

COMMUNITY ENJOYS "CHRISTMAS IN THE CITY"



CAROL MAHLER
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Photos provided

On Dec. 5, more than 1,000 people enjoyed the inaugural "Christmas in the City" event at the Tree of Knowledge Park in downtown Arcadia. After visiting similar events in Wauchula and Lake Wales last year, Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland suggested that Arcadia hold a free event, full of family fun, and the Council wholeheartedly approved the plan.

"I think this has been a great event," Wertz-Strickland said, "with a great turnout. We're happy to offer this event for the citizens. . . . It's our way of giving back to the public."

City Administrator Beth Carsten said, "This came from the Council. We took their plan and made it

Those attending "Christmas in the City" received a free necklace with a glowing Christmas tree light pendant on it from City employees; from left, Becky Andrews, Golf Course Director Jeff Gibson, Connie Godet, Michelle Griffin, Steve Griffin, and Joe Wood.

happen." She noted that the City's 40 employees served as the workers for the event.

Free face painting was available along with two crafts: decorating a wooden Christmas tree ornament and making a Christmas tree using cupcake papers. Free food included popcorn, hotdogs and chips, plus a variety of beverages, and Council members distributed mini candy canes. In addition, Saturday Night Lights volunteers set up games for the children, including bowling, connect-four, corn-hole toss, large-size dominoes, and wooden blocks.

Council Member Dee Washington noted the nice weather and said, "The mayor and City workers did a

SEE CHRISTMAS PAGE 14 >>

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DESOTO COUNTY
SPORTS

PAGE 4

STEVE KNAPP
sports@peacerivershopper.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

DEC 16	DESOTO COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING
TUES 3P	Administration Building 201 E. Oak Street, Suite 103 Arcadia, FL 34266
DEC 23	DESOTO COUNTY CANCELLED BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING
TUES 3P	Administration Building 201 E. Oak Street, Suite 103 Arcadia, FL 34266
DEC 25	DESOTO COUNTY COUNTY OFFICES CLOSED
THUR	In observance of Christmas

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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Angie Duckett

CREATIVE DIR / AD DESIGN
Jackie Bierman

OPS / PRODUCT DESIGN
Jonathan Bruch

CITY CONSIDERS PHOTO ENFORCEMENT OF SCHOOL ZONE SPEEDING



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Photos provided*

At the Dec. 2 meeting, Jeff DuFloth of Red Speed, USA, gave a presentation to the City Council about how his company provides automated photo enforcement in school zones to stop speeders: with “high-definition, lane-specific, motion-picture based enforcement.”

At the request of Marshal Quinn Jones, Red Speed conducted a three-day speed study with the following results: drivers exceeding the speed limit in a school zone by more than 11 miles per hour numbered 913 on DeSoto Ave. (aka U.S. Highway 17 South) and 863 on Brevard Ave. (U.S. Highway 17 North) for West Elementary School; 181 on Gibson St. for DeSoto Middle School; 324 on Turner Ave. for DeSoto High School; and 67 on E. Hickory St. for Memorial Elementary School.

Red Speed calculates that 100 violations per day are needed to fund the program effectively. Each speeding-in-a-school-zone violation incurs a \$100.00 ticket, and of that total, \$20.00 goes to the State’s General Revenue Fund; \$3.00 to Dept. of Law Enforcement’s Criminal Justice and Training Trust Fund; \$12.00 to the School District; and \$5.00 to the County for the School Crossing Guard Recruitment and Retention Program. The remaining \$60.00 goes to the City, and of that, \$21.00 will pay Red Speed for the automated photo enforcement service as well as the billing and collection of the fines. The City must use the remaining \$39.00 for public safety.

“The goal is to change driver behavior, reduce accidents, and increase safety,” DuFloth said. He noted city and county governments that had reported 90% to 95% reductions in speeding violations.

City Attorney T.J. Wohl said that even though he is victim of photo enforcement, he is in favor of it. When he received a photo enforcement ticket for running a red light in Haines City, he reviewed the online video of the violation. “You can’t argue with the video,” he said. Nevertheless, the City will have a special magistrate to hear any violators who may contest the citation. Assistant City Marshal Gary Evans asked about “checks and balances” for the automated program, and DuFloth assured him that the films will be reviewed by a City law enforcement officer before the tickets are mailed by Red Speed.

IN OTHER BUSINESS

Council Members Bob Heine, Jr., Keith Keene, Luis Velasco, and Judy Wertz-Strickland elected Wertz-



Red Speed, USA, provides automated photo enforcement in school zones to stop speeders: with “high-definition, lane-specific, motion-picture based enforcement.” Photograph courtesy of redspeed.com



Darien Bailey thanked the City for the new-to-the-City machine that will help to maintain the softball fields at the Smith-Brown Recreation Complex on Martin Luther King St.



Charmian Price spoke against changing the name of Orange Ave., as it would involve a great deal of time and effort for residents.



A retired law enforcement officer, Jeff DuFloth of Red Speed USA gave presentation about using cameras to enforce school zones and explained how the program is violator funded.



Alibaba Lumumba, president of the HCW Foundation, asked for a copy of the proposed ordinance for renaming a street or avenue in the City as well as the biography of anyone for whom a street is named that will be required by the proposed ordinance.



School District Community Outreach Coordinator Ashley Brown invited everyone to the upcoming holiday performances by the school bands and choruses. She announced early dismissal on Dec. 19 starting the winter break of Dec. 22 though Jan. 2. She also reported that the walls of the new high school are “going up.”

Strickland as mayor and Velasco as deputy mayor again. Although Council Member Dee Washington attended the meeting, he left early because of ill health before the election occurred. A formal resolution memorializing the vote will be on the Dec. 16 meeting agenda.

On first reading, the Council approved Ordinance #1113 Creating a Procedure and Establishing Criteria for Renaming Streets as proposed with the removal of subsection a. in Section 86-45 that prohibits the renaming of a portion of a street. Subsections b, c, and d will remain, prohibiting the renaming of a street for a living person or an individual who has been convicted of a felony, or by a name “with connotations which by contemporary community standards are derogatory or offensive.” The Ordinance also requires a biography of the person for whom the street will be renamed.

On second and final reading, the Council approved the Police/Fire Pension Amendment Ordinance #1112, changing “Section 2-186, Benefits

Amounts and Eligibility, to provide for a one-time cost-of-living increase for each retiree, joint pensioner and beneficiary in pay status on Oct. 1, 2025, in the amount of \$1,000.00” as a one-time benefit.

The Council approved the second and third amendments to the agreement for banking services with Truist Bank, approved on Nov. 17, 2020, with an original three-year term and five one-year extensions, continuing the term to Nov. 16, 2025, and Nov. 16, 2026, respectively. Finance Director Teresa Conerly promised the Council that she will remember to request an extension for the agreement before the term expires next year.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS

City Administrator Beth Carsten reported a water main break during the State Road 70 construction, so that traffic had to be diverted to Oak St., and she praised the Arcadia Police Dept. for doing an excellent job directing

traffic. In addition, the sewer and water pipes have been replaced as part of the Gibson St. project and now the paving has started and will continue for five months. She is looking forward to opening the bids on Fri. for the Speer Center/YMCA as a public-private partnership. She reminded everyone of the “Christmas in the City” event on Dec. 5 and the employee Christmas party at noon on Dec. 12.

CONSENT AGENDA

Under the Consent Agenda, the Council approved two special event permits: Frank’s Fireworks, Inc., for a fireworks tent sale from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. from Dec. 20 - Dec. 31, 2025, at 245 S. Brevard Ave., and for DeSoto Cares Homeless Services, Inc., to hold a bicycle ride to raise funds to benefit the Tiny Town Village project from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Sat., Feb. 14, 2026.

SANTA CLAUS IS COMING DOWNTOWN!



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Photos provided*

Meet Santa Claus from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Dec. 13, in Santa’s Workshop, in the Pink Building, 101 W. Oak St., in downtown Arcadia. Enjoy games, face-painting, crafts, and more with Santa’s elves, including Marshal Quinn Jones and Sergeant Plymale. You’ll have a chance for a photograph with Santa Claus and to sit in his life-sized sleigh.

If children drop off their letters to Santa before Dec. 12 in the mailbox in the arcade of The Pink Building, they will be entered into a drawing for five \$100.00 gift cards thanks to owners of The Pink Building. The event is sponsored by Arcadia Main Street, The Pink Building, and Visit DeSoto.

While you’re downtown, you’ll want to browse and shop in Downtown Arcadia’s Vintage Merry Market, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Dec. 13, in historic downtown Arcadia and the Tree of Knowledge Park. The festive Christmas market will feature antiques, vintage vendors, art, antique stores, boutiques, specialty stores, restaurants, live music, and more.

You’re also invited to the Jingle Mingle, starting at 4:00 p.m., on Fri., Dec. 12: a wine and beer tasting, with hors d’oeuvres, window-decorating contest, shopping passport, prizes and drawings. Live music includes Red



If children drop off their letters in Santa’s mailbox in the Pink Building arcade before Dec. 12, their names will be entered into a drawing for five \$100.00 gift cards thanks to owners of The Pink Building.

Griffin an’ the Pickin’ Crew on the Tree of Knowledge Park stage as well as Jasper and the South Hounds at Monroe Ave. and Oak St. Tickets are \$25.00 per person and include a commemorative wine glass. Jingle Mingle is sponsored by Modern Woodmen, Jarrett Glosson, 239-628-1280, and MidFlorida Credit Union, and hosted by Arcadia Main Street. For details and to buy tickets, check online at arcadiamainstreet.com.

Santa Claus will be in Santa’s Workshop in The Pink Building at 101 W. Oak St., from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Sat., Dec. 13, plus games, crafts, and more fun.



DOWNTOWN ARCADIA'S VINTAGE MERRY MARKET!

Saturday December 13th

9am to 2pm

Historic Downtown Arcadia
Tree of Knowledge Park

Festive Christmas Market
with Antiques, vintage vendors, Art,
Antique Stores, Boutiques, Specialty
Stores, Restaurants, Live Music, & More!

FEATURING:
SANTA'S WORKSHOP!
Hosted by The Pink Building!
10am to 1pm
Meet **SANTA**
and his Special Elves
Marshal Jones and Sergeant Plymale!
Play games, craft, and dance!

SANTA'S WORKSHOP!

Saturday December 13th 2025

10am to 1pm
Come downtown to meet

SANTA CLAUS
and his special Elves
Marshal Jones and Sheriff Plymale!
Bring the kids!

This super fun day will include photo ops with Santa and you can even sit inside his life sized sleigh! Stay and visit inside the workshop for more elves, games, face-painting, crafts, and so much fun!

Don't forget to drop off your letters to Santa BEFORE the 12th! The Pink Building will be selecting 5 families in need to win \$100 gift cards!

107 W Oak St. Arcadia FL 34266

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PEACE RIVER SPORTS

BULLDOGS CHASE AWAY BOBCATS IN 73-57 WIN



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The North Port girls basketball team traveled to Arcadia with a perfect 3-0 record which included a 72-3 win over Sebring. For the first half they stayed with the Bulldogs and led by two points at the end of the first and second quarters.

The second half was a different story as DeSoto scored 25 points in the third quarter which nearly matched what they scored in the whole first half. Ardine Primus told the team to leave the three points shots “out there” because they would be there all night and drive the lane to take advantage of some mismatches inside. That’s why she is the coach and knew what to do to chase away the pesky Bobcats.

The Bulldogs kept working inside and with a few big bombs from outside they built up a 21 point lead, 65-44, topped by a Rihanna Downing bucket in the fourth quarter. The game didn’t start out well for either team as DeSoto connected on only 2 of their first 10 shots yet managed to score the first 8 points of the game. North Port found the range at 3:37 left with their first field goal. They continued scoring and took the lead with a 10 point run in part of their 14-4 first quarter outburst.

Both teams totaled 14 in the second quarter to maintain a two point advantage for the Bobcats. One of the North Port coaches told me that they knew DeSoto was a strong second half and particularly the third quarter team. “We knew we had to stop them in the third quarter to stay close but we couldn’t match up with them.”

Downing said, “Coach told us to just go. Don’t sit back and let them play their game, we need to play our game.”

DeSoto has been averaging 18.5 points in the third quarter but broke loose with 25 and added 22 more in the fourth quarter to cruise to the 73-57 win. DeSoto has been averaging 36 second half points in their previous 3 games but shattered that with 47 points against the Bobcats.

Yahri Tyler led the team with 24 points including 14 of them in the second half. She also picked up 12 boards for another double double. Tyler has had a double double in 3 of the first 4 games only missing out against Evangelical when she had a season high 23 points but just 7



Yahri Tyler watches two of her team high 24 points fall through the net on her way to another double double with 12 rebounds.



Mariah Valladares works her way to the basket in the 73-57 win over North Port.



DeSoto junior Cherish Wiggins splits the Bobcat defense and drives for the basket to put the Bulldogs up 24-22.



Junior Rihanna Downing puts in 2 of her career high 18 points against the Bobcats.

rebounds.

Cherish Wiggins nearly had a triple double with 16 points, 10 in the second half, along with 11 boards and 9 assists. Downing had 10 of her career high 18 points in the second half and Janeris Bing got all of her 13 points after the break.

The Bulldogs will be in the “Battle of the Cove” at Port Charlotte this weekend with their first game against IMG at 1:30. Their next opponents will be decided at the tournament. They will be home Monday and next Thursday as they host Babcock Ranch and Palmetto.



Janeris Bing puts up a shot against North Port. Bing scored 13 points in the second half in the 73-57 win.

DESOTO COUNTY

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK



YAHRI TYLER



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All the superlatives have been used up while speaking about Yahri Tyler. Both on and off the court there are just no words left to describe the talented, hardworking, popular (I recycled a few words) senior for the DeSoto Bulldogs.

Monday evening she reached another milestone in an already full career of achievements including the Daily Sun Female Athlete of the Year last year. After scoring 12 points in the first quarter, Tyler was fouled early in the second quarter in a 55-15 romp over Hardee. Tyler was fouled while making a shot and went to the line for her “and one” bonus.

Tyler had an abnormal night at the free throw line making just 1 of 5 attempts. That one successful shot was the one that gave her 1000. When asked how she envisioned her 1000th point, she replied “and one, those are my favorite”.

Before the game Yahri was not nervous at all. She was singing and dancing during warmups in which I saw her make four straight 3 point shots. Near the bench she was joking with her teammates and posing for photos as if it was just another game. For Tyler, it was just another game. She never gets caught up in the moment. She just enjoys playing and projects confidence and humility wherever she goes.

The unusual thing is her sister Zeri also reached the 1000 point club on the same type of play, “basket and one.” Of course comparisons will be made between the sisters. Zeri played 93 games and totaled 1256 career points. If Yahri continues with her nearly 18 point a game average, she will also end up with 1256 points.

The difference is that Yahri reached that figure in 3 seasons (56 games) while Zeri took four years and 93 games. Both players averaged a double double in their careers. Zeri averaged 13 points and 11 rebounds while Yahri is averaging 18 points and 11 rebounds.

After making that money shot, Tyler sat for most of the rest of the game. She did reenter late in the third quarter to score 4 more points to keep her average up. This season the Bulldogs lost out on a chance for 3 more games when a tournament was



Yahri Tyler celebrates her 1000th career point with her teammates and coaches.



Toi Reaves, DeSoto coach and mother to Yahri Tyler, proudly stands with her second daughter to reach 1000 points.



DeSoto coaches LaDeja Dennis, Ardine Primus and Toi Reaves celebrate with Yahri Tyler and her 1000th career point.

canceled so that will shorten their season unless they can find somebody who has openings and is willing to play the Bulldogs.

Toi Reaves is the assistant coach for the Bulldogs and more importantly the mother of Zeri and Yahri. ‘When we started coaching together 8 years ago, I put them in the hands of a person I trusted, coach Primus. In the words of Butta (Zeri’s

nickname) Coach Primus is a bad mamma jamma.”

As a coach, it is always exciting to see a player reach some great milestone. As a mother, Reaves said. “As a mother my heart is overflowing. Watching one child reach 1000 points is a blessing...but watching two of my daughters achieve that milestone is something words can hardly capture. It

humbles me with indescribable pride. I’m grateful to God for giving them the passion, the drive, and the opportunity. I’m proud of their accomplishments, but even more proud of the women they’re becoming. I’m a grateful, emotional and incredibly proud mother celebrating a double blessing #23, #3 DeSoto strong.”



DESOTO COUNTY

GAME OF THE WEEK

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BULLDOGS FIRST EVER WIN AGAINST PIRATES 2-1



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The victorious Bulldog soccer team points to the scoreboard as they celebrate the school's first win over Port Charlotte in 21 previous matches.

It was a long time coming and that's what made it so sweet as the DeSoto girls soccer team beat Port Charlotte

2-1 last week. In the previous 21 matches against the Pirates, DeSoto had tied 2 but lost the other 19 matches. That's what makes it so special is they finally have a victory over Port Charlotte.

After falling behind 1-0 in the 12th minute, Clara Martinez tied it up going into the break. Midway through the second half, Zariah Santos found the back of the net for a 2-1 lead. DeSoto

keeper, senior Jana Hannon, fought off a flurry of shots over the final four minutes and kept everything out of the net to preserve the win.

Michelle Garcia dribbles and then passes to Zariah Santos late in the 2-1 win over Port Charlotte.



Michelle Garcia and Andrea Casiano fight for a loose ball with a Pirate forward in the win over Port Charlotte.



DeSoto seniors Alondra Maldonado and Isela Gonzalez are happy to get their first win over Port Charlotte.



Senior keeper Jana Hannon fought off a flurry of late shots to preserve the win.



Clara Martinez and Zariah Santos celebrate in front of the scoreboard as they scored both goals in the 2-1 win over Port Charlotte.

DESOTO SPORTS

ROUND-UP

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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The DeSoto girls soccer team got their first win of the season and first win ever over Port Charlotte with a well played 2-1 win. Clara Martinez and Zariah Santos scored the two goals and Jana Hannon had a good game in the net. They played Babcock at home this past Monday and will be at Palmetto next Monday the 15th.

The boys soccer team shut out Imagine School of North Port 8-0 last Thursday but were on the other end of the shutout the next night with a 5-0 loss at Hardee. They went to Port Charlotte to face the 1-9 Pirates this past Monday and Tuesday had a home match with Lake Placid. They will host Okeechobee tomorrow night at 7:30.

The girls basketball team had three games this past week with 2 at home and one at Babcock Ranch. All three games ended in DeSoto's favor with a 57-53 win over the Tarpons followed by a 73-57 win on Tuesday night over North Port. DeSoto easily rolled over Babcock 57-19 allowing just 8 points in the second half including none in the final quarter.

DeSoto traveled up highway 17 on Monday to face Hardee, a team that they have owned for quite some time. On Saturday at the tournament at Port Charlotte, the Bulldogs will play IMG followed by another game determined at the tournament. They will be home next Monday the 15th for Babcock and next Thursday as Palmetto comes to town.



Rihanna Downing brings the ball up court on her way to a career high 18 points against North Port.

The boys basketball team beat Lake Placid 76-31 with Te'Coy Campbell leading the way with 17 points. The win was by the largest margin since January of last year and the team's 21 assists is the most they've had in over a year. On Thursday they fell to North Ft. Myers in a classic overtime affair 81-76. Campbell had a break out game with 25 points. On Friday the team lacked spark playing their third game of the week and was beat up by Frostproof 74-49. It was their lowest scoring game of the season and only the second time they didn't score at least 66 points in a game.

They were home with Hardee and Babcock Monday and Tuesday and will finish their three game home stand with Fort Meade Friday night at 8:00 clock.

Senior Emiley Cline works the ball up field over Port Charlotte.



Anna Hernandez and Gabriella Rios celebrate their win over Port Charlotte.



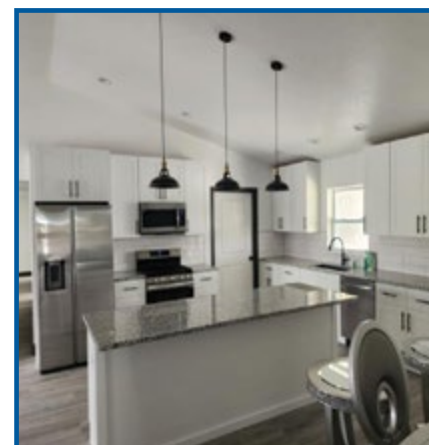
The DeSoto girls soccer team take a water break on their way to a 2-1 win over Port Charlotte.

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TOO BIG OF A HOLE TO CLIMB OUT OF DMS GIRLS LOSE 39-11



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After a nice 16-13 win at Lake Placid, the Lady Bulldogs had their hands full with Hardee in their first home game and lost 39-11.

The Wildcats used a strong man to man full court pressure defense to create several turnovers and put the Bulldogs down 16-0 at the end of the first quarter. Poor ball handling and passes led to many turnovers that gave Hardee some easy points. The defense was better in the second quarter as they held the Wildcats to just 2 points but were unable to find the bottom of the net and trailed 18-0 at the break.

DeSoto scored in the third quarter when Kailyn Vazquez-Magana hit a bucket to get the team on the board. She followed that with a long three pointer off the glass that got the crowd standing and cheering. DeSoto trailed 32-9 going into the fourth quarter, and eventually lost 39-11. Vazquez-Magana totaled 7 points for the Bulldogs with two by Calvilina Brown and another 2 by a Hardee player who put the ball through the wrong basket to total the Bulldogs' 11 points.



The Bulldogs come away with this rebound in the loss to Hardee.



Calvilina Brown launches a shot that missed the mark in the loss to Hardee. Brown scored 2 points in the losing effort.

The cheerleaders brought a lot of spirit and noise to the game.



Jalishah Luther looks to the basket as the ball gets stolen from her in the 39-11 Desoto loss.



Kailyn Vazquez-Magana drives to the hoop for two of her team high 7 points.



Calvilina Brown swipes at the tip off for DeSoto.



The referees stopped the game to remind the teams which basket they were shooting at after a Hardee player sunk a shot in the Desoto basket.



FOG CURTAILS ATTENDANCE AT PANCAKE BREAKFAST



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Photos provided

On Dec. 6, dense morning fog prevented VFR (Visual Flight Rules) pilots from flying to the Experimental Aircraft Association's (EAA) Chap. 1226's monthly pancake breakfast at the Arcadia Airport, 2269 A. C. Polk, Jr., Dr.. Those who drove in for the event enjoyed delicious food—eggs, pancakes, sausage, coffee, and juice—all you care to eat for \$8.00 per person.

The funds benefit EAA Chap. 1226, especially the Young Eagles Program from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. on the second Sat. of each month. It gives eight-to 17-year-old youngsters “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” eaa.org/eaa/youth/free-ye-flights . The Young Eagles Program will be Dec. 13 at the Arcadia Airport.

Airport Director Shelley Peacock thanked the volunteers: Austin Awad and Elena Awad who served as cashiers as well as those who prepared and served the food—Jim Brewer, Geri Draper, Veera Fitzpatrick, Chyanne Pabon, and Jack Scott.



From lefty Veera Fitzpatrick and Geri Draper prepared food while Sue Doane, Dee Aldridge, Rick Warner, and Jack Scott filled their plates at the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) Chap. 1226's Monthly Pancake Breakfast at the Arcadia Airport.

EAA Chap. 1226 holds their monthly pancake breakfast in the “Aviation City” pilot shelter in the pilot campground at the Arcadia Airport. The shelter is the namesake of the City during World War I when the U.S. Army operated two aviation training camps just outside of the City.

You’re invited to the first monthly pancake of the new year: 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. on Sat., Jan. 3: please mark your calendar for good food and good company!



At center, Luella Awad sat in the pilot seat of the teeter-totter shaped like an aircraft while Tiffany Awad, left, and Selah Awad enjoyed the wing seating. The playground-grade equipment was donated by José Hernandez and Yolanda Hernandez who own and operate the Taqueria Querétaro food truck at the Airport's Taco Tuesday event.

Merry Christmas

From the DeSoto County Property Appraiser's Office

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CLOSED

December 24th - 26th for the holidays



DESOTO COUNTY PROPERTY APPRAISER
David A. Williams, CFA, CCF

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K-POST 11 HOLDS PEARL HARBOR DAY CEREMONY: “WE WILL NEVER FORGET”



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Photos provided*

On Dec. 7, the Arcadia American Legion K-Post 11 held a ceremony to honor and remember those killed in the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. K-Post 11 Commander, Sgt. Maj. Ron Jones, Sr., noted the fatal strike was also on a Sun. morning as was this 84th anniversary of the event.

Sheriff Jim Potter gave the invocation, and Jones led the “Pledge of Allegiance.” Then he introduced K-Post 11 Member Adrian Cline, a U.S. Air Force veteran, as the keynote speaker.

Cline recited the historical facts: the attack started at 7:55 a.m. and finished at 10:00 a.m., with a total of 2,403 people killed of which 2,008 served in the U.S. Navy, 68 were civilians, and the rest served in the U.S. Army or the U.S. Marine Corps. In addition, 1,178 people were wounded.

The Dec. 11, 1941, issue of the “Arcadian” newspaper reported that for the first time in history, school children listened on Dec. 8 as Pres. Franklin Roosevelt asked Congress for a declaration of war and “heard the actual resolution calling for such a declaration.” Cline noted that such an occurrence is common today, but it was innovative in 1941 and showed “the importance of making certain that the memory of what happened on Dec. 7 was permanently part of our memories.”

Cline remembered the County residents who “gave their lives in the service of our country:” 39 of the estimated 420,000 U.S. citizens who died during World War II. He said that remembrance ceremonies such as this one are “a time of reflection and gratitude, but also a call to action for our younger generation . . . a reminder to build on the solid foundation left by the greatest generation.”

He said, “As we honor the past, we forge ahead ensuring that the lessons of history continue to guide us in creating a future that upholds the values of courage, resilience, and peace. We honor the bravery and sacrifice of all the men and women who stood their ground in the face of unimaginable adversity. . . . let us remember the lives lost and the heroes who emerged. Their legacy reminds us of the importance of peace, and unity, and the enduring American spirit.” He ended his talk with four words: “We will never forget.”

Cline and U.S. Air Force Veteran Art Southwell, also a K-Post 11 member, threw the ceremonial wreath into Peace River. Jones explained that the tradition recalled the flower leis that the women of Hawaii cast toward the departing ships: if the flowers returned to shore,



After the flower wreath was tossed into Peace River, the K-Post 11 Honor Guard fired a gun salute: from left, Fred Wheatley, Honor Guard Commander Mike Dempsey, K-Post 11 Commander Sgt. Maj. Ron Jones, Sr., Louis Reuter, and Amber Jones.



To close the Pearl Harbor Day Ceremony, K-Post 11 Member Damon Rector played “Taps” on the bugle.



K-Post 11 Member, U.S. Air Force Veteran, Retired School District Superintendent, and Historical Society President Adrian Cline gave the keynote address at the Pearl Harbor Day ceremony.



From left, Arcadia American Legion K-Post 11 Members and U.S. Air Force Veterans Adrian Cline and Art Southwell prepared to throw the ceremonial wreath into Peace River to remember and honor those who died in the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

so would the servicemen.

Under the direction of Honor Guard Commander Mike Dempsey, the Honor Guard—Fred Wheatley, Dempsey, Jones, Louis Reuter, and Amber Jones—fired a gun salute, and K-Post 11 Member Damon Rector played “Taps.”



K-Post 11 Commander Sgt. Maj. Ron Jones, Sr., emceed the Pearl Harbor Day ceremony and noted that the attack on Pearl Harbor 84 years ago was also on a Sunday morning.



A small crowd attended the Pearl Harbor Day ceremony held by K-Post 11 on the historic bridge across Peace River, built more than 100 years ago by the Luten Bridge Company.

IBT OFFERS FREE INTRO TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CLASSES IN DESOTO COUNTY



DeSoto County, Fla. – IBT, along with the DeSoto County Economic Development Department, is launching a series of free community classes to help residents learn the basics of Artificial Intelligence (AI). These sessions are designed for all ages and require no prior experience, making it easy for anyone to understand what AI is and how it can be used in daily life and work. The classes will be led by Priya Ahluwalia, Director of IBT's Digital Inclusion Initiative.

PARTICIPANTS WILL LEARN:

- What AI is and how it works
- Practical examples of AI tools
- How AI can help with everyday tasks, learning, and jobs
- Free tools anyone can use immediately

CLASS SCHEDULE

**WEDNESDAY,
DECEMBER 10TH**

4:00 PM to 5:00 PM

**TURNER CENTER
EXHIBIT HALL**

2260 N.E. Roan Street
Arcadia, FL 34266

**THURSDAY,
DECEMBER 11TH**

11:30 AM to 1:00 PM

**DESOTO COUNTY
LIBRARY**

125 N. Hillsborough Avenue
Arcadia, FL 34266

**FRIDAY,
DECEMBER 12TH**

11:30 AM to 1:00 PM

**NOCATEE
CHURCH OF GOD**

4870 SW Highway 17
Arcadia, FL 34266

All classes are free and open to the public. Refreshments will be provided.

There is no charge, but we ask you to register:
email: S.Guffey@desotobocc.com
or call/text: 863-444-2396
For more information, visit: www.ibt.us.

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

Level: Intermediate

SUDOKU

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

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

ANSWERS:

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES

GAUDETE: THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT - JOY THAT CANNOT BE SILENCED

CHAPLAIN AMANDA REUTER
US Army Reserve
DeSoto County Ministerial Association

The third Sunday of Advent breaks the purple solemnity with rose-colored light. We light the Gaudete candle and the Church whispers—then shouts—“Rejoice!” Not because the world has suddenly become gentle, but because the Lord is nearer than He was yesterday. Joy, in Scripture, is never naive optimism. It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit that grows best in the soil of suffering, a defiant song sung in the dark.

The shepherds heard it first: a multitude of angels tearing open the night sky over Bethlehem’s fields, saying “Glory to God in the highest!” Common people, working the night shift, became the first evangelists. They did not wait for permission or polish their message. They ran, breathless, telling everyone what they had seen: a baby wrapped in rags, lying in a feeding trough, who is Christ the Lord. The joy was too large to keep; it spilled out of them like light through broken clay.

Mary had already sung it: “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” She carried

Joy Incarnate beneath her heart while Roman taxes and village gossip pressed against her. Yet her song rose higher than both.

This is the joy we are invited to taste in week three: not a feeling that depends on circumstances, but a Person who has drawn close. And true joy, like true love, is never content to stay private. It multiplies when shared.

In a world that markets cheap happiness and medicates real sorrow, the Church is called to be a people who carry uncontainable joy. We are the ones who know the night is far spent, the dawn almost here. Therefore, we tell the story again—of the God who became small so that we could become His children. We tell it in hospital rooms and grocery lines, across fences and phone screens, in songs and silence, tears and laughter.

Rejoice, then. The King is coming. And when He fills us with His joy, the only reasonable response is to open our mouths, our doors, our lives, and let the Good News run wild again.



DeSoto County Ahead Resource Fair & Community Update

**REGISTER
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FOR**



The DeSoto County Ahead Resource Fair & Community Update is a free, one-of-a-kind event hosted by The Patterson Foundation.

The update will:

- Showcase local organizations
- Highlight valuable community resources
- Feature presentations from changemakers
- Offer actionable ideas to drive positive change

Whether you're a nonprofit, business, or community group, or an interested citizen, this is your chance to connect, collaborate, and help build a stronger DeSoto County. Scan the QR code to attend.



What: A Community Update Dinner
Date: Tuesday, January 13, 2026
Time: 4:00p – 8:00p
Location: Turner Agri-Civic Center
2250 NE Roan St.
Arcadia, FL 34266



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Florida Power & Light Company is proud to share the spirit of the season with the DeSoto County community.

From Thanksgiving meal distributions to providing energy-saving kits, we’re helping families enjoy cherished traditions, manage costs and strengthen the bonds that bring neighbors together.

This December, let’s celebrate what truly matters—supporting one another and powering the connections that make our communities shine!



CHRISTMAS

FROM PAGE 1 >>

good job putting this event together.” He also thanked all the City workers and volunteers for their efforts.

Ashley Lebeau, whose daughter Alison Lebeau has participated in Arcadia Main Street’s Young Entrepreneurs program, said, “It’s nice to see so much put into this event and so many neighbors come together to celebrate.”

Council Member Bob Heine, Jr., said, “What a great crowd for a first time event. It will only grow as we do this annual event.”

A member of Building A Village, Darien Bailey said, “This is wonderful. The City Council is forward-thinking and inclusive and has given our families something local to do, so they don’t have to drive to Port Charlotte or Sarasota or Fort Myers.”

Council Member Keith Keene said, “I’m super pleased with the turnout for “Christmas in the City,” and I’m looking forward to more such events in the future.”

As the event began at 5:00 p.m., the DeSoto High School Blazing Blue Band performed followed by Keith Mathys who entertains during the weekly Taco Tuesday event at the Airport, and then Terry Stewart, retired city administrator.

At 7:00 p.m., the full moon emerged from the cloudy horizon at the same time as Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus—portrayed by Keith Dyal and Kathy Dyal—arrived via fire truck. Even though the event concluded at 8:00 p.m., Santa sat on the stage talking with children for another hour, so that every child could have a turn.

“This is a great event,” Deputy Mayor Luis Velasco said. “The City deserves a great family gathering for Christmas.”



Just after 7:00 p.m., Mrs. Claus and Santa Claus took the stage at the Tree of Knowledge Park and stayed an hour after “Christmas in the City” ended to make sure each child had a chance to talk with them. Photograph courtesy of Emily Morris.



Free facepainting was available thanks to Isabella Ramirez, standing and wearing a Santa Claus hat: from left, Bridgett Forrester, Lillian Forrester, and Riley Forrester.



The City provided plenty of bright lights in addition to the street lights and decorative lighting in the Tree of Knowledge Park for “Christmas in the City.”



After a count-down, the City Council gave the signal for the lighting of the Christmas trees located in the Tree of Knowledge Park along DeSoto Ave. during the inaugural “Christmas in the City” event last Fri.



Council Member Bob Heine, Jr., Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland, Council Member Keith Keene, and Deputy Mayor Luis Velasco posed for a moment at the start of the inaugural “Christmas in the City” event.



Assistant City Administrator Carl McQuay, Administrative Assistant Connie Godet, and City Administrator Beth Carsten served as the event coordinators and turned into reality the Council’s plans for “Christmas in the City.”

Council Member Dee Washington visited with School District Community Outreach Coordinator Ashley Brown during the “Christmas in the City” event.



From left, City Employee Crystal Baxter helped Bryson Adams and Gunner Henderson make Christmas trees out of cupcake papers and stickers. Children also had a chance to decorate a wooden Christmas tree ornament.



Laura Partridge, owner of Laura’s Good Vibe Tribe Thrift Store in downtown Arcadia, said, “This is so cool.” Her volunteer assistant in the store is 16-year-old Maren Mondragon, who said, “Life is truly amazing when we all come together.”

DESOTO COUNTY

SHERIFF'S OFFICE



ARREST REPORT |

11/28/25 - 12/4/25

Adside, Kaleb:

Aggrav Battery - Aggrav Battery With A Deadly Weapon

Avila Luna, Maria Estrella:

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

Baltazar, Raymundo Antonio:

Disorderly Conduct - Brawling Fighting Corrupt Public Moral Decency, Resist Officer - Obstruct Wo Violence, Drugs-Possess - Possess Controlled Substance W/O Prescription, Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use

Bennett, James William:

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

Brown Sr., Cecil Brian:

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

Castro-Cendejas, Jose Alberto:

Moving Traffic Viol - Drive While Lic Susp Habitual Offender

Darnell, Lisa Christine:

Prob Violation - Prob Violation

De la luz, Jose Luis:

Aggrav Battery - Aggrav Battery Cause Bodily Harm Or Disability

Edrine, Robert:

Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While Lic Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

Francisco, Cristino Andres:

Flee/Elude Police - Flee Elude Leo With Lights Siren Active, Resist Officer - Obstruct Wo Violence

Gil Gil, Victor Fernando:

Hit And Run - Leave Scene Of Crash Involve Damage To Prop, Moving Traffic Viol - Operate Motor Vehicle W/O Valid Lic 1St Conv

Herrera-Godinez, Joel Elias:

Homicide - Murder Not Premeditated During Other Felony

Ibarra-Leon, Jose:

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

Melbourne, Tameka Lynette:

Fraud-Imperson - Use Possess Personal Id Of Deceased, Forgery Of - Alter Public Record Certificate Etc, Fraud-Imperson - Use Possess Personal Id Of Deceased, Forgery Of - Alter Public Record Certificate Etc, Fraud-Swindle - Obtain Property 20K Less Than 50K Dols

Morales Padilla, Wilber Alberto:

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

Paixao de Souza, Leandro:

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

Pedroza, Fernando Vega:

Disorderly Conduct - Brawling Fighting Corrupt Public Moral Decency, Resist Officer - Obstruct Wo Violence

Perez-Alvardo, Manuel:

Hit And Run - Leave Scene Of Crash Involve Damage To Prop, Moving Traffic Viol - Operate Motor Vehicle W/O Valid Lic 1St Conv

Powers, Steven Brad:

Prob Violation - Prob Violation

Santos, Elizabeth:

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

Thomas, Georgie:

Smuggle Contraband Into Prison - Marijuana Into Correctional Institution, Drugs-Possess - Possess Controlled Substance W/O Prescription

Ulrich-Grines, Laura:

Battery - Battery On Specified Personnel, Resist Officer - Resist Officer With Violence

Valdez, Jacob Lee:

Possession Of Weapon - Or Ammo By Convicted Fla Felon, Larc - Grand Theft Of Firearm, Failure To Appear - Written Promise To Appear (X2)

Velasco, Brigido Torres:

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

Wilson, Willard Joseph:

Disorderly Intox - Disorder Intox Public Place Cause Disturbance

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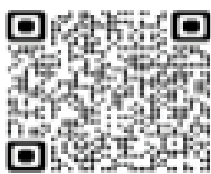
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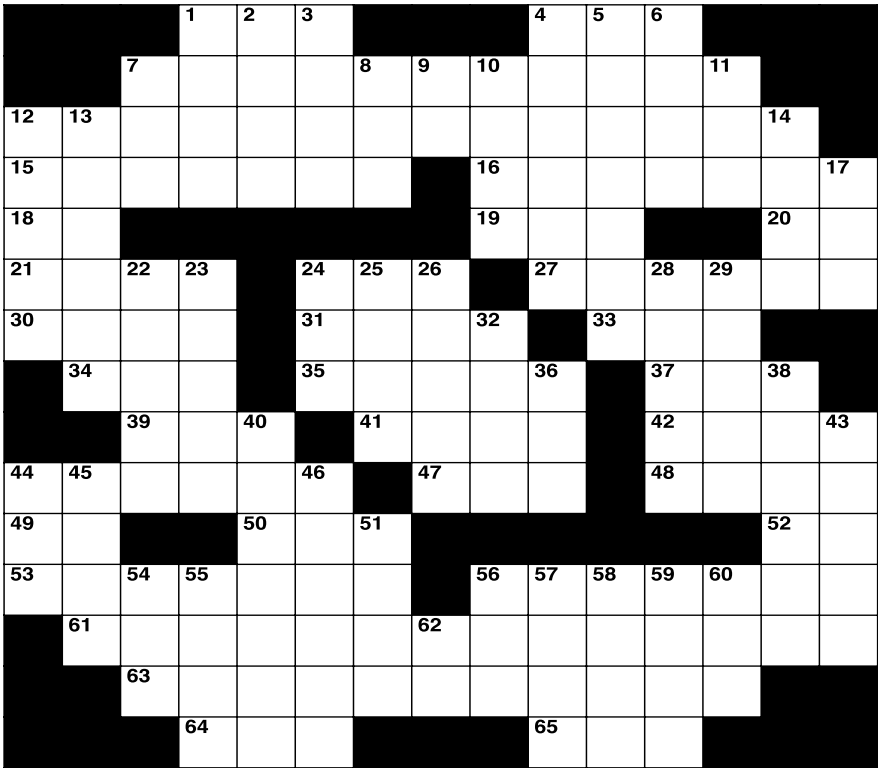
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CLUES ACROSS

1. Expression of surprise

4. Keyboard key

7. One who works on lights

12. Notable children’s story

15. Fall back into a bad pattern

16. Eye parts

18. Atomic #18

19. Of she

20. Farm state

21. One point south of southeast

24. British media entity

27. Asian garment

30. Drench

31. Expressions of pleasure

33. Turf

34. UK trade union (abbr.)

35. Bleated
37. Fifth note of a major scale

39. Paddle

41. Monetary unit of Italy

42. American classical pianist

44. Shuts down for the day

47. Seize

48. Soluble ribonucleic acid

49. Greeting

50. Some cars still need it

52. Atomic #22

53. Let go

56. Marched in public

61. U.S. residents, Mexicans and Canadians

63. Hostilities

64. Speak aloud

65. River in NE Scotland

CLUES DOWN

1. Razorbill genus

2. Longtime Baltimore tight end

3. Performs on stage

4. Supports a sentiment

5. Rugged mountain ranges

6. Broadway songwriter Sammy

7. Snakelike fish

8. Men’s fashion accessory

9. Hospital worker

10. Something to scratch

11. No (Scottish)

12. Volcanic ash

13. Of this

14. American jazz drummer Watts

17. Drop down

22. English dialect

23. Predatory seabirds

24. Imams’ deputies

25. Fertility god

26. Fence material
28. Parks and DeLauro are two

29. Distinctive smell (Brit.)

32. Protein-rich liquids

36. Touch lightly

38. Season for Catholics

40. Boat race

43. Police actions

44. Chinese river

45. Waterfall (Scottish)

46. Walk ostentatiously

51. Type of carpet

54. Mauna __, Hawaiian volcano

55. Sea eagles

56. An enclosure for confining livestock

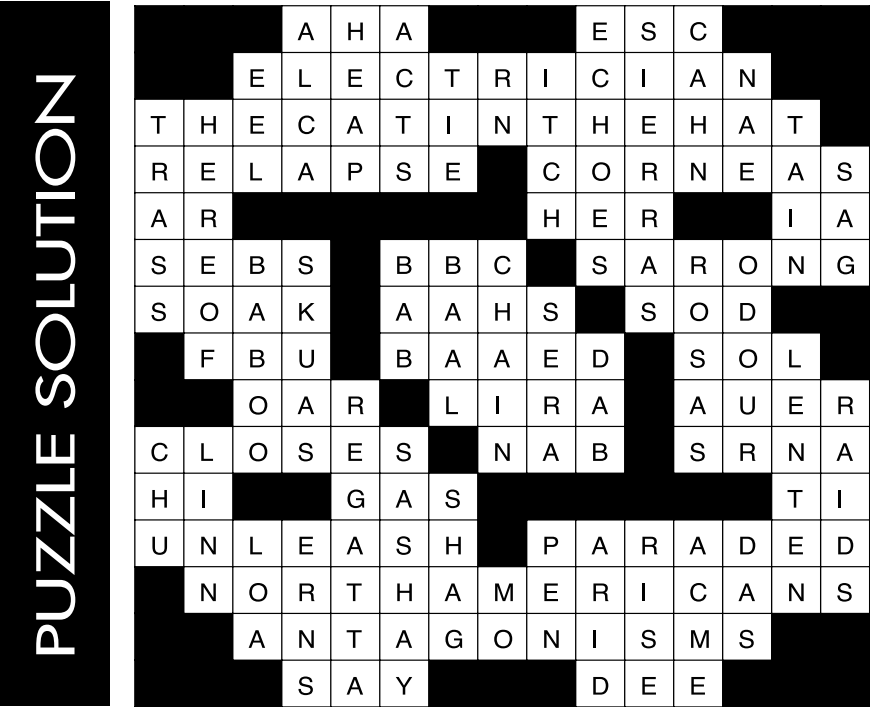
57. Dry

58. An increase in price or value

59. The highest point of something

60. Government lawyers

62. Larry and Curly’s pal



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PAM KARLSON INDUCTED INTO SFSC PANTHER ALUMNI SOCIETY HALL OF FAME



AVON PARK, Fla. – Dec. 4, 2025 – With the thousands of alumni and exceptional graduates that South Florida State College (SFSC) has nurtured since 1965, selecting an outstanding alum for the SFSC Panther Alumni Society Hall of Fame is always a difficult task. SFSC’s most prestigious alumni honor was awarded on Thursday, Dec. 4 to Pamela Karlson, during the SFSC Foundation’s annual Christmas Luncheon at the Hotel Jacaranda in Avon Park. Previous Hall of Fame inductees were Jeff Sikes, Jeffrey Roth, and John Sedlock.

“The SFSC Alumni Association is proud to honor Pamela Karlson of Lake Placid as our 2025 Panther Alumni Society Hall of Fame Honoree,” said Anastasia Fuchser, SFSC Alumni Association coordinator. “Her dedication to her community shines throughout. She has built a strong reputation in her career field that makes us proud to call her a Panther alumna.”

Karlson is the owner and attorney practicing with Karlson Law Group in Lake Placid, Fla. She graduated from Stetson University in 1991 with a Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences, with a focus in Political Science and Russian Studies. She graduated with a Juris Doctor from Samford University School of Law in Birmingham, Ala. in 1994.

Peggy Sueppel, SFSC assessment and accreditation coordinator, nominated Karlson to the Panther Alumni Society Hall of Fame. “Pam has served our community her whole life, including serving as SFSC’s board attorney for many years,” Sueppel said. “She is active in local organizations and generously supports many groups and individuals in our community. She was awarded the Champion for Children award, which alone says a lot about her devotion to the



(from left) Kelly Dressel, chair of the SFSC Alumni Association Advisory Council; Emily Dabolt, executive director, Institutional Advancement; Pam Karlson; Anastasia Fuchser, coordinator, Institutional Advancement and Alumni Development; and SFSC President Fred Hawkins Jr.

youth of our area. She is well respected and has been a great supporter of South Florida State College.”

Some of Karlson’s activities within Highlands County have been as a volunteer for Ag Venture and with the Florida Rural Legal Services. She is past president of the Greater Lake Placid Chamber of Commerce and past vice president of the Leadership Highlands Class of 2004. She is a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Lake Placid.

To view the Panther Alumni Society Hall of Fame, visit southflorida.edu/community/alumni/panther-alumni-society.

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FLORIDA POWER & LIGHT COMPANY
Newsroom

Tips to Save Energy All Season Long and a Chance to Win Holiday Energy-Efficiency Kits for 80 Floridians

Florida Power & Light (FPL) is combining holiday spirit with energy awareness this season through its Care To Share® initiative and interactive House of Savings experience.

Care To Share provides customers facing financial hardship with up to \$750 during a 12-month period to help pay the FPL bill.

FPL's House of Savings challenge is designed to make learning about practical energy-saving tips interesting for all ages. The interactive experience takes customers on a virtual home tour to spot energy-saving opportunities by interacting with items like the thermostat or fridge.

As part of this online experience, Floridians can make a difference by helping neighbors in need while learning ways to save energy during the holidays.

For every House of Savings game completed by a registered player from now through Dec. 22, FPL will donate \$5 to the Care To Share® financial assistance fund, up to \$10,000. These funds will provide vital emergency assistance funds to Floridians who are

facing crisis situations.

PAY HOLIDAY ENERGY-EFFICIENCY FORWARD

In addition, participants have a chance to win one of 80 Holiday Energy-Efficiency Boxes, valued at \$150 each. Each box includes practical items designed to make the holidays brighter while using less energy. Winners can also nominate another registered Floridian to receive a box, spreading the holiday cheer, all season long.

Winners can choose from two themed energy-efficient prize boxes, including:

- Kitchen: Smart outlet, toaster oven and LED-lit wreath.
- Outdoor: LED string lights, outdoor timer outlet, solar lawn stakes, and snowflake window clings.

TIPS FOR A HOLIDAY-READY, ENERGY-EFFICIENT HOME

As Floridians get their homes into the holiday spirit, FPL is also offering simple energy saving tips to keep bills as low as possible this holiday season:

1. Deck the halls with LED string lights to save nearly a dollar per string of lights per month as they use 80% to 90% less energy and last 10x as long as incandescent. Consider adding solar



- powered lighting to your holiday décor, which uses zero energy.
2. Plug your lights and inflatables into an outlet timer and program them to turn off automatically when you're asleep. Running a medium-sized inflatable overnight costs an average of \$4.90 extra per month, which adds up with multiple inflatables.
3. If you opt for inflatables, consider a smart power strip to avoid phantom energy usage, which draws from decorations that appear off and can cost the average household as much as \$100 per year (or \$16 during the holiday season).

4. Go energy free and decorate for the holiday with ornaments, wreaths, ribbons and pathway decorations.
 5. Making holiday treats? Consider using a small appliance instead of the oven like a microwave, toaster oven or air fryer whenever possible. These use about one-third the power of an oven broiler.
- For more tips, programs, resources and rebates, customers can go to [FPL.com/WaystoSave](https://www.fpl.com/WaystoSave), where they can access FPL's savings tools like the Energy Manager and House of Savings.

With every generation, we get better at protecting our environment.

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



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