

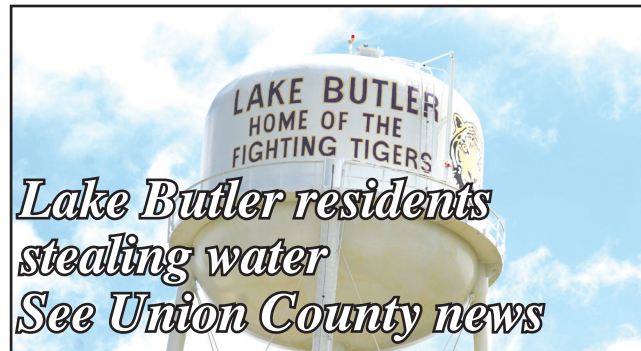
UNION COUNTY TIMES

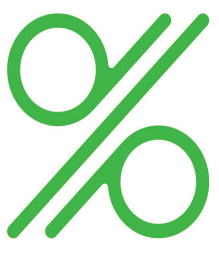
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Thursday, June 5, 2025

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WORTH NOTING

Pastor's anniversary at New Covenant

New Covenant Baptist Ministries invites the public to celebrate the ninth anniversary of Pastor Jeffrey T. and Sister Daffany Jones on Sunday, June 22, at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Minister Dwayne Bailey of St. John Missionary Baptist Church in Providence will speak at the morning service, and the Rev. Alvin Greene and St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church in Lake City will lead the afternoon service. Dinner will be served.

Family histories sought for new book

The Union County Historical Society is hard at work on a second book about the county's history and the families that made it happen. Members are actively collecting family histories and information on Union County history. To inquire about the project or to submit a family history item, interested parties can email the society at theucbook@gmail.com.

Assistance for veterans

An American Legion Post 56 Service Officer is available to assist veterans by providing information concerning available benefits and other needs. Walk-ins are available at the American Legion Hall on Edwards Road in Starke every Wednesday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., or call Al Hunter at 407-494-9694 for an appointment.

Vacation Bible Study at New Bethel

New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church will host its annual Vacation Bible Study from June 4-6 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. each evening. The sessions will take place in the church's fellowship hall, located at 901 Keller St. in Starke. Attendees can look forward to Bible study, games, arts and crafts, and dinner each night.

A VBS Picnic will follow on June 7 from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Camp Blanding's Over the Hill Pavilion, featuring games and lunch for all participants.

The event is sponsored by New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church's "Diamonds in the Rough Ministry."

State Attorney wants to be community resource

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

Eighth Judicial Circuit State Attorney Brian Kramer recently appeared in two separate meetings before Union County commissioners and City of Lake Butler officials.

The chief prosecutor for the six-county region stretching from the Georgia line to the Gulf of Mexico gave his business card to Lake Butler city commissioners during their May 20 meeting. He also briefly introduced himself to those who had never met him before.

"I've worked as an assistant state attorney or a prosecutor for about 27 of the past 31 years," he said. "We represent Alachua, Union, Baker, Bradford, Levy, and Gilchrist counties, so I cover about 4,300 square miles and have about 425,000 constituents."

Kramer said his office prosecutes around 17,000 criminal cases a year, and he is proud that he won Union County with over 85% of the vote in the 2024 election.

Kramer told Lake Butler officials that even though his primary responsibility is prosecuting criminal cases, he wants to do more throughout

the circuit, including in Union County. "Sometimes there are things that happen that are outside that scope," Kramer said.

The official said he is willing to help with any problems in the community that the public is concerned about, adding that while he doesn't have expertise in all areas, he knows a wide range of people who can help with community problems.

"If you need somebody criminally prosecuted, give me a ring, right? That's no problem. That's what I do," he said. "But if you have a question or a concern in the community that you don't know who to call, give me a ring, and if I can't help you, I will find somebody who can."

When Kramer visited county commissioners in April, he told the group that due to changing technology, their bill to support his office might increase soon.

The state attorney said that each county in the circuit shares the cost of his office's information technology.

"And the way it works is that Alachua County, because it's the circuit seat and it has the largest population and pays the largest share of pretty much everything in the office, they pay the

budget, and then Union County reimburses them for that," he said.

Kramer added that although his IT budget has been static over the past few years, the rise of digital forensic evidence will increase those costs.

Digital forensic evidence includes body camera videos, content captured from cell phones, and video from security cameras.

He added that the cost of processing that evidence is bloating his IT budget, which will ultimately impact the budgets of each county in the circuit.

"That's where the world is going," he said of digital evidence. "And so one of the things I'm doing is I'm going around to every one of our county commissions to give you



Eighth Judicial Circuit State Attorney Brian Kramer at the April 21 meeting of Union County Commissioners. Also pictured (right) is Kramer's Executive Director, Rebecca Shinholser.

my card, make sure you know who I am, make sure you know how to reach, contact me and tell you that this technology is coming and that it will change the cost of that shared IT budget."

Rotary raises over \$80k for fireworks



BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

The Lake Butler Rotary Club nearly doubled its usual take from its Spring fundraiser to raise money to support the city's July 4th fireworks display.

The club brought in over \$80,000 during its first-ever Saddle Up Soiree in April.

Club President Alexandra Pritchett said that in prior years, the group put on a Hawaiian-style luau.

She, along with club Treasurer Tina Lloyd, said the change in theme and holding the event on a Thursday instead of the weekend improved attendance and gross receipts.

The group's principal source of revenues were sponsored tables and an auction.

The event had four title sponsors: Pritchett Trucking, Mister Sparky Electrical and Ben Franklin Plumbing, Welch Site Work and Asphalt Paving, and Lunex Power.

The two club officers also credited one-on-one sales calls to potential sponsors for the event's success.

"So just the personal visits made a heck of a



Lake Butler Rotary Club President Alexandra Pritchett and City Commissioner Joe Stephenson

difference," Pritchett said. "The personal phone calls, not just somebody randomly from the club calling, like somebody on the executive board calling. I went as far as Ocala. Tina went all over."

Lloyd and Pritchett said the money will come in handy, as the cost of fireworks is skyrocketing.

Coordinator gets more money for road project



BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

Union County Coordinator Jimmy Williams reported to the board of county commissioners on June 2 that he had secured additional funding to resurface Southwest 92nd Street.

The two-lane street links State Road 121 in the Union County Riding Club area to Southwest 146th Lane.

Last month, Williams told commissioners that the sole bid for the project came in around \$700,000 more than a grant from the Florida Department of Transportation awarded to fund the job.

He added that the project's costs were estimated years ago and that inflation had driven up construction costs since the estimate was made.

During the June 2 county commissioners' meeting, Williams presented commissioners with a supplemental agreement from FDOT, providing an additional \$823,805 for the project, based on a construction bid shortfall and additional funds needed for engineering services.

County Commissioner Mac Johns lauded Williams for obtaining the additional funding from the state.

"Jimmy Williams did a fantastic job on acquiring this money," Johns told his colleagues. "We ran into the same problem with the (Providence) fire station, remember? And we didn't get any extra money. We had to work it out and cut. We were really looking at doing that with this road project, maybe even (paving) half the road, which would've enraged a bunch of people."

Weekly deadline is Monday at 5 p.m. • Phone 904-964-6305 • Fax 904-964-8628

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Dr. Paul Montoya, MD starts June 2nd in our Starke location!

After spending the past 10 years in south Florida working at Sarasota Memorial Hospital, Dr. Montoya is settling down on a farm in the Bradford County area. Montoya is a graduate of Creighton University School of Medicine in Omaha, Neb. Over his nearly 20-year medical career, he has worked in Nebraska and Florida at several hospitals, emergency rooms and medical centers performing minor surgical procedures and overseeing clinical care of patients. His calling to medicine came after a stint as a financial and investment adviser and service in the military. He is a decorated U.S. Navy veteran, who operated nuclear-powered submarines in San Diego, California.

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Vacation Bible Study at New Bethel

New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church will host its annual Vacation Bible Study from June 4-6 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. each evening. The sessions will take place in the church's fellowship hall, located at 901 Keller St. in Starke. Attendees can look forward to Bible study, games, arts and crafts, and dinner each night.

A VBS Picnic will follow on June 7 from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Camp Blanding's Over the Hill Pavilion, featuring games and lunch for all participants.

The event is sponsored by New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church's "Diamonds in the Rough Ministry."

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Lawtey negotiates agreement over fire assessment

BY MELISSA PYLE
Special to the Telegraph

There was much anticipation surrounding Lawtey’s June council meeting due to recent news the county could consider removing the personnel and trucks from the Lawtey Fire Department if the council couldn’t come to an agreement with the county on its special assessment.

County Commissioner Carolyn Spooner addressed the council and the public to assure them that the county wants everyone to work together for the betterment of Bradford. She was open to any questions about the proposed fire assessment and offered her input throughout the meeting.

Councilman Joshua Bell took the floor to address Bradford Fire Rescue Chief Ben Carter over the fire assessment. Bell asked how it is not double taxing the city’s residents to add a fee if they’re already paying taxes to the city. Carter responded by saying it’s a valid argument when people outside the city limits will only be paying one assessment to the county. Bell was not the only council member to have questions for Carter and Spooner over the fire assessment fees.

Members were frustrated over what they felt was a poor portrayal of the city in a recent commission meeting and a sense they were being given an unfair ultimatum. Councilwoman Amy Blom took issue with the statement that “Lawtey was just a building”. Blom addressed Carter and said “We don’t have just a building” as she proceeded to share the financial costs the city of Lawtey has spent for the department.

Since February 2020, the city

has paid out over \$101,000 for the fire department. Blom said things such as new appliances and flooring were also paid for by the city and weren’t included in the \$101,000 figure. The city still has the fire department in its budget and pays for all utilities associated with the station and some repairs. Lawtey also gifted a truck to the county, but the vehicle requires \$50k in repairs.

Blom said it is not fair for residents within the city limits to have to pay three taxes. Explaining part of the residents’ county tax bill goes to the fire department, part of the city taxes go to the fire department, and now a fire assessment would be a third way residents would be taxed.

Chief Carter responded to Blom by clarifying that his statement about Lawtey being “just a building” wasn’t meant to demean the city’s contributions to the fire department. He said it was in response to the question, “What equipment does Lawtey have?” and explained that the city doesn’t own the equipment, just the building

“It was not my intent to say that Lawtey does not contribute to the fire department. You certainly do. It’s been a great partnership,” he said.

Carter went on to remind the council that prior to the county taking over the station, they were still paying bills associated with the station when it was an all-volunteer station, but he says he does see the points about double taxation on city residents.

Assessing financial and safety costs

Blom expressed her frustration with the delay memorandum of

understanding between the city and county and the assessment, but said it was due to the council awaiting more information from the county on the final numbers. Blom asked if there was time to review a new MOU in which the city no longer pays for the utilities and repairs associated with the station.

City attorney Dan Sikes requested time from the mayor to question the chief about the repercussions of the city not signing the fire assessment agreement. Sikes asked, “What’s the penalty if we don’t sign it?”

Carter said that the commission could move the resources to Heilbronn Springs. Sikes said, “That would effectively remove any fire protection from the north end of the county ... because we [the city] defied the county?” Sikes also asked if the citizens of Heilbronn Springs would be paying more than the city of Lawtey in fees.

Carter said no, the argument is for the city of Lawtey to opt in to the fees. All county residents will receive the fire assessment bill, but if the city opts out, the residents within city limits will not be paying those fees. Sikes said it seems that the county would be “punishing the city,” and by default punishing the residents in north Bradford who would not have fire or emergency services within a safe distance.

Spooner interjected and said the county does not want Lawtey to lose fire services and their intent is to work together to resolve the problem. She suggested the council members have an emergency meeting with the chief to address the MOU and make adjustments.

Council member Virginia Warner stressed the dire consequences of not having a

fire department, one of which is obtaining and retaining homeowners’ insurance. Councilwoman Debra Norman expressed deep concerns over the human toll. She said the sheer volume of traffic on U.S. 301 calls for an emergency response team to be in proximity in case of wrecks. Another example of the human cost was the proximity of the station to the school and the prison, both needing fire and emergency services.

Norman shared that many citizens have told her they can’t afford another expense in their budget. Spooner responded by explaining there will be ways to assist citizens and if someone is below the poverty line, they will not have to pay.

Ultimately, the council voted to hold an emergency meeting on June 16 to rework the existing MOU to state the city will no longer pay the station’s utilities or repairs in exchange for the city opting into the county’s proposed assessment fee of \$167 per year, per household. (This amount has yet to be finalized.) This will remove the double dipping council members felt the city’s residents would be facing if adjustments are not made and will ensure the station in Lawtey stays open.

The timing of the last-minute agreement was even more celebratory when Chief Carter presented the city with one of the new engines acquired by the county through state appropriations. Carter said the new engines come at no cost to the county and one will be going to the Lawtey station.

Art Walk in Melrose

The first Friday Art Walk begins at 6 p.m. on June 6. “Southern Reflections” will highlight the work of artist Alyson Tucker whose paintings of land and seascapes capture the essence of Southern living, according to the Mossman Muse. Mossman Hall hosts the event. Come enjoy conversation, music, shopping and delicious food.

2025 Kingsley Kids Reunion

This year’s Kingsley Kids Reunion will take place Saturday, June 14, beginning at noon. The event is for those who grew up at Kingsley Lake, but all are invited for an opportunity to see friends you haven’t seen since school. There is no charge to attend, but donations of prepared food, appetizers or soft drinks are appreciated.

For more information, please contact Doug Combs at 904-533-2921.2

McDonald’s grants support programs serving K-12

Applications are now open for the 2025 McDonald’s Golden Grants program. To apply, eligible entities can visit mcdgoldengrants.com/florida through October 10.

McDonald’s Owner/Operators across South Carolina, Georgia and Florida will be selecting deserving educators, nonprofit organizations, and the like, who

represent programs that fuel the imagination, education and growth of students, as recipients of a McDonald’s Golden Grant. Entering its fifth year, the program has awarded \$400,000 in its first four years.

In 2024, eleven grants were awarded throughout south Georgia and north Florida. This year, grants will be awarded in the amounts of \$10,000, \$5,000, \$2,500 and \$1,000 based on creativity and hands-on application of projects.

Qualifying activities include arts programs, education initiatives, mentorship and empowerment programs, after-school programs, community service, sports activities, and technology.

Recipients of a Golden Grant will be announced in October 2025.

Church of God food distribution

Starke Church of God by Faith and Farm Share’s upcoming food distributions will take place on Thursday, June 5 and 19, and Thursday, July 3, from 10 a.m. to noon. This is a drive-thru distribution. The church is located at 730 Old Lawtey Road in Starke. (Distribution could start early depending on delivery.)

Foster, adoption classes

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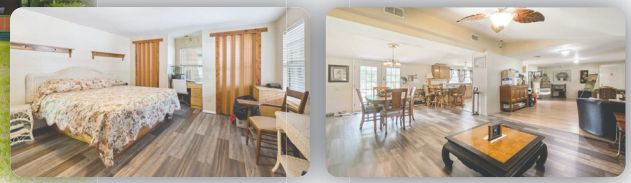
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Clay County breaks ground on new animal shelter



Clay County officials joined representatives from Chewy Health and Lincoln Memorial University on May 27 for a groundbreaking ceremony at the site of the county’s new Animal Services building in Middleburg. During the ceremony, Chewy Health pledged a \$1 million donation—made in partnership with LMU—to support the construction of an innovative educational space within the new facility.

This specialized room, named the Chewy Health & Lincoln Memorial University Applied Learning Center, will serve as a mixed-use space for LMU veterinary students. Designed to deliver hands-on learning in a real-world shelter environment, the center will play a vital role in training the next generation of veterinarians in shelter medicine, handling techniques and clinical skills. The space will also be available for future community events and educational

programming.

“The Chewy Health & LMU Applied Learning Center is a powerful example of what’s possible when education, innovation and community come together,” said Mita Malhotra, President of Chewy Health. “At Chewy Health, we are deeply committed to supporting the broader profession by expanding access to real-world, experiential learning. This pledge reflects our belief that investing in future veterinary leaders strengthens not just the profession, but also the wellbeing of the pets and communities they serve.”

The partnership between the Clay County Board of County Commissioners, Chewy Health, and the LMU College of Veterinary Medicine at Orange Park brings meaningful benefits to the region across multiple fronts. In addition to enhancing student training opportunities, the new facility will significantly expand the capacity of Clay

County Animal Services, enabling staff to perform more advanced medical procedures and improving health outcomes for shelter pets.

“We’re proud to partner with Chewy Health and Clay County on a project that brings lasting benefits to both veterinary education and animal care in our community,” said Kim Carney, Dean of Lincoln Memorial University–College of Veterinary Medicine at Orange Park. “The Chewy Health and LMU Applied Learning Center will give our students valuable hands-on experience early in their training, while also supporting the vital work happening every day at Clay County Animal Services. At LMU, we’re committed to building strong community partnerships that create real opportunities for service, learning, and shared impact.”

The need for expanded services and infrastructure has grown in

Clay sheriff’s office teaches active shooter defense

BY JENN SAMSEL
Special to the Monitor

Clay County Sheriff Michelle Cook’s community outreach program, Sheriff’s Net, held a special presentation on Thursday, April 24, at the First Baptist Church in Keystone Heights.

The Civilian Response Active Shooter Events (C.R.A.S.E.) presentation underscored the importance of community preparedness.

The presentation was given by Deputy Matt Edmonson. He showed a video of several scenarios and went in-depth on how to prepare.

Each year, according to the sheriff’s office, there are about 567 gun violence events in the US. Throughout the decades, gun violence in which the shooter has no connection with the victims has increased by 64%.

Fifty percent of attacks happen in businesses, 20% occur outdoors, and 15% in schools and at other events.

Risk factors for active shooters are a history of violence, exposure to violence, substance abuse/dependence, mental illness, and a history of suicidal thoughts.

Practical knowledge is key in an active shooter situation. Knowing where all the exits are is crucial. The 1 Avoid = Run, 2



Deputy Matt Edmonson

Deny = Hide, 3 Defend = Fight strategy provides a practical approach to survival. Remember, it’s always best to run.

Things to remember: be aware of your surroundings, do not hesitate, such as freezing, and go to the closest, safe exit.

The sheriff’s office held a large-scale active assailant training exercise earlier Thursday morning at the Thrasher-Horne Center in Orange Park. This exercise simulated a real-life active shooter situation, allowing law enforcement and emergency

response teams to practice responding and coordinating in such a crisis.

According to the sheriff’s office, “The simulated active shooter response is part of our ongoing commitment to preparedness and public safety.”

In the event of such a situation, Stop the Bleed is a great program that teaches civilians how to stop victims from bleeding. Clay County Fire Rescue, in collaboration with other local agencies, offers classes on it.

Clay Electric Foundation approves grants for \$165k in April, May

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

April

The Clay Electric Foundation approved 8 applications for April 2025 in the amount of \$89,500.

Fellowship Baptist Food Pantry - \$8,000, (Union County)

Fellowship Baptist Church of Raiford offers a food pantry for those in need in surrounding counties. Grant funds will be applied to the purchase of a walk-in freezer.

Regional Food Bank of Northeast Florida - \$10,000, (Putnam County)

Feeding Northeast Florida is the region’s largest food bank and hunger-relief network, working to establish food security across eight counties. Grant funds will go toward the Snack Pack Child Feeding Program, which provides food for children over the weekend.

Child Advocacy Center - \$20,000, (Alachua County)

The Child Advocacy Center works with child victims to break the cycle of abuse by offering therapy and case management. Grant funds will help replace equipment used in forensic interviews.

National Association of Veterans and Families - \$12,000, (Clay County)

The National Association of Veterans and Families helps veterans and their families understand and maximize the benefits they have earned from the Veterans Association. Funds from the grant will support the Senior Veterans in Crisis program.

NMB Organization - \$14,500, (Alachua County)

The NMB Organization in Gainesville is dedicated to implementing positive youth

programs, particularly targeting public housing communities. Grant funds will support the PATH program by providing funds for academic tutors and supplies.

Ascension St. Vincent - \$5,000, (Clay County)

Ascension St. Vincent’s Foundation in Jacksonville is a not-for-profit, philanthropic organization that provides quality, compassionate healthcare to the community’s most vulnerable. Grant funds will support the Mobile Health Outreach Ministry in Clay County.

Food Pantry of Green Cove Springs - \$15,000, (Clay County)

The Food Pantry is an all-volunteer organization that provides Clay County with emergency food for families and individuals in need. Funds from the grant will be used to purchase nonperishable food items.

KMS Coyote Band Boosters, Inc. - \$5,000 (Alachua County)

The Kanapaha Middle School Coyote Band Boosters supports band students in achieving their best as musicians. Grant funds will help purchase new instruments and uniforms.

May

The Clay Electric Foundation approved eight applications for May 2025 in the amount of \$75,300.

Fort Clarke Middle School Band Boosters - \$7,500, (Alachua County)

Fort Clarke Middle School Band Boosters is a group of volunteers who support the FCMS band program. Grant funds will help absorb the cost of student participation.

Child Evangelism Fellowship of Florida/Camp Good News - \$10,000, (Putnam County)

Camp Good News, located in Hawthorne, is a day camp for children and youth. Funding from the grant will be applied to improvements to the property.

Communities in Schools in Bradford County - \$15,000, (Bradford County)

Communities in Schools of

Bradford County surrounds students with a community of support empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life. Funds will be used for programming to increase the graduation rate of Bradford County students.

Children’s Home Society - \$7,800, (All counties)

Children’s Home Society of Florida is committed to breaking the tragic cycle of child abuse and neglect. Funds from the grant will be used to provide academic support to help students reach grade promotion or achieve a diploma.

Clay County Rescue Mission - \$15,000, (Clay County)

The Clay County Rescue Mission provides hope to families and individuals who need help with the basic needs of food, shelter and clothing. Grant funds will provide assistance in supplying those basic needs.

Here Tomorrow - \$10,000, (Clay County)

Here Tomorrow strives to transform lives by building a community where mental healthcare is acceptable and accessible. Funding from the grant will provide therapy sessions for residents across Clay’s 15-county service territory.

Putnam County Caring Coalition - \$5,000, (Putnam County)

The Putnam County Caring Coalition (PC3) addresses critical needs for Palatka’s unhoused through its year-round Temporary Overnight Safe Space. Grant funds will be used to purchase personal hygiene supply kits for the homeless.

St. Catherine’s Society of St. Vincent de Paul - \$5,000, (Clay County)

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul at St. Catherine’s Catholic Church in Orange Park is an international organization of lay persons which allows men and women to join together in offering person-to-person service to the needy. Grant funds will be used to assist the needy with basic needs such as electric bills, water bills and rent costs.

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UNION COUNTY

Lake Butler finds evidence of water theft

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

Lake Butler’s acting public works director told city commissioners that some of the municipality’s water meters appear to have had wires cut or pulled from meters, allowing the customers to be charged the city’s minimum fee rather than for the amount of water those customers actually used.

Jason Furman made the remarks when trying to persuade commissioners to charge customers to repair damaged meters, such as when a homeowner damages a meter by running over it with a lawnmower.

He said Lake Butler’s water meter supplier told him other utilities charge customers \$250 when replacing a meter’s interface unit.

However, when Furman mentioned that he had found at least one meter, the wires of which appeared to have been intentionally cut, and three more in which wires were pulled from the interface unit, Mayor Melissa Hendrix, City Attorney John E. Maines, IV, and City Manager Kim Hayes focused on the intentional acts.

“That’s sabotage,” Maines



said after hearing Furman’s explanation. “That’s a violation of state law.”

“It’s actually a felony,” Furman replied. “You’re not supposed to open that box.”

Furman said that once Lake Butler’s remote water meter reading system is in place, the city will be notified daily if any meters record no water use over the last 24 hours, alerting public works of the possibility of a meter problem.

“Every morning, we get an email that says, ‘Hey, these people’s meter did not project a reading,’” he told commissioners. “There’s either something that they cut out there or something

wrong out there in the field.”

Maines and Hayes then discussed how the city would investigate possible water theft and notify the sheriff’s office of cases.

“Any time that you suspect foul play or malicious (action),” Maines told Furman, “you need to take pictures. “(Hayes) is going to report it to the sheriff’s office.”

Furman said that besides charging customers for replacing vandalized meters and accusing customers of criminal theft, the city can cut water services to customers who tamper with meters.

Dukes retires after 51 years in school system

BY AMBER J. CRAFT
Special to the Times

After nearly five decades of service to the Union County School District, Eugene Dukes is stepping away from full-time work in education, but not from the community he has called home his entire life.

From walking the halls as a student to leading the district as superintendent, Dukes has worn nearly every hat in the Union County education system since 1975. Teacher, principal, district administrator, coordinator, and superintendent—Dukes has done it all, and then some.

“I’ve done everything there is to do. Basically. I’ve been a teacher, been a principal. I’ve worked at the district office, I’ve been superintendent of schools, and then the last few years I’ve worked in adult ed,” Dukes said in a recent interview. “I’m the director of testing, and we all wear a bunch of hats.”

His retirement marks the end of an era for Union County’s tight-knit education community, but not the end of Dukes’ impact.



Eugene Dukes

transformative years in education—decades of shifting policies, growing student populations, and ever-evolving academic standards. Through it all, he remained a constant source of leadership and stability.

In recent years, he has shifted his focus toward adult education and testing. His current role as coordinator reflects his continued commitment to helping people access education and opportunity at every stage of life.

However, even as he transitions out of the school district, Dukes is far from finished with public service.

“It’s surreal. I mean, at this point I haven’t really got used to it yet, but it’s my love,” Dukes said of retiring. “So, we’re going to continue. Like I said, I’m not going anywhere. I’m going to be around.”

Eyes on the Future: Workforce Development and Beyond

Dukes now serves on an executive board focused on regional workforce development—an area he believes is critical to the future of Union County and surrounding areas. The board is working to restructure workforce development regions in Florida, aiming to improve access to job training and placement services.

“We’re trying to make things

better and easier to navigate for job seekers,” Dukes explained. “This is about creating real opportunities for people—students and adults alike—to find meaningful work and support their families.”

It’s a natural extension of his life’s work: empowering people through education.

His involvement in adult education and workforce development comes at a pivotal time. As economies evolve and the demand for skilled labor increases, Dukes sees great promise in regional collaboration and innovative workforce strategies.

A Lasting Legacy

Dukes’ departure from day-to-day operations may mark the end of an extraordinary chapter, but the impact of his work will continue to shape the district for years to come.

He has been a mentor to generations of educators, a guide to administrators, and a friendly face for thousands of students. His leadership has left a mark not only on the school district but on the entire Union County community.

Perhaps most inspiring is his continued drive to serve.

“I’m not done,” he said. “I may be retiring from the school system, but I’m still going to be part of this community. There’s still work to be done.”

Complaints about vagrants in vacant building

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

Lake Butler officials talked about the need to enforce building codes for commercial properties and prevent vagrants from occupying vacant buildings.

Bo Bayer brought up the topic during the city commission’s May 20 public comment period. He said that for two days recently, an overpowering odor was coming from a building formerly occupied by Sunrise Laundry.

“I get my gas there,” Bayer said of Sunrise Grocery, which is next to the vacant structure. “I like the people, but that place in the back and the old little pizza place over there needs to have a door put on it. And around back needs to be cleaned up.”

Bayer added that during inclement weather, vagrants seek shelter in the building without a door.

Commissioner Joe Stephenson, who attended the meeting by telephone, said he had already talked to the property owner about the problem.

“I’ve talked to the owner of the Sunrise and told him that he needed to make an effort



Bo Bayer said that for two days recently, an overpowering odor was coming from a building formerly occupied by Sunrise Laundry.

to get rid of all those people,” Stephenson said. “I’ve talked to the owner...no less than four times, and he said he’ll take care of it. He would run out there. He would do something, and then the next day they’re back again.”

The commissioner added that the sheriff’s office told him it cannot arrest people for trespassing without a complaint from the property owner.

City Manager Kim Hayes told commission members she would talk to Sheriff’s Captain Lyn Williams for clarification on enforcing trespassing and the possibility of posting “No

Trespassing” signs on the property.

City Attorney John E. Maines IV said the signs would allow law enforcement to bypass warning individuals before arresting them for trespassing.

Commissioners said vagrants moving from building to building within Lake Butler is an ongoing problem, which some frequenting city parks after hours.

Mayor Melissa Hendrix said one individual has, in the past, loitered at Fletcher Myers Park, the park next to City Hall.

A Life Rooted in Union County

Born and raised here, Dukes graduated from the very school where he would later serve as a principal and administrator. His family’s legacy in the area stretches back 12 generations, a fact he shares with pride.

“I went to school here too for 12 years. My family’s been here 12 generations,” Dukes said. “I went first grade through 12th grade here, graduated in this same building right here [Union County High School], and then I went to the University of Florida and then I went to the University of North Florida.”

His blend of humility, humor, and heart has defined his approach to education over the decades. Colleagues describe him as a steadfast leader who always puts the needs of students and staff first.

Leading with Vision, Leaving with Purpose

Dukes’ career spans

Union County hires new EMS director

BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

Union County’s Board of County Commissioners unanimously voted to hire Brent Allen as their new emergency medical services director, replacing retiring director Toby Witt.

The board followed the recommendation of a committee chaired by Sheriff Brad Whitehead. Witt, former EMS Director Allen Parrish, County Coordinator Jimmy Williams, Board of County Commissioners Chair Channing Dobbs, and county Human Resource/Administrative Assistant Michaela Clemons were also on the committee.

Before commissioners made their selection, Allen told them he had been a paramedic for 14 years, with 10 spent in Union County.

“I believe that I was the first captain ever promoted here, when that position was created by Mitch Andrews,” he told commissioners. “I started here under Chris Drum. I was over training. I’ve got my bachelor’s degree from the University of Florida.”



Brent Allen introduces himself to county commissioners before they select him as Union County’s new EMS director.

Allen operated a ShandsCair helicopter base in the Villages and then managed Columbia County’s emergency medical services, which had been contracted to the private ambulance service Century Ambulance. Later, Century also acquired the contract for Taylor County, so Allen managed the EMS departments for two counties simultaneously.

Century later, promoted Allen to chief of operations over the entire state, where he managed

around 350 employees.

Allen told commissioners the experience with the private company was a good opportunity to learn about billing and the importance of efficiency.

However, he said he also saw the downside of privately owned healthcare.

“After Century was acquired,” he said, “I asked if I could step down and just run the EMS services. The inter-facility side and trying to care more about making money than patient care wasn’t really what I’m here for.”

“I’m here for patients,” he added. “That’s the Number 1 priority, to be able to do that. You have to be efficient with money, but trying to make money and affecting patient care by doing that wasn’t something that I was really interested in. So, I asked to step down.”

Allen told commissioners he has trained future paramedics and EMTs at Santa Fe College for the past 10 years. He added that the teaching position will aid him in running the county’s EMS department because he can actively recruit potential employees when working at Santa Fe.

Allen told commissioners he hoped to bring stability to the department.

“I think we’ve had four full-time directors and two interim, and it’s only been about 12 or 13 years,” he said. “I want to bring stability. This is somewhere that I can see myself retiring and being here for the long haul.”

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Bradford sheriff’s volunteers open doors, change lives

BY AMBER J. CRAFT
Special to the Telegraph

At the Bradford County Sheriff’s Office jail, transformation is more than a buzzword—it’s a mission. Through the power of community volunteers, the jail’s programs division is building bridges for inmates to reenter society with the tools, confidence, and support they need to make real, lasting changes.

From substance abuse support groups and art classes to religious services and potential entrepreneurship programs, the jail’s volunteer-led initiatives are creating effects far beyond the facility’s walls. These programs are designed not just to fill time, but to fill lives with skills, hope, and purpose.

“Our jail programs give inmates the tools to rebuild their lives—skills for jobs, hope for tomorrow,” said Sheriff Gordon Smith. “We’re not just locking doors—we’re opening pathways. Teaching a trade, building confidence—that’s how we change lives behind bars. When inmates leave with a purpose, they’re not just free, they’re ready to thrive.”

Building Confidence, One Class at a Time

Jenny Johnson, the jail’s programs coordinator, is leading the charge behind the scenes. With 17 years of experience in the Florida Department of Corrections, Johnson knows how important programming can be to someone trying to break the cycle of incarceration.

“We fully realize the impact we—staff and volunteers—can have on individuals while they are here,” Johnson said. “But more importantly, we understand the bigger impact we can have on our community. Incarceration is an opportunity. If we can return a better-prepared, more confident individual back to our community, we, in turn, make our community better.”

The programs currently offered include substance abuse recovery groups, religious and ministry services provided by local churches, and creative outlets like art classes. These classes aren’t just therapeutic—they provide inmates with moments of dignity and purpose in a setting that can often feel hopeless.

And there’s more on the horizon. Johnson is exploring new additions like entrepreneurship courses, employability training, personal finance education, and life skills development. The aim? Equip individuals with the practical tools they need to survive—and thrive—once they return home.

Volunteers Make It Possible

As a small rural agency, the sheriff’s office faces resource



Bradford County Sheriff’s Office Programs Coordinator
Jenny Johnson

challenges, making volunteers essential to its mission.

“We greatly depend on our volunteers to assist us in providing as much programming and support to our inmates as we can,” Johnson said. “We’d love to expand our offerings even further—into interview techniques, trades, and personal development—but we need people from our community to help us make that happen.”

Volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds—teachers, clergy, counselors, artists, and everyday citizens—who are willing to give their time and share their skills. While some programs are faith-based or therapeutic, others are educational or artistic. Regardless of the format, all of them offer inmates a chance to engage in positive, constructive activity.

Volunteers are required to pass a background check, and for safety reasons, those with recent criminal histories or close ties to current inmates may not be approved. But for those who are eligible, the experience can be as rewarding for them as it is for the inmates.

“Impacting that one person in a positive way can have a tremendous ripple effect within our small town,” Johnson said. “And that’s the reward for volunteers—knowing they’ve had a positive impact on someone else’s life and potentially, an impact on their own community.”

A Culture of Support

Johnson credits the success of the volunteer programs to the unwavering support of the Sheriff and command staff.

“The sheriff, Major (Dawn McKinley), and Colonel (Brad Smith) are extremely supportive of our programming,” she said. “Coming from larger institutions where getting buy-in for inmate programs was sometimes an

uphill battle, it’s refreshing to be in a place where leadership actively encourages new ideas.”

This supportive environment enables innovation, like the proposed entrepreneurship program, which would teach inmates how to write business plans, market products or services, and set realistic goals for self-employment.

“Some of our inmates are incredibly creative and resourceful,” Johnson noted. “If we can help them channel that into something legitimate and sustainable, we’re not just helping them—we’re helping their families and their communities.”

Changing Lives, Changing Communities

While inmate turnover at the jail can be frequent and unpredictable, the impact of even a short-term program can be profound. Johnson recalls how even brief interactions with volunteers can serve as a lifeline.

“I would like to think that when they get out, if nothing else, they have got a resource or resources that they can reach out to,” she said. “If they do run into a hurdle, they’ve got someone they can call—a volunteer they met in here—who can help them get over that hurdle.”

The goal is simple but powerful: to give inmates a better chance at success when they return home and make Bradford County a stronger, safer community.

“I root for the underdogs. That’s who I love,” Johnson said. “And in this work, you see the potential in people who may have forgotten they had any.”

Get Involved

The Bradford County Sheriff’s Office seeks community

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

Marie Black, 43, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Bradford deputies on May 27 for forgery and larceny.

Justin Bryant, 41, of Green Cove Springs, was arrested by Bradford deputies on May 26 for DUI.

Vincent Green, 48, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on May 27 for an out-of-county warrant.

Cyrus Hallmon, 62, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on May 27 for an out-of-county warrant and aggravated battery.

Tracy Holmes, 50, of Middleburg, was arrested by Bradford deputies on May 28 for smuggling contraband into a correctional facility.

Alvin Jenkins, 53, of Jacksonville, was arrested by Bradford deputies on May 24 for DUI and driving with a suspended or revoked license.

Zoykynda Long, 21, of Gainesville, was arrested by Bradford deputies on May 30 for a probation violation.

Ricky Rinehart, 67, of Lawtey, was arrested by Bradford deputies on May 27

for hit and run and aggravated assault.

Bobby Robinson, 50, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on May 28 for a probation violation.

Carol Sanders, 48, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on May 28 for battery.

Brair Stephens, 23, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on May 28 for battery and burglary.

Brandon Waters, 36, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on May 28 for failure to appear.

James Williams, 33, of Starke, was arrested by Bradford deputies on May 25 for a probation violation.

Union

Lakisha Douglas, 47, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on May 31 for aggravated assault and battery.

Shawn Killings, Jr., 35, a Department of Corrections inmate, was arrested by Union deputies on May 27 for smuggling contraband into a prison.

John Nettles, 42, of Lake Butler, was arrested by Union deputies on May 31 for battery and resisting an officer.

Virgil Ruddick, 40, of Onalaska, Texas, was arrested by Union deputies on June 1 for an out-of-county warrant.

Clay

Arik Bach, 29, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on May 24 for malicious land burning and resisting an officer.

Linda Green, 63, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on May 24 for trespassing.

Ricky Lentz, 38, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on May 27 for possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug equipment, resisting an officer, and driving with a suspended or revoked license.

Tyeoka Lewis, 38, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on May 24 for possession of cocaine and possession of drug equipment.

Noely Pereira, 19, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on May 24 for operating a motor vehicle without a valid license.

Kyle Ploe, 32, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on May 30 for battery.

Jasmine Poore, 43, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on May 27 for possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug equipment.

Robert Rock, 51, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on May 26 for domestic battery.

Rocky Shuman, 40, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on May 27 for a probation violation, possession of methamphetamine, and possession of drug equipment.

Caralee Smith, 34, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on May 29 for battery.

Zaheed Tusher, 43, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on May 27 for a probation violation, possession of a controlled substance without a prescription, possession of fentanyl, and possession of drug equipment.

Richard Watson, 55, of Keystone Heights, was arrested by Clay deputies on May 24 for possession of drug equipment.

members who want to make a difference. Whether you have professional skills to share, a passion for teaching, or a desire to support others through

mentorship or ministry, your time could help change the trajectory of someone’s life.

If you want to become a volunteer or learn more about

the programs, contact the Bradford County Sheriff’s Office Programs Division at (904) 966-2276.

Work beginning on water storage ground tank



BY DAN HILDEBRAN
dan@bctelegraph.com

At press time, the City of Lake Butler said a contractor would begin work on the municipality’s water storage ground tank on June 3.

The city was initially awarded a \$875,000 state grant to replace its current tank. However, three bids to replace the structure were over \$1 million.

Lake Butler’s engineering

firm, Mittalier, recommended refurbishing the utility’s current tank instead of replacing it to meet the city’s funding constraints, and persuaded the state’s Department of Environmental Protection to go along with the plan.

The city said in a notice, “Throughout construction, there may be a strange smell of sulfur or excessive chlorine that may be present until the project is completed.”

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Obituaries

Anita Clark

Jan. 28, 1963 – May 25, 2025. It is with deep love and sadness that we announce the passing of Anita Clark, beloved wife, mother, daughter, sister, and friend, who departed this life on Sunday, May 25, 2025, at the age of 62. She was the devoted wife of Kenny Clark of Providence, and together they built a life full of love, laughter, and cherished memories. She was a proud and loving mother to her three children, Kenny (Stephanie), Darren (Ashlea), and Jessica (Alexander). Her heart overflowed with love for her family, and nothing brought her more joy than spending time with them, especially on the Suwannee River, a place she held dear. She dedicated many years of service to the Union County School District, where she touched countless lives with her warmth, compassion, and commitment to education. She was preceded in death by her beloved brothers, Danny and Keith, whose memories she carried with her always. She is survived by her loving parents, Ruth and H.D. Sapp; and her brother, Kevin (Jamie) Sapp. She also leaves behind a host of grandchildren, aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends who will miss her dearly and remember her always. A memorial service to celebrate her life will be held Saturday, June 7, at 11 a.m. at the home of her parents, located at 1999 S.E. 82nd Place, Lake Butler. Lunch will follow the service as family and friends gather to honor and remember her. Anita’s memory will live on in the hearts of all who knew and loved her.



PAID OBITUARY

James Hall Sr.

Mr. James “Scott” Hall Sr., 58, of Keystone Heights passed away Wednesday night, May 28, 2025, from injuries he sustained in an automobile accident. He was born July 16, 1966, in Jacksonville to Richard and Arnola (Boynton) Hall Sr. He enlisted in the United States Army from March 1987 through 1994, then joined the Florida National Guard in 1997 and became active (AGR) in 2003. He was a three-time combat war veteran, last serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2003-2004, where he became a Purple Heart recipient. Throughout his service, he was an honorable and dedicated soldier, receiving numerous accommodations and medals. He was honored to serve his country. Shortly after retiring from the service in March 2016, he found a few jobs that would keep him busy and help integrate him back into civilian life. His final place was Walmart in Starke, where he met some great people he could share his pranks and sense of humor with. He was known as a big prankster. He was an avid paintball player, enjoyed fishing and woodworking and loved wildlife. He believed in paying it forward. Most importantly, he was a dedicated and loving husband, father and loyal friend. His father, Richard, preceded him in death. His survivors are his loving and dedicated wife of 37 years, Pamela (Wells) Hall; and their children, Scott Hall Jr. and Ellie (Kortney) Goforth-Hall; and his mother, Arnola (Boynton) Hall, all of Keystone Heights. Also left behind is his brother, Rick (Shellie) Hall of Jacksonville; and a precious grandpup, Zeus. Visitation will be held Thursday, June 5, from 10 a.m. until 10:45 a.m. at Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home Chapel. A military graveside service will follow at 1:30 p.m. at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell In lieu of flowers, the family would greatly appreciate memorial donations to be given to www.PTSD.VA.GOV. Arrangements are by Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home, 340 E. Walker Drive, Keystone Heights, 32656. 352-473-3176. www.jonesgallagherfh.com



PAID OBITUARY

Jeremiah Hamilton

Jeremiah Jackson Hamilton, 45, of Starke was unexpectedly called home on Tuesday, May 13, 2025. Born on April 13, 1980, in Orange Park, he grew up in Starke and graduated from Bradford High School. He was a loving father, devoted soulmate, and wonderful dog dad to his English bulldog, Winston. He was affectionately known as “Uncle Bubba” to the entire family. His hobbies and interests helped define who he was. He was a die-hard Georgia Bulldog fan. If you knew Jeremiah, you know he’d squeeze red and black into every single outfit in some way. He loved watching the Dawgs play football and baseball. Saturdays were specifically reserved every weekend in the fall. It wouldn’t be a true game day without hearing “HBTFD!” at least once. He always told us that Georgia felt like home to him, and he went there every chance he got. He was also a huge fan of the Atlanta Braves. As a Starke native, he spent many fall seasons cheering on the Tornadoes every Friday night. He was passionate about all sports, and he studied them rigorously. Jeremiah will forever be known as a DGD. He was a one-of-a-kind person, a man of great generosity, kindness, integrity, optimism, and selflessness. He never failed to put a smile on your face and left an everlasting impact on everyone who knew him. He was also the most extraordinary father anyone could ever be blessed with. He loved his children wholeheartedly. His kindness and endless love will live through them forever, and the person he was shaped them into the adults they are today. He is survived by his children, Macie Jaiden Hamilton and Jeremiah Jackson Hamilton II; his soulmate, Nicole Bumbaugh; bonus children, Morgan and Mason Long; siblings, Cara Hamilton (Sean) Hayes and Erin Hamilton (Joel) Richardson; parents, George Hamilton and Sherry Solze Roseberry; niece, Kelsei Rehberg; nephews, Chance Clemons, Chase Hayes, Canyon Hayes, Wesley Lucius, Riley Lucius, and Brantley Lucius; great-niece and nephews, Willow Clemons and Marley Hayes; aunts, Kim Solze (Wayne) Teston and Lindsey Solze; uncle, Richard C. (Donna) Solze Jr.; and many dear friends. He was preceded in death by his paternal grandparents, Sherrod W. Hamilton and Anne Jackson Hamilton of Jefferson, Georgia; and maternal grandparents, Richard C. Solze Sr. and Joann Miller Solze, both of Starke. A celebration of life for Jeremiah will be held on Friday, June 6, from 4 p.m. until 8 p.m. at the Woman’s Club of Starke. Friends and family are welcome.



PAID OBITUARY

Lori R. Manning

Lori Rowe Manning passed away on Thursday, May 22, 2025, at Shands at UF, Gainesville. She attended the schools of Bradford County. She was a homemaker and attended Fellowship Church of Lawtey. Survivors are her son, Frederick Williams; and a host of sisters, brothers, nieces, nephews, cousins, and many friends. The visitation will be Friday, June 6, from 4 p.m. until 6 p.m. at Haile Funeral Home Inc., 802 Oak St., Starke. Funeral services will be Saturday, June 7, at 11 a.m. at Church of Christ, Lawtey, with Minister Curtis White officiating. Interment will be at Peetsville Cemetery, Lawtey. Arrangements are under the care of Haile Funeral Home, Inc., 802 Oak St., Starke. 904-964-7905.

Willeane Nazworth

Mrs. Willeane Nazworth, 80, of Starke passed away Sunday, June 1, 2025, following an extended illness at Baya Pointe Nursing and Rehabilitation in Lake City. She was born March 9, 1945, in Macclenny, the daughter of the late Vollie Griffiths and Altie Mae (Varnes) Griffiths. She was a member of Trinity Baptist Church of Keystone Heights and, prior to retirement, worked as a staff assistant for the University of Florida Tax Law School. She enjoyed her church family, serving God and working in her flower garden. Her greatest joy was in serving her family, spending time with them and cooking. Following her retirement, she had many happy times camping with Franklin. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her grandchildren, Scott Thomas Nazworth and Patrick Alan Nazworth. Survivors are her husband of 62 years, James “Franklin” Nazworth of Starke; sons, Daryl Nazworth (Cathy Woodall) of Lake Butler and Eric Nazworth (Sherry Thomas) of Lake Butler; brothers, Marvin (Nancy) Griffiths of Raiford, and DeWitt (Libby) Griffiths of Raiford. She is also survived by her grandchildren, Daniel Nazworth, Rachel Nazworth (James) Cavin and Jonathan Nazworth; along with great-grandchildren, Aubrey Nazworth, Jackson Nazworth, Emma Cavin, Calleigh Cavin and Macie Cavin. The family will receive friends at DeWitt C. Jones Chapel of Jones-Gallagher Funeral home on Thursday, June 5, from 10 a.m. until 11 a.m. with funeral services beginning at 11 a.m. Interment will follow at Santa Fe Cemetery in Hampton. Arrangements are by Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home of Starke. 904-964-6200 www.jonesgallagherfh.com.



PAID OBITUARY

L.E. Padgett

Mr. L.E. Chester Padgett, 88, a lifelong resident of Bradford County, passed away unexpectedly at his home Friday, May 9, 2025. He was born on Aug. 27, 1936, to Harry and Lillie (Tanner) Padgett. He retired from the Bradford County Road Department as a heavy equipment operator in 1998. He attended Smyrna Baptist



Church and enjoyed tinkering around the house and working on old cars and mowers that he could resell. But, most of all, he loved riding his grandchildren around on his side-by-side. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his son, Gregory “Greg” Padgett; daughter, Sandra Padgett; brother, Homer Padgett; and sister, Mildred Batton. He leaves behind his loving and devoted wife of nearly 64 years, Velma Padgett; and their son Bryan (Connie) Padgett; as well as a daughter-in-law, Marcilla (Carter) Padgett, all of Starke. He was lovingly called “Papa” and “Papa2” by grandchildren, Alyssa (Trey) Shannahan and Ashlyn (Connard) Rodgers; and great grandchildren, Mason and Asher and soon to be two more. Also left behind is his niece and nephew, Linda and Joey Baldree; and nephew, Michael Padgett. Funeral services were held Thursday, May 15, at Smyrna Baptist Church with Brother Charles Starling officiating. Interment followed at Long Branch Cemetery. Arrangements were under the care of Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home, 620 E. Nona St., Starke 32091. 904-964-6200. www.jonesgallagherfh.com

PAID OBITUARY

Stephen Prince

Stephen F. Prince was escorted with friends and family by his side on Sunday, June 1, 2025, to be forever with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He passed away peacefully at home after a long illness, at age 72. He was born Oct. 4, 1952, in Petersburg, Virginia, to Mary Lou Parker Rogers and Ralph Rogers. He cherished his family and friends and had a heart for service to his Lord and country. He evangelized for many years and was passionate about leading people to accept the Lord Jesus as their personal Savior. He worked in the Grace Prison Outreach Ministry prior to becoming founder and pastor of Glory Days Tabernacle in San Mateo. He proudly served in the U.S. Marine Corps for four years and earned the rank of sergeant. Marine Corps Sgt. Prince, Stephen F., will be laid to rest with military honors. He was a very talented musician who loved playing and collecting guitars. He also enjoyed collecting firearms and target shooting in his backyard. He leaves behind his loving and devoted wife of 28 years, Dena (Lourcey) Prince; and his children, Stephen L. (Gayle) Prince of Kapolei, Hawaii, Phoebe Prince of Jacksonville and Justus Prince of Deland; and his stepdaughter, Victoria Smith of Keystone Heights. Also left behind are his sisters, Heather Rogers (George) Mackel of Georgia, Katherine “Binky” Naidenoff of Naples, Stephanie Elaine Herndon of Georgia, and Kim Herndon Legg of Georgia; and his three grandchildren, Dominique, Luke and Noah, who lovingly called him “Grandad.” Funeral services will be held at Lannie Road Baptist Church, located at 5998 Lannie Road, Jacksonville on Thursday, June 5. The family will receive friends beginning at 10 a.m. The funeral service will begin at 11 a.m. and will be officiated by Evangelist Toby Stephens, Pastor Dale Kitchens, Evangelist Ronald Story, and Rev. Ray Chandler. Interment will immediately follow at Jacksonville National Cemetery with military honors. In lieu of flowers, please make a memorial donation to the charity of your choice in memory of Stephen F. Prince. Arrangements are made by Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home, 340 E. Walker Drive, Keystone Heights 32656. 352-473-3176.

PAID OBITUARY

Marshall Sullivan

Mr. Marshall Hugh Sullivan, 79, of Keystone Heights went to be with Jesus on Thursday, May 29, 2025. He was born Aug. 14, 1945, in Richmond, Virginia to Larkin and Lela Ruth (Nye) Sullivan. At the young age of 16, he began a lifelong career with Winn Dixie. He applied as a bag boy and worked his way to district manager, retiring after 38 years of dedicated service. In 1959, while in high school, he met Frances Paulette Brooks. From that day forward, the Lord has not only walked every step with them, but has guided them and taken care of their family through their wonderful 61 years of marriage. He was her stronghold and sweetheart. He was a man of high character, and a Godly man, who was always quick to share Jesus with others. Marshall has been a dedicated and active member of First Baptist Church for 23 years, where he served as deacon for many years, worked in the kitchen, and had a strong presence in the walk-through Bethlehem at Christmas. He enjoyed traveling with Paulette and playing golf, but God and his family came first. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his sister, Jacqueline Garner. Marshall leaves behind his loving and much devoted wife of 61 wonderful years, Frances Paulette (Brooks) Sullivan and their children, Carla (Mike) McGivney and Matthew (Susi) Sullivan; brother, Jim (Sharol) Sullivan; Mike (Terri) Lore; along with additional brothers and sisters-in-law; many nieces, nephews; and a host of extended family members and friends that will miss his loving smile and encouraging words. He was lovingly called “Grandpa” by grandchildren, Justin (Alexis) Lore, Jessica (Chris) Gilkerson, Gabriela Sullivan, Cameron Sullivan, and Jonathan (Sarah) Tompkins; and great-grandchildren, Griffin Gilkerson, Kaiden Edwards, and Levi Lore. A Celebration of Life will be held at 11:30 a.m., Friday, June 6, at Keystone Heights First Baptist Church with Pastor Ryan Begue and Pastor Jim Prose officiating. The family will receive friends beginning at 11 a.m. A private interment will be held at Keystone Heights Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, please make a memorial donation to Community Hospice in memorial of Marshall. Arrangements are by Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home, 340 E. Walker Drive, Keystone Heights 32656. 352-473-3176. www.jonesgallagherfh.com



PAID OBITUARY

Bobby Wood

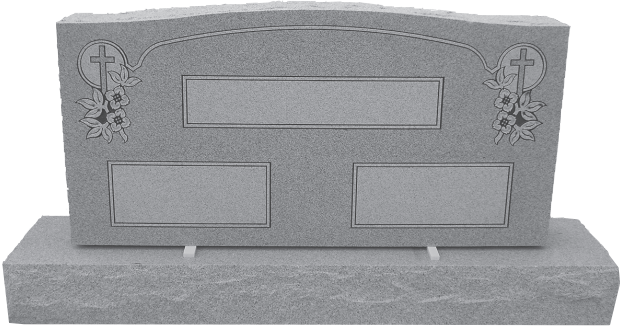
Bobby Wood, 79, of Bradford County passed away Sunday, June 1, 2025, at Ascensions St. Vincent’s Clay County in Middleburg. He was born in Rome, Georgia on Jan. 7, 1946, to the late James Cleveland Wood and Willie Ruth Qualls Wood. He was raised in Cave Springs, Georgia and attended Cave Springs High School. At a young age, he had an interest in machinery and driving. At just 16 years old, he began his lifelong career as a truck driver, a path that would span an incredible 57 years. While in school, Bobby answered the call with honor and courage when he was drafted into the United States Army in 1965. He proudly served in the Vietnam War as a combat engineer and as a heavy equipment transporter. In 1967, he was honorably discharged from the military and returned home for a short season. He relocated to Jacksonville in 1968 and made Bradford County his forever home in 1976. He was dedicated to his career and found great joy in driving trucks. Driving wasn’t just a job, but a way of life. He devoted 20 years to Winn-Dixie Distribution Center as a truck driver and became an entrepreneur, starting his own company, Bobby Wood Trucking, LLC in the early 1990s. After 57 years of dedication and countless miles traveling behind the wheel, he retired at the age of 73. In his free time, he enjoyed the peacefulness of fishing and loved watching fast race cars. For years, he and his sons loved the excitement of going to drag races, dirt track races, and watching NASCAR races. Whether at the track, on the television, or under the hood, Bobby found joy in the high-speed thrills, along with working on semi-trucks. More than anything, he loved his family and enjoyed spending precious time with them. He was preceded in death by his parents, James Cleveland Wood and Willie Ruth Qualls Wood Bentley; stepfather, Nathaniel Bentley; brother, Frankie Wood; sister, Aline Crews; and brother-in-law, Jackie Crews. He is survived by his children, James Allen (Dana) Wood of Macclenny, Anthony (Diane) Wood of Cartersville, Virginia, and April Sabrina Wood and Bryan Sebastian Wood, both of Bradford county; brother, Johnny (Eloise) Wood of Bradford County; sister, Maria Couey of Bradford county; grandchildren, Myles (Justin), Tyler, Garrett (Pauline), Seth (Lauren), Tiffany (Daniel), and Carlo; great-grandchildren, Josie, Jace, and Colton; along with several extended family members and friends. A Celebration of Life will be held in the near future. In lieu of flowers, please make donations to help find a cure in Bobby’s honor to Huntington’s Disease Society of America, <https://hdsa.org>. Arrangements are under the care and direction of V. Todd Ferreira Funeral Services, 250 N. Lowder St., Macclenny 32063. 904-259-5700. Visit www.ferreirafuneralservices.com to sign the family’s guest book.

PAID OBITUARY

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Obituaries

Legal Notices

Tyson Woodland

Tyson “Bug” Woodland, a beloved son, brother, grandson, and friend, took his final ride on Thursday, May 29, 2025, leaving us far too soon at the young age of 18. Born on Nov. 16, 2006, in Gainesville, he was a true motoring enthusiast who couldn’t resist getting his hands greasy from the tender age of a kid. His lifelong passion for motors had everyone convinced he could fix anything with an engine, and probably a few things without one! Tyson was a proud graduate of Union County High School, class of 2025, where he not only mastered mechanics but also enjoyed playing baseball and being an active member of the FFA. Did we mention he was always the life of the party? With a contagious smile and a heart of gold, he never met a stranger. Kids adored him, and he returned the affection wholeheartedly, his joyful spirit lighting up any room he entered. In what can only be described as a well-rounded life, he had hobbies that included “mudding” with friends, riding four-wheelers, hunting, and indulging in a diet that included pickles, Dr. Pepper, and tomatoes, because who doesn’t? Simply put, he was a boy who lived life to the fullest and embraced every adventure with open arms.

Tyson’s family, who cherished him dearly, includes his father, Kendall (Veronica) Woodland and mother, Kelley Lane, all of Lake Butler; sisters, Harley and Avery Woodland of Keystone; grandparents, Woody and Regina Lane and Rick and Susan Brown, all of Worthington Springs; his “Meme,” Barbara Harrison; aunts and uncles, Kasey Adkins of Starke, Kristen Woodland of Lake City, Caytlyn (Justin) Denunzio of Lake Butler, Clay (Faly) Halle of Lake Butler, Sadie Brown of Lake Butler and Alecia (Rob) Lukatz of Lake Butler; and his best friend, his dog, Bella.

Family and friends are invited to celebrate Tyson’s extraordinary life at a visitation and funeral service on Sunday, June 8, at Sardis Baptist Church in Worthington Springs. The visitation will start at 2 p.m., followed by the service at 3 p.m. He will be laid to rest at Elzey Chapel Cemetery.

Here’s to Bug. May we always remember the laughter, the kind-hearted spirit, and the adventures that define this incredible young man as we keep his memory alive in our hearts!

Archer-Milton Funeral Home is honored to serve the Woodland and Lane families. 386-496-2008. www.ArcherFuneralHome.com



PAID OBITUARY

Alberta Young

Mrs. Alberta Crawford Young, 83, of Starke passed away Saturday, May 24, 2025, at HCA Orange Park. She was born March 23, 1942, in Starke to Olbert and Grace (Glover) Brown. She attended Bradford County High School and was a homemaker. As a child, she was baptized in the Church of God. She was known for being an excellent cook and enjoyed listening to the Gaithers’ music and watching Jimmy Swaggart. Sunday afternoons were spent with Lacy watching her favorite NASCAR driver, Joey Logano. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by a grandson, Eric Cowart; and former husbands, Bill Johnson and Lonnie Crawford.

Left behind to cherish her memory is her loving husband of 10 years, Lacy Young; daughters, Coleen Carroll and her devoted husband Eric Carroll, and Deborah Sapp; along with stepsons, Charles Crawford, Andy (Gloria) Young (Gloria); and sisters, Brenda (Doyle) Thomas and Linda Shearer; and sister-in-law, Barbara Daves. Alberta was lovingly called “Nanny” by Tina Kelso, Angel Hunsinger, and Holly (Ricky) Mendez; along with her great-grandchildren, Zachary Adams, Jordan Cason, Amerie Matthew, Chloe Hanson, Rachel Kelso, and Brook Kelso; and we can’t forget her precious poodle, Bella. Also left behind are additional extended family members and friends that will miss her dearly.

The family received friends Friday, May 30, at DeWitt C. Jones Chapel. Funeral services to celebrate her life followed, with Pastor Marty James Moon officiating. 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

PAID OBITUARY

James Young Jr.

James “Jim” Edgar Young Jr., 86, of Melrose, passed away on Saturday, May 24, 2025, at HCA Florida North Florida Hospital in Gainesville. He was born in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina on July 31, 1938, to the late James Edgar Young Sr. and Nina Marty George Young. As a child, Jim and his family relocated to Bradford County, where he was raised. He graduated from Bradford High School in 1956 and, immediately following school, he joined the United States Air Force. He had a desire to serve from an early age and enjoyed a long successful career in the military. Before traveling the world with the military, he married his high school sweetheart, Glenda Underhill, in 1958. Jim, Glenda, and their children were stationed in Tampa, England, New Hampshire, Thailand, Maryland, and lastly Pensacola, before his honorable discharge in 1977. While proudly serving our county, he was a member of the VIP Squadron, Strategic Air Command, and the Military Air Lift Command. In 1975, he and Glenda relocated back to Bradford County and parted their union after 25 years of marriage. In 1990, Jim made Melrose his forever home and met his best friend, Shirley Blackwell. He and Shirley were happily married in 1991 and shared 31 amazing years of marriage. Jim was a devoted husband, loving father, and grandfather who cherished his family. He was always active and never fully retired. Following 20 years in the military, he owned and operated Jim Young Aviation, at the Keystone Heights Airport and the Palatka Municipal Airport, where he was a general aviation aircraft mechanic. He was still currently helping many with their aviation needs. He was also very active at Eliam Baptist Church in Melrose, where he was a longtime member. He proudly served as a Deacon for years and loved assisting with church activities. More than anything, he loved his family and thoroughly enjoyed spending precious time with them. He was such a treasure and will be greatly missed by all who knew him. Jim was preceded in death by his parents; and loving wife, Shirley Young.

He is survived by his children, James “Jim” (Kimbra) Young III, Debbie (James) McCallister and David (Tootsie) Young, all of Starke; stepchildren, Chris and Brian Hester; sister, Patsy Deal; grandchildren, Christopher, Joshua, Aaron, David Alen, Amanda, Laura, Raychell, Kaytee, Hunter, and Caleb; along with several great-grandchildren, extended family members and friends.

A Celebration of Life will be held on Friday, June 6, at 11 a.m. at Eliam Baptist Church in Melrose with Pastor Arthur Johnson officiating. Military honors will be rendered. He will be laid to rest with his late wife, Shirley, at Eliam Cemetery.

Arrangements are under the care and direction of V. Todd Ferreira Funeral Services and Archie Tanner Memorial Chapel, Starke, 904-964-5757

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Legals for the week of June 5, 2025

BRADFORD

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA
CIVIL DIVISION
CASE NO. 042024CA000430CAAXMX
Division No. 042024CA000430CAAXMX
WILMINGTON SAVINGS FUND SOCIETY, FSB, NOT IN ITS INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY BUT SOLELY IN ITS CAPACITY AS INDENTURE TRUSTEE OF CIM TRUST 2022-R3 Plaintiff,

vs. FOREST GARBER SR, UNKNOWN SPOUSE OF FOREST G. GARBER, JR., UNKNOWN SPOUSE OF TAMMY L. GARBER, UNKNOWN TENANT 1 9736 NW COUNTY AND UNKNOWN TENANT 2 9736 NW COUNTY, et al., Defendants

NOTICE OF SALE PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 45

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Final Judgement dated April 29, 2025, and entered in Case No. 042024CA000430CAAXMX of the Circuit Court of the EIGHTH Judicial Circuit in and for BRADFORD County, Florida, wherein Wilmington Savings Fund Society, Fsb, Not In Its Individual Capacity But Solely In Its Capacity As Indenture Trustee Of Cim Trust 2022-r3 is the Plaintiff and FOREST GARBER SR, UNKNOWN SPOUSE OF FOREST G. GARBER, JR., UNKNOWN SPOUSE OF TAMMY L. GARBER, UNKNOWN TENANT 1 AND UNKNOWN TENANT 2, the Defendants. Denny Thompson, Clerk of the Circuit Court in and for BRADFORD County, Florida will sell to the highest and best bidder for cash at 945 North Temple Avenue, Starke, FL 32091 in accordance with section 45.031, Florida Statutes on **June 26, 2025**, the following described property as set forth in said Order of Final Judgment, to wit: A PARCEL OF LAND LYING IN THE S 1/2 OF THE NE 1/4 OF SECTION 34, TOWNSHIP 5 SOUTH, RANGE 21 EAST, BRADFORD COUNTY, FLORIDA, SAID PARCEL BEING MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

COMMENCE AT THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF SAID S 1/2 OF THE NE 1/4 AND RUN SOUTH 00 36' 01" EAST, ALONG THE WESTERLY BOUNDARY THEREOF, 763.81 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 89 57' 17" EAST, 24.13 FEET TO THE EASTERLY BOUNDARY OF THE RIGHT OF WAY OF COUNTY ROAD 225 (FORMERLY STATE ROAD 225) FOR THE POINT OF BEGINNING (SAID POINT ALSO BEING THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF A COUNTY). FROM THE POINT OF BEGINNING THUS DESCRIBED CONTINUE SOUTH 89 57' 17" EAST, ALONG THE NORTHERLY BOUNDARY OF SAID PARCEL (O.R. BOOK 212, PAGE 75), 411.49 FEET TO AN IRON ROD SET AT AN INTERSECTION WITH A NORTHERLY PROLONGATION OF THE EASTERLY BOUNDARY OF LANDS DESCRIBED IN O.R. BOOK 137, PAGE 44 OF SAID PUBLIC RECORDS; THENCE SOUTH 00 36' 01" EAST ALONG SAID NORTHERLY PROLONGATION AND ALONG THE EASTERLY BOUNDARY OF SAID PARCEL (O.R. BOOK 137, PAGE 44) AND PARALLEL WITH THE WESTERLY BOUNDARY OF SAID SOUTH OF THE NE 1/4, A DISTANCE OF THE WESTERLY BOUNDARY OF SAID S 1/2 OF THE NE 1/4 A DISTANCE OF 114.98 FEET TO AN IRON ROD SET ON THE SOUTHERLY BOUNDARY OF SAID PARCEL (O.R. BOOK 137, PAGE 44), THENCE SOUTH 89 39' 07" WEST, ALONG SAID SOUTHERLY BOUNDARY 412.10 FEET TO AN IRON ROD SET ON THE EASTERLY BOUNDARY OF THE RIGHT OF WAY OF SAID COUNTY ROAD 225, THENCE NORTH 00 17' 40" WEST, ALONG LAST SAID EASTERLY BOUNDARY, 117.80 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING..

IF YOU ARE A 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, YOU MUST FILE A CLAIM WITH THE CLERK OF COURT BEFORE OR NO LATER THAN THE DATE THAT THE CLERK REPORTS THE SURPLUS AS UNCLAIMED. IF YOU FAIL TO FILE A TIMELY CLAIM, YOU WILL NOT BE ENTITLED TO ANY REMAINING FUNDS. AFTER THE FUNDS ARE REPORTED AS UNCLAIMED, ONLY THE OWNER OF THE RECORD AS OF THE DATE OF THE LIS PENDENS MAY CLAIM THE SURPLUS.

If the sale is set aside, the Purchaser may be entitled to only a return of the sale deposit less any applicable fees and costs and shall have no further recourse against the Mortgagor, Mortgagee or the Mortgagee's Attorney.

DATED AT BRADFORD County, Florida, this 14th day of May, 2025.
RUBIN LUBLIN, LLC
Attorney for Plaintiff
2313 W. Violet St.
Tampa, Florida 33603
Telephone: (813) 656-8801
Fax: (813) 656-8802
FLemailservice@riselaw.com

By: /s/ Brittany L. Harvey
Brittany L. Harvey, Esq.
Florida Bar No. 124795
24-F000027/TL
Published in: Bradford County
Telegraph
6/5 2tchg 6/12-BCT

NOTICE OF SETTLEMENT

Victoria Seeley vs. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Notice is hereby given that the above referenced parties have entered into a settlement of claimant's tort claim(s) against the insured, for the total amount of **\$5,426.94** to be paid by State of Florida to the claimant.
6/5 1tchg-BCT

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY
GENERAL JURISDICTION DIVISION
CASE NO. 24000272CAAXMX
PENNYMAC LOAN SERVICES, LLC, Plaintiff,

vs. ELIZABETH MARIE COODY, et al., Defendant.

NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE SALE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to a Summary Final Judgment of Foreclosure entered April 28, 2025 in Civil Case No. 24000272CAAXMX of the Circuit Court of the EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT in and for Bradford County, Starke, Florida, wherein PENNYMAC LOAN SERVICES, LLC is Plaintiff and Elizabeth Marie Coody, et al., are Defendants, the Clerk of Court, DENNY THOMPSON, will sell to the highest and best bidder for cash Bradford County Courthouse, 945 North Temple Avenue, Lobby, Starke, FL, 32091 in accordance with Chapter 45, Florida Statutes on the 26th day of June, 2025 at 11:00 AM on the following described property as set forth in said Summary Final Judgment, to-wit: Lot 7 and Northerly 1/2 of Lot 6, Block 27, Livingston, Truby and Company's Addition to Starke, in Section 28, Township 6 South, Range 22 East, as per the Plat recorded in Deed Book J, Page 232, of the Public Records of Bradford County, Florida.

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.
I HEREBY CERTIFY that a true and correct copy of the foregoing was: [check all used] (x) E-mailed (x) Mailed this 30th day of May, 2025, to all parties on the attached service list.

By: /s/ Morgan B Lea
Morgan Lea, Esq.

McCalla Raymer Leibert Pierce, LLC
Attorney for Plaintiff
225 E. Robinson Street, Suite 155
Orlando, FL 32801
Phone: (407) 674-1673
Fax: (321) 248-0420
Email: MRService@mccalla.com
Fla. Bar No.: 96405
Published in: Bradford County
Telegraph Inc.
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.

24-10244FL 6/5 2tchg 6/12-BCT

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA IN AND FOR BRADFORD COUNTY
GENERAL JURISDICTION DIVISION
CASE NO. 24000138CAAXMX
FREEDOM MORTGAGE CORPORATION, Plaintiff,

vs. BENJAMIN JACOB BUCHBERGER, et al., Defendant.

NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE SALE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to a Summary Final Judgment of Foreclosure entered February 24, 2025 in Civil Case No. 24000138CAAXMX of the Circuit Court of the EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT in and for Bradford County, Starke, Florida, wherein FREEDOM MORTGAGE CORPORATION is Plaintiff and Benjamin Jacob Buchberger, et al., are Defendants, the Clerk of Court, DENNY THOMPSON, will sell to the highest and best bidder for cash Bradford County Courthouse, 945 North Temple Avenue, Lobby, Starke, FL, 32091 in accordance with Chapter 45, Florida Statutes on the 26th day of June, 2025 at 11:00 AM on the following described property as set forth in said Summary Final Judgment, to-wit: A parcel of land lying in Lot 1 "Woodlawn" according to the Plat thereof as recorded in Plat Book 1, Page 17, in Section 11, Township 5 South, Range 22 East, Bradford County, Florida; said parcel being more particularly described as follows:

Commence at the Southwest corner of said Lot 1 and run N 00°32'54"W, along the West line of said Lot 1, also being the West line of said Section

11 and the centerline of NW 22nd Avenue (66' R/W) for a distance of 295.00 feet; thence run N 89°15'42"E for a distance of 33.00 feet to a found 1/2" iron rod located on the Easterly R/W line of said NW 22nd Avenue for the Point of Beginning.

From the Point of Beginning thus described run N 00°32'54"W, along said Easterly R/W line of NW 22nd Avenue and parallel with the West line of said Lot 1, for a distance of 363.80 feet to a found 1/2" iron rod located on the North line of said Lot 1; thence run N 89°15'39"E, along said North line of Lot 1, for a distance of 262.00 feet to a set 1/2" iron rod; thence run S 00°32'54"E, parallel with the West line of said Lot 1, for a distance of 363.80 feet to a set 1/2" iron rod; thence run S 89°15'42"W for a distance of 262.00 feet to the Point of Beginning.

Subject to platted streets of said "Woodlawn"

Subject to any covenants, easements, and/or restrictions of record. The above described parcel being the same lands as described and recorded in ORB 1712, Pages 464-465 of the public records of said County, LESS and Except that portion lying within the right of way of NW 22nd Avenue.

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.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that a true and correct copy of the foregoing was: [check all used]

(x) E-mailed (x) Mailed this 30th day of May, 2025, to all parties on the attached service list.

By: /s/ Morgan B Lea
Morgan Lea, Esq.

McCalla Raymer Leibert Pierce, LLC
Attorney for Plaintiff
225 E. Robinson Street, Suite 155
Orlando, FL 32801
Phone: (407) 674-1673
Fax: (321) 248-0420
Email: MRService@mccalla.com
Fla. Bar No.: 96405

Published in: Bradford County
Telegraph Inc.

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.

23-08047FL 6/5 2tchg 6/12-BCT

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Andrew Thomas fired as UCHS football coach

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Union County Superintendent of Schools Mike Ripplinger announced on May 29 that Andrew Thomas would no longer be head football coach at Union County High School, ending a five-year stint that saw the Tigers win 77 percent of their games.

Ripplinger, in a statement emailed to media outlets, said, “In the best interest of the Union County High School football program — both in the immediate and long-term future — the decision was made to part ways with Head Coach Andrew Thomas. Union County is appreciative of the success Coach Thomas had during his tenure, and may he continue to have a successful career.

“An interim head coach will be named to lead the program through the next season as a search is conducted to find and hire the next head coach for the following spring.”

Lamar Waters was announced as the interim coach on June 2 (see related story).

Ripplinger didn’t say anything more specific regarding the firing during a May 30 interview with a Telegraph-Times-Monitor journalist, but did say his decision was based on “a combination of things over a period of time.”

“I believe most people who know me know that I don’t make rash decisions,” Ripplinger said. “I definitely would not have made a rash decision in this case.”

That’s not to say there weren’t some “sleepless nights,” Ripplinger said. After all, he was parting ways with a coach who went 46-14 over five years. Thomas’ UCHS teams had a 10-5 postseason record and advanced to at least the regional finals every season. The Tigers played in the state semifinals in 2022 and 2024.

“That was something I struggled with,” Ripplinger said.

Thomas, who has an overall record of 132-37 in 14 seasons (with stints at Trenton, Ocala’s Trinity Catholic and Brewton, Alabama’s T.R. Miller), released a statement via his Facebook account on May 31. Like Ripplinger, he didn’t offer any specifics as to why he was let go, but he did say “plenty more details will come when the time is right.” The coach added that he



Andrew Thomas had a 46-14 record in five seasons at UCHS. His postseason record was 10-5 as the Tigers made the playoffs all five seasons, advancing to the state semifinals twice.

did nothing to deserve being fired and that he had nothing but “full support” from program boosters and the school board.

He reiterated that he would “elaborate at a later time.”

Ripplinger said he understands that the end of May is not when you want to make a coaching change in your football program.

“I admit that this is not the best timing at all,” Ripplinger said, “but at the end of the day, I made a decision based on what I believe is best for the student-athletes, both now and for the future.”

Five assistant coaches — Scott McDaniel, Kyle Presnick, Riley Reed, Craig Slocum and Travis Smith — resigned on June 2. All posted statements via their Facebook accounts, citing they disagreed with Ripplinger’s decision to fire Thomas.

“Today, with a heavy heart as a staff, we decided to take a stand for what is right and wrong and step aside from coaching football at UCHS,” Reed wrote.

Slocum wrote, “I didn’t like the way things were done and feel like things could have been handled differently.”

“I am unwilling to support a decision by county administrators that I felt was unwarranted and unfair,” McDaniel wrote. “My passion for coaching and my desire to help guide the young men in this program made this the most gut-wrenching decision of my career. My heart hurts, but wrong is wrong.”

Presnick wrote of the “very hard decision” and stressed that “I did not quit on the kids.”

“I am fighting for the kids because I do not believe that the direction that was taken for the program was the right one.”



Superintendent of Schools Mike Ripplinger said it was in the best interest of the football program — immediately and longterm — to part ways with Thomas.

Smith’s statement echoed the same sentiments.

“No, I am not quitting on the kids, but I did not agree with the direction the program was being pushed,” Smith wrote. “If I stayed on, I would be condoning the actions of our administration, which I will not do.”

Despite the situation, Reed expressed how much he has enjoyed coaching in Union.

“For five years, I’ve poured my heart and soul into this community,” Reed wrote. “This community has been nothing but amazing to me. These kids I’ve coached have changed my life, and hopefully I’ve made half an impact on them as they have on me. I have nothing but amazing things to say about this place. Sometimes God works in funny ways. While I may not agree with what is happening, I would not change the time I’ve spent here.”

Most of the coaches expressed that they’ll always love Union County and will always be Tigers.

Thomas gives thanks, highlights program success

As part of his Facebook statement, Thomas said, “I love Union County,” and added that “the amount of people that have reached out to me the past two days tells me all I need to know and gives me comfort that God has a plan.”

His statement would go on to describe how he enjoyed being in Union County and coaching for the Tigers.

See THOMAS, page 12

Lamar Waters will be interim coach for the 2025 season

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

Lamar Waters was named interim head football coach and athletic director at Union County High School on June 2, stepping in for Andrew Thomas, who was relieved of his duties on May 29.

Waters, who was a part of the staff in the spring after coaching and serving as athletic director in Williston, is no stranger. His family lived in Lake Butler before moving to Dunnellon, where Waters attended middle school and high school. Waters, who was a part of Robby Pruitt’s football staff at UCHS in the 1990s, has held multiple coaching positions in Union, including head coach of the Lake Butler Middle School football team and head coach of the UCHS baseball team.

“He has been part of multiple successful programs and has served as athletic director in other districts,” Union Superintendent of Schools Mike Ripplinger said via a statement emailed to the Telegraph-Times-Monitor. “Throughout his career, Coach Waters has spent many years in Union County and has developed many relationships over the years that will assist the program.”

Waters went from not even thinking he’d be coaching to now leading the UCHS football program. However, he was offered the opportunity to join the staff, which he did since his son Kanaan was playing.

His son was a big reason he felt he needed to step up and take on the interim role, but not the only reason.

“At the end of the day, I couldn’t leave him out there by himself,” Waters said. “That was a little selfish on my part. I didn’t want to leave my own son out there, but at the same time, I had made some connections in my short time (back) here with some of the other kids.

“No matter where I’ve been, I’ve always rooted for Union County, so I just thought it was something I needed to do.”

Waters, who graduated from Dunnellon High School and the University of Florida, had short coaching stints in Dunnellon and Hawthorne before joining Pruitt’s staff at UCHS. He later joined the staff of Bradford High School Head Football Coach Rowland Cummings, whom Waters coached alongside at



Lamar Waters has coached multiple sports at UCHS, beginning with being an assistant on Robby Pruitt’s football staff in the 1990s.

UCHS. While at BHS, Waters also coached baseball as an assistant and served as head coach on three separate occasions following the resignation of other coaches.

He returned to Union, where he helped coach baseball and football at UCHS and served as head coach of the middle school football team. Waters was the UCHS head baseball coach for three seasons and also briefly filled in as athletic director during Head Football Coach Ronny Pruitt’s life-threatening illness in 2016.

A return to Bradford saw Waters fill the role of athletic director as well as helping to coach football.

Waters coached alongside Robby Pruitt again when Pruitt, after coaching for 20-plus years in Georgia, returned to Florida to take the head job at Williston in 2022.

His responsibilities as athletic director in Williston took up a lot of his time. He was ready to take advantage of an opportunity to return to Union when a teaching position opened up. That would allow him to see more of his family. His wife, Erin, already works in the school system and sons Kanaan and Kyson are Union students. Waters’ oldest son, Kale, graduated from UCHS in 2023.

“The people in Williston were very great and gracious to me, helping me out as much as possible, but I just wanted to be closer (to home),” Waters said. “I was starting to miss more stuff with my kids. I’ve given a lot of time to other people’s kids. It was just time to give a little bit more back to mine.”

Since becoming the UCHS interim coach, Waters has been busy hiring coaches after five assistants resigned (see related story). In talking to a Telegraph-Times-Monitor journalist on June 3, Waters said he was close to completing his staff and noted that it looked as if it would consist of some who played for the Tigers and some who’ve played and coached collegiately.

Waters said he and the program have already received great support in such a short period of time. He said he wasn’t sure if he was going to be able to feed players breakfast on the morning of June 3, as summer workouts are now underway. Now, it looks as if he may have someone providing breakfast and lunch for the remainder of the week and possibly for the whole summer.

Also, he said that many who work for the school district have offered to help in any way they can.

“I can’t say enough about how much people have helped us and how much the good Lord has blessed us,” Waters said.

Ripplinger said having an interim coach for 2025 will “give us time to get our resources together, not be in a rush and make a good decision.”

“Toward the end of the upcoming season, we will search for the best possible candidate who is out there to take over the team for the spring,” Ripplinger said.

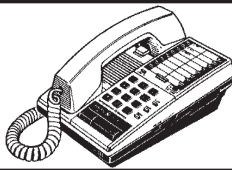
The superintendent added that “the type of coach we’re probably looking for is not the type who would just walk away from a program at this time of the year.”

As for Tiger football fans, Ripplinger encourages them to continue to support the program, the coaches and, most importantly, the players.

“The ones who always deserve our attention and support the most are the players,” Ripplinger said. “That should not change. They’re the ones who are out there working out all summer long and hitting during two-a-days and kind of going through the grind of the season.

“Regardless of what has occurred off the field, they still deserve our respect and our support on Friday nights and during the week.”

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WE ACCEPT

THOMAS

Continued from page 11

“I was drawn to coach in Union County because of its history for loving and supporting their football teams. And Union County did not disappoint. They did support and still are very supportive of the football team, my staff, my family and myself. No matter what the future holds for my family and me, Union County will always be very special to me.”

Thomas then focused on his family and coaching staff.

“While I gave this program my heart, it would not have been this successful without the help of my wife (Angel) and children,”

he said. “Some are aware — but obviously some aren’t — how much time and effort and love my wife and family have put into the background of this program.

“I have also been very fortunate to have a wonderful coaching staff throughout the five years that’s changed year to year — different guys that have bought into our culture and some who have gone on to better themselves as professionals and new guys that have come in and loved and built on what we’ve done the last five years. They have worked far beyond the hours of their paycheck.”

Thomas said coaches’ jobs are to “turn boys into men, describing football as a “tough sport played by tough men.” That

job is “harder and harder in this day and age,” Thomas said, but he expressed his gratitude for the student-athletes he coached.

“Without them and their true commitment and buy-in, then we don’t have what we’ve had.”

Thomas highlighted the program’s accomplishments since he was hired in 2020, including advancing three rounds deep into the postseason every year and the two state-semifinal appearances.

“We’ve won 10 playoff games in five years — equal to the previous 16 seasons combined,” Thomas said.

He also said during his time there the Tigers experienced the “best five-year run in Union County in 30 years,” which is

correct regarding postseason success. The Tigers did win 51 of 60 games in 2011-15 under Ronny Pruitt, though their playoff record those years was 5-5.

Thomas mentioned program improvements, such as the field getting a new jumbotron and the locker room getting new legacy lockers and flooring. Also, the field house is being renovated.

“Most importantly,” Thomas said, is that 16 players have gotten opportunities to play in college.”

Thomas closed his statement by saying, “Apparently, this culture of success has been challenged and questioned, but I’m dang sure proud of it.”

Thomas was one of five finalists for the UCHS coaching position and was, according to Carlton Faulk, who was superintendent of schools, a unanimous selection by a committee composed of 10 members who represented five decades of UCHS football.

Fauk cited Thomas’ work ethic, moral character and small-town background as his biggest strengths.

Thomas, a 1995 Dixie County High School graduate who would go on to graduate from Florida State University, coached as an assistant at Newberry, Dixie and then Chiefland before taking on the head job at Trenton.

Trenton went 60-6 and won two state championships in

Thomas’ five seasons there. The school experienced 13 postseason wins under Thomas after having just 10 all-time prior to his arrival.

Thomas left Trenton to take the head job at T.R. Miller High School in Brewton, Alabama. He coached there two seasons, going 13-8, before moving back to Florida, where he was hired as the head coach at Ocala’s Trinity Catholic.

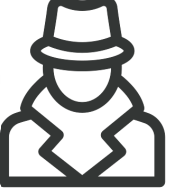
Trinity went 13-9 in two seasons before Thomas accepted the head job at UCHS.

The Tigers won at least eight games in each season under Thomas, with a 12-win season in 2021 and a 10-win season in 2024.

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Sea-themed installation highlights Woman’s Club meeting

BY CLIFF SMELLEY
cliff@bctelegraph.com

The installation of officers for the Woman’s Club of Starke was a cause for shell-abration, if you will.

General Federation of Women’s Clubs Florida District 4 Director Terry Laws conducted the installation at the club’s May 14 meeting, using a theme of “Gifts from the Sea” and highlighting each position with a particular seashell.

“The ocean is filled with many wonders,” said Laws, who’s a member of Jacksonville’s Lakeshore Woman’s Club. “Among these wonders are found beautiful and useful sea animals — their homes are known to us as seashells. There are lessons to be learned from our ocean friends, and today, I’d like to present a gift from the sea to each one of you to remind you of the office that you are to hold next year.”

Laws began by presenting President Sheila Barnes with a conch shell, saying, “In the olden days, this shell was often used as a trumpet, perhaps to herald the beginning of a meeting or to give notice of a gathering. Appropriately enough, one kind of conch is known as the queen conch for its qualities.”

Barnes will preside over club and executive-board meetings as well as serve as the club’s official delegate at district and state meetings, Laws said, adding, “May you, madame president, let this shell remind you that your club has elected you because of your leadership qualities.”

First Vice President Cindy Little was presented with a clam shell.

“Clams live in the midst of many coral animals and at times with sea plants and animals actually living on the clams’ shells,” Laws said.

After explaining that Little’s duties would include assuming the president’s duties in her absence, arranging programs for monthly meetings, handling annual reporting and promoting the club’s service in the area of arts and culture, environment and education and libraries, Laws said, “Like the clam, you will help others to thrive as they join your group, and you, too, will gain by having many members around you.”

Laws presented Second Vice President Lisa Rodgers with a murex shell, saying, “The murex has a hard shell and strong spines. You shall serve the duties of the president or first vice president as needed. You shall be over membership, health and wellness, and civic engagement.

“Like the murex, you will be strong in promoting your club’s functions.”

As she presented Third Vice President Cleo Elder with a cone shell, Laws said, “These shells are the favorite of many collectors and are considered some of the most highly valuable shells in the world. You shall serve the duties of the president or first vice president or second vice president as needed. You shall be responsible for fundraising and service projects, which shall include education.

“May the thought of this valuable shell encourage you in this position.”

Lori Thompson’s office of fourth vice president was represented by a cowrie shell. Thompson wasn’t present, but the script Laws went by described the cowrie shell as being “as smooth on the outside as it is on the inside” and that the shells were valuable and used by fur traders.

With the fourth vice president being responsible for social activities and the house and grounds, the cowrie shell is to serve as a reminder that the role makes her “valuable to us all.”

Recording Secretary Jejetta Lee was presented with a scallop shell.

“This type of shellfish travels by a kind of jet propulsion,” Laws said. “After the shell opens and closes, a jet of escaping water pushes the scallop forward.

“As you accurately record the minutes of the executive board and club meetings, you will perform quickly and efficiently. You shall be the custodian of all official documents and

papers and the preparing of the yearbook.

“May this shell remind you of your responsibilities.”

Laws presented Corresponding Secretary Jaelyn Jackson with an auger shell, saying, “These high-spined shells have many whorls, which wind down, resembling a writing tool. They are said to inspire intuition.

“You shall attend to all the correspondence of the organization. You shall give notice to the election of new members and publish the newsletter.

“May you remember this shell when you correspond with others as you represent the organization, and may you always have your heart in your job.”

Treasurer Linda Lee received a quahog shell.

“Many years ago, Indians used this shell animal for two purposes — for food and as money,” Laws said. “May you be reminded to be useful to your organization, and may the quahog especially remind you to be cautious as you handle the finances. You shall keep a record of all income and expenses. You shall hold all monies and keep records of all receipts and disbursements and make a monthly, written report. You shall submit your records to the auditor at the end of the year.”

In conclusion, Laws told the officers they were only a part of the club.

“May each one of you do your part, and may the rest of you do your part, so that you can function effectively, harmoniously and joyfully, as do our friends from the sea,” Laws said.

President’s awards

Barnes, who has already been serving in the role of president, presented awards to several club members, starting with Charnelle Whittemore, a past president she described as a mentor and one who “took the time to take this club into her hands and run it for four solid years, and through blood, sweat and tears has really made an impact — not only on the club, but on me as well.”

“She’s a great friend to me,” Barnes said, adding, “I just love her with all my heart, so this year’s Woman of the Year award goes to my beautiful friend, Charnelle Whittemore.”

Barnes presented Little with an Outstanding Service Award, saying, “This young lady has been by my side. When I first asked her to be a part of the team and sit on the board with me as my right-hand woman, she was like, ‘As long as you’re doing it, I’ll do it with you.’

“She’s been a go-getter. She keeps our prayer requests going. She reaches out and keeps our socials going. She’s always asking questions to keep our minds open on the board, so we come up with new ideas and do new things.”

Jackson received a Leadership in Excellence Award, with Barnes saying that Jackson “jumped in” and took on such roles as chairing the arts and culture committee and being involved in multiple projects as well as the General Federation of Women’s Clubs District 4 arts-and-crafts event.



The Woman’s Club of Starke held an installation of officers at its May 14 meeting, with General Federation of Womeh’s Clubs Florida District 4 Director Terry Laws performing the installation. Pictured (l-r) are Past President Charnelle Whittemore, Treasurer Linda Lee, Corresponding Secretary Jaelyn Jackson, Recording Secretary Jejetta Lee, Third Vice President Cleo Elder, First Vice President Cindy Little, Second Vice President Lisa Rodgers, President Sheila Barnes and Laws. Not pictured: Fourth Vice President Lori Thompson.

In presenting Charlotte Williams with a Spirit Award, Barnes said, “She’s there with us for everything. If we need something, all we do is call Miss Charlotte, and she will do the best that she can.”

Monterey Wasdin, who Barnes said has “been a blessing to our club,” received a Lifetime Achievement Award, while Rodgers was presented with a Community Impact Award.

“She has chaired our civic engagement and outreach committee,” Barnes said of Rodgers. “She’s always volunteering.”

Elder was presented with a Fundraising Champion Award following a year in which the club raised more than \$18,000.

“This lady never wants to be recognized,” Barnes said, “but she’s always there, willing to help. When I jumped in as fundraising chair, she was right there by my side, helping me sell those tickets and helping me get things done.

“Now, we’re helping her as much as we possibly can.”

In presenting Lorie Riley with a Creative Vision Award, Barnes described Riley as “very creative” and noted how she, as a new club member, co-chaired the arts and culture committee and assisted with the production and sound for the club’s “Drinking Habits” play.

Jejetta Lee received a Behind the Scenes Award.

“She’s very quiet, but she serves on our board, and she’s always making sure we’ve got our reports in as far as the minutes to our board meetings, minutes for the luncheons and things like that,” Barnes said.

In presenting Brenda Bell with a Best New Member Award, Barnes said, “She has joined forces with Ms. Lisa (Rodgers), helping volunteer with our civic engagement and outreach programs. She helps with the disadvantaged. Anytime we need her, she shows up. She’s helping bring food in, put food on the table, clean up, put chairs away — whatever needs to be done.”

Penny Pearson-Yaxley received a Most Cheerful Member Award.

“Anytime I’ve ever come to this club, this woman has a smile on her face, and she greets people with a smile,” Barnes said.

Barnes’ final presentation was the Problem Solver Award, which went to Linda Lee.

“Anytime I need a question answered, she will answer me,” Barnes said.



Charnelle Whittemore (left) receives the Woman of the Year Award from Sheila Barnes.



Cindy Little (left) receives an Outstanding Service Award from Sheila Barnes.



Jaelyn Jackson (right) receives a Leadership in Excellence Award from Sheila Barnes.



Charlotte Williams was presented with a Club Spirit Award by Sheila Barnes.



Sheila Barnes (left) presents a Lifetime Achievement Award to Monterey Wasdin.



Lisa Rodgers (left) receives a Community Impact Award from Sheila Barnes.



Cleo Elder (right) receives a Fundraising Champion Award from Sheila Barnes.



Lorie Riley (right) receives a Creative Vision Award from Sheila Barnes.



Sheila Barnes (left) presents a Behind the Scenes Award to Jejetta Lee.



Sheila Barnes (left) presents a Best New Member Award to Brenda Bell.



Penny Pearson-Yaxley (right) receives a Most Cheerful Member Award from Sheila Barnes.



Linda Lee (left) receives a Problem Solver Award from Sheila Barnes.



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Birthday

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life and birthday of

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As Earl battles terminal cancer, what better time to comfort him. We know God is an awesome God!

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Starke Branch - 2460 Commercial Dr.

FWC asks for reports of wild turkey sightings until Aug. 31

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is asking Florida residents and visitors to report all sightings of wild turkeys between now and Aug. 31. This includes hens, poults (newly hatched wild turkeys) and gobblers.

Florida's annual summer wild turkey survey is part of a broader multi-state initiative aimed at better understanding the reproductive success and abundance of wild turkeys. This survey helps determine wild turkey nesting success, poult survival and population distribution and abundance,



which is crucial information that FWC biologists need to manage and sustain healthy wild turkey populations for years to come. Nests typically begin to

hatch in late spring and continue into the summer. However, nesting success can vary each year based on several factors, including weather conditions, predation and habitat quality. Fluctuations in nesting success and poult survival can strongly influence wild turkey populations.

By reporting wild turkey sightings, Floridians and visitors can help biologists estimate population metrics at statewide and regional levels.

To learn more and start reporting, visit MyFWC.com/hunting/turkey.



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