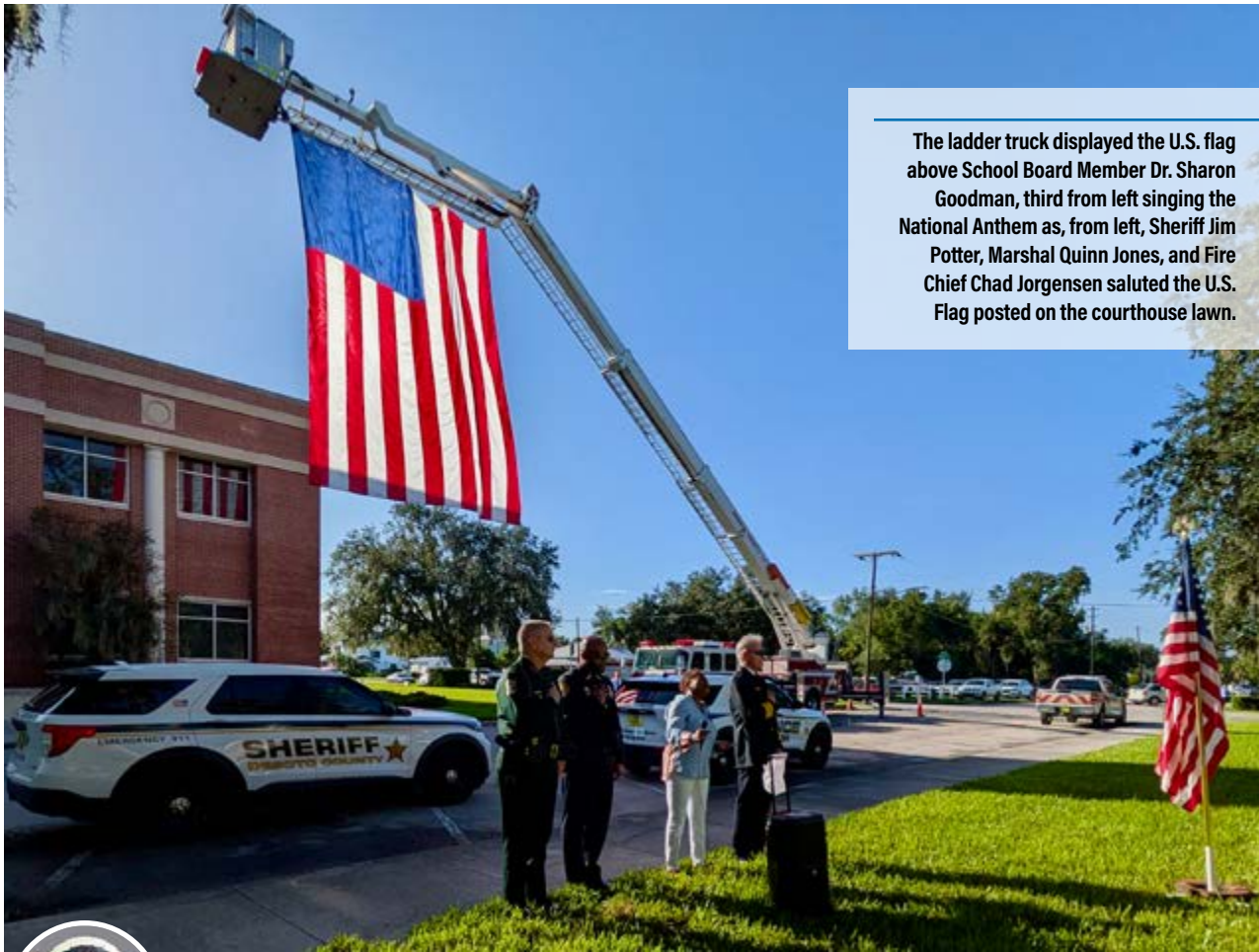


ON THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY,
WE REMEMBERED 9/11



The ladder truck displayed the U.S. flag above School Board Member Dr. Sharon Goodman, third from left singing the National Anthem as, from left, Sheriff Jim Potter, Marshal Quinn Jones, and Fire Chief Chad Jorgensen saluted the U.S. Flag posted on the courthouse lawn.



CAROL MAHLER
Independent Contractor
carolmahler22acl@gmail.com
Photos provided

On Sept. 11, Fire Chief Chad Jorgensen organized and emceed a ceremony to remember the heroic actions of firefighters, police, and others as well as all those died in the terrorist attacks 25 years ago. He noted that some adults today were not born when the tragedy occurred.

He delayed the start of the ceremony for a few minutes as many of those who attended had to park at a distance and walk to the east courthouse lawn because nearby parking had been filled by those called to jury duty. In some ways, it was appropriate to the occasion that commemorates the defense of freedom because one of the responsibilities of that freedom is serving on a jury when called.



Standing beside Fire Chief Chad Jorgensen at right, the Rev. David Stewart, pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church, said the opening and closing prayers asking God to bless and comfort the families of all those who died in the terrorist attacks 25 years ago.

SEE ANNIVERSARY PAGE 12 >>



DESOTO COUNTY SPORTS
PAGE 4
STEVE KNAPP
sports@peacriver shopper.com



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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

SEP 17	DESOTO COUNTY SPECIAL MASTERS HEARING
THUR 11A	Administration Building 201 E. Oak Street, Suite 103 Arcadia, FL 34266
SEP 22	DESOTO COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING
TUE 3P	Administration Building 201 E. Oak Street, Suite 103 Arcadia, FL 34266
SEP 22	DESOTO COUNTY BUDGET HEARING
TUE 6:30P	Administration Building 201 E. Oak Street, Suite 103 Arcadia, FL 34266

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

Realtor Showcase
..... See page 13

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

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THRIFT STORE EXPANDS WITH “LITTLE VIBE TRIBE”



CAROL MAHLER
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Photos provided

When asked what inspired her to expand her thrift store to include a huge selection of reasonably priced, gently used clothing and other items for children, Laura Partridge said, “It was the moms asking for more kids stuff.” So when her landlord told her that the adjacent store was available next week, Partridge went with her gut feeling and a prayer.

On August 13, a hole was made in the wall between her thrift store and the adjacent empty shop, and a month later on Sept. 13, she opened her shop expanded to include the “Little Vibe Tribe.” The new entrance is now at 215 W. Oak St..

Partridge believes in the positive effects of arts and crafts on mental health, so she had opened a not-for-profit organization called Mixed Emotions Craft Studio, Inc., in downtown Arcadia. Then in 2024, she learned that high school senior girls could not graduate unless they wore a black or blue dress. “Every woman needs a little black dress,” she said.

More than 100 dresses were donated during her first Black Dress Event, and upwards of 50 high school seniors accepted one to wear. After that, Partridge and many of the women who helped her renamed the organization, “Laura’s Good Vibe Tribe Thrift Store.” It opened at 213 W. Oak St. on July 13, 2024.

“We are more than a thrift shop,” a sign in the store states. “We are a community where women are uplifted with dignity, support, and essentials, rediscovering their strength through the generosity of others.”

Indeed, a sign near a rack of fancy dresses suitable for the upcoming High School Homecoming Dance invites shoppers to check in with a volunteer, fill out a short form, try on some dresses to “find the one that makes you feel amazing, add accessories to complete your look,” and check out with a volunteer. “No purchase necessary, just come find your sparkle.”

Partridge has been amazed at the condition of the donations: “they’re all in great shape,” she said. She also introduced Aveyron Lara, age 14 years, the first male to volunteer at the shop.



The ‘Little Vibe Tribe’ sign welcomes shoppers into the expanded area full of kids stuff priced at \$2.00 for baby or toddler and \$3.00 for kids items. “We have affordable clothing for everyone,” Partridge said.



Laura Partridge, owner and operator of Laura’s Good Vibe Tribe Thrift Shop, stands with Delainy Shattles, who said, “I was so happy because I was hanging out with my cousins.”



As part of the grand opening of the Little Vibe Tribe expansion of Laura’s Good Vibe Tribe Thrift Store, Taura Hammil, Rebecca Walker, and Noah Parker were selling lemon shake-ups, homemade carmel in a jar, and 3-D prints by Noah as the Lemon Drop Shop.



From left, Aveyron Lara, Delainy Shattles, Elimaya Lara, and Morgan Shattles paused a moment with their bags full of treasures. Eleven-year-old Elimaya shopped by herself. “It was fun,” she said, “and I felt very mature.”



Maria Alejo held up two of the fancy dresses from the rack of gowns suitable for the upcoming High School Homecoming Dance. She also helped translate for those who are not yet fluent in English.



Demetra McMillan said that she was the first customer to do arts and crafts with Partridge. McMillan also volunteers in the shop “to help out with this and that.”

He said, “It’s fun because there’s a lot of stuff to do here.” He has organized goods, packed boxes, and done “whatever she asks me to do.”

Those visiting the thrift store may receive a “kindness coin” that is worth a dollar off anything. The shop is open 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Tues. through Fri., and

9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sat. For more information, call 863-263-4598 or check online at facebook.com/p/Lauras-Good-Vibe-Tribe

ARCADIA AIRPORT HOSTS YOUNG EAGLES RALLY



CAROL MAHLER
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Photos provided

Thanks to Pilots Ralph Arwood, Dave MacGregor, and Shelley Peacock, five youngsters flew at Arcadia Airport on Sept.

12 as part of the “Young Eagles” Rally held by the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) Chap. 1226: Isaiah Cendejas, Joel Geddum, Brantley Hausman, Maddison Lederhouse, and Colton Newberry.

In 1992, EAA established the Young Eagles program to give young people “their first free ride in an airplane. It’s the only program of its kind, with the sole mission

to introduce and inspire kids in the world of aviation.” Thanks to the program, more than 2.4 million “Young Eagles” have flown according to the EAA Website eaa.org/eaayouth/free-ye-flights

To participate, parents must register their children through the EAA young eagles website at www.youngeaglesday.org. Opportunities to fly are limited by the

EAA pilots who volunteer, and if available registrations are filled, parents may add their child to the wait list.

During the safety briefing, Peacock reminded families that this Young Eagles program is for “first timers” only, even

THREE FORT OGDEN RAILROAD CROSSINGS MAY CLOSE



CAROL MAHLER
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Photos provided*

At the Sept. 8 meeting, the Board of County Commissioners discussed Seminole-Gulf Railway’s (SGR) proposal to close three of the five railroad crossings in Fort Ogden: SW Kentucky, SW Georgia, and SW Senate streets. The SW River St. and SW Massachusetts St. crossings will be improved. If the Board agrees to the closures, SGR has offered a \$20,000.00 credit against replacing a crossing in another area. The Board will vote on the matter at the public hearing on Sept. 22.

Project Director for Seminole Gulf Railway, Inc., Bianca Dunkle said that Senate St., one of the three railroad crossings proposed for closure, has been closed for repairs for at least two weeks, and travel time to bypass the crossing is only two minutes.

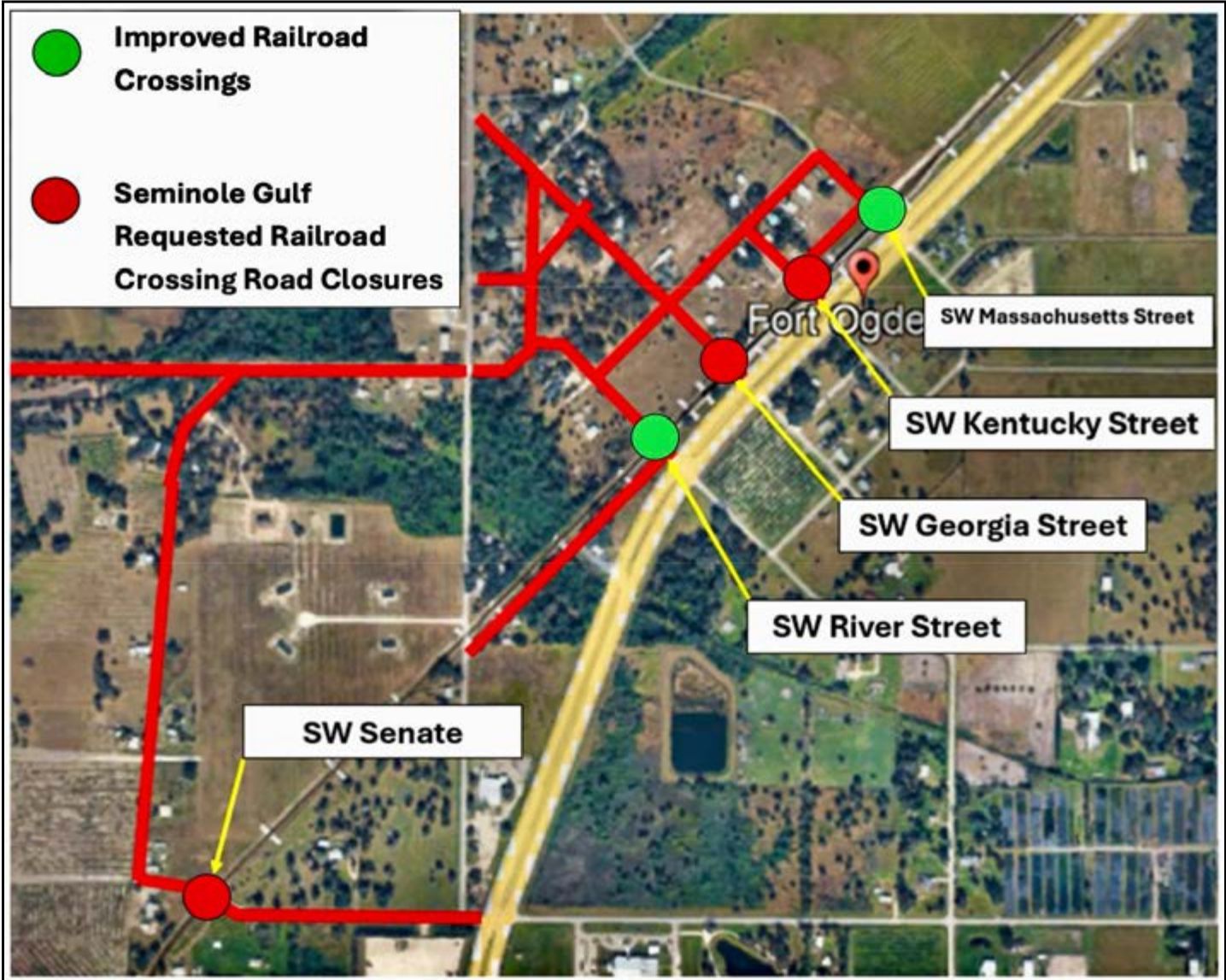
The County Engineering Dept. is coordinating the paving of the roads with the SGR’s work funded by the Federal Railway Administration (FRA) CRISI (Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements) grant. SGR requires the County to pay \$984.75 per track foot for a minimum of 30 linear feet (LF) per crossing. Three of the five crossings have a siding, so the estimate is \$60,000.00 instead of \$30,000.00 each.

Board Chairperson Steve Hickox asked to have the opinion of the County’s first responders to consider for the closures. To inform residents of the Board’s proposed action, the Board agreed to County Administrator Mandy Hines’ suggestion of placing door hangers on all Senate St. residences.

COUNTY ROAD 769 PHASE I EXPANSION

The Board approved the Locally Funded Agreement (LFA) and the Transportation Off System Post Project Maintenance Agreement with the Florida Dept. of Transportation (FDOT) and the Resolution for the County Road (CR) 769 Phase 1 Expansion Road Construction and authorized the \$1,718,458.00 payment to FDOT. The payment is the estimate of the County’s share of the construction costs—\$1,309,458.00—plus Construction Engineering and Inspection (CEI) services of \$409,000.00.

The Phase I Expansion is from the Charlotte County line to S.W. Glenadine Ave., and the design is 60% complete with an estimated construction cost of \$29.7 million. That total includes nearly \$3.8 million Federal and \$15 million State dollars plus \$9.7 million “in utility costs paid for by the Peace River Regional Water Supply Authority and DeSoto County Utilities (DCU).” The total Construction Engineering and Inspection (CEI) services is estimated at \$2 million



Seminole Gulf Railway, Inc., has proposed to close three of the five railroad crossings in Fort Ogden—SW Georgia, SW Kentucky, and SW Senate streets—and leave open and improve the ones on SW Massachusetts and SW River streets.



James Ritenberg, Project Admin. with KCI Technologies, Inc., who has the contract for Construction Engineering Inspection Services for the Second Bunker Ave. bridge, said that the geo-technical report indicated only soft material on either side of the bridge.



Work on the Second Bunker Ave. bridge was interrupted because the pilings were not able to be driven to the correct depth as assumed in the geo-technical report, so ZEP Construction, Inc., asked for a change order for drilling.

including \$1.6 million in State funding.

The County’s cost for the project may increase when the design is complete and the project is bid. Costs do not include DCU’s utility adjustments. Before this payment, the County had more than \$4 million in the King’s Highway Capital Reserve.

IN OTHER BUSINESS

The Board authorized the County Administrator to sign the change order for the Second Bunker Bridge adding \$46,000.00 to the cost that will be reimbursed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The additional funds will pay for drilling to a sufficient depth for the pilings. The geo-technical report showed only soft material in core samples taken on the bridge approaches, but the construction crew found rock beneath the bridge that must be drilled to set the pilings. As staff is trying to avoid remobilization costs, the request was a last-minute agenda item.

The Board approved the Property & Casualty Insurance Agreement Amendment #1 and the policy renewal, using the first of four one-year renewals, for fiscal year 2026-2027, including all lines of coverage for Property and Casualty insurance with Brown & Brown Risk Management Assoc. and Preferred Government Insurance Trust (PGIT). The insurance renewal is a result of a two-year rate guarantee through the competitive Request For Proposals (RFP) process in 2025.

As rates were locked in, so premium changes are simply updated via the changes in property, auto, equipment, payroll values and the Workers Compensation Experience Modification Factor—which increased from 1.50 to 1.76 and adversely affected the premium. The renewal also includes Firefighter Cancer and Death Benefits coverage through Florida United Badges Insurance Services. A full appraisal resulted in a 15% increase to the total insured value of County assets;

however, to implement the appraisal, PGIT agreed to waive the mid-term additional premium of \$68,446.00. The last appraisal was 2021.

ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

Hines reported that she and three members of Fair Assoc. plus an architect had met at the Turner Center. The Fair Assoc. wants to submit a grant application by the Oct. 1 deadline but cannot do so without a facility use agreement. The grant is open to both county governments and fair associations, so the Board directed her to apply for a planning grant as the existing Turner Center barns are in need of repair or replacement.

She also updated the reuse of the Administration Building: the former Tax Collector’s office will now house the Supervisor of Elections; Utilities administration will move into the former



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BULLDOGS CAN'T COME BACK FROM FIRST QUARTER DISASTERS



STEVE KNAPP

Sports Writer
sports@peacerivershopper.com

To say the first quarter of the Bulldogs' loss at Bonita Springs was a nightmare is an understatement. Five total yards of offense, 4 penalties, a pic six and the inability to hold onto the ball with 3 fumbles led to 26 first quarter points for the Bullsharks.

A short pic six from within the 5 yard line started the scoring with less than a minute and a half off the play clock. A five yard run two minutes later boosted the score to 13-0. A 15 yard TD run made the score 20-0 with less than half of the first quarter gone. The final score was a 3 yard run with 40 seconds let in the quarter to make it 26-0 at the end of one.

After that, DeSoto settled in and kept the Bullsharks out of the end zone for the rest of the game. Elijah Johnson scored the Bulldogs' first touchdown of the season on a run of about 85 yards.

'It was crazy man until my hamstring gave out on me. It was absolutely beautiful to see that open field in front of me,' said Johnson.

A couple of other players made their presence known with breakout games. Sophomores Jordan Summers and Yogi Nurse had their best games of their young careers. Nurse struggled holding onto the wet ball but he did have a nice kickoff return for 20 yards in the first quarter and he made some plays on defense. Summers had a huge game especially on defense. There are no official stats for the game, but he carried the ball well and was in on so many tackles. If both of those players can continue to perform like they did last week they could be difference makers for the rest of the season.

A couple of valuable players should be coming off the injury list for tomorrow's game. Charlie Wilkinson has recovered from a foot injury that has forced him to miss most of the season so far. Blake Forman is also due back along with possibly a couple of other players. Carter Bennett looks like he may miss another week or two before he returns to action.



This was a familiar sight for both teams all night as the wet conditions made it hard to hang onto the ball.



Jordan Summers celebrates his tackle for a loss. Summers had his best game of his career in the loss to Bonita Springs.



Yogi Nurse breaks the tackle and picks up a big gain. By the time this run was finished there were 4 defenders on the ground who failed to bring him down.



Jordan Summers signals a first down after a nice pickup.



Elijah Johnson comes off the field after his touchdown and gets greeted by his teammates.



Sophomore Ra'Motni Watson tries to pry the ball away from a Bullshark player on a fumble.

DESOTO COUNTY

GAME OF THE WEEK

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BULLDOGS CHEW UP WILDCATS



STEVE KNAPP
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After watching the JV volleyball team blast Hardee in straight sets by identical 25-8 scores, it should have been a harbinger for the varsity game. The varsity game was even better as they kept the Wildcats to an average of just 7 points with wins of 25-9, 25-5 and 25-8.

In the first set, three of the Wildcats first 4 points came on service errors by the Bulldogs. They created another error and a rotation error to give Hardee 5 of their 9 points. DeSoto had a total of 7 service errors in the match for their third highest total of the season. Their season high was 9 also against Hardee.

The second set saw the Bulldogs jump out to an 8-2 lead when Bailey Muse began serving. By the time she was finished, the Bulldogs had rattled off 9 straight points for a 17-2 lead. The match winning set was highlighted by another long service run, this time by Emma Sorrells with 8 straight points.

Brighten Long picked up 33 assists along with 5 digs and 4 aces. Sorrells led with 11 kills, 4 digs and 3 aces as the Bulldogs upped their record to 11-3.

Kylee Taylor has missed most of the season with a foot injury but got into the game late. "I was so scared. I thought I was going to miss my serve but I didn't. Coach told me if the score was 20-5 she'd put me in and that's what the score was.



Maddy Atherton goes cross court with this kill shot in the win over Hardee.



Senior Izaria Anderson gets the shot past the Hardee defenders.



Bailey Muse drills the ball past the Hardee defenders in the 3-0 win.



Chloe Clemons makes a diving save on a ball and watches as her teammates keep the play alive.



Another outstanding performance by Brighten Long as she puts up one of her 33 assists.



Chloe Clemons serves during the 3-0 win over Hardee to boost the DeSoto record to 11-3 for the season.

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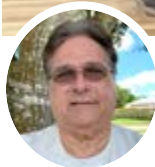
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DESOTO COUNTY

ATHLETES OF THE WEEK

JV VOLLEYBALL

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STEVE KNAPP
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The JV volleyball team came through with a huge win at the Braden River JV

tournament last weekend. They stunned Charlotte with a 25-22 and 15-8 win after losing the first set 25-21. They kept on winning as they swept Lemon Bay 25-14 and 25-17. They also beat the host team's freshman team 2-0 and their

JV team. That gave them 8 wins out of 9 sets and the tournament championship. Coach Lucretia Gilmore said, "They had their moments but every time they found a way to fight through and keep going. The girls played some incredible

volleyball and showed plenty of heart, teamwork, and determination." It was also the first trophy as coaches for Gilmore and Kristie Joens.



ADVERTORIAL

FPL LAUNCHES NEW ASSISTANCE CENTER, MAKING IT EASIER FOR CUSTOMERS TO FIND WAYS TO GET HELP AND SAVE

THE NEW ONLINE RESOURCE CENTER INCLUDES THE NEW FPL SAVING STEPS PROGRAM, WHICH OFFERS ELIGIBLE CUSTOMERS A ONE-TIME \$200 BILL CREDIT, ALONG WITH BILL ASSISTANCE, ENERGY-SAVING PROGRAMS AND LOCAL COMMUNITY RESOURCES

FLORIDA POWER & LIGHT COMPANY
Newsroom

Florida Power & Light Company (FPL) is launching a new online Assistance Center, designed to make it easier for customers to find programs that can help them save energy, manage their monthly bills and find additional support. This new resource features FPL Saving Steps, a new program that gives eligible participants ways to reduce everyday energy use and the opportunity to earn a one-time \$200 bill credit toward a future bill.

As Florida's summer heat drives higher energy use, FPL is focused on helping customers now while connecting them with tools that can support long-term savings. The new center brings together FPL programs, federal assistance options, energy-saving education and local nonprofit support so customers can more easily find the help that fits their needs.

WHAT IS FPL SAVING STEPS?

FPL Saving Steps is a new program available through the Assistance Center that teaches practical ways to reduce everyday energy use and better manage monthly expenses. Eligible participants can earn a one-time \$200 bill credit toward a future FPL bill.

Saving Steps gives customers another

way to take action on their energy use, complementing FPL's existing programs and tools that help customers understand consumption, improve efficiency and manage energy costs.

WHAT BILL PAYMENT SUPPORT AND SHORT-TERM RELIEF DOES FPL OFFER TO CUSTOMERS?

For customers facing temporary financial hardship or who need more time to pay, the Assistance Center highlights programs that can provide immediate support and flexibility.

- FPL's **Payment Extension** provides eligible customers with extra time to pay their bill when they need short-term flexibility.
- Federal assistance** such as the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) can help income-qualified customers with home energy costs.
- FPL's Care To Share** provides emergency bill-payment assistance or support for qualified electrical repairs for individuals and families experiencing temporary financial hardship.
- FPL's Bill Extender** offers an extended due date for eligible customers who would benefit from more time between when their bill is issued and when payment is due.



- FPL Budget Billing** helps customers manage monthly expenses by smoothing seasonal bill fluctuations into a more predictable monthly bill amount.
- Energy Saver program**, qualifying households can access energy-efficient home upgrades that can help lower energy use.
- WHAT OTHER FPL PROGRAMS CAN HELP CUSTOMERS SAVE AND LOWER THEIR BILLS?**
- FPL offers programs and tools that can help customers use energy more efficiently, understand their household energy use and manage monthly expenses over time.
- FPL On Call** gives customers bill credits of over \$90 a year to briefly pause certain appliances during periods of peak energy demand.
- The free **Energy Manager** tool provides personalized insights and recommendations tailored to a customer's home to help them better understand and manage energy use.
- Through the **FPL Community**
- WHAT COMMUNITY RESOURCES CAN CUSTOMERS FIND THROUGH THE ASSISTANCE CENTER?**
- The Assistance Center also connects customers to support beyond their electric bill through a searchable directory of local nonprofits, community organizations and partners. Customers can use the directory to find help with needs such as rent or mortgage assistance, food, transportation and other essential services.
- Powered by Findhelp, a social-service referral platform, the directory makes it easier for customers to search for programs available in their area.
- To explore available resources, customers can visit [FPL.com/Assistance](https://www.fpl.com/assistance).

DESOTO SPORTS

ROUND-UP
THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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STEVE KNAPP
Sports Writer
sports@peacerivershopper.com

The varsity volleyball team lost their two matches on Friday in a tournament and then came back to win all three matches on Saturday. All the matches ended in straight sets. They beat Hardee during the week also in straight sets 3-0. They played at Port Charlotte earlier this week and will be at ODA tomorrow. They will be in the Gene Gorman Tournament Saturday at Charlotte high school. The Bulldogs are 11-3 and 4-0 in 3A district 10.

The JV team had a milestone week, read about their accomplishments in the “Athletes of the Week” column.

The football team showed some improvement against Bonita Springs with a 26-8 loss. They will be home tomorrow against Lemon Bay and then will host Evangelical Christian as they enter the second half of their season.

The girls golf team got in one hole before the rains came and canceled the rest of their match against Lake Placid. They will travel to Lake Placid tonight

The boys golf team is home tonight against the Pirates of Port Charlotte.

The cross country team will run at North Port on Saturday and will host their only home meet of the season the following Saturday. The home meet is scheduled for the 26th at 7:30 at Morgan park.

The middle school football team lost 16-0 to Lake Placid. They will be home next Tuesday against Babcock.



The weather has been cruel to the middle school softball team. They’ve had 4 games scheduled but three of them were canceled before they even left the school due to the afternoon rains. The one game that they played was a nice 6-2 win over Sebring. Sophia Ruiz struck out 10 and gave up just 3 hits in her 5 innings in the circle. Ruiz also went 2-2 at the plate. The Bulldogs trailed 2-0 after 3 innings but exploded for 5 runs in the fourth to take the lead. Lai Martinez had the big hit with a double that drove in 3 runs. DeSoto was aided by 7 walks with Zyla Rendon and Zuli Torres each getting two free passes. They will have a 2 game home stand starting next Monday with Hardee coming to town and Lake Placid next Thursday. Both games start at 6pm.





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COUNCIL ADOPTS TENTATIVE BUDGET & MILLAGE RATE



CAROL MAHLER

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Photos provided*

At the Sept. 9 public hearing, the Council adopted two resolutions for the fiscal year 2026-2027: the tentative millage rate of 7.9 mills and the tentative budget of \$30,224,511.00. The millage rate has been set at 7.9 mills for the past four years. The Council may lower but may not raise it. The rollback rate is 7.6289 mills.

Expenditures in the tentative budget include the following funds and amounts: General - \$8,966,713.00; Water/Sewer - \$10,304,540.00; Solid Waste - \$1,507,250.00; Airport -



When Ashley Brown asked if the water/sewer revenue reflected the new rates, City Administrator Beth Carsten said that the new rates will be proposed at the public hearing at 6:00 p.m. on Oct. 6.



The Council thanked City Administrator Beth Carsten and Finance Director Teresa Conerly for their hard work in constructing the budget and then reviewing it for any possible adjustments.

\$1,910,512.00; and Small County Surtax - \$7,535,496.00.

Finance Director Teresa Conerly constructed the budget based on the proposed millage rate of 8.2

mills. As each tenth of a mill is equal to \$36,569.00 of revenue, City Administrator Beth Carsten said that the fund balance will supply the \$109,707.00 difference.

The final millage and budget public hearing is scheduled for 5:01 p.m. on Sept. 21 in the Council Chambers, 23 N. Polk Ave.. For more information, call 863-494-4114 or online at arcadia-fl.gov

BOARD ADOPTS TENTATIVE MILLAGE RATE, BUDGET, & ASSESSMENTS



CAROL MAHLER

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Photos provided*

At the Sept. 8 public hearing, the Board of County Commissioners adopted resolutions concerning fiscal year 2026-2027: the tentative millage rate of 6.8352 mills, Law Enforcement Municipal Service Taxing Unit (MSTU) of 2.9301, and EMS MSTU of 0 (as it has been replaced by a special assessment) for a total of 9.3901 mills, a slight decrease over the rolled back rate of 9.4052. Now that the tentative millage rate is set, the Board may lower but may not raise it. The Board also adopted the tentative budget of \$195,682,451.00.

The Assessment Rate Resolutions for Fire Protection Services (FPS) and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) were adopted per residential and commercial/institutional unit: \$145.00/\$271.00 and \$115.00/\$33.00, respectively. City Administrator Mandy Hines explained the history of the assessments: when the City and County merged in 2006, the City agreed to pay the County an annual amount that started at \$1,055,000.00—with “a credit for ambulance runs and . . . a contribution”—and decreased by \$50,000.00 every year for 20 years. Now that the payments have concluded, the City adopted a resolution authorizing the County to apply the same FPS and EMS assessments to those living in the City

At the merger, the City established a \$77.00 annual FPS assessment for all properties whereas the County adopted a \$77.00 for residential properties and for “commercial, industrial and other property classes, an equivalent building



Michael Blasen complained about the water standing near his home and the condition of SW Pickens Ave., and Board Vice-Chairperson Elton Langford noted that Pickens is on the 2026-2027 list of roadways to be paved. Photograph courtesy of Allen Reesor.



A City resident, Ashley Brown asked why property owners funded the Emergency Medical Services when “the entire community benefits.” After listening to the assessment history recounted by County Administrator Mandy Hines, Brown said, “I appreciate the explanation . . . it would be so helpful . . . to the community to get some sort of historical breakdown like that.” Photograph courtesy of Allen Reesor.

unit based on square footage and property type,” Hines said. To set that amount, a study analyzed “the fire call data” according to property classes, and redistributed the cost to the property classes that use the service. That study was updated in 2025 and will be reviewed every five to seven years. Of course, some EMS calls—on public roadways, for example—are not assessed to any property, so a “large general fund transfer” to public safety pays for them.

From 2006 to 2015, the County levied an EMS MSTU, so it had its own millage rate. However, in 2018, it was changed to a benefit unit assessment—as allowed by the State for fiscally constrained counties. Hines noted

that as the Board has increased the assessments, they have lowered the overall millage rate.

The Board also adopted a resolution setting the annual special assessment residential rate for solid waste collection and disposal at \$247.59 per unit, which is an increase of \$8.20 more than last year. As stated in amendment one, approved in 2024, to the Third Garbage Franchise Agreement with Womack Sanitation, Inc., a Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustment of 4.2% (the April 2026 rate) for Water and Sewer and Trash Collection Services was applied to the hauling portion of the rate as requested by Womack.

In addition, under the Consent Agenda, the Board adopted the

resolution for the Solid Waste Disposal (Landfill) Benefit Unit Special Assessment of \$45.50 per residential and \$91.00 per business unit. The Board also adopted the resolutions for the following Lighting Districts Special Assessments Rates per lot per year:: Golden Melody (\$45.00 to \$55.00) Harlem Heights (\$11.00 to \$15.00), Kings Crossing (\$21.00 to \$28.00), Lake Suzy (\$40.00 to \$44.00), Ogden Acres (\$36.00), Peace River (\$17.00 to \$20.00), Spring Lake (\$25.00), and Sunny Breeze (\$43.49).

The public hearing to adopt the final millage rate and final budget will be at 6:30 p.m. on Sept. 22 in the Commission Chambers, 201 E. Oak St., Arcadia.

YMCA BEACONS PROGRAM HOSTS NASA SCIENTIST



CAROL MAHLER
*Independent Contractor
carolmahler22acl@gmail.com
Photos provided*

On Sept. 10, the YMCA of Southwest Florida's Beacons Program hosted Dr. Ed Rosenthal, a NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) scientist, at the Turner Agri-Civic Center. He pioneered controlled-release fertilizer technologies used in NASA space-based food production as well as traditional agriculture.

Florikan, the family business that he and his wife started in their garage in Sarasota, has been inducted into the Space Technology Hall of Fame, and an exhibit telling their story is now on display at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.. Dr. Rosenthal holds seven U.S. patents and has been inducted into the Florida Inventors Hall of Fame. The Rosenthal family sold the Florikan business now located in Wauchula, Florida.

In collaboration with NASA, Florikan Fertilizer Corp. is developing a fresh food sustainable system for astronauts aboard the International Space Station (ISS) as well as those journeying to the moon and to Mars. On Aug. 10, 2015, astronauts harvested and consumed red romaine lettuce grown in space with Florikan Controlled Release Fertilizer (FCRF).

Since then, more than 12 crops of leafy green veggies—including lettuce, Chinese cabbage, mustard greens, and kale—have been successfully grown on the ISS. In addition, astronauts specifically requested chili peppers, so a special fertilizer was developed with more potassium and less nitrogen to encourage compact growth and flowering. Tomatoes are also being tested for growth in space.

The challenges of growing vegetables in space are no gravity, light, or soil, and water that floats rather than flows, and nutrients. Blue and red wavelengths are the minimum necessary for good plant growth, and instead of soil, a silica clay provides essential nutrient uptake. "Plant pillows" reconfigure roots downwards, and FCRF optimizes plant nutrition.

The Apollo missions were all-male, so NASA is now working on the all-women Artemis missions. (Apollo, god of the sun, and Artemis, goddess of the moon, were twins in Greek mythology.) On one of the Artemis missions, a woman will walk on the moon's south pole.

YMCA BEACONS PROGRAM

The Beacons Program provides "opportunities for high school-aged youth to become college and career ready through participation in meaningful work, leadership, wellness activities, and experiences." Teens meet



From left, YMCA Regional Major Gifts Officer Alix Redmonde escorted Dr. Ed Rosenthal and his wife Betty Rosenthal to the Turner Agri-Civic Center where they talked with YMCA SKY Academy Principal Adam Danapilis, and YMCA Senior Program Director Asha Campbell.

Some members of the YMCA Beacons Program in DeSoto County attended "A Night Out With Nasa Scientist Ed Rosenthal:" back row, from left: Tecoy Campbell, Jezyan Shine, Laurence Sipe, Coach Darrell Nicklow, Sariel Johnson, and Aiden Clark; front row, from left, Trudeau White, Jetyrin Shine, Coach Joe Powell, and Kiptyn Alley.



In the Turner Center, Betty Rosenthal and Dr. Ed Rosenthal conversed with Alix Redmonde, YMCA Regional Major Gifts Officer, and Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland.

The YMCA provided a free meal catered by Slim's BBQ for those who attended "A Night Out With Nasa Scientist Ed Rosenthal" on Sept. 10 in the Turner Agri-Civic Center: the LeBeau family served themselves in the buffet line as others waited in line.



one or two times a week, or sometimes on the weekends for tour or events. They participate in college preparation and career readiness as well as civic engagement and health & wellness. Jetyrin Shine said he likes the Beacons Program because of "the opportunities they give us to learn." Jezyan Shine said he enjoyed "helping

people out," and YMCA Senior Program Director Asha Campbell said that Beacons Members assisted with food distribution all summer. Sariel Johnson said he appreciated having new experiences. College and Career Readiness Coach Darrel Wicklow said that he meets with Beacons Members every

Thursday, and they recently did a community clean up on Orange Ave., starting at Elizabeth Baptist Church and working south to Louis C.Anderson, Sr., Park. For more information, visit the YMCA of Southwest Florida's Website: www.YMCASWFL.org.

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES

WHEN DECEIT RUNS DEEP, PART 1

PASTOR ABDIEL FUENTES
First Christian Church of Arcadia
DeSoto County Ministerial Association

Bottom Line Up Front: Schemes don't stop God. They don't cancel His care for you.

Genesis 29-31 takes us into one of the most complicated and emotionally exhausting seasons of Jacob's life: his long years under Laban's roof. As we saw last week, Jacob met God at Bethel, where God said to him, "I am with you." That promise was not just for a holy moment beside a stone pillow; it was meant to carry Jacob forward in the hard years ahead (Gen. 28:13–15). So, if last week's message showed that God is present when we're weak, today's passage shows that God is faithful when life becomes unfair (if you missed last week's message, [click here](#)). And if

there is one simple takeaway from last week's message to bring forth and connect to this message, it's this: God's grace does not stop when the conflict starts.

Jacob arrives in Haran emotionally drained and wounded—but also hopeful. He meets Rachel at the well, and Scripture says rather quickly that he loved her (Gen. 29:18). But this is not a simple fairy-tale romance. Jacob is vulnerable and openly exposed to Laban's manipulative ways. Because Jacob has no wealth, no livestock, and no resources for a traditional bride price, Laban demands seven years of labor. And old man Jacob completes the term. But then the story turns. On the wedding night, Laban switches daughters. Yeah, you heard right—incredible, isn't it? Jacob wakes up to Leah instead of Rachel and, shocked,

declares, "Why then have you deceived me?" (Gen. 29:25).

And that deception didn't create one isolated wound; it created a whole household of pain. Look, Genesis repeatedly tells us that Jacob loved Rachel, but it never once says that Rachel loved Jacob (Gen. 29:18, 20, 30). Leah is portrayed as longing for Jacob's love, aching for affection she never receives (Gen. 29:32–35). Yet God saw Leah's pain. "Now the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb" (Gen. 29:31). And it wasn't until much later that God remembered Rachel and opened her womb as well (Gen. 30:22). So, there, in a home marked by favoritism, jealousy, and sibling rivalry, God still writes His covenant story, by His design, through imperfect people. So here is Lesson Point No. 1:

God's providence governs conflict. No scheme can overturn His purpose.

Before Jacob ever met Laban, God had already declared His covenant purpose. Jacob's future was anchored in that promise. It didn't depend on Laban's behavior. Laban's schemes could not derail God's plan. His manipulation could not rewrite Jacob's destiny, and this deceit could never cancel God's covenant (Gen. 28:13–15; Isa. 46:10; Job 42:2). Look, it's very important to understand that God's providence is not fragile. It is not undone at all. It always stands. So here is Lesson Point No. 2:

Our manipulation never secures God's blessing. Trusting God always beats scheming. Read next week's article for points 3-5!

AIRPORT

[FROM PAGE 2 >>](#)

though other well-established programs offer youngsters more than one free flight. She also noted that Arwood and MacGregor both fly in from Naples to help with the Young Eagles program. "The pilots are donating their time, use of their aircraft, and their fuel," she said.

EAA recently recognized Chap. 1226 for flying 100 Young Eagles, and a banner marking that achievement is on display on the terminal's back porch. Besides the pilots, EAA Chap. 1226 volunteers included Veera Fitzpatrick, Skyler Ferguson and Matt Ferguson (plus their three children, Ethan, Joyce, and Clyde), and Abby Corriveau (with her children Emersyn Meredith and Jackson Corriveau).

For more information, call 863-494-7844 or check online at [arcadia-municipal-airport-x06](#).



Having never flown before, nine-year-old Isaiah Cendejas summed up his experience in one word, "Fun!" Pilot Ralph Arwood said that Cendejas did an excellent job of flying Arwood's Lake 250 Renegade aircraft.



After flying with Pilot Dave MacGregor in his Cessna 170 aircraft, 17-year-old Joel Geddam said, "That was exciting and pretty cool. I was nervous at the beginning."



Eleven-year-old Maddison Lederhouse had never flown until her flight with Pilot Dave MacGregor in his Cessna 170 aircraft. "It was fun," she said. "I saw Peace River and mostly everything else."



"It was fun," Colton Newberry, 13 years old, said of his flight with Pilot Ralph Arwood in his Lake 250 Renegade aircraft. "I saw my house that we're building and the one we're living now."



Nine-year-old Brantley Hausman said, "I liked it!" after his flight with Pilot Shelley Peacock in her Cessna 172 aircraft. He said that he saw the field where he plays baseball. Peacock said, "He flew so good, and he flew a lot."



From left, Joyce Ferguson, Clyde Ferguson, and Nathan Ferguson tried out an aircraft scooter on the Arcadia Airport ramp during the Sept. 12 Young Eagles Rally where their parents Skyler Ferguson and Matt Ferguson volunteered as members of EAA Chap. 1226.

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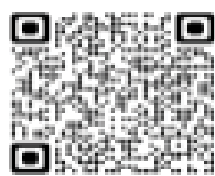
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ANNIVERSARY
FROM PAGE 1 »

Sheriff Jim Potter and Marshal Quinn Jones stood with Jorgensen as he recounted the tragic events: American Airlines (AA) Flight 11 striking the North Tower of the World Trade Center; AA Flight 175 hitting the South Tower; AA Flight 77 slamming the Pentagon; the fall of the South Tower; the crash of AA Flight 93 into the ground near Shanksville, Pennsylvania; and the collapse of the North Tower. In conclusion, Jorgensen said, “That day, 343 firefighters would have their lives stolen from them along with 60 police officers. In total, 2,983 people died in New York and Washington, along with [the passengers and crew of AA] Flight 93.”

Two recordings were played— “Amazing Grace” performed on bagpipes and “Where Were You When The World Stopped Turning” sung by Alan Jackson. During the latter, several paramedics quietly left the ceremony to answer a call, and the sound of the rescue truck’s siren fading in the distance seemed a fitting tribute.

Fire Chief Chad Jorgensen listened as Engineer and Paramedic Brandon McDonald read “The Firefighters Prayer” aka “The Fireman’s Prayer” written by Alvin William “Smokey” Linn (1924-2004) after being unable to rescue children from a burning building.



Even at 9:00 a.m., the shade of the oaks on the east courthouse lawn was welcomed by those who gathered for the remembrance ceremony of the 25th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11.



After a moment of silence, Firefighter and Paramedic Nicholas Talamentez rang the bell mounted on the ladder truck bumper: five strikes repeated four times as “final honors to departed comrades” according to a tradition known as “tolling the bells” dating from the 19th century when fire stations communicated with bell commands.



From left, American Legion K-Post 11 Member Kenny Prescott stood beside Member Author Southwell who played “Taps” at the end of the remembrance ceremony.



From left, Amber Jones and Mike Dempsey served as the Arcadia American Legion K-Post 11 Color Guard with Dempsey posting the U.S. flag on the east courthouse lawn and Fire Chief Chad Jorgensen joining Dempsey in saluting the flag.



From left, Bob Stewart, Victor Dennison, Jay Mothershed, Fred Wheelley, Amanda Reuter, Amber Jones, and Dave Fonger served as the Arcadia American Legion K-Post 11 Honor Guard firing a seven-gun salute as ordered by Commander Make Dempsey.

LIBRARY ASSOC. PRESENTS BOOK TO CYCLIST



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Photos provided

At their quarterly meeting on Sept. 10, the DeSoto County Library Association presented Karen Smoke with a copy of the book, “Pedal Pusher: How One Woman’s Bicycle Adventure Helped Change the World” by Mary Boone and illustrated by Lisa Anchin. The children’s book is based on the true story of Annie Cohen Kopchovsky also known as Annie Londonderry. Despite not knowing how

to ride a bicycle, when she heard in 1894 that two men bet a woman could not bicycle around the world as a man had done, she started an incredible journey to prove them wrong.

A well-known bicyclist in DeSoto County, Smoke organized the annual “Ride for Tiny Town” for bicycle riders to raise funds for the DeSoto Homeless Coalition’s transitional housing project known as Tiny Town. She has also been a member and past president of the Library Assoc. as well as a library staff member and volunteer. As a volunteer with the DeSoto Arts Center (DAC), she also coordinated a weekly arts program for



Karen Smoke thanked the Library Assoc. for giving her a copy of the “Pedal Pusher” book: from left, Library Assoc. member Karen Bledsoe, Library Staff Fran Kovach, Library Assoc. Member Susan Barnes, Smoke, Library Assoc. Pres. Elizabeth Kenney, and Library Manager Liz Coronado.

youngsters at the library.

Thanks to the Assoc., the book is also in the DeSoto County Library’s collection.

For more information, call 863-993-4851 or check online myhlc.org/desoto

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				9			4	
			1			9		
		5			7		2	
7	9	4			2			
2		3		8				
			6	7	4			
							1	
5		8		4		3		
1		9		5				7

Level: Advanced

Answer:

7	8	4	9	5	2	6	3	1
9	6	3	1	4	7	8	2	5
2	1	5	6	3	8	9	7	4
6	3	2	4	7	9	1	5	8
4	7	1	5	8	6	3	9	2
8	5	9	2	1	3	4	6	7
3	2	8	7	9	4	5	1	6
5	9	6	8	2	1	7	4	3
1	4	7	3	6	5	2	8	9

**US House District 16
Candidate Forum**



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OF MANATEE COUNTY



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS'
OF THE ST. PETERSBURG AREA



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS'
OF SARASOTA COUNTY



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Kelly Kirschner (D)



Sydney Gruters (R)



Mark Davis (NPA)

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The forum is free and open to the public. The event will be recorded by the League.

RAILROAD
FROM PAGE 3 >>

Property Appraiser’s office, and the former Supervisor of Elections office will be taken by the Sheriff’s office administration.

CONSENT AGENDA

Under the Consent Agenda, the Board approved the following items: the 2026-2027 Annual Certified Budget for Mosquito Control to receive a \$69,587.50 Florida Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) grant with a 25% match of \$17,396.88 from the County; 2027 State Aid to Libraries Grant Agreement to provide “free library service . . . access to materials, information and services for all residents . . . at least one library . . . open 40 hours or more each week”; the revised Dept. Director Employment Agreement for Dept. Directors appointed by County Administrator and confirmed and approved by BOCC; and revision of the Capital Asset Policy that ensures “the County is in accordance with new Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) rules which sets and establishes Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) for public entities.” In addition, the Board adopted the Resolution amending and restating the Building Dept. fee schedule “to ensure continued compliance with applicable Florida law and to more accurately reflect the costs associated with the services provided by the County.”



Project Director for Seminole Gulf Railway, Inc., Bianca Dunkle said, “Every crossing is a liability,” after County Engineer Mike Giardullo explained the situation.



Extension and 4-H Youth Development Director Katelyn Mulinix along with Livestock and Small Farms Agent Kendall Gill presented the activities and programs of UF/IFAS Extension DeSoto, a partnership between the University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), the United States Dept. of Agriculture (USDA), and the County.



Kenny Gallt related his experience in being hospitalized in Chicago and then flying home to Florida and how Artificial Intelligence (AI) assisted in so many ways.



A barber in Arcadia, Angel Gonzalez spoke against the proposed data center and how it places at risk Peace River as well as the water supply. He said he gives back to the community as he is able giving free haircuts and coaching youth soccer.



Asha Stalnaker said that the data center is proposed for the wrong location because it is an intensive heavy industrial use, and she called for the Board to place on the agenda a discussion of how to protect the County’s potable water supply.

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DESOTO COUNTY
SHERIFF'S OFFICE



ARREST REPORT | 9/4/26 - 9/10/26

Arrowood, Victoria Vesta:
Prob Violation - Prob Violation

Bowers, Cecil Steven:
Lewd Lascv Behavior - Molest VIC 12
Yoa Lt 16 Yoa Off 18 Yoa Older

Capizzi, Jean McClernon:
Battery - Touch Or Strike

Carter, Trista Marie:
Out-of-County Warrant - Out-of-County Warrant

Danford, Jim Richard:
Prob Violation - Prob Violation

Dobbs, Jody Lee:
Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use (x2); Drugs-Possess - Possess Controlled Substance W/O Prescription (x4); Obstructing Justice - Tamper W Evidence In Criminal Proceeding; Resist Officer - Obstruct Wo Violence

Dowling, Daniel Liam:
Larc - Grand Theft 750 Less Than 5k Dols; Public Order Crimes - Interfere With Railroad Train; Trespassing - Trespassing Structure Or Conveyance

Fonseca, Jason Matthew:
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; Moving Traffic Viol - Dwlsr Or Revocation Equiv Status Subsq Off

Freeland, Kyle Houston:
Battery - Touch Or Strike

Hand, James Dean:
Aggrav Battery - Aggrav Battery Cause Bodily Harm Or Disability; Battery - Touch Or Strike; Resist Officer - Obstruct Wo Violence

Harvey, Roger Allen:
Aggrav Battery - Aggrav Battery Cause Bodily Harm Or Disability

HAYGOOD, ANTHONY:
Fail To Reg As Career Off - Fail To Reg Aft Establish PERM/TEMP Residence (x2)

Hesters, Emily Morgan:
Damage Prop-Crim Misch - Over 200 Dols Under 1000 Dols

Lott, Brittany Nicole:
Trespassing - Trespass Fail To Leave Prop On Order Of Owner

Lutz, Robert Ellis:
Prob Violation - Prob Violation

Maybell, Nathaniel:
DUI-Unlaw Bld Alch - DUI Influence Of Alcohol Or Drugs; DUI-Unlaw Bld Alch - Refusal Submit DUI Testing

Mendez Jr., Juan:
Nonmoving Traffic Viol - Fail To Register Motor Veh

Nunez Padron, Maximino:
DUI-Unlaw Bld Alch - DUI Influence Of Alcohol Or Drugs; DUI-Unlaw Bld Alch - Refusal Submit DUI Testing; Moving Traffic Viol - Operate Motor Vehicle W/O Valid LIC 1st Conv

Payne, Rickey Louis:
Fraud - Fail Redeliv Hired Leased Prop 300 Dols Or Ovr

Ray, Brittany Michelle:
Failure To Appear - Written Promise To Appear (x2)

Reinert, William Mac:
Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use; Marijuana-Possess - Possess Less Than 20 Grams Cannabis; Obstructing Justice - Tamper W Evidence In Criminal Proceeding

Reyes Rodriguez, Rosseli:
Moving Traffic Viol - Drive W/ DL Expired More Than 6 Months

Rivers, Dawson Tyler:
Possession Of Weapon - Or Ammo By Fla Delinquent Adult Felony (x2)

Roan II, John Eric:
Fail To Reg As Career Off - Fail Report In Person Change To RESIDENCE/NAME

Wood, Kelly Joe:
Battery - Touch Or Strike

Zapata, Ruben D:
Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While LIC Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

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