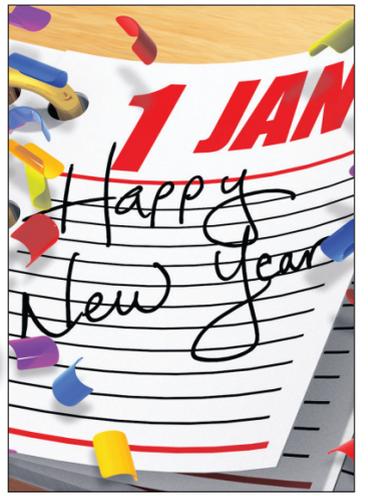


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## IN BRIEF

### Caryville Baptist Blue Grass Jam

**CARYVILLE** — Caryville Baptist Church will hold a Blue Grass Jam at 6 p.m. on Friday. Come and enjoy picking, singing, food and fellowship. Chili and soup will be served. The church is at 4217 Old Bonifay Road in Caryville.

### North Bay Tribe Fundraiser

**CHIPLEY** — The North Bay Tribe will hold a yard sale from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday at the tribal grounds. All proceeds will go to the clan building fund. The tribal grounds are at 1560 Lonnie Road, about five miles south of Chipley.

### 'Sound of Music' auditions

**MARIANNA** — Chipola College Theatre will hold auditions for "The Sound of Music," Monday, Jan. 6, in the Chipola Center for the Arts. Ages first grade and up are welcome. No previous experience is required.

Those auditioning for the Von Trap children will audition at 5 p.m. Adults and all others will audition at 6:30 p.m. Call-back auditions are at 6 p.m., Jan. 7. "The Sound of Music" is a musical with music by Richard and Hammerstein. Contact Charles Sirmon, 718-2227; sirmonc@chipola.edu.

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# Youth spread the Mormon Word

## LDS missionaries answer calling far from home

By RANDAL SEYLER  
638-0212 | @WCN\_HCT  
rseyler@chipleypaper.com

**CHIPLEY** — Everyone is familiar with the sight of clean-cut young men in dress clothes, bicycling

through the community. But not everyone is used to seeing young women in dresses on bicycles.

"The hardest part was learning how to ride a bicycle in a dress," says Sister Christopherson, 19, a Wyoming native who has been called to Washington County to serve part of her time as a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

See **MORMON A2**



Mormon missionaries currently serving Washington County include, from left, Elder Hill, Elder Wilcox, Sister Christopherson and Sister Krebs. The missionaries attend church in Bonifay and gave a talk on Sunday to the congregation. They invite inquiries and the elders may be contacted at 849-9397.

RANDAL SEYLER | Times-Advertiser

# 'WALKING MIRACLE'

## Washington County boy regains vision

By CECILIA SPEARS  
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cspears@chipleypaper.com

**CHIPLEY** — On Nov. 29, 2011, we took an incredible journey with then 5-year-old Israel Sosa III, who suffers from Kennekam Syndrome, a lymphatic developmental disorder, as Angel Flight Southeast chose him to be transported to the Miami International Airport for much-needed medical treatment.

Now, two years later, 7-year-old Sosa's great-grandmother, Bertha Johnson, reports his health has vastly improved and now, with the patience and dedication of a Jacksonville eye doctor, he is finally able to see.

"After back and forth to doctors and surgeries we can thank God that Israel is doing as well as he is," Johnson said. "Israel is the only living Kennekam patient alive in the United States, and what's more is that he has three terminal

See **MIRACLE A2**



SPECIAL TO TIMES-ADVERTISER

Israel Sosa III happily stands with mother, Amy Wright, great-grandmother Bertha Johnson and 5-year-old cousin, Lily Wright, all of whom Sosa is now happy to finally physically see.

# County votes to settle lawsuit with former HR director

By RANDAL SEYLER  
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**CHIPLEY** — The Washington County Board of County Commissioners voted 4-1 on Monday to pay a \$150,000 settlement in a lawsuit between the county and Heather Finch, the county's former Human Resources director.



HEATHER FINCH

The board held a special meeting and executive session on to discuss the litigation, and met in closed session for about 40 minutes. In the executive session were the county commissioners, County Attorney Jeff Goodman, plaintiff's attorney John Dickinson and a court reporter.

According to the terms of the settlement, the county will pay \$150,000 to Broad and Cassel Trust Account on or before Dec. 27. The county will also pay all mediation costs and will accept a letter of resignation from Finch and her status in the county's computer system will be changed from terminated to resigned.

The Washington County News obtained a copy of the settlement on Friday after submitting a request for public documents under the state Sunshine Law.

See **LAWSUIT A2**

# Caryville lawyer clarifies town position

## Markers, not bodies, can be moved from cemetery

By CECILIA SPEARS  
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cspears@chipleypaper.com

**CARYVILLE** — Caryville Town Attorney Lyndia Spears said the town council may remove grave markers,

not bodies, if the city were not paid for burial plots.

At the Dec. 10 Caryville Town Council meeting where the town was advised to inform those who bury bodies in the Caryville Cemetery without authority would be requested to have the bodies removed by the Town of Caryville.

"I was advising that they would send a letter that



LYNDIA SPEARS

states that they should pay the bill or move the bodies," said Spears. "The only thing that the town would be physically removing would be the unpaid markers."

One case the town council members discussed involved a murder-suicide.

The couple buried after the tragic incident last year brought up by Council member Jim Taylor is an excep-

tion, explained Spears.

"Due to the unusual circumstances of their demise, the town had agreed to allow them to be buried in the cemetery so there is nothing we can really do legally in this case," said Spears.

"However, for others we can send out a letter saying that they pay the bill or they can have the body removed. If they still do not comply then the city will take legal action if not removed."

Family members of the deceased have contended

that the city has been paid for the burial plot, however.

At the Dec. 10 meeting, Councilman Jim Taylor also informed the council that there were several unpaid markers at the cemetery.

"They had no right to mark their plot without paying and we need to let them know that we're taking it up until they pay," said Spears on Dec. 10. "You'll wind up not having a plot for the people of this town because of people taking advantage of the system."

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# Council, former clerk discuss policy issues

By RANDAL SEYLER

638-0212 | @WCN\_HCT  
rseyler@chipleypaper.com

**WAUSAU** — Former city clerk Margaret Riley addressed the Wausau Town Council on Thursday to respond to information Councilman Charles Park Sr. had presented during the Dec. 12 meeting.

"I received a copy of what Mr. Park wanted to add to the agenda last month, and I want to address it," Riley said.

Park was under the impression that city clerk JoAnn Hayes claimed to have seven days of comp time accrued. Riley noted that the actual amount is 7.25 hours of comp time.

"Anytime an employee works more than 40 hours, they get comp time at the overtime rate," Riley said. "You have got to give them their comp time."

The town cannot afford to pay overtime to the employees, that is why they are allowed comp time, Riley said.

She also noted that bereavement leave is available to employees at any time. "The mayor and the mayor pro tem are over the clerk, and those are the only two people she has to let know," Riley said.

Riley announced her



RANDAL SEYLER | Times-Advertiser

Former Wausau city clerk Margaret Riley, at right, discusses policy with the town council members on Thursday in Wausau.

plans to retire during the June 13 council meeting after 17 years of service as city clerk.

In August, the council hired Hayes to take Riley's place as city clerk, but Riley stayed on to train her replacement and to help guide the city through the budgeting process, retiring at the Sept. 28 town council meeting.

Riley has also made herself available to help Hayes during the transition, even after leaving the town's

payroll.

"During the interviewing process, you said the starting pay for the clerk would be \$12.50 per hour, and after a 90-day probation that would go to \$13.50, that is what you voted on," Riley said.

She said that according to the city personnel policy, the probation period should have been six months, but she had mistakenly informed the council that it was a 90-day probationary period. "I'm sorry for that,

but you all voted on it."

"The clerk in Wausau has never had to be voted on every year to be rehired," Riley said. "I never have heard of that before. The clerk is hired by the council."

Riley said she was informed that she should not be allowed behind the counter at city hall. "Why am I a security risk after 17 years?" she asked.

"When I left here, I had a deep respect for each of you," Riley told the council members. "I said I would

come back and help the city in any way I could."

"If you don't have trust in your clerk and have the confidence in her to move money back and forth, from the street department to the water department and so on, then you're in trouble," Mayor B.J. Phillips said. "I'm kind of new at this mayor business, but I know we have to go by the city charter."

Riley said the town lives on a month-to-month budget, just like regular families, and sometimes the clerk has to move funds from one account to another to cover bills.

One example was a \$12,000 fire truck payment that was due in December, and which caused concern with the Volunteer Fire Department members.

"The county has cut back on the amount of fire funds they provide, and those funds don't come in all at once," Riley explained. She said the county has cut its annual contribution to the city fire department by \$10,000.

"We're living with a budget, and to survive, we have to move money around," Phillips said.

Past practice has been that the clerk moved funds around to pay the bills, without seeking council

permission for each transaction, Riley said. "In your books each month you get a report showing all the transactions."

Councilman Dallas Carter said he was under the impression that every thing had to come before the council for approval.

"You do get a report that you approve each month, but the clerk has never had to ask every time she made a transaction, at least not in the 17 years I was here," Riley said.

"Margaret was here for 17 years and she did a fine job," Carter said. "We have got to have trust in the clerk and I think she (Hayes) is doing a fine job."

"I've been lucky enough to have Margaret here to train me," Hayes said, "and when we have had issues, she's always been willing to help me out."

"I was very disappointed in this piece of writing," Phillips said of Park's comments. "This was just not called for."

County Attorney Jeff Goodman recommended the council members put the dissent behind them.

"Wausau is a good town, and people care about this community," Goodman said. "My advice is to put this in the rearview mirror and go forward."

## MIRACLE from page A1

diseases under the Kennekam. We knew something was wrong with Israel's sight, but we didn't know how bad until a specialist in Jacksonville found that he had glaucoma."

She said he had 10 surgeries on his eyes, with the first one being more than six hours long.

"He can't be out in the sun because of his photosensitivity, and the light for an eye examination was next to impossible," Johnson said. "After a three-hour examination with a blind specialist, we finally found that all he was seeing out of his left eye was sizes, shapes and colors. I'd like all over Washington County and people all over the world to know that Israel can now see."

Johnson said she has experienced so many miracles since Sosa had

come into her life.

"He wasn't supposed to make it past the age of 2, but he's alive and doing well," Johnson said, her voice cracking with emotion. "It's thanks to God and all those angels watching over him. God's got an angel in his teacher at Kate Smith Elementary School, there's angels at Gulf Coast Hospital every week we go because of his life ports, and there's angels throughout Washington County in those generous store owners and people who help him every day without asking anything in return. God's got a lot of working on Israel, and it's incredible to watch the miracles happen because Israel is living, loving and learning at a massive speed now with his new glasses and the help given at Kate Smith Elementary."

## LAWSUIT from page A1

In February, Finch was fired from her position as county HR director for "grossly negligent" behavior, according to a letter written by then-county manager Steve Joyner.

According to the letter, Finch publicly discussed sensitive and privileged employment situations involving county staff and employees and abused her access to certain county information and files in providing that information for noncounty-related purposes.

Finch filed a charge of discrimination with the Florida Commission on Human Relations and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, according to the settlement.

After the executive session, Goodman recommended the board accept the terms of the settlement. Commissioner Charles Brock voted against accepting the settlement, but the remaining board members voted in favor of the settlement.

In exchange for the settlement and the change of discharge status, Finch releases the county from any future claims and is "entitled to no payments or other consideration of any kind from the county," according to the settlement.

Finch and her attorneys are also responsible for the tax payments and filings on the settlement.

According to the settlement, Finch and the county agree that they have entered into the agreement in compromise of a disputed claim and that entry into the agreement is not an admission of any liability or wrongdoing on the part of the county.

As part of the settlement's confidentiality provisions, Finch agrees not to disparage the county, and the county agrees to instruct individuals who have managerial responsibilities to likewise not disparage Finch. Finch also agrees not to disclose the terms of the agreement to anyone other than her spouse or accounting professional.

Finch also agrees to cooperate with and assist the county in responding to or defending against any

claims against the county regarding facts which arose during her employment with the county. The county also agrees to pay Finch \$19.83 per hour for time reasonably spent at the written request of the county to cooperate and assist the county.

Finch also voluntarily agrees to refrain from working for the county in any paid capacity in the future.

In other business, the board also unanimously approved a \$750 per month county contract with Dr. Samuel Ward, who is the physician of record for the county Emergency Medical Services.

County Coordinator David Corbin explained that the EMS has to have a physician behind their services, and Dr. Ward has served in that capacity for years.

"According to the contract, he is paid the \$750 a month, and if he is ever needed above and beyond that he is paid \$50 an hour," said Commissioner Todd Abbott. "I don't know that he has ever been needed beyond his regular contract."

"Do we ever look to see if anyone else would want this contract, or do we just give it to him automatically every year?" Commissioner Lynn Gothard asked.

"I don't think anyone else would work for that cheap," Commissioner Joel Pate said, jokingly.

Brock noted that Dr. Ward is also Chief of Staff for Northwest Florida Community Hospital.

"Once again we're coming to the board and only have had something for two minutes and are having to vote on it," Gothard said.

"This is something that should have been handled in November," Abbott said.

Corbin said he had only received notice of the contract that morning, just prior to the board's special meeting.

"I will send a memo to all staff informing them that in the future, if something isn't turned in on time, it won't be added to the agenda," Corbin said.

## MORMON from page A1

"Of course I rode a bike when I was younger, just not in a dress," she adds, laughing.

Christopherson is one of four young people presently living in Chipley as part of their missionary service to the Mormon church.

The Mormon church is based on the revelations of Joseph Smith, who said the heavenly messages were delivered to him in the 1830s. Headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah, the church has more than 5 million members in the U.S. and over 14 million worldwide.

As part of their tradition, the young missionaries use the designations "elder" or "sister" and forego first names while serving their terms and they typically will serve their mission in two or more locations.

Young men will serve two year missions while young women will be called for 18 months, said Elder Hill, a 20-year-old Fort Worth, Texas native who quietly assumes the role of leader when the four missionaries gathered for an interview on Dec. 23.

"All worthy young men and women are called to serve as missionaries," Hill explained, adding that not all Mormon youth are called to serve missions, but many do. "The process begins with our Prophet praying and fasting over our names, and there are 80,000 missionaries around the world."

The young people attend a Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah, for pre-mission training before being sent to a mission to serve — in this case, the Tallahassee, Florida Mission, where area Mormon missionaries are assigned.

The MTC is adjacent to Brigham Young University, but the training is not an accredited course. Rather the goal of the training is preparation for proselytizing and training in proper conduct and scripture study.

"Our Mission stretches from Tallahassee to Perry (Fla.) to Pascagoula (Miss.)," Hill said.

Where the individual missionaries finally wind up is a decision made by the mission president. The president prays and fasts for guidance in making the assignments.

Joining Hill and Christopherson in Chipley are Sister Krebs, 21, and Elder Wilcox, 19, both of Utah. None of the missionaries knew each other before arriving in Tallahassee for assignment.

Mormon missionaries are recognizable from their professional attire and their bicycles.

According to Wikipedia, missionaries must remain in professional, conservative attire. For instance, a light colored suit is acceptable. They are also allowed to wear a sweater or suit vest over their dress shirt and are encouraged to wear brightly colored ties.

Sister missionaries are required to wear skirts and dresses that cover their knees and are not required to wear skirts and dresses that are mid-calf length. Young women are encouraged to dress in bright colors and patterns, and they may wear appropriate jewelry and accessories. Sister missionaries may not wear slacks (outside of service activities or exercise) and must wear shirts that cover their entire shoulder.

In some areas these standards are altered slightly according to the discretion of the mission president. For example, in hot, humid climates, such as Florida, suit coats are not required, and dress shirts may be short-sleeved.

Casual clothes may be worn only in limited circumstances, such as when missionaries provide manual labor; exercise, or during preparation day — when the missionaries are involved in recreation, cleaning, shopping, and laundry.

The missionaries are unpaid volunteers, said Krebs. The young Mormons engage in proselytizing, church service, humanitarian aid and community service as part of their time as missionaries.

In fact, the missionaries are expected to pay their own expenses, and every missionary pays a set amount each month while serving, Hill said.

"At one time, the costs varied based on where the mission was located," Hill explained. However, that amount was eventually set at a constant amount to spread out the cost of mission service and to help make the mission experience more affordable for all missionaries.

Of the four young missionaries in Chipley, Christopherson is the only one who spent part of her youth observing a different religious tradition.

"My mother was a Methodist and she raised me in the Methodist Church, but my father was a member of this church," Christopherson said. After her parents

separated, Christopherson became more involved in the Mormon church with her father, who had been an inactive church member during his marriage. "The church brings a lot of comfort," Christopherson said, including comforting her father after his divorce. Eventually, her father was able to baptize Christopherson and her little sister into the church.

Hill explained that in the Mormon church, there are no ministers. All worthy young men over the age of 12 are members of the priesthood, and they can be ordained elders after age 18, usually after graduating from high school and before serving as missionaries.

The Mormon priesthood finds its roots in the works of John the Baptist, Hill explained, and it was through Joseph Smith that the church was restored on the Earth.

The Mormon church is organized in a hierarchical priesthood structure administered by men, according to Wikipedia.

Latter-day Saints believe that Jesus leads the church through revelation and has chosen a single man, called "the Prophet" or president of the church as his spokesman on the earth. The current president is Thomas S. Monson, Hill said.

Once the missionaries complete their missions, they will return home and pursue their academic or professional careers. But for now, the four missionaries in Chipley are more focused on their mission.

"It is our choice to put off school and donate our time to serving the Lord," Hill said. "I know how much the Lord has changed my life, and I am happy to have the chance to share that experience with others."

"We get a lot of opportunities as missionaries to share the gospel," Christopherson said. "I want people to know that this is the one true church that was started by Jesus Christ."

"We aren't out to take away anything from people, but we want to add to what they already have," Sister Krebs said. "The Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ, and it adds to what is in the Bible."

"We'll talk to anyone, anywhere," Elder Wilcox said. "We talk to people on the street, in their homes, and people ask us to come by and visit. We just want to share the gospel."

# Ethics Commission acts on 30 complaints

Special to Times-Advertiser

**TALLAHASSEE** — Meeting in Tallahassee on Dec. 13 in closed session, the Florida Commission on Ethics took action on 30 complaints, Chairman Morgan Bentley announced on Dec. 18.

No probable cause was found to believe that Adam Barringer, Mayor of New Smyrna Beach, misused his position by using City funds for private parties, demanded special parking access, and berated a police officer for his personal benefit. No probable cause also was found on an allegation that his restaurant catered a retirement event that was paid for by the City. The Commission also voted to find no probable cause that Mayor Barringer had a conflicting employment or contractual relationship with a restaurant that did business with the City.

The Commission found no probable cause to believe that New Smyrna Beach City Manager Pam Brangaccio misused City funds for private parties.

The Commission considered a complaint filed against Caroline McManus, former employee of the Florida Department of Education, Division of Blind Services. No probable cause was found concerning six allegations: that she was doing business with her agency; that she had a conflicting contractual relationship; that she became employed with a business after she participated in the procurement of a contract in her public capacity; that she became employed with an entity in connection with a contract in which she participated personally and substantially while an employee of DOE, that she became employed with an entity in connection with a contract that was within her area of responsibility at DOE within two years of terminating her employment with DOE; and that she procured contractual services for the Department from a business entity with which she held a material interest.

Dorothy Gay, President of the Board of Directors of Excel Leadership Academy in Palm Beach County, was cleared of an allegation that she misused her position to direct a payment to Tri-Star Leadership, Inc.

No probable cause was found to believe that Hendry County Supervisor of Elections Lucretia Strickland misused her position to advocate for certain candidates for office.

The Commission found no probable cause to believe that Joseph Fink, Arcadia City Council member, had a voting conflict when he

voted to approve a special event permit. No probable cause also was found to believe that Mr. Fink had a conflicting contractual relationship with an antique association. An allegation that he misused his position to demand the City enforce the association's rules was also dismissed with a finding of no probable cause.

Probable cause was found on two allegations that Charlie S. Smith, Midway City Council member, violated the voting conflict law when he abstained from votes in July 2012 and January 2013, but failed to file the requisite voting conflict form in both instances. However, because the Council was aware of the conflict, and Mr. Smith abstained from the votes and asked for the required form from the City Manager, the Commission will take no further action on the matter unless Mr. Smith requests a hearing. On two other allegations, the Commission found no probable cause to believe that he had a prohibited business relationship by doing business with the City of Midway or had a conflicting employment relationship, because the business relationship met a statutory exemption.

The Commission also considered a complaint filed against Rocco Maglio, former Melbourne Beach Mayor and Town Commissioner. No probable cause was found to believe he violated the voting conflicts law on two occasions when he voted on special permits and an ordinance. The Commission also found no probable cause regarding an allegation that he was doing business with the Town. No probable cause also was found to believe that he had a conflicting contractual relationship by virtue of his relationship with an entity that

was organizing art shows in the Town. An allegation that he misused his position or official resources to advertise his private business venture was dismissed with a finding of no probable cause.

The Commission voted to dismiss a complaint filed against David Schirtzinger, former candidate for Cape Canaveral City Council, because the public interest would not be served by further proceedings. The allegations concerned the disclosure of real property that was Mr. Schirtzinger's mailing address. The Commission dismissed the following complaints for lack of legal sufficiency: Mike Prescott, Director and Member of the Hardee County Industrial Development Authority and Economic Development Council; Kenneth Evers, Attorney for the Hardee County Industrial Development Authority and Economic Development Council; Paula O'Neil, Pasco County Clerk of Court; Michael Kridel, Palm Beach County Ethics Commissioner; Patricia Williams, Vice Mayor and Lauderdale Lakes Commissioner; Jerri Haynes, former Principal of New Millennium Charter School; Diamond Jones, Shantha (Nita) Mitchell, Savilla Murphy, and Mijanvo Pride, members of the Board of Directors for New Millennium Charter School; Werner Bols, Chair of the Indian River State College Board of Trustees; Ed Massey, President of Indian River State College; Mike Blackburn, Inspector General for the Florida Department of Education; Nancy Daniels, Public Defender in the 2nd Judicial Circuit; Patricia Duffy, Charlotte County Commissioner; Mark Montinmuro, Broward County school

teacher; Shari Pagan, Broward County school teacher; John Reichard, Panama City Beach School Teacher; Joe Negron, Florida Senator in the 32nd District; Jeffery Beasley, Inspector General for the Florida Department of Corrections; and Jeanne Dozier, Lee County School Board Member.

The Commission's reviews for legal sufficiency are limited to questions of jurisdiction and determinations as to whether the contents of the complaint are adequate to allege a violation of the Code of Ethics. As no factual investigation precedes the reviews, the Commission's conclusions do not reflect on the accuracy of the allegations made in these complaints.

In public session, the Commission adopted a joint stipulation between the Commission Advocate and Lori Gulden, Florida Notary Public, finding that Ms. Gulden violated ethics law by misusing her position to improperly notarize a signature for the benefit of a coworker. A civil penalty of \$1,000 and public censure and reprimand will be recommended to the Governor.

In an opinion interpreting the voting conflicts law, the Commission determined that a Mayor could vote on matters relating to the removal of his neighborhood from the Town's boundaries. Under the circumstances presented, the impact on the Mayor's interests would not constitute any "special" private gain or loss under the statute.

The Commission adopted an advisory opinion that determined that a prohibited conflict of interest exists where a public school teacher/facilitator/department chair provides services to students of his public school in his private capac-

ity through paid therapy and counseling. However, the services could be provided by him as additional duties of his public employment.

In another opinion, the Commission determined that the law does not prohibit a district school board member from employment with the Florida Virtual School, a statewide school district, and the voting conflict law would not prohibit the member from participating in votes concerning the Florida Virtual School, under the circumstances presented.

The Commission also issued an opinion that determined a former member of the Florida House of Representatives, during the two years following vacation of his legislative office, would be prohibited from asking legislative and executive branch officials to designate legal services plans as available employee benefits in order to enable him to market the plans to legislative and executive branch officers and employees. However, he would not be prohibited during that time period from marketing such products directly to individual legislative and executive branch officers and employees. The Code of Ethics would not prohibit his entering into an employment or contractual relationship with a company doing business with the State of Florida.

In an opinion concerning the new mandatory training requirement for Florida Constitutional officers, the Commission determined that two hours on the subject of the Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees or Article II, Section 8, Florida Constitution, and one hour each of open meetings and public records, would satisfy the four-hour training requirement imposed under the law.

An opinion requested by a member of the Florida Senate found that a Senator's providing a letter of support for grant funding or for a hospice's certificate of need application (unpaid, "constituent work") would not violate the statute prohibiting misuse of public position.

The Commission also issued an opinion determining that no prohibited conflict of interest is created where the chair of the neurology department of a State university's medical school is involved in a private, non-profit foundation to improve health care delivery to patients with chronic neurodegenerative diseases, as long as he does not receive compensation from, or otherwise have a contractual relationship with, the foundation. However, were he to receive compensation from the foundation or be considered a member of it, a prohibited conflict of interest would exist.

Contact the Commission office to obtain rulings on appeals of automatic fines imposed for late submission of financial disclosure reports submitted by public officers and employees.

The Florida Commission on Ethics is an independent nine-member commission formed in 1974 to review complaints filed under the statutory Code of Ethics and to answer questions from public officials about potential conflicts of interest through its issuance of advisory opinions.

If the Ethics Commission believes a violation of the law may have occurred, it may decide to hold a public hearing. If it concludes a violation has been committed, it may recommend civil penalties that include removal from office or employment and fines up to \$10,000 per violation.



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Colonoscopy is a safe, painless outpatient procedure performed, while you are in a light sleep, by Dr. Dale Mitchum at Doctors Memorial Hospital in Bonifay. Dr. Mitchum is a board certified Fellow of the American College of Surgeons and has a great deal of experience performing colonoscopies.

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## Our VIEW

### Keeping eye on spying

At the same time a federal judge last week ruled that a federal phone surveillance program was “almost Orwellian” and likely unconstitutional, President Obama’s own panel of experts recommended 46 significant changes to the way the government gathers information on Americans.

Those developments indicate a growing awareness of the power of these domestic spying programs, and their potential for abuse, from inside the government itself, not just civil libertarian groups.

The question is whether there will be sufficient impetus to make necessary changes that will maintain the proper balance between security and privacy.

The President’s Review Group on Intelligence and Communications Technologies was created in August in the wake of Edward Snowden’s leak of classified information on U.S. surveillance methods. Last week, the panel released its report ([tinyurl.com/mcwry3j](http://tinyurl.com/mcwry3j)), which came to the same conclusion that U.S. District Judge Richard Leon did: The National Security Agency’s massive collection of telecommunications metadata is not essential to the nation’s war on terrorism because there is no evidence that it has thwarted a single attack. In fact, the report said, the information “could readily have been obtained in a timely manner” through other means less destructive of privacy.

The panel proceeds to recommend ways to scale back the scope of government snooping, moving away from a general collection of data toward a more focused and short-term surveillance.

The report says

Washington “should not be permitted to collect and store mass, undigested, non-public personal information about U.S. persons for the purpose of enabling future queries and data-mining for foreign intelligence purposes.” Instead, phone records should be collected and stored by telecommunications companies or by a private consortium. The NSA and other agencies would have to obtain separate judicial orders to search those databases instead of authorizing such searches themselves. Those records would be held for just two years.

The panel also would significantly change the policy regarding national security letters, which the FBI uses to order a communications or financial company to turn over data. The government also can demand that the company not inform anyone that their records were turned over to the feds (the so-called “gag order”). Instead, the panel suggests, the government first should convince a court that the records are relevant to an authorized investigation involving “international terrorism or clandestine intelligence activities.” Furthermore, gag orders would be limited to 180 days (instead of in perpetuity) and could be challenged in court.

These and other recommendations are but a first step toward tightening government surveillance practices, increasing transparency and protecting Americans’ privacy absent probable cause to violate it. But that won’t happen unless Congress and the president embrace the changes — which, so far, appears unlikely. Further pressure must be applied.

## Ghosts of Christmas Past and Present

Christmas 2013 is history, and we’ve had our share of too much food, too much stuff and too little time with loved ones. At our Senior Adult Christmas lunch at First Baptist Church, Jeep Sullivan, our minister to Sr. Adults asked us to share Christmas memories we have. I shared one last week. Jack shared at the luncheon that he remembered the one he lost in 1944 as his transport to the Philippines in the Pacific crossed the International Date Line on Dec. 24 and then they were in another time zone, and it was 1945.

Tom Cook remembered coming to Bonifay to shop Pelts Five and Dime Store and to see Santa who rode into town on the Fire truck and gave a bag with an apple, an orange and some hard candy to every boy and girl who stood in line. I think the Fire Department also gave senior adults a bag of goodies, too. I remembered Betty Segers and I taking our children. There were two lines, one to talk to Santa and one to get the bag of goodies. One year, Hiram insisted on getting in line to talk to Santa. That was a little puzzling as he felt it was his responsibility to tell all the kids that there was no



**HAPPY CORNER**  
Hazel Wells Tison

Santa Claus. After we’d waited for him to go through the long line to talk to Santa, I asked him why he wanted to talk to Santa. He said, “to tell him he isn’t real.”

Shirley Brooks Wilkins remembered that their gifts were always placed in a box, so they tried to find the biggest box so they’d get more.

I don’t have vivid memories of Christmas as a child. Primitive Baptists’ beliefs were quite Puritanical, at least Grandpa Wells’ were, so Christmas was pretty meager, but I do remember that we put a shoe box underneath our beds in hopes that Santa brought us something. Perhaps a doll made from papier-mache with painted features. I remember my sister Minnie left hers out in the rain and its skin got all wrinkled. Our older brothers, Jim and Perry told her it was dead and had a funeral. Minnie Lee cried and cried.

We never hung stockings for the apple and orange which most children of our day received. However, fruit was usually fairly plentiful in our home as our dad brought home oranges by the bushel bag and

sometimes a box of red delicious apples. He always bought a coconut, the juice of which he liked to drink unless Mama reserved it to put in her coconut cake icing. He also liked to buy seeded raisins in the bulk which we children never cared much for, and cream drops that were called a politically incorrect name. We never loved them either. We did like the grapes, some of which Mama put in her ambrosia. I can picture my foster brother Shelby Barber peeling and sectioning oranges for that food of the Gods.

Most of our celebration came when the family, uncles, aunts, and cousins, gathered at Grandma’s house for a sumptuous dinner, with my favorite, chicken dressing and Grandma’s “collard” pudding. This was a bread pudding which she jokingly called collard pudding because she had no recipe, just day old biscuits, eggs, home churned butter and lots of pecans.

As we established our own family and bought my husband’s old home we started the tradition of having his parents and brothers along with his sister Ruth, her husband, Judge Helms and their children on Christmas Eve. We ate Christmas goodies, exchanged gifts, and shot fireworks.

I guess 1963 was my most memorable. Like Jack’s 1944 memory, I lost Christmas because on Christmas Eve as the family guests were arriving, I had an emergency trip to the delivery room where Christmas day and several days after were a blur to me. Cindy got her first (and only) bicycle that year so it was probably her most memorable.

For the past several years the Wells family has used the fellowship hall of First Baptist Church for our Christmas dinner. Like we used to do when we gathered at my Grandma and Grandpa Wells’ home, the focus of our celebration is food. This year, sadness overshadowed our celebration because our youngest sister, Gail’s son, Robert Garret is battling the ravages of ALS, (Lou Gehrig’s disease.) But we also joyfully anticipate the March arrival of Robert and Amber’s son Hugh Thomas and Kelvin and Amy Wells’ son Clyde Brown Wells II. We celebrated the newest family member, Dusty Holley, the husband of our granddaughter, Hilary Webb Holley. We look forward to future Christmases and the traditions which will be established as we launch a new generation of young adult Wells grandchildren.

## Wild delicacies of Washington County

As the New Year jumps into full swing today, the Prattler will celebrate by presenting his first column for the bright new year, a milestone that is ours to enjoy.



**PERRY’S PRATTLE**  
Perry Wells

Topics for “Perry’s Prattle” just keep coming whether shopping in Walmart, attending funerals, social

functions or in a doctor’s office.

Two weeks ago, it was while visiting the office of Mark Garney for my weekly B-12 injection, where I met up with Jerry Baxter, whom I had not seen for years. We ended up having a long and an interesting conversation covering many things regarding our past experiences.

He told me right off that he reads my writings, stating that he fully related to my story many months ago about my experience of eating squirrel, smothered in gravy, fried on a wood burning stove in my mother’s kitchen. When the article was printed, John Stevens, who lives on Bahama Road, was another one who reported his enjoyment of eating squirrel, brought to the breakfast table by his dad, who waited in nearby woods on a cold morning while the small animal began his daily activities in pursuit of food. John was impressed with the mention that our dad prized every .22 caliber rifle cartridge highly and made every effort to bring in a squirrel for each bullet fired.

At our meeting in the doctor’s office, Jerry Baxter told me that his family ate possum, but only after his dad, Willie Baxter, learned to capture



SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

Jerry Baxter, left, as a junior and Agnes Kent as a freshman from the 1955 Chipley High School Year Book.

them once they “sulled.” “They were then penned up for two or three weeks, fed domestic food and purged from the undesirable diet consumed while still in the wild, then butchered and eaten,” according to Jerry.

Another wild delicacy mentioned by my friend which his family ate was soft shell turtles. “Once while in a party of boys my age, we placed trotlines out in Mobile Bay expecting to catch catfish. When we returned to retrieve our fish, we found all the hooks filled with soft shell turtles.” Jerry explained that this was not a disappointment to any of his friends as these turtles were dressed and enjoyed at the family dinner table by all of those involved in the catch.

According to Baxter, wild hogs were plentiful in the hunting woods and he, and others, often hunted and killed the animals, which produced meat as good or better than his grown at home. He told me, that in recent years,

Howard Tiller, Jr. a noted wild hog hunter, killed a record number of the animals to the point of having to call for help to get them out of the woods.

Jerry Baxter, born in 1937, is the son of John Willie Baxter and Mittie Fussell Baxter. He completed Chipley High School in 1956 and immediately went to work for the Department of Transportation in surveying. While discussing his long tenure with DOT, he told me that he worked with the surveying crew all the way from Pensacola to Tallahassee and was still on board when Interstate 10 was completed. Upon my telling him that I detected that he enjoyed his work on this job, he answered: “Mr. Wells, I did very much enjoy my work. When you are working with men such as Dalton Carter, Mr. Buck Buchanan, Stokes Bush and Ernest (Peanut) Dalton by your side, you have to enjoy every minute of it.”

Jerry married Agnes

Kent on July 7, 1956. She is the daughter of Nix Kent and Jessie Mathias Kent. Agnes attended Chipley High School, but dropped out to marry Jerry Baxter. She later obtained her GED and had a working career as Director of the Washington County Council on Aging from 1975 until retiring in 1990. She, too, enjoyed her job. She and Jerry have a son, David, who has retired from the U.S. Air Force and is employed in Civil Service in the medical field at Warner Robbins, Georgia. Their daughter, Dana Costill, is employed in the medical profession at the Glen Cove Facility in Panama City.

The Baxters have one grandson and one granddaughter. The couple owns and reside on the farm and in the same house where Agnes was reared. “Mr. Wells, this is the house that I was raised in and the place where Jerry and I were married and we

See PERRY A5

## HOLMES COUNTY Times Advertiser

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

# Ryan Leavins is a 'victim of mistakes'

Dear Editor,  
My brother, Ryan Leavins, is the victim of mistakes. He is charged with a crime he's not guilty of. I made a mistake years ago with him. We were working in the logging woods with our dad, William Leavins. Ryan asked me if I thought he should get more schooling and be a teacher. Thinking that logging was an uncertain future and knowing what a caring and helping person he is and thinking a teaching career would be a safe, life-long job, I encouraged him to teach.

Other people have made mistakes. The school board hired Ryan with policies in place that teachers maintain control of their class and administer discipline. He was moved from a regular class to a small portable room with a dozen special education children. With several different grade levels, he had to have different work for them. The child he

disciplined was coming to school in diapers. Ryan, trying to help him, started a plan to help potty train him. Ryan and the parents had made progress; the boy was wearing clothes to school. Ryan didn't have to do this. Ryan had to change the child's clothes and clean up when the child had an accident. Other teachers have made the comment that they sure wouldn't.

The day the discipline occurred, the child was disrupting class for over an hour. The other children in the room were looking to Ryan to do something because they were losing learning time. Ryan doesn't even own a paddle, so he went to another class and borrowed a paddle. The other teacher loaned him a small, narrow paddle without telling him it was not of approved size; more mistakes. Ryan, on his knees begging the child to behave, gave the child one lick, tried to return to class, no change in child. After

that, the child was given two licks with no change in behavior. After two more licks, they returned to class. The rest of the day was a normal day in the class with all the children getting to learn their school work. Ryan took the child to the bathroom later that day and noticed his bottom was red, but saw no bruises or anything. The child was back in school the next day. Ryan really thought he done what his job required.

The parents signed permission for the child to be paddled if needed. Knowing the child might need disciplining. The parents came to school with concerns of the way the child's bottom looked. The principal and others seemed to know that a narrow paddle could leave marks. Ryan didn't know. The child's grandpa, a very well-respected man in this community, said he could not believe that little paddle could do any harm. Is it possible that some children bruise real

easy? The parents signed papers that they didn't want Ryan charged. The police told Ryan there were no charges. The school board told Ryan "10-day suspension then back to work." But he wasn't called back to work. Five weeks later, he got a call from the police about a warrant. He went to the jailhouse and was charged with felony child abuse. Ryan was asked to resign he same day. He lost his job and insurance and is threatened with five years in prison. The school board just lost a caring, responsible teacher.

The school board has changed policies so that only the principal can administer discipline.

Ryan Leavins is not a criminal. Is this what living in America is like now? Where people pay taxes to employ can go against the will of parents and everybody involved to ruin innocent people's lives? I sure hope not. If children don't learn that

not following rules has consequences, we better start building more prisons than schools.

The people responsible for this huge injustice are: Family Services (I believe they try to do good work, but what they're doing to Ryan has to be a mistake)

State Attorney (supposedly pressured into filing charges)

Holmes County School Board (knowingly put Ryan and other teachers in situations they are not trained for and being no help at all for the when something happens. Way to stand behind your workers.)

The Victims: Ryan Leavins (years of education and ears of teaching with no complaints, means nothing to these people)

The little boy (might not get a proper education because no one will discipline him or try to teach him rules for fear of criminal punishment)

The parents of the little boy (asked that Ryan not be charged, knowing Ryan has been helping him. Now knowing their hope for the child getting an education is greatly reduced)

All the children that will not learn that not following the rules has consequences until they're sitting in a courtroom

The children cheated out of their education because other students cannot be made to behave

Every tax payer that pays these peoples salaries

The people of this community (who can't believe a person as good and caring as Ryan is being treated this way)

The people responsible for this injustice need to take responsibility for their mistakes. I can only hope all parties involved can see mistakes were made. Admitting mistakes and doing the right thing is the only answer.

Raymond Leavins  
Ponce de Leon

## Nurse goes above and beyond

By CECILIA SPEARS

547-9414 | @WCN\_HCT  
cspears@chipleypaper.com

**CHIPLEY** — Not much deters Emerald Coast Hospice Nurse Cindy Pippin — not even high water.

"This occurred several weeks after the flood in July when the water was still very high in certain areas of Washington County," Cecily Smith, community liaison with Emerald Coast Hospice.

Smith recounted the story of Nurse Pippin's act of bravery. "Our nurse, Cindy Pippin, had a patient that had not been able to be seen due to the high waters for two weeks. It was getting to a critical point where the patient needed to be seen."

She said the patient was well but it was just as important for them to be seen.

"Emergency Management had already gone into the home to take the patient and family some supplies, but the water still had not gone down," said Smith. "The nurse had been several times to check the water level and it still was not going down. She talked with the family and they informed her that someone had been boating in and had left a boat at the end of the road, but had no idea whose boat it was."

When Cindy arrived at



SPECIAL TO TIMES-ADVERTISER

Emerald Coast Hospice Nurse Cindy Pippin went above and beyond the call of duty when a patient went without care because of the recent floods in Washington County.

the patient's home she noticed a boat tied to a tree nearby.

"She decided that in order to see the patient, she would have to take the boat, so she left a note on the tree that said 'to whom it may concern, I borrowed your boat' and left her number and name and waded on out to the water to get into the boat," said Smith. "She paddled until she got to the patient's house, at which time she was soaked and the patient was so happy to see her they said come on in wet clothes and all

we don't care. I guess the whole main idea of the story is that we go above and beyond to see our patients, and truly care about the patients, to the point that we won't stop until we have them taken care of."

She laughed and said "even if it means taking someone's boat and leaving a note."

"It is pretty funny," said Smith. "We just wanted people to know we are here, care about our patients, and are a hometown hospice with an office right in Chipley."

## PERRY from page A4

enjoy being here and having our children and grandchildren come visit us often."

Both Jerry and Agnes both are experiencing medical issues now which prohibits their involvement in activities, which their former busy and active jobs would have required. In conversation, Agnes spoke of the many years she spent with the Washington County Council on Aging job and of the personal

satisfaction received in assisting others: "I still have many happy memories stemming from this experience," concluded Agnes.

Jerry comments as he reflected on his many years working with his friendly and helpful crew at the Department of Transportation: "Mr. Wells, I think many times of just how much fun and enjoyable it would be for me to once again be out there working in all kinds of weather with all my

former co-workers and good friends."

It has been my delight to once again talk, and submit this story, on long time friends whom I have not seen for awhile. It is good to receive the reports on their present status and hear the positive attitudes both Jerry and Agnes still possess toward the jobs they held for many years. Both consider their former employment as a privilege and an honor. See you all next week.

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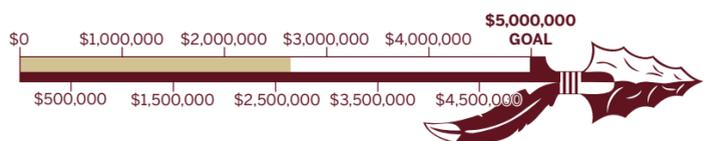
Gail and Wayne Lindsey

**The impact that FSU Panama City has on our students and our community far outweighs any collegiate loyalty this old Gator may have. I am truly proud to support FSU Panama City. Please consider joining me with your support.**

— Wayne Lindsey  
Owner, Sonny's Real Pit Bar-B-Q

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The new College of Applied Studies at FSU Panama City was approved by the FSU Board of Trustees in June 2010 and allows the campus to more easily respond to workforce needs in our area. We invite you to support *The Campaign for Our Community's University* by helping us build an endowment for tomorrow's jobs. Our goal is to establish a \$5 million endowment for the College of Applied Studies by 2017, which will allow FSU Panama City to establish student scholarships, implement new degree programs and provide new equipment and technology.

## Bonifay Garden Club's Christmas Party at Well's Country Home

By ADONNA BARTLETT

Special to Halifax Media Group

**BONIFAY** — Members of the Bonifay Garden Club gathered recently at the Well's childhood country home to salute the festive season. The merriment started with conversation at 11:30 a.m. on Dec. 13. The agenda included a pot-luck lunch and cookie swap among the members.

Hazel Tison and Faye Helms were the hostesses. Club chaplain Peggy LaPlante gave the devotion for the meeting and a memorial remembrance for Berney Bartlett, Club President Adonna Bartlett's husband who passed away in November with cancer.

Gifts were collected for the Dogwood Inn Assisted Living Center in Bonifay for their 'Season of Giving' project.

The Bonifay Garden Club is a group of gardeners, both experienced and beginners, who meet at the Chamber of Commerce, on the second Friday of each month, September through May.

The meetings start at 11:30 a.m. with a program, which may cover either floral design, indoor or outdoor gardening, green practices, landscape de-

sign or sound horticultural methods. The program is followed by a lunch combined with good fellowship.

The yearly dues are \$25 and lunch is \$5 for members and guest. In addition to the regular meetings, there are tours to places of interest for gardeners.

For more information please contact [www.bonifaygardenclub@yahoo.com](mailto:www.bonifaygardenclub@yahoo.com).

## DIABETES OR PROSTATE CANCER?

Your sex life and erection can now survive  
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## Engagement



### Poole – Stanton to wed

Mrs. Marion Daniel Poole and Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Eugene Poole of Tuscaloosa, Ala., announce the engagement of their daughter, Caroline Rowan Poole of Tuscaloosa, to Lee Ellis Stanton of Chipley Fla., son of Mr. and Mrs. Rual Kenneth Stanton of Chipley.

The wedding will be March 1 at 4 p.m. at Saint James Episcopal Church in Livingston, Ala.

The bride-elect is the granddaughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Jackson Poole and the late Mr. and Mrs. John Marion Daniel Jr., all of Tuscaloosa.

She is a 1997 graduate of Tuscaloosa's Central High School and attended the University of Alabama, where she received a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Development. She was a member of Delta Delta Delta sorority and was presented in the 2000 Tuscaloosa Holiday Cotillion.

She attended the University of West Alabama, where she received a master's

degree in College Student Development. She is employed as Admissions Communications Coordinator with the University of West Alabama in Livingston.

The prospective groom is the grandson of Mr. Samuel Burnett Stanton and the late Mrs. Dorothy Lowell Stanton, and the late Mrs. Johanna Scheid Ellis, all of Chipley, Fla. He is a 1988 graduate of Chipley High School and attended Livingston University, where he received a bachelor's degree in Biology and Environmental Science. He attended the University of South Alabama, where he received a master's degree in Marine Sciences, and Louisiana State University where he earned a doctoral degree in Oceanography and Coastal Sciences.

He currently serves as the Director of the Black Belt Conservation and Research Institute and as an associate professor of Biological and Environmental Sciences at the University of West Alabama in Livingston.

## Congratulations



### Howell presented with U.S. Divers Pin

Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln Howell are proud to announce the graduation of their son, PVT 2 Lincoln Drew Howell, on his successful journey to become a U.S. Army Deep Sea (Engineer) Diver.

Lincoln Drew Howell is the son of Lincoln and Paula Howell of Bonifay. His proud younger brothers are Dakota and Dalton Howell. His grandparents are Larry Howell and Lynda Stokes, Patricia Myers and the late Dewey Mixon.

On 20 Dec. 2013, Lincolns little brother, Dalton Howell age 9, was given the traditional honor of presenting his big brother with his U.S. Divers Pin. He graduated from the class of 13-30-UCTB A2C. His pursuit began in Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. On April 12, 2013, Lincoln completed a grueling

phase I course (12D Army Diver). He continued his training in Panama City, at the Naval Diving and Salvage Training Center. Accompanied by determination and hard work, Lincoln successfully completed a seven month intensive training course. He is now a part of a small and elite group of Soldiers — U.S. Army Deep-Sea (Engineer) Divers. Approximately 150 soldiers begin the pursuit to become Engineer Divers each year. Only about 20-25 Graduate to become Engineer Second Class Divers.

We are so very proud of our sons' accomplishments. Although we are going to miss him, we are also excited to see what opportunities await him. "Today is the first day of the rest of our lives."

## Make volunteering your new year's resolution

Special to Halifax Media Group

Now that the holidays are over, and you are starting to think about your New Year's resolutions, I encourage you to make one of those resolutions to become a Covenant Hospice volunteer.

When people think about volunteering for hospice, their first thought may be, "I could never do that" or "I would be too depressed."

However, talk to a Covenant Hospice volunteer and he or she will tell you a very different story.

Covenant volunteers come from many different backgrounds, ranging from retired persons, to working professionals, active military personnel, high school and college students.

They all have one thing in common...a desire to give back, and in that giving they receive so much in return.

Covenant has opportunities for people with diverse skills and interests.

Volunteers that are looking for a chance to meet new people and to be active in the community will love Covenant's Ambassador Program. For those that want to have fun and socialize with others, Covenant's fundraising events are the perfect fit. Volunteers that enjoy office work or computers can find a home in administrative support.

Individuals with care-giving experience or emotional and spiritual support skills may choose to visit Covenant's patients and their families. Persons that have experienced the loss of a loved one understand

what families have gone through and make wonderful bereavement volunteers. Volunteers from our communities help to garden, clean yards, make simple home repairs, build ramps, sew, crochet, cook and bake.

Volunteers receive specialized training that prepares them to volunteer in their area of interest.

Covenant Hospice makes a promise to our volunteers that they will find a sense of purpose, worthwhile work, and the realization that they are making a difference.

That's why over 2,600 individuals have chosen to give an important part of their lives to Covenant Hospice.

Covenant's volunteer program has received Awards of Excellence from Florida Hospice and Palliative Care Organization for the Ambassador Volunteer Program, the Reflections Life Review Journal Program, and the Tuck-in Program.

The late Sam and Joyce Goldenberg, long-time Covenant Hospice volunteers, received the Volunteer of the Year Award from the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO).

So while you are composing your New Year's resolutions, please think about becoming a Covenant Hospice volunteer.

I promise it's a resolution that is easy to keep, as well as very rewarding.

For more information about volunteering, please contact Donna Meldon, Volunteer and Community Relations Manager at 482-8520 or 888-817-2191.

## Robison named Ethics Committee vice chairperson

From Staff Reports TALLAHASSEE

— The State of Florida Commission on Ethics, in its public session meeting on Dec. 13, unanimously elected Linda McKee Robison as vice chairperson for the 2013-14 term.

She was appointed to the Commission in 2011

by Governor Rick Scott and was reappointed in 2013.

Robison is a partner in the Corporate Transactions Group of Shutts & Bowen, LLP in Fort Lauderdale and also serves as the co-chairperson of the firm's Health Care Practice Group.

## Community EVENTS

### North Bay Tribe Fundraiser

CHIPLEY — The North Bay Tribe will be holding a yard sale from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Jan 4 at the tribal grounds. All proceeds will go to the clan building fund. The tribal grounds are located at 1560 Lonnie Rd about five miles South of Chipley.

### Sound of Music Auditions

MARIANNA — Chipola College Theatre will hold auditions for "The Sound of Music," Monday, Jan. 6, in the Chipola Center for the Arts. Ages first grade and up are welcome. No previous experience is required.

Those auditioning for the Von Trap children will audition at 5 p.m. Adults and all others will audition at 6:30 p.m. Call-back auditions are at 6 p.m., Jan. 7. The Sound of Music is a musical with music by Richard and Hammerstein. Many songs from the musical

have become standards, such as "Edelweiss," "My Favorite Things," "Climb Ev'ry Mountain," "Do-Re-Mi," and the title song "The Sound of Music." Contact Charles Sirmon, 850-718-2227; sirmonc@chipola.edu.

### Harpist to Perform as part of Artist Series

MARIANNA — The Chipola Artist Series presents harpist Anna Maria Mendieta, at 7 p.m., Jan. 16, in the Center for the Arts. Leading the audience through the right turns, dips, and smoky cafes of Argentina, harpist Anna Maria Mendieta's Tango del Cielo (Tango from Heaven) is a fresh innovative presentation of the passionate and sensuous music of the Tango and Spanish Flamenco. Complete with Latin instruments and Flamenco dancers, the theatrical music and dance program is a must see.

Tickets are available online at www.chipola.edu. Tickets will be available in the Center for the Arts Box Office.

### Prom and Bridal Expo

CHIPLEY — The Chipley Women's Club will be sponsoring the Fifth Annual Prom and Bridal Expo from 1 to 4 p.m. on Jan. 19 at the Washington County Ag Center. Admission is free. Booths will be filled by vendors of all the services related to weddings and other social gatherings. There will be event planners, photographers, caterers, florists, linens and other decorating accents, limousines, hair stylists, make-up artists, nail technicians, jewelers, videographers, DJ's, musicians and much more. Prom dresses, mother-of-the-bride apparel and all the accessories will be modeled during the last hour of the expo. Door prizes will be given as guest visit the vendors

booths. For more information call 260-5896.

### Jennie Finch Coming to Chipola for Softball Camp

MARIANNA — Area softball players will have the once-in-a-lifetime chance to work with softball superstar Jennie Finch and four other professional players at the Chipola College Softball field, Jan. 25 and 26.

The two day Chipola camp will include instruction each day with lunch on Saturday. Registration deadline is Jan. 21. Registration fee is \$250. No on-site registration will be available.

The Skills Camp will be held Jan. 25, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Players will learn to practice like a champion, play like a champion and live like a champion. Jennie Finch and other Softball Greats will lead a full day of personal instruction covering all aspects of softball.

The Camp will continue Jan. 26, from 9 a.m. to noon. Skills camp coaches will include Jennie Finch, Kat Dodson, Ivy Renfroe, Lauren Gibson and Raven Chavanne.

Campers will receive instruction from professional coaches and players, lunch on Saturday, Camp T-shirt, Personalized Softball and Certificate of Participation

For information, call Kelly Brookins at 850-718-2468, Belinda Hendrix at 718-2358 or Jimmy Hendrix at 573-1508.

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# Obituaries

## Fred H. McGowan

Mr. Fred Howard 'Pete' McGowan, age 81, of Bonifay, passed away Dec. 20, 2013 at Wiregrass Medical Center in Geneva, Ala.

He was born April 13, 1932 in Bartow. Mr. McGowan was the owner of Fred's Auto and McGowan Enterprises.

He served in the Korean War.

Mr. McGowan was preceded in death by his father, Ralph McGowan; his mother, Esther Thames Harris and a brother, Clifton McGowan.

Mr. McGowan is survived by his wife, Amy Collins McGowan of Bonifay; a daughter, Lisa Martin of Cataula, Ga.; a son, Frederick McGowan and wife Kazuko of Cataula, Ga.; a grandson, Wade McGowan and a sister, Betty Treadwell of Jacksonville.

Funeral services were held at 2 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 22, 2013 at New Zion Baptist Church with interment in the New Zion Baptist Church Cemetery. Peel Funeral Home of Bonifay, Fla., directing.

## Cellie Y. Perez

Cellie Yvonne Perez, 66, of Ebro, died Dec. 22, 2013.

Funeral services were held, Dec. 27, 2013 inter-

ment followed in the Ebro Community Cemetery. Peel Funeral Home directing.

## Wanda L. Cook

Wanda Lillian Cook, 72, of Bonifay died on Dec. 20, 2013.

Funeral services were held on Dec. 22, 2013,

interment followed at Pleasant Hill Cemetery. Sims Funeral Home is directing.

## Catherine L. Mathis

Catherine L. (Swingle) Mathis, 78, passed from this life Saturday, Dec. 21, 2013, at her residence.

She was born in Plant City, on April 9, 1935, to Clenton D. and Catherine E. (Duncan) Swingle. Mathis worked in the lunchroom at the Washington County Schools and was a member of the New Hope Methodist Church. She was lived her since 1972 coming from Fort Lauderdale.

Mathis is survived by her husband of 60 years, Bill Mathis of Vernon; one son, Craig Mathis and wife Hyphen of Lakeland; two

daughters, Jodi Reeves and husband Michael of Kentucky and Diana Zaiter and husband Bakhos of St. Augustine; one sister, Frances Hill of Bradenton; six grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

Funeral services were held at 3 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 22, 2013, at New Hope Methodist Church with the Rev. Bill Mathis and the Rev. James Brooks officiating. Memorialization was by cremation.

Brown Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements. Friends and family may sign the online register at [www.brownfh.net](http://www.brownfh.net).

## Garnet E. Raypole

Mrs. Garnet Evaline Raypole, 83 of Lake Worth, formerly of Bonifay, died on Thursday, Dec. 19, 2013, at her residence in Lake Worth.

Born Monday, June 9, 1930, in Chillicothe, Ohio, she was the daughter of the late Pearl Farnham and the late Sarah Green Farnham.

Surviving are sons, Jerald Eugene Raypole of Greenville, S.C., Robert Norman Raypole of Ft. Lauderdale, David Lee Raypole of Green Acre and Ricky Raypole of Copperas Cove, Texas; daughters, Pamela Casteen of Coving-

ton, Ga., and Sharon Kay Thomas of Waynesboro, Tenn.; sister, Vivian Pearl Conley of Leesburg; 13 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

A graveside service was held at 11 a.m., on Monday, Dec. 23, 2013, at the Bonifay Cemetery with the Rev. Shelly Chandler officiating.

Interment followed in the Bonifay Cemetery, Bonifay.

The family received friends from 6 to 7 p.m., on Sunday, Dec. 22, 2013, at Sims Funeral Home Chapel.

### Guidelines and Deadlines

Obituary notices are written by funeral homes and relatives of the deceased. The Washington County News/Holmes County Times-Advertiser reserves the right to edit for AP style and format. Families submitting notices must type them in a typeface and font that can be scanned into a computer. Deadline for obituaries is 12 Noon on Monday for the following Wednesday newspaper. There is a \$25 charge for obituaries. Obituaries may be e-mailed to [funerals@chipleypaper.com](mailto:funerals@chipleypaper.com) or delivered to the Washington County News at 1364 North Railroad Ave, Chipley or Holmes County Times-Advertiser at 112 Eat Virginia Ave. in Bonifay.

## Community CALENDAR

### Library hours

**Wausau Library**  
Mon.: 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
Tue.: 1 - 6 p.m.  
Wed.: Closed  
Thur.: 1 - 6 p.m.  
Fri.: Closed  
Sat.: Closed  
Sun.: Closed

**Holmes County Library (Bonifay)**  
Mon.: Closed  
Tue.: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Wed.: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Thur.: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Fri.: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Sat.: 8 a.m. - noon  
Sun.: Closed

**Washington County Library (Chipley)**  
Mon.: 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
Tue.: 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
Wed.: 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
Thur.: 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
Fri.: 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
Sat.: Closed  
Sun.: Closed

**Vernon Library**  
Mon.: Closed  
Tue.: 1 - 6 p.m.  
Wed.: 1 - 6 p.m.  
Thur.: Closed  
Fri.: 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
Sat.: Closed  
Sun.: Closed

**Sunny Hills Library**  
Mon.: 1 - 6 p.m.  
Tue.: Closed  
Wed.: 1 - 6 p.m.  
Thur.: Closed  
Fri.: Closed  
Sat.: Closed  
Sun.: Closed

### MONDAY

**10 a.m. to noon:** Holmes Council on Aging provides bingo, exercise, games, activities, hot meals and socialization.

**11 a.m.:** Washington Council on Aging (Chipley) senior lunches; for reservations, call 638-6217. Donations accepted.

**6 p.m.:** Third Monday Holmes/Washington Relay For Life Meeting at Patillos

**6 - 7:30 p.m.:** Salvation Army Domestic Violence and Rape Crisis Program (SADVP) hosts a domestic violence support group at the SADVP Rural Outreach office, 1461 S. Railroad Ave., Apartment 1, in Chipley. Call Emma or Jess at 415-5999.

### TUESDAY

**8 - 9 a.m.:** Tai Chi Class at the Washington County Public Library, Chipley Branch

**8 - 10 a.m.:** Church Fellowship Breakfasts at Around the Corner Grill. Breakfast provided. All denominations welcome.

**10 a.m. - noon:** Holmes Council on Aging provides hot meals and socialization.

**11 a.m.:** Washington

Council on Aging (Chipley) senior lunches; for reservations, call 638-6217. Donations accepted.

**Noon:** Chipley Kiwanis Club meeting.

**Noon:** Alcoholics Anonymous open meeting, New Life Assembly Fellowship Hall, Chipley.

**5 p.m.:** BINGO at St. Joseph Catholic Church games start at 6:25 p.m. Call Peg Russ at 638-451

**6 p.m.:** Holmes County Commission meets second Tuesdays.

**7 p.m.:** Narcotics Anonymous meeting, Blessed Trinity Catholic Church on County Road 177A

### WEDNESDAY

**10 a.m. - noon:** Holmes Council on Aging provides hot meals and socialization.

**10 a.m. - 2 p.m.:** The Vernon Historical Society Museum is open to the public from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Meetings are fourth Wednesdays at 2 p.m.

**11 a.m.:** Washington Council on Aging (Chipley) senior lunches; for reservations, call 638-6217. Donations accepted.

**1 p.m.:** Line dancing, Washington Council on Aging in Chipley.

**5 p.m.:** New Hope United Methodist Church Bible Study

**7 p.m.:** Depression and Bipolar Support Group meets at First Baptist Church educational annex building in Bonifay.

Call 547-4397.

### THURSDAY

**7:30 a.m.:** Washington County Chamber of Commerce breakfast every third Thursday

**9 a.m. - 11 a.m.:** Amazing Grace Church USDA Food Distribution every third Thursday (Holmes County Residents Only)

**9 a.m. - 3 p.m.:** Money Sense at Goodwill Career Training Center; call 638-0093; every third Thursday

**10 a.m. to noon:** Holmes Council on Aging provides hot meals and socialization.

**10:30 a.m.:** Chipley Library preschool story time.

**11 a.m.:** Washington Council on Aging (Chipley) senior lunches; for reservations, call 638-6217. Donations accepted.

**11 a.m.:** Care Givers Support group meets third Thursdays at the First Presbyterian Church at 4437 Clinton St. in Marianna.

**Noon:** Alcoholics Anonymous open meeting at New Life Assembly Fellowship Hall, Chipley

**1 p.m.:** Caregivers Meeting at Washington County Council on Aging in Chipley for more information call 638-6216

**2 p.m.:** Writers Group meets the first Thursday of each month (unless a holiday) at the Chipley

Library

**4 p.m.:** Holmes County Historical Society 2nd Thursday of each month.

**6 p.m.:** TOPS meets at 7 p.m. with weigh in at 6 p.m. at Mt. Olive Baptist Church

**6 p.m.:** The Holmes County Historical Society meets first Thursdays at 6 p.m. The public is invited to attend.

**6 p.m.:** Washington County Council on Aging Line Dancing Class for more information call 638-6216

**6:30 p.m.:** T.O.P.S. Mt. Olive Baptist Church on State Road 79 North.

**7 p.m.:** Narcotics Anonymous meeting, Blessed Trinity Catholic Church on County Road 177A

### FRIDAY

**6 a.m.:** Men's Breakfast and Bible Study at Hickory Hill Baptist Church in Westville.

**10 a.m. to noon:** Holmes Council on Aging provides bingo, exercise, games, activities, hot meals and socialization.

**11 a.m.:** Washington Council on Aging (Chipley) senior lunches; for reservations, call 638-6217. Donations accepted.

**11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.:** On third Fridays, Washington County Council on Aging (Chipley) will have a plate lunch available to anyone as a fundraiser

for our local senior citizens. Plates are \$6. Must make reservation at 638-6216 or 638-6217.

**3:30:** Bead Class every second Friday at Laurden-Davis Art Gallery call 703-0347

**5 p.m.:** Red Hill Methodist Church Mission Supper 4th Friday of every month January - September.

**6 - 8 p.m.:** Washington County Council on Aging 50+ dance club for more information call 638-6216

**6 - 8 p.m.:** Marianna's Gathering Place Foundation has a get-together for 50+ senior singles, widowed or divorced on last Fridays at Methodist Youth Center in Marianna. Come join the fun for games, prizes and snacks. For more information, call 526-4561.

**8 p.m.:** Alcoholics Anonymous open meeting at Chipley Presbyterian Church.

### SATURDAY

**9 a.m. - 1 p.m.:** The Holmes County Community Health Clinic located at 203 W. Iowa Street, Bonifay, will be open from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m., the first and third Saturday

**10 a.m.:** The Alford Community Health Clinic will be the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month, from 10 a.m. until the last patient is seen.

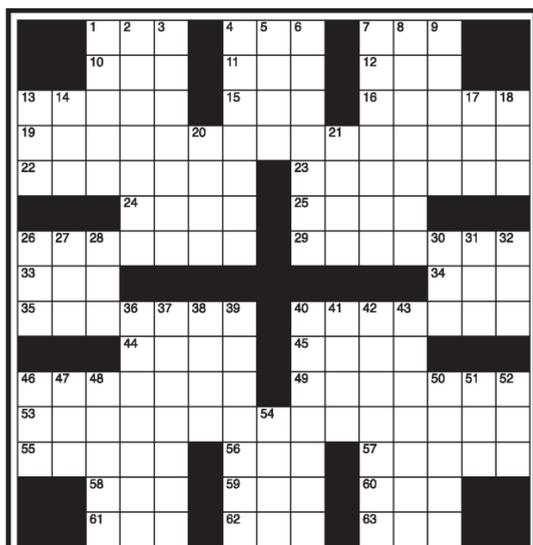
**10 a.m. - 12 p.m.:** Children's education day 4th Saturday of every month North Bay Clan Tribal Grounds, 1560 Lonnie Roads.

### SUNDAY

**11 a.m.:** New Hope United Methodist Church Worship Service

**5 p.m.:** New Hope United Methodist Church Worship Service

**8 p.m.:** Alcoholics Anonymous meeting in the board room at Graceville-Campbellton Hospital in Graceville.



### CLUES ACROSS

- Type of health plan
- Atmospheric haze
- A period of time
- Auricle
- Copycat
- Manpower
- Delicate fern genus
- Diego, Francisco or Anselmo
- Zanzibar copal
- Jackie's 2nd husband
- Calcified tooth tissue
- Conjoined twins
- Mythological birds
- This (Spanish)
- Lowest hereditary title
- Pre-transplant plot
- Fiddler crab genus
- Professional legal organization
- Most thick
- Sleeve indicator of mourning
- Far East housemaid
- Hmong
- With three uneven sides
- Tempts
- Jewelry finding
- Showed intense anger
- Black tropical American cuckoo
- Sculpture with a head
- A single entity
- What part of (abbr.)
- Before
- Confined condition (abbr.)
- Hurrah
- Transport faster than sound (abbr.)

### CLUES DOWN

- Sorli's Tale hero
- A musical master
- Speech
- Swiftest
- Opaque gem
- Origins
- Proceed from a source
- Rechristened
- Liquorice flavored seed
- Small amount
- Mineral aggregate
- Prefix for wrong
- Point midway between E and SE
- A single instance
- French river
- Undeveloped blossom
- One pip domino
- Fled on foot
- Sheep bleat
- One point N of due E
- Father
- A projecting part
- Improved by editing
- Made melodious sounds
- Treatment
- Agreeableness
- Bell sound
- Tennis contests
- Furnace vessels
- Sirius Satellite Radio (abbr.)
- Licensed accountant
- Crude potassium bitartrate
- Insert mark
- Election Stock Market (abbr.)
- A health resort
- So. Am. Indian people

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## 11TH HOUR



## 11th Hour to perform in Esto

**From Staff Reports**  
**ESTO** — The gospel group 11th Hour will perform at 7 p.m. on Jan. 11 at the Mt. Zion Independent Baptist Church in Esto. The concert is free and the group will surely bless your heart. There will be a

love offering and everyone is invited to worship and fellowship with us. The church is located at 3205 Highway 2 in Esto. For more information call Chris Smith at 768-0843 or email mtzionindp@gmail.com.

## Caryville Baptist Blue Grass Jam

**CARYVILLE** — Caryville Baptist Church will be holding a Blue Grass Jam at 6 p.m. on Friday, Jan 3. Come and enjoy picking, singing,

food and fellowship. Chili and soup will be served. The church is located at 4217 Old Bonifay Road in Caryville.

## To judge or not to judge that is the dilemma

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage does not allow any pets in our domicile. Something about cleaning up their mess and fleas and other things that I cannot recall. When our last child moved out of the house so did all pets. They are now just fond memories, at least on my side.



**DR. JAMES L. SNYDER**  
Out to Pastor

So no pets are roaming around our house but I do have a variety of pet peeves. My wife graciously allows me to keep my pet peeves as long as I keep them to myself and that they do not mess up the house. For the most part, I try to do that, but occasionally one of my pets escapes from its pen.

A pet peeve that recently escaped from its cage is, people taking something out of context to prove their point. You can make anything you want it to say or mean. The politicians have perfected this art and I think it ought to remain within the confines of Washington DC.

It always amazes me that politicians can virtually say the same thing to different crowds and have it mean different things to separate crowds. Nobody can twist and turn words like professional politician. Just think what these politicians could do if they put this great talent to benefit the people of the United States who elected them.

Getting back to my pet peeve. Perhaps a few ex-

amples might help explain what I am talking about.

In Pennsylvania, we have a saying that if you do not hear the whole thing you might just misunderstand what it is about and jump to the wrong conclusion. The saying goes like this, "Throw Papa down the stairs..." and if you stop here, Papa may go tumbling down the stairs. However, it is the end of that saying that changes the whole meaning of that phrase, "... his hat."

If you focus on the first part of the phrase, you completely misunderstand what it is all about and poor old Papa will suffer the consequences. I wonder how many people have been thrown down the stairs because somebody just heard part of what was actually said.

Another one has to do with my wife. We have been married for over 40 years and get along famously but every now and then she will say, "Who do you think you are?" The first time I heard this I was rather stunned.

If I would take that question by itself and divorce it from its context, I might flounder in the sea of despondency. After all, if my wife of 40 something years does not know who I am, something is amiss.

Perhaps, after all these years, she is losing it, whatever "it" is. On the other hand, after all these years she still cannot figure me

out. I find that rather silly myself. I am a rather simple person. My wife has a different name for it, she calls it simpleton but it means the same, I think.

I distinctly remember one time when she asked this question she caught me off guard and I reintroduced myself to her. Let me just say, I will never make that mistake again.

Every so often, she will say in a voice loud enough for everybody in the house to hear, "Somebody in this house is getting to be very messy." The first time I heard this I went through the house looking for that "somebody" not knowing that it was me. At least I am somebody in this house, which is better than, "Who do you think you are?"

It is important to put everything together and in context.

Perhaps the most ridiculous example of this is people quoting the Bible. It always amazes me that those who claim the Bible is not really true, always cite the Bible to prove their point. Those who pick out fragments of the Bible to prove their point are rather pathetic.

Who has not heard somebody quote Matthew 7:1? "Judge not, that ye be not judged." From that, they conclude that Jesus does not want us to judge anybody for anything. If they took the pains to read a few more verses they would find out that they are completely misunderstanding what Jesus is talking about.

I have yet to hear somebody pull out Hebrews 12:6, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." It sort of sounds like judging to me.

If somebody wants to excuse something they are doing, they will invariably pull some phrase out of the Bible, always out of context, and hide behind it. It would be like a two hundred pound man hiding behind a golf club thinking nobody can see him.

When our grandchildren were younger, they thought if they closed their eyes, we could not see them. Just because they could not see did not mean we could not see. That is okay for small children but when it comes into adulthood, it is quite silly.

Jesus also said, "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eyes; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5).

I have read my Bible over one hundred times throughout my life and I have learned one basic truth that goes along with this. True love always judges without being judgmental.

*Rev. James L. Snyder is pastor of the Family of God Fellowship, PO Box 831313, Ocala, FL 34483. He lives with his wife, Martha, in Silver Springs Shores. Call him at 1-866-552-2543 or e-mail jamesnsnyder2@att.net. His web site is www.jamesnsnyderministries.com.*

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**A Renewed Commitment**

Sunday 1 Kings 17:1-5  
Monday 1 Kings 17:6-12  
Tuesday 1 Kings 17:13-17  
Wednesday 1 Kings 17:18-20  
Thursday 1 Kings 17:21-24  
Friday 1 Kings 18:1-7  
Saturday 1 Kings 18:8-14

As you begin this year, look to the future with optimism. Ask God's forgiveness for transgressions of the past and for His blessings on your renewed commitment. Celebrate with God for a year of greater growth and development.

**Weekly Bible Trivia**  
From where did the prophet Elijah come?  
(answer found in this week's scripture reading)

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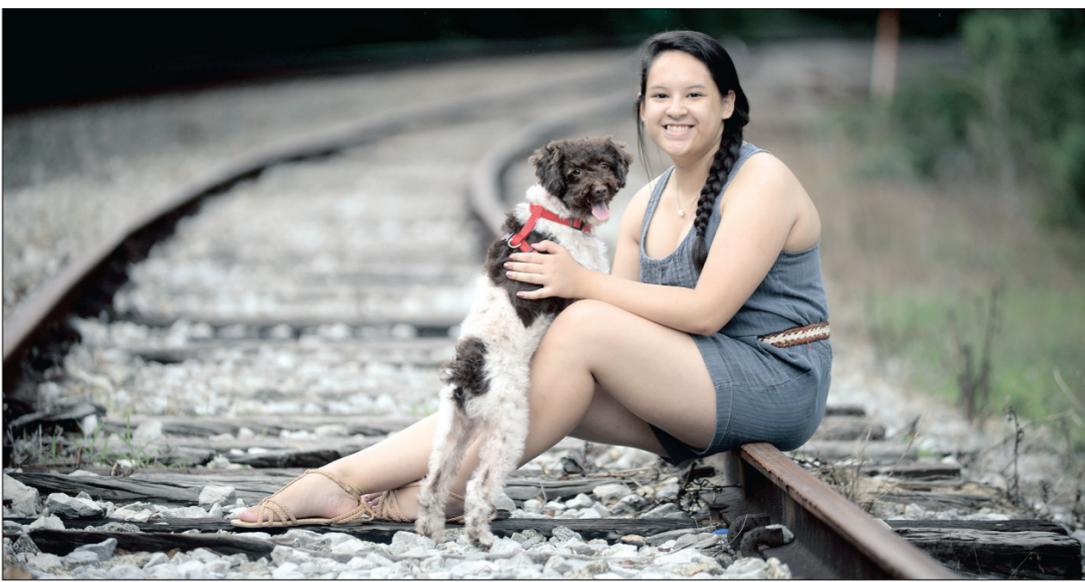
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FILE PHOTO | Daily News

Inri Fales is seen with her bunny, Batman. She attends the University of Central Florida in Orlando. **At right**, Fales is pictured with her dog in Crestview earlier this year.



# Crestview teen has a new life in college

By **KATIE TAMMEN**  
315-4440 | @KatieTnwfdn  
ktammen@nwfdailynews.com

Inri Fales has begun a new chapter. After seeing her high school years defined by tragedy, the 19-year-old has found a brighter picture in college.

With one semester at the University of Central Florida under her belt, Inri finally lives

in a house with three girls that doesn't face foreclosure or a sudden loss of its utilities. She is living on her own terms.

"I like it (in Orlando)," Inri said in a telephone interview.

"I'd like it a little bit better if I had more time and money," she added with a laugh.

Since August, she's focused on classes in chemistry, biology, English and trigonometry. She

postponed getting a job while she acclimated to her new life, but plans to look for one next semester.

She made it through the first one with help from a Bright Futures Scholarship, a Pell Grant and occasional help from her boyfriend.

"I think I needed that semester to get used to college and everything," Inri said.

After her brother commit-

ted suicide, her father died from cancer and her mother up and left, Inri was left with a home in Crestview and no way to pay the bills.

The house was foreclosed after she left for UCF with her collections, furniture and memories inside. She's at peace with that.

"There's not really a great attachment to those things anymore," Inri said.

She's spending Christmas

with her boyfriend's family, who are caring for her cats and dog until she gets a place where she can have them with her.

For now, her love of animals is satisfied with a bunny her boyfriend got her. She named it Batman.

Inri had a quiet realization one recent night as she watched television with her boyfriend and Batman hopped around the room.

"I was happy."

# Central Florida's SunRail train gets ready to roll

## Budget cuts could slow later expansion

**ORLANDO (AP)** — Central Florida will embark this spring on one of its largest mass transportation experiments when service begins on the first 32-mile phase of the \$1.2 billion SunRail commuter train, an effort to ease nightmarish traffic and protect the region's long-term economic health.

Currently, tens of thousands of commuters and tourists cram a few main highways and roads in the popular, fast-growing area. The first phase — 12 stations from Debary in Volusia County through downtown Orlando to Sand Lake Road in Orange County — will be the ultimate viability test case for an area that never before has had this kind of transportation alternative. And with promised federal money for the second phase suspended in Washington budget limbo, the success or failure of SunRail's initial stage will garner an even brighter spotlight.

guarantees SunRail will be included in the 2014 federal transportation budget.

It's caused lobbying efforts to intensify locally and in Washington, with opinions differing about what will happen.

"I know a lot of local business leaders went to D.C. to make the point about trying to make sure to continue to help build it, and get the momentum going," Florida Transportation Secretary Ananth Prasad said. "I think ultimately that's needed. We need that federal budget certainty ... and I know everybody is working hard to get there."

U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown, a Democrat who serves alongside Mica on the transportation committee, said last month that not having a 2014 transportation budget and the potential for an additional \$100 million in cuts next year "has brought a high level of uncertainty and a limitation on the ability to fund new transit projects."

But she added she had spoken to Federal Transit Administrator Peter Rogoff about SunRail's importance and also would reach out to President Barack Obama.

Mica said Phase 2 will have the system's highest ridership, according to projections, and he expects the expansion will be looked upon favorably with Phase 1 almost complete.

"I hope it's in the president's budget. If not, there are alternatives ... to continue the work," he said.

Mica said one of those is spreading the project out over the next two fiscal years, although that could affect construction plans. Either way, he said, he believes it will move forward.

Optimism also runs high in the affected communities, where growth makes alternative transportation attractive.

MetroPlan Orlando, a regional planning organization, projects that the three-county metro area of Orange, Seminole and Osceola will grow more than 70 percent by 2030. Using the 2012 census estimate of 2.1 million people, that would mean an increase to more than 3.5 million. Also, according to census data, over the past



Construction workers make progress on the SunRail station in October as an Amtrak train stops at the next door Amtrak station to pick up passengers in Winter Park. The SunRail train begins taking its first passengers in May for the initial phase of the project.

12 years the largest population growth in Central Florida has been in Sanford, Winter Garden, south Orlando and Kissimmee.

While the 18- to 35-year-old demographic is migrating toward urban city centers, there are segments working and residing in surrounding counties.

It's why convincing a chunk of that group to ride SunRail during the initial rollout has been a focus.

Seminole County Commission chairman Bob Dallari called SunRail "a game changer."

"SunRail is getting attention from a lot of folks," he said. "And the younger population wants to be able to live places where they don't have to be dependent upon automobiles."

Since 2012, the state transportation department has been having "lunch and learn" sessions to reach out to businesses to tap those prospective riders.

The Orlando Regional Chamber of Commerce also got a grant to promote the train and explain why employers should encourage their workers to ride it.

There also has been a push to bring retail and residential options close to stations.

Prasad said 15 projects are within a 10-minute walk of the initial stations with a close to \$800 million construction

value. He said that included about 3,700 new residential units around the stations and new hotel projects.

"It's the perfect scenario for SunRail to have a chance," Prasad said.

Some residents along the initial route have concerns, though.

Christine Watkins, 63 and president of the South Seminole Community Association for Progress, resides in a predominantly black community in East Altamonte, about 2 miles from the SunRail station there. She said that while many in her neighborhood welcome new, accessible alternatives for those who are without transportation, some have concerns.

The loudest are from residents who fear they eventually could be encouraged to move to other areas to make way for development near the station. That happened in the historically black Hannibal Square district in Winter Park years ago.

"We don't want that to happen here," she said.

Dallari said those concerns in Seminole haven't been ignored — the county commissioners paid for a study to look at the kind of projects that could go up without displacing many people.

Still, Watkins plans to ride.

"Personally, I'm excited about it because of the

great location I am in, and I plan to live here for the duration," she said. "You name it, we're right there in the middle of it. I've had

some other people in my age group who are saying as long as our taxes aren't through the roof, we're for it."

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N41°00'54"E 398.30 FEET ALONG SAID CENTERLINE OF COUNTY ROAD; THENCE N25°41'04"E 174.70 FEET ALONG SAID CENTER LINE TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING; THENCE N13°19'44"E ALONG SAID CENTERLINE OF COUNTY ROAD 125 FEET; THENCE N76°40'16"W 125 FEET; THENCE S13°19'44" W 125.0 FEET; THENCE S76°40'16"E 125.0 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING, ALL LYING AND BEING IN HOLMES COUNTY, FLORIDA.

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ida, thence South 04 degrees 54 minutes 25 seconds East along the West boundary line of said section 14, 2375.87 feet to the Point of Beginning, thence North 87 degrees 03 minutes 00 seconds East, 263.48 feet to the centerline of a county road, thence South 22 degrees 46 minutes 59 seconds West along said centerline 316.77 feet; thence South 86 degrees 13 minutes 56 seconds West, 116.15 feet to Section 14, thence North 04 degrees 54 minutes 25 seconds West along said West line of Section 14, 287.18 feet to the point of beginning. Together with a 2010, CMH mobile home; Model: Value 1.

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