

# ARCADIA THE COMMUNITY

MARCH 12, 2026



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# Local

## CITY DENIES REQUEST FOR GREENHOUSE



**DESOTO COUNTY SPORTS**  
PAGE 4  
STEVE KNAPP  
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**CAROL MAHLER**

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Photos provided

The Arcadia Garden Club submitted a zoning application for 10' x 16' greenhouse for their property at 1005 W. Magnolia St. that is zoned residential, but has never been used as residential property. This rendering shows where the Club requested its location in the City's right of way. Image provided.

The Arcadia Garden Club submitted a zoning application for the installation of a 10' x 16' greenhouse at 1005 W. Magnolia St. that was denied by staff—as recommended by City Planner Jeff Schmucker and City Attorney T. J. Wohl—because the proposed location is within the City's right of way. At Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland's request, the Club was allowed to ask the Council about a variance, but Wohl said that no discussion could take place without a formal application.

The Club described the greenhouse as “a living classroom” for learning “about plants, food growing, and environmental stewardship.” They noted their partnerships with more than a dozen other organizations and that members “contribute thousands of volunteer hours each year to projects that enhance

the beauty, environmental health and sense of community in the City.” The Club has maintained this City property for decades—and will continue to do so.

In addition, the Council approved the Annual Performance Review of City Administrator Beth Carsten with a 4.75 rating. “Competencies” rated were problem solving, functional knowledge and skills, service to others/customer focus, building trust, collaboration, communication, and taking initiative, with the following rating scale: 1 unacceptable, 2 needs improvement, 3 meets expectations, 4 exceeds expectations, and 5 far exceeds expectations.

“I love this work,” Carsten said. “I love doing what I've been doing . . . but I feel that the feedback that

SEE CITY PAGE 9 >>



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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>MAR 24</b>	<b>DESOTO COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING</b>
TUES 3P	Administration Building 201 E. Oak Street, Suite 103 Arcadia, FL 34266
<b>MAR 26</b>	<b>DESOTO COUNTY SPECIAL MASTER HEARING</b>
THUR 11A	Administration Building 201 E. Oak Street, Suite 103 Arcadia, FL 34266
<b>MAR 28</b>	<b>DESOTO COUNTY EASTER EGG HUNT</b>
SAT 10A	Walt Brewer Sports Complex 1365 SE Hargrave Street 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  
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# 1<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL DOWNTOWN ART SHOW: YOU'RE INVITED!

## PLUS RODEO & ARTS MARCH VINTAGE MARKET



**CAROL MAHLER**

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Photos provided

After the annual Arcadia Rodeo parade along with the “Rodeo and Art Vintage Market” on Mar. 14, you’re invited to the 1st Annual Downtown Art Show from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Oak St., hosted by Arcadia Main Street and Pletcher’s on Monroe.

Gallery Owner and Artist Marc Pletcher said, “We have an opportunity to put artists on the street. . . . we have had a ton of inquiries and a lot of interest. Now we’re doing a last minute push trying to get any more artists out there that we can.”

He said, “A woodcarver and a painter will be demonstrating, but the biggest thing we’re excited about is the free kids area—an activity booth with arts and crafts” coordinated by Laura Partridge of Laura’s Good Vibes Tribe, 213 W. Oak St., and the DeSoto Arts Center (DAC). It will be located in the Presbyterian Church parking lot on W. Oak St.

DAC will also have a booth to showcase their members’ artwork. Some art will have a rodeo theme, and one artist has designed some rodeo-themed coloring pages for the kids.

He also asked that everyone be patient with the artists setting up: “Artists normally have a lot of time behind the scenes to set up their booths, and they might not all be set up by 11:00 a.m., but they will be in the process.”

A member of DAC, Pletcher said, “The idea behind the name 1st Annual Downtown Art Show is to start thinking about the future and to have a second one and so forth. . . . we needed a base to start and to think as big as we could.”

In addition to the Art Show, you’ll also enjoy the “Rodeo and Art Vintage Market” from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with music and food trucks, hosted by Arcadia Main Street in honor of the 98th annual Arcadia Rodeo and America 250, the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

### THE ARTS AND AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

In Florida, state funding and support for the arts are distributed primarily through the Florida Division of Arts and Culture, with much of this funding flowing through designated Local Arts Agencies (LAAs). However, 19 rural counties—including DeSoto—have no LAA, so they miss out on funding, resources, and opportunities.

The Arts and Agriculture Program was designed to deliver arts programs in a cost-effective manner to rural counties throughout the state. The Heartland Cultural Alliance (HCA) is coordinating a pilot project in DeSoto, Glades, Hardee,

and Hendry counties to provide free Art Activity Kits as well as demonstrations by artists.

Unhappy with the art kits for which they had contracted with another gallery, HCA has contracted with Pletcher’s

on Monroe to provide the monthly Arts Activity Kits and quarterly in-person artist-led events in each county (<https://www.artsandagriculture.com>).

Gallery artists will be assembling the art kits and planning future ones.

Pletcher hopes the contract will be renewed, so that gallery artists will be paid for making the kits and more free art kits will be available in our community.

Artist and Gallery Owner Marc Pletcher was working on a palette knife painting of the historic buildings on the south side of Oak St., just west of Monroe Ave., where his gallery is located at 16 S. Monroe Ave.



**RODEO & ART**

**MARCH VINTAGE MARKET**

**MARCH 14<sup>TH</sup>**  
**9 AM - 4 PM**

**JOIN US FOR OUR MARCH MARKET IN DOWNTOWN ARCADIA!**

**This vintage-inspired market features local vendors, antiques, handmade goods, western finds, artisan items, unique gifts, and more.**

**Make a full day of it—Enjoy the Rodeo Parade earlier**

**shop the market and enjoy the Art Show, including free art activities for kids.**

You'll want to be downtown this Sat., Mar. 14, for the Rodeo & Art Vintage Market starting at 9:00 a.m., the Arcadia Rodeo Parade at 10:00 a.m., and the 1st Annual Downtown Art Show starting at 11:00 a.m.

# MOST SUCCESSFUL PANCAKE BREAKFAST IS LAST OF THE SEASON



**CAROL MAHLER**

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 Photos provided

Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) Chap. 1226 held its most successful pancake breakfast last Sat., with nearly \$1,000.00 raised for the Young Eagles program. Airport Director

and EAA Member Shelley Peacock wrote, "This was another great pancake breakfast season, and we are excited to focus on flying kids for the next six months."

Peacock also narrated this story: "One of our members who showed up yesterday was Rita Schaefer, who joined our chapter last year and told us that she wanted to join because her dad "Dean Schaefer" is a EAA Member, and he holds a membership number from the first 5,000 member numbers. Dean

and his wife Sharon are visiting from Emporia, Kansas, also known as the "Gravel Grinding Capital of the World," and we were honored they made it to our last pancake breakfast of the season."

Currently EAA has more than 300,000 members, this includes members from 100 countries and nearly 1,000 chapters worldwide—and Arcadia's EAA Chap. 1226 is one of them. As of September 24, 2025, EAA has recorded 2,453,776 Young Eagle flights, and Chap. 1226 flew 71 Young Eagle flights last year.

From 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., this Sat., Mar. 14, EAA volunteer pilots will be flying Young Eagles, and to keep them safe, the airport will close the runway to transient pilots. EAA Chap. 1226 will meet at 11:00 a.m. after the Young Eagles flights and welcomes more pilots to give Young Eagles flights: check online at ([eaa.org/eaa/youth/free-ye-flights](http://eaa.org/eaa/youth/free-ye-flights)).



A collage of photographs of Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) Chap. 1226's last pancake breakfast of the season was submitted by EAA volunteer and Airport Director Shelley Peacock. Note at lower center is Ms. Pat Hange, a pilot, flight instructor, and glider pilot instructor, who was honored for having more than 50 years of flying without an accident. She and her partner, Harriett Hamilton (1919-2005) operated Lenox Flight School at the airport. Skilled glider pilots, they were inducted into the "United States Soaring Hall of Fame" in 2003.

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# PEACE RIVER SPORTS

## THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY



**STEVE KNAPP**

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In the 1960's there was a classic movie called The Good, the Bad and the Ugly. It was about three gunslingers looking for gold and the roles were played by three different actors. That movie came to mind after watching the Lady Bulldogs fall to the Westminster Christian Warriors 10-0 in a rare Saturday afternoon game.

The Warriors are out of the Miami area and played a doubleheader winning the first game 9-4 over Hardee and then blanking DeSoto 10-0 in five innings. They aren't a powerhouse team. They came into Saturday with a 3-3 record and after winning the first game over the Wildcats, you might think they might be tired. With two sixth graders and two seventh graders on the team, you would expect DeSoto to either give them a split for the day or at least stay close. Neither one happened.

**18 HOURS OF DESOTO SOFTBALL**  
On Friday night the Bulldogs filled the "GOOD" part of this story's title. They went to Lake Placid and played a great game shutting out the Dragons 9-0 in a game that was scoreless after 3 innings.

Pitching was great with Jo Duke hurling 3 innings of 2 hit ball and Mya Goodnoe going 4 innings without giving up a hit. The team capitalized on 7 Lake Placid errors and they swung the bats really well banging out 8 hits.

Leading the charge for DeSoto was senior Lilly Fullerton with 3 hits in 4 at bats driving in 2 runs and scoring once. Layla Morales went 2-3 and scored twice, Livia Evans also crossed the plate twice.



Lilly Fullerton dives safely back to first on a pickoff attempt by Westminster Christian. Fullerton led off the third inning with a base on balls.



Lilly Fullerton puts out a good effort diving for this base hit. The senior had a good game against Lake Placid going 3-4 with two ribbies and a run scored.



The Warriors runner scores on this close play at the plate with Ellie Whidden catching for DeSoto.



Layla Morales holds on to this pop up in the loss to Westminster Christian. Morales had the only Bulldog hit against the Warriors after going 2-3 with 2 runs scored the night before against Lake Placid.



Now comes the "BAD" part. Saturday afternoon saw a completely different ball club. They mustered just one hit and that was a shot off Morales' bat through the 5-6 hole. The Warriors swung their bats real well as they scored in 4 of their 5 at bats and put the game away with a 3 spot in the fifth. DeSoto had their chances to get on the board with 5 walks but were unable to get the key hit or even a ground ball to get a run in.

Trailing 3-0 in the second, Goodnoe walked and was sacrificed to second by Morales, but two strikeouts ended the threat. Another opportunity came in third, DeSoto was the beneficiary of 3 bases on balls sandwiched around a strikeout. A double play ended the inning.

The bases were juiced again in the 4th when Morales got the teams only hit with one out. Two more walks put runners in scoring position, but a pop up to the pitcher and then to the shortstop

ended the inning trailing 6-0. That took the wind out of the sails and the game ended on three infield pop ups in the fifth. The Warriors tacked on 3 more runs to put an end to the game.

Everybody can have an off day, but the "UGLY" part of the game came from the fundamentals of the game. The third inning double play to end the threat came on a hump back liner to the second baseman with the runner on first running with the play in front of her for an easy twin killing. Outfielders hesitated on where to throw the ball and a pitcher failed to cover home on a wild pitch and a runner on third who scored uncontested. It just seemed as if the Bulldogs couldn't get anything going after carrying over the energy from the win just a few hours earlier.

Coach Jinny Schaefer said, "I've said it before, I don't mind losing if we play quality ball. If we are struggling on offense then we have to tighten up our defense. If our defense fails us then we have to do something at the bat. We didn't do either one today, it was terrible. We were great last night but with no defensive support it makes our pitchers work too hard. We just didn't come out here to win today. There was no hustle or desire today."



**STEVE KNAPP**

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The Bulldogs baseball team had a rare Saturday afternoon game, actually the game time was 11am to avoid the potential rain. It was a beautiful "chamber of commerce" type of day. The sun was shining yet not too warm

to enjoy a high school baseball game. It was a good game- for two innings at least.

In the third inning the North Port Bobcats exploded for 7 runs on their way to an easy 9-0 win over the Bulldogs. It was a day that nothing went right for DeSoto. They only had 2 hits

and 14 of their 21 outs came via the strikeout route.

If there was a bright spot in the game, it was the pitching of recent call up of freshman Chase Shirley. Shirley had been brought up from the JV squad because as coach Matt Martin described it, "we just ran out of arms." Shirley was

on the team earlier this season for one game but didn't see any action. In his varsity debut he threw well for his two inning stint and even singled in his first varsity at bat.

## TIRED BULLDOGS SHUTOUT 9-0

# DESOTO COUNTY

# GAME OF THE WEEK



# ROUTINE PLAYS LEAD TO "UNROUTINE" LOSS



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Coaches will tell their teams "Just make the routine plays". That refers to doing the fundamental parts of the game correctly consistently to ensure success. That didn't happen in the JV Bulldogs' 4-1 loss to Hardee.

This is a talented club that has had a successful season with a mixture of good pitching and solid hitting and that routine has resulted in an 8-3 record after the loss to the Wildcats. In their previous game against Hardee they trailed late in the game and came back to pull out the win. There was that confidence in the dugout that they would come back again, but this game was different.

There were several unroutine plays that evened the season series at one win each with another game to play to decide the season winner. A couple of bloop, bleeders can't be helped but miscommunication in the outfield resulted in a couple of catchable balls landing between two outfielders. A misjudged fly ball and a two out error that led to a run brought the Bulldogs to defeat.

It was just "one of those games". They had strong pitching from Shelby Hollingsworth but the bats never came to life. DeSoto managed just 4 base hits but also had 5 walks to put runners on base. Only the third inning saw the Bulldogs go down 1-2-3 as they managed all night to get runners in scoring position but just couldn't get the big hit to start a rally.

DeSoto scored in the fifth trailing 3-0 when Colton Giddens fanned but the ball was dropped by the catcher. His throw to



The JV team lines up for the National Anthem before their game against Hardee.



Shelby Hollingsworth delivers a pitch in the first inning. She had a good outing but the Bulldog bats couldn't deliver in the 4-1 loss.



Braden Lawrence puts the tag on a would be base stealer in the game against Hardee.



Hez Strader is safe after stealing second base in the loss to Hardee.



First sacker Riley McCray drills this pitch to second to drive in the only Bulldog run in the 4-1 loss.

first was over the first baseman's head for an error. Giddens worked his way to

third with one out when first baseman Riley McCray hit a sharp ground ball to

second to score Giddens with their only run.

## SHUTOUT

FROM PAGE 4 >>

It was the team's 4th game in 5 days including three straight games to close out the 2-2 week. That may have something to do with the lackluster performance at the plate. The Bobcat pitchers fanned the side in the first, fourth and sixth innings.

Desoto had a pair of walks in the first inning sandwiched around the three strikeouts but couldn't do anything with them. The Bulldogs picked up a pair of one out bases on balls in the second but couldn't get anybody home. A two out single by Braden Deluca in the third didn't go anywhere as the next batter fanned to end the inning.

The fourth inning had Aiden Adkins safe on an error followed by Shirley's baseknock, but three straight strikeouts ended the threat. In the fifth, two more

walks put runners on with no outs, but they died on the basepaths. DeSoto didn't get any runners on in the sixth or seventh as the Bulldogs' final 8 eight batters all failed to reach base.

The Bulldogs will be home tonight with Booker providing the competition. Booker bested the Bulldogs 3-2 earlier this season so it should be a good rematch. Tomorrow DeSoto travels to North Port to face the winless Imagine Sharks who the Bulldogs defeated 7-3 one month ago.



DeSoto catcher Trent Alley gets under a popup behind the plate and makes the catch in the 9-0 loss to North Port.



Freshman Chase Shirley fires to the plate in his varsity debut for the Bulldogs.



Josue Hernandez looks to the umpire for the call on this pitch in the 9-0 loss.



Abel Nedley, who started on the mound for the Bulldogs, steps on the bag as the ball gets away from Bobcat first baseman Connor Olivo.



Cameron Nummedor dives back to first in front of the tag by North Port first baseman Connor Olivo.

# DESOTO SPORTS

# ROUND-UP

## THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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**STEVE KNAPP**

Sports Writer  
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Spring break is upon us so the sports schedule is very light until March 23rd. Only the baseball team will see action this week starting tonight. They host Booker who beat the Bulldogs 3-2 in a very good game earlier this season. Friday they go to Imagine school of North Port for a rematch after the Bulldogs won the first meeting 7-3.

The Bulldogs had three games last week and all were tighter than bark on a tree. They went 1-2 bringing their record to 8-5 on the season. Against Ft. Meade, DeSoto had the better stats but they picked up 2 in the 6th to pull out a 2-1 win. Josue Hernandez got 2 of the team's 4 hits and scored a run. Braden Deluca had a double to score a run and he also scored the other Bulldog run. Cole Rhoden gave up just 2 hits in 3 1/3 innings while Aiden Adkins went 3 2/3 innings giving up 5 hits and the lone run. DeSoto was out hit 7-4 and had 10 strikeouts to the Miners 4 but DeSoto pulled out the win.

Lake Placid hung a 5-4 win on DeSoto as the Bulldog bats went silent collecting just 2 hits. Four DeSoto errors allowed four runs to score and take home the loss. Hernandez had one of the hits and scored a run and knocked in one. At Lakeland the Dreadnaughts scored twice in the bottom of the 7th for a 7-6 win. DeSoto banged out 10 hits but fell short.

The JV baseball team has a nice 8-3 record and will attempt to add to that mark with a home game next Tuesday against North Port.

The softball team beat Lake Placid 9-0 but fell flat the next day in a 10-0 loss. You can read about those games in this edition. They are at the 1/3 point of their season with a 4-3 record with 12 games left. They pick up after the break at Babcock on the 24th and then home for a rematch with Port Charlotte on the 26th. The next night they travel to Braden River to close out the week.



The tennis teams will resume play with the girls at home March 24th against Ft. Meade and both teams will be home on the 26th hosting Hardee.

The track team will be at Lake Placid March 28th and then at Avon Park 3 days later.



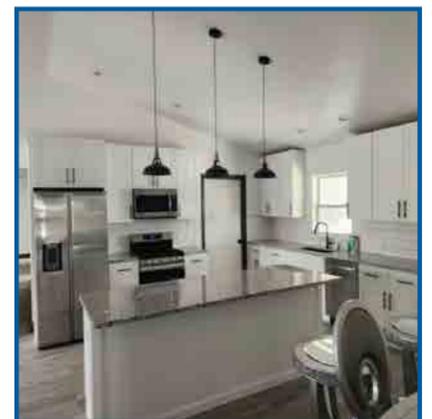
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# DESOTO COUNTY

# ATHLETES OF THE WEEK



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Fans- short for fanatics are an integral part of any game. When Covid 19 hit, many arenas and stadiums were empty as the teams played in a bubble. There were studies made to see what affect there would be on the performance of the teams.

The absence of crowds reduced the home field advantage by over 50%. The atmosphere created by noise and energy translates to more focus by the players with effort levels going up 7% and physical strength up by 8%. Home team fans can motivate players and have proven to be an important part of the athletic contests.

Lets salute and thank all the fans who cheer for the Bulldogs, provide encouragement, and support the teams in good times and bad.



# DESOTO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRESENTS CAREER EVENT, 'BOTS, BOLTS & BOOTS CAREER DISCOVERY: SKIP THE DEGREE, NOT THE DREAM



The interactive and fun event lets guests of all ages explore high-demand, high-skill careers that offer great pay in challenging fields.

DeSoto County, Fla— DeSoto County Economic Development Department will host "Bots, Bolts & Boots Career Discovery: Skip the Degree, Not the Dream" as part of the 2026 Suncoast Remake Learning Days.

This interactive, hands-on event invites guests of all ages to explore high-demand, high-skill careers that offer excellent wages and rewarding work---many of which do not require a four-year degree. Attendees will engage

directly with industry professionals, local employers, and real-world tools and technology across multiple fields.

"If you're dreaming of a career that's high-wage, skilled and doesn't necessarily require a college, this free event is for you, featuring hands-on displays and interaction with people in the field," said Economic Development Director Sondra Guffey. "Connecting our community with opportunities like these is essential to building a strong and sustainable workforce for the future."

The event takes place Thursday April 30 from 3:30 to 7 p.m. at the Turner Agri-Civic Center, 2250 NE Roan Street, Arcadia, FL. It is an open-house format.

Guests can discover new career pathways, spark their passions, enjoy free refreshments, and enter to win prizes. Bots, Bolts and Boots is free

for attendees and exhibitors. Both are asked to register at [TinyURL.com/bots-bolts-boots](http://TinyURL.com/bots-bolts-boots). For more information, call 863-993-4807, or go to [www.GoDeSotoFL.com](http://www.GoDeSotoFL.com).

Suncoast Remake Learning Days is a 15-day, hands-on learning festival, underwritten by The Patterson Foundation, across Charlotte, DeSoto,

Manatee, and Sarasota counties— focused on youth from birth through 12th grade and their families. The festival runs from Saturday, April 18 through Saturday May 2. For more information about Suncoast Remake Learning Days, call 941-952-1413 or go to [www.gradelevelreadingsuncoast.net](http://www.gradelevelreadingsuncoast.net).



## TROOP 60 BSA SUMMER CAMP 2024 TO NEW ENGLAND

Troop 60 meets on Monday night at 6:30 p.m. The Scout House is located at 701 W Oak St. Every summer the Troop goes to Summer Camp to live for a week in the outdoors camping, swimming, hiking and climbing. In 2019 and again in 2024 the Troop flew to New England to spend almost two weeks in

places that are cool at night in July. In addition to camping activities the Troop spent several days learning about American History by visiting Boston and Concord, Massachusetts.

For more information or to join call Bill Payne: 978-502-8683



Troop 60 BSA hikes the Issac Davis Trail from Acton to Concord, MA



Troop 60 spent several days at beautiful Camp Collier, Gardner, MA

Weston Hughes climbs a COPE Tower at Camp Wanoksett, Dublin, NH



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Dr. Christina Pepper



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**CITY**  
FROM PAGE 1 >>

you've given me will help me grow, and that's what I want to do."

Council Member Keith Keene recalled and commented on several past city administrators. To Carsten, he said, "I'm certainly appreciative for all you do." Council Member Bob Heine, Jr., said, "For all she's got on her plate, she's performed outstanding." Deputy Mayor Luis Velasco said, "It is a pleasure, Beth, to work with you." Council Member Dee Washington appreciated that Carsten "always has a positive attitude." Wertz-Strickland said, "I want to thank Beth for just being Beth and for the work she's done for the City."

**In Other Business**

When the City will no longer make payments to the County according to the 2006 merger agreement of fire and emergency protection services, Ordinance 1114 passed on second and final reading allowing the properties in the City to be included in a Municipal Services Benefit Unit (MSBU) established by the County for fire protection and emergency medical services.

Passed on first reading was Ordinance 1115 for the voluntary annexation of a five-acre property owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints located on NE Gibson St. adjacent to and behind the property where the church is located, 1117 E. Gibson St., that is already included in the existing City limits.

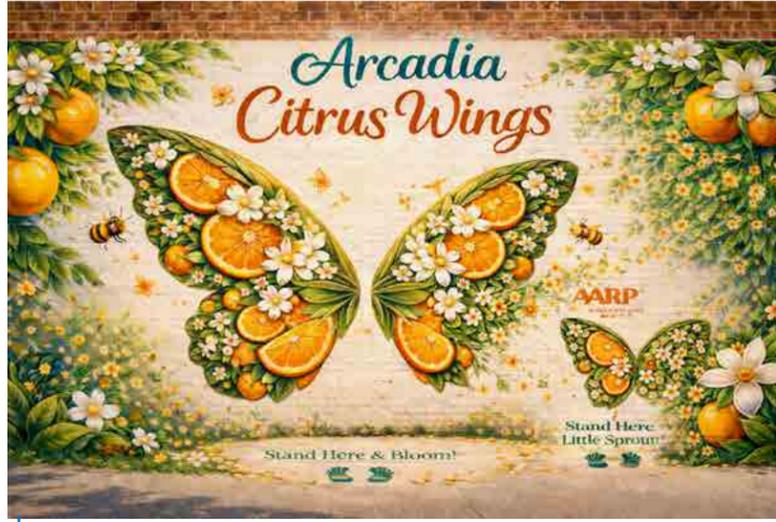
The Council adopted Resolution 2026-02 authorizing the Mayor or Deputy Mayor to submit information for the Florida Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) for a program "to improve and reestablish urban forests in Florida communities negatively impacted by Hurricanes Idalia, Helene, and Milton through tree planting, tree maintenance, urban forest inventory, canopy assessment, and urban forest management planning initiatives. . . . for awards of up to \$75,000.00 for eligible projects."

As a "walk on" item, the Council approved an ongoing contract for \$58,437.00 for lighting packages for the police dept. vehicles using a piggyback contract, recently renewed, with the City of Cape Coral with Lightning Wireless Solutions, LLC.

**Comments From Depts.**

According to Marshal Quinn Jones, 15 arrests were made the weekend of Feb. 20-23: aggravated battery with a machete (2), possession of narcotics, fleeing to elude, domestic battery (4), resisting an officer without violence (3), DUI, and no valid driver's license (3). Keene asked about burglaries from cars parked in yards, and Jones reported that it had stopped. Wertz-Strickland asked about a gentleman who had contacted her through email, and she forwarded it to Jones, who had contacted the man about the shooting range.

Wohl is working on the ordinance for the school zone speed enforcement and



The Council had approved the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) funded interactive mural for 201 W. Oak St., but the wall was damaged, so the Council approved the "citrus wings" interactive mural for the west wall of 35 S. Monroe Ave. as a "walk on" agenda item for Arcadia Main Street. Image provided.



At left, Arcadia Garden Club Treasurer Kelly Forbes listened as Assistant City Administrator Carl McQuay explained that an application for a variance must be turned in first, reviewed by staff, and then considered by the City's Planning and Zoning Board.



School District Outreach Coordinator Ashley Brown announced that Spring Break will be next week and registration is open for Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) and the Space Academy at DeSoto Middle School (DMS). She also congratulated the DMS girls volleyball team that are undefeated for three years.



The Rev. Nathan Headrick, pastor of the Arcadia Church of God, described his day dressed in a gorilla suit in thanks to the children who raised \$1,500.00 for his church. He invited everyone to a spaghetti dinner and fundraiser at 6:00 p.m. on March 21 at the church.



Tim Jones accepted from Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland a tribute to—and remembrance—his mother, Carol Jones (1946-2026), who worked for the City of Arcadia as Administrative Executive Assistant for many years.



Property Appraiser Dave Williams spoke on behalf of Georgia Martin who is facing a deadline to have her house rebuilt by Rebuild Florida because of black mold growing following hurricane damage. Williams believes the correct zoning for the property was not transferred when the zoning maps were digitized.

will have it prepared for first reading at the next meeting. He contacted the Red Speed company to present at least at the second reading, so that the City will have "had a public hearing and heard evidence on the necessity of the speed detection systems in those school zones"—all except Memorial Elementary School.

Airport Director Shelley Peacock reported 1,833 gallons of fuel sold, the most ever sold on one day with 184 operations and lots of drive-in diners for lunch at Taco Tuesday. She invited everyone to the last pancake breakfast of the season this Sat. and announced that registration is open for the Young Eagles program, funded by the breakfasts.

Golf Course Director Jeff Gibson noted that the Arcadia American Legion Golf Tournament was "the biggest tournament we've ever had" with 140 players, and another tournament will take place this weekend. The new irrigation system is keeping the course in good shape even in the dry season when the ponds are down four to five feet.

Carsten noted that at McSwain Park, the footers for the playground are ready to be poured and all is going as scheduled. The groundbreaking for the wetlands project is scheduled for March 18. The City also has an opportunity for a Florida Commerce Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) that cities often use for utilities

or street paving or to build or repair sidewalks with the usual amount being \$750,000.00 but it could be as much as \$2 million. The threshold requirements include 51% low income population, and the City exceeds that at 57%. Florida Commerce will help the City on getting an estimate, and Public Works will start an inventory of sidewalks. City Hall's upstairs floors are being sanded and the HVAC systems are being installed. The emergency exit is being worked on with the architect. She also noted that the Ridge League meeting is on Mar. 12 in Bartow; the Arcadia Rodeo parade is on Mar. 14, and she has Arcadia Rodeo tickets available for Council members.

# BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES

## A FRESH TAKE: SPURGEON'S RESURRECTION ANCHOR IN AN AGE OF FORGETTING

**CHAPLAIN AMANDA REUTER**

**US Army Reserve**

DeSoto County Ministerial Association

Charles Spurgeon, preaching on April 9, 1882, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, took up Paul's charge to Timothy: "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel." In an era when Victorian skepticism chipped at miracles and higher criticism questioned Scripture's reliability, Spurgeon hammered home one unyielding fact—the empty tomb as the linchpin of everything Christian. He urged his hearers not to let the resurrection fade into seasonal sentiment but to hold it as the living center of faith.

Today, in our hyper-connected yet spiritually fragmented world, the call to "remember" cuts deeper still. We live in an age of curated memories: algorithms feed us endless feeds of yesterday's highlights, while collective amnesia erases inconvenient histories. Easter becomes pastel eggs, brunch, and a brief nod to spring renewal—rarely the raw, history-altering event Spurgeon proclaimed. Yet the resurrection refuses to be domesticated. It is not a metaphor

for personal reboot or societal progress; it is God's decisive "No" to death's finality and sin's dominion.

Spurgeon emphasized the human lineage—"of the seed of David"—to ground the miracle in promise-keeping reality. Jesus wasn't a ghostly apparition or abstract spirit; He was the promised King, flesh-and-blood descendant, who rose bodily to fulfill centuries of prophecy. In our time of identity fluidity and eroded roots, this matters profoundly. The risen Christ reconnects us to a story larger than our isolated selves. He is no invented icon or psychological projection. Jesus Christ is the historical hinge where heaven invaded earth, where the Davidic covenant burst its bounds to embrace every tribe and tongue.

The resurrection, Spurgeon insisted, undergirds the entire gospel. Without it, atonement is incomplete, justification a fiction, sanctification powerless. Death wins; hope dissolves. But because Christ rose, the gospel is not fragile advice but invincible declaration. In an era drowning in bad news—pandemics, polarization, ecological dread, existential drift—the empty tomb declares that evil's momentum has been reversed. Graves stay open. Tyrants fall.

Forgiveness is not wishful thinking but accomplished fact.

Spurgeon closed with application: remember this truth daily. Let it steel you against despair, fuel your witness, and shape your life. In our distracted age, where attention scatters like chaff, the resurrection demands focus. It is the fixed point amid shifting sands—the event that says creation's groan will end in glory, that suffering is not senseless, that death is defeated.

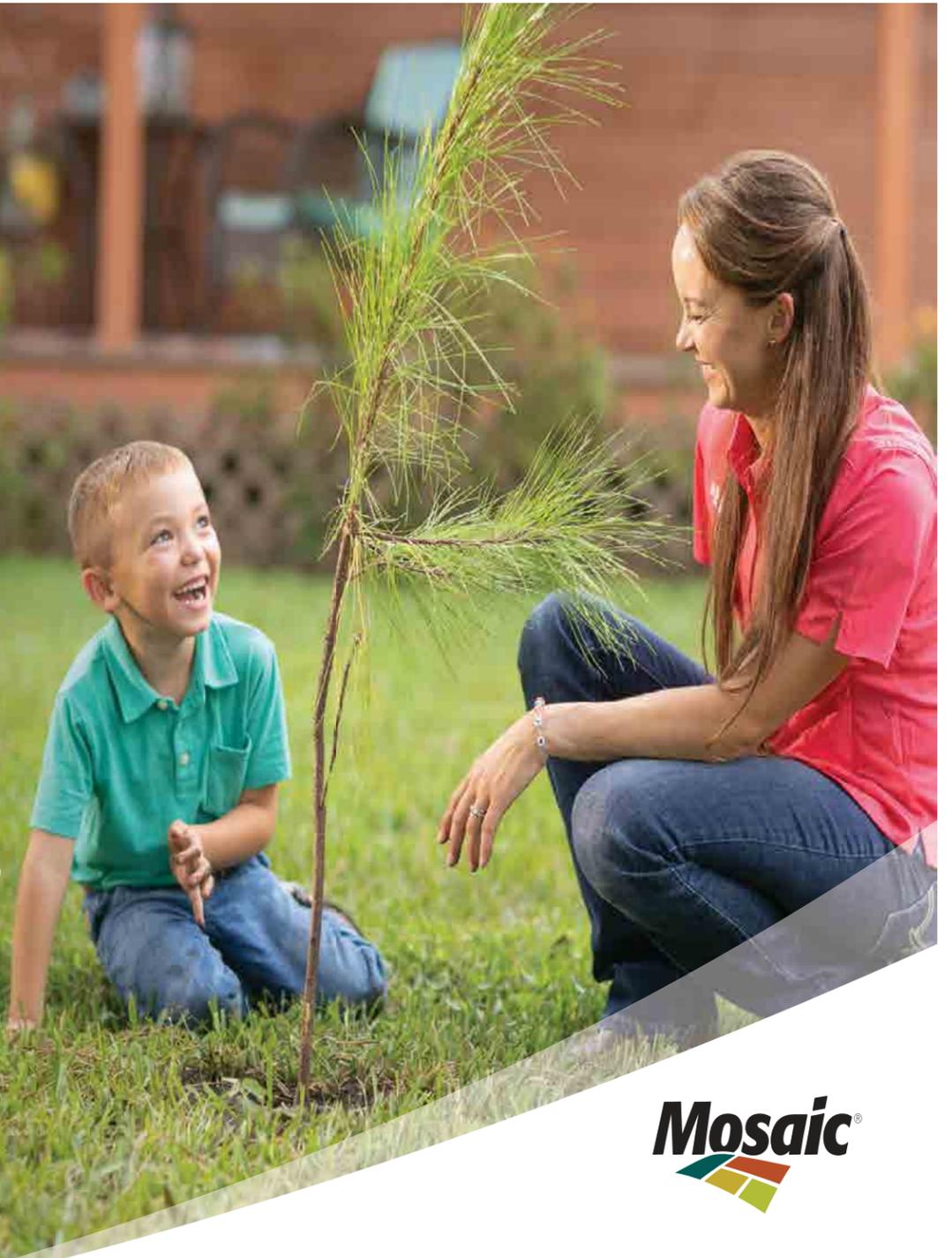
So remember, as Spurgeon pleaded: not as nostalgic ritual, but as revolutionary reality. The seed of David lives. His rising pulses through history still, calling skeptics to faith, wanderers home, and weary saints to stand. In a world prone to forget, the empty tomb shouts: He is risen indeed. And because He lives, nothing—nothing—can ultimately prevail against those who remember.



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# IBT'S FIBER BROADBAND NETWORK IN DESOTO COUNTY IS UNDERWAY



*Supported in Part by USDA, FloridaCommerce, and Treasury Support, the Project Will Deliver High-Speed Internet Access to More Than 4,700 Locations.*

DeSoto County, Fla—IBT announced that construction is officially underway on a new fiber-to-the-premises (FTTP) broadband network in DeSoto County, marking a major milestone in expanding access to reliable, high-speed internet service for residents and businesses. The announcement was made on February 9, 2026.

Once complete, the network will provide fiber broadband service to more than 4,700 homes, businesses, and community anchor institutions across the county, delivering significantly faster speeds, improved reliability, and future-ready connectivity.

“This project represents a critical investment in DeSoto County’s digital infrastructure,” said Daniel Toledano,

Managing Director of IBT. “By bringing fiber directly to thousands of locations, we are helping ensure residents, businesses, and public institutions have the connectivity they need to support economic growth, education, healthcare, and everyday life.”

Construction activities are currently underway in multiple areas of the county and will continue in phases as crews build out the core network and neighborhood-level infrastructure. Fiber-to-the-premises technology allows internet service to be delivered directly to each location, supporting symmetrical gigabit-class speeds and long-term scalability.

This deployment is part of a broader effort to expand broadband access in unserved and underserved areas and is supported through a combination of grant funds provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of the Treasury, and the State of Florida Department of Commerce.

IBT will provide regular updates as construction progresses and service availability expands. Residents and businesses will be notified when fiber

service becomes available in their area. For more information and to track construction progress, visit [www.ibt.us](http://www.ibt.us), or follow IBT on social media at [Facebook.com/IBTGroupUSA](https://www.facebook.com/IBTGroupUSA) and [Instagram.com/IBTGroupUSA](https://www.instagram.com/IBTGroupUSA).

This broadband deployment is supported through a combination of federal and state funding programs aimed at expanding high-speed internet access in unserved and underserved communities.

Sponsored by IBT Group USA, LLC and the State of Florida, Department of Commerce. This project is being supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number SLFRP0125 awarded to the State of Florida by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

The project receives support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) through its Rural Utilities Service broadband initiatives.

The contents of this announcement reflect the activities and perspectives of IBT Group USA, LLC and do not necessarily represent the official views or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of the Treasury, or the State of Florida.



Reference to these agencies or funding programs does not constitute or imply endorsement by the United States Government or the State of Florida.

IBT Group USA, LLC is an equal opportunity provider.

IBT is a broadband infrastructure and internet service provider focused on delivering high-performance fiber and fixed wireless networks to communities across the United States. The company specializes in deploying future-proof broadband solutions that support economic development, digital inclusion, and long-term community growth.

## ADVERTORIAL

# WHY YEAR-ROUND VOLUNTEER SUPPORT MATTERS FOR SOUTHWEST FLORIDA’S NONPROFITS

### FLORIDA POWER & LIGHT COMPANY

#### Newsroom

Charlotte Miller, Manager of External Affairs for Fort Myers and Naples, Florida Power & Light Company

Every day across southwest Florida, volunteers are powering strong communities. Consistent, hands-on service helps ensure families are supported, essential programs remain strong and local nonprofit organizations can continue serving those who depend on them.

Yet many organizations are being asked to do more with fewer hands. According to the Florida Nonprofit Alliance, about 40% of nonprofit organizations say they need more volunteers to meet current demand. Here in southwest Florida, that need is clear. With extra support, food banks like Community Cooperative can distribute more meals, youth organizations such as YMCA of Collier County can mentor more students, and community groups like Keep Lee County Beautiful can keep our neighborhoods and shorelines clean. But many still lack the regular volunteers they depend on to operate at full strength.

That’s why corporate volunteerism matters. After decades of working alongside nonprofit partners, Florida

Power & Light Company (FPL) has seen firsthand how reliable volunteer engagement helps stretch limited resources and reduce operating costs. When volunteers return month after month, they become trusted partners who make it possible to plan ahead and meet growing community needs – whether during hurricane season, the holidays or throughout the year.

In February, hundreds of FPL employees participated in our 18th annual Power to Care Week, an initiative rooted in the belief that lasting impact comes from showing up consistently. In LaBelle, FPL volunteers rolled up their sleeves to help complete the new LaBelle Educational Garden to create a welcoming outdoor learning space for students and the community. That commitment continues throughout the year, as FPL volunteers contribute more than 55,000 volunteer hours annually working alongside hundreds of nonprofit partners, from preparing meal kits for seniors ahead of



On Feb. 18, 2026, Florida Power & Light Company (FPL) volunteers, along with LaBelle Middle FFA Chapter, help complete the new LaBelle Educational Garden. Volunteers installed educational signage for foliage, hammock posts and a fountain and also landscaped the area and planted a new pollinator garden area – creating a welcoming outdoor learning space for students and the community. This project is in partnership with the City of LaBelle, Arts of the Inland Gallery, LaBelle Garden Club, National FFA Organization, LaBelle Middle School and Hendry County School District. Now in its 18th year, FPL’s Power to Care program reinforces the company’s long-standing commitment to powering strong communities making Florida an even better place to live, work and raise a family. This year, FPL’s Power to Care week consists of more than 30 projects led by hundreds of employees in over 10 counties across Florida.

hurricane season alongside Community Cooperative and Collier Senior Center - Golden Gate to supporting programs that help families meet basic needs.

Strong communities aren’t built overnight. They’re built through steady, hands-on service – one hour, one skill and one project at a time – that lays a foundation of volunteerism that lasts for

generations. As southwest Florida grows and faces new challenges, dependable volunteer support will be more important than ever to make our communities thrive.

# Realtor Showcase



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At Florida Power & Light Company, we are proud to support the DeSoto County Historical Society's 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Pioneer Day.

This event is a special opportunity to honor the rich history, traditions and progress that shape the DeSoto community.

We hope to see you on March 28 at the Turner Agri-Civic Center!





# OBITUARIES

## DONNA SUZANNE THOMAS



Donna Suzanne Thomas, age 76, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, February 25, 2026,

leaving behind a legacy of faith, family, and devotion. She was born on November 27, 1949, in Jacksonville, Florida. She is preceded in death by father, Roy Schnell Davis; mother, Ethel Marguerite Jones; her sisters, Mary Ellen Coppola, Royalyne Ward-Davis, and Darlene Davis. Donna is survived by her siblings: Marlene and Gerald McCain; Alvin and Shirley Davis; Sherry and David Hodges; Perry and Arlene Davis; and William Jones.

Donna leaves behind her high school sweetheart and beloved husband of 35 years, Jesse Gerard Thomas and her loving children: Chad Henderson; Lance and Crystal Henderson; and Jessica and Chris Joiner.

Donna/DeeDee was a proud and devoted grandmother to Cayla Joiner and Chris Fulton; Jordan

and Ashley Collins; Caitlin O'Neal; Ashlee Henderson; Leah Bauer; Dalton and Allie Joiner; Bradlee and Kalyn Henderson; Emilee and Mark Schelm; and Jake Joiner, along with ten cherished great-grandchildren: Rowan, Camden, Tayven, Ryatt, Reid, James, Micah, Colbie, Emilia, and Russel.

Donna dedicated her life to caring for others. She loved cooking for her family, planning beach trips, and celebrating holidays surrounded by those she loved most. Her faith was central to her life. She was an active member of First Baptist Church of Fort Ogden, where she faithfully taught Sunday school and served her church community with love and compassion. Professionally, Donna devoted many years to education and community service. She served at The Arcadian/DeSoto Sun newspaper from July 1970

through June 1999 before following her passion for early childhood education. In 1999, she became the owner of The Learning Tree Inc., where she lovingly taught and cared for preschool children and families in the community for over two decades before selling the school in September 2021.

Donna will be remembered for her kindness, strong faith, generous heart, and unwavering love for her family. Her presence will be deeply missed and forever cherished by all who knew her.

**A Celebration of Life service will be held at First Baptist Church of Fort Ogden on Saturday, March 28, 2026, at 11:00 a.m., where family and friends are invited to gather in remembrance of Donna and to honor her life.**

## NEWS FROM THE DESK OF SHERIFF POTTER

# PROACTIVE APPROACHES TO PREVENTING CRIME



**SHERIFF POTTER**  
DeSoto County Sheriff

Dear DeSoto County,

You may have noticed an uptick in crime on television or heard of a friend who has been a victim of a crime, which leads me to explain how we can come together to get a handle on crimes such as burglaries and theft, to better protect you and your belongings.

The DeSoto County Sheriff's Office's fundamental obligation to the citizenry is public safety. The safety and security of a person and their property is widely viewed as basic human rights and are essential to the community's overall quality of life. Our deputies work hard every day to keep you safe and secure. It is important for me to convey to you information to help you avoid being a victim of a crime.

According to the National Crime Prevention Council, crime

prevention is a pattern of attitudes and behaviors directed at reducing the threat of crime and enhancing the sense of safety and security, to positively influence the quality of life in our society, and to develop environments where crime cannot flourish.

The different types of crime prevention include punitive, corrective and protective. Punitive justice believes criminals will accept responsibility for their actions through punishment, which can eventually change and influence behavior. Punitive crime prevention is enforced through criminal laws, law enforcement, courts, jails and prisons.

Corrective prevention attempts to reduce crime by avoiding certain conditions which can lead to crime, such as reducing overcrowding and creating viable neighborhoods. This can include employment, education, counseling and mentoring.

Protective crime prevention is focusing on methods to reduce

the opportunities to commit crime. This can be implemented in several ways such as a neighborhood watch program, community policing and public education. To proactively take action to prevent crime, you must understand the criminal's actions when committing the crime.

It starts with the person being driven by the desire to commit the crime. Without desire there is no intent to commit a crime, therefore a crime cannot occur. It then leads to the ability to commit crime. This side addresses whether a person can commit the crime they have the desire to commit. Finally, comes the opportunity to commit the crime. Crime can be prevented when we remove an offender's desire, ability or opportunity. It only takes getting rid of one. What do you have most control of?

We have considerable control over the opportunities we provide criminals to commit crimes against us. Whether it's in the workplace or in your community. There are strategies you can implement in

your daily life to limit opportunities for criminals. Some of the most basic actions you can take is locking the doors of your home and vehicle. When you remove the opportunity, the "Crime Triangle" breaks down. Remember, the DeSoto County Sheriff's Office is working on the other parts of the "Crime Triangle" every day. When we all work together, we can hamper the criminal element from victimizing our County.

Overall, the most efficient and effective way to successfully work together to reduce or remove crime is by eliminating the opportunity side of the triangle. As individuals and as a community, we have the most power to control what opportunities are presented to criminals.

Be the change to prevent crime in DeSoto County!

**Be Safe, Be Kind, God Bless,  
Sheriff James F. Potter**

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# DESOTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



ARREST REPORT | 2/27/26 - 3/5/26

**Bovee, John:**

Failure To Appear - Written Promise To Appear

**Brady, NyTrevious Levon:**

Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use; Drugs-Sell - Sell Controlled Substance Schedule II; Marijuana-Possess - Possess Less Than 20 Grams Cannabis; Public Order Crimes - Keep Pub Nuisance Structure For Drug Activity

**Bronder, Kay Anne:**

Disorderly Intox - Disorder Intox Public Place Cause Disturbance

**Cadien, Sedney George:**

Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use; Drugs-Possess - Int SELL/MFG/DEL Ctrl Sub WORSHIP/CONV Schd II; Marijuana-Possess - Possess Less Than 20 Grams Cannabis; Possession Of Weapon - Or Ammo By Convicted Fla Felon; Public Order Crimes - Keep Pub Nuisance Structure For Drug Activity

**Constant, Sean David:**

Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While LIC Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

**Faircloth Jr., Jeffery Dean:**

Prob Violation - Prob Violation

**Fernandes Jr., Herbert Victor:**

Moving Traffic Viol - Dwlsr Or Revocation Equiv Status

**Fernandez, Jaimie Dawn:**

Damage Prop-Crim Misch - Over 200 Dols Under 1000 Dols; Resist Officer - Obstruct Wo Violence

**Foret, Maria M:**

Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use; Drugs-Possess - Possess Controlled Substance W/O Prescription

**Frazier, Christopher Charles:**

Damage Prop-Crim Misch - 1000 Dols Or More; Weapon Offense - Missile Into Dwelling Veh Building Or Aircraft

**Garrett, Michael Q:**

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

**Gonzalez, Jose Federico:**

Battery - Touch Or Strike

**Guzman, David:**

Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use; Marijuana-Possess - Possess Less Than 20 Grams Cannabis; Moving Traffic Viol - Dwlsr Or Revocation Equiv Status Subsq Off

**Harden, Gregg Marcellus:**

Failure To Appear - Written Promise To Appear

**Harrison, Daniel Clyde:**

DUI-Unlaw Bld Alch - DUI Influence Of Alcohol Or Drugs; DUI-Unlaw Bld Alch - Refusal Submit DUI Testing

**Hernandez, Dario:**

Failure To Appear - Written Promise To Appear

**Heyne, Xander Arthur Alan:**

Larc - Other Theft (x4)

**Juarez De Leon, Julio Cesar:**

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

**LAINKO, DANIELLE NICOLE:**

Prob Violation - Prob Violation

**Lopez-Velazquez, Jessica Nicole:**

Aggrav Battery - Aggrav Battery With A Deadly Weapon; Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use; Drugs-Possess - Possess Controlled Substance W/O Prescription; Marijuana-Possess - Possess Less Than 20 Grams Cannabis; Resist Officer - Obstruct Wo Violence; Veh Theft - Grand Theft Of Motor Vehicle

**Louissaint, Ligenson:**

Moving Traffic Viol - Drive While LIC Susp Habitual Offender; Nonmoving Traffic Viol - Driver Present Non Current Insurance; Nonmoving Traffic Viol - Fail To Register Motor Veh

**Mitchell, James Alfred:**

Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While LIC Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

**Olmo-Rivera, Alex:**

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

**Reynaga-Villanueva, Juan**

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

**Ruiz, Jesus Aparicio:**

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

**Sanders Jr., Robert Michael:**

Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use; Drugs-Possess - Possess Controlled Substance W/O Prescription

**Williams, Jevontae Deshawn:**

Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While LIC Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

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