

DISTRICT BREAKS GROUND FOR NEW HIGH SCHOOL



CAROL MAHLER
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Photos provided

On Aug. 5, the School District celebrated a groundbreaking ceremony for the new high school, the fifth to serve DeSoto County. The legislature appropriated \$108 million dollars that will fund the project as well as “renovations throughout the district,” according to Superintendent Dr. Bobby Bennett. The new structure will be “a lot more efficient, modern and up-to-date,” he said, and will support interdisciplinary studies and include more technology.

“This new high school is more than a building: it’s a bold step forward for public education in DeSoto County,” Board Member Karen Chancey wrote. “It reflects our vision for a modern, inclusive, and opportunity-rich learning environment that prepares

School Board Members Asena Mott, Karen Chancey, Jami Schueneman, Kelli Mercer, and Dr. Sharon Goodman posed for a moment at the ground-breaking ceremony for the new high school.

students for success in a rapidly changing world.”

The first high school was a wood frame structure, built in 1891, located where the parking lot is north of the post office. (It later became the Central Hotel and was torn down in 1932.) However, after the City of Arcadia was incorporated in 1901, the Council discussed how to attract the best citizens to Arcadia. They decided that the finest school with the best teachers would draw the most excellent residents. When Bennett learned of this plan, he said, “I would agree with that. We can break the poverty cycle through education. We need students to be career-ready and step into their lives as citizens.”

That early Council issued municipal bonds to

SEE HIGH SCHOOL PAGE 14 >>

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DESOTO COUNTY SPORTS
PAGE 4
STEVE KNAPP
sports@peacerivershopper.com



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GOVERNMENT MEETING SCHEDULE

CITY
CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS OCCUR THE
1ST AND 3RD TUESDAY OF THE MONTH
UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED
Margaret Way Building
23 N. Polk Ave., Arcadia, FL 34266

AUG 19	DESOTO COUNTY AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TUE 9A	Administration Building 201 E. Oak Street, Suite 103 Arcadia, FL 34266
AUG 19	DESOTO COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL MEETING
TUE 1:30P	Administration Building 201 E. Oak Street, Suite 103 Arcadia, FL 34266
AUG 26	DESOTO COUNTY BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING
TUE 1P	Administration Building 201 E. Oak Street, Suite 103 Arcadia, FL 34266

Active dates and times are subject to change.
County: <http://desotobocc.com/calendar>
City: <https://arcadia-fl.gov/events/>

Realtor Showcase
See page 11

DESOTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
ARREST REPORT
See page 13

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Angie Duckett

CREATIVE DIR / AD DESIGN
Jackie Bierman

OPS / PRODUCT DESIGN
Jonathan Bruch

\$19 MILLION GRANT FUNDS NEW WASTEWATER PLANT



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Photos provided*

As part of the process to acquire a grant agreement with the Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection (FDEP), the Aug. 5 Council meeting opened with a public hearing for the FDEP Supplemental Appropriation for Hurricanes Fiona and Ian (SAHFI) grant of \$19,283,318.00 to construct the wastewater treatment plant. No public comment was offered.

The William Tyson Wastewater Treatment Plant is the oldest plant in the State with “operational challenges caused by infrastructure deficiencies,” as noted by City Engineer Manny Perez. During the past eight years, Hurricanes Irma in 2017, Ian in 2022, Helene and Milton in 2024, have impacted the plant, and it has suffered “sanitary sewer overflows into Peace River.” FDEP has issued a “consent order requiring improvements to meet current requirements and parameters.”

Of the five options considered, the City chose to build a new membrane bioreactor (MBR) Treatment Facility, with equalization tanks to increase peak capacity to five million gallons, with new UltraViolet (UV) disinfection, headworks (including coarse screening, grit removal, and influent pumps), new site electrical and piping plus drainage improvements. The new MBR will be located on the Public Works site west and across Parker Ave. from the current plant, so that it can continue to function as the rest of the plant is upgraded. Total cost of the new plant is estimated at \$45 million with no impact to the tax payers because of “funding partners.”

ACTION ITEMS

The Council approved the agreement for \$1,057,980.00—funded by the Florida Dept. of Commerce (FDOC)—with General Underground, LLC, for the Arcadia Airport Water Main Extension project. In addition, for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Stormwater and Flood Control grant project affecting Jordan Branch, the Council ratified FDOC’s request for a delegation-of-authority letter for the City Administrator to act as the Certifying Officer, “responsible for certifying expenditure and compliance documents related to CDBG funds including environmental reviews and release of funding request.”

In preparation for future hurricanes, the Council ratified the first amendment to Request For Proposals (RFP) 2022-02 for Emergency Debris Removal and Disposal Services with Ceres Environmental Services, Inc., extending the original 2022 three-year contract for the first of two 12-month extensions. In addition, the Council approved the second amendment for RFP 2021-01 Emergency Debris Monitoring Services



Serving as one of the City’s engineers, Manny Perez of George F. Young, Inc., presented the background and plans for the new wastewater treatment plant during a public hearing at the start of the Aug. 5 Council meeting.



Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland presented a certificate of appreciation to Matthew “Mark” Rowe in appreciation of his five years of dedicated service to the City.



Speaking to the Council about the Historic Preservation Commission’s (HPC) denial of a certificate of appropriateness for the demolition of the historic home at 147 S. Sumter Ave., were the following, from left: HPC Member Linda Williams, Ryan Compton of BHL Federal, “a family-owned and operated company that specializes in emergency management construction contracting” (bhlffederal.com), Andrea Lavin, Homeowner Maria Cano-Nievas, and Lori Ward. City Attorney T.J. Wohl offered to explain the appeal process to them after the meeting.



City Resident John Bois asked the Council for action against unleashed dogs in the neighborhood after his kitten and another cat in his neighborhood were killed.

with Landfall Strategies, LLC, for emergency debris monitoring services, for the second of two 12-month extensions of the initial 2021 three-year contract.

The Council adopted Resolution 2025-27 for a revolving credit loan with Truist Bank, not to exceed \$2 million. “The revolving credit loan allows for draws as needed and loan principal repayment at any time without a penalty” to help with cash flow as many of the City’s grant-funded infrastructure projects are reimbursements.

long-term disability—with Florida Blue as well as the dental and vision insurance benefits with The Standard. The health insurance renewal has an increase of three percent and the dental insurance four percent with all other insurances continuing at the same rate as last year. As in the past, the insurance carriers will pay the primary agent commission of two percent. Human Resources Director Patty Coram said of City Administrator Beth Carsten, she “is a tough-as-nails negotiator.”

The inspection report by White General Constructors, Inc., for 116

N. Monroe Ave. was discussed. The \$170,000.00 estimate includes the demolition of the two-story addition, “constructed at a later date” that is causing the rear of the home to sag because no additional foundation support was built. Some parts of the home—including the exterior siding and trim plus the “original heart pine, tongue-and-groove wood floors” are in good condition. The Council approved spending up to \$10,000.00 to clean up the “debris, furniture, clothing, trash, etc., inside the house.

The Council approved the proposed 2026-2027 legislative priorities: property taxes, water quality and infrastructure, enterprise fund transfers and utility surcharges, Community Redevelopment Areas (CRAs), and preserving local home rule authority. Legislative project requests—also ratified—include \$3 million for the solids processing for the new wastewater plant as the City already received \$3 million in state appropriations; \$750,000.00 for the planning and design phase to reconstruct the stormwater system on N. Mills Ave. and restore the roadway;

COUNCIL REVIEWS PROPOSED 2026 BUDGET



The City’s antique 1924 LaFrance Fire Truck needs a new engine, brakes, and other improvements. It is displayed annually at the DeSoto County Historical Society’s Annual Pioneer Day scheduled for March 28, 2026, at the Turner Agri-Civic Center.



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Photos provided*

The Council met on Aug. 5 to review the changes in the proposed 2026 budget and approve it as the tentative budget for adoption at the Sept. 4 public hearing. Hot topics were property insurance, credit card fees, and restoration of the City’s antique fire engine.

City Administrator Beth Carsten reported that an updated appraisal of the City’s assets revealed raised valuations, so the property needs to be insured at a higher amount. Preferred Government Insurance Trust (PGIT) suggested a 10% increase. PGIT “is a member owned, non-assessable insurance risk pool . . . [with] unmatched public entity experience, integrity, stability, and personalized service” (pit.org).

However, Carsten contacted the Florida League of Cities for an estimate from the Florida Municipal Insurance Trust (FMIT) which was \$100,000.00 less than PGIT with no commission assessed. “The FMIT, governed by elected officials, is a non-assessable local government risk-sharing pool. It provides insurance services for approximately 500 public entities in Florida, of which over 250 are

municipalities” (insurance.flcities.com/home/about-us). She said she will update the Council about the issue.

Keene questioned again the City paying \$75,000.00 in credit card fees. He said, “I can’t justify spending that kind of money . . . for someone else’s convenience.” Finance Director Teresa Conerly assured the Council that charging the customer the standard 3% “convenience fee” is as easy as turning on a switch, and the Council may choose to do that.

In the meantime, staff is contacting customers who use credit cards—especially for the larger bills—and some have been willing to change to Automated Clearing House (ACH) aka electronic money transfers. Other customers have agreed to use autopay, an automatic deduction from an individual’s checking, savings, or money market account to pay a recurring bill in time to meet the payment due date.

A lengthy discussion involved restoration of the City’s antique 1924 LaFrance fire engine estimated at \$71,800.00. The DeSoto County Fire Dept. had raised \$8,000.00 for the project, so the Council matched that amount in its budget. Council Member Keith Keene also suggested that the City

“take leadership and initiate a fundraiser ourselves.” When Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland commented that the Arcadia Main Street organization may help out, Keene said that area “civic and fraternal-type organizations” may also be willing to help with funds for the restoration.

Wertz-Strickland asked about 12th Ave. and E. Oak St., especially as E. Oak St. has suffered from heavy traffic avoiding the construction on E. Hickory and E. Magnolia Streets (aka State Road (SR) 70). Council Member Bob Heine, Jr., noted that E. Oak St. needed repairs even before the construction began.

Carsten reported that the lift station was installed on 12th Ave., so now the paving will be completed. As for E. Oak St., the current underground project involving sewer and water lines will be from Osceola to Mills Ave.; however, no utilities are under E. Oak St. from Mills Ave. to Roger Ave., so that portion may be repaved. In addition, the portion between U.S. Highway 17 and Osceola Ave. may also be paved.

Marshal Quinn Jones said that no semi-trucks have been driving east on Oak St., and he encouraged Council members to call him if they witnessed one doing so. He also plans to add stop signs to slow traffic down as he did on many

of the W. Oak St. intersections. Carsten said that the W. Oak St. stop signs “have made a big difference.”

Deputy Mayor Luis Velasco asked about lighting for E. Oak St., and Carsten said that current plans are for downtown lights. Interestingly, the budget for “state-road street and traffic lights” and “other street lights” was decreased by \$15,500.00.

The Human Resources budget decreased \$4554.00 because of a duplicate entry, and the expenses for the golf course increased by \$7800.00 because of two items accidentally omitted: “a range ball washer and a ball picker.” In addition, another mower is needed for Oak Ridge Cemetery (two @ \$9,850.00) plus \$15,000.00 for repairs/improvements bringing that dept.’s capital outlay to \$39,700.00.

Conerly also presented the Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan (2026-2030). Carsten said that it does not affect the 2026 budget, but it does allow the Council to consider what equipment and materials will be needed by each department in the near future.



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DESOTO FOOTBALL STARTS TOMORROW WITH KICK-OFF CLASSIC



STEVE KNAPP
Sports Writer
sports@peacerrivershopper.com

Year two of the Cliff Lohrey era at DeSoto County kicks off tomorrow at SWFI Christian Academy in Fort Myers. The regular season begins on August 22 at home against Okeechobee. It will be the 5th year in a row that the Bulldogs have squared up against the Brahmas in the season opener. DeSoto won the first two but lost the last two games.

Lightening strikes have forced the Bulldogs to practice inside to run plays either in the locker room or hallways. These walkthroughs allow the players and coaches the opportunity to make sure they know their assignments.



REGULAR SEASON SCHEDULE

AUG 22 HOME.....	OKEECHOBEE	OCT 3 AT.....	SOUTHEAST
AUG 29 AT.....	AVON PARK	OCT 10 HOME....	MULBERRY
SEPT 5 AT.....	CENTRAL	OCT 17 AT.....	LAKE PLACID
SEPT 12 HOME.....	LABELLE	OCT 24 AT.....	HARDEE
SEPT 19 HOME.....	IDA BAKER	OCT 31 HOME....	PALMETTO RIDGE
SEPT 26	BYE WEEK		



CROSS COUNTRY OPENS SEASON AT HOME TUESDAY



STEVE KNAPP
Sports Writer
sports@peacerivershopper.com

The DeSoto Cross Country team has their only home meet of the season next Tuesday at Morgan Park. The varsity teams will start at approximately 5 pm. They will also compete in the Lemon Bay Invitational on Saturday August 23. They had a grueling workout as they practice in the heat at Morgan Park earlier this week.



DESOTO FLAG BLOWS OUT BARTOW 33-0



STEVE KNAPP
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The DeSoto flag football team put on a good show for the fans who were at their game last Saturday. They ran all over the Bartow Yellowjackets 33-0. They scored in every quarter and did so quickly. They scored on their first possession in just one play. It took two plays to score on their second possession and the rout was on. The offensive line did a good job opening holes for the running backs.



Remy Aguilar scores the first touchdown for the Bulldogs in their 33-0 win over Bartow.



FLAG
FROM PAGE 5 >>

The 2025
DeSoto Flag
football team.



These players scored a touchdown in the 33-0 romp over Bartow. Back row: Brant Schueneman, Remy Aguilar, Christian Unruh. Front row: MJ Omar and Owen Bellflower.



Brant Schueneman looks over his shoulder at two Bartow players after his long touchdown run.



MJ Omar outruns the Yellowjackets defense on a 45 yard touchdown run.



Christian Unruh is off on a touchdown run in the 33-0 win over Bartow.



SFSC ELEMENTARY TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM RANKED AMONG HIGHEST IN FLORIDA



AVON PARK, Fla. – Aug. 7, 2025 – South Florida State College’s (SFSC) Bachelor of Science in Elementary Teacher Education (BSETE) program earned a 3.7 out of 4.0 on the Florida Department of Education’s Annual Program Performance Report (APPR) for 2025.

Among all Elementary Education, ESOL, and Reading programs reviewed, only five Florida institutions scored higher than SFSC, placing the program among the top teacher preparation programs in the state.

The APPR evaluates teacher preparation programs on several key measures of quality:

- **Candidate Readiness:** This category assesses certification exam pass rates. SFSC scored Level 4 (highest level), reflecting outstanding performance on the Florida Teacher Certification Examinations.
- **Workforce Contribution:** This aspect tracks graduate employment in teaching. SFSC scored Level 4, with all graduates employed in the teaching profession and additional weighting awarded because SFSC’s degree prepares teachers in a designated high-need area.



- **Annual Evaluations:** This section is based on employer evaluations of recent graduates. SFSC scored Level 3, with 100% of completers rated Effective or Highly Effective by their districts.

These results affirm the excellence of SFSC’s faculty, staff, and graduates, and highlight the program’s strong role

in preparing highly qualified teachers for Florida’s schools.

“The program’s success is a result of the dedication of BSETE professors and adjuncts whose enthusiasm for teaching empowers our student teachers to change lives,” said Dr. Maday Leon, lead instructor for BSETE. “We will continue to support our communities by developing

effective educators.”

For more information about SFSC’s BSETE program, contact Dr. Leon at leonm@southflorida.edu or 863-784-7154.

CLASS OF RADIOLOGIC TECHNOLOGISTS GRADUATE FROM SFSC



AVON PARK, Fla. – July 30, 2025 – On Thursday, July 24, South Florida State College (SFSC) honored 10 of its graduates in a traditional pinning ceremony on the College’s Highlands Campus in Avon Park. The graduates have earned their Associate in Science (A.S.) in Radiography.

The graduates honored were: Alma Bacon, Madison Deer, George Gomez, Sonia Hernandez, Ashlee Jackson, Amanda Kennedy, Sandra Lopez-Gonzalez, Alyssa Perez, Guadalupe Salgado, and Gemi Saunders.

Upon completing SFSC’s two-year A.S. degree in Radiography, graduates can work as certified radiologic technologists by passing the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (ARRT) national examination. Radiologic technologists work in hospitals and clinics performing diagnostic imaging



examinations, such as X-rays. For information about SFSC’s

Radiography program, contact Danielle Nuccio, Health Sciences advisor,

at 863-784-7027 or by email at healthsciences@southflorida.edu.

GRANT

FROM PAGE 2 >>

half million for design and construction of a green infrastructure project to “improve water management, reduce flooding, and enhance the long-term environmental and economic resilience of Arcadia’s downtown.”

IN OTHER BUSINESS

Council Member Bob Heine advocated that City employees be given the same holidays as County employees, and so Heine, Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland, Deputy Mayor Luis Velasco, and Council Member Dee Washington voted to give Presidents Day and Columbus Day as holidays. Council Member Keith Keene was opposed.

Under the Consent Agenda, the Council approved special event permits for Azteca Promotions to stage a parade to celebrate the Independence of Mexico from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Sept. 14 on Oak St. from the intersection with Orange Ave. to Volusia Ave., with Volusia being closed between E. Oak St. and Magnolia St. (aka State Road 70).

DeSoto High School also received a special event permit for the Homecoming Parade from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Oct. 10 on Oak St. from the intersection with Orange Ave. to Volusia Ave.

COMMENTS FROM DEPTS.

City Marshal Quinn Jones reported in the Citrus/Myrtle area a “home



Although the City dedicated the Coach Fred Carter Pavilion on July 25, Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland read and then presented the proclamation to Fred Carter’s Widow, Charlotte Hill Carter, and her daughter Romona Carter Gollman. Carter referred to herself as a “hometown girl,” and thanked the mayor and council for the honor given to her husband.

invasion robbery” on July 11 and on Serena Dr. a “domestic aggravated assault with deadly weapon” on Aug. 1.

City Attorney T. J. Wohl noted that the same Miami Law Firm that invited cities to join a lawsuit against Form 6 is now inviting cities to oppose SB180 that prohibits local governments from making more burdensome regulations following Tropical Storm Debbie as well as Hurricanes Helene and Milton from Aug. 2024 until Oct. 2027. The Council declined to participate.

Airport Director Shelley Peacock reported a busy Taco Tuesday, and even though the grass runway was open, no one used it. Fox 4 News covered the event with the opening, “How far would you go for a good taco?” The rehabilitation of the ramp is underway. She advocated for the remote-control

Ashley Brown, community outreach coordinator for the School District, reported on the day’s activities: a convocation for new and returning teachers plus a ground-breaking for the new high school.



jet club meeting once a month. She said that the Taco Tuesday event is good for pilots, and this club will be good for families. She suggested first Saturdays since the kids are there for the Young Eagles program.

Golf Course Director Jeff Gibson said that the course was in good shape and that the irrigation system is helping in the hot and dry weather. He is looking forward to the start of school and the high school teams practicing.

With every generation,

we get better at protecting our environment.

Reclamation ecologists like Ashlee work to return mined lands to productive use as wildlife habitats, public parks and more—so future generations can enjoy these lands for years to come.

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES:

FAITH THAT ACTUALLY MOVES (JAMES 2:19-26 NLT)

PASTOR ABDIEL FUENTES

First Christian Church of Arcadia
DeSoto County Ministerial Association

Saving faith is faith that actually moves. It doesn't hide in your head or your heart—it shows up in how you speak and in how you treat others. It doesn't wait for convenience; it moves toward the poor, the messy, the marginalized. It demands mercy, not preference. If love for your neighbor is nothing more than empty prayers or sending good vibes, that isn't love at all—it's just sanctimonious talk. If your "faith" rolls out the red carpet for the rich but ignores the poor, that's not awkward; that's evil. It's not insensitive, it's sin. Don't you see, God chooses the poor to be rich in faith. So, what are you doing? Why do you honor the rich?

That's why James dismantles the lie that belief alone saves when he says: What good is it if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? No, that kind of faith is dead. Suppose

you believe in all the right things but never spur into action; that's not saving faith—it's worthless jargon. Even demons believe in Jesus, but they are not moved to submission, surrender, or obedience.

Paul said we're justified by faith apart from the works of the law—meaning the Law of Moses—a system of governance given to the nation of Israel, packed with ceremonial rituals, dietary rules, and civil regulations—those are the works no longer required of you. Paul understood that saving faith is faith that actually moves. It requires obedience to the law of Christ and God's Law. That is why he said in 1 Corinthians 9:21: "When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ."

But faith? Faith takes effort. It listens. It surrenders. It obeys, just like when Abraham raised the knife and Rahab hid the spies—that was faith that actually moved. Don't kid yourself, faith takes work, and the only work God wants from you is to believe in the one he has sent (John 6:29). So, if you believe in Jesus and you say you love him, you are required to obey his commands (John 14:15).

Look, we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus and his completed work on the cross. Salvation has never been up for sale—you can't earn it, can't perform for it, and God's not impressed by your résumé. You can't twist God's arm with your morality. Good behavior is already expected of you—it's not extra credit, so you've got nothing to barter with. You can't even impress God—your good deeds are like filthy rags before the Lord. But God is sovereign,

above all, and Lord of all, and he is love. He saves because he wants to, not because he has to. And that's the beauty—He's made a way to redeem you through Jesus: crucified, risen, and reigning. Out of his own free will, his sovereignty—God saves because he loves you.

So what's the takeaway? Faith without works is just dead religion. Faith that actually moves is the only kind of faith worth having. God wants action. If your faith never makes you break a sweat, never opens your wallet, never risks your comfort, never forgives your enemy, never serves the poor—it's dead. And you need to change that. Pray for opportunities to live out your faith.

And Paul would agree: "What is important is faith expressing itself in love" (Galatians 5:6, NLT).



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From all of us at Florida Power & Light Company, we're wishing DeSoto County students, teachers and families a great school year ahead.

We believe in the power of education to transform lives. That's why we're proud to support STEM programs, invest in classrooms and support the educators who are shaping the next generation of leaders.

Here's to a safe, successful and inspiring school year ahead!





OBITUARIES

EULA BELL PEEPLES



Eula Bell Peeples, age 75, passed away on Friday, July 11, 2025, in Arcadia, Florida. She was born in Ozark, Alabama, on March 17, 1950, to the late L. D. Strickland and Frances Elizabeth Watts.

She has lived in the community for 74 years, and graduated from DeSoto County High School. She was a Certified Nursing Assistant working at GPW Memorial Hospital, and then at DeSoto Manor Nursing Home. Afterwards, she joined the family Electrical Business, Strickland Electric.

Sue was a force of nature, a true Alabama fan "Roll Tide". Her hands

were always busy creating or holding the newest released books. She had an intense love for books and reading, and fishing at the Boca Grande Phosphate Docks. You would always catch her outside, nurturing her plants. Her grandchildren were her life, and she found joy in crafting.

Sue is survived by her husband, Michael C. Peeples. She is also survived by her two sons, Rusty (Jennifer) McCall and Rowdy McCall; sisters Cindy Skinner, Donnell (Jerry) Huckaby; brothers Frank (Priscilla) Strickland, and David (Patsy) Strickland. Her grandchildren are Logan (Alyssa) McCall, Mackenzie

McCall, Dylan McCall, Caylee (Cody) Gray, Carl (Kayla) Keller, Jenna Mobley, Kyle McCall, and Kyan McCall.

She was preceded in death by her Mother, Frances E. Strickland, and Father, Lewis D. Strickland.

There will be a Celebration of Life at a later date. Online condolences may be made at: www.pongerkaysgrady.com

Ponger-Kays-Grady Funeral Homes & Cremation Services have been entrusted with the arrangements.

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth,
As it is in heaven.
Give us this day,
our daily bread.
And forgive us
our trespasses,
As we forgive them that
trespass against us.
And lead us not
into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
The power, and the glory,
For ever and ever. Amen.



While I Breathe I Hope



DESOTO COUNTY
SHERIFF'S OFFICE



ARREST REPORT | 8/1/25 - 8/7/25

Corhn, Bobby:

Nonmoving Traffic Viol - Fail To Register Motor Veh

Davis, Devonte Dequane:

Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While Lic Suspend Revocation Equiv Status, Resist Officer - Obstruct Wo Violence

Eldridge, Jason:

Aggrav Battery - Aggrav Battery With A Deadly Weapon

Farabee Jr., Gary Dean:

Burgl - Burglary Dwelling/Structure/Conveyance Armed, Burgl - Burglary With Assault Or Battery, Aggrav Asslt - Weapon - W Deadly Weapon Without Intent To Kill

Gamble, Marvin Lewis:

Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While Lic Suspend Revocation Equiv Status, Resist Officer - Obstruct Wo Violence

Hernandez, David Galloso:

Moving Traffic Viol - Operate Motor Vehicle W/O Valid Lic 1St Conv

Luther, Jermonick Bernard:

Loitering - Or Prowling, Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use

Mendoza, Robert Lee:

Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While Lic Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

Milian-Morales, Tammy Sue:

Prob Violation - Prob Violation (X2)

Sambrano, Oscar Omar:

Moving Traffic Viol - Dwlsr Revocation Equiv Status 3Rd Sub Viol, Flee/Elude Police - Fail To Obey Leo Order To Stop, Obstructing Justice - Tamper W Evidence In Criminal Proceeding, Drugs-Possess - Possess Controlled Substance W/O Prescription (X2), Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use

Stewart, Morris Anthony:

Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While Lic Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

Villatoro, Kenedin Noe:

Moving Traffic Viol - Operate Motor Vehicle W/O Valid Lic 1St Conv

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NEWS FROM THE DESK OF SHERIFF POTTER

WE CAN'T STOP TALKING ABOUT THIS:
TIPS FOR KEEPING OUR KIDS SAFE IN THE DIGITAL AGE



SHERIFF POTTER
DeSoto County Sheriff

Dear DeSoto County,

We can't stop talking about how important it is to keep our children safe in our digital age. In this second article about how criminals can take advantage of us through the internet, we will discuss how these criminals can target our children and what you can do to prevent them from becoming victims. Parents and Children should stay alert because people aren't always who they seem to be in online environments where identity is easy to fake!! In our rapidly evolving digital age, the internet and social media have become integral to our daily lives, connecting us with loved ones, providing information and fostering community bonds. However, these technological advancements also come with significant risks that we must address together.

RIISING THREAT OF INTERNET CRIMES

Recent statistics reveal a concerning increase in internet crimes, including online scams, cyberbullying, and other malicious activities. The FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) reported a record 791,790 complaints of suspected internet crime in 2022,

with reported losses exceeding \$4.2 billion. Alarmingly, our youth are often targeted, making it essential to prioritize internet safety education for children and teens.

DESOTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE AND THE ICAC TASK FORCE

Several members of DCSO proudly participate in the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program (ICAC). This national network of law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies is dedicated to investigating and prosecuting individuals who exploit children online. Through ICAC, we are committed to promoting safe internet and social media use, especially for our younger community members.

SAFETY TIPS FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Parents and guardians play a crucial role in safeguarding their children's online experiences. Here are some essential tips to help protect your children:

- Open Communication:** Regularly discuss internet safety with your children. Encourage them to share their online experiences and address any concerns they may have.
- Education:** Teach children about the dangers of sharing personal information online and the risks of interacting with strangers.

- Supervision:** Monitor your child's internet use and be aware of the websites and apps they are accessing.
- Parental Controls:** Utilize parental control software to restrict access to inappropriate content and set time limits on internet usage.

PROTECTING EVERYONE ONLIN

It's not just children who are at risk; adults must also remain vigilant against cyber threats. Here are some practical steps to enhance your online security:

- Secure Passwords:** Regularly update your passwords, ensuring they are strong and unique.
- Beware of Phishing:** Be cautious of emails or messages from unknown sources asking for personal or financial information.
- Privacy Settings:** Adjust privacy settings on social media accounts to control who can see your information.
- Report Suspicious Activity:** Promptly report any suspicious online activity to the DCSO, 863-993-4700, to help protect our digital community.

BEING A PRO-ACTIVE PARENT OR GUARDIAN IS PREFERRED

Review games, apps, and social media sites before they are

downloaded or used by children. Pay particular attention to apps and sites that feature end-to-end encryption, direct messaging, video chats, file uploads, and user anonymity, which are frequently relied upon by online child predators.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

At DCSO, we are dedicated to fostering digital safety through educational and community outreach programs. These initiatives aim to equip our community with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate the online world safely. We encourage you to participate in these programs and stay informed about best practices for internet safety.

JOIN US IN PROMOTING A SAFE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

We urge everyone to help us promote a safe and secure digital environment. By staying informed and implementing responsible internet and social media practices, we can protect our children and ourselves from potential harm.

Be Safe, Be Kind, and God Bless.
Sheriff James Potter

HIGH SCHOOL

FROM PAGE 1 »

fund a new high school that was built in 1906, the first year that the Florida legislature added 12th grade. It was called the Arcadia Public School, and then later DeSoto County High School, and was used until the District built the third three-story high school on N. Orange Ave. in 1914. After part of its roof collapsed in 1990, it was demolished.

The Arcadia Public School then became a grammar school until West Elementary School—now the Family Service Center—was built in 1925. The old school was used variously, and then during the Great Depression, its renovation was one of President Franklin Roosevelt’s “Neal Deal” projects. Under the Works Progress Administration (1935-1043), the tower and second story were removed, and the structure was reroofed as a one-story cafeteria and gymnasium. In 1992, the district renovated it as the “annex” for the Family Service Center.

In 1978, a new one-story high school was built at the corner of Turner Ave. and Roan St., and School Board Member Asena Mott noted that the groundbreaking ceremony for that structure in Nov. 1976 included School Board Members Aurin Collins, James Westberry, and Jim Brewer—related to current Board Members, respectively, as grandfather of Mott, father of Karen Chancey, and grandfather of Board Attorney Cole Brewer. She also wrote, “All of our board members, the superintendent, and our board attorney graduated from DeSoto High School, so we all have an especially vested interest in this project.”

The new school was designed by Rene Tercilla of PBK Architects, recommended by the facilities director of the Sarasota County School District (SCSD). Sarasota worked with Pasco County School District to conduct the “critical need” assessment of DeSoto County schools for the Florida Dept. of Education. In addition, the design follows the SMART designation: Soundly Made, Accountable, Reasonable and Thrifty, as detailed in Florida Statutes 1013.41 passed in 2024.

Also attending the ceremony were Florida Rep. Vanessa Oliver and Former Lt Governor Jeff Kottkamp, who said that the design is a model for school buildings. He serves as executive vice-president and general counsel for Florida Tax Watch, “Florida’s premier, independent nonpartisan, nonprofit government watchdog and taxpayer research institute” floridatwatch.org.

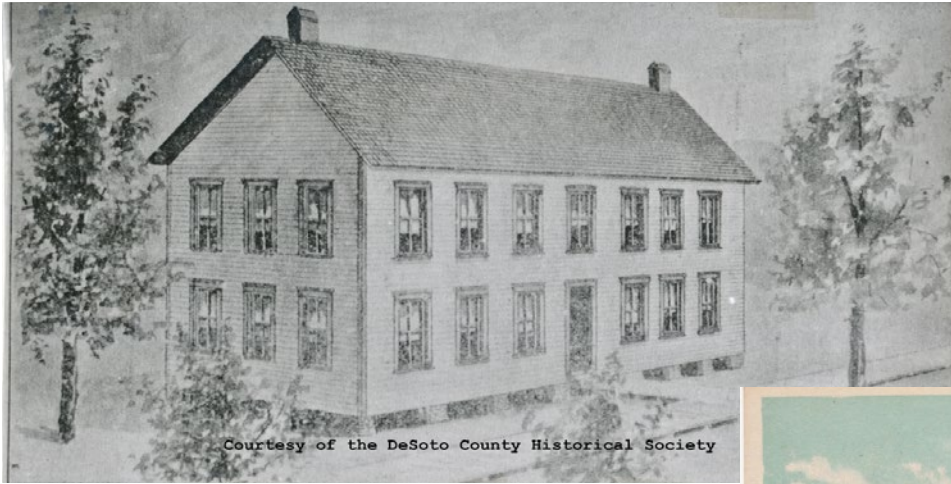
“We have been so blessed,” Bennett said. Acquisition of 20 acres adjacent to the current high school saved the purchase of additional acreage for the new structure. The old high school that was damaged in Hurricane Ian will be renovated for use as the middle school.

School Board Member Dr. Sharon Goodman wrote, “The new school is going to be cutting edge, offering so much more than just the academic curriculum to prepare students for college or university. This facility will allow us to expand currently offered



This sign displayed the design concept for the new school at the ground-breaking ceremony for the County’s fifth high school funded by the Florida legislature.

The fourth high school built at the corner of Turner Ave. and Roan St. opened for students on Aug. 28, 1978, as announced on the front page of Section B of “The Arcadian” newspaper.

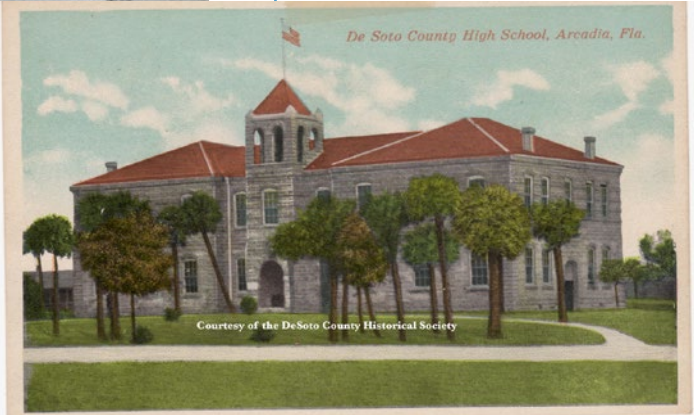


The first wood-frame, two-story high school was located north of the present U.S. post office. When the new high school was built in 1906, the old school was renovated and was used as the Central Hotel.

City funds built the second two-story DeSoto County High School that was later reroofed as a one-story cafeteria/gymnasium and then renovated as the Family Service Center Annex.



The third DeSoto County High School was built on N. Orange Ave. in 1914 and stood until part of the roof collapsed in 1990 and demolition followed. A monument now marks its location.



From left, Deputy Superintendent Dr. Jake Reynolds and Superintendent Dr. Bobby Bennett at the ground-breaking ceremony for the new high school on Aug. 5.



School District Staff paused with shovels full of dirt, from left: School Board Members Asena Mott, Karen Chancey, and Jami Schueneman, Dr. Amy Bennett, Superintendent Dr. Bobby Bennet, Deputy Superintendent Dr. Jake Reynolds, High School Principal Dr. Joshua White, plus School Board Members Kelli Mercer and Dr. Sharon Goodman.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes designed to prepare our students to go directly from high school into the workforce with certifications: programs such as nursing, cosmetology, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), and Microsoft

certifications to name a few. . . . I commend Dr. Bobby Bennett for leading the charge in making this happen for our community.”
Board Member Jami Schueneman noted, “I am excited for this new chapter

for DeSoto County Schools, and grateful for everyone who has worked so hard to make this dream come true for our students and our district.”

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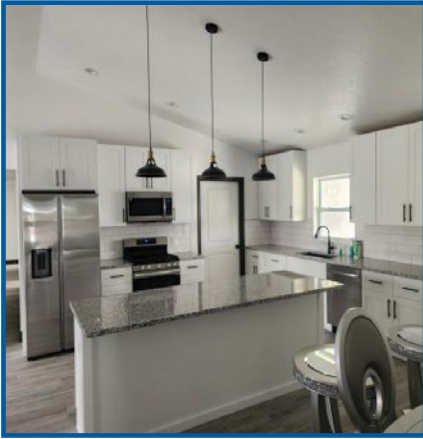
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WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell

something pertaining to agriculture.

D

E

F

E

Answer: Feed

GUESS WHO ?

I am singer born in England on February 13,

1974. I liked performing while I was in

primary school. I went on to join a popular

boy band in 1990 that had many hits. My

friend Elton John helped me face by

substance abuse problems, and I've

turned my life around.

Answer: Robbie Williams

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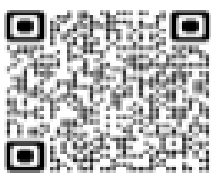
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