

Bradford County Telegraph

USPS 062-700 — Starke, Florida

Thursday, Aug. 15, 2024

146th year, 5th Issue — \$1

Commissioners have thoughts on how you should vote

Commission votes 4-1 to oppose abortion amendment and encourage voters to do the same

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
mark@bctelegraph.com

As if the fire assessment seat wasn't hot enough, Bradford County commissioners decided to enter the debate over abortion access in Florida last week.

Commissioners voted 4-1 to approve a resolution condemning Amendment 4 as a "misleading" and "pro-abortion" amendment and encouraging all Bradford County voters to vote against it.

The ballot summary for Amendment

4 reads, "No law shall prohibit, penalize, delay, or restrict abortion before viability or when necessary to protect the patient's health, as determined by the patient's healthcare provider. This amendment does not change the Legislature's constitutional authority to require notification to a parent or guardian before a minor has an abortion."

Among the county resolution's claims is that "pro-abortion organizations including Planned Parenthood and the ACLU have spent millions and deceived thousands to garner the required number of petition signatures to place a pro-abortion constitutional amendment, titled 'Amendment to Limit Government Interference with Abortion,' on the November 2024 statewide ballot."

The resolution calls language of the amendment, including "age of

viability" and "health of the mother," misleading with the goal to "enshrine abortion on demand in the Florida Constitution."

Commission Chairwoman Carolyn Spooner opposed the resolution, saying the board "should not take up and promote a particular party's viewpoint." She said the resolution's language was controversial, hostile, offensive and "not factual."

"I may choose as a Christian, as a minister, to oppose it, but I know in reality, sometimes extenuating circumstances occur in a person's life where they may have to make that unthinkable choice," Spooner said. She gave an example of an adolescent who became pregnant as the result of rape while incapacitated in a medical facility. The resulting medical complications could have killed her had someone not been able to act on

her behalf and make a difficult choice.

Spooner said board members should not use their place on the dais to impose their moral values on anyone. Deciding for oneself how to vote is one of "the blessings about America," she said.

Commissioner Danny Riddick said the resolution was based on examples provided to him from other jurisdictions by a constituent.

"Abortion is not a form of birth control. Period. A baby is a special gift from God. Period. The Bible says in Jeremiah 1:5, 'Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.' Man or woman does not have anything to do with creating babies. God created that baby," he said.

See VOTE, page 8

Early voting

In Bradford County, early voting for the primary will be available through Aug. 18, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Go to the commission meeting room in the north wing of the Bradford County Courthouse.

In Union County, early voting takes place in the Supervisor of Elections Office at 175 W. Main St. in Lake Butler. Early voting is open through Aug. 17 from 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday through Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

In Keystone Heights, early voting takes place at city hall from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. through Aug. 17.

Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at precincts throughout the area on Tuesday, Aug. 20.

Fairgrounds food distribution

A communitywide food distribution hosted by Feeding Northeast Florida and True Vine Ministry will take Tuesday, Aug. 20, at 9 a.m. at the Bradford County Fairgrounds.

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.

Lifeline food giveaway

Lifeline Ministries and Gleaners Dispatch will hold a food giveaway on Saturday, Aug. 24, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at 325 N. Christian St. in Starke.

Food distribution at True Vine

A communitywide food distribution hosted by Farm Share and True Vine Ministry will take place Tuesday, Aug. 27, 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.

Soil and water conservation board meets

The Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District will meet at 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 20, at the Bradford County Extension Office, 2266 N. Temple Ave. in Starke.

The impacts of the Tropical Storm Debby. If people have images of flooding or erosion please email them to Paul Still. You can also contact Still for a site visit. It is important to identify conditions that can contribute to flooding and erosion.

These meetings are open to the public. Contact Paul Still at 904-368-0291 or stillpe@aol.com for more information.

Riverbend residents dealing with washed out roads

BY CAROL MOSLEY
Special to the Telegraph

The small community of River Bend, between Graham and Brooker, was left with impassable roads after Hurricane Debby. The community of more than 50 residences banded together quickly to seek an immediate solution that would allow for emergency vehicles to get in and out if needed.

What they wanted was lime rock to fill the gaping holes and deep ruts. Local residents hit the phones to their commissioner and the county.

The residents are a resourceful bunch with many owning dump trucks and excavators that could do the work, and they were willing, they said, if they could just get lime rock from the county. They considered it a dire situation since there are bedridden elderly and disabled who were stranded. School is about to start and the turnaround at the entrance to the community would not support the school bus, so children would have to wait on an unsafe road. These folks were not taking "no" for an answer.

This is not the first time they've had to deal with this on their private



Nancy Benckowsky slows traffic while Jassy Crews excavates lime rock from the concrete ditch that leads to the Sampson River.

roads. Some sections have washed away in heavy rains before. And, they say they've always been able to get assistance from the county, or at least the lime rock to do it themselves. So,

they were expecting that to be the case again.

But private roads are generally not permitted to be maintained by the county and are technically

the responsibility of the residents who purchased homes along those roads. They found themselves in a legal conundrum they had not faced in the past that required a county commission meeting to approve the emergency request at hand.

At the entrance to the subdivision is a circular turnaround where the school bus usually loads and unloads the students. Then the road splits into two, Southwest 112th and 113th avenues. In the circular turnaround there is a large, round drainage catchment that they call "the bowl." Broken culverts underground are left to carry the water to the bowl, where it is then supposed to exit onto an open concrete lined ditch and drain into Sampson River.

But when the lime rock washes off the roads and clogs the bowl, there is nowhere for the water to go but to create a river out of the roads. And the lime rock that washes out of the bowl builds up along the steep concrete lined ditch, with some washing into the river, altering the river's depth and flow.

See ROADS, page 4

Lake dwellers ask boats to slow down following storm

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

A Bradford County lake dweller is asking boaters to slow down after

Hurricane Debby passed the area, and homeowners saw lake waters creep into their yards and approach their homes.

Rick Nath said he is trying to persuade officials to establish a no-wake zone on the lake to minimize property damage.

"We've got water on some docks," he said, "and we've got some boats that are running 20 miles per hour."

Nath said he called Bradford County Emergency Management, the Suwannee River Water Management District, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission about a no-wake order but could not find the agency with the authority to declare such a restriction.



Crosby Lake water crept over the Lakewood recreation area dock as the lake reached flood stage.

Nath added that he hoped that once word got out about the damage fast boats can cause in high-water conditions, boaters would voluntarily slow down to help their neighbors.

"I have about a foot-and-a-half of water in my backyard right now," he said. "It's not coming into my house but creates erosion and other issues."

The Lakewood neighborhood resident added that boat wakes create turbidity in the water and lift and move wetland plants.

"You have the erosion that can take place, especially with irregular waves and have a more forceful power than nature to the water dispositions," he added.

Nath said that Lakes Crosby and Sampson reached flood stage on Friday at 132 feet above sea level and were expected to crest at that level.

Revenues down for Union County School District

BY TRACY LEE TATE
Special to the Times

The Union County School District has drafted its 2024-25 school year tentative budget, which is awaiting final approval by the Union County School Board on Aug. 20, 2024. Some changes in funding sources are the main difference in the new budget, due to some Federal programs sunseting at the end of September and a slight increase in the state-mandated millage rate charged taxpayers as a part of their property tax.

General revenues are decreased slightly for the coming year. These are funds that come from federal, state and local sources. Federal funding has increased by \$12,000, while state funding has increased by a little over \$688,160, and local funding has decreased by \$1,212,439. Fund balances for the coming year are also lower than last year by \$1,936,655. This sets the total for revenues and fund balances at \$2,347,769 less than the 23-24 school year.

Special revenue is showing an increase for the new school year.

These are funds that are designated for specific uses or programs, coming from federal and local sources. The special revenue fund is slightly more than \$1 million more than last year thanks to a much larger carry-over of fund balances.

The big loss is in the area of special revenue from specific government sources, most of which were connected with special funding to assist schools with COVID issues during the pandemic. The programs are ending as of Sept. 30, 2024. They include the Elementary and

Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER), the American Rescue Plan (ARP), and CARES funds. Last year, these funds totaled \$3,575,513. There are none this year. Last school year much of this funding was used by the district to repair roofs, improve or replace air conditioning units and improve ventilation in the schools, costs that are considered to be non-recurring.

Capital projects spending is also down for the new year, with a decrease of \$385,830. As with last year, the bulk of the funds will be spent on

See BUDGET, page 8



Bradford HIPPY program seeks students

Enroll your preschool-age child in a free kindergarten readiness program. HIPPY is an

evidence-based home visiting program that partners with the parents of children, ages two through five to help prepare parents and children for school success.

Each week HIPPY delivers free curriculum, books and materials to families. Through

peer-to-peer mentoring, HIPPY provides parents and guardians with the confidence, tools and strategies for engaging their child in the HIPPY activities for that week.

HIPPY does not replace preschool, but is meant to work in collaboration with children's

early childhood educational experiences, bridging the school and home.

For more information, please contact 904-966-6036.

RJE alumni plan social

The RJE alumni will host a Denim and Pearls Social on Saturday, Aug. 24, from 6-10 p.m. at the Starke Golf and Country Club, 15501 NE 14th

St. near Starke. A good time is planned with finger foods, games and dancing. Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased from any alumni member, or contact President Joann Jackson at 904-769-6963 or Linda Hampton at 904-964-8156.

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Clerk: Bradford finances in trouble without budget cuts, new revenue

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
mark@bctelegraph.com

Clerk of Courts Denny Thompson told Bradford commissioners last week that they needed to consider budget cuts if they were not going to increase revenue.

"We're a hair away from appearing in Tallahassee as an insolvent county," Thompson said.

The remarks came after the board postponed a new fee to fund its fire department until at least next year and a presentation from Finance Director Dana LaFollette on the board's tentative budget for 2024-25.

LaFollette said if the board took its \$13.9 million in contingency funding and set aside two months' worth of operating expenses in an emergency fund as commissioners have requested, that would leave general fund reserves at \$6.8 million.

"Just in case anyone was wondering what that meant,

what Dana just told you, is that can's been kicked as long as it can be kicked," Thompson said. "If you're not going to fund it, something's got to be cut."

The clerk said he doesn't know what that something should be. According to Thompson, it's only been a few years since Bradford was flush with cash.

"We had plenty money. We could buy two brand new tractors for the road department at \$300,000, \$400,000 of what we used to have left over. There's nothing left over," Thompson said. "I mean, we're by the skin of our teeth right now."

Commissioners had no comment. While they have reportedly met individually with the clerk's office to discuss the budget, there have been no budget workshops this year to hear department spending requests or consider budget cuts.

According to LaFollette's budget summary for next year, revenue and expenditures, including all reserve funds,

amounts to \$75.5 million. This does not include the final figures on Florida Department of Transportation grants, but it does include \$2.79 million in grants for fire rescue, the library, community development (SHIP), mosquito control and solid waste. It includes \$31.4 million in regular expenditures, plus another \$24.7 million in transfers between funds. The final reserve total, including the department-specific reserves, was \$16.59 million.

The budget for fines and forfeitures (including law enforcement, jail and court expenses) is nearly \$12.1 million, fire rescue (including firefighting and emergency medical services) is \$10.5 million, the road department (without grants) at \$4.14 million, solid waste is \$2.07 million and the library is \$1.5 million.

The full tentative budget will be presented at the county commission's first public budget hearing on Sept. 3.

Land conservation on Clay ballot

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

Clay County Commissioners passed a resolution placing a referendum on the November 5 ballot that will ask voters whether or not to earmark 0.2 mills in the county's tax revenue for land acquisition.

According to the resolution, the 0.2 mills would be used to repay \$45 million in bonds over 20 years. The county would issue the bonds to finance land acquisitions for conservation within Clay County.

The ballot measure reads as follows:

"CLAY COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION REFERENDUM TO PROTECT WATER QUALITY, WILDLIFE HABITAT, FORESTS AND FARMS

To acquire and manage lands that protect water quality in rivers, lakes, creeks, and drinking water sources; conserve wildlife habitat, natural areas,

and working forests and farms; reduce flooding; and provide outdoor recreation, shall Clay County issue general obligation bonds up to \$45 million, maturing within 20 years, bearing interest not exceeding legal maximum rates, payable from ad valorem tax up to 0.2 mills, with annual audits, citizen oversight, and full public disclosure of spending?

___YES
___NO

According to a feasibility study by the Trust for Public Land, the measure would cost each Clay County homeowner \$33 per year over 20 years.

That same report said that from 1996 to 2023, 101 referendums were offered to Florida taxpayers to finance land conservation. Eighty-five of those measures passed, while 18 failed.

The report states that "Since 1988, 26 counties in Florida have received voter approval to dedicate funding for land conservation. Many counties, including Polk, Seminole, and

Volusia counties, have received approval for multiple ballot measures to renew funding for their land conservation programs. Most recently, in 2022, voters in Alachua, Brevard, Indian River, Nassau, Pasco, and Polk counties approved dedicated funding for land conservation."

Before the unanimous vote to put the measure on the November 5 ballot, Commissioner Betsy Condon insisted that the vote was not for a tax increase.

"I saw some discussion today on social media that we, the board of county commissioners, are asking for a tax increase," she told her colleagues. "That's not what this is. We're asking them, the voters, about conservation. So, if you don't want to pay (0.2) mills towards conservation, you'll vote no in November. If you want to put 0.2 mills towards conservation, you'll vote yes in November. And that's all we're asking the public."

Clay County making headway in strategic goals

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

The director of community and social services for Clay County told the board of county commissioners that the local government had reached some of the goals outlined in its strategic plan and is making progress toward other aspirations.

Gabrielle Gunn reviewed a report from County Manager Howard Wanamaker, which stated that while county commissioners set a goal of a 90% retention rate for county employees, the current retention

rate is 99%.

Gunn added that the county is exceeding its goal for the days it takes to process new permits for residential and commercial structures.

She noted that the strategic plan calls for a permit review time of seven days for residential structures and 30 days for commercial buildings.

In June, county workers averaged 22 days to review permits for commercial buildings and five days for residential units.

The director also pointed out progress in other goals within the

document.

The plan stipulates that at least 95% of county employees receive at least 24 hours of training annually. The current staff training rate is 32%.

The plan also sets a grant revenue goal of \$100 million within five years. To date, the county has received \$38 million in grant awards.

The plan also sets the goal of the county inspecting 100% of all high-risk occupancy buildings each year. Through June, county inspectors looked over 123

See GOALS, page 8

Church banquet at fairgrounds

Evangelistic Church of the Risen Savior will have its annual banquet at the Bradford County Fairgrounds on Saturday, Aug. 17, at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$35. Please call 352-262-3942 or 5509.

Democratic Women Meet Aug. 22

The Democratic Women's Club of the Lakes Area will meet on Thursday, Aug. 22, two days

after the primary. Tony Connolly, the Democratic candidate for FL House District 20, will speak at 7 p.m. District 20 covers southern Clay as well as all of Putnam counties.

All Democrats are welcome,

and doors open at 6:30 p.m. Meetings are held at the Melrose Center, 309 S.R. 26, Melrose, FL 32666. For further information, please contact 352-235-4161 or info@dwc-la.org. Visit online at www.dwc-la.org/.

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"I am honored to support and endorse my fellow clerk, friend and colleague Kellie Hendricks Rhoades, CPA for Clerk of Court & Comptroller in Union County. Kellie's designation as CPA is very important to the Comptroller's office. With this designation, Kellie is saving Union County about \$120,000 per year in salary and benefits. Maintaining the County's funds and keeping the books accurately in accordance with generally accepted governmental accounting principles is imperative! As a former Union County citizen, known to some as "Tater", I strongly support Kellie's bid for re-election."

-- Greg James, Wakulla County

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Commissioner Diane Andrews demonstrates the depth of the hole at one impassable intersection.



Justin Crews lays mesh over a deep rut in hopes of slowing the runoff.

ROADS

Continued from page 1

According to the residents, not being responsible for the maintenance doesn't necessarily mean that the county and other agencies are alleviated from all responsibility, especially in the case of emergency situations. Emergencies demand action. And, they had Attorney General opinions that they interpreted to say that private roads must be made passable for emergency vehicles, but cannot be "improved" with public resources. They said the documents even indicated that usual protocol could be suspended in a declared emergency such as this.

The sheriff and fire chief confirmed that a fire truck and typical EMS vehicle could not get down those roads.

The residents say "the bowl" and its exit concrete ditch are county property and supposed to be maintained by the county. They claim the county hauls the

lime rock away when they do clear the ditch rather than put it back on their roads. They say they've watched the roads drop as much as three feet over the years and that lime rock that was taken was used elsewhere. They say they are just asking for their own lime rock to come back to them.

Commissioner Diane Andrews called for an emergency commission meeting to get the decision made and action taken before the declaration of emergency from Debby expired, but was unable to get a quorum of three. Angry residents filled the Emergency Operations Center in anticipation. Andrews was able to pull together a quorum the following day and the people passionately made their case and got the answer they needed to pick up the lime rock the next morning and use it to make the roads passable.

Jessica Soulsby called for a meeting at her house for the community to develop a plan of action. "In the past, sometimes people would do it one way and others might complain, but if we



"The Bowl" catchment is too full of debris for the water to flow.



The pipes are now exposed and ready to carry water to the bowl.

come together as a community and all decide what to do then no one can blame anyone because it wasn't done a certain way or another. This way, we are all in it together."

And, band together they did. By early morning the trucks were at the yard getting the lime rock.

The roads were filled with tractors moving the lime rock around and their own excavators were cleaning the debris out of "the bowl" and in the deep concrete ditch where the water

runs to the river. Folks in ATVs and golf carts were stopping by with water and sandwiches.

Nancy Benckowsky was slowing traffic on C.R. 18 while Jassy Crews, operating the excavator, slogged through watery lime rock in the deep ditch and piled it up to be reclaimed. "This is our lime rock in this ditch we're taking back and putting back on our road," Nancy explained. "It's supposed to be a county maintained ditch. The county comes out here on

occasion and instead of giving it back to us they haul it away and give it somewhere else. In the last 30 years I've seen my road drop three feet or more."

Paul Still from Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District was out to assess the drainage structures and identify the source of the flow. His evaluation is that it needs a major re-do project but many things can be done now to mitigate damages until a major overhaul plan could be figured out. "The main thing is to identify where the water is coming from" he said. He'll be bringing the issue up at the next soil and water board meeting.

Meanwhile, the community is determined to come up with a long range solution together. "We don't want to live in the city. We live out here because we love country living. And, we don't ask for much," exclaimed Bill Hinshaw.

According to Soulsby, "There may be an impression that we're a bunch of poor, uneducated people living way out here on dirt roads. That is not the case. We are well educated people with businesses who choose to live out here. We pay our taxes, shop

in this county and buy gas that funds roads just like everybody else. We just want what's fair."

They don't want a homeowner's association, but they plan to form a coordinated effort to investigate the history of their community's development and know exactly what are their rights. Andrews learned of a program through the National Guard that trains soldiers how to build roads. High hopes hang on such a fix as that, with functioning drainage culverts and ditches and the road raised and properly pitched. And, most importantly, identify and stop the flow that turns their roads into rivers.

Whatever it takes, the community says they've had enough this time. They want answers before the next major storm gives them a repeat event. Meanwhile, they're glad to have gotten a promise from the county that lime rock that comes from Riverbend stays at Riverbend in the future. Until a permanent solution can be found, they are willing and able to do the work themselves to maintain the roads.



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Emergency meeting called for road repair post-Debby

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
mark@bctelegraph.com

A neighborhood of residents pulling together to help each other was able to convince Bradford County Commissioners to at least provide the materials to help.

Following a couple of meetings and additional contacts with county officials, residents of Riverbend Estates agreed to transport and distribute lime rock from county property to repair their private roads, which were once again left destroyed by the heavy rainfall that accompanied Tropical Storm Debby.

Only three commissioners were able to attend an emergency meeting on Aug. 9, and not all of them agreed to declare the matter an emergency.

Commissioner Danny Riddick said "every" road in Bradford County could be the subject of an emergency meeting.

"Yesterday, I had three calls, three different private roads that you can't get down. So next week, do you want me to call Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and put all three of them on emergency meetings?"

It was a rhetorical question, however Commissioner Diane Andrews who represents the Riverbend area had an answer: "Yes, sir!"

But Riddick continued, pointing out the county road department was "struggling" to repair the county's publicly owned roads.

"I don't even call (Public Works Director Jason Dodds or County Manager Scott Kornegay) and report them roads, because I know right now our road department is struggling just as hard as it can just to get some of the regular county roads passable. And two, as far as the fire truck, you'd be hard pressed to get a fire truck back in this area even on a good day without the rain," he said.

The crowd response in the Gov. Charley E. Johns Conference Center was just the first of many times Commission Chairwoman Carolyn Spooner had to call for order.

Riddick said he wanted to help everyone, but if the county repaired this private road, it would have to repair every private road.

"I don't think we should have any private roads in Bradford County. I'm just being honest with you. But unless this board was OK to buy two more graders and (add) probably five or six more people in the road department to take care of those roads, there's nothing we can do about it at this time," he said.

Riddick added that Riverbend has been an issue since he's been on the board. Any action taken now will be undone by the next storm, he said. For whatever reasons they chose to live there, Riddick said the residents knew they chose to live on a private road that they would have to maintain.

"Everybody in here, when you bought your piece of property, you weren't flown in on a helicopter. You had to drive into that location, and you had to drive down that road to see," he said.

He maintained that while the road may be inaccessible by certain emergency vehicles, it was not altogether impassible and therefore did not meet the emergency requirements for the county to break protocol and repair a private road.

"You can't expect that these people will continue to drive in a ditch or on people's property to get around that massive hole at the end of the road," Andrews said, citing the opinions of Sheriff Gordon Smith and Fire Rescue Chief Ben Carter about responding to emergencies under these circumstances. She said if she was having a heart attack at the end of that road, she would tell her family to sue the county before she died.

"It is wrong that we put people's life in jeopardy because we don't want to fill up a hole with some dirt," she said.

Doing so required agreeing the road was impassible and that repairing it would benefit the general public. Carter said most fire and rescue vehicles would not be able to travel the road. Others would have difficulty, but if there is a call, they would respond, he said.

Emergency Management Director Capt. Brad Witt

explained the county would also have to use its own resources to do so in anticipation that it might eventually be reimbursed by federal disaster relief funding.

Resident Jassy Crews told the board that the county had always come to repair the road following a hurricane-type event because portions regularly wash out and become impassible.

"We all pay taxes. We all pay tax at the pump it for this stuff. I understand that money goes to county-maintained roads, but the money that the county is getting right now for those materials is not coming from the county budget. It might be in the beginning, but in the end, you're reimbursed for that. And if one of you had a loved one on that road, you'd want it fixed, too," she said.

"It's really hard to understand why our county, which always promotes that you are here for the citizens, will not stand up for the citizens. It is unfathomable that we're here and that it took getting an emergency meeting to get that approved, and the fact that our county, instead of assessing the roads and prioritizing which ones were the worst, they took and maintained the county roads that should have had minimal damage because they're maintained regularly," Crews said.

"We have a family that has three disabled people that live in the house," Jessica Soulsby said. "We have three residents

that are just about wheelchair bound. They cannot walk. They do not have vehicles of their own. Arc cannot come down there and take them to their doctor's appointments," she said, adding that children going back to school would have to stand on the side of the highway because the buses could not enter and make a U-turn.

"This is a life and death situation," Andrews said. "I don't want to be responsible, to be the one who says we cannot do this because we can. We all know in a state of emergency that we fill out FEMA paperwork and we're given every single penny back to the county. It's not going to count. It may cost the county today and tonight and tomorrow, but to say it's going to cost the county, not going to cost the county. We are in a state of emergency, and that money will be replaced."

Andrews was also exasperated that it took an emergency meeting to address the problem.

"This is ridiculous that we've had to go this far, but in some cases, sometimes you just have to do what you got to do. These people matter just as much as any other person in Bradford County. I know for a fact that there was truckloads of stuff hauled behind a store in Hampton. I know there was truckloads of stuff hauled to Lawtey. These people matter, too, and it's time that we start treating — and I'm just going to say it — people in District 5 just

like we treat everybody else," Kornegay informed commissioners that the county had enough lime rock on hand to be able to make some repairs to the roads at Riverbend. Spooner recommended the board approve making the emergency road repairs and also look for a long-term solution. Riddick offered an alternative, asking Kornegay if the county could give the lime rock to the residents and let the residents perform the work.

"If they're willing to do the work, they could probably get a whole lot more done if we supplied them the lime rock, and then they could get started. Because to be honest, I don't know when the county can get started, even if we vote for it right this second, because we still got other roads that are that we're trying to get passable," Riddick said.

With the attorney's blessing, Spooner agreed, "That seemed to be a reasonable solution that would satisfy everybody and take care of this emergency. Let's do it."

"I'm glad we had this discussion," Riddick said. "I'm not against helping anybody, so please don't ever think that. But you know, I've got to make sure that we're fair and equal with 18,000 people in the whole county and do what's right. So, I feel like we came up with the right solution today, and hopefully y'all feel the same way."

Auditors find problems with Keystone Heights accounting

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

The City of Keystone Heights's external auditor told the city council that it found problems while examining the municipality's financial statements for the year ending September 30, 2023.

Annie Nock of Reddish and White said the city overspent its budget, which is an automatic finding. Secondly, the municipality's Community Redevelopment Agency underspent money on some of the projects it was working on and did not properly document the carryover of those projects to the following year.

Nock also said her firm had to make a \$39,000 adjustment to the city's accounts receivable and that the city staff could not produce 10 documents that auditors requested to view.

The CPA said she understood that office staff turnover caused most of these problems. City Manager Charlie Van Zant emphasized that point after Nock's presentation.

"I just want to state out loud," the city manager, who was hired in January 2024, said, "there is not a single person inside city hall that was here on September 30th, 2023, when this audit was finalized. We've got the same public works crew, but the people that were doing the accounting and the invoices and paying the bills and going into all the online portals with the state's chief financial officer and the Department of the Treasury and making those entries (are gone)."

Kiwanis fishing tournament approved

The council approved a request by Lake Region Kiwanis to hold a kayak fishing and cornhole tournament at the municipality's beach park on March 30, 2025.

Kiwanis representative Fred Goetzman told council members that fishing tournament participants would launch at 6 a.m. from any point on Lake Geneva and return to the beach park at 3 p.m.

"They cannot come out of the water for any reason until three," he said.

Goetzman added that when anglers reel in a fish during the catch-and-release event, they measure and photograph it. The image is sent to tournament officials, who approve or reject the catch.

The entry fee for the event is \$85, and the first-place winner will receive 50% of the purse. Second through third-place finishers will win 30% and 20%, respectively.



Kiwanis representative Fred Goetzman (left) told council members that fishing tournament participants would launch at 6 a.m. from any point on Lake Geneva and return to the beach park at 3 p.m. Also pictured (l-r) are Council Member Elston "Speedy" Kussler, Vice Mayor Christine Thompson, Council Member Tony Brown, City Manager Charlie Van Zant, and City Attorney Rich Komando.

Councilman Tony Brown said he wanted a chase boat in the water during the event in case any of the participants encountered an emergency. Goetzman replied that he would ensure the added safety measure was in place.

Land use and rezoning

The council approved a land use change and rezoning for property owned by Dr. George Restea.

Restea's residential-zoned parcel extends from North Lawrence Boulevard, adjacent to the north side of the Family Dollar property, to Lake Brooklyn behind the Ride and Shine Car Wash on Cargo Way.

The change approved by the council rezones the one-acre section of the parcel closest to North Lawrence Boulevard to commercial while leaving the section closest to the lake residential.

China Chef demolition to be rebid

Council members directed its staff to rebid the demolition of the China Chef Restaurant at the corner of South Lawrence Boulevard and East Walker

Drive.

In response to its first request for bids, the municipality received two responses, one from Jacksonville's ELEV8 Demolition for \$34,714 and a second from C & S Site Prep of Lawtey for \$77,004.

Project Manager Beau Wright said that six other companies inquired about the job after the bids were received.

The council also approved an \$8,000 purchase to replace a public works trailer and told Wright to look into replacing the city's bucket truck, which he said could cost \$30,000. The project manager is also researching the acquisition of a side-by-side for public works, which he said would cost around \$20,000.

Wright also told the council he is making progress on demolishing the rebuilding of the municipality's tennis courts and resurfacing the pickleball and basketball courts.

Council members also approved joining the Florida State Retirement System for its employees.

Airport negotiating with Florida State Guard

Airport Chair David Kirkland told the council that the airport

looking for an apron area and a hangar, and essentially, they're looking at 15 acres to lease at the airport."

Kirkland added that State Guard officers are attracted to the airport straddling the Bradford and Clay County lines because of its proximity to Camp Blanding.

"They want to have Keystone as their primary aviation resource area," Kirkland said. "They will be doing a lot of work with local entities, FDLE, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and a lot of their training is done in Camp Landing, so they're excited to be

at the airport."

Kirkland added that the Florida Department of Transportation approved three grants for the facility. One is a \$400,000 grant for three generators, the second is a \$950,000 grant for a fuel facility upgrade, and the third award is for a Jet A fuel truck for \$300,000.

The chair also said that in 2025, FDOT money will fund a three-year, \$4.3 million rehabilitation of the airport's 11/29 runway.

Curtis A. "Lex" Sanders Attorney at Law



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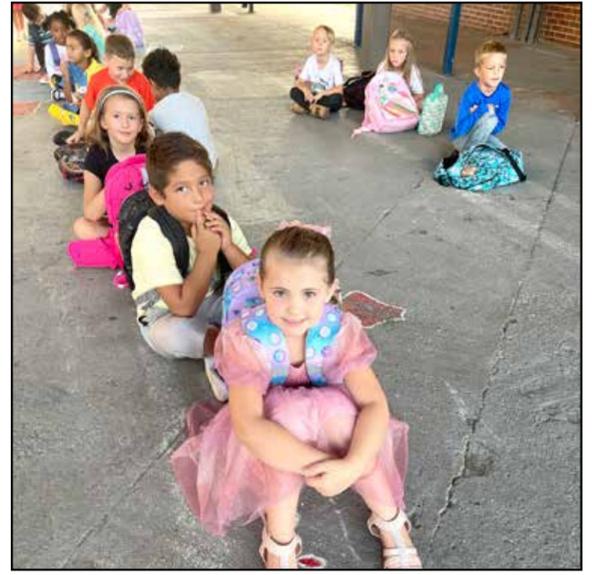
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New kindergartner Ja-Sean was accompanied by his family to the first day of school at Lawtey Elementary. He, like many young students, was excited but a little nervous.



Twin sisters Addison and Avery, along with all returning students, were welcomed by their smiling Principal Terri O'Quinn. O'Quinn said this year they have around 270 students and are challenging them to "Push their Limits" (this year's theme) and give an extra 1% each day. She said the 1% is to remind students and staff that small changes make a big difference!



Young ILA sits at the head of the line of this year's first graders. Some anticipating the first day, others a little unsure, but all were greeted by the caring staff of Lawtey Elementary.

FIRST DAY AT LES



Colt and Rylee were bananas about having breakfast together in the cafeteria on their first day back!



Wanda Curtis is one of the smiling faces Lawtey students will see bright and early each school morning. The cafeteria staff arrives by 6 a.m. each day to prepare the free breakfast offered to students before they get started on lunch prep. They said between 80-100 children take advantage of the breakfast, but they'd like to see even more students take part in the program.



New backpacks and old friends, just a few of these girl's favorite things! Self-proclaimed besties, Madeline and Sophie, sat outside with the "big kids" this year as they awaited the start of the 2024-2025 new school year.

The Matthews Museum (Bradford County Museum) Needs Volunteers!

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"Who's ready for the first day of school?" second-grade teacher Mr. Strayer cheerfully asked his new students. His enthusiasm caught on and many of the kids headed to class with a smile!



Kyson, Robbie, Carter and Jordan were reconnecting on the first day back at Lawtey Elementary as they waited to meet their new fourth grade teacher.

4-H holds annual auction

BY TRACY LEE TATE
Special to the Times

Union County loves its 4-H program and has a long history of supporting its programs. This was clearly illustrated last Friday night (Aug. 9, 2024) when supporters gathered for the annual 4-H Auction event.

There is always good attendance at 4-H events, but this year the number of people exceeded both the expectations and plans of event organizers. Union County 4-H Youth Development Agent Meagan Daniel planned on about 150 people attending the event, which was held at the Pine Grove Barn. She was quite surprised when about 230 people showed up to support the organization. Extra tables had to be quickly set up and the buffet-style meal of pulled pork, macaroni and cheese and green beans started to run out early. Some late-comers had to make-do with mac-and-cheese and a drink. Determined that her guests should be fed, Daniel called Sonny's BBQ and ordered 30 sandwiches with a side of beans and sent one of the volunteers to pick them up. Even the desserts, which are always numerous, disappeared with haste.

The high attendance and the resulting increase in seating caused the auction to be conducted a little differently. The live auction items were located in a front corner of the room and volunteer auctioneer Jason Stalnaker was based at a small table and conducted the auction standing in the middle of the room among the tables. Former 4-H'er Tanner Connell volunteered his time to ride heard on the club members who were on hand to deal with the needs of their guests and display the items as they came up for bids. Due to the restricted space the youngsters were weaving around the room between tables people carrying the items so everyone could have a look. Connell did a great job coordinating the efforts of the young people, but later described the experience as "like wrangling cats."

The auction was held under the auspices of the Union County 4-H Association, who all were on hand helping to organize and manage the event. Board members of the association

are Karen Cossey, Ashkea Dyal, Chrissie Griffiths, Justin Howard, Christy Huntley, Loren Kunze, Stephanie Sellers, Jason Stalnaker and Eric Williams.

Fifty-five items were featured in the live auction, all donated by local businesses, members of the community and several of the 4-H Clubs that the event helps to support. Donors included: West Fraser, Swift Creek Trucking, Lori Caren, New River Club, Melissa McNeal, Pritchett Trucking, Danny Tomlinson, Mac Johns, Providence Woodworks, Anisha Waters, Welch and Son, Homeschool Club, Kellie Rhoades, Kristen Muse, Mayo Ag Services, Julie Denson, Nancy Stalnaker, North Florida Custom Meats, Bradford Sportsman Farm, Union Power Equipment, Hillandale, Wilber Andrews, Josh Smith, Joe Hendricks, Hamilton Farms, Phillip McDonald Plumbing, Brittany Ranard, Avid Anglers Club, Thomas Hardware, North Florida Equipment Rental, Pigtails and Ponytails Club, Kristi McCallister, Crystal Elixson, Growers and Showers, Nanette Stalnaker, Kyle Bessent, Pinetree Quarterhorses, Becky Sharpe, Justin and Eric Outdoors, Dawn Ripplinger, Marine Services Mobile, Becky Raulerson, Bunny Buddies, Kasey Kelley, Lake Butler Farm Center, Union County Farm Bureau, Providence Friendship Club, Charlotte Durrance, Tax Collectors Office, K2 Ranch and Beyond the Buckle Horse Club.

The Silent Auction featured 46 items, including goods, services and a number to themed baskets. Many of the donors were the same as in the live action, but there were some other donors as well. These included: donors listed above, Crystal Rosier, Bucks and Struts, David Deren, Kettle Kreations, Squirrelle Out Leatherworks, Lola Farms, Balloons, Decor and Moore, Lindsey Reid, Total Air, Judy Harden, Dapper Duck Soap Company, NAPA, Union County Beekeepers, Colan Coody, Bunny Buddies, Williams Gas, Ryan and Alexa Perez, Fila Perez, Union County, Kasey's Rustic Rise, Nexttran, Carquest, O'Reillys, Ink and Thread and Our Family Table. The raffle included gift certificates from Pop Pops Pizza Box, Hillandale,



Jolene Moore with a pound cake made by Nancy Stalnaker that sold for \$350 at the 2024 4-H Auction.



Kamryn Hartley and Lyle Neuhofer display a stool, donated by Mac Johns, to the audience. It sold for \$250.



Lyle Neuhofer with a wooden flag art piece, donated by Clerk of Court Kellie Rhoades. It sold for \$300.



Klayton Neuhofer with a S'Mores firepit basket, donated by Danny Tomlinson.

Gather Lake Butler, B-Squared and a basket of goodies from Chick-Fil-A.

As usual, a number of homemade cakes, made for the event by some of the best known bakers in Union County, were sold in the live auction and, also as usual, they sold high. The top two fundraising cakes were a poundcake, made by Nancy Stalnaker and a Reeses Eruption cake, made by Crystal Elixson. Both of these cakes sold at

purchase items at one or both auctions, with many purchasing several. Daniel said it was the best fundraiser in at least the last three years.

The money raised at the event will be used to support awards for 4-H members for their participation and achievements in the program, the 4-H clubs (including the background checks run on all volunteers) and in-school 4-H programs (including STEM, agriculture

education and financial literacy). Daniel was quick to express her appreciation for all those who made the event possible.

Each year, I am amazed at the generosity and financial support shown within our community," Daniel said. "I would like to thank you for your commitment to youth development in Union County. Due to your generous donations, we are able to increase opportunities each year for our 4-H program."

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Brooker Community School welcomes students with giveaway

BY CAROL MOSLEY
Special to the Telegraph

Brooker Community School is getting ready for students to return by equipping them with a backpack and starter supplies. It was also a chance for family of students to meet the new principal, Thomas Lashley. He and his wife, Laura, were there to welcome the incoming students and their parents.

Families had a hot dog lunch and students picked their favorite backpack from the ones lined up on a table at the back of the room. The backpacks were filled with the basic supplies of paper, pencils and such. There were also folders, crayons, rulers and other essentials.

Attendance is up to more than 80 students enrolled so far. Sixth grade was added this year. And there was a room full of incoming kindergartners excited to begin their educational journey. Now, the teachers can be sure that all students show up for the first day of school with everything they need to get started.



New principal Thomas Lashley and wife, Laura, welcome families.



Devian Watson will enter kindergarten to learn reading, writing and art.



Kindergarten student Maicee Rowe loves pink and art.



Bensen Roberts will be a new student at the school in second grade. His favorite subject is math.



Emmanuel Barron loves his blue backpack!

Coordinator completes training

BY TRACY LEE TATE
Special to the Times

Union County Coordinator Jimmy Williams recently completed the County Government Education Program, which the Institute for County Government developed. The institute recognized program graduates at an awards ceremony held during the Florida Association of Counties Annual Conference and Educational Exhibition in Orange County in June.

The program was designed for county staff to have the same educational opportunities as county commissioners offered by the institute. The designation's curriculum consists of 45 hours of coursework covering a diverse range of courses, such as growth management, financial management, and ethics, as well as a number of elective courses, such



Union County Coordinator Jimmy Williams and Program Director Charles Goswin at the FAC 2024 Conference where Williams received his certificate of completion.

as affordable housing, emergency management, and resiliency.

Through a scholarship, Williams participated in the program at no cost to the county. The program was presented through a combination of live and online classes, many of which are the same as those county

commissioners take.

"I have been working on this course for the past two years in an effort to increase my knowledge of my job and to gain a better understanding of county government," Williams said.

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

Bruce Bernard Donley, 31, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford

deputies on August 6 for a probation violation.

Steven Gerard Frazier, 26, of Jacksonville, was arrested by Lawtey police on August 6 for criminal mischief with property damage. According to the victim, Frazier damaged her cell phone, valued at \$200.

Edward Allen Grover, 56, of Hampton, was arrested by Bradford deputies on August 6 for possession of drugs and possession of drug equipment.

Alana Briel Hendreith, 20, of Lawtey, was arrested by Lawtey Police on August 6 for battery. According to an arrest report, police witnessed the defendant throwing objects at the victim in

the middle of Lake Street while the victim was trying to remove himself from the area.

Herbert Edward Herndon, 58, of Lawtey, was arrested by Bradford deputies on August 8 for a probation violation.

Scott Joseph Jenkins, 40, of Gainesville, was arrested by Bradford deputies on August 7 for DUI.

Kaeli Dezaray Jones, 34, of Hawthorne, was arrested by Bradford deputies on August 8 for failure to appear.

Clint R.J. McMillan, 28, of Waldo, was arrested by Bradford deputies on August 5 for a probation violation and a

conditional release violation.

Dominic Harold Mitchell, 30, of Hampton, was arrested by Bradford deputies on August 4 for DUI.

Malcolm Jamal Newby, 39, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on August 8 for out-of-county warrants, failure to appear, and resisting an officer.

Tracy Dean Pruitt, 59, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on August 4 for battery.

Bradley Scott Rhoades, 34, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on August 4 for being an out-of-state fugitive.

Charles Kevin Truett, 51,

of Raiford, was arrested by Bradford deputies on August 6 for a probation violation.

Union

Johnny Ray Burnham Jr., 40, of MacClenny, was arrested by Union deputies on August 7 for failure to appear.

John-Layton Agnes-Daniel May, 23, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on August 8 for aggravated battery with a deadly weapon, larceny, and resisting an officer.

Kelli Amber McClees, 42, of High Springs, was arrested by Union deputies on August 9 for larceny.

Joshua O'Neal Perry, 29, was arrested by Union deputies on August 9 for failure to appear.

Clay

David Austin Gallion Binczak, 25, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on August 7 for domestic battery.

Christopher Trent James, 24, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on August 4 for possession of drug equipment.

Michael Lynn Jowers, 67, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on August 6 for burglary.

VOTE

Continued from page 1

He went on to cite scripture about obedience and the shedding of "innocent blood."

"This is what God says. Period. I mean, there is no question. There is no argument. This is what God says. And with that, I make a motion that we approve the resolution opposing the pro-abortion amendment to Florida constitution," he said.

Commissioner Chris Dougherty seconded the motion and voted in favor along with Riddick and commissioners Kenny Thompson and Diane Andrews, who said the board voting on the resolution did "bother" her. "Everyone has to choose for themselves," she said. At the same time, she said as a Christian she believed what Riddick said was true.

Several speakers spoke for and against the county commission taking a stand, including Bonnie Coffey Cannone from Lake City, who founded a political committee to fight the amendment. She said the issue is not about women's rights, but the right to life of every "innocent human being."

"You, as civil magistrates, are elected by the people, but your authority is granted to you by God, and you are charged not only with protecting all of your constituents but wielding the sword of justice against evildoers. It is therefore your solemn duty to condemn this amendment, which has your

tinest citizens directly in its crosshairs," she said.

Marshall Clayton Rawson of Hampton, who shared the resolution with Riddick, said if Amendment 4 passes, Florida will become "a hotspot for abortion tourism."

"We're talking about the most innocent and most vulnerable of society," he said, adding that government leaders unwilling to protect them are unfit to serve.

Brandon Elixson of Lake Butler said "government was instituted by God" and cannot be neutral when it comes to protecting those made in his image.

"While it is the custom of those that hold political office — and for good reason — to listen to the voices of their constituents and attempt to make the best decisions possible, to be representatives for them and to work towards the good of the land, ultimately, I'm here today to represent those voices that are too small to be heard, those voices that may never see the light of day if this amendment is passed at the constitutional level here in Florida.," he said.

Kate Ellison of Melrose said she was dismayed the commission was considering the resolution.

"One of the things that people in Bradford County have impressed on me is that we do things differently. Here we value community and working together to make things better. In Bradford, we all pull together rather than retreat into our red or blue corners to call each other

names," she said.

For Ellison, abortion is not a favorite topic because it is so divisive. She said it's a private matter.

"The wording of your resolution is straight out of the Republican talking points, and it directs the board to tell the voters, to tell me, how to vote. I don't know, but I think it's unprecedented, and it's really uncalled for. The party that usually wants to limit government to minimize Big Brother's intrusion into our lives, is telling me how to mark my ballot," she said.

The resolution also states the "iniquitous amendment would remove the possibility of prosecuting and holding accountable those that seek to shed innocent blood."

"Apparently, you want to arrest and prosecute me for having an abortion and maybe my doctor, too. Apparently, you want us to resort to back-alley illegal abortions, because outlawing them has never made them go away," she said.

Also speaking against the resolution was Vyunda Strong of Lawtey.

"People talk about the innocent lives, but nobody talks about the people that it starts with, and it starts with the woman," Strong said. "I really am passionate about this issue, but I'm passionate because I'm really tired of people being in my vagina. People need to stay out of my vagina."

It's individuals who will be "standing before God," she said.

GOALS

Continued from page 3

of the county's 359 high-risk occupancy buildings.

Another aspiration in the strategic plan is to decrease the fire rescue response time to emergency calls by 15% in five years. The average fire rescue response time in 2023 was seven minutes and 11 seconds.

With a target response time of six minutes and six seconds, fire rescue took 7:06 in January to get to calls, 7:04 in February, 7:24 in March, 6:59 in April, 7:19 in

May, and 7:01 in June.

The document sets a live release rate of 90% for the animal services department, which would qualify the county's shelter as a no-kill animal shelter.

Animal services met that goal in January, February, and March but fell below the target in April, May, and June. The current live release rate is 88%.

The county also aspires to increase ridership in its public transportation efforts by 20% over the next five years, which would equate to 50,621 riders per year. Through the first half of 2024, the number of riders was 21,760.

One infrastructure goal is to resurface 100 miles of roadways in five years. So far, the county has resurfaced 31.1 miles. In addition, the county set a goal of improving or adding 20 miles of sidewalks or trails within the next half-decade. So far, the county has added or enhanced 1.86 miles of the alternative routes.

Another infrastructure goal is to maintain and improve 10,000 feet of pipes and ditches to improve stormwater management within five years. So far, the county has completed 3,470 feet of improvements.

Letters

Union responds to school grades

Dear Editor:

The state of Florida recently released school and district grades for the 2023-24 school year. This year's grade calculations re-introduced learning gains and bottom quartile learning gains for ELA and math now that the F.A.S.T. assessment has completed its second year. The Union County School District remained a "B" overall, with Lake Butler Middle School increasing from a "C" to a "B," Union County High School maintaining a "B," and Lake Butler Elementary School dropping to a "C" by one point.

The 2023-24 school grades witnessed Lake Butler Middle School earning its first "B" since 2019. This was due to gains made across nearly all tested subject areas. LBMS saw an increase in ELA achievement scores from 46% in 2023 to 48% in 2024. Seventh grade alone had 57% of students pass the ELA assessment, tying them for the eighth highest school district in the state. This increase was accompanied by 57% making learning gains and 60% in the bottom quartile making learning gains in ELA. Both of these high marks in learning gains were the highest in seven years. The school also had an overall increase in math scores going from 59% achievement in 2023 to 61% achievement in 2024. Again, seventh grade did exceptionally well, with 68% of students passing the math assessment enabling LBMS to be tied for eighth highest school district in the state. This success in the math assessment scores was bolstered with 65% of students making learning gains and 66% learning gains for those in the bottom quartile. The improvements in learning gains for math were the highest in more than seven years.

LBMS also experienced a significant increase with its seventh-grade civics scores from 59% in 2023 to 75% in 2024. The success on the civics assessment tied LBMS for ninth highest school district in the state. Science scores in fifth and eighth grades are still a matter of concern and are receiving added attention this year. The school's science achievement fell from 38% in 2023 to 31% in 2024. Additionally, the Acceleration Points earned through students passing the Algebra 1 Assessment

and Industry Certification exams rose from 68% in 2023 to 70% in 2024.

The 2023-24 school year also brought a good bit of success to Union County High School, where it once again maintained a high "B." UCHS saw an increase in ELA achievement scores from 50% in 2023 to 53% in 2024. Ninth-grade students earned a 57% pass rate, which allowed UCHS to tie for seventh highest school district in the state for ninth-grade ELA scores. Students also made learning gains in ELA, with 61% overall making learning gains and 63% making learning gains in the bottom quartile. Overall math achievement slipped somewhat from 61% in 2023 to 54% in 2024. This includes those students who took the algebra 1 and geometry state assessments. Math also saw 37% of students making overall learning gains, with 35% in the bottom quartile making learning gains.

While UCHS again turned in solid performances in science and social studies, this year's scores were slightly lower than last year's scores. The science achievement scores earned from the biology state assessment saw 71% of students passing as opposed to 78% last year. Social studies achievement measured by the U.S. history state assessment was at 70% in 2024 compared to 74% in 2023. College and Career Acceleration also dipped from 64% in 2023 to 55% in 2024, while the graduation rate grew from 78% in 2023 to 86% in 2024. Finally, while this assessment is not in the school grade calculation, 81% of the students who took the Florida Civics Literacy Examination (FCLE) were successful.

Lake Butler Elementary School was one point shy from maintaining its 2023 "B" as it made its first "C" since 2002. A change made to this year's school-grade calculation for elementary schools involved the third-grade ELA achievement score added as a stand-alone component of the grade. LBES third-grade ELA achievement scores saw 65% of students being proficient on the assessment, tying them for sixth highest school district in the state. This was up from 53% passing the assessment in 2023. Fourth-grade ELA achievement scores were 50%, matching the score from 2023. The ELA learning gains for LBES stood at 54%, while 53% of students in the bottom quartile made learning gains.

In the area of math, LBES third-grade students did very well; with

73% passing the assessment, which was up from 69% the previous year. This made Union County the third highest school district in the state for third-grade math scores. Fourth grade saw 57% of its students pass the assessment. Overall, LBES math achievement was at 65%, with 50% making learning gains but only 28% in the bottom quartile making learning gains. The 28% bottom quartile learning-gains component was the main reason LBES dropped from a "B" to a "C." For the 2024-25 school year, this will be an area that is given a great deal of attention.

The overall Union County School District maintained a score of a "B." Across all schools, the district increased ELA achievement from 48% in 2023 to 52% in 2024. Math rose from 59% achievement in 2023 to 61% in 2024. Science fell overall to 43% achievement, down from 49% in 2023. Finally, social studies achievement scores rose to 73% in 2024 from 65% in 2023.

Overall, the Union County School District is still strong and moving in the right direction despite some minor setbacks in areas. Throughout the summer and in preparation for the 2024-25 school year, teachers and administration alike have worked diligently to identify areas of concerns and develop plans to address those areas and improve instructional delivery so that both teachers and students will be more successful during the next school year.

Respectfully,
Mike Ripplinger
Union County Superintendent
of Schools

BUDGET

Continued from page 1

student transportation services.

The overall total for the 2024-25 school year is less than last year by about \$5 million dollars, but the Union County School District is no stranger to working with a "bare-bones operating budget," called such by District Finance Director Renae Prevatt. She said that some of the issues for the coming year include the increase in the minimum wage (and the compression increases given to employees already making \$15 per hour or more) and the increase in the cost of goods and services that has been seen in all areas of the

economy since the pandemic. These increases are one of the main motivations for the slight increase in the School Tax cost in the state this year. The increase is so small that it should not cause any hardship to individual taxpayers but the accumulated fund will help provide for the schools increased costs. Prevatt provided an example of the effects of the tax increase.

For a property with an assessed value of \$50,606, with a homestead exemption of \$25,000, the tax assessed will be on the taxable value of the property of \$25,606. Before the increase (last year) the school tax paid on this property was \$138.76. Since the increase the cost has increased to \$138.81 -

an increase of five cents.

Given all the changes in funding amounts, the total budget is down by only about \$5 million. Much of this is due to the district's general frugality, which allows the carryover of fund balances from the previous year. Prevatt said the 2024-25 budget should be sufficient to provide Union County students with the quality education they have received in the past.

"The county is just doing a little belt-tightening due to the decrease in funding — something that happens frequently over the years," Prevatt said. "As long as we hold the line and work to keep steady as we go, there should be no problems."



Russ WADE

Attorney at Law

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

386-496-9656

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Family and Friends Day at New Covenant

New Covenant Baptist Ministries will be celebrating Family and Friends Day on Sunday, Aug. 25, at 11 a.m. The Rev. Marrior S. Drye, pastor of Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church, and congregation will be in charge of the service. The public is invited.



Legal Notices

Legals for the week of Aug. 15, 2024

BRADFORD

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR TAX DEED

Notice is hereby given that DAVID J COGNATA the holder of the following certificate has filed said certificate for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and names in which it was assessed are as follows:
 Certificate Number: 222
 Year of Issuance: 2017
 Parcel Number: 00868-0-00132
 Case Number: 04-2024-TD-008
 Description of Property:
 TDA NUMBER: 602TDA
 Parcel NUMBER: R 00868-0-00132
 The South 132.00 feet of the North 264.00 feet of the West 330.00 feet of the NW1/4 of SW1/4 of Section 11, Township 7 South, Range 21 East, Bradford County, Florida, containing 1.00 acre, more or less. Reserving therefrom an easement for ingress, egress and utilities over the Easterly 15 feet thereof. Above described parcel being conveyed with a 30.00 foot easement for ingress, egress and utilities over the following described parcel: The Northerly 30.00 feet of the Westerly 1040.00 feet and the Easterly 30.00 feet of the Westerly 345.00 feet of the Northerly 1238.00 feet of said NW1/4 of SW1/4. Above described parcel also being conveyed with a right of ingress and egress over the following described parcel: Commence at a concrete monument located at the Northwest corner of the NE1/4 of the NE1/4 of Section 10, Township 7 South, Range 21 East and run South 00 degrees, 07 minutes and 19 seconds East, along the Westerly boundary thereof, 157.72 feet to the Southerly boundary of the right of way of County Road 225 (formerly State Road S-225); thence South 77 degrees, 14 minutes and 19 seconds East, along said Southerly boundary, 405.77 feet to the centerline of an existing road for the Point of Beginning (said road being 60 feet in width and lying 30 feet on each side of a centerline described as follows). From Point of Beginning thus described run South 00 degrees, 07 minutes and 19 seconds East, parallel with the Westerly boundary of said NE1/4 of NE1/4, a distance of 378.18 feet; thence South 15 degrees, 15 minutes and 41 seconds West, 374.65 feet; thence South 20 degrees, 44 minutes and 49 seconds East, 333.96 feet to the end of said 60 foot road and the beginning of a road 20 feet in width and lying 10 feet on each side of said centerline; thence continue South 20 degrees, 44 minutes and 49 seconds East, along said centerline, 30.88 feet; thence South 21 degrees, 12 minutes and 57 seconds East, 438.28 feet to a set iron rod; thence South 21 degrees, 22 minutes and 11 seconds East, 330.29 feet to an intersection with the centerline of a road 30 feet in width and lying 15 feet on each side of the following described centerline; thence South 42 degrees, 52 minutes and 49 seconds West, 274.13 feet to a set iron rod; thence South 17 degrees, 50 minutes and 25 second East, 418.91 feet to a set iron rod (last said iron rod being 15.00 feet Northerly of the Southerly boundary of the SE1/4 of the NE1/4 of said Section 10 when measured at right angles therefrom); thence South 89 degrees, 53 minutes and 43 seconds East, parallel with last said Southerly boundary, 686.05 feet to an iron rod set on the Easterly boundary of said SE1/4 and NE1/4 and the end of said centerline (last said iron rod being located 15.00 feet Northerly of the Southeast corner of said SE1/4 and NE1/4).
 Name in Which Assessed: ELLA III LLC
 Name on last tax roll, if different:
 All of said property being in the County of Bradford, State of Florida. Unless such certificate or certificates shall be redeemed according to law the property described in such certificate or certificates will be sold to the highest bidder at the BRADFORD COUNTY COURTHOUSE, STARKE, FL on 10/09/2024, at 11:00 AM, or any subsequently scheduled sale date.
 Denny Thompson, Clerk Of The Circuit Court Bradford County, Florida
 BY: Kanetra Jenkins
 KANETRA JENKINS, Deputy Clerk
 Contact the Tax Deed Office at 904-966-6280 to obtain the amount necessary to redeem.
 DATED: July 19, 2024
 DATE OF PUBLICATION: JULY 25, 2024; AUGUST 1, 2024; AUGUST 8, 2024; AUGUST 15, 2024
 7/25 4tchg 8/15-BCT

PARCEL NUMBER: R 03611-0-00100
 Legal Description Lots 3 and 4, Block 11, TEMPLE'S ADDITION to the TOWN OF STARKE, Florida, according to plat thereof recorded in Plat Book G, Page 304, of the public records of Bradford County, Florida. Name in Which Assessed: TNT 314, LLC
 Name on last tax roll, if different:
 All of said property being in the County of Bradford, State of Florida. Unless such certificate or certificates shall be redeemed according to law the property described in such certificate or certificates will be sold to the highest bidder at the BRADFORD COUNTY COURTHOUSE, STARKE, FL on 10/09/2024, at 11:00 AM, or any subsequently scheduled sale date.
 Denny Thompson, Clerk Of The Circuit Bradford County, Florida
 BY: Kanetra Jenkins
 KANETRA JENKINS, Deputy Clerk
 Contact the Tax Deed Office at 904-966-6280 to obtain the amount necessary to redeem.
 DATED: July 19, 2024
 DATE OF PUBLICATION: JULY 25, 2024; AUGUST 1, 2024; AUGUST 8, 2024; AUGUST 15, 2024
 7/25 4tchg 8/15-BCT

PUBLIC SALE
 Notice is hereby given that on dates below these vehicles will be sold at public sale on the date listed below at 10AM for monies owed on vehicle repair and storage cost pursuant to Florida Statutes 713.585 or Florida Statutes 713.78. Please note, parties claiming interest have right to a hearing prior to the date of sale with the Clerk of Courts as reflected in the notice. The owner has the right to recover possession of the vehicle without judicial proceedings as pursuant to Florida Statute 559.917. Any proceeds recovered from the sale of the vehicle over the amount of the lien will be deposited with the clerk of the court for disposition upon court order SALE DATE OCTOBER 14, 2024 THE SHOP OF AGRICULTURAL & EQUIPMENT REPAIR INC 10362 HAMPTON AVE 1989 CHEV 1GNR2J6K181016 \$7,041.32
 8/15 1tchg-BCT

R PICKFORD REVOCABLE TRUST the holder of the following certificate has filed said certificate for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and names in which it was assessed are as follows:
 Certificate Number: 967
 Year of Issuance: 2018
 Parcel Number: 04432-0-00000
 Case Number: 2024-TD-0011
 Description of Property:
 A part of the NE 1/4 of the NW 1/4 of Section 33, Township 6 South, Range 22 East, Bradford County, Florida, being more particularly described as follows:
 Commence at the NW Corner of said NE 1/4 of NW 1/4 for point of beginning; from point of beginning this described, run South 0°58' East 420 feet to a point; thence run South 89°58' East 315 feet to a point; thence run North 0°58' West 320 feet to a point; thence run North 89°58' West 200 feet to a point; thence run North 0°58' West 100 feet to a point; run thence North 89°50' West 415 feet to point of beginning. SAVE AND EXCEPTING therefrom any portion thereof lying within the right-of-way of the Seaboard Air Line Railroad.
 Name in Which Assessed: GREGORY DURBAN
 Name on last tax roll, if different:
 All of said property being in the County of Bradford, State of Florida. Unless such certificate or certificates shall be redeemed according to law the property described in such certificate or certificates will be sold to the highest bidder at the BRADFORD COUNTY COURTHOUSE, STARKE, FL on 10/23/2024, at 11:00 AM, or any subsequently scheduled sale date.
 Denny Thompson, Clerk Of The Circuit Court Bradford County, Florida
 BY: KANETRA JENKINS, Deputy Clerk
 Contact the Tax Deed Office at 904-966-6280 to obtain the amount necessary to redeem.
 DATED: August 7, 2024
 DATE OF PUBLICATION: AUGUST 15, 2024; AUGUST 22, 2024; AUGUST 29, 2024; SEPTEMBER 5, 2024
 8/15 4tchg 9/5-BCT

at 1630 North Temple Ave, Starke, County of Bradford, FL, at 2:00 pm on Wednesday, the 28th day of August; 2024 and continuing day to day thereafter until sold: the household goods and misc. contents of the following:
 OG023 Di Jion Williams
 01021 AVH Plumbing LLC
 01046 Theresa Woody
 01052 Theresa Woody
 01058 Jack Frankling Gunter
 01036 Gwendolyn Futch
 8/15 2tchg 8/22-BCT

August 27, 2024, at 5:00pm at the City Commission Chambers located at 200 SW 1st Street Lake Butler, FL 32054. The **FOURTH BUDGET WORKSHOP** will be to discuss and prepare for the tentative 2024-2025 Fiscal Year Annual Operating Budget and Millage Rate.
 8/15 1tchg-BCT

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR TAX DEED
 Notice is hereby given that FIG 20, LLC the holder of the following certificate has filed said certificate for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and names in which it was assessed are as follows:
 Certificate Number: 398
 Year of Issuance: 2022
 Parcel Number: 01744-0-00102
 Case Number: 04-2024-TD-009
 Description of Property:
 TDA NUMBER: 600TDA
 PARCEL NUMBER: R 01744-0-00102
 Legal Description:
 West 1/2 of East 1/2 of NE 1/4 of SE 1/4 of SE 1/4, Section 26, Township 5 South, Range 22 East. Reserving unto the general public an easement for ingress and egress over and above the Easterly 15 feet of the above described property.
 Name in Which Assessed: KELLY H TUCKER; QUEEN ESTHER TUCKER
 Name on last tax roll, if different:
 KELLY TUCKER (DEC) & QUEEN TUCKER (DEC) %MARGARET COOPER
 All of said property being in the County of Bradford, State of Florida. Unless such certificate or certificates shall be redeemed according to law the property described in such certificate or certificates will be sold to the highest bidder at the BRADFORD COUNTY COURTHOUSE, STARKE, FL on 10/09/2024, at 11:00 AM, or any subsequently scheduled sale date.
 Denny Thompson, Clerk Of The Circuit Court Bradford County, Florida
 BY: Kanetra Jenkins
 KANETRA JENKINS, Deputy Clerk
 Contact the Tax Deed Office at 904-966-6280 to obtain the amount necessary to redeem.
 DATED: July 19, 2024
 DATE OF PUBLICATION: JULY 25, 2024; AUGUST 1, 2024; AUGUST 8, 2024; AUGUST 15, 2024
 7/25 4tchg 8/15-BCT

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR TAX DEED
 Notice is hereby given that FIG 20, LLC the holder of the following certificate has filed said certificate for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and names in which it was assessed are as follows:
 Certificate Number: 915
 Year of Issuance: 2018
 Parcel Number: 04198-0-00000
 Case Number: 2024-TD-0012
 Description of Property:
 Beginning at the NE corner of the SW 1/4 of SE 1/4, run thence West 405.8 feet for Point of Beginning; thence run South 670.6 feet, thence West 401.9 feet, thence North 670.6 feet, thence East 504.8 feet to point of Beginning. Lying and being in Section 30, Township 6 South Range 22 East.
 Name in Which Assessed: CONSEVILLA GOODSON; CONSEVILLIA HAMEED; ATA DOWNSHAMEED
 Name on last tax roll, if different:
 CONSEVILLA GOODSON ET AL
 All of said property being in the County of Bradford, State of Florida. Unless such certificate or certificates shall be redeemed according to law the property described in such certificate or certificates will be sold to the highest bidder at the BRADFORD COUNTY COURTHOUSE, STARKE, FL on 10/23/2024, at 11:00 AM, or any subsequently scheduled sale date.
 Denny Thompson, Clerk Of The Circuit Court Bradford County, Florida
 BY: KANETRA JENKINS
 Deputy Clerk
 Contact the Tax Deed Office at 904-966-6280 to obtain the amount necessary to redeem.
 DATED: August 7, 2024
 DATE OF PUBLICATION: AUGUST 15, 2024; AUGUST 22, 2024; AUGUST 29, 2024; SEPTEMBER 5, 2024.
 8/15 4tchg 9/5-BCT

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO REGISTER FICTITIOUS NAME
 Pursuant to Section 865.09, Florida Statutes, notice is hereby given that the undersigned: FIRST CHURCH OF STARKE INC., 200 N. Walnut St., Starke, FL 32091 doing business under the firm name of: FOUNDATION CHURCH, 200 N. Walnut St., Starke, FL 32091 intends to register fictitious name under the aforesaid statute. Dated this 10 day of August A.D., 2024, in BRADFORD County.
 8/15 1tchg-BCT

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO REGISTER FICTITIOUS NAME
 Pursuant to Section 865.09, Florida Statutes, notice is hereby given that the undersigned: FIRST CHURCH OF STARKE INC., 200 N. Walnut St., Starke, FL 32091 doing business under the firm name of: FOUNDATION CHURCH, 200 N. Walnut St., Starke, FL 32091 intends to register fictitious name under the aforesaid statute. Dated this 10 day of August A.D., 2024, in BRADFORD County.
 8/15 1tchg-BCT

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
 The administration of the estate of Beatrice H. Griffin, deceased, whose date of death was June 7, 2024, is pending in the Circuit Court for Bradford County, Florida, Probate Division, the address of which is 945 N. Temple Ave., Starke, FL 32091. The names and addresses of the Personal Representative and the Personal Representative's attorney are set forth below.
 All creditors of the Decedent and other persons having claims or demands against Decedent's estate on whom a copy of this notice is required to be served must file their claims with this court ON OR BEFORE THE LATER OF 3 MONTHS AFTER THE TIME OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE OR 30 DAYS AFTER THE DATE OF SERVICE OF A COPY OF THIS NOTICE ON THEM.
 All other creditors of Decedent and other persons having claims or demands against Decedent's estate must file their claims with this court WITHIN 3 MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE.
 ALL CLAIMS NOT FILED WITHIN THE TIME PERIODS SET FORTH IN FLORIDA STATUTES SECTION 733.702 WILL BE FOREVER BARRED.
 NOTWITHSTANDING THE TIME PERIODS SET FORTH ABOVE, ANY CLAIM FILED TWO (2) YEARS OR MORE AFTER THE DECEDENT'S DATE OF DEATH IS BARRED.
 A Personal Representative or curator has no duty to discover whether any property held at the time of the Decedent's death by the Decedent or the Decedent's surviving spouse is property to which the Florida Uniform Disposition of Community Property Rights at Death Act as described in sections 732.216-732.228, applies, or may apply, unless a written demand is made by a creditor as specified under section 732.2211.
 The date of first publication of this notice is August 15th, 2024.
 Attorneys for Personal Representative:
 White, Griffin and Littell, PLLC
 BY: Virginia E. Griffin, Esq.
 Florida Bar No. 761931
 3701 NW 40th Terr., Ste. 1
 Gainesville, Florida 32606
 Telephone: (352) 416-3468
 E-Service: e-griffin@wgl-law.com
 Personal Representative:
 Ashton C. Norman
 Personal contact information protected.
 Sect. 119.071(4)(d), Fla. Stat., c/o Virginia E. Griffin, Esq., 3701 NW 40th Terr., Ste. 1 Gainesville, Florida 32606
 8/15 2tchg 8/22-BCT

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR TAX DEED
 NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that J. R. Davis, Jr., as Trustee of the J. R. Davis Trust the holder(s) of the following certificate has filed said certificate for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and the names in which it was assessed are as follows:
 CERTIFICATE #: 71
 YEAR OF ISSUANCE: 2018
 DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY: 21-06-18-45-000-0410-0
 LEGAL DESCRIPTION:
 Parcel No. 41 of Upland Pines Plantation, Union County, Florida:
 The Westerly 164 feet of the following described property:
 Commence at the Northwest corner of Section 21, Township 6 South, Range 18 East and run North 86 degrees 27 minutes 24 seconds East along the North line of said Section, 2021.94 feet, thence run South 2 degrees 46 minutes 29 seconds East, 619.62 feet to the North right of way line a 60 foot Access Road (Sara Lane; said point being the Point of Tangent of a curve on said right of way) thence run South 3 degrees 32 minutes 36 seconds East 60 feet to the South right of way of said 60 foot Access Road; thence run South 86 degrees 27 minutes 24 seconds West, along said right of way 656 feet, thence run South 3 degrees 32 minutes 36 seconds East, 575.12 feet to the North right of way of a 40 foot dedicated County Road and the Point of Beginning; thence run South 88 degrees 20 minutes 12 seconds West along said right of way 328.57 feet, thence run North 3 degrees 28 minutes 03 seconds West 294.34 feet, thence run North 86 degrees 27 minutes 24 seconds East, 328.00 feet, thence run South 3 degrees 32 minutes 36 seconds East, 305.12 feet to the Point of Beginning, being and lying in Section 21, Township 6 South, Range 18 East, Union County, Florida.
 NAME IN WHICH ASSESSED: MARY R MILLING & JAMES Z STRIPLING
 Said property being in the County of Union, State of Florida. Unless such certificate shall be redeemed according to the law, the property described in such certificate will be sold to the highest bidder in the Courthouse lobby at 11:00 A.M., the 26th day of September, 2024.
 Dated this 13th day of August, 2024.
 Kellie Hendricks Rhoades
 Clerk of Circuit Court
 Union County, Florida
 Persons with disabilities requesting reasonable accommodations to participate in this proceeding should contact (386) 496-3711.
 8/15 4tchg 9/5-UCT

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR TAX DEED
 Notice is hereby given that MIKON FINANCIAL SERVICES, INC. AND OCEAN BANK the holder of the following certificate has filed said certificate for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and names in which it was assessed are as follows:
 Certificate Number: 744
 Year of Issuance: 2022
 Parcel Number: 03611-0-00100
 Case Number: 04-2024-TD-10
 Description of Property:
 TDA NUMBER: 604TDA

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR TAX DEED
 Notice is hereby given that FIG 20, LLC the holder of the following certificate has filed said certificate for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and names in which it was assessed are as follows:
 Certificate Number: 818
 Year of Issuance: 2022
 Parcel Number: 04470-0-00000
 Case Number: 04-2024-TD-07
 Description of Property:
 Legal Description: 04470-0-00000
 COMMENCE AT NE CORNER OF NE 1/4 OF NE 1/4 & Run S 964 Feet For a POB, Run W 299 Feet, S 167 Feet, E 299 Feet, N 128 Feet TO POB. SEC 34, T-6S, R-22-E. (Being that same real property described in Official Record Book 66, Page 385 et seq. of the public records of Bradford County, Florida.)
 Name in Which Assessed: THOMAS SHANE GRIFFIS
 Name on last tax roll, if different:
 All said property being in the County of Bradford, State of Florida. Unless such certificate or certificates shall be redeemed according to law the property described in such certificate or certificates will be sold to the highest bidder at the BRADFORD COUNTY COURTHOUSE, STARKE, FL, on, the 09/18/2024, at 11:00 AM, or any subsequently scheduled sale date.
 Denny Thompson, Clerk Of The Circuit Court Bradford County, Florida
 BY: Kyrrah Smith
 KYRAH SMITH, Deputy Clerk
 Contact the Tax Deed Office at 904-966-6280 to obtain the amount necessary to redeem.
 DATED: July 19, 2024
 DATE OF PUBLICATION: July 25, 2024 August 1, 2024, August 8, 2024, August 15, 2024
 7/25 4tchg 8/15-BCT

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR TAX DEED
 Notice is hereby given that SHIRLEY R PICKFORD REVOCABLE TRUST the holder of the following certificate has filed said certificate for a tax deed to be issued thereon. The certificate number and year of issuance, the description of the property, and names in which it was assessed are as follows:
 Certificate Number: 915
 Year of Issuance: 2018
 Parcel Number: 04198-0-00000
 Case Number: 2024-TD-0012
 Description of Property:
 Beginning at the NE corner of the SW 1/4 of SE 1/4, run thence West 405.8 feet for Point of Beginning; thence run South 670.6 feet, thence West 401.9 feet, thence North 670.6 feet, thence East 504.8 feet to point of Beginning. Lying and being in Section 30, Township 6 South Range 22 East.
 Name in Which Assessed: CONSEVILLA GOODSON; CONSEVILLIA HAMEED; ATA DOWNSHAMEED
 Name on last tax roll, if different:
 CONSEVILLA GOODSON ET AL
 All of said property being in the County of Bradford, State of Florida. Unless such certificate or certificates shall be redeemed according to law the property described in such certificate or certificates will be sold to the highest bidder at the BRADFORD COUNTY COURTHOUSE, STARKE, FL on 10/23/2024, at 11:00 AM, or any subsequently scheduled sale date.
 Denny Thompson, Clerk Of The Circuit Court Bradford County, Florida
 BY: KANETRA JENKINS
 Deputy Clerk
 Contact the Tax Deed Office at 904-966-6280 to obtain the amount necessary to redeem.
 DATED: August 7, 2024
 DATE OF PUBLICATION: AUGUST 15, 2024; AUGUST 22, 2024; AUGUST 29, 2024; SEPTEMBER 5, 2024
 8/15 4tchg 9/5-BCT

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO REGISTER FICTITIOUS NAME
 Pursuant to Section 865.09, Florida Statutes, notice is hereby given that the undersigned: KATHY M. MERCER-MILLER, 7602 Sand Dune Court, Keystone Heights, FL 32656, sole owner, doing business under the firm name of: KAT'S HOME CARE SERVICES, 7602 Sand Dune Court, Keystone Heights, FL 32656, intends to register fictitious name under the aforesaid statute. Dated this 5th day of August A.D., 2024, in CLAY County, FLRM
 8/15 1tchg-LRM

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LAKE REGION

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KHHS, UCHS ready to kick off the 2024 football season

Indians want to build off of a bounce-back season

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Keystone Heights High School entered the 2023 football season off of just two wins in 2022, but the Indians got back on track, going 6-4 and qualifying for the playoffs for the fourth time in five years before finishing the year at 6-5.

Head Coach Steve Reynolds said he wished the season hadn't ended with a 36-10 loss to Yulee in the first round of the playoffs, but added that making the postseason was a reward for the players' efforts.

"I would say it was really validating for the kids for their hard work, their commitment and buy-in," Reynolds said.

The 2024 offense will be without graduated running back Cartez Daniels, who accounted for almost 70 percent of the team's rushing yards, but Reynolds is excited about the players in the mix at running back as well as the fact the team returns its starting quarterback and an experienced offensive line.

Colton Hollingsworth was second on the team in rushing last year, making the most of his touches, averaging 7.2 yards per carry. He'll certainly have the chance to carry the ball more than the 21 times he did last season. In fact, he'll touch the ball at multiple positions, as Reynolds said Hollingsworth will also line up at slot receiver.

"He's a dynamic player," Reynolds said of Hollingsworth, who scored four touchdowns in Keystone's spring jamboree. "He's a patient runner, he's tough, he runs good routes and he's got solid hands."

Zane Leger will also carry the ball. Reynolds described him as "big, low, strong, physical and quicker than people realize."

Blocking the way for those backs is a line that brings back plenty of experience despite graduating a couple of key players. Though Jackson Herman didn't start on the offensive line last year, he certainly could've, Reynolds said. The depth the team had at offensive line and the need it had on the defensive line made Herman primarily a defensive player. However, he has experience on both sides of the ball, dating back to his freshman year in 2021.



Linemen Bryce Daniels (left) and Pete Bostic get work in at the team's Aug. 2 practice.



Evan Lallemond (left) and Zane Leger battle each other in practice.

The line also consists of such players as Luke Bacorn, Pete Bostic, Bryce Daniels, Jackson Faul and Ted Westbrooks. Those players, along with Herman, are six "pretty good, physical, strong kids," Reynolds said.

Keystone's offensive line was already doing a "pretty decent job" of run blocking, Reynolds said, adding, "In the spring and throughout the summer, I've seen their pass protection improve, which is good to see and big for us because we're throwing the ball a little bit."

The Indians attempted 148 passes last season, which was 49 more attempts than the 2021 and 2022 seasons combined. Baylor Ford returns after completing 66 of 140 passes last year for 1,016 yards and 11 touchdowns. Reynolds is eager to see how Ford builds off an offseason of polishing his footwork and improving his timing.

"We've very excited about how he's progressed," Reynolds said, adding that he thinks the biggest jump in Ford's game will be not locking on one receiver and doing a better job of reading defenses and going with his best option.

Reynolds said Ford looked good in the spring jamboree.

"We didn't ask him to throw a lot in the spring, but he made some nice throws," Reynolds said.

The top four receivers from last year (Darrion Grady, Andru Siemer, Garrison Teague and Wyatt Van Zant) have graduated, but Reynolds likes what he's got in players such as Tallon Campbell, Jackson Parmeter and Tyler Sapp — players who got experience on junior varsity and varsity because of the six-quarter rule.

See KHHS, page 11

Tigers work to be consistent with success

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Football season is here, with preseason kickoff classics taking place this week, followed by the start of the regular season the next week.

Union County High School's football program, though, isn't solely defined by what takes place between the start of the season and the end of the season. Head Coach Andrew Thomas attributes the work put in outside of the season as a reason for why his Tigers have advanced to the regional finals for four straight years.

"We're not just a football team that gathers from August through November," he said. "We've got a year-round program in the weight room. I think our consistency in the weight room and what we do in the offseason is the reason for our consistent success."

Union will try to maintain that success and strive to go deeper in the postseason with fewer players than the team has had in recent years.

"Our numbers are down from what they've been the last few years," Thomas said. "That happens in a small school. You're going to go through that."

The coach, however, isn't expecting a down year.

"I like our team," Thomas said. "I think if we can stay healthy, we've got a chance to be a really good football team."

One of the key players is senior Trenton Klein, who's a starter on both sides of the ball. His return at quarterback will help take pressure off an offensive line that returns only seniors Reece Hendricks and Maddox Wheeler. "We're replacing a lot up front," Thomas said, "but having an experienced quarterback settles a lot of that. It still allows you to do a lot of stuff."

As a starting linebacker as well, Klein creates/receives a lot of contact and is also making the calls for what Thomas describes as a complex defensive scheme.

"For him to be able to digest all that and be able to turn around and play quarterback is huge," Thomas said.

Klein, who passed for 1,351 yards and 14 touchdowns last season, as well as rushing for 501 yards and six scores, will share some time at quarterback with sophomore Bryan Tyson, who also starts at linebacker. Tyson saw some action at quarterback last season, but made more of an impact as a receiver with 114 yards on just seven catches.

Tyson will still see action on offense when he's not at quarterback.

"Those are two guys who



Drew Simmons returns after leading the Tigers in rushing last year.



C.J. Ivey (right) fights his way past Garrett Jackson during the Tigers' Aug. 9 practice.

probably won't step off the field on defense," Thomas said of Klein and Tyson. "We're going to try to find a way to get them both in the action on the offensive side to kind of spell each other. They're both really good players."

Senior Gavin Jenkins led the receiving corps last year with 27 catches for 490 yards and six touchdowns. Thomas said the 6-3, 173-pound receiver is one of the top athletes in the area if not the entire state. The coach said Jenkins has added leadership to his athletic ability.

"He's taken on more of a mature approach to leadership," Thomas said. "It shows. His work ethic in the weight room has been really good."

Senior Ibn Williams was the fourth-leading receiver last year. He caught only five passes, but averaged 25.6 yards per reception.

Thomas said players such as seniors Alec McClellon and Ashton Newsom and junior Bo Thomas will also be in the mix at receiver.

The Tigers graduated two of their primary running backs, but return Drew Simmons, who led the team as a freshman last season with 512 yards and seven touchdowns on 35 carries.

"He's special," Thomas said of Simmons. "He can do a lot

of good things. We're looking forward to what he can do — not only this year, but in the future."

Thomas said junior C.J. Ivey is going to be "one of our key guys running the football between the tackles."

When it comes to the offensive line, Thomas said the Tigers have three sophomores who are going to have to step up. Senior Connor Bresee has been more of a defensive lineman, but will probably move over to offense to help the line on that side of the ball.

The experience comes from Hendricks and Wheeler.

"Reece is our biggest kid we've got in our program as far as a mover who can move somebody," Thomas said of the 6-3, 330-pound lineman. "We're going to try to run behind him."

As for Wheeler, Thomas said, "He's a great senior leader and a solid football player. He's smart up front."

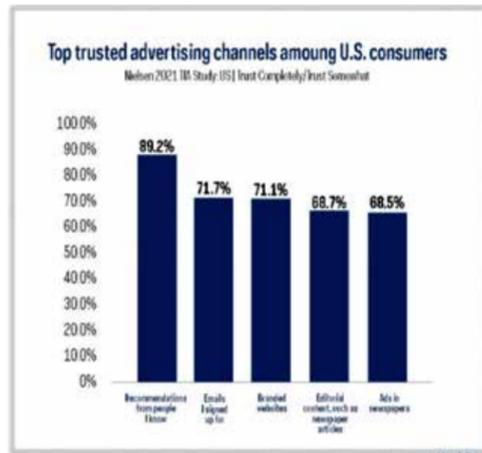
Thomas said most of the linemen are physical and move well, but they're not very big.

"We're not a soft bunch by any means," Thomas said. "We just don't have a bunch of 6-3, 280 guys."

The defensive line returns a pair of interior players in Bresee and fellow senior Anthony

See UCHS, page 13

CONSUMERS TRUST NEWSPAPERS



Special note: The Relevance Project thanks The Nielsen Co., a global leader in audience, measurement, data, and analytics, for this excerpt from its Trust in Advertising Study. Nielsen used 21 channels, a term to distinguish where ads show up or are referenced, in the study.

Here's further proof that advertisers and marketers seeking a trusted media should hire newspapers. Newspapers show up as two of the Top 5 "trusted advertising channels" rated by U.S. Consumers in Nielsen's 2021 Trust in Advertising Study. Seven out of 10 consumers said they either trust completely or trust somewhat four of the channels that included newspapers or products they offer advertisers. The top channel applies also to newspapers because their readers are informed consumers.



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2024 volleyball season set to get underway

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

High school volleyball's regular season begins the week of Monday, Aug. 19, and features a matchup between Bradford and Union County as well as home matches for Keystone Heights and Hope Christian.

First, Union plays in a preseason tournament at Alachua's Legacy Park Multipurpose Center on Thursday, Aug. 15, beginning at 5:30 p.m. Bradford and Keystone play in preseason tournaments on Saturday, Aug. 17. The Tornadoes travel to Orange Park High School to play Orange Park at 9 a.m. and Stanton at 10:30 a.m. The Indians play in a tournament at the Jacksonville Juniors Volleyball Association Training Center. A tournament schedule will be posted on sportsrench.com.

Union plays the first regular-season match among the teams covered by the Telegraph-Times-Monitor, traveling to play Williston on Aug. 19 at 6 p.m. The junior varsity teams will play at 5 p.m.

On Tuesday, Aug. 20, Bradford

and Union play each other in Starke, with a JV match at 5:30 p.m. and a varsity match at 6:30 p.m.

The Tornadoes will play another home match after the Aug. 20 match against Union, hosting Hilliard on Thursday, Aug. 22, at 7 p.m., following a JV match at 6 p.m. Bradford then goes on the road to play Baker County on Monday, Aug. 26, at 7 p.m., with a JV match to be played at 6 p.m.

Union travels to play Oak Hall on Thursday, Aug. 22, and Lafayette on Tuesday, Aug. 27. Both varsity matches are 6:30 p.m. following JV matches at 5:30 p.m.

Keystone and Hope begin their regular seasons with home matches on Tuesday, Aug. 20. The Indians will play Interlachen at 7 p.m., following junior high and JV matches at 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. The Lions will play Hawthorne at 5 p.m.

Hope travels to play First Assembly Christian on Thursday, Aug. 22, at 6 p.m. The Lions play another road match on Monday, Aug. 26, against First Coast Christian at 6:30 p.m.

Keystone hosts Columbia on Monday, Aug. 26, at 6 p.m., following a JV match at 5 p.m. The Indians then travel to play Ridgeview on Tuesday, Aug. 27, with the JV teams playing

at 6 p.m. and the varsity teams playing at 7 p.m.

Northside Christian doesn't begin its season until Friday, Aug. 23, with a road match against Gainesville Christian Community at 5 p.m.

On Tuesday, Aug. 27, Hope and Northside play each other at Hope at 5 p.m.

BHS, KHHS, UCHS to play Aug. 16 kickoff classics

High school football teams take to the field to play preseason kickoff classics on Friday, Aug. 16.

Bradford and Union County will both host games, with the Tornadoes playing Columbia at 7 p.m. and the Tigers playing Baker County at 7:30 p.m.

Keystone will travel to Orange Park to play Ridgeview at 7 p.m.

The regular season begins in earnest the following week, with Bradford, Keystone and Union all playing on the road on Friday, Aug. 23. The Tornadoes and Tigers play 7 p.m. games, with Bradford taking on Baker County and Union squaring off against Yulee. The Indians play Interlachen at 7:30 p.m.

KHHS

Continued from page 10

“Those three guys are returning players who are going to make a lot of plays for us because they competed at both the varsity and JV levels and developed,” Reynolds said.

As already mentioned, Herman was an integral part of the defensive line last year. Reynolds said Bostic will be a key member of that unit along with Herman.

“I think Pete’s athleticism and his strength are huge tools for him,” Reynolds said. “He and (Herman) both do a good job of playing with their hands and reading blocks.”

Reynolds said Bostic and Herman had the most playing time of the returning linemen, but added that Bacorn also saw a lot of action. The coach said the team will be counting on Daniels and Westbrook to contribute as well.

Due to numbers, those players are going to have to play both defensive and offensive lines. Reynolds did say, though, that the team has a couple of freshmen that he expects to be in the defensive-line mix.

The linebacking corps returns experience in the form of such players as Leger, Kyle Perkins and Layton Wright.

Hollingsworth and Parmeter will man the safety positions in the secondary. Hollingsworth

is a returning starter who led the team in tackles last season. He’ll be counted on a lot with the graduation of safety Van Zant.

“I really like how steady he is every day, working on his craft,” Reynolds said of Hollingsworth. “He reminds me a lot of Van Zant in that regard, and it’s probably because they spent so much time playing next to each other.”

Parmeter played corner last year. Reynolds said though he didn’t start the whole season, he did gain a lot of experience in the secondary. In fact, he had two interceptions, which led the team.

“I like his energy and the enthusiasm to get more reps and continuously improve his game,” Reynolds said.

Other players who figure to be contributors to the secondary include Campbell, Sapp and Andrew Wilson.

Sapp returns to handle placekicking duties and is one of two kickers on the roster along with Ryder Thomas. Sapp made 90 percent of his extra-point attempts in 2023 and kicked two field goals — one of which was a game-winner.

The Indians will travel to Orange Park to play Ridgeview in a preseason kickoff classic on Friday, Aug. 16, at 7 p.m. Keystone begins the season in earnest at Interlachen on Friday, Aug. 23, at 7:30 p.m.

Keystone plays its first home game on Friday, Aug. 30, against Union County at 7:30 p.m.

2024 KHHS Varsity Football Schedule

Aug. 16	at Ridgeview (KC)	7 p.m.
Aug. 23	at Interlachen	7:30 p.m.
Aug. 30	Union County	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 13	at Newberry*	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 20	Dixie County	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 27	at Bradford*	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 4	West Nassau (HC)	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 11	at Santa Fe*	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 18	Chiefland	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 25	Palatka*	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 1	at Crescent City	7 p.m.

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Blanding commander speaks at KH Rotary

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
Dan@BcTelegraph.com

The new commander of Camp Blanding discussed the training center's mission in a talk during the Aug. 7 meeting of the Keystone Heights Rotary Club.

Col. Todd Hopkins assumed command of the 73,000-acre facility in April while retaining his other job as the human resource officer for the Florida National Guard.

"So, I joke, and I say 75% of my time is spent being the HRO for the State of Florida," he said, "and the other 75% is spent running Camp Blanding."

Evacuated Ukraine when Russia invaded

For the first 23 of his 25 years in the Florida National Guard, Hopkins was a part of the Tampa-based 53rd Infantry Brigade, the state's largest unit, with around 2,200 soldiers.

When introducing the colonel, Rotarian Jim Eifert, the retired adjutant general of the Florida National Guard, said Hopkins has received the Bronze Star, seven meritorious service medals, and three commendation medals.

His service includes action in Iraq, Kuwait, and the Horn of Africa.

The general added that as part of a joint training group in Ukraine, Hopkins's unit evacuated the country when Russia invaded its southwestern neighbor in 2022.

Hopkins said that although

he had been to Camp Blanding many times over his career, this was the first time he was "on the other side of the counter."

"I've always been there as a customer," he recalled. "I didn't realize it was like running a small city covering about 73,000 acres. I'm learning about stuff like trash management and wastewater management and flooding issues."

Prisons, borders, and hurricanes

Hopkins said the guard's current missions include providing supplemental staffing at 13 Department of Corrections facilities with nearly 200 people and flying missions over the Florida Straits to report suspected illegal immigration attempts. He expects the mission with the Department of Corrections to conclude by the end of the year.

"We also have guardsmen out in Texas working on the southwest border in both federal and Texas National Guard capacities," he said. "Worldwide, the Florida National Guard is present in every geographic combatant command. Right now, we have approximately 600 soldiers and airmen deployed that have representation in NORTHCOM, SOUTHCOM, EUCOM, AFRICOM CENTCOM, and INDOPACOM with a unit that just left to go support operations in Southwest Asia."

Hopkins added that the Florida National Guard maintains 128 military installations in 55 Florida communities that support



Col. Todd Hopkins, the commander of Camp Blanding, speaks to the Keystone Heights Rotary Club about the challenges facing the Florida National Guard.

over 12,000 citizen soldiers and airmen.

The colonel gave his talk to the civic group two days after Hurricane Debby made landfall near Steinhatchee and left many of Florida's west coast neighborhoods underwater.

He said 3,500 guardsmen were activated to support communities recovering from the storm.

"My son happened to be one of them," Eifert said. "He just came back from almost a month with the 53rd Infantry Brigade training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, in absolutely miserable conditions in the middle of the summer. On his way home from that month-long deployment, he got a call: Hey, turn around. You're going back to Panama City to be activated for Debby."

The general added that

balancing civilian, family, and military commitments is becoming increasingly difficult for guard members.

Hopkins countered that a guardsmen's contract obligates the soldier or airman to a minimum of one weekend a month and one week a year, which equates to around 48 days.

"Right now, every soldier and airman is doing about 90 to 95 days per year," he said. "It's almost twice what the original baseline contract is."

The two officers added that one of the biggest problems facing the military today is that only 20% of the population qualifies for military service. Eifert said that during World War II, 90% qualified, but because of obesity and psychological issues, that number is dipping into the low double digits and even single digits. In addition, potential recruits who have taken prescription drugs in wide use, like Ritalin, Adderall, and Ambien, for more than three months are disqualified from joining.

Hopkins added, "We've got hundreds of jobs out there, and we're able to fill about half of them. We just cannot get them filled faster."

20% of Clay County

The colonel said that Camp Blanding is a Level Two Garrison, meaning it should have enough space to accommodate the maneuvers of an entire

See HOPKINS, page 14

A look at Camp Blanding's rich heritage

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
Dan@BcTelegraph.com

Namesake

According to a video produced by the Camp Blanding Museum, the facility's namesake, Albert Hazen Blanding, was born in Lyons, Iowa, in 1876. His father moved the family to the Sunshine State when he was two, and his father died when young Albert was 16.

Blanding's mother sent the teenager to Gainesville for a better education, and he graduated from East Florida Seminary, the predecessor of the University of Florida, in 1894.

Blanding joined the Florida National Guard in 1899, commissioned as a captain. He was promoted to major seven years later and to colonel in 1909. As a colonel, he led Florida's second infantry in an expedition on the US-Mexico border, providing security for supply lines to General John J. Pershing's punitive expedition against Pancho Villa.

The same year that his federal service ended for the Mexican conflict, 1917, he was again activated for federal service for World War I.

Blanding was one of eight officers promoted to Brigadier General by President Woodrow Wilson and assigned to command the 53rd infantry brigade of the 27th Infantry Division. Today, the 53rd is the largest Florida National Guard unit, with over

2,200 soldiers.

During World War II, Blanding commanded the 53rd Infantry brigade during an attack on the Hindenburg line in September 1918, followed by the battle of the Selle River the following month. In 1919, Blanding returned to the Sunshine State and resumed his civilian duties.

In 1924, Blanding was promoted to major general, and 12 years later, President Franklin Roosevelt appointed him chief of the Bureau of the National Guard in Washington. While in that job, which continued until 1940, he also retained his infantry division command.

Blanding retired in 1940 and served as a military advisor to Florida's governor during World War II. He died in 1970 and was interred in Gainesville.

Predecessor-Camp Foster

In his book "Camp Blanding, Florida Star in Peace and War," W. Stanford Smith said the great Jacksonville fire of 1901 exposed the poor organization, coordination, and training of Florida National Guard units. The legislature responded by appointing a commission to examine potential areas for a training site.

The commission selected a 1,000-acre site near Black Point on the St. Johns River, around 12 miles from downtown Jacksonville and near the Clay

County Line.

The state acquired the property and named it Camp Foster after a recently deceased commander of the Florida National Guard.

Between the two world wars, Camp Foster played essentially the same role as Camp Blanding would play during World War II and afterward.

As early as 1935, soldiers, constrained by the limitations of the Camp Foster acreage, began maneuvers in the Kingsley Lake area because of his extensive properties.

In 1939, the Navy persuaded the Florida legislature to enact a law requiring Camp Foster's conveyance to the Navy. However, the War Department refused to abandon the property unless the Florida Armory Board was reimbursed \$400,000 plus other costs. The War Department also required a replacement facility for its training needs.

Kingsley Lake site constructed

In searching for a replacement facility, which needed to be at least 25 times larger than Camp Foster, the Armory Board considered six potential sites: the Talquin area in Gadsden County, the Eastport area in northern Duval County, the Dinsmore area in western Duval County, the Deland area in Volusia County, the Green Coast Springs area, and the Kingsley Lake area. All of the Duval County sites were eliminated because they were expensive and lacked space for artillery training. The Kingsley Lake property was selected because it was the closest to Jacksonville.

Some of the land was acquired through negotiations with property owners, and others were acquired through eminent domain. A third group of parcels was leased to the Armory Board during the war and returned to its owners after the conflict.

Nearby Starke was woefully unprepared for the influx of soldiers and contractors into the area.

Since construction workers

were paid two-dollar bills, the "Bradford County Telegraph" described the boom as a gold rush with two-dollar bills.

The War Department began announcing the deployment of units to Camp Blanding, which would quickly outstrip contractors' construction capabilities. One contractor determined that it would need 7,000 carpenters to fulfill the bid for the work.

Starke quickly developed an acute housing shortage, with workers and their families sleeping on the grounds covered by burlap sacks.

Training begins

The first official training at Camp Blanding occurred on August 4, 1940, when the 116th Field Artillery Regiment fired 75 mm artillery pieces on a range near Sandhill Lake.

The lake was later renamed Lake Lowry in honor of Brigadier General Sumter L. Lowry, a regimental commander who fired the first shot in the training exercise.

The first division to train at Camp Blanding was the 31st, also known as the Dixie Division because it comprised National Guard units from Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

The 124th Infantry Brigade of the Florida National Guard arrived at Camp Blanding on December 20, and the entire division assembled at the camp by December 22. Since the facilities were not complete by the time the 31st division arrived, the soldiers pitched in to help complete the work.

Camp Blanding was intended to house two army divisions simultaneously, each consisting of between 10,000 and 15,000 soldiers. By the end of 1940, leaders were informed that the 43rd division would occupy the other half of the two-division-sized camp, which was nearing completion. The 43rd's troops were National Guard units from

See CAMP, page 15

Obituaries

Dale Bivins



Dale Francis Bivins, also known as "Shrimp," a beloved husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, peacefully passed away on Sunday, Aug. 11, 2024, at Haven-Suwannee Valley Hospice Care Center in Lake City. He was born Nov. 16, 1951, to the late Leonard and Hazel Crawford Bivins and was a lifelong resident of Lake Butler. He dedicated 35 years of his life serving as an electrician for the University of Florida before retiring, leaving behind a legacy of hard work and commitment. His quiet and laid-back personality endeared him to all who knew him, and his presence will be deeply missed by his family and friends. He was a man of simple pleasures and found joy in the tranquility of nature and the great outdoors. Family was everything to him. He shared 51 years of love and companionship with his devoted wife, Sandra Smith Bivins. He was a devoted and supportive father to Stephanie Bivins and Stephen (Ginny) Bivins. His legacy lives on through his adoring grandchildren, Garrett, Alyssa, Chesley, Gavin, Mila, and Charlee; as well as his great-grandchildren, Kashon, Caleb, Kaden, and Brooks. In addition to his immediate family, he is survived by his uncle, Melvin Crawford; and his nephew and niece, Brandon Bivins and Lora Williams. He was preceded in death by his parents; and his brothers, Gary and Randel Bivins.

Friends and family are invited to pay their respects at a visitation to be held Thursday, Aug. 15, from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. at Archer-Milton Funeral Home in Lake Butler. A graveside service will take place the following day, Friday, Aug. 16, at 11 a.m. at Midway Cemetery in Lake Butler. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to Haven-Suwannee Valley Hospice Care Center in Lake City.

Archer-Milton Funeral Home, 386-496-2008, is honored to serve the family of Dale Bivins. www.archerfuneralhome.com

PAID OBITUARY

Marcus Henry



Marcus Hamilton Henry, born Sept. 21, 1971, in Starke, passed away Monday, July 1, 2024, in Spokane, Washington after battling an extended illness. He leaves behind a legacy of love and cherished memories. He was predeceased by his daughter, Sara Henry; his paternal grandparents, Alexander Hamilton Henry and Lila Anderson Henry; his maternal grandparents, Gerè and Jerome Johns; and his aunts, Martha Saunders and Mamie Norman.

He is survived by his daughter, Lacy Selph, and her husband, Michael; his mother, Debra Johns, and her husband, Frank Williams; his sister, Meaghan Church, and her husband, Matthew; his father, Patrick Alexander Henry, and his wife, Karen; his sister, Leslie Thornton; and his beloved grandson, Cayden Culpepper.

A private family memorial service will be held on Tuesday, Aug. 20, to celebrate Marcus's life and the impact he made on those around him. In his passing, may his spirit rest in peace, knowing he was loved and will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

PAID OBITUARY

Theodore Melton

Theodore "Arthur" Melton, 84, of Lake City passed away on Monday, Aug. 5, 2024, at Baya Pointe Nursing and Rehab in Lake City. He was born March 24, 1940, in Graham to the late Theodore and Nellie (Willis) Melton. After graduating from Gainesville High School in 1958, he began working as a machinist. His career spanned over 20 years, and he primarily worked for GE and, eventually, the University of Florida until his retirement. He was an outdoorsman who enjoyed hunting and fishing. He also enjoyed western country music and doing word searches. He was preceded in death by his parents; and a special brother in law, Phil Eunice.

He is survived by his sister, Carlene Eunice of Lake City; and numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

A graveside service to honor him was held Friday, Aug. 9, at Santa Fe Cemetery in Hampton. His service was officiated by Emory Eunice.

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

PAID OBITUARY

Melvin Owen



Pastor Melvin J. Owen, 84, of Wellborn, passed away on Saturday, Aug. 10, 2024, at the Haven Hospice Suwannee Valley Care Center in Lake City. He was born in Lake City, the oldest of three sons, to the late Davis Hawkins Owen and Katie Gertrude Mikell Owen. He was raised in Olustee and was a graduate of Baker County High School, class of 1957. Following high school, he enlisted in the United States Navy and was a veteran of the Vietnam War. He was called into the ministry and furthered his education and attained a doctorate in Theology at Luther Rice College and Seminary. He served as pastor for 52 years at many local churches, including Fellowship Baptist Church of Lake City, First Baptist Church of Lake Butler, Old Providence Baptist Church and he was currently serving as the pastor at Tiger Lake Baptist Church in Live Oak. Pastor Owen also worked for many years in the insurance industry with Farm Bureau, Avmed and Woodmen of the World. He loved all sports, especially the Florida Gators. He coached basketball for several years at the Lake City Academy, Forest Hills Academy and the Lake City Community College Timberwolves. He was preceded in death by his parents; his wife of 57 years, Laura Barnes Owen; and his brother, Kenneth Paul Owen.

Survivors include his children, Melvin L. "Larry" (Tammy) Owen of Providence and Emily Walker of Sanford; one brother, Jerry (Bonnie) Owen of Glen St. Mary; his sister-in-law, Glenda Owen of Olustee; nine grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; and seven great-great-grandchildren. Funeral services will be conducted on Saturday, Aug. 17, at 11 a.m. at Tiger Lake Baptist Church in Live Oak with Dr. Virgil Lovett officiating. Interment will follow at Olustee Cemetery in Olustee with military honors. A time of visitation with the family will be Friday, Aug. 16, from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. at the funeral home.

Arrangements are under the direction of Gateway-Forest Lawn Funeral Home, 3596 S. US Hwy 441, Lake City 32025. Please leave words of comfort for the family at www.gatewayforestlawn.com.

PAID OBITUARY

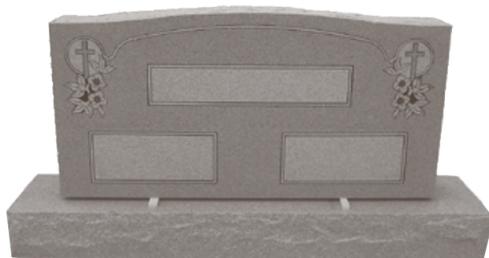
Card of Thanks

With grateful hearts, the family of the late Bobby Louis Hampton would like to extend our heartfelt "Thank you!" to our community and surrounding area for the acts of kindness shown to use during the loss of our beloved family member. Each call, text, card, floral arrangement, donation, food item, household supplies and, most of all, the prayers were appreciated.

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UCHS

Continued from page 10

Holmes. Thomas said Bresse and Holmes "are two kids between the tackles who are as good as you're going to get at our level (rural)."

"They're big bodies, but they're strong and play with good technique inside," Thomas said. "Connor's got the ability to be a good pass rusher. That's not necessarily Anthony's game, but he's lost a lot of weight in the past year and is moving a lot better."

In fact, Thomas said Holmes has been making things difficult for the offense in practices as he "almost eliminates stuff between the tackles."

Wheeler will see his playing time on defense increase as the Tigers will have to rely on some young guys to step up and fill positions on the line. The line will have a senior in Garrett Jackson, who looks to make an impact at defensive end.

"We're looking for his game to rise up and fill that void,"

2024 UCHS Varsity Football Schedule

Aug. 16	Baker County (KC)	7:30 p.m.
Aug. 23	at Yulee	7 p.m.
Aug. 30	at Keystone	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 6	Santa Fe	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 13	at Baldwin	6:30 p.m.
Sept. 20	Fort White	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 27	Paxon	7 p.m.
Oct. 4	Zarephath (HC)	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 18	Trinity Catholic	7 p.m.
Oct. 25	at Hudson	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 1	at Chiefland	7:30 p.m.

KC Preseason Kickoff Classic
HC Homecoming

Thomas said. "He's a big-body kid who's got the potential to take that (position of defensive end) over."

As already mentioned, the linebacking corps will consist of Klein and Tyson. Klein was the Tigers' leading tackler last season.

Thomas said Klein is tough and plays bigger than his 5-10, 182-pound frame.

"It's probably harder to replace him on the defensive side than on the offensive side," Thomas said, adding, "It's a blessing for us to have a kid like him who can make the calls and

put people in the right places. He just has the instinct. It's a shame he's not 6-2, 230. He'd probably have every SEC school around wanting him."

Newsome will be a factor at linebacker as well as at defensive end. Thomas described him as "just a tough, gritty kid."

Jenkins, who made four interceptions last year, is the lone returning starter in the secondary, but Thomas said, "Our other three guys back there now are all pretty solid."

Thomas said Williams, who'll play corner along with Jenkins, "covers well for his size."

Those two will also play safety some, but the main safeties appear to be McClellon and fellow senior Jesse Chaikin.

"Alec is really smart," Thomas said of McClellon. "He's going to be where he's supposed to be. He understands the defense and is a good athlete."

Chaikin is coming off a spring game in which he had two interceptions. Thomas described him as "a kid who's just kind of waited for his time," adding that he "has good instincts back there."

Backups who are now getting their chance, plus quite a number of young players, may not sound ideal for a team that's seen its numbers drop, but Thomas believes UCHS has a program in place that readies inexperienced players to become starters or major contributors.

"I feel like we do a good job of developing our kids to where we can compete," Thomas said.

Union hosts a preseason

kickoff classic against Baker County on Friday, Aug. 16, at 7:30 p.m. The Tigers open the season in earnest with a road game against Yulee on Friday, Aug. 23, at 7 p.m.

The Tigers' first regular-season home game (following a Friday, Aug. 30, 7:30 p.m. road game against Keystone Heights) is against Santa Fe on Friday, Sept. 6, at 7:30 p.m.

NOTICE

The 2024 Bradford County Value Adjustment Board will conduct an Organizational Meeting Tuesday, August 27, 2024 at 9:30 a.m. in the County Commission Chambers located in the North Annex of the Courthouse at

945 N. Temple Avenue, Starke, FL (Any person desiring to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at this meeting will need a record of the proceedings. For such purpose, said person may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.)

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Starke Branch - 2460 Commercial Dr.

Aug. 29 Leave a Legacy to honor Prevatt and Register

The Bradford County Education Foundation will host its annual Leave a Legacy event on Thursday, Aug. 29, at 6 p.m. at Starke's Madison Street Baptist Church.

This year's honorees are Lisa Prevatt and Paula Register.

Tickets, which are \$30, include dinner and can be purchased from any BCEF board member or via the "Bradford County Education Foundation" Facebook page.

Natalie Whytsell, last year's Bradford County School District Teacher of the Year, will provide musical entertainment.

The Dessert Dash, which serves as an additional fundraiser for BCEF, returns for its second year. Guests will pool their monies as they try to make their



Lisa Prevatt



Paula Register

table among the highest bidders for the chance to "dash" for their preferred dessert.

All desserts are made by some of the area's amazing bakers.

The proceeds from tickets

and Dessert Dash bids go to support BCEF, an all-volunteer organization created in 1990. BCEF raised \$11,000 last year for Bradford public schools.

HOPKINS

Continued from page 12

brigade and the capacity to support a 40-person platoon for live fire training.

"The entire 53rd Infantry Brigade should be able to train there," he said. "We're short; we have the maneuver space. We're missing some of the training area and the building space and some of the support areas."

Hopkins said that 55,000 acres of the camp's 73,000 acres are available for maneuvers and that Blanding's entire area covers 20% of Clay County.

He also said that the Florida National Guard takes up only two-thirds of the facility's training time. Joint interagency, intergovernmental, and international partners fill out the remainder of the time.

"Even right now," he said, "Coast Guard, Air Force Special Operations is conducting an exercise. There are local community partners that are there from time to time like scouting, Civil Air Patrol, churches, and explorers' programs. We have a

large, robust recreation center. So, it is a revolving door (with) about 10,000 people per month."

Camp Blanding supports artillery practice with 37 firing points and three observation points; airborne operations with 62 landing zones, a 32,000-foot ceiling, and an aerial gunnery range; and live fire operations with two shoot houses and a convoy live fire lane.

The center also provides civilian training with an urban defense building, a tunnel trainer, and a rumble trainer. Camp Blanding also provides training for counterdrug operations and for the guard's 44th Civilian Support Team, which responds to chemical, biological, nuclear, or explosive attacks on civilian populations.

Construction costs skyrocketing

Hopkins said the training center has 19 projects on its construction plan with a total budget of over \$568 million. One hundred forty-three million has been funded. Nearly \$400 million of the total budget is for

billiting areas where soldiers are housed. Only one-fourth of those housing upgrades have been funded.

Hopkins said \$24.5 million is needed for firing range improvements.

"Obviously, that's pouring tons of money into this local community," he said.

Hopkins added that skyrocketing construction costs make funding new facilities within the training center harder.

Rotarian and Clay County Commissioner Betsy Condon verified that claim by noting that the county built a new fire station in Keystone Heights in 2018 for \$3.5 million.

"The same fire station today is \$12 million," she said.

Hopkins said one trend evolving in military training is the shift to virtual reality simulators.

"It's an exceptionally expensive thing to invest in at the very beginning," he said, "but then it has a long-term, low-cost yield for moving soldiers or airmen through to get the training needed before we go out and shoot live rounds."



Union County Public Library

MONTHLY PROGRAMS

PROGRAM	DATE	TIME
Senior Social Club	First and Fourth Tuesdays of each month	10-11:30am
Monthly Adult Craft Programs	2nd Tuesdays of the month	6pm
Story Time	Wednesdays and Thursdays	Weds: 1pm Thurs: 10am
After School STEAM	Sept 5: Marble Run Sept 19: Reddikulus Oct 3: Make It Fly Oct 17: A Kandinsky Halloween Nov 7: Zip Lines Nov 21: Candyland Dec 5: Christmas Cheer	3:30pm

Your Tax Dollars Hard at Work!

We would like to thank the citizens of Union County for the financial support you have given us over the past 30 years.

Because of your financial support we are able to offer valuable programs for our children, youth, adults, and seniors. It is an honor to serve the citizens of Union County. Please remember to vote Yes on Tuesday, August 20th for the Union County Public Library referendum.



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CAMP

Continued from page 12

Maine, Vermont, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.

The parade grounds dividing the two divisions became known as the Mason-Dixon line.

In May 1941, the 31st Division conducted an urban warfare exercise. It assaulted the false front town of Thompsonville in the face of simulated machine guns, snipers, and air attacks. They then engaged in hand-to-hand street fighting to take and hold the village. Today, urban warfare training is an essential component of training at the facility.

During this training, officers and enlisted men could spend

weekends with their families in Starke, Gainesville, Green Cove Springs, Jacksonville, Saint Augustine, Palatka, and Keystone Heights. Most of the soldiers with families gravitated towards Starke.

In early August 1941, both divisions left for maneuvers in Louisiana. The 43rd, staffed with Northerners, gained a new appreciation for Camp Blanding once they trained through the swamps of Louisiana in preparation for their deployment to the jungles of the South Pacific.

Both divisions left in late October for the second round of significant maneuvers, this time in the Carolinas with much cooler weather than they had experienced in Louisiana. They

returned to Camp Blanding in late November, then came the December 7, 1941, Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

After the surprise attack, units from the 31st division were assigned to guard the Atlantic Coastline Railroad from Wilmington, North Carolina, to Key West at strategic points. Because of its proximity to Camp Blanding, the City of Starke's power and water plants were under 24-hour guard.

POW Camp

From September 1942 to April 1946, the army operated a prisoner of war camp within Camp Blanding.

The army was concerned that civilians might be apprehensive

of escape, so the presence of the POW camp was kept under wraps.

Sometimes fights broke out between prisoners loyal to the Nazi regime and those not. Most of the around 200 prisoners housed at the initial detention camp were from the German Navy rescued from sinking or captured U-boats.

A German army prisoner-of-war camp was also established with a capacity of 1,000. Camp Blanding was also responsible for an additional 3,000 prisoners of war held at 11 branch camps throughout Florida.

Prisoners sent to the branch camps were usually employed in agriculture. Farmers were required to pay the federal government a specific rate, and

the prisoners were paid \$.80 per day in coupons, which they could redeem at a prison canteen.

The United States government realized more than \$25 million from the POW's labor. The state of Florida received \$777,000 for POW contract labor in the last month of 1944.

The army had a program to provide German prisoners of war with recreational programs and procured books, magazines, and movies, including newsreels showing German concentration camps as Allied armies found them. After one of the newsreels, the POWs took up a collection and presented \$411 to the German Red Cross to be used for the survivors of the German concentration camps.

Visitors

A late 1944 survey showed that an average of 5,000 soldiers left the post on Saturdays for weekend passes to nearby cities. Bus fare to Starke was \$.15, to Gainesville \$.65, and to Jacksonville \$1.

When movie star Cary Grant visited the Camp Blanding station hospital in February 1945, he signed 210 autographs and visited with virtually every patient.

The estimated number of people processed through Camp Blanding during World War II was over 745,000.

Most of this story was adapted from "Camp Blanding, Florida Star in Peace and War" by W. Stanford Smith.

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**Vote
August 20th**



Serving the constituents of Bradford County over the last four years has been an honor and a privilege. Working side by side with our educators to improve Bradford County Schools has been the most rewarding experience of my life. The amount of support we have received throughout this campaign has truly been overwhelming. With your continued support, and your vote on August 20th, our students and staff will have the consistency they deserve and our school district can continue on the path of positive growth.

- Will Hartley

PUBLIC OFFICIALS ENDORSE WILL HARTLEY

Gordon Smith-Bradford County Sheriff,
Andy Redding-City of Starke, Vice-Mayor,
Carlton Faulk-Former Union County Superintendent,
Cheryl Canova-School Board Member,
Dr. Kathy Burns-Nassau County Superintendent,
Jim Horne-Former FL Commissioner of Education,
Lex Carswell-Columbia County Superintendent,
Ted L. Roush-Suwannee County Superintendent

SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYEES ENDORSE WILL HARTLEY

Alicia Padgett-Para, Amber Hartley-Teacher, Ami Griffis-Para, Amy Hallisey-Teacher, Angel Autry-Secretary, Ashely Dowd-Teacher, Ashely Yowell-Teacher, Ashley Gunter-Teacher, Audrey Murphy-Teacher, Audrey Reddish-Para, Bambi Murwin-Para, Becky McCord-Teacher, Belinda Phillips-Teacher, Beverly Wise-Teacher, Brandi Tatum-Teacher, Brandy Scott-Secretary, Brittany Bradley-Transportation, Cassandra Reed-Teacher, Cassie Reddish-Teacher, Chelsea Lemire-Teacher, Chelsea Waters-Teacher, Cheryl Chalker-Secretary, Chris Coffey-Administrator, Christine Collins-IT, Cindi Asmuth-Teacher, Crystal Williams-Administrator, Curtis Knights-Custodian, Dana Hurst-ESE Clerk, Dan Wells-Teacher, Debbie Parmenter-Teacher, Denisha Brown-Teacher, Donna Hartley-Guidance, Dr. Terri O'Quinn-Administrator, Erica Rowe-Transportation, Geoff Cook-Teacher, Grace Barber-Teacher, Grace Johns-Teacher, Gracie Gartman-Teacher, Heather Alvarez-Teacher, Heather Eison-Curriculum Specialist, James Todd-Food Service Manager, Jaquan Bryant-Para, Jennifer Cowart-Teacher, Jodi Traylor-Teacher, Joshua Bell-Transportation, Joshua Goodson-Transportation, Joy Moore-Teacher, Juanita Burch-Teacher, Karen Bowen-Teacher, Kathleen Hoffman-Teacher, Kelly Donn-Transportation, Kim Adams-Teacher, Kristi Wells-Teacher, Lashonda O-Reilly-Para, Laura Akins-Teacher, Lauren Morgan-Administrator, Leanna Norman-Teacher, Lindsay Detweiler-Teacher, Loretta Levenson-Para, Lorrie Rehberg-Teacher, Lynn Woods-Teacher, Mae Lynn McKenzie-Teacher, Lynn Dickinson-Teacher, Marie Appling-Media Specialist, Marlana Funderburk-Secretary, Mary Beth Johnson-Teacher, Melissa Gleman-Teacher, Melissa Hines-Teacher, Michelle Greist-Teacher, Michelle Jones-Data Entry, Nancy Esford-Teacher, Nancy Payne-Teacher, Natalie Whytsell-Teacher, Nicole Campbell-Teacher, Nina Steinmeyer-Teacher, Pami Harrell-Teacher, Peggy Leziak-Teacher, Rachel McClelland-Teacher, Renee Cassels-Guidance, Robbin Witt-IT, Robert Mears-Transportation, Rob Norman-Teacher, Sabrina Harden-Teacher, Sandy Acree-Para, Sharon Benton-Food Service Manager, Sheree Alvarez-Director, Sonya Stack-Transportation, Stacy Dyal-Para, Tamala Delashmet-Teacher, Tamara Roberts-Teacher, Tammy Saxon-Director of ESE, Tarrin Jackson-Para, Tiffany Baxter-Para, Tina Justice-Para, Toni McCutchen-Teacher, Tonya Barnhart-Transportation, Troysha Floyd-Teacher, Tyhesia Brady-Teacher, Valerie Strickland-Para, Velesa Hampton White-Para, Venessa Sweeney-Teacher

RETIRED EDUCATORS ENDORSE WILL HARTLEY

Betty Ann Chapman, Charlotte Durrance, Cindy Canova,
Cindy DeValerio, Cindy Whytsell, David Tew, Debra Riggs, Dee Conova,
Donna Jackson, Donna Tew, Jimmy Prevatt, Kellie Clark, Kris Dunfee,
Linda Bennett, Lisa Prevatt, Martha Boyette, Mike Hartley, Patricia Wainwright,
Randy Whytsell, Sandra Starling, Shirley Mangol, Sue Mordock, Susan Nichols,
Vickie Moran, Virginia Walkup, Wanda Prevatt, Yvette Keys

