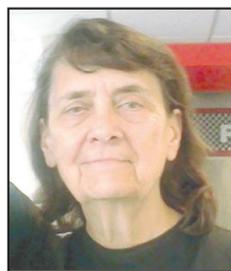
PAID OBITUARY

Alice Dawkins

Alice Carlene Dawkins, 80, of Starke, passed away peacefully at home in the arms of her loving husband on Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023. She was born Nov. 24, 1942 in Alamo, Wheeler County, Georgia. She was raised in Starke and attended Bradford High School until 1959. Shortly after high school, she met the love of her life, Robert George Dawkins, while working at the Mary Carter Paint Store, and the two of them were married in Nahunta, Georgia in 1962. Together they shared 60 beautiful years. She was a loving wife, mother, and grandmother, who loved her family deeply, and, in her spare time, she enjoyed tending to her family as a homemaker, sewing, listening to (and singing) old-time gospel music, and Elvis Presley. In her later years she enjoyed sitting on her back porch with her husband and watching birds, but most of all, she loved her family and having them around her, and she always put them first. She was preceded in death by her parents, the late Howard A. Coleman and Gladys Ruth Coleman.

She is survived by her loving husband, Robert George Dawkins of Starke; children, Robert (Kathy) Dawkins of Starke; Joe (Birgit Williams) Dawkins of Ocala; brother, Alton (Marlene) Coleman; sisters, Hazel (Gene) Bass and Sandra (J. W.) Crawford all of Starke; grandchildren, Drake (Ashley) Dawkins, Zylon Dawkins, and Stephen Williams; as well as many nieces and nephews that she loved dearly.

A remembrance service in her memory will be announced at a later date. Arrangements are under the care and direction of V. Todd Ferreira Funeral Services and Archie Tanner Memorial Chapel, Starke.



PAID OBITUARY

Barbara Griffis

Barbara Richie Griffis, a resident of Gresham, Oregon went to be with our Lord on Sunday, Jan. 1, 2023. She was born on June 13, 1932. She moved to Starke with her parents and brother when her father retired from the Navy. She met and married Gerald D Griffis in 1949, living the majority of her life at Camp Blanding on Kingsley Lake, until Gerald retired after 36.5 years. She loved First Christian Church, her home church. She was preceded in death by her husband, Gerald; parents, Carl and Marbury Richie; and brother, Donald.

She is survived by sons Dan C. (Gloria) Griffis of Gate City, Virginia and Jerry E. (Barb) Griffis of Gresham, Oregon; grandchildren, Dr. Danny (Jen) Griffis of Anchorage, Alaska, Jeremy (Tisha) Griffis of Gate City, Virginia, Kelly Griffis of Sherwood, Oregon, and Kyle (Meagan) Griffis of Gresham, Oregon; and great-grandchildren, Wyatt, Abbie, Sabrina, Colter, Georgia, Monique, Damien, Zane, Laurel, and Boone.

Family and friends are invited to a Celebration of Life at First Christian Church, Starke on Feb. 25, at 11 a.m. A family interment of Barbara & Gerald will be at Longbranch Cemetery.



PAID OBITUARY

Do you have an In Memory or Card of Thanks to submit? Please email socials@bctelegraph.com.

William Lee

William "Bill" H. Lee, 83, of Keystone Heights passed away Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2023, in Gainesville. He was born Sept. 28, 1938, in Logan, West Virginia to Robert A. and Ruby (Fitzpatrick) Lee, and had proudly served in the United States Air Force. In 1987 he returned to school to earn his bachelor's degree in nursing from the University of Florida. This opened the doors to a career working at the Veterans Hospital in Gainesville and a local nursing home until his retirement. He was an avid Florida Gators fan, and always enjoyed helping others. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his daughter, Debbie Lee; and six brothers.

His survivors are his wife of nearly 36 years, Jolinda (Wilks) Lee of Keystone Heights; Cindy Lee of Keystone Heights, Rosemary Grant of Wisconsin, Vail Scotland of California, Michael Lee of Lake City, Matthew Richard Lee of Lake Butler; and he was lovingly called "Grandpa" by four grandchildren.

A Memorial Service will be held at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 11, at Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home Chapel with Pastor Justin Brown officiating. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to the Wounded Warrior Project.

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



PAID OBITUARY

Frances Norman

Frances C. Norman, 72, of Raiford, went home to be with Jesus on Saturday, Feb. 4, 2023. She was born on Aug. 4, 1950, in Williston, to Ebb and Nettie Cannon. She was the youngest of 16 children, and she spent her childhood moving around the west coast of Florida as the daughter of a commercial fisherman. She met the love of her life, Stanley, in June of 1966 and they were married the following year. She spent the next 56 years in Raiford, loving him and raising their children to love Jesus. She retired from North East Florida State Hospital after 30 years of faithful service. She enjoyed spending time with her family, camping with her "Hunk of Burnin' Love," cruising, and hosting family gatherings, especially Christmas Eve, for many, many years. One of her favorite places to be was out in the yard with her flowers. Her most favorite color for any occasion was red. She loved her Gators, and you could hear her cheering really loud against those "Dawgs." Her passion was taking care of others, as evidenced by her long career. But, where her caring heart was exhibited most, was in how she took care of her babies and grandbabies. Above all, what defined her was her love for Jesus, His Word and His people. She took 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 to heart... "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." She was preceded in death by both parents; and 12 siblings.

She is survived by her husband, Stanley; her children, Randall (Vickie) Norman, Eddie (Suzanne) Norman, and Suzanne (Bo) Warren; her grandchildren, Jay (Jenna), Garrett, Kindsey, Sam, Mason, Colton, Hannah, Tessa and Cale; and her great-grandchildren, Micah, Jed, Holden and Lydia; her siblings, Buddy (Irene) Cannon, Katheryn (Norman) King, and Freddie (Alice) Cannon.

Her Homegoing service was held Wednesday, Feb. 8, at New River NCM Church in Raiford, followed by a graveside service at Pine Grove Cemetery in Raiford.

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



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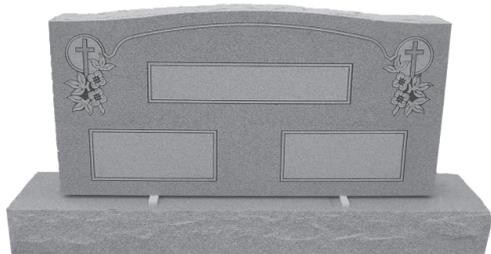
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Statewide Guardian ad Litem announces new branding

The Florida Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office announces a new logo and brand

identity. A new look and feel will better encompass what the office does and the significant positive impact it has on abused and neglected children it represents in the courtroom and communities across Florida.

The new logo is the letter G, with an exterior outline forming a shield shape to represent guardianship. The open area of the G is fashioned from a heart shape, mirrored in the bar. The yellow abstractly symbolizes the state of Florida.

"Although we will have a new brand, our values and focus will not change. We are pivoting to something greater," said Dennis Moore executive director of the Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office. "Our new brand, associated only with Florida, will help us reach more people and partners. The new identity will now incorporate all aspects

of what the Statewide Florida Guardian ad Litem Office does, including the independent legal representation of abused and neglected children."

Every child in Florida appointed to the Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office is assigned a Guardian ad Litem attorney as part of their multi-disciplinary team, providing zealous independent advocacy and undivided loyalty to the child.

"Florida has become a leader in child welfare representation across the country, with proven outcomes based on data and evidence," Moore said. "The new branding will allow us to communicate our efforts better and help others understand who we are and what we do."

"It takes teamwork to get the gold-standard results Florida has obtained. A team consisting of

a Guardian ad Litem attorney, a child-welfare professional and, hopefully, a Guardian ad Litem trained volunteer from that child's community."

The Florida Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office represents Florida's abused, abandoned and neglected children in the courtroom and community. Through the collaboration of a multi-disciplinary team, quality legal representation for children's interests is provided, as well as assistance so that the child can express their needs and wishes. This unique approach allows Guardian ad Litem to support the whole child, addressing their physical, educational, mental, emotional, social, and legal needs.

In 2021, the Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office represented over 37,000 children in Florida.



18 to compete for titles at Feb. 11 Miss Bradford Fest

Miss Bradford Fest will be held at the Bradford High School auditorium on Saturday, Feb. 11, at 7 p.m. Pre-sale tickets are available until noon on Friday, Feb. 10, for \$7. Tickets will be \$10 at the door.

Program books will also be for sale at the door.

Five will be competing for the Petite Miss title, five for the title of Junior Miss, five for the title of Teen Miss and three for the title of Miss.

A People's Choice Award and a "Top Bid Award" will go to your favorite contestant and will be chosen that night based on your participation. You must attend to vote!

Your participation is enriching the future of our contestants who are competing for a two-year scholarship. Come cheer them on as their dreams come true.

The contestants are as follows:

Brilee Melvin

Brilee, the 6-year-old daughter of Cassie and Brian Melvin of Brooker, is competing in the Petite Miss category. She is a first-grade student at Southside Elementary School, where she is on the honor roll and was recently recognized as a Kiwanis Club of Starke Terrific Kid. She loves competing in pageants and is currently a member of the North Florida Elite Cheer Purple Diamonds all-star team. She seems to be shy, but shows on stage her love for getting dressed up and her confidence. She loves to sing and dance and has a huge heart for animals. She enjoys reading a book before bedtime each night as well as a devotional, teaching her how to pray for others. Her teacher describes her as an "insightful, empathetic, helpful, caring and responsible student."

Bethany Peraino

Bethany, the 6-year-old daughter of Heath Vann and Krystal Kerr of Lawtey, is competing in the Petite Miss category. Bethany attends Northside Christian Academy and is in kindergarten, where she has an A Honor Roll student. She loves to sing at church and enjoys spending time with her younger siblings. Every time you see Bethany, she has a smile on her face. She loves riding four-wheelers and can go from makeup to mud. Bethany loves to take care of her horse and chickens. When she grows up, she wants to attend college and become an X-ray technician.

Olivia Coiana

Olivia, the 5-year-old daughter of Gino and Brittany Coiana, is competing in the Petite Miss category. She attends Midway Learning Center, where she is thriving. She is the youngest of three children and looks up to both of her sisters and adores them. She wants to be like her sister Amelia Grace, who lives for pageants. Olivia is very spunky and is so excited to have the opportunity to do something she thinks is fun. Olivia is very outgoing and funny no matter where she is. She has taken her state test for pre-K and scored close to the first-grade level. She would rather work puzzles and do work than anything else. Olivia wants to be a police officer when she gets older.

Hadley Holsenbeck

Hadley, the 5-year-old daughter of Dustin and Kayla Holsenbeck of Starke, is competing in the Petite Miss category. She is in kindergarten at Southside Elementary School, where she is currently Little Miss Southside. She is an A/B Honor Roll student. Hadley loves to dress up and do her make-up. She enjoys dancing, singing and being the life of the party. She wants to be a famous on TikTok when she grows up. She is proudly sponsored by Holsenbeck Land Tree and Debris, LLC.

Jesslyn Higgs

Jesslyn, the 5-year-old

daughter of Jesse and Lindsay Higgs of Starke, is competing in the Petite Miss category. She is the youngest of six children. She is in kindergarten at Southside Elementary School. Jesslyn loves to be outdoors and ride four-wheelers and side-by-sides with her family. An interesting fact about Jesslyn is she has cheered with North Florida Elite Tiny Sugar Plums since she was 3. She is currently in her third season of cheerleading. She is sponsored by AAA Bail Bonds and Lisa Tatum. When Jesslyn grows up, she wants to become a nurse after attending college.

Charley Box

Charley, the 9-year-old daughter of Jacob and Laresa Box of Lake Butler, is competing in the Junior Miss category. She is a fourth-grade student at Lake Butler Elementary School. Charley is a sergeant in the LBES safety patrol and is responsible for putting up and taking down the flag each day at school. A big accomplishment for Charley was her cheer team winning Overall Level-One Grand Champion at Battle on Broadway in Nashville last year. Charley enjoys 4-H and is showing a steer, heifer and goat in the UCLA fair this year.

Shalin Hannah

Shalin, the 12-year-old daughter of Terry and Shannon Hannah, is competing in the Junior Miss category. Shalin attends Bradford Middle School and is in the seventh grade. She is a former title holder of Miss Bradford Fest. She lives on a farm and enjoys spending time with her animals. Shalin is a member of Bradford FFA and is the chaplain of her chapter. Shalin is also in Bradford 4-H and shows goats in the Bradford County Agricultural Fair. She wants to become an interior designer when she graduates from college.

Raegan Godwin

Raegan, the 12-year-old daughter of Robert and Jessica Godwin of Starke, is competing in the Junior Miss category. She is a sixth-grade student at Lake Butler Middle School, where she is an A/B Honor Roll student. She is a member of the Sapphire Dance Team at Starke Dance Academy. Raegan is a member of SWAT, plays percussion in the LBMS band and is an active member of her church youth group. Raegan is proud to have been saved and baptized in the summer of 2022. She aspires to attend the University of Florida, where she will start her studies to be a marine biologist.

Kylee Kerr

Kylee, the 12-year-old daughter of Kevin and Stephanie Kerr of Lawtey, is competing in the Junior Miss category. She is in the seventh grade at Bradford Middle School, where she is an A/B Honor Roll student. Kylee enjoys being part of her church youth group and sharing the news of Jesus to anyone who will listen. Recently, Kylee and a few of her friends from school started a Bible study group, hoping to reach more children with the gospel. Kylee is in her second year cheering for BMS, where she has learned hard work and discipline pay off if you are willing to put forth the effort. An interesting fact about Kylee is she has a passion for all things girly and hopes to become an aesthetician so she can make others feel beautiful.

Taylin Holsenbeck

Taylin, the 9-year-old daughter of Dalton and Whitney Holsenbeck of Starke, is competing in the Junior Miss category. She is in the fourth grade at Southside Elementary School, where she is currently Miss Southside. She is an A/B Honor Roll student and in her second year of gifted classes. She is in 4-H of Bradford County and will show her pig, Oliver, in this year's fair. Taylin has done pageants since she was 3 and

loves every minute of being on stage, having fun. In her spare time, Taylin loves to spend time with her family in Georgia hunting. She also spends time hanging out with her younger brother and sister. When she grows up, she wants to be one of the best country singers to stand in the Grand Ole Opry Circle in Nashville.

Hailey Griffis

Hailey, the 14-year-old daughter of Jeanne Osteen and Kyle Griffis of Lawtey, is competing in the Teen Miss category. She is in eighth grade at Bradford Middle School, where she is the chapter president of Future Farmers of America, a majorette and was voted 2022-23 Winter Queen by her peers at the Winter Formal. Hailey loves to show livestock and competes in a variety of competitions associated with agriculture. When Hailey graduates, she plans to become an anesthesiologist. In her spare time, she likes to go hunting with her dad and her brother or binge watch Netflix. A fun fact about Hailey is she has participated in the Miss Bradford Fest pageant since she was 6.

Bailey Varnes

Bailey, the 14-year-old daughter of Erika Kemp of Lake Butler, is competing in the Teen Miss category. She is in the ninth grade at Union County High School, where she is an A Honor Roll student. She is on the UCHS Tigerettes team and an active member of the Lake Butler Future Farmers of America. A big accomplishment of Bailey's is establishing her own herd of cattle. She volunteers during the Bradford and Union County fairs. Bailey loves to dance, and she loves dogs. Two interesting facts about Bailey are that she loves to fish and her favorite holiday is Halloween. She plans to attend Texas A&M to study Animal Science and eventually become a veterinarian.

Sydney Box

Sydney, the 16-year-old daughter of Jacob and Laresa Box of Lake Butler, is competing in the Teen Miss category. She is in the 11th grade at Union County High School, where she is an A/B Honor Roll student. Sydney is a member of the UCHS varsity cheerleading team. She is on two all-star cheer teams at NFE and also coaches a level-1 tumbling class. Sydney is involved in showing livestock through the Lake Butler FFA chapter and Union County 4-H. In her spare time, she practices photography and assists her aunt with photo shoots. Three words that describe Sydney would be compassionate, hardworking and joyful.

Chloe Anderson

Chloe, the daughter of Chazz and Paige Anderson of Starke, is competing in the Teen Miss category. She is a junior at Bradford High School, where she is a dual-enrolled honors student. She plays varsity volleyball and holds leadership positions in both FFA and Student Government. One of her biggest accomplishments was overcoming her fear of public speaking by participating in the theater and competing in public-speaking events for FFA. She placed second in the Tri-County area. She has volunteered in many different settings, but enjoyed her time at the Rainbow Center the most. Chloe plans to graduate with honors and an AA Degree from Santa Fe College and then attend a four-year university.

Remington Higgs

Remington, the 13-year-old daughter of Jesse and Lindsay Higgs of Starke, is competing in the Teen Miss category. She is a seventh-grade student at Lake Butler Middle School and is an A/B Honor Roll student. A big accomplishment for Remi was stepping out of her comfort zone and competing in Miss Winter Fest 2022 (she is the reigning title holder for her division).



Brilee Melvin



Bethany Peraino



Olivia Coiana



Hadley Holsenbeck



Jesslyn Higgs



Charley Box



Shalin Hannah



Raegan Godwin



Kylee Kerr



Taylin Holsenbeck



Hailey Griffis



Bailey Varnes



Sydney Box



Chloe Anderson



Remington Higgs



Liberty Harahus



Kimberly Palmer



Kyndall Key

Remi has done competitive cheer with North Florida Elite for four seasons, participated in BMS cheerleading and is currently a junior coach for NFE's Tiny Sugar Plums. Once Remi graduates from high school, she plans to attend college to become an NICU pediatric nurse.

Liberty Harahus

Liberty, the 19-year-old daughter of Tasha Bennett-Baucom and Herbert Baucom of Starke, is competing in the Miss category. She graduated from Bradford High School with her CNA and CPR certifications. A fun fact about Liberty is this is her second pageant. Her first pageant was less than a month ago. Liberty decided to start doing pageants to help build confidence in herself and step out of her comfort zone. Liberty plans to attend Santa Fe College in the spring to begin working

toward her goal of becoming a NICU nurse. She would like to thank all her family and friends for the endless support that they have given to her.

Kimberly Palmer

Kimberly, the 19-year-old daughter of Tim and Vicki Palmer of Lake Butler, is competing in the Miss category. She was 2022 Miss Union County High School. Kimberly has worked at Nutrition Escape since she was 16, and she has taught dance for four years to 3-4-year-olds. Kimberly has worked with and continues to work with individuals with exceptional needs, and this continues to be one of her greatest passions. She is a sophomore at Florida Gateway College, where she maintains a 3.82 GPA and made the President's List for the 2022 fall term. She plans to attend Santa Fe College, where she

will earn a degree in Radiology Technology.

Kyndall Key

Kyndall, the 17-year-old daughter of Chris and Misy Key of Starke, is competing in the Miss category. She is in the 12th grade at Bradford High School, where she has earned three industry certifications. She is the president of the FFA chapter and vice-president of the Skills USA chapter, as well as a member of Bradford County 4-H. Kyndall has volunteered with Meals of Hope to package meals for those in need and with Altrusa to help educate elementary school children about agriculture by reading to them and interacting with them. Kyndall enjoys cooking, welding and being with her cow. She hopes to earn a certificate in welding and one day become an agriculture teacher.



All four Bradford High School lifters who competed at the Region 2-1A finals placed. Pictured (l-r) are Rylie Blankenship, Takeirra Bakken, Allie McFarland and Brianna Brooks. Blankenship, Bakken and McFarland will advance to state.

BHS sending 3 to state in girls weightlifting

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer

Takeirra Bakken won her weight class at the Feb. 4 Region 2-1A girls weightlifting finals at West Nassau High School and is one of three from Bradford High School who'll compete at the state finals.

Bakken automatically qualified for state by placing first in the 199-pound class. She had a 190 bench press and a 200 clean and jerk for a 390 total. That put her 65 pounds ahead of runner-up Hayden Herndon of Baldwin.

The champions of each weight class at each of the four regions in Class 1A qualified to go to state, which will be held Saturday, Feb. 18, at RP Funding Center-Jenkins Arena in Lakeland.

An additional 16 lifters in each class received at-large bids based upon a comparison of region totals. Bradford's Rylie Blankenship and Allie McFarland will advance and compete as well.

Blankenship was the Region 2 runner-up in the 110 class with a 210 total (105 bench press, 105 clean and jerk). That was tied for the fourth-best total among lifters competing for at-large bids.

McFarland placed fourth in the 169 class at the region meet with a 285 total (150, 135). That was tied for the sixth-best total among lifters competing for at-large bids.

Brianna Brooks also competed

for Bradford, placing sixth in the unlimited class with a 275 total (140, 135).

The efforts of the four lifters gave Bradford a team score of 16, which placed the Tornadoses third behind Palatka (36) and Pierson Taylor (30).

Gabby Oliver, who was the District 6 champ in the 169 class, failed to make weight and didn't compete.

It was the second straight week the Tornadoses had to compete without one of their state qualifiers from last year. Courtney Comer failed to make weight at the District 6 meet, which prevented her from going for a third straight state championship.

Oliver was a second-place finisher at state last year.

Bakken will be making her third trip to state. She competed in the 183 class the past two years, placing second in 2021 and third in 2022.

This will mark the first-ever trip for Blankenship and McFarland. In fact, this is Blankenship's first year in competitive weightlifting.

Blankenship will lift during the morning session at the state finals, which will begin at 8 a.m. Bakken and McFarland will lift in the 1 p.m. session.

Admission is \$9. Tickets can be purchased via rpfundingcenter.com.

The cost to park at the venue is \$10.

KHHS' Wright qualifies for state with 2 region titles

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer

Keystone Heights High School's Kaylee Wright won her weight class in both the Olympic and traditional events at the Feb. 4 Region 2-1A girls weightlifting finals at West Nassau High School, which qualified her for state for the third straight year.

Wright, competing in the 169 class, won the Olympic event with a snatch of 115 and a clean and jerk of 155 for a 270 total, putting her 150 pounds ahead of Palatka's Al'Lyssa Ford and Camden Posey.

Her clean and jerk, combined with a bench press 180, gave her a 335 total in the traditional event. That put her ahead of Palatka's Posey by 25 pounds.

The winners of each weight class in each of the four regions in Class 1A automatically qualified for the state finals, which will be held Saturday, Feb. 18, at RP Funding Center-Jenkins Arena in Lakeland. An additional 16 at-large lifters were selected for each class based upon region totals.

Chloe Still, who placed fourth in the 139 class in the traditional event with a 245 total (120 bench press, 125 clean and jerk), was 10 pounds shy of earning an at-large state berth.

Paige Harrington and Ariel King each had totals that left them 5 pounds shy of receiving at-large berths. Harrington was fifth in the 183 class in the Olympic event with a 220 total (95 snatch, 125 clean and jerk), while King was sixth in the 129 class in the traditional event with a 250 total (130, 120).

Kenly Chitty was sixth in the 154 class in the Olympic event with a 215 total (90, 125).

The Indians had a team score of 10 in the Olympic event to place 10th and a score of 11 in



Kaylee Wright won her weight class in both the Olympic and traditional events at the Region 2-1A finals. File photo by Cliff Smelley.

the traditional event to place seventh.

Keystone also had the following results in the Olympic event: Heidi Knapp with a 165 total (70, 95) in the 119 class, Trista Harrison with a 165 total (75, 90) in the 129 class, Ashlyn Brown with a 210 total (100, 110) in the 154 class, Morgan Wilson with a 195 total (85, 110) in the 169 class and Lily Mitchell with a 185 total (75, 110) in the 183 class.

The traditional event also included the following Keystone results: Chitty with a 235 total (110, 125), Brown with a 210 total (100, 110), Wilson with a 210 total (100, 110) and Harrington with a 225 total (100, 125).

Wright is looking to earn a medal at state for the second straight year. After placing 11th in the 199 class at the 2021 state finals, she placed sixth in the 183 class last year.

Medals are awarded for top-six finishes.

Wright will lift during the 1 p.m. session.

Admission is \$9. Tickets can be purchased via rpfundingcenter.com.

The cost to park at the venue is \$10.



Leah Clark's second-place finish at the Region 2-1A finals earned her a trip to state. File photo by Cliff Smelley.

Clark is a region runner-up for UC, will lift at state

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer

Union County High School's Leah Clark lifted her way to the Class 1A state finals by placing second in her weight class at the Region 2 finals, which were held Feb. 4 at West Nassau High School.

Clark had a bench press of 135 and a clean and jerk of 140 to finish with a 275 total in the 139 class. That put her 10 pounds ahead of West Nassau's Peyton Bass. Pierson Taylor's Amya Ramos won the championship with a 310 total.

The champions of each weight class at each of the four regions in Class 1A qualified to go to state, which will be held Saturday, Feb. 18, at RP Funding Center-Jenkins Arena in Lakeland.

An additional 16 lifters in each class received at-large bids based

upon a comparison of region totals.

Taleya Smith fell 15 pounds shy of earning an at-large berth. She placed fifth in the 154 class with a 245 total (115 bench press, 130 clean and jerk).

Union also had the following results: Hailey Rivera with a 185 total (85, 100) in the 119 class, Hayley Burke with a 215 total (100, 115) in the 154 class, Gracelyn Manning with a 245 total (125, 120) in the 199 class and Jaira Highland with a 235 total (120, 115) in the 199 class.

Clark will lift in the morning session at the state finals, which will begin at 8 a.m.

Admission is \$9. Tickets can be purchased via rpfundingcenter.com.

The cost to park at the venue is \$10.



Takeirra Bakken won the Region 2-1A title in the 199 class with a 390 total. She'll be making her third straight trip to the state finals. She was a state runner-up in 2021 and a third-place finisher in 2022. File photo by Cliff Smelley.

KHHS is District 4-3A girls soccer runner-up

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer

Goalkeeper Aspen Korhn stopped shot after shot and kept top seed P.K. Yonge off the board in the first half, but the Blue Wave got four goals from Faith Hardy in the second half as the Indians lost 6-1 in the District 4-3A championship match at P.K. Yonge on Feb. 2.

Korhn made 20 saves before walking off the field to a round of applause by the Keystone fans when she was replaced by Miranda Yow in the 71st minute. More than half her total occurred in the first half as the Indians (19-5) were constantly on the defensive. Keystone attempted only five shots on goal for the entire match.

P.K. Yonge (12-4-1), which was also thwarted by numerous offsides violations, saw Korhn make three saves in the final two minutes of the first half, including one in the final five seconds. Korhn stopped a shot in the 42nd minute when play resumed, but the Blue Wave finally found the net, with Hardy recording an assist on the first goal of the match off a corner kick. That occurred in the 47th minute. Approximately a minute later, Hardy scored to put the Blue Wave ahead 2-0.

Hardy added another goal in the 54th minute before the Indians got their lone goal when Kiersten Shaw scored off

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Kiersten Shaw gains possession on a throw-in in Keystone's 6-1 loss to P.K. Yonge in the District 4-3A championship match. Photos by Cliff Smelley.

KHHS girls' hoops season ends with 2-point loss

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer

Though they were the top seed, the Keystone Heights High School Indians came up just short, losing 54-52 to fourth seed North Marion in the District 5-4A girls basketball semifinals on Feb. 1 in North Marion.

The Indians (16-9) got 13 points, 19 rebounds and four steals from Dezaray Bright, while Kiley Channell had 17 points and four assists.

Yasmin Bryant finished with eight points, while Kaitlin Brown and Rexi Lewis each had six. Brown also grabbed 10 rebounds.

Kadence Massey had two points and eight rebounds.

District boys basketball tournaments are underway

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer

Bradford, Keystone Heights and Union County all played their first games in their

respective district tournaments this past Tuesday (Feb. 7).

Union, which ended the regular season with five wins in six games, was seeded fourth in the District 6-1A tournament. The Tigers (13-10) played fifth seed Bell in a quarterfinal game on Feb. 7. If they won, they traveled to play top seed Newberry in a semifinal game on Wednesday, Feb. 8.

If Union advanced past the semifinals, it will travel to play either second seed Hawthorne or third seed Fort White for the championship on Friday, Feb. 10, at 7 p.m.

Keystone, which ended the regular season with a two-game losing streak, was seeded fifth in the District 5-4A tournament, which is being hosted by Santa Fe High School. The Indians (14-10) played fourth seed Eastside in a quarterfinal on Feb. 7. If they won, they played top seed Santa Fe in a semifinal game on Feb. 8.

If Keystone advanced past the semifinals, it will play either second seed North Marion, third seed Palatka or sixth seed Suwannee for the championship on Friday, Feb. 10, at 7 p.m.

Bradford (1-15) was seeded fourth in the District 2-3A tournament. The Tornadoses played top seed P.K. Yonge in a semifinal game on Feb. 7. If they won, they'll travel to play second seed Interlachen or third seed Trinity Catholic for the championship.

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer

Third seed Bradford High School was able to bring a 16-point deficit down to single digits, but the Tornadoses watched host Trinity Catholic pull away in the end in a 60-46 loss in the semifinals of the District 2-3A girls basketball tournament on Feb. 1.

Jada Hankerson was a huge part of the rally, scoring 17 second-half points and going 11 of 14 from the foul line. Two made free throws on one trip pulled Bradford to within six points in the third quarter, while another 2-of-2 trip in the fourth quarter made it a five-point game.

Hankerson led all scorers with 24 points.

Despite the loss, Bradford (10-11) received an at-large Region 1 playoff berth and will travel to play Providence in a quarterfinal game on Thursday, Feb. 9, at 7 p.m. If the Tornadoses win, they would travel to play either Florida High or Trinity Catholic in a semifinal game on Tuesday, Feb. 14, at 7 p.m.

The Tornadoses were in a tie game in the first quarter after two free throws by Nichelle Brown, but they committed turnovers on seven straight possessions as second seed Trinity closed the quarter with a 10-0 run to take a 14-4 lead.

A Hankerson three-pointer made it a seven-point game

in the second quarter, but the Celtics responded by outscoring Bradford 11-2. Trinity went into halftime leading 29-13.

Leanna Pabst made a three-pointer to start the second half, giving Trinity a 32-13 lead before the Tornadoses went on a 15-4 run. After a free throw by Hankerson, a Ar'Nayshia Griffin scored off a Brown steal. The teams then each exchanged one free throw before Griffin scored off an offensive rebound. Griffin then grabbed a rebound on the defensive end and went the length of the court, drawing a foul on a drive to the basket. She made 1 of 2 free throws to make the score 33-20.

Following her trip to the foul line, Griffin made a backcourt steal, which led to Hankerson getting fouled on a shot. Hankerson made both free throws, which was the start of a stretch in which she made eight in a row.

Brown and Crum scored baskets off their own steals to make the score 33-26. After a free throw by the Celtics' Heaven Sanders, Hankerson was fouled on a drive to the basket. She made both free throws to make it a 34-28 game in the final minute of the third quarter.

That was the good news. The bad news was that the quarter's final minute also saw three Bradford players pick up their fourth foul: Brown, Griffin and Ajayah Jackson.



Jada Hankerson (left) pulls up for a shot against Trinity Catholic's Rose Gravel-Holtzclaw in the Tornadoses' 60-46 District 2-3A semifinal loss. Photo by Cliff Smelley.

It was 39-30 going into the fourth quarter, which began with Griffin scoring on a drive to the basket and Hankerson sinking two more free throws to make it a five-point game. Trinity then reeled off six straight points. The Celtics' Alessa Washington scored off a scoop shot in the

lane and then added another basket off a steal by teammate Rose Gravel-Holtzclaw. A steal by Delaney Baker led to a turnaround jumper from Gravel-Holtzclaw as Trinity extended its lead to 11.

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Mickey and Tuiet Bath are pictured at their wedding in Vietnam. Pictured (l-r) are Tuiet's mother, Pham Thi Sung, Tuiet, Mickey and Mickey's brother Ronnie.

BATH

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their medevac helicopter was taking off, the helicopter that was bringing Mickey was landing.

Mickey dashed indoors to change into his suit. The ceremony took place. Then he changed and was back on the helicopter, going back to his camp.

"It was a short wedding," Mickey said, adding, "I don't know that we had time (to think about being married)."

The wedding took place during the Delta's dry season, but Tuiet said a hard rain fell during the couple of days she remained at home, helping her mother clean up. She said a man in her village believed the rain was a good omen for the newlyweds, saying, "You two are going to be very rich."

"We're still waiting," Tuiet said.

The short wedding was actually the first of two. Mickey and Tuiet made a trip to a justice of the peace when Tuiet came to the U.S.

"We had to have a marriage certificate for her to apply for a green card," Mickey said.

A life together

Just as their wedding ceremony practically went by in the blink of an eye, so, too, has life. Tuiet said once she and Mickey settled down in the U.S., they always seemed to be busy with school, work, raising children and attending all the activities their grandchildren have been a part of. Mickey said it's been "go, go, go for the last 52 years," while

Tuiet said, "Before you knew it, it was, 'Oh, my goodness. Here we are, retired.'"

Mickey worked for a while before serving a second stint in the Army for three years. He then went to the University of Florida for its Physician Assistant program. Afterward, he worked in hospitals in Lake Butler and Ocala and also alongside the late Dr. Pete Gianas. Mickey worked two separate times for UF, which is where he retired from in 2012.

Tuiet worked as a nurse at what is now known as HCA Florida North Florida Hospital in Gainesville. She first went to school to become a licensed practical nurse. The hospital paid for her to participate in a bridge program so that she could become a registered nurse.

Mickey said before Tuiet was set to retire in 2013, she took a leave of absence so that she and he could travel in their motorhome to Alaska.

"She said she was going to find out if she could stay with me for two months, every day, in close quarters, before she retired," Mickey said.

Traveling is something the couple enjoys. Though the Alaska trip was planned out in advance, most of their trips are spontaneous, including visiting the cabin they own in the Smoky Mountains in North Carolina.

"We kind of take it a day at a time," Mickey said. "Tomorrow afternoon, we might say, 'Let's run to North Carolina and check out the cabin.' We have driven

up to North Carolina, spent the night at the cabin, got up the next morning, got a cup of coffee and headed back to Florida."

Mickey and Tuiet like to fish, though Mickey said, "We have fished less since we retired than we did when we were working." He recalled a funny incident when he and Tuiet went fishing with their daughter Christina and her family and their daughter Patricia's sons. Mickey said he fixed every pole and baited most everyone's line, but he was the only one who didn't catch a fish.

Still, no fish doesn't ruin the experience.

"I like to catch fish, but if I don't, I don't mind at all," Tuiet said. "It's nice to be out there. There's something relaxing about it."

They enjoy a variety of sports, especially when it comes to the Gators. They have season tickets for UF football and used to go to Gainesville with their motorhome to tailgate.

Tuiet first fell in love with ACC basketball during Mickey's second stint in the Army.

"She'd be at home, so she'd watch TV," Mickey said. "We were in North Carolina (at Fort Bragg). They've got teams called North Carolina State Wolfpack. They won the national championship that year. She was watching them. She was watching Duke. She was watching North Carolina. She was watching Maryland."

A lot of the sports they watch now involve their grandchildren.



Tuiet Bath is pictured in the uniform she wore while working as a nurse who assisted U.S. Army doctors.

Of course, family, in general, takes up a lot of their time. Their house is the hub of many events.

"We stay very active with the kids and the grandkids," Tuiet said. "We get together here a lot. Most of the kids' birthday things are done here."

What Mickey described as an "unlikely meeting, unlikely courtship and unlikely wedding" has taken him and Tuiet from a time in which they called each other "kid" to now, in which they're known by what Mickey said are their new names: "Grandpa" and "Grandma."

"It has all been atypical, courtship, wedding and all," Mickey said, "but it's lasted a long time."



Jordyn Morgan prepares material for a Cricut machine, which will cut the material based upon a design she created. "When students design something in here that they are super proud of, Jordyn will actually print it for them on the Cricut," teacher Donna Harris said. "We call her the Cricut Girl."

DESIGN

Continued from page 11

something she's been a part of for 28 years, with 11 of those years coming in Digital Design. Vocational education at North Florida Technical College specifically is something that means a lot. Her parents took classes there — her father in welding and her mother in medical. Her aunt attended NFTC as well, studying cosmetology.

"My family has benefitted greatly from vocational program," Harris said.

She was no stranger to NFTC when she began teaching there. She said she walked on the campus when she was as young as 4 and took classes there herself, including in the very classroom in which Digital



Jordyn Morgan shows off one of her designs on a T-shirt. Photo by Michelle Fox.

Design is offered.

"I know this campus all too well," Harris said.

What she likes about NFTC is the fact that students are learning from people who know what they're teaching. They're people who've worked in the field. Harris, for example, employs marketing and digital-design strategies as the owner of a small business.

Harris said if you walk by the welding class, you walk by a teacher who's a real welder. If you walk by the criminal justice class, you walk by a teacher who works in law enforcement.

"You don't have someone who's just read about it. You have someone who lives it and does it every day," Harris said. "That's the type of instructor you get (at NFTC)."

BHS

Continued from page 14

Bradford made it a single-digit game again after a basket by Hankerson and a free throw by Jackson. A steal by Hankerson led to her getting fouled on a drive to the basket. Both of her free-throw attempts went in, but each was disqualified due to a lane violation.

After a made basket by each team, the Celtics went on an 11-1 run to put the game out of reach for Bradford.

Griffin finished with 12 points, while the Tornados also got five points from Brown, two points each from Crum and Gemma Rodriguez and one point from Jackson.



Ar'Nayshia Griffin applies pressure in the backcourt against Trinity Catholic's Brionie Leahman (foreground).



Goalkeeper Aspen Krohn prepares to corral a ball. She made 20 saves in the loss to P.K. Yonge.

KHHS

Continued from page 14

a Dallas DeCrosta assist in the 61st minute.

P.K. Yonge scored three goals in the final 12 minutes.

Though they came up short, the second-seed Indians earned an at-large Region 1 playoff berth. Keystone, the seventh seed in the eight-team region, traveled to play second seed Bolles in a quarterfinal match this past Tuesday (Feb. 7). If the Indians

won, they'll travel to play either third seed Maclay or sixth seed Providence in a semifinal match on Friday, Feb. 10, at 7 p.m.

The region championship match is on Tuesday, Feb. 14, at 7 p.m. If Keystone advances that far, it would play either top seed P.K. Yonge, fourth seed Pensacola Catholic, fifth seed Florida High or eighth seed Episcopal. The Indians would have to travel to face any of those opponents with the exception of Episcopal.

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