VOL. VII, NO. 28

FREE

THE ARCADIA LOCAL

JULY 9, 2026

PRS BROUGHT TO YOU BY PEACE RIVER SHOPPER

NEWS, SPORTS & MORE!

MOOSE LODGE SPONSORS

INDEPENDENCE DAY PARADE

CAROL MAHLER

Independent Contractor
carolmahler22acl@gmail.com
Photos provided

Celebrating 52 years of service as well as the 250th anniversary of Independence Day, Able Wrecker and Road Service won the "Most Spirited" award in the parade sponsored by the Arcadia Moose Lodge 1327.

Last Sat., in celebration of America 250, the Arcadia Moose Lodge 1327 sponsored the Independence Day Parade that stepped off under overcast skies at 6:30 p.m. instead of the usual 10:00 a.m. start-time. The crowd seemed delighted and appreciative of the approximately 45 marching units, vehicles, animals/horse groups, and floats.

Abel Wrecker and Road Service won the "Most Spirited" award; Council Member Dee Washington, "Best Civil;" Cub Scout Pack 626, "Best Under 18 Years Old;" Commissioner Candidate Buddy Johnson, "Most Patriotic;" Arcadia Moose Lodge 1327, "Most Enthusiastic;" Confederate Cow Cavalry, Sons of Confederate Veterans Camp 2181, "Best Non-Profit Organization;" Arcadia All-Florida Saddle Club, "Best Animal/Horse;" and Pure Class - Jeep, "Most Original."

Parade Organizer Missy Foundation said, "I was so excited to be a part of this historical moment of the 250th birthday of America. To be able to change the time for the community to come together is a vision I always had, and to be able to honor the veterans in a way that the community knows that without them, freedom wouldn't be free."

Not only did she shift the time of day for the parade, she also changed the way that the awards for the parade entries are chosen. "To have the judging panel be teens," she said, "that to me is a historical moment they will never forget. They're our next generation, and we need to help them know about respecting our veterans and what they stand for. Thank you, Arcadia Moose Lodge 1327, for sponsoring the parade and allowing me to be the

SEE **PARADE** PAGE 12 »

DESOTO COUNTY SPORTS
PAGE 4

STEVE KNAPP
sports@peaceriversshopper.com

Publix.

GET YOUR PUBLIX WEEKLY ADS INSIDE!

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

JULY 14 — TUE 9A

DESOTO COUNTY

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING

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

JULY 14 — TUE 1P

DESOTO COUNTY

BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING

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

JULY 23 — THUR 8:30A

DESOTO COUNTY

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (EDAC)

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

HELP SUPPORT ARCADIA'S NEWEST PUBLICATION!

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US IN MAKING OUR COMMUNITY BETTER, TOGETHER!

For advertising, contact Angie Duckett: ***sales@peaceriversshopper.com*** *or call* ***863-990-9813***

To participate as a Community Contributor, email: ***editorial@peaceriversshopper.com***

SALES INQUIRIES:
SALES@PEACERIVERSHOPPER.COM
863.990.9813

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

SALES / OFFICE MANAGER *Angie Duckett*

CREATIVE DIR / AD DESIGN *Jackie Bierman*

OPS / PRODUCT DESIGN *Jonathan Bruch*

DOWNTOWN CELEBRATED AMERICA'S 250TH BIRTHDAY!

CAROL MAHLER
Independent Contractor
carolmahler22acl@gmail.com
Photos provided

Last Sat., Arcadia celebrated the 250th anniversary of Independence Day downtown with a special market, live music by the Craig Singleton Band, ribbon cutting for a patriotic mural, and a jeep rally with awards hosted by Arcadia Main Street (AMS); a special one-day historical exhibit thanks to the DeSoto County Historical Society; and a patriotic parade sponsored by the Arcadia Moose Lodge 1327.

From noon to 4:00 p.m., AMS hosted a jeep rally in the parking lot just west of 202 W. Oak St., and 16 vehicles competed. Mindy Ryals, an AMS Board member, announced the winners: Dave Williams won "Most Patriotic;" Bill Martin, "Best Vintage;" and John Wood, "Best of Show" and "People's Choice." Marshal Quinn Jones awarded a oversize rubber duck wearing a cowboy hat to Wood and small ducks dressed in police uniforms to everyone who participated in the rally.

Arcadia Main Street Director Pam Ames said, "Saturday's America 250 celebration was a wonderful reminder of what makes our community so special. Families, volunteers, merchants, residents, and visitors came together to celebrate our nation's history all while supporting our local history. The excitement throughout the day showed that when a community works together, we can create memorable experiences that honor our past and build us a strong future. Our Main Street Program is grateful to everyone who helped make this celebration a success."

Early in the morning, Oak St. was closed to vehicular traffic, and vendors set up their shade tents in the street from DeSoto Ave. to Monroe Ave., with more booths set up in the Tree of Knowledge Park. On the gazebo stage, the Craig Singleton Band performed a variety of music until a thunderstorm passed nearby threatening the electronics.

Starting on Memorial Day, AMS held an America 250 Downtown Passport event. Every $10.00 spent at a participating shop or restaurant earned a stamp on the passport, and 10 stamps completed the passport that could be submitted for a drawing. On July 4, AMS selected the passport of Sarah Saiders, so she won $250.00 in "downtown bucks."

From 10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m., the DeSoto County Historical Society presented a one-day exhibit: "The Arcadia Rodeo: A July 4th Tradition" in the new AMS office at 17 N. Polk Ave.. The Society is grateful to those who loaned images for the exhibit: two digital displays from the Arcadia Rodeo Association—a video with reminisces by Adell Brown, Debbie Hansel Carlton, and Sage Welles Gray and a slide-presentation of historic photographs; a photograph, circa 1931, of African-American Cowboy Leron Simpson from Minnie Jean Simpson Jones; photographs of Jackie Duncan Condo and Matt Condo from Sorrel Condo Pickle: and photographs of Donald Boyd and Judy Boyd from Jody Boyd Sullivan.

The Society displayed a metal reproduction of the Arcadia Rodeo Mural, on the west side of 47 W. Magnolia St.; Jack Duncan's saddle; photographs of—and a yoke associated with—Oscar, the Ox, that advertised the Arcadia Rodeo as far north as the 1939 World's Fair in New York City; the sign for the American Shoe Shop owned and operated by Alvie Twiss and "Rodeo Queen" Delia Twiss plus a two "twister leggings" that Alvie patented in 1957 and the couple manufactured; and many historic photographs.

About 45 groups and individuals entered the America 250 Independence Day parade organized by Missy Fountain and sponsored by the Arcadia Moose Lodge 1327, and many consisted of equestrians, floats, vehicles, and walkers—singly or some combination thereof. Fountain shifted the parade to an evening event and changed the judges to a panel of teenagers who voted for eight awards.

Property Appraiser Dave Williams won the "Most Patriotic" award for his jeep decorated for the Arcadia Main Street America 250 Jeep Rally: from left, Hayden Williams, Heidi Williams, and Dave Williams.

Winning the "Most Patriotic" award in the America 250 Independence Day Parade, Commissioner Candidate Buddy Johnson even decorated the wheels of his Vector 390 Tractor, one of six vehicles representing him, with "Happy 4th of July."

A member of the Arcadia Main Street Board of Directors, Mindy Ryals announced the winners of the America 250 Jeep Rally: John Wood won the "People's Choice" award.

Tim Martin, whose son Michael Martin is a commissioner candidate, held a reproduction of an article and postcard from 50 years ago when he helped his father Everett Martin, Rick Dodd, Ed Graber, Alfred King, George Wheeler and Paul Whitlock build a log cabin on the courthouse lawn to celebrate the Independence Day Bicentennial.

Granddaughter Everly Pooley stood with Tax Collector Susan Pooley who held some of the historic photographs loaned to the exhibit by Sorrel Condo Pickle, who works for Pooley and whom Pooley encouraged to contact the Society.

Shade tents filled the center of Oak St. closed for the special America 250 Downtown Market on July 4.

Wearing his patriotic Superman t-shirt, the Honorable Guy Flowers and Mylene Flowers enjoyed the vendors set up on W. Oak St. for the America 250 Downtown Market.

John Wood won the "Best In Show" and "People's Choice" award for his jeep plus a special rubber duck from the Arcadia Police Dept. presented by Marshal Quinn Jones: from left, Wood, Jones, and Mary Magagnos.

Many of the downtown boutiques, cafes, restaurants, and stores offered specials, including a saxophone trio performing patriotic selections at Dragon's Den Bookstore, 106 W. Oak St.: from left, Bookstore Owner Doug Heavener, Louis Spinoff, and Rob Dickason.

From left, Hal Thompson, his daughter Clancey Hernandez Morel, and another couple perused "The Arcadia Rodeo: A July 4th Tradition," a one-day exhibit hosted by the DeSoto County Historical Society.

TREE OF KNOWLEDGE: TRUE TO ITS NAME

CAROL MAHLER

Independent Contractor
carolmahler22acl@gmail.com
Photos provided

Last Sat., in celebration of the 250th Anniversary of Independence Day, Arcadia Main Street hosted a special market on Oak St., with Commission Candidates Michael Martin and Buddy Johnson and Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland, who is seeking re-election, set up in the Tree of Knowledge Park along with the Supervisor of Elections Debbie Wertz offering voting information and the Girl Scouts collecting school supplies.

The Tree of Knowledge was so named because of the political oratory delivered beneath its welcomed shade. No modern-day candidates for election gave any formal speeches because the Craig Singleton Band performed on the gazebo-stage. However the candidates and their supporters were eager to talk with voters until lightning threatened as a thunderstorm passed nearby.

Other vendors displayed their wares under shade tents on Oak St. that was closed for the occasion, and many remained despite the storm. Arcadia Main Street Board Member and Promotions Committee Chairperson Starr McLaughlin organized the market. She said, "It was a proud moment standing in the street and seeing all of the patriotic decorations, vendors lining the center of Oak Street, businesses open, and people walking around our downtown waving flags. The community sure came together, and that's exactly what the Arcadia Main Street Program works hard to accomplish."

In addition to those listed above, vendors included Arcadia Main Street, Bake Me Crazy, Bethel International Ministries, Cheeky Art, Christy's PermaLinx by jBloom, CW's Sweets and More, Daniel Downs, Duck Around Duck Bar, Eligra's Soaps and More, First Christian Church Arcadia, Gator Grinds Coffee, Gina Hackney, Hearth and Ivy, Island Vibz Italian Ice and Slushies, Jody's Painted Treasures, Just A Girl Book Club, Knot Just Wreaths by Niki, Amy Krokstrom, L&K Flowers and Gifts, Little Moments Magnet Co., Krissy Mendez, Miami Snow Shaved Ice, Mr. and Mrs. Lemonade, MoKa Treats, MTP Delights, New Beginnings, Once Upon A Cookie Southwest Florida, Our Daily Bread Bakery, Pop N Planz, Praying Through Ministries, Rick's World Famous Lemonade and Shaved Ice, Seashell Oil Lamps, Shais Resin Creations, Stoned and Sterling, Sunset Coast Creations, Tigerlily Links, Tropical Creations, Tropical Furniture and Talavera, and William Edwards.

Last Sat., Supervisor of Elections Debbie Wertz offered voting information during Arcadia Main Street's America 250 Downtown Market in the Tree of Knowledge Park.

Performing on the Tree of Knowledge Park Gazebo Stage, the Craig Singleton Band played until lightning struck nearby: from left, Guitarist Wagner Fulco, Drummer Brian Jones, Keyboardist and Vocalist Craig Singleton, Percussionist Tommy Nick, and Saxophonist Roberto Carlo.

Dawn Mitchell of Duck Around Duck Bar talked about the different options with the Laughlin family: from left, Hanna, Ollie, Eoin, and Jacob Laughlin.

First Christian Church of Arcadia offered free water, popcorn, and air conditioning in their "prayer booth:" from left, John Russell, Avery Russell, Mariposa Bertch, Katie Russell, Kaylee Russell, Pastor Abdiel Fuentes, and Mayerling Fuentes.

HELP SUPPORT THE ARCADIA LOCAL NEWSPAPER!

For advertising, contact Angie Duckett:
sales@peaceriversshopper.com
or call ***863-990-9813***

To participate as a Community Contributor, email:
editorial@peaceriversshopper.com

YOU CAN COUNT ON US!

DeSoto and Hardee Counties are home to us, and we have served these communities for many years. We're proud to serve you and we look forward to serving you for many years to come. Caring only as a neighbor can, the meaning of a good neighbor is not only someone who is close by, but someone you can always count on to be there.

Ponger-Kays-Grady
Funeral Homes & Cremation Services

50 N. Hillsborough Ave.
Arcadia, FL 34266
(863) 494-4101

205 N. 9th Ave.
Wauchula, FL 33873
(863) 773-6400

www.PongerKaysGrady.com

THANK YOU TO OUR
BULLDOG YOUTH SPONSOR!

• DESOTO COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD (PRS)
• MOSAIC • FPL • JEWEL CONTRACTING

S4G WHITE HOLDS ON FOR WIN

STEVE KNAPP
Sports Writer
sports@peaceriversshopper.com

In the 9-10 year old age group in the S4G Saturday basketball league, the White team held onto a slim one point lead in the final minute of play. Kaiden hit a three pointer to give his team a 17-13 win. Kaiden let the team with 7 points while Jassiah led the white team with 5 points.

TOUGH LOSS IN 8U FINALS NETS SECOND PLACE TROPHY

STEVE KNAPP
Sports Writer
sports@peacerivershopper.com

The 8U Keith team from the Miss DeSoto Fastpitch Softball league played well during the end of season tournament at Port Charlotte but came up just a little short in the finals finishing with a second place trophy.

The DeSoto team was the number 2 seed because of their 8-2 regular season. They blasted North Port #3 by a score of 13-3 with Daleyza Tello swinging a big bat with an inside the park homer.

The semi final game was against North Port team #2. DeSoto trailed by 4 with 2 outs in the final inning but the team battled back with several hits and aggressive base running. Shea Schueneman, drove in two runs to tie the game. Tello blasted the ball past the right fielder to knock in Schueneman with the winning run. That put the Bulldogs into the finals against the number 1 seed, North Port #1.

The North Port #1 team held a 5-2 lead over the Bulldogs in the 5th inning of the championship game. Then the Bulldogs started barking and scored 4 times to take a 6-5 lead. North Port was at the top of their order and are a good hitting team. DeSoto recorded one out but a couple of back to back hits scored two runs and sent the Bulldogs down with a 7-6 loss to finish a very successful season. Schuememan pitched into the third inning which is quite an accomplishment in 8U.

Coach Keith Wallace said, “It was a great game and the girls left everything on the field. They played with so much heart, hustle and determination from the very first pitch to the final out.”

RIBBON CUT FOR NEW PATRIOTIC MURAL

From left, Louis Reuter, Klaus Zingraff, Cindy Reuter-Zingraff, Amanda Reuter, Cassidy Poole, Natalee Butts, Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland, Linda Williams, Artist Angelika Shevchenko, Arcadia Main Street Director Pam Ames, Sophie LaCroix, John Vavrosky, Heidi Williams, Hayden Williams, and Property Appraiser Dave Williams.

CAROL MAHLER
Independent Contractor
carolmahler22acl@gmail.com
Photos provided

Last Sat., in celebration of the 250th anniversary of Independence Day, Arcadia Main Street (AMS) held a ribbon cutting for the new patriotic mural at 14 E. Oak St., a building owned by John Vavrosky and the present location of Jonesville Music.

The mural was painted by Angelika Shevchenko and funded by a grant from the America 250 Florida Initiative to AMS. The image features the two main industries on which DeSoto County was founded: cattle and citrus. Growing row crops or "truck farming" was also important economically, especially in the early to mid-20th century. Our local farmers carry on that tradition, most notably the grower-members of the DeSoto County Watermelon Assoc..

Although her specialty is portraying beach and underwater scenes in houses, Shevchenko painted the patriotic mural, a design that was given to her. This is the biggest artwork she has ever done that's located in a public space. "I really enjoyed how the cows turned out," she said. "That was my favorite part."

Angelika Shevchenko cut the ribbon for the patriotic mural she painted as part of Arcadia Main Street's America 250 Celebration: from left, Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland, Linda Williams, Shevchenko, Arcadia Main Street Director Pam Ames, Sophie LaCroix, and Jean Vavrosky.

She noted that it was ironic that she spent 50 hours painting the mural over six weeks. "I took my time," she said, "and because it was so hot, I could only work in the mornings." She had to stand on scaffolding to paint the top of the mural, but the love bugs were the most challenging. "They were attacking the mural as I was painting," she said. "They were getting stuck in the paint." Sometimes, she picked them out of the paint, and other times, she painted over them.

Originally from California, she moved to DeSoto County about six years ago after staying with her sister who lives in Port Charlotte. A self-taught artist, she started on large-scale images in houses about four years ago.

Although AMS had hoped to also cut the ribbon for the other patriotic mural on the south side of Groovy Smoothie, 29 S. Polk Ave., Artist Juan Ledesma has not yet completed the image showcasing Arcadia's unique aviation history, including the fact that during World War I, the City called itself the "Aviation City of Florida" because of the two U.S. Army Aviation training camps built nearby.

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. 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!

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

Level: Intermediate

Answer:

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

GULF COAST COMMUNITY FOUNDATION'S

INVEST IN INCREDIBLE (I3) PROGRAM ANNOUNCES WORKSHOP SCHEDULE FOR REMAINDER OF 2026

GULF COAST COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

VENICE, Fla. (May 26, 2026) – Gulf Coast Community Foundation (Gulf Coast) has announced the remaining schedule of 2026 workshops through Invest in Incredible (I3).

Serving as Gulf Coast's resource for regional nonprofits, I3 strengthens board governance and operational effectiveness while helping organizations build skills, knowledge and leadership capacity. The new workshop schedule offers practical training for nonprofit professionals, board members, and professional advisors, with topics spanning planned giving fundamentals to responsible, real-world applications of artificial intelligence.

"The newest i3 offerings are built with the real, day-to-day demands of nonprofit leaders and board members in mind," said Erin Minor, Vice President of Community Leadership at Gulf Coast Community Foundation. "By bringing together practical learning in governance, strategy, and evolving tools, i3 equips organizations to realize their unique missions as they grow alongside the communities they serve."

The full list of i3 workshop offerings from July through December is listed below. For more information and to register, visit GulfCoastCF.org/events

BUILDING & ENHANCING PRESENTATION SKILLS

Thursday, July 23, 2026
Sarasota Philanthropy Center
1549 State Street, Sarasota
Facilitated by: Mitch Lomazov

EASY TO UNDERSTAND FINANCIAL REPORTS

Wednesday, July 29, 2026
Venice Headquarters
601 Tamiami Trail South, Venice
Facilitated by: Dan Weiss, CPA, J.D.

FUNDAMENTALS IN PLANNED GIVING

Thursday, August 20, 2026
Venice Headquarters
601 Tamiami Trail South, Venice
Facilitated by: Joe Carter, CAP®

LEADING PRACTICES IN GOVERNANCE & BYLAWS

Thursday, August 27, 2026
Venice Headquarters
601 Tamiami Trail South, Venice
Facilitated by: Whitney Crettol, MA

PLANNED GIVING INSTRUMENTS AND STRATEGIES

Tuesday, September 15, 2026
Sarasota Philanthropy Center
1549 State Street, Sarasota
Facilitated by: Joe Carter, CAP®

DIGITAL THAT DELIVERS: TOOLS, TACTICS AND 7 C'S OF COMMUNICATIONS

Wednesday, September 23, 2026
Sarasota Philanthropy Center
1549 State Street, Sarasota
Facilitated by: Alyssa Barnsley & Alyssa Holcomb

BUILDING YOUR ENDOWMENT

Tuesday, September 29, 2026
Sarasota Philanthropy Center
1549 State Street, Sarasota
Facilitated by: Joe Carter, CAP®

MOVING THE NEEDLE ON BOARD FUNDRAISING

Thursday, October 6, 2026
Sarasota Philanthropy Center
1549 State Street, Sarasota
Facilitated by: Tracy Vanderneck, MSM, CFRE

YOUR STORY IS YOUR STRATEGY

Wednesday, October 21, 2026
Venice Headquarters
601 Tamiami Trail South, Venice
Facilitated by: Kristen Theisen, CFRE

SKILLFUL BOARD CHAIR

Tuesday, November 3, 2026
Venice Headquarters
601 Tamiami Trail South, Venice
Facilitated by: Betsy Steiner

VISION TO REALITY: NAVIGATING, SCOPE, BUDGET & RISK BEFORE CONSTRUCTION

Monday, November 9, 2026
Sarasota Philanthropy Center
1549 State Street, Sarasota
Facilitated by: Jenn Stutler

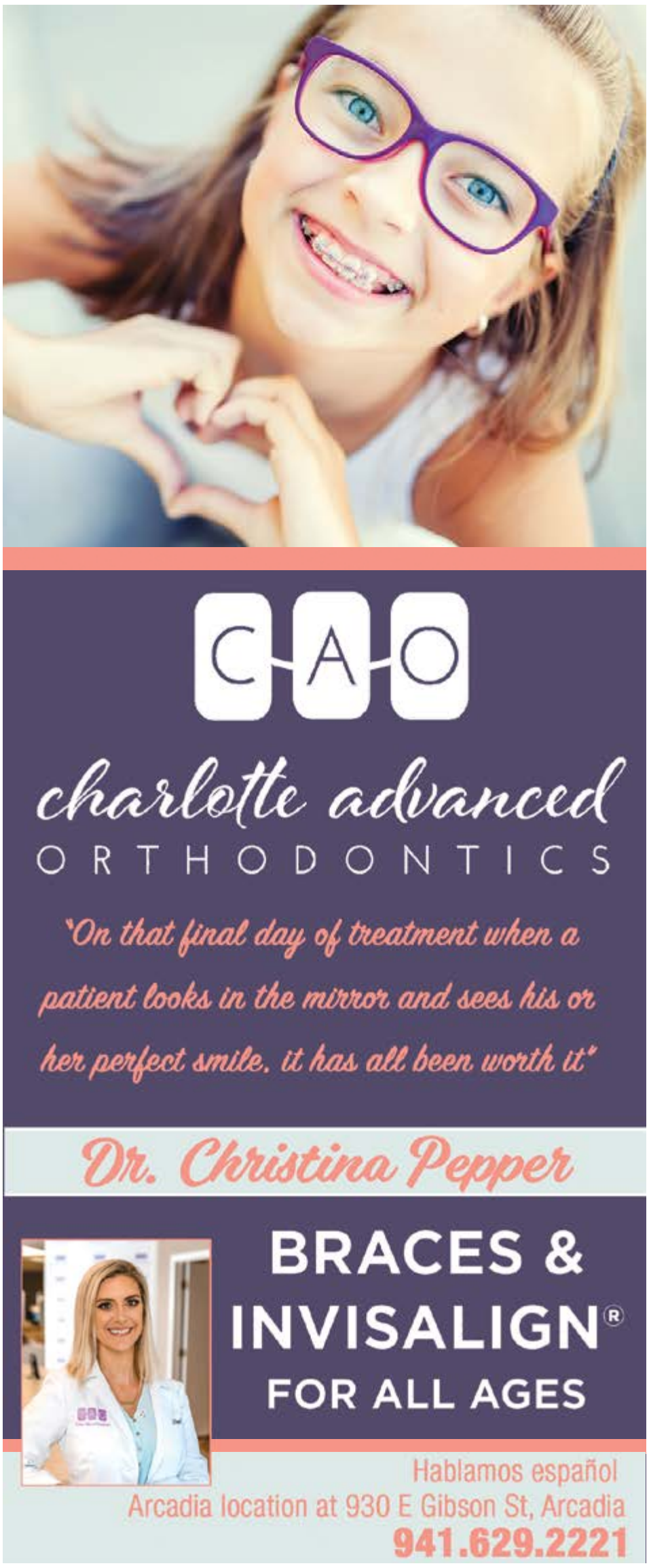
THE LISTENING CLINIC FOR LEADERS

Thursday, December 3, 2026
Sarasota Philanthropy Center
1549 State Street, Sarasota
Facilitated by: Joan Lowery

SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR BOARD AND STAFF

Tuesday, December 8, 2026
Venice Headquarters
601 Tamiami Trail South, Venice
Facilitated by: Laurie Huebner

The Invest in Incredible (i3) program is Gulf Coast's nonprofit capacity-building initiative that offers a variety of workshops ranging from "board basics" to media training and best practices in recruiting and supervision.



SFSC ALUMNA BARBARA STITES: AN ACCOMPLISHED CAREER IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCES

AVON PARK, Fla. – July 1, 2026 – South Florida State College (SFSC) alumna, Barbara Stites, who graduated with an Associate in Arts from the College in 1974, spent most of her career in Library and Information Sciences. Although now retired, she looks back on her personal and professional life with a great sense of accomplishment and service to libraries throughout Florida.

Stites earned her doctorate in Leadership and Education with a specialization in Human Resource Development from Barry University, a Master of Arts in Library and Information Science from the University of South Florida, and her Bachelor of Arts in Education from the University of South Florida.

However, Stites' academic and professional careers may never have come to pass, but for Stites' own tenacity as well as the generosity of one person who strongly believed that education paves the road to a better life.

Stites' family moved to Broward County, Fla. from New Jersey when she was 10 years old. At age 15, she moved to Lake Placid and, later, graduated from Lake Placid High School.

"My father graduated from Pace University in New York on the GI Bill after World War II," she said. "But my parents were divorced and I didn't have much contact with my dad. So, college wasn't familiar to me. I came from serious poverty. We lived in a travel trailer in a trailer park in Lake Placid. I moved out of my mother's place when I was 16 and was then on my own. I just wanted to do what I wanted to do when I wanted to do it. I was a feisty teenager."

Stites decided that she wanted to become a librarian. "I was a curious individual and just loved learning," she said. "I like reading – it was an escape for me. But I just loved digging through information. I love the hunt, just as people go to thrift stores and hunt for good deals. Some people like to go fossil hunting. I loved the idea of researching."

But Stites felt somewhat limited in her resources to become a librarian. "At the time in Central Florida, a woman had three choices: she could become a secretary, a nurse, or a teacher."

Stites knew little about pursuing a college degree or how to apply for college. In fact, she was unaware that South Florida State College (South Florida Junior College at that time) existed in her own community.

"But I heard that a scholarship was available through the Lake Placid Rotary Club," she said. "And I considered going to secretarial school. The man who was in charge of the Rotary's scholarships was Mr. Wilkins."

When Stites applied for the Rotary scholarship, Mr. Wilkins contacted her and said that the scholarship was for college, but that secretarial school wasn't considered college. He said, "I have an idea. How about I pay for your first semester of secretarial school personally?" Stites agreed.

A few months later, Stites spoke with Mr. Wilkins and said that she learned about South Florida State College in Avon Park and would like attend. Mr. Wilkins agreed to pay for her first semester at the College.

"By the end of my first semester at the College, I got straight A's," Stites said. "Then Mr. Wilkins said he'd pay for my second semester. After that, I had gotten married and was able to take care of my own financial obligations. All these years later, I'm a strong supporter of scholarships. They change lives. Mr. Wilkins changed my life."

Stites blossomed as a student at SFSC. "Between the staff, faculty, and other students, everybody was encouraging. It had a positive, 'Can Do' atmosphere. They recognized that students are out there like me who need an extra hand."

Stites took an astronomy class at SFSC from Dr. Bill Gene Smith. "In his class, we learned more about education than we did astronomy, because he was running for the Highlands County School Board for the first time," she said. "And he wanted to talk about education. It inspired me."

After graduating from SFSC, Stites continued her education at the University of South Florida in Tampa. "Three women I knew from SFSC and I carpooled from Highlands County to USF to take classes," Stites said. "We'd get up at 4 a.m., attend classes all day, then drive home."

Right out of college, Stites was offered a job at Lake Placid Elementary School, teaching first, second, and third grades. She taught at the school for over nine years.

"All the while, I still had the desire to be a librarian," she said. "But to be an entry-level librarian, you needed a master's degree. So, I went back to college, driving to Tampa, Fort Myers, and Orlando for classes." Stites earned her master's degree and took her first job as a librarian at Sebring High School, working with Peggy Smith, Dr. Bill Gene Smith's wife.

As the years passed, Stites worked as a librarian in a corporation and at a law firm. "I was training lawyers and accountants in how to do research. But they were being paid far more money than I. So, I made a list of the jobs that made the kind of money that I wanted to make.

A job came open as an executive director of a non-profit organization that paid good money. "It was a non-profit that was like a small business development center but for libraries," Stites said. "So, I switched to leadership. That tipped me from frontline service as a high school or corporate librarian to leading an organization. That was a big shift for me."

One of the highlights of Stites' career came when she and colleague, Dr. Elizabeth Curry, created the first statewide training ground for library leaders in Florida called the Sunshine State Library Leadership Institute (SSLLI) that continues to serve a new generation of library leaders 20 years later.

"Around the late '80s or early '90s, a colleague of mine at the Tampa Bay Library Consortium and I talked about being able to provide internet access to the public. At the time, there was no internet access in people's homes. We wrote a grant and got funding to provide the first internet access to the public in Florida. We rolled out the internet to a couple of rural libraries, some medium-sized libraries, and some larger libraries. We taught people about the internet, how it worked, what buttons to push. We did all the training that it took to get the first line of librarians trained so they could begin training the public on the internet and how to use it."

"Eventually, we provided desktop access to the internet at all these test libraries, such as the one we set up in Wauchula. We also hooked up 11 large libraries so that they had the first online 'card' catalog."

After four decades of library service, Stites retired in 2019 from her role as interim dean of the Florida Gulf Coast University Library. "When the university was new, I helped to build a library from the ground up. The library is the heart of a university. People come there to study and do homework, research, sleep, find a boyfriend, participate in student-centered activities. We did some serious research about student engagement in library spaces and what influenced that. We determined what kind of furniture supported that, what kind of lighting. We had a 133,000 sq. ft. building with 100 employees. We needed to manage a cadre of people like that and make sure they always provide the best customer service possible."

Stites believes that in these times, the role of a librarian has changed, that you don't just check out books. "Larger academic libraries are not so much about the books anymore. It's about artificial intelligence and working with large data sets and crunching information. Public libraries have moved toward supporting people's education and entertainment needs, but also their social needs. That requires the computer community supporting people who don't have internet access."

In Stites' view, Information Sciences has become more and more important for the public. "So much of the information that we're exposed to is not accurate," she said. "Thinking about running a world on information that isn't accurate scares me to death. It's important that libraries and information scientists connect in any way they can with our students. Our main goal is to connect with students, employees, community members, and help connect them with information that they need to make the best decisions. If you're at an educational institution, you're supporting student learning and you're supporting faculty research."

To an extent, Stites' early experience with college has come full circle. Her daughter, Emily Dabolt, is the executive director of institutional advancement at SFSC and oversees the SFSC Foundation. The Foundation solicits, receives, and manages charitable donations in support of the College, its programs, staff, and students. "My life changed through the scholarship from Mr. Wilkins and it led all the way to SFSC," Stites said. "Emily has an opportunity to make a difference in other people's lives through her job – along with all the support that's at the College and from donors. A little generosity makes a huge difference in someone's life."

CLEARWATER GUN SHOW

POLISH CENTER OF J P II

1521 N. SATURN AVENUE • CLEARWATER, FL

JULY 11TH & 12TH

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

UPCOMING

PORT CHARLOTTE
JULY 18TH & 19TH
CHARLOTTE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS
2333 EL JOBEAN RD.
SAT 9AM-5PM & SUN 9AM-3PM

SARASOTA SHOW
AUG 8TH & 9TH
ROBARTS ARENA
3000 RINGLING BLVD
SAT 9AM-5PM & SUN 9AM-3PM

WE ARE THE BEST COMBINATION OF FFL DEALERS AND PRIVATE COLLECTORS AROUND!

All Federal, State , and local laws must be obeyed.
Guns, knives, accessories, ammo, parts, and so much more. Come ready to buy, sell, or trade. We have new, used, and antique items.
And as always, FREE PARKING!

CHILDREN (*16 and Under*)
2-Day Admission
Free

ACTIVE Miliarty or LEO
2-Day Admission
Free

Veteran OR Retired LEO
2-Day Admission
$1.00 off

ADULT (*17 and Over*)
2-Day Admission
$10.00
Saturday **AND** Sunday
Come and go as you please on both days!

WE HAVE TONS OF GUNS AND AMMO AVAILABLE!
Tickets sold at the door, Cash or Check Only, limit 1 discount per person

2 GUYS
GUN SHOW
727-776-3442 • 2GuysShows.com

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES:

CHAPLAIN AMANDA REUTER

US Army Reserve
DeSoto County Ministerial Association

The doctrine of anthropology—our understanding of humanity—asks the fundamental question: What is man? In an age of confusion about identity, gender, dignity, and purpose, Scripture gives a clear and hopeful answer. Human beings are uniquely created in God's image, tragically fallen through sin, and gloriously redeemable through Christ. This biblical view of humanity undergirds ethics, justice, relationships, and the gospel itself.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Bible opens with humanity's exalted origin: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'" (Genesis 1:26). The imago Dei (image of God) grants every person inherent dignity, value, and purpose—male and female alike—setting humans apart from the rest of creation (Genesis 1:27; 9:6; James 3:9). We were made for relationship with God, with one another, and with the world as stewards (Genesis 2:15-18).

Yet the image is marred by the Fall. Adam and Eve's rebellion introduced sin and its consequences: spiritual death, relational brokenness, physical decay, and a bent toward evil (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12-19). The New Testament deepens this: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Humanity is now spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1-3), enslaved to sin, and under God's just wrath—yet still bearing God's image, however distorted.

Redemption restores what sin ruined. In Christ, the perfect image of God (Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3), believers are renewed in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10). Full restoration awaits the resurrection, when we will bear the likeness of the heavenly man (1 Corinthians 15:49; Philippians 3:21).

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Early church fathers defended human dignity against Gnostic and pagan views that demeaned the body. Irenaeus and Athanasius emphasized the image of God and Christ as its true restorer. Augustine's Confessions and City of God profoundly shaped Western thought with his realistic view of original sin and grace. The Reformers, especially Calvin, stressed total depravity—not that humans are as bad as possible, but that sin affects every part of our being—while upholding human responsibility and dignity. Modern theology has sometimes reduced anthropology to psychology or sociology, but historic orthodoxy keeps the biblical tension: great dignity and great need.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY

A biblical anthropology affirms the equal worth of every person, grounding justice, compassion, and human rights. It explains our deepest brokenness without excusing it and offers real hope through gospel transformation. In our community, it challenges both self-worship and self-loathing, calling us to treat every neighbor as an image-bearer and every believer as a new creation in Christ. True identity is found not in self-expression, but in relationship with our Creator and Redeemer.

JEWEL CONTRACTING INC.

CUSTOM HOMES
STARTING AT $269,000!

BUILDING HOMES IN DESOTO COUNTY SINCE 2005

IF YOU HAVE THE LAND OR ARE THINKING OF PURCHASING LAND...
LET US HELP YOU GET YOUR DREAM HOME BUILT!

CALL ROGER AT: **863-990-5921**
OR AJ AT: **863-633-8345**

JEWELCONTRACTINGINC.COM

Arcadia Abstract & Title Co., Inc., Est. 1963,

"Family Owned & Operated"

What is title insurance?

Title insurance protects homebuyers and lenders from undiscovered defects against a property by making sure 100% of the property interest vests to the Buyers.

The party that pays for title insurance chooses the title agency where the closing/transaction happens. Typically, the Seller pays the premium.

We treat every transaction the same, with respect and integrity. Choose us!

A: 20 West Oak Street, Arcadia, FL 34266
P: (863) 494-4300
E: general@arcadiaabstract.com
Mon – Fri | 8:30am-5pm.

SFSC ALUMNA JENALE ALFONSO CRUZ MERGES HER PASSION FOR DENTISTRY AND RESEARCH

AVON PARK, Fla. – June 10, 2026 – South Florida State College (SFSC) alumna, Jenale Alfonso Cruz, is passionate about becoming a dentist and a dental researcher. When she was 12 years old, her father had a cardiac event that sent him to the hospital, where nurses and doctors saved his life. Witnessing their dedication to patient care, Cruz decided that she wanted a career saving lives, too.

A first-generation college student, Cruz graduated from SFSC in December 2023 with an Associate in Arts and was the keynote student speaker during her Commencement ceremony. Currently, she's working toward a bachelor's degree in Microbiology and Cell Science with a minor in Pathogenesis at the University of Florida (UF). Her goal is to become a Doctor of Medicine in Dentistry (DMD) and earn a Ph.D. in Biomedical Sciences.

Last spring, Cruz was awarded a prestigious Goldwater Scholarship. In 2026, the Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation drew from an applicant pool of over 5,000 college sophomores and juniors to award 1,485 students the Goldwater Scholarship. Scholars receive an annual amount of support equal to the cost of tuition, fees, books, and room and board up to a maximum of $7,500 per academic year.

The Goldwater Foundation is an independent agency that identifies, encourages, and financially supports outstanding graduates who wish to pursue research careers in the sciences, engineering, and mathematics. Cruz's submission to the Goldwater Scholarship cited her three undergraduate research studies in which she participated at SFSC, a community college.

But Cruz's academic journey hasn't been an easy one. Because of her tenacity and desire to make significant contributions to patient care, she's maintained her focus and developed supportive relationships that continue to point her in the right direction.

Seven years ago, Cruz met Dr. Albert Ruiz, a Sebring dentist, when she visited his office for a dental appointment. During a conversation with Dr. Ruiz, Cruz indicated that she was in college and working at a local restaurant to pay for tuition. She wanted to become an emergency room nurse or doctor. Dr. Ruiz offered her a job in his dental office and instructed her in dental assisting.

Cruz has said that as a dental assistant working with patients, she learned the importance of empathy, precision, and good communications. "At the dentist's office, we pay attention to what's happening with our patients beyond oral care," she said. "While working with Dr. Ruiz, I noticed a difference in patients who have cardiovascular disease or systemic diseases."

As a student at SFSC, Cruz was curious about the links between oral health and cardiovascular disease and wanted to know more. She met Dr. Mintoo Patel, biology professor, who was starting an undergraduate research project on "The Oral Microbiome as a Cardiovascular Biomarker: Bridging Dentistry and Cardiology." Cruz signed on.

"I have watched Jenale grow from a curious student into a thoughtful and independent researcher, and the recognition through the Goldwater Scholarship is incredibly well deserved," Dr. Patel said. "Her research on the oral microbiome as a biomarker for cardiovascular disease highlights the critical connection between oral and systemic health, an area of growing importance in modern medicine. Through this work, she has developed the analytical and translational skills to pursue clinically meaningful questions. This experience is laying a strong foundation for her future as a dentist/scientist, where she will bridge patient care with impactful research. I have no doubt she will make meaningful contributions to both dentistry and medicine."

Other undergraduate research that Cruz pursued while at SFSC was "The Impact of HIV/AIDS on Oral Health: Implications for Comprehensive Care" with mentor Dr. Patel and "Pseudoziziphus celata GC-MS and LC-MS," with Dr. Kate Calvin in her Organic Chemistry class. The research, in partnership with Bok Tower Gardens and Metaware Bio, studied and analyzed the endangered plant, the Florida Ziziphus. In spring 2026, Cruz returned to SFSC to continue research on "The Oral Microbiome as a Cardiovascular Biomarker."

SFSC professors encouraged Cruz

to present posters and make oral presentations at SFSC's Undergraduate Research Forum and at significant scientific forums, such as the Florida Undergraduate Research Conference (FURC) and the Florida Academy of Sciences Annual Conference (FAS). Cruz and other SFSC students visited the Capitol in Tallahassee in 2026 to present their scientific posters and explain their research results to state lawmakers.

In summer 2026, Cruz is participating in the McNair Scholars Program at UF. The program is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and prepares high-achieving first-generation undergraduate students for doctoral studies (Ph.D.). UF supports 25 scholars annually. The scholars work on research with mentors, develop writing and research skills, and attend workshops on the graduate admissions process.

"In the McNair Scholars Program, I'll work with DMD/Ph.D. students in their lab doing oral microbiome research," Cruz said. "I'm super excited. I'm the first online student ever at UF to get accepted into the McNair Scholars Program."

While Cruz was doing research and taking courses toward her bachelor's degree, she was preparing to take the Dental Admissions Test (DAT) for entry to dental school. She took the test in January 2026. The test runs approximately five hours and consists of 280 multiple-choice questions.

Cruz anticipates graduating from UF in August 2027 with her bachelor's degree in Microbiology and Cell Science, with a minor in Pathogenesis. She will apply to dental school and a Ph.D. program to do oral health research. "The first four years, I'd take classes like any other dental student," she said. "Then, I'd have about two or three more years as a Ph.D. candidate."

"I have a strong passion for dentistry," she said. "I aspire to bridge the gap between clinical dentistry and biomedical research by investigating how oral bacteria contribute to chronic conditions, such as HIV/AIDS, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's. I aim to translate discoveries from the laboratory into innovative diagnostic tools and preventive therapies that improve both oral and overall health."

HELP SUPPORT THE ARCADIA LOCAL NEWSPAPER!

For advertising, contact Angie Duckett: ***sales@peaceriversshopper.com*** *or call* ***863-990-9813***

To participate as a Community Contributor, email: ***editorial@peaceriversshopper.com***

PARADE

FROM PAGE 1 »

chairperson."

Other participants included American Freedom Flyers, AmVets Post 60, Arcadia Main Street, Arcadia Police Dept., The Bandit Store, Commissioner Candidates Lorenzo Dixon and Michael Martin, Commissioners Jerod Gross and Judy Schaefer, Council Member Candidate Addison Reesor, Council Members Keith Keene and Robert Heine Jr., Darrell Brown, DeSoto County Historical Society, Fire Rescue, Florida Beach Horses, Florida Cracker Trail Assoc., Honor Guard and Esteemed Veterans, Madsen and Maddison Families, Mayor Judy Wertz-Strickland, Mismo Visions, Miss DeSoto County and Miss Southwest Florida, Miss Florida Swim Safe/Tucker's Promise Foundation, Miss Rachel's Homestyle Cooking (formerly known as Champs), Miss Southern Florida, Motorcycles, Property Appraiser Dave Williams, Rash Decisions Ministry, Sheriff's Posse and Office, Yvette Smith's Brahma Bull, Strollin' 4 A Cure, Superintendent Bobby Bennett, Supervisor of Elections Debbie Wertz, Twin Creeks Adventure Ranch, and Christy Villegas.

Although chauffeured by City Administrator Beth Carsten, Council Member Dee Washington was handing out treats to the crowd and won the "Best Civil" award: from left, Washington, standing, and in golf carts, Carsten, Cindy Keene and Council Member Keith Keene.

Parade Organizer Missy Fountain and Carolyn Tyson in front, and Fountain's Grandson Slade Miethke in the back, represented Fountain's business: Mismo Visions.

Winning the "Best Non-Profit Award," Greg Albritton and Huston Ryals led the entry for the Confederate Cow Cavalry, Sons of Confederate Veterans Camp 2181, that also included a float.

Cub Scout Pack 626 won the "Best Under 18 Years Old" award in the Independence Day Parade.

The Arcadia Moose Lodge 1327 float won the "Most Enthusiastic" award in the Independence Day parade that they sponsored.

With walkers, a float, and equestrians in the Independence Day parade, the Arcadia All-Florida Saddle Club won the "Best Animal/Horse" award.

Along with his multiple vehicles and many campaign workers, Commissioner Candidate Buddy Johnson handed out cold bottled water to the crowd and won the "Most Patriotic" award.

Realtor Showcase

United Country Real Estate
GULFLAND REAL ESTATE

Mac Martin, ALC, GRI, BA
BROKER/OWNER
863.494.2100
landpanther@gmail.com
2019 Florida Land Realtor

National Marketing, Local Expertise®
FOR YOUR *Lifestyle Property*

www.gulflandrealestate.com

Your Hometown Realtor

Jean Vitali

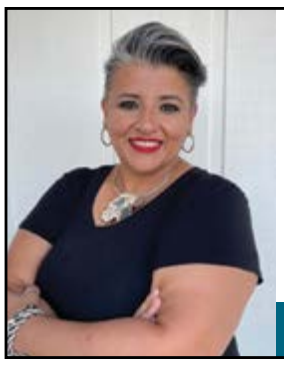
Contact this agent:
863.990.5106
jean1711@gmail.com
www.jeanvitali.com

ONE CALL DOES IT ALL!

COLLINS MANAGEMENT & REALTY

Dan Collins, Broker
863.494.6181
223 E. Oak Street
Arcadia, FL 34266

Make Your Appointment Today!



RMZ Realty Inc
Oralia Ramirez, *BROKER*
863.494.2702
oraliaramirez@gmail.com
www.rmzhomez.com

NEW MEMBERS APPOINTED TO THE SFSC DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

SOUTH FLORIDA State College

SFSC Trustee Bo Conerly

SFSC Trustee Justin Fussell

AVON PARK, Fla. – May 27, 2026 – South Florida State College (SFSC) is pleased to announce the appointment of two new members to the SFSC District Board of Trustees, Robert "Bo" Conerly and Justin Fussell. Board members are appointed by Gov. Ron DeSantis.

Conerly is a senior project manager for Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. Active in his community, he is a member of the Association of State Floodplain managers and the Wauchula Main Street Board. He earned his associate degree from SFSC and his bachelor's degree in Engineering from the University Florida.

Fussell is the area president with Crews Bank for DeSoto and Hardee counties. He is the president of the DeSoto County Chamber of Commerce and is a member of the Florida Cattleman's Association and the Florida Farm Bureau Federation. He earned his bachelor's degree in Agricultural Education and Communication from the University of Florida.

"We are proud to welcome Mr. Conerly and Mr. Fussell to the SFSC District Board of Trustees," said Fred Hawkins, SFSC president. "Their leadership, perspective, and dedication to service will play an important role as we build on our momentum and continue advancing the College's mission."

The governor has reappointed four trustees: Terry W. Atchley, Derren J. Bryan, Devon Donaldson, and Alison Hancock. Atchley, the chair of the SFSC District Board of Trustees was appointed to the Board in 2020. He is county manager for Hardee County. Bryan was appointed to the Board in 2011 and is the chief operating officer of Avail Companies. Donaldson was appointed to the Board in 2024 and is the owner of Geodev Financial Group. Hancock was appointed to the Board in 2024 and is a commercial relationship manager for SouthState Bank.

OBITUARIES

RUSSELL NEWTON MCLENON

Russell Newton McLenon peaceful left this earth in the care of Hospice on June 27th, 2026. He leaves behind a legacy of love and family who cares for him deeply.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Warren Russell McLenon and Polemon Estelle Forrester McLenon.

Russell was born February 2nd, 1942, to the late Warren Russell and Poleamon Estelle McLenon, right here in Arcadia, Florida. Russell was raised here in Desoto County where he loved to hunt and fish, with his brothers and just generally be outdoors. At a very young age, around 10 years old, Russell became a youth member of the First Baptist Church of Fort Ogden. Here, he regularly helped with church services, ushering the patrons and holding doors for those in need. Russell was a member of the Fort Ogden Baptist Church for over 74 years.

In 1958, when Russell was only 16 years old, he met his future wife on his local school bus. Russell was smitten and her asked out, but her father wouldn't let her go to the movies with him by herself. She, Russell and all her siblings piled into a Volkswagen Beetle to go to the local drive-in movie theatre. In no way did this discourage Russell and in 1961, he married Ms. Ola Croy.

Russell was mostly a quiet man, but as he got older, he seemed to enjoy talking with anyone who would stop and chat with him while he rode around town on his cherished golf cart. His cell phone also seemed to be an extension of him, and he loved to check the facts and find out for himself, "according to his smart phone." One hobby Russell really enjoyed doing was yard work, especially mowing lawns. He embraced this talent by helping others around his community and mowing lawns for anyone who needed it. He would also mow the roadside around town and local cemeteries on a regular basis out of kindness and his passion for yard work.

Over the years, Russell became very fond of animals, and he adopted over 20 cats. He loved and cared for every single one of them up until his passing. Each and every one of them were very special to him.

Russell is survived by his wife of 65 years, Ola "Bebe" McLenon; Son, William "Bill" McLenon; Daughter, Deborah McLenon Summey and her partner Timothy Mozroll; Brothers, Larry McLenon and Walter McLenon and his wife Sue; Grandchildren, Rachel Cooper and her husband Jake; Timothy "TJ" Mozroll Jr.; Great-grandchildren, Elyse and Aria; as well as many nieces and nephews whom he loved.

Russell will be remembered and missed by all who knew and loved him. His family will continue to cherish the memories they have of Russell so his memory will forever live on.

Services for Russell will be held graveside at The Fort Ogden Cemetery on Friday, July 10th at 10:00 a.m. Service will be conducted by Pastor Wayne Ernest. Flowers can be sent to Ponger Kays Grady Funeral Home.

GWEN BRANNAN

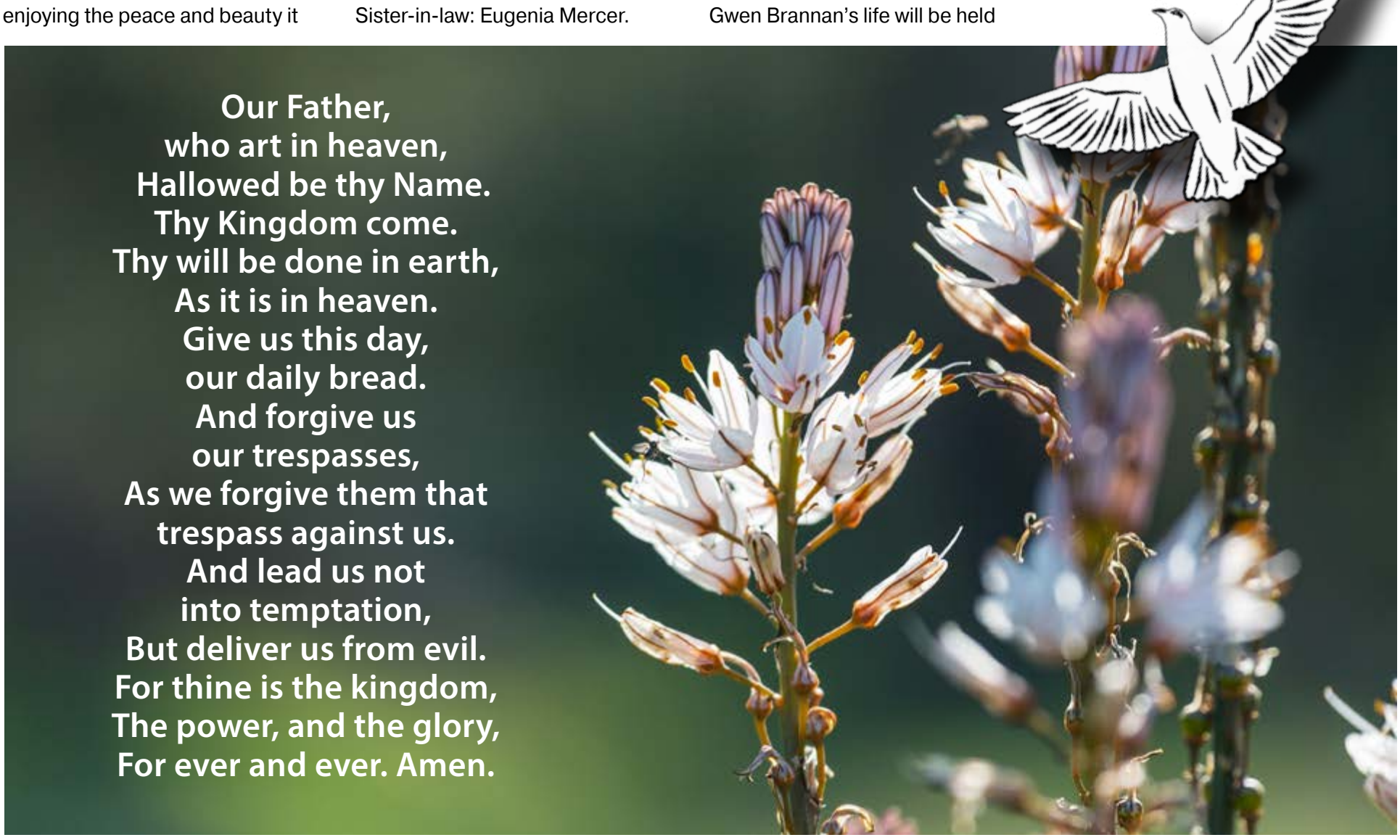
Gwen Brannan, 75, of Arcadia, Florida, passed away peacefully on July 1, 2026. Born on July 5, 1950, in Arcadia, Florida, to the late Birck "Buck" Sullivan and Bessie Parrish. Gwen embraced life with enthusiasm and found joy in the things she loved most. She was an avid fan of the Miami Dolphins and the Miami Hurricanes, faithfully cheering on her teams through every season. She loved spending time on the water, whether boating or simply enjoying the peace and beauty it brought her. Gwen was also a proud member of AMVETS Post 60, where she valued the friendships and camaraderie she shared with fellow members. Above all, she will be remembered for her selfless spirit, unwavering loyalty, and the genuine love she gave so freely to her family and friends.

She is survived by a loving and supportive family who will forever cherish her memory: Niece: Robin Amendola (Andrew); Sister: Sandra Sullivan; Brother: Larry Sullivan (Lana); Mother-in-law: Ann Brannan; Sister-in-law: Eugenia Mercer. Nephews: Brent Sullivan, and Clay Sullivan; Great-Niece: Calynne Vrba (Chris) Along with numerous nieces and nephews.

Gwen was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Eugene "Buddy" Brannan III. Together, they shared many years of companionship and partnership that formed the cornerstone of Gwen's happiness. She was also preceded by her parents, Buck and Betty Sullivan, and Father-in-law Eugene "Gene" Brannan II.

A graveside service honoring Gwen Brannan's life will be held at 11:00 a.m. on July 7, 2026, at Joshua Creek Cemetery, located at 4354 County Road 760, Arcadia, FL 34266. All who knew Gwen are welcome to pay their respects and to celebrate a life so well lived. In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to a local animal rescue/shelter of your choice.

Gwen Brannan's legacy of kindness and love will resonate through her family and friends for generations to come.



DESOTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

ARREST REPORT | 6/26/26 - 7/2/26

Acevedo, Ricardo Soto:
Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While LIC Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

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

Bibbs, Valentine:
Nonmoving Traffic Viol - Fail To Register Motor Veh

Bing, Marcus Tiyone:
Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While LIC Suspend Revocation Equiv Status; Prob Violation - Prob Violation

Boyette, Debra Marie:
Out-of-County Warrant - Out-of-County Warrant

Butts, James Elmer:
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

Caballero-Vasquez, Josue David:
Moving Traffic Viol - Operate Motor Vehicle W/O Valid LIC 1st Conv

Capote, Brian Esteban:
Homicide-Neglig Mansl-Veh - DUI Cause Death To Human Or Unborn Child; Homicide-Neglig Mansl-Veh - Killing Of Human Being Or Unborn Child W Veh; Moving Traffic Viol - Drive While LIC Suspended Death Serious Injury

Crawford, James Andrew:
Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While LIC Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

Davis, Tiara Jenena:
Battery - Cause Bodily Harm

DIEUJUSTE, ANTHONY:
Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While LIC Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

Dominguez, Juan Carlos:
Larc - Other Theft

Essick, Kourtney Shiann:
Neglect Child - Neglect Child With Great Bodily Harm; Neglect Child - Neglect Child Without Great Bodily Harm

Flood, Kevin Don:
Moving Traffic Viol - Drive W/ DL Expired More Than 6 Months

Gabriel, Oscar Miranda:
Battery - Commit Domestic Battery By Strangulation

Gallego, Joseph Michael:
Moving Traffic Viol - Operate Motor Vehicle W/O Valid LIC 1st Conv

Gonzales, Xavier Lee:
Prob Violation - Prob Violation

Guevara, Antonio Ortega:
Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use; Drugs-Possess - Poss Intent SELL/MFG/DELIV Ctrl Sub Schedule I

Hearns Sr., Marcellous Douglas:
Battery - Touch Or Strike

Jones, Sara Maria:
Operate Vehicle Exceed Speed Limit 50+ Mph

Layport, John Michael:
House For Other Agency

Louissaint, Ligenson:
Failure To Appear - Written Promise To Appear

Mejia Estrada, Julio Hansel:
DUI-Unlaw Bld Alch - 0.15 Or Higher Or W Person Under 18 In Vehicle; Moving Traffic Viol - Operate Motor Vehicle W/O Valid LIC 1st Conv

Moran, Lizette:
Marijuana-Possess - Possess Less Than 20 Grams Cannabis

Newhart Jr.,Arthur Wayne:
Contrib Delinq Minor - Cause To Become Delinq Dependent Needy; DRUGS-DELIV/DISTR - Deliver Control Substance to Minor Schedule IV

Perez Guillen, Diego:
Drugs-Possess - Possess Controlled Substance W/O Prescription

Pickett, Franklin James:
Drugs-Sell - Sell Ctrl Substance SCHOOL/PARK Schedule I; Public Order Crimes - Use 2 Way Comm Device To Facil Felony

Pulido Jr., Jesus:
Amphetamine-Traffic - Traffic In METH/AMPHETAMINE 14 Grams+; Contempt Of Court - Viol Injunction Protection Domestic Violence; Drug Equip-Possess - Drug Equip-Possess: And Or Use; Drugs-Produce - Mfg Ctrl Sub Place WORSHIP/CONV Store Schd I (x2); Trespassing - Trespass Fail To Leave Prop On Order Of Owner

Rodriguez, Amaury:
Fraud-Swindle - Defraud To Obtain Property Value Of $20K-$50K; Veh Theft - Grand Theft Of Motor Vehicle

Smith, Tashawna Denise:
Aggrav Battery - Aggrav Battery With A Deadly Weapon; Battery - Touch Or Strike (x3)

Towns, James Ancele:
Moving Traffic Viol - Driv While LIC Suspend Revocation Equiv Status

Veiga, Navaya:
Battery - Cause Bodily Harm

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

HELP SUPPORT THE ARCADIA COMMUNITY LOCAL!

For advertising, contact Angie Duckett:
sales@peaceriversshopper.com** or call **863-990-9813
To participate as a Community Contributor, email:
editorial@peaceriversshopper.com

Join the Mission to Keep Florida Communities Safe

We provide evidence based Forensic Treatment.

Walk-in interviews every Wednesday 9am-noon

Recovery Solutions/Florida Civil Commitment Center

13619 Hwy 70 Arcadia, Florida 34266 (10.5 miles east of Walmart)

(863) 491-4800. To apply please visit RecoverySolutions.us/careers/

We have jobs and careers in security ($21), nursing ($23-38), direct care ($15-16), mental health therapist, maintenance, food service and more...

We find the best fit for applicants based on their work history, attitude, education and interests. New employees receive intensive training and OTJ support.

YOU have choices! We offer Daily Pay, regular paychecks, various health care plans (health, dental, vision), 401K, sponsorship for the Correctional Academy, full time and PRN, some sign bonuses are up to $2000, air conditioned work environment, tuition reimbursement and more...

RecSol Recovery Solutions™

Florida Civil Commitment Center

13619 SE Hwy 70, Arcadia FL 34266 (863)491-4800