

# ARCADIA THE COMMUNITY

JUNE 25, 2026



BROUGHT TO YOU BY PEACE RIVER SHOPPER NEWS & MORE

# Local

# WANTED

## YOUR ARCADIA RODEO MEMORABILIA FOR ONE-DAY EXHIBIT



Courtesy of the DeSoto County Historical Society

On July 4, 1944, the Arcadia Rodeo parade featured U.S. flags and equestrians as it marched past the Atlantic Coast Line depot in downtown Arcadia. Photograph courtesy of the DeSoto County Historical Society.



**CAROL MAHLER**

Independent Contractor  
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Photos provided

Please share your Arcadia Rodeo memorabilia for the DeSoto County Historical Society's exhibit "The Arcadia Rodeo: A July 4th Tradition" at the Arcadia Main Street Office, 17 N. Polk Ave., from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on July 4. The Society will also showcase some of its historic artifacts, photographs, programs, and more. The exhibit is free and open to the public.

Memorabilia may be brought to the Main street office between 9 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Friday, July 3, or between 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, July 4. Memorabilia may be picked up between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m. on July 4, or between 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. on Monday, July 6.

The Arcadia All-Florida Championship Rodeo had its origins in a July 4th Celebration organized by the Arcadia American Legion K-Post 11 on July 4, 1929. The exhibition and demonstration of the everyday skills and techniques used by local cattlemen was such a success, that K-Post 11 started the first Arcadia Rodeo held on

November 11-12, 1929.

The July 11, 1929, "Arcadian" reported that "The program of sports during the day was an interesting and varied lot. The amount and quality of new talent in the numerous events came as a surprise to those in charge, and out of this has come a proposition to put on a real rodeo exhibition here some time later in the year, probably next fall."

K-Post 11 held an annual rodeo in 1930, 1931, and 1932, and four years of proceeds from the event allowed the Legion to pay off the mortgage on their hall constructed on the banks of Peace River on land donated by Legion Member A. D. Snelbaker. It burned in the 1970s and was rebuilt at 2124 NW American Legion Dr..

The Arcadia Rodeo then moved to Limestone until 1938 when Billy Welles and Gerald Taylor brought it back to Arcadia with the help of Billy's father Ed C. Welles. He provided the stock, land, money, and an arena. The

SEE RODEO PAGE 12 >>



**DESOTO COUNTY SPORTS**

PAGE 4

STEVE KNAPP  
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## GOVERNMENT MEETING SCHEDULE

### CITY OF ARCADIA

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

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

<b>JULY 3</b>	<b>DESOTO COUNTY COUNTY OFFICES CLOSED</b> In observance of Independence Day
<b>JULY 7</b>	<b>DESOTO COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING</b> Administration Building 201 E. Oak Street, Suite 103 Arcadia, FL 34266
<b>JULY 14</b>	<b>DESOTO COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING</b> Administration Building 201 E. Oak Street, Suite 103 Arcadia, FL 34266

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

## Realtor Showcase

See page 13

## DESOTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

ARREST REPORT  
See page 15

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SALES / OFFICE MANAGER: Angie Duckett | CREATIVE DIR / AD DESIGN: Jackie Bierman | OPS / PRODUCT DESIGN: Jonathan Bruch

# ANNEXATION ORDINANCE PASSES; WASHINGTON OPPOSES FUNDS FOR PLACER.AI



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Photos provided

At the June 16 meeting, the Council passed on first reading Ordinance 1118: Voluntary Annexation of Property owned by B&D Opportunity Zone Fund, LLC, located on NE Gibson St., approximately 16 acres contiguous to the City limits. The second and final reading will be on the July 7 meeting agenda.

In addition, Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland, Deputy Mayor Luis Velasco, Council Members Bob Heine and Keith Keene approved the City's commitment of \$2,500.00 annually for three years in partnership with DeSoto County Tourism (DCT) and Arcadia Main Street (AMS) for a three-year contract with Placer.ai, so that all three entities may use its data platform "to support economic development and assist in planning downtown events." It provides information about how many people attend events, where they travel from, how long they stay at the event, and much more.

AMS Director Pam Ames told the Council that having that information and those statistics helps when applying for grants and for event sponsors. DCT and AMS have promised \$5,000.00 and \$2,500.00 annually, respectively, and the contract will cost \$8,000.00 the first year, \$9,000.00 the second, and \$10,000.00 the third.

Council Member Dee Washington was opposed. He asked how AMS has tried to attract local residents downtown. Ames listed social media, local radio, local print publications, the Chamber's weekly E-Blast, and more.

The Council also approved a request from the Kingston Group to block two parking spaces on Oak St. and then Polk Ave. to park a dumpster/dump trailer during the removal of the exterior cedar shakes and installation of new windows on the building at 34 W. Oak St. from June 22 to Aug. 3. While the work is being done from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Mon. through Fri., the sidewalks adjoining the parking spaces will be closed and will reopen for pedestrians at all other times. Cones will be placed around the closed parking spaces and sidewalks. On the weekends, no work will be done, and the dumpster/dump trailer will be removed. On Feb. 3, an identical request was approved by the Council for work to be done from Feb. 16 through Mar. 13, but the property owner chose not to move forward with the plans at that time.

## IN OTHER BUSINESS

The Council approved the agreement amendment with the State of Florida Department and Division of Historical Resources for the Historic City Hall



Image courtesy of the DeSoto County Historical Society

The Kingston Group will rehabilitate the building at 34 W. Oak St. built in 1905 as the First National Bank of Arcadia, one of three buildings to survive the 1905 fire that destroyed downtown Arcadia. The original tower, corner entrance, and pediment were removed in the 1920s. First Federal Savings & Loan Assoc. of DeSoto County removed the windows and added the cedar shakes and yellow bricks in the 1970s. Photograph courtesy of the DeSoto County Historical Society.



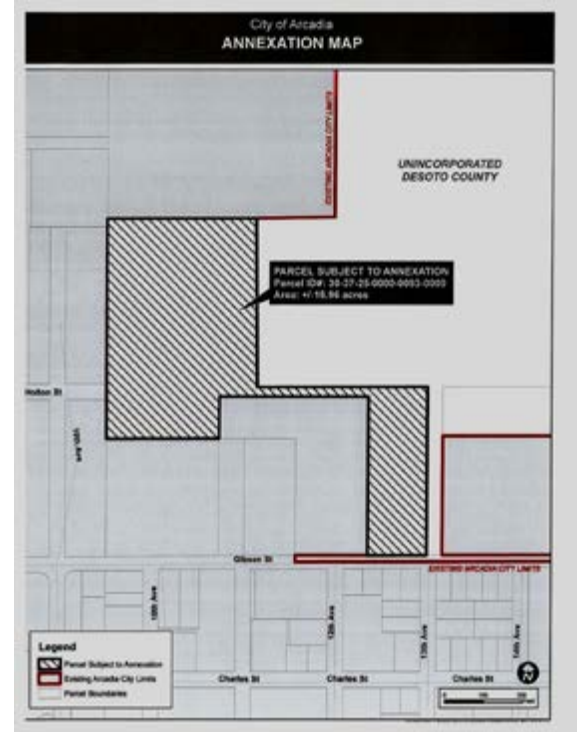
The City of Arcadia proclaimed June 19 as Juneteenth Day and presented the proclamation to Vice-President of Building A Village Darien Bailey; President of the HCWF Foundation (HCWF) Alibaba Lumumba, and HCWF Vice-President Nijuan Polk. Photograph courtesy of Carol Mahler.



City Administrator Beth Carsten introduced Kevin Crawford, the new director of Public Works, who said he is "fortunate and excited to be here." He served 33.5 years in the U.S. Army and has worked as a chemical and environmental engineer. Photograph courtesy of Carol Mahler.



Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland presented a plaque of appreciation to Steve Underwood on the occasion of his retirement after 36 years of service to the City: he began as a Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator, moved to Mechanic, Supervisor, and finally Director of Public Works. Photograph courtesy of Carol Mahler.



On first reading, the Council passed Ordinance 1118, a voluntary annexation into the City of about 16 acres on NE Gibson St.. The second reading will be at the July 7 meeting. Image provided.

project that began on July 1, 2022, to extend the completion date from June 30 to Dec. 31, 2026. City Administrator Beth Carsten does not anticipate that the project will continue for six months, but as the State was willing to grant the extension, the City agreed. Carsten thinks that the project will be finished in another month.

In addition, the Council ratified the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) 2026-2027 Traffic Signal Maintenance and Compensation Agreement of \$79,513.00, an increase of \$2,265.00 from the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 amount of \$77,248.00.

After awarding on June 2 the Request For Proposals (RFP) 2026-01 Emergency Debris Monitoring Services to Debris Tech, LLC, the Council approved and executed the three-year agreement with the firm that included the fee schedule and may be extended, "at the sole discretion of the City," for two additional one-year terms.

Under the Consent Agenda, the Council approved a special event permit for Maria Bess to celebrate her

daughter's first birthday at the McSwain Park Splash Pad from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on June 18.

## COMMENTS FROM DEPTS.

City Marshal Quinn Jones did not have anything to report. Heine asked about motorists exceeding the speed limit near the new 7-11 gas station/convenience store on U.S. Highway 17, and Jones said he was waiting on the installation of new speed limit signs.

City Attorney T.J. Wohl reviewed information that the Council had received last week about a group that is challenging the verbiage of the ballot for the increased homestead exemption and has filed a lawsuit.

Senior Code Enforcement Officer Naomi Lantz reported 253 cases, no special master hearing in June (the special master is on vacation), so the next hearing is scheduled for July 23, and no change in the lien amnesty program.

Carsten reported that Gibson St. is open to traffic, but FDOT has not approved the inspection because of a problem with water pooling in one

location. She is working with the contractor to correct the problem.

The City's massive sewer and water project is at the milling and paving of streets stage: Alabama, Harris, and Palmetto will be paved this week, some finishing work on Oak St., Cypress St, Maple St., and Volusia Ave.. The City is working with the contractor to repair/replace sidewalks on Volusia Ave. and other locations.

Materials have been ordered for the Speer Center, and the YMCA requested some design changes that the engineer has incorporated, so the City has a "notice to proceed." The YMCA has requested an official groundbreaking in Aug..

The Council agreed to a 2:00 p.m. budget workshop on July 17 and a presentation at 5:00 p.m. on July 21 about the City's Strategic Plan by County Management Association Senior Advisor Ed Lavallee. After that, the Council may schedule a workshop to discuss moving forward with the Plan. The Water Rate Study Workshop is scheduled for 5:00 p.m. on Aug. 6.

# RESIDENTS PARTICIPATE IN COMP PLAN UPDATE WORKSHOP



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Photos provided

About 25 residents participated in the Comprehensive (Comp) Plan Update Community Engagement Workshop held by the Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC) last Thurs. at the Turner Agri-Civic Center.

CFRPC Staff Members facilitated three break-out groups as they discussed Comp Plan Elements: Future Land Use/ Economic Development facilitated by Christopher Knowles and Brenda Torres; Parks and Recreation by CEO Jennifer Codo-Salisbury and Stefanie von Paleski-Bush, and Transportation by Richard Ranck and Donnie Arbeau.

Comments on and off the topics were voiced. Connie Dillander said, "I want development to pay for itself." Lorna Brewer said, "People come to DeSoto County because of the land, the beautiful oak trees. We have to keep our agricultural way of life."

Several people asked about the route for State Road 31 north of State Road 70, and those who had contacted the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), including CFRPC staff, said that FDOT staff answered that the "alignment" will be chosen after the next public hearing in the Spring of 2027.

When Kelly Forbes said, "No 'roundabouts'" as a solution to busy intersections, several people agreed. Traci Keen said that she drives north every day on U.S. Highway 17, "and it's not congested." Ashley Brown noted that the unpredictability of the train is a problem.

Andrew Neuhofer of the Florida Farm Bureau said that the County's top priority is agriculture. He said, "I



From left, CFRPC Staff Christopher Knowles and Brenda Torres facilitated a breakout group including Sam MacLeod, Ed Johnson, Johnny Fugate, Theresa Collins-Hill, Debbie Fugate, Bill Martin, Colleen Martin, Theresa Rapier, Connie Dillander, Angel Walker, and Lorna Brewer.



Discussing Parks and Recreation, this group included, from left, Kelly Forbes, Janie Watson, CFRPC Staff Stefanie von Paleski-Bush, CFRPC CEO Jennifer Codo-Salisbury, Debbie Lodrini, Tracy Keen, Ashley Brown, and Sondra Guffey.



The only one left in his group, Mat Kessler reported that not every available property should be developed and that housing should be available for people to live and work in our county. He said, "We need to save our rural heritage and character as we plan for growth."



Ashley Brown, standing, was the reporter for her group. She noted that they wanted to protect our rural community and expand transportation opportunities such as the DeSoto Area Regional Transportation (DART) bus, and sidewalks for walking and bicycling.



Standing to report for her group, Lorna Brewer said that the County should not allow random rezoning in Agricultural-10 (A-10 or one residence per 10 acres) zoning and could use the "rails to trails" program for hikers, bikers, and equestrians. She also noted that dump trucks are "tearing up the roads and may not be paying their way."



From left, Sharon Neuhofer, Mt. Zion AME Church Pastor Bernie Hayes, Farm Bureau Director Andrew Neuhofer, David Stevenson, Mat Kessler, and Debbie Vickers were later joined by Council Member Keith Keene and Verna Haynes.

don't want a developer taking prime agricultural land." Now that citrus is in decline, he said, "We need a profitable agricultural business—maybe a processing facility that could provide a market for farmers."

David Stevenson asked, "What other crops will grow here?" He told about his neighbors on West Farms Rd. that grow Chinese vegetables and ship them to Chicago, New York, and San Francisco. He also noted that Immokalee in Collier County has an \$8-billion annual harvest of vegetables. He hopes that the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, (UF/IFAS Extension—a partnership with UF, our county, and the United States Dept. of Agriculture or USDA) will be able to find

a crop or crops for our county that will be sustainable to grow.

Many people talked about the need to improve and maintain the existing City and County Parks. City Council Member Keith Keene talked about how the City could connect its parks as well as the County's adjacent Morgan and DeSoto Veterans Memorial parks. The availability of bicycles at the Arcadia Municipal Airport for pilots to ride into the City was mentioned and could be considered when planning the connectivity of trails.

Healthcare was cited as an important career path, especially with the planned lease of DeSoto Memorial Hospital by Tampa General Hospital. Most people agreed that low-income and affordable housing must be located near services,

and one of the underserved populations is single women raising children.

Debbie Lodrini reviewed a letter she had written and submitted to be part of the formal record of the workshop requesting that data centers only be located in the heavy industrial zoning, with a five-mile separation from schools as well as enhanced environmental review plus public input into the project and full transparency.

Ashley Brown suggested the importance of having activities for families that are not necessarily the same as the ones her family enjoyed when she was growing up in Arcadia. She said that growth is inevitable: "We need to preserve what we have and be forward thinking."

# SISTERHOOD HOLDS SUCCESSFUL JUNETEENTH EXHIBIT



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Photos provided

"The Juneteenth exhibit that the Sisterhood has done is very impactful—especially the hands-on learning—to the community and beyond," Dr. Geri Williams said. "I think they're doing a phenomenal job."

The Sisterhood is a group of Deborah Clifton's friends who presented the Juneteenth exhibit from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on June 19 in the DeSoto County Library. Other members include Jannie Brazell, Evelyn Dallas, Bobbie Faison, Demetra McMillian, and Sandra Peacock.

"I like the spirit that's involved here,

showing compassion and kindness and how easy it is to spark curiosity," Sandra Peacock said. "It's a calm and healing experience."

Brazell said, "We all need to know our history and feel good about it. The struggle is still alive, and we need all of us to participate."

Starting with life in Africa, the display portrayed the enslaving of Africans—"the largest forced migration ever" starting in the 16th and ending in the 19th centuries—the life of a slave, runaways and the Underground Railroad, plus emancipation. Even after slavery ended in the U.S., discrimination continued another form of bondage.

Lucretia Askew said she flew from Ohio to Arcadia for the exhibit. She said, "This is my community, and I came



From left, Deborah Clifton talked with Robbie Grubbs near the display that showed the "middle passage," the journey enslaved people endured from Africa to the United States.

[SEE JUNETEENTH PAGE 8 >>](#)



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# PEACE RIVER SPORTS

## DESOTO'S JOSSELYN LOPEZ WILL RUN AT THE NEXT LEVEL



**STEVE KNAPP**

Sports Writer  
sports@peacerivershopper.com

Josselyn Lopez has turned her cross country (Best sport ever as coach Julie Chidsey always says) skills into a scholarship to run at South Florida State College next fall. Family and friends gathered in the cafeteria to celebrate her achievement.



**CONGRATS!**

# S4G WHITE TEAM COMES BACK FOR ONE POINT WIN



**STEVE KNAPP**  
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Midway through the second half the S4G 5-6 year old white team trailed 12-8. They made a comeback to draw within a point with under a minute to go when Chance Carson put up the game winner and give his team an exciting 13-12 win.

High scorer for the white team was Briyah Bonds with Keontae Butler taking top honors for the black team.

The S4G 5&6 year old basketball team.



Briyah Bonds and Keontae Butler were the high scorers for the white team's 13-12 win.



# COUNTY HONORS EMPLOYEES



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 Photos provided*

At the June 9 meeting, the Board of County Commissioners recognized and appreciated employees: the Planning Dept. for “Outstanding Team Performance,” and Ricky Mercer—called a “one-man band”—as “Outstanding Employee.”

Mercer and Harvey Sweeting received the “Thrifty Nickel” award for assembling the new auto loader for the Public Safety Dept. saving the County about \$18,000.00 to hire a specialty worker to complete the project.

Longevity Awards included the following: for five years of service, Brian Golden, Jacob Haynes, Travis Kona, and Brian Ross; for 15 years, Peter Danao and Andrew Fabila; for 20 years, Sharon Gray, Alex Shannon, Kirk Simcic (plus four years of prior service with the City); Harvey Sweeting (plus 22 years of prior service with the City); Lewis Wells, II (plus 16 years of prior service with the City); and for 25 years of service, Latrinda Jones.

The Board also approved the funding agreement with Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection for \$5 million to install two deep-water injection wells for treated wastewater (aka effluent) at the wastewater treatment plant on State Road 31. The County also received \$8 million in Community Development Block Grant/Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds, so the project may go out to bid as soon as the funding is secured and Florida Commerce releases the money.

In addition, the Board ratified the construction contract of \$158,252.79 with Accurate Power and Technology for the installation of an emergency backup generator at the Mills Complex, 815 N. Mills Ave. This contract is less than the construction budget of \$189,270.00, so the County will complete the project full scope with the available grant funding.

## IN OTHER BUSINESS

The Board approved the Cooperative Purchase Agreement through Sourcwell for generator and maintenance services with Caterpillar, Inc., for the 25-30 generators that the County owns.

The sale of the surplus property at 11212 SW Cedar Ave. for \$56,500.00 to Clayton Ball was also ratified by the Board. After the County is reimbursed about \$15,000.00 for the cost of cleaning up the property, the sales price will be split 50/50 with the mortgage holder Suncoast Credit Union.

The Board also approved the appointment of Jennifer Bowser as an alternate member for the Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment.

## COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

County Administrator Mandy Hines reported that she has not been able to find experts to review the



The Planning Dept. was honored and recognized with the Outstanding Dept. award: from left, Commissioners Jerod Gross and Judy Schaefer; Georgia Sutton, Laura McClelland, Director Misty Servia, Commissioner J.C. Deriso, Vice-Chairperson Elton Langford, and Chairperson Steve Hickox.



Although not present at the meeting, Ricky Mercer, Public Safety Fleet Maintenance Supervisor, was honored as “Outstanding Employee.” He said he takes care of about 45 vehicles, small engines, and much more.



Harvey Sweeting and Ricky Mercer—also honored as Outstanding Employee—were recognized with the “Thrifty Nickel” award for their efforts that saved the County \$18,000.00: from left, Commissioners J.C. Deriso and Judy Schaefer, Sweeting, Vice-Chairperson Elton Langford, Chairperson Steve Hickox, and Commissioner Jerod Gross.



Honored and thanked for 25 years of service to the County was Human Resources Director Latrinda Jones: from left, Commissioners Jerod Gross and Judy Schaefer, Jones, Commissioner J.C. Deriso, Vice-Chairperson Elton Langford, and Chairperson Steve Hickox.



Honored and thanked for 15 years of service to the County were Finance Director Peter Danao and Andrew Fabila: from left, Commissioners Jerod Gross and Judy Schaefer, Fabila, Danao, Commissioner J.C. Deriso, Vice-Chairperson Elton Langford, and Chairperson Steve Hickox.



Employees appreciated for five years of service included Brian Golden, Jacob Haynes, Travis Kona, and Brian Ross: from left, Commissioners Jerod Gross and Judy Schaefer, Public Safety Director Chad Jorgensen holding the certificates of his employees not present, Brian Ross; Commissioner J.C. Deriso, Vice-Chairperson Elton Langford, and Chairperson Steve Hickox.



Employees recognized and appreciated for 20 years of service to the County included Sharon Gray, Alex Shannon, Kirk Simcic, Harvey Sweeting, and Lewis Wells, II: from left, Commissioners Jerod Gross and Judy Schaefer, Harvey Sweeting, Sharon Gray, Alex Shannon, Commissioner J.C. Deriso, Vice-Chairperson Elton Langford, and Chairperson Steve Hickox

DeSoto County Industrial Park (DCIP) application for a Data Center, so the application will not be considered by the Board during either the July or August meeting.

In answer to her query, the Board agreed to extend the deadline from June 15 to July 15 for Eugene Turner, Jr., to plant the berm around his excavation pit on U.S. Highway 17 South.

She also spoke about the new property tax reform that is on the ballot for Nov., and how DeSoto County was called out by the legislators as one of counties that has worked to keep taxes

low. However, if passed by the voters, the homestead exemption law will change the County’s funding. Therefore, Hines said she will prepare a budget and a year-two budget as well.

## CONSENT AGENDA

Under the Consent Agenda, the Board approved the following

- Interlocal Contract for Cooperative Purchasing with the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC Buy);
- authorization for the County

Administrator to approve the purchase order finalizing the purchase, as approved in the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 adopted budget, for \$56,767.50 for the custom-built boating equipment for Public Safety offered under H-GAC Buy purchasing cooperative; and adopted the Cash Handling and Rounding Policy “to establish standardized procedures for handling cash transactions in light of the national discontinuation of penny production.”



ARCADIA MAIN STREET PROGRAM



# 4TH OF JULY

*Celebration*

**10:00AM-3:00PM**

MUSIC CONCERT  
FOOD TRUCKS  
VENDOR MARKET

**12:00PM-4:00PM**

JEEP RALLY &  
AWARDS

**3:00PM-4:00PM**

MURAL RIBBON CUTTING

**6:30PM-7:30PM**

PARADE

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ENTRY**



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ALL EVENTS, VISIT  
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**HISTORIC  
DOWNTOWN ARCADIA**



# JUNETEENTH

FROM PAGE 3 >>

back to support my community. I was born and raised in Arcadia and this will always be home."

In partnership with the HCW Foundation (HCWF), the DeSoto County Historical Society added a display recalling some of the historic Black-owned businesses in southwest Arcadia. HCWF Vice-president Nijuan Polk said, "We really enjoyed the Juneteenth exhibit at the Library, and we enjoyed everyone who came out to see it."

The reprint edition of "The History of Smith-Brown School 1892-1950" that the two organizations published was available for purchase. Handling sales of the book was Evelyn Dallas, who said, "This is the third year that we have done this Juneteenth exhibit, and we thank everyone who was involved, and we appreciate everyone who came. The Lord willing, we'll be back again next year."

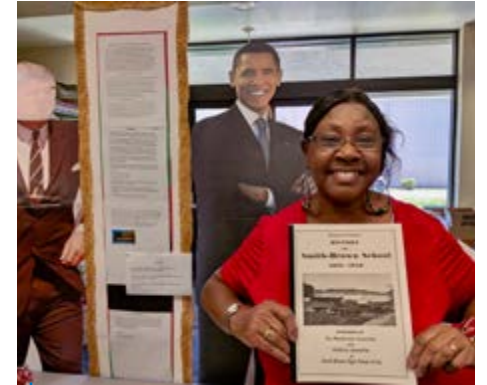
The Sisterhood hosted a successful Juneteenth Exhibit at the DeSoto County Library on June 19: from left, Lucretia Askew, Dr. Geri Williams, Cynthia Townsend, Rhoda Hairston, Pastor of Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church Dr. Darrell Gadsden, Tiffany Lane, Demetra McMillian, Bobbie Faison, Sandra Peacock, and Jannie Brazell.



Many people enjoyed the Juneteenth Exhibit at the Library on June 19: from left, seated, Robbie Grubbs and Jannie Brazell; standing, Lucretia Askew, Cynthia Townsend, Ty-Neisha Eaddy, Emma Eaddy, Building A Village Vice-President Darien Bailey, HCW Foundation (HCWF) Vice-President Nijuan Polk, Kain Headley, Bobbie Faison, Jayceon James, Deborah Clifton, Xuri Headley, HCWF Secretary Michele Holton, Cefornia Reed, Demetra McMillian, HCWF President Alibaba Lumumba, Evelyn Dallas, Tiffany Lane, and Sandra Peacock.



Mabel Johnson and Wanda Bailey looked at the display featuring historic Black-owned businesses in southwest Arcadia that was part of the Juneteenth Exhibit thanks to the DeSoto County Historical Society and the HCW Foundation.



Standing in front of life-size cutouts of Presidents John F. Kennedy and Barack Obama, Evelyn Dallas held up a copy of the "History of the Smith-Brown School 1892-1950" reprinted by the DeSoto County Historical Society and the HCW Foundation.



Wanda Bailey said, "The Juneteenth Exhibit is very educational, especially for the young children:" from left, Xuri Headley, Kain Headley, and Jayceon James.



# 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.

# CLEARWATER GUN SHOW

POLISH CENTER OF J P II

1521 N. SATURN AVENUE • CLEARWATER, FL

JULY 11<sup>TH</sup> & 12<sup>TH</sup>

SATURDAY 9AM-5PM & SUNDAY 9AM-3PM

## UPCOMING

**PORT CHARLOTTE**

JULY 18<sup>TH</sup> & 19<sup>TH</sup>

CHARLOTTE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

2333 EL JOBEAN RD.

SAT 9AM-5PM & SUN 9AM-3PM

**SARASOTA SHOW**

AUG 8<sup>TH</sup> & 9<sup>TH</sup>

ROBARTS ARENA

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SAT 9AM-5PM & SUN 9AM-3PM

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2-Day Admission

**Free**

Veteran OR Retired LEO  
2-Day Admission

**\$1<sup>00</sup> off**

ADULT (17 and Over)  
2-Day Admission

**\$10<sup>00</sup>**

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Tickets sold at the door, Cash or Check Only, limit 1 discount per person

Saturday AND Sunday

Come and go as you please on both days!



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GUN SHOW**



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# BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES:

**CHAPLAIN AMANDA REUTER**  
**US Army Reserve**  
 DeSoto County Ministerial Association

The doctrine of God (Theology Proper) forms the foundation of all Christian belief. Who God is shapes our understanding of creation, humanity, salvation, suffering, and holiness. In a world of shifting ideas about divinity, Scripture reveals one eternal God—triune as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—perfect in power, wisdom, holiness, and love.

## BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Scripture opens with God’s sovereign act: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). This establishes Him as the self-existent Creator (aseity), dependent on nothing yet sustaining all things. He is eternal—“from everlasting to everlasting” (Psalm 90:2)—unchanging in character (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8), and infinite, beyond full human comprehension (Isaiah 40:28; Romans 11:33-34).

God’s attributes shine throughout the Bible. He is omnipotent (all-powerful): “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14; Jeremiah 32:17). He is omniscient (all-knowing), searching hearts and knowing the end from the beginning (Psalm 139:1-6; Isaiah

46:10). He is omnipresent, always near yet not confined by space (Psalm 139:7-12; Jeremiah 23:23-24). Above all, God is holy—set apart in moral perfection (Isaiah 6:3; 1 Peter 1:16)—and love itself (1 John 4:8, 16), demonstrated supremely in sending His Son (John 3:16).

The Old Testament emphasizes God’s oneness: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4). Yet hints of plurality appear—God speaks in the plural (“Let us make man in our image,” Genesis 1:26) and the Spirit hovers over the waters (Genesis 1:2). The New Testament brings fuller revelation. Jesus claims equality with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9), and the Great Commission baptizes “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). Passages like 2 Corinthians 13:14 and the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:16-17) show three distinct persons sharing one divine essence.

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Early Christians worshiped the triune God before formal doctrine crystallized. They faced heresies: Arianism denied the Son’s full deity, while modalism collapsed the persons into one. The church responded through councils. The Council of Nicaea (AD 325) affirmed the Son as “of the same substance”

(homoousios) with the Father. Constantinople (AD 381) extended this to the Holy Spirit. The Nicene Creed became a touchstone, clarifying biblical truth against error while preserving mystery.

Church fathers like Tertullian (who first used “Trinity” around AD 200), Athanasius, and the Cappadocians deepened reflection. Augustine’s *On the Trinity* explored analogies in human love and mind. The Reformers upheld this heritage, emphasizing Scripture’s sufficiency. Throughout history, the doctrine has guarded worship: we pray to the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY

Understanding God’s triune nature transforms daily life. His holiness calls us to reverence and repentance, while His perfect love invites trust amid suffering—Emmanuel, “God with us” (Matthew 1:23). His sovereignty brings comfort: nothing escapes His wise rule.

In our community, a high view of God counters modern idols of self, success, and sentiment. It fuels mission, ethics, and hope. “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). May this knowledge draw us deeper into relationship with the God who creates, redeems, and renews all things.





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# RODEO

FROM PAGE 1 >>

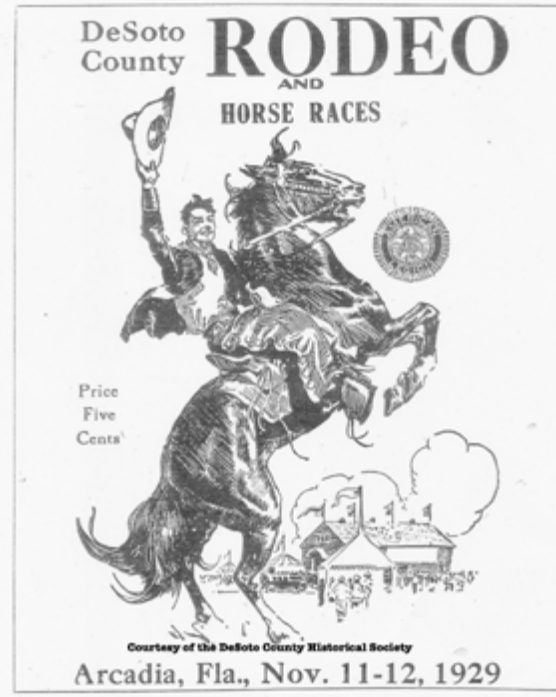
Florida National Guard's Battery F, 116th Field Artillery, was the official sponsor. Mayor Marshall T. Whidden proclaimed the rodeo an annual Arcadia event.

Ed Welles died in 1950, and the front page of the June 28, 1951, "Arcadian" announced that "This year, Arcadia will not have a big parade and the gay and colorful crowds will also be missing, in fact, Arcadia would not have a rodeo on July 4. . . . Several weeks ago, the sponsor of the rodeo announced that the big show would not go on and maybe would never be presented again."

On Jan. 10, 1952, the Rotary Club met in the Kentucky Restaurant. The "Club had long recognized the fact

that DeSoto County had no project calling for community-wide interest and cooperation. Rotarians wanted to do something about this and their opening suggestion was that the rodeo be revived in the community. . . . Dick Welles was present at the meeting and he advanced the opinion that the rodeo grounds would be available and that other members of his family would cooperate to the fullest extent." The Arcadia Rodeo was held on July 4 and 5, 1952, and was held annually on July 4th into the 21st century.

For more information, please contact the Society at 863-266-5774 or online at [desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com) or [historicdesoto.org](http://historicdesoto.org).



As part of "The Arcadia Rodeo: A July 4th Tradition," the Society will display a facsimile of the program published for the first Arcadia Rodeo on Nov. 11 and 12, 1929. Image courtesy of the DeSoto County Historical Society.



This photograph of Sam Browning riding a "wild steer" was taken by Ralph Russell Doubleday (1881-1958), a prominent rodeo photographer from 1910-1952. Photograph courtesy of the DeSoto County Historical Society.



This 1975 postcard of the Arcadia Rodeo is a photograph by Joseph Baker that features Larry Minchey, the clown, who "draws attention of an angry bull away from the bull rider who has been unseated." Photograph courtesy of the DeSoto County Historical Society.

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# OBITUARIES



## CHERIE A. HOLLINGSWORTH



Cherie A. Hollingsworth, 80, of Arcadia, Florida, passed away peacefully at Hampton Manor of Punta Gorda on Tuesday, June 2, following a prolonged illness.

Cherie was born in Chicago, Illinois, on October 9, 1945, and

moved with her family to Sarasota, Florida, in July 1959. She graduated from Sarasota Riverview High School in 1963 and went on to study Business at Virginia Intermont College.

In 1965, she met her future husband and moved to Arcadia, Florida, to the family farm in the heart of cattle and orange country, where she raised her two children and built a life rooted in service and community.

Cherie dedicated herself to helping others throughout her life. She was active in local volunteer programs, participated in the Arcadia Literary Club, and served for 28 years with the DeSoto County Extension Office, affiliated with the University of Florida, as an Extension Program Assistant. During her career, she helped build

and strengthen the 4-H program in DeSoto County and made a lasting impact on generations of local youth and families.

She was a faithful member of Historical Pine Level Church and often fondly remembered the years when only ten families attended worship together. Cherie found joy at the beach, water activities, ballet and tap dancing, canning, helping others, and most of all, spending time with family.

She was preceded in death by her parents, William and Lillian Bishop, and her sisters, Joyce Gould and Gay Probus, all of Sarasota, Florida.

Cherie is survived by her son, Terry Hollingsworth, and her daughter, Sandra Hollingsworth Dyal of Arcadia, Florida; her grandsons, Justin Hollingsworth, Gary Hollingsworth, Eli Dyal, and

granddaughter, Emily Dyal—as well as five great-grandchildren; and many beloved nieces and nephews.

**Family, friends, and all whose lives Cherie touched were invited to attend a Celebration of Life service at Pine Level United Methodist Church, officiated by Pastor Ed Horne, located at 9596 NW Pine Level Street, Arcadia, Florida, on Saturday, June 20, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. A graveside service will follow at Sarasota Memorial Park in Sarasota, Florida. Instead of flowers, the family welcomes donations to: Desoto County 4-H Association**

**Mail to: UF/IFAS Extension Service Attention: Desoto County 4-H 2150 NE Roan St Arcadia, FL 34266**

Cherie will be greatly missed and forever remembered.

## BETTY JEAN ALBRITTON GRADY



Betty Jean Albritton Grady, known lovingly to family, friends, and generations of Arcadia residents as “Bingo,” passed away peacefully on June 15, 2026 at the age of 99, leaving behind a legacy of faith, service, family, and flowers that will continue to bloom in the hearts of those who loved her.

Born on May 9, 1927, in Limestone, Florida, to Elam and Myrtle Albritton, Betty was a proud daughter of Old Florida. She grew up in the close-knit farming community she always held dear, carrying with her the values of hard work, humility, faith, and devotion to family that would guide her throughout her remarkable ninety-nine years. Betty graduated with the DeSoto County High School Class of 1945, where she proudly represented the Bulldogs as a member of the varsity basketball team. The friendships, community spirit, and hometown pride she developed during those years remained with her throughout her life. She remained deeply rooted in the community she called home for nearly a century.

As a young woman, Betty married the love of her life, Fred Jackson Grady. Together they built a life centered on faith, family, and service to others. Though Fred preceded

her in death, theirs was a love story that endured through the decades and remained one of the defining blessings of Betty's life.

Betty began her career at the Arcadia Chemical Company before finding what would become her, and Fred's, life's work as co-owners of Roberts-Grady Funeral Home. For more than forty years, she served families throughout DeSoto County during some of their most difficult moments. Her compassion, kindness, and steady presence brought comfort to countless families, and her work became a testament to her servant's heart and deep love for her community.

Faith was the cornerstone of Betty's life. She was raised in Limestone Baptist Church and later became a devoted member of Trinity United Methodist Church in Arcadia. There she faithfully served as District Sunday School Superintendent for twenty-one years, was an active member of the Methodist Women's Guild, and sang in the church choir for more than forty years. Trinity was far more than a church home; it was an extension of her family and a place where she joyfully shared her gifts, leadership, and unwavering faith.

While Betty was devoted to her family, church, and community, perhaps nowhere was her heart more visible than in the life she built alongside Fred. Together they operated the Wagon Wheel Ranch, a place that brought Betty immense pride and countless cherished memories. She loved ranch life and took great joy in raising beautiful Florida Cracker cattle. The ranch reflected the values she treasured most: hard work, stewardship of the land, and a deep appreciation for the simple beauty of country living.

Betty also possessed a remarkable gift for nurturing things

and bringing beauty into the world. Her gardens were known throughout the community, especially her beloved roses and lilies. The lilies held special significance, having originated from her mother Myrtle's garden in Limestone and continuing to bloom through generations of careful tending. Her famous staghorn fern, which grew to the size of a tractor, became legendary among family, friends, and visitors alike.

One of Betty's greatest joys was sharing her flowers with others. More than fifty years ago, Fred built the wooden cross that remains a cherished part of Trinity United Methodist Church's Easter celebration. Each year, Betty carefully selected the finest blooms from her garden to adorn the cross, ensuring it reflected the beauty and hope of Easter morning.

Betty's capacity for love extended far beyond people. Throughout her ninety-nine years, she shared her home and heart with a beloved succession of dachshunds, each one treated as a treasured member of the family. There was rarely a time in her life when a faithful dachshund was not nearby. Her final and most precious companion, Lil Buddy, remained devotedly by her side through the later chapters of her life and brought her immeasurable comfort and companionship.

In what now feels like a fitting and beautiful farewell, Betty's final journey away from her home took place this past Easter. Surrounded by family, she visited Trinity United Methodist Church to see her roses displayed upon the Easter cross that Fred had built more than fifty years ago. Afterwards, she traveled to Oak Ridge Cemetery to visit her beloved Fred.

Looking back, it seems only fitting that her final outing would be spent

among the things she loved most: her flowers, her church, and the man with whom she shared a lifetime of love.

Betty is survived by her son, Frederick John Grady, and daughter-in-law, Lisa Grady; her granddaughter, Kacy Skylar Grady-Heinz and husband Kevin Heinz; her grandsons, John Keaton Grady and Heath Frederick Grady (and partner Cydney Clark); and her cherished great-granddaughter, Charlotte “Charlie” Jean Heinz.

She was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Fred Jackson Grady; her parents, Elam and Myrtle Albritton; and her brother, John Albritton.

Though Betty's earthly garden has been laid to rest, the seeds she planted through her faith, kindness, service, and love continue to flourish in the lives she touched. For ninety-nine years she embodied the spirit of Old Florida—steadfast in her faith, devoted to her family, generous to her community, and happiest with her hands in the soil.

Her family finds comfort in knowing she is once again reunited with her beloved Fred. And somewhere beyond this life, her roses are blooming, the choir is singing, Lil Buddy is at her feet, and she is finally home.

The family extends their heartfelt gratitude to the many friends, neighbors, church members, and community members whose prayers, love, and support have meant so much during this time.

Betty had a lifelong love of flowers and cherished the relationships she built with the local florists in town. In honor of her wishes, her family has chosen Valley Florist (formerly Holzendorff's) to provide the flowers for her service.

# DESOTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



ARREST REPORT | 6/12/26 - 6/18/26

**Chanza, Lissa Noell:**

Failure To Appear - Written Promise To Appear; Out-of-County Warrant - Out-of-County Warrant

**Dixon Campbell, Neily Yelena:**

Battery - Commit Domestic Battery By Strangulation

**Fewox, John Paul:**

Drugs-Possess - Possess Controlled Substance W/O Prescription

**Fread III, Harold Lorenzo:**

Battery - Touch Or Strike

**Gilchrist, Imamu Terryatta:**

Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use (x2); Drugs-Sell - Sell Ctrl Substance SCHOOL/PARK Schedule I (x2); Public Order Crimes - Use 2 Way Comm Device To Facil Felony

**Gonzalez-Fuentes, Maryo Alcides:**

Battery - Cause Bodily Harm

**Kenney, Sabrina Lynch:**

Trespassing - Trespass Fail To Leave Prop On Order Of Owner

**Martin, Erin Jamaal:**

Simple Asslt - Intent Threat To Do Violence

**McDaniel, Matthew Blaise:**

Out-of-County Warrant - Out-of-County Warrant

**Menendez, Josiel Adel:**

Obscene Material-Possess - Poss Control View Depiction Child Pornography (x2)

**Mercado-Meza, Marco Antonio:**

DUI-Unlaw Bld Alch - DUI Influence Of Alcohol Or Drugs; Moving Traffic Viol - Operate Motor Vehicle W/O Valid LIC 1st Conv

**Morgan, Roycelynn Marie:**

Cocaine-Traffic - 28 Grams Less Than 150 Kg Cocaine Or Mixture; Drugs-Possess - Cntrl Sub Wo Prescription; Failure To Appear - Written Promise To Appear (x3); Smuggle Contraband Into Prison - Control Subs Defined Provisions Of s.893.02(4)

**Paul, Saintano:**

Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While LIC Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

**Perez-Lopez, Carlos:**

Aggrav Asslt - Weapon - W Deadly Weapon Without Intent To Kill; Battery - Cause Bodily Harm; Kidnap-False Imprisonment - False Imprisonment Of Person; Resist Officer - Obstruct Wo Violence

**Pilozo-Moreno, Edinson Joel:**

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

**Pritchett, Levi:**

Battery - Touch Or Strike

**Pulido, Marisol:**

Battery - Touch Or Strike; Resist Officer - Obstruct Wo Violence

**Ramirez-Moran, Gerardo:**

Battery - Commit Domestic Battery By Strangulation

**Recinos-Perez, Jose Luis:**

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

**Reyes, Ana Laura:**

Battery - Touch Or Strike; Cruelty Toward Child - Abuse Child Without Great Bodily Harm

**Roan II, John Eric:**

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

**Rodriguez-Colorado, Maria Delfina:**

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

**Rush, Heather Ann:**

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

**Santana-Munoz, Pilar:**

House For Other Agency

**Sevast, Rebecca Darlene:**

Failure To Appear - Written Promise To Appear

**Washington-Hyde, Charmetra Renee:**

Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While LIC Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

**Williams, Naquaron Lanigil:**

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

**Zapata, Diego Antonio:**

Nonmoving Traffic Viol - Fail To Register Motor Veh

**Zavala III, Emiliano:**

Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use; Resist Officer - Obstruct Wo Violence

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## DOYLE BRYCE EDWARDS JR.



Doyle Bryce Edwards Jr., 82, of Arcadia, Florida, passed away peacefully at home on May 10, 2026. Born February 20, 1944, in Arcadia,

Doyle was the second of five children of Doyle Sr. and Leila Edwards. The family moved several times before settling in his grandmother's home on S. Volusia Avenue. He graduated from DeSoto High School with the class of 1962. A gifted athlete, Doyle excelled in baseball as a child and discovered basketball in high school. His height and talent earned him a spot on the varsity team and a full basketball scholarship to LeTourneau College in Texas. A knee injury ended his playing career after two seasons.

Doyle moved to Richmond, California, to be near his high school sweetheart, Irene Arndt. He worked for Beverage Distributors Incorporated before enlisting in the United States Marine Corps in

1968. After an honorable medical discharge due to another knee injury, he returned to Richmond and married Irene on June 8, 1968. Their loving marriage lasted nearly 58 years.

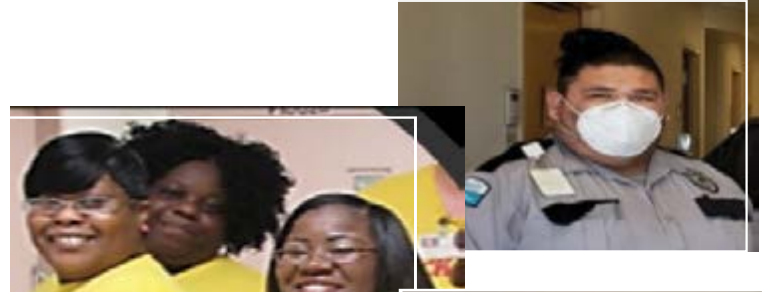
In 1975, the couple returned to Arcadia where Doyle joined the Arcadia Fire Department serving for 25 years as a firefighter, paramedic, and eventually Captain. He was known for his calm demeanor and compassionate care while helping others in emergencies.

Doyle and Irene retired in 2001 and spent the next 20 years traveling the country in their RV, visiting every state and creating cherished memories. In 2015, Doyle was diagnosed with prostate cancer. He

faced his illness with quiet courage and his faith in God. He became a Christian through his grandmother's influence and later served faithfully at the Arcadia Seventh-day Adventist Church as a deacon, elder, and groundskeeper.

He was preceded in death by his parents and brothers Robert and Stephen. He is survived by his devoted wife, Irene; sister Judy Edwards Osborne of Lincoln, CA; brother Alan Edwards and wife Karen of Ocala, FL; and many nieces, nephews, and cousins. Doyle will be remembered as a kind, unselfish man who never met a stranger. His dedication to family, community, and service touched countless lives. He will be deeply missed.

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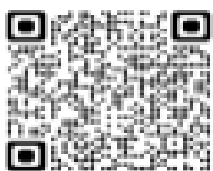
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