

The Jasper News

Today's Weather
High 56° F
 Precip: 30%
 A few showers today. High 56°F and lows High 40°F. Winds N at 7 mph. Chance of rain 30%.
 UV Index: 3 - Moderate
 For up to the minute weather go to www.nflaonline.com.

143RD YEAR, NUMBER 3

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2013

1 SECTION 18 PAGES

50¢

A LOOK BACK

As we welcome in 2014 we say goodbye to 2013 with a look back at some of the top stories that shaped our county. Here are the top 10.

Dec. 5 edition

PotashCorp White Springs announces layoffs



PotashCorp Public Affairs Manager Mike Williams delivers the bad news to the county commissioners. - Photo: Joyce Marie Taylor

Approx. 250 lost jobs immediately, more will come later
 Suwannee River chemical plant to close, leaving one

White Springs Agricultural Chemicals, Inc (PotashCorp White Springs) announced Tuesday, Dec. 3, that it will permanently close the Suwannee River chemical plant – one of two plants at the White Springs facility – during the second half of 2014. Initial closure activities resulted in an immediate reduction of about 250 people. Final closure in 2014 will result in an additional reduction of approximately 100 people; a cumulative reduction of approximately 50 percent from current levels.

According to Mike Williams, PotashCorp White Springs public affairs manager, the approximate 250 employees were notified Tuesday of their immediate job loss, however, those employees will be paid and receive benefits until February.

The changes at White Springs stem from a company-wide review of business and operational needs that will affect all three business segments (potash, nitrogen and phosphate) and are being undertaken to enhance the global competitive position of the company.

In view of challenges in the global phosphate market and an increased regulatory burden, PotashCorp made the difficult but necessary decision to reduce production levels in White Springs by closing the Suwannee River chemical plant. The new operating level is expect-

ed to extend the life of the existing phosphate rock mine by approximately five years.

The Swift Creek Chemical complex, in addition to the Suwannee River granulation plants, will continue to operate and White Springs will maintain over 350 positions at the facility.

The company also announced that Bill Donohue has been appointed general manager at White Springs, replacing Terry Baker. Donohue was previously plant manager at PotashCorp's Weeping Water and Cincinnati feed phosphate facilities.

Nov. 21 edition

Trojans football team advances to regional finals

Following the win the week before against the Bell High Bulldogs, the 1-A District champions, the Hamilton County Trojans, will play the Trenton High Tigers in the regional finals. The Trojans will host the Tigers Friday evening, Nov. 22, at the Hamilton County Veterans Stadium in Jasper. Gates will open at 6 p.m. and the game will begin at 7:30 p.m.

The Trojans, led by Coach Blair Armstrong, had an outstanding season, finishing 4-5 for the regular season and winning the district championship undefeated with a record of 3-0. The Tro-

jans defeated the Bell High Bulldogs 39-24 in last week's regional semi-finals.

The Tigers, led by Coach Andrew Thomas, finished 9-1 for the regular season and were also district champions. The team defeated Lafayette County 50-21 in last week's regional semi-finals. The Tigers were the state runners-up in last year's competition.

Senior quarterback Antefernee Smith was the player of the game against Bell. He went 6-12 for 198 yards and two passing touchdowns, one rush for 18 yards securing a touchdown. Year long passing yards is 1,243. He has 12 passing touchdowns, 138.1 yards per game, 59-116 att., four int., long 85. Rushing he has 42 carries for 214 yards, average of 5.10, long 58 and five touchdowns.

County looks at fire department consolidation

At the Oct. 1 meeting of the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners, a last minute item that was added to the agenda was discussed in great detail; consolidation of all local fire departments into a single Hamilton County Fire Department under the authority of the board.

SEE A LOOK BACK, PAGE 6A



Coach Blair Armstrong talks to the team following the win.

Hamilton County High School gets 'F' grade for 2012-13



Moffses

On Wednesday, Dec. 18, the Florida Department of Education released grades for the state's high schools. The Hamilton County School District received an "F" grade, down from a "D". The District was prepared for lower overall scores and a lower school grade, based on the 30 plus grading formula changes implemented over the last two years, and higher standards implemented again this year. Hamilton County High

SEE HAMILTON, PAGE 8A

Two council seats up for grabs

By Joyce Marie Taylor
 joycemarie.taylor@gafnews.com

The city of Jasper is holding an election for council seats for Districts 1 and 5 on Tuesday, March 4, 2014.

Qualifying began Dec. 4 and ends at noon on Jan. 3, 2014. Interested candidates need to pick up their packets in person at Jasper City Hall from City Clerk Jennifer Hightower.

The two seats up for grabs are currently held by LaBarfield Bryant (Seat 1) and Kathy Avriett, (Seat 5).

Other council members are Darnell Lumpkin, Seat 2; Ann Lessman, Seat 3; and Mary Kay Dunaway, Seat 4.

As a reminder, the Jasper City Council holds their regular monthly meetings on the second Monday of every month at 6 p.m.

PROVIDING DEDICATED CARE AND SERVICE

Hamilton County Student Health Center, High School Clinic here for Hamilton County citizens

By Johnny Bullard
 Accreditation coordinator
 Dept. of Health, Hamilton County

At first glance, one would think that a school based student health center offers services only to the students on the campus of a given school. That glance would be in error, however, especially when one discovers the full

range of health services provided by the dedicated staff at the Hamilton County Student Health Center, located on the campus of Hamilton County High School in Jasper.

The dedicated staff members at this outstanding health facility, along with a number of outstanding LPN's at the various school sites in the school district, are dedicated to serving the needs of many citizens in Hamilton County.

Hamilton County is a rural and an extremely poor coun-



Front from left: Elizabeth Mitchell, social worker; Shankeyda Simmons, nurse. Back from left: Tracie Cox, RN, Student Health Center services manager; Joanna Griffin, senior clerk and Martha Fultz, nurse and supervisor. - Photo: Johnny Bullard

SEE STUDENT, PAGE 3A



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Band of Brothers and Shotgun Redd bands to rock the Music Hall at The Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park Dec. 27-28

If Santa didn't leave you enough presents under the Christmas tree, give yourself the gift of hearing these two bands! Bring your sweetie and your dancing shoes 'cause it's going to be an awesome weekend you do not want to miss! And it's free admission

Don't put away those dancing shoes yet folks, there's still one more weekend of spectacular music left in 2013 at The Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park (SOSMP) in Live Oak. The outstanding Band of Brothers of Mayo will be on hand Saturday, Dec. 28, to rock the house with its variety of country, Southern rock, Elvis and more. The weekend begins Friday, Dec. 27, with a new band to the SOSMP, the Shotgun Redd Band of Jacksonville.

Saturday night, Dec. 28, Band of Brothers will likely pack the Music Hall and bring the house down numerous times during the evening with its incredible music, dynamic band of musicians and sensational lead singer, Travis Prine. Prine sings lead, backed up by guitarist Hal Thomas. When Prine is not singing directly to the audience, he's seriously taking over the stage, getting into the music and creating an exciting evening for the fans! The remaining



Band of Brothers.

band members, brothers Kevin and Scott Barington and Ross and Tyler Wimberly, rock out with their guitar and drum expertise to the delight of the fans who pack the house. This band is fast becoming one of the favorites at the SOSMP's Music Hall. If you haven't heard them, get on out there Dec. 28 and see what all the hoopla is about...this band is HOT and you will not be disappointed.

Shotgun Redd Band, organized by Jacksonville area music entrepreneur Dustin Roberts, plays country, rock, Southern rock and

much more. The band is a new edition to Dustin's long record of music endeavors. Dustin, who began playing music as a child, is the lead singer for the new band and has played various night spots in Jacksonville including Mavericks' at the Jacksonville Landing and many other clubs and events. Come out and enjoy this new band...don't forget those dancing shoes.

The SOS Café and Restaurant in the Music Hall will be open ready to serve you with delicious food and drink. A full-service bar is open. Doors to the Music Hall



Shotgun Redd

open at 6 p.m. for dinner, music begins at 8 p.m. Free admission.

If you would like to make reservations for RV parking, cabins, primitive camping or camper parking for the

weekend at the SOSMP for this or the many other upcoming events, call 386-364-1683 or email spirit@musicliveshere.com. Also check out the SOSMP's website at www.musicliveshere.com to learn more about upcoming events.

The Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park is located at 3076 95th Drive, Live Oak

cliveshere.com to learn more about upcoming events.

The Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park is located at 3076 95th Drive, Live Oak

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Life in WHITE SPRINGS

By Walter McKenzie

lifeinwhitesprings@gmail.com

It is a bit unusual to see much evening traffic on the two main highways in White Springs, US 41 and CR 136. Usually there are just a few cars and an occasional truck and you can easily walk or drive across these streets without much of a wait, but this is not true during much of December! The line of cars waiting to get in the Stephen Foster Park's Festival of Lights sometimes extends back a half a mile on these two highways on a Friday or Saturday night. Don't let that discourage you from coming, but you might consider coming on a week night or showing up right about the time it gets dark. Actually, the crowd of people just adds to the festive feeling. This year we took a visiting friend from Nashville, Tennessee and she ooh'ed and aah'ed from the moment we entered the park until we left two hours later, thoroughly satisfied by the lights, the snow, (Yes, the snow!) the craftsmen and artists, and the popcorn, hot chocolate and, oh yes, the smores.

Our friend, who has travelled all over the world, said she had never seen any holiday celebration so visually wonderful as this one in White Springs. She was also amazed that most of the folks working or volunteering at the park were so cheerful. I think it is because many of them are volunteers. They enjoy the team effort, they know that they are doing something good for White Springs, they get to actually do something that some folks preach more and more and some folks practice more or less. They spread tidings of comfort and joy! What's not to be cheerful about when you get to do that?

Speaking of volunteers, which I often do because they are the lifeblood of our community, many volunteers showed up to do a construction retrofit to the vehicle shed at White Springs Town Hall so that our fire engine can be properly housed. Special thanks go

out to Lewis Archer and Bryan Futch for donating their professional time, effort and guidance to the group of volunteers who included Bob Farley, Ed Miller, Dennis Price, Randy Madison, Rhett Bullard, Mike Batusic, Jim McMillan, Chris Green, Maddie Moore and a "Mountain Man" and a "Teddy Bear" too! I may have missed a name or two but please know that everyone there was much appreciated by all and I felt privileged to be a small part of this effort and was in awe of the skills and efforts that these folks donated.

A good crowd of folks gathered for the White Springs Town Hall Christmas Party and the wonderful food and desserts were much appreciated. Most of White Springs' employees and officials were in attendance and I was especially glad to see our long time former mayor, Joseph McKire in there. Mayor Helen

Miller spoke to the crowd in appreciation of our town staff and our community of volunteers and citizens. I think that most folks in our town are proud of all these public servants too. Thanks to one and all!

I rode in the Christmas Parade in a short sleeved shirt. I took a lightweight vest to the Festival of Lights and it was too warm to wear it. It has been unseasonably warm but I have decided not to worry about the weather, but just to enjoy it and I hope you do too. And I encourage you to get out of the house and enjoy the many wonderful experiences and opportunities that you will find as you explore life in White Springs. I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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

Florida Museum of Natural History to celebrate 35th Collectors Day Jan. 25

GAINESVILLE, Fla. --- Florida Museum of Natural History visitors will have the opportunity to view a variety of collections -- from antique cars to Coca-Cola memorabilia and stamps to Legos -- during the 35th Collectors Day Jan. 25, 2014, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

This free event is the museum's longest-running and one of its most popular public programs, allowing visitors to speak with collectors and learn more about the uniqueness, history and context of their collections.

Florida Museum educator Tiffany Ireland said the program's goal includes celebrating collectors and their collections, as well as bringing awareness to the importance of collections and their contributions to science.

"Some of the museum's vast collections have been donated by personal collectors," Ireland said. "These include many pieces of the museum's North Ameri-

can Indian ethnographic collection, originally purchased by Leigh Morgan Pearsall between 1900-1960."

The artifacts later came to the University of Florida in 1964 when a donor purchased the Pearsall collection for the museum.

"Our collections are not just used by museum researchers but by scientists from around the world," Ireland said. "The Florida Museum collections are used to study DNA sequencing, conservation and archaeology."

For those interested in displaying their collections, the deadline to register is Jan. 18, 2014. Collectors of all ages are welcome and there is no charge for participating.

To register, visit <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/events/collectors-day-registration/> or for more information call Ireland, 352-273-2061.

Student Health Center, High School Clinic here for Hamilton County citizens

Continued From Page 1A

Jennings. In fact, the district recently qualified for services to provide all students in the district with universal free breakfast and lunch, because over 90 percent of the students in the school system qualify for free and reduced price meals. Hamilton County ranks among the poorest of Florida's 67 counties based upon the federal guidelines for those living at or below the poverty level, based upon income. It is one of the 35 poorest counties, economically, in the United States of America.

However, the services offered by an outstanding and highly qualified staff of health care professionals in the Hamilton County School District are anything but "poor". In fact, the services are outstanding.

Comprised of Martha Fultz, RN, nurse supervisor for the Student Health Center, Elizabeth Mitchell, certified social worker, Tracie Cox, RN, Student Health Center manager, Shankeyda Simmons, Nurse, and Joanna Griffin, Senior Clerk, the outstanding staff does a marvelous job providing health care services for many students, as well as a large number of employees who work with the Hamilton County Public School District. This staff is supported and professionally assisted by a number of dedicated and caring Licensed Practical Nurses at all the school sites in Hamilton County including: Lore Johns, South Hamilton Elementary, White Springs; Terry Cribbs, Central Hamilton Elementary and Ann Anglin, Greenwood School, Jasper and Kathy Wynn, North Hamilton Elementary,

In order for a child to receive medical and/or social services at the Hamilton County High School Student Health Center, it is required that parents and/or legal guardians complete a parental consent form, and the form must be notarized by a Notary Public, licensed in the state of Florida.

The professional staff includes a Nurse Practitioner, Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses as well as a Social Worker.

The services provided are for all PK-12 students in Hamilton County, even those who are enrolled in home schools or private schools, as well as the public school population.

Services provided

Services provided by the Student Health Center include: Routine Health Physicals, School Entry Physicals and School Sports Physicals, Screenings for Vision, Hearing, Growth, and Development, Counseling, Routine Blood Check, Urine Test, Throat Cultures, Diabetes, Pregnancy Testing and Health Education Classes and Referrals.

On Wednesday mornings, the Hamilton County Student Health Center sees a number of sick children from the school aged population in Hamilton County, as well as many of their siblings. These students and their siblings are "attended to" by a Certified Nurse Practitioner.

In addition, the health care staff throughout the district takes care of a number of chronically ill students including those must have "G-Tube" Feeding, those who must have insulin injections as well as catherizations.

Outstanding programs

The Student Health Center has initialized a number of outstanding programs that have been of great benefit to the children of Hamilton County including: the flu vaccine, flu mists that were recently offered to students in the district through the Tony Boselli Foundation, Healthy Schools, LLC. Hamilton County was one of three school districts in the state of Florida who participated in this program. Flu vaccines, flu mists were offered for all children, as well as all adults up to age 49. Tony Boselli, a former professional football player, who played for the Jacksonville Jaguars, funded this foundation.

Many of Hamilton County's citizens took advantage of this program.

One of the most outstanding programs offered students is the Dental Van—"Miles of Smiles", and this year, those dental services will be offered to students in grades PK-6. This program comes through a special grant with the Florida Department of Health, Hamilton and Columbia counties and the Blues Foundation through the Strategic Health Planning Committee of Florida Department of Health, Hamilton County, Nancy Sult, nursing director, MSN, RN, Jasper, and Mark Lan-

der, MS, director of the Florida Department of Health, Hamilton and Columbia counties.

Elizabeth Mitchell is the school social worker for the public schools in Hamilton County. She holds a bachelor's in social work from Florida State University, and she is fully certified and qualified to offer instruction to both students and school system employees. She does an outstanding job offering many services to various sectors of the school population, as well as the school professional staff throughout the school district.

Among those classes provided by Mitchell include: School Parenting, Teen Parenting, and these are two semester courses that are offered on a regular basic and free daycare is provided for those who participate.

She also offers Teen Violence and Child Abuse Prevention Classes to school staff members in the district which, by Florida Statutes, is required each year.

Issuing medication

The staff at the Student Health Center issues a great deal of medication to students. Before prescription medication can be issued to students, parents must have a form signed by a physician and parents must bring the medica-

tion to the Student Health Center and pick the medication up, and, of course, the form must be signed by the child's parent and/or legal guardian.

Staff members stated that students who are in possession of prescription medication and who have not gone through the proper channels of having such medications issued by the health professionals at the Student Health Center run the very high risk of being suspended and/or expelled from school.

Counseling

Counseling services for those in need of support for grief counseling, depression, as well as other counseling services are coordinated and offered through the Student Health Center.

The Student Health Center does not provide for family planning or birth control. Hamilton County has an extremely high percentage of teen pregnancies and has an extremely high rate of sexually transmitted diseases; one of the highest rates for the population of the county of any

county in the state of Florida.

The Student Health Center works very closely with the Florida Department of Health of Hamilton County in coordination of programs, services provided, and outreach to the larger community.

Major issues faced by Hamilton County's population include: Obesity, a high rate of diabetes and heart disease, teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

Hamilton County is very fortunate to be served by such outstanding health care professionals at the Florida Department of Health-Hamilton County and the Hamilton County Student Health Center and at the public schools throughout the district.

Many much larger school districts do not offer the wide range services provided by the Hamilton County School District and the Florida Department of Health. We are fortunate, indeed, to have such a high quality health care program in place here in our county.

Gospel singing watch-night service

The Long Branch Congregational Methodist Church located on CR 135 in White Springs will be hosting a gospel singing watch-night service on Tuesday, Dec. 31, starting at 7 p.m. The group 2nd Crossing will be the guest singers. Everyone is welcome to come worship with us in praying in the new year. If you would like more information, please call 386-397-2673.



In order to allow our employees time off to spend with their families the following deadlines will be in effect:

Thursday, Jan. 2 edition

Classified Line Ads.....	4 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 26
Legal Advertising.....	4 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 26
Jasper News Retail Advertising.....	1 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 26

Have a safe and happy holiday

Our office will be closed on Jan. 1

Jasper News
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OPINION

Dumb politicians won't get elected

Politicians can be progressives, liberals, conservatives, Democrats or Republicans, and right-wingers. They just can't be dumb.

For years, I used to blame politicians for our economic and social mess. That changed during the 1980s as a result of several lunches with Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., which produced an epiphany of sorts.

At the time, I had written several columns highly critical of farm subsidies and handouts. Helms agreed, saying something should be done. Then he asked me whether I could tell him how he could vote against them and remain a senator from North Carolina.

The Office of Management and Budget calculates that more than 40 percent of federal spending is for entitlements for the elderly in the forms of Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, housing and other assis-

...tance programs. Total entitlement spending comes to about 62 percent of federal spending. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that entitlement spending will consume all federal tax revenue by 2048.

Only a dumb politician would argue that something must be done immediately about the main components of entitlement spending: Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Senior citizens indignantly would tell him that what they're receiving are not entitlements. It's their money that Congress put aside for them. They would attack any politician who told them that the only way they get Social Security and Medicare money is through taxes levied on current workers.



A MINORITY VIEW

© 2013 Creators Syndicate BY WALTER WILLIAMS

Social Security and Medicare are by no means the only sources of unsustainable congressional spending. There are billions upon billions in handouts going to farmers, corporations, poor people and thousands of federal programs that have no constitutional basis whatsoever.

Let's examine some statements of past Americans whom we've mistakenly called great but would be deemed both heartless and dumb if they were around today. In 1794, James Madison, the father of our Constitution, irate over a \$15,000 congressional appropriation to assist some French refugees, said, "I cannot undertake to lay my finger on that article of the Constitution which granted a right to Congress of

expending, on objects of benevolence, the money of their constituents." He added, "Charity is no part of the legislative duty of the government."

In 1854, President Franklin Pierce vetoed a bill intended to help the mentally ill, saying, "I cannot find any authority in the Constitution for public charity" ... and to approve such spending "would be contrary to the letter and the spirit of the Constitution and subversive to the whole theory upon which the Union of these States is founded."

Grover Cleveland vetoed hundreds of congressional spending bills during his two terms as president in the late 1800s. His often stated veto message was, "I can find no warrant for such an appropriation in the Constitution."

If these men were around today, making similar statements, Americans would hold them in contempt and disqualify them from office. That's a sad commentary on how we've trashed our Constitution.

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.

GUEST COLUMN

Up on the house top click, click, click

By Dwain Walden The Moultrie Observer



Recently, I've read some commentaries where people told about the moment they first realized there was no Santa Claus. I got to thinking about that, and I couldn't recall a specific moment when such realization came to me.

I'm not sure I ever believed there was a real physical jolly old elf who could drop down the chimney with a Red Ry-

der BB gun. You see our fireplace at the old farm house was not very proficient. It smoked more than it heated. So the fireplace was closed up, and we had one of those big iron wood-burning heaters with its smokestack feeding into the chimney. I do recall specifically the night I tossed a pack of firecrackers in it. When they started going off, people were running from one room to the other, bumping into each other like Keystone cops not knowing where they were going or what they were going to do when they got there.

So early on I knew Santa couldn't get down our chimney. And apparently there are people who still haven't embraced chimney construction. Almost every year we read about someone getting stuck while trying to climb down a chimney. Hey folks, go measure a flu liner and then check your waist size. There's a cause-and-effect scenario there that's crucial to your success or failure.

Now I do recall once when someone dressed up in a Santa suit came to our house on Christmas Eve night and scared the hell out of me. For that one moment I thought this character might have heard about the firecracker incident and was there to chastise me in some fashion... you know, that good and bad list thing.

Even though I don't recall really believing in Santa or a moment when I quashed the concept that there was one, I do recall specific Christmases. I re-

member one at a very early age where I got a toy rake and hoe as a gift. Later on in life I realized that this was probably a move on the part of my dad to get me ready for the real thing. You see, we were farmers, and by the time I was 10 I was in the peanut field with my own "big boy hoe" chopping cockle burrs. Smart move on my dad's part. He couldn't talk to you about psychology, but he knew what worked. Also, he couldn't read music, but he could play the harmonica.

But even though I didn't really believe in a Santa, I didn't go around expounding on the subject. It's a good story and it means well. I've read the old "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus" letter many times, and I grasp that it's about a concept of love, sharing and goodwill toward men. And I can embrace the metaphor if not the fat man in the red suit. Also I realize there are some among us who probably think that a metaphor is something you put on a cold sore, and they need to believe literally. That's just the way things are.

I guess maybe it's a good thing that my understanding of the Santa thing was a gradual progression as opposed to a single event. Sometimes when something happens so abruptly, it can be traumatic. And depending on one's mental acuity, therapy might be required. One day such a person might find himself on a therapist's couch discussing such thoughts of betrayal at such an early age.

I think maybe that old song, "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus" helped some youngsters begin to make the transition from North Pole mythology into the real world. However, some may have had a relapse on the subject with a more recent follow-up titled, "Grandma Got Run Over By A Reindeer."

Whatever, I wish everyone a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year!

Dwain Walden is editor/publisher of The Moultrie Observer, 229-985-4545. Email: dwain.walden@gafnews.com.

Public Service Announcement

If you have yet to receive your high school diploma, the time is now.

Hamilton County Adult Education Class Registration begins on Jan. 6, 2014 and classes officially start Jan. 7, 2014.

On Jan. 6, registration for both day and night classes will be held at the Adult Education center on the Hamilton County High School campus within the Culinary Art building.

Registration times are as follows: 9 a.m., 1 p.m. or 5 p.m.

For registration purposes, a potential student should bring:

- 1. Social Security Card
2. Proof of Florida Residency, requires two of the following:
a. drivers licenses
b.vehicle registration
c.Florida voters card

Any dependent student (under the age of 24) must have their parent or legal guardian to complete the Florida residency forms.

As part of the registration procedure, an academic locator test will be given to all new students. Returning students will not take this test nor will they need to prove residency. The registration process could take up to an hour and half. For further information or questions on Hamilton County's adult education classes please contact 386-792-6540 after Monday, Jan. 6, 2014.

CJBAT tests

Monday - Thursday

Monday - Thursday at 5 p.m. (by appointment): CJBAT (Criminal Justice Basic Abilities Test) at NFCC Testing Center (Bldg. #16), Madison. CJBAT is required for acceptance into Corrections & Law Enforcement programs. Photo ID required. Pre-registration & scheduling time and date are required. To register please call 850-973-9451.

TABE tests

Monday - Thursday at 5 p.m. (by appointment): TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) at NFCC

Testing Center (Bldg. #16), Madison. TABE is required for acceptance into vocational/technical programs. Photo ID required. Pre-registration & scheduling time & date are required. To register please call 850-973-9451.

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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.

SUWANNEE-HAMILTON TECHNICAL CENTER
CAREER PROGRAM
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Application must be in by 4:00 Jan. 15th.
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All vocation opportunities will be (are) offered without regards to race, color, national origin, sex or disabilities.

PUZZLE SOLUTION
A grid of letters with some letters highlighted in a crossword puzzle solution format.

Obituaries

Doris Hammond
April 5, 1950
Dec. 17, 2013

Doris Hammond, 63, of Jasper, Fla. passed away Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2013 in White Springs, Fla. following an extended illness. Doris was born on April 5, 1950 in Jasper, Fla. to Johnnie and Stella Hurst (Plymel), weighing in at 14 lbs.

She worked at Jasper Textile for many years. She was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, Walter Hammond, two sons Michael and Lamar Hammond, her brother Gene Duncan, two sisters, Ethel and Avis, a granddaughter, Chelsea Hester and a great grandson, Derek Webber. With all of the loss in her life, she still felt blessed to have the family and friends God blessed her with. On Tuesday morning she was surrounded by the love of her family Regina, Bobby, Leonda and nephew Neal when she went on to join her loved ones in heaven.

Survivors include two daughters, Regina Hester (Bobby) of White Springs, Fla. and Leonda Thomas, Spring Hill, TN.; one brother, R.N. Duncan, Satsuma, Fla.; one sister, Hazel Rowland, Ocala, Fla.; 8 grandchildren and 1 great granddaughter.

Funeral services were held Friday, Dec. 20, 2013 in the chapel of Harry T. Reid Funeral Home in Jasper, Fla. with Rev. Jerry Thomason officiating.

Interment followed at Hebron Cemetery.

Memorial contributions may be made to St. Jude's Children's Hospital or the charity of your choice.

Harry T. Reid Funeral Home was in charge of arrangements.

Virginia Liles Davis MacFarlane
Nov. 22, 1920
Dec. 21, 2013

Virginia Liles Davis MacFarlane, age 93, of Jasper, FL, passed away Dec. 21, 2013 at her home following a brief illness.

Graveside services were held at 2 p.m. Monday, Dec. 23, 2013 at Evergreen Cemetery in Jasper with Pastor Roger Hutto officiating.

Ms. MacFarlane was born on Nov. 22, 1920 in Brantley County, GA. to the late Alex and Ola Woodard Liles. She was a graduate of Ware County Georgia High School "Class of 1938" where she was captain of the girls Georgia State Basketball Championship team. Virginia was a national honor graduate of Valdosta State College with a Degree in Education. She taught elementary school in Hamilton County, The Panama Canal Zone and in Oakland California. During her career she coached girls basketball and invested in the lives of many young children.

This remarkable and gracious lady will be greatly missed by those whose lives she touched. Her family and friends will remember her for her love, compassion, generosity and kindness for others. She will be remembered by her family for her steadfast love and dedication, her outgoing personality, zest for life and positive attitude. She was a faithful member of First Baptist Church until her health prohibited her attendance.

Ms. MacFarlane was predeceased by her husbands, John William Davis and Lt. Col. John F. MacFarlane, her daughter, Jonnie Kay Davis Wagoner, great granddaughter, Katelyn Mitchell, her parents, a sister Larkin L. Schierkolk and a brother Lawrence Liles.

Survivors include her daughter, Margaret D. Lewis and her husband Gerry of Jasper, Fla.; her

son, John William Davis, Jr. and his wife Ann of Leesburg, Fla.; son-in-law, John R. Wagoner of Jasper, Fla.; two special nieces, Georgiana S. Pierce and Luola S. Savelle of Valdosta, GA.; eight grandchildren, Gina L. Chambers (L J), Gerald Lewis, Gerrett Lewis, Helen Wagoner, Pattie W. Mitchell, Rog Wagoner, John William Davis, III (Shannon) and Jason Davis (Shawnda);

twelve great grandchildren and four great-great grandchildren.

Memorial contributions may be made to Hospice of the Nature Coast, 857 SW Main Blvd Suite 125, Lake City, FL 32025 or to the Teacher's Memorial Scholarship Trust Fund, 207 NE 2nd Street, Jasper, Fla. 32052.

Harry T. Reid Funeral Home was in charge of arrangements.

Purple Hatter's Ball announces 2014 artist lineup at The Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park

Purple Hat Productions has unveiled its initial line-up for the 7th annual Purple Hatter's Ball at the famed Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park (SOSMP) in Live Oak.

Taking place May 9 - 11, 2014, the three-day music festival honors the memory of music festival lover Rachel Morningstar Hoffman. The 2014 event features a diverse line-up of artists including experimental world fusion performers Beats Antique; Emancipator Ensemble, a four-piece live band that builds on Emancipator's original triphop downtempo production; England's funky four-piece The New Mastersounds; dynamic genre-bending rock band The Heavy Pets; soul-music super group The Nth Power; the conscious world-reggae of DubConscious; Space Capone's retro disco-funk; multi-instrumentalist sisters Rising Appalachia; bass-driven live electronic trio Greenhouse Lounge, and more.

For the first time, Purple Hatter's Ball will also offer more scheduled activities including healing and arts workshops, yoga, massage, hula hooping, painting and more, as well as a silent disco. Taking place during the spring, the venue itself is a virtual playground with endless fun and activities such as swimming, canoeing, kayaking, disc golf and biking. The park also offers guest comforts including cabins, general store, full service restaurant, showers and water stations.

Advance tickets are currently available for \$65 at www.PurpleHattersBall.com and include three days of music, primitive camping and all taxes and fees. The SOSMP is also generously offering a deeply discounted cabin

and golf cart rental package to Purple Hatter's guests. Cabins are limited, so jump on this deal quickly by calling 386-364-1683. Stayed tuned for additional artist announcements.

Purple Hatter's Ball 2014 Artist Line Up - Beats Antique, Emancipator Ensemble, The New Mastersounds, The Heavy Pets, The Nth Power, DubConscious, Space Capone, Rising Appalachia, Greenhouse Lounge, Catfish Alliance, Locos Por Juana, Grandpa's Cough Medicine, Applebutter Express, Sir Charles, Vlad the Inhaler, Zak the Blak, Trial By Stone, Ketchy Shuby, Stillwood, Cherry Royale, Shoes and Laces, SPORE, Herd of Watts, Parker Urban Band, Squeedlepuss, Jason Lamar & the Rig, Jacksonvegas, Love Chunk, Morning Fatty, Stereo Vudu, Flat Land, Hail Cassius Neptune, Bells and Robes, DJ Ruby, MSNRA, Parker Robinson, Trillucination, LeGinge, Ellofunk, Combustible, Seth Edemik, Bit Def, Mason Masters and Matthew Connor.

Purple Hatter's Ball Information: www.PurpleHattersBall.com | www.RachelMorningstarFoundation.org

www.facebook.com/PurpleHattersBall; Twitter + Instagram: @PurpleHatters

Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park Information: www.MusicLivesHere.com; www.facebook.com/musicliveshere; Twitter: @SOSMP

Media Contact: Brotherly Love Productions | Destiny Spang | 215-704-9555 | Destiny@BrotherlyLoveProductions.com

Edward Jones ranks No. 1 in national survey of financial advisors

Submitted

For the 19th time, the financial-services firm Edward Jones ranked No. 1 in the WealthManagement.com./ REP. magazine annual survey of the nation's six largest financial services firms, according to the following Edward Jones financial advisors.

* Steve Cuneo, Edwards Jones in High Springs, located at 65 Nw 1st Ave, who can be reached at 3864543336

* Steve Smith, Edwards Jones in Lake City, located at 330 S W Main Blvd, who can be reached at 3867586888

REP. magazine randomly selects financial advisors nationwide and asks them to rank their firms in various categories. Edward Jones' overall score was 9.5 out of 10 possible points. The firm scored top marks across the board, earning near perfect scores in overall ethics (9.8) and public image (9.7), according to WealthManagement.com.

Edward Jones financial advisors gave the firm some of the highest scores in the technology and training category, scoring high above the other five firms in every sub-category which includes the quality of technology, clarity and online access of client account statements and ongoing training.

"This honor is a testament to the enduring strength of our firm values, our trade-offs and our partnership," said

Managing Partner Jim Weddle. "We are guided by a clear mission to serve the serious, long-term individual investor and to provide the best career-long opportunity for financial advisors who take pride in their work and appreciate the importance of the work we do."

According to WealthManagement.com, between Oct. 7 and Nov. 7, 2013, invitations were emailed to print subscribers and advisors from various firms in

the Meridian-AIQ database requesting participation in an online survey. By Nov. 7, 2,333 completed responses were received. Financial Advisors rated their current employers on 33 items related to their satisfaction. Ratings are based on a 1-to-10 scale, with 10 representing the highest satisfaction level.

For more information about Edward Jones, please contact one of the agencies above or visit www.edwardjones.com.



By Angie Land

HEART MATTERS

doubt as overwhelmed as she was! Instead of a cradle to lay her son, she placed him in a feed trough.

And do you remember those shepherds who came to see the baby Jesus? If Mary and Joseph had been anywhere else, the shepherds would have totally missed it. Shepherds were not exactly high on the social ladder, but God chose them to be the first witnesses of the birth of his Son! Who better to understand the amazing truth that God had just provided the perfect "Lamb" that would one day be the sacrifice to take away the sins of the world?

Could it be that when we feel like there is no room for us someplace, it is because God has made room for us somewhere else? Try this perspective when dealing with holiday plans for your family: if someone can't be there, for whatever reason, look around and see who that makes room for, and if something causes you to miss family celebrations, look around to see where God is making room for you. Celebration is ultimately up to us, and the attitude we choose to take. Our plans may not work out exactly like we hoped, but it could be that God has something extra special in mind this year!

Blessings for a Merry Christmas,
Angie

"So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her first-born, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

Luke 2:4-7

About that first labor pain, Mary had to be thinking, "This is not how it was supposed to be!" Those pretty Nativity scenes we set up each year are wonderful decorations, but the real deal was dirty and smelly! Surely Mary didn't have this in mind. Instead of a soft, clean bed, she gave birth on the floor of a stable. Instead of her mother and other women tending to her, she was alone with Joseph, who was no

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

College Placement Tests

Monday Thursday at 5 p.m. (by appointment): College Placement Test (CPT), NFCC Testing Center (Bldg. #16), 5 p.m., Madison. Register in NFCC Student Services 24 hours before test. For information please call 850-973-9451.



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 Pruetter 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>	 

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

A LOOK BACK

As we welcome in 2014 we say goodbye to 2013 with a look back at some of the top stories that shaped our county. Here are the top 10.

Continued From Page 1A

Emergency Management Director Henry Land said a state ISO (Insurance Service Organization) inspection was recently done at the White Springs Fire Department and soon the others in the county would be inspected, as well.

The ISO assigns a Public Protection Classification number from 1 to 10 after their inspection and Class 1 generally represents superior property fire protection, while Class 10 indicates the area's fire-suppression program doesn't meet ISO's minimum criteria.

"There are several deficiencies in White Springs that we're trying to work on," said Land. "One of the things that we must overcome is the lack of personnel able to respond. White Springs is not the only fire department in the county that has this issue. Not only do you have to have the correct number of bodies, but they also have to be trained. Just having people on a roster does not suffice the requirements," Land added.

The higher an ISO rating, the higher insurance premiums will be for people in the county, Land explained, and could possibly affect auto insurance rates, as well.

Sept. 26 edition

The springs are running in White Springs *The odor is unmistakable*

There's something in the air in White Springs and it's not the fragrance of blossoming flowers or trees. It's a pungent odor of sulphur that is unmistakable, although, it is also a welcome sign that water conditions for North Florida could be improving.

White Sulphur Springs

As you walk down the wooden steps to the White Sulphur Springs spring house situated on the Suwannee River in White Springs, your nasal passages will soon be bombarded with the distinct odor of sulphur. The closer you get to the spring, the more intense the smell becomes.

Sometime in the 90s White Sulphur Springs dried up for the most part. In March, 2012, however, after a lot of rain pelted the region, the tannic water from the rising Suwannee River began to rush into the spring house. A few months later when Tropical Storm Debby flooded the area, the process reversed and water began flowing up from the spring and rushing out into the Suwannee as the spring house filled up with water.

"It flowed for nine days," said local resident Ed Miller. "Every now and then, when we get the right amount of rain farther north, the spring runs for a couple days."

Miller, who has explored and researched many of the local springs, explained that all the springs originally started out as sinkholes that developed years ago when ocean levels were lower. When water begins to flow upward through a sinkhole, he said, it is called a spring.

Thanks to generous rainfall amounts in Georgia over the last few months, on Monday, Sept. 23, White Sulphur Springs was in its glory again, pumping water up from the spring and out into the Suwannee River, filling the air with the lovely aroma of sulphur.



The pungent odor of sulphur lingers around the spring house. - Photo: Joyce Marie Taylor

Various editions

Michael Norman jailed for May shooting death of nephew

A White Springs man was arrested in connection with the May 12 shooting death in Lake City of 11-year-old Jarvin Jackson, who was a student at South Hamilton Elementary School, according to Columbia County Jail records.

Reports show that on Thursday, Aug. 8, Michael Norman, 26, 16583 Jewett Street, White Springs, Jackson's uncle, was arrested by the Lake City Police Department on charges of negligent manslaughter homicide and two weapons charges. His total bond amount is \$61,500.

According to a previous Lake City Police Department report, Norman was babysitting a group of children in a Lake City apartment on Thursday, May 30, and had a Ruger 9 mm handgun in his possession at the time. Norman told investigators that all the kids were asleep and that he went to sleep around 3 a.m. on May 12. The report stated Norman left the handgun on the kitchen table "unsecured, visible and accessible by others in the apartment, including children."

Reports further stated that Norman was awak-

ened at 8 a.m. by the sound of a gunshot and he rushed into the living room to find Jackson unresponsive with a two-year-old female and his four-year-old daughter standing nearby. Investigators determined the four-year-old awoke and saw the two-year-old playing with the gun, which then discharged and shot Jackson in the neck. The four-year-old sustained injuries to her face from the recoil when the handgun discharged.

Investigators also determined that Norman was a convicted felon and the handgun was one he purchased "from a guy in White Springs" that had an altered serial number, according to the report.

Charges of aggravated manslaughter, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, and possession of a firearm with an altered serial number were filed with the State Attorney's Office at that time.

Norman was not arrested until Aug. 8, and booked into the Columbia County Jail, charged with negligent manslaughter homicide and two weapons charges.

Jan. 24 edition

Body found *Possible murder/ suicide investigated*

A woman found shot to death in southwest Hamilton County Monday morning, Jan. 21, is believed to have been killed by her 79-year-old father, whose body was found Tuesday morning in his vehicle in Marion County in what officials are calling an apparent suicide.

According to Hamilton County Sheriff Harrell Reid, a power crew from Suwannee Valley Electric Cooperative had turned onto SW 44th Street, a dirt road off SR 6, in Jasper and found the body of Pamela Provenzano, 61, lying near the edge of the roadway about 100 feet from the intersection of SW 44th Street and SR 6, about a mile from the I-75 exit. Reid stated he believes the body was placed at the scene sometime between 10:30 p.m. Sunday night and 6:30 a.m. Monday morning.

During an investigation, Reid said it was learned that Provenzano, who is from Hahira, Ga., had possibly come to visit her father, Daniel Ovaert, 79, who lived in Lowndes County. At some point, it is believed that Ovaert dropped his daughter's body on the roadway in Hamilton County. Ovaert's body was found Tuesday morning in his vehicle at a gas station in Marion County, shot to death, in what appears to be an apparent suicide, according to officials. Reid said that "notes" were found at Ovaert's place of business in Lowndes County and at the scene in Marion County. Reid would not divulge the content of the notes.



An FDLE mobile crime scene unit at the scene of a homicide in Jasper Monday morning, Jan. 21. - Photo: Joyce Marie Taylor

Sept. 5 edition

New county coordinator hired

Hamilton County has a new county coordinator who is taking over for Danny Johnson who is officially retiring on Sept. 30. William Louie Goodin's first day of work was Tuesday, Aug. 27, and he got to sit in at his first meeting of the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners on Tuesday, Sept. 3.

Goodin is originally from Valdosta, but has lived in Hamilton County for half his life already. He goes by his middle name Louie and has been married to Susan Deas Goodin for almost 33 years.



New County Coordinator Louie Goodin looks right at home in the county commission boardroom. - Photo: Joyce Marie Taylor

Jan. 10 edition

Farley is new town manager of White Springs

The town of White Springs has just announced the hiring of their new town manager, former Live Oak city administrator Bob Farley, who began his first day on the job Wednesday, Jan. 2.

Farley was let go as city administrator of Live Oak in early October by a 3-2 vote of the Live Oak City Council.

Bob Farley was born in White Plains, N.Y. and earned his Associate in Applied Science from the State University of New York at Delhi. He moved to Florida in 1971 after working in Philadelphia, Pa. for the Penn Central Railroad.

During his tenure in Live Oak, Farley was named City Administrator/Manager of the Year in 2010 by the Florida Rural Water Association. He has completed all necessary National Incident Management System (NIMS) as required by FEMA/Homeland Security for Command & General Staff - Complex Incidents. Additionally, he has completed classes in budgeting and ethics given by the Florida League of Cities.



Bob Farley

July 4 edition

Elections supervisor cleared of allegations *Ethics commission finds no probable cause*

A June 13 press release from the state of Florida Commission on Ethics states that Hamilton County Supervisor of Elections Laura Dees was cleared of four allegations that she misused her position.

A complaint against Dees was filed with the Ethics Commission by former political opponent Joy Howell in October, 2012, that stated Dees was misusing her public position by using her office mailing labels for campaign materials; by withholding the daily absentee ballot request list from other candidates until the day after she mailed her own campaign materials; by campaigning June 12, 2013 to school children while serving in her public capacity; and by campaigning when registered voters came to her office.

Howell ran against Dees for Supervisor of Elections in the August 2012 primary. Dees was able to retain her position by a vote of 1,918-1,665 in that primary election.

After a thorough investigation, on June 12, 2013, the Florida Ethics Commission dismissed all the allegations against Dees with a finding of no probable cause.



Laura Dees

April 25 edition

Residents swarm HamCo commission meeting to get dirt road paved

At the April 16 meeting of the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners, Alberta Young, speaking on behalf of Erma Fields who was on the agenda but unable to attend, addressed the board with regard to road repairs and paving of NW 23rd Boulevard in Belleville.

Young said she has lived there for 20 years and she has been waiting 20 years for the dirt road to be paved. The road, she said, serves several residents, as well as a tomato farm and two churches. It also connects to other roads leading to Lake Park, Valdosta, Madison and Jasper.

Young is trying to get NW 23rd Blvd. moved to the top of the list of roads that need paving in the county. When she learned that nearby CR 143, which is already paved, is on this year's list of roads to be re-paved by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), she made a telephone call.

Young said she spoke to Jordan Green and Bill Henderson from FDOT and they told her she had to speak to her county commissioner, Beth Burnam, and so she did.

Young explained that it is costing the taxpayers on 23rd Blvd. money because they have to resort to an alternate route to gain access to Interstate 75. Additionally, she said residents who live there are having major issues with damage to their cars because the road is so bad.

Commission Chair Randy Ogburn explained to Young that CR 143 is funded under a different program than NW 23rd Blvd.

Ogburn said he had a road in his district that was also on the plan and it has been 14 years and the road still isn't paved.

Burnam interjected that she had spoken to FDOT and that NW 23rd Blvd. was being placed in the Small County Outreach Program (SCOP) to be paved.

County Clerk Greg Godwin said, "For years SCOP would not address a dirt road. That's the difference in the issue."



44 birthday candles and hopes for 44 blood donors

One year ago, as Michelle LeNeave approached her 43rd birthday, she was in the middle of a battle with breast cancer and didn't feel much like partying.

What a difference a year can make.

This Dec. 29 LeNeave is planning a birthday party with a purpose. She'll be hosting a blood drive with LifeSouth Community Blood Centers, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, 928 E. Howard St., Live Oak, with hopes of getting a donor for each of the 44 candles on her birthday cake. The blood drive is open to the public.

LeNeave recalled that she'd had her last chemo treatment the day after Christmas in 2012, with plans to begin radiation treatment, but she was feeling extremely weak, her blood counts were down, and her doctor suggested a blood transfusion would help. After carefully considering it, she agreed.

"It made me feel so much better, I'm glad I did it," she said.

LeNeave, along with husband Sam, daughter Savannah and son Ryan, lives in Live Oak, Fla. where she has a bookkeeping business. She said that blood donors and many friends supported her during her illness. A friend and fellow cancer survivor in New York gave her the birthday blood drive idea.

"I'm never going to be able to pay all of these people back, so I'll pay it forward," she said. "If I can get 44 units on my 44th birthday, that's a small way I can help."

It will also be well-timed help.

"We often struggle to get donors during the holidays, so anything that encourages people to donate is especially helpful," said LifeSouth Suwannee Valley Regional Manager Lorrie Woods.

Donors must be 17 or older, or 16 with parental consent, weigh a minimum of 110 pounds and be in good health. A photo ID is also required.

HCHS Spelling Bee



These are all who participated in the spelling bee.



1st place winner Bryan Cribbs; 2nd place winner Tionne Williams; 3rd place winner Albino Lopez.

Florida Museum of Natural History to celebrate 35th Collectors Day Jan. 25

GAINESVILLE, Fla. --- Florida Museum of Natural History visitors will have the opportunity to view a variety of collections -- from antique cars to Coca-Cola memorabilia and stamps to Legos -- during the 35th Collectors Day Jan. 25, 2014, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

This free event is the museum's longest-running and one of its most popular public programs, allowing visitors to speak with collectors and learn more about the uniqueness, history and context of their collections.

Florida Museum educator Tiffany Ireland said the program's goal includes celebrating collectors and their collections, as well as bringing awareness to the importance of collections and their contributions to science.

"Some of the museum's vast collections have been donated by personal collectors," Ireland said. "These include many pieces of the museum's North American Indian ethnographic collection, originally purchased by Leigh Morgan Pearsall between 1900-1960."

The artifacts later came to the University of Florida in 1964 when a donor purchased the Pearsall collection for the museum.

"Our collections are not just used by museum researchers but by scientists from around the world," Ireland said. "The Florida Museum collections are used to study DNA sequencing, conservation and archaeology."

For those interested in displaying their collections, the deadline to register is Jan. 18, 2014. Collectors of all ages are welcome and there is no charge for participating.

To register, visit <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/events/collectors-day-registration/> or for more information call Ireland, 352-273-2061.

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MSRP: \$22,995 - \$500 RETAIL CUSTOMER CASH - \$1,000 RTM DISCOUNT = \$28,000

2014 FORD FUSION S

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Around the Banks of the Suwannee

By Correspondent
Johnny Bullard

"Through the years, we all will be together. If the fates allow. Hang a shining star upon the highest bough. And have yourself a Merry Little Christmas now."

Part of the lyrics to "Have yourself a Merry Little Christmas" still echo through my mind.

As I reflect upon this Christmas season of 2013, many thoughts and memories flash through my mind; some happy, some sad, some pure contentment, and some, at times, a bit frustrating. My thoughts and memories, the thoughts and memories of many dear friends and readers.

In this wonderful "journey" called life, we all face certain detours, "bumps in the road", and "smooth sections", too. Western philosophy often teaches us that "happiness is our due". I am more inclined, to be truthful, to embrace a core value found in Eastern philosophy that "happiness is a gift", and when we possess it, we should recognize that gift and see it as such. I try and do that. I am not always successful, but I do try.

I saw a life long friend of mine at the post office in Jasper a few days ago. We are about the same age, and we talked for maybe five minutes. I told him I tried to begin each day by looking up to the Master and saying "Thank you". He said "I do, too, Johnny, but I didn't always, not when I was younger." I told him that I didn't do it either, but, that at 55, which is like "80" in Bullard years, for Bullard men, that I was trying to be more faithful and more consistent. He said he was, too. We talked a bit about our families, and we wished each other a Merry Christmas and went on our way.

I want to share a few wonderful memories of this past year that have been a blessing to me.

Laughter shared with dear friends and loved ones. We often underestimate the power of a sense of humor and laughter. As you prepare yourself to enter 2014, don't underestimate either. Both are very important for leading a more full and happy life.

The songs, prayers, and fellowship I've enjoyed with my church family at White Springs United Methodist Church. The lyric to the old hymn "Blest be the tie that binds, our hearts in Christian love. The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above." Kneeling at the communion rail, while the candles flicker on the altar, and the light streams in the old stained glass windows. Receiving the warm hugs and sharing mutual joys, sorrows, blessings and burdens. Church may not be for everyone, but I love it, and I love the folks who are members of my church. I have often heard folks say "You don't have to be in a church to be a good Christian". You don't, but I will relate this to you, most people in the United States are fairly undisciplined in some parts of their lives,

and if they don't attend a church, Bible study, or something, most will not, on their own, take the time or effort to learn anything about the Bible. That, in and of itself, can be quite dangerous for the individual and, especially for their children.

If you have absolutely no moral compass, you will be more prone to wander, and possibly get lost in the wilderness. I know, I've been there, and it's not a pleasant place to be. So I do thank God for the blessing of my church family.

My readers. As 2013 comes to a close, I wish to thank my wonderful readers of The Jasper News, and the Suwannee Democrat. Many of you see me "out and about" and tell me how much you enjoy my column. I am glad you do. It blesses my heart to write it, and it blesses me that you enjoy it. I wish to express thanks to Myra Regan, Jeff Waters, Bryant Thigpen, Joyce Marie Taylor, and all the wonderful folks at the newspaper for all their wonderful assistance and encouragement. God Bless you.

The place I live. I know I extol the virtues of the beautiful place we live, but I do love it. Slash pines, moss festooned oaks, palmettos, and a majestic dark river; the ever flowing, ever immortal, Suwannee, flowing through the heart of our beloved homeland. River of lore, river of mystery, river of song, river of recreation and life. I am so blessed to have grown up in White Springs, Florida, a small town that literally "hugs" the banks of the Suwannee. It was and is a blessed and ever inspiring presence in our lives.

Along its storied banks are so many veritable bowers of beauty including Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park. I am writing this column on Sunday, Dec. 22. Last night, I drove over to the park with good friends on a golf cart, and I could not believe my eyes. Through the evening, over 5,000 people came to see the beautiful Christmas Festival of Lights at Stephen Foster. If you haven't seen them, you've missed a treat. They are "on" until Jan. 3. Admission is \$3 a piece. If you want to get in the holiday mood, go to see the Festival of Lights at Stephen Foster.

I also drove through Suwannee Lights on Thursday, Dec. 19, with my good friend, James Cornett, CEO of Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park. The lights were beautiful, and I always love that James has the Puppetone Theater to entertain the young and young at heart. What a beautiful and wonderful holiday experience.

A couple of other blessings, my beautiful niece, Laura Leigh, her smile, laughter and zest for life. I am very proud of her. She is a freshman this year at my alma mater, her mother's alma mater, and her maternal grandmother's alma mater, Valdosta State University. It was Valdosta State College when I at-

tended and graduated there. I wish her joy and lots of happiness. When I reflect upon the core of my life, Laura Leigh has given it a lot of meaning, laughter, and direction. My baby, even though she's old enough to vote. Still my baby, always will be. She brings joy to my life each and every day. Just the thought of her smile brightens my day and puts more "pep in my step."

Food, and I need to get off food, and this year I am going to try and slim down some and walk more and drink more water and eat, "yuck" more salad. And it isn't that I don't love salad, I do, but sometimes and too often, I like it with fried chicken and that kind of defeats the purpose. Anyhow, for the past several months I have been employed part-time by the Florida Department of Health-Hamilton County. We work closely with the Florida Department of Health-Columbia County. We have, in our various communities completed a Community Health Assessment and a Community Health Improvement Plan. Let me relate to you that obesity, heart disease, diabetes, are among the top health concerns and challenges for our area. I am going to "truly try" and be more prudent about my physical health by making some small and realistic changes. We all need to walk a little more, drink more water, eat more fresh fruits and vegetables, less red meat, although I do love a hamburger. Well, maybe one every other week from The Brown Lantern or The Dixie Grill or down at Family Traditions in White Springs or at Myra's in Jasper.

I hope 2013 has been a good year for you. I have suffered the loss of a number of friends and loved ones, but I've made some new, wonderful friends, too. I was able to go to work part-time and, in my work place, gain some wonderful, wonderful friends and colleagues.

I finished my novel about this area, now if I can get it published. I wish I had a good editor and someone to help me. I wrote Santa Claus about that, and I hope he will help me. I eagerly anticipate 2014, and look forward to the New Year, but, I am not taking chances. I have already purchased my dried black eyed peas, and, very soon, will be purchasing my fresh mustard greens, too. I plan on having those traditional menu items on New Year's Day; black eyed peas for luck, greens for money. You can take the "boy" out of the country, but you can't take the "country" out of the boy.

I wish all of you a wonderful remainder of the Christmas holidays, and, again, thank you for all your continued encouragement.

From the Eight Mile Still on the Woodpecker Route north of White Springs, wishing you all a day filled with joy, peace, and, above all, lots of love and laughter. So blessed to be in the number "one more time".

Hamilton County High School gets 'F' grade for 2012-13

Continued From Page 1A

School is considered a combination school because grades 7 and 8 are part of the high school complex. The Florida Department of Education classifies grades 6 through 8 as middle grades and they are graded with a different formula than the regular 9-12 high school organizations. As part of a combination school, 70 percent of the score is comprised of FCAT/EOC exams, with the remaining 30 percent from all other graded components. A typical high school is graded 50 percent FCAT/EOC exams and 50 percent other components.

Hamilton County High School's overall score increased 19 points from the 2011-12 school grade of D, but the school received an F for 2012-13. The 30 plus grading formula changes by the State Board of Education over the last two years reflect the fact that overall scores may increase, but grades decrease.

Supt. of Schools Thomas Moffses stated previously that the grading system for Florida's schools needs to be overhauled. "The fact there have been so many formula changes during the last two years and some changes prior to grading

is a train wreck waiting to happen," said Moffses.

The high school scores just released are for components that ended in June, 2012. Moffses thinks the state should do a better job by providing data and feedback in a more timely manner.

"The data we just received is six months old and does not reflect all the positive changes since school began in August," said Moffses. "For a state that is pushing performance-based evaluations, the delays in reporting school grades and teacher evaluation data for up to six months makes absolutely no sense. I have no issue with performance-based data and evaluations, but the state must come up with a much more timely system for providing decision-making information."

"Today we turn a new page and move forward," Moffses said. He is confident these scores will rise.

"The team now in place at HCHS is outstanding and I applaud everyone's hard work and dedication to our students this year," Moffses said. "Numerous changes were made in May and June to provide the best overall opportunity for our students. I could not be more excited with the changes and

with the instructors and staff who will serve our students."

With higher standards from the Florida Department of Education expected to continue, changes in teaching approach and targeted teaching strategies are required and have been implemented over the last six months.

Moffses stated, "Changes were made before the school year began, so that teachers and teaching strategies could be more successful. Data tools, such as Performance Matters, were purchased to provide teachers direct access to their students' testing data for specific teaching needs and specialized instruction. Additionally, the high school's master schedule includes dedicated blocks of time for differentiated instruction. The focus is to provide time for common planning across all levels of instruction that actually match the learning needs of each student. These changes also allow a more focused approach designed to assist our students performing at Levels 1 and 2 of the Florida FCAT and EOC exams."

For more information about the Hamilton County School District, visit the district's web page at www.hamiltonfl.com.

Public service announcement

If you have yet to receive your high school diploma, the time is now.

Hamilton County Adult Education Class Registration begins on Jan. 6, 2014 and classes officially start Jan. 7, 2014.

On Jan. 6, registration for both day and night classes will be held at the Adult Education center on the Hamilton County High School campus within the Culinary Art building.

Registration times are as follows:

9 a.m., 1 p.m. or 5 p.m.

For registration purposes, a potential student should bring:

1. Social Security Card
2. Proof of Florida Residency, requires two of the following:
 - a. drivers licenses
 - b. vehicle registration
 - c. Florida voters card

Any dependent student (under the age of 24) must have their parent or legal guardian to complete the Florida residency forms.

As part of the registration procedure, an academic locator test will be given to all new students. Returning students will not take this test nor will they need to prove residency. The registration process could take up to an hour and half. For further information or questions on Hamilton County's adult education classes please contact 386-792-6540 after Monday, Jan. 6, 2014.

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HAPPIER Holiday Hors D'oeuvres

FAMILY FEATURES

Holiday entertaining is all about food, wine and quality time with family and friends. This year, try a new approach to holiday get-togethers by hosting an hors d'oeuvres party.

Skip the hassle of preparing a full meal by serving a number of small bites, dips and spreads for your guests to enjoy. Most hors d'oeuvres can be prepared ahead of time so you can spend more time with your guests instead of in the kitchen, making it easy to entertain flawlessly.

The best part is you don't have to break the bank to host a fabulous holiday gathering. By switching from national name brands to a grocer like ALDI, party essentials and seasonal must-haves, such as holiday gifts and baking necessities, can be as much as 50 percent less. Manufactured by many of the nation's leading food producers, these exclusive brand items often meet or exceed the quality and taste of the national name brands.

Try these hors d'oeuvre serving tips from food stylist and loyal ALDI shopper Janice Stahl:

- **Rethink the regular:** Surprise guests and get creative with classic recipes by changing the presentation. Square pizza bites, circular tea sandwiches or star-shaped fruit make entertaining fun.
- **Keep hors d'oeuvres simple:** Serve foods that are bite-sized and easy to pick up. Try skewers to create festive kabobs, which are perfect for nibbling.
- **Presentation is everything:** Experiment with serving pieces like vases, champagne glasses or appetizer cups that add special interest to bite-sized snacks from chips and dip to shrimp cocktail.

With these simple tips and recipes, you'll be ready to throw a festive holiday hors d'oeuvres party that's easy and affordable. Visit www.aldi.us for more entertaining ideas.

Cranberry Shrimp Ceviche Cups

\$0.58 per serving at ALDI
Recipe courtesy of Chef Alyssa, ALDI Test Kitchen

Prep time: 20 minutes, plus 1 hour to chill
Cook time: 3 minutes
Yields: 16 ceviche cups

- 1 1/2 teaspoons iodized salt, divided
- 16 ounces medium raw shrimp, thawed
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- 1/2 red onion, roughly chopped
- 1/2 cup fresh parsley
- 1/2 jalapeno, roughly chopped
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 cup fresh lime juice
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper or ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 16 ounces tortilla chips
- 2 limes cut into wedges
- Fresh cranberries, optional

Bring medium pot of water to a boil. Season with 1 teaspoon salt. Add shrimp and cook for 3 minutes. Immediately plunge cooked shrimp into ice water bath. Peel shrimp and place in flat dish. In food processor, combine cranberries, red onion, parsley and jalapeno. Pulse until finely chopped. Add cranberry mixture to shrimp. Add lemon juice, lime juice, remaining salt, crushed red pepper and oregano. Stir to combine ingredients thoroughly. Refrigerate for 1 hour. To assemble, spoon ceviche, about 4 to 5 shrimp each, into small clear cups or glasses. Garnish with tortilla chips and lime wedges.



Pistachio Lemon Truffles

\$0.43 per serving at ALDI
Recipe courtesy of Chef Michelle, ALDI Test Kitchen

Prep time: 30 minutes, plus 1 hour to chill
Cook time: 30 minutes, plus 1 hour to chill
Yields: 24 truffles

- 1 1/4 cups pistachios, shelled
- 8 ounces cream cheese
- 4 ounces plain goat cheese
- 3/4 cup dried mixed berries, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon iodized salt
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- 4 teaspoons finely chopped lemon zest
- Pinch ground black pepper

Roughly chop pistachios, place in bowl. With electric mixer, cream together remaining ingredients. Refrigerate for 1 hour. Scoop tablespoon size balls of cheese mixture and roll in pistachios to coat. To serve, sprinkle platter with remaining pistachios and place truffles on top. Serve with crackers.



SIGNATURE DRINK

A signature drink is a must at any holiday soiree. Get creative by offering guests a specialty cocktail that matches the color scheme for the event. An avid party hostess, food stylist Janice Stahl makes the occasion special by pairing white wine with a splash of cranberry-pomegranate juice, garnished with fresh fruit or herbs. Giving your signature drink an original name to reflect your personality is an added touch your guests will love. For a lasting impression, hand out recipe cards of your signature drink as party favors.

Signature Drink

\$0.58 per serving at ALDI
Recipe courtesy of ALDI Food Stylist, Janice Stahl

- Sugar for glass rim
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 1/2 cup cranberry-pomegranate juice
- 1 tablespoon fresh cranberries
- Fresh fruit for garnish

Dip rim of glass in sugar. Pour wine and juice into glass, stirring to combine. Drop in cranberries, along with any additional fruit desired. Serve immediately.

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A large crowd turned out for Gov. Scott fundraiser luncheon. -Photos: Joyce Marie Taylor



Retired Judge Vernon Douglas, Rep. Charles Van Zant and Avery Roberts were guest speakers.



Guests enjoyed a delicious meal before the program.



More photos from the RPOF luncheon with Gov. Rick Scott

Rep. Elizabeth Porter was one of the guest speakers.

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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FWC, U.S. Power Squadrons boost boating safety efforts

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has enjoyed a strong partnership with the U.S. Power Squadrons for years. Recently, the FWC provided inflatable life jacket kits to U.S. Power Squadrons units across the state. The kits will be used by instructors to provide information on inflatable life jacket use and to show students how easy it is to wear a life jacket all of the time while boating.

"Organizations like the Power Squadrons are a critical part of boating safety efforts in Florida and across the country," said Brian Rehwinkel, FWC Boating Safety Outreach Coordinator. "The instructors with the Power Squadrons are often the first boating safety contact a new boater will encounter, and the information learned in a boating safety class can make a big difference on the water."

Life jacket kits were purchased through boating safety grants for approved boating safety classroom courses in Florida.

"With life jackets, seeing is believing," Rehwinkel said. "Having the life jackets in hand will allow instructors to show students how easy it is to wear them all the time while boating."

Life jacket wear does make a difference. Statistics show that more than 62 percent of the 55 boating-related deaths confirmed in 2012 were attributed to drowning, which life jackets are designed to prevent.

"We want to promote the message that there is a wide variety of comfortable, affordable and stylish life jackets on the market today," Rehwinkel said. "It is easier than you might think to keep you and your passengers safe."

The project with the Power Squadrons will help get that message out to those enrolled in boating safety courses.

The Power Squadrons is a nonprofit, educational organization dedicated to making boating safer and more enjoyable by teaching classes in seamanship, navigation and related subjects. The FWC is supportive of organizations who teach approved boating safety education courses in Florida.

For more boating safety information, visit MyFWC.com/Boating.

Welcome in the 2014 New Year with the Masquerade Ball at The Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park.



Justin Case Band.

Justin Case Band will entertain during the evening along with a finger foods buffet, costume contest with great prizes, dancing music and midnight champagne toast with party favors to ring the new year.

It's time to party and ring in the 2014 New Year at The Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park (SOSMP) in Live Oak, Fla. Make plans now to attend the New Year's Masquerade Ball Dec. 31 at the SOSMP. One of North Florida's best country bands, the Justin Case Band, will in the house providing great music the entire evening. Also there will be a buffet of finger foods, a masquerade costume contest with prizes and midnight champagne toast and party favors.

It's going to be a great evening, so why not come out and join your friends.

Doors to the Music Hall open at 5 p.m., party begins at 8 p.m.. Admission is \$50 per couple or \$30 per person.

The Justin Case is one of the best country bands in North Florida and regularly entertains at the SOSMP. This long-time band has developed a huge following of fans and each of the band's concerts at the SOSMP is highly anticipated. If you love Southern fried country, Southern rock, country and more, you will not be disappointed with The Justin Case Band and this New Year's Eve Party.

You may make your party reservations and/or overnight reservation to rent an RV/camping site or one of our beautiful cabins by calling the SOSMP at 386-364-1683 today.

The Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park is located at 3076 95th Drive 4.5 miles north of Live Oak.

GUEST COLUMN

College basketball's snooze season almost done



Tom Lindley

Tom Lindley
CNHI News Service

One of the best Christmas presents that college basketball fans receive is the end of the dreadful, pre-conference schedule.

Until this point in the season, except for a few made-for-TV matchups, competitive offerings are slim. Most college powers set up schedules guaranteeing 10 wins by the time they play their first conference game of the season.

That's becoming a problem for college basketball, where the early games are oftentimes boring and the outcomes mostly assured. It's good for a coach who wants to pad his schedule, but not so for fans who pay good money to watch bad teams.

Recent estimates of the Rating Percentage Index (RPI) used to evaluate teams at the end of the season, which factors schedule strength, showed that

Indiana so far has played seven teams ranked 150th or lower. The Hoosiers aren't alone. Louisville claims six victories against bottom-feeders, while Kentucky, UCLA and Duke have five. The list could be much longer.

Conversely teams with the poorest records play the toughest schedules. Among the Top 10 in the Strength of Schedule rankings thus far are North Dakota (1-6), Oakland (2-9), Santa Barbara (4-3) and Grambling (0-4). They do get paid well - in ticket receipts - for their beatings.

It wasn't always this way. When Denny Crum coached Louisville to two national championships, he loaded up the early portion of his schedules in hopes of getting his teams ready for conference play. For instance, in 1985, his pre-New Year schedule included Miami (Ohio), St. John's, Tulsa, Kansas, Purdue, Indiana and Kentucky. It worked. The Cardinals won the 1986 NCAA crown.

Today's soft schedules make it harder to tell which teams are the better ones in the opening weeks of the season. It's generally safe to say the powers use the initial weeks to reload and work new players into their systems.

The most interesting aspect of the season so

far has been the introduction of high-level freshmen phenoms. Given the hype, big things were to be expected at Kentucky, Kansas and Duke. So far, the freshmen have played well, but not like the memorable, one-and-done game-changers they were projected to be.

Syracuse coach Jim Boheim was the first to acknowledge that not all that glitters is gold. Good players, yes; great players, no. At least so far.

"There's no player that's out there on the horizon that's a Tim Duncan or a LeBron James," he said. "I've seen all these guys play. I think they're very talented players. They're not that kind of player."

That's not the assessment that was expected at John Calipari U., where the freshmen had already been dubbed "the greatest class ever." There was banter about an undefeated season at Kentucky, but Calipari's Wildcats have already lost three games. A showdown against defending national champion Louisville is on tap for Dec. 28.

It's been much the same at Kansas, where Andrew Wiggins arrived on campus amid comparisons to former Jayhawk star Wilt Chamberlain. Three early-season losses have

tempered those comments, but Kansas has played the toughest schedule of the major powers so far, much to its credit.

Duke is off to an 8-2 start and looks to have the best freshman in the country in 6-foot-8 Jabari Parker, who is averaging 22 points a game. The Blue Devils have been ranked in the Top 10 dating back 222 games. That's likely to continue.

All these teams should survive the two month-plus grind of conference games to play in the NCAA Tournament in March. How far they go will depend on whether the freshmen have matured as college players and shaken off bad habits from high school and AAU.

Calipari summed up the situation accurately in an assessment of his own players this week on his website, but it probably could go for other budding stars, as well. "They are great kids," he said, "but they have bad basketball habits they keep falling back to."

The good news is that the shake-out is about over. The days of playing no-names will be done, and it will be time to step up and play or get out of the way.

Tom Lindley is a CNHI sports columnist. Reach him at tlindley@cnhi.com.



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A Christmas Message from Cass

Wow what a year! As we reflect back on the end of our 15th year, it is so humbling to realize just how blessed we are. These blessings have come in the form of so many wonderful new friends and customers with relationships that we will treasure forever.

We are so grateful for those of you who have made us your Automotive Dealer of choice. It has been a sincere pleasure serving you and your family while earning your trust & loyalty. We are encouraged about the upturn in the economy and certain that if we all unite together our nation's future will be bright.

We completed our first full year at the Chevrolet Dealership in Quitman. We are humbled by your overwhelming response to our offering the Chevy brand. The growth has been phenomenal, and we are excited about our expansion plans for 2014. It is an honor to now be able to offer you the sale and service of a full line of Chevrolet vehicles in Quitman; as well as Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, & Ram vehicles in both Valdosta & Quitman.

We have only been able to accomplish so much because of the Lord's favor and yours; we thank you both for that. We are extremely grateful to live in a community that values friendship, and a country, that thanks to so many brave young men and women, remains the enduring symbol of freedom throughout the world.

Please take the time to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas. In today's society, with so many distractions and secular groups trying to remove any resemblance of Christ from Christmas, I pray that you will focus on what is really important.

This special season is about family, love, kindness, generosity, and the true peace on earth that began in a manger some 2000 years ago. With the birth of that child, who has been called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace we have been given hope and a destiny that will last for eternity. Scripture tells us that children are a true gift from the Lord. We thank our Heavenly Father for ours and for yours during this special season. I pray His blessings on you & your family this Christmas and throughout the New Year.

Your friend in the car business,
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