

Bradford County Telegraph

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146th year, 2nd Issue — \$1



Lawtey brings back community get-together

Sheila Cummings, who also serves on the school board, organized the Community Come Together Day in Lawtey on Saturday and was joined by many residents, young and old alike. For more on the event, see page 3.

Impact fees approved

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
mark@bctelegraph.com

As expected, Bradford County commissioners moved forward with new impact fees to raise revenue for law enforcement, firefighting and emergency medical services.

Impact fees are paid on new construction at the time a building permit is issued, and the revenue is restricted to paying for new capital costs that are the consequence of growth. That includes buildings, land, vehicles, rescue apparatus and equipment. It does not include pay for personnel. Governments use impact fees to require developers to help pay for their impact on public infrastructure, relieving some of the burden on taxpayers.

The residential fees are \$498 per dwelling unit for fire protection, \$304 for law enforcement and \$258 for emergency medical services, for a total of \$1,060 per new dwelling unit.

The nonresidential fees are \$194 per 1,000 square feet for fire protection, \$119 for law enforcement and \$101 for emergency medical services, for a total of \$414 per 1,000 square feet of new nonresidential construction. For a 40,000 square foot grocery store, the total impact fee would be \$16,560. Something approaching the size of the Walmart Supercenter would pay nearly \$70,000.

The ordinance will be in effect beginning Oct. 1. An additional 2% would be charged to cover the cost of administration and collection.

There are some exemptions, including altering or expanding an existing dwelling unit, or adding an accessory dwelling with the existing unit or on the same lot. Impact fees won't apply. This includes replacing an entire building or

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WORTH NOTING

City clerk election

Starke's city clerk election will take place on Tuesday, Aug. 19, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at city hall. Early voting will take place Monday, Aug. 11, to Friday, Aug. 15, from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily in the supervisor of elections office at the courthouse.

For information call the supervisor of elections office at 904-966-6266 or visit www.votebradfordfl.gov.

GOP Patriots Dinner welcomes Rep. Byron Donalds

Join the Bradford GOP on Friday, Aug. 29, for an evening with special guest Congressman Byron Donalds at the Governor Charley E. Johns Conference Center beginning at 6 p.m. The location is 1610 N. Temple Ave. in Starke. Buffet and cash bar provided by the Downtown Grill.

Tickets are \$65 and a table of 8 is \$520, payable by personal check, business check, cashier's check or money order made out to BCREC and mailed to BCREC, P.O. Box 213, Starke, FL 32091. If you mail a check your tickets will be available for pick up at the door.

The purchase of a ticket is a donation to the Bradford Republican Party and is not refundable. For tickets or more information, contact BCREC Treasurer Donna Solze at 904-364-6076.

Contributions or gifts to the Bradford GOP are not deductible as charitable contributions for Federal income tax purposes. Congressman Byron Donalds is appearing as a special guest and is not soliciting any funds associated with this event. All solicitations of funds in connection with this event are by the Bradford GOP and not by Congressman Byron Donalds or any federal officeholder.

Keystone Heights rejects Lake Geneva cleanup bid

Sole bid was 16x over budget

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

Keystone Heights city council members rejected the sole bid made to cut down and remove trees and underbrush from the dry lake bed of Lake Geneva during the council's August 4 meeting.

Interim City Manager Jamie Booth told council members that two contractors attended a pre-bid meeting and only one submitted a bid for the work for \$1.6 million, exceeding the \$100,000 project budget by \$1.5 million.

Booth told the council that the contractor had divided the project into three major restoration areas and two minor areas around the lake. He added that the contractor attached a \$500,000 bid to each of the three major areas and a \$75,000 cost to each of the minor ones.

Theoretically, you (could) award one of those two small restoration areas," he told council members. But you're only talking about... five to 10 acres, maybe five out of 340 acres that we are looking at in the entire lake over those five restoration areas."

Booth explained that the budget-busting cost was due almost exclusively to the permit issued by the state, which requires all trees and underbrush to be removed from the lakebed, rather than burned or ground onsite.

"What I would recommend," he advised the



Trees surround the Clay County boat ramp near Lake Geneva's Fifth Avenue. Clay County and the City of Keystone Heights are seeking to remove trees and underbrush from the lakebed before rising water from the Black Creek Water Resource Development Project makes the removal impossible.

council, "is not awarding this contract, allowing us to go back together as a team with the county and coordinate with the St. Johns River Water

Management District and seek an individual permit, which would then authorize either of the three different ways of (disposing of the project's waste)."

Union commissioners turn down crematory

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

By a 3-2 vote, Union County Commissioners rejected a special exception to its zoning code that would have allowed J.R. Davis Acquisitions, LLC, to build a crematory on Little Springs Road in Worthington Springs.

Commissioners approved a rezoning for the nine-acre parcel in April and considered the special exception in July. However, Commissioner Melissa McNeal requested additional time to research the matter, and her colleagues delayed the vote until their August 4 meeting.

Mac Johns, Donna Jackson and McNeal voted to reject the special exception, while Chair Channing Dobbs and Willie Croft voted against Johns's motion to turn the project away.

Dobbs was the most vocal supporter of the special exception. He told residents of the surrounding area, who opposed the project, that scientific data did not support their claims that the crematory raised health concerns.

"The health concerns that have been brought up numerous times," Dobbs said, "unfortunately, I'm just concerned there aren't enough legitimate sources saying that this is a concern. If this was as dangerous as they say it is, we adjoin Alachua County, which is one of the most liberal counties in the state. Why are not every one of (the crematories) over there outlawed?"

Archer-Milton Funeral Home owner Garrett Milton spent his time arguing for the project, attempting to refute what he said were false claims made by crematory opponents during the July meeting.

Milton said claims that he would be required to post a sign by the facility were false, and that he has no contract with the Department of Corrections for cremating inmates, as project opponents claimed.

"It was said last week that I own a pet crematory, or my associates own a pet crematory," he added. "That is false. There is a pet crematory that just opened in Starke, but we have nothing to do with it."

Milton also denied the claim that he tried to get a crematory approved within the City of Lake Butler and was denied.

"I've never tried to get a crematory approved anywhere," he said. "This is my first time ever. So, I don't know where that came from."

Milton also tried to refute the claim that his project would suppress property values in the area by citing an example of a Starke residence near that town's crematory that recently sold for \$199,500.

"The estimated value of a home in Starke goes for \$135 a square foot," he added. "That house...sold for \$163 a square foot, a lot higher than the median average square foot of a home in Bradford County."

Project opponent Michael Thornton told commissioners that property values drop 12% in



Project opponent Michael Thornton told commissioners that property values drop 12% in areas near a crematory.

areas near a crematory. He also disputed Milton's case in Starke, claiming that the crematory was built before the home.

"Those people chose to live there," he said. "We are not choosing this."

Thornton said the City of Ocala recently denied an application for a crematory because of the potential for fire. He said 161 fire calls in Marion County originated from crematories.

"I got a firefighter buddy of mine in Jacksonville, been called to one," Thornton added, "had flames shooting out, because if you burn a body over 300 pounds, it's a grease fire for the first hour. They burn faster and hotter, and 42% of Union County is obese. We are third in the state for (an) obese county."

McNeal, who requested the vote delay, said her decision to oppose the project came down to the condition of Little Springs Road and the impact the crematory would have on the dirt grade.

"I will be completely transparent in saying that if there is a new road and that concern is addressed, then I may feel differently," she said.



Commissioner Melissa McNeal, who requested the vote delay, said her decision to oppose the project came down to the condition of Little Springs Road and the impact the crematory would have on the dirt grade.



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Impact Fee	Residential	Non-Residential
Fire	\$498.00	\$194.00
EMS	\$258.00	\$101.00
Law Enforcement	\$304.00	\$119.00
Total	\$1,060.00	\$414.00
Unit	Dwelling	1,000 Sq Ft

FEES

Continued from page 1

dwelling unit where no additional square footage or dwelling units are created. Neither do impact fees apply to public property, including government building and schools. Fees can also be

waived partially or completely for any developer who receives contribution credit for the donation of land or equipment or the construction of capital facilities.

The commission must review the fees at least once every six years to ensure the impact fees collected do not exceed the reasonably anticipated cost of capital improvements required to accommodate growth.

The fees approved are based on a study by consultant Stantec, which was instructed to calculate the maximum fees the county could charge for these categories. The methodology involved determining the replacement cost of each department's fixed assets as the cost basis for the impact fee calculation as well as the proportionate share of that cost on both categories of development, residential and nonresidential.

Municipalities can participate by entering an interlocal agreement with the county. The city of Starke, however, will be considering its own impact fee schedule when the results of its impact fee study are released.

Tacos at Hawthorne Post
 American Legion Post 230 in Hawthorne is hosting Taco Tuesday on Aug. 12 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. For \$5, choose soft or hard tacos and salad with chips and salsa. The post is located at 20370 SE Hawthorne Road.



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Elect Chrissy Allen Thompson for the City Clerk of Starke



I'd be honored to earn your vote. Vote Chrissy Allen Thompson for City Clerk of Starke on August 19th. Because experience isn't just about knowing the job. It's about knowing the people and loving the community being served.

When you think about what the City Clerk of Starke should be, think beyond paperwork and meetings. Think of someone who not only knows the job but lives the needs of this community every single day. Someone who leads not just with words, but through consistent action. That's why I am running for Clerk and why experience truly does matter.

The Clerk's office isn't just a desk job. It's the public information hub for the City of Starke; a vital connection between citizens, commissioners, and city operations. It's about making sure everyone has access to the same information, and it's always accurate and on time. It's about serving Starke, not just during campaign season, but every day after.

I understand this position means more than typing minutes or organizing files.

It's about being attentive to the community's real needs. That means answering questions, returning calls, and always making time for the people who matter most to me: You – the citizens of Starke.

As your City Clerk I will:

- Support the commission with clear, timely documentation.
- Ensure citizens get the same, correct information – no surprises.
- Be a reliable source during both routine matters and emergencies.
- Rebuild the citizens' trust in the Clerk's office through fairness, honesty, consistency, and transparency.

This campaign isn't about slogans, it's about showing up. You'll find me buying groceries locally, pumping gas right here in town, and supporting Starke businesses every day—not just when votes are on the line.

More importantly, I am present in the moments that matter: Youth sports, school events, fundraisers, civic boards, and lending a hand to families in need. That's not politics. That's just being part of this community... A community I love deeply.

Whether serving the commission or the citizens, I believe in servant leadership—putting others first, staying accessible, and always following through. No empty promises. Just work that gets done properly.

In local government, especially in a city like Starke, experience isn't just helpful—it's essential. That's why I am running for City Clerk of Starke, bringing not only the professional know-how the position demands, but also the deep-rooted community connection that truly make a difference.



Disclaimer: Paid political advertisement for Chrissy Allen Thompson for City of Starke Clerk.

Lawtey Community Day: A time to reconnect with family, friends and local history

BY MELISSA PYLE
Special to the Telegraph

The Lawtey-Peetsville Community Day was held on July 26. Current and former residents braved the hot Saturday to have a time of connection among friends and family. The event was a grassroots effort of Lawtey residents, led by Sheila Cummings. Cummings decided the event needed to be revived this year since it was last held in 2022.

Cummings and friends hosted the community Come Together Day at the Old Middleburg Road Park location in Lawtey. The park has been the topic of discussion recently with plans to revive its vision and create a future space once the old building is demolished. The park currently has a large green space where vendors set up food trucks, shops and information about local resources.

One such vendor was local artist Eula Snell. Snell said she was born at home in Lawtey and has resided there most of her life. She said after she retired from her New Beginnings Daycare businesses, she began painting. She had several pieces for sale at the event. Snell was just one example of Lawtey's local artist and business owners who were in attendance and ranged in age from college to senior adults.

The multigenerational event spotlighted a short history from guest speaker Cynthia Ross.



Eula Snell, local artist and a lifelong Lawtey resident, was at the event showcasing her art collection. Snell was the owner and operator of New Beginnings Daycare for 33 years. At the prompting of her husband, she had "new beginning" pursuing her passion for painting.

Ross shared memories of how Lawtey's Come Together Day began when she was just a child. She said, "There's no place like Lawtey" and recalled going to the baseball games behind Thompkin's Grocery Store. The baseball games were sponsored by Arnett Thompkins, the store owner, and became a meeting place for the community. Ross explained that there's no place like Lawtey because of its people. People who are still working to pass on their legacy of community to the next

generation. The highlight of the afternoon was an impromptu gathering of Anderson Jr. High alumni. The students, now in their golden years, were able to sing the song in unison, without any help remembering the words. The group recalled how they'd attended Anderson Community School from elementary to junior high school before promoting to RJE High School in Starke. Most of the members singing became educators themselves. Cummings and others



Siblings Job and Ana were staying cool at Lawtey's Community Day with some fresh snowcones.



Lawtey's Come Together Day hasn't been held since 2022, but was once a yearly celebration in Lawtey.

hope the tradition of coming together, celebrating the Lawtey community, its heritage and history will continue year after year.



Lifelong Lawtey resident Cynthia Ross was the guest historian to share some stories of how Lawtey has such a rich history of community. She reminisced about her childhood and the successes of Lawtey's residents, many of whom have gone on to become doctors, lawyers and educators. Ross said some have remained or eventually returned to Lawtey to use their talents to enrich the next generation.

More money allocated for Sampson City station

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
mark@bctelegraph.com

An appeal for more money to finish up the Sampson City fire station was approved on the Bradford County Commission's consent agenda Tuesday morning despite further warning about supporting every funding request.

Consent agendas typically list routine, noncontroversial business that the board approves with a single vote without need for discussion. For example, the

Aug. 5 consent agenda included emergency medical services account write-offs, an inventory surplus deletion list, a road closure, and a grant application for mental health and substance abuse services. It also included planned purchase approvals, such as a \$20,000 compact excavator and more than \$80,000 for cardiac monitors, and retroactive approval of more than \$58,000 for an emergency fire engine repair.

But the request for asphalt

paving at Station 9 in Sampson City — where new grant-funded living quarters are nearly complete — delayed the routine vote for a deeper discussion that echoed multiple recent discussions over the county's spending.

The commission is prepared to finally approve a new fire assessment fee later this month to fund the rising cost of fire rescue — including operating a future station in Brooker — but the special assessment is only

expected to cover half of the firefighting budget.

Ultimately, Commissioner Chris Dougherty's request to have the \$33,110 paving expense removed from the consent agenda failed, with the rest of the board voting to fund it.

"The bottom line is, I just don't think it's a necessary

See MONEY, page 4



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In order to grow and develop as a Christian we must first understand that after we were born-again our spiritual journey didn't end, it's just began. When you were born-again the Holy Spirit of God imparted eternal life to your spirit man. Being new born, the Bible calls you a babe in Christ. Your physical age has nothing to do with your spiritual age. If you were born-again at 12 years of age, it is at that point you became a spiritual babe. If you were 70 when you were born-again it is at that point you became a spiritual babe in Christ. The scriptures tell us in 1 Peter 2:2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby." Peter is talking here about a persons spiritual maturity. Peter said if you are a new born in Christ Jesus you are a babe or baby. Notice that he also tells us that in order to grow we must feed on God's Word.

I've made this comment before but it bears repeating, the church is filled with people who have been saved for years but have not grown or developed very much, if any. The problem lies in the fact that, one, they do not know that God expects them to grow or either they are lacking spiritual nutrition because they have not consistently fed on God's Word. In order to develop our faith, grow spiritually, and renew our mind we must spend adequate time feeding on the Word. Not just reading but feeding. I will expound upon this later. Understand this, God's Word is spiritual food for our spirit man and our faith just as natural food provides nutrition to our physical bodies. In Matthew 4:4 Jesus said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." From this verse of we now know that in order to grow as Christians we must feed upon the Word of God. Well, how do we feed on the Word?

First, the entire Bible is wonderful and it is Truth, but a babe needs a certain diet to develop properly, I mean a well-balanced scriptural diet. I would start with a Gospel, an Epistle, a Psalm and a Proverb every day. A good place to start is the Gospel of St. John. All the Gospels are really good and each are very unique but John sets forth Jesus Christ in His deity and feeds the faith of believers. He covers various miracles and the "I AM" statements of Christ. The first Epistle I would read would be the Epistle of Romans. It is in this Epistle that Paul explores the sacrificial death of Jesus. He covers everything Jesus provided for humanity; to wit, the forgiveness of sins and God's wonderful mercy and saving grace. He proceeds further by expounding upon the truth that we are now free from the law of sin and death and have received the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. He then by the Holy Ghost carries us from sinners to our place of inheritance as children of God in Christ. Psalms is important because we find the importance of praise and worship and what happens when God's people worship Him in the midst of seemingly impossible circumstances. Proverbs which were given to us mostly by Solomon's God given wisdom, provides detailed instruction for God's people to deal successfully with the practical affairs of everyday life. So, a good way to start feeding on God's Word would be covering a chapter in the Gospel of St. John, Romans, a Psalm and a Proverb each and every day. I will show you soon how to study (feed) on God's Word so you can grow properly as a Christian. Until then, may the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you.

Pastor Rick

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MONEY

Continued from page 1

expenditure,” Dougherty said. “I just hate to see a brand-new fire station out there with a milled parking lot,” said Ben Carter, chief of Bradford County Fire Rescue. “But I think we’ve got a great opportunity to do it once and do it right.” Currently, he explained, trucks returning from a fire must drive to Starke to rinse and decontaminate their hose because there’s no place to park and do that at the Sampson City station.

According to Carter, the department generated approximately \$22,000 from

surplus sales and standing by at events. The remaining amount would come from unencumbered contingency funds.

“Chief Carter, I think we do what we can with what we have,” Dougherty said, adding that only 50% of his budget will be covered by a fire assessment and the money he mentioned could be spent elsewhere.

Commissioner Diane Andrews disagreed. “In my opinion, too many times in the county we start projects, and we do them halfway and leave the other half undone and never go back,” she said. For a small amount of money, she said, they can complete the work and not have to look back. “We have the money, and let’s finish

the project and do it right.”

Clerk of Court Denny Thompson, whose office has been drawing attention to spending as reserve funding is declining, asked if they should be planning to spend another \$33,000 on a parking lot for the Brooker fire station.

Commissioner Carolyn Spooner asked Thompson if the Sampson City project is not something that could be completed within the county’s budget. Thompson said they are getting closer to eating into minimum reserve the board established last year, which is around \$7 million to cover two months of operating costs during an emergency.

Carter said fire rescue has avoided spending from its fund balance, allowing it to grow, and adding that the county’s workforce would be competing the work. The legislative appropriation used to build the new station could not be stretched enough to cover the cost of paving.

Dougherty revisited Thompson’s question about whether the cost of paving would be included in the Brooker project or an additional expense. “I’m just saying, so these things don’t just come up three days before our meetings. I think that’s where we get blindsided,” he said.

Spooner said approval

seemed reasonable if the paving cost could be covered by the equipment sales revenue and around \$11,000 from contingency funding.

“It just always amazes me. Amazes me how we just find money,” Dougherty said.

Funding for football

Spooner’s request to restore \$7,500 to the Bradford Cowboys failed in a second 4-1 vote. Money normally allocated to youth recreation groups was swept into the budget for Bradford Sports United, which is being formed by the county, city of Starke and Tourist Development Council, with each contributing \$150,000 for operations and field improvements.

The Cowboys are entering their season now, but Bradford Sports United won’t be fully established and ready to play until early 2026. Spooner said the Cowboys must cover costs like equipment, field rental and insurance.

“They provide a community service, and without the county’s

assistance, it would greatly negatively impact the ability to function in the community,” she said. At the time the board reallocated the funding to the new recreation department, it wasn’t clear that the Cowboys season was already underway, she said.

Thompson asked if the board was going to deduct the \$7,500 request from rec department budget. Commission Chairman Danny Riddick said all three partners are already locked in at \$150,000. Spooner said the county’s tentative recreation budget next year is \$166,000, with \$11,000 of that set aside as contingency funding. She suggested the Cowboys be funded from that amount. However, Chief Deputy Clerk Rachel Rhoden clarified that \$11,800 was actually for care and maintenance of the county’s parks. There is only \$5,000 in reserve funding.

Spooner’s motion to fund Cowboys failed for lack of support.

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

BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD OF THE CITY OF STARKE, FLORIDA, SERVING AS THE BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT OF THE CITY OF STARKE, FLORIDA, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to the City of Starke Land Development Code as amended, hereinafter referred to as the Land Development Code, objections, recommendations and comments concerning the special exception, as described below, will be heard by the Planning and Zoning Board of the City of Starke, Florida, serving as the Board of Adjustment of the City of Starke, Florida, at a public hearing on August 18, 2025 at 5:30 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard, in the City Commission Meeting Room, City Hall located at 209 North Thompson Street, Starke, Florida.

SE 25-02, a petition by Anthony Davis, to request a special exception be granted as provided for in Section 4-105.B.3(b) of the Land Development Code, to permit a mobile home within an AGRICULTURAL (AGR) zoning district, in accordance with an application dated July 1, 2025 and site plan dated June 10, 2025, to be located on property described, as follows:

A parcel of land lying in the Northwest 1/4 of Section 22, Township 6 South, Range 22 East, Bradford County, Florida: said parcel being more particularly described as follows:

Commence at a 2” iron pipe found at the Northwest corner of said Section 22 and run North 88 degrees 24 minutes 36 seconds East, along the Northerly Boundary thereof, 1409.98 feet; thence South 00 degrees 42 minutes 45 seconds West, along the Easterly line of the Northwest 1/4 of the Northwest 1/4 of said Section 22 for a distance of 34.39 feet to a 1/2” iron rod (LB 4012) set on the Southerly Boundary of the right of way of North 173rd street for the Point of Beginning. From Point of Beginning thus described run South 00 degrees 42 minutes 45 seconds West along said Easterly Boundary, 798.33 feet to a set 1/2” iron rod (LB 4012); Thence North 76 degrees 01 minutes 33 seconds West, 404.49 feet to a set 1/2” iron (LB 4012); thence North 00 degrees 42 minutes 45 seconds West, 654.84 feet to a 1/2” (LB 4012) set on the Southerly Boundary of the right of way of Old Lawtey Road (60’ R/W) said Southerly Boundary being a curve concave to the South and having a radius of 645.00 feet; thence Northeasterly along said Southerly Boundary and along the arc of said curve, 227.85 feet as measured along a chord having a bearing of North 79 degrees 04 minutes 51 seconds East, to the end of said curve; thence North 89 degrees 11 minutes 18 seconds East, along Southerly Boundary, 186.88 feet to the Point of Beginning.

Containing 6.825 acres, more or less.

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

Copies of the petition are available for public inspection at the City of Starke Zoning Department, located at 209 North Thompson Street, Starke, Florida, during regular business hours.

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

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

A PORTION OF THE CITY OF STARKE
A portion of Section 22, Township 6 South, Range 22 East
Bradford County, Florida



Lake Region

Kiwanis gets approval for Colors on the Boulevard

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

The Keystone Heights City Council approved a proposal by Lake Region Kiwanis to display American flags on South Lawrence Boulevard eight days a year.

Kiwanian Keith Hatch told council members during their August 4 meeting that his club proposed lining the boulevard from Walker Drive (State Road 100) to the south point of Keystone Beach Park.

"These flags," he told council members, "each will be about eight feet tall. They'll be three by five flags, embroidery flags, not printed flags, so they will be presentable."

"These flags will be posted about a foot and a half behind the sidewalk," he continued. "They will not be permanently in the ground. They have three stakes."

The club member added that the flags posted at his office building, which houses Hatch Realty and Hatch Accounting and Tax Service, are the same

type as those with which the club plans to line the boulevard. He said the flags will be displayed for around a week, surrounding the following holidays: Presidents' Day, Armed Forces Day, Labor Day, Patriots' Day, Independence Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, and Veterans Day.

Council member Dan Lewandowski said previous City Manager Lynn Rutkowski tried to get an organization to sponsor a similar project, but found no takers.

"So, this is not a new idea," he told his colleagues. "I'm really happy Kiwanis is willing to do this because the city staff doesn't have time to do this, and it will require maintenance of the flags. Where I saw this done previously, I think it was in Baldwin, just north of I-10, and it was beautiful."

Council members unanimously voted to donate \$2,500 toward the project.



Kiwanian Keith Hatch told council members during their August 4 meeting that his club proposed lining the boulevard from Walker Drive (State Road 100) to the south point of Keystone Beach Park.

Tillis saw change as long-time postmaster

Celebrating 100 years of Keystone Heights history

BY MARCIA MILLER
Special to the Monitor

The sleepy little town of Keystone Heights is not so sleepy anymore, and few people are more aware of that fact than the postal employees who handle all the mail for residents.

If you look at Keystone's past through the eyes of one of its former postmasters, you will realize just how much the area has changed over the years.

Gladys Tillis grew up on the family farm in Melrose and graduated from Melrose High School in 1932.

Growing up in the 1920s

Graduating from high school was not easy for Tillis, but not because she couldn't make the grades — her marks were usually excellent.

Other circumstances made the journey to graduation difficult. Living out in farm country, the family worked from sunup to sundown. Tillis had a generous share of chores since she was the only child. Those chores had to be done before or after school.

The family did not travel much away from the farm. A weekly trip to the grocery store to buy the few things they could not raise themselves was pretty much the extent of Tillis' childhood travels.

"To do any real shopping, you had to go somewhere like Gainesville or Palatka — and that didn't happen often," said Tillis.

Most of the crops raised by her family were for their own use, but

some were said to buy things that could not be produced locally.

So, in addition to schoolwork, Tillis had to milk cows, hoe vegetables, and attend to other chores.

When the Depression swept into the area during her final two school years, Tillis faced an additional obstacle. The school system couldn't pay the bus drivers who brought children from the farm country into town for school each day. Many farm children simply had to drop out since they had no way to get into town and since children often had to replace hired hands on the farm — hands that could no longer be paid.

Learning the value of a dollar

It was five miles or further from the Tillis farm to the school, but getting an education was important to Tillis, and her family knew that. Tillis' father had an old truck that he said she could drive each day to school — provided she could get enough other children to ride with her



Gladys Tillis receives her commendation as postmaster of Keystone Heights.

whose parents could fund the gas for the vehicle.

Tillis set out each morning in the truck and picked up children all along State Road 21. Their families chipped in a few cents each for the gasoline, and the children could get to school daily.

During her senior year, the school district asked for bids on bus service in an effort to supply the service for less money than in the past.

Tillis bid on the service and won.

She spent her last year of high school as the bus driver, picking up 28 children and taking them to school each day.

Tillis said that having the initiative to figure out a way to get things done for herself was something her family taught her from an early age.

Her parents had always given her a certain portion of the farm to run as her own. She had her own chickens to raise and tend, her own fruit trees, etc. The money from these projects was hers to spend, which taught her how to manage her own money and gave her a sense of achievement.

"They taught me how to use money wisely, and I think that was a real help to me later on," said Tillis. "The younger generation will never know the value of a dollar if it is just given to them all the time."

From Melrose to Keystone Heights in 1940

"Tillis took her initiative and moved from Melrose to Keystone in 1940. There were no paved roads in the town then, and only one telephone was available — at the Wiggins gas station.

"If you wanted to use the telephone, you had to go there and make the call," she said.

During Tillis' childhood, animals roamed freely through the town, including cows and pigs, which could cause problems for property owners. A fence around town and cattle gaps finally solved that problem.

When Tillis first moved to Keystone, she worked for Helen Lawrence, Mrs. E.A. Smith, and Mrs. C.E. Sprower as household help.

When Camp Blanding was booming before and during World War II, the mail for the

camp came through the post office in Keystone, said Tillis. The extra load meant the post office needed help, and Tillis was hired to work with the Postmaster, F.M. Walrath.

According to Tillis' records, rural delivery service was first established in 1939.

License plate reads '32656'

The growing town steadily outgrew the sideline-type post offices prevalent in the 1930s and before and had to have new quarters in 1941 when a new facility was built across the street.

Even that building was soon outgrown, and a post office was constructed in 1962.

Tillis continued to work with Walrath through 1962 when poor health forced his retirement, and she was made acting postmaster. She was appointed as postmaster in 1963 full-time.

The post office that is currently in use today was built in 1962 and had Tillis at the wheel until her retirement in 1974. She had to retire because her father became ill, and she had to look after him.

She said one of the things she is best remembered for is a car tag. When zip codes first began being used, Tillis went down to the vehicle tag office and bought a car tag with 32656 emblazoned on it.

"I wanted to help people be able to remember Keystone's new zip code, and I thought that might be a good way, she said.

When Tillis was ready to retire, the post office was just getting ready to be named a first-class post facility.

After retirement, Tillis remained active, doing yard work and housework — and she could almost always be found with a bowling ball in her hand, taking a bead on a set of pins.

"I bowl for exercise. I really enjoy it," she said. She was president of her league for years and was recently named "Women Bowler of the Year" by the league.

She also used to enjoy fishing but gave that up since the lake levels have dropped significantly.

Tillis died in 2009 at the age of 96.

Council passes first reading of Sunrise Estates PUD

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

The Keystone Heights City Council passed the first reading of a rezoning that would replace a planned urban development named Country Meadows, with a similar PUD named Sunrise Estates.

The city's planning and zoning board recommended the replacement of the 14-acre proposed development in the Paradise Lake area in June.

In 2022, developer Jed Duckro proposed a 55-lot housing development on the parcel bordering Paradise Point Drive and Sunrise Boulevard.

Duckro sold the 14-acre parcel to Clay County contractor Joe Wiggins the following year.

Wiggins also owns 48+ acres north of Commercial Circle and Fox Run. He previously told the council he wanted to develop the acreage behind American Legion Post 202 on State Road 21 into a mixed-use property.

The change in zoning from one PUD to another centers around Wiggins' plan to convert eight of the development's single-family lots into 16 multi-family lots, on which he hopes to build townhouses.

Wiggins told council members during their August 4 meeting that if the townhouses sell well, he will incorporate multi-unit housing into his plan to develop the 48 acres or more off Fox Run.

Council member Dave Welch expressed concern about the increased traffic on Sunrise Boulevard between Nightingale Street and State Road 100, citing the proposed addition of 180 to 200 residents in Sunrise Estates.

City planner Janis Fleet responded that motorists entering and exiting the neighborhood could also take Nightingale Street east to Orchid Avenue as an alternate



In 2022, developer Jed Duckro proposed a 55-lot housing development on the parcel bordering Paradise Point Drive and Sunrise Boulevard.

route, likely reducing the load on the State Road 100 intersection, which faces a McDonald's and an Advance Auto Parts store.

Both Mayor Nina Rodenroth and Council Member Dan Lewandowski supported Wiggins' concept of increasing housing diversity with more multi-family options.

"For more than a decade, we have expected housing to be built on that piece of property," Lewandowski told Wiggins, "and so personally I think it's great that you're doing it and creating the townhomes gives us a little more variety in price points, and so therefore it does open it up to socioeconomic diversity."

"I'm a hundred percent for it," added the mayor. "We need it. We need versatility for our citizens. We have a lot of young 20-year-olds who can't afford a house, and we'd like to keep them here. We don't want them to leave us."



Joe Wiggins told council members during their August 4 meeting that if the townhouses sell well, he will incorporate multi-unit housing into his plan to develop the 48 acres or more off Fox Run.

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UNION COUNTY

Three retirees honored

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

The Union County School District honored three retirees during its meeting on July 8.

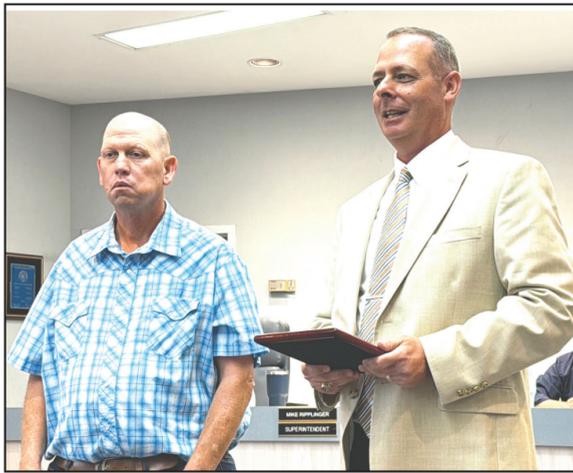
Paul Griffis

Superintendent Mike Ripplinger announced that Paul Griffis was retiring after 34 years of service.

"You have been a fixture," Ripplinger told the retiree, "not only around our district, but at the football games."

Griffis said he would continue to work football games as a member of the chain crew.

"When you think of dedication, when you think of hard work, when you think of Union County, you think of this guy right here, and he has been dedicated," the superintendent continued.



Superintendent Mike Ripplinger (right) announced that Paul Griffis was retiring after 34 years of service.

Tammy Highland

Lake Butler Middle School Principal Marcie Tucker joined Ripplinger to say goodbye to the next retiree, Tammy Highland.

The superintendent said Highland was retiring after seven years and is known for her trademark smile.

Tucker said Highland was dependable and could be relied upon to get jobs done.

"But one of the things that I miss most of all every day, when I got to school is, she was worshipping Jesus with some praise and music," said the principal, "and she set that tone for the day. 'No matter what came along, Jesus was going to be there with you to get through it.'"

Tucker added that Highland's encouragement is motivating her to encourage others.

"It's like I need to be that person for others," Tucker said. "I'm telling you, she's a leader and she's one you'd follow because she's guided by Jesus, and she walks the walk and talks the talk."



(L-r) Superintendent Mike Ripplinger, retiree Tammy Highland and Lake Butler Middle School Principal Marcie Tucker.

Bonnie Honour

Union County High School Principal Julie Denson joined Ripplinger to recognize Bonnie Honour.

The superintendent said Honour was retiring after nine years and was noted at the high school for her smile and love for students.

Denson said Honour was a colleague before Denson became her supervisor.

"This is a person you want in your corner," she added. "She



(L-r) Union County High School principal Julie Denson, retiree Bonnie Honour, and Superintendent Mike Ripplinger.

loves kids. She loves kids so much that we got her out of ISS and put her in ESE, where she could just love and love and love on kids." Denson said Honour was a fierce advocate for her students.

Register for Union County Master Gardener class

BY JIM DEVALERIO
UF/IFAS Union County

Do you want answers to your landscape or gardening questions? Would you enjoy teaching others how to grow plants and solve plant problems? If you answered yes to these questions, consider becoming a Master Gardener.

Master Gardener is a title given to selected individuals who take this horticultural training and in return agree to give 75 hours of volunteer service helping their local county extension agent. Volunteering is rewarding! Learning new things, being active and helping others is good for everyone.

Much of the course is formatted in a convenient, on-line format that can be attended at home. Live lectures and hands-on activities will be held on Wednesdays from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Union County Extension office from Sept. 1 to Oct. 29. The cost to enroll in the course is \$120.

Training will include topics such as basic plant science, entomology (insects), plant pathology (diseases), nematology, vegetable gardening, fruit culture, annuals/perennials, woody ornamentals, turf management, plant propagation, animal pest control, Florida Friendly Landscaping and irrigation design.

Master Gardeners give their volunteer hours to county extension offices in many ways. Union County Master Gardeners may conduct plant clinics, teach school-aged youth about plants, plant and maintain demonstration gardens, teach groups about landscape and gardening, or work with school garden projects.

Applications can be emailed or can be picked up at the Union County Extension Office Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in Lake Butler. Applications need to be submitted by Aug. 17. Candidates will be interviewed and selected on or before Wednesday, Aug. 20.

Father and daughter walk 1,100 miles together



Jamie and Cali Booth at the southern terminus of the Florida Trail.

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

The City of Keystone Heights's interim city manager recently completed walking the Florida National Scenic Trail with his now 13-year-old daughter.

Jamie Booth said he first started thinking about hiking the trail three years ago as he approached his retirement from the Army, adding that part of the trail passes near his Crystal Lake-area home.

"So, I knew it was there," he recalled, "and as I was getting close to retirement, I thought it'd be neat to hike the Florida Trail when I retire, I don't have anything else to do, which I think is funny now."

His daughter Cali's ninth birthday was approaching during that same time, and Booth wanted to invest some time with his daughter.

"We went up to Goldhead," the retired colonel recalled, "and we figured we'd hike the trail out in Goldhead. I think that day we hiked six or seven

miles. We pretty much hiked through Goldhead and back. We had a terrific time, and as we were driving away, Cali said, 'That was fun. I'd like to do that again.'"

"And I said, 'Well, if you really like hiking, I'm thinking about hiking the Florida Trail, and maybe we can do it together.' That was kind of the beginning of the discussions over the next couple of years about actually doing it."

Starting out small

Booth retired as the District Commander of the Jacksonville District of the Army Corps of Engineers in July 2024. But instead of settling into a traditional retirement, he interned at the City of Keystone Heights and then contracted with the city for additional work.

The traditional season for hiking the Florida Trail is from January through March, and as December approached, Booth

See HIKE, page 7

Call 386-496-2321, email jtd@uf.edu or visit the Union County Extension office at 15120 SW 84th St. in Lake Butler to pick up

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Croft places 6th in barrel world championships

SUBMITTED BY THE
UNION COUNTY RIDING
CLUB

The Georgia National Fairgrounds in Perry buzzed with excitement from July 19-26, 2025, as young barrel racers from across the globe competed in the National Barrel Horse Association Youth & Teen World Championships.

Among the standout performers was 13-year-old Naomi Croft, a member of the Union County Riding Club, who secured sixth place in the 5D division of the Youth category.

Union County Riding Club President Janice Parrish said Croft's sixth-place finish highlighted her dedication, horsemanship, and growing skill in the sport.

"Naomi's achievement at the NBHA Youth World Championships is a testament to her hard work and the support of our riding club," said Parrish. "We're incredibly proud of her!"

The championships drew over 1,200 competitors aged 6 to 18, showcasing the sport's future stars.

The event was held at the Georgia National Fairgrounds, featured two arenas and awarded over \$585,000 in cash and prizes,

including Circle Y Saddles and Gist buckles for division champions and finalists.

Competitors navigated a challenging cloverleaf pattern around three barrels, aiming for the fastest times across five divisions.

As a member of the Union County Riding Club, Naomi has practiced her skills through countless hours of training and local competitions, building a strong bond with her horse that was evident in her performance on the national stage.

The NBHA, founded in 1992 in Augusta, Georgia, is renowned for its divisional scoring system, which levels the playing field by categorizing riders into divisions based on their times, ensuring fair competition across skill levels. Naomi's 6th-place finish



Naomi Croft

in the 5D division underscores her ability to hold her own in a field of talented international competitors, including riders from the U.S., Canada, Australia, and beyond.

The Union County community has rallied behind Naomi, celebrating her success as a source of local pride. Her journey to Perry was marked by months of preparation, from perfecting her barrel racing technique to ensuring her horse was in peak condition for the demanding 15- to 17-second runs that define the sport. As she looks ahead, Naomi's performance at the 2025 NBHA Youth World Championships sets a strong foundation for future competitions.

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Crime

Recent arrests in Bradford, Union and Clay

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

Bradford

Bruce Allen, 51, of Ocala, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 29 for a probation violation.

Shelley Byrne, 62, of DeLand, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 30 for a probation violation.

Ted Curtis, 45, of Brooker, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 27 for DUI.

Robert Godwin, 60, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 27 for a probation violation.

Morgan Griffis, 31, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 26 for aggravated assault.

Gregory Allen, 34, of Lawtey, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 29 for trespassing.

Robert Jackson, 42, of Lawtey, was arrested by Bradford deputies on August 1 for battery.

Charity Johnson, 24, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 29 for a probation violation.

Courtney Kelly, 26, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 30 for driving with a suspended or revoked license.

Brittney McCrimager, 32, of Apex, North Carolina, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 27 for driving with a suspended or revoked license and resisting an officer.

Kevin Parker, 46, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 26 for withholding support and out-of-county warrants.

James Pennington, 33, of Keystone Heights, was arrested on August 1 for failure to appear.

Got bloody nose after battery

Adam Rosier, 53, of Lawtey, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 26 for battery.

According to an arrest report, the victim told a deputy that Rosier hit her in the arm and pulled a chair from underneath her during an argument.

The deputy reported that after the battery, "Adam then approached (redacted) in an aggressive manner, at which time (redacted) punched him in the face."

The deputy wrote in the report that Rosier continued aggressive movements toward the victim, prompting a visitor to punch him in the nose.

"Adam received a bloody nose as a result of the incident," wrote the deputy in the report. "It should be noted that Adam was extremely intoxicated."

Nathaniel Soto, 31, of Interlachen, was arrested by Bradford deputies on August 1 for possession of cocaine, resisting an officer, destroying evidence and possession of drug equipment.

Taylor Wheeler, 34, of Lawtey, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 29 for failure to appear and fraud-impersonation.

Punched victim over missing cell phone

Christopher Willingham, 52, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on July 28 for battery.

According to an arrest report, the victim told a deputy that Willingham punched him in the face after accusing the victim of stealing his cell phone.

A witness in the home told the deputy that the victim was cleaning the kitchen when the defendant began screaming at the victim, accusing him of stealing his phone.

Union

Dana Bacon, 38, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on August 1 for contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

Travis Benton, 42, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on August 1 for contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

Arrested for indecent exposure

Ronald Bishop, 74, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on August 3 for indecent exposure.

According to an arrest report, the victim told a deputy she was pulling into her driveway at a Lake Butler RV Park when she saw the defendant "messaging with his penis."

"She got out of her vehicle and yelled at Ronald, asking him, 'Hey, what are you doing?'" according to the deputy who wrote the report. "According to (the victim), in response to this, Ronald turned towards her, acknowledged her, and then began to mess with his penis again before pulling his pants up and going inside."

The victim added that her daughter was in the vehicle with her and witnessed the incident.

The defendant told the officer he had a medical condition, could not control his bladder, and was urinating outside of his residence.

"The defendant claimed that he did not 'mean' for anyone to see him," wrote the deputy. "It should be noted that Ronald has previously been arrested in Alachua County for having inappropriate communication with a minor."

Morgan Griffis, 31, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on July 30 for a probation violation.

Cory Harp, 37, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on July 31 for failure to appear.

Sean Morgan, 37, of Raiford, was arrested by Union deputies on July 28 for a probation violation.

Allan Padgett, 57, of Hampton, was arrested by Union deputies on July 28 for possession of drugs, possession of drug equipment, failure to register a motor vehicle, resisting an officer, driving with a suspended or revoked license, and attaching a registration plate not assigned.

Brandy Snyder, 39, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on July 28 for failure to appear.

Carolann White, 47, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on July 28 for possession of drugs, possession of drug equipment and resisting an officer.

Claude Whitehead, 63, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on August 2 for possession of cocaine and possession of drug equipment.

Clay

Prints found on food packaging

Justin Harris, 34, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on July 31 for unarmed burglary of a dwelling.

According to a January 18, 2020, affidavit for an arrest warrant, the victim told deputies that his Polaris ATV, valued at \$15,000, had been stolen from an attached garage.

"The side door of the garage had been pried open, and the keys

for the Polaris were taken from (the victim's) bedroom," wrote an investigator. "A plastic gun box was also reported missing, and several food items had been taken from his kitchen pantry, which were found in his garage on the floor where the side-by-side had been."

Two days later, deputies responded to a call on Silver Sands Circle about an overturned ATV with the driver of the vehicle fleeing on foot.

"The side-by-side was confirmed by the victim as being his, and it appeared that someone had recently painted it white, as the paint was still wet," wrote the responding deputy.

The complainant, Justin Buchler, told deputies that he could not identify the rider, who he said was painting the side-by-side white with a shirt wrapped over his face.

However, on February 26, 2020, both Buchler and Harris were arrested in Putnam County for burglary.

"Buchler was interviewed at the Putnam County Jail, to which he admitted that the masked person he saw in his yard painting the side by side was Harris," wrote a deputy. "He stated that Harris was high on drugs and driving the side-by-side erratically, and that was why he crashed it on the road. Buchler stated that he did not want to get Harris in trouble over the burglary, and that was why he initially denied knowing the masked person. Buchler denied any involvement with the burglary or theft."

A Clay detective also reported that an FDLE crime lab matched prints found on a cheddar pretzel bag and a Cosmic Brownies box that were taken from the victim's kitchen as belonging to the defendant.

Mom said son punched her

Julius Padron, 19, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on July 31 for domestic battery.

According to an arrest report, the defendant's mother told a deputy the 19-year-old punched her during an argument over the son's use of her car.

A neighbor told the officer that after he heard the woman scream, he went outside and saw Padron push the mother in the chest.

The defendant told the deputy that his mother pushed him first, and he pushed her back in retaliation.

James Pennington, 33, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on July 29 for failure to appear.

Awoke with defendant straddling her

Dustin Wright, 37, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on July 30 for assault and battery during a burglary and trespassing an occupied structure.

The victim told deputies that she had been in a sexual relationship with the defendant for 10 months, but had separated at the end of July and that the couple never resided together.

"(The victim) advised the following:" wrote a deputy. "She was sleeping in the shed, with the door unlocked, and woke to the defendant straddling her. He then opened a beer, took a sip, then poured some into her mouth."

The victim added that Wright then grabbed her by her hair and drug her to the couch, approximately two feet from the bed. He began yelling at her about his battery chargers being missing.

"He grabbed her by the throat, screaming and asking where the batteries were," the reporting officer wrote "A car horn beeped from the front of the residence, and he released her, and she ran from the shed towards the front of the property."

The victim said Wright then dragged her outside and toward the road when a motorist pulled over to intervene. Wright then ran into the woods. Deputies later found him at another home in the neighborhood.

HIKE

Continued from page 6

told his daughter that if they wanted to do it, they should start preparing.

Booth originally intended to through-hike the 1,100-mile trail from Big Cypress National Preserve in the Everglades to Gulf Islands National Seashore in the Panhandle.

However, with his growing responsibilities with the city, the pair pivoted to taking on the trail in smaller units.

"And so, since it comes through Keystone Heights, we went out back to Goldhead and we started from Goldhead and hiked into basically the Goldhead and Blanding portions of it," Booth recalled. "And then we hiked from Blanding on towards Lake Butler the next time and we would just take small chunks and we'd just increase our mileage."

The father-daughter tandem increased their endurance from five to 12 miles a day. Booth's wife, Melissa, would drive them to drop-off and pickup spots. Then they graduated to overnight and multi-day trips, working up to 80 miles over four-day stretches.

Cali said those first few hikes awakened an enjoyment of the outdoors for her, with Goldhead's streams and ponds.

The most dangerous animal

Asked if they ever feared for their safety, Booth said his military training included going through Florida swamps. He added that the wildlife threat is more perceived than real.

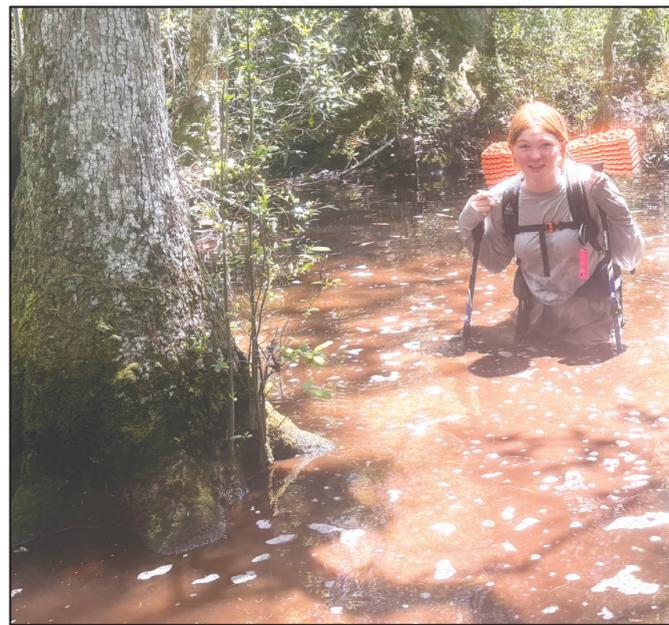
"We only saw two poisonous snakes during the five months we were out there," he said.

Ironically, the retired Army colonel said the most potential danger they encountered wasn't from black bears or alligators, but from homo sapiens.

"The only time I felt a little uncomfortable was on our very last day of hiking up in Pensacola," he remembered. "We were hiking along the beach, along the equivalent of A1A up there, and somebody pulled in. We were hiking very early in the morning to escape the heat, and someone pulled up in a car

right behind us. We were out in the middle of nowhere, and they drove up behind us, pulled off to the side of the road, kept their lights on for a little while, and

to music while walking, but said their fondest memories will be talking about life.



"We only saw two poisonous snakes during the five months we were out there," Jamie Booth said.

then turned them off. That was just odd. Sometimes the hair on the back of your neck goes up, but we just kept on hiking and kept our eyes to the back."

The pair walked their 12-mile day hikes through March, covering the central portion of the trail between the Suwannee River and South of Orlando.

Hiker Insertion and Extraction Support Team

Melissa then drove them to the southern terminus in Big Cypress, and they worked their way north with week-long overnight treks.

"Usually, Melissa would drop us off on a Tuesday or Wednesday morning, and we would typically hike until Saturday," Booth said. "And then if we came across and the timing worked out, we'd stay at a hotel just to grab a shower one night."

Booth said he learned that the promise of a shower was a motivation that could squeeze an additional 10 to 15 miles from his daughter when times got tough.

Melissa, along with the couple's son Alex, drove hundreds of miles during the project and earned a moniker from her husband and daughter.

"The HEIST," said Booth. "The Hiker Insertion and Extraction Support Team."

The pair sometimes listened

She sees what a good man is

Cali said she relished in what she coined "Dad-Lore" stories about her father's childhood adventures.

She added that the hike made up for the long periods her father was away on deployments.

"He was always gone when he was working and stuff, so I didn't get to talk to him that much," she said. "So, I just really got to talk to him more and know his interests as a person, that kind of stuff."

Booth described the adventure as a life-changing experience.

"I think every dad needs an opportunity to figure out how to connect with their children," he said. "I just found that with Cali and hiking, and what I guess many would consider a pretty extreme version of a sport. Not too many people are willing to hike a thousand miles. I'm just a nearly 50-year-old guy who's been in the Army, not a big deal. But to have a 12-year-old doing it. Just amazingly proud of her tenacity to get through that."

"I've learned more about her personality and how to interact with her," he added. "And so I think our relationship is extremely close now, more so than it would've been had we not done this hike."

Booth said that, after speaking with Florida Trail Association representatives, he believes his daughter is the youngest person to have ever traversed the 1,100-mile trail.

Melissa said she can sense the closeness between her husband and daughter.

"I can see there's a strong bond between the two of them that will last forever," she said. "And I think coming as a female, I think it's every little girl's dream to be close to her dad and that he be the hero in her life. I love that they have that relationship."

Melissa added that the experience showed Cali what to look for in a good man.

"A protector," she said. "A provider, to take care of his daughter while he's out there."

She recalled one discussion she had with her husband the night before the pair were to embark on their Everglades segment.

"One of the things he said to me right before he left for the Everglades is, 'Don't worry. I'll take care of her while we're out there,'" Melissa recalled. "And that to me was important — that she sees what a good man is."



Father and daughter with their certificates of completion for hiking the Florida National Scenic Trail.

Russ WADE

Attorney at Law

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

386-496-9656

Probate • Family • Wills • Adoption • Litigation • Corporate

Legal Notices

Legals for the week of Aug. 7, 2025

BRADFORD

City of Starke Commission Meeting Dates for August and September

Commission Meeting August 12, 2025 at 5:30 pm
 Commission Meeting August 26, 2025 at 5:30 pm
 Tentative Budget Hearing September 9, 2025 at 5:01 pm
 Commission Meeting September 9, 2025 at 5:30 pm
 Final Budget Hearing September 23, 2025 at 5:01 pm
 Commission Meeting September 23, 2025 at 5:30 pm

7/31 2tchg 8/7-BCT

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT, EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA
 File No.04-2025-CP-0068-CPAXMX
 PROBATE DIVISION

IN RE: ESTATE OF GLORIA AGEE GRIFFIS,
 Deceased.

PETITION FOR SUMMARY ADMINISTRATION
 (Testate)

Petitioner **LONNIE JOSEPH GRIFFIS**, son of decedent allege:
 1. Petitioner has an interest in the Estate of **GLORIA AGEE GRIFFIS**. Petitioner's address is 720 Glendale Street, Starke, Florida 32091.

A. Decedent died testate on June 18, 2014, her last known address was 720 Glendale Street, Starke, Florida, was 88 years of age, whose Social Security number was XXX-XX-4849, and is survived by her two Sui Juris children, **Lonnie Joseph Griffis** and **KATHLYN ANN GRIFFIS**.

3. Venue for this proceeding is in Bradford County because the decedent was a resident of Bradford County.

4. Proceedings concerning this decedent's estate are not pending in another state or country.

5. Decedent died testate. A copy of the original Last Will and Testament is being filed at the same time of this Petition. The original will be delivered to the Clerk of the Court, Bradford County, Florida.

6. The estate qualifies for summary administration because the value of the estate, less the value of the property exempt from claims of creditors, is less than \$75,000.00.

7. At the time of decedent's death, the decedent owned property which constituted the homestead of the decedent within the meaning of Section 222.01(1) of the Statutes of the State of Florida, on the following described parcel of real property:
 NAME 720 Glendale Street Starke, Florida 32091
 VALUE \$125,481.00
 Homestead — EXEMPT
 Lot 8 Block F, Dalewood Subdivision, as per plat thereof recorded in Plat Book 3, Page 8, Section 21, Township

6 South, Range 22 East, Bradford County, Florida

8. Property is inside of a municipality and is approximately one-fourth (1/4) acre more or less.

9. The Petitioner has made a diligent search and reasonable inquiry for any known or reasonably ascertainable creditors and the estate is not indebted.

10. After a diligent search for additional assets, none were found and none are expected.

11. The name of the decedent's surviving descendants having an interest in the decedent's estate, and their respective relationships to decedent and dates of birth, if minors are as follows:
 NAME ADDRESS RELATIONSHIP AGE
 William Elisha Griffis - (Deceased) Spouse
 Lonnie Joseph Griffis - 720 Glendale Street - Starke, Florida 32091 - Son - Sui Juris
 Kathlynn Ann Griffis - Unknown - Daughter - Sui Juris

12. Per the Last Will and Testament of the decedent, petitioners propose to distribute the estate as follows: All property, whether real or personal, to be distributed and placed into the name of my son, **LONNIE JOSEPH GRIFFIS**.

13. Petitioners acknowledge that the recipients of the decedent's property under this Order of Summary Administration shall be personally liable for a pro rata share of all lawful claims against the estate of the decedent, but only to the extent of the value of the estate of the decedent actually received by each recipient, exclusive of the property exempt from claims of creditors under the Constitution and Statutes of Florida. Any known or reasonably ascertainable creditor who did not receive notice and for whom provisions for payment was not made may enforce the claim, and if the creditor prevails, shall be awarded reasonable attorney's fees as an element of cost against those who joined in the petition.

14. Under penalties of perjury, the petitioners declare, by and through undersigned counsel, that they have read the copies of the foregoing, and the facts alleged are true, to the best of their knowledge and beliefs.
 Dated this 20th of June, 2025.
 /s/LONNIE JOSEPH GRIFFIS
 LONNIE JOSEPH GRIFFIS
 Petitioner
 /s/ Curtis A. Sanders
 Curtis A. Sanders, Esquire
 The Law Office of Curtis A. "Lex" Sanders, P.A.
 407 W. Georgia Street
 Starke, FL. 32091
 Florida Bar #0625647
 Phone: 904-964-4111
 Fax: 904-964-5111
 Attorney for Petitioner

7/31 2tchg 8/7-BCT

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA
 CASE NO.: 2024 CA 000274
 PHH MORTGAGE CORPORATION,
 Plaintiff,
 VS.
 RACHEL PARSONS; UNKNOWN HEIRS, BENEFICIARIES, DEVISEES, SURVIVING SPOUSE, GRANTEE ASSIGNEE, LIENORS, CREDITORS, TRUSTEES, AND ALL OTHER PARTIES CLAIMING AN INTEREST BY, THROUGH, UNDER, OR AGAINST THE ESTATE OF

7/31 2tchg 8/7-BCT

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA
 FILE NO.: 2025-CP-000082
 DIVISION: PROBATE
 IN RE: ESTATE OF
 BETTY ALBERTA KRAJNOVICH,
 Deceased.
 NOTICE TO CREDITORS
 The administration of the estate of **BETTY ALBERTA KRAJNOVICH**, deceased, whose date of death was May 2, 2025, is pending in the Circuit Court for Bradford County Florida, Probate Division, the address of which is 11649 Parker Street, Brookler, Florida 32622. 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 the decedent's estate on whom a copy of this notice is required to be served must file their claims with this court WITHIN THE LATER OF 3 MONTHS AFTER THE TIME OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE OR 30 DAYS AFTER THE DATE OF SERVICE OF A COPY OF THIS NOTICE ON THEM.
 All other creditors of the decedent and other persons having claims or demands against decedent's estate must file their claims with this court WITHIN 3 MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE.
 ALL CLAIMS NOT FILED WITHIN THE TIME PERIODS SET FORTH IN SECTION 733.702 OF THE FLORIDA PROBATE CODE WILL BE FOREVER BARRED.
 NOTWITHSTANDING THE TIME PERIODS SET FORTH ABOVE, ANY CLAIM FILED TWO (2) YEARS OR MORE AFTER THE DECEDENT'S DATE OF DEATH IS BARRED.
 The date of first publication of this notice is July 31, 2025.
 Attorney for Personal Representative:
 /s/ Cherie H. Fine
 CHERIE H. FINE, ESQUIRE
 Fla. Bar No. 0331317
 FINE, FARKASH & PARLAPIANO, PA
 622 NE First Street
 Gainesville, Florida 32601
 (352) 376-6046
 Personal Representative:
 /s/ BARRY KRAJNOVICH
 BARRY KRAJNOVICH
 11649 Parker Street
 Brookler, Florida 32622

7/31 2tchg 8/7-BCT

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA
 CASE NO.: 2024 CA 000274
 PHH MORTGAGE CORPORATION,
 Plaintiff,
 VS.
 RACHEL PARSONS; UNKNOWN HEIRS, BENEFICIARIES, DEVISEES, SURVIVING SPOUSE, GRANTEE ASSIGNEE, LIENORS, CREDITORS, TRUSTEES, AND ALL OTHER PARTIES CLAIMING AN INTEREST BY, THROUGH, UNDER, OR AGAINST THE ESTATE OF

7/31 2tchg 8/7-BCT

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN AND FOR UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA
 CIVIL DIVISION
 PHH MORTGAGE CORPORATION
 PLAINTIFF,
 VS.
 REBECCA M. NETTLES, AGNES R. HODGES A/K/A AGNUS RUTH HODGES A/K/A AGNUS RUTH SAPP F/K/A AGNES R. COMBS, ROBIN CAPRICE JOHNS ET AL.,
 DEFENDANTS.
 RE-NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE SALE
 (Please publish in Union County Times)
 NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Order Rescheduling Foreclosure Sale dated the 26th day of June, 2025, and entered in Case No. 24000047CAAXMX, of the Circuit Court of the Eighth Judicial Circuit in and for Union County, Florida, wherein PHH Mortgage Corporation is

West, along the east line of said SW ¼ of the NW ¼, a distance of 784.00 feet to a concrete monument and the Point of Beginning; Thence run S.88°16'46" East, 179.86 feet; Thence run S.33°51'30" East, 199.92 feet; thence run North 88°16'29" West, 695.52 feet to the easterly right of way line of a 60 foot county graded road; Thence run N.19°57'02" West, along said easterly right of way line, 174.96 feet; Thence run S.88°16'45" East, 463.95 feet to the Point of Beginning;

containing 2.5 acres, more or less.
 TAX PARCEL NUMBER 05819-0-01031, 05819-0-01032, 05819-0-01033, 05819-0-01034, AND 05819-0-01035

The public hearing may be continued to one or more future dates. Any interested party shall be advised that the date, time, and place of any continuation of the public hearing shall be announced during the public hearing and that no future notice concerning the matter will be published, unless said continuation exceeds six calendar weeks from the date of the above referenced public hearing.
 At the aforementioned public hearing, all interested parties may appear to be heard with respect to the amendment.
 Copies of the amendment are available for public inspection by request to the Bradford County Office of the Director of Zoning, Planning, and Building, County Courthouse, located at 945 North Temple Avenue, North Wing, Starke, Florida, during regular business hours.
 Persons with disabilities requesting reasonable accommodations to participate in the proceeding should contact (352)498-1206 (Voice & TDD) or via Florida Relay Service (800)955-8771.

All persons are advised that if they decide to appeal any decision made at the above referenced public hearing, they will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, they may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.
 8/7 1tchg-BCT

and file the original with the clerk of this court either before service on Plaintiff's attorney or immediately thereafter; otherwise a default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint or petition.
 Dated July 18, 2025
 As Clerk of the Court
 By: K. JENKINS
 As Deputy Clerk
 1395-1254B 8/7 2tchg- 8/14 BCT

SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

PUBLIC NOTICE OF APPLICATION
 Notice is hereby given that pursuant to Chapter 373, Florida Statutes, the following application for permit was received on July 25, 2025:

Bradford County, 945 N Temple Ave., Starke, FL 32091-2110 has submitted an environmental resource permit (ERP) application number ERP-007-252168-1. The project is located in Bradford County, Section 27, Township 6 South, Range 21 East, and includes 0.92 acres of impervious area on a total project area of 1.86 acres.

Interested persons may comment upon the application or submit a written request for a staff report containing proposed agency action regarding the application by writing to the Suwannee River Water Management District, Attn: Resource Management, 9225 C.R. 49, Live Oak, Florida 32060. Such comments or requests must be received by 5:00 PM within 14 days from the date of publication.
 No further public notice will be provided regarding this application. A copy of the staff report must be requested in order to remain advised of further proceedings. Substantially affected persons are entitled to request an administrative hearing, pursuant to Title 28, Florida Administrative Code, regarding the proposed agency action by submitting a written request after reviewing the staff report.
 PUBLISH: no later than August 7, 2025/atm
 8/7 1tchg-BCT

LEGAL NOTICE
 The City of Starke General Election will be held August 19, 2025 at Starke City Hall. Polls will be open from 7am to 7pm. Early voting will take place in the Bradford County Supervisor of Elections office beginning on August 11-Aug. 15, from 8am-7pm daily. A citywide contest for City Clerk will be on the ballot.
 Poll workers scheduled for this election:
 Brenda Donaldson
 Steve Futch
 Carol Milner
 Eugenia Whitehead
 Nelson Green
 A post-election manual audit is scheduled for August 26, 2025 at 11am at the Supervisor of Elections office.
 Amanda Seyfang
 Bradford Supervisor of Elections
 8/7 1tchg-BCT

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING CONCERNING AN AMENDMENT TO THE BRADFORD COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA, SERVING AS THE PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD OF BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA, AND THE LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY OF BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to Sections 163.3161 through 163.3248, Florida Statutes, as amended, and the Bradford County Land Development Regulations, as amended, comments, objections and recommendations concerning an amendment, as described below, will be heard by the Board of County Commissioners, serving as the Planning and Zoning Board of Bradford County, Florida, and the Local Planning Agency of Bradford County, Florida, at a public hearing on August 21st, 2025, at 6:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard, in the Board of County Commissioners Meeting Room, North Wing of the County Courthouse, located at 954 N. Temple Avenue, Starke, Florida.

Z 25-02, an application by Tommy Lee Alexander, owner, to amend the Official Zoning Atlas Series of the Land Development Regulations by amending the Official Zoning Atlas classification from RESIDENTIAL, SINGLE FAMILY -1 ("RSF-1") to RESIDENTIAL, SINGLE FAMILY/ MOBILE HOME-1 ("RSF/MH-1") for the property described, as follows:
 A tract of land situated in the South ½ of the NW ¼ of Section 24, Township 8 South, Range 22 East, Bradford County, Florida; said tract being more particularly described as follows:
 Commence at a concrete monument at the Northeast corner of the SW ¼ of said NW ¼ and run S.00°30'32"

West, along the east line of said SW ¼ of the NW ¼, a distance of 784.00 feet to a concrete monument and the Point of Beginning; Thence run S.88°16'46" East, 179.86 feet; Thence run S.33°51'30" East, 199.92 feet; thence run North 88°16'29" West, 695.52 feet to the easterly right of way line of a 60 foot county graded road; Thence run N.19°57'02" West, along said easterly right of way line, 174.96 feet; Thence run S.88°16'45" East, 463.95 feet to the Point of Beginning;

containing 2.5 acres, more or less.
 TAX PARCEL NUMBER 05819-0-01031, 05819-0-01032, 05819-0-01033, 05819-0-01034, AND 05819-0-01035

The public hearing may be continued to one or more future dates. Any interested party shall be advised that the date, time, and place of any continuation of the public hearing shall be announced during the public hearing and that no future notice concerning the matter will be published, unless said continuation exceeds six calendar weeks from the date of the above referenced public hearing.
 At the aforementioned public hearing, all interested parties may appear to be heard with respect to the amendment.
 Copies of the amendment are available for public inspection by request to the Bradford County Office of the Director of Zoning, Planning, and Building, County Courthouse, located at 945 North Temple Avenue, North Wing, Starke, Florida, during regular business hours.
 Persons with disabilities requesting reasonable accommodations to participate in the proceeding should contact (352)498-1206 (Voice & TDD) or via Florida Relay Service (800)955-8771.

All persons are advised that if they decide to appeal any decision made at the above referenced public hearing, they will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, they may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.
 8/7 1tchg-BCT

the Plaintiff and **AGNES R. HODGES A/K/A AGNUS RUTH HODGES A/K/A AGNUS RUTH SAPP F/K/A AGNES R. COMBS, REBECCA M. NETTLES, UNKNOWN SPOUSE OF ROBIN CAPRICE JOHNS, ROBIN CAPRICE JOHNS, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ON BEHALF OF THE SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT and UNKNOWN TENANT IN POSSESSION OF THE SUBJECT PROPERTY N/K/A LORETTA MERRITT** are defendants. Kelly Hendricks Rhoades as the Clerk of the Circuit Court shall sell to the highest and best bidder for cash in the lobby of the Union County Courthouse, 55 West Main Street, Lake Butler, FL 32054 at 11:00 A.M. on the **25th day of September, 2025**, the following described property as set forth in said Final Judgment, to wit:

Part of the South 1/2 of the Southwest 1/4 of the Northwest 1/4 of Section 15, Township 5 South, Range 20 East, Union County, Florida, containing one-acre, more or less, as defined by four concrete monuments. These monuments are located as follows: Running Southerly along the supposed East boundary of the above 20 acre tract to a monument said to be the Southeast corner thereof, run right through a deflection angle of 86°15'; Thence 163.33 feet to a point, at which turn right through a deflection angle of 48°05'; Thence Northwesterly along this course a distance of 512.00 feet, to a monument, this monument being the East corner monument of the one-acre tract herein described, thence run left through a deflection angle of 89°59'; Thence along this line, being a boundary of the one-acre tract herein described for a distance of 209.00 feet to a monument, being the Southern corner of the one-acre tract herein described, thence turning right through a deflection angle of 90°03'; Thence along this course being a boundary of the one-acre tract herein described, a distance of 210.00 feet to a monument, being the West corner of the aforesaid one-acre tract, thence turning right through a deflection angle of 89°50'; Thence along this course, being a boundary of the one-acre tract herein described, a distance of 210 feet to a monument, being the North corner of the aforesaid one-acre tract, and thence turning right through a deflection angle of 90°07'; Thence along this course, being a boundary of the aforesaid one-acre tract, a distance of 210.00 feet to a monument, being the East corner previously mentioned; It being specifically understood the aforesaid monuments are and remain the boundaries of the parcel herein described. AND Commence at the Northwest corner of the South 1/2 of Southwest 1/4 of the Northwest 1/4, Section 15, Township 5 South, Range 20 East, Union County, Florida, and run North 84° 30' 27" East along the North line of said South 1/2 of the Southwest 1/4 of the Northwest 1/4, 146.89 feet, thence South 44° 32' 28" East, 420.69 feet to the point of beginning, thence South 42° 52' 17" West 122.00 feet, thence South 47° 08' 43" East, 210.00 feet, thence North 42° 52' 17" East, 210.00 feet, thence North 47° 08' 43" West 210.00 feet, thence South 42° 52' 17" West, 88.00 feet to the Point of Beginning.

IF YOU ARE A PERSON CLAIMING A RIGHT TO FUNDS REMAINING AFTER THE SALE, YOU MUST FILE A CLAIM WITH THE CLERK NO LATER THAN THE DATE THAT THE CLERK REPORTS THE FUNDS AS UNCLAIMED. IF YOU FAIL TO FILE A CLAIM, YOU WILL NOT BE ENTITLED TO ANY REMAINING FUNDS. AFTER THE FUNDS ARE REPORTED AS UNCLAIMED, ONLY THE OWNER OF RECORD AS OF THE DATE OF THE LIS PENDENS MAY CLAIM THE SURPLUS.
 If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Persons with a disability who need any accommodation in order to participate should call Jan Phillips, ADA Coordinator, Alachua County Courthouse, 201 E. University Ave., Gainesville, FL 32601 at (352) 337-6237 within two (2) working days of your receipt of this notice; if you are hearing impaired call (800) 955-8771; if you are voice impaired, call (800) 955-8770.
 Dated this 2nd day of July, 2025.
 Kellie Hendricks Rhoades
 Clerk of the Circuit Court
 By: C. Hollingsworth
 Deputy Clerk
 Submitted by:
 Miller, George & Suggs, PLLC
 ATTORNEY FOR PLAINTIFF
 210 N. University Drive, Suite 900
 Coral Springs, FL 33071
 DESIGNATED PRIMARY E-MAIL FOR SERVICE
 PURSUANT TO FLA. R. JUD. ADMIN 2.516
ESERVICE@MGS-LEGAL.COM
 24FL922-0055 7/31 2tchg 8/7-UCT

INVITATION TO BID
 Notice is hereby given that the Union County Board of County Commissioners invites qualified firms to submit a bid to install generators at the Union County High School for sheltering operations.
 Bids Due: Sealed bids will be received until **September 16, 2025, at 1:00 PM EST**, at the Union County EOC, 58 NW 1st Street, Lake Butler, Florida 32054.
 Bid Package:
 Generator(s) for Union County High School
 Mandatory Pre-Bid Meeting:
 September 4, 2025, 2:00 PM EST, at 55 SW 6th St, Lake Butler, FL 32054
 Bid Documents:
 Bid Documents are available by emailing allentc@unionsheriff.us, or by downloading the package from unionscounty-fl.gov. All submitted bids must include copies of Insurance, all relevant licenses, and other required forms included in the bid specifications.
 Union County Board of County Commissioners reserves the right to reject any and all bids received and to waive any and all minor irregularities or informalities in any bid.
 Union County Board of County Commissioners encourages Minority Business Enterprises to respond to this Bid Invitation.
 8/7 & 8/21 2tchg-UCT

UNION

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN AND FOR UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA
 CIVIL DIVISION
 CASE NO.: 24000047CAAXMX
 PHH MORTGAGE CORPORATION
 PLAINTIFF,
 VS.
 REBECCA M. NETTLES, AGNES R. HODGES A/K/A AGNUS RUTH HODGES A/K/A AGNUS RUTH SAPP F/K/A AGNES R. COMBS, ROBIN CAPRICE JOHNS ET AL.,
 DEFENDANTS.
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The public hearing may be continued to one or more future dates. Any interested party shall be advised that the date, time, and place of any continuation of the public hearing shall be announced during the public hearing and that no future notice concerning the matter will be published, unless said continuation exceeds six calendar weeks from the date of the above referenced public hearing.
 At the aforementioned public hearing, all interested parties may appear to be heard with respect to the amendment.
 Copies of the amendment are available for public inspection by request to the Bradford County Office of the Director of Zoning, Planning, and Building, County Courthouse, located at 945 North Temple Avenue, North Wing, Starke, Florida, during regular business hours.
 Persons with disabilities requesting reasonable accommodations to participate in the proceeding should contact (352)498-1206 (Voice & TDD) or via Florida Relay Service (800)955-8771.

All persons are advised that if they decide to appeal any decision made at the above referenced public hearing, they will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, they may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.
 8/7 1tchg-BCT

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From darkness to redemption: Kern's transformation



Zoey Marshall earned a fifth-place medal at the AAU Junior Olympics.

Marshall runs to 5th place at AAU Junior Olympics

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Lake Butler's Zoey Marshall earned a medal and All-American status with her performance in the 400m dash at the AAU Junior Olympics, which were held July 26-Aug. 2 in Houston.

Marshall, who competes as a member of Supreme Performance Athletics, placed fifth in the 12-year-old girls division with a time of 58.12 seconds, putting her ahead of fellow Floridian Rubi Colimon, who had a sixth-

See AAU, page 13

BY AMBER J. CRAFT
Special to the Telegraph

At first glance, Frank Leamon Kern is hard to miss. Tattoos blanket his face like a permanent record of a life that's known more valleys than peaks. But look closer — beyond the ink, beyond the past — and you'll find a man reborn, standing on the other side of trauma, addiction and isolation with a heart full of hope and a spirit burning with purpose.

Kern, 35, has lived in Starke his entire life. Raised without a father and with a mother who did everything she could to hold things together, Kern's early years were marked by an aching void and an overwhelming desire to be accepted. That desire would shape the course of his life in painful ways.

"So, I got with the wrong crowd," Kern said. "And growing up here, it was so hard. It was hard to be accepted. Nobody ever wanted to take the time to be my friend. And a lot of people pushed me away, and I felt very alone."

From that loneliness, Kern spiraled into drug use. "I was seeking — not validation," he said. "I was seeking just support and acceptance and to be confident to be able to grow up and have a future."

The streets of Starke offered little comfort. Kern's sexuality set him apart in a town that wasn't ready to embrace difference.

"Nobody here would ever hire me," he explained. "Nobody would ever give me a chance because I was the gay guy...It wasn't accepting like it is now."

To survive, Kern resorted to stealing — food for himself and his mother, clothes for his body. Eventually, it caught up to him. Prison became the next chapter in his story.

"Prison is a good thing if you allow it to be," he said. "And that was one thing that I allowed — it to change me — because it's someplace that nobody really deserves to be, especially someone of my character."

But the cost was devastating. "I was raped severely," Kern recalled. "I lost my eye...and I felt very hopeless in there."

It would take years and deep pain before he began to see the light. One pivotal day, he found himself on Call Street, his necklace broken, his spirit even more so. He wandered into a store he'd never been in before — Williams Jewelry — hoping they could fix the chain. What happened next would change everything.

"I met the most amazing person that I could have ever met, and that was Tracy Williams," Kern said. "She took it upon herself to bring me behind the counter. I was in tears. I was just all out of options."

Williams asked him what was wrong. "I'm just tired of living like this," he told her. "I feel like God had to allow me to hit rock

Frank Leamon Kern's life in on an upward trajectory. He has a job he loves at Hometown Grounds and now dares to dream big, with a goal of starting his own interior-design business.



bottom before he could put me back together."

Williams pointed him toward Cross Church. Kern resisted at first, but something in her faith stirred him. "Have you been going to church?" she asked.

What followed was the beginning of a spiritual awakening. "God is actually real, and He's working on me," Kern said. "I never in my life thought I'd be having an interview. Never in my life I thought I'd be in the paper other than being arrested."

At that church, something remarkable happened. "When I tell you I had 80 people up there with me when I gave my life to Jesus — that was amazing," Kern said. "And they all told me, 'You have a support team here, and you don't even know it.' And that made me feel

so good."

Redemption for Kern didn't come in a lightning bolt, but in slow, steady steps — each one dragging the weight of a painful past behind it. He gave it all to God.

"I gave the homosexuality to God. I gave my past to God. I gave my traumas to God. I gave disappointments, letdowns, verdicts — I gave it all to God," he said. "And I really feel like once I gave it all to Him, I feel like He's got something big for me."

One of those big things was a job. Bills were piling up. Hope was wearing thin. Williams again stepped in. "She told me, 'The coffee shop down the road is hiring,'" Kern said. "So, I said, 'Really? I'll give it a shot.' I was still hanging on by a lick of faith

and a taste of hope."

He applied at the coffee shop, interviewed and held his breath through the process.

"I poured out my heart because I felt like this was my last chance," Kern said.

Then the phone rang. It was Amy Polk, owner of Hometown Grounds, calling back.

"Are you still interested?" Polk asked.

"I said, 'I'm more than interested. I have been waiting for this moment forever,'" Kern said.

Now, Kern has a job he loves — a place where his customer-service skills, kind heart and creative personality shine. And beyond that, he's dreaming bigger than he ever has before. He wants to start his own interior-design business one day.

"I've never been a bad person. I've just made bad decisions," he said. "And my biggest thing in life is I always love to help others. I thrive to put a smile on people's faces. I'll go out of my way, I'll stop what I'm doing, I'll spend my last smile just to see someone else smile, because I know how it feels to not be able to smile."

Today, those face tattoos are no longer marks of pain, but reminders of the road he's walked — wounds that have healed into symbols of survival.

"They tell a story," Kern said quietly. "Every scar, every inked

See KERN, page 13

Legal Notices

Legals for the week of Aug. 7, 2025

UNION

NON-DISCRIMINATION NOTICE
The Union County School District offers the following career and technical programs, including career academies wherein students may earn industry certification: Animal Science & Services, Food Science Applications, Agriculture Sales & Services, Digital Design, Nursing Assistant, Welding Technologies, Criminal Justice Operations, Carpentry, and Culinary Arts Admissions to the programs are open with the exception of Health Academy courses, which require specific prerequisite courses and criteria for admission.

The district prohibits discrimination in the terms and conditions of employment, and in access to educational programs and activities, and prohibits harassment of any individual or group on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, disability, religion, marital status, or genetic information (and other protected classes included in the district's nondiscrimination policies). Lack of English language skills will not be a barrier to admission and participation. The district may assess each student's ability to benefit from specific programs through placement tests and counseling, and, if necessary, will provide services or referrals to better prepare students for successful participation. For complaints or concerns of discrimination or harassment, the following person(s) may be contacted: Chris Mecusker, Director of Personnel & Secondary Education
55 SW 6th Street
Lake Butler, FL 32054
Phone: 352-448-5145
mecuskerc@union.k12.fl.us

ESE/504 Contact: Christie Whitehead, Director of ESE and Student Services
Lake Butler, FL 32054
Phone: 352-448-5144
whiteheadchr@union.k12.fl.us
Title IX: Chris Mecusker, Director of Personnel & Secondary Education
55 SW 6th Street
Lake Butler, FL 32054
Phone: 352-448-5145
mecuskerc@union.k12.fl.us

8/7 1tchg-BCT

NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING CONCERNING AN AMENDMENT TO THE CITY OF LAKE BUTLER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LAKE BUTLER, FLORIDA, SERVING AS THE PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD OF THE CITY OF LAKE BUTLER, FLORIDA AND THE LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY OF THE CITY OF LAKE BUTLER, FLORIDA, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT, pursuant to Sections 163.3161 through 163.3248, Florida Statutes, as amended, comments, objections and recommendations

concerning the amendment, as described below, will be heard by the City Commission of the City of Lake Butler, Florida, serving as the Planning and Zoning Board of the City of Lake Butler, Florida, and the Local Planning Agency of Lake Butler, Florida, at a public hearing to be held on August 19, 2025 at 6:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard in the City Commission Meeting Room, City Hall at 200 Southwest First Street, Lake Butler, Florida.

CPA 25-01, an application by Spires, Inc., to amend the Future Land Use Plan Map of the Comprehensive Plan by changing the future land use classification from RESIDENTIAL, MODERATE DENSITY (less than or equal to 4 dwelling units per acre) to COMMERCIAL for the property described, as follows:
A parcel of land lying in Section 30, Township 5 South, Range 20 East, Union County, Florida. Being more particularly described as follows: Lots 1 through 11 of Block 19 of McKinney's Addition to Lake Butler, a subdivision recorded in the Public Records of Union County, Florida. Containing 0.70 acre, more or less.

AND
A parcel of land lying in Section 30, Township 5 South, Range 20 East, Union County, Florida. Being more particularly described as follows: Lots 12 through 16 of Block 19 of McKinney's Addition to Lake Butler, a subdivision recorded in the Public Records of Union County, Florida. Containing 0.36 acre, more or less. Total lands containing 1.06 acre, more or less.

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

Copies of the amendment are available for public inspection at the Office of the City Manager, City Hall located at 200 Southwest First Street, Lake Butler, Florida, during regular business hours.
All persons are advised that if they decide to appeal any decision made at the above referenced public hearing, they will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, they may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. Any person requiring auxiliary aids and services at this meeting may contact the Office of the City Manager at 386.496.3401 at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. If you are hearing or speech impaired, please contact the Florida Relay Service at 1.800.955.8770 (voice) or 1.800.955.8771 (TTY).

8/7 1tchg-UCT

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS CONCERNING AMENDMENTS TO THE CITY OF LAKE BUTLER LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LAKE BUTLER, FLORIDA, SERVING AS THE PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD OF THE CITY OF LAKE BUTLER, FLORIDA AND

THE LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY OF THE CITY OF LAKE BUTLER, FLORIDA, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT, pursuant to Sections 163.3161 through 163.3248, Florida Statutes, as amended, comments, objections and recommendations concerning the amendments, as described below, will be heard by the City Commission of the City of Lake Butler, Florida, serving as the Planning and Zoning Board of the City of Lake Butler, Florida, and the Local Planning Agency of Lake Butler, Florida, at public hearings to be held on August 19, 2025 at 6:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matters can be heard in the City Commission Meeting Room, City Hall at 200 Southwest First Street, Lake Butler, Florida.

LDR 25-01, an application by the City Commission, to amend the text of the Land Development Regulations by amending Section 2.3.2.3 entitled Nonconforming Uses of Land, Discontinuance to change the discontinuance period from six consecutive months to 12 consecutive months; by amending Section 4.2.13 entitled Mobile Home, Replacement of Existing Mobile Homes to change the time period from six consecutive months to 12 consecutive months that can lapse between either the removal of one mobile home and the erection of another mobile home or the removal of one mobile home without replacement.

Z 25-01, an application by Spires, Inc., to amend the Official Zoning Atlas of the Land Development Regulations by changing the zoning district on certain lands from RESIDENTIAL, (MIXED) SINGLE FAMILY/MOBILE HOME-2 (RSF/MH-2) to COMMERCIAL, GENERAL (CG) for the property described, as follows:

A parcel of land lying in Section 30, Township 5 South, Range 20 East, Union County, Florida. Being more particularly described as follows: Lots 1 through 11 of Block 19 of McKinney's Addition to Lake Butler, a subdivision as recorded in the Public Records of Union County, Florida. Containing 0.70 acre, more or less.

AND
A parcel of land lying in Section 30, Township 5 South, Range 20 East, Union County, Florida. Being more particularly described as follows: Lots 12 through 16 of Block 19 of McKinney's Addition to Lake Butler, a subdivision as recorded in the Public Records of Union County, Florida. Containing 0.36 acre, more or less. Total lands containing 1.06 acre, more or less.

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

Copies of the amendments are available for public inspection at the Office of the City Manager, City Hall located at 200 Southwest First Street, Lake Butler, Florida, during regular business hours.

All persons are advised that if they decide to appeal any decision made at the above referenced public hearings, they will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for

such purpose, they may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. Any person requiring auxiliary aids and services at this meeting may contact the Office of the City Manager at 386.496.3401 at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. If you are hearing or speech impaired, please contact the Florida Relay Service at 1.800.955.8770 (voice) or 1.800.955.8771 (TTY).

8/7 1tchg-UCT

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO REGISTER FICTITIOUS NAME

Pursuant to Section 865.09, Florida Statutes, notice is hereby given that the undersigned: SALINA SWAIN, 4170 SW 99th AVE, LAKE BUTLER, FL 32054, SOLE owner, doing business under the firm name of: BLUFF CREEK TAX SERVICES, 4170 SW 99th AVE., LAKE BUTLER, FL 32054 intends to register fictitious name under the aforesaid statute. Dated this 4TH day of AUGUST A.D., 2025, in UNION COUNTY.

8/7 1tchg-UCT

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA
CIVIL ACTION
CASE NO.: 2024-CA-000081
DIVISION:

PLANET HOME LENDING, LLC, Plaintiff, vs. PAUL HUFFER AKA PAUL E. HUFFER AKA PAUL ELLIOTT HUFFER, et al, Defendant(s).

NOTICE OF SALE PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 45

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN Pursuant to a Final Judgment of Foreclosure dated June 23, 2025, and entered in Case No. 2024-CA-000081 of the Circuit Court of the Eighth Judicial Circuit in and for Union County, Florida in which Planet Home Lending, LLC, is the Plaintiff and Paul Huffer aka Paul E. Huffer aka Paul Elliott Huffer; Taylor Huffer aka T. Huffer aka Taylor L. Huffer; United States of America Acting through Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; Union County Clerk of the Circuit Court; Any And All Unknown Parties Claiming by, Through, Under, And Against The Herein named Individual Defendant(s) Who are not Known To Be Dead Or Alive, Whether Said Unknown Parties May Claim An Interest in Spouses, Heirs, Devisees, Grantees, Or Other Claimants are defendants, the Union County Clerk of the Circuit Court will sell to the highest and best bidder for cash in/on Union County, Florida at on the 28th day of August, 2025, the following described property as set forth in said Final Judgment of Foreclosure:
ALL THAT CERTAIN LAND SITUATE IN UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA, TO-WIT:
LOT 49-B OF UPLAND PINES PLANTATION, AN UNRECORDED SUBDIVISION DESCRIPTION

A TRACT OF LAND LYING IN SECTION 20, TOWNSHIP 6 SOUTH, RANGE 18 EAST, UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA, MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

COMMENCING AT THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF SAID SECTION 20 (ALSO BEING THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF SECTION 21) AND THENCE RUN N 86 DEGREES 27' 24" E ALONG THE NORTH LINE OF SECTION 21, A DISTANCE OF 2021.94 FEET; THENCE S 2 DEGREES 46' 29" E, A DISTANCE OF 619.62 FEET TO THE NORTH RIGHT-OF-WAY LINE (R/W) OF SARA LANE; THENCE S 3 DEGREES 32' 36" E, A DISTANCE OF 60 FEET TO THE SOUTH R/W LINE OF SARA LANE; THENCE S 86 DEGREES 27' 24" W, ALONG SAID SOUTH R/W LINE, A DISTANCE OF 1955.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF CURVATURE OF A TANGENT CURVE, CONCAVE TO THE SOUTH, HAVING A RADIUS OF 1115.92 FEET AND A CENTRAL ANGLE OF 23 DEGREES 42' 25"; THENCE WESTERLY ALONG SAID R/W CURVE, A DISTANCE OF 461.73 FEET TO THE END OF SAID CURVE; THENCE S 3 DEGREES 32' 38" E, A DISTANCE OF 174.41 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING; THENCE CONTINUING S 3 DEGREES 32' 38" E, A DISTANCE OF 309.40 FEET TO THE NORTH R/W LINE OF A 40 FOOT COUNTY ROAD; THENCE S 87 DEGREES 13' 09" W, ALONG SAID R/W LINE, A DISTANCE OF 142.23 FEET; THENCE N 3 DEGREES 32' 38" W, A DISTANCE OF 309.40 FEET; THENCE N 87 DEGREES 13' 09" E, A DISTANCE OF 142.23 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. TOGETHER WITH A MOBILE HOME LOCATED THEREON AS A PERMANENT FIXTURE AND APPURTENANCE THERETO, DESCRIBED AS A 1999 LIBERTY WINDMERE PLUS DOUBLEWIDE PALM MOBILE HOME BEARING SERIAL NUMBERS: 10L27073X AND 10L27073U. A/KK/A 5821 SW 52ND TERRACE LAKE BUTLER FL 32054

Any person claiming an interest in the surplus from the sale, if any, other than the property owner as of the date of the Lis Pendens must file a claim before the Clerk reports the surplus as unclaimed. Dated in Union County, Florida this 5TH day of August 2025. Clerk of the Circuit Court Union County, Florida
By: C. HOLLINGSWORTH
Deputy Clerk
Albertelli Law
Attorney for Plaintiff
P.O. Box 23028
Tampa, FL 33623
(813) 221-4743
(813) 221-9171 facsimile
eService: servealaw@albertellilaw.com

IN-24-010322
If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Persons with a disability who need any accommodation in order to

participate should call Jan Phillips, ADA Coordinator, Alachua County Courthouse, 201 E. University Ave., Gainesville, FL 32601 at (352)337-6237 within two (2) working days of receipt of this notice; if you are hearing impaired, please call 1-800-955-8771; if you are voice impaired, please call 1-800-955-8770.

The above is to be published in the Union County Times, 125 E Main St, Lake Butler, FL 32054

IN-24-010322 8/7 2tchg 8/14-UCT

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING CONCERNING A VARIANCE AS PROVIDED FOR IN THE BRADFORD COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

BY THE BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT OF BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT, pursuant to the Bradford County Land Development Regulations, as amended, hereinafter referred to as the Land Development Regulations, objections, recommendations and comments concerning a variance, as described below, will be heard by the Board of Adjustment of Bradford County, Florida, at a public hearing on August 21st, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard, in the County Commission Meeting Room, North Wing, County Courthouse located at 945 N. Temple Avenue in Starke, Florida.

V 25-06, an application by Karin Thomas, to request a Variance be granted as provided for in Section 4.15 "CI", Commercial, Intensive, Section 4.15.8, Maximum Height of Structures, from a maximum height of Thirty-five (35') feet to a requested height of Sixty (60') feet of the property being described as follows: A parcel of land lying in the Southwest ¼ of the Southeast ¼ & the Southeast ¼ of the Southeast ¼ of Section 24, Township 7 South, Range 21 East, Bradford County, Fla. and being Bradford County Parcel Number 00967-0-00000

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

Copies of the material are available for public inspection at the Office of the Director of Zoning, Planning, and Building, County Courthouse located at 945 North Temple Avenue, North Wing, Starke, Florida, during regular business hours.

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

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Union County grad Jones runs at Para National Championships

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Stirley Jones, a 2003 Union County High School graduate, earned a first-place medal at the 2025 Toyota USATF Para National Championships, which were recently held in Eugene, Oregon.

Jones, who competes in the T13 visually impaired division, ran a time of 11.26 seconds in the 100m. His race involved two other competitors, who each competed in a different visually impaired division. Noah Malone (T12) ran a time of 10.62 to take first regardless of visually impaired classification, while Mohammed Jauda (T11) ran a time of 12.49.

The former UCHS track-and-field athlete and basketball and football player was diagnosed with keratoconus while in high school. Keratoconus is a thinning of the cornea, which gradually bulges outward and causes blurred vision. Jones wears contact lenses for the condition.



Stirley Jones, pictured after winning the bronze medal in the 100m at the 2023 Parapan American Games, won the 100m in his visually impaired category at the 2025 Toyota USATF Para National Championships.

He wears sunglasses when

See JONES, page 14



Christian Gravelle and Eve Gravelle sold various items at the July 29 Bradford County Friends of the Library Young Makers Market. Eve Gravelle said the cake-mix cookies were her favorite because "they smell good."

Bradford library hosts Young Makers Market

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

You can check out books on crafts at the Bradford County Public Library, of course, but on July 29, patrons were also able to purchase crafts as part of the Friends of the Library Young Makers Market.

The market allowed tweens and teens to display the results of their artistic talents and sell them as well.

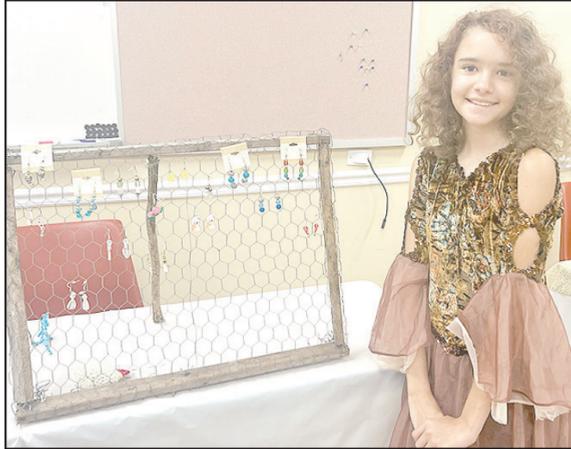
"It's pretty fun," said Eve Gravelle, who was joined by Christian Gravelle in selling such items as bracelets, cake-mix cookies and wooden signs. "It's a good experience."

Christian Gravelle said he found it fun to make bracelets, but Eve Gravelle said her favorite thing to make was probably cake-mix cookies because "they smell good."

The cake-mix cookies weren't the only items to be found to satisfy a hunger craving. Nathaniel Gifford, wearing a chef's hat, was selling flatbread and offered apple butter, grape jam and peanut butter for people to use on it. His favorite spread is peanut butter.

Several of the young entrepreneurs, like the Gravelles, offered an array of different items. Allyssa Kudlesky, for example, was selling bracelets, earrings, paintings and clay figures.

"I've been painting since I was close to 7, 8, and making jewelry since I was about 10," Kudlesky said. "These mushrooms (her



Icy O'Dell makes and sells earrings and other jewelry "because it's fun," she said. She believes she's found a lifelong hobby.



Allyssa Kudlesky, 16, was selling bracelets, earrings, clay figurines and paintings. She's been making items since she was 7 or 8.

See MARKET, page 14



Adalyn Southwell placed second in the second-grade division of Bible Memorization at the National Association of Free Will Baptists' Vertical Three Conference.

Lake Butler church youth takes 2nd at national event

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Adalynn Southwell came home with a medal and a trophy after placing second in her age division in Bible Memorization at the Vertical Three Conference, an annual event organized by the National Association of Free Will Baptists.

Adalynn, who attends Lake Butler's Harmony Free Will Baptist Church, was one of 17 children competing in the second-grade division at the July 20-23 event in Kansas City, Missouri. She had a score of 99.96 to place behind a competitor from Kansas and ahead of a competitor from North Carolina.

Children in Adalynn's event also represented Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma and South Carolina.

Adalynn's parents, Brett and Mallory Southwell, were happy to see their daughter do so well, but more importantly, they're happy that their daughter is reading and memorizing scripture.

"As a Christian parent, there's nothing you want more than for your kids to have a relationship with Jesus," Mallory said, while Brett said, "I just smile when I hear her say (scripture). That's all I can do — just smile."

Mallory said Harmony Free Will Baptist has always had youth participate in the competitions, so she and Brett wanted Adalynn and their son, Alden, to take part as well.

Adalynn took part in an art competition last year before going in Bible Memorization this year.

"We thought it was something she'd be good at," Brett said.

Though you might not have believed that if you had been around Adalynn before she had to compete. Mallory recalled

See BIBLE, page 13

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Obituaries

Roman Alvarez

Roman Mansfield Alvarez went home to be with the Lord on Sunday, Aug. 3, 2025. A devoted Baptist minister, Roman lived a life rooted in unwavering faith, deep love for his family, a heart for missions, and a steadfast commitment to his great country. His sermons resonated with grace, his actions embodied integrity, and his prayers served as a foundation for countless lives. Born Oct. 5, 1938, in Starke, he was the son of Rufus and Kathleen (Underhill) Alvarez, both of whom predeceased him. He is survived by his siblings, Pat (Jerry) Baldwin of Hampton and Owen (Julia) Alvarez of Starke, and was preceded in death by siblings, J.L., James, Mary Lou Dubose, Daniel, and Lavon Alvarez. He graduated from Bradford High School in 1956. He joined the National Guard for several years of service that included an assignment to the Pentagon. In 1956, he married his childhood sweetheart, Betty, and they enjoyed 68 years of marriage, celebrating what would have been 69 years on Aug. 31. Together, they raised three children, Greg (Stephanie) Alvarez, Derek (Sherree) Alvarez, and Stefanie (Gordon) Smith. He was blessed with six grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren: Justin Alvarez (Collin, Harper, Ridge), Heather Alvarez (Jack, Bryce, Cole, deceased), Hailey (Chris) Coffey (Cayden, Coby, Hudson, Finley, Huxley), Hayden Smith, Kylie (Josh) Orick, and Macy (Lance) Prouty (Aisling). As a father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, he was a steady source of love and wisdom. His grandchildren and great-grandchildren were his world, and nothing highlighted his spirit more than their love and laughter. The family cherishes fond memories of gospel music sings, yard sales, Sunday dinners, gardening, and, of course, Poppa's many jokes!

Roman answered God's call to ministry at an early age, preaching at Pine Level upon request even before attending Bible College. In 1958, he attended Arlington Baptist College, graduating as valedictorian in 1961 with a Bachelor of Divinity and later earning a Bachelor of Arts in Education in 1972. After graduating in 1961, he became pastor of Pine Level Baptist Church, serving from 1961 to 1965. In 1965, he returned to Texas as associate pastor under Dr. Earl Oldham at Calvary Baptist in Grand Prairie. In 1969, he was called to pastor Gideon Baptist in Warren, Michigan. In 1970, Dr. Oldham requested his return to Texas to teach at Arlington Baptist College and even flew to Michigan to explain to the members of Gideon Baptist how much his return was needed. From 1970 to 1975, Roman juggled teaching Bible classes at Arlington Baptist College, traveling on weekends to represent the college and preach in churches across America, serving as dorm parents for the women's dorm, and answering the call to full-time pastor at New York Avenue Baptist in Arlington, Texas.

In the spring of 1975, he returned to Starke for health reasons. After recovering, he heeded the call from Pine Level to return as pastor once more, serving from August 1975 until 1991.

Upon retiring from pastoral duties at Pine Level in 1991, Roman focused on preaching Missions Conferences until he was called by First Baptist Church of Graham as interim pastor. The church grew and eventually relocated from Graham to Starke, later changing its name to Southside Baptist Church. He led this congregation for 22 years until December 2023, when he retired permanently for health reasons.

Throughout his ministries, Roman had a heartfelt burden for missions and spreading the gospel worldwide. He worked tirelessly to support missionaries through World Baptist Fellowship, providing prayers, church support, and his own personal finances throughout his life.

In addition to his ministry, he dedicated over 40 years to law enforcement, beginning in 1977 as a resource safety officer in schools. He joined the sheriff's office in 1988, where he served as a Lieutenant and Detective, later working with the State Attorney's Office as an Investigator until his retirement. Even after retiring, he was invited back to train investigators at the police department. His work in the justice system offered him opportunities to share God's word and counsel many during their times of crisis.

Roman also proudly served as a member of the school board for District 5, demonstrating his dedication to the community and the education of its students.

Roman Alvarez was more than a minister. He was a patriot, a pillar of strength, and a humble servant of God. His legacy lives on in every life he touched, every truth he preached, and every act of kindness he offered without hesitation. His family and friends find comfort in knowing he heard the words: "Well done, good and faithful servant." (Matthew 25:21)

In lieu of flowers, online memorial donations can be made to World Baptist Fellowship Mission Agency Inc.

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

PAID OBITUARY

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Tommy Clark

Thomas "Tommy" Charles Clark was welcomed into his eternal home in Heaven on Monday, July 21, 2025. He was born Nov. 24, 1941, in Waycross, Georgia to Frank Clifton Clark and Willie Mae Sikes. He was the third of four boys. He and his brothers grew up together in Waycross and spent much of their time outdoors. Their family would often visit his grandfather's farm in Bannockburn, Georgia, where he and his cousins would play baseball, football and corkball and spent many hours swimming in the Alapaha river. His family moved to Florida in 1958 when his father's job with Hercules Inc. transferred locations. He was a junior in high school when they moved and he graduated from Bradford High School in 1960. It was here in Bradford County that he would meet and marry his wife of 62 years, Patricia Thomas. Being a true patriot following graduation, he served his country as a member of the US Army and Florida National Guard. He worked many years for General Electric and then Energizer, where he retired in 2001. He had a passion for inventing and was granted many patents throughout his life. He loved being outdoors and fishing on Hampton Lake. He enjoyed sitting on his porch and watching eagles, wood ducks and hummingbirds. He was preceded in death by his parents, Frank and Willie Mae Clark; his brothers, Kay and Donnie Clark; and his great-grandson, Theo Marshall.

He is survived by his wife, Patricia Clark, his son, Kenny (Kellie) Clark; granddaughters, Ashlan (Josh) Marshall and Jadie Clark (fiancé Ty Briscoe); brother, Lane (Sandy) Clark of Mansfield, Georgia; great-grandchildren Oliver and Dorothy Marshall; and other beloved nieces and nephews.

The family has chosen to do a private burial at Santa Fe Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to <https://www.patriotsfour.org/donate/>. Arrangements are under the care of Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home, 620 E. Nona St., Starke 32091. 904-964-6200. www.jonesgallagherfh.com

PAID OBITUARY

Marlene Coleman

Marlene Rowe Coleman celebrated her 82nd birthday with her Lord and Savior on Thursday, July 31, 2025. She was preceded in death by her parents, Percy and Jewell Rowe; sister, Freda Hardenbrook; and brothers, Charles, Cecil, Trubie and Corky Rowe, all of Starke.

Survivors are her husband, Rev. Alton Coleman; sister, Rita (Mel) Crawford; daughter, Christi (Leon) Payne; son, Alex (Misty) Coleman; and extended family.

Services were held at Sampson City Church of God, 8042 SW CR 225, Starke, 32091. Interment followed at Crosby Lake Cemetery.

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

Dave Handley

James David "Dave" Handley, 86, of Keystone Heights died Wednesday, July 23, 2025, after an extended illness. He was a longtime member of Trinity Baptist Church. He was preceded in death by his only grandchild, James David Handley III.

Survivors are wife of 65 years, Wanda (Simpson) Handley; and their children, Pamela R. Handley (Brian) Sorli, James David Handley Jr. (Cindy, Payton).

No services are planned at this time.

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

Richard McRae

Richard Dale "Rick" McRae passed away quietly on Tuesday, July 8, 2025. He was 71. He was born Oct. 11, 1953, in Jacksonville to Owen and Iris McRae. Rick served in the Army, did a tour of duty in Korea and was an expert rifleman. He grew up in Starke and moved to Keystone Heights for work over 20 years ago. He was preceded in death by his parents and his wife, Marilyn "Kay" McRae.

Rick is survived by his son, Steven McRae; daughter, Melanie McRae (Talmadge Smith); stepson, Eric Long; stepdaughter, Amber Fishley; and three grandchildren, Talmadge and Laken Smith and Mackenzie Raney. He is also survived by his brothers, Harley (Kathy) McRae, Gary (Linda) McRae and Michael (Edie) McRae; and his first wife, Kelley McRae. He will be missed.

PAID OBITUARY

Sherri Norman

Sherri Elizabeth Norman, 6/26/62-7/18/25, was born in Miami June 26, 1962. When she was in ninth grade, her family moved to Starke. Sherri graduated from BHS in 1979. After graduating, she went to college and became an X-ray technician. During her years as an X-ray technician, she traveled the globe with her closest friends. She moved to Pendleton, South Carolina in October 2024 to be near her sister, Melissa, and nieces and nephews. Sherri died of natural causes on Friday, July 18, 2025. She was preceded in death by her father, Marcus Norman; and two nephews, Curtis Lyons II and Schon Curtis Lyons.

She leaves behind her mother, Joy Norman of Starke; and her sisters, Melissa Norman Lyons of Pendleton, South Carolina, and Darlene Norman Shockley of Starke. She also leaves behind seven nieces and nephews and numerous great-nieces and nephews who adored their "Aunt Sherri."

Sherri was cherished and will be missed greatly by many. She was selfless and generous to a fault, and she loved her people deeply. We rejoice in the knowledge that she's dancing, celebrating and gardening with Jesus. A celebration of life luncheon will take place at a restaurant in Starke. Date to follow.

PAID OBITUARY

Armortine Osborne

Armortine Osborne, 95, of Lake Butler, passed away Friday, Aug. 1, 2025, at Windsor Health and Rehabilitation Center in Starke with her loving family by her side. She was born in Lake Butler on Jan. 26, 1930, to the late Julius Parrish and Frances Waters Parrish. She was a lifelong resident of Union County. After school, she married her best friend, Thomas Jefferson Parrish, and they were blessed with eight precious children. Years after Thomas's passing, she was thankful to find her second love, Larry Osborne. She was most passionate about her family and thoroughly enjoyed her role as wife, mother, and homemaker. She was a true beacon of warmth and hospitality. Her home was always open, her kitchen radiated with delicious aromas, pots were filled with comfort food, and her table ready for family and friends. She loved bringing smiles, laughter, and feeding anyone who was hungry. She was a devoted Jehovah's Witness who lived her faith boldly and shared it graciously. She found deep joy in sharing the hope she treasured and talking to others about Jehovah's promises. She certainly lived life to the fullest and cherished each and every moment. She was preceded in death by her parents; husbands, Thomas Jefferson Parrish and Larry Osborne; and children, Linda Tanner and Larry Parrish.

She is survived by her children, Barbara Leach, Cathy (Mark) Welch, Tommy (Terre) Parrish, Pam (Johnny) Williams, Tina (Billy Ray) Elixson and Wayne (Dana) Parrish; son-in-law, Wayne Tanner; daughter-in-law, Sharon Parrish; siblings, Samuel Parrish and Nancy Brickey; along with several grandchildren, great grandchildren, great-great grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and friends.

Armortine's family will celebrate her life privately.

Arrangements are under the care and direction of Ferreira Funeral Services, 435 Main St., Lake Butler 32054. 386-496-1400.

PAID OBITUARY

Angela Riley

Angela Teresa Riley, 76, of Keystone Heights died Friday, Aug. 1, 2025, at Shands Hospital in Gainesville after an extended illness. She was preceded in death by her husband, Allen Riley.

Survivors are children, Donald Kane, Denegre Beckman, and Steven Lamberson; and extended family members.

A Celebration of Life will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 23, at Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home Chapel. Her ashes will be interred at a later date.

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

Karen Wacha

Mrs. Karen Ann Wacha, 85, of Keystone Heights passed away at her home Tuesday, July 29, 2025. She was born April 25, 1940, in Bayonne, New Jersey to William and Virginia (Berlicki) Wagner. She was an active and longtime member of Trinity Episcopal Church in Melrose. She enjoyed traveling, gardening, flowers, and spending time with her family and friends. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her brothers, Gregory Wagner and Collin Wagner.

Left behind to cherish her memory is her loving and devoted husband of 60 years, Kenny Wacha; and their sons Darren Wacha, Craig Wacha, Todd Wacha, Ryan (Susan) Wacha, Rickey (Lawren) Wacha, Jason (Lisa) Wacha and Randy (Rachael) Wacha; along with sisters, Pamela (Bruce) Ferris and Yvonne Ludwig (Jim Roeder). She was lovingly called "Grandma" and "Gigi" by her 14 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Also left behind is her precious puppy, Apple.

A Celebration of Life will be held at Trinity Episcopal Church, Melrose, on Saturday, Aug. 16, at 11 a.m.

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

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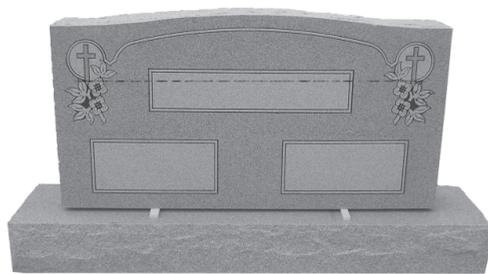
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BCEF Leave a Legacy to honor Bennett, Ramseur

The Bradford County Education Foundation will host its annual Leave a Legacy event on Thursday, Aug. 28, at 6 p.m. at Starke's Madison Street Baptist Church.

This year's honorees are Linda Bennett and Vivian Ramseur.

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

The event also includes the Dessert Dash, an additional fundraiser for BCEF. Guests will pool their monies as they try to make their table among the highest bidders for the chance to "dash" for their preferred dessert.

KERN

Continued from page 9

word, every image — they're part of my journey, but they

don't define where I'm going. God does that now." His eyes shine — one clouded by trauma, the other wide open to grace. What does he want most in the

future? Not riches. Not revenge. But family. "I wanted 11 kids," he said with a laugh that carries both longing and joy. "I want to raise a family. I want to build something

new." From drugs and rejection to prison and hopelessness, to faith and restoration, Kern's life is a powerful testimony that even in the darkest places, redemption is

possible. Because sometimes the ones with the most ink on their skin are the ones with the clearest stories etched on their hearts.

AAU

Continued from page 9

place time of 58.90. Pennsylvania's Grace Butcher won the race with a time of 56.71. Placing second through fourth were Heaven Isokpunwu of Texas (57.21), Tyler Parker of Louisiana (57.62) and Bailey James of Michigan (57.75).

Leading up to the event, Marshall ran first-place times of 59.02 at the AAU Region 9 Qualifier and 57.85 at the AAU National Club Championship.

Marshall also ran the 200m at the AAU Junior Olympics, crossing the line in 14th place with a time of 26.24.

BIBLE

Continued from page 10

that prior to taking the stage at the Florida Free Will Baptists' Florida State Youth Conference, which was held May 2-3 in Jacksonville, Adalynn said, "Please don't make me do it." Yet all she did was place first out of eight at that event, which qualified her for the Vertical Three Conference.

"It's really impressive to watch her go up there and do it

even though she gets so nervous beforehand," Brett said. "She gets up there, and it just flows out."

The words continued to flow as she earned that second-place national medal.

"Every one of them (at the national event) was first or second in their state," Brett said. "You're going against the best in their state, so all the kids are going to do good. It's a tough competition."

Competitors are provided with Bible passages to memorize

before the competition. They don't know what they'll have to recite specifically until they get on stage.

As Adalynn's designated "coach," Mallory said she probably read the words as much as her daughter did, but she couldn't recite them from memory like Adalynn could.

Neither could her father, who tried his hand at it as well.

"He got every word wrong," Adalynn said, laughing. She then added, "He got like five words right."

The Vertical Three Conference was attended by nearly 4,000 people, Brett said. Besides the youth competitions, the event consists of such things as carnival-like activities for children, seminars for adults and worship services for all ages.

Vertical Three's mission statement is to "help students discover their talents, develop their leadership and dedicate their hearts for faithful service to God."

Alden Southwell took part in a group competition this year, with his group earning the right

to compete at the national event. However, not everyone in the group was able to make the trip.

Next year, Brett and Mallory said they're going to have Alden compete in Bible Memorization in his age group.

That'll mean both children in the Southwell home will be reading and memorizing, right? Well, when asked if she was ready to do it again next year, Adalynn said, "I don't know."

"That's the response," Brett said, "but she'll be there (at the national event) again, hopefully."

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MARKET

Continued from page 10

clay figurines) I've been doing for about a year. I'm 16 now, so I've been at this for a while."

Other sellers specialized in one type of craft. Benjamin Gifford, for example, was selling figurines he crafted out of melting beads. It's a hobby he's enjoyed for approximately four

years.

"It kind of started earlier (in life) when I wanted to make myself toys," he said. "It's just taken off."

Tabitha Gifford uses buttons to make designs on painted canvas. She said it takes her a couple of hours to decide what she wants to create, but then only a couple of minutes to bring a work to completion.

Carena Alexander showed

her artistic side by adding to the look of existing dolls. She calls it semi-customizing.

"I fix up their hair, and I make different clothes for them," she said.

Alexander said she wanted to start collecting dolls, but she obtained one that had matted hair. Through online research, she learned how you can fix a doll's hair the way that you want it to look and became aware of

the art of customizing dolls.

"I've seen people sell full-custom dolls for like thousands of dollars," Alexander said. "I'm just starting off small."

Who knows? A small start for any of the vendors at the Young Makers Market could turn into something big in the future.

At the very least, though, some of the youth may have discovered a lifelong hobby.



Tabitha Gifford shows off her button art. She said it doesn't take long to make a piece, once she comes up with the idea.



Brothers Easton Krahl and Hunter Krahl had fun making and selling items such as bracelets and keychains.



Nathaniel Gifford donned a chef's hat to sell flatbread.



Benjamin Gifford makes figurines out of melting beads. The hobby began when he was younger and wanted to make his own toys.



Carena Alexander was selling her semi-customized dolls. It complements her hobby of collecting dolls. She'd also like to start collecting vintage toys.



Shiloh Barnes (right) is joined by her friend, Nova, at a colorful display of rainbow rings and other rainbow-related items.

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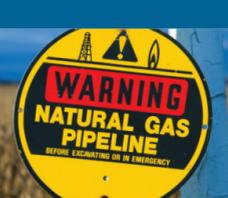
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FGU20-004

JONES

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competing to prevent the wind from blowing his contacts out.

As a junior at UCHS, Jones was a district runner-up in both the 200m and 400m. He was the only UCHS boy to qualify for regionals.

Jones placed third in each race at the regional level to qualify for state. At state, he earned a medal with an eighth-place finish in the 200m. He finished 11th in the 400m.

During his senior year at UCHS, he was a district runner-up in both the 200m and high jump, while placing third in the 400m. He was also a member of the third-place 4x100m relay team.

Jones was first in the 200m preliminaries at the regional level, but he pulled a hamstring while running in the finals of the 4x100m relay, which prevented him from finishing the race in the 200m finals. The 4x100m team would place fifth, while Jones took sixth in the high jump.

After working for a year after graduating from high school, Jones moved to Huntingdon, California, and enrolled at Golden West College, where he competed in basketball, football and track and field. As a freshman, he broke the school record in the 200m with a time of 21.31, was named his team's MVP and earned first-team all-conference honors. Jones was the Orange Empire Conference champion in the 200m and the runner-up in the 100m. He was fifth in the 100m and sixth in the 200m at the National Junior College Athletic Association Southern California Finals.

Jones took a semester off at Golden West after sustaining a back injury in a vehicle accident. Doctors told him he wouldn't run at the same level he was used to, but Jones took that as a challenge. He re-enrolled at the school and was again named his team's MVP, while also earning first-team all-conference honors. He was the conference champ in the 100m and runner-up in the 200m.

In 2016, Jones qualified for the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials. In 2023, he competed as a member of Team USA at the Parapan American Games in Chile, earning a bronze medal for a third-place finish in the 100m. His time was 11.39.