FREE VOL. VI, NO. 15

ARCADIA COMMUNIO COMMUNI **APRIL 10, 2025**



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Local

IT'S A GREAT TIME TO BE A BULLDOG





STEVE KNAPP

Sports Writer sports@peacerivershopper.com

The past few days have seen a lot of great things going on in DeSoto County athletics. We will try to give you as much information as we can over the next few weeks.

The red hot softball team is playing their best ball of the season and could make a deep run in the post season tournament. Shortstop Emery Skinner has signed to play softball at Gaston in North Carolina and signed her letter of intent in front of 60 people who

Jo Duke fires to the plate with second baseman Layla Morales in the background. The scoreboard tells the entire story as the Bulldogs shutout Port Charlotte 3-0.

were on hand to the event.

The baseball team just beat rival Hardee on senior night and are battling to host a home game in the district tournament. Their current 7-14 record is misleading as they have lost 3 games by one run and 3 more by two runs this season.

The track and field team is showing signs of improvement in every meet and will be running in the district tournament on April 19.

The All Area teams have been announced with

SEE BULLDOGS PAGE 7 >>

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GOVERNMENT MEETING SCHEDULE

CITY

CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS OCCUR THE **1ST AND 3RD TUESDAY OF THE MONTH UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED**

Margaret Way Building 23 N. Polk Ave., Arcadia, FL 34266

DESOTO COUNTY

COUNTY OFFICES CLOSED

In observance of Good Friday

FRI

DESOTO COUNTY

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING

3P & 6:30P

Administration Building 201 E. Oak Street, Suite 103 Arcadia, FL 34266

DESOTO COUNTY

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

TUE 5:30P

DeSoto County School District 530 N La Solona Ave, Board Room (40) Arcadia, FL 34266

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







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223 E. OAK ST. STE. 1 ARCADIA, FL 34266

OSCEOLA ORGANICS SPECIAL EXEMPTION TABLED



CAROL MAHLER

Independent Contractor Photos provided

At their March 25 public hearing, the **Board of County Commissioners tabled** the request for a special exemption to allow Osceola Organics to establish a biosolids composting facility in the Agricultural-10 (A-10) zoning district on an approximately 413.94-acre lease area within the subject property of nearly 757.88 acres located north of State Road (SR) 70, and west of Florida Ave. near the Pine Level community. The project area is about 32.03 acres within the lease area owned by IMC-Agrico Co. and VCH Holdings, LLC.

Organics Owner John Arnold, Jr., assured the Board that he receives no complaints about odor or stormwater runoff at his other facilities. Each of the commissioners will visit the existing facilities: either Osceola Organics in Kenansville in Osceola County or Showcase of Citrus in Claremont in Lake County to verify that the facilities do not produce odor or runoff. The Board will vote on the special exception at the Apr. 22 public hearing.

The facility proposes to produce organic slow-release fertilizer utilizing solar sludge drying and composting to produce a Class AA registered soil amendment, pursuant to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) requirements. Operations will be limited to 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Saturdays, and closed on Sundays. A long driveway to the facility will prevent stacking on SR 70 of trucks delivering biosolids, projected at 25 loads a day. Except for Arnold and Hollingsworth, no one spoke in favor of the special exception at the public

Biosolids are defined as the "organic matter recycled from sewage, especially for use in agriculture." It is sludge that has been "dewatered" or driedoften called the "cake" by wastewater treatment plants. This nutrient rich material will be mixed with mulched hurricane debris-8,000 dump-truck loads-already stored on the property. The mixture will be heated by the sun to kill any bacteria, pathogens, or viruses, and to remove moisture. The finished organic fertilizer will be spread on Hollingsworth's pastures on the same property where it is produced.

One of Arnold's biosolids composting facility is on property that he also uses for "Showcase of Citrus," one of Florida's largest agri-tourism operations. FDEP has a "frequently asked questions" sheet about that operation: "Showcase of Citrus uses EPA approved methods to generate a Class AA biosolids material that is distributed and marketed as a registered fertilizer. The biosolids must be treated to meet both pathogen



Owner of Osceola Organics, John Arnold said that he receives no complaints about odor or runoff from the two composting facilities he own and operates in Osceola and Lake counties. "We want to be good neighbors," he said.



Molly Bowen questioned whether the applicant-John Arnold-understood "what we go through during flooding" with the recently frequent hurricanes.



Brooks Armstrong, president of People for Protecting Peace River (3PR), said that he and his organization were against phosphate mining that produces synthetic fertilizer, so this organic fertilizer may be a good product, as long as the facility does not pollute Peace River.



Owning some of the acreages and leasing the rest of the property from IMC-Agrico as cattle pasture, VC Hollingsworth already has 8,000 dump-truck loads of mulched hurricane debris to mix with the biosolids. He will use the resulting slow-release organic fertilizer to improve the pasture.



Kim Moore said that she read an article in a toxicology magazine that in a biosolids composting facility, the mixing process may cause some of the microorganisms to become airborne.



Buzzard's Roost Branch flows through the subject property and into acreage that Newt Keen owns, and he is concerned that the composting facility will pollute the stream and cause an odor. "I shouldn't have to suffer for someone else's progress," he said.



Tracy Hoppel remembers when sewage sludge was brought into the county previously, and she is worried about the heavy metals and pathogens. She noted Milorganite, a slow-release fertilizer produced in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, that also uses composted sewage.



Theresa Collins Hill questioned how this biosolids composting facility will benefit the County and what kind of tax the operation will pay to the County. She also asked who will provide oversight to the facility?

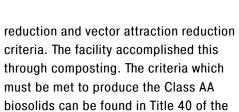


Norman Kennedy spoke against the biosolids composting facility as he wants to "keep Arcadia green." Tim Ritchie noted that the Pine Level community experienced extreme flooding after Hurricane lan and other storms that may also impact this facility.



that he has worked in a biosolids composting facility and as a result suffered fungal and bacteria infections in his lungs. He also asked, "What is in it for the County?"

James Ammon said



Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 503." floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/ ShowcaseofCitrusFAQs.pdf



With degrees in agriculture from Cornell University and University of Michigan plus 16 years of experience serving on a zoning board, Ken Gallt qualified himself as an "expert witness." He asked the Board to consider the cost/benefit of the facility to the County.

COUNCIL APPROVES LEASE WITH YMCA





CAROL MAHLER

Independent Contractor carolmahler22acl@gmail.com Photos provided

At the April 1 meeting, the City approved the ten-year lease for the YMCA to use the Speer Center with three renewal options of five years each. Using grants and other funds, the YMCA and the City will pay for renovations needed for the YMCA to offer childcare and a variety of youth and adult community services.

The YMCA distributed handouts to the Council including one entitled "Arcadia Program Center: Partnering with The City of Arcadia and Preserving History. The Speer Center was built in 1938 as a National Guard Armory by the Work Progress Administration (WPA) as part of President Franklin

Roosevelt's "New Deal" program during The Great Depression.

After a new armory was built in 1968, the property reverted to the City. Having served on the Council, as Mayor, and as City Recorder, Paul P. Speer (1892 - 1972)suggested that it be used as a

recreation center. After his death, it was dedicated "in memory of a man who served with untiring devotion for over 45 years and whose accomplishments were exceeded by none," according to the plaque in the building.

Chief Operations Officer Shannon Matthews invited everyone to the YMCA Community Day from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Apr. 12 at the Speer Center, 185 Winifred St., showcasing 40 community partners. She said the new Arcadia YMCA Community Board has 20 members who grew up attending programs-either in the Speer Center or the YMCA.

She spoke of the YMCA's affect on her life, and its "three pillars:" youth

The YMCA of Southwest Florida was represented at the Apr. 1 City Council meeting by the following, from left, Chief **Operating Officer Shannon Matthews** who said she grew up in the YMCA; **Chief Impact Officer Brian Nason who** talked about how the Speer Center will remodeled to accommodate YMCA programs; and Volunteer Mike Horan, who is also the CEO of Ajax Paving Industries of Florida, Inc..

development-"empowering young people to reach their full potential," social responsibility-"providing support and inspiring action in our communities," and healthy living-"improving individual and community well-being." Matthews reminded everyone that the YMCA raises funds annually for scholarships, so they "never turn anyone away because they can't pay."

YMCA Chief Impact Officer Brian Nason described the future layout of the building: half dedicated to early learning and childcare with a separate entrance.



Chief Impact Officer Brian Nason talked about how YMCA programs will improve kindergarten readiness and student reading abilities and help teens understand the opportunities available to them after graduation. He also noted the YMCA's after-school and summer camp programs, and quipped, "When school's out, we're in."

On the other side, a community space with a food pantry and kitchen because so many residents have food insecurity. He noted that the YMCA has already served 30,000 meals in Arcadia.

Council Member Keith Keene recalled a conversation about three years ago with YMCA Volunteer Mike Horan and

SEE YMCA PAGE 18 >>

STUDENTS OF THE MONTH

Gator Wilderness Camp School hosted the DeSoto County Chamber of Commerce's Early Bird last Thursday, April 3rd. Congrats to the students below for being chosen Student of the Month. (not all pictured)



DHS

RACHEL LANFORD

9[™] GRADE

FERNANDA OLGUIN

10[™] GRADE

SHYANNE COX

11[™] GRADE

AUBREY HIGHTOWER

12[™] GRADE



DMS

JAYDEN HUNTER 6[™] GRADE

YAHIR VALDEZ-GARCIA 7[™] GRADE

ISABELLA SKINNER 8TH GRADE

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BULLDOGS TAKE A

DOUBLE DIP OVER PIRATES



STEVE KNAPP

Sports Writer sports@peacerivershopper.com

The red hot DeSoto varsity softball team took a pair of games from two different Pirates teams last week in two completely different kinds of games. First they traveled to Port Charlotte and had a very well played game and came out of it with a 3-0 win. Later in the week it was a come from behind 15-9 win over the Braden River Pirates.

At Port Charlotte the Bulldogs scored three in the first and made it last with nothing but "donuts on the board" for

the first inning uprising. Emery Skinner led off the game with a single and Ellie Whidden followed suit. Mya Goodnoe walked to load the bases and Livia Evans singled in what proved to be the game winning RBI. Jules Wolcott blasted a ball over the left fielder's head for a double to score both Goodnoe and Evans.

both teams after

It looked like another easy win

that the Bulldogs were accustomed to having lately. That wasn't the case as the bats were silenced when the Pirates brought their ace into the circle.

Layla Morales had a leadoff single in the second inning, but it was 17 batters later before they would get another hit when Morales led off the sixth with another single. DeSoto loaded the bases with a two out Pirate error, hit batter and a walk in the third inning, but couldn't break the game open. DeSoto had runners on base in every inning except the 7th as the Bulldogs used strong defense and good pitching to get the win.

Defensively there were only 2 errors and they didn't extend the inning more





The Bulldogs got out of another scoring threat by Port Charlotte and get instructions between innings.



Ellie Whidden slams a first inning single in the 3-0 win at Port Charlotte.

than just one batter. The Pirates were having trouble getting around on Duke and Goodnoe so a lot of balls were hit to the right side where Morales and Goodnoe kept busy. Whidden had another strong game behind the mask blocking several pitches that could have advanced runners into scoring position.

Coach Fernando Zepeda said, "Our defense was strong tonight, we didn't let those two errors grow into three or four and get ourselves in trouble. They didn't change our game or our attitude. We had good energy in the first inning and we need to carry that over to the other innings too."

Jo Duke went 3 1/3 innings before her back began to hurt from an injury suffered in January. She struck out 5 of her 10 outs recorded and gave up just two hits. Goodnoe came in to close the door and preserve the win.

Coach Jinny Schaefer told the team, "We have to carry this type of game over to the rest of the week and keep on playing this kind of ball, good defense and pitching and get a few more hits and we will be all right."

At Braden River it was a different type of game. The bats came alive and crushed out 16 hits, but the gloves were left at home as 5 Bulldog errors led to 5 unearned runs. For the first time in 21 consecutive innings, DeSoto found themselves trailing at the end of an inning. They continued their streak of scoring at least one run in the first inning in their past five games picking up 2 but trailing 3-2 after the first inning.

DeSoto scored three times in the third to take a short lived 5-3 lead. The Pirates answered with four in their half of the inning to regain the lead 7-5. The Bulldogs put 4 on the board in both the fourth and fifth innings to pull away and get their fifth straight win.

Ellie Whidden led the way going 4-5

with 5 runs batted in and her team high third triple of the season. She now leads the team with 15 ribbies and boosted her batting average to .366. Skinner had

a trio of hits in 5 at bats and scored 3 times. Goodnoe also banged out 3 hits and knocked in 3 runs.

The win gives the Bulldogs an 8-5 record. They will be at Hardee tonight and back home tomorrow to play Ida Baker for the second time this week.

Coach John Schaefer talks to his infield during the fourth inning pitching change. Jo Duke made the tough decision to come out of the game because of a back injury in a "We not me" team decision.



Jules Wolcott dives safely back into first on a pickoff attempt following her 5th inning walk. Wolcott's double drove in two runs in the first inning in the 3-0 win over Port Charlotte.



Second baseman Layla Morales and first sacker Mya Goodnoe were kept busy on the right side of the infield in the shutout at Port Charlotte.



DESOTO COUNTY

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK



SENIORS LEAD WAY IN HISTORIC VICTORY



Seniors Logan Adkins, Hagen Bryan, Daylon White and Revel Rodriguez blow the imaginary smoke from the barrel of their pistols after shooting down Hardee 3-2 on their senior night.



Logan Adkins, Hagen Bryan and Daylon White (hidden in back) hold Revel Rodriguez as they pretend to be a bazooka after their 3-2 win over Hardee. When asked why a bazooka, Rodriguez simply replied, "to blow them d#\$m

DESOTO COUNTY GAME OF THE WEEK



SENIORS SHINE ON THEIR SPECIAL NIGHT



STEVE KNAPP

Sports Writer sports@peacerivershopper.com

Hollywood couldn't have written a better script for the DeSoto baseball senior night 3-2 win! Generally a team will try to schedule a "cupcake" for senior night so they could get a win and be a happy and memorable occasion for all the seniors to remember.

The schedule didn't cooperate and had the Bulldogs facing their rival Hardee in what appeared to be a mismatch on senior night. Lets set the scene for the game. In the previous game leading up to the Hardee contest, the Bulldogs gave up 22 runs and burned up three arms in a 22-9 loss to Lemon Bay.

Hardee had won the previous 22 games going back to April 21 2015 when many of the current Bulldogs were just playing their first youth baseball game. In that stretch of 22 games, the Wildcats had outscored the Bulldogs 157-44. There were 6 shutouts with run rule losses with two games at 10-0, a 12-0 loss, 15-4 and the worst season in 2018 when the Bulldogs were outscored 38-15 in their 3 losses to Hardee.

Going into this season the Bulldogs had played some very good games with the Wildcats over the past 7 games. They lost 5 of those games by one run, another by 2 runs and one by 5 runs. The tide had turned and the Bulldogs were no longer an easy win for Hardee. The Wildcats were so intent on winning this game that they threw their ace pitcher rather than saving him for a tougher game against IMG later in the week.

The odds didn't favor the Bulldogs, but heart, grit and momentum can't be measured with statistics. Coach Wes Roe talked to some of the seniors in a semi-private pregame speech. From what I could hear, Roe's words made me want to suit up and get out there and do some damage to the Wildcats. It didn't take long before each of the seniors made a significant contribution to their 3-2 win.

It started with the first batter sending a long fly ball into foul territory down the left field line. A strong breeze pushed it towards the stands, but senior Sam Cuellar made an outstanding running catch just as he hit the fence and managed to hang onto the ball. Cuellar said, "I thought I had at least 10 feet to go so I was surprised when I hit the fence at full speed, I did manage to get a hand between me and the fence when I hit it."

That play set the tone of the game and the Bulldogs quickly capitalized on the momentum to take a 1-0 lead after one. Senior Revel Rodriguez led off with a single. Braden Deluca executed a perfect hit and run and got the speedy Rodriguez to third with no outs. Cleanup hitter senior Daylon White knocked Rodriguez



Daylon White gets under the pitch to loft a fly ball into the outfield to score Revel Rodriguez in the first inning to take a 1-0 lead. The same combination teamed up again in the sixth to tie the game on White's double.



DeSoto senior Logan Adkins was an intimidating sight on the mound. The righthander held Hardee to one earned run on 5 hits in the 3-2 win.

> **Daylon White lets everyone** know who is number one after the thrilling 3-2 win over Hardee.



in with a sacrifice fly to take the lead.

After the Wildcats responded with a run in the second to tie the game, they added another in the fifth to take a 2-1 lead. With 5 of the last 7 losses by a run, it looked like another strong DeSoto effort would be lost.

It's a new era for the Bulldogs as they bounced back to score twice in the sixth to take a 3-2 lead. Again it was a senior led attack with Rodriguez starting it off with a base on balls. Abel Nedley got on and White doubled Rodriquez home to tie the game at 2. The winning run scored on sophomore Trenton Alley's second hit of the game. Alley's two hits led the Bulldogs, who managed just 6 hits, and got the timely hit coach Matt Martin has been waiting for all season.

With just 3 outs standing in the way

of snapping a long losing streak, starting pitcher senior Logan Adkins took the hill. He needed to get the Wildcats out quickly as he was approaching his pitch count limit of 105. Adkins reached the 105 mark with one out and was able to finish the batter he started with.

Hollywood couldn't produce anything better than what happened next. Senior Hagen Bryan came on in relief. Bryan was a former Wildcat and knew everybody on their team and is good friends with them. Now he had to put that friendship aside and "BE A DAWG".

Bryan didn't waste any time as his first pitch was popped up on the infield. With the tying run racing around the bases and the sky high popup seemingly never coming down, it finally fell into the glove of Deluca and the celebration

began.

THE BULLDOGS WIN!! THE **BULLDOGS WIN!!**

The six seniors all contributed mightily in a very well played overall team win. White finished the night with 2 runs batted in, Rodriguez scored on both of White's rbi's. Adkins had perhaps his finest performance of the season as his slider was his go to pitch for the night. He allowed just 5 hits, one earned run and fanned 4 in 6 2/3 innings of work. Bryan got the save on just one big pitch and Cuellar sparked the team and got the momentum going from the very first batter. The sixth senior on the roster, Carlos Morales, was injured and unable to play.



Trenton Alley, Carlos Morales, **Camden Iglehart and Aiden** Adkins were all smiles as they leave the field after breaking a 22 game losing streak with a 3-2 win over Hardee.

BULLDOGS

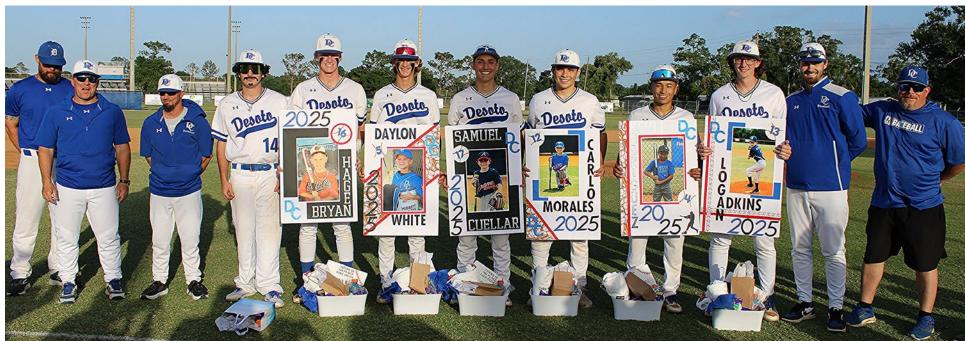
FROM PAGE 1 >>

two girls making the first team, one on the second team in basketball. Coach Primus was named coach of the year. Two boys soccer players were named to the all area team, one on the first team and one girl made the second team for the Bulldogs.

The winter sports award ceremony highlighted our winter athletes and award winners will be published soon. With so much more going on, it really is A GREAT TIME TO BE A BULLDOG!

> **Track coach Darrel Nicklow** stands with his long jumpers at Hardee as they prepare for the district tournament.





The seniors broke a losing streak to Hardee in front of the home fans on senior night.

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JO DUKE, PLAYING WITH AN ANGEL ON HER SHOULDER



Young adults aren't suppose to die. With a long and bright future in front of them, it just isn't fair to see them leave behind loved ones at such a young age. In a tragic car accident, that affected not only the community but also the DeSoto Bulldogs softball family, Raven Golden lost her life on March 24. Golden was a former cheerleader at Desoto middle and high school. She was working as a teacher aide/paraprofessional at Memorial elementary School.

Golden was the sister of Micah Duke, assistant to coach Schaefer and parent to Jo Duke on the softball team. Golden just turned 20 years old, only 4 years older than her niece Jo. The relationship between Raven and Jo was more like a best friend or big sister relationship, not the typical aunt and niece. Raven was a SubDeb member and tapped Jo in her freshman year, being a "big sister" she wanted Jo to also be a SubDeb. Micah Duke said, "They really were like sisters."

Three days later the Bulldogs played a game against Booker. It would have been expected for Jo to miss the game after such a tragic loss. It would have been understandable to lose focus and let her mind drift if she played in the game.



Jo Duke and her aunt/big sister Raven Golden were as close as two people could be.

Jo wanted to play and got the call to start on the mound. Jo took the mound with the name RAVEN written on her cleats and visor. She wore a little pin of a Raven on her visor and a yellow bow in her hair.

Jo pitched her best game of her career. She threw a no hitter and struck out 7 of the 9 batters she faced. Her teammates supported her with a 20 run

outburst to end the game after just three innings due to the run rule.

In her next game, Jo got the win shutting out Port Charlotte but leaving the circle in the fourth inning due to a back injury that was flaring up. She had painted her fingernails pink and yellow, Raven's favorite colors. She again wore the yellow ribbon in her hair. The entire team now

wears yellow ribbons as a sign of support for their teammate.

BULLDO

Jo says, "Little things pop up that reminds me of Raven all the time. I know she is with me and yeah, you could say I felt her spirit with me. I had more focus at the Booker game. There was a black bird that flew over my head at the home game after the delay (lightening). She has definitely been with me."



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U.S. Army Reserve **DeSoto County Ministerial Association**

"An Easter Carol," widely regarded as the greatest VeggieTales story, masterfully adapts Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol into a vibrant Easter narrative, delivering profound spiritual lessons for children in an engaging, vegetable-filled package. Released in 2004, this episode features Ebenezer Nezzer, a factory owner obsessed with producing plastic Easter eggs, who is visited by a musical angel, Hope (voiced by Rebecca St. James), and guided through a journey of past, present, and future. The story pivots on the true meaning of Easter-Jesus' resurrection-contrasting Nezzer's materialism with the redemptive power of Christ's sacrifice. Through catchy songs like "Hope's Song" and whimsical humor, it captures young imaginations while embedding a clear gospel message: Easter is about eternal life, not fleeting trinkets. In Sunday

School settings, "An Easter Carol" shines as a teaching tool, blending entertainment with theology. Its vivid animation and relatable characterslike Bob the Tomato and Larry the Cucumber-hold children's attention. while its narrative reinforces core Christian values such as love, repentance, and faith. The stainedglass depictions of Jesus' life and death offer a visual anchor for kids, making abstract concepts tangible and fostering spiritual formation by connecting Easter's joy to personal transformation.

For children, this story plants seeds of faith that grow through discussion and reflection, often sparking curiosity about biblical events. Its balance of silliness and sincerity ensures lessons stick, encouraging kids to see Easter as a celebration of hope rather than just candy and bunnies. However, as children mature into adults, VeggieTales' playful simplicity gives way to deeper, more contemplative resources. For adults, the equivalent might be found in robust biblical studies, sermons, or works like



C.S. Lewis' Mere Christianity and The Passion of the Christ, which explore the resurrection's implications with intellectual and emotional depth. These replace the lighthearted veggies with complex theology and raw depictions of sacrifice, meeting adults' need for

nuanced understanding. While "An Easter Carol" lays a foundation for lifelong faith in kids, adult spiritual growth leans on richer texts and experiences that challenge and refine belief, bridging childhood wonder to mature devotion.

2025





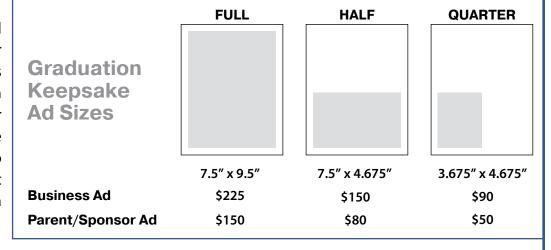
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Through a joint effort with the community, we are honored to provide this special edition keepsake to our Seniors year after year. This is a unique opportunity for businesses, families and individuals to express their congratulations to our much deserving seniors. This Keepsake Edition will include senior portraits, sports photos, as well as many memories for the seniors and loved ones. Copies of this edition will be free to the public and will be available and distributed May 30th at Graduation. Please contact us if you're interested in placing a congratulations in this commemorative edition.

DEADLINE TO RESERVE SPACE IS MAY 16TH







PANCAKE BREAKFAST TAKES OFF FOR SUMMER MONTHS



CAROL MAHLER

Independent Contractor carolmahler22acl@gmail.com Photos provided

On Apr. 5, Experimental Aircraft Assoc. (EAA) Chapter 1226, hosted the last pancake breakfast before summer in the pilot shelter at Arcadia Municipal Airport, 2269 SW A.C. Polk, Jr., Dr.. Some members of the community enjoyed the breakfast, but only a few pilots. Airport Director Shelley Peacock said that many pilots were visiting the Sun-n-Fun Aerospace Expo, Apr. 1-6, at the Lakeland Linder International Airport.

Usually scheduled on first Sat. of every month, the Young Eagles program was also canceled for lack of volunteer pilots. Treasurer of EAA Chap. 1226, Elena Awad said she hoped to reschedule the Young Eagles later in the month. She said, "We so grateful to Shelley, the Airport, and the City of Arcadia for letting us come out and have the Young Eagles program here to introduce kids to the adventure of flying."

Mark your calendars for the next pancake breakfast from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. on Sat., Oct. 4, 2025.





Nadia Giacomini and Elad Yeffet flew in from Vero Beach for the pancake breakfast. It was great!" he said. "Thank you, Arcadia, for bringing us here." Volunteers from EAA Chap. 1226 prepared and served the pancake breakfast, from left, Jack Scott, Dave Peight, Kimberly Jones-Beilstein, Veera Fitzpatrick, Lynna Welker, Jenifer Mahoney, and Jack Mahoney. Photograph provided.



From left, Kiana Awad and Tiffany Awad stand next to Leuella Awad, Elena Awad, and Selah Awad sitting in the golf cart with Airport Director Shelley Peacock.



Maurice Lavoie of Arcadia and Quebec, Canada, said, "It's a nice bike ride to the airport in the morning, and I like to watch the airplanes."

From left, Dave Peight cooked pancakes mixed up by Jack Scott while Veera Fitzpatrick served the first arrivals: Conner Reardon, Macy Reardon, and Jason Reardon from Fort Ogden.



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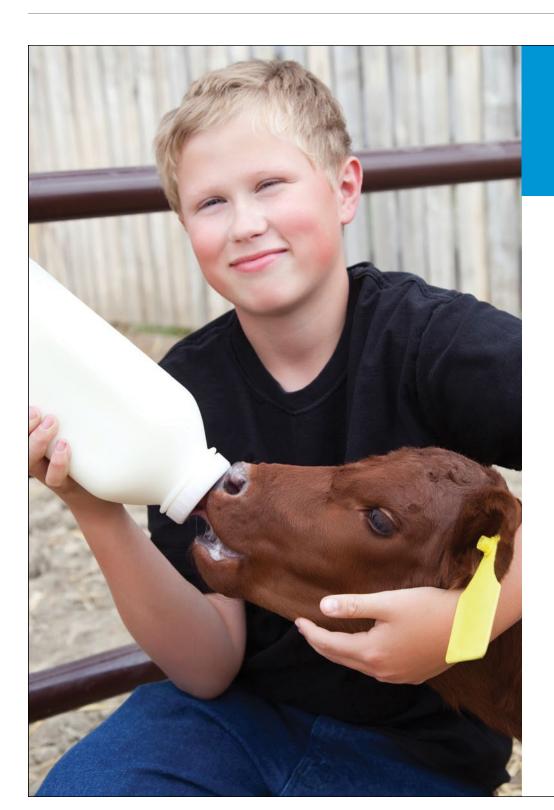
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Thank you to the members, families and volunteers for your unwavering commitment. Together, we are building a brighter future.

With heartfelt gratitude,





OBITUARIES





NORITTA FAYE JOHNSON

JUNE 23, 1962 - MARCH 20, 2025

With love, laughter, and cherished memories, we celebrate the life of Noritta Faye Johnson—an outgoing, passionate, and caring woman whose free spirit brought warmth and joy to everyone around her.

Noritta's greatest joys came from the simple pleasures in life: cooking, shopping, and exploring new places. Her home was often filled with the comforting aromas of her home-cooked meals, which she lovingly prepared for those she held dear.

She was known for her bold personality, her sense of adventure, and her unfiltered sense of humor—punctuated often with a classic, spirited "Damnit" that only she could deliver just right.

Noritta is survived by her husband, Lee Johnson; her brother, William Walters; her children, JD Brakefield and Sharlee Suggs; and her grandchildren, Leighanne, Brooke, Payton, and Grayson.

She also had a close bond with her lap dog, Ace, who was always by her side—her "ride or die."

Noritta cared deeply for her family. She will be missed and remembered for the things she loved and the way she made people feel at home.







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ARREST REPORT

3/21/25 - 3/27/25

Abrego, Adrian:

Moving Traffic Viol - Operate Motor Vehicle W/O Valid Lic 1St Conv, Nonmoving Traffic Viol - Fail To Register Motor Veh, Out-Of-County Warrant - Out-Of-County Warrant

Alvarez, Jorge Luis:

Larc - Other Theft, Battery - Touch Or Strike, Aggrav Asslt - Weapon - W Deadly Weapon Without Intent To Kill

Arrowood, Victoria Vesta:

Dui-Unlaw Bld Alch - Dui Damage To Property Or Person Of Another

Boadas, Yorkendri Alexander:

Moving Traffic Viol - Operate Motor Vehicle W/O Valid Lic 1St Conv, Nonmoving Traffic Viol - Fail To Register Motor Veh

Bonett, Joyce Gloria:

Battery - Touch Or Strike

Brady, James Lee:

Drugs-Possess - Possess Controlled Substance W/O Prescription (X4), Drugs-Traffic - Traffic Fentanyl/ Fentanyl Analogues 4 Grams+, Drugs-Possess - Poss Intent Sell/Mfg/Del Ctrl Sub Schedule Ii, Drugs-Possess -Poss Intent Sell/Mfg/Deliv Ctrl Sub Schedule I (X2), Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use

Brown, Jalil Alexander:

Prob Violation - Prob Violation

Evans, Latarra Clarissa:

Drugs-Traffic - Phenethylamines 10 Grams Or More, Marijuana-Possess -Not More Than 20 Grams, Drug Equip-Possess - And Or Use

Heeman, Tyler Donald:

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

Hernandez Chavez, Gustavo **Adolfo:**

Dui-Unlaw Bld Alch - Dui Damage To Property Or Person Of Another

Lauria, Joshua Thomas:

Resist Officer - Obstruct Wo Violence, Intimidation - Threat Leo Death/Harm

Lopez, Cristian Joel:

Larc - Other Theft, Liquor-Possess -By Person Under 21 Yoa 1St Off

Mangiavillano, Jessica:

Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While Lic Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

Montoya, Ricardo Jose:

Aggrav Asslt - Weapon - W Deadly Weapon Without Intent To Kill

Morales Martinez, Ismeal:

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

Powell, Anthony:

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

Ramirez-Mateo, Gennaro:

Battery - Touch Or Strike, Crimes Against Person - 18 Yoa Or Older Lure Entice Child Under 12 Yoa

Ramos-Romero, Omar:

Obstructing Justice - Tamper Witn Withhold Testim/Info Fel 1St Proc, Contempt Of Court - Viol Injunction Protection Domestic Violence (X2), Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use, Drugs-Possess Possess Controlled Substance W/O Prescription, Trespassing - Trespass Occupied Structure Or Conveyance

Rogers, Jennifer Sue:

Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use

Shannon, Jocealynn Saranne:

Smuggle Contraband Into Prison -Control Subs Defined Provisions Of S.893.02(4), Drugs-Possess - Possess Controlled Substance W/O Prescription (X2), Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use

Sorrells, Justin Bryant:

Burgl - Burglary Unoccupied Structure Unarmed, Larc - Other Theft

Turizo, Derrick Johan:

Contempt Of Court - Viol Injunction Protection Domestic Violence, Battery - Touch Or Strike, Simple Asslt - Intent Threat To Do Violence

Worth, John Allen:

Flee/Elude Police - Fail To Obey Leo Order To Stop, Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While Lic Suspend Revocation Equiv Status, Nonmoving Traffic Viol - Fail To Register Motor Veh, Moving Traffic Viol - Reckless Driving 1St Off

INFORMATION ON THIS REPORT IS PROVIDED FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY FROM THE PUBLIC INMATE RECORDS OF THE DESOTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE. WHILE EVERY EFFORT IS MADE TO ENSURE THAT THE POSTED INFORMATION IS ACCURATE, IT MAY CONTAIN FACTUAL OR OTHER ERRORS. ARREST INFORMATION MAY NOT REFLECT THE CURRENT INFORMATION. AN ARREST DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE INDIVIDUAL HAS BEEN CONVICTED OF A CRIME. THE INFORMATION ON THIS REPORT SHOULD NOT BE RELIED UPON FOR ANY TYPE OF LEGAL ACTION. UNAUTHORIZED OR

NEWS FROM THE SHERIFF POTTER

ENHANCING PUBLIC SAFETY WITH ALPRS



SHERIFF POTTER DeSoto County Sheriff

Every day, law enforcement agencies across the country are working to find ways to better protect and serve their communities. Whether it is through specialized training, advanced tactics, or cutting-edge technology, the mission to provide safety for the citizens who depend on us never ends.

At the DeSoto County Sheriff's Office, our deputies work tirelessly to patrol and protect our approximately 640 square mile county. While our county may be small in population, we have become a hub for vehicular travel from across the state with several major highways traversing our landscape. With many vehicles traveling on our roadways, it is impossible for our deputies to keep up with who is coming and going. That's where the use of technology comes into play. Over the past few years, our agency has invested in Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs), and the benefits have been tremendous. You may have seen them on the roadways you aren't sure exactly what it is or how it is used. Let's take a minute to clarify how ALPRs are keeping our community safe.

ALPRs are helping law enforcement across the country protect our most vulnerable citizens and take more

criminals off the streets. Let's use a child abduction for example. You have probably received an Amber Alert on vour phone with the description of the child, the suspect and the suspect's vehicle. Now, law enforcement can enter the suspect vehicle's license plate information into the ALPR database and instantly have eyes watching our roadways across not only our county, but the state as well. If an ALPR locates the license plate, the local law enforcement agency where the ALPR is located will be notified so they can act swiftly to safely recover the abducted child and bring the abductor to justice.

As another example, let's assume John Doe is wanted for a crime in another jurisdiction and a warrant has been issued for his arrest. That jurisdiction has identified a vehicle he is known to travel in and has entered his license plate number into the ALPR database. That license plate is then detected by an ALPR in DeSoto County and local law enforcement is provided with an immediate alert. Law enforcement can then review the image captured by the ALPR to determine if the vehicle the license plate is attached to is the suspect's vehicle. If so, law enforcement will verify the warrant and attempt to locate the suspect vehicle to determine if John Doe is in the vehicle. Once the warrant is confirmed and John Doe is found in the vehicle, law enforcement will make the arrest and

remove the wanted person from our streets, something that may NEVER have happened without the help of the ALPR.

An ALPR is a camera installed on a public roadway designed to capture images of vehicles coupled with software that can read the alphanumeric characters on a license plate in real time. The ALPR tells law enforcement a vehicle with a certain license plate was on a particular road at a particular time. The ALPR system can provide instant alerts to law enforcement when a license plate is spotted that has been flagged for a specific reason, and these images are stored in a restricted-access database that can ONLY be used for a specified law enforcement purpose. However, with an average of about 71,500 tag reads a day for a total of over 26 million tag reads last year (2024) in DeSoto County, it is impossible for our deputies alone to monitor this amount of traffic in real-time to keep an eye out for the vehicles of concern. But an ALPR can.

Now that you have an idea of what an ALPR is, let's talk about what an ALPR is NOT. An ALPR is not a camera keeping track of the everyday lives of our citizens. As mentioned before, all images captured are only of vehicles on our public roadways and access to those images is restricted to law enforcement personnel acting in accordance with a specific investigatory purpose. Meaning an extremely high percentage of images

will be taken and never even viewed.

Investing in ALPRs and having access to ALPR data has been an incredible tool for our Sheriff's Office. Not only has this information been used to locate endangered persons, solve crimes and locate the individuals responsible for those crimes within DeSoto County, but it has also been instrumental in apprehending criminals from other jurisdictions traveling through and attempting to use our community as a safe haven. Many criminals attempt to use our rural backroads and highways as a means of evading detection, but it has become much more difficult to do so with our ALPRs providing real-time alerts to our local law enforcement when they are traveling on our roadways.

The ALPRs are an extra set of specially trained eyes keeping watch on our public roads. Although the information they provide is limited, when combined with sound law enforcement tactics and techniques, the information is invaluable to keeping our citizens safe.

The Sheriff's Office will continue to use every resource available to protect our community by vigorously pursuing criminals within DeSoto County, and not allowing our home to be a pass-through or hiding place for criminals from other jurisdictions.

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

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APRIL PROCLAIMED CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND DONATE LIFE MONTH



CAROL MAHLER

Independent Contractor carolmahler22acl@gmail.com Photos provided

At the Apr. 1 meeting, Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland and the Council proclaimed April as both Child Abuse Prevention and Donate Life Month. At the request of the Child Protection Center, the Mayor and Council urged "all citizens to be aware of and involved with the local and national programs which provide on-going protection of our children."

On behalf of "LifeLink of Florida, the non-profit organization dedicated to recovery of organs and tissue for transplantation therapy in Florida," the Mayor encouraged all residents "to consider leaving an infinite legacy through organ donation." Floridians may register as a donor at DonateLifeFlorida. org or MyStoryContinues.com or when renewing their driver's licenses or state identification cards. She also recognized and thanked City Administrator Beth Carsten for being an organ donor.

In addition, the Council agreed to a quarterly report from Team Arcadia as most of their programs are ongoing. Representing Team Arcadia, Allen Reesor thanked the City for being a partner with them to "help make a difference in DeSoto County and Arcadia." Allen reported that the new dance instructor could not start for personal reasons, so another teacher is sought; the Jump Start Monday program allows parents and children to work and learn together; and one third-party rental is scheduled for May.

THREE ORDINANCES APPROVED

On second and final reading, the Council passed Ordinance 1106 Amending Section 2.02.00 of the Land Development code to update the definition for "shipping/cargo container" to include portable storage containers.

On first reading, the Council approved Ordinances 1107 and 1108: the voluntary annexation of two ten-acres parcels owned by David Stevenson, Kelly M. Forbes, and Cowpens, LLC, located at 2323 and 2443 NE Roan St., adjacent to the high school, where a new high school will be constructed; and the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) Redevelopment Trust Fund as separate special fund managed and maintained by the City of Arcadia Finance Dept..

IN OTHER BUSINESS

The Council approved the award of Invitation For Bid (IFB) 2024-09 for \$1,317,753.25 to Thomas Marine Construction, Inc., for the widening of E. Gibson from N. Brevard to N. Mills avenues. The project requires Construction Engineering and Inspection (CEI) services that will cost an additional \$140,898.75, bringing the total cost to \$1,458,652.00. The

From left, Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland presented the proclamation of April as Child Abuse Prevention Month to Michelle McSwain, Madison Betts, and Emma Grooms with the Child Protection Center, Maria Magowan with Healthy Families, Sandee Woods with Guardian Ad Litem, and Tonya Wallace, First 1,000 Days Navigator.



Brandon Smith of Public School Development Solutions of Tampa spoke about the new high school project on property that the City plans to annex. He hopes the new school will ready in 2027.



Annexation Exhibit

Forward

DeSoto High School

EXHIBIT:

of Environmental Protection (FDEP) State Revolving Fund (SRF) grant/loan forgiveness program.

Florida Dept. of Transportation (FDOT) **Small County Outreach Program** (SCOP) will pay \$987,507.00. City Administrator Beth Carsten has asked FDOT for an additional \$300,000.00, and if received, the remaining balance of \$171,145.00 will be paid by the City's Capital Improvement Fund 107. Ajax Paving Industries of Florida, LLC, also submitted a bid.

The Council ratified the agreement with White General Constructors, Inc., for IFB 2024-12 Arcadia City Hall Repair, Restoration and Renovations for \$1,668,265.00 funded by the Florida Dept. of State, Division of Historical Resources, grant and Fund 107.

IFB 2024-13 for Maple Street Road Improvements from Brevard to Hillsborough avenues was rejected because of lack of funding. Carsten hopes that "this project or at least the stormwater conflict portion" can be added to IFB 2024-08 Sanitary Collection System Improvements, Phase 2B, Water Distribution System Improvements, Phase 1B, funded through the Florida Dept.

COMMENTS FROM DEPTS.

Assistant City Marshal Gary Evans reviewed the Arcadia Police Dept. (APD) Report for March 2025: eight felony, 12 misdemeanor, one juvenile, six traffic, and three warrant arrests; 29 accident reports, 18 warning and 127 traffic citations; 785 responses to complaints, and six criminal investigations-four open and two closed cases.

Airport Director Shelley Peacock reported a busy airport for Taco Tuesday, mostly because of people driving in as many pilots were attending the Sun-N-Fun Aerospace Expo in Lakeland. The new hangars are ready. To provide easier after-hours access to the aircraft, a pedestrian gate will be installed for about \$8,000.00 in money "leftover" from a grant project. The next improvement will be installing a tank and pump for Jet A fuel as "very few airports operate without it." She invited everyone to last pancake breakfast on Sat., Apr. 5, and noted that the Young

Eagles program-also scheduled for that day-was canceled for lack of volunteer

at the District Office; Apr. 8, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Migrant Parent & Family

Meeting and Apr. 15, 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., ESE Spring Resource Fair-both at the

Family Service Center Annex; Apr. 17, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., Kindergarten Round

Up at all schools; Apr. 18, schools closed for Good Friday; and Apr. 23, 3:30 p.m. to

5:00 p.m., District Strategic Planning Committee meeting at the District Office.

Assistant Golf Course Director Fabio Colon reported \$120,000.00 in revenue for March, and that "we are close to the end of active playing season." Customers have offered praise and thankfulness for the excellent condition of the course. Two new leagues have also signed up.

Carsten reported that the design is complete for the wastewater wetlands, and a permit has been submitted to FDEP. The "Bronco Buster" statue donated to the City will require a 6' x 4' pedestal built of concrete blocks with a concrete top, and the Council voted to spent \$6,690.00 from the contingency fund for it. Arcadia Main Street received grant funding to improve the Tree of Knowledge Park including pressurewashing and painting the benches and curbing, plus new signs and an archway entrance. So the Council approved spending \$2,475.00 from the contingency fund to pressure wash and paint the stage.







As School District

Community Outreach

everyone of dates: Apr.

School Board meeting

Coordinator, Ashley **Brown reminded**

8 and 22, 5:30 p.m.,

Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland presented the proclamation of April as Donate Life Month to David Weinstein of LifeLink. He said that both he and his wife have benefitted from organ or tissue transplants.







Arcadia, Florida - Fort Ogden Area



7088 SW Groveway Trl \$355,000 3 BR | 2 BA | 1792 SF

This home features a formal living room, family room, and dining room and sits on 5.76 acres. MLS A4629034

Arcadia, Florida - Fort Ogden Area



7089 SW Groveway Trl \$369,900

4 BR | 2 BA | 2016 SF

This home features a formal living room, family room, dining room, and laundry room/mud room and sits on 5 acres. MLS A4628352

Arcadia, Florida - Fort Ogden Area



7141 SW Groveway Trl \$374,900 4 BR | 3 BA | 2240 SF

This home features a living room, dining room, family room, game room, and laundry room and sits on 5.47 acres. MLS A4629040

Arcadia, Florida - Fort Ogden Area



7142 SW Groveway Trl \$389,900 4 BR | 3 BA | 2560 SF

This is a very large open floor plan, living and dining room open to the kitchen, with a very large family room at the end of the hallway. Enjoy a dream mud room/laundry room with its own exterior door. MLS A4637041

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YMCA

FROM PAGE 3 >>

Former City Administrator Terry Stewart, who suggested bringing the YMCA to the Speer Recreation Center. He praised the "outstanding work" that the YMCA has done so far.

After the Apr. 1 meeting, Horan, also Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Ajax Paving Industries of Florida, Inc., said, "Lots of our employees live here in DeSoto County, or they grew up here, so it's time we give back."



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WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THERE!

The YMCA of Southwest Florida invites everyone to a Community Day from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., this Sat., Apr. 12, at the Speer Recreation Center, 185 Winifred St.





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