



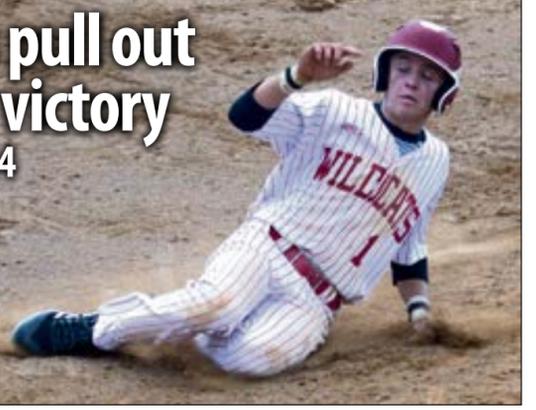
Dog Days of Baker

Saturday, April 14 • 11 am - 4 pm
at the Baker County Fairgrounds

Animal Adoptions 🐾 Contests
Live Music and much more!

Cats pull out late victory

Page 14



THE BAKER COUNTY PRESS

\$1.00

88TH YEAR | VOLUME 51

APRIL 12, 2018

AT A GLANCE

THINGS TO DO

APRIL 12

New River library coop meeting
4 p.m. - 5 p.m.
New River Solid Waste Facility

The New River Public Library Cooperative Governing Board Meeting will be at the New River Solid Waste Facility.

BCHS Wildcat baseball vs Bolles

7 p.m.
Baker County High School
1 Wildcat Dr.
Glen St. Mary

The Cats return to District 3-5A play against Bolles. The rematch of the previous two district championship games is scheduled for 7 p.m. The teams play again April 13 at Bolles.

APRIL 13

A Day of Hope Inc. presents Teen Challenge

5 p.m.
MORE ON PAGE 3

SPORTS



Kennedy commits
See page 14

Go vote ...

How should the county spend its bed taxes?

68% New venues/rec opportunities

12% New events

20% All of the above

bakercountypress.com

Possum in the Park preview

Page 9



The BCHS Wildcat weightlifting team celebrates its 10th state championship in program history.

Photos by Kimberlin Hall

Wildcats reign supreme!

JON SHUMAKE
SPORTS EDITOR

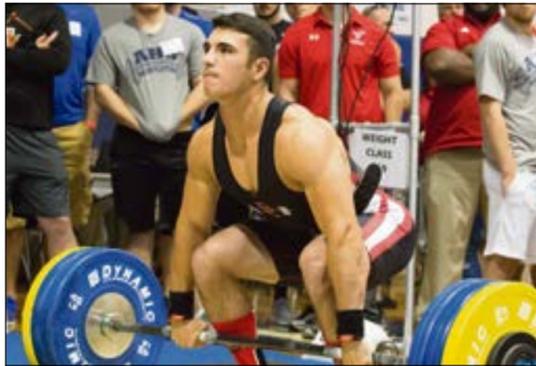
sports@bakercountypress.com

Why not?

After 10 consecutive seasons finishing as state champion or runner-up, BCHS Wildcat weightlifting head coach Scott McDonald asked the lifters that simple question: Why not make it 11 straight years?

The Cats answered the question in dominant fashion by successfully embarking on the second decade of the dynasty's reign.

Baker County captured its 10th championship in program history on April 6 in Panama City Beach in the most lopsided outcome at the Class 1A meet in more than a half-decade. Marcus Dialo and Dalton Simon both won individual state championships to lead



Dalton Simon, the program's third lifter to win back-to-back titles, lifts the clean and jerk attempt.

the team to 34 points, easily out-muscling Labelle, Bradford and Madison County, which all finished in a three-way tie for second with 13 points.

The 21-point gap between first and second was the largest at the Class 1A meet since Baker County won by

24 points in 2011 after scoring 44 points.

For coach McDonald, the program's seventh state championship since 2008 is just as sweet as the first.

"Every kid that stood up on that platform and held that championship trophy, got that medal around their

neck, it was their first-ever state championship," coach McDonald said. "It doesn't matter how many I've been a part of or coached, it doesn't matter at that point. That's their state championship."

"... That one Friday was just as sweet as any other and just as sweet for those guys to get up there and enjoy and be remembered and their names be engraved as a state champion at Baker County High School."

Simon will also have his name etched in school history for another reason. The senior joined Lucious Lee and Reuben Jackson as the program's only back-to-back state champions when he finished atop the 169 class.

His school record 675-pound total was the best in the class by 55 pounds,

See page 15

DECADE LATER: REFLECTIONS ON BCDC THEN, NOW

Mixed reviews by jail founders

JOEL ADDINGTON
MANAGING EDITOR

reporter@bakercountypress.com

Ten years ago the non-profit Baker Correctional Development Corporation, or BCDC, was in its infancy.

It had just issued \$45 million in municipal bonds to finance construction of a 500-plus-bed county jail and sheriff's office headquarters. It spent \$3 million of that sum to buy 90 acres just north of Mac-

"I've come to the conclusion my trust in our sheriff was grossly misplaced and it was intentionally abused."

- Alex Robinson
Former Baker County commissioner

clenny, about 20 acres of which was reserved to build the jail complex.

It was expected the federal government, specifically Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), would fill up the facility with immigration detainees based on statements from officials within that agency.

They stopped short of making such guarantees in writing, however.

Still, if all went well initially, ICE representatives reportedly told the Tallahassee architect who designed the facility, Bill Rutherford, even more beds could be needed down the road, necessitating expansion of the facility.

In fact, ICE official Mike Rosas was on hand when the first cement was poured for the project in March, 2008.

See page 3

A 'sassy' lip sync performance wins

JOEL ADDINGTON
MANAGING EDITOR

reporter@bakercountypress.com

Youth Baylee Thornton gave a sassy lip sync performance of Meghan Trainor's "All About That Bass" to win over the crowd at the first "Lip Sync Battle" hosted by the Baker Prevention Coalition the evening of April 6 at Heritage Park and take the top prize in the contest — a wireless speaker.

Second place went to Kamila Burks, who lip-synced "Can't Stop the Feeling" by Justin Timberlake. Her prize was a pair of wireless headphones.

The third place finalist was Samuel Rackley with Justin Bieber's "One Time," which he directed to his wife and coalition coordinator Taryn Rackley.

All three were selected based on crowd applause at the end of the fun-filled

See page 2



Purchase this photo at www.bakercountypress.com. Photo by Joel Addington
Baylee Thornton lip syncs Meghan Trainor's "All About That Bass."

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Lip sync: Drug-free fun

From page 1

event after the contestants took the stage once again.

"We will definitely be doing this type of event again. We like to try and do events that are unique and appealing to all age groups. This was fun!" said Ms. Rackley by email early this week.

Attended by more than 50 people, the lip sync contest was paired with children's activities — a bounce house, face painting and card tricks from Shane Kennedy of the Women's Center of Jacksonville — as well as concessions.

It was the latest event from the coalition, which works to combat substance abuse among local youths. The coalition sponsors regular entertainment events for kids and teens to encourage them to have fun in a safe, drug and alcohol-free environment.

"We were very pleased with the turnout and participation as a first-time event," said

coalition executive director Lea Rhoden early this week.

"Our goal was to have at least five lip syncers and we ended up with nine participants. We never know how many people we will have at an event so our philosophy is even if a handful of kids come out, that is worth the effort because that many kids had something fun and safe to do," she said.

The coalition is planning more movie in the park events soon as well.

Ms. Rhoden said the details — the particular movies, dates and times — will be announced on May 4 (hint, hint).



Second place winner Kamila Burks.



Purchase these photos at www.bakercountypress.com. Photos by Joel Addington. Baylee Whitehead, 9, and Millie Thornton, 4, of Macclenny play on the inflatable bounce house.

The Baker County Press Weather April 12, 2018

| Five Day Forecast | | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|--|
| | Thursday | Mostly Sunny | High: 79 Low: 58 | |
| | Friday | Partly Cloudy | High: 81 Low: 62 | |
| | Saturday | Partly Cloudy | High: 84 Low: 66 | |
| | Sunday | Few Showers | High: 77 Low: 59 | |
| | Monday | Chance Showers | High: 73 Low: 55 | |
| | Tuesday | Sunny | High: 76 Low: 58 | |
| | Wednesday | Mostly Sunny | High: 80 Low: 62 | |

| Today's High & Low Temperatures | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------------|---------|------------------|---------|
| Jasper | 79 / 58 | Callahan | 77 / 58 | Fernandina Beach | 73 / 63 |
| Watertown | 78 / 57 | Macclenny | 79 / 58 | Jacksonville | 76 / 61 |
| High Springs | 80 / 59 | Baldwin | 78 / 57 | Atlantic Beach | 73 / 63 |
| St. Augustine | 74 / 64 | St. Augustine | 74 / 64 | | |

| Sun/Moon Chart This Week | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------|------|
| Day | Sunrise | Sunset | Phase | Full |
| Thursday | 7:04 a.m. | 7:54 p.m. | | 4/29 |
| Friday | 7:03 a.m. | 7:54 p.m. | | |
| Saturday | 7:02 a.m. | 7:55 p.m. | | |
| Sunday | 7:01 a.m. | 7:56 p.m. | | |
| Monday | 7:00 a.m. | 7:56 p.m. | | |
| Tuesday | 6:59 a.m. | 7:57 p.m. | | |
| Wednesday | 6:58 a.m. | 7:57 p.m. | | |

| St. Mary's River Levels | | |
|-------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Location | Now | Change |
| Moniac, GA | 6.10 ft. | +0.00 ft. |
| Macclenny | 4.68 ft. | +0.72 ft. |

| Hunting/Fishing Times | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Day | AM | PM |
| Thu | 9:57-11:57 | 10:20-12:20 |
| Fri | 10:43-12:43 | -- |
| Sat | 11:06-1:06 | 11:30-1:30 |
| Sun | 11:54-1:54 | 12:18-2:18 |
| Mon | 12:42-2:42 | 1:08-3:08 |
| Tue | 1:34-3:34 | 2:00-4:00 |
| Wed | 2:27-4:27 | 2:55-4:55 |

| Last Week's Local Almanac | | | | |
|---------------------------|------|-----|---------|--------|
| Day | High | Low | Normals | Precip |
| Tue, 4/3 | 84 | 55 | 81/52 | 0.00" |
| Wed, 4/4 | 81 | 61 | 80/52 | 0.04" |
| Thu, 4/5 | 72 | 48 | 80/53 | 0.00" |
| Fri, 4/6 | 82 | 46 | 81/53 | 0.00" |
| Sat, 4/7 | 79 | 63 | 81/53 | 1.23" |
| Sun, 4/8 | 63 | 57 | 81/53 | 0.01" |
| Mon, 4/9 | 81 | 59 | 81/53 | 0.00" |

THINGS TO DO

From page 1

Baker County High School 1 Wildcat Dr., Glen St. Mary

A Day of Hope Inc. presents a Teen Challenge rally at the high school, featuring complimentary food from the Ale House and a drug-free message from Jacksonville's Teen Challenge Men's Center. The food will be served at 5 p.m., and the presentation, including the Stay Sharp program, is scheduled to start at 6 at the high school's auditorium.

BCHS Lady Wildcat softball vs West Nassau 7 p.m.

Baker County High School 1 Wildcat Dr. Glen St. Mary

After falling in a walk-off loss at West Nassau earlier in the season, the Lady Cats will try to avenge the loss when they host the Lady Warriors.

Dollar karaoke at the brewery 6 p.m. - 9 p.m. Crooked Rooster Brewery 1478 S. Sixth St. Macclenny, FL 32063

Crooked Rooster Brewery is hosting a dollar karaoke fundraiser to benefit the Women's Center of Jacksonville during Sexual Assault Awareness month. There will be prize drawings for \$5 as well as hamburgers and hotdogs for donations. All proceeds will benefit survivors of sexual assault.

APRIL 14 Wildcat Warrior 5k 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Heritage Park Village, Lowder St. Macclenny, FL 32063

Wildcat Warrior 5k is a nonprofit charitable event to raise community support for families of children battling life threatening illness. Join us to INSPIRE, EMPOWER & STRENGTHEN the love and spirit of our community while helping a great cause.

Free health fair at Ed Fraser Memorial Hospital 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Ed Fraser Memorial Hospital 159 N. Third St. Macclenny, FL 32063

Ed Fraser Memorial Hospital will host a free health fair on Saturday, April 14. Lots of activities including health screenings, bone density screenings, wellness education and free hot dogs, chips and drinks. There is even face painting for the kids as well as WQIK 99.1 broadcasting live. For more information, call (904) 259-3151.

ADD YOUR COMMUNITY EVENT TO THE ONLINE & PRINT CALENDAR AT bakercountypress.com

BCDC: Ex-commissioner felt misled

From page 1

But when the facility opened its doors in the summer of 2009, the projected influx of federal inmates didn't materialize, at least not for several years.

The slow start caused BCDC to burn through its reserve cash to keep operating. It led to employee furloughs and a temporary forbearance arrangement with bondholders for partial debt service payments. While BCDC has been making full debt payments for a number of years now, it remains behind on payments to vendors.

The county, meanwhile, was stuck paying nearly twice as much for housing its inmates at the new facility. The higher inmate housing costs slowly drained the county's reserves to near critical levels that are only now starting to rebound.

BCDC is now facing new financial woes tied at least in part to high interest on its debt. The bonds were issued with an adjustable interest rate that's now above 8 percent.

The nonprofit owner of the jail and sheriff's complex, which is operated by the Baker County Sheriff's Office on behalf of BCDC, has pinned its hopes on a federal loan to refinance its debt and free up an estimated \$1 million per year.

Was it the 'right' decision? Former commissioners split

The Baker County Commission in 2008 consisted of Alex Robinson, Mike Griffis, Mark Hartley, Gordon Crews and Julie Combs. They helped lay the groundwork for the project, loaning BCDC some \$200,000 in seed money at zero interest, repaid with 6 acres of purchased property, and rezoning the acreage for the jail complex.

They were sold on the project by its biggest backer and arguably the most powerful elected official at that time, former sheriff Joey Dobson. They were told there would be so much demand for space for ICE detainees, BCDC would have enough money to not only pay back the bonds but also offset higher housing costs for the county, which would roughly double to more than \$84 per inmate per day at the new jail.

After a few years, then county commissioner Mr. Robinson recalls hearing, the county could get even more money in the form of excess revenue returned to county coffers by BCDC.

Among the former commissioners interviewed during the last week, Mr. Robinson, a Macclenny electrician, was the most angered about how the new jail endeavor played out. He said he feels like he and other officials were intentionally misinformed by the former sheriff, though he couldn't say to what end.

"Knowing then what I know now, would I make the

same decision? No," he said early this week. "I'd probably rather go with some kind of renovation [of the old jail]."

Nonetheless, the project as presented more than a decade ago was hard to pass up.

The existing jail and sheriff's office was old, rapidly deteriorating and at near capacity. The number of U.S. Marshals prisoners housed there — a long time revenue source for the county — was also dwindling.

"Being a long-time elected official," said Mr. Robinson, "I trusted the advice and information provided by the sheriff at that time. He was the top elected official in that capacity ... Why would we not have that trust in him?"

Mr. Griffis remembers mulling renovations to the old jail but said it was too far gone to save. That led officials to consider building a new one, which officials in Glades County, FL were already doing with similar promises of revenue from ICE detainees to repay debt issued to build a new facility.

"It was working for them," said Mr. Griffis. "The ICE folks were saying there's no problem getting the inmates. Looking back, with the same information, I think I would have made the same decision. It was the right decision with what information we had at the time ... It was vetted in public. No one was against it in concept at the time."

But unlike Mr. Robinson, Mr. Griffis says he doesn't regret the decision and doesn't believe he was misled by former sheriff Dobson.

"Looking back, hindsight being 20/20, would we have been better off to bite the bullet and build the jail, with taxpayers still on the hook, I don't know," said Mr. Griffis, the assistant manager for the City of Macclenny. "... BCDC may survive and do what it was planned to do originally. The jury is still out on whether that was the right decision or not."

In Mr. Robinson's mind, however, the verdict is clear. "Since the inception of BCDC, I've come to the conclusion my trust in our sheriff was grossly misplaced and it was intentionally abused," he said. "I feel like the sheriff and those closest to him misled the county commission and the public."

He said a possible motivation for doing so may have been the potential for more funding for the sheriff's department. The original management fee due to the department in BCDC was set at \$800,000, he said, compared to \$200,000 today.

The larger fee was never collected, however, due to the financial troubles BCDC faced from day one.

Mr. Robinson served on

the BCDC board of directors at that time but would later step down. He said he'd grown dissatisfied with the project because his input was ignored and he didn't trust the information he was getting. For example, he said, commissioners were initially told that the county could

Looking back though, Mr. Crews said, he would have liked to have seen a better long-range plan for the facility or something in writing outlining how the county would benefit from the project.

"Everyone remembers how it was supposed to happen, but there was no documentation. We were supposed to have this extra money coming back to the county and that never happened."

-Gordon Crews

not pay a cheaper inmate housing rate than the federal government, even though years later BCDC began offering the county discounted rates for paying up front.

Better move: Build a smaller jail with taxpayer money

Like Mr. Griffis, former county commissioner Gordon Crews, who was enjoying Spring Break with his grandkids by the lake last week, doesn't regret creating BCDC to finance construction of the new jail without obligating taxpayers' money.

But, he admits, given the struggles BCDC has faced in the last decade servicing the debt used to build the 500-plus-bed jail, the better move may have been for the county to borrow substantially less money to build a smaller facility to house mainly local prisoners.

If the county had financed and built a 250-bed facility, for instance, the debt load would've been much smaller, perhaps \$20-\$25 million, and the interest rate on the debt would be about half as much, too.

"It's tough to say because it was such a financial struggle, but I still see how it [the current facility] could be a positive to the county if it's ever paid off," said the long-time ER nurse.

Mr. Crews said, he would have liked to have seen a better long-range plan for the facility or something in writing outlining how the county would benefit from the project.

"I was never in favor of building the complex," she said. "I had a lot of unanswered questions. I never got any answer as to how much it would cost per day per inmate."

After she left the commission, however, she says she lost interest in the project.

Former commissioner and high school teacher Mark Hartley, similarly, didn't have much to say about BCDC, past or present.

"I haven't been following it," he said. "I think it did get us something. At the time it didn't seem we could afford to build that large of [a jail]. From what we thought it was going to be, it was a good deal, but all that kind of fell through when they didn't bring the ICE inmates."

Asked if he now thinks the former board should have taken a different course related to the jail, Mr. Hartley said it's hard to say.

"Maybe we should have looked to build a smaller one, but I don't know that because I don't know how many [county inmates] are in there now," he said.

There were on average 128 local prisoners at the jail in February, which was about the average for the previous four months. The average number of federal detainees from October to February was 346.

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said, pointing to the large suite on the south side of the complex housing the sheriff's and sheriff's secretary's offices, a lobby area and conference room. "It's not what taxpayers expect from their government."

His predecessor on the board, Julie Combs, now a deputy clerk at the courthouse, said she voted to rezone the property for the jail but remained skeptical about the venture and the potential for the county to face liability should the project fail.

"I was never in favor of building the complex," she said. "I had a lot of unanswered questions. I never got any answer as to how much it would cost per day per inmate."

After she left the commission, however, she says she lost interest in the project.

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There were on average 128 local prisoners at the jail in February, which was about the average for the previous four months. The average number of federal detainees from October to February was 346.

"I would not have supported it being as big as it is, and not only smaller but without all the luxuries," he

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Deal on field lights open to all

MIKE ANDERSON
PRESS STAFF

After rejecting a move to grant a blanket waiver of electric bills for the use of ball fields at county parks, the county commission last week voted to extend the offer to all athletic groups in exchange for improvements made at the facilities.

Previously, the county has only entered into such an agreement with Baker County Little League, which Commissioner James Croft argued is unfair to others — such as softball, church and volleyball teams — who pay the county's full charge of \$10 an hour to cover lighting costs.

"In the last fiscal year a little under \$3200 came in as revenue on over an \$18,000 light bill (total at all county parks)," Commissioner Croft said when he brought the matter up at a board meeting the evening of April 3. "This year so far we've brought in a little over \$2100 and the light bill is a little over \$11,000."

The county ends up paying the bulk of the bills from Florida Power and Light Co., which defeats the intent of the county's ball park lighting fees, he said.

"The whole purpose is to try to recover the money that is being billed," Commissioner Croft said. "But then the board entered into an agreement with the Little League that allowed them to

do upgrades to the fields, or what have you. We give them a dollar for dollar match. I understand we've had stuff done at the fields but we still have light bills."

Then he moved into the specific reason he raised the issue for discussion, which he said was to "offer some consistency in our policy." "I don't like to propose this because I consider myself fiscally conservative ... but right now my proposal is that we dissolve the light bill charge because Little League can do some things to get their bill cleaned (erased)."

"If you leave the lights on all night you have to pay a \$100 fine. I have no problem at all with that. That's just irresponsibility of whoever was using the field."

—Commissioner Jimmy Anderson

said Mr. Croft. "But what can the volleyball league do or other groups that don't have the option? So, my proposal is that until we come up with an option nobody pays."

Furthermore, he said, the county should begin charging a penalty, say \$100, for any group that fails to turn the lights off after they finish playing at night, something that occurs all too frequently.

"This would encourage folks to make sure the lights are off before they leave the field," Mr. Croft said.

While his second suggestion received unanimous support of the board, his motion to dissolve light bills for all groups that reserve ball fields failed to gain any trac-

tion and died on the spot. "If you leave the lights on all night you have to pay a \$100 fine. I have no problem at all with that," said Commissioner Jimmy Anderson. "That's just irresponsibility of whoever was using the field."

But he and other commissioners felt that improvements Baker County Little League has made at Knabb Sports Complex in exchange for a waiver of electric fees has been a good deal for the county because everyone benefits from better facilities all year and it reduces

of courthouse security, said the new machine is identical to ones in use by the Florida Department of Corrections. He said it contains the latest X-ray technology and has "a greater ability to penetrate steel" and can also detect wiring on explosive devices.

Approved job descriptions and salary ranges for two new positions starting in 2019 when the county fire and Emergency Medical Services departments will be combined under the leadership of a Fire/EMS chief and deputy chief.

After comparing salaries for similar positions in other Northeast Florida communities, commissioners set the salary range for the fire/EMS chief at \$65,000 to \$75,000 and the salary for the deputy chief at \$45,000 to \$55,000.

The new chief's position is expected to be filled by next February or early spring. EMS director David Richardson is retiring at the end of May, 2019.

A job overview provided by the county manager stated that the county "wants to transition from two separate departments into one consolidated department and hire full-time firefighter personnel to work side by side with the volunteers."

The merger was one of numerous recommendations a citizen visioning committee made last year following an in-depth assessment of firefighting and EMS services and funding levels in Baker County.

Scheduled a day-long budget workshop on June 12 to work out all the details for the upcoming fiscal year in 2018-19 beginning October 1, which, if accomplished, could set a precedent for future budgets.

Traditionally, the commission has met numerous times over a period of months to go over all department budgets before reaching a consensus on a new budget. This time, officials say they intend to complete the task in one day, beginning at 1 p.m. until the job is done.

Authorized \$24,908 in emergency repairs to county fire engine 50 following a determination that what at first was thought to be a minor oil leak actually was caused by a faulty head gasket that also had leaked oil into the coolant system, necessitating more extensive repairs.

Because the fire department budget didn't have sufficient funds to cover the repairs, the county manager asked the board to approve the expenditure from the general fund, which may be reimbursed next year if the commission approves a proposed increase in the annual fire assessment.

Ms. Downing said the expenditure should be declared an emergency "so that Engine 50 can be repaired and placed back in service."

Established new voting precincts to coincide with county commission district boundaries, though the location of the nine polling places will remain the same. Concerned voters may contact the supervisor of elections office at 259-6339 with questions about whether their particular polling place has changed.

Selected Jowett & Wood, a forest management company, to lead the tree thinning, replanting and harvesting program at Baker County's St. Mary's River Shoals Park for the next four years. The company was one of only two firms that responded to requests for proposals the county sent to 31 companies.

After a review of bid responses by county staff Jowett & Wood won the award by outscoring its competitor, The Forestry Company, 279 to 265.

In other recent arrests,

BAKER COUNTY COMMISSION

Bed tax helps fund local events

MIKE ANDERSON
PRESS STAFF

Eighteen years after a tourist development tax was enacted in Baker County the main purpose still has not been achieved — building a civic center or auditorium as a venue for cultural events, music concerts and other activities designed to bring visitors to the county.

But that doesn't mean the so-called "bed tax," which was implemented by the county commission in 2000 and has grown to over half a million dollars today, isn't being spent on a much smaller scale to support less grandiose purposes.

Two months ago county commissioners approved a request by County Manager Kenzie Downing to appropriate \$1500 to help fund her second annual Dog Days of Baker Festival at the county fairgrounds on April 14.

Later, they granted a \$1500 request on April 3 to support the Possum in the Park's fifth annual charity music festival, which begins at 9 a.m. on April 21 at Heritage Park in Macclenny.

County officials also have discussed the potential use of bed taxes to fund future attractions at St. Mary's River Shoals Park, possibly horse shows, ATV and bicycle races, concerts and the like.

The key requirement, officials say, is that qualifying events must be intended and advertised as a vehicle to promote tourism.

"When we have an opportunity to promote things in the county we use the appropriate funds to do so and that is the purpose of these funds," said Commissioner James Bennett after the board approved his motion last week to grant the \$1500 donation for Possum in the Park.

Greg Sheppard, a founder and co-chair of Possum in the Park, submitted a letter to the county manager last month seeking the donation and personally appeared

before the commission last week.

"Right now, conservatively, we think that our expenses are going to be about \$4500," said Mr. Sheppard, adding that the \$1500 contribution from the county would help finance marketing expenses for the 11-hour event.

The county's participation as a sponsor, he said, "will help ensure that the event can reach our goal to raise \$5000 for charity."

This year's recipient is Project Cold Case, which is focusing on a joint jurisdictional unsolved murder case involving the Baker County Sheriff's Office and the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

Mr. Sheppard, owner of the Crooked Rooster Brewery in Macclenny and a member of the county's Land Planning Agency, said an estimated 2000 visitors are expected to attend this year's festival, which will feature American folk music bands, numerous vendors and other activities.

"This event," he said, "is part of a coordinated effort by local civic organizations and volunteers to help market Baker County to reach (its) full potential as a family-friendly community that actively supports others in and around the community through public-private partnerships."

While Project Cold Case will be the primary beneficiary, Mr. Sheppard said proceeds from a 5K run from Heritage Park to Baker High and back will be donated to the family of Colby Hodges, former Wildcat baseball pitcher who recently lost his battle with testicular cancer.

Before the board voted on the request Commissioner Bennett asked Mr. Sheppard to explain what Possum in the Park was all about, saying he knew nothing about it and wondered "if it had anything to do with an animal show or something like that."

Mr. Sheppard explained that the event was inspired

by an annual charitable music festival called Bear in the Square in the North Georgia town of Dahlonega.

"This was our twist on taking the Bear in the Square and creating our own hometown event here in Baker County, calling it the Possum in the Park," he said, noting that the festival has continued to draw bigger crowds each year.

"The first two years we did it over at Friendship Park in Glen and the last two years we've moved it over here to Heritage Park," he said, adding that the event likely will be moved to a larger site next year to accommodate increasing crowd sizes and more vendors.

In addition to ads in *The Baker County Press* and *Hometown Journal*, Mr. Sheppard said Possum in the Park is being promoted on Facebook, Twitter and flyers.

"We're trying to attract more people this year from the Westside of Jacksonville, Lake Butler and the Lake City area," he said.

That's good, Commissioner Bennett said, because tourist development funds can only be used to support events designed to attract visitors from surrounding counties, not just those who live in Baker County.

At first, however, it appeared as though the request might be denied because a nine-member Tourist Development Council (TDC), which was created in 2000 to advise the county commission on the use of tourism development funds, has been inactive for quite some time.

"The TDC has been dormant for several years, so as of now, no seats are filled," the county manager said in an email a few days after the commission meeting. "We hope to have a new list very soon of potential TDC members to present to the board for approval."

According to the legislation that created the bed tax and TDC, up to 10 percent

of the revenue annually may be appropriated for special events that promote tourism.

Commissioner Bennett said Possum in the Park "would be an excellent opportunity" for the use of bed tax revenue, but he was under the impression that the TDC first would have to review such requests and advise the commission.

When it came time for the board to take action on the request, he asked whether the commission could vote to "move money out of that (TDC) account" without input from the Tourist Development Council, to which County Attorney Rich Komando noted that commissioners have done so in the past.

"Let me ask my question again," Mr. Bennett said. "Can we actually approve this funding request?"

"I believe we can," the attorney replied, adding that the TDC's purpose is to set direction for "long-term goals."

"Okay, I move to approve the requested amount of \$1500 for Possum in the Park's music festival," Mr. Bennett said, gaining the unanimous consent of the board.

In a report to the commission last week Mrs. Downing said the tourist development tax fund contained \$546,627, of which 75 percent is reserved for a civic center/auditorium, 10 percent for "cultural events and activities which promote tourism in Baker County," 10 percent for administrative expenses and 5 percent for contingency.

Most of the TDC money is derived from a 3 percent tax on lodging at three motels in Macclenny.

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Passed out from 'huffing'

A Macclenny man faces counts of felony child neglect and misdemeanor possession of a harmful chemical after he was found passed out in his vehicle at Macclenny City Park with his 6-year-old daughter nearby in a rear seat.

Deputy John Murphy responded to a complaint by a 34-year-old Macclenny woman the early evening of April 3 and said he had to shake Caleb Poturich, 33, awake to question him. The officer described him as "slightly lethargic" and said Mr. Poturich denied being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

During a consent search, Deputy Murphy found an aerosol can of Endust dusting and cleaning spray on the front driver's side floorboard, and two additional cans on the front passenger seat. Inhaling the spray is often called "huffing" and though delivering a euphoric high it is considered dangerous and even deadly to humans.

Deputy Murphy quoted Mr. Poturich as admitting he is a meth user trying to quit, and that he "huffs" as a substitute.

The witness said she was parked next to the suspect's vehicle and observed him inhale the spray then pass out with the daughter in the rear seat. She said he remained in that state about an hour.

In other recent arrests, county deputies charged a trio of suspects with possession of meth and meth-related devices following traffic stops, one of them a bicyclist.

Deputy Jeffrey Davis said he confronted James Whitaker, 41, of Macclenny on U.S. 90 west about 3:30 a.m. on April 3 after seeing him near Lowder Street on a bicycle without reflectors.

A consent search of a cart he was pulling turned up one gram of meth in a baggie, a syringe with meth residue and a digital scale, among other items.

Timothy Hance, 32, of Glen St. Mary was jailed the early morning of April 8 for meth possession and tampering with evidence after the vehicle he was riding in was clocked speeding northbound on CR 125 near the interstate.

Deputy Jeffrey Higginbotham said a 2007 Toyota driven by Thor Fennell, 28, of Glen turned into the Journey Store about 12:30 a.m., and he observed what turned out to be a cloth liquor bag tossed out the

front right window into shrubbery.

The meth inside allegedly belonged to Mr. Hance, based on a statement made to another deputy at the scene. Mr. Fennell was ticketed for speeding and two other occupants, James Rattliff III, 30, and Rachael Rosier, 22, both of Macclenny, were not charged.

Another vehicle passenger, Jessica Floyd, 29, of Glen was charged with having meth in a syringe, a Suboxone strip and other paraphernalia when the 2005 Dodge she was riding in about midnight on April 4 was stopped on CR 125 north of Glen for an expired tag.

Detective Jeremiah Combs said he conducted the traffic stop near Pierce Road, and soon learned that Ms. Floyd was wanted in Duval County for failure to pay child support. He spotted a box containing the items while escorting the suspect out of the vehicle, and Mr. Floyd admitted it belonged to her.

Three other occupants, Chastity Ellis, 25, and Kelly Crews, 38, both of Glen, and Jack Hodges Jr., 49, of Hampton were not charged.



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OPINION

Lessons learned from jail fiasco a decade ago

Joel Addington's retrospective this week on the birth of BCDC a decade ago to both replace an aging county jail and have someone else pay for it is a well-done look back on how sitting county commissioners perceived it then, and what they think now with the knowledge of hindsight. We all could use a little hindsight looking back on decisions we've made. The challenge always is to swallow our pride and honestly assess where we might have gone amiss, and learn from it. Looking back on things we've done well — or turned out well with luck — is no challenge.

No one on the county board at that time remains an incumbent today. The fact that their acquiescence in 2008 was key to getting the new jail project off the ground lends credence to why what they think today is important. They had to sign off on a \$3 million land purchase and the \$45 million bond issue.

What seems apparent based on responses to Mr. Addington's questions is the majority of ex-commissioners believe either they were purposely misled by then-sheriff Joey Dobson, or they went along believing what he did at the time — the jail would pay for itself via income from federal ICE inmates. There was some, but not a majority of, concern that the income base had no real foundation, and that, of course, turned out to be the case.

The result was a near-immediate sucking sound of the commission's sizable cash surpluses in 2009 (around \$13 million) going down the hole to a level so depleted that it truly imperiled the fiscal viability of Baker County government.

The majority of ex-commissioners seem now to believe they would never have signed onto this, opting instead for a lesser debt load to construct a new jail with room for future growth and whatever the federal government deemed to send our way as extra income.

That option in fact was proposed by many (yours truly included) before any bond indebtedness

was signed, but met with dogged opposition by Mr. Dobson insisting this was a "win-win" proposition. He probably believed that, but it's generally conceded now that he was blinded by legacy building (as witnessed by the palatial and lavishly furnished office he appointed for himself at the new jail), lack of experience in the business world and a smug belief he was the most powerful local political

force. He certainly treated the county commission that way.

All this is history now, and truly Baker County has learned from it. The fallout from the jail fiasco may not have directly whipped any of the sitting commissioners (most declined to seek re-election for one reason or another), but it gave momentum to new faces vowing to stop the fiscal bleeding and eventually draw the line on how much the county was going to pay for local inmate room and board.

Now the challenge for the nonprofit BCDC and ultimately the county commission is obtaining alternate financing to give the jail operation some breathing room back from its gloomy fiscal morass (dwindling reserves, high interest on bonds, large accounts payable backlogs). It's far from out of the woods. The public souring on the new jail played at least a partial role in Sheriff Scotty Rhoden stepping forth to oppose Mr. Dobson in 2016, and the incumbent's

near-immediate decision to retire and anoint his under sheriff Gerald Gonzalez to run in his place. The latter had to run, and lose, with the yoke of the incumbent around his neck, and Mr. Rhoden by winning was left to clean up the mess. It's no stretch to say the events a decade ago leading up to building a new jail changed the course of politics in Baker County more than any single event. Ten years from now we'll know how much.

Impressions

Jim McGauley

pointed for himself at the new jail), lack of experience in the business world and a smug belief he was the most powerful local political



APRIL IS SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH...

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Making those pre-dawn 'to-do' lists

For some reason I've gotten in the habit of waking up at 4 a.m. It could be a sign that I am getting older and when you get older stuff like that happens.

Usually, I will look at my watch and say, "You idiot, it's 4 a.m. Roll over and go back to sleep. Most of the time, that works.

Occasionally, however, it does not. When that happens, my mind takes trips down the rabbit hole with Alice and thinks of all sorts of strange and unusual things. I get very creative at 4 a.m.

I have written stories and songs in my mind, songs, come up with wonderful schemes. The nutty part of these 4 a.m. musings is that they all make perfect sense at the time. If I'm lucky, by the time I wake up the next morning, I have forgotten every single thing that I've concocted in the wee small hours of the morning.

If not, I usually look at what I jotted down — yeah, sometimes I do that, and wonder whether I went to an opium den. What in the world was going through my head? What did I eat before bed?

I dream a lot. I rarely remember them but when I do, most of the time it is directly related to something I've read or seen right before bed. The other night, Kelley was talking about poisonous snakes so I dreamed I was bitten on the finger by a snake. When I woke up at 4 a.m., I looked very intently at my finger and wondered why it wasn't swelling.

"Because, you idiot, you weren't bitten by a snake. Roll over and go back to sleep."

I don't really mind those journeys around my psyche with Alice in Wonderland. It's kind of fun, actually.

What I do mind are the worry times. Many 4 a.m. mornings are spent worrying about things over which I have no control in the hours before dawn. I hate those mornings because

they set the stage for the rest of my day. I wake up blue and it usually takes a couple of hours before I get back on track.

Worry-mode often stacks one thing on top of another on top of another until it looks like I'll never get through it all during the day. Then morning dawns and I've finished everything on my worry clipboard by 10 a.m. and I'm left scratching my head.

Or I worry about things in the future over which I have no control. Money,

health, our country, the world, the zombie apocalypse. Most of that stuff I have very little control over, but try telling that to the 4 a.m. blues. On those occasions, I'm better off getting up, taking a shower and drinking coffee.

Today was a 4 a.m. morning, but it was mild. I had to go back to school after a week off for spring break. I made a list in my head of what I had to accomplish, rolled over and went back to sleep.

On a slightly different path, but in a similar vein, I heard an interesting discussion the other night on sports talk radio. The program was *Helmets and Heels* on 1010 XL AM radio. I tuned it in as I was driving home from rehearsal.

The premise of the program was three very football-savvy women and one guy discuss the Jaguars, the NFL, the Gators and all things football. It's usually pretty interesting because they come at it from a feminine take.

That night, however, they got off-track and were talking about top sheets. One of the women had read that the majority of millennials didn't use top sheets. Top sheets, of course are the sheets under your blanket.

All three of the women used top sheets. The got into a discussion of regular cotton versus Egyptian cotton. They talked about thread counts and mysterious stuff like that. They all

agreed that they couldn't understand how you could not sleep under a top sheet. The lone guy did not agree. He slept with just the blanket.

I got to thinking about that. I wonder if that's a universal man/woman thing.

I don't use a top sheet, but Kelley does. She uses the top sheet and a blanket if it is cold. I only use a blanket.

I scratched my head again and thought about that.

To me, the top sheet is useless. It serves no purpose except to cover you up. It doesn't keep you warm at all.

Kelley, who is more subtle than I am, disagreed. "I don't know how you can sleep under those blankets every night with your bare feet sticking out the bottom. It's way too hot."

"No it's not. Only my feet get hot. The rest of me is nice and perfectly toasty."

"Hmmpf."

I have to give this more thought. I'll put it on my 4 a.m. to-do list.

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Check scheme foiled

In what was described as a set-up by an undercover informant, Baker County detectives arrested an Orange Park man on April 3 for bringing counterfeit bills and bogus payroll checks into Macclenny with the aim of having one of them cashed here.

According to the report submitted by Det. Charlie Sharman, Bo Ellis Shipman, 38, intended to have the informant cash an \$860 check on Intra-coastal Builders Corp. of Jacksonville Beach and split the proceeds.

Officers found the check and nine others left blank in the Honda with Virginia plates stopped on SR 228 in south Macclenny that afternoon by detectives Charles Ross and Keith Parker after they were tipped that Mr. Shipman was in the area. The suspect also had two fake \$50 bills and a fake \$20 bill in his possession that he allegedly was going to circulate here.

The driver of the vehicle said to be Mr. Shipman's girlfriend of the same Orange Park address was identified as Brandie Maddox, 31. She claimed to have no knowledge of the checks or bills and was not charged.

Juan Young, 22, of Jacksonville was arrested the morning of April 7 for theft of a

wallet and purse from a vehicle belonging to Reva Guin and parked near the Dollar General on South Sixth Street.

Deputy Jacob Satterwhite traced the suspect via a surveillance video from nearby McDonald's, and from witness statements at the store. He was confronted at Rhoden's trailer park nearby and the purse plus \$38 were recovered from a baby stroller.

Mr. Young was charged with felony burglary, misdemeanor theft and marijuana possession.

Deputy Jeffrey Davis arrested Dennis May, 58, at Dixie trailer park behind Winn-Dixie the evening of April 7 for stealing two cases of beer from the store.

An employee called police after witnessing Mr. May go to the cooler and lift the beer valued at \$53 before walking out of the store. Based on a surveillance video, he was traced to his residence where both cases were recovered, less two beers he consumed.

A criminal complaint was filed naming Matthew Lindsey, 31, of Sanderson as the person who took 26 items from the inventory at Walmart in late March and drove off from a security employee in a blue pickup truck before he could be detained for police.

Deputy Morgan McDuffie learned Mr. Lindsey had been banned from the store in December for stealing so he will also be charged with trespass.



Bo Shipman

March to protest lack of arrest in Broadus killing

JOEL ADDINGTON
MANAGING EDITOR
reporter@bakercountypress.com

Activists calling for an arrest in the killing of Dominic Jerome "DJ" Broadus II at the hands of Gardner Kent Fraser at the latter's Southern States Nursery Road home on February 3 are planning a "March on Macclenny" April 21 from Emmanuel Church of God in Christ to the courthouse and back that afternoon.

A statement released April 6 partly titled "Killers With Ties to Local Sheriff Walks Free Now For 62 Days" from Bob Schlenhuber of Peacebuilding Connections in Washington,

D.C. says the march will start at 3:15 p.m. and end at the church at 4:30 p.m. with a vigil in DJ Broadus' memory.

"Despite overwhelming evidence that Fraser shot Broadus in the face at least three times at close range there have still been no arrests or charges filed against Fraser," it reads. "Gardner Fraser is the son of Ryan T. Fraser, fired Jacksonville Police Officer and former Baker County Sheriff."

"Not only has no arrest been made, DJ's family has received very little information about the status of the investigation, which has been taken over by the Florida Department of Law

Enforcement (FDLE). The FDLE has not been transparent in their investigation and has not provided a timetable for charges to be pressed in DJ's death. Activists and community organizations in Florida and across the country believe that the FDLE and Baker County Sheriff Departments are covering up the execution to protect the well-connected Fraser family."

Near weekly requests by *The Press* for more information regarding the investigation from FDLE have been met with the same stock response — that the information is confidential pending the outcome of the active investigation.

Gun is found after threats

A Macclenny woman was arrested the late afternoon of April 8 for making repeated telephone threats against three persons, then driving by their residence on Linda Street with what turned out to be a loaded .22-caliber rifle openly displayed on the dashboard of her vehicle.

Deputy Morgan McDuffie arrested Charlotte Nobles, 50, at that address answering a disturbance complaint and found the suspect "extremely intoxicated" and screaming at others identified as T.C. Green Jr., 67, and Starla Walker, 25, of the same Glen St. Mary address, and Melissa Walker, 43, of White Springs.

All three told the officer they heard a disturbance outside and went out to find Ms. Nobles driving east on Linda with the rifle visible and pointed in their direction. She then parked in front of the driveway threw the gun into the back of the vehicle where it was later found with 17 live rounds.

Ms. Nobles was booked for aggravated assault with a weapon, a third-degree felony.

In other recent incidents, all resulting in criminal complaints:

Samantha Combs, 23, was named for battery on her sister-in-law Cheyenne Combs, 23, at a residence on Abernathy Circle north of Sanderson the afternoon of April 1. The accused told Deputy Mitchell Wright an argument broke out over alleged insults to her mother.

Deputy John Murphy filed a complaint on Christina Vann, 39, no address given, for battery on estranged husband Terry Vann, 40, during an argument April 2 as they returned home with their children following an Easter visit out of town.

Christian Rogers, 19, of Sanderson was accused in a complaint filed by Deputy Justin Yingling of battery on a 17-year-old male at an address on Hoss Keller Road the early morning of March 31.

Automated system for utility help

A new automated appointment scheduling system has been established for residents of Baker and surrounding counties seeking assistance with utility bills.

The system set up by Northeast Florida Community Action Agency will be user-friendly and can direct overflow calls and other inquiries to a call center. All data entered into the system will be secure.

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Drivers arrested with pot and beer

A state trooper arrested a Raiford woman for drunk driving early on April 7 after following her weaving southbound Chevrolet on SR 121 south of Macclenny.

Candy Bennett, 41, had a strong odor of alcohol when questioned, and Trooper K.A. Hilliard said she fumbled with identification and papers, at one point dropping them outside the vehicle door.

The trooper also noted two open beers inside the car. Ms. Bennett, who admitted she had been drinking but changed the quantity amounts, performed poorly on field sobriety tests and her blood alcohol level measured .142, nearly twice the legal limit.

Trooper Joshua Seay arrested Jordan Weeks, 25, of Washington, FL the morning of April 4 after stopping his westbound Ford Explorer on Interstate 10 in west Baker County for speeding.

He detected a strong odor of marijuana from the interior, and found 32 grams of the drug on a black case and a roller, along with a smoking pipe in a fast food bag.

Mr. Weeks was charged with felony possession of pot, possession of paraphernalia and felony possession of a Glock pistol found in a glove box.

Probation officers and Detective Charlie Sharman arrested James Render III, 20, at his north Macclenny apartment at midday on April 3 after finding seven small baggies of pot and a digital scale in his bedroom.

He is charged with felony possession with intent to sell. Mr. Render is on probation for sale of opium derivative drugs.

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Arrests, complaint for theft of jewelry

Police took three persons into custody and named a fourth in a criminal complaint for their roles in the theft of an estimated \$700 in jewelry during an early morning burglary at a residence on Bluewater Court in the Macedonia neighborhood north of Macclenny.

Neighbor Michael Johnson told Deputy John Finley he informed homeowner Brandi Estep about 3:30 a.m. that he saw two males and a female in her backyard with what appeared to be a dark-colored bag. Ms. Estep, away at work, then called the sheriff's department.

Mr. Johnson said he saw the female walk to an adjoining trailer and Deputy Finley approached her there seated on back steps. Identified as Taylor Bowles, 22, of Macclenny, she allegedly admitted she had been next door with others she identified as Carl Rhoden, 35, of Glen St. Mary and Dalton Daniels, 25, of Jacksonville. She claimed not to know their whereabouts.

The deputy and Sgt. Patrick McGauley then spoke with Paul Melvin III, 43, at the nearby trailer and he denied Ms. Bowles' admission that Mr. Rhoden was inside. It was only after threat of sending a K-9 into the residence that he appeared.

Mr. Daniels is believed to have taken the stolen jewelry with him when he left the scene. He and the alleged accomplices are charged with felony burglary and grand theft. Mr. Melvin faces one felony charge for giving a false statement.

In another home burglary case, Jennifer Starling, 28, of Glen was arrested on April 3 and charged with the theft of two shotguns from the residence of her sister Dana Barton last month.

Det. Jake Betros said pawn records indicated Ms. Starling pawned a .20 gauge on March 22 for \$30 and she later admitted under questioning to selling a .410 to a north county man for \$60.



Taylor Bowles



Carl Rhoden

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OBITUARIES

Service Friday for Tammy Bagley

Tammy Eulene Cooper Bagley, 68, of Glen. St. Mary died peacefully at home on April 7, 2018. Ms. Bagley was born on October 10, 1949 to James Tillman Cooper and Roxie Maranda Cooper in Alma, Georgia, and moved to Jacksonville where she spent most of her life. She enjoyed shopping, volunteering, crafting, cooking and most importantly spending time with her family and friends.



Tammy Bagley

Ms. Bagley retired from the Florida Department Business and Professional Regulation, and most recently from St. Catherine Labourer Manor. She was a member of the First Baptist Church of Jacksonville. Ms. Bagley was preceded in death by her parents, brothers Terry Cooper and Donald Dell and sister Patricia McCance.

She is survived by her daughter Michelle (Robert) Davis of Glen St. Mary; sons Christopher (Dawn) Bagley of Gulf Breeze, FL and Brandon (Audrey) Bagley of Jacksonville; grandchildren Jessica, Heather (Erek), Landon and Noah, all of Glen St. Mary, Kyle, Kyndall and Ashlyn of Gulf Breeze and Colton and Cooper of Jacksonville; sisters Courtney Gandy of Hortense, GA and Elinda Price of Brunswick, GA; brother Gary (Freda) Cooper of Alma, GA; numerous nieces, nephews and cousins also survive.

A funeral service to honor and celebrate the life of Ms. Bagley will be held on Friday, April 13 at 2 p.m. in the chapel of Guerry Funeral Home in Macclenny with Rev. Robert Hinson officiating. Visitation with the family begins an hour before the service.

Johnny Baxter Sr., 42 of Macclenny

Johnny William Baxter Sr., 42, of Macclenny died on April 4, 2018. He was a lifelong mechanic, retired from the Florida Department of Transportation. Mr. Baxter loved driving dump trucks, playing the guitar, poker, fishing, painting, classic cars and women. He was a good man who greatly loved his family, a great father and husband, and a great grandfather to the children who knew him as "Poppy." He was an E4 with the U.S. Army's Third Division, 20th Special Forces.



Johnny Baxter

Mr. Baxter was preceded in death by his father Thomas Wesley Baxter Sr., twin sisters Felena and Felisha Baxter, and grandson Braden Cyle Register.

He is survived by wife Lona Baxter; children Samantha Baxter, Harley Baxter, Johnny Baxter Jr., Kelli (Enondrus) Phillips and Ashley Smith; grandchildren Kayla, Macy and Levi Phillips, Benjamin Register, Nicholas Smith and Daniel Bell; brother Thomas (Robin) Wesley Baxter Jr.; sisters Ashley Tomko and Katie Robinson; mother Glenneice (Bill) Tomko; step-mother Wanda Baxter; grandmother Kathy (Gene) Waters; best friends Johnny Harvey and Jason McIntosh; former wife Angela Harrell and her family who he considered part of his own; many aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews.

The family held a private memorial service.

Cynthia Stewart, 56, dies on April 5

Cynthia L. Ruise-Stewart, 56, of Sanderson died on April 5, 2018. She was born on March 20, 1962 to Rudolph and Lillian Ruise and was preceded in death by her mother and nephew Deshawn Jefferson.



Cynthia Stewart

Mrs. Ruise-Stewart is survived by her husband of 31 years, Nolan Stewart; sons Chris McCray and Brad Stewart; daughter Dreamy Stewart; granddaughter Xiana Dixon; her father; sisters Gwen Carter, Lillian Williams, Phyllis Farrar (Patrick), Marie Ruise and Cassandra Brown; brothers Curtis Ruise and Rodrick Ruise; sisters-in-law Ann Hill (Lincoln), Joann Warren (Charles) and LeVonia Paige (Joe); brother-in-law Roman Stewart; godmother Minnie Hobbs; dearest friend and cousin Sharon Waring; many nieces and nephews.

A home-going service will be held 11 a.m. on Saturday, April 14 at the Emmanuel COGIC in Macclenny with Pastor Joe Ruise officiating. The viewing will be on Friday, April 13 from 5-7 p.m. at New Jerusalem COGIC in Margaretta. Interment will be in the Quitman Cemetery. Sarah L. Carter Funeral Home Northside in Jacksonville is in charge of arrangements.

Bernice Wilson service on March 26

Bernice Ann Wilson, 78, of Macclenny died peacefully on Thursday, March 22, 2018 surrounded by loved ones. She was born to the late Harley Browning and Gertrude Broun Browning of Lily, KY on October 9, 1939. Her faith in God, family and friends were Bernice's passion and delight. She loved spending time with her family, gardening, playing cards and caring for her children and grandchildren. She was an honest and loving mother, sister, aunt and friend to those blessed to know her. Her smile, laugh, sense of humor and gentleness were contagious.



Bernice Wilson

Mrs. Wilson is survived by her children James Wilson Jr. of Jasper, TN, Rita Hutton (Steve) of Jacksonville, Tammy Metcalf (Howard) of Dunlap, TN, Dinah Ott (Granville) of Signal Mountain, TN, Angela Holloman (Tony) of Glen St. Mary, Lisa Bailey (Steve) of Tazewell, TN and Jennifer Wilson of Jacksonville; 18 grandchildren, 27 great-grandchildren and numerous loved ones.

The funeral service for Mrs. Wilson was held on March 26.

Obituaries and a photo are printed free of charge.

The important and amazing lives of honey bees

We take them for granted and depend on them for much of our food. Now they and we may be in serious trouble.

When I grew up, European honey bees and dozens of species of native bees used to be very common. I even remember stepping on some while running through a patch of clover. The bees didn't like that too much. Neither did my feet. Bee stings are a bit painful!



Jerry Walls

Many scientists think that the European honey bee populations are declining rapidly, as well as populations of our native bee species. Disease, mites, strong and over-applied pesticides and herbicides and other contributing factors are decreasing their numbers quickly and dramatically.

Some scientists believe that a trending problem called Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) is causing a significant decrease in European honey bee populations.

So, is this significant? When you stop and think about all the plants that bees pollinate, including many of them that provide us with food, the decline of the honey bee is very important. Less available food could result in possible food shortages and higher prices at the local grocery store.

European honey bees are not native to the United States. It is believed they were brought over by early explorers. They found North America to be a good place to live.

A colony can consist of up to 60,000 bees. They have a regimented social structure. One ruling queen, thousands of workers (all females) and several dozen drones (males).

The female bees do all the work. (Okay ladies, I can hear your comments about your spouses now!) The "house bees" clean the hive. "Field bees" visit flowers to gather nectar to make honey. In the process they also gather pollen and pollinate plants. The queen's "court" guard cleans and feeds the queen bee. Usually the "court" consists of about a dozen bees.

The queen can live to up to about four years. Female workers and the male drones live about eight weeks.

It takes visiting about 1,000,000 flowers to make a pound of honey. That is a lot of work done by the busy worker bees. Another little-known fact is that a bee's wings beat up to 250 times per second.

Worker field bees actually dance to let other bees know in what direction and how far to find pollen-rich flowers. They have at least two different dances. The round dance and the abdomen wiggle dance. This applies to the female bees only. Like many of their human counterparts, male bees don't dance. Yep, I would definitely be a male bee except when no one is looking!

Also, if you are stung by a honey bee, it will be a female that does it. Remember, the female workers leave the hive to gather pollen. The male drones are hanging around the queen in the hive. When a female bee stings you, it is fatal to the bee as a part of the bee's internal organs leave the body attached to the stinger.

So the next time you see a bee visiting a flower, take a moment to appreciate what they do for us in pollinating food crops. A single bee is part of a complex social structure within the amazing culture of a colony of thousands of bees. They are quite amazing insects!

The next time you see a European honey bee, consider yourself lucky. If we lose them all we will all be in serious trouble. Do whatever you can to assist them in their struggle to stay alive. Consider attending a local beekeeper club meeting to learn more about our amazing and beneficial bees.

There are literally hundreds of species of bees in the world. Not all live in large groups or colonies. Some are called solitary bees. They live alone.

Enjoy your Baker County nature trails. For questions or comments, e-mail jwalls443@gmail.com.



Baker 18th in child well-being

JOEL ADDINGTON
MANAGING EDITOR
reporter@bakercountypress.com

Baker County ranked just inside the top third in the state for the well-being of children, a new study from the University of South Florida's Kids Count initiative shows.

Standing at 18th among Florida's 67 counties in the second year of the study that looks at five areas of child well-being — economic, education, health and family and community — Baker County made strides in nine measures among the four larger categories while four measures went unchanged and only three got worse.

Last year the county ranked ninth in Florida.

"Last year our inaugural Florida County Child Well-Being was launched to help maintain a focus on Florida's children and to highlight areas in which we need to do better to support their healthy development," reads the Florida Kids Count website. "The 2017 edition sparked conversation in some communities and we hope that there has been action taken in the meantime."

Baker County's highest rankings were in the areas of family and community well-being and economic well-being, landing at fourth and fifth, respectively, among all Florida counties.

Declines in the number of youths in the juvenile justice system and those with verified maltreatment cases led to the high ranking for family and community measures, as well as fewer single-parent families than statewide.

The share of single-parent families in Florida was 35.7 percent, compared to 27.4 percent here. The rate



Keith Thrift and Dale Bennett as Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn in *Broadway in Baker*. PHOTO COURTESY OF BOE GERARD

'Broadway' opens up this Thursday

The BCHS Drama department and the Baker County Community Theatre present *Broadway in Baker: Greatest Hits* Thursday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. The show is to benefit Wildcat Warrior Colby Hodges and his family.

The show is a compilation of hits from the last ten years of Broadway in Baker at BCHS. There's a little bit of everything from every time period and genre. Elvis, Stevie Wonder, Adele, Bee Gees, Conway and Loretta, Hank Williams and Broadway show tunes are all on the bill.

Performers include Maci McDuffie, Keith Thrift, Dale Bennett, Jeff Rowe, Denny Wells, Kelley Norman, Sara Beth Gerard-Summers, Lucas Kish, Cathy Mendolera, Amanda Rhoden, Blayne Fraser, Jackson Helms, Joel Griffith, Allie England, Kristie Shook, Gregory Barrios, Tucker Kinghorn, Lorian Bliss and Jaci Adkinson.

Reserved seats are available in the first four rows by calling 259-6286. General admission tickets are on sale at the door.

Rep. Lawson seeks student art entries



Last year's winner "Dollar Tree Bicycle" by Savannah Rahn. PHOTO COURTESY OF REP. LAWSON'S STAFF

Congressman Al Lawson (FL-05) is now accepting submissions for the 2018 Congressional Art Competition. This annual art contest, held by members of the U.S. House of Representatives, highlights the creative talents of students in each of the congressional districts.

"I am pleased to host the Congressional Art Competition for students in Florida's 5th Congressional District," said Rep. Lawson. "Art is a way for our students to express themselves and showcase their creativity. I am excited to see all of this year's entries."

The competition is open to students in grades 7-12. Winners from each congressional district will receive two tickets to fly to Washington, D.C., to attend a congressional reception and see the unveiling of their artwork in the U.S. Capitol. The artwork will remain on display in the U.S. Capitol for one year, where it may be viewed by the millions of visitors. The winning artwork will also be featured on the U.S. House's Congressional Art Competition webpage.

Artwork and application materials are due to Rep. Lawson's district office by Friday, April 20. To enter, students must e-mail a high-resolution photograph of the artwork submission and the completed Student Information and Release Form to Jessika Eglin at mail.house.gov. Winners will be announced in early May.

For a full set of rules and the application form, visit <https://lawson.house.gov/services/art-competition>. Individuals may also contact Rep. Lawson's district office at 850-558-9450 for more information.

Health focus

A focus group sponsored by Baptist Health will be held on Thursday, April 12 from 10:30 a.m.-noon at the Baker County Council on Aging in Macclenny.

The topic is a community needs assessment, and the public is urged to attend. Call 259-2223 with questions.

Veterans Club

The Baker County Veterans Club meets the second Thursday of each month at Macclenny Primitive Baptist Church, 94 North Boulevard East.

A meal is served at 6 p.m., followed by a meeting at 6:30. All veterans are welcome.

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Sunday Evening Service 6:00 pm
Wednesday Service 7:00 pm

523 North Boulevard W. I a few blocks north of Hwy. 90 in Macclenny

www.calvarybaptistmacclenny.com •• 259-4529

FLORIDA KIDS COUNT CHILD WELL-BEING INDEX

| | |
|--------------|-------------|
| St. Johns | 1st |
| Nassau | 3rd |
| Clay | 5th |
| Baker | 18th |
| Bradford | 29th |
| Union | 30th |
| Duval | 43rd |

Source: floridakidscount.org

of children with verified maltreatment dropped from 17.7 in 2011-12 to 8.1 in 2016-17, compared to 8.3 statewide.

Contacts with the juvenile justice system also dropped from 39.6 per 1000 youths in 2010-11 to 21.7 last year, though that's slightly higher than the state rate of 17.8 per 1000.

Among the economic indicators, Baker County had near the same rates of children in poverty, unemployment and truancy as the state, but made improvements in the latter two measures while beating the state considerably in the housing cost measure to land at fifth in Florida for economic well-being among kids.

The share of families who

spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing — the measure for high housing costs — fell about 9 percent here between 2007-11 and 2012-16 to 21.4 percent, versus 37.3 percent statewide.

Baker County also cut the share of teens not in school or working from 15.5 percent in 2007-11 to 8.8 percent in 2012-16, compared to 8 percent in Florida.

The county fared less well in the health and education well-being indicators where it was ranked 30th among 67 counties.

Baker County's percent-

age of low-birth weight babies fell about 1 percent between 2011 and 2016 to 9.9 percent, but it remained higher than the state rate of 8.7 percent.

There were proportionately fewer children without insurance here than statewide — 5.9 percent compared to 7.3 percent in Florida — but the rate of high school teens who reported using drugs or alcohol within the last 30 days ticked up from 30.5 percent in 2012 to 32.7 percent in 2016, or roughly on par with the state.

Baker County fared the worst in the education domain, ranked 48th out of 67, due to increases in fourth graders not proficient in English between 2014-15 and 2015-16 to 79 percent (compared to 74 percent statewide) and 3- and 4-year-olds not enrolled in school, which inched up by some 2 percent between 2007-11 and 2012-16 to 70 percent. The statewide percentage was about 50 percent.

Still, more students were graduating on time and fewer eighth graders were not proficient in math.

"The objective of Florida Kids Count is to inform Floridians and their policy makers about the quality of life for Florida's children and to build leadership and accountability for action on behalf of our children," the site states.

The study by the University of South Florida was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which funds similar reviews around the country for the national Kids Count index. Across the country, Florida ranks 40th in children's well-being.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

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for children who will be 5 years old on or before September 1, 2018

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Guidance: Angie 259-0385
Summer VPK: Lisa 259-3014

Summer VPK is available to children who will be 5 on or before September 1, 2018, live in Florida and have not previously attended a VPK program.

AFTER-HOURS REGISTRATION
WEDNESDAYS - Hours: 3:30 - 7:00 pm
April 11 • April 25 • Thursday, May 10

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Glen St. Mary

Rev. Tommy & Doris Anderson
Youth Director Kayse Fiano

Phone: 904-259-2213

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Wednesday Night 7:30 pm

New Hope Church, Inc.

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Wednesday
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Associate Pastor: Shane Conner

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For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16

CHURCH AND OBITUARY NOTICE INFORMATION

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.

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6:00 Evening Worship

Wednesday:
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7:00 Adult Service
7:00 Youth Services

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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Ads must be placed and paid for by
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Classified ads and notices must be paid in advance, and be in our office no later than 4:00 pm the Monday preceding publication, unless otherwise arranged in advance. Ads can be mailed provided they are accompanied by payment and instructions. They should be mailed to: Classified Ads, The Baker County Press, P.O. Box 598, Macclenny, FL 32063. We cannot assume responsibility for accuracy of ads or notices given over the telephone. Liability for errors in all advertising will be limited to the first publication only. If after that time, the ad continues to run without notification of error by the person or agency for whom it was published, then that party assumes full payment responsibility. The Baker County Press reserves the right to refuse advertising or any other material which is in the opinion of the publisher does not meet standards of publication.

FOR SALE

Roll top desk and china cabinet. Call Rhonda Bagby at 904-452-3335.

Sawmills from only \$4397. Make and save money with your own bandmill. Cut lumber any dimension. In stock ready to ship. Free Info/DVD. www.NorwoodSawmills.com 1-800-578-1363 Ext.300N

Plant sale: Fruit trees, blueberries, landscape and flowering plants. We take orders, Sands Dayville Farm, 6698 Sands Dale Road, Macclenny, FL 32063. 904-303-1501, 904-259-6891. Saturdays we are located at P&R Electric on Lowder Street. 3/8-4/12c

Like new John Deere compact farm tractor, 3 cylinder, diesel, with 2 year old 5 finish mower, \$6900. Terry, 904-259-2393. 4/12c

John Deere riding lawnmower, automatic transmission, \$999. Like new Husqvarna, 46" cut, automatic transmission, \$999. Terry, 904-259-2393. 4/12c

MISCELLANEOUS

Alterations: basic hemming, zipper repair, and basic alterations, next day service on most items. Marva Williams, 904-868-8604, 904-275-2770. 4/5-4/26p

We install 6" seamless gutters, pressure washing, 259-7335, 8/11ffc

Alcoholics Anonymous meetings Monday at 904-994-7750.

ANIMALS

Dogs: all types from puppies to adults. Animal Control, \$65 adoption fees will apply. Call 259-6786. 11/20ffc

Use Happy Jack® Miteox® and Ear Canker powder to treat yeast infections. Glen Cash Store, 904-259-2381, kennelvax.com. 3/15-4/5p

HELP WANTED

Notice to readers:

The newspaper often publishes classified advertising on subjects like work-at-home, weight loss products, health products. While the newspaper uses reasonable discretion in deciding on publication of such ads, it takes no responsibility as to the truthfulness of claims. Respondents should use caution and common sense before sending any money or making other commitments based on statements and/or promises; demand specifics in writing. You can also call the Federal Trade Commission at 1-877-FTC-HELP to find out how to spot fraudulent solicitations. Remember: if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. -The Baker County Press

28 year established contracting firm with full benefits is now accepting applications for qualified applicants. Gateway Contracting, Inc. offers health insurance, vacation, paid holidays and 401k benefits, and provides stability, training, and growth for our employees. We are growing and have the need to fill the following positions. If you

are interested and qualify, please apply online at www.gatewaycontractinginc.com. Full-time positions available: LEAD CARPENTER, must be able to perform journeyman level work as a carpenter in a commercial and industrial setting. This position requires a full range of both rough and finish skilled carpentry work, including the ability to work from drawings, specifications, and instructions to build, remodel and repair various types of facilities and structures. PLUMBER PIPEFITTER, pipe welding experience. Experienced in commercial and industrial work. Plumber's HELPER. Qualified applicants must have good driving record and pass background check. DFWP call (904) 388-4799. 3/29-4/19c

Receptionist wanted, full-time, benefits, pay depends on experience. M & R trailers, ask for Richard. 904-397-0246. 4/5-4/12p

Now hiring Library Outreach Assistant to provide library services to local communities using outreach van. Minimum HS graduate, thorough knowledge of computer operation, internet, and email. \$10/hour, 15 hours/week, Monday & Wednesday. Valid FL driver's license and clean driving record required. EOE, drug-free workplace. Apply in person New River Public Library Cooperative, 110 N. Lake Avenue, Lake Butler. Applications close at 4:00 pm, April 19th. 4/5-4/12c

Furtherance Private Care: Caregivers and Companions are needed immediately to accompany clients on activities and to places of interest. Apply online at 9100.avaxicare.com or call 904-866-6035. 4/5-4/12p

Construction punch out work: Looking for motivated and experienced individuals to do new residential construction punch out work. Must be experienced in painting, sheet rock patches, and minor interior trim work. Looking for lead men and helpers. 904-588-5212. 4/12p

Looking for experienced painters and helpers. 904-624-3813. 4/12p

Experienced cook wanted, Sixth Street Steakhouse, apply in person at 1199 South Sixth Street, Macclenny, 904-259-7535. 4/12c

Lake Butler Hospital: Facility and Maintenance Technician, RN-FT and PRN, Pharmacy Tech-FT. Please visit our website www.lakebutterhospital.com for more information and to fill out an application. PH. 386-496.2323 Ext 9258, Fax 386-496.2105. Equal Opportunity.

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DEADLINES

Placement, correction or cancellation of classified ads may be done by phone, e-mail or in person anytime before Monday at 5 p.m. for publication on the following Thursday.



Saturday, 7:00 am - ?, Hunters Ridge subdivision off of Odys Yarbrough Road. Multi-family sale.

Saturday, 8:30 am - ?, 633 Fox Run Circle, Fox Ridge subdivision. Multi-family sale: clothing and household items.

Saturday, 9:00 am - 2:00 pm, Baldwin, FL behind the old feed store. Rummage, junk and art market.

Saturday, 9:00 am - 2:00 pm, 454 West Macclenny Avenue, Munson Electric parking lot. Baker Women's Political Network, great deals!

Saturday, 8:30 am - ?, Sunday 10:00 am - ?, 121 south across from the Exxon. Something for everyone, if interested in setting up with us contact James, 904-796-9298.

Coming Saturday, April 21st, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm, 14441 Wildcat Alley, Glen, off of Odys Yarbrough Road. Moving sale: fridge, oven, dryer, furniture, tools and miscellaneous items.

Experienced painters needed. Peacock Painting. Call 904-259-5877. 2/21ffc

Wayne Frier Macclenny. Looking for service repair man. Mobile Homes. Vehicle/Driver's License required. Jared, 904-259-4663, jm_martin23@yahoo.com. 1/18ffc

Wayne Frier Macclenny. Need T&T Contractors. Mud / Paint / Trim. Jared, 904-259-4663, jm_martin23@yahoo.com. 1/18ffc

REAL ESTATE

Notice to Readers

All real estate advertising in this newspaper is subject to the Fair Housing Act which makes it illegal to advertise "any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status or national origin, or an intention to make any such preference, limitation or discrimination." Familial status includes children under the age of 18 living with parents or legal custodians, pregnant women and people securing custody of children under 18.

This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate which is in violation of the law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertised in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis. To complain of discrimination, call HUD toll free at 1-800-669-9777. The toll free telephone number for the impaired is 1-800-927-9275.

Wayne Frier Macclenny, I buy land. Cash paid immediately. Call 904-259-4663. 3/9ffc

2.25 acres lots, set up with power pole, well, and septic. \$25,000 each, owner financing. Call 912-843-8118. 3/22ffc

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1 BR, 1 BA available apartments, 491 East Michigan Avenue #2 and #3, located in Macclenny. Water, sewer and garbage included, \$400/ deposit, \$600/month, first/last/ security deposit required to move in, service pets only. Call 904-259-8444 or email vtpropertymanagement@yahoo.com for more information or to get an application. 4/5ffc

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Real estate transactions from early this year

The following land transactions were recorded in the Baker County courthouse November and December. Values are derived from documentary stamps. Many descriptions are by (Section) (Township) (Range). If acreage or price are not listed, none were indicated in the documents.

Patricia L Fish Revocable Living Trust to Brantley Michael Fish on 1/26/2018 for \$15,000.00 in 25-25-21-0000-0000-0350.

John Wesley Bennett, Rhonda Diane Bennett, Rhonda Raulerson to Robert W Walsh on 3/8/2018 for \$159,000.00 in 29-25-22-0202-0000-0510/LT 51 TIMBERLANE SUB UNIT 4.

Ashley R Byrd, John D Byrd, Ashley R Rhoden to John Dechmerowski, Pamela Dechmerowski on 2/2/2018 for \$169,900.00 in 16 6 SANDS POINTE SUB.

Carol Baker, Kay Hall to Sheila R Whitley on 1/23/2018 for \$1,500.00 in 07-25-22E.

Julia A Gross, Leon W Gross to Latoya Lee on 1/30/2018 for \$100,000.00 in 32-25-22-0049-0056-0070/LT 7 BLK 56 MAC-CLENNY.

Mary Lou Davis to Ginger Crews, Louann D Crews on 2/20/2018 for \$100.00 in 20-35-21-0000-0000-0050.

Terry Clardy to Paula Sue Clardy, Troy Clardy on 1/26/2018 for \$102,000.00 in LT 1 BLK 2 COUNTRY CLUB ESTATES UNIT 2.

Aaron S Maurer, Shelley D Maurer to Logan P Baity on 3/9/2018 for \$106,000.00 in 25-25-21-0115-0000-0020.

Carol McMurray, Robert McMurray to Carol McMurray, Robert McMurray on 3/5/2018 for \$106,380.07 in 32-15-21-0138-0003-0070.

Edith Ruise, Japan Ruise to Shamekia Givens on 3/1/2018 for \$11,000.00 in 33-25-21E.

Eleanor S Lyons Revocable Living Trust, Eleanor S Lyons Trustee to Emil Clayton Lyons Jr on 2/2/2018 for \$12,000.00 in 06-25-22E.

David E Mangrum to BTE Revocable Trust, Hugh D Fish Jr Trustee on 2/2/2018 for \$123,000.00 in LTS 10 11 12 HILLS OF GLEN.

Mark Gelling to Michael S Szelak, Robin Y Szelak on 2/27/2018 for \$123,000.00 in LT 13 BLK 1 COUNTRY CLUB ESTATES.

Brittney Robinson Yingling, Justin Yingling to Travis James Johns on 3/7/2018 for \$125,000.00 in 20-35-21E.

US Bank NA to Dynamic Progressive LLC on 2/20/2018 for \$136,375.00 in LT 3 CYPRESS POINTE UNIT 1/28-25-22-0209-0000-0030.

MTGLQ Investors LP to Darren Philip Gray, Victoria Lynn Gray on 1/23/2018 for \$145,000.00 in 29-25-22-0074-0000-0050.

Fred W Yarbrough, Kimberly Yarbrough to Davis Warren E Sr on 1/23/2018 for \$149,900.00 in 29-25-22-0164-0000-0050.

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SPORTS

Big frame lifts Cats over Cook Five-run 5th inning

JON SHUMAKE
SPORTS EDITOR
sports@bakercountypress.com

For the second time in less than 24 hours the BCHS Wildcat baseball team allowed a late lead to disappear.

But just like the previous night — an 8-7 walk-off win over Santa Fe — Baker County came through at the plate to pull out a dramatic win.

After watching a five-run lead evaporate in the top of the fifth inning the afternoon of April 4, the Cats responded with a five-run outburst in the bottom half of the frame to reopen a commanding lead and top Georgia's Cook 10-5 in six rain-shortened innings.

"Everybody knows how that can go when the momentum starts to go another team's way," head coach Jarrell Rodgers said following the team's third straight win. "All it takes is for them to come up and shut us down in the next half inning and who knows what happens when they get back up to the plate. ... I'm proud of our guys for battling back like that."

Left fielder Preston Sutton went 3 for 3 with two RBIs, and drove in the go-ahead run on a blooper single to right field. Right fielder Conner Moore connected with an RBI double to left field later in the inning.

The Cats took advantage of several Cook miscues to pad the cushion. Both Sutton and shortstop Hunter Noblitt, who went 2 for 3 in



Caleb Crews fires the pitch in Baker County's win over Cook.

the game after his walk-off hit the previous night, scored on passed balls. Moore also reached home on an error by shortstop Sam Bennett during Clayt Smith's at bat.

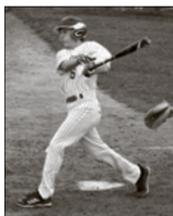
But uncharacteristic defensive and pitching mistakes by Baker County helped the Hornets (19-6) erase a 5-0 deficit and nearly steal momentum.

After loading the bases with one out following a walk and two straight hit batters, Cole Rogers got Cook on the board by driving in two runs on an error. Tyler Weeks connected with a two-RBI double to deep left center field one batter later, and ultimately scored the equalizing run on a passed ball.

Relief pitcher Jarron Hodges, who entered the game with one out and Weeks at third, got out of the jam by allowing the one run. He struck out Jalen Wilcox



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Hunter Noblitt awaits the ball as Cook's Hart Griffin successfully slides to steal second base.



Conner Moore

before forcing Ethan Folsom to ground out to Moore to end disastrous inning.

"That's supposed to be our M-O: pitching and defense," coach Rodgers said. "It's a frustrating thing, but at the same time when we're swinging it as well as we are right now I feel pretty good

about it."

The team's hot streak at the plate continued in the game, which the umpires called off in the bottom of the sixth inning as storms passed through the county in the early afternoon. Baker County's 14 hits tied its second highest total of the season, and the Cats scored in the double figures for the second time in three games.

Catcher Wade Johnson went 3 for 4 with a sixth-inning double, and led off Baker County's five-run inning with a single up the middle.

The Cats appeared to be cruising early, building the lead with the help of a three-run third inning. Right fielder Casen Milton, who went 2 for 4 with two RBIs, drove in runs in the first and third innings. Designated hitter Colby Kennedy's sacrifice fly and Sutton's single to center

field capped the third frame.

Noblitt scored on a double steal with center fielder Travis Neal in the fourth inning. Neal successfully stole second base, allowing Noblitt, who scored a career-high three runs, to dash home from third and dive to the plate for the run.

Baker County's home game against West Nassau scheduled for April 10 was postponed until April 25 at 6 p.m. due to weather.

Tuesday's game would have been the team's final tune-up before this week's pivotal District 3-5A series against Bolles [see sidebar at right].

The Cats host the two-time defending Class 5A champion before traveling to Bolles for the rematch on April 13. Both games are scheduled for 7 p.m.

3-team tie in the district possible

JON SHUMAKE
SPORTS EDITOR
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The upcoming District 3-5A series between the BCHS Wildcats and Bolles could determine the No. 1 seed in the district tournament and the subsequent playoff berth.

Both Baker County and Bolles enter the district series with 1-1 records in the district after both schools split their respective series against Suwannee, which ended its regular-season district record at 2-2.

A sweep in the upcoming two-game series by either team would give them a 3-1 district record, earning them the No. 1 seed in the District 3-5A tournament scheduled to begin May 1 at Suwannee.

As a result of the three-team district, the top seed automatically enters the district championship game and earns a playoff berth, while the lower two seeds must play each other to advance to the title game.

But if the Cats and Bolles split the series, all three District 3-5A teams would end the regular-season district schedule with identical 2-2 records.

The tiebreakers involving three or more teams will be decided based on the following, according to the FHSAA:

1. Total win-loss record in district games played among the tied teams;
2. The win-loss record in district play of the tied teams against the highest-seeded program (and proceeding through the lowest-seeded team, if necessary);
3. Number of road victories in the district;
4. Number of home victories in the district;
5. Blind draw by the district tournament manager.

The tiebreakers would be used in that order until the tie was reduced to two schools. The same criteria would be used to break the two-team tie until the final step, which would involve a coin toss in place of a blind draw, according to the FHSAA.

"It can be overwhelming sometimes because not many people have the opportunity to do what I'm going to be able to get the opportunity to do when I graduate high school," Kennedy said. "It's a little overwhelming but I'll get used to it."

Kennedy has started three games as a pitcher for the Wildcats, posting a 1-0 record as of April 10. His 18 1/3 innings pitched is second-most on the team, and he has thrown 16 strikeouts with a 2.67 ERA.

He is batting .286 with a .311 on-base percentage and has hits in six of his previous seven games. He has also doubled and driven in six runs thus far during his junior campaign.

also features sophomore Callie Paine, lost 10-2.

• Senior Kylie Holton's Morehead State Lady Eagles lost both games of a home Ohio Valley Conference doubleheader on April 6, falling 7-0 and 14-2 to Eastern Kentucky. Holton went 0 for 3 in the games.

• Freshman Madison Kennedy's Florida State Lady Seminoles won two out of three games to win the Atlantic Coast Conference series against visiting Pitt. The No. 13 Lady Seminoles (33-7, 11-1) book-ended the series with a 2-1 win on April 6 and an 8-0 six-inning victory on April 8. The team's 20-game winning streak was snapped with a 1-0 loss in the second game of the doubleheader on April 6.

Wildcats win 10th state title in program history

From page 1

which was the second largest margin of victory at the meet. Simon's 365 bench press was the division's heaviest by 25 pounds, and his 310 clean and jerk was the only one to break 300 pounds.

Simon, who missed his sophomore season due to a shoulder injury, is an example of Baker County's process working, coach McDonald said.

"I speak to the kids a lot about the process, about you can't get everything right now. You have to put in the time and go through the process and deal with issues and come out on top," he explained. "You have to be able to see through that process and I think Dalton's done that winning the second state championship this year for our program and for himself. He will forever be written down in the history books, and that's what I like to tell them — that your name will be engraved now."

Marcus Dialo posted a 500 total to win the 139 class by 15 pounds. The junior recorded a 265 bench press, the best in the division, and a 235 clean and jerk.

"He may be our fourth time back-to-back state champion next year. You never know," coach McDonald said. "... He is a very talented young man that I believe has fell in love with the



Carson Padgett lifts the clean and jerk at the state meet.

sport and he has huge opportunities in front of him through the sport. I know that athletic-wise he's very athletic and he is a person that will see that process through."

In addition to the two state champions, the Cats had seven other lifters finish in the top six of their weight classes to score points in the runaway championship.

John Green in the 154 and heavyweight Cooper Hodges both took third place.

Green's 515 total was only 10 pounds behind runner-up Dazriel Acosta of Citrus and 20 pounds behind champion Keith Grantham of Blountstown. Green, a junior who returned to weightlifting this season after last competing as a freshman, had a 270 bench and 245 clean and

jerk. Hodges attempted a 405-pound clean and jerk on his final lift, which would have tied the state record and catapulted him into first place. His left hand slipped off the bar during the first portion of the lift, and he dropped the weight in front of him.

Still, he finished third for the second straight season with a 735 total. His 365 clean and jerk was the heaviest in the state by 50 pounds, and he posted a 370 bench press.

William Bloodsaw was Baker County's second weightlifter to score in the 169 class. The senior claimed fourth with a 580 total, which was just five pounds back of third-place lifter Garison Hutchinson of Altha. Bloodsaw, who underwent shoulder surgery midway through his junior season, had a 320 bench press and 260 clean and jerk.

"He's put over 60 pounds on his total from January to the state meet. That's a very, very good number," coach McDonald said. "... Nobody really knew about William. Nobody really knew about how athletic and how good he was as a weightlifter until this year and they found out."

Cooper Hodges, who finished third in the heavyweight division, completes the split in the clean and jerk.

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Carson Padgett in the 119



Cooper Hodges, who finished third in the heavyweight division, completes the split in the clean and jerk.

and Brandon Combs in the 199 both took fourth place as they each finished 10 pounds behind the third-place competitor in their weight classes.

Padgett had a 380 total with a 200 bench press and 180 clean and jerk to finish behind John First of Zephyrhills.

Combs' 610 total gave him a five-pound edge over fifth-place lifter David Araujo of Orange Park, who edged the Baker County lifter in the district and regional meets. Combs' 315 bench press made the difference as he and Araujo both had 290 clean and jerks.

Body weight dropped Kyle Griffis to fifth in the 238 and Josh Dialo to sixth in the

129. Griffis and Bishop Kenney's Evan Loadholtz had identical 635 totals, but Loadholtz was given the fourth-place nod on the tiebreaker. Griffis' 360 bench press tied for the third-best in the class to go along with his 275 clean and jerk.

Josh Dialo, a freshman, weighed in at a pound heavier than Altha's Jackson Goin, which sorted out the 420-pound total tie. Josh Dialo's 230 bench press was 10 pounds better than Goin's. His clean and jerk, however, was 10 pounds better than Josh Dialo's 190 outing, which made up the gap and forced the tie.

Coach McDonald thanked the county and school's ad-

ministration, the community and the high school's student body for their support of the weightlifting team all season.

With a handful of underclassmen already scoring at the state meet this year, and more set join them next season, the expectations are already high before the off-season training even begins.

"That's the process. It gets to a point where we look at our future every year," coach McDonald said. "... That's what make this thing a program. It's a year-around training methodology behind it, but it is a program in the fact that the kids stick with it and see it through. That plays a huge part in our success."

Kennedy commits to play at Embry-Riddle

JON SHUMAKE
SPORTS EDITOR
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Academics and athletics aligned perfectly for BCHS Wildcat baseball player Colby Kennedy during his collegiate search. Now, with a year of high school baseball still ahead of him, he already knows his college destination.

The junior announced last week his commitment to Daytona Beach's Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, a private school founded in 1926, where he will continue his academic and baseball career at the Division II level.

"It feels good. It takes a lot of pressure off your shoulders. It definitely takes a lot of pressure off you," he said Monday. "... It [committing early] wasn't necessarily a priority at the time, but my senior year ... is coming

up soon, so it was something I would like to go ahead and get out of the way so it was nice."

The 16-year-old Macclenny resident received interest from other schools, he said, but opted with Embry-Riddle due to its highly-regarded aerospace engineering program. The university's undergraduate aerospace engineering program has been ranked No. 1 nationally among school's where the highest degree is a master's for 16 straight years, according to the school's website.

"I love working with my hands and making stuff work," said Kennedy, who also plays travel ball for Jacksonville's Five Star. "My papa he worked on planes in Vietnam. My dad's dad built his own planes and flew them. It runs through the fami-

ly. I kind of grew up a little bit around planes."

Kennedy initially landed on Embry-Riddle's radar after attending a camp during his freshman year. He returned to the camp as a sophomore and junior and received the scholarship offer in late 2017.

"It's pushed me," he said of the interest from the university, which competes in the Sunshine State Conference. "Knowing that someone's out there they might want you it gives you a little more drive. It'll definitely push you."

He will not only join one of the nation's top academic schools, but also step into one of Division II baseball's premier conferences after he graduates from Baker County in 2019. The Sunshine State Conference boasts

three national championships since 2013, and has four teams ranked in the April 4 edition of National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association's Top 25, according to NCAA.com.

"It can be overwhelming sometimes because not many people have the opportunity to do what I'm going to be able to get the opportunity to do when I graduate high school," Kennedy said. "It's a little overwhelming but I'll get used to it."

Kennedy has started three games as a pitcher for the Wildcats, posting a 1-0 record as of April 10. His 18 1/3 innings pitched is second-most on the team, and he has thrown 16 strikeouts with a 2.67 ERA.

He is batting .286 with a .311 on-base percentage and has hits in six of his previous seven games. He has also doubled and driven in six runs thus far during his junior campaign.

Collegiate teams bounce back from recent losses

JON SHUMAKE
SPORTS EDITOR
sports@bakercountypress.com

Several former BCHS Wildcat baseball and softball stars helped their collegiate teams overcome recent losses with wins over the weekend, while other players fell in conference action.

• The No. 17 Middle Georgia State Knights have won seven out of eight games, including a three-game Southern States Athletic Conference series sweep over visiting Martin Methodist. Senior first baseman Mikal Flores went 1 for 10 with three runs and an RBI in the series, which the Knights (31-12, 11-4) won 3-1 and 13-8 in a doubleheader on April 6 and 11-8 on April 7. Senior pitcher Jared Crews

won his fifth game of the season in the series opener, throwing 6 innings of one-run ball with six hits, two strikeouts and a walk.

The Knights' four-game winning streak ended April 3 with a 10-4 loss at Reinhardt University. Flores went 1 for 3 with a walk in the loss.

• The South Carolina-Aiken Pacers recovered from a slump with a three-game sweep at Augusta in Peach Belt Conference competition. Junior pitcher Zach Rafuse improved to 4-2 on the season on April 6 with 6 innings of two-run ball with five hits, five strikeouts and two walks in his team's 14-4 victory. The Pacers (24-13, 15-6) also rolled 15-1 on April 7 and 6-0 on April 8.

Pacers lost for the third time in four games April 4,

falling 9-4 at Newberry.

• Junior Landon Boyette's Thomas Night Hawks' 10-game winning streak was snapped as they were swept at Webber University in a Sun Conference series. Boyette went 1 for 5 in the series, during which Thomas (24-20, 5-13) lost 7-1 on April 6 and 2-1 and 8-1 on April 7.

The Night Hawks had won 10 straight games, including a doubleheader sweep over Brewton-Parker on April 3 by the scores of 11-2, 11-1.

• Sophomore pitcher Dylan Hall threw 2/3 inning on April 7, allowing three runs on five hits in his FSCJ BlueWave's 11-6 loss at Seminole State. The BlueWave (14-22, 4-12) also lost 14-5 the previous day to Lake

Sumter State.

He also pitched 1 1/3 innings and allowed four earned runs on six hits with two strikeouts in his FSCJ BlueWave's 11-10 loss at St. John's River State College on April 4. The BlueWave (14-20) won at home 4-1 on April 2 over the same team.

• The Tallahassee Community College Lady Eagles (10-30-1) have lost 14 straight games after getting swept in a doubleheader April 5 at Northwest Florida State College. Sophomore Brandie Callaway went 1 for 3 with an RBI in the second game, in which Northwest Florida State College stole a 6-5 victory after entering the seventh inning trailing 5-3. Callaway also went 1 for 3 with a stolen base in the early game, which TCC, which

also features sophomore Callie Paine, lost 10-2.

• Senior Kylie Holton's Morehead State Lady Eagles lost both games of a home Ohio Valley Conference doubleheader on April 6, falling 7-0 and 14-2 to Eastern Kentucky. Holton went 0 for 3 in the games.

• Freshman Madison Kennedy's Florida State Lady Seminoles won two out of three games to win the Atlantic Coast Conference series against visiting Pitt. The No. 13 Lady Seminoles (33-7, 11-1) book-ended the series with a 2-1 win on April 6 and an 8-0 six-inning victory on April 8. The team's 20-game winning streak was snapped with a 1-0 loss in the second game of the doubleheader on April 6.

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Lady Wildcats win twice Wins at Apopka and Montverde

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The BCHS Lady Wildcat softball team traveled to central Florida during Spring Break, and the ladies brought home two of the biggest wins of the season as souvenirs.

Third baseman Kat Rhoden drove in the go-ahead runs in both games, and Baker County (13-5) topped Apopka, Class 9A's second-ranked team, and Montverde Academy on back-to-back nights.

Liz McGovern threw a complete game four-hitter on April 3, leading the Lady Cats to a 2-1 victory at Apopka in the pitcher's duel. She carried a shutout into the seventh inning when she held off the Lady Blue Darters' late rally for Baker County's third straight win.

Apopka's Emma Miller was almost equally effective, allowing five hits with one strikeout and a walk in 5 1/3 innings. But it was a pair of mistakes by the pitcher that helped the Lady Cats gain the advantage after five scoreless innings.

First baseman Emma Gipson drew a five-pitch walk to lead off the sixth inning, and designated hitter Kiki Carter reached on an error by Miller, which advanced pinch runner Reagan Griffis to third base.

Rhoden then changed the game on a full count. She hit the pay off pitch to right field for a two-RBI single, which broke the scoreless tie and gave the Lady Cats the lead for good.

Baker County had a chance to pad its advantage even more after moving two runners into scoring position with two outs. But pitcher Nyah Vogel forced a ground out to end the inning, giving the Lady Blue Darters an opening to nearly steal the game in the

seventh inning.

Apopka had runners at second and third with no outs in the final frame after Hannah Collins doubled — the game's only extra base hit — to advance Georgia Egbers to third base. Following a pop fly out to McGovern, Gabi Corlo cut Baker County's lead in half with an RBI ground out to second baseman Sara Keves.

McGovern got out of the seventh-inning jam by forcing a game-ending pop fly to Keves, which left Apopka's game-tying run at third base.

The Lady Cats scored five runs in the fifth inning to overcome a three-run deficit on April 2 to top Montverde Academy 6-4.

Rhoden batted 2 for 3 with three RBIs, including the go-ahead bases-clearing double to center field. Carter and Taylor Crews also hit RBI singles in the inning, during which Baker County erased a 4-1 hole to take the lead for good.

McGovern, who entered the game in relief of winning pitcher Crews, shut down the Lady Eagles in the last three innings to preserve the lead. She allowed one hit with a strikeout as she retired eight of Montverde's nine final nine batters.

After Marissa Rhoden gave the Lady Cats the lead in the top of the second inning, Montverde responded in the bottom half of the inning to pull ahead. The Lady Eagles scored on a pair of two-out errors to go up 2-1, and added additional runs on a third-inning error and a fourth-inning ground out.

Crews allowed four runs — one earned — in four innings with four hits and a strikeout to improve to 4-0 during her freshman season.

Baker County's scheduled game on April 10 against Ponte Vedra was canceled due to weather and will not be made up, head coach Kyle Canaday said via a message.

The Lady Cats are set to return to the field on April 12 at Columbia. They host West Nassau on April 13 and Fleming Island on April 16 in their final two regular-season home games.

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