



Wildcats on a roll with 2 shutouts against Paxon

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THE BAKER COUNTY PRESS

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75¢

MARCH 6, 2014 THURSDAY

Raid at cock fight Sunday results in 17 arrests

Sheriff's deputies acting on a tip raided a cock fight about midday on March 2 near Cuyler and arrested 17 attendees on charges ranging from staging the fights to animal cruelty and contributing to the delinquency of minors for having children present.

Warrants were issued the following day for two others who managed to slip through a police dragnet of nearby woods, and another suspect turned himself in later.

The officers found nine dead birds piled up near a shed where the fighting was taking place on Timberland Rd., along with five live chickens in two wooden crates in the rear of a nearby pickup truck. Also seized was a wide array of equipment including tackle and tool boxes with spurs used to heighten the "blood sport" aspect of the activity, medication to stanch the flow of blood and antibiotics.

Sgt. James Marker said he and other deputies acted on a telephoned report late that morning, and witnessed participants and spectators fleeing into nearby woods as they approached the address. Most remained at the scene.

Sgt. Marker said Jeffrey Ray Griffis, 35, and Michael Burnsed, 22, both of Sanderson, admitted active involvement in fighting the chickens. They, along with Timothy Bennett, 48, of Sanderson, were charged with cruelty to animals, counts that may be upgraded because of their level of involvement.

A Chevrolet pickup registered to Mr. Bennett was found nearby containing a crate for transporting the birds and a weighing scale. They were seized as evidence.



Makayla Burnham



Jeffrey Griffis



Michael Burnsed



Timothy Bennett

Deputies Chris Walker, Jacob Satterwhite and Daryl Mobley scoured nearby dense woods and swamp and succeeded in arresting Makayla Burnham, 18, of Glen, Morgan Jones, 19, of Gainesville, Mr. Bennett and a 17-year-old male juvenile. They face counts of resisting arrest without violence in addition to animal cruelty.

Warrants were issued for Reginald Keith, 27, of Sand-

erson and James Larkey Wilkerson, 41, who resides at the nearby mobile home. Mr. Keith was believed to have driven a 2003 Chevrolet Tahoe found on the property, though it was registered to Tasha Coleman.

Mr. Wilkerson's 2003 Chevrolet pickup was also parked near the scene. A Toyota pickup registered to Mitchell Canaday was thought to have been driven there by

one of the participants, but police have yet to pinpoint the identity.

Sgt. Marker said the remaining spectators who did not flee are also charged with felony animal cruelty. They were identified as James Thompson, 28, of Jacksonville, Mark Belford, 47, of Macclenny, William Harris, 24, of Sanderson, Florence Francis, 57, her husband Jesse, 60, and their juvenile grandson, 17, all of Sanderson, Priscilla Dyal, 36, of Glen, April Griffis, 31, and the wife of Jeffrey Griffis, Dustin Starling, 25, of Macclenny, Angela Morris, 44, and Kayla Blackburn, 25, both of Glen St. Mary.

Brandon Ray Combs, 18, of Sanderson turned himself in at county jail the following day. A 2003 Tahoe registered to his parents was inventoried

during the raid, yielding four live chickens in a crate plus medication.

The Francis couple, April Griffis and Ms. Dyal were also charged with contributing to the delinquency of minors by allowing children in their care to be present.

Eight or possibly nine spectators ranging in age from 3-17 were on the property.

"Normally if we'd get a call like this, everyone has left the area before we get there," observed Sgt. Marker, "so we were surprised when we saw all those people when we drove up."

It was the first case of animal fighting resulting in arrests since April, 2010, when officers raided a pit bull ring north of Sanderson, arresting two men and confiscating the animals, some of which were badly mauled.

MACCLENNY ZONING ADJUSTMENT BOARD

Wait a minute! Decision was legal

MIKE ANDERSON
PRESS STAFF

Weeks after Macclenny city officials declared a February 3 meeting of its Zoning Board of Adjustment "null and void" for failing to meet quorum requirements of an old ordinance that nobody was aware of at the time, the validity of the meeting was upheld by a second overlooked ordinance revealed just this week.

About two hours before the zoning panel was scheduled to meet at 5 pm on March 3 to reconsider two cases carried over from last month, the meeting was abruptly cancelled after officials announced they had discovered an ordinance passed in September 2000 that reduced the number of board members required for a quorum from four to three.

Three members were present when the board, which had two vacant seats at the time, rendered two decisions on February 3. One approved American Enterprise Bank's request for a

sign variance and the other denied an application for a permit to sell liquor at Smoker Friendly, a shop at 101 S. 6th St. licensed as a convenience store to sell tobacco products, beer, wine and other items.

A few days later, however, city officials said they apparently had made a mistake assuming that three members would constitute a quorum instead of the four called for in a 1999 ordinance, which a clerical worker came upon while researching the case.

The meeting was rescheduled and additional advertisements were placed in *The Baker County Press* announcing the date and time for the new hearing at 5 pm on March 3. That afternoon, Assistant

City Manager Roger Yarborough went to Smoker Friendly to personally inform the owner, Ghandi Ayoub, of the change.

"He came by around 4 o'clock and gave me a copy of the law (2000 ordinance)," Mr. Ayoub said the next day. "I was, like, in shock. They have this law all along and don't know about it until now? I'm speechless."

He said he had hired Steven Diebenow, a Jacksonville lawyer who specializes in land use and zoning law, to represent him and he was already en route to Macclenny to attend the meeting. Now, he'll be representing his client in a lawsuit seeking to

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Woman injured as SUV strikes culvert, overturns on Crews Rd.

Fire and rescue workers from several departments needed nearly a half hour to extricate the driver of this 1995 Isuzu Rodeo that overturned on Crews Rd. just east of CR 125 the morning of March 3 after striking a culvert. The Florida Highway Patrol said Ann S. Watson, 67, of Glen lost control on a nearby curve, then veered across the northbound lane onto the grass shoulder before striking the culvert and flipping over on its right side. Ms. Watson, the vehicle's sole occupant, was flown from nearby Cuyler Field to UF Health of Jacksonville with serious injuries. Charges are pending.

Draw water from St. Mary's? Doubtful

JOEL ADDINGTON
MANAGING EDITOR
reporter@bakercountypress.com



Geoffrey Sample of the St. Johns River Water Management District at Tuesday's Lunch and Learn.

Projections show the regions of northeast and north central Florida will need about 74 million more gallons of water per day than the existing groundwater supply can meet without harming water quality and quantity, according to the St. Johns River Water Management District.

Recommendations for ways water utilities can make up the shortfall were addressed this

week at the Chamber of Commerce's monthly Lunch and Learn event, when the water management district's intergovernmental coordinator Geoffrey Sample presented the district's draft water supply plan.

The plan identifies 18 "alternative" water supply projects in the district, which includes Baker County and 17 other northeast and central Florida counties.

Of particular interest to the two dozen or so Chamber

members gathered March 4 was the only project identified here in Baker County: the St. Mary's River. It was also the only project of the 18 for which no potential yield was identified.

Mr. Sample explained that's because the district has not yet studied the proposition of withdrawing water from the St. Mary's, which is fed by the Okefenokee Swamp watershed and empties into the Atlantic Ocean.

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Press sues for access to financial records of closed BCCS

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Wait! Decision was legal

From page 1
 overturn the zoning board's denial.
 "I'm hoping to get the minutes (from the February 3 zoning meeting) and take it to court," said Mr. Ayoub, who previously said he had contacted state authorities and already made arrangements to buy an available liquor license prior to getting city zoning approval.
 There is no provision in the municipal code for zoning appeals to be taken to the city commission. Instead, the only recourse for disgruntled applicants who are denied zoning requests is to take their grievance directly to court.
 The 2000 ordinance, which superseded the one a year earlier and reduced the number of members that must be present to meet quorum requirements, was discovered by a clerical worker at city hall on the morning of March 3 while going through the city's code of ordinances on a separate issue.
 City Manager Phil Rhoden

immediately sent a copy to City Attorney Frank Maloney for an opinion.
 "This ordinance was passed subsequent to the original ordinance requiring four members to constitute a quorum," Mr. Maloney said in a letter back to the city manager later that day. "With its passage back in September 2000 three members constitute a quorum."
 "It appears that through inadvertence either at the City in not forwarding this ordinance to Municipal Code Corporation or Municipal Code Corporation failing to register the ordinance, it never appeared in digital form."
 Whatever the reason, Mr. Maloney said there was no question that the February 3 meeting met the legal requirements of the latest ordinance.
 "The earlier meeting was completely valid," he said. "There is no reason for a second meeting on the matters that were previously decided."
 The 2000 ordinance was not

found last month was because nobody actually looked in the code book at city hall, Mr. Rhoden said. Instead, they simply went to the Municipal Code Corporation website to research it, but the latest ordinance was never added to the digital listings.
 Mr. Rhoden, who gave up a city commission seat to take the city's top management post in April last year, said in an effort to avoid a similar mishap in the future he has assigned city hall staffers to the task of researching all city ordinances "to make sure no others are missing."
 Meanwhile, he hasn't lost his sense of humor.
 "Do I feel embarrassed? Absolutely," he said. "We're like three monkeys jumping on a football."
 City commissioners appointed Pam Lyons, a retired registered nurse, as the fourth member on the unpaid Zoning Board of Adjustment last month. The city is still seeking a fifth volunteer.

Injured when car hits moving train

JOEL ADDINGTON
 MANAGING EDITOR
 reporter@bakercountypress.com

Two Sanderson women were flown to UF Florida Health the afternoon of February 28 in serious condition after their car struck a train in Baxter about 1:15 this afternoon.
 Driver Cynthia Marie Gordon, 36, was heading north on CR 127 with passenger Ashley Suggs, 16, when their 2008 Pontiac G6 hit a moving train at the railroad tracks just south of SR 2, according to the Florida Highway Patrol.
 Charlton County emergency responders arrived on scene first, followed by units from Baker County. Initially, first responders said both victims were moving and talking inside the vehicle, one complaining of chest pain and the other of leg pain. A short time later authorities called for two helicopters to transport both women to the hospital.
 FHP described their injuries as serious. The crash is still under investigation, including whether it was alcohol-related.

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COMMENT

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters are welcome, but must contain the signature of the writer, a telephone number and city of residence. Letters must be concise and reflect opinions and statements on issues of current interest to the general public. The newspaper reserves the right to reject any material which in the newspaper's judgement does not meet standards of publication.

CONTACT US

By phone at 904.259.2400 or by fax at 904.259.6502. You can stop by our office located at 104 S. Fifth Street, Macclenny, FL or mail your submission to PO Box 598, Macclenny, FL 32063 Online at www.bakercountypress.com or email editor@bakercountypress.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Seeks to continue Y's sports line-up

Dear Editor:
 The board of directors of the Baker County Family YMCA is truly saddened by the decision of the First Coast YMCA to close the wellness center in our branch. It has been an asset to our community for the past 13 years.
 We understand this was a financial and business decision they felt was necessary. Many Baker County residents have participated in the group exercise classes and used the gym equipment in the wellness center, and this will be sorely missed. True to the Y's mission and with the help of scholarships, the Y has served not only those who are able to pay the nominal membership fee, but also those who could not pay that fee and who otherwise would not have been able to participate in the Y programs, and we are very proud of that endeavor.
 The Baker County board of directors raised funds over the years to help pay for those scholarships. Even so, the First Coast YMCA has had to subsidize our branch since its inception and we thank them for their continued support.
 We are all aware that Baker County has some of the poorest health statistics in the state. That is another reason this is such a great loss. We have seen over the years many members who lost weight, became fit and educated in weight loss and diabetes, and found support in the Y experience.
 Our community needs to continue to address these issues. We have had a great partnership with the Baker County Health Department in providing health education, awareness and fitness opportunities to improve the overall health in the community. The directors would like to continue to make this a priority for our county.
 The YMCA will continue to provide the Silver Sneakers classes to our seniors, the pool will be open for business for swim lessons, group exercise classes and the swim team, the youth sports programs will continue as well as home school P.E. classes, along with other programs as they develop.
 We are grateful that these opportunities continue to be offered, and ask the community to continue to support the good work of the Y through its participation and support.

Margaret (Mag) McGauley
 Chairwoman, Board of Directors
 Baker Family YMCA

No 'band-aid' clinic

Dear Editor:
 While I sympathize with Dale Sirk's situation and experience at Ed Fraser Hospital (letter to the editor, Feb. 20 edition), I'd like to challenge the degrading headline and say I strongly protest even the smallest insinuation that Fraser Hospital is a "band-aid clinic."
 Thank God for this hospital and especially for what it has done for me and my wife. I've been a patient in other hospitals for various things, and sometimes we all have to wait our turn before we can be treated.
 My wife and I have been treated by several physicians at Fraser Hospital and Dopson Medical Center, and we appreciate the trust we have gained in their services. The fact that we have confidence in them saves us many trips to Jacksonville. We have been to the emergency room on several occasions and received the highest professional treatment when our time came to be served.
 It may be timely to remember how close we came to losing our community hospital several years ago, and how blessed we are to have it. It seems best if complaints are handled through the proper channels at the hospital instead of creating embarrassment for the entire hospital and staff for what most likely was the insensitivity and negligence of one or two.

Mack Moser
 Macclenny

Blessed to have a hospital

Dear Editor:
 I would like to respond to the recent letter in *The Press* where Fraser Hospital was referred to as a "band-aid clinic."
 In December, 2012 my daughter became very ill on her 18th birthday. We rushed her to the hospital and by the time we got there she was barely breathing and unresponsive. Her heart stopped three times but the doctors and nurses didn't give up.
 They listened to her and she was flown to St. Vincent's.
 We are blessed to have Fraser Hospital; had it not been for the staff's emergency preparedness our daughter would not be here. She is now 19 and recently married — all is right with her world.

Jeff and Melissa Anderson
 Montic, GA

Russia's behavior result of Olympics

It's been a while since your intrepid investigative journalist has dipped into his bag of tricks and brought you all the hard hitting news. But there's a lot going on out there in the world and I thought that you had the right to know. I figure that my musings are at least as accurate as what you're getting on Fox News or MSNBC, so here goes.
 • The world is biting its collective fingernails over what the Russians are going to do in the Ukraine, part of the old Soviet Union that kicked out its Russian-backed president in favor of a pro-democracy government. In response, the Russians marched into Crimea on the southern tip of the country where the Ukraine had naval bases on the Black Sea, and is considering invading the rest of the country. The Ukrainians say they will fight back and are appealing for help from NATO.
 • Why in the world would Russian president Vladimir Putin do such a crazy thing? Well, after contacting all my sources in Eastern Europe, I have come to the conclusion that the Olympics are to blame.
 Putin doesn't normally have a lot of contact with people from the West and was shocked to learn after attending the Olympics that he is a laughingstock in the USA. When a group of Americans from Alabama saw him at the USA/Russia hockey game, they immediately started

laughing and pointing.
 The former director of the KGB, Russia's equivalent of the CIA, noticed the Americans laughing at him and he asked his translator what they were saying.
 "Well, your excellency, they are saying 'Vladimir's Pootin' and laughing." When he explained what "pootin" means to Southerners, Putin got red in the face and stormed out.
 The hockey fans from Alabama were heard to remark, "What a stinker" and "Who cut the Russian cheese?"
 Putin has been angry and embarrassed ever since and decided to take it out on his neighbors in the Ukraine, who have also been known to make fun of his name.
 • In other news, Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer vetoed a controversial anti-gay bill that passed the Arizona state legislature. The bill allowed restaurateurs to refuse service to anyone they suspected of being gay.
 Brewer told her conservative supporters not to worry, that she hasn't softened her right wing stance and claimed that with the anti-gay issue off the table, it would give her more time to spend discriminating against Mexican immigrants.
 Florida legislators have been considering a similar legislation but Gov. Rick Scott has threatened to veto it if passed. He was heard to quip to one of his aides, "Heck, all

the restaurants in Key West and South Beach would have to close down if that law passed."
 • Congress is debating raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 from the current \$7.25. They are having some difficulty coming to terms with the issue since the last time any of them made the minimum wage they were 16 years old and working in a Whataburger. So, they have little conception of reality.
 Billionaire Warren Buffett disagrees with President Obama's idea of the \$10 minimum wage. Buffett doesn't think it's too much, he thinks it's too little. He suggests \$15 an hour.
 When questioned by CNBC, the financier was candid about his reasons. "Hey, whether it's \$10 or \$15 I can afford to pay it. I'm worth \$8 billion. Let's just make it \$50. It's no skin off my nose."
 House Speaker John Boehner was scandalized at Buffett's remarks. "That's irresponsible," said Boehner on Fox News. "I don't know why it has to be raised at all. These people can afford to pay \$1.59 for a gallon of gas and 79 cents for a loaf of bread like everybody else. What ... it's not \$1.59 or 79 cents? It was a \$1.59 the last time I had to fill up my own car. What's happened to the price of gas? I need to look into this."

LIKE US ON **FACEBOOK** TO JOIN THE DISCUSSION

What will you miss most from the YMCA?
The Press recently asked readers what they will miss the most after the YMCA closes its Macclenny fitness center on Lowder St. Keep in mind that the Y is not ceasing its pool and youth sports programs.

Victoria Baker: Hate to state the obvious but, uh, working out.
Debbie Anderson Clark: I was blessed with a job with the Y for awhile, but after Marcy Knight left it was not a Young Mens Christian Association (YMCA). My husband's cancer news spread faster than his cancer, even before we shared it with our children! This was brought to Ryder's (Leary's local director) attention but since Baker was merely a stepping stone for a corporate position not an eye was blinked. I'm cheering! This branch is a cancer. Good riddance!

Susan Ward: The memories spent there when my boys did sports and my husband was a volunteer coach. I know sports are staying but I will also miss the people there. I liked the smaller environment and the fact that they had financial assistance for those with a low income. I was thinking of going back because Anytime Fitness is way too high priced for me. Guess that is no longer an option.
Schell Barber: Being able to go there and work out without the crowd. The friendly people.
A follow-up question we asked was

how should the community fill the void left by the fitness center closing? Who should take the lead? Government, private citizens, a mix of both? And how should it be funded?

Connie Walker: The Y laid the groundwork for this closing when they continually cut back on gym hours. Anyone who works outside the county would have a hard time getting a workout in before 8 pm. At least there is another option for adults to work out but it's unfortunate the other programs for kids will be lost. It will take a combination of public and private to fill the void.
Jim Rigney: Sad. Way to go Baker County!

Rick Colbert: They kept horrible hours for people to work around, even the pool. Back when they had a monopoly on the county, it worked. With competition, I am surprised it took this long.
Gov. Scott proposes to veto gay law...

Gov. Scott says, after being pressured, he would veto a bill like the one proposed and vetoed in Arizona to allow business owners to discriminate based on sexuality of customers. What do you think? Would such laws help or hurt Florida?

Jess Davenport: Someone please explain to me how treating people like they're people and loving all mankind, like Christ taught, is a slippery slope towards anything but love?

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USPS 040-280
 Post Office Box 598
 Macclenny, FL 32063
 (904) 259-2400

The Baker County Press is published each Thursday by Baker County Press, Inc. Periodicals postage paid under permit issued April 12, 1929 at the post office in Macclenny, Florida.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
 \$25.00 a year inside Baker County; \$45.00 a year outside Baker County; deduct, \$5.00 for persons outside Baker County who are 65 years of age or older, military personnel on active duty, and college students. POSTMASTER: send address changes to The Baker County Press, P.O. Box 598, Macclenny, FL 32063.

Publisher
 James C. McGauley - editor@bakercountypress.com

MANAGING EDITOR - Joel Addington - reporter@bakercountypress.com

ADVERTISING/PRODUCTION - Jessica Prevatt - advertising@bakercountypress.com

SPORTS EDITOR - Jon Shumate - jonshug@live.com

FEATURES/COMMENT/SPORTS - Robert Gerard

BUSINESS MANAGER - Karin Thomas - kthomas@bakercountypress.com

CLASSIFIEDS - Jeannette Blackmon - classifieds@bakercountypress.com

This newspaper is printed on recycled paper.

The Baker County Press Weather March 6, 2014

Seven Day Forecast	
Thursday T-storms Likely High: 67 Low: 46	Friday Sunny High: 66 Low: 46
Saturday Sunny High: 73 Low: 51	Sunday Mostly Sunny High: 73 Low: 50
Monday Mostly Sunny High: 71 Low: 52	Tuesday Partly Cloudy High: 71 Low: 49
Wednesday Mostly Sunny High: 74 Low: 50	

Today's High & Low Temperatures	
Jasper 64 / 45	Callahan 65 / 45
Fernandina Beach 62 / 48	Jacksonville 67 / 48
Atlantic Beach 64 / 50	Baldwin 67 / 47
Watertown 66 / 46	High Springs 68 / 46
St. Augustine 67 / 50	Starke 68 / 47

Sun/Moon Chart This Week		
Day	Sunrise	Sunset
Thursday	6:47 a.m.	6:31 p.m.
Friday	6:46 a.m.	6:31 p.m.
Saturday	6:45 a.m.	6:32 p.m.
Sunday	6:45 a.m.	6:32 p.m.
Monday	7:43 a.m.	7:33 p.m.
Tuesday	7:41 a.m.	7:34 p.m.
Wednesday	7:40 a.m.	7:35 p.m.

St. Mary's River Levels		Hunting/Fishing Times	
Location	Now	Change	Peak Times
Moniac, GA	8.38 ft.	-0.27 ft.	Thu 4:59-6:59 4:29-6:29
Macclenny	9.00 ft.	-0.51 ft.	Fri 5:49-7:49 5:19-7:19
			Sat 6:38-8:38 6:08-8:08
			Sun 7:26-9:26 6:56-8:56
			Fri 5:49-7:49 5:19-7:19
			Sat 6:38-8:38 6:08-8:08
			Sun 7:26-9:26 6:56-8:56
			Mon 8:13-10:13 7:43-9:43
			Tue 8:59-10:59 8:29-10:29
			Wed 9:44-11:44 9:14-11:14

Weather History	
March 6, 1989	- A winter storm in the south central United States left parts of Missouri and Arkansas buried under more than a foot of snow. Heavier snowfall totals in Missouri included 14 inches at Springfield and 16 at Lebanon.

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Press sues to obtain BCCS financial data

JOEL ADDINGTON
MANAGING EDITOR
reporter@bakercountypress.com

The Baker County Press filed suit last week to obtain access to financial records of the now-shuttered Baker Community Counseling Services, formerly a non-profit provider of substance abuse treatment in Macclenny since the 1990s.

The suit names Macclenny accounting firm Lyons & Lyons as the defendant along with Baker Community Counseling Services, or BCCS.

BCCS abruptly shut down on April 17, 2013 after the organization lost its bid for a roughly \$600,000 annual contract with Lutheran Services of Florida the previous month.

Lutheran was hired by the Florida Department of Children and Families in 2012 to start managing mental health and substance abuse contracts in 23 counties in the region. County contracts were competitively bid last year.

But BCCS' board of directors, including Sheriff Joey Dobson, local clergyman Joe Ruise and Property Appraiser Tim Sweat, decided to shut it down and lay off employees nearly two weeks ahead of schedule.

Former employees said the closure was hastened by allegations brought to the board regarding sexual harassment and financial mismanagement by then executive director Chris Thomas, who previously announced BCCS would close in May 1. He also denied any wrong-doing, financial or otherwise.

When asked why the organization halted operations ahead of schedule, board members declined to speak in any detail about what prompted the move.

One board member said the group was "sworn to secrecy."

The newspaper's lawsuit, filed February 25, names the accounting firm because Lyons & Lyons was given all of BCCS' financial records upon the organization's closure.

The Press, its attorney Robert Dees of Jacksonville and the First Amendment Foundation in Tallahassee believe the records are public and subject to disclosure under state law because BCCS received government funding and performed services, including managing drug court and house arrests programs, on behalf of the county.

Lyons & Lyons has repeatedly denied The Press access to the records, however.

The suit asks the court to determine whether the records are indeed public, and if so, compel disclosure to include disbursement and receipt documents, operating statements and balance sheets. In addition, the suit seeks reimbursement for the plaintiff's attorney fees.

Prison for vehicle break-ins

A Macclenny woman who was on probation in Columbia County when she broke into a vehicle and stole a pistol and other items was sentenced on February 25 to 18 months in prison.

Brandi Thompson, 34, entered no contest pleas to grand and petty theft, and to a reduced count of burglary. Judge Joey Williams, sitting in for Circuit Judge Mark Moseley, allowed her credit for 212 days she has been in county jail.

Ms. Thompson was caught on surveillance video from nearby Baker Beverage in downtown Macclenny in the act of taking a .38 caliber pistol and identification documents in the early morning hour of July 14, 2013. Court records indicate her criminal



Brandi Thompson

record includes battery, resisting arrest, burglary and grand theft.

In other cases that day, Jonathan Lee Harris of Sanderson pleaded no contest to felony criminal mischief, aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, resisting an officer and harming a police dog.

Mr. Harris, 34, was arrested on October 8 of last year after he stopped a female motorist on CR 125 north posing as an off-duty officer after following her vehicle closely. He resisted a county deputy after he was located on the Eddy Grade in the north county, and attempted to choke the officer's canine Blitz.

The defendant at the time had pending cases of aggravated battery with a deadly weapon, domestic battery and felony criminal mischief, and all but the latter were dropped in the plea agreement.

From the October 8 incident, the state dropped additional counts of impersonating an officer and reckless driving. The judge ordered him to serve 30 months on drug offender probation when

released and submit to a substance abuse evaluation.

Judge Williams ordered Alilyn Hysler to receive drug abuse counseling in addition to an eight-month jail sentence after she pleaded no contest to possession of drugs without a prescription.

Eighty-eight days in jail already served will suffice as the sentence imposed on Lynnwood Kirk for felony driving on a suspended license and misdemeanor marijuana possession. He pleaded no contest to both and admitted to violating probation for an earlier felony license violation.

Joshua Thornton pleaded no contest to twin counts of felony driving on a suspended license and will be in county jail nine months, less two months already served. The state dropped a minor license tag charge.

Steven Wisniewski was placed on a two-year drug offender probation after pleading no contest to possession of cocaine and paraphernalia for storage.

DUI arrest on interstate

A Lake City motorist found stranded in his vehicle in a water-filled ditch along Interstate 10 early on March 3 was arrested for drunk driving.

Deputy Matt Riegel said he responded to what was initially reported as a vehicle fire near the SR 121 exit about 1:50 am and said the steaming 2004 Toyota driven by Michael Reynolds, 31, was standing in about a foot of water.

Mr. Reynolds told the officer he veered into the ditch attempting to exit, believing SR 121 was the road to Lake City. He admitted to consuming alcohol earlier at several Jacksonville locations.

He failed field sobriety testing at a nearby parking lot and he blew a .141 intoxication level at county jail. A mark of .08 is considered drunk.

In other traffic-related arrests, Christopher Sea, 36, of St. George, GA was taken to

jail the evening of February 28 for driving on a license with nine prior suspensions.

Deputy Clements Leo stopped the suspect driving a 2001 Chevrolet pickup onto I-10 eastbound from SR 121 about 8:45. He was responding to a report that the vehicle was veering out of the traffic lane, and observed it doing so several times.

Deputy Chris Walker arrested Jason Byrd, 35, of Glen St. Mary on March 2 after stopping his 2002 Chevrolet pickup on Blair Circle for faulty stop lights.

The deputy minutes earlier had gone to a residence on Washington St. where Daisy Stewart had reported Mr. Byrd missing. The suspect drove up on the address while the officer was there, and abruptly changed directions.

He was charged with driving with four suspensions for

failure to pay fines.

Deputy Daryl Mobley said he was aware that driver Jared Griffis, 31, of Glen had multiple license suspensions when he stopped a 1999 Acura in a downtown parking lot about midday on March 1.

The officer earlier received a report that the vehicle was swerving out of its travel lane and its occupants were making obscene gestures to others. Mr. Griffis was arrested for having three suspensions.

In a non-traffic arrest, Altie Drashner, 37, of Cripple Creek, Col. was taken into custody in west Macclenny on a warrant from Charlotte County, FL for violating probation on a breach of the peace charge.

Deputy Jacob Satterwhite said he confronted the suspect after a suspicious person report in the area of US 90 and 7th St.

Stole grandfather's credit card

Multiple felony charges were filed on a Sanderson man on March 1 for illegal use of a credit card over the course of a week after he was caught on video using the card buying beer and cigarettes.

The victims received a phone call from Ystar about possible credit card fraud and a bank statement revealed 36 different charges totaling \$1,725.32 between the dates of February 22 and March 1. The victims told police their grandson, Justin Luke, had been living with them for the past five months and is the only person who could have access to the card.

According to the credit card statement, a charge was made to the card at the Citgo gas station on CR 125 on March 1. Surveillance video showed the 22-year-old suspect using the card at the gas station on the date and the total matched the one on the statement.

Deputy Jacob Satterwhite was unable to locate Mr. Luke and charges of felony larceny, fraud and exploitation of the elderly and misdemeanor larceny were filed.

In other related incidents:

A Macclenny man was the victim of felony fraud after his account showed four transactions in Atlanta that totaled more than \$1,000.

The victim told Deputy Satterwhite that three charges were made on his account on January 27-28 that totaled more than \$950. A fourth charge was made in the form of a check for \$119.19.

Anthony Wilson was the owner of the check with the victim's routing and account number. No record was found when the deputy checked Mr. Wilson's Georgia driver's license.

The bank refunded the victim and will pursue the case in the jurisdiction where the crime occurred.

A Macclenny man was the victim of felony fraud when he received four emails from PayPal that his account had been charged the total of \$65 for Skype communication in Russia. The victim furnished Deputy Chad Mouton with print-outs of the transactions.

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Pre-dawn attacks on two

Police arrested a Maxville man on two counts of battery and one of disorderly conduct during the pre-dawn hours of March 2 in west Macclenny.

Aaron Beard, 22, is charged with choking his cousin Natasha McCaul, 25, in a bedroom of her residence in West Minnesota Ave. just before 5 am during an argument over him riding a motorcycle at high speed in the neighborhood.

Ms. McCaul told deputies Daryl Mobley and Justin Yingling that she, the accused and others returned from a night of drinking when Mr. Beard got on the motorcycle and began sprinting up and down the street.

Mr. Beard, who the officer said smelled strongly of alcohol, then allegedly accosted his cousin in the presence of her 2-year-old daughter. Travis Richardson, 24, of Macclenny, intervened and Mr. Beard then turned on him outside the residence.

In a second incident that sent two persons to the hospital, the sheriff's department referred criminal complaints against four Margareta suspects in the alleged beating of a Havana, FL man during a fight on CR 139 in Margareta the

afternoon of March 2.

Sheriff's investigator Matthew Yarborough filed the complaints for aggravated battery and battery against Antonio Lee, 28, Malik Lee, 18, Ryan Manning, 25, and a 15-year-old male after interviewing several witnesses on March 3.

Among those witnesses was Andrew Kelly, 32, who was flown to UF Health Jacksonville that afternoon and treated and released for lacerations to his head and arms from being struck repeatedly with glass liquor bottles.

Mr. Kelly reportedly went to the aid of Sheyan Williams, 18, also of Havana, after Malik Lee and the juvenile threw objects at her and a local 6-year-old girl while they rode on an ATV near CR 139 and Sam Lampkins Lane about 3:30 pm.

Dwight Parker, 19, of Havana was treated at Fraser Hospital after he was struck on the head with liquor bottle. Witnesses told police Mr. Parker intervened when Ms. Williams and Mr. Kelly were attacked. He was described as Ms. Williams' boyfriend, and they were in the neighborhood attending several birthday parties where heavy drinking was reported.

Pummels husband for forgetting an ID

Deputies arrested a Macclenny woman for domestic violence and filed criminal complaints following marital disputes in two other cases the past week.

Cherry Padgett, 34, was jailed in the late evening of February 28 for attacking her husband Keith Padgett, 41, as they drove onto the property of the Country Club Lounge. Mr. Padgett, who Deputy Earl Lord said had scratch marks on both sides of his face and a bite mark on the right forearm, said his wife became enraged because he forgot to bring her identification.

The officer also noted that Ms. Padgett had a small amount of blood under her nose which her husband claimed resulted from the ensuing struggle.

In other incidents, Deputy James Marker filed complaints against Derrick Brantley, 38, and Shelley Brantley, 31, following an altercation at their residence on Red Maple Circle near Taylor the evening of February 24.

Ms. Brantley telephoned the next morning alleging that her husband pushed her down and pointed a .22 caliber rifle at her face during an argument that began when he searched her cell phone for evidence that she was communicating with another man.

Mr. Brantley later that day showed the officer multiple scratches, bruising and bite marks on his back and arms. He said his wife became enraged when he looked at her phone and jumped on his back, adding that she kicked a hole through a door attempting to reach him.

Ms. Brantley showed another officer bruising on both arms.

A complaint was filed on February 26 naming Timothy Harris, 31, for making threatening statements and spitting into the face of estranged wife Jennifer Harris, 28, during an argument at a residence on Eastwood Dr. south of Macclenny.

Ms. Harris told Deputy Chad Mouton she went to the address to return property to the accused and an argument ensued. Mr. Harris during a subsequent interview denied the allegations.

In a case involving a 14-year-old male and his stepfather, Deputy Matt Riegel filed a domestic battery complaint against James Rosier, 30, of Glen St. Mary following an incident at their residence on Confederate Dr. the evening of February 28.

The youth claims he was shoved in the face and from behind during a 9 pm argument over the victim cleaning up after himself. Mr. Rosier countered that he raised his hands in self-defense when the step-son approached him in a threatening manner.

Shoplifts TV, a laptop

A Hilliard man was charged with one count of felony theft for attempting to steal a \$600 television from the Macclenny Walmart in the early afternoon of February 27.

Derek Hernandez, 43, also faces an additional charge for stealing a laptop computer from the same store four days earlier.

Police were called about noon after a store security worker observed the suspect place the TV in a shopping cart and proceed out the door. When he was stopped, he allegedly began cursing and resisting the employee, at one point stabbing him in the abdomen with a key.

Deputy Michael Antonini said Mr. Hernandez produced a receipt that he insisted was proof that he paid for the unit, even though surveillance vid-

eo showed that he did not go to a register before leaving.

Closer examination by the store revealed the receipt was bogus, and included a time stamp that was actually an hour and a half into the future. There was no explanation of how the suspect came by the receipt that also had a faulty register number.

The store's security employee then produced a video that depicted Mr. Hernandez as the person who took the laptop on February 23. The computer was also valued at \$600.

Deputy Antonini filed additional counts for resisting a merchant and presenting a fraudulent receipt, both misdemeanors.

In other shoplifting arrests at Walmart recently, Jalisa Tootle, 25, of Macclenny was

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Shoplifter also had drugs

A Macclenny man caught shoplifting at Walmart the afternoon of March 1 was also charged with possession of three types of prescription drugs.

Deputy Daryl Mobley said he was called to the store after an employee observed John Akridge Jr., 29, at various locations cutting merchandise free of packaging and stashing items in his waist and pockets.

The suspect purchased \$180 worth of groceries and other items before he was stopped attempting to leave with another \$150 in merchandise ranging from a flashlight to golf balls and small tool sets.

Deputy Mobley also learned that Mr. Akridge was wanted in two Texas counties for failure to appear in court for driving while intoxicated.

The prescription drugs on his person were Xanax and Suboxone, used to treat opioid dependence.

Mr. Akridge also had in his wallet two Florida and one Tennessee identification cards belonging to one persons. The officer noted that none had been reported stolen.

In another recent drug case, two sheriff's investigators arrested a pair of Macclenny women on a number of possession counts after stopping their vehicle on South 6th St. the evening of February 27.

Investigator Matthew Yarborough said he and Investigator Mike Hauge observed Selena Roberts, 41, and Sabrina Oralls, 38, seated in a 2005 Hyundai near East Railroad and 4th St. engaged in what appeared to be a drug deal with a white male.

They followed the vehicle as it headed west on US 90 minutes later, and observed it swerving out of the travel lane as the occupants appeared to be exchanging items.

Ms. Roberts, the vehicle owner, agreed to a search that turned up a spoon with white residue identified as methamphetamine and a paper towel with blood spots. While the officers were searching the car, Investigator Hauge said the suspects tossed several items to the ground.

They included syringes, two baggies of meth, a straw with residue and pills identified as Xanax, Hydrocodone, Oxycodone and amphetamines.

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Pinewood Derby set

Local Cub Scout Packs 555 and 655 from the St. Mary's Catholic Church will stage their annual Pinewood Derby race on March 8 from 2-5 pm at the Dawkins Masonic lodge number 60 at 233 East Macclenny Ave.

Snacks and drinks are provided and the public is encouraged to attend.

The Cub Scouts, aged 7-10, have let their creative juices flow and crafted some awesome speedsters from a single block of wood.

Band group needs items

Donations of saleable items are needed for the annual spring yard sale sponsored by BCFIA, the non-profit that supports band activities at both Baker High and the middle school.

Bring the items to the band rooms at either school from 2:30-4:30 on school afternoons. Leave your name and address for a tax deductible receipt.

To arrange for the pick-up of large items, please contact Kim at 904-334-4499.

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Teacher union vexed about VAM

JOEL ADDINGTON
MANAGING EDITOR
reporter@bakercountypress.com

New teacher evaluation data recently released by the state show Baker County's crop of educators fare well compared to other districts in the region.

The majority of teachers here have positive Value-Added Model, or VAM, scores, which means their students performed better than anticipated on FCAT reading and math exams.

According to *The Florida Times-Union's* analysis of the VAM scores, Baker County's teachers, as a group, had the third-highest ratings of any district the state.

While that's great news, the Baker County Education Association and other teachers unions around Florida view the VAM scores as flawed.

They say the data in some cases is inaccurate, and even when it's correct, the scores may give residents an incomplete picture of student and teacher performance.

"We believe in teacher accountability. We want effective teachers in the classroom, however, we do not think VAM is a valid determination of it," said Angela Callahan, president of the Baker County Education Association, or BCEA, by e-mail last week.

"There are far too many variables that are supposedly applied to a VAM score. There are far too many questions and not enough answers," she said.

The VAM scores reflect up to 50 percent of a teacher's annual evaluation. They represent how much above or below a predetermined level of progress students actually achieve. The expected level of progress is calculated based on average standardized testing results for similar grades and subjects statewide.

But teachers who don't teach FCAT-related subjects, like music or physical education, receive VAM scores based on their school's average VAM score.

"Only 30 percent of teachers teach FCAT

We believe in teacher accountability. We want effective teachers in the classroom, however, we do not think VAM is a valid determination of it.

—Angela Callahan
BCEA President

subjects so for 70 percent of teachers the VAM does not even attempt to measure their actual teaching," said Mrs. Callahan. "We believe this is highly unethical."

Just getting the VAM scores from the state was a battle.

The Florida Times-Union had to sue the Florida Department of Education to obtain the VAM data, which was initially withheld by officials. The newspaper prevailed and released the scores via a searchable online database, a move some teachers might resent, on February 24.

"We feel that it was a reckless decision for these scores to be released to the public because they are so incredibly flawed and very difficult to understand," Mrs. Callahan said. "They also do not represent a full evaluation of the teacher."

According to the *Times-Union* database, about 57 percent of teachers at the middle school had positive VAM scores, which are expressed as a positive or negative percent-

age indicating student performance above or below the anticipated level.

A VAM score of zero would represent performance at that level.

The highest VAM scores at BCMS for the 2012-13 school year belonged to math teacher Tara Rhoden (326%), a former district teacher of the year designee, and Lisa D. Mobley (202%). The lowest VAM score was given to Joan M. Parker (-55%).

At the high school that year, some 72 percent of the 69 teachers listed in the database had positive scores, including former track coach Joey Sulkowski (111%), who didn't teach FCAT-related courses but had the school's top score.

BCHS' Faith M. Fly had the second highest VAM score but the highest among FCAT-related teachers (80%), while Jacqueline B. Smith had the lowest (-57%).

Last year at Keller Intermediate, the district's only D-school, 65 percent of the teachers listed had negative VAM scores, including Laraine Franze (-92%). Jill Johnson had the top score (36%).

The database does not include every teacher in the district. *The Times-Union* noted that some teachers' data was redacted from the state's list while other names were duplicates.

The database did show five teachers at Westside Elementary but none at Macclenny Elementary.

"The fact that our county's aggregate VAM average is the third highest in the state yet we have what the state determines to be a 'low performing' school in our district should give evidence to show that things do not match up, or at least that [VAM scores] are not fair and accurate assessments of student or teacher performance," said Mrs. Callahan.

Sentences handed down February 26 during county court

The following dispositions were ordered by County Judge Joey Williams during regular court session on February 26:

- Stephanie Bartley, petty theft; prosecution deferred.

- Deloris Brewer, DUI, re-write obituaries from Kentucky school bus accident, 50 hours community service, 24 hours Give Back to Baker (GBB), a community service program, if unemployed.

- Leonard Brock, driving on a suspended license; six-month probation, 15 days in jail, 90 days on monitoring device.

- Terry Joe Burnham, driving on a suspended license; 45 days in jail, 12-month probation, attend license school.

- Benjamin Claridy, driving on a suspended license; six-month probation, GBB.

- Jared Fama, loitering/prowl; six-month probation, two days in jail.

- Jonathan Lee Harris, criminal mischief; 60 days in jail and restitution.

- Allison Martin, possession of drug paraphernalia; 21 days in jail, 12-month probation, attend addiction classes.

- James Edward Newmans Jr., driving on a suspended li-

cense; did not appear, warrant issued.

- Dakota Owens, affray; six days in jail.

- Joseph Parish, petty theft; did not appear, warrant issued.

- Marsha Wilkerson, driving on a suspended license; 45 days in jail, six-month probation.

- Tammy Cole, DUI; did not appear, warrant issued.

- Roosevelt Day, possession of drug paraphernalia; did not appear, warrant issued.

- Bobby Gaskins, criminal mischief, admits probation violation; 62 days in jail.

- Richard Henry Lee, possession of drug paraphernalia, admits probation violation; 76 days in jail, 24 hours GBB if not employed.

- Kristopher Legg, criminal mischief; 69 days in jail.

- William Mash, driving on a suspended license; did not appear, warrant issued.

- Marcus Nipper, DUI with injury or property damage; did not appear, warrant issued.

- Angelica Nobles, driving on a suspended license; 38 days in jail.



From left: Tricia Martin, cancer survivor and Relay For Life caregiver chairperson, with in-laws Sharon and Roger Martin, making their food selections. Roger Martin is also a cancer survivor. Photo by courtesy of Kristie Fletcher

Relay hosts 'Purple Tea'

American Cancer Society volunteers held their second annual Purple Tea, an event open and free to all cancer survivors and their caregivers.

It was a time set aside to honor survivors in the community with food, fun and fellowship. Local businesses donated gifts for door prize drawings to benefit the esteemed guests.

The highlight of the event was guest speaker Anna Williams, mother and caregiver of cancer survivor Layla Williams. She spoke on how cancer touched her life in the most critical way.

Also, dancers from the Kelly Christie Dance Academy in Lake Butler entertained guests with three classical ballet pieces.



Dancers (from left) Kate DeShong, Chelsey Crews and Klara Fletcher join hands while they perform in honor of cancer survivors in attendance. Photo courtesy of Kristie Fletcher

"This event, like our signature Relay, continues to grow and become more successful."

"After the survivors' lap around the track, they are invited to a special reception in their honor where they'll receive a delicious meal and gifts to enjoy with a special loved one."

"We look forward to seeing you at relay," said Mrs. Fletcher.



Brie Knight reacts to the victor of one of the door prize drawings after her mother, Marcy, called the winning number. Photo courtesy of Kristie Fletcher.

Hill: don't ditch school grades

JOEL ADDINGTON
MANAGING EDITOR
reporter@bakercountypress.com

Since being named Baker High's principal in 2009, when the high school was rated a D-school, Thomas Hill has led the school to a B-grade and boosted reading scores considerably.

And after excelling under the state's rigorous accountability system of standardized tests and school grades, Mr. Hill is not ready to ditch the system.

That puts the principal at odds with the state's teachers union, the Florida Education Association, which is calling for the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) to suspend school grading until the state completes its transition to higher testing and performance standards.

"I do favor grading school performance," Mr. Hill ex-

plained in a recent e-mail on the matter. "We could argue all day long about the inadequacies of the current system, but at the end of the day, it is a system intended to improve student performance."

"I believe BCHS has improved significantly because of the influence of the FDOE's grading system. Suspending school grades would reinforce to the state's educational stakeholders the department's lack of faith in its own system."

Nonetheless, a state senator from Tallahassee, Democrat Bill Montford, is calling for school grades to be withheld for about a year and a half. Last week he filed a bill to do just that.

This year students will be assessed under the new standards, basically Florida's version of the Common Core standards being rolled out na-

tionwide and approved by the State Board of Education in February.

Though Sen. Montford's bill is likely not to become law, it would suspend school grades until the 2017 school year, require a rigorous review of the standardized test selected to replace the FCAT and modify the teacher evaluation system, according to *The Florida Current*, a website that follows state government.

Senate President Don Gaetz does not support the bill, but said he would vote for changes approved by the State Board of Education, which simplifies the school grading formula, uses test results from the 2014-15 school year to establish a baseline for each school and eliminates penalties for letter-grade drops for the first year of the new standards, according to the website.

Annual GED graduation is set for April 11

The county's Teacher of the Year Lynn Green will be the guest speaker at the annual GED graduation scheduled for the evening of Friday, April 11 starting at 7:30. Location is the Baker County Middle School auditorium.

Graduates are asked to dress appropriately and be at the auditorium an hour early for practice. They will receive complimentary caps with tassels, along with individual photographs and a 2014 charm.

This ceremony is for GED graduates from March of last year through February of this year. It is requested that they contact Joy Sirk at the district's adult ed department to confirm attendance. Family and friends are encouraged to attend.

Ms. Sirk can be reached at

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED LARGE SCALE AMENDMENT TO THE BAKER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
The Baker County Board of County Commissioners will hold a Public Hearing on Tuesday March 18, 2014 at 7:00 PM in the Baker County Administration Building, 55 North Third Street, Macclenny Florida, to consider adoption of a Large Scale Land Use and Zoning Amendment, by ordinance to the Baker County Comprehensive Plan. The Amendment request was submitted by Mark and Allison Broughton. Copies of said ordinance may be inspected by any member of the public in the Commissioners office, address stated above. On the above mentioned date, all interested parties may appear and be heard with respect to the proposed ordinances which are listed below:

ORDINANCE NO. 2013
AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF BAKER COUNTY, FLORIDA, MAKING A LARGE SCALE AMENDMENT TO THE BAKER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN BY RECLASSIFYING APPROXIMATELY 218 ACRES OF PROPERTY, OWNED BY MARK AND ALISON BROUGHTON, AND IDENTIFIED BY BAKER COUNTY PROPERTY APPRAISER PARCEL IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS 11 35 20 0000 0000 0091, 1135 20 0000 0000 0090, 1435 20 0000 0000 0040 and, 15 35 20 0000 0000 0015 18-35-22-0000-0000-0015. THE FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATION WILL CHANGE ON 110 ACRES FROM VERY LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL TO RECREATION ON THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP ADDITIONALLY, 108 ACRES WILL CHANGE FROM VERY LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL TO AGRICULTURE A ON THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP; PROVIDING FINDINGS BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS; PROVIDING DIRECTION TO THE CODIFIER AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

ORDINANCE NO. 2013
AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF BAKER COUNTY, FLORIDA, REZONING 218 ACRES OF REAL PROPERTY OWNED BY MARK AND ALISON BROUGHTON AND IDENTIFIED BY BAKER COUNTY PROPERTY APPRAISER PARCEL IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS 11 35 20 0000 0000 0091, 11 35 20 0000 0000 0090, 14 35 20 0000 0000 0040 and, 15 35 20 0000 0000 0015 AND, 18-35-22-0000-0000-0015. 110 ACRES WILL CHANGE FROM RESIDENTIAL CONVENTIONAL 1 DWELLING PER ACRE (RC-1) TO RECREATION RESOURCES AND 108 ACRES WILL CHANGE FROM (RC-1) TO AGRICULTURAL 1 DWELLING PER 10 ACRES (AG-10) ON THE ZONING MAP; PROVIDING FINDINGS BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING DIRECTION TO THE CODIFIER AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

A copy of said ordinance may be inspected by any member of the public in the Commissioner's office, address stated above. In accordance with Section 286.0105, F.S.: "If any person desires to appeal any decision made by the County Commission with respect to any matter considered at this scheduled meeting or hearing, the person will need a record of the proceedings, and for such purposes the person may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceeding is made which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based."

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, persons needing a special accommodation or an interpreter to participate in this proceeding should contact the Administration Department at (904) 259-3613 at least 48 hours prior to the time of the hearing.

Help is sought on trail

The US Forest Service needs your help maintaining the Gun Swamp hiking trail in the Osceola National Forest later this month.

The USFS is seeking volunteers to help "clear and blaze trails, cut brush and small trees, clear branches and debris, and install new signs," according to a recent press release.

The effort will take place March 24 through 27. Volunteers are asked to meet at 8 am any of those days at the district ranger office.

Transportation will be provided to the project location. Public campgrounds are available on the forest on a first come first serve basis.

Gum Swamp is a 13,000 acre, nearly-level area, consisting of cypress and gum trees, hardwood hammocks, and swamp. The trail surface is comprised of old road bed and a thick mat of organic material.

The hiking trail loops through the drier pine flatwoods of the perimeter on the west-northwestern side of the forest.

For additional information and to register please contact Debra Stucki at (386) 752-2577 or at Dstucki02@fs.fed.us.

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Location: Baker County Pre-K/K Center
Transportation: None available. Parents must provide transportation to and from school.
Hours: 3 hours per day during school hours (8:10 - 11:10 A.M. or 12:10 - 3:10 P.M.)
Fees: None
Meals Provided: None
Required Documents:
*Original birth certificate
*Proof of custody if not the birth parent
*Current shot record
*Current physical
*Photo ID
*Proof of residency (must be physical address)
FULL DAY
Who qualifies: Every 4 year old living in Baker County. (4 on or before Sept. 1, 2014)
Location: Baker County Pre-K/K Center
Transportation: Bus transportation provided to and from school.
Hours: Full school day (8:30-3:00) Our Extended Day Enrichment Program (EDPE) is also available for an additional fee.
Fees: TBA >>> Full and reduced prices available <<< (Sliding scale fee reduction available through Episcopal Children's Services to those who qualify through family size and income. Employment and income verification required.) *Proof of employment and full time student status (if applying for a reduced rate)
Meals provided: Breakfast and lunch are available through the school cafeteria for purchase (free and reduced lunch applications are available for those who qualify).
Required Documents:
* Original birth certificate
* Proof of custody if not the birth parent
* Current shot record
* Current physical
* Photo ID
* Proof of residency (must be physical address)
* Proof of employment or full time student status (if applying for a reduced rate)

River withdrawal doubtful

From page 1

Nonetheless, local officials are concerned the river is even on the list of alternative water supplies. It was added some four years ago, Mr. Sample said.

County commission chairman Jimmy Anderson recently drafted a letter to the district expressing his concerns about using the river for a potential water source, namely because there's not much water there to begin with. In the letter, he urged the district to remove the project from its water supply plan.

Mr. Sample responded the plan is still in draft form and that district officials are considering comments supporting removal of the St. Mary's as a potential source for water in the future.

"I know it's being considered," he said.

Mr. Sample began his presentation by reviewing the district's projections on future water demand based on past water usage and expected increases in population, both of which were used in formulating the 20-year supply plan that's updated every five years.

"It's a conservative approach," he said of the plan. "We always hope to increase conservation [of water], but we don't want to come up short."

He said that despite some decreases in water demand within the 18-county district during the last 20 years, expected growth there will more than offset further drops in demand.

level" project. "I'm not aware that any utility is pursuing it," Mr. Sample told the group.

Mr. Sample began his presentation by reviewing the district's projections on future water demand based on past water usage and expected increases in population, both of which were used in formulating the 20-year supply plan that's updated every five years.

"It's a conservative approach," he said of the plan. "We always hope to increase conservation [of water], but we don't want to come up short."

He said that despite some decreases in water demand within the 18-county district during the last 20 years, expected growth there will more than offset further drops in demand.

He said today the St. Mary's River option is only a "concept-

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Photo by Joel Addington

Teen's thoughtfulness touches Macclenny entrepreneur

Ty Hartley finished a 5K charity run to benefit the hungry in Baker County last October in about 25 minutes, netting him a \$50 gift card prize. Five minutes later, 9-year-old Jacob Miller cruised past the finish line. Mr. Hartley, 16, who runs on the high school's cross country team, said he thought it was so cool such a young boy was into his sport, the youth deserved a prize. And with that, Mr. Miller was \$50 richer. Witnessing the act of selflessness by someone in his teens was Mark Broughton, husband to run organizer Allison Broughton, both of Macclenny, touched Mr. Broughton. "His thoughtfulness just blew me away," said Mr. Broughton. More recently, as Mr. Broughton and his business partners were rolling out an athletic clothing line "Heroes Brand" and giving samples to athletes they believe live the spirit of the brand, the entrepreneur decided that Mr. Hartley deserved some "swag" too. They all gathered at a Macclenny sportsware retailer where the clothing is sold to present the teen with his gear. Mr. Broughton said the clothing line touts everyday heroes who exemplify good behavior rather than negative behaviors some athletes exhibit today, like cursing and trash talking. The company has also donated items to two martial arts athletes.

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OBITUARIES

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Obituaries must be submitted in a timely fashion and have a local connection. Pictures are printed with obituaries free of charge. The newspaper reserves the right to publish photos based on quality. It is requested that all news items be typed or emailed to insure accuracy in print.

CONTACT US

By phone at 904.259.2400 or by fax at 904.259.6502. You can stop by our office located at 104 S. Fifth Street, Macclenny, FL or mail your submission to PO Box 598, Macclenny, FL 32063 Online at www.bakercountypress.com or email editor@bakercountypress.com

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MARCH 6, 2014

Ruby Baker, 85, mother of local

Ruby Martin Baker, 85, died on Sunday, March 2, 2014 at Vidant Roanoke Chowan Hospital in Ahoskie, NC. She was a native of Northampton County and born to the late Curtis and Mary Odom Martin. She was a member of Ahoskie Free Will Baptist Church and was employed in the sewing industry for years. Known for always having a smile on her face, Mrs. Baker enjoyed working in her yard and attending to her flower beds. Her love extended beyond family and grandchildren, to include neighbors and all those that knew her.



Ruby Baker

Along with her parents, Mrs. Baker was predeceased by her loving husband William Earl Baker Sr., and her siblings.

Mrs. Baker is survived by daughter Linda Meeks and husband Wayne of Ahoskie, daughter Nancy Conner and husband James of Glen St. Mary, son Billy Baker and wife Judy of Ahoskie, daughter Mary Lou Byrum and husband Mitch of Ahoskie; beloved companion Snoopy; six grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

A celebration of life service will be conducted on Saturday, March 8 at 11 am at Garrett-Sykes Funeral Service of Ahoskie. Burial will follow in Ahoskie Cemetery.

Clarence Bonham, father of local

Clarence Gordon Bonham, 89, of Green Cove Springs died on February 24, 2014. He was born to the late Clarence and Sara Alice Bonham on June 18, 1924 in Howell County, MO. He received his high school diploma in 1943 while continuing his education after enlisting in the Navy at age 18, and also attended Dartmouth and Columbia universities. He served his country over a span of 23 years and three wars. He received his commission as a naval officer and served his final command as an aviation training officer at Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, TX in 1965. He married his surviving wife Cecilia L. Bonham in 1977 and they lived in Corpus Christi before relocating to Florida in 1979.

He enjoyed sailing, ham radio communication and engineering. Gordon and Cecilia completed the voyage from Green Cove Springs to the islands of Bahamas in a 25-foot sailboat on two occasions. This accomplishment was always admired by the other sailing craft in the fleet due to the small size of the vessel.

Mr. Bonham is survived by his sister Georgia L. Brixey of Canyon City, Colorado; children and step-children Patricia Hicks, Carol Wood, David Bonham and Debra Presley of Corpus Christi, Laura Murphy of Spotsylvania, VA and Scott Combs of Macclenny; nine grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

A celebration of life will be held at Springs Park located at 321 Walnut St. in Green Cove Springs on March 22, 2014 at 11 am. Interment will be at a later date in Arlington National Cemetery. Helms-Gallagher Funeral Home of Green Cove Springs was in charge of arrangements. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to Northeast Florida Community Hospice, 4266 Sunbeam Rd. Jacksonville, Florida 32257, or a local food pantry.

Ms. Chessman, 37, accident victim

Elizabeth LuClair (Betsy) Chessman, 37, of Baker County died unexpectedly on February 25, 2014. She lived in Baker County and was born in Cherry Point, N.C.

She is survived by daughter Chase Haydu and son Kade Chessman; mother Suzanne (Eddie) Bibby; father Phillip (Darlene) Chessman; brothers Brad and Brent (Kristen) Chessman; numerous extended family and friends.

The funeral service was held February 28 at the First Baptist Church of Baldwin with Rev. Chris Drum officiating. Interment followed at Brandy Branch Cemetery. Prestwood Funeral Home of Baldwin was in charge of arrangements.

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CFT SERVICE TIMES:

Wednesday, March 5th
6:00-6:45 Family Dinner
7:00 Adult Worship Services
7:00 Youth Worship Services

Sunday, March 9th
10:00 Sunday School (All Ages)
11:00 Morning Worship Service
11:00 Children's Church
6:00 Evening Worship

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Bishop Richard Givens dies at 94

Bishop Richard Givens Sr., 94, of Jacksonville died on March 1 at his home in Oceanway. He was born in Sanderson on September 1, 1919, the eldest child of the late Arthur "Bud" and Rosie Givens and received his education at the school in Sanderson. After school he enlisted in the US Army and served dutifully during World War II until being honorably discharged after many years. Later in life, Bishop Givens founded New Born House of The Lord Jesus in Jacksonville, later changing the name to Givens Temple. He is preceded in death by his wife Willie Mae and brothers Paul Ruise, Mitchell and Arlee Givens.



Richard Givens Sr.

Bishop Givens is survived by children Delores Williams, Rose Stevens, Norma Kelly, Lillie Tysons, Joyce Norris, Samuel Givens, Everett Givens and Ricky Givens; sister Carlena (Eunice) Bell and brother Leroy (Lois) Givens; many grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews and cousins.

The funeral service for Bishop Givens will be on Saturday, March 8 at 11 am at Mount Moriah House of God Saints in Christ at 1005 Odessa St. in Jacksonville with Pastor Charles McGriff and Bishop Vic Givens officiating. Q.L. Douglas Funeral Home in Jacksonville is in charge of arrangements.

Funeral in Lake City for Mrs. Kite

Shirley Brown Kite, 79, of Fort White, Fla. died on Sunday, March 2 at the Suwannee Valley Care Center in Lake City following a long illness. She was born in Olustee and lived in Lake City, Lakeland and Gainesville before moving to Fort White in 1989. She worked at the J.C. Penney Store in Lake City for over seven years and was a homemaker who enjoyed gardening, working in her flower beds and sewing. She was a member of the Elim Baptist Church in Fort White.



Shirley Kite

Mrs. Kite was preceded in death by her parents, Evander Dewy and Nellie Williams Brown, and brothers Jesse and Robert Brown. She is survived by her husband, Donnie A. Kite of Fort White; daughters Donna (John) Stevens of Jacksonville, Sharon (Dave) Winston of Merritt Island, Fla. and Nancy (Don) Pettyjohn of Macclenny; sister Mary Nell Ramsey of Vancouver, Wisconsin; grandchildren Jamie Atkinson, Allison Vatcher, Erin Stevens, Brittany Winston, Jennifer Winston, Justin and Sara Pettyjohn.

The funeral service will be conducted at 11 am Thursday, March 6, in the chapel of Guerry Funeral Home in Lake City with Rev. Larry Sweat, pastor of Elim Baptist Church, officiating, assisted by Rev. Tom Stalnaker. Interment will be in Swift Creek Cemetery, Union County. Visitation will be from 6-8 pm on Wednesday, March 5 at the funeral home at 2659 S.W. Main Blvd.

Cemetery workday

South Prong Cemetery will have a workday on Saturday, March 22 beginning at 8 am. For further information please contact David Richardson at 259-9977.

In loving memory of Larry Givens

March 1, 2007

Seven years have gone by since that day when the Lord called one of His angels home. We miss and love you each and every day. It still seems like it was yesterday. We know that you are at rest, but the Lord knows what is in our hearts and will never, ever depart. We love you.

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Wed. Night Service 7:30 pm

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Saint Peter's in the Glen

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10:00 am Holy Eucharist
7:00 pm Wednesday Services

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Sun. Evening Worship . . 6:00 pm
Wed. Eve. Bible Study . . 7:00 pm

Dr. Roy Vining

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Service Friday for Ms. Michell

Cheryl Lee Michell, 66, of Macclenny died on March 1, 2014 at her residence with family by her side. She was born in Mt. Clemons, Michigan



Cheryl Michell

on March 26, 1947 to the late Cletus George Rodocker and Virginia Mary Margaret Connor Rodocker. Cheryl was raised in Michigan and in 1983 moved to Baker County, where she raised her family. She enjoyed being a homemaker, raising her children and attending church. Cheryl also enjoyed playing cards and computer games, knitting, crocheting, dancing and most of all spending time with her family and grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her parents; her brother Tommy Dolan and sisters Laura Rodocker and Sharon Dolan.

Mrs. Michell is survived by her loving husband of 35 years, Michael Lee Michell of Macclenny; children John Monk of Detroit, Robert "Bob" (Tania) Michell and Michael W. Michell, both of Macclenny, and Scarlett Strickland of Lake City; brother Lavere "Rocky" (Claire) Oxenrider of Glen St. Mary; sister Velma Thayer (Michael) Hayden of Dallas, TX; grandchildren Gabriela, Sierra, Michael Jr. and Casey Michell, David Dugan II and Savannah Strickland.

The funeral service will be conducted on Friday, March 7 at 3 pm at V. Todd Ferreira Funeral Services chapel in Macclenny with Pastor Bill Kincaid officiating. The family will receive friends for two hours prior to the service. In lieu of flowers please make donations to Cerebral Palsy Association of Northeast Florida, 3311 Beach Boulevard, Jacksonville, FL 32207.

Happy Birthday!
We will always remember you, and want to wish you a Happy Birthday in Heaven. We miss you; our hearts still ache with sadness and many tears still flow. What it meant to lose you, no one will ever know. We hold you close within our hearts, and there you will remain. To walk with us throughout our lives until we meet again.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY MICHAEL, MOMMA (SABBA), JAMES, RAISHLEH, KODIE, AUBRIE, PAISLIE, RAIFORD, GRACE, LIZZIE, A.J., DAVID, STEVEN, MIMI, NIC, SANDRA, CORY AND CHAIRBERLIN

In loving memory of Minnie L. Givens

3/4/38-12/19/13

Happy Birthday!

Mom, it's only been two months since the Lord called you home. I know Heaven is still rejoicing on your homecoming. We can only imagine what it's like to be present with the Lord. Mom, you are very missed among us, but thank God for letting you be our angel on earth. Now that you're in Heaven, keep watch over us until we meet again. Happy Birthday!

LOVE ALWAYS,
JOHNNIE L. GIVENS,
CHILDREN AND GRANDKIDS

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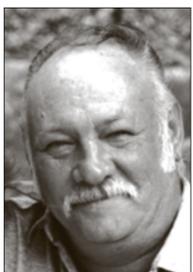
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In loving memory of John 'Cod' Merrett

10/13/1945-3/7/2013

Happy Birthday!
The moment that you died, my heart was torn in two. One side filled with heartache, the other died with you. I often lie awake at night when the world is fast asleep, and take a walk down memory lane, with tears upon my cheeks. Remembering you is easy, I do it everyday. But missing you is heartache that never goes away. I hold you tightly within my heart and there you will remain, until the joyous day arrives that we will meet again.

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In loving memory of Penny

9/2/58-3/8/13

Happy Birthday!
The moment that you died, my heart was torn in two. One side filled with heartache, the other died with you. I often lie awake at night when the world is fast asleep, and take a walk down memory lane, with tears upon my cheeks. Remembering you is easy, I do it everyday. But missing you is heartache that never goes away. I hold you tightly within my heart and there you will remain, until the joyous day arrives that we will meet again.

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the proposed ordinances, whose title hereinafter appears, will be presented in two public hearings to the Baker County Land Planning Agency for review on Thursday, March 13, 2014 at 7:00 PM or as soon thereafter as possible, and to the Board of County Commissioners for review on Tuesday April 15, 2014 at 6:00 PM, both at the Baker County Administration Building, 55 North Third Street, Macclenny, Florida. Copies of said ordinances may be inspected by any member of the public in the Commissioner's office address stated above. On the above mentioned date, all interested parties may appear and be heard with respect to the proposed ordinances which are titled as follows:

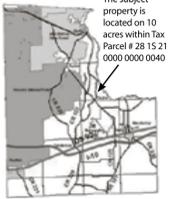
ORDINANCE 2014- AN ORDINANCE BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF BAKER COUNTY, FLORIDA, AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 91-1, AS AMENDED, REGARDING THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP OF THE ADOPTED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, WITH RESPECT TO ONE PARCEL OF LAND, BEING APPROXIMATELY 10 ACRES IN SIZE, RELATING TO SMALL SCALE DEVELOPMENT AMENDMENT PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED IN SECTIONS 163.3161 THROUGH 163.3215, FLORIDA STATUTES, PURSUANT TO AN APPLICATION SUBMITTED BY HARVEST BAPTIST CHURCH; PROVIDING FOR A CHANGE IN LAND USE CLASSIFICATION FROM AGRICULTURAL B LAND USE TO INSTITUTIONAL; PROVIDING SEVERABILITY, INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CODIFIER AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

ORDINANCE 2014- AN ORDINANCE BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF BAKER COUNTY, FLORIDA, REZONING 10 ACRES OF REAL PROPERTY OWNED BY HARVEST BAPTIST CHURCH FROM AG B TO INSTITUTIONAL; PROVIDING SEVERABILITY, INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CODIFIER, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Persons interested in commenting on the proposed changes may appear and shall be given an opportunity to speak at the public hearing or may send written comments to: Baker County Planning Department, 360 E Shuey Street, Macclenny, Florida, 32063. Copies of the ordinance are available for public inspection at the Baker County Planning Department. For additional information, please call (904) 259-3354.

NOTE: Pursuant to Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes, if any member of the public desires to appeal any decision made at this public hearing, he/she will need a record of the proceedings and for that purpose may need to ensure that he/she transcribe a verbatim record of the proceedings, which record would include the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, persons needing a special accommodation or an interpreter to participate in this proceeding should contact the Administration Department at (904) 259-3613 at least 48 hours prior to the time of the hearing.



SPORTS

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MARCH 6, 2014

SPORTS NOTICE SUBMISSIONS

We welcome your sports submissions for youth league, traveling league or individual athletic achievements. The paper reserves the right to publish submissions. It is requested that all news items be typed or emailed to insure accuracy in print.

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Ashton Alford runs home. Photo by Jud Johnson

Girls improve to 7 wins

JON SHUMAKE
SPORTS EDITOR
jonshu@live.com

The BCHS Lady Wildcats closed out their first month of play with victories on back-to-back nights over University Christian and West Nassau to improve their overall record to 7-1.

A three-run third inning gave the Lady Cats the cushion they needed to pull out a close 4-2 win over the visiting West Nassau Lady Warriors on February 28. Kylie Holton drove in two runs with a double that gave the team a two-run lead and "kick-started" the squad's offense, coach Franklin Griffith said. Her replacement runner, Madison Kennedy, scored on an error two batters later to give the Lady Cats a 4-1 lead.

The Lady Warriors tried to rally in the top of the sixth inning but pitcher Mackenzie Wingard navigated her way out of the jam by giving up only one run and left two West Nassau runners stranded on base. Macy Jackson closed out the game and sealed the win for the Lady Cats as the visiting team once again left the tying run stranded on base.

Outside of the third inning, West Nassau pitcher Morgan Williams was dominant on the mound as she allowed only one hit, Delicia Washington's first-inning solo home run, and struck out 10 Baker County batters.

"We knew this girl from West Nassau is one of the best pitchers we'll face all year," coach Griffith said. "We didn't hit it well as we should have but we scored."

The tight game followed three straight games where the team easily pulled away from its opponents. The coach said games like the one against West Nassau will only benefit the team moving forward.

"Sometimes you need those good, close, hard-fought victories," he said. "I think it will work well for us throughout the year and into the postseason."

The home victory over West Nassau came one night after the Lady Cats went on the road and defeated University Christian 14-8 on February 27.

Free physicals on these dates

Free physicals for middle school and high school girls participating in FHSA-sanctioned sports during the 2014-15 school year will be held on Wednesday, March 5 starting at 4 p.m.

The location is Dopson Family Medical Building beside Fraser Hospital in Macclenny.

Free physicals for boy athletes will be given on Wednesday, April 16 starting at 4 p.m.

After getting off to a slow start and falling behind 3-1, the Lady Cats took the lead with a three-run home run from Washington in the fourth inning. The team added another run in the same inning when Hayleigh Mulkey batted in Jennifer Hodges.

Baker County padded its lead with five runs in the fifth inning when Ashton Alford connected with a two-RBI double and Jennifer Hodges drove in two runs on a single. Holton batted in her second run of the game with an RBI single.

The Lady Cats added two

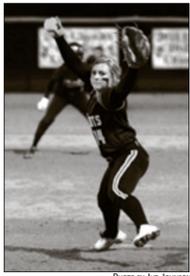


Photo by Jud Johnson
Macy Jackson pitches.



Purchase this photo at www.bakercountypress.com
The Lady Cats' Delicia Washington. Photo by Jud Johnson

runs in both the sixth and seventh innings to take a 14-4 lead. University Christian rallied in the bottom of the seventh inning and scored four runs, but the deficit was too much for them to overcome.

The team opens up the new month with a busy week of games. The Lady Cats traveled to Terry Parker on March 4 (see next week's edition for a recap) and host Stanton on March 6 for two district games. The girls

then travel to Trinity Christian for a non-district road game on March 7. Coach Griffith is confident that his team will add to its four-game winning streak.

"We played Terry Parker and Stanton well the first time, but that doesn't mean it'll happen the second time," he said. "Trinity has improved since we played them in the preseason. I'm keeping the girls focused. I feel like we should come away with three victories this week, too."

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Impressive starts for JV

JON SHUMAKE
SPORTS EDITOR
jonshu@live.com

Both of the high school's junior varsity teams have gotten off to hot starts through the opening weeks of the spring season with the softball team cruising to a 5-1 record and the baseball team jumping out to a 4-2 start.

The JV Lady Cats extended their streak to four games by winning three games in a row by a combined score of 46-3.

Angel Jackson blasted a home run to help the girls blow out visiting West Nassau 14-1 on February 28. The lopsided win followed two other easy victories as the team stomped Paxon 15-0 on February 20 two days after destroying Terry Parker 17-2 in front of home

crowds. While the softball team has dominated its competition, the JV Wildcat baseball team has also been piling up runs during its quick start.

Chaise Taylor batted in three runs and Chase Griffith added two more RBIs to help the JV squad run away with an 11-6 home win over West Nassau on March 3. The JV Cats pulled out to a 10-2 lead through the first three innings and then held on to win their third straight game.

Griffis hit a bases clearing double to help the JV Cats edge out the visiting Episcopal Eagles 9-6 on February 28. JV coach Kevin Mierzewski said the team relied on small ball to put pressure on Episcopal's defense. Pitcher Bryce Watson threw

four scoreless innings as the JV squad picked up a 5-4 home win over Bishop Kenny on February 25.

The team also defeated Columbia County on February 17. Coach Mierzewski said he is encouraged with the offensive production thus far, but expects the team to continue to play better once the starting pitching and base running improves.

The boys' and girls' seasons will continue when the baseball team travels to West Nassau for a rematch on March 5. The boys will then take on Columbia on the road on March 10 before returning home the following night against Middleburg. The JV Lady Cats traveled to Terry Parker on March 4 and are scheduled to play at Paxon on March 11.

Oak Leaf gives lifters 1st loss

JON SHUMAKE
SPORTS EDITOR
jonshu@live.com

The BCHS boys' weightlifting team suffered its first loss of the season when it fell 46-44 at Oak-leaf on February 25, but the team had young lifters step up and perform well in the absence of more experienced competitors.

Coach Scott McDonald said the team gave up the win to allow several lifters to get healthy as they prepare for the final push for the first sectional qualifying meet at West Nassau on March 24, which gave some younger and inexperienced lifters the opportunity to compete.

"We had some young kids step in for us and they did phenomenally," coach McDonald said. Sophomore John Crawford completed all six lifts, which the coach said is an impressive showing from a sophomore, en route to a third place finish in the 199-pound weight class. Valdez Jackson came away on top the same weight class.

Jackson wasn't the only Wildcat lifter to finish atop of his respective weight class. Brandon Har-

vey in the 129, Dalton Dyal in the 154, Jacob Salvey in the 169 and Blayne Merchant in the 183 finished in first place in their weight classes.

The Cats also had four lifters end the meet in second place, including Willis Starling in the 119, Jarrett Turner in the 154, Thomas Mcelfresh in the 169 and Tyler McCray in the 183.

In addition to Crawford's third-place finish, Cody Miller in the 119, Louis Handte in the 129, Dalton Williams in the 139, Tyler Mash in the 219, Collyn Green in the 238 and heavyweight Austin Rhoden all ended the meet with similar showings.

The weightlifting team will return to competition against 17 other squads at an invitational at Fort White on March 10. Schools from both 1A and 2A will compete at the meet and coach McDonald said it will give Baker County lifters an opportunity to see the totals they will have to put up to place at state.

"It's a huge meet for us and it will have the 'state' feel," he said. "It's going to be a broad spectrum of lifters and our guys will get to see where they stand. We're going to have guys vie for the top positions the same way they will with the state meet."

Picks shine at combine

Jaguar fans are surely watching the NFL combine carefully to evaluate the top players coming into the NFL draft. The Jaguars have the third pick in the draw and

FAT LADY ROBERT GERARD

Clowney may go before the Jaguars get a chance to pick, particularly if his combine numbers look good. He was wickedly fast with a 4.53 in the 40-yard dash, but didn't look nearly as strong as some of the other defensive players on the board.

If the Jaguars choose to go with a quarterback instead of a

pass rusher they could choose "Johnny Football." Heisman Trophy winner Johnny Manziel has entered the NFL draft. The Jaguars have the third pick in the draw and Texas A&M signal caller might be around at number 3.

Manziel has a lot of upside — his speed, his accuracy, his running abil-

ity, but he also comes with a downside. His personality is over the top and often divisive and his focus has been claimed to be about him rather than the team. On the other side of the coin, after a few years of Blaine Gabbert, the Jaguars might want a take-charge guy in the huddle.

It's a quarterback heavy draft this year so even if the Jaguars don't choose Manziel there's UCF's Blake Bortles, Louisville's Teddy Bridgewater, and Alabama's A.J. McCarron are all coming out. Of the bunch, Bortles probably has the best NFL chances, but then, Gabbert looked really good at the combine when the Jaguars traded up to get him.

• As a big soccer fan, I don't get a lot to cheer about in this part of the world. So I was cheering recently when the exciting news came out of Jacksonville that the US national team will play its last World Cup warm-up in the city on June 7 before heading off to Brazil for the World Cup.



Purchase this photo at www.bakercountypress.com
Tyler Wendell (left) fields the ball. Also pictured is Jared Crews. Photo by Jud Johnson

Boys shutout Paxon twice

JON SHUMAKE
SPORTS EDITOR
jonshu@live.com

The BCHS Wildcats allowed just one hit in back-to-back shut out victories over Paxon to open their District 3-5A schedule with a 2-0 record and improve their overall season record to 5-2.

Pitchers Jared Crews and Garrett Yarborough combined for a no-hitter to give the Wildcats a 2-0 road win over the Golden Eagles on February 28. Crews threw five hitless innings before he was removed from the game for reaching his pitch count.

Yarborough entered in relief and capped off the no-hitter with a few hitless innings of his own. Coach Fred Matricardi said the team's district rival, "I would have liked for him to finish [the no-hitter]," coach Matricardi said. "I knew he wanted it. He's as good as anybody."

Miller entered the game in Kennedy's place and closed out the win after loading the bases with a couple of walks. The Cats jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the second inning when Kennedy drove in a run. Tyler Wendell crossed home plate later in the inning to give the team the two-run lead.

Baker County padded its lead with two more runs in the fourth inning. Miller connected with an RBI single to score Zach Rafuse. Miller would get caught in a run down, but Wendell took advantage of the defensive distraction and scored.

The team capped off its scoring with a three-run sixth inning to give the squad the final 7-0 lead. Wendell scored his third run of the game when he was batted home on an RBI single by Cameron Wilson. Gregory drove in two runs on a deep double but was thrown out going for third to end the inning.

The Wildcats' district schedule will continue when they host Bishop Kenny on March 6 before traveling to play the Crusaders once again the following night. Coach Matricardi called the series a "big test" that

will help determine his team's seed in April's district tournament. "It's the Bishop Kenny. They're always good," coach Matricardi said about the team's district rival. "I feel like if we throw strikes and pitch well we'll be in it."

The Wildcats fell 5-2 to the Fernandina Beach Pirates on a cold night at in Jacksonville March 4 to drop to 5-3 overall on the season.

A pair of third-inning two-RBI doubles gave the Sharks a 4-1 lead they wouldn't relinquish for the remainder of the game. They added another run in the fourth inning on a throwing error by Baker County.

The Wildcats had several opportunities to claw their way back into the game but left 11 runners stranded on base, including eight in scoring position. The team had two runners on with two outs in the bottom of the seventh with the tying run at the plate, but batter Tyler Wendell grounded out to first to end the game. BCHS took an early 1-0 when Jordan Kennedy took advantage of a throwing error in the second inning.

The Cats pulled within two in the bottom of the third inning when Zach Rafuse knocked in Jared Crews, but the team couldn't put any more runs across the plate through the final four innings.



Purchase this photo at www.bakercountypress.com
Andrew Dehart slides into base. Photo by Jud Johnson

to a big ovation from the Baker County faithful for his performance after giving up the hit.

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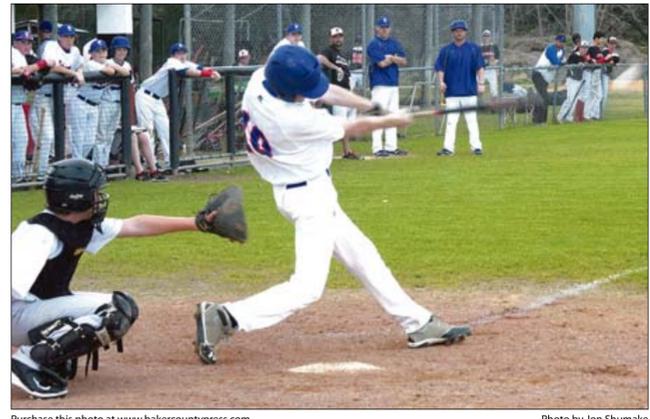
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Purchase this photo at www.bakercountypress.com
Bobcats' Wade Johnson swings during Monday's match up against Lake City. Photo by Jon Shumake

Bobcats baseball garners first district win 3-to-2

JON SHUMAKE
SPORTS EDITOR
jonshu@live.com

The BCMS Bobcat baseball team recently rebounded from its slow start by winning its first district game of the season to improve its overall record to 2-2, while the school's softball team split its two games to move to 1-3 overall.

Caleb Scott connected with a walk-off base hit up the middle to score Christian Watkins and give the Bobcats a 3-2 home win over the Lake City Falcons in the team's first district game of the season on March 3.

The game was tied at 2 entering the seventh inning after Josh Haygood crossed the plate on a throwing error in the bottom of the sixth. Watkins led off the final inning with a double and was advanced to third on a sacrifice bunt from winning pitcher Zac Gregory. Scott's base hit drove Watkins home for the game-winning run.

"Winning on a walk-off hit at home, especially in the first district game of the year, it



Purchase this photo at www.bakercountypress.com
Hunter Wilson slides into base February 25 against Trinity Christian. Photo by Debbie Pelham

doesn't really get much more exciting than that," head coach Matt Turner said.

While the offense found its rhythm late, pitchers Hunter Wilson and Gregory kept the game close and combined for eight strike outs. The Falcons scored both of their runs in the third inning, but Gregory pitched his way out of a bases loaded jam before more damage was done.

Coach Turner said Lake City is the toughest team on BCMS' side of the district and opening district play with a win over the

Falcons helps the Bobcats chances at a district title.

"It was the most important game so far this season being the first district game," he said. "It was a must-win game and they stepped up. [The win] puts us in the driver's seat to get us in the championship game."

The Bobcats

traveled to Trinity on March 4 for a rematch from the previous week that Baker County won 14-4 in five innings.

• The Lady Bobcat softball team has had an up-and-down year so far as they split their last two games.

The girls were defeated 10-3 by visiting Lake City on March 3. Coach Angela Lauramore said the team tried to rally back at the end, but it was too late to mount the comeback.

The Lady Bobcats picked up their first win of the season on February 25 by defeating host Yulee 10-4. MiKayla Mulkey led the high-scoring offense by going four out of five at the plate. Coach Lauramore said the defense played strong and pitcher Morgan Smith did a good job on the mound.

The softball team hosted Yulee on March 4. See next week's edition for a recap. Both teams are scheduled to be in action at home against Wilkinson on March 7. The two teams will go on the road against Lake Asbury on March 10 and return home against Suwannee the following day.



Photo by Debbie Pelham
Bobcats' Mackenzie Carter at the plate.



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McKenzie Hickman attempts to tag out a Lake City player sliding into home plate. Photo by Debbie Pelham

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