

HELP PRESERVE OUR HISTORIC CEMETERIES



CAROL MAHLER
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Photos provided

The Confederate Cow Cavalry (CCC), Camp 2181 of the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), seeks volunteers to help preserve our county’s historic cemeteries. All of our county’s cemeteries are historic, and most are private except Oak Ridge Cemetery which is owned by the City of Arcadia.

Mount Ephraim Baptist Church and Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church care for their cemeteries. The Jernigan Plot and the King Plot—closed now and encompassed by the Ziba King Memorial Recreation Park—are strictly family cemeteries. Located on private property, the Hull Cemetery is also closed.

The community cemeteries—Fort Ogden, Joshua Creek, Kabrich, Keen Family (aka Indian Mound), Oak Hill, and Pine Level Camp Grounds have associations or trustees or guardians—all volunteers—who keep track of burials and lot sales; however, they do not maintain the cemeteries or gravesites. Even at Oak

Ridge Cemetery, that task traditionally belongs to the families of the deceased. Increasingly, however, family members have moved away or have died off, and so those graves become neglected.

“We need to do everything we can to preserve these cemeteries,” SCV Lt. Commander Greg Albritton said.

One of the oldest veterans organizations, SCV helps in marking the graves and cleaning the gravesites of all veterans—Confederate States (CSA) or United States of America (USA). They are also working to maintain our historic cemeteries, and they welcome others to help. On Aug. 18, members will start at the Fort Ogden Cemetery where vegetation obscures the headstones.

In the Fort Ogden Cemetery, Greg Albritton and Leon Arthur stood in front of the monument for the Confederate Cow Cavalry, Camp 2181 of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, for which Arthur and his late wife Evelyn Arthur personally paid as well as the lot where it is located.

SEE HELP PAGE 12 >>

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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

AUG 25	DESOTO COUNTY *CANCELED* SPECIAL MASTER HEARING
TUE 11A	Administration Building 201 E. Oak Street, Suite 103 Arcadia, FL 34266
AUG 25	DESOTO COUNTY BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING
TUE 1P	Administration Building 201 E. Oak Street, Suite 103 Arcadia, FL 34266
AUG 25	DESOTO COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING
TUE 3P	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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ACOUSTICAL PROFESSIONALS TO ASSIST WITH DATA CENTERS REVIEWS



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Photos provided

To assist the County Development Dept. in the review and development of conditions for two zoning applications on file with the County for Data Centers, the Board of County Commissioners, at the Aug. 11 meeting, approved a proposal from Gary Siebein Associates, Inc., for acoustical consulting services on an hourly basis and authorized County Administrator Mandy Hines to issue a task order and purchase order not to exceed \$15,000.00.

“On May 12, 2026, based on time constraints, the Board [had] authorized the County Administrator to exceed the Administrator’s purchasing authority and to waive local procurement policies to engage consultants, as needed, to assist the County Development Dept. in the review and development of conditions for two zoning applications on file with the County for Data Centers.” However, the County’s Procurement Policy Sections 8.1.1 and 8.4 allow “non-CCNA (Consultants’ Competitive Negotiation Act) professional services to be engaged without competitive bidding up to \$25,000; therefore, the engagement is authorized under the County’s Procurement Policy.”

In addition, the Board adopted the resolution and agreement for the Florida Dept. of Transportation (FDOT) Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP) of approximately \$3.9 million for the design, construction, and Construction Engineering Inspection (CEI) services for about four miles of SE Airport Rd., from State Road (SR) 70 to County Road (CR) 760A. Improvements include resurfacing, improving the shoulders, upgrading drainage and safety items, such as signage, guardrails and AVT (Advanced Vehicle Technology) measures.

VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

The Board adopted the resolution accepting the countywide Vulnerability Assessment that includes the City of Arcadia, funded by a Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection (FDEP) grant and in accordance with Sect. 380.093, Florida Statutes, and completed by the Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC). Now the County is eligible to apply for Resilient Florida and other grant funding to protect Vulnerable Assets: “the list of critical and regionally significant assets . . . prioritized by area or immediate need and identifie[d as to] which flood scenario(s) impacts each asset.”

As part of the Vulnerability Assessment, the County received a \$200,000.00 grant from the Coastal and Heartland National Estuary Program to



The Board congratulated and recognized the most recent graduates of the Certified Public Manager (CPM) program: from left, Commissioner J.C. Deriso, Chairperson Steve Hickox, Commissioner Judy Schaefer, Madi McGee, Cindy Talamentez, County Administrator Mandy Hines, Liz Coronado, Vice-chairperson Elton Langford, Jeanine Tatum, Lauri Benson, and Commissioner Jerod Gross. Not pictured are CPM graduates Dennis Johnson and Alison Shuman. Photograph courtesy of Allen Reesor.



Christopher Knowles of the Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC) presented the count-wide Vulnerability Assessment that includes the City of Arcadia. Photograph courtesy of Allen Reesor.



Jennifer Hecker, executive director of the Coastal and Heartland National Estuary Program (CHNEP), told the Board about the \$200,000.00 grant that her agency awarded to the County for the adaptation action area plans. Photograph courtesy of Allen Reesor.

develop Adaptation Action Areas Plans. Kimley-Horn: Engineering, Planning, and Design Consultants identified and prioritized the Adaptation Action Areas: Arcadia is ranked first, followed by Brownville and Nocatee (aka SW Highway 17 in the report). Several Adaptive Strategies were also proposed, such as “deployable flood barriers” for the Arcadia Police Dept. or additional water retention ponds and swales for SW Highway 17.

TURNER AGRI-CIVIC CENTER

Considered an asset for tourism, the Turner Agri-Civic Center is using the bleachers installed when it was built in 2003; however, parts of the bleachers are obsolete, and they are worn because of using a device to pull them in and out that requires two staff members and does not always align the sections. The Board approved the cooperative agreement using the TIPS (The Interlocal Purchasing System) Agreement for inspection and maintenance authorizing Faciliserv to perform the work of automating the bleachers. The cost is \$57,323.00 funded from Tourism reserves with the balance from Turner Center Repair and Maintenance fund.

In addition, the Board ratified the Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) addendum of \$471,558.61 with SEMCO Construction, Inc., for Construction Management at Risk (CMAR) Services for the Fire Training Tower Project. Public Safety Director Chad Jorgensen thanked the Road and Bridge Dept. for their work on the site preparation.

County Administrator Mandy Hines thanked Jorgensen, Purchasing Director Cindy Talamentez, and Economic Development and Tourism Director Sondra Guffey for saving the County about \$30,000.00 in storage fees by finding room for tower equipment behind the Turner Center and in the back lobby for several pallets of items that need weather protection.

The Board also approved the Memorandum of Understanding providing for the use of the Turner Center as a unification point for students and parents in the event of a school crisis or emergency. The original MOU was signed in 2020 for five years, and the School District has requested a new agreement with “substantially the same terms as the original agreement.”

CONSENT AGENDA

On the Consent Agenda, the Board approved the DeSoto Transportation Plan for 2026-2029, reviewed by Col. James Vitali of the Sheriff’s Office, that “outlines and coordinates transportation methods to a Crisis Stabilization Unit for individuals who are involuntarily Baker Acted or Marchman Acted” as required by the Florida Mental Health Act and originally developed in 2017.

The Board also ratified the State Financial Assistance Agreement for a fixed capital outlay of \$400,000.00, awarded through the Legislative appropriations process for the current State fiscal year July 1, 2026-June 30, 2027, for property acquisition for the DeSoto County Jail project that includes an administrative complex.

ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

Hines distributed a flyer about the new Fall Festival on Oct. 30, organized by the Parks Dept. and the Turner Center, that will replace the trick-or-treating event. She also thanked County staff “that works hard every day” and congratulated the Certified Public Manager (CPM) graduates: “I’m super proud of their dedication,” she said. In her comments, Commissioner Judy Schaefer added her congratulations to the graduates.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Commissioner J. C. Deriso appreciated the Road and Bridge Dept.: “Yesterday, one of the dump trucks, with a full load of rock, popped the tailgate and



Charlotte County Administrator Hector Flores and Sarasota County Administrator Jonathan Lewis presented a plaque “in recognition of her outstanding service, contributions, and leadership as president of the Florida Association of County Managers” to DeSoto County Administrator Mandy Hines at the Aug. 11 meeting. Photograph courtesy of Allen Reesor.



To develop the Adaptation Action Area Plans, Shepard Smith of Kimley-Horn Engineering, Planning, and Design Consultants identified, ranked, and proposed some strategies. Photograph courtesy of Allen Reesor.

left it all over Kings Highway. Our Road and Bridge team was out there with the right staff and the right equipment right away to get it cleaned up. . . . Having that quick response that was pretty impressive . . . thank you all, team, for that, going above and beyond—as usual.”

He then explained that a small area south of the City was designated by the federal government as an Economic Opportunity Zone (EOZ) that allows people “anywhere in the Country” with large capital gains taxes to re-invest those capital gains instead of paying taxes on them. It involves no County tax incentives. Deriso advocated to increase the size of the EOZ, and deadline to do so is Sept 28. Vice-chairperson Elton Langford asked about Enterprise Zones, but Hines said they were “sunsetting” legislatively by the State in 2015, whereas EOZs are a federal program. All agreed that Guffey will bring the EOZ as a future agenda item.

Commissioner Jerod Gross expressed thanks for the improved approaches to the Kings Highway bridge crossing Horse Creek and to the Road and Bridge Dept. for helping a constituent who had contacted him. Chairperson Steve Hickox asked for an update on the State Road 70 construction from FDOT.



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BULLDOGS KEEP EAGLES GROUNDED IN SEASON OPENER



STEVE KNAPP
Sports Writer
sports@peacershopper.com

Monday saw a nice crowd at the first volleyball game every played in the gym at the brand new Wellen Park High School. The Eagles' JV team had beaten the Bulldogs and the varsity had visions of making it a sweep in front of their fans at the beautiful new school.

The Bulldogs had other plans and hung the collar on the Eagles in a 3-0 sweep 25-22, 25-18 and 25-13. In each of the games the Bulldogs built up a nice lead only to see the Eagles come back just enough to make it interesting and then the Bulldogs put the games away. "It was kind of like a cat and mouse game tonight," said DeSoto coach Danielle Taylor.



Samari Hoskins gets way up for this kill shot in the win over Wellen Park.



Madalynn Atherton goes against a double block in the win at Wellen Park.



Emma Sorrells drills another shot against Wellen Park.



Everybody is happy with a win in the season opener.



Bailey Muse gets this shot over the net at Wellen Park in the season opener.



Kylee Taylor and Samari Hoskins go up for a block in the win over Wellen Park.

NEW BULLDOGS SHOW LIFE IN SEASON OPENER



STEVE KNAPP
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The 17-0 loss at LaBelle last week showed what the New Bulldogs are made of. They showed a spark that lasted the entire game. They played hard evidenced by the scoreless fourth quarter. They were aggressive. They showed that they can move the ball on offense and stop their opponents on defense. They showed enthusiasm, joy and a bond for each other. They showed hope for a team that needs something to rally around.

Fans used the words, “I have confidence in this team”, “that is much better than the past,” much improved”, “now we have a football team” and “they are going to be fun to watch.”

There were highlights that weren’t present over the past three years. DeSoto moved the ball well on the opening drive highlighted by Elijah Johnson’s 14 yard run for a first down and a 24 yard pass reception to the LaBelle 31. That play was called back on a holding penalty but the hold was away from the play and didn’t affect the nice gain.

Jamarion Grant had a 48 yard kickoff return in the third quarter, however a fumble on the next play gave the ball back to the Cowboys and saw the sidelines go from cheers to disappointment.

Sophomore quarterback Jacob Tanner actually had time to look for a receiver rather than just throw the ball in an area where a receiver should be. He hit multiple receivers and picked up good chunks of yardage without any interceptions.

The big story of the night was the defense for the Bulldogs. They stood strong on several drives. When they had a runner trapped behind the line which would have set up a 4th down, they didn’t wrap up and the runner bounced outside and got into the red zone. The front 4 stuffed the Cowboy runners on the next 3 plays forcing them to settle for a field goal and a 3-0 lead at the end of one.

A second quarter touchdown gave the Cowboys a 10-0 lead at the half. That score came on a 48 yard pass with a trips left formation that left the young secondary confused and left a receiver wide open for the score.

Later in the third quarter, the Cowboys had driven inside the Bulldog 10 yard line and took three cracks at the front wall of the Bulldogs and came up short. On a fourth down and 2 inches, they managed to pick up 4 inches to keep the drive alive. A three yard run gave the Cowboys their only score in the second half.

DeSoto played a fairly clean game as far as penalties. Their penalties came mostly from aggressive efforts. An ineligible man down field came when the



Tyler Whidden, Cruze Miethke, Ra’Motni Watson and Austin Pittman played a big game up front on defense. Coaches pointed to their effort as a key in the game. Both Miethke and Watson had sacks, Whidden was all over the place making plays and Pittman was somewhere around the ball on every play.



Angel Bautista makes a tackle with Blake Forman (22) and Carter Bennett (44) ready to help.



Junior Tyler Whidden makes the tackle with Elijah Johnson helping out.



Elijah Johnson hauls in a pass and picks up 24 yards on the play.



Sophomore Ra’Motni Watson has the quarterback in his sights. Watson had a sack later in the 17-0 loss to LaBelle.

lineman had already sent his man to the ground and was looking for somebody else to block and just wondered too far downfield looking for somebody. An unsportsmanlike penalty late in the game was a result of a young player and his frustration. Football is a “controlled aggression” game and he let his anger get the best of him.

On a LaBelle fourth down and 3, the DeSoto coaching staff were yelling to the players to “watch the ball”. They even yelled to captain Cruze Miethke to tell everybody, yet one of the players jumped off sides to give the Cowboys a fresh set of downs. LaBelle had the ball in their own territory and were unlikely to snap the ball and tried a hard count and caught the Bulldogs leaning. It was an aggressive attempt but the players have to be aware of the situation. Both

Miethke and Ra’Motni Watson had big sacks for the first time in several years that the Bulldogs have had multiple sacks in a game.

Luckily all those miscues are “correctable” and should be eliminated over the season. When you consider the team never had a spring game or kickoff classic and had a long conditioning period starting at the beginning of the year, they played very well. They hadn’t faced anyone wearing a different colored jersey since last November and played a very strong game.

LaBelle was 10-1 last season and shut out 6 opponents including their first 5 games by a total of 181-0. They were district champions and their only loss came in post season play. Their big guns all returned yet the Bulldogs who were outnumbered, and with less experience

with just 4 seniors on the team, stayed in the game all the way to the end says something about this team.

In his coaching debut, Tommie Henry wasn’t disappointed or angry. His post game talk concentrated on the good things he and the staff saw. “Guys it was the little things that beat us tonight. You played your butts off tonight. I’m not mad at your effort tonight. You guys came to play. We just need to continue to work on the fundamentals, learn our plays and get in better shape. Their coach told me after the game, ‘your defense is Dawgs!’ What I’ve seen tonight, I’m encouraged.”

The Bulldogs will host Avon Park tomorrow night at 7pm in what I believe will be another good game and a win for the Bulldogs

12U BULLDOGS SUFFER FIRST LOSS



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After an impressive jamboree win over Okeechobee, the Bulldogs ran into a very talented team from Clewiston and were shut out 27-0. The Cougars had a tandem of running backs that combined speed and power that gave the DeSoto defense problems.

The Cougars also had a strong defense. Slade Miethke ripped off a big run to the 14 yard line only to see the drive stall at the 12. The Bulldogs also got near the Cougars 20 yard line late in the game but that drive also ended on an incomplete fourth down pass.



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DESOTO HEAT SURVIVES HEAT TO SPLIT IN SCRIMMAGE



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The DeSoto Heat softball team played in the preseason scrimmage Saturday and picked up a win in their 8:30 game against the Outlaws. By the time they stepped back on the field at 11 am, the temperature had already shot up to make it an uncomfortable game. They played well but came up short against the Fillies to give them a split for the day.

There were several impressive plays on defense especially by centerfielder Addy Kerker who made two catches off her shoe tops to keep the game close. Shortstop Carrie Mcabee had a heads up play chasing the runner back to second before firing across the diamond to nail the batter. The girls swung some strong bats and peppered the infield with shots and hit the long ball up the alleys but still came up short.

The team travels to Bartow this weekend and on September 5/6 for the Perfect Game tournament.



The DeSoto Heat gets a team photo after splitting their two scrimmage games on Saturday.



Heat catcher DD Smith takes a good cut at a pitch and fouls it off in Saturday's scrimmage.



Carrie Mcabee does a nice job of chasing the runner back to second before retiring the batter at first.



Sophia Ruiz takes a high pitch and drills it for another Heat base hit.



Kalea Jones hurls to the plate. She kept the Fillies off balance with a nice change up.



Addie Kerker makes her second shoe top catch in the game against the Fillies.

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COMMISSIONERS AGREE 3% COLA FOR EMPLOYEES



At 3268 SW Dishong Ave., the Environmental Services Dept. operates as an “enterprise fund,” meaning that the charges for services—in this case, the “tipping fees” at the landfill—support the entity. Photograph courtesy of Carol Mahler.



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Photos provided

At the third budget workshop on Aug. 11, the Board of County Commissioners agreed to give employees a three percent Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). Vice-chairperson Elton Langford said, “Our employees deserve whatever we can afford to give them.” The fourth budget workshop is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. on Aug. 25, and the tentative budget hearing at 6:30 p.m. on Sept. 8.

The increase in the County’s cost for employee health insurance is 9.5%. However, County Administrator Mandy Hines had shared that employees will pay more for health insurance especially for dependents. In three years, the cost has increased 64.9% for the whole family; 45.2% for the employee and spouse; and 34.2% for the employee and dependents.

Budget Coordinator Brian Wagner calculated both a two and three percent COLA for the Constitutional officers—Property Appraiser, Clerk of Courts, Supervisor of Elections, Tax Collector, and Sheriff— as well as the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) depts., and the effect of each on the Contingency Reserves—less \$354,726.00 and \$631,873.00, respectively.

The budget is still calculated on the rollback millage rate of 6.8352 mills and a Law Enforcement Municipal Service Taxing Unit (MSTU) of 2.9301 mills.

Wagner also reviewed the changes to the more than \$196 million budget since Workshop 2 and then focused on capital, enterprise, and agency funds. In special revenues, the \$150,000.00 addition to annual paving was reallocated for new air-conditioning at the Courthouse. In the General Fund, the Animal Control budget received a \$6,000 adjustment; the health insurance for retirees was shifted to \$30,941.00 and for the Clerk of Court and Property Appraiser to \$34,603; and

the Tax Collector merit and operating adjustment to \$18,607.00 for a total of \$90,151.00.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Projects funded by a little more than \$15.5 million in grants include sidewalks and road improvements. The sidewalks are located on SE Maple from Hillsborough to SE West Ave. and SW Kingsway Circle from Egret to County Road (CR) 769. The roads are SE Airport (only \$300,000.00 for design rather than the entire \$4 million project), NE Cubitis, NE Hargrave, NW Lily from State Road (SR) 70 to the Hardee County line; SW Liverpool at U.S. Highway 17; CR 661 from SR 72 to CR 760, and NE Bishop from NE Masters to NE Cubitis.

In addition, approximately \$1.6 million in grants will carry over from this year to fund a generator as well as impact-resistant windows and doors for the county library; fire safe rooms; a generator for DeSoto Middle School; and the Fire Training Tower.

ENTERPRISE FUNDS: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND UTILITIES

Environmental Services (aka the landfill) and Utilities (aka water and wastewater) are “enterprise funds” meaning that they are operated like private businesses. “The costs of providing goods and services to the general public on a continuing basis [are] financed primarily through user charges.” Thus, they receive no funds from taxes.

Environmental Services has a budget of approximately \$7 million including a fund balance of \$4.1 million as well as fees for services (primarily “tipping fees”) of about \$2 million. The operating expenses include about \$700,000.00 in personnel and \$647,383.00 in capital construction. The total capital request is \$275,000.00 for a chemical building (a carry-over from this year), boom mower attachment, and plowing disc.

Utilities—water and wastewater together—have a budget of about \$12 million with a fund balance of about \$6 million and a little more than \$5 million

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES FAITH MOVES US AWAY FROM COMPROMISE

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

God does not overlook evil, yet He is merciful to rescue anyone willing to leave it behind. Genesis 19, Abraham had stood before God, interceding boldly for Sodom because he knew God is both just and merciful. But while Abraham prayed, Lot had grown much too comfortable among the very things God was about to destroy. And that’s the warning for us: moral compromise rarely begins with open rebellion. It begins with a quiet drift.

Lot’s moral drift began in Genesis 13, when he “lifted his eyes” and chose what looked good to him rather than seeking to understand what would honor God. He pitched his tent near Sodom, then he lived in the city, and by Genesis 19, he’s sitting at the city gate—a place of civic authority and honor. That’s how compromise works: quietly, gradually, and often unnoticed until it has gone much farther than we ever intended.

When the angels arrived, Sodom’s wickedness was no longer subtle. The bible says, “All the men of the city, both young and old,” surrounded Lot’s house demanding to violate his guests. This wasn’t a matter of personal or private sin we should keep our noses out of. And while our culture is not Sodom, we can still recognize the drift: what once asked for tolerance as a matter of

personal sexual deviancy, now demands celebration; what was once hidden now insists on public approval and protection.

In the chaos, Lot makes a shocking offer—his own daughters. It’s disturbing, but it reveals something essential. Lesson 1: Compromise always costs more than we think. It steals clarity, weakens courage, and damages witness. Lot had lived in the city so long that Sodom now lived in him. So, when Lot warned his sons in law, they thought he was joking. Even Lot hesitated. Verse 16 says he lingered until the angels seized him by the hand and pulled him out, which leads to lesson 2: God’s mercy often moves faster than our hesitation. Most people miss this. Lot didn’t sprint out of Sodom—he was rescued.

Once outside, the angels gave one clear command: “Escape... and do not look back.” But Lot’s wife did look back, and she became a pillar of salt. Why? Because her feet left Sodom, but her heart didn’t. So here is lesson 3: You cannot move toward life while clinging to what leads to death. At some point, by God’s grace, you must let go.

So, what do we do with this? We flee compromise. We don’t bargain with sin or try to manage what God has told us to run from. Instead, we pursue holiness with joy and intercede with compassion for those still trapped in sin. And the takeaway is simple: God warns because He loves. He rescues because He is merciful. And He calls on you to move away from compromise and toward Jesus.



in charges for services. The capital requests for the water and wastewater are SCADA and video surveillance cameras for both, and—respectively, cargo trailer and by-pass pump LS-21, for a total of \$160,000.00. Non-capital repair and replacement projects for water are two Clearwell pump replacements and pump maintenance for the DeSoto Correctional Institution (DCI) Water Treatment Plant; ongoing maintenance and VFD (Variable Frequency Drive) replacement for the North Booster Station, and the Engineered Tank Program for a total of \$187,500.00; and for wastewater, five lift station rehabilitations for \$459,000.00.

Water has a capital reserve balance of \$4.8 million. The wastewater capital of \$37 million includes the expansion and deep well injection projects of \$18 million each plus \$950,000.00 for the CR 769 force main, and a contingency reserve of about \$350,000.00.

AGENCY FUNDS

The Law Enforcement Trust Fund Reserves will be \$125,614.00, about \$4,000.00 more than last year. The Indigent Half-Cent Sales Tax is estimated at \$2.7 million for the current and next fiscal year, and will continue until 2036 or until the mortgage on DeSoto Memorial Hospital is paid off.

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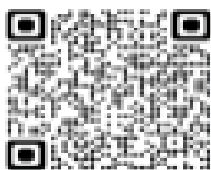
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WERTZ-STRICKLAND TO PRESENT BETTY ALBRITTON GRADY’S EARLY LIFE



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

Judy Wertz-Strickland, member of the DeSoto County Historical Society and City of Arcadia mayor, will speak about the early life of Betty Jean Albritton Grady at noon on Aug. 24 in the McSwain Conference Room of DeSoto Memorial Hospital, 900 N. Robert Ave.. The meeting is free and open to the public.

At 11:30 a.m., lunch is available for purchase in the hospital cafeteria and may be eaten in the McSwain Conference Room.

Born on May 9, 1927, in Limestone, Florida, Betty Jean Albritton Grady was a member of the varsity basketball team and graduated from DeSoto County High School in 1945. She worked for the Arcadia Chemical Company that manufactured Gator Roach Hives, a precursor of the modern “Roach Motel” produced by Black Flag.

After her marriage to Fred Jackson Grady (1923-2011) in 1946 and his graduation from college in 1948, they worked together at Robarts-Grady Funeral Home where she served families throughout DeSoto County for more than 40 years. She died on June 15, 2026.

More than 50 years ago at 7 E. Oak St., Wertz-Strickland founded the Valley Florist now owned by her daughter Kim Wertz-DuCette and open again in the



Member of the DeSoto County Historical Society, Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland holds a photograph of Betty Jean Albritton Grady and her husband Fred Jackson Grady. Photograph courtesy of Carol Mahler.



Born on May 9, 1927, Betty Jean Albritton Grady grew up in Limestone and attended DeSoto High School, graduating in the class of 1945. Photograph courtesy of Judy Wertz-Strickland.

original location. The Grady and Wertz families are well-acquainted because of their work in the funeral business.

“When the Gradys owned the funeral home, we did plenty of work for them,” Wertz-Strickland said. The Valley Florist also supplied flowers for the funerals of Fred Grady and Betty Grady. After Betty’s death, her daughter-in-law Lisa Grady found Betty’s reminiscence of growing up in Limestone and gave a copy to Wertz-

DuCette to give to her mother. Lisa Grady said, “I would really like this to get out to the public.”

Betty Albritton Grady and her brother, John Arthur Albritton (1923-2007), are the children of Elam Singleton Albritton (1886-1958) and Myrtle M. Skipper Albritton (1900-1953). Elam is the son of Mary Frances Ivy Albritton (1852-1942) and John Arthur Albritton (1846-1921), one of the 12 children of Thomas Henry

Albritton, Jr., (1818-1907) and Frances Waldron Albritton (1821-1879). They are also the parents of Arcadia Matilda Albritton Coker, for whom the City is named—according to tradition.

For information, please call 863-266-5774 or online at desotocountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

HELP FROM PAGE 1 »

“We welcome any help,” he said. “If you have two hours out of your day, please work whether we’re there or not.”

SCV Brigade Commander Leon Arthur founded the CCC about 18 years ago with ten members. The organization now has 35 members. They also clean headstones and slabs and offer workshops, open to the public, about the correct way to do so. In addition, they place the CSA Iron Cross—modeled after the Southern Cross of Honor—and flags at the graves of CSA veterans. They have also marked CSA veteran graves in the Coker, Crewsville Baptist Church, Fort Greene, Friendship, and New Zion Baptist Church cemeteries in Hardee County.

Arthur noted that the Confederate Battle Flag is often characterized as a “hate” symbol, but it is a true Christian flag as it is based on St. Andrew’s Cross as is the flag of Scotland. “We’re a Christian organization and have a Chaplain,” he said.

He and Albritton have personally purchased flags to replace any tattered or worn flags in cemeteries. They collect the old ones for the Order of the



Confederate Rose because a member makes them into wreaths that are auctioned to raise donations.

“We want to get people interested in preserving our history,” Albritton said. For more information, contact him at 863-990-1900.

The Fort Ogden Community Cemetery Association donated a plot for the headstones of four CSA veterans who are buried in the Fort Ogden Cemetery, but whose gravesites cannot be found: David J. Addison, Thomas Daughtrey, James Henry Edwards, and Joseph W. Williams.



In our county’s historic cemeteries, the families of the deceased upkeep the burial plots; however, when families move away or die off, the gravesites become neglected as seen at the Fort Ogden Cemetery. The Confederate Cow Cavalry will start working there on Aug. 18.

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**DeSoto County
NOTICE OF DESOTO
COUNTY BOARD OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
WORKSHOP ON DESOTO 2050!
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

What: DeSoto County Board of County Commissioners Workshop

Topic: DeSoto 2050!
Comprehensive Plan Update

In Person Meeting:

Tuesday, August 25, 2026 | 9:00 AM
DeSoto County Commission Chambers
DeSoto County Administration Building
201 East Oak Street, Arcadia, FL 34266

The DeSoto County Board of County Commissioners will hold a workshop to discuss the update of the DeSoto County Comprehensive Plan to the 2050 Planning Horizon. The Plan's goals, objectives and policies reflect the County's vision for the future and how it will meet the needs of existing and future residents, visitors and businesses. The Plan informs decision-making and guides growth and development. To be effective, the Plan must continue to be updated to adapt to changing conditions and needs. This effort provides the opportunity to take a holistic look at how well the Plan is performing and meeting the community's vision.

Project contact: Jennifer Codo-Salisbury, jcodosalisbury@cfrpc.org or at (863) 534-7130 ext. 178. Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, income, or family status. Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact the CFRPC Title VI/ Nondiscrimination Coordinator, Indihra Chambers, (863)534-7130, or via Florida Relay Service 711, or by email: ichambers@cfrpc.org at least three (3) days before the workshop.

La participación pública es solicitada sin distinción de raza, color, origen nacional, sexo, edad, discapacidad, religión o situación familiar. Las personas que requieren asistencia bajo la Ley sobre Estadounidenses con Discapacidades (ADA) o la traducción de idiomas, de forma gratuita deben ponerse en contacto con la Coordinadora de Título VI / No Discriminación/ADA, Indihra Chambers, CFRPC a (863)534-7130, oa través de el Transmisión de la Florida 711, o por correo electronico ichambers@cfrpc.org al menos tres (3) días antes del evento o reunion.



DOYLE B. EDWARDS, JR.

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at Arcadia Seventh Day Adventist Church; 2865 SE Ami Drive, Arcadia, FL 34266. Refreshments will follow.

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth,
As it is in heaven.
Give us this day,
our daily bread.
And forgive us
our trespasses,
As we forgive them that
trespass against us.
And lead us not
into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
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ARREST REPORT | 8/7/26 - 8/13/26

Bellows, Joseph Dale:
Battery - Touch Or Strike

Chambers Jr., Kenneth Eugene:
Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use; Marijuana-Possess - Possess Less Than 20 Grams Cannabis

Connick, Angela:
Battery - Touch Or Strike

Cruz, Luis Alberto:
Aggrav Battery - Aggrav Battery With A Deadly Weapon

Danford, Jim Richard:
Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use; Drugs-Possess - Possess Controlled Substance W/O Prescription; Prob Violation - Prob Violation

Dielson, Michel:
Moving Traffic Viol - Operate Motor Vehicle W/O Valid LIC 1st Conv

Folmsbee, Dustin Tucker:
Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use; Marijuana-Possess - Possess Less Than 20 Grams Cannabis

Galvez-Romero, Alvaro:
Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While LIC Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

Gomez-Rodriguez, Rafael:
Battery - Battery By Strangulation

Gordon, Elizabeth Carol:
Battery - Touch Or Strike

Harrelson Jr., Bobby Lynn:
Battery - Prior Convic Felon Batt Commit 2nd Sub Battery

Klein, Kyle Douglas:
Amphetamine-Traffic - Traffic In METH/AMPHETAMINE 14 Grams+; Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use; Obstructing Justice - Tamper W Evidence In Criminal Proceeding

Knuth, Nathaniel Zachary:
Aggrav Asslt - Weapon - W Deadly Weapon Without Intent To Kill; Battery - Battery On Specified Personnel (x2); Battery - Touch Or Strike; Resist Officer - Obstruct Wo Violence

Little, Brandon Andrew:
Drug Equip-Possess - And Or Use; Drugs-Possess - Cntrl Sub Wo Prescription; Fraud-Illeg Use Credit Cards - Use More 2 Time 6 Ms Obt Gds Mney 100 Dol More; Larc - Petit Theft 2nd Degree 1st Offense

Moody, Wendy Jean:
Conservation - EXCH/SELL Pamletto Berry Wo PERMIT/PERMISSION; Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use; Drugs-Possess - Possess Controlled Substance W/O Prescription; Marijuana-Possess - Possess Less Than 20 Grams Cannabis; Moving Traffic Viol - Dwlsr Or Revocation Equiv Status

Nipper, Ronnie David:
Failure To Appear - Written Promise To Appear

Palomo, Marcko Nettles:
Nonmoving Traffic Viol - Fail To Register Motor Veh

Ramirez, Yolanda Vasquez:
Aggrav Battery - Aggrav Battery With A Deadly Weapon

Taylor, Brandon Phillip:
Battery - Touch Or Strike (x2)

Terzuoli, Dominick Clifford:
Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While LIC Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

Thompson, Dewayne Deanthony:
Prob Violation - Prob Violation (x3)

Wickey, Ozark Hunter:
Battery - Touch Or Strike

Williams, John Quincey Jack:
Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use; Drugs-Possess - Possess Controlled Substance W/O Prescription; Moving Traffic Viol - Drive While LIC Susp Habitual Offender

Zapata-Martinez, Marisol:
Battery - Touch Or Strike

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