

Here's what is happening this weekend in your county



Branford Christmas Festival and parade

This Saturday, Dec. 8, Branford Area Inter-Church Ministries is hosting the 2012 Annual Branford Christmas Festival and evening parade. See page 7A for more.



Steamboat

WWE star coming to Live Oak

WWE NXT is proud to welcome WWE Hall of Famer Ricky "The Dragon" Steamboat to Live Oak on Saturday, Dec. 8. Steamboat will be signing autographs for fans prior to the night's event. The WWE NXT Live Tour takes place at the Suwannee Coliseum in Live Oak. Bell time for the show is 7:30 p.m. VIP ticket holders will receive access to the autograph session featuring Ricky Steamboat at 6 p.m. while all other ticket levels will receive access at 6:30 p.m. Eight big matches are slated for the card, which will also see NXT Divas in action. Visit NXTWrestling.com for more information.

Fill the Truck toy drive this weekend

Locals do their part to help

By Andrew McGee

andrew.mcgee@gafnews.com

On Saturday, Dec. 8, at 9 a.m. the Salvation Army will partner with the Live Oak Walmart store to host a "Fill the Truck" toy drive that will help provide new toys and coats to local children in need this Christmas.

SEE FILL, PAGE 9A

REMINDER

Legislative delegation hearing

State Representative Elizabeth Porter, (R-Lake City), and State Senator Charlie Dean (R-Inverness) will be hosting the 2012 legislative delegation hearing for Suwannee County on Tuesday.

Any member of the pub-

SEE LEGISLATIVE, PAGE 9A



Broadband or no broadband?

NFBA gives presentation on Monday to select few

Meeting was by RSVP only

By Bryant Thigpen

bryant.thigpen@gafnews.com

On Monday at 10:30 a.m., at the Suwannee Valley Electric Cooperative building in Live Oak, Donny Lort, senior project manager for the North Florida Broadband Authority, as well as several board members held a meeting to inform several attendees about the program and to answer questions regarding the NFBA.

The meeting on Monday was by RSVP only.

The *Democrat* obtained an email announcing the meeting just days before it took place.

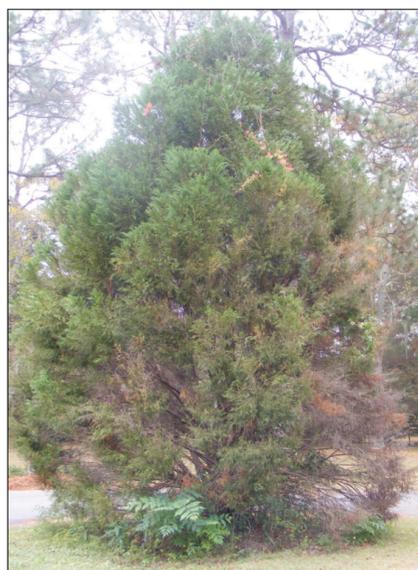
According to the email, the meeting was designed to "provide an update about the North Florida Broadband Authority (NFBA) and communicate how public and private agencies/organizations, businesses, and/or residences in Suwannee County

SEE BROADBAND, PAGE 8A

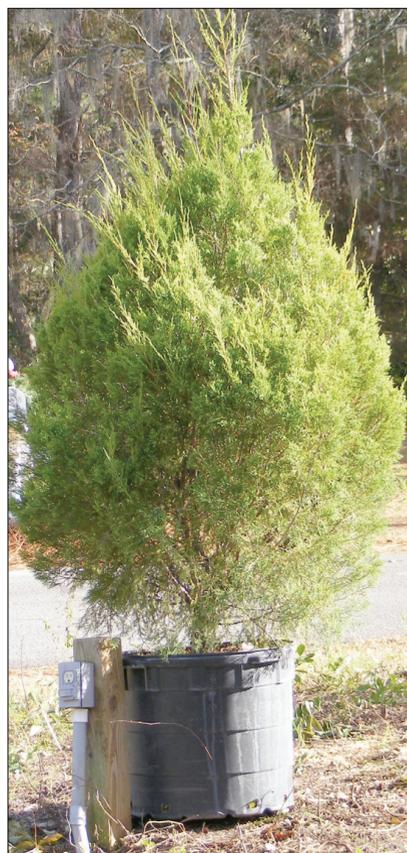


Jeff Hendry speaks to those that attended the presentation Monday.

Christmas tree displayed blight, not lights



A cedar tree, commonly known as the community's Christmas tree, was in distress and was cut down recently due to disease. - Photos: Bryant Thigpen



A smaller cedar tree has replaced the diseased one.

Coliseum Ave. tree falls victim to disease

By Bryant Thigpen

bryant.thigpen@gafnews.com

For many Christmas seasons, local residents have made their way to Coliseum Avenue in Live Oak to admire the beautiful cedar tree decked with orna-

ments and lights, and even an appearance from Santa Claus. This year, however, the Christmas tree is gone and was replaced with a smaller tree due to a disease.

According to Senior Forester Brian Cobble, a call was initiated

by a neighboring home owner, Pat Arnett, who noticed there was something wrong and requested for the tree to be examined. Arnett had decorated the tree for over 20 years. Last

SEE COLISEUM AVE., PAGE 9A

Downtown Live Oak's makeover

By Bryant Thigpen

bryant.thigpen@gafnews.com

The Live Oak Community Redevelopment Agency is working with government programs to redevelop downtown Live Oak, which suffered substantial damage from the flood of TS Debby in late June. Through the Commercial Building Facade Grant Program, local businesses can qualify for assistance to improve the visible structure of the building.

The program began in September and has vastly improved several buildings in downtown Live Oak. The CRA has allotted \$133,591 in its budget for this project. Since funds are limited, the CRA has designated corridors in which requests from these locations will take precedence. The first corridor is Howard Street (US 90) within the CRA district, which is mostly the downtown area. The second corridor is Ohio Avenue (US 129) from Winderweede Street to Pinewood Drive.

The grant focuses on the beautification of the city, and so it will grant improvements that are visible from the street. But, businesses who qualify will receive the grant which will cover 85 percent of the project, up to

SEE DOWNTOWN, PAGE 2A

Christmas happenings

Staff

Suwannee County has many wonderful events for everyone to enjoy this Christmas season. Here are just a few of the events the *Suwannee Democrat* knows about. To include your event in the *Suwannee Democrat*, please email it to nf.editorial@gafnews.com.

Village Church in Dowling Park - Christmas Cantata

The Village Church in Dowling Park will present its annual Christmas Cantata - God Speaks "Word of the Father now in flesh appearing."

For more than 35 years, this musical has drawn people from North Florida and South Georgia. This is an intergenerational event, with a cast and production crew of

over 75 children, teens and adults, combining in drama and singing to capture the Christmas story in a fresh new way each year. A three-octave handbell choir is also featured along with trumpets, guitar, percussion, piano and organ. If you want to begin your Christmas season with an inspirational music and worship experience, please join us. All are welcome. Saturday, Dec. 8 at 6:30 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 9 at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Tickets for this year's program can be obtained at no cost for the Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon performances at the Village Church office (386-658-5344) or at The Music Center in Live Oak. Tickets are not required for the Sun-

SEE CHRISTMAS, PAGE 8A



The Old Dog Says, "Move over Santa."

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Downtown Live Oak's makeover

Continued From Page 1A
 \$10,000. The maximum award one may receive per property is \$8,500.

Businesses who are eligible include:

Properties which have no identified code violations, unless the proposed improvements serve to remedy said violations;
 Properties which are

demonstrated to be, according to city records, within the adopted redevelopment area and also which are designated on the Suwannee County Tax Collector records as paying into the Live Oak Redevelopment fund;

Properties which have no signage or structures which were previously erected in violation of existing land development or

other applicable code regulations, unless said signage or structures are removed or replaced as part of the proposed improvements;

Properties whose current and proposed future use is 100 percent conforming to legally existing in relation to the Zoning Atlas and applicable Land Development Regulations, and is used for legally permitted commercial or industrial purposes;

Owner(s), and/or tenant(s) have maintained all required licensing to operate, as well as being current

on all city utility accounts, and having no delinquent property tax payments.

The grant covers repairing or replacing items such as new or replacement windows, paint, doors, professional design services, brick or textured pavement, permanent signage and much more.

Grant applications can be picked up at the CRA's office or online at city-of-liveoak.org. Grants come on a first come, first serve basis until all funds have been exhausted.



The building at the corner of Howard Street and Ohio Avenue is one of several buildings that has received a facelift, courtesy of the facade grant program. - Photo: Bryant Thigpen

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Letters, comments and opinions on the Viewpoint & Opinions page are not necessarily those of the management/ownership of the Suwannee Democrat.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters may be mailed, faxed or emailed to our office. All letters are read. Not all letters are published. Letters may be edited to fit available space. The editor should not alter the writer's point of view. Well written letters require less editing. Keep it to the point, an ideal range is 150 to 200 words. Please include your name, address and day and evening phone numbers for verification. Letters MUST be signed. Letters to the editor can be limited to one letter per quarter per individual.

RANT & RAVE HOTLINE

Here's your chance to tell everyone what you think! Callers may dial 208-8314 and leave a message to express their thoughts, good or bad, 24/7 about issues and politics, but not about private individuals or businesses. If you prefer, you may email your comments to jeff.waters@gafnews.com. Your name is not required, but you must adhere to no more than 200 words.

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CONTACT US WITH YOUR COMMENTS

If you have any questions or concerns, call us at 386-362-1734 or visit our Web site at www.suwanneedemocrat.com

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Arrest Record

Patrol
 FWC-Florida Wildlife Commission
 DOT-Department of Transportation
 OALE-Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement
 P & P-Probation and Parole
 USMS-US Marshals Service
 ATF-Department of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms
 DOC-Department of Corrections
 Dec 4, Robert Larry Davenport, 33, 12807 155th Place, Live Oak, FL, VOP Burg of a Structure; VOP O/C Grand Theft III: P&P- Battles, K

Dec 4, Christopher Province, 20, 938 Irin Ave SE, Live Oak, FL, Bond Revocation on DUI and Reckless Driving: SCSO- J. Mills
 Dec 4, Francisco Ramirez, 37, 1711 Long Street, Live Oak, FL, VOP O/C DWLS + 6 Months: SCSO- J. Mills
 Dec 4, Gregory Dean Wall, 49, 4186 216th Street, Lake City, FL, VOP O/C Poss -20 G Cannab: Cash Bond Only: SCSO- Capt J. Mills
 Dec 4, Tarrence Laron Ailep, 37, 611 SW 8th Street, Live Oak, FL, VOP O/C Grand Theft III, Criminal Trespass, Poss -

20 Grams Marij, Writ of Bodily Attachment: SCSO- W. Kelly
 Dec. 5, Jeffery Smith, 22, Hamilton Co CI, Jasper, FL, Contraband in prison; Poss, Return for court: SCO-T. Ford
 Dec. 5, Shawn Emmett Cottrill, 41, 160 Mary Etta Terrace, Lake City, FL, Vocc o/c DWLS/R-Habitual: SCSO-A. Prins
 Dec. 5, Lawton Calvin Adkins, 41, 568 NE 255th St, Cross City, FL, Return for court: SCSO-T. Ford
 Dec. 5, Billy Joe Burnham, 42, RMC, Lake Butler, FL, Return to court: SCSO-D.F. Shotwell
 Dec. 5, Christopher James Ault, 22, 102 Brown St., Lake City, FL, Grand Theft Auto, no valid DL, Poss cont sub, Poss - 20 cannabis, Reckless driving: LOPD-A. Hernandez

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

The following abbreviations are used below:
 SCSO-Suwannee County Sheriff's Office
 LOPD-Live Oak Police Department
 FDLE-Florida Department of Law Enforcement
 FHP-Florida Highway

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FANTASY 5	
12/5/12 3,6,18,19,21	
MEGA MONEY . . . 6,11,16,42, MB7	
LOTTO 6,20,25,36,44,52,x3	
POWERBALL 13,17,19,27,38 PB12	

SAY, "CHEESE"!

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Pictures with Santa

Special thanks to:
 Dairy Queen of Live Oak and Jeffrey Boatright

Suwannee Sr. FFA Agricultural Communications Team brings home gold

Suwannee High School is now home to one of the top five Agricultural Communications Career Development Teams in the nation. After winning the state contest in April, the team secured their spot to compete at the National FFA Convention on Oct. 24-27, 2012 in Indianapolis, Indiana. The state winning team consisted of Taylor Alley, Laura-Kaitlyn Boatright and Shelly Williams. However, due to a college conflict, Alley was unable to attend National Convention to compete. While Alley and the team were discouraged, Ciera Cole stepped in a week before leaving and completed the team. Despite the challenges ahead, as Florida's representative, the team set out with the goal of "bringing home the gold."

Prior to national convention, the team developed a written communications campaign for a local hunger relief effort. This written plan detailed the goals and the campaign, the media tactics used to promote the key messages of the campaign, and examples of print, electronic and written

media to be used throughout the campaign's duration. This media plan was submitted for judging prior to convention.

The Agricultural Communications CDE aims to prepare students for success in the area of communications and to test their skills in multiple real-life situations. The team presented their written plan during a 15-minute presentation, competed in an editing exercise and communications quiz, attended a simulated news conference and used that information to complete individual practicums. Cole was responsible for developing, recording and editing a radio newscast, Boatright completed a written press release while Williams designed and built a functioning website.

After two long days of competition, the team attended a luncheon to determine their fate. After the "bronze" and "silver" teams had been announced, the girls knew they had made the "Top 11" and had accomplished their goal of being named a "gold" level team.

"As they kept announcing the placing, our state had still not been called," said Williams. "Pretty soon they announced that we were in fifth place."

In addition to an overall fifth place finish, Williams placed eighth overall individually. The team's written media plan was awarded the highest points; therefore, making it first in the nation.

"While fifth place is not necessarily a win, at this level of competition, it was not a loss either. I could not be more proud of the girls," said Suwannee FFA Advisor Adrienne Boyette. "This is the highest any Florida team has ever finished in the contest nationally. They went to Indianapolis with a goal, worked hard, came together and ended up with an exceptional performance. As an advisor, they did their best, and that's all I could ever want."

Top Placing Teams

1st Place-- Iowa Abigail Nelson, Katelyn Gregory, and Courtney Petersen, all of Montezuma FFA

2nd Place-- Kansas Jenna Bogner, Orren Taylor, and Austin Ryan, all of Labette



Ciera Cole, Shelly Williams, Laura-Kaitlyn Boatright and Suwannee FFA Advisor Adrienne Boyette.

Co FFA

3rd Place-- Washington Kyle Sneddon, Savannah Hoffman, and McKenzie Bostic, all of Yelm FFA

4th Place-- Indiana Nathan Deyoung, Kathryn Pierce, and Adrienne Trenepohl, all of Shenandoah FFA

5th Place-- Florida Shelly Williams, Ciera Cole, and Laura Boatright, all of Suwannee FFA

6th Place-- Texas Haley Pluenneke, Sloane Stables, and Madison Martin, all of Florence FFA

7th Place-- North Carolina Evan Moesta, Robert Deaton, and Emma Sims, all of Millbrook FFA

8th Place-- Tennessee Kalyn Lanier, Sarah Cantrell, and Hailey Gates, all of Wilson Central FFA

9th Place-- South Dakota Rachel Schartz, Melinda Knuth, and Liz Renner, all of West Central FFA

10th Place-- North Dakota Cheyenne Peterson, Shelby Grabanski, and Ashley Stoppleworth, all of Kindred FFA

Top Placing Individuals
1st Place-- Ashley Stoppleworth of Kindred FFA, North Dakota.

2nd Place-- Sarah Cantrell of Wilson Central FFA, Tennessee.

3rd Place-- Courtney Petersen of Montezuma FFA,

Iowa.
4th Place-- Abbey Weninger of Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted FFA, Minnesota.

5th Place-- Orren Taylor of Labette Co FFA, Kansas.
6th Place-- Abigail Nelson of Montezuma FFA, Iowa.

7th Place-- Ashton Dawson of Bentonville FFA, Arkansas.

8th Place-- Shelly Williams of Suwannee FFA, Florida.

9th Place-- Sierra Jepsen of Amanda-Clearcreek FFA, Ohio.

10th Place-- Rebecca Fortner of White County FFA, Georgia.

Darrin Baldwin: Casting vision, moving forward

By Bryant Thigpen

bryant.thigpen@gafnews.com

In the early part of 1981, a vision and a desire was placed in the heart of Bob Champion to establish a family church - one that would be a teaching center and driven by world outreach ministries. With the support of Champion's family, his wife, Carol, and their children, Eric and Caprill, the dream was born.

Melody Christian Center has been firmly built on the beliefs that a Christian must know God's word and must follow its teachings to be an overcomer in life. Throughout its 31 years in ministry, the Bible remains to be the center pillar in which all programs and ministries are built upon.

The church has seen many changes in the past three decades. According to the church's history, its first service was held in the former Brim Funeral Home building and housed Melody's first sanctuary and school on the 1.6 acre property. In 1984, the former Allbritton home located on 3.7 acres was purchased for the purpose of relocating Melody Christian Academy and expanding its children's ministry.

In September of 1985, Champion and his family moved to pastor a church in Alabama. Frank Davis was then appointed to serve as the church's lead pastor. Under the leadership of Davis, in May of 1988, the church moved into a new 8,000 square foot sanctuary situated

ed on 10 acres of land. Two years later, the church added 10 more acres to the property.

The church continued to move forward in the 1990s and experienced enormous growth within the decade. Some of the significant events include the acquisition of interest in WOLR 91.3 FM in 1992, followed by complete acquisition in 1997. The church constructed an athletic facility in 1993, and expanded facilities including the fellowship hall and the sanctuary for children and youth services, and renovated the existing building.

Davis began his role recently as CEO of Melody Christian Church when he stepped down as pastor, and the church appointed Darrin Baldwin as lead pastor.

Baldwin was born on Aug. 3, 1977 in New Jersey. He resided in the garden state until 1987 when his family ended up in Live Oak.

"My dad saw an ad for some property in the New York Times, and about a year later, we moved to Florida," Baldwin said.

The family was attending Southside Baptist Church when some friends invited them to attend an event at Melody Christian Center.

"There was something special about the church. It was different. It was very lively, and we fell in love with it," said Baldwin.

The family plugged into the church for about two years before unfortunate circumstances had the family

moving back to New Jersey during the summer before Baldwin's ninth grade year.

"That's when my life started turning upside down," he said.

By his junior year, Baldwin was involved with drugs and got kicked off the baseball team. He was arrested following a car wreck that happened while he was under the influence and illegal drugs were found inside his vehicle. Six months later, his parents bought him a one way Amtrak ticket and sent him to live with his brother in Live Oak.

His life was in a mess, and even recalls sitting on his roof with a fist pointed at God, angry because of where his life had led him. Instead of starting life afresh, Baldwin found himself on a downward slope that seemed to have no end. Depression had him on the verge of being an alcoholic. However, at the age of 19, his life dramatically changed in February of 1997, when Baldwin joined some friends from Melody Christian Center on a trip to a church in High Springs. That night when the altar call was given, Baldwin surrendered his life to Christ and soon began his journey in the ministry.

A little over a year later,



Baldwin family

Baldwin enrolled at Rhema Bible Training Center in Oklahoma.

Just 10 miles down the road, Laura Davis, a girl he met while attending Melody Christian as a child and the daughter of Frank Davis, was attending Oral Roberts University.

"That was a God thing," he said.

The couple attended youth group meetings together, and in fact, she was there the night that he was saved but they never dated.

In Oklahoma, Baldwin said, "We hung out some then. That sparked something, but nothing was ever official."

Baldwin graduated from Bible college in 2000, and in unusual circumstances that the couple admits was "God ordained," the couple was married on May 26, 2001. He continued to serve as the youth pastor at Shore Christ-

ian Center in New Jersey until 2002 when God directed their path back to Live Oak.

Ten years later, Baldwin became lead pastor of the church he fell in love with as a child. "We're thrilled about moving forward," Baldwin stated.

Leading the church moving forward, Baldwin expressed many goals in motivating a bright future at Melody.

"We want to see an increase at the Live Oak campus," he said. "We want a strong online campus (through media sources), a strong emphasis on leadership that will help us develop a multi-campus church. We also want to be a church that is diverse and reaching the

unchurched."

The church has young leadership that has a passion that is driven toward this generation.

"We've always had a strong youth program," Baldwin said. "And I don't want anything to be normal. We desire real faith for real life. It doesn't have to be done the same old way it's always been done. We're excited about what God is doing."

Baldwin, his wife, Laura, and their three children, twins Sophia and Isabella, and Darrin Christian, have a vision to reach this community and abroad.

"We have a heart to reach this generation," said Baldwin.

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## Grand Master visitation



Stafford

The Most Worshipful Grand Master of Florida, Most Ancient & Honorable Fraternity

Free and Accepted Masons, Prince Hall Affiliated Florida & Belize, Central America Jurisdiction, Incorporated: Anthony T. Stafford will make his annual visitation to Masonic Empowerment Zone 1 on Dec. 7 & 8. The host lodges are James Cooper Lodge #21 and Gold Standard Lodge #167. The visitation will consist of a town meeting with the Grand Master – for brothers only on Friday night. On Saturday morning (9 a.m.) there will be a public program held at African Baptist Church. At this program, the public is invited and the local Order of Eastern Star (OES) sisters will join the brothers.

If you have any questions please contact Al Nelson at 386-623-4127.

## Sparky's Kids box at Democrat

### A lot of joy to spread around

This time of year we see a lot of generous people that take time out of their busy schedules to help bring the joy of Christmas to a child or family in need.

We can't express to you how many right here in our area are in need. And good people like those at the Live Oak Fire Department are doing what they can to make sure some of those needs are filled. Hundreds of kids will once again be on Sparky's Toys for Kids list. Each child on the list will receive a bag of toys.

Staff at the *Suwannee Democrat* in Live Oak is doing what they can to help. Employees are being encouraged to bring at least one new gift for a child to work for donation to Sparky's Kids. We will also have a box at the office for toys to be donated from the public. Our address is 211 Howard St. East, Live Oak, FL 32064. We're kind of catty-corner across the street from the Dixie Grill.

When you're thinking of those on

your list, don't forget the ones who are really in need.

Spend that extra \$5 or \$10 you would on something useless on a toy to be donated.

### 144th Church anniversary

The community is cordially invited to attend our 144th Church Anniversary:

Where: Ebenezer AME Church  
411 Parshley Street  
Live Oak, FL 32064 Phone: 386-362-6383

When: Sunday, Dec. 9, 2012 at 4 p.m.

Guest Speaker: Minister Darius Bowers

Come out and enjoy an afternoon of praise and worship. A repast will be served.

Rev. Charles E. Graham is pastor.

# Holiday fire safety tips

From Suwannee County Fire/Rescue

The holidays are here and Suwannee County Fire/Rescue would like to urge people to look for and eliminate potential dangers from holiday lights and decorations that may lead to fires and injuries.

Each year, hospital emergency rooms treat about 8,100 people for injuries such as falls, cuts and shocks related to holiday lights, decorations and Christmas trees. In addition, Christmas trees are involved in more than 400 fires annually, resulting in 30 deaths, 90 injuries and an average of than \$17 million in property loss and damage.

To have a safe and happy holiday season follow these safety tips:

#### Trees

Imitation trees are preferred, but if you choose a living tree please follow these safety guidelines:

- Tree selection must emphasize freshness to minimize the fire hazard of dry needles. If needles fall from the limbs when you shake the tree, put it back and purchase one in which needles do not drop.

- Before mounting it in the house, cut its base so it can absorb water and check the water level daily.

- Place the tree away from fireplaces and other heat sources.

- Use only lights that are Underwriter's Laboratory approved. Before putting them on the tree, make sure that there are no frayed wires, loose plugs or broken bulbs.

- Use flame-resistant trimmings.

- Do not overload electrical outlets or run electrical cords under rugs or in traffic areas.

- Before leaving the house or going to bed, turn the lights off.

#### Holiday Decorating

Each year, 12,500 people are treated at hospital emergency rooms for injuries such as falls, cuts and shocks related to holiday lights and decorations.

- Indoor or outside: Use only lights that have been tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory which indicates compliance with safety standards. Use only lights that have fused plugs.

- Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections, and throw out damaged sets. Always replace burned-out bulbs promptly with the same wattage bulbs.

- Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord. Make sure the extension cord is rated for the intended use.

- Before using lights outdoors, check labels to be sure they have been certified for outdoor use.

- Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports to protect the lights from wind damage. Use only insulated staples to hold strings in place, not nails or tacks.

- Turn off all holiday lights when you go to bed or leave the house. The lights could short out and start a fire.

- Outdoor electric lights and decorations should be plugged

into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters

If applicable use UL approved surge protector where needed.

Do not overload outlets.

If you are burning candles make sure to leave a clear distance from other objects and extinguish the candle before you leave the home or before going to bed.

For more Fire Safety tips contact us at 386-364-3404 or visit us online at [www.suwanneefirerescue.com](http://www.suwanneefirerescue.com)

## Kylie Kennon inducted into The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi

BATON ROUGE, La. — The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi is pleased to announce that Kylie Kennon of Live Oak, Fla., was recently initiated into Phi Kappa Phi—the nation's oldest and most selective collegiate honor society for all academic disciplines. Kennon is pursuing a degree in criminology at the University of Florida.

Kennon is among approximately 30,000 students, faculty, professional staff and alumni to be initiated into Phi Kappa Phi each year.

Founded in 1897 at the University of Maine, Phi Kappa Phi is the nation's oldest and most selective all-discipline honor society. The Society has chapters on more than 300 college and university campuses in North America and the Philippines.

Membership in Phi Kappa Phi is by invitation and requires nomination and approval by a chapter. Only the top 10 percent of seniors and 7.5 percent of juniors, having at least seventy-two semester hours, are eligible for membership. Graduate students in the top 10 percent of the number of candidates for graduate degrees may also qualify, as do faculty, professional staff and alumni who have achieved scholarly distinction.

#### More About Phi Kappa Phi

Founded in 1897 and headquartered in Baton Rouge, La., Phi Kappa Phi is the nation's oldest and most selective collegiate honor society for all academic disciplines. Phi Kappa Phi inducts annually approximately 32,000 students, faculty, professional staff and alumni. The Society has chapters on more than 300 select colleges and universities in North America and the Philip-

ines. Membership is by invitation only to the top 10 percent of seniors and graduate students and 7.5 percent of juniors. Faculty, professional staff and alumni who have achieved scholarly distinction also qualify.

Since its founding, more than 1 million members have been initiated. Some of the organization's more notable members include former President Jimmy Carter, NASA astronaut Wendy Lawrence, novelist David Baldacci and YouTube cofounder Chad Hurley. The Society has awarded approximately \$15 million since the inception of its awards program in 1932. Today, \$1 million is awarded each biennium to qualifying students and members through graduate fellowships, undergraduate study abroad scholarships, member and chapter awards and grants for local and national literacy initiatives. The Society's mission is "To recognize and promote academic excellence in all fields of higher education and to engage the community of scholars in service to others."

For more information on Phi Kappa Phi, please call 1-800-804-9880 or visit [www.PhiKappaPhi.org](http://www.PhiKappaPhi.org).

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## Christmas classic movie showing at Library

The Live Oak Public Library will be showing the Christmas classic movie "A White Christmas" on the big

screen on Saturday, Dec. 8, 2012 from 1 p.m. until 3 p.m. Bring the family for a great time! Free popcorn!

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### Free Sunday lunch Hamilton County

A group headed up by Pat and JoAnn Lynch will be serving a free lunch at the Civic Center in Jasper, on the 2nd Sunday of the month. We need volunteers to help set up and serve the meals. If you are interested in volunteering you may contact Pat and Jo Ann Lynch at (386) 935-1076 or Roger Burnside at (386) 935-3343.

### Free Sunday lunch Live Oak

For the past several months a group headed up by Pat and JoAnn Lynch have been serving a free lunch at the community center in Live Oak the last Sunday of the month. We need volunteers to help set up and serve the meals. If you are interested in volunteering you may contact Pat and Jo Ann Lynch at (386) 935-1076 or Roger Burnside at (386) 935-3343.

## Visit Santa

Friends and neighbors of Coliseum and Sandra Avenues invite you to bring your children and grandchildren to visit with Santa on Dec. 14 from 6-8 p.m. Don't forget to bring

your camera if you want a photo with Santa and your children. Coliseum and Sandra Avenues is just off 11th Street, across from the Suwannee County Coliseum.

**OBITUARIES**

**Myrtle V. Bender Torrey  
Dec. 4, 2012**

Myrtle V. Bender Torrey, 85, of Live Oak, Fla. passed away on Tuesday, Dec. 4, 2012. The Live Oak native lived in Suwannee County all her life. She retired from Alltel after 35 years of service. Myrtle was a member of the Pioneer Club and enjoyed going to the Spirit of the Suwannee for music and fellowship. She was of the protestant faith.

Myrtle is survived by her daughters Pat Folsom (Harry), Live Oak, Fla. and Teresa Hallas (Allen), Miami, Fla.; son, Rick Bender (Robyn), High Springs, Fla.; grandchildren: Steve and Susanne Folsom; great-grandchild: Tyler Folsom.

Grave side services will be held Friday, Dec. 7, 2012 at 3 p.m. at Live Oak Cemetery with a visitation at 2 - 2:45 p.m. at Daniels Funeral Homes and Crematory, Inc.

Please sign the guest book at [www.danielsfuneralhome.com](http://www.danielsfuneralhome.com)

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

**James Thomas "Jimmy" Webb  
Dec. 5, 2012**

James Thomas "Jimmy" Webb, 70, O'Brien, Fla. passed away on Wednesday, Dec. 5, 2012 after a long illness. The Alabama native was a Vietnam Veteran while serving in the U.S. Marines and was of Baptist faith. He also was a hay farmer and a welder. Mr. Webb is survived by his wife: Yolanda G. Webb, O'Brien, Fla.; one daughter: Cyndi (Terry) Morrison, McAlpin, Fla.; stepdaughter: Heather Duncan, O'Brien, Fla.; one son: Tim (Wendy) Webb, McAlpin, Fla.; four grandchildren: Daniel, Jessica, Matt, Michael; six great-grandchildren: Kamryn, Karlyn, Taycee, Kaidyn, Kayzlin, and Isaiah. A memorial service will be held at 6 p.m. Friday, Dec. 7th at Daniels Memorial Chapel with Dr. Jimmy Deas officiating.

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

**DEATH NOTICE**

**Broughton Land  
Dec. 2, 2012**

Broughton Land, 35, Lake City, Fla. passed away on Sunday, Dec. 2, 2012.

Daniels Funeral Homes & Crematory, Inc., Live Oak & Branford, Fla.

**OBITUARY INFORMATION**

All obituaries are paid notices and are placed by the funeral home or crematorium handling the arrangements as a service to the family.

For more information:  
Phone: 386-362-1734  
Fax: 386-364-5578  
email: [nf.obits@gafnews.com](mailto:nf.obits@gafnews.com)

757783

**North Florida Regional Water Supply Partnership stakeholder committee to meet Dec. 12 in Lake City**

The stakeholder advisory committee of the North Florida Regional Water Supply Partnership will meet at 1 p.m. on Dec. 12 at Florida Gateway College, 149 S.E. College Place, Lake City.

The meeting will be held in the Wilson S. Rivers Library and Media Center, Building 200, Room 102.

The agenda includes discussion and possible committee recommendation of the north Florida regional water supply boundary area. Other agenda items include:

- Consideration of the committee's updated work plan and meeting schedule
- Clarifications regarding water use data reporting terminology
- Overview of agricultural best management practices
- Reports on aquifer replenishment and water resource development strategy

Support staff response to committee questions, if any, regarding the consumptive use permitting process and the need for sub-regional models in regional water supply plan development

The meeting is open to the public, and there will be an opportunity for public comment.

At the Oct. 29 meeting, the committee received presentations on water use data, a status update on the North Florida-Southeast Georgia Groundwater Model, and a proposed map of recharge/discharge and the regional water supply plan planning area.

For more information about the Partnership, visit [northfloridawater.com](http://northfloridawater.com).

**About the North Florida Regional Water Supply Partnership**

The Partnership seeks to improve program coordination, scientific tool development and communication

among water managers, local governments, concerned individuals and other stakeholders by working together to protect our shared water resources and

cost-effective, sustainable water supplies. The committee serves as an advisory body to offer viewpoints from stakeholder groups to the St. Johns River and

Suwannee River water management districts and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to help address the region's water supply issues.

**Wishing you all of the joys this Season!**

I know that most of us have that sweater hiding in our closet or dresser drawer. You know the one I'm talking about. It's UGLY. There are no ifs, ands or buts about it. The sweater is UUUUGGGGGAAAALLLYYYY but for whatever reason you have never thrown it away. Well here is your chance to wear that ugly sweater and win a prize doing it!

Monday December 10th is our next TEAM PARTY and we are having an Ugly Sweater Contest. Come dressed in your ugliest sweater and be prepared to win a prize and laugh at everyone else's ugly sweater.

Meeting starts at 6 pm at the Shrine Club. There will be refreshments and entertainment.

If you have any questions feel free to contact our Event Chair, Denny Tompkins, at 386-688-3344 ([cdtom@hotmail.com](mailto:cdtom@hotmail.com)) or our Team Development Chair, Heather Starling, at 386-249-0746 ([heather.starling@live.com](mailto:heather.starling@live.com))

**SHINE needs volunteers**

Do you have 16 hours a month to help seniors in your community?

SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders) needs volunteers in Columbia, Suwannee, Hamilton and Lafayette counties.

Call 1-800-96-ELDER (or 1-800-963-5337) to train as a SHINE volunteer.

SHINE is a statewide volunteer-based program of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, offering counseling and assistance with Medicare, Medicaid, long-term care planning, prescription drug assistance, supplemental insurance and Medicare fraud. We will train you fully at no cost to you.

The upcoming SHINE training consists of:

- Orientation (two hours) – Jan. 11, 2013 from 1 to 3 p.m.
- Basic training (three days) – Feb. 13, 14 + 15, 2013 from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Mentoring (six sessions) scheduled as convenient

All training on the dates above takes place at Elder Options, 100 SW 75th Street (Tower Rd.) in Gainesville. Mentoring will be arranged with an experienced SHINE counselor in the community in which you live.

Registration is required

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TIPS ON DENTURE CARE**

Q: Do you have any general suggestions for denture care?  
A: Dentures do indeed require tender, loving care. Though in one way they are quite resilient, they are, in another sense, fragile. They can break if they are dropped even a short distance onto a hard surface. So when you're handling your dentures, do it over your bed or over some folded towels or even over a bowl or sink full of water. Dogs, for some reason, find dentures irresistible, so keep dentures out of reach of pets and children.

Also, keep in mind that even with dentures you have to consider regular oral health matters. For instance, just like natural teeth, dentures need daily brushing to remove plaque and food particles. Brushing will prevent the dentures from getting stained and it will keep your mouth feeling fresh. Talk with your dentist or at the pharmacy about brushes that are specifically designed for denture care. If you can't find a special denture brush, a regular toothbrush with soft bristles will do the trick. Also talk with your dentist about an appropriate cleaning agent. Some people use a mild dishwashing liquid or hand soap. Avoid powdered household cleaners. Most are probably too abrasive. Talk with your dentist about other steps you can take to prolong the life of your dentures and keep them sparkling.

Presented as a service to the community by  
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**Prescribed burn planned at Mallory Swamp**

The Suwannee River Water Management District (District) land managers will conduct a prescribed burn on the Mallory Swamp Wildlife Management Area property beginning on Dec. 10 extending through January 2013. The prescribed burning will be located south of Tom Gunter Road in Lafayette County.

The District has hired a contractor to carry out the burn on up to 4,000 acres during the winter months using a helicopter to ignite the burn. This activity may temporarily produce smoke or other hazardous conditions. For the safety of recreational users, some roads may be closed and public access may be limited on certain sections of the property including the Mallory Swamp Wildlife Manage-

ment Area. Prescribed burns facilitate the overall ecological restoration by enhancing native wetland and upland vegetation and improving habitat for native wildlife. Also, prescribed burns reduce fuel levels to help lower the intensity of any possible wildfires and prepare the area for tree planting activities.

The public can monitor the Important Notices page on the Suwannee River Water Management District website at [mysuwanneeriver.com](http://mysuwanneeriver.com) for more definite burning dates as they become available.

For additional information on the prescribed burn please contact Scott Gregor, Natural Resource Specialist, at 386-362-8130.

**SRWMD Governing Board meetings**

On Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2012, the Suwannee River Water Management District's Governing Board will meet at 9 a.m. at the District headquarters, 9225 CR 49, Live Oak, FL 32060. The meeting is to consider District business and conduct public hearings on regulatory, real estate, and other various matters.

During the Dec. 11, 2012 Board meeting, the District will hold a public hearing on the strategic priorities established in the 2014-18 strategic plan. The strategic priorities are sustainable water supply, water conservation, minimum flows and levels, heartland springs initiative, water management

lands, and non-structural flood protection.

A workshop will be held immediately following the meeting.

All meetings, workshops, and hearings are open to the public.

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# Viewpoints/Opinions



## Editorial objectives for 2012

1. Install a county manager
2. Update our LDRs and comp. plan to better protect resources and plan for growth
3. Multidisciplinary study to look at our diminishing water supply
4. Continue progress on Perimeter Road
5. Reduce duplication of effort by city/county offices and agencies

## The Democrat says! County avoids a stinkin' mess

In Wednesday's edition of the *Suwannee Democrat*, we informed you about the county changing the language in the comprehensive plan, and more specifically in the land development regulations, to protect the future development of Suwannee County. Since the new year began, it has been our objective to update the land development regulations and comprehensive plan to better protect resources and plan for growth; hence editorial objective number 2 above.

We're proud to put a check beside our objective.

The Suwannee County Board of County Commissioners held their second and final public hearing on Tuesday, Nov. 20, and voted unanimously to adopt ordinances that have been in the works for quite some time. In November of 2011, an application was submitted with a request to place a solid waste facility near I-10 and US 129 North.

Even though the proposed landfill wouldn't have been visible from the road, so we were told, the putrid smell and everything that accompanies a landfill would be well known, some officials said. Should it have been approved by the Suwannee County Commissioners, the solid waste facility would have been near the city's \$3 million water tower and well fields, right beside I-10 and right next door to the Live Oak city limits. This move, in our opinion, would have been stop signs instead of welcome flags to potential businesses.

County Administrator Randy Harris and Planning and Zoning Director Ron Meeks and their staff worked diligently with the state of Florida to adopt changes to the land development regulations and comprehensive plan to protect the county's future in economic development and quality of life.

This was a great move and a job well done.

## Rant & Rave

### Want to vent? Our hotline is open 24/7.

Callers to 386-208-8314 may express their thoughts, good or bad, 24/7, about community issues and politics. Private individuals or businesses are excluded from comments and will not be published. If you prefer, you may email your comments to [nf.editorial@gafnews.com](mailto:nf.editorial@gafnews.com). Or, simply visit our website at [www.suwanneedemocrat.com](http://www.suwanneedemocrat.com), click on the Rant & Rave tab on the left and submit your thoughts there. You don't have to give your name. Phone submissions must be no more than one minute long, or exceed 200 words. The same word count holds true for written submissions, such as email messages. Anything over will be discarded. If the constraints are not enough, write a letter to the editor (guidelines for letters appear below).

Page 9A of Nov. 30's *Suwannee Democrat* said, "Suwannee County has been chosen to receive \$16,074" grant (aka, our future tax dollars.) My questions are, How can FEMA give away any money, much less when it is currently \$17.775 BILLION in debt? and, Where in the U. S. Constitution, as amended, is the federal government given the power to give tax dollars to charities? [www.fas.org/spp/crs/misc/R40650.pdf](http://www.fas.org/spp/crs/misc/R40650.pdf), Congress' behavior is criminal! Any bets as to whether or not the United Way of Suwannee Valley will refuse this illegal 'gift'?

The city needs to invest in some additional Christmas decorations for the town of Live Oak. In my opinion the entire length of both 129 and 90 should be lit up from city limit to city limit sign. How did they decide where to begin and end the current decorations and lights?

Live Oak needs a Cracker Barrel out by I-10 north of McDonald's or somewhere in that vicinity. I am certain it would be crowded most of the time with local customers and those traveling the interstate. Has anyone ever considered this? The one in Lake City does a great business.

Does Live Oak or Suwannee County have a shelter for homeless people who need a good, warm meal and a place to put their heads at night. Frequently there are 3-4 of the same folks who appear to live on the streets.

What a great Christmas on the Square that we've had. Susan Hillhouse and crew did a fantastic job. My hats off to the crew. You done a great job and it was a great atmosphere and we had a great time while we were visiting the Christmas on the Square. My hats off to the great crew at the Chamber of Commerce for the great job they did. I loved it.

with all the feema money the county got, you would think they could fix where the sinkhole was on market rd.. oh they tried to fix it, come on people, that is just pure stupid with how they fixed it. i wish our county comm. would spend a little money down here in the south county, come on wainwright do your job

## OPINION

### They say simple stuff is good for us

By Dwain Walden

Among the musings in my emails this morning was an opinion piece that said we should relish "ordinary things" in our lives. If I might cut to the chase, the writer was saying we should "stop and smell the roses."

Parallel to that, another writer advised me "not to sweat the small stuff." We've all heard that before. If it won't matter two weeks from now, it probably doesn't matter now.

You see I've noticed that lately we seem to have more philosophers out there. Either that, or just more philosophers now have computers. And they range from some guy contemplating the lent in his navel on one end of the spectrum to some other fellow pontificating on the Higgs particle and the Big Bang Theory on the other. I've done both but with no great authority.

The ones I'm talking about today are somewhere in-between. They are a little more enlightened than being entertained by finding a missing T-shirt in their navel but not so much into physical science as seeing their chili dog as a composite of atoms and molecules. They do not wonder why, when they drop a pickle on the floor, a pickle atom doesn't split and cause an explosion.

Now back to relishing ordinary stuff. I thoroughly enjoy my coffee club. It's just a bunch of guys who enjoy a special camaraderie. It's a mixture of political, religious and football beliefs. After discussing the price of gasoline and the power of "big oil", the next conversation may draw a high five for someone who just got a great deal on a chainsaw.

Now I don't know how much of one's thinking is dedicated to thinking of ordinary stuff as opposed to out-of-the-ordinary stuff. I would guess the majority of the time it's about ordinary stuff because that's the



Walden

stuff that we most likely can affect. For instance, there's not a darn thing we can do about oil prices and car bombs in the Mideast. While we can offer an opinion on "good and bad" in those venues, we can rest assured that the CIA doesn't have our table bugged for tips on dealing with international intrigue or that we have become privy to information that we shouldn't have and should fear men in trench coats speaking into their sleeve cuffs.

In fact, on occasions any one of our members is prone to say, "That's more information than I need." It happened just the other morning when someone was explaining how hotdogs are made.

The other day I enjoyed a simple pleasure that dates back to my childhood. I popped open an Orange Crush and poured salted peanuts into it. I've often wondered who was the first person to ever do that and what was the occasion. Maybe he was driving and couldn't manage the steering wheel, a pack of peanuts and his drink. Maybe he was fishing and decided it was better to marry the two than to risk not snagging that bass. I know there are many people who have never poured peanuts into their drinks. But that's okay. I've never eaten raw fish. And despite either of these non-occurrences, the earth still spins on its axis, people still lie about their age and politicians still make promises they don't keep.

One of the commentaries I read said we tend to be healthier if we relish the simple stuff. It affects our blood pressure and even our metabolism, according to some research. I'm not sure if that's true, but it sounds good.

My friend, The Earl of Stumpworth by the Ochlocknee, is sold on this idea. When he gets stressed, he gets back to the basics. He sits on the creek bank with a cane pole rigged up with a big old bottle stopper cork and talks to his dog. He says it adds years to his life. Sometimes he catches fish and sometimes he doesn't. But he says the conversation is always good.

(Dwain Walden is editor/publisher of *The Moultrie Observer*, 229-985-4545. Email: [dwain.walden@gafnews.com](mailto:dwain.walden@gafnews.com))

## BIBLE VERSE

"Jesus replied, 'Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.'" **John 14:23 NIV**

Please address letters to:

Letters to the editor, *Suwannee Democrat*, PO Box 370, Live Oak, FL 32064.

Please include your full name, address and daytime phone number. We ask this so we can verify your letter and discuss any questions about it with you.

## ONLINE OPPORTUNITY QUESTION OF THE WEEK

### What kind of Christmas shopper are you?

- Shop early and get done.
- Last minute.
- Don't celebrate Christmas.

#### Poll Results (11-30-12)

Do you think allowing alcohol sales on Sunday will better the local economy?

Yes -- 68%  
No -- 32%

This poll is not scientific and reflects the opinions of only those Internet users who have chosen to participate. The results cannot be assumed to represent the opinions of Internet users in general, nor the public as a whole. [www.suwanneedemocrat.com](http://www.suwanneedemocrat.com)



**BHS boys fall to Trojans - SPORTS 1B**

# Branford News

Serving southern Suwannee County, including Branford, O'Brien and McAlpin

## National logger award winner recognized by area bank



Byrd family members with banner presented by Drummond Community Bank.



T.W. Byrd's & Sons, Inc., a Branford logging company named 2012 National Outstanding Logger by the Forest Resources Association (FRA), was recognized on Wednesday, Nov. 28, with a personalized banner presented to them by Drummond Community Bank of Mayo.

Garrett Knight, Gray Drummond and Luther Drummond

awarded the banner to Byrd family members Paul, Benita, Jack and Earl, in recognition of the company's achievement.

FRA's Outstanding Logger Program honors exceptional performance in the industry. The winner is selected by a jury of 25 national leaders in forestry and conservation efforts.

T.W. Byrd's Sons, Inc., was previously named Florida Logger of the Year. Florida Forestry Association (FFA) president Lynetta Usher Griner applauded the Byrds' latest award.

"The Byrds are a unique family and business," she said. "They are a hardworking forestry and logging family, all

of whom are very low-profile when it comes to fanfare and awards. They deserve to be recognized for the great example they set."

The company was created as a one-man operation in the 1930s by T.W. Byrd. Today it provides harvesting for both institutional and private landowners; delivers to diverse markets; offers site prep and reforestation services to landowners; and includes several sideline enterprises as well. The group also owns and manages 3,500 acres of land, with 2,700 acres used for forestry purposes.

"The Byrds are well-respected in the industry for their high

standards and innovative approaches to business," said Alan Shelby, FFA executive vice president. "Their company has a long and distinguished history of doing the right things the right way. They show what can be accomplished when a company sets high standards and then exceeds them."

The Florida Forestry Association is the oldest state-wide, forestry trade organization to represent the interests of forest landowners, wood producers, silvicultural contractors, foresters and the wood-using industry in Florida.

For more information, please visit [www.floridaforest.org](http://www.floridaforest.org).

## Branford Christmas Festival and Parade BAICM hosts annual event

By Andrew McGee  
[andrew.mcgee@gafnews.com](mailto:andrew.mcgee@gafnews.com)

This Saturday, Dec. 8, Branford Area Inter-Church Ministries is hosting the 2012 Annual Branford Christmas Festival and evening parade.

BAICM is comprised of nine local churches and through this joint-effort, are putting on the festival and parade. Everyone is invited to the festivities.

Floats which keep to the theme of "Keeping Christ in Christmas" will be judged for prizes. All floats may enter, but only those keeping with the theme will be judged.

### The parade route

Line up is at 5 p.m. at the Branford High School football field and the parade begins at 6 p.m. The parade will travel west on Governor Street, (Don Odom Drive) to Drane Street. It will turn North on Drane and go up to Scaff's market where it will then turn back west to Suwannee Avenue (US 129). From there, it will proceed south on Suwannee Avenue to Murray's Cove Restaurant (Formerly Nell's) and it turns east and will end at Hatch Park.

BAICM is also encouraging folks to come out and be vendors. Vendors can come to Hatch Park to setup Saturday morning from 8 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. The festival will begin at 12 noon and run till 9 p.m. There will be a \$10 fee for vendors this year and no vendor will be allowed to break down until closing time. Spaces for vendors are on a first-come first-serve basis. The quicker an application is filled out and submitted, the better the space available. All applications must be completed in full and it is strongly encouraged to include a contact phone number and email address if possible.

Forms can be picked up in Branford at Badcock, Town Hall, Scaff's, Branford Library, churches, restaurants or can be downloaded from BAICM.org web site.

The state of Florida requires all vendors to have tax identification numbers. If you don't have a tax number, you can obtain a temporary tax number by contacting the Department of Revenue in Lake City by calling 386-758-0420.

Due to safety concerns raised by the sheriff's office, please be aware the following items are not to be sold during the festival.

Poppers, firecrackers or any explosive device, regardless of strength.

Any items that creates a difficulty to clean by product such as Silly String or confetti. Also, slingshots, wrist rockets or other human-powered projectile weapons such as slings, bows and arrows or blowguns.

The BAICM Christmas Committee reserves the right to refuse to allow any vendor, solicitor or patron to participate in the BAICM Christmas Festival.

For any questions or information, please call Jim Hollis at 386-688-7269.

## Clean-up and Christmas business

By Andrew McGee  
[andrew.mcgee@gafnews.com](mailto:andrew.mcgee@gafnews.com)

November's meeting of Branford American Legion Post #59 had a 17 member participation.

The main order of business that evening was to fully organize members for the new Dec. 8 project to clean the overgrown old Fort White Cemetery and mark both US and Confederate vets graves. Jule McGee has been spearheading this project.

Also, Commander Christian Keeney and Adjutant Skip Trubey gave the final words regarding the annual Christmas party on Dec. 18.

The next American Legion meeting for Branford's Post 59 will be Dec. 18.



L to R: Vice Commander Walter Sherrod, Jule McGee, Jimmy, Joyce & Bill Webster, Wendell Lewis and Arthur Wilson.



L to R: Commander Chris Keeney, Adjutant Skip Trubey and Sgt-At-Arms Bob Childress.



Chaplain Al Donovan, the post's only attending WW II vet, and past Commander Erin Donovan.



Jimmy Terry, left, was the lucky winner of the \$230 50/50 drawing which was awarded by adjutant Skip Trubey.

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# Broadband or no broadband?

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may be able to gain access to significantly enhanced, reliable, affordable Broadband services and specifically, connectivity to high speed Internet services."

When asked by email about the way the meeting was advertised, Jeff Hendry, a spokesperson for the NFBA and executive director of the economic development partnership, said it was targeted to certain interests.

"The meeting in Suwannee was marketed to largely prospective community anchor institutions and staff through an email," he wrote.

According to the NFBA, the company is a government entity, established specifically for the purpose of bringing broadband services to the North Florida region. It operates much like an independent water, sewer, or electrical utility, but instead provides high-speed broadband access.

Hendry said the purpose of the NFBA is to promote economic development. As a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the NFBA was awarded \$30,142,676 to make this project happen.

"The government was handing out \$30 million dollars, and if we didn't go after it, that money would be going somewhere else," Hendry said.

Addressing an audience of about 30 people, Hendry said the reasons why this program is vital to Suwannee County is it will improve economic development and the quality of life. Businesses will have access to Internet with a higher speed. Residents could have Internet at reduced costs. Schools will be con-

nected to high speed broadband.

The NFBA was initially funded with a grant from the National Telecommunications Information Administration and 20 member counties and municipalities each contributed in-kind assets, including the use of existing towers and other infrastructure. Using grant money, two data centers were established and four distribution hubs were placed in NFBA region. A reliable, cost-efficient wireless network, similar to the networks that carry cell phone service, then distributes the service across the region.

The counties that could be served by this utility include: Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor, Union and Wakulla. Four counties have recently withdrawn from the NFBA.

DirectCONNECT is NFBA's new high-speed broadband service specifically for community anchor institutions including schools and libraries, hospitals and clinics, and government and emergency service providers. Most residential and business users will purchase high-speed service from NFBA's retail partner, Suwannee Valley Internet Corporation of Chiefland.

Progress regressed last fall when the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of Acquisition and Grants (NOAA) suspended funding to the NFBA due to allegations of waste in the project. The Government Services Group and Capitol Solutions, two private companies who were contracted for the NFBA, re-

signed last October.

GSG remained onboard to assist the NFBA during its reorganization. The NFBA submitted a plan of corrective action, as directed by NOAA, and awaited the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to restore the project's funding. Some surrounding counties haven't been happy with progress thus far of the NFBA and fear they aren't getting the necessary information they need. Columbia County became one of many counties to pull their name from the hat on Nov. 1, when the Columbia County Board of County Commissioners decided in a 5-0 vote to withdraw from the NFBA.

Suwannee County is considering to withdraw as well, all for the same reasons.

On Tuesday, Dec. 4,

Hendry addressed the Suwannee County commissioners and gave a short presentation on behalf of NFBA, but left the board with more questions than he was able to answer.

Board member Phil Oxendine asked Hendry why other counties have withdrawn from NFBA, and his answer was "I don't know." The *Democrat* and other news sources have cited a lack of communication and information as reasons why counties have decided to withdraw from the authority. Hendry, however, said that the media and bloggers are at best, "inaccurate."

County Administrator Randy Harris expressed his concerns to Hendry.

"First of all, I don't see a business plan. I don't see a plan on how Suwannee County would benefit from this," said Harris.

Secondly, Harris noted that he, nor any member of the board, has seen a copy of the financial report that was supposed to be sent 180 days within the end of the fiscal year, according to the contract.

Thirdly, Harris told Hendry that he has not seen a copy of the budget.

"Surely, you've got to be operating off of a budget. We would like to see a copy of the budget," Harris said.

According to sources, other counties have requested to see this information but have not been granted it.

Oxendine asked Hendry, "Isn't it true that you made \$10,000 in one month from the NFBA?" Hendry stated that it was true and noted that his company currently makes \$7,500 per month from the organization.

According to Hendry, the NFBA, which started out

with over \$30 million, is currently operating with about \$5-6 million left.

"I don't think we would have gotten the \$30 million if there wasn't a need here for broadband," Hendry said.

NFBA board member Sherry Millington said that minutes from meetings for the past two-and-a-half years do exist and are in her possession. The concern of the commissioners, though, is that they have not heard or received information they requested from the organization.

So far, Suwannee County hasn't put a dime into the project.

The board elected to table further discussion until their next meeting on Dec. 18, at 4 p.m. Hendry said that the NFBA would have someone present to answer questions that the board may have.

# Christmas happenings

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day morning performance.

## Santa photos and Christmas greetings from your family

Smile for the camera and get a very special Christmas greeting too - a picture with Santa Claus! Right now he's a whole lot closer than the North Pole - he's right here at the *Suwannee Democrat*! Picture and a 2x2 Christmas greeting from your family in the Dec. 21 *Suwannee Democrat* only \$10 Friday, Dec. 14 • 4-6 p.m. and Saturday, Dec. 15 • 9-11 a.m. *Suwannee Democrat*, 211 Howard Street East • Live Oak, FL 32064 386-362-1734 • suwanneedemocrat.com.

## Visit Santa

Friends and neighbors of Coliseum and Sandra Avenues invite you to bring your children and grandchildren to visit with Santa

on Dec. 14 from 6-8 p.m. Don't forget to bring your camera if you want a photo with Santa and your children. Coliseum and Sandra Avenues is just off 11th Street, across from the Suwannee County Coliseum.

## First Baptist Church of Dowling Park - 'O Holy Night'

The First Baptist Church of Dowling Park invites you to the dynamic new Christmas presentation "O Holy Night!" by their Chancel Choir on Saturday, Dec. 15 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 16 10:45 a.m.

The church is thrilled to bring the message of Christ's birth in song during this season of celebration. Classic carols and hymns, along with stirring new songs fill their Christmas gift to you. Hear the Christmas story from familiar and not so familiar perspectives including

Mary, Joseph, Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Come and experience an unforgettable night of song that will enrich your Christmas holiday. The church is located in Dowling Park near intersection of CR 250 & CR 136 at 11274 235th Lane.

## Christmas Gala

The Social Sewing Club is having a Christmas Gala on Dec. 15 at 8 p.m. Please come out and celebrate this festive occasion. The club is asking for a \$10 donation. There will be door prizes and refreshments will be served. The club is located at 406 Center Ave. SW, Live Oak.

## Community Christmas Luncheon

Christian Mission in Action presents Community Christmas Luncheon on Dec. 15 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Suwannee County Coliseum, exhibition building 2 on 11th Street in Live Oak. There will be a free luncheon and gift giveaway. Call 386-364-1367 to donate or volunteer.

## Suwannee Lights

The Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park can put you in a Christmas mood with more than 5 million lights on Christmas displays. Now open through Dec. 24 at the park at 3076 95th Drive, this driving tour leads to a walking tour; the quaint crafts village with its gift shops, Santa and his elves, hot chocolate, cookies, the Puppette Rockers, Dave Blazer by the campfire, the Kazoobie Guy and more. Bring the family and make memories that will warm your heart. For more

information, visit [musicliveshere.com](http://musicliveshere.com), or call 386-364-1683.

## Toys for Sparky's Kids

The Live Oak Fire Department is having its annual drive for Toys for Sparky's Kids, a program that is designed to provide children in Suwannee County with toys for Christmas. Parents can submit their child's name at LOFD at 200 Duval St. NE. New toys can be given directly to the LOFD or at collection boxes in some local businesses, including the *Suwannee Democrat* at 211 Howard St. East.

## Lisa's Lights

Lisa and Robert King delight families with their dazzling Christmas lights show at their house. The Kings have about 70,000 lights on and surrounding their home in McAlpin. Of those, 47,000 are part of an audio portion of the show where music and lights are synchronized. Folks can tune in to a radio station while parked in the King's front yard and listen to Christmas music while the lights dance to the tunes.

Lisa Lights runs the entire month of December and is free to visitors. Lisa's Lights are at 11567 156 St. in McAlpin just west of US 129. The hours are Sunday through Thursday 5:45 to 9 p.m. and Friday through Saturday from 5:45 to 11 p.m.

There will be extended hours on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Years Eve, from 5:45 until midnight.

For more information, directions or weather cancellation, call 386-590-4839.

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**Branford Church Directory**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Hatch Bend Apostolic Church</b><br/>Pastor Steve Boyd<br/>Church 935-2806 Hm. 935-0125<br/>Sunday Worship.....10:00 a.m.<br/>Wednesday.....7:30 p.m.<br/>718447-F</p>                                                                                                                       | <p><b>First Baptist Church</b><br/>Dan Main, Pastor<br/>Church 935-1363<br/>Sunday School.....9:00 a.m.<br/>Morning Worship.....10:15 a.m.<br/>Sunday Evening.....6:00 p.m.<br/>Awana.....6:30 p.m.</p>                                                           |
| <p><b>Branford United Methodist Church</b><br/>Lerbie Alligood<br/>935-1653<br/>Sunday School.....9:30 a.m.<br/>Church Service.....10:45 a.m.<br/>Wednesday.....5:30 p.m.<br/>718449-F</p>                                                                                                        | <p><b>Peace Baptist Church S.B.C.</b><br/>John R. York<br/>935-4681 • 7794 E. US Hwy 27<br/>Services Each Sunday<br/>Small Groups.....10:00 a.m.<br/>Worship.....11:00 a.m.<br/>Wednesday.....6:00 p.m.<br/>Prayer &amp; Bible Study.....6:00 p.m.<br/>758039</p> |
| <p><b>Burlington Santa Fe Church of Christ</b><br/>4393 US Hwy 27 • Branford, FL 32008<br/>Evangelist Ken Campbell<br/>935-1532<br/>Bible School.....10:00 a.m.<br/>Worship Service.....11:00 a.m.<br/>Worship Service.....6:00 p.m.<br/>Wed.-Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.<br/>732109</p>            | <p><b>San Juan Catholic Mission</b><br/>Reverend Sebastian George<br/>For information call 935-2632<br/>Sunday Mass.....9:30 a.m.<br/>Wednesday Mass.....6:00 p.m.<br/>718465-F</p>                                                                               |
| <p><b>Living Springs Family Worship Center</b><br/>Pastor Charles Istre<br/>Church 935-1713<br/>www.livingspringsfwc@windstream.net<br/>Sunday School.....9:30 a.m.<br/>Morning Service.....10:30 a.m.<br/>Wed. Family Night &amp; OPEN Youth Ministries<br/>Service.....7:00 p.m.<br/>758066</p> | <p><i>Thanks unto the Lord</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

This space could be your church listing or business, for more information call Treena at 386-362-1734

**HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS LIVE? #2**

We continue our quest through the book of 1 Peter on how Christians should live. The Bible is the instruction book for Christians; may we read it and allow it to be our guide for living!

- 1) We Are To DESIRE God's Word!**  
1 Peter 2:2—we are to grow in the word! The gospel is not only the means of helping a person consumed by sin; it even makes alive those who are dead in sin. 1 Peter 1:25 "The word of the Lord endures forever. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you." We should [like a baby for milk] have an appetite for God's word.
- 2) We Are LIVING STONES!**  
1 Peter 2:5—we read that we are God's spiritual house. We are also, as a priest, offer up spiritual sacrifices to God, through Jesus Christ, that He will accept.
- 3) We Are SOJOURNERS AND PILGRIMS!**  
1 Peter 2:11—we are reminded that we are strangers in this world. We are told there are things that will war against our soul and we need to abstain from those things. Always remember that our citizenship is in heaven [Phil. 3:20].

Ken Campbell, Evangelist,  
Burlington-Santa Fe church of Christ

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# Coliseum Ave. tree falls victim to disease

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month, an inspection was performed and the tree was diagnosed with a contagious disease known as Cercosporidium Blight.

The tree was cut down Thursday, Nov. 29 by the city of Live Oak since it was in their right-of-way.

Symptoms of the disease could be observed in the initial infected needles of the lower twigs and branches that were closest to the main stem. The needles of the tree, which are

typically green, turned rusty brown. In most cases, the disease starts at the bottom and works its way up the tree.

The disease can be treated with chemical controls. It can be reduced by limiting overhead irrigation to early morning hours. Washing contaminated clothing and decontaminating hands with hand soap after handling infected plants will reduce chances of it spreading. Using fungicides can help cure the disease or simply

cut the tree down.

"In severe cases, it will more than likely kill the whole tree," Cobble said.

Families that reside down Coliseum and Sandra Avenues gathered at St. Luke's Episcopal Church Dec. 3 to plan and organize the Christmas festivities that adorn their avenues each year. Each household was asked to contribute \$10 to cover the costs of decorations and photographs of children with Santa. Folks can visit with Santa on Dec. 14

from 6-8 p.m. Coliseum and Sandra Avenues is just off 11th Street, across from the Suwannee County Coliseum.

The front lawn of nearly every house on the av-

enues is usually filled with Christmas cheer, and the roadside will be filled with luminaries. Volunteers usually decorate the enormous cedar tree that sat at the end of Coliseum Av-

enue, in preparation for Santa's visit.

Although the tree was cut down, Christmas on Coliseum Avenue is saved, in the form of a small cedar tree.



Coliseum and Sandra Avenues are usually adorned each Christmas season with luminaries for people to drive along and view the Christmas lights. - Photo: Bryant Thigpen

## Fill the Truck toy drive this weekend

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The event is open to the general public who would like to donate new toys and coats to children who take part in The Salvation Army programs year-round. As they enter the store, Walmart shoppers will receive a list of suggested gifts to help fill TSA's passenger van. Once the van is full, TSA will distribute the gifts to local children in need. The collection is expected to provide gifts to more than 150 children.

Tricia Garcia, Community Service Block Grant and Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (CSBG/LIHEAP) Coordinator at Suwannee River Economic Council Inc. said she's been doing it a couple of years and has recruited some wonderful little helpers.

"My kids and I deliver food boxes and toys," said Garcia. "They love it and understand. They love being involved."

Garcia said that she, her son and daughter, Gavin and Grace, have spent the last few Christmas holidays boxing food, wrapping gifts and delivering toys and food to families. She has seen it firsthand and is a firm believer that it's a wonderful way to teach children about giving and helping people in need.

"Every year they get excited and look forward to participating in the TSA Christmas program that helps those who are struggling and bring Christmas

cheer to families in our community," said Garcia. "I believe that every year they gain a deeper understanding of the hope and joy that we bring."

Garcia even mentioned that her kids liked it so much that when they were a little younger, they asked her if there was going to be a toy drive for Easter too.

Throughout the last few years, relief organizations have seen a rise in the requests for assistance during the holiday season. In recognizing these needs, George and Gail Blevins, officers with TSA and Garcia have worked together to assist families during the Christmas holidays to provide them with food and toys.

Even in the face of catastrophic events like TS Debby, TSA provided services, material and financial support in the amount of more than \$250,000 which assisted more than 4,500 people right here in Suwannee County. This was done without one dime of the money coming from locally raised funds or the local economy.

Walmart and TSA have partnered together for more than 30 years to help support people in need. This year, Walmart will once again host those familiar TSA red kettles in front of their stores as part of TSA's 122nd Annual Red Kettle Campaign through Dec. 24.

"We're hoping to do it on a larger scale depending on donations," said Garcia. "We're hoping we can get

a big turnout and do it for years to come."

Community members interested in volunteering for the event can contact TSA by calling Tricia Garcia at 386-209-0089 or George Blevins at 850-232-4981.

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All proceeds benefit the Foundation's mini-grants for teachers program and Take Stock in Children.

## Legislative delegation hearing

Continued From Page 1A

lic wishing to address the delegation, please contact Koby Adams in Rep. Porter's office at 386-719-4600 or koby.adams@myfloridahouse.gov to be placed on the agenda. As a courtesy

to others, please plan to limit comments to four minutes. Appearance cards will be available at the hearing for anyone who wishes to be heard. If you are presenting a handout to the delegation, please have at least four copies available.

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