

Area school evaluations a mixed bag

Hamilton County has more effective teachers than highly effective; 26 need improvement

By Bryant Thigpen
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The Florida Department of Education released statewide preliminary aggregate results recently of personnel evaluations from each school district.

According to the FDOE, the report contains information provided by the districts and includes the number and percentage of

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School district recognized by SACS

By Joyce Marie Taylor
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At the Dec. 9 meeting of the Hamilton County School Board, Phyllis Porter, coordinator of federal programs for the district, presented the school board and Superintendent Thomas Moffses with a

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The Stephen Foster Museum is the perfect backdrop for this beautiful lighted scene. -Photo: Joyce Marie Taylor

Festival of Lights

Stephen Foster event runs through Jan. 3

By Joyce Marie Taylor
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Now in its 20th year, the Festival of Lights at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park continues going strong and gets better every year.

Festival of Lights began Friday, Dec. 6 and will continue throughout the holidays until Jan. 3, 2014. The park will be open each evening until 9 p.m., except Christmas Night, Dec. 25.

This Top 20 event in the southeastern United States allows visitors to enjoy award-winning holiday sights and sounds, unique holiday light displays, an antebellum museum dressed in full holi-



An amazing assortment of hors d'oeuvres awaited all the guests inside the Stephen Foster Museum during the sponsor's reception. -Photo: Joyce Marie Taylor

day splendor, a gingerbread village, candy cane forest, Santa's runway and so much more.

The park's centerpiece 200 foot tall Carillon Tower will be illuminating the night sky as holiday mu-

SEE FESTIVAL, PAGE 9A

Sponsor's reception draws a crowd

By Joyce Marie Taylor
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For the last 20 years Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park has been showcasing their Festival of Lights, an event that draws thousands of visitors throughout the month of December to marvel at all the amazing Christmas light displays throughout the park.

To kick off the event each year, the park invites the sponsors to come out the evening before to get a

SEE SPONSOR'S, PAGE 13A

Resource fair Dec. 20 at PCS Conference Center

Event to serve recently laid off PCS workers

By Joyce Marie Taylor
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Efforts are underway to serve those affected by the lay-off at PotashCorp White Springs, according to Deputy Director of North Florida Workforce

SEE RESOURCE, PAGE 2A

EMS hires new ass't director

By Joyce Marie Taylor
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Recently hired Hamilton County EMS Assistant Director Mac Leggett was introduced to the county commissioners at their Dec. 3 board meeting by Emergency Management Director Henry Land.

"I believe he'll do a great, great job," said Land. "It's already been

SEE EMS, PAGE 11A

Sen. Montford in Hamilton tomorrow

By Joyce Marie Taylor
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Senator Bill Montford will be holding mobile office hours in Hamilton County tomorrow, Dec. 13, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon at the Hamilton County Courthouse Annex, 1153 US Hwy. 41 NW, Suite 8, Jasper. Due to a scheduling conflict, the date was changed to Dec. 13, rather

SEE SEN., PAGE 2A

Jewett St. back to normal

By Joyce Marie Taylor
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Jewett Street in White Springs, which was completely washed out thanks to Tropical Storm Debby in June, 2012, has finally been repaired.

"We appreciate the patience demonstrated by residents of the neighborhood affected by the bridge wash-out and repair," said White Springs Mayor Helen Miller.

Miller said town staff has

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The stakes have been set on the grounds of town hall to show the proposed layout of the new fire station. -Photo: Joyce Marie Taylor

The stakes are set for new fire department

By Joyce Marie Taylor
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White Springs Town Manager Bob Farley isn't letting any grass grow beneath his feet as he boldly moves forward with plans for the new fire department.

Farley explained that the stakes in the ground are, for now, just for planning purposes.

"The property has already been surveyed," said Farley. "We have proper setbacks off the

property line."

The town, he said, will be paying the engineers about \$21,000 to do the design work.

"They will get it designed and permitted," he said. "With our grant application to CDBG (Community Development Block Grant), we get an extra 100 points for doing that."

When it comes time for grant monies to be given out, that extra 100 points, Farley said, will give the town a much better shot at receiving funding.

If everything works out as planned, Farley said, "We get \$600,000 free. So, we spend \$21,000, but we get \$600,000."

Farley said the grant

monies do not have to be repaid.

Meanwhile, the short term fix to help satisfy ISO (Insurance Services Office) requirements is moving forward. Farley said he submitted a design to the county, who approved it, and the list of supplies has been sent to Howland's.

"They're going through the list now to make sure they got everything," said Farley. "As soon as they say we're good to go, we're doing a purchase order, having the material shipped here, and then we will coordinate with Hamilton CI for the inmate crews to build it. We're trying to get it done before Christmas."

Dreams of a White Springs Christmas

Parade draws hundreds to town

By Joyce Marie Taylor
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The 19th Annual White Springs Christmas Parade drew all kinds of people out to the main drag to watch the procession of floats, antique cars, emergency vehicles, bicyclists, horses and more, as they traveled down the street and into Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park, where everyone got to witness the first public viewing of the Festival of Lights.

People began arriving early before the sun went down, so they could snag a good viewing spot along the street to watch the parade.

This year's grand marshal of the parade was White Springs Vice Mayor Walter McKenzie and his wife Merri. Just behind

SEE DREAMS, PAGE 10A



Santa Claus came to town, compliments of White Springs Town Manager Bob Farley.

-Photo: Joyce Marie Taylor



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School evaluations a mixed bag Hamilton County has more effective teachers than highly effective

Continued From Page 1A

classroom teachers, other instructional personnel and school administrators who earned evaluation ratings of highly effective, effective, needs improvement, developing, or unsatisfactory for the 2012-13 school year.

The report below is based on the data collected as of Nov. 25, 2013. Another report will be released in January as Florida school districts continue to submit internal evaluation results.

Hamilton County classroom teachers

Based on the evaluation of 123 classroom teachers, 7.7 percent (8 teachers) were highly effective; 67.3 percent (70 teachers) were effective; 25 percent (26 teachers) needs improvement; and 19 were not evaluated. There were no teachers reported in developing or unsatisfactory categories.

Non-classroom instructional personnel

Based on the evaluation of 45 non-classroom instructional personnel, 10 percent (one teacher) was highly effective; 60 percent (six teachers) were effective; 30 percent (3 teachers) needs improvement; and 35 were not evaluated. There were no teachers reported in developing or unsatisfactory categories.

School results

Based on the evaluation of all instructional staff at Central Hamilton Elementary School, 91.7 percent (six teachers) were effective; 8.3 percent needs improve-

ment; and 31.4 percent was not evaluated. There were no teachers reported in the unsatisfactory category.

Based on the evaluation of all instructional staff at Hamilton County High School, 2.4 percent were highly effective; 57.1 percent were effective; 25 percent needs improvement; and 6.7 percent was not evaluated. There were no teachers reported in the unsatisfactory category.

Based on the evaluation of all instructional staff at South Hamilton Elementary School, 21.4 percent were highly effective; 57.1 percent were effective; 21.4 percent needs improvement; and 12.5 percent were not evaluated. There were no teachers reported in the unsatisfactory category.

School superintendent's office

Based on the evaluation of the superintendent's office, 100 percent of those evaluated were effective; and 81 percent were not evaluated.

There was no data available for Greenwood School or school administrator evaluations.

Lafayette County

classroom teachers

Based on the evaluation of 71 classroom teachers, 67.1 percent (47 teachers) were highly effective; 31.4 percent (22 teachers) were effective; 1.4 percent (1 teacher) needs improvement; and one was not evaluated. There were no teachers ranked in developing or unsatis-

factory categories.

Non-classroom instructional personnel

Based on the evaluation of 10 non-classroom instructional personnel, 88.9 percent (8 teachers) were highly effective; 11.1 percent (one teacher) were effective; and one was not evaluated. There were no teachers reported in the unsatisfactory categories.

School results

Based on the evaluation of all instructional staff at Lafayette High School, 83.3 percent were highly effective; 16.7 percent were effective; and 2.7 percent was not evaluated. There were no teachers reported in the unsatisfactory, developing or needs improvement categories.

Based on the evaluation of all instructional staff at Lafayette Elementary School, 59.5 percent were highly effective; 38.1 percent were effective; 2.4 percent needs improvement; and 13.3 percent was not evaluated. There were no teachers reported in the unsatisfactory or developing category.

No data was available for school administrator or superintendent office evaluations.

Suwannee County

classroom teachers

Based on the evaluation of 410 classroom teachers, 19.5 percent (70 teachers) were highly effective; 72.1 percent (259 teachers) were effective; 5.6 percent (20 teachers) needs im-

provement; 2.8 percent (10 teachers) were considered developing; and 51 were not evaluated. There were no teachers ranked unsatisfactory.

Non-classroom instructional personnel

Based on the evaluation of 135 non-classroom instructional personnel, 18.9 percent (17 teachers) were highly effective; 75.6 percent (68 teachers) were effective; and 3.3 percent (3 teachers) needs improvement; 2.2 percent (2 teachers) were considered developing; and 45 were not evaluated. There were no teachers reported in the unsatisfactory category.

School results

Based on the evaluation of all instructional staff at Suwannee Primary School, 1.8 percent were highly effective; 94.5 percent were effective; 1.8 percent needs improvement; 1.8 percent were considered developing; and 8.3 percent was not evaluated. There were no teachers reported in the unsatisfactory category.

Based on the evaluation of all instructional staff at Suwannee-Hamilton Technical Center, 47.8 percent were highly effective; 47.8 percent were effective; 4.3 percent needs improvement; and 43.9 percent was not evaluated. There were no teachers reported in the unsatisfactory category.

Based on the evaluation of all instructional staff at Suwannee Inter-

mediate School, 51.3 percent were highly effective; 30.8 percent were effective; 17.9 percent were considered developing; and 13.3 percent was not evaluated. There were no teachers reported in the unsatisfactory category.

Based on the evaluation of all instructional staff at Suwannee High School, 10.9 percent were highly effective; 81.8 percent were effective; 7.3 percent needs improvement; and 9.8 percent was not evaluated. There were no teachers reported in the unsatisfactory or developing category.

Based on the evaluation of all instructional staff at Branford High School, 10.9 percent were highly effective; 81.8 percent were effective; 7.3 percent needs improvement; and 9.8 percent was not evaluated. There were no teachers reported in the unsatisfactory or developing category.

Based on the evaluation of all instructional staff at Suwannee Middle School, 17.4 percent were highly effective; 69.6 percent were effective; 11.6 percent needs improvement; 1.4 percent were considered developing; and 17.9 percent was not evaluated. There were no teachers reported in the unsatisfactory category.

School administrators

Based on the evaluation of school administrators, 63.2 percent (12 administrators) were highly effective; 31.6 percent (6 administrators) were effective; 5.3 percent (one administrator) was considered developing; and three were not evaluated. No administrators were ranked unsatisfactory or needs improvement.

School superintendent's office

Based on the evaluation of the superintendent's office, 11.1 percent of the staff were highly effective; 85.2 percent were effective; 3.7 percent needs improvement; and 48.1 percent were not evaluated.

Resource fair is Dec 20 at PCS Conference Center

Continued From Page 1A

Diane Head.

"PCS invites all personnel affected by their recent lay-offs to attend a Resource Fair hosted by North Florida Workforce," said Head.

The event will be held Friday, Dec. 20 from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m., at the PCS Conference Center in White Springs. Head noted that previously they reported the event would be held in Lake City, but it has been changed to the PCS Conference Center.

"In attendance will be re-employment assistance representatives, local training providers, local service agencies and veteran resources," said Head.

There will also be employers on hand at the event who are looking to recruit experienced workers for immediate openings.

Sen. Montford in Hamilton Dec. 13

Continued From Page 1A

than Dec. 17.

To make sure their office is aware of any issues or concerns Hamilton County constituents may have, Senator Bill Montford's office holds periodic meetings to gather citizen input.

Senator Montford's staff looks forward to seeing and hearing from you. For more information, call the Capital District Office at 850-487-5003.

Check out our new events calendar, nflaonline.com/events. The calendar highlights local and area activities and lets you peruse them and add to them, for free. Check it out!

Suwannee Valley Events	
MON 25	Rotary Club of Live Oak meeting Farm Bureau Buildi... Live Oak, Florida
SAT 23	Raid on the Suwannee Spirit Of The Suwa... Live Oak, FL
MON 25	Lego Club Live Oak Public Li... Live Oak, FL
MON 25	Health Insurance Navigator Live Oak Public Li... Live Oak, FL
FRI 22	
SAT 23	
SUN 24	
MON 25	
TUE 26	

See all events + Add your event

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Letter to the editor and Article Policy

Letters to the editor and article submissions can be mailed or dropped off at the news office at 211 Howard St. E, Live Oak, FL 32064, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. until 5 p.m.

Letters to the editor should be typed, brief and to the point, approximately 150 to 200 words or less. Not all letters are published. To be considered for publication, letters to the editor must be signed, include the writer's address and phone number, and in the news office by noon on Friday.

Submissions, 400 or less words, should be typed, brief and to the point. Not all submissions are published.

Letters and submissions may be edited to fit available space. Well written letters/submissions require less editing.

You may fax letters/submissions to 386-364-5578.



THE PROMISE

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Life in WHITE SPRINGS

By Walter McKenzie

lifeinwhitesprings@gmail.com

"Truth and reconciliation." I have heard that on the world news a lot this week. Often things that happen on the world stage remind me of an often quoted phrase, "Think globally, act locally", and make me wonder, how we can weave this week's lessons of the world into the fabric of White Springs? What does the life and death of Nelson Mandela, a man from a powerful nation on a far distant continent, have to do with us here in our very small, far-away town? Should we even pay any attention? I think we should. In the face of far greater problems than we face, Mandela, along with the nation of South Africa, showed courage, but even more importantly he showed us resilience and "the power of action; of taking risks on behalf of our ideals". How does this apply to White Springs? During Mandela's lifetime, as a town we have come a long way socially, and some of us can be proud of the progress we have made. Politically, we are not as divided and opposed as populations and politicians in many

larger political venues. Economics is our biggest problem, and our economic outlook is our biggest weakness. We have put too many of our eggs in one basket for far too long and when that basket gets dropped, as it did this past week, it really wakes us up to the need for more diversity in our economy and in our outlook towards our economic problems and solutions and our plans for the future. As dark as things seem for many of us right now, we must realize that the phosphate mine, which has been a big employer and, on many levels a good neighbor and provider, is not what defines us as the people of White Springs or Hamilton County. We are much more than that. Life will go on after the mines are closed and we the people can learn from the lessons of the grater world. We can come together, face the truth, reconcile our differences and have the courage to set off in new directions, playing on the strengths of our area, the beauty of our natural heritage, and the willingness of our planners and leaders to make bold economic decisions on behalf of our local and regional needs and ideals. Times are changing and we need to have the courage to think outside the box of big industrial economics that put all our eggs in

one basket. Let's put together an economic environment that will build more than that. We can do it and, in the long run, we'll be much better off.

It was a great honor for Merri and I to have been the grand marshals for last week's Christmas parade. It was fun too. We were in awe of all the work that was done by our wonderful volunteers behind the scenes to decorate floats and vehicles, march, ride bicycles, play music, throw candy, direct traffic, serve hot dogs and cookies, and put up a stunningly beautiful display of Christmas lights in town and in the park. For a brief moment, both in the parade and in the Sponsor's reception earlier in the week, we all came together to plan and enjoy the festivities and it felt really good. Thank you to all the people who made it happen, far too many to name but they include the usual suspects. You know who you are!

I am looking forward to a wonderful holiday season and I hope to see you out and about, enjoying life in White Springs.

Walter McKenzie
lifeinwhitesprings@gmail.com
386-269-0056

Spread holiday cheer with manatee, sea turtle decals

Those searching for a meaningful holiday gift should consider choosing one that helps protect Florida's manatees and sea turtles.

With a \$5 donation, people can receive a manatee or sea turtle decal from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

This year's decals celebrate the presence of manatees and sea turtles (los manatíes y tortugas marinas) 500 years ago in Florida when Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon landed on this peninsula and named it La Florida, land of flowers.

People can order the decals online at MyFWC.com/ManateeSeaTurtleDecals or ask for them at local county tax collectors' offices. Decal donations support conservation of manatees and sea turtles, including research, rescue, rehabilitation and management efforts.

"The FWC's manatee and sea turtle decals illustrate how these species have been interwoven with Florida's history for 500 years as part of our rich natural heritage," said Carol Knox, the FWC's Imperiled Species Management Section leader. "With a \$5 donation per decal, people can be part of the effort to keep manatees and sea turtles as part of our wildlife legacy for at least 500 more years."

Manatees and sea turtles were among the native wildlife seen by Ponce de Leon and his crew. Ponce de Leon also designated a cluster of is-

lands 70 miles west of Key West as Las Tortugas, because of the many sea turtles nesting there. As with other Florida beaches, the islands of Dry Tortugas National Park still have loggerhead and green turtles coming back year after year to lay their eggs.

Today, the manatee is the state's designated marine mammal, and the loggerhead sea turtle is the state's saltwater reptile.

Purchase of a "Save the Manatee" or "Helping Sea Turtles Survive" license plate is another way to celebrate the holidays while protecting these imperiled species. Go to BuyPlate.com.

For more on manatees, go to MyFWC.com/Manatee.

For more on sea turtles, go to MyFWC.com/SeaTurtle.

Timberlake Property Owners Association will have its next board meeting on Thursday, Dec. 12 at 6 p.m. in the room at the Race Track on CR 152 in Jennings. Members are invited to attend.



You're Invited!



What: Decar Scaff's display of Christmas Cottages

Where: Gingerbread House next to Decar & Eileen Scaff's home at 7337 NW CR 146 (2 miles West of the S&S on State Rd 6)

When: Any time throughout Christmas Season for viewing.

Friday, and Saturday:

December 06, 2013 4:00 pm - 8:00 pm (Open House)

December 07, 2013 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm (Open House)

AGENDA
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, HAMILTON COUNTY, FLORIDA
Room 112 - Courthouse 207 Northeast First Street
Jasper, Florida
MEETING DATE: DECEMBER 17, 2013

THE AGENDA ITEMS LISTED BY NUMBER WILL BE TAKEN IN ORDER FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE MEETING REGARDLESS OF TIME. HOWEVER, THE TIME CERTAIN ITEMS LISTED WITH SPECIFIC TIMES WILL COMMENCE AT THE SPECIFIED TIME.

LISTED ITEMS

- 1) COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC - UNAGENDAED APPEARANCES (*)
- 2) CONSENT AGENDA APPROVAL
- 3) DISCUSSION OF RURAL HEALTH CLINIC
- 4) VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK-STATUS REPORT
- 5) JENNINGS RECREATION PARK
- 6) APPROVE BILLS
- 7) CORRESPONDENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENTS
- 8) ADJOURN

TIME CERTAIN ITEMS

6:00 P.M. - CALL TO ORDER - INVOCATION - PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG
6:05 P.M. - COUNTY ROAD PROJECTS - STATUS REPORT
A) DISCUSSION OF COURTHOUSE PARKING LOT
6:10 P.M. - SHIP PROGRAM - STATUS REPORT

DUE TO PUBLICATION DEADLINE, THIS AGENDA MAY NOT CONTAIN ALL MATTERS BEFORE THE BOARD. A COMPLETE COPY OF THE AGENDA MAY BE OBTAINED AFTER 1:00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2013 FROM THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT, COURTHOUSE, JASPER, FLORIDA.

Persons appearing before the Board are requested, if possible, to submit in writing the subject matter of their appearance before the Board not later than Tuesday prior to the Board Meeting the following Tuesday.

(*) NOTICE: Persons appearing before the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners, not having given notice in time to be included and shown on the Agenda, and desiring to make a presentation, will be limited to five (5) minutes, in the interest of meeting time. The Board of County Commissioners will hear and listen to persons appearing whose subject has not been shown on the agenda; however, action by the Board on any such matter can only be taken upon determination of an emergency situation. Any identifiable group of three (3) persons or more shall be limited to a total of ten (10) minutes per topic.

In accordance with Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes, notice is given that if any person decides to appeal any decision made by the Board, agency or commission, with respect to proceedings and that, for such purpose, he/she will need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is based.

NOTIFICATION: IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES NEEDING A SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION FOR ATTENDANCE AT THIS MEETING SHOULD CONTACT THE CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT, ROOM 106, 207 NORTHEAST FIRST STREET, JASPER, FLORIDA, TELEPHONE (386) 792-1288, NOT LATER THAN 72 HOURS PRIOR TO THE PROCEEDINGS. IF HEARING IMPAIRED, TDD (386) 792-0857.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD: TUESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2014 AT 9:00 A.M.

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FROM THE CITY OF JASPER
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8:30 A.M. TO 4:30 P.M.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
HAMILTON COUNTY, FLORIDA
CONSENT AGENDA
December 17, 2013

- 1) MINUTES - APPROVE:
 - A) December 3, 2013 - Regular Meeting
- 2) COUNTY DEPARTMENT HEADS - INFORMATION ITEMS:
- 3) APPROVE PAYMENT OF THE FOLLOWING INVOICE FROM RHETT BULLARD, P.A.:
 - A) Invoice No. 1995 - Value Adjustment Board - \$250.00
- 4) APPROVE PAYMENT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$2,360.00 FROM TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TRUST FUND FOR THE PURCHASE OF 15,000 JEWEL OF THE SUWANNEE BROCHURES IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,910 PLUS \$450.00 SET UP FEE AT THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE HAMILTON COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL.

OPINION

Our fragile planet

Let's examine a few statements reflecting a vision thought to be beyond question. "The world that we live in is beautiful but fragile." "The 3rd rock from the sun is a fragile oasis." Here are a couple of Earth Day quotes: "Remember that Earth needs to be saved every single day." "Remember the importance of taking care of our planet. It's the only home we have!" Such statements, along with apocalyptic predictions, are stock in trade for environmental extremists and non-extremists alike. Worse yet is the fact that this fragile-earth indoctrination is fed to our youth from kindergarten through college. Let's examine just how fragile the earth is.

The 1883 eruption of the Krakatoa volcano, in present-day Indonesia, had the force of 200 megatons of TNT. That's the equivalent of 13,300 15-kiloton atomic bombs, the kind that destroyed Hiroshima in 1945. Preceding that eruption was the 1815 Tambora eruption, also in present-day Indonesia, which holds the record as the largest known volcanic eruption. It spewed so much debris into the atmosphere, blocking sunlight, that 1816 became known as the "Year Without a Summer" or "Summer That Never Was." It led to crop failures and livestock death in much of the Northern Hemisphere and caused the

worst famine of the 19th century. The A.D. 535 Krakatoa eruption had such force that it blotted out much of the light and heat of the sun for 18 months and is said to have led to the Dark Ages. Geophysicists estimate that just three volcanic eruptions, Indonesia (1883), Alaska (1912) and Iceland (1947), spewed more carbon dioxide and sulfur dioxide into the atmosphere than all of mankind's activities in our entire history.

How has our fragile earth handled floods? China is probably the world capital of gigantic floods. The 1887 Yellow River flood cost between 900,000 and 2 million lives. China's 1931 flood was worse, yielding an estimated death toll between 1 million and 4 million. But China doesn't have a monopoly on floods. Between 1219 and 1530, the Netherlands experienced floods costing about 250,000 lives.

What about the impact of earthquakes on our fragile earth? There's Chile's 1960 Valdivia earthquake, coming in at 9.5 on the Richter scale, a force equivalent to 1,000 atomic



A
MINORITY
VIEW
© 2013 Creators Syndicate
BY WALTER WILLIAMS

bombs going off at the same time. The deadly 1556 earthquake in China's Shaanxi province devastated an area of 520 miles. There's the more recent December 2004 magnitude-9.1 earthquake in the Indian Ocean that caused the deadly Boxing Day tsunami, and a deadly March 2011 magnitude-9.0 earthquake struck eastern Japan.

Our fragile earth faces outer space terror. Two billion years ago, an asteroid hit earth, creating the Vredefort crater in South Africa. It has a radius of 118 miles, making it the world's largest impact crater. In Ontario, there's the Sudbury Basin, resulting from a meteor strike 1.8 billion years ago, which has an 81-mile diameter, making it the second-largest impact structure on earth. Virginia's Chesapeake Bay crater is a bit smaller, about 53 miles wide. Then there's the famous but puny Meteor Crater in Arizona, which is not even a mile wide.

I've pointed out only a tiny portion of the cataclysmic events that have struck the earth -- ignoring whole cat-

egories, such as tornadoes, hurricanes, lightning strikes, fires, blizzards, landslides and avalanches. Despite these cataclysmic events, the earth survived. My question is: Which of these powers of nature can be matched by mankind? For example, can mankind duplicate the polluting effects of the 1815 Tambora volcanic eruption or the asteroid impact that wiped out dinosaurs? It is the height of arrogance to think that mankind can make significant parametric changes in the earth or can match nature's destructive forces.

Occasionally, environmentalists spill the beans and reveal their true agenda. Barry Commoner said, "Capitalism is the earth's number one enemy." Amherst College professor Leo Marx said, "On ecological grounds, the case for world government is beyond argument." With the decline of the USSR, communism has lost considerable respectability and is now repackaged as environmentalism and progressivism.

Walter E. Williams is a professor of economics at George Mason University. To find out more about Walter E. Williams and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com.

It's true: Objects are closer than they appear

Dwain Walden
The Moultrie Observer

You know that little warning on your rearview mirror that says, "Objects are closer than they appear." Well, it's true.

Some \$700 later, I have corroborated those six words. Remarkably, my mailbox was still usable. But I had to replace the hatch on my SUV. Guess my mailbox was designed by an Auburn University engineer...with God's help.

So I got to thinking about phrases and "famous last words" that I have come upon along my journey, and I will comment on a few.

It's about this time of year when I used to cringe at the site of "some assembly is required." For the most part, that horse has left the barn...left the pasture, even.

I once refused to buy a new barbecue grill unless they would sell me the display model. After some debate, the store owner gave in, and I took the fully assembled product home.

I bought a metal utility barn many years ago and in the process of putting it together, I realized I had 900 bolts and 200 nuts. Not only that, the holes for the bolts did not match up. But that's nothing an electric drill couldn't fix. You see when you grow up on the farm, you learn to improvise. Some-



times the outhouse was just too far away.

I ordered a glass cutting device off one of those TV infomercials. I was going to make all kinds of neat things out of old wine bottles. When the device arrived, not only was it a flimsy piece of crap, but the directions for putting it together and using it were written in French. I took French in college, mainly because the French occupied Vietnam before the United States — in its infinite wisdom and penchant for meddling into other peoples' affairs — decided on a "police action." I figured knowing a few French words like "Don't shoot, I'm friendly" would come in real handy.

Well, I could only remember a few slang words in French that seemed to apply to this glass-cutting moment. I'm not even sure I got them right, but whatever I missed in pronunciation was made up in body language I'm sure.

I've often seen "this side up" printed on cardboard boxes. Well, I once loaded tractor-trailer rigs for UPS (college days), and I'll tell you right now that we didn't always get that thing right. But unless you mailed something liquid with the top off, I don't think it mattered all that much. And besides, there's always that one guy

who will turn the box upside down just to see what would happen. This is the guy who could have been an extra in the Road Runner cartoons.

I can't confirm it, but I heard that there was once a fellow who had printed on his tombstone, "Hey, I told y'all I was sick."

We've all been advised not to operate heavy machinery after taking Nyquil. The irony is, a bottle of Jack Daniels does not offer that same advice. Go figure.

Well I've never wanted to crank up a bulldozer and push up fence rows after I had taken Nyquil. I'm not saying the advice is not valid, I just don't think many people actually read it.

I did, however, take a couple of Ambien on one occasion and my wife found me wandering around in the backyard at 3 a.m. She said I was in the

vicinity of the lawn mower. I guess it's a good thing I don't own a bulldozer. That scared the heck out of me, mostly because I didn't remember it. I haven't taken an Ambien since then. That said, I know a couple of guys who can't remember the 1960s. For other reasons.

I began this rambling with a warning label. So I end it with one. On the internet, I found a product manufactured in the U.S. and sold in France. It had a warning label that translated, "Wash with warm water. Use mild soap. Dry flat. Do not dry in the dryer. Do not iron. We are sorry that our president is an idiot. We did not vote for him."

Bonjour!

Dwain Walden is editor/publisher of The Moultrie Observer, 985-4545. Email: dwain.walden@gafnews.com.

North Central Florida Tea Party monthly meeting

KrisAnne Hall is the guest speaker

Are you concerned about the things going on in our country, at the local, state and federal levels? Have you wondered what you can do to help make changes so that future generations can enjoy the God-given liberties that our Constitution was written to guarantee? KrisAnne Hall

will be the guest speaker at the monthly meeting of the North Central Florida Tea Party. She will be speaking on "Restoring Liberty for Future Generations". She says that there is too much finger pointing go-

SEE NORTH, PAGE 14A

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Neglecting your great salvation Part 2



Hugh G. Sherrill
ems-hugh43
@comcast.net

Last week we began a study on how to fix it when one neglects his salvation. Remember, to neglect something means we have to possess it. There is danger

when one that has accepted Jesus as their Savior, then lives a life not consistent with His teaching. We started our study with the first four of the "let us"s in the book of Hebrews. "Let us" fear, "Let us" be diligent to enter His rest, "Let us" hold fast our confession, and "Let us" come boldly to the throne of grace.

The next one is found in chapter 6:1: "Therefore leaving the discussion of the elementary principle (or doctrine) of Christ, "Let us" go on to perfection (or maturity), not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works

and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptism, of laying on of hands, of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment" (Hebrews 6:1-2 NKJ). In other words, the writer says grow up, study and find the truth, and hold on to it. So many today don't know what they really believe about the subjects recorded in these verses. Til one settle what they believe, it is impossible to grow or go on to maturity.

Then we move on to Hebrews 10:22-25. We have just learned that Jesus is our High Priest in verse 19-21. We now are told in verse 22 "Let us" draw near with a true heart in full assurance of

faith". We must settle what we believe by faith. Faith is all we have. Hebrews 11:1 says "Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen". Hebrews 11:6 says "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him".

Again in verse 23 "Let us" hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful". One must by faith hold on to his profession in Christ, trusting that He is who He says He is. Then in verse 24 "Let us" consider one another in

order to stir up love and good works". Stir up love. Too many in the Church these days are more interested in stirring up discord than they are love. When discord is present, the work of the Lord goes lacking. God is love and His love is suppose to be in us.

Hebrews 12:1 "Let us" lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us". To fix ones neglect, one must find the sin and get it out of ones life. For we who know Christ are in a race and sin weighs one down. 1st John 1:9 "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our

sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness". Without confession there can be no forgiveness.

Hebrews 12:28 "...let us" have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:". To replace the neglect in one's life, they must by grace serve God acceptably. One cannot serve God acceptably when they are not living their life in accordance with God's will. The godly fear here means be cautious, or be concerned. It is a warning we should heed. Hebrews 12:29 "For our God is a consuming fire".

Let us repair our neglect.

Obituaries

Lisa Lynn Law Corbin
Nov. 5, 1969
Nov. 3, 2013

Lisa Lynn Law Corbin 43, of Bangor, Maine passed away after an unexpected illness on Nov. 3, 2013.

Lisa was born on Nov. 5, 1969 at Suwannee County Hospital. She was a successful CNA.

The memorial services will be held Sunday, Dec. 15, 2013 at Salem Primitive Church, 199 Salem Church Court, Lake City, Fla. at 3 p.m.

She is survived by her mother Rebecca Law of Jasper, Fla., one brother Virgil Law of Live Oak, Fla., one daughter Jennifer Corbin and two sons Curtis Carlton and Carl Rankin all of Live Oak, Fla.

Pine Grove Crematorium was in charge.

(Jack), Jasper, Fla. and Mary Ann Lastinger (Ronnie), Hahira, GA.; two sisters-in-law, Eva Pelczar, Hartford, CT. and Monya Washer, Wethersfield, CT.; two grandchildren, Christina and Michael Scherban; numerous nieces and nephews also survive.

Funeral services were held Monday, Dec. 9, 2013 in the chapel of Harry T. Reid Funeral Home, Jasper, Fla. with Rev. Paul Johnson officiating. Interment followed in Evergreen Cemetery, Jasper, Fla.

Memorial contributions may be made to Haven Hospice 6037 West U.S. Hwy 90, Lake City, Fla. 32055 or Suwannee Valley Nursing Center, 427 NW 15th Ave, Jasper, Fla. 32052

Harry T. Reid Funeral Home, Jasper, Fla. was in charge of arrangements.

Georgia Alma Johnson Scherban
Dec. 17, 1923
Dec. 6, 2013

Georgia Alma Johnson Scherban, age 89, of Jasper, Fla. passed away Friday, Dec. 6, 2013 at Suwannee Valley Nursing Center following an extended illness. Alma was born on Dec. 17, 1923 at Hahira, GA. to the late Ivey and Estelle Kelly Johnson.

On April 19, 1943 in Valdosta, GA. she married Michael Scherban and the two moved to Mike's hometown in Hartford, CT. They retired in 1973 and moved to Jasper, Fla. Alma was a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Jasper, Fla. where she enjoyed singing in the church choir and was a Church Elder. Alma worked for many years at Kayo's Drugstore. She loved to read and enjoyed traveling. She lived life to the fullest and when she could no longer live on her own, she went to live at Suwannee Valley Nursing Center. Alma enjoyed her life there and loved the staff. She will always be remembered and loved by everyone that knew her. Alma was predeceased by her parents, Ivey and Estelle Johnson, her husband of 56 years, Michael Scherban, her son, Dwight M. Scherban and a sister, Doris Molle.

Survivors include her daughter and son-in-law, Marsha and Henry Groll, Jasper, Fla.; daughter-in-law, Maria Mendez-Scherban, Marlborough, CT.; two brothers, Paul Johnson (Linda) and Jimmy Johnson, of Hahira, GA.; two sisters, Louise Vinson

Robert Owen Miller
Jan. 9, 1936
Nov. 25, 2013

Robert Owen Miller, age 77, of Jasper, Fla., passed away at his home on Monday, Nov. 25, 2013.

Mr. Miller was born in New Castle, Indiana on Jan. 9, 1936 to the late Glenn and Blanch Miller.

Miller was owner and operator of his own insurance agency for many years. He served his country in the United States Navy and Air Force during the Korean Conflict. Mr. Miller moved to the area from Coral Gables, Fla., and was a former resident of Ocala, Fla. and TX. He attended First United Methodist Church in Live Oak, Fla.

Survivors include his wife of 19 years, Linda Miller, Jasper; one son, Michael Miller, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; two daughters, Sharon Sheehan, Rock Wall, TX. and Debra Smith, Farmersville, TX.; two stepchildren, Tony Martinez, Cumming, GA. and Jennifer Rembisz, Gainesville, Fla.; seven grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Memorial services will be held at a later date. Harry T. Reid Funeral Home, Jasper, Fla. is in charge of arrangements.

Louise Smith Green Nickle
Dec. 3, 2013

Louise Smith Green Nickle, 85, of Jasper, Fla. passed away on Tuesday, Dec. 3, 2013.

Daniels Funeral Homes & Crematory, Live Oak, Fla. in charge of arrangements.

Heart Matters

"Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat there. When the kinsman-redeemer he had mentioned came along, Boaz said, 'Come over here, my friend and sit down.' So he went over and sat down. Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, 'Sit here,' and they did so. Then he said to the kinsman-redeemer, 'Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech. I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line.'"

'I will redeem it,' he said. Then Boaz said, 'On the day you buy the land from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitess, you acquire the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the dead with his property.' At this the kinsman-redeemer said, 'Then I cannot redeem it because it might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it.' (Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method for legalizing transactions in Israel.) So the kinsman-re-

deemer said to Boaz. 'Buy it yourself.' And he removed his sandal." (Ruth 4:1-8)

Chalk it up to my love of multi-tasking, (don't you just love that rare day when you get to check off everything on your list?) but I really like the word "meanwhile," especially when it gets used like this: My dinner was in the oven; meanwhile I finished up the laundry. Meanwhile literally means "at the same time." Chapter four begins by telling us that while Ruth was at home feeling very concerned and probably confused about what was happening, Boaz was in town getting the matter settled, just like Naomi assured her that he would.

Like a man on a mission, Boaz gets to work: first, he waits for the nearer kinsman-redeemer at the city gate where all legal transactions were settled...the equivalent of our courtroom. Once he is in place, ten elders were gathered and then the case was opened. The details get a bit confusing in our English translation, but remember that property wasn't actually bought and sold in the way that we understand today. Through his inheritance, Naomi's husband, Elimelech had rights to a parcel of land that was forfeited when the family left Bethlehem to go to Moab. What Boaz is presenting to the closest kinsman is the opportu-

nity to buy back the property for Naomi's family, herself and Ruth, not from them. This appeared to be agreeable until he understood the strings attached...the widow, along with the responsibility to maintain her dead husband's name.

Isn't Boaz playing it cool? No doubt his heart is beating double time, hoping that he gets to be the one to redeem the property and get the girl! Did you notice how he throws in the fact that Ruth is a Moabitess (one of them foreigners!) and a "dead man's" widow? I mean are there any other kind? It sure seems like Boaz was trying to make the deal sound as least appealing as possible...whether it was those small details or not, Boaz's strategy works and the offer was refused!

One last thought...while I'm so glad that everything works out for Boaz to redeem the property and marry Ruth, I can't help but feel a bit sorry for that other relative. For heaven's sake, what if he was wearing his favorite pair of shoes? And I just have but wonder...did they have a shoe store in Bethlehem where you could buy just one in cases like this? Just goes to show, you never know what might be going on meanwhile...

Because Every Heart Matters,
Angie



Heart Matters is a weekly column written by Angie Land, Director of the Family Life Ministries of the Lafayette Baptist Association, where she teaches Bible studies, leads marriage and family conferences and offers Biblical counseling to individuals, couples and families. Contact Angie with questions or comments at angieland3@windstream.net

Dreams of a White Springs Christmas

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Church & Family Go Together

<p>ADVENT CHRISTIAN FIRST ADVENT CHRISTIAN N.W. 15th Avenue Jasper Rev. Wayne Sullivan Sunday Sunday School.....10:00 a.m. Morning Worship.....11:00 a.m. Wednesday Bible Study.....7:00 p.m. 784022</p>	<p>BAPTIST (Southern) FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH "Where Friends become Family" 207 N.E. 2nd Street, Jasper 792-2658 Pastor: Roger Hutto Sunday Sunday School.....9:45 a.m. Morning Worship.....11:00 a.m. Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m. Wednesday Supper.....6:00 p.m. Children, Youth & Adult Programs 6:30 p.m. 784012</p>	<p>METHODIST FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH 405 Central Ave., Jasper, FL Pastor - Dale Ames Phone - 386-792-1122 Sunday Sunday School.....9:45 a.m. Morning Worship.....11:00 a.m. Wednesday Family Night Dinner 3rd Wednesday Clothes Closet 4th Saturday 1-5pm 783995</p>	<p>PRESBYTERIAN FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 204 N.W. 3rd Avenue, Jasper 792-2258 Pastor: Shelton Steen SUNDAY Sunday School.....10:00 a.m. Worship Service.....11:00 a.m. WEDNESDAY Choir Practice.....7:00 p.m. 834981</p>
<p>CATHOLIC CHURCH ST. THERESA CATHOLIC CHURCH Three miles north of Jasper U.S. 41 P.O. Box 890, Jasper, FL 32052 Rectory U.S. 90 E., Live Oak, FL (386) 364-1108 Saturday MASS 4:00 p.m. 784014</p>	<p>NON-DENOMINATIONAL BURNHAM CHRISTIAN CHURCH 4520 NW CR 146, Jennings, FL 32053 938-1285 Pastor: Johnny Brown Sunday Sunday School.....9:45 a.m. Worship.....11:00 a.m. Evening Service.....6:00 p.m. Wednesday Youth Program.....5:30 p.m. 784003</p>	<p>BAPTIST CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH 11320 C.R. 6 East Jasper FL 32052 Pastor: Rev. Ronald Prueter Home: 386-938-5912 Church: 386-792-3267 Morning Service: Sunday School.....10:00 a.m. Worship.....11:00 a.m. Children's Church.....11:00 a.m. Evening Training Union.....6:00 p.m. Worship.....7:00 p.m. Wednesday 835174 Worship.....6:00 p.m. 835547</p>	<p>Building On FAITH</p>

To list your church on our church directory, please call Nancy at 386-362-1734

"Outta' the Woods"

By Tony Young

December filled with holiday hunting traditions



There's finally a chill and certain festiveness in the air as most of us try to take time off from work to enjoy spending quality time with family and friends and reflect on the passing year. Children will be out of school on winter break soon, and while the holiday season is upon us, so are several traditional hunting opportunities.

The second phase of waterfowl and coot season comes in statewide Dec. 7 and runs through Jan. 26. In addition to the usual hunting license and permit requirements, duck hunters also must have a Florida waterfowl permit (\$5) and a federal duck stamp (\$15).

The daily bag limit on ducks is six, but you need to know your ducks before you pull the trigger, because there are different daily limits for each species. For instance, within the six-bird limit there may be only one black duck, one mottled duck and one fulvous whistling-duck.

Only two of your six-bird limit may be canvasbacks, pintails, red-heads or scaup, and

three may be wood ducks. And you may have no more than four scoters or four mallards (of which only two may be female) in your bag. All other species of ducks can be taken up to the six-bird limit, except harlequin ducks.

The daily limit on coots is 15, and there's a five-bird limit on mergansers, only two of which may be hooded.

When hunting waterfowl, hunters may use only nontoxic shotgun shells. Only iron (steel), bismuth-tin and various tungsten-alloys are permissible.

For something different, try woodcock hunting. Woodcock season again runs Dec. 18 - Jan. 31. Woodcocks are excellent game birds because they hold well for pointing bird dogs and provide a challenging shot when flushed. The daily bag limit is three.

The third phase of mourning and white-winged dove season opens Dec. 14 and runs through Jan. 12. The daily bag limit is 15 birds.

From November on, the shooting hours for all migratory birds are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. However, you must get a no-cost migratory bird permit where you purchase your hunting license before you hunt any of these birds.

The only firearm you can use to hunt migratory game birds is a shotgun, no larger than 10-gauge. Shotguns must be plugged to a three-shell capacity (magazine and chamber com-

bined). Bows also are legal.

Retrievers and bird dogs can be useful in hunting migratory game birds. Artificial decoys and manual or mouth-operated bird calls also are legal and essential gear for duck hunters.

You may hunt migratory game birds over an agricultural field if the crop was planted by regular agricultural methods. However, don't even think about "sweetening" the field by scattering agricultural products over it - or anywhere near it - or you could wind up in serious trouble. It doesn't matter if you aren't the one who scattered the bait. If you knew or should have known that such bait was present, you're accountable under federal law.

Some other things you can't do while hunting migratory game birds include using rifles, pistols, crossbows, traps, snares, nets, sinkboxes, swivel guns, punt guns, battery guns, machine guns, fish hooks, poisons, drugs, explosive substances, live decoys and recorded bird calls, sounds or electrically amplified bird-call imitations. It is also against the law to shoot from a moving automobile or boat and herd or drive birds with vehicles or vessels.

Bobcat and otter hunting season always runs Dec. 1 - March 1, and there's no daily bag or season limit on either species.

Like foxes, bobcats may be chased year-

round with dogs, but possessing firearms during the closed season, between March 2 and Nov. 30, is prohibited. On a few wildlife management areas, bobcats and otters may not be taken, so please consult the specific area brochure before you

hunt.

December has the hunting opportunities you're looking for, whether you are upland-bird hunting with friends and family, shooting ducks on the pond with your favorite lab or taking that big cat as he slips up behind an

unsuspecting fawn.

Here's wishing you happy holidays and a successful hunting season. If you can, remember to introduce someone new to our great sport. As always, have fun, hunt safely and ethically, and we'll see you in the woods!

Suwannee Country Club to irrigate turf with reuse water

LIVE OAK - The Suwannee Country Club in Live Oak will soon maintain its turf without relying on groundwater. Rather than pumping water from the Upper Floridan Aquifer they will be irrigate with reuse water. Reuse water is an alternative water source produced from highly treated wastewater and used for irrigation and other non-potable uses.

The golf course will receive 100,000 gallons per day (GPD) of reuse water from the City of Live Oak's Waste Water Treatment Plant, offsetting their groundwater irrigation use by 100 percent.

The Suwannee River Water Management District (District) provided the City of Live Oak \$19,570 in funding assistance to pay for the infrastructure to connect the golf course to the city's reuse system. The City was awarded the funding as part of the District's Regional Initiative Valuing Environmental Resources (RIVER) program. Construction is scheduled for completion by February 2014.

Suwannee Country Club Manager and Superintendent Jason Cannon has eagerly awaited the opportunity to use reuse water since the City installed its reuse system several years ago.

"We're excited for the opportunity to irrigate in a manner that will reduce costs, conserve water, and provide beneficial nutrients to our turf which will reduce fertilizer use," he said.

Other customers receiving reuse water include Camp Weed, which uses

up to 450,000 GPD for aquifer recharge and Suwannee Correctional Institute which uses up to 200,000 GPD for irrigation and other non-potable uses. The District is also using reuse water for landscape irrigation on an as-needed basis, offsetting 100 percent of their groundwater use.

"It's a smarter use of our end product," said Live Oak City Administrator Kerry Waldron. "It also allows users the ability to use treated effluent for irrigation and related purposes rather than pulling from our fresh drinking water supply."

The District has assisted several cities in its 15-county boundary with planning and funding assistance to produce reuse water. Cities within the District that have reuse programs include Alachua, Archer, Cedar Key, Lake City, Live Oak, Monticello, and Perry. Collectively, this offsets pumpage by about 4.1 million gallons of groundwater per day.

"The District is pleased to partner with the City of Live Oak on this project which will reduce groundwater pumpage, and we are delighted that Suwannee Country Club wanted to be a part of these efforts," said District Executive Director Ann Shortelle. "Reclaiming water allows us to save our precious groundwater supplies, while making beneficial use of high-quality wastewater. We will continue to use this important resource to help meet the District's future water supply needs."



The Suwannee Country Club in Live Oak will soon maintain its turf without relying on groundwater. Courtesy photo

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Suwannee Valley Transit Authority moving forward

Turning around a multi-county agency

By Bryant Thigpen
bryant.thigpen@gafnews.com

Gwendolyn Pra was hired by the Suwannee County Board of County Commissioners to serve as the administrator for the Suwannee Valley Transit Authority, a public agency that was over \$2 million dollars in debt at the time. Since Pra took over in August of 2011, she has pulled the agency out of debt and improved the quality of service.

SVTA has approximately 30 buses that service three counties: Columbia, Hamilton and Suwannee. The agency relies on those counties boards of county commissioners and DOT for funding. Medicaid funds are used strictly for the services they provide to Medicaid services.

"I realized after about four hours of being here the agency was about to close its doors," Pra said. After a few minutes of calculating numbers, she realized the agency was over \$2 million in debt. Even the electric bill had not been paid for quite some time.

The building's maintenance had been long forsaken. The electrical system was out of code. The plumbing was a mess. The bus shop and office was disarray. The phone system was 20 plus years old. The software was outdated. The former staff was using a data base to schedule trips, but they were taking reservations using a pen and paper. There were no exit signs. There was no fire system. The maintenance performed on buses was not properly maintained.

It seemed Pra had quite the challenge ahead.

Pra, who is a former employee with the Department of Transportation, knew what needed to be done to get the agency up to par and knew it would be a steep hill to climb.

"The big thing was, 'how are you going to pay for this?'" Pra asked herself.

"When I first got here, it was about survival and trying to get the place back in the black," Pra said. "We knew we had to take some tough measures to keep the doors open."

Although it was no easy task, Pra said within 15 months of taking over the agency, SVTA was completely out of debt. It should be noted that Pra did that without receiving any additional funds.

"We just jumped in. I knew I was in an emergency situation," Pra said. "We were probably within five days of closing."

Pra said she began gaining ground by removing service that didn't have a funding source. There were seven routes in Lake City and two in Live Oak that met that criteria and were cut immediately.

She then called in Bill Steele, a long-time friend who was retiring from the military, to move to Live Oak and become the director of operations for SVTA.

For quite some time, Pra said there was no such thing as an eight hour day, as they worked long hours as a team to get the building and the company back on its feet again. Within a year-and-a-half, the building was brought up to date.

"We spent a weekend up here scrubbing and getting the building ready to paint," Pra said.

In another effort to save money, Pra obtained approval with the court system to be a place where individuals needing community service hours could work for the SVTA and gain the hours they needed to comply with the court.

"Bill reviewed their skills and put them to work at their skill labor," Pra said. "That was a huge help to us."

Pra gave much credit to the DOT who assisted in remodeling the garage.

"We documented the need to them, and they helped," Pra said.

Pra said she stopped many outside services to save money such as coffee, cleaning and lawn care. For over a year, someone at SVTA was responsible for maintaining the lawn. Staff members worked as a team to clean the office.

"Things we could do ourselves, we did," Pra said.



SVTA Administrator Gwendolyn Pra led the agency out of a \$2 million debt into profit within 15 months.

Pra takes pride in knowing her office is truly a public service agency.

She recalled during Tropical Storm Debby, bus drivers were reporting to the office in the midst of the storm to go and help others.

"Many drivers were already on their way to the office by the time I called them," Pra said.

During the storm, airboats were used to rescue individuals from their

homes which were under water. SVTA buses would then pick the people up and transport them to the local storm shelter. Pra said 286 people were loaded up on buses and carried to safety.

Pra said she has three goals: continue to stay within the operating budget; provide services to those who need it; and expand the services currently offered.

School district recognized by SACS

Continued From Page 1A

plaque from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) recognizing their District Accreditation Quality Achievement Award.

"As you know, we went through a very rigorous review as a district for SACS accreditation," Porter reminded the board.

Porter said the process of accreditation

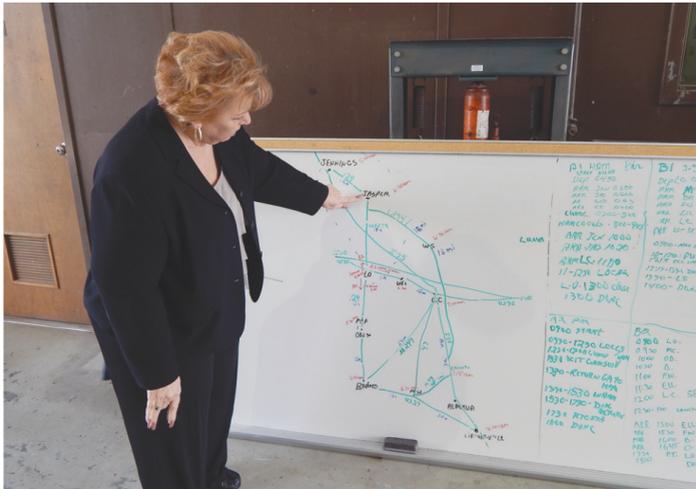
was completed in the spring, however, they just now received the actual proof by way of the award plaque.

"We actually had no findings, no areas of improvement, and they think we're a quality district," she said.

Moffses explained that normally SACS will find areas within a school district that need improvement during their review, which need to be ad-

dressed within an 18-24 month period.

"We had no finding of fact in our review and are not required to go through SACS accreditation or any other review process for another five years," said Moffses. "It's a tremendous honor to be able to receive this, but the credit goes to the staff and their dedication for what they've done within the district."



SVTA Administrator Gwendolyn Pra explains bus routing. - Photos: Bryant Thigpen



Hamilton County School Board members (L-R) Sammy McCoy, Gary Godwin, Damon Deas, Supt. Thomas Moffses, Jeanie Daniels and Johnny Bullard show off their SACS accreditation plaque. -Photo: Joyce Marie Taylor

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Festival of Lights now open at Stephen Foster

Continued From Page 1A
roasting and holiday singing for everyone, as well as a "flurry" of fun in the winter wonderland, which includes holiday music nightly from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Cousin Thelma Boltin's Gift Shop will be open daily from noon until 9 p.m. Complimentary hot cocoa and popcorn will be served nightly in the Craft Square. There will be demonstrations, a bonfire, marshmallow

Be sure to bring the kids because Santa will visit the park every evening through Dec. 24. You'll find him in the new North Pole

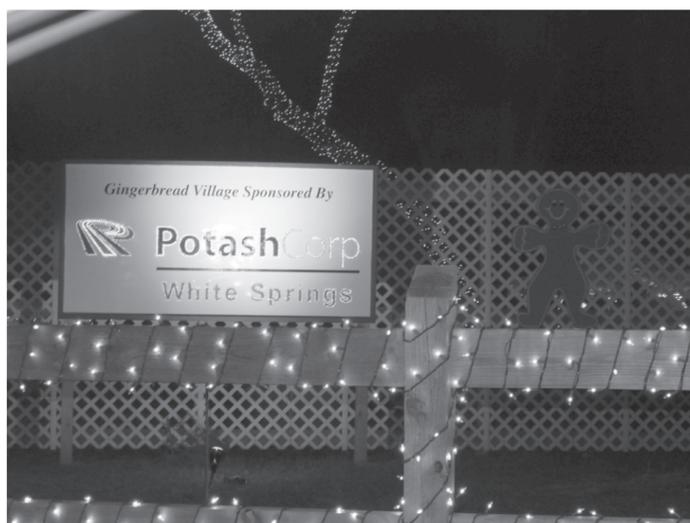
Entrance fee during Festival of Lights is \$3 per person. The event is sponsored by the Stephen Foster Citizens Support Organization, and made possible by the generous support of numerous local individuals and businesses. For more information, call 386-397-4331.



Lighted walkways and candy canes show the way to all the displays.



One of many large decorated oak trees in the park.



Potash Corp White Springs is the proud sponsor of the Gingerbread Village in the park. -Photos: Joyce Marie Taylor



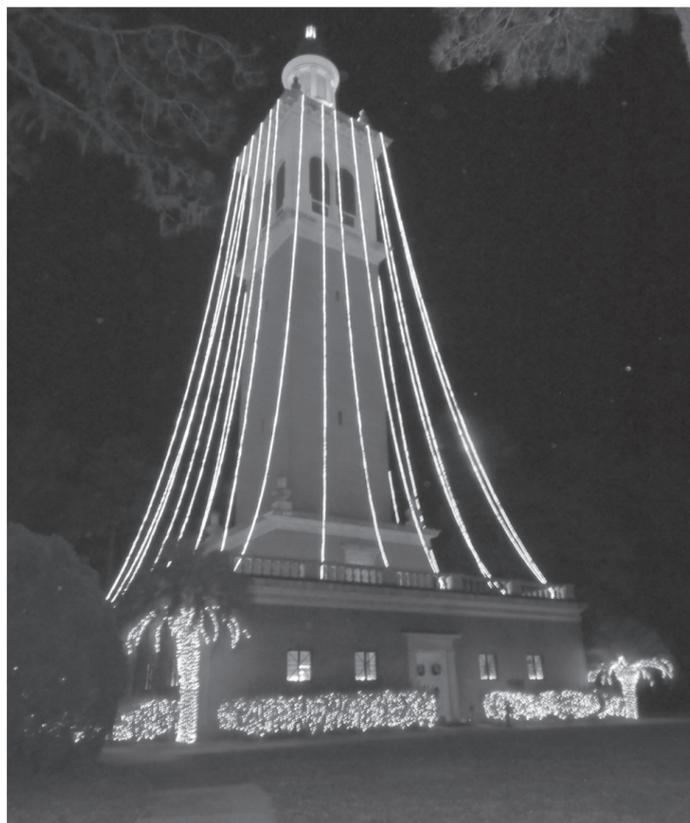
Lake City Train Club had young and old alike fascinated.



The auditorium drew lots of folks anxious to see the model trains.



This beautiful palm tree looks even more majestic decked out in bright red lights.



The centerpiece of the park, the Carillon Bell Tower in all its colorful glory.



Even from a distance, the Stephen Foster Museum is a magnificent sight to behold.



Nelly Bly's Kitchen is all decked out for the holidays.

Dreams of a White Springs Christmas

Continued From Page 1A
 them was White Springs Mayor Helen Miller who was joyfully tossing candy to the children along the route.
 Town Manager Bob

Farley had the honor of transporting Santa Claus near the tail end of the parade on the back of the town fire department's new Polaris.
 After the parade, everyone was invited

into the park to check out the Festival of Lights and also enjoy a hot dog supper at Nelly Bly's Kitchen.
 Don't forget, Festival of Lights runs through Jan. 3, 2014, except for Christmas night.



A perfect holiday horse and buggy chariot.



The Glory Train comes to town.



Wards Lights heads toward the park.



White Springs' own Johnny Bullard waves to the crowd.



The Hamilton County Commissioners wave to the crowd.



The HOPE Aqua Bus is filled with kids.



Grand Marshal was White Springs Vice Mayor Walter McKenzie and his wife Merri.
-Photos: Joyce Marie Taylor



Horses, horses and more horses.



One of many floats in the parade.



Just one of several antique cars in the parade procession.



The Hamilton County Chamber of Commerce float.



White Springs Mayor Helen Miller tosses candy to the children.



The early birds got the good seats...and some pizza, too.

EMS hires new ass't director

Continued From Page 1A
exciting just the past week that he's been here and the things we've been able to discuss and the directions

that we want to go. So, I'm very excited about the opportunity to work with Mr. Leggett."

Leggett said, "We've got some interesting

things that we're looking at, and trying to improve the service. I've got a few years to draw on," he added. "I've been in EMS for about 30 years."



(L-R) Mac Leggett and Henry Land from Hamilton County EMS. -Photo: Joyce Marie Taylor

Jewett St. back to normal

Continued From Page 1A

conducted all work on a timely basis, but the repairs were performed and paid for through a partnership of federal, state, county and local agencies,



Jewett Street in White Springs is now passable. -Photo: Joyce Marie Taylor

and coordination has been challenging at times.

"In fact, we are still waiting on some required data from a government partner, so that Town Manager Bob Farley can finalize the documentation needed to close out the project before the end of the year, and funding can be reimbursed," said Miller.

On the up-side, Miller added, the bridge over the culvert is a big improvement over its predecessor.

"We are hopeful it's useful life will prove longer than the previous bridge," Miller said.

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Dr. Fred Mickler, retired Hamilton County physician

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Around the Banks of the Suwannee

By Correspondent
Johnny Bullard

From the Eight Mile Still on the Woodpecker Route north of White Springs, Florida.

Dear Santa,

It is that time of the year, once again, when I write to you my annual letter. I know you are very busy this time of year. I worked hard writing my letter and trying to collect my thoughts. "Collecting" my thoughts is not as easy for me as it was at one time, Santa. I seem to lose things more and more frequently. The latest thing I lost was part of my "mind", but I feel, for the most part, I am in good company, as so many pleasant souls who live around me seem to be in the same shape in which I find myself.

Firstly, thank you, Santa, for always being so faithful and true. I really do appreciate your "sameness". Each year I have the joy of writing you knowing you are going to receive my letter, read it, and respond. I appreciate that in you

so very much. You know, Santa, as you know most everything, that I live in an area that values "sameness", and "tradition". The same Suwannee River is flowing through the heart of my beloved homeland. No doubt you see it, curving through North Florida, and the dark river, and the white sand around it helps you often navigate your way through our part of the world on a foggy Christmas Eve. I am thankful for the Suwannee, Santa, as well as many of the kind hearted folks who live near its banks. I never asked you for these gifts, Santa, but you've given me the gift of living in the most wonderful area and among the most wonderful folks on earth. I do thank you.

Secondly, and this is the requesting part, Santa, the asking part. I am asking that you "look into" the economic situation in our area. We could use some of your extra special help. Recently, a number of our friends and neighbors received word they no

longer have jobs. The industry providing these jobs is not at fault. Our area, truly, can't hold the company accountable and offer it anything but accolades. It has provided tax money, employment, and done a great deal of charitable and altruistic work in our area. Many people who have lived here over a couple of generations could not have lived here and provided for their families had it not been for this industry, but, as it is with any phase of our lives, "all good things at some time must come to an end". Our area leaders need to begin taking a "hard look" at possibilities for future employment for many of our citizens. In fact, Santa, I am asking you to whisper to them and tell them all to try "extra hard". So much of our future depends on it. "Out of the box", creative thinking, will have to be involved Santa, as our area, in the way of being attractive to major employers and companies is somewhat "behind the eight ball" in what we may have to of-

fer in comparison to larger, more metropolitan areas, but, I also know you have always looked after us, and you always will. Just try extra hard, this year, Santa, will you please? Thank you for your consideration.

Thirdly, Santa, I want to thank you, once again, for all the hard work you have done in bringing many factions of our communities together to take a much harder look at the future of our environment, and the beautiful place we call, "Home Sweet Home". We still have a "ways to go", but I know, with your help, that one day, we will see many of our beautiful springs "come back to life" and, once again, we will rejoice in their beauty. Thank you, Santa, for the progress that has been made in this area and, to those who have worked so hard on this area, I hope you have something "extra special" for them.

Finally, Santa, I do want to thank you for a number of blessings sent my way this year; the wonderful staff at the Jasper News and the Suwannee Democrat newspapers and all their continued encouragement. The folks at the

Department of Health Hamilton County, who have been so kind to me, as I've learned a whole "new" job. The wonderful citizens of District 4 in Hamilton County who have allowed me the privilege of serving as their school board member for which I am very grateful and my super special students at South Hamilton Elementary in White Springs. I love reading to you, as well as many great friends and my dear family.

I hope to see you very soon, Santa Claus, and I know that even though America is in the middle of a health craze, and we are fighting obesity "tooth and toe nail", I won't leave you any alfalfa sprouts or a glass of tepid, ionized water as your treat on the table. There will be the standard pecan pie wrapped up for you, along with a thermos of Community Coffee, and you enjoy.

Thanks again, for all your kind consideration, Santa, and, oh, Santa, I do want to thank all the volunteers and "shout out" to the staff of Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park, White Springs, for all the hard work they do on their Festival of Lights,

opened nightly through the month of December except Christmas Day, and what a wonderful admission price, \$3 each, and children under 12 are admitted free of charge. I especially want to single out one staff member at Stephen Foster who means so much to me and who always goes "above and beyond" on any project with which I have worked for the past couple of decades or so and that is Pat Cromer. I call her the "Keeper of Stephen Foster's House", as she is always taking care of the beautiful museum there. Do something extra special for her if you would Santa Claus, she deserves it, as do all the staff members and volunteers there.

Well, for now, I am going to close. I love you Santa and know that you are "real". I've been a "pretty good" boy this year, so I hope you'll grant my Christmas wish. From the Eight Mile Still on the Woodpecker Route north of White Springs, wishing you a day filled with joy, peace, and, above all, lots of love and laughter.

With sincere appreciation,
Johnny Bullard

Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park

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Suwannee Valley Nursing Center would like to issue a statement regarding the "Adopt a Grandparent" fundraiser promoted by a certain "Mary Kay Representative."

Although Suwannee Valley is appreciative of all efforts to provide gifts to our residents, we see the need to clarify a few misconceptions. We were contacted by this representative, but did not authorize the solicitation of funds by fliers and social media using the Suwannee Valley Nursing Center name. It is not our fundraiser, and we have no control over the use of these funds. Another aspect of this fundraiser that needs clarification is the promotion that "this may be the only gifts these residents will get." This statement is categorically false. Our great community-through our local churches and organizations-provides gifts annually. There is also a local benefactor who, for over 25 years, buys each resident a gift and personally delivers it to each person. In fact, all our residents receive multiple gifts every year.

Thanks Hamilton County Community! We appreciate your support!

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Sponsor's reception for Festival of Lights draws a crowd

Continued From Page 1A
sneak peek at the lights and to enjoy fun and fellowship, as well as partake of a wide assortment of delicious hors d'oeuvres. The theme for the sponsor's reception was teddy bears and they were everywhere, big ones, small ones, and even edible ones.

Park Manager Michelle Waterman be-

gan the evening by thanking all the sponsors who made the event and the evening's meal possible, including the White Springs Citizen's Support Organization. Waterman also thanked the park staff for their hard work in setting up all the lights and the District 2 park staff for their support.

"Our staff began working on the festival in July and we've been

working on the Festival of Lights ever since," said Waterman. "Our sponsors and partners help to make this event what it is. The Citizen's Support Organization is an asset to our park and they're dedicated to preserving the folk life here in North Florida. The town of White Springs, the Hamilton County Tourist Development Council, and our local government

agencies and land managers are great supporters of the park and work very closely to ensure that the visitors to White Springs want to come back again," she added.

Waterman said because of the contributions they receive from all the sponsors, the park is able to keep the event at a low cost to visitors.

"Three dollars a per-

son to come into a park and enjoy four hours of entertainment, and get free marshmallows, popcorn and hot cocoa," Waterman began. "Where can you go for that?"

Once everyone finished eating, Waterman donned her animated, lighted Santa hat and, lo and behold, a special guest arrived by the name of Santa Claus, who brought Mrs. Claus

along with him to greet the crowd and wish them a Merry Christmas.

With the back doors to the museum now open, everyone filed outside to begin exploring all the wonders of the lighted park, including the excitement of the Lake City Train Club, who already had their tracks and trains set up in the auditorium.



It was still daylight when folks began arriving to pick up their name tags and be serenaded with music out in front of the museum.. -Photos: Joyce Marie Taylor



Dennis Price (left) dishes out shrimp cocktail for the guests.



White Springs Vice Mayor Walter McKenzie and Potash Corp Public Affairs Manager Mike Williams enjoy a beverage together.



Everyone raved about all the delicious food.



Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park Manager Michelle Waterman.



Santa and Mrs. Claus were the guests of honor at the reception.

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FDOT schedules public meetings on 5-year transportation plan

A \$3.2 billion work program of projects proposed by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for the Northeast Florida area over the next five years will be discussed at two public meetings this Thursday (Dec. 5) and next Monday (Dec. 9).

Thursday's meeting will be an informal open house between 2-6 p.m. at the FDOT District Office located at 1109 South Marion Avenue in Lake City. The focus of this meeting are projects in the counties of Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton,

Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor and Union.

Monday's meeting will begin at 5:30 p.m. and will include a presentation on proposed projects in Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau, Putnam and St. Johns counties. This meeting is at the FDOT Training Center located at 2198 Edison Avenue (off I-10 and Stockton Street).

Information for all 18 counties served by FDOT District 2 will be available at both meetings. FDOT staff will be available to discuss projects and answer questions.

Each year, the FDOT must up-

date its five-year transportation plan with projects requested by the public, local government, metropolitan planning organizations and resurfacing criteria. The results will be presented to the Florida Legislature for budget approval in 2014.

Each county's tentative transportation plan is available at the FDOT web site: <http://www.d2wp.com>.

Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin, disability or family status.

SVEC urges members to be aware Of potential scams this holiday season

With the holidays upon us, we look forward to the good times they bring. Unfortunately, we often see an upswing in scams and suspicious activity during the holidays. Thankfully, we haven't encountered any scams recently, but people should be aware of suspicious activity and contact SVEC if concerned.

Recently, a neighboring electric cooperative encountered two scams. Several members reported receiving a call by someone claiming to work for the utility company. The individual stated to the member they were calling to collect a past due bill. SVEC does not collect past due amounts in this manner.

The second scam involved two men in a pickup truck claiming to be contractors for the utility and stated they were there to "check windows". The member became suspicious and called the utility, who informed her they had no contractors that would be there to "check windows" and that she

should call the sheriff's office.

SVEC encourages its members to be very suspicious of anyone who calls and claims he or she represents the co-op and wants to be paid for an overdue bill.

If an SVEC member has an overdue bill, he or she will likely receive a call from our automated phone messaging system as a reminder to call the cooperative to arrange payment along with a notice by mail. SVEC encourages its members to not share confidential and or personal information over the phone.

SVEC personnel and its contractors wear uniforms, carry identification, and can properly identify themselves if requested. Currently, SVEC has a contractor treating poles and employees doing routine maintenance trimming.

If a member has any questions regarding this issue they can call Community Relations Manager Baynard Ward, at 386.362.2226 x.5662, or Dispatch at 386.364.5200 or 800.752.0025.

Arrest Records

Editor's note: The Jasper News prints the entire arrest record each week. If your name appears here and you are later found not guilty or the charges are dropped, we will be happy to make note of this in the newspaper when judicial proof is presented to us by you or the authorities.

The following abbreviations are used below:

- DAC - Department of Agriculture Commission
- DOA - Department of Agriculture
- DOT - Department of Transportation
- FDLE - Florida Department of Law Enforcement
- FHP - Florida Highway Patrol
- FWC - Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- HCDTF - Hamilton County Drug Task

- Force HCSO - Hamilton County Sheriff's Office
- ICE - Immigration and Custom Enforcement
- JAPD - Jasper Police Department
- JNPD - Jennings Police Department
- OALE - Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement
- P&P - Probation and Parole
- SCSO - Suwannee County Sheriff's Office
- WSPD - White Springs Police Department

- Dec. 2, Samuel Lee Staten, Jr., 39, 3840 Cypress Pointe, Union CI, possession less than 20 grams marijuana, hold for Madison Cty., FHP-Hughes
- Dec. 2, Terrance Bernard Calloway, 43, 5524 Stanford Rd., Jacksonville, Fla., hold for

- Fitzgerald, Ga., FHP-Hughes
- Dec. 2, Gregory Edward Decker, Jr., 22, 1120 SW Silas Dr., Live Oak, Fla., vop grand theft, HCSO-Curry
- Dec. 3, Haji Salum Abdullah, 47, 1600 Anderson St., Apt. C-9, Durham, NC, operating motor vehicle w/expired license over 6 months, DOA-Jenkins
- Dec. 4, Johnny Ray Spells, 34, 6693 Herring Rd., Lake Park, Ga., dwls, DOT/FHP-Williams
- Dec. 4, Irina Joe Armstead, 41, 3739 NW 109 Ave., Jasper, Fla., battery, criminal mischief, HCSO-Burnam
- Dec. 5, Lucky Dan Wilmart, 58, 33 E. Brand Cir., Battlecreek, Mi., fail to stop, remain at crash involving injury, hit and run, vehicle theft, FHP-McGauley

- Dec. 5, David Wayne Wheeler, 39, 7526 SE CR 135, Jasper, Fla., battery DV, HCSO-Burnam
- Dec. 7, Anthony Van Francis, 49, 209 Railroad Ave., Jasper, Fla., poss. cocaine within 200 ft. of public park, poss. narcotic equip., HCSO-Murphy
- Dec. 8, Danielle Marie Dow, 40, 11380 NW 40 St., Jasper, Fla., vop warrant, HCSO-Carter
- Dec. 8, Kitina Natasha Simmons, 27, 721 Scriven Ave., Live Oak, Fla., no valid DL, JAPD-McGauley
- Dec. 8, Tyrell Omega Claridy, 47, PO Box 794, Jasper, Fla., dwls/r, allow unauthorized person to drive, JAPD-McGauley
- Dec. 8, Rakeem Olanjuan Marshall, 12590 Robert St., White Springs, Fla., battery, DV, criminal mischief, WSPD-Golub

North Central Florida Tea Party monthly meeting

Continued From Page 4A

ing on today and finger pointing is for losers! She will give us real practical solutions so that "WE THE PEOPLE" can work to restore liberty. This will be a lesson for the pro-active activist. She will give us things that we can do every day! KrisAnne is a Constitutional Attorney who travels the country teaching groups of all ages about the roots of our liberty and many other lessons that we weren't taught in public schools. For more information about KrisAnne Hall, go to www.krisannehall.com

We will have our drawing for the \$500 Visa gift card. This is one of our fundraisers for the year to help defray our expenses. We use part of our money to print and distribute the

American Patriot News in the local areas. You will be able to buy tickets at the meeting before we hold the drawing. We always have a lot of information/action items on the issues facing us on the local, state and federal level. It is a great way to get caught up with things that are going on, meet some like-minded people, and get busy working to save this country.

We meet at 7 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 12, at the Taylor Building, located at 128 SW Birley Ave in Lake City. This is on the corner of U.S. 90 and Birley Avenue, three miles west of the I-75 interchange in Lake City. For more information, call John 386-935-1705 or Sharon 386-935-0821. Visit our website at www.northcentralflorida-teaparty.org for more information about us.



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REDUCED! BANK OWNED- 1996, 3/2 DWMH, 1,300+sq.ft. on almost an acre on Lake Jeffery Road. Large covered back porch. Workshop. \$36,995. MLS#82213 www.RealEstateShows.com/656213



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BANK OWNED- Just \$18,750 for this 2 acre lot in Cobblestone. MLS#80238

10 ACRES on paved road for just \$29,900. MLS#85563

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Gov. Scott: Another record for Florida tourism

Florida has already welcomed more than 72 million visitors in 2013

TAMPA –Governor Rick Scott announced recently that according to preliminary estimates* released by VISIT FLORIDA – the state's official tourism marketing corporation – 22.9 million visitors came to Florida in the third quarter of 2013 (July-September), an increase of 1.7 percent over the same period in 2012. These numbers represent the largest third quarter for visitation in the state's history.

Governor Scott said, "The announcement of another record quarter for visitation clearly shows 'It's Working' in Florida. Because every 85 visitors to our state supports one Florida job; a growing tourism industry equates to more jobs for Florida families and a stronger economy. As we move toward our third consecutive year of record tourism growth, it is clear why the Sunshine State remains the top travel destination across the world."

Through the first three quarters of 2013, Florida welcomed 72.6 million visitors – an increase of 3.4

percent over the same period last year. Visitor spending in Florida for January-August 2013 (last reported month) was \$51.8 billion, representing a year-over-year increase of 5.8 percent from the same period in 2012. Direct travel-related employment in Florida for January-August (last reported month) rose 2.8 percent, adding 29,700 jobs since this same time one year ago. Each of these figures marks a record, making the first three quarters of 2013 the largest nine-month period in the history of Florida's tourism industry.

"So far this year, we're up nearly 2.5 million visitors who increased their spending by almost \$3 billion, led by a double-digit increase in international visitors," said Tammy Gustafson, Chair of the VISIT FLORIDA Board of Directors. "This continued momentum is a testament to the strength of VISIT FLORIDA's marketing efforts, the power of the Sunshine State brand and the dedication of the nearly 1.1

million Floridians who work in the state's tourism industry."

An estimated 19.5 million domestic visitors came to Florida during the third quarter of 2013, representing a 0.5 percent increase from the same period in 2012. Florida welcomed 2.9 million overseas visitors in Q3 2013, representing a 10.1 percent increase over Q3 2012, and 516,000 Canadian visitors during the same period, representing a 2.9 percent increase from the previous year.

"Record visitor numbers equate to record visitor spending," said Will Seccombe, President and CEO of VISIT FLORIDA. "With taxable sales up, occupancy rates up, rental car collections up, bed taxes up and average daily room rates up, Florida's tourism industry has never been stronger."

Carol Dover, President and CEO of the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association said, "These newly released tourism numbers are encouraging to our more than 10,000 members of the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association in our effort to attract over 100 million visitors to the Sunshine State. As Florida's largest employer, our tourism and hospitality industry is on the front lines each and every day in providing a world class experience to visitors coming to our state for business meetings, conventions, vacations and milestone celebrations. We thank Florida Governor Rick Scott and members of the Florida Legislature for providing a pro-business and pro-family environment which not only attracts national and international tourists, but supports job creation and growth here at home."

Additional Preliminary Data:

The Average Daily Room Rate rose 3.6 percent to \$102.69 and the occupancy rate for Florida hotels increased 1.9 percentage points to 62.7 percent in Q3 2013 compared to Q3 2012.

Tourism-related employment has led the state in growth for 41 straight months

Nearly 13.6 million Florida residents are estimated to have taken a pleasure trip during Q3 2013.

The share of in-state pleasure trips by residents was 42.3 percent, resulting in more than 5.7 million pleasure trips in-state – a 6.2 percent increase from the same time last year.

Traffic at the state's five Official Florida Welcome Centers managed by VISIT FLORIDA was up 4.0% in Q3 2013.

To view additional Florida visitor data, go the Research page on VISIT FLORIDA's media website.

*Preliminary estimates are issued 45 days after the end of each calendar quarter. Final estimates are released when final data are received for all estimates in the report.

December "Fish Busters' Bulletin"

By Bob Wattendorf

TrophyCatch boat giveaway winner announced

Five lucky anglers who signed up at TrophyCatchFlorida.com started celebrating the holidays early when their own special Santa delivered big, with a boat and motor, or fishing trip and gift cards.

TrophyCatch is a special reward-driven angler recognition program that encourages Florida anglers to take extra care to document and live-release large-mouth bass heavier than 8 pounds. The program is conducted by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and supported by corporate partners, who provide the incentives.

By simply registering, more than 4,000 anglers became eligible the first year in a drawing for a Phoenix 619 Pro bass boat powered by a Mercury 200SX outboard. In October, a random drawing was conducted to select five finalists for the boat and special consolation prizes. The finalists were announced by Teresa Johnson, Phoenix's chief operating officer, along with Tom Champeau, director of the FWC's Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management and KP Clements, Trophy-

Catch coordinator (see video at YouTube.Com/TrophyCatchFlorida).

Frank Ay, the grand-prize winner, originally learned about TrophyCatch through an email sent out by FWC (Note: Anglers can sign up for custom emails at MyFWC.com by selecting the red envelope in the top banner). Ay lives in North Lauderdale and works at Sy Katz Produce as an inspector, where his boss sympathizes with Ay's bass fishing addiction. Ay is a member of Big Reel Bassmasters of Margate, which is known for its charity Ghosts & Goblins fishing event. Ay said his biggest large-mouth bass was 10 pounds, 2 ounces. He caught it in a small pond in Coconut Creek.

Ay was surprised at a Big Reel Bassmasters club tournament on Lake Okeechobee on Nov. 24 by pro angler Bobby Lane, Champeau, Clements and television celebrity and producer Keith Alan, where he was awarded the \$40,000 boat and outboard motor (see video at bit.ly/Phoenix-giveaway).

The four runners-up in the TrophyCatch regis-

tration giveaway were Rocco Cantalupo from Clearwater, Mark Frost from Melrose, Jason Haynes from Lady Lake and Andrew Walton from Toronto. The runners-up each won a trip to Bienville Plantation and \$100 gift cards (\$300 total) from FWC TrophyCatch partners, including Bass Pro Shops, Dick's Sporting Goods and Rapala lures, as well as a Bass King T-shirt.

Every angler in a household should register separately, because Phoenix and Mercury will be giving another boat and motor to the lucky angler for season two (Oct. 1, 2013-Sep. 30, 2014). Whether registrants catch a fish or not, they are eligible for the drawing. If you are already registered, you do not need to register again. However, this year, for every bass you have verified in TrophyCatch, you'll get 10 additional chances to win the boat. So register, go fishing and document your catches at TrophyCatchFlorida.com.

By submitting photos for verification online, anglers also become eligible for a custom certificate and decal, plus awards based on the bass's weight. Lunker

Club entrants (8-9.9 pounds) each receive a \$50 Bass Pro Shops gift card and Bass King T-shirt. Trophy Club participants (10-12.9 pounds) earn a total of \$150 worth of gift cards (Bass Pro Shops, Dick's Sporting Goods and/or Rapala), plus a long-sleeve T-shirt.

To be entered into the Hall of Fame, anglers must catch, carefully document and release a bass weighing more than 13 pounds – but it's worth it. Hall-of-Fame entrants also receive a free \$500 fiberglass mount of their fish from New Waves Taxidermy, \$200 in gift cards, a duffel bag full of Bass King apparel, a Glen Lau video library and other prizes worth a total of \$1,000.

The biggest bass of the year, for the second season will again win a TrophyCatch championship ring, from the American Outdoor Fund.

'Nuff said! Register, grab your license and rod-and-reel, make sure you have a scale and camera and go catch 'em—then release them and say proudly, "My Trophy Swims in Florida."

This **8' CHRISTMAS STOCKING,**
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Qualifying for the drawing is easy!
Just subscribe to **The Suwannee Democrat**, **The Mayo Free Press** or **Jasper News** or renew your current subscription.
When payment is made, you must ask to register for the Christmas Stocking Drawing.
Your name is entered one time in the drawing. That's it!

We believe everyone should have a chance at this fun-filled prize, so the drawing applies to all customers!

The Suwannee Democrat,
The Mayo Free Press or **Jasper News** will begin accepting entries for the drawing on November 29, 2013 and end at 4 p.m. on December 20, 2013.

The winner will be notified by phone. For more information, Call **The Suwannee Democrat**, **The Mayo Free Press** or **Jasper News** at **386-362-1734**

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 2007 Honda Odyssey #895A \$169 mo.	 2010 Ford Focus #7223B \$186 mo.	 2009 Scion XB #7303B \$189 mo.	 2010 Ford Fusion #7165A \$192 mo.	 2006 Nissan Pathfinder #7191B \$192 mo.	
 2010 Dodge Journey #7077 \$199 mo.	 2012 Hyundai Sonata #12186A \$209 mo.	 2005 Ford F-250 #12192B \$218 mo.	 2012 Nissan Altima #7235A \$225 mo.	 2013 Nissan Rogue #7156B \$239 mo.	
 2009 GMC Acadia #7572A \$249 mo.	 2012 Kia Optima #7514A \$257 mo.	 2010 Chevy Equinox #7363A \$257 mo.	 2011 Ford Edge #12179A \$267 mo.	 2012 Toyota Tacoma #7433A \$289 mo.	
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Young newlyweds charged with Craigslist murder in Pennsylvania

Police investigate other possible killings tied to suspects



Troy LaFerrara, 42, Port Trevorton, Pa., Craigslist murder victim.

CNHI News Service
SUNBURY, Pa. — Authorities said Saturday they're investigating possible other murders by a young married couple charged with luring a central Pennsylvania man to his death with an adult companionship ad on Craigslist.

Elytte Barbour, 22, and his wife of seven weeks, Miranda Barbour, 18, recent residents of nearby Selinsgrove, Pa., were arrested this week for the stabbing death of Troy LaFerrara, 42, of Port Trevorton, Pa., a month ago and dumping his body in an alley here, said Sunbury Police Chief Steve Mazzeo.

Police said Elytte Barbour confessed the couple had been planning a thrill killing for some time with adult companionship ads for wealthy

men on Craigslist but couldn't pull it off until the encounter with LaFerrara.

A police affidavit in the case said Elytte Barbour told investigators he hid under a blanket in the backseat of the couple's SUV when they picked up LaFerrara at a Selinsgrove mall Nov. 11, driving him to an isolated location in Sunbury. Barbour said he then wrapped a cord around the unsuspecting victim's neck to restrain him while his wife stabbed him 20 times with a knife and took his wallet.

Afterward, Barbour told investigators, they dumped LaFerrara's body in a dark alleyway, purchased cleaning materials to remove blood stains from the SUV, and spent the rest of the night celebrating Barbour's birthday at a strip club in the state capital of Harrisburg.

The murder went unsolved for more than three weeks, but investigators eventually traced the last call received on the victim's cellphone to Miranda Barbour's cellphone. She was charged

with LaBerrara's death Wednesday. Her husband was arrested and charged on Friday.

Police said Miranda Barbour is the mother of an 18-month-old child, and that Elytte Barbour told investigators the biological father had died before the couple moved to central Pennsylvania from North Carolina.

Authorities said they are investigating the circumstances of that death as well as any other unsolved murder cases that may be linked to the couple.

Following his wife's arrest, Elytte Barbour told The Daily Item of Sunbury that Miranda Barbour, whom he married Oct. 22, regularly hired herself out as a "companion" to men she met on various websites, a business venture he said he supported because it didn't involve sexual contact.

Barbour said his wife made anywhere from \$50 to \$850 by meeting with men for such activities as having dinner together or walking around a mall. The ads she placed on websites including Craigslist all said upfront that sex was not part of the deal, he said.

"She is not a prostitute," he said. "What she does is meet men who have broken marriages

or have no one in their lives, and she meets with them and has delightful conversation."

Details for this story

were provided by The Daily Item of Sunbury, Pa.



Miranda Barbour, 18, suspect in Craigslist murder. (Photo/Sunbury, Pa., Daily Item)



Elytte Barbour, 22, suspect in Craigslist murder. (Photo/Sunbury, Pa., Daily Item)

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The City of Jasper, FL, is accepting applications for the position of Customer Service Clerk. This position requires the ability to handle cash and account for it accurately in a very busy environment; responsibility for preparing utility bills, receiving utility payments, as well as payments for other billings and collections.

Minimum requirements: High School Diploma/GED, and the ability to be BONDED. Possession of computer (Microsoft Excel and Word), adding machine and other office equipment and telephone skills is necessary. Any experience in dealing with the public in a customer service environment while handling funds would be a strong plus.

Salary range is dependent on experience and qualifications, starting at \$20,800 annually plus benefits.

Please apply to Margaret Harper, Chief Financial Officer at 208 W. Hatley St., Jasper, FL 32052. Phone: (386) 792-1212. Fax: (386) 792-3468 Application can be picked up and mailed to the address above. Applications will be accepted until Friday, January 3, 2014 at 5 p.m.

City of Jasper is EOE/DFWP.

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Easy ways to enjoy a flu-free winter

Spending significant time in close proximity to others indoors can make people more susceptible to the flu. As a result, winter, when people typically spend more time indoors than outdoors, is often dominated by the sniffing and sneezing synonymous with the flu. But men and women can take steps to protect themselves from the flu this season.

- * Get a flu shot. Some people prefer to avoid getting a flu shot because they want to build up their natural immunities or they believe the shots can make them sick. But most flu shots contain an inactive virus that will not make you sick, and will only trigger your body's immune system response to a foreign invader. It can take a couple of weeks for full immunity to develop, so it's possible to still get sick even after a flu shot has been administered. Also, a flu shot does not guarantee recipients won't get the flu. People can still get the flu after receiving a flu shot, as it may be another strain of the virus. But flu shots are largely effective.
- * Quit smoking. Smoking cigarettes and cigars can affect the immune system and also compromise the body in a number of different ways. Smoking can disable mechanisms in your breathing passageways that serve as natural repellants to the flu. These include the hairs on the lungs that brush away contaminants. Smoking also can create holes in the lining of lower air passages, and such holes can make people more susceptible to illness, including the flu. Smokers who get the flu typically find that the flu further complicates their ability to breathe.
- * Avoid sick people. When those around you are sick, it is best to keep your distance, especially when those people have the flu. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention state that people with the flu can spread it to others up to six feet away. Flu viruses are spread mainly by droplets of bodily fluids expelled during coughing, sneezing and even talking. This is why doctors recommend that anyone who has the flu stay home from work or school until they are fully recovered.

* Be especially cautious when pregnant. According to Dr. Cameron Wolfe, an infectious disease specialist at Duke University Medical Center, women who are pregnant are at a higher risk of complications and even death from influenza. Doctors don't fully understand why, but many feel that because the flu can compromise a woman's ability to breathe well, this makes it difficult for oxygen to be passed on to the fetus. Pregnant women should speak with their obstetricians about the safety of the flu shot.

* Get plenty of rest and good food. Adequate sleep and a healthy diet can bolster your immune system. It's important to stay hydrated, eat fruits and vegetables rich in vitamin C and prioritize getting a good night's sleep each night.

* Beware of homeopathic remedies. Always check with a doctor before adding any natural remedies to your flu-fighting repertoire. While some supplements like elderberry syrup, zinc and osilloccocinum can mitigate symptoms of the flu, there's no solid evidence that these items offer any preventative value. Homeopathic remedies also can interfere with medications or may be dangerous to a developing fetus, so do not take these substances without first checking with a doctor.

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at N.F.A.A.



F1983

2012 Dodge Avenger
PW, PL, CD, Low Mileage & Payments
\$10,250⁰⁰



C1273A

2007 Acadia SLT
Low Payments! Easy Financing!
\$14,000⁰⁰



T11070A

2006 Chrysler Pacifica
Touring Package! \$163.80 a mo! WAC
\$5,995⁰⁰



M1523

2007 Cadillac CTS
ONLY 60K miles! Black Beauty!
\$12,995⁰⁰



14T162A

2004 Toyota Camry LE
Low Miles! Clean! Low Payments!
\$7,995⁰⁰



2012 Toyota Camry LE
Four to choose from, starting at
\$13,995⁰⁰



14CV117A

2005 Nissan Armada SE
Leather, All the Goodies!
\$6,995⁰⁰



M1513

2011 Ford Fusion SE
Nice and Sporty! Low Payments
\$11,500⁰⁰



M1455

2009 Toyota Yaris
35 MPG! This is a nice car!
\$6,580⁰⁰



M1467

2008 Jeep Compass
30 MPG! Nice SUV!
\$9,840⁰⁰



M1493

2011 Kia Rio LX
Less than \$200 a month!
\$8,000⁰⁰



14CV55A

2006 Chrysler 300
Leather! Low miles!
\$8,995⁰⁰



F2057A

2006 Ford Escape
ONLY 80K Miles!
\$8,995⁰⁰



14T115A

2005 Dodge Magnum
This is a clean car!
\$7,995⁰⁰



M1520

2010 Ford F150 Ext Cab
Save Thousands on this one!
\$15,500⁰⁰



13F29564A

2001 Ford F150 Super Crew
XLT Package! Local Trade!
\$7,995⁰⁰



M1502

2008 Cadillac Escalade
All the Goodies! Save Thousands!
\$23,500⁰⁰



14K134A

2004 Cadillac Deville
Leather! Clean car!
\$6,500⁰⁰



C1325

2006 Honda CRV SE
Running Boards! Low Payments!
\$12,300⁰⁰



14T83A

2008 Honda Accord EXL
Local Trade! Nice and Clean!
\$12,500⁰⁰



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\$309 PER MO
39 MO LEASE
2499 DAS

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\$359 PER MONTH
36 MONTH LEASE
\$2499 DAS

2014 Dodge Dart
\$199 PER MO
39 MO LEASE
2499 DAS

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