

# ARCADIA THE COMMUNITY

APRIL 30, 2026

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# Local

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY HOSTS MUSEUM GRAND RE-OPENING



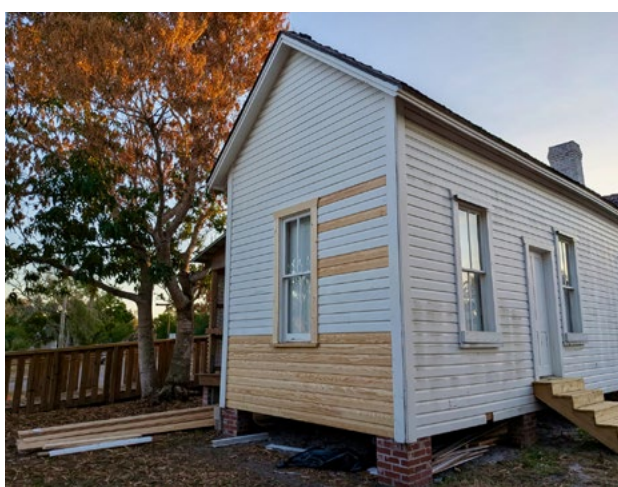
**DESOTO COUNTY SPORTS**  
PAGE 4  
STEVE KNAPP  
sports@peacerrivershopper.com



After Hurricane Charley and during the restoration funded by the State of Florida, Division of Historic Resources, wood shingles were installed on the roof, and when JSC Roofing stripped them off, the original purlins were revealed. Photograph courtesy of Carol Mahler



**CAROL MAHLER**  
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Photos provided



As lumber dimensions have changed since the nineteenth century, R.D. Welch Company ordered custom-cut boards to repair the siding on the John Morgan Ingraham House Museum. Photograph courtesy of Carol Mahler.

You're invited to the DeSoto County Historical Society's Grand Re-Opening of—and Ribbon Cutting for—the John Morgan Ingraham House Museum at 10:00 a.m. on May 1 at 300 N. Monroe Ave., in celebration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The Society is also appreciating the completion of a new roof by JCS Roofing as well as siding repair and fresh paint by R. D. Welch Company. Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland will be the guest speaker, and light refreshments will be served.

In 1919, John Morgan Ingraham (1883-1980) and his wife Maude Stribling Ingraham (1883-1929) bought the house at the corner of N. Monroe Ave. and W. Whidden St., built in the late 1800s by Robert Early Whidden (1866-1951)—a cattleman, citrus grower, and business-man. The Ingraham family enclosed the south porch with a wooden lattice and installed a bathtub

and commode in one corner, but the original house design remained essentially unchanged.

Mr. Ingraham was an entrepreneur who owned and operated the Ingraham Seed House, first in a downtown location and then adjacent to his home.

SEE MUSEUM PAGE 12 >>



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## GOVERNMENT MEETING SCHEDULE

**CITY OF ARCADIA**  
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

<b>MAY 5</b>	<b>DESOTO COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING</b>
<b>TUES 5:30P</b>	<b>Administration Building</b> 201 E. Oak Street, Suite 103 Arcadia, FL 34266
<b>MAY 12</b>	<b>DESOTO COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING</b>
<b>TUES 9A</b>	<b>Administration Building</b> 201 E. Oak Street, Suite 103 Arcadia, FL 34266
<b>MAY 26</b>	<b>DESOTO COUNTY SPECIAL MASTER HEARING</b>
<b>TUES 11A</b>	<b>Administration Building</b> 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 13

**DESOTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**  **ARREST REPORT**  
..... See page 15

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Jonathan Bruch

# BURN BAN STAYS, FIRE TRAINING TOWER PURCHASED



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Photos provided

Past and present residents of the Fort Ogden community will celebrate the 131st “May Day” Picnic at noon on May 3 in Ziba King Memorial Recreation Park, 6895 SW Georgia St., about ten miles south of Arcadia.

Trish Howard, organizer of the “May Day” Picnic, asked those who attend to bring a covered dish as well as a cash donation to help pay for renting the park and purchasing picnic supplies and the meat. Sheriff Jim Potter and Michelle Potter are donating the iced tea and water. The dinner will begin at 1:00 p.m., and although the park has some picnic tables, Howard also requests attendees to bring their own table and chairs.

Traditionally, the picnic has included music with many pioneers playing instruments and singing hymns until dusk. Families have also enjoyed playing yard games and delighted in the playground. The “May Day” Picnic is traditionally an “opportunity to visit and get to know each other and to learn about the rich history of Fort Ogden.”

## HISTORY OF MAY DAY

Originally, May Day was a holiday to celebrate the return of spring evolving from ancient Greek and Roman agricultural rituals. Different cultures celebrated various festivities, but most “include the gathering of wildflowers and green branches, the weaving of floral garlands, the crowning of a May king and queen, and the setting up of a decorated May tree, or Maypole, around which people dance” (britannica.com). People believed these activities would guarantee fertility for crops, livestock, and humans. The New England Puritans judged such customs as pagan and immoral, so they outlawed the holiday. Thus, it was not adopted by U.S. communities.

In 1889, “an international federation of socialist groups and trade unions” designated May 1 as the commemoration of the Haymarket



At last year’s “May Day” picnic, the covered dish dinner was served in the pavilion, and those attending sat at tables and chairs they brought and set up beneath the oaks in the Ziba King Memorial Recreation Park.



Riot of 1886: the violent confrontation between police and labor protesters calling for an eight-hour work day at the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company in Chicago.

Dismayed by the Socialist’s involvement in choosing May 1 as “Workers Day” or “International Workers Day,” voters called on legislators to honor workers with a federal holiday. Inspired by New York City’s unions celebrating their members with a parade in 1882, “Labor Day” on the first Mon. in Sept. was celebrated as a state holiday by Colorado, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and Oregon by 1887. President Grover Cleveland signed the federal holiday into law in 1897.

## HISTORY OF FORT OGDEN’S MAY DAY PICNIC

In the “News from Fort Ogden,” published in the May 9, 1968, “Arcadian,” Mrs. G. H. Mercer wrote, “The Fort Ogden Annual May Day Homecoming was started by Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Martin in 1896. Mr. and Mrs. Martin came from Oxford, Florida, where it was the custom to have a May Day Homecoming. The Martins enjoyed it so much, they organized one for Fort Ogden with the help of their many friends.

“The first meeting in 1896 began with a small group gathered down by the river bridge. The Annual Picnic continued

until the [second] World War, when it had to be discontinued because of gas rationing. A number of years later, it was resumed through the efforts of the ladies in the [Fort Ogden] Home Demonstration Club as the result of a motion by Mrs. Minnie Barnwell and Mrs. Roberta Thornton. A few years ago, the place of meeting was changed to King Park.”

True to its name, the “May Day” picnic was traditionally held on May 1, and many old-timers remembered missing school to participate in the event. It was eventually scheduled for the first Sunday in May to make it easier for everyone to attend.



From left, almost a decade ago, Trish Howard accepted the position of organizer of the “May Day” Picnic (aka “mayor of Fort Ogden”) from Irma Hay, and Howard said she welcomes anyone to join the planning committee.



From left, Don Robertson sat beside Faye Collins, who brought a collection of historic photographs in an album that Asena Mott and others enjoyed. Daughter of Alton Lanier and Josephine Lanier, Collins said she attended first through 8th grades in the old red-brick Fort Ogden School, now a private residence.

The 131st Annual “May Day” Picnic will be held on May 3 at the Ziba King Memorial Recreation Park, 6895 SW Georgia St., about ten miles south of Arcadia. The park property—including the King family cemetery—was donated to the County in 1955 by King’s granddaughters Hazel King Fish and Zoe King Lykes.

# COUNCIL HOLDS PUBLIC HEARING FOR SIDEWALKS GRANT



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Photos provided

Before the meeting on Apr. 21, the Council held a public hearing on the application to the Florida Dept. of Commerce for a Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to repair and replace sidewalks through the City. “The construction cost for this

project is estimated at \$1,479,000.00,” and engineering services “will bring the estimated amount to around \$2 million.”

According to the grant requirements, the sidewalks to be repaired or replaced must be located in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods where they will increase access and walkability in the City and provide a “City-wide benefit.” The six project areas are 1.) Martin Luther King, Jr., St.; 2.) Orange Ave. from MLK St. to Whidden St.; 3.) Orange Ave. and Whidden St. around West Elementary School and the Family

Services Center to Gibson St.; 4.) Gibson St. from West Elementary School to the high school; 5.) N. Robert Ave. to the professional medical offices, hospital, and rehab/nursing home; and 6.) both W. and E. Oak St..

Council Member Dee Washington questioned the need for sidewalks on Martin Luther King St. as he felt they had had some attention in recent years. Council Member Bob Heine, Jr., said that even \$2 million is not enough to fix every sidewalk in the City. In addition, the Council had allocated \$200,000.00

in the budget to repair sidewalks, and City Administrator Beth Carsten said that Public Works Director Steve Underwood is working on estimates for repairing or replacing some “shorter areas” of sidewalks.

Council Member Keith Keene congratulated staff on doing a great job with the grant application in meeting its certain specifications, and he acknowledge that the Council has

# COUNCIL APPROVES JORDAN BRANCH BOX CULVERTS CONTRACT



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Photos provided

The Council approved the agreement of \$4,625,196.99 with EZ Contracting, LLC, for the Tributary F (aka Jordan Branch) Box Culvert Replacement funded by a grant from the Florida Dept. of Commerce Community Development Block Grant for Mitigation (CDBG-MIT). In addition, the Council authorized George F. Young, Inc., to perform Construction Engineering and Inspection (CEI) services for the Tributary F Box Culverts Replacement Project for an amount not to exceed \$150,000.00 funded by the City.

In addition, Andrew Sitework (ASW) is currently replacing existing water and sewer lines throughout the City, and the milling and overlay for roadways were underestimated. For the additional milling and overlay needed to complete the project, ASW has agreed to a 30% reduction in the bid price for those items, and the work will be performed under the existing agreement with 90% principal forgiveness. The Council approved Change Order 3 for the \$688,875.00 increase to the contract raising the total amount to \$14,387,381.76.

## IN OTHER BUSINESS

The Council desires an updated analysis for the original 1982 study to determine which structures in the Arcadia Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places since 1984, are still contributing, so City Administrator Beth Carsten presented two estimates—from Terracon Consultants, Inc., and Downtown Redevelopment Services. The Council approved the agreement for \$11,750.00 with Terracon: \$8,750.00 for “a desktop analysis using data from the 1984 study and 2025 update” plus an additional \$3,000.00 for the area that was not included in the 2025 update: roughly bounded by Hillsborough Ave to the west, East Cypress St. to the north, Mills Ave. to the east, and Pine St. to the south.

According to Council Member Keith Keene, in 2024, the City changed from running municipal elections to contracting with the County Supervisor of Elections for those services to save money. The Council ratified the agreement with the County Office for election services for municipal elections as an annual contract that automatically renews each year unless either party provides written notice at least nine months before a scheduled election. The previous annual fee was \$4,000.00; under this agreement, the annual fee will be \$5,000.00.

For funding the new wastewater treatment plant, the Council approved



School District Outreach Coordinator Ashley Brown announced, among other events, the YMCA’s “healthy kids day” when families may also sign up for summer camp from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on May 1 at the Turner Center.

Council Member Keith Keene, also a member of Arcadia Elks Lodge 1524, accepted the proclamation of May 1-7, 2026, as “Elks National Youth Week” from Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland and encouraged the community to support youth programs.



Amendment 1 for the State Revolving Fund (SRF) Supplemental Appropriation for Hurricanes Fiona and Ian (SAHFI) loan agreement with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), updating certain sections to current language used in the City’s federally funded agreements.

The June 19, 2018, Commercial Lease with Wingman Aviation, LLC, was first amended by the Council on Dec. 1, 2018, for the “property” a 6,000 square foot metal building commonly referred to as the “Maintenance Hangar” and the paved area approximately 100 feet X 100 feet in size immediately in front of the Maintenance Hangar. The recent completed Apron Rehabilitation & Expansion Project has taken approximately 50 feet for a taxi lane, and with Wingman Aviation’s increased operations, they needed more aircraft tie-down parking spaces. So the Council also ratified the Third Amendment adding two more aircraft tie-down parking spaces for a total of five: spaces 5, 10, 11, 23, and 24.

Under the Consent Agenda, the Council approved the special event permit for Crews Bank and Trust to hold their annual employee soft softball game from 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., May 2, at the Jim Space Park, aka North Arcadia Ave. Complex.

## COMMENTS FROM DEPTS.

Assistant City Marshal Gary Evans commented briefly on the “double homicide” that happened on Friday, “a very sad situation,” he said. He was grateful that Vetrina Burns has worked more than 20 years for the Arcadia Police Dept. as the Victims Advocate.

Speaking as a concerned citizen, Ashley Brown encouraged the Council

to form “a domestic violence task force to bring together law enforcement, the courts, schools, and community organizations” to improve education about—and awareness of—domestic violence. “We have an opportunity to turn this moment of tragedy into meaningful change for our community,” she said. In his comments, Keene said that the Health Dept., where he worked for many years, is also concerned about domestic violence, and he asked Brown to bring back a proposal to the Council.

Senior Code Enforcement Office Naomi Lantz reported that she is managing 246 cases and 10 are scheduled for the special master hearing on Apr. 30.

Carsten said that Gibson St. will be paved on Monday, and the construction at McSwain Park is complete. She will also submit the first draft of the “consent order” to the Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and will meet with them on Apr. 30. When it is accepted, then the City may apply for the building permit for the wastewater treatment plant.

Debra Clifton resigned from the Planning and Zoning Board, and Deputy Mayor Luis Velasco suggested a person who works for the Property Appraiser. City Attorney T. J. Wohl asked that the candidate fill out an application for the Council to consider.

Carsten also announced that she will write a check to Arcadia Main Street for the \$20,000.00 the Council agreed to contribute to the “build out of the old police dept. building” and that the Airport Development Plan and Improvement Plan are on the Board of County Commissioners’ agenda for Apr. 28.

Carsten recounted her participation in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) hurricane exercise and said that the County now has a new app for damage assessment following a hurricane.

## PUBLIC AND COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

Arcadia Main Street Director Pam Ames announced that 7,000 people had visited Bike Fest on Apr. 2 according to a Placer.AI, a service that provides location intelligence “obtained by integrating and analyzing a wide variety of geospatial datasets. Some of the key insights that can be achieved with location intelligence include venue visitation patterns.”

Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland said that Ames shared this information with the Tourist Development Council (TDC)—on which they both serve—and TDC offered to pay half of the \$8,000.00 cost of Placer.AI to have access to this and similar information for Arcadia and DeSoto County. Members discussed whether or not—or how—such information would be useful to the City. Airport Director Shelley Peacock said that knowing how many people participate in an event is helpful for grant applications. Although he felt that \$2,000.00 was not a large expense, Deputy Mayor Luis Velasco asked Carsten to bring the amount available in the contingency fund to the next meeting.

Council Member Bob Heine, Jr., announced that the merger of DeSoto Memorial Hospital (DMH) and Tampa General has been delayed, and Wertz-Strickland said that DMH CEO Vince Sica will speak about that subject at the Arcadia Rotary Club meeting on Apr. 28.



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# PEACE RIVER SPORTS

## BULLDOGS SHUTOUT MANTAS IN COMPLETE GAME EFFORT



**STEVE KNAPP**

Sports Writer  
sports@peacerivershopper.com

In what might have been a preview to the district championship game, the Bulldogs showed what kind of team they are with a well played 6-0 shutout over Lemon Bay. A trio of hurlers allowed just 4 hits as Jo Duke, Mya Goodnoe and Livia Evans kept the number 1 seed in the district off the scoreboard.

The Mantas' only threat came in the fifth with the bases loaded and one out. A suicide squeeze was popped up with Goodnoe making the catch and easily doubling off the runner at third to end the inning.

The Lady Bulldogs swung their bats with 10 hits and a solid defense especially up the middle. Lilly Fullerton was a ball hawk saving at least 2 runs late in the game with a pair of running catches from her center field position. A couple of base running mistakes were the only things that need to be cleaned up in an otherwise perfectly played game.

Desoto scored in the second when Fullerton led off the inning with a base on balls and scored on a fielder's choice off the bat of Evans. A second run came in the third with Lacey Berini leading off the inning with a base hit and scoring on Juliette Wolcott's clutch two out single.

The Bulldogs broke it open with 4 in the fourth as Duke doubled in Caitlyn Zamora who was running for Goodnoe



Senior center fielder Lilly Fullerton camps out under a "can of corn" early in the game. In the fifth inning Fullerton made two fine running catches to save at least two runs from scoring in the 6-0 win over Lemon Bay.

who singled to open the inning. Berini singled in both Evans and Duke for the second and third runs of the inning. Berini rode home on fellow freshman Amiyah Smith's two out single to end the scoring.

Berini was 2-4 with two ribbies and a run scored. Evans also collected two base knocks and scored once. Goodnoe was the other Bulldog with two hits.

Seniors Livia Evans and Lilly Fullerton leave the pregame meeting with the umpires and Lemon Bay captains before the 6-0 win for the Bulldogs.



Juliette Wolcott takes an outside pitch in the 6-0 win over Lemon Bay.



A popup falls to the ground but DeSoto catcher Ellie Whidden pounces on it and fires to second to force the runner in the win over Lemon Bay.



Livia Evans drives a single in the fourth inning and later scored on a double by Jo Duke.

DESOTO COUNTY

# GAME OF THE WEEK



# CHEERS, TEARS AND MEMORIES ON SENIOR NIGHT



**STEVE KNAPP**  
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sports@peacerrivershopper.com

The DeSoto Bulldogs softball team hosted Booker for senior night. There was no chance that the Tornadoes would provide any competition as they went down 16-1 and that run was a gift. Their best player is a fairly decent pitcher who hurt herself at Sarasota after stepping in a hole on the field. The Tornadoes used a "pitcher by committee" in what looked like a slow pitch softball league.

The real excitement came both before and after the game which was merely a three inning gap in the celebration of the four DeSoto seniors.

Anna Hernandez, Livia Evans, Jo Duke and Lilly Fullerton were the reasons why family and friends attended the game on a beautiful spring evening. Before the game each player walked with their family around the bases being greeted by teammates at each base. A letter was recorded by the seniors and coach talking about their memories. It was a touching moment filled with smiles and a few tears.

After the game they gathered for photos with family and friends along with their final run around the bases which sometimes included a slide at home. They each had a small bottle they filled with dirt from their position as a keepsake. They "signed out" with a painted hand print on the poster hanging on the side of the clubhouse.

As the lights went out and everyone made their way home, the ghosts of memories as a DeSoto Bulldog softball player took over the field. You couldn't see them but like the seniors before them, they were real and will live on in their memories.



Seniors Anna Hernandez, Lilly Fullerton, Jo Duke and Livia Evans are the 2026 DeSoto softball seniors who were honored by family and friends at Senior Night.



Livia Evans is all smiles as she steps on home after her run around the bases.



Jo Duke slides into home after her trip around the bases at the conclusion of senior night.



Lilly Fullerton kicks up some dust as she dives headfirst into home after the "Senior run around the bases."



Lilly Fullerton filled her senior bottle with dirt and topped it off with grass from her center field position.



Livia Evans fills up her senior bottle with dirt from her third base position.



Jo Duke fills her keepsake bottle with dirt on senior night.



Anna Hernandez gets dirt from second base for her senior bottle.

DESOTO COUNTY

ATHLETES OF THE WEEK



# TRACK AND FIELD



The seniors get together for one last meet together.



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The DeSoto track and field team held a mini meet after their senior night ceremony. Since they didn't have any home meets, it was a good chance for the family and friends to see the team perform. Here are the seniors who have contributed so much for the team during their high school career.



The members of the 2026 DeSoto boys track team.



The DeSoto 2026 senior girls track members.



DeSoto track and field coaches Darrell Nicklow and Decquon Cowell.

The rest of the team join in with the giving of gifts for the seniors.



The team managers are all seniors, Janet Segura, Kaylie Gamboa Carranco and Janiya Clayton will all graduate this year.

# SEASON ENDS IN SEMIFINAL LOSS



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Everybody knew that the Bulldogs were going to have to have their best game of the season to beat the heavily favored Bishop Verot Vikings on their home turf in the district semifinals. It didn't happen as the Bulldogs ended their season with a 10-0 loss. The Vikings are one of the best teams in the state. They went 11 innings before losing to Venice 1-0. Venice is ranked number 1 in the state and in some polls they are ranked number 1 in the country.

A bases loaded two out error in the first inning gave the Vikings all the runs they would need. A three run homer hit well over the fence gave them a 5-0 lead after one. Three more runs in the second ended any chance the Bulldogs had to get into the game.

DeSoto had just 3 hits and 2 errors while the Vikings banded out 10 hits off the Bulldogs pitching staff. Coach Matt Martin pulled starter Abel Nedley and brought in his JV pitchers to get their feet wet against the Vikings.

Freshman Chase Shirley had a pretty good outing in relief of Nedley. He came in with 2 runners in scoring position and one out. He gave up a sacrifice fly and got the next man to ground out to end the inning. Shirley went a total of 2 2/3 innings and allowed just one run on a big bomb to left. He had an impressive at bat falling behind in the count and fouled off a couple of pitches before finally draw a walk.

Martin told his players not to focus on what happened in that game, but what they accomplished over the season. "We finished at .500, it wasn't

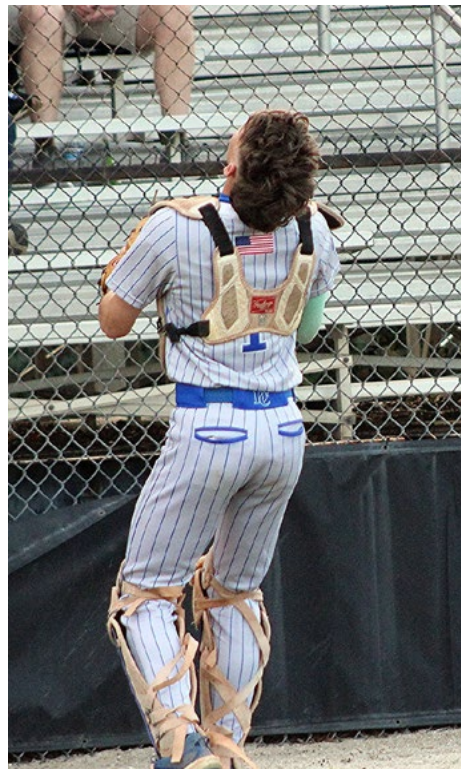


DeSoto coach Matt Martin warms up with some of the players in an old fashioned game of ball tossing.



DeSoto starter Abel Nedley checks the runner on first in the season finale at Bishop Verot.

what we wanted but it is the first time in about 10 years that the team has done that. It is only the second time a DeSoto team has finished at 500 since 2007. Only two teams since 2007 has ended the season over 500 so we are making



Catcher Trent Alley camps out under a pop up behind the plate and makes the catch in the season ending loss 10-0 in the district semifinals.

steps in the right direction. You seniors bought in and turned the program around and got us headed in the right direction. But there is still work to do."

DeSoto graduated a lot of talented players with leadership qualities and



Junior varsity pitcher Chase Shirley came in relief and had a good outing allowing just one run in 2 2/3 innings.

they will be missed. The JV team had a very good season and has some good players trying to earn a starting role next season. They are deep in pitching which is of course the key to winning games and championships.

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**GRANT**  
FROM PAGE 2 >>

budgeted money for sidewalks. However, he suggested that other funding for sidewalks may be available, and he recalled a program for sidewalks called "Safe Streets To Schools" that was available when he first served on the Council in 2009.



Assistant City Administrator Carl McQuay presented the proposed Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for an estimated \$2 million from the Florida Dept. of Commerce to repair and replace sidewalks throughout the City.

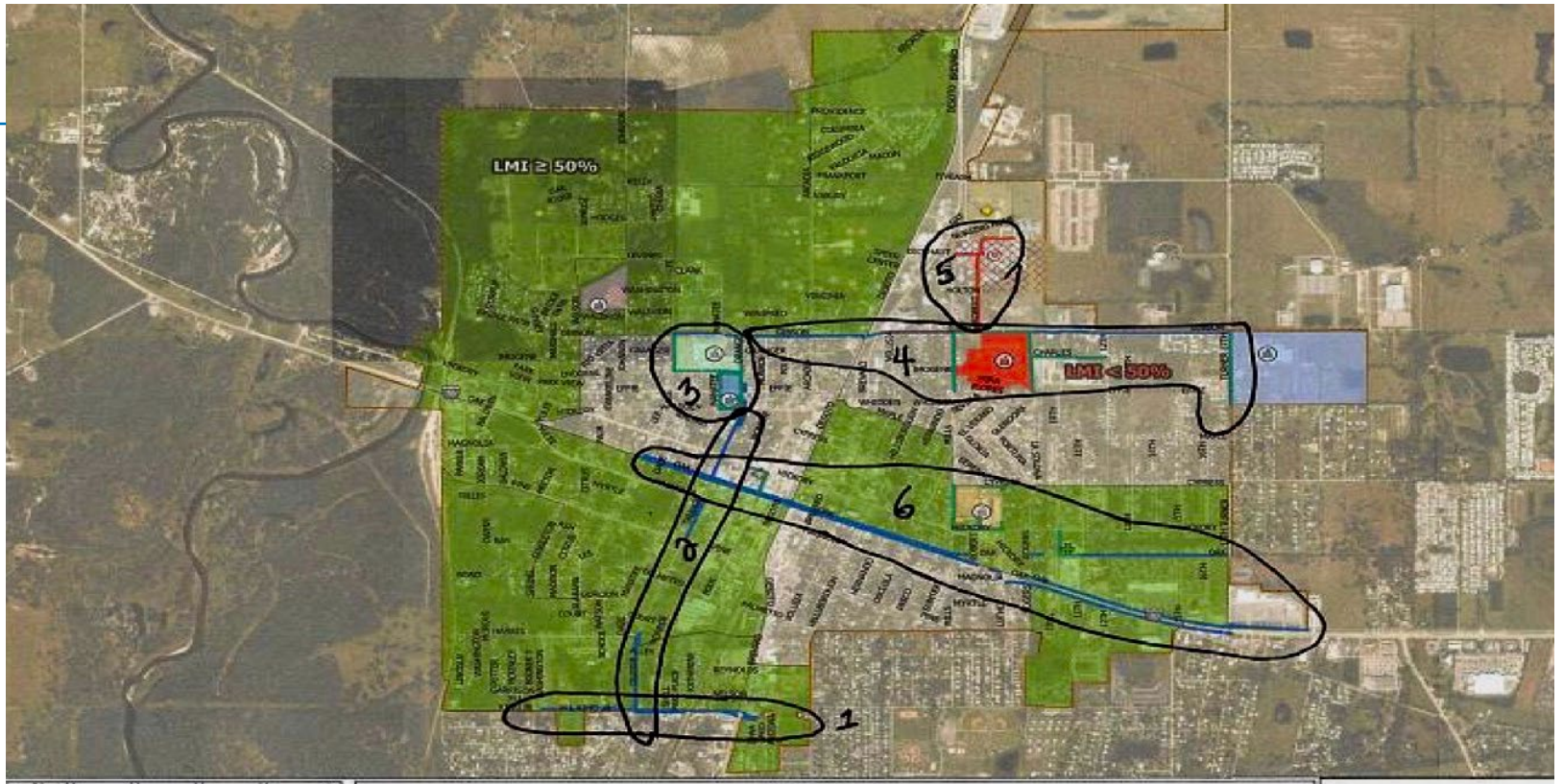


Amber Headrick questioned if the sidewalks will be built on the side streets along Oak St., and City Administrator Beth Carsten said that the application is only for Oak St. sidewalks.



Arcadia Main Street Director Pam Ames asked if completing the red brick pavers on the downtown sidewalks will be included in this project, and City Administrator Beth Carsten said that the pavers are problematic, but "the look" may be accomplished in other ways.

The Small Cities Community Development Block Grant application includes six areas identified for sidewalk repair or replacement as shown on this map prepared by Assistant City Administrator Carl McQuay. Image provided.



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# BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES

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**US Army Reserve**  
DeSoto County Ministerial Association

Church history in DeSoto County, Florida, reflects the spiritual and social life of its pioneer settlers in the rural Heartland region. DeSoto County was carved from Manatee County in 1887 and named after Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto. Its early religious institutions emerged amid scattered settlements focused mainly on agriculture (farming, cattle, and lumber), with Pine Level serving as a key early hub.

Religious activity predated formal county organization. In the 1850s–1860s, settlers in the Pine Level area gathered for informal worship. The oldest documented church in present-

day DeSoto County was the Pine Level Methodist Church, founded in 1868 shortly after the Civil War. A Baptist congregation, Mt. Pleasant at Pine Level, also formed that year. These early churches operated in a frontier town that briefly served as county seat. The town featured a courthouse, jail, and basic community structures. Worship services often took place in homes or simple wooden buildings before dedicated sanctuaries arose.

As settlement expanded in the 1870s and 1880s, more congregations organized. Baptist churches multiplied, including Mt. Moriah (Davidson) in 1874, Fort Ogden in 1878, Bunker (Oak Hill) in 1882, and Nocatee in 1890. Methodists followed suit with churches at Fort Winder (1880), Arcadia's Trinity (1887), Nocatee (1890), and Brownville (1892).

Arcadia, which became the county seat in 1888, quickly developed its own religious core. The first church building in Arcadia was Methodist.

By the 1890s, denominational diversity grew. First Baptist Church of Arcadia organized in 1890 and built a notable Romanesque Revival sanctuary in 1907. St. Paul's Catholic Church appeared around 1890, followed by Mt. Zion A.M.E. (African Methodist Episcopal) in Arcadia in 1891. The Episcopal Church of St. Edmund the Martyr began as a mission in 1893, with its first building completed in 1897 (the current structure dates to 1930). First Presbyterian Church followed in 1896, and a Seventh-day Adventist congregation formed in Fort Ogden in 1897.

These pioneer churches served

not only spiritual needs but also social functions in a county shaped by agriculture and occasional hardships like fires and hurricanes. Congregations were often small and relied on circuit riding preachers or shared buildings. In Arcadia, several historic churches, including First Baptist (now Heritage), Trinity Methodist, and others, contributed to the downtown architectural character, with some structures surviving into the 20th century despite challenges like the 1905 Thanksgiving fire that blazed through downtown.

Today, DeSoto County's religious landscape remains predominantly Protestant, with strong Southern Baptist and Methodist presence, alongside Catholic, Missionary Baptist, and smaller denominations. Many historic sites, such as the preserved Pine Level Church, stand as testaments to the faith that sustained early Floridians through isolation and growth. These institutions helped foster community identity in a region that transitioned from frontier outpost to modern rural county.

Information gathered from google and Melton's books. Correct me if the history is wrong! Thanks!

amanda\_reuter@yahoo.com



**2026**



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**Publishing May 29, 2026**

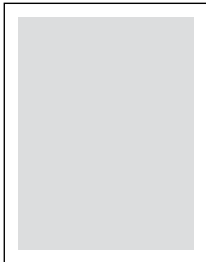
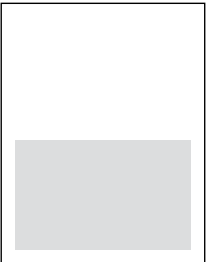
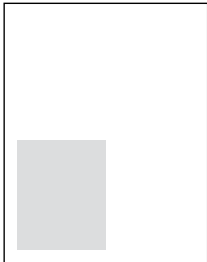
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**MUSEUM**

**FROM PAGE 1 >>**

In 2012, the Society built a replica of the Seed House on its original site to serve as the Howard and Velma Melton Historical Research Library. Howard Melton is the author of two books about our local history: "Footprints and Landmarks: Arcadia and DeSoto County, Florida" and "More Footprints and Landmarks: Arcadia and DeSoto County, Florida," published in 2002 and 2004, respectively.

In 2002, the Pipkin family donated the house and property to the Historical Society, and the Society named the house for Mr. Ingraham, who served two terms in the State House of Representatives and was the longest resident of the home. Volunteers worked to rehabilitate the house using both cash and in-kind donations from the community. In 2004, Hurricane Charley "wrecked the house beyond the Society's ability and finances to repair it."

To assist the Society and to save her grandparents' home, Kathleen Ingraham Kuhns wrote grant applications, and between 2007 and 2010, the Society received four grants to restore the Ingraham House totaling \$158,000.00 from the Florida Department of State, Division of Historic Resources. To complete the interior and install air conditioning, the Mosaic Company Foundation also donated \$40,000.00 in 2012.

An excellent example of an unaltered, turn-of-the-century "Florida Cracker House," the Museum is a memorial to all early pioneer families. The house contains period furniture and furnishings--some of which belonged to the Ingraham family--as well as many displays about the history of Arcadia and DeSoto County.

Founded during the centennial celebrations for Arcadia and DeSoto County (1986-1987), the DeSoto County Historical Society is an all-volunteer, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that works to preserve and promote the history of DeSoto County, Florida, for future generations. For details, call 863-266-5774 or check online on Facebook or at [www.historicdesoto.org](http://www.historicdesoto.org).



Photograph courtesy of the DeSoto County Historical Society.

The only known historical photograph of the John Morgan Ingraham House at 300 N. Monroe Ave. was taken in 1922 and features Ingraham, his wife Maude Stribling Ingraham, and two children, John Jr., and Grace. Image courtesy of the DeSoto County Historical Society.

When all the replacement and repairs were complete, R.D. Welch Company painted the exterior including the cypress lattice—originally installed by the Ingraham family—to block the sun and allow light and air onto the south porch. Photograph courtesy of Carol Mahler.



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Florida Power & Light Company was proud to celebrate community and history at DeSoto County Historical Society's 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Pioneer Day & BBQ.

We celebrated the county's heritage while sharing how agriculture and innovation continue working side by side through cattle grazing and apiary agrivoltaics pilot projects on our solar sites. And we were honored to receive a certificate of gratitude recognizing our support of agriculture in in the county.

We are proud to be part of this community and look forward to continuing our work together in the years ahead.

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# OBITUARIES

## RODNEY RAY MORGAN

FEBRUARY 9, 1955 - APRIL 24, 2026



Rodney Ray Morgan, a beloved father, and grandfather; passed away peacefully on April 24, 2026, in Bradenton, FL. Born on February 9, 1955, Rodney dedicated much of his life to the service of others, working as a correction officer at Florida

State Prison, where his commitment to safety and community was unwavering.

Rodney leaves behind his significant other Nikki Keirns, and a was a devoted father to his two daughters, Paula Lewis and Jennifer Westberry, who remember him not only for his strong work ethic but also for the profound love he showed his family. As a grandfather, he cherished every moment spent with his grandchildren: Jacob Lewis, Morgan Lewis, Olivia Lewis, and J.T. Westberry. His playful spirit and nurturing guidance have left an indelible mark on their lives.

Throughout his life, Rodney embraced the values of hard

work, integrity, and compassion. He garnered respect from his colleagues and friends, who recognized his steadfast dedication not only to his profession but also to the wellbeing of those he served. Rodney had a gift for making others feel valued and heard, a trait that will be dearly missed by all who knew him.

Family and friends will gather for visitation on May 2, 2026, at 10:00 am with funeral service to follow at 11:00 am at Ponger-Kays-Grady Funeral Home, 50 North Hillsborough Avenue, Arcadia, FL. Burial will be in Oak Ridge Cemetery, 601 N. Johnson Avenue, Arcadia, FL.

This ceremony will honor the

impact he made during his time on earth, as those who loved him will come together to share memories, reflect on his legacy, and bid farewell.

Rodney Ray Morgan leaves behind a loving family and a community that will forever remember him for his service, compassion, and the loving fervor with which he embraced life. May he rest in peace, embraced by the love he so generously shared.

Roney was preceded in death by his parents Tilman Morgan, Bennie Morgan, brothers Timothy Morgan, John Morgan, and sisters Wilma Jean Winchester, Jackie Morgan.

## JOHNNY EDWARD HERREN



Johnny Edward Herren, age 75, of Arcadia, FL passed away peacefully

at home surrounded by his family. He was born to Oscar and Betty Herren on February 16, 1951. He is survived by his wife of 29 years, Connie. He is also survived by his two granddaughters, Piper and Carter in Ft. Myers, FL, sister Becky in Michigan and stepsister Teresa, in Florida, sisters-in-law, Nancy Corbin in Arcadia, FL, Robin Hawkins in Nocatee, FL, and Vonnie (Ed) in Pt. Charlotte, as well as nieces, nephews and good friends.

He was a man of few words but with a good heart. He enjoyed being

outside with family and friends, deer hunting, boating, fishing and camping. He also enjoyed watching the news and westerns, Gunsmoke being one of his favorite TV shows. He loved his cats. He was a master at the grill, cooking the best steak you would ever want.

He was a dedicated employee of Sun Bulb Company, INC. for 32 years serving as Maintenance and had a green thumb growing beautiful plants at his own home.

He was preceded in death by both his parents Oscar and Betty; his stepmom Nell; his stepsister Stacy; and his daughter Lisa.

**We are honoring his wishes to be cremated with no service to follow. Online condolences may be made at: [www.pongerkaysgrady.com](http://www.pongerkaysgrady.com). Ponger-Kays-Grady Funeral Homes & Cremation Services have been entrusted with the arrangements.**

## SHIRLEY ALICE BONETT

Shirley Alice Bonett, 94, passed away on April 19th, 2026, in Zolfo Springs, Florida. She was born November 28, 1931 in Chicago, Illinois to John Bruckner and Alice Brown Bruckner. A long-time resident of Desoto County, Florida until 2024, she worked in the restaurant industry as a waitress and cook across multiple businesses. She is preceded in death by both parents, her daughter Sharan

Shaffer, and her brother Jonathan Bruckner. She is survived by her sons Frederick "Fred" Pratt of Zolfo Springs, Florida and Christian Bonett of Arcadia, Florida; her daughters Charmaine Kelly of Bradenton, Florida, Rosemarie Kerth of Zolfo Springs, Florida, and Joyce Bonett of Arcadia, Florida. She is also survived by 22 grandchildren, 43 great-grandchildren, and 42 great-great-grandchildren.

**A graveside service was held at Gardner Cemetery on Monday, April 27, 2026 @ 11:00 A.M.**

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.

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# DESOTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



ARREST REPORT | 4/17/26 - 4/23/26

**Brown, Kevin Deangelo:**

Prob Violation - Prob Violation

**Chavez Larios, Oscar Eriberto:**

DUI-Unlaw Bld Alch - DUI Damage To Property Or Person Of Another; Moving Traffic Viol - Operate Motor Vehicle W/O Valid LIC 1st Conv

**Coccarelli, Stephen James:**

Larc - Petit Theft Merch Farm Transit 2+ Prior Conv

**Davis, William Lamar:**

Possession Of Weapon - Or Ammo By Convicted Fla Felon

**Dominguez-Mozo, Francisco:**

Moving Traffic Viol - Operate Motor Vehicle W/O Valid LIC 1st Conv

**Dunagan, Zachary Michael:**

Trespassing - Trespass Fail To Leave Prop On Order Of Owner

**Gantt, Aaron Javon:**

Battery - Touch Or Strike

**Garza, Andy Valdez:**

Sex Offender Violation - Fail To Register As Required; Sex Offender Violation - Provide False Registration Info

**Gomez-Vera, Ricardo:**

Moving Traffic Viol - Drive W/ DL Expired More Than 6 Months

**Hairston, Whitney Darlene:**

Drugs-Possess - Cntrl Sub Wo Prescription; Nonmoving Traffic Viol - Fail To Register Motor Veh; Public Order Crimes - Use 2 Way Comm Device To Facil Felony; Smuggle Contraband - Introduce Into Detention Facility

**Hernandez, Omar:**

Prob Violation - Prob Violation

**Houser, Jewell:**

Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While LIC Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

**Jones, Antonio Jerome:**

Prob Violation - Prob Violation

**Kizito, Erika Beth:**

Trespassing - Trespass Fail To Leave Prop On Order Of Owner

**Lopez, Juan Miguel:**

Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While LIC Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

**Luangrathkhamkeo, Izik Skyler:**

Trespassing - Trespass Fail To Leave Prop On Order Of Owner

**Lugo-Gonzalez, Maria Del Carmen:**

Moving Traffic Viol - Operate Motor Vehicle W/O Valid LIC 1st Conv

**Maldonado III, Thomas:**

Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use; Marijuana-Possess - Possess Less Than 20 Grams Cannabis; Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While LIC Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

**Maloney III, Charles Calvin:**

Prob Violation - Prob Violation

**Maness, Jesse Wayne:**

Aggrav Battery - Aggrav Battery With A Deadly Weapon; Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While LIC Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

**Mansfield, Lillie Christina:**

Nonmoving Traffic Viol - Fail To Register Motor Veh

**Mendez, Emilio Sanchez:**

Moving Traffic Viol - Operate Motor Vehicle W/O Valid LIC 1st Conv

**Morales, Richard:**

Failure To Appear - Written Promise To Appear (x4); Resist Officer - Resist Officer With Violence

**Palazon Valverde, Francisco Jose:**

DUI-Unlaw Bld Alch - DUI Influence Of Alcohol Or Drugs

**Post II, Daniel Christopher:**

Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While LIC Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

**Quets, Warren Peirce:**

Trespassing - Trespass Fail To Leave Prop On Order Of Owner

**Robinson, Eric Devon:**

Assault - Aggravated W Intent To Commit A Felony (x2); Contempt Of Court - Viol Injunction Protection Domestic Violence; Homicide - Murder First Degree Premeditated (x2); Kidnap-False Imprisonment - False Imprisonment Of Person; Obstructing Justice - Tamper With ALTER/DESTRY Obj LIFE/CAP Fel Proc; Possession Of Weapon - Or Ammo By Convicted Fla Felon; Robbery - By Sudden Snatching W Firearm Or Weapon; Weapon Offense - Missile Into Dwelling Veh Building Or Aircraft

**Sheppard, Jordan Trenton:**

Prob Violation - Prob Violation

**Strong, Bryan Scott:**

Battery - Touch Or Strike

**Sullivan, Terence Precell:**

Aggrav Battery - Aggrav Battery Cause Bodily Harm Or Disability

**Thomas, Rudyrols Fretzner:**

Fraud - Utter False Instrument; Nonmoving Traffic Viol - Fail To Register Motor Veh

**Torres-Romero, Juan Eduardo:**

Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use (x2); Drugs-Possess - Possess Controlled Substance W/O Prescription (x2); Out-of-County Warrant - Out-of-County Warrant

**Trkulja, Lea:**

Trespassing - Trespass Fail To Leave Prop On Order Of Owner

**Williams, Maya Shanice:**

Failure To Appear - Failure To Appear (x2)

**Worley, James Curtis:**

Resist Officer - Obstruct Wo Violence; Trespassing - Trespass Fail To Leave Prop On Order Of Owner

**Zavaleta, Jose Luis:**

Disorderly Conduct - Brawling Fighting Corrupt Public Moral Decency; Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use; Drugs-Possess - Possess Controlled Substance W/O Prescription

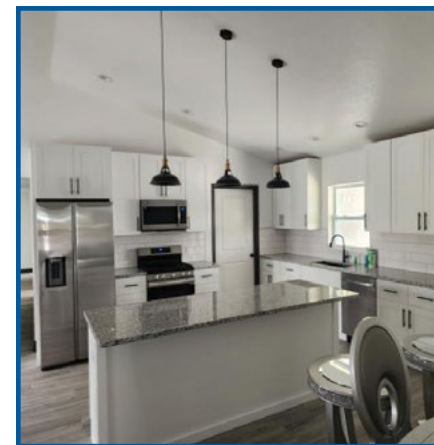
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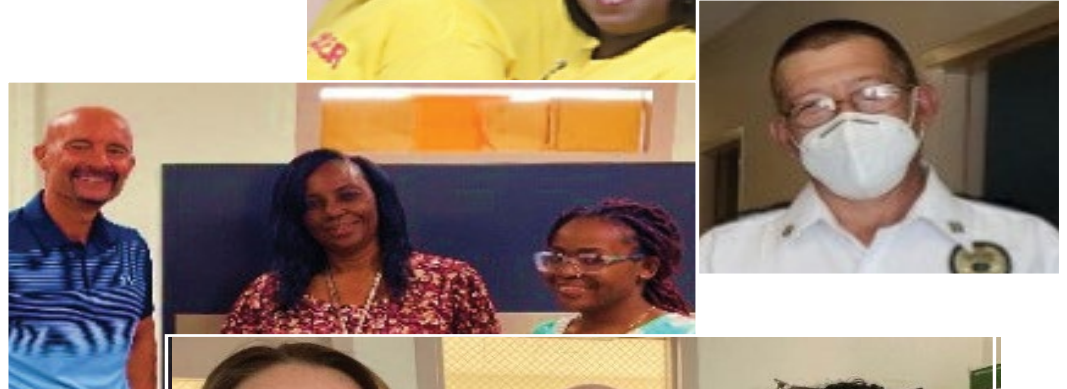
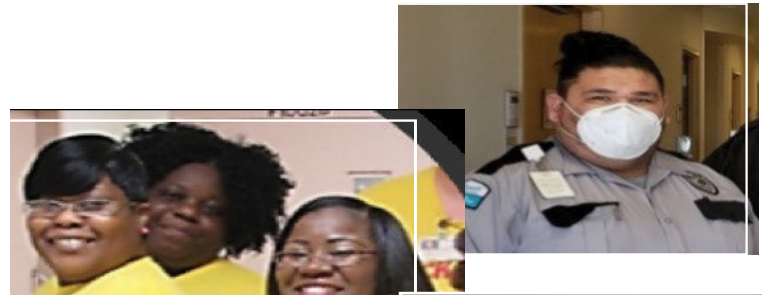
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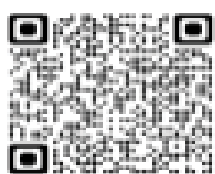
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