

"FOR THIS REASON, I ALSO SUFFER THESE THINGS; NEVERTHELESS I AM NOT ASHAMED, FOR I KNOW WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED AND AM PERSUADED THAT HE IS ABLE TO KEEP WHAT I HAVE COMMITTED TO HIM UNTIL THAT DAY." - 2 TIMOTHY 1:12

Hilliard Middle-Senior High Hires New Head Football Coach

Dawn S. West

The Pride of Hilliard Football Club held their Annual Football Banquet last week. It was at the banquet that everyone was introduced to Hilliard's new Head Football Coach, Matthew Yancey. Many people were surprised, but some weren't. Yancey addressed the crowd and expressed his goals, expectations and excitement for the 2024-2025 season.

Coach Yancey is a Florida State University graduate. He currently lives in Lake City with his wife Kristin and sons Dekle (6) and Harden (3). As Coach Yancey stressed to me, "My family is everything. They are my biggest fans and keep me going!"

Yancey started his coaching career at West Liberty University, West Virginia, as a graduate Assistant from 2013-2014; in 2014-



2016 he was the Offensive Line Coach at Suwannee High School in Live Oak; 2016-2017 he coached at Pine Ridge High School in Deltona; 2017-2020 at Interlachen High School; and 2020-2023 at Branford High School.

Yancey recalled coming to Hilliard to play one season and realizing this was a tough place to play. "I could

see the fans were all in and the team was tough," added Yancey. "There's nothing like small town Friday night football. I hope to build back the trust and consistency into our players. I'm looking forward to getting started. I'm all in! I want to set the expectations high for these players. This is the first school that I have been able to be here prior to the spring season and really get a chance to work with these young men. It's a great opportunity."

Coach Yancey sent this message out to players: *Players: If you are a class of 2024, 2025 or 2026 and want to play college football, please come see me. Small school recruiting is cranking up. Make sure your full season HUDL highlights are updated. Seniors class of 2024, I will help you out anyway possible; whether that is playing college ball, finding a job, or applying*

to schools. Anybody interested in playing football this season, if you do not have me for weightlifting, please see guidance and try to get added to my weightlifting class. We will begin after school Organized Team Activities Tuesday, February 6. This will include agilities, conditioning and scheme installation. These workouts will be every Tuesday and Thursday from 4 - 5:15 p.m. We will increase in days the closer to spring ball we get. If you are not playing an in-season sport you are expected to be there. Spring practice begins April 24. If you do not play in the spring, you cannot play in the fall! We have a chance to get this program back where it belongs, but it does not come easy. The time starts now!

Those are confident words from a confident leader! Welcome, Coach Yancey and Good Luck!



Take Care of It and It Will Last

Dawn S. West

Recently, we had a visitor drop by the office to share something with us. The visitor, Mr. Charles Stahler, of Callahan, wanted to share the invoice from the purchase of his 1974 F100 Ford Truck, from 50 years ago. The purchase was made in January 31, 1974. The invoice is super clear and easy to read, showing that the original cost for the truck was \$4,390.00 and was purchased from Lynch-Davidson Ford. After providing

the original invoice, he asked if we would like to step outside and see the truck? The truck is still beautiful. I don't think I know anyone that still has their original vehicle bought off of the lot. I'm sure there are some, but not that I know!



Charles has called Callahan home for about 38 years. He began his career working in the automotive department at JC Penney in the Gateway Shopping Center. He worked as an auto mechanic. When JC Penney got out



of the automotive business, he and the entire crew were offered to work for Firestone, which Charles did. He later began doing transmission and body work on vehicles. Obviously, he has a love for vehicles and enjoys taking care of them!

Back to his 1974 Ford truck, he has always done the required oil changes and maintenance when needed. He has had to put a new engine in it and completely restored the interior with all

original parts. "I just believe in keeping the old vehicles," said Charles. "I know so much about what makes them run. With these new vehicles, everything on them is electronic, which makes them difficult to work on. I have my own shop and love tinkering with the old vehicles. It's so intriguing to get one working again!"

Charles also purchased a 1967 Ford Fairlane. After working on it, she also purrs like a cat! And it looks brand new inside and out. Charles couldn't help but let me look under the hood at the sparkling clean engine that actually

See 'Take Care of It' on page 2



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Take Care of It

Continued from page 1


looks like it's brand new. He recently purchased a 1969 Ford Torino GTO. "I had been eyeing that car every time I passed by it. Finally, I saw a For Sale sign on it and called about it. She's mine now and I love it," continued Charles. "Working on vehicles was my career, now it's my hobby. I work on them when I can, it keeps me going!"

Charles' story is one that many people love to do, purchase and restore old vehicles, however most people do it to sell them as quickly as possible. Charles prefers to drive his and use them. And he is quite particular when he does that. As he had to make sure



there was no rain when he brought the truck back up for us to take some pictures of it! Just brings back the old saying...If you take care of something, it can last a lifetime!

Black History Month Read-In



Join us Thursday, February 1 at 7 p.m. at the Hilliard Library for a Black History Month Read-In. Pastor Johnnie Green will lead us in reading poetry and other selections by African American authors. You may participate by bringing a 1-2 minute reading from any material written by an African American. Participation is not required, but encouraged.

FREE WEDNESDAY COMMUNITY DINNER
5 p.m. • Callahan Methodist Church • Walk up
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In the Kitchen... Hash Brown Casserole

1 (2 lb.) pkg. frozen hash brown potatoes, thawed	½ cup chopped onion
1 (10.5 oz.) can condensed cream of chicken soup	½ teaspoon salt
2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese	½ teaspoon ground black pepper
1 (8 oz.) container sour cream	1 cup crushed cornflakes
1 cup butter, melted, divided	

Preheat the oven to 350°. Mix hash browns, Cheddar cheese, condensed soup, sour cream, 1/2 of the melted butter, onion, salt, and pepper in a bowl. Transfer mixture to a 9x13-inch baking dish. Sprinkle cornflakes on top, then drizzle with remaining melted butter. Bake until sauce is bubbly and top is golden brown, about 1 to 1 ½ hours.

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JUST MY OPINION

Roger R. West

So much is happening at such a rapid pace, none of us are capable of grasping it all. With Ron DeSantis finally bowing out of the presidential race the stage is set. Biden versus either Trump or Haley, the democrats want Haley, and is funding her campaign account. The reason they want her is because she is a Uniparty, not a republican. She supports mass illegal immigration, supports the transgender agenda and other liberal ideologies. If she were to be the republican nominee it's a win-win for the democrats. They will abandon Biden in droves and vote for Haley. DeSantis, whom is a great governor, has to now rebuild himself to even have the slightest chance of a 2028 bid at the presidency. If he had been smart and not so self-righteous, he would be the Vice President candidate with Trump and a very likely shoe-in for 2028 and 2032.

When Trump secures the nomination (and he will) what are the Democrats going to attempt next? Jack Smith is diligently working on having Trump in prison prior to the election. They will cheat as much as possible but they know it's going to be much harder this time around. Their next option is scary. I first ask you a question. Why are the liberal/communists throwing our country into the gutters? My answer is this; if they can't win on Election Day then their best avenue is to not have an election

day. They are pushing every button they can push on the true patriotic American in hopes to do one thing. We've all heard about the straw that broke the camel's back. The democratic/communist party keeps shoveling things upon us in hopes of triggering a wide spread revolt which will escalate into an armed civil war. We are already in a civil war, left versus right, but thus far it has been peacefully civil.

An ought-right revolution will give the communist leaders the route to impose Marshall Law, hence, no election and permanent rule. I said this same thing while Obama was president but it didn't materialize. Well, Obama is still in control and is the one calling all the shots for Biden. Obama still has the overwhelming desire to be the ruler of America! Call it crazy if you must, but in all honesty, how much more will true Americans be willing to accept? I for one am totally fed up with these liberal ways and yearn for my real America!

Am I suggesting for an armed revolt? Absolutely not! I never want to see something like that in our country. It would be most devastating to witness our countrymen brutally fighting each other. What I'm saying is people can only bear just so much before they will do most anything to protect their home. Standby, it's going to be one heck of a year! God, please protect America!

As always...that's just my opinion!

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Understanding the Bible: Part #1

Pastor Benjie Loyd, River Road Baptist Church, Hilliard



One of the biggest passions of my life is to help people understand the Bible better. The Bible is a life-changing book that God uses to bring spiritually dead people to life. Jesus said in John 17:17 that word of God is truth and that God's people are sanctified by the truths of the Scripture. I would like to take this year and help people get a grip on the contents of the Bible. The Bible can be a very intimidating book. You think about the Bible and you think about this large book, that is difficult to read. The reality is that the Bible is larger than most books, but the way that you read a large book is by reading a little bit a time. The Bible is composed of two testaments, 66 books, and 1,189 chapters. If you read 4 chapters a day, every day for a year, you will read through the Bible in a year. This can be done in under 15 minutes a day.

As you read the Bible, understand that the Bible is not 66 disconnected books. The Bible is one book, telling one story. I don't remember who this quote is original to, but the message of the Bible can be summarized in one sentence. The sentence is as follows: Slay the dragon, get the girl. This is the story. Satan is the dragon. The girl is the bride of Christ. The dragon slayer is Christ. The grand story of the Bible involves 4 movements. The drama of the story is creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. The 66 individual books of the Bible tell this one grand story. The hero of the Bible is Jesus. Every story in the Bible points to Jesus.

There are many ways that you could summarize the message of the Bible. I have shared this in the past. When looking at the whole Bible in light of Christ, we could say the following:

- Old Testament: Christ anticipated
- Gospels: Christ manifested
- Acts: Christ proclaimed
- Letters: Christ explained
- Revelation: Christ returns

Throughout this year, I am going to give you tips on how to understand the contents of the Bible. It is imperative to keep the story focused on Christ. Next month, I will overview the first 5 books of the Bible. It is my desire that these articles will help us all understand the Scriptures better in order to know God better.

CHURCH NEWS

Sanctuary Baptist Church meets Sundays at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. at the Callahan County building, 45401 Mickler St. in Callahan. Come worship with us!

North Hilliard Baptist Church, 552823 US HWY1, offer a Children's ministry available for kids 5-13 years old.

Attend the church of your choice this Sunday.

Sun Wheelers Donate to "Make-A-Wish" Foundation

The Sun Wheelers chapter, of the Family Motor Coach Association, collected donations from their membership over the 2023 calendar year. On January 22, 2024, they presented a check in the amount of \$1,000 to the Jacksonville offices of the "Make-A-Wish" foundation.

The Sun Wheelers are a group of recreational vehicle owners, which travel once a month together,

for fun and friendship. They have memberships, and travels, that encompass the Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia areas. The donation was an accumulation of proceeds from Bingo games, White Elephant sales and some just out of the goodness of the hearts of their membership. The Sun Wheelers Chapter is celebrating its 50th Anniversary of its charter this year.



Shown (l to r) are: Alyssa Huey, Make-A-Wish Development & Communications Engagement Coordinator, John McGraw (Sun Wheelers President) and wife Verna, of Hilliard, Carol Bentley (Sun Wheelers Treasurer) of Jacksonville, Ann and Doug Pearson (Sun Wheeler members) of Hilliard.

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Hilliard Town News

Dawn S. West

The Hilliard Town Council met Thursday night for their final regular meeting of January. The first order of business was the Second and Final Reading of Ordinance 2023-17 which concerned the Vacating of an Alley. The ordinance relates to Public Right-of-Way or Alley; Making Findings; Vacating Public Right-of-Way or Alley within or surrounded by Block 166; Plat of the West Portion in the Town of Hilliard; Authorizing Recording of a Certified Copy of this Ordinance for applicant Ursula Jones. The council approved the ordinance.



The next item was to consider holding one workshop per month on the same day each month. After much discussion, the council decided to try to schedule workshops on the second Thursday of each month and see if that works.

The next item concerned setting the Annual workshop with the Nassau County School Board. The workshop was set for Monday, January 29 at 6 p.m. There will also be a joint workshop with the Planning & Zoning Board and the council Monday, January 29 at 7 p.m. to discuss the Lofty Annexation

and Companion applications. This property is located off of US 1 south.

The council recently had a workshop with Public Works Director Joel Hall concerning Commercial Drivers Licenses for more of the public works employees. "I have been in contact with the Nassau County School Board to see if the town could piggyback off of their system for CDL applications," said Councilman Jared Wollitz. "The application and testing can be done online and we are working to use the same company the NCSB uses for the road course. I will let you know when I find out."

The final items included the approval of a payable to Lampe, Roy & Associates, Inc. for project name; FDOT land North in the amount of \$1,100. This is part of the FDOT PTGA 100% grant funded lump sum grant of \$464,000. The council also approved a payable to USEMSI/HTV for project name; Jet Rig Camera in the amount of \$9,780.29 which is part of a Capital Funded project lump sum contract of \$9,780.29.

The next meeting of the council will be Thursday, February 1 at 7 p.m.

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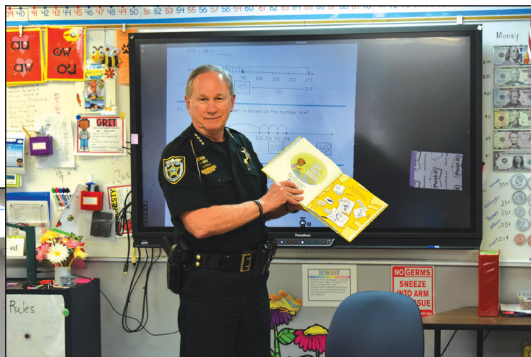
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Sheriff Leeper Visits BES

Sheriff Bill Leeper kicked off Literacy Week in a second-grade class at Bryceville Elementary Monday. Literacy week is designed to raise awareness about the importance of reading and to inspire Florida's students and families to make reading part of their daily routines.



Singley Awarded 2A Dairy Farmers Swimmer of the Year

Last Wednesday, Brody Singley, a junior at West Nassau High School, was awarded the 2A Dairy Farmers Swimmer of the Year! Brody is the first swimmer in Nassau County to receive this award! Brody is also the first West Nassau swimmer to win two State titles.

Brody does his club swimming with Episcopal AmberJax, as West Nassau does not have a pool facility. He trains year round and has actually been swimming since he was about 6-years-old. He placed eighth in the 800m free at Ocala Futures this past summer before racing two events at Junior Nationals. He took third in the 400m free and 1500m free at Orlando Sectionals last winter before going on to win the mile at Florida Seniors. He won the 200 free and the 500 free at the Florida 2A State Championships this past season. His proud parents are Jason and Jenny Singley.



Lee/Jackson Banquet Held

Kim Hoffecker, Chaplain Kirby-Smith Camp 1209, Sons of Confederate Veterans, held its annual Lee/Jackson Banquet at Maggiano's Little Italy in Jacksonville this past Sunday. Guest speaker was Army of Tennessee Councilman Carl Jones, who spoke about the U.S. Constitution, Secession and the causes of the war 1861-1865.



In appreciation, SCV Florida Division Commander Calvin Hart presented Jones with framed pictures of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. For more information about the Sons of Confederate Veterans, visit: scv-kirby-smith.org.

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Nassau County Welcomes New General Magistrate

On Tuesday, January 23, 2024, Deirdre A. Wallace, Esquire, was sworn in as the General Magistrate, Fourth Judicial Circuit, Nassau County, Florida. Ms. Wallace has been a practicing attorney for over 23 years, litigating and mediating family law matters. Many know her as a Partner and Co-Founder of the family law practice Alvarez & Wallace, P.A.



Ms. Wallace matriculated through the Nassau County Public Schools before entering Florida State University, where she earned three degrees,

including a Juris Doctor from the FSU College of Law. Ms. Wallace is passionate about family law and brings years of experience as an accomplished litigator to the Fourth Judicial Circuit. "We raised Deirdre to understand that there is no door she can't walk through or limit to what she can accomplish," stated her parents, DiWell and Veronica Wallace. "We are very proud of her and wish her great success." When asked about her greatest accomplishment, Ms. Wallace does not hesitate to say her son, Richard Roberts.

NCSO Receives Grant for Project LifeSaver

The Nassau County Sheriff's Office was recently awarded a grant to help fund their Project LifeSaver Program. The program is designed to help track and locate loved ones who wander off and become lost. Many of those individuals who benefit from this program, include people who have Alzheimer's disease, dementia, autism or Down Syndrome.



Project Lifesaver deploys radio technology on registered participants to help the Nassau County Sheriff's Office quickly locate, rescue and return home, a missing adult or child. Destiny Davis recently told the Sheriff's Office, thankfully, she hasn't had to activate Project LifeSaver for her 5-year-old son Michael, but the small wristband does give her peace of mind. "Not only does it help reunite loved ones but it can truly prevent a terrible tragedy from

happening," said Sheriff Bill Leeper. Project LifeSaver can reduce the potential of serious injury to adults and children with cognitive conditions by helping our agency respond in a timely manner. This program was funded by a grant provided by the Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA). For more information on the program, email Lt. Ricky Rowell at: rickyrt@nassauso.com.

Sheriff Attends Task Force Summit



On January 18, Nassau County Sheriff Bill Leeper, current Florida Sheriffs Association President, attended the Florida Sheriffs Association Regional Task Force Summit hosted by the Citrus County Sheriff's Office. Seven sheriffs, members of their staff, and representatives of the FSA attended the summit to discuss recent storm deployments to gauge what has worked and how each region can improve its capabilities. We live in an all-hazards state. Thanks to the mutual aid agreement, when a natural or man-made disaster impacts an area, a Sheriff from that region can request assistance from other Sheriff's Offices through the FSA. During storm recoveries, task forces can provide immediate services that aid in daily operations. These services ensure the citizens of that region can continue to receive adequate public safety services to protect their lives and property while beginning recovery efforts. "We've learned over the past few

years that when the unexpected comes along, it can happen to any county in Florida. None of us can do it alone, and it's important to know that you can count on your fellow Florida Sheriffs for help," said FSA President Nassau County Sheriff Bill Leeper. "I want to thank Citrus County Sheriff Mike Prendergast for hosting this meeting and showcasing the equipment that will be used as we respond quickly and safely to affected areas, helping citizens to receive the assistance they need."

The FSA Task Force is divided into seven regions and is Chaired by Bay County Sheriff Tommy Ford. Citrus County Sheriff's Office was selected to maintain the Region Four Disaster Base Camp for lodging personnel during mutual aid missions. This is the first of many FSA planned base camp set-ups, which include two large inflatable tents, cots, portable air conditioners, bathroom trailers, a water trailer, generators and a mobile kitchen.

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Assistant County Manager Eyerman Earns ICMA Credentials

Congratulations to Assistant County Manager Marshall Eyerman on receiving his Credentialed Manager Designation from the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). Marshall is now one of approximately 1,300 local government management professionals in the United States who are currently credentialed through the ICMA Voluntary Credentialing Program, with only 138 residing in the State of Florida.



experience in finance and management, including 15 years working in local government. His education includes a Bachelor of Science Degree and a Master's in Business Administration from California State University San Marcos. He has also received Professional Certificates in Local Government from ICMA University and has completed the Bloomberg Harvard's Innovation Track Project, a leadership and management program designed for senior government officials.

To receive the prestigious ICMA credential, a member must have significant experience as a senior management executive in local government; have earned a degree, preferably in public administration or a related field; and have demonstrated a commitment to high standards of integrity and to lifelong learning and professional development.

ICMA's mission is to advance professional local government through leadership, management, innovation, and ethics and by increasing the proficiency of appointed chief administrative officers, assistant administrators, and other employees who serve local governments and regional entities around the world. The organization's 13,000 members in 27 countries also include educators, students, and other local government employees.

Marshall has more than 27 years of

Since joining Nassau County's team in 2021, Marshall has made significant contributions to the County including: Structuring of the budget to include millage (tax rate) reductions for three consecutive years, as directed by the BOCC; Assisting the County Manager with development of the County's first strategic plan; Earning the County's first Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA); Improvements to the County's credit rating resulting in improved scores from Fitch and Standard & Poor; Development of the Pavement Management Program, Chip Seal Program, and Fleet Replacement and Management Program; Adoption of a fully-funded Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Program; Revision and/or implementation of numerous financial policies to streamline procedures and

POLICE REPORTS

Names, Addresses and all information appearing in the Police Reports are taken from the Sheriff's Department files and do not necessarily indicate guilt, only that arrests were made or charges were filed.

Monday, January 15

Derick Alan Roach, 19, Bryceville: Aggravated Battery on Person older than 65; Deprive 911 Communications

Nicholas Dylan Roach, 22, Bryceville: Aggravated Battery on Person older than 65; Deprive 911 Communications

Thursday, January 18

Frederick James Rock, III, 66, Hilliard: Prior Conviction Felony Battery Commit 2nd Sub Battery

Saturday, January 20

Sean Alvin Epperly, 21, Callahan: Tag Not Assigned to Vehicle; Improper Exhibit Deadly Weapon; Discharge Firearm in Public; Driving While License Suspended or Revoked (no prior forcible Felony); Leaving Crash with Property Damage; Tamper/Destroy Evidence; Aggravated Assault with Deadly Weapon

Aaron Martin Henderson, 34, Hilliard: Possession of Methamphetamine
Gregory Scott Weidner, 41, Hilliard: Possession of Drug Paraphernalia with Residue; Possession of Methamphetamine

Sunday, January 21

Tammy Jean Baker 52, Callahan: DUI Breath Alcohol 0.08 or more than 210L

Wesley Doyle Baker, 57, Callahan: Resist without Violence
Devon Eugene Popham, 53, Hilliard: Habitual Traffic Offender; Violation of Probation Community Control Felony; Tamper/Destroy Evidence; Possession of Methamphetamine

to ensure that the correct controls are in place; Assisted the County Manager in development of the Nassau Florida Prosperity Plan; Implementation of Customer Care Standards in a proactive effort to create a more positive work environment, advance a public service culture, enhance accountability, and to provide for exceptional customer service to those doing business with the County.

Board of County Commissioners Chairman John Martin stated, "Earning the Credential Manager designation through ICMA is especially meaningful

because it represents years of dedication to local government and demonstrates a commitment to professional development that greatly benefits the County and its residents. The Board is proud to have Marshall serving as Assistant County Manager and looks forward to seeing all the great things he will accomplish in the future."

For additional information regarding the ICMA Voluntary Credentialing Program, contact Public Information Officer, Sabrina Robertson, at (903) 530-6010 or email: srobertson@nassaucountyfl.com.

29173 ST. MARYS CIRCLE • HILLIARD



Are you looking for a place to escape to and maybe generate some passive income? Located high on the banks of the St. Marys river, this spacious, 3-story home has been well cared for. Perfect for a large family

or it could be used for an AIRB&B! You can fish the floating docks, swim or ski in the river or just enjoy the beauty of nature. New paint, freshly serviced A/C, new fascia outside, sliding glass doors and garage door recently replaced. With the enjoyable view and serenity, the possibilities are endless. MLS #106538

48077 MERIDIAN TRAIL • HILLIARD



This beautiful, 3BR brick home sits on 2.5 acres and has been meticulously cared for. The attention to detail in this home is quite refreshing and it has the upgrades most people want including

granite counters, stainless steel appliances, double oven and more. The master bedroom is spacious with a soaker tub. Located 1.6 miles from the public boat ramp on the St. Marys River. Bring the horses and chickens! Detached garage will make the perfect Man Cave. MLS #106788

1786 TOMPKINS LANDING RD. HILLIARD



This 2-story home is over 3,300 sq. ft. that's meticulously crafted. It features a wood burning fireplace, upgraded granite countertops throughout, Kitchenaid Stainless

Steel appliances, and a sprawling layout. The view from the second floor balcony is breathtaking. Sitting on 5 acres, deer feed on the Live oaks. The fenced property includes a separate pole barn, workshop and pump house. Price Reduced! MLS #106234

371662 HENRY SMITH RD • HILLIARD



This all-brick home sits on 5 acres just outside the Hilliard city limits. With 3 bedrooms, a large master bedroom and 2 baths, a walk-in closet in the master and a wide open floor plan, it's the perfect place to raise a

family. The family room has a wood burning fireplace and is open to the kitchen so you can socialize while cooking. There's an RV shed off to the side with utilities, a garage that is a workshop and a good-sized pole barn in the back. Bring the animals and you can have a taste of country life close to town. MLS #106235

32415 POND PARKE PLACE FERNANDINA BEACH



Located in beautiful Flora Parke, this home is spacious with 1,900 sq. ft. of living space. This home is located on a cul-de-sac and backs up to a pond and preserve area. Kitchen bar for those

conversations and separate dining area with easy access to the kitchen. Outside you'll find an open air covered patio and plenty of room to fire up the grill or enjoy your morning coffee. MLS #106256

34019 AMERICA LANE • CALLAHAN



This all brick home features a metal roof, tile floors throughout the home, spacious bedrooms with large closets and a functioning fireplace for those cool winter nights. The back porch is screened in

so you can enjoy that morning or evening coffee. You'll enjoy country life sitting on 2.02 acres (zoned Open Rural) with a partially fenced back yard. Located just outside of Callahan off US 301, you'll find this location close enough to conveniences like shopping and schools. MLS #106258



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LAYTON ALTON DOWLING



Layton Alton Dowling, 69, or "Pawpaw" as so many would lovingly call him, was called to walk with the Lord on January 13, 2024, to join his son, James. He left his earthy home with the sounds of laughter and harmony as his sister Cathy Aker helped prepare the evening meal with loved ones gathered around his bedside. He was born April 29, 1954 in Jacksonville, to Von Henry and Mavis Dowling.

He was a United States Army Veteran in the 15th Cavalry. While in the Army he met the love of his life, Sandra Dixon. Alton was happy to tell everyone that and after only 2 weeks they went from "How do you do" to "I do." After he was discharged from the Army, he began a career in the electrical field where he was an electrical serviceman in Alvin, Texas. Alton continued his career and became a Power Trader with Duke Energy in Houston, Texas, before moving to Callahan. He eventually returned to Jacksonville, where he was employed by The Energy Authority until his retirement. Alton was a resident of Callahan for over two decades and a proud member of Crossroads Worship Center.

A proud family man and veteran, Alton would never shy away from the opportunity to tell you about the successes of his loved ones or his time in service. Life and excitement spilled from his mouth as he told his exaggerated stories of fishing or that joke he had already told you a hundred times, but still made you laugh. Alton met every task in life, big or small with pride and an "I got this" mentality and taught his family the same. He was a man with a legacy of pride and tremendous love who never met a stranger and made everyone feel like family. Alton's memory will forever fill a space in our hearts and homes. Alton is preceded in death by his parents; and son James Henry Dowling.

Alton is survived by his wife of 48 years,

OBITUARIES

Sandra Dixon Dowling; sons Michael Lee Dowling and Christopher Layton (Sarah) Dowling; grandchildren Devin (Tabbatha) Dowling, Dustyn Dowling (Caitlin Folk), Alexis Dowling, Noah Dowling (Lindsay Rhoden) and Elijah Dowling; along with his faithful furry companion Biscuit.

A celebration of Alton's life will be held Thursday, January 25 at 2 p.m. at Jacksonville National Cemetery, with Pastor Jeul Strickland officiating where military honors will be rendered. The family requests that casual wear be worn.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations made in Layton Alton Dowling's memory to: Crossroads Worship Center, 542284 US Hwy 1, Callahan, FL 32011.

Arrangements by Nassau Funeral Home, Callahan, 904-879-1770.

Visit www.nassaufh.com to sign the family's guest book.

AVERY THOMAS GREEN, JR.



Avery Thomas Green, Jr., 77, of Hilliard, passed away peacefully January 13, 2024 at Community Hospice Warner Center in Fernandina Beach. He was born November 28, 1946 in Jacksonville, to the late Avery Thomas Green and Iva Lee Jones Green. Avery and the true love of his life, Virginia, wed on January 30, 1965, and were happily married for 59 years. Together they had a beautiful family with four sons. Avery was a loyal and dedicated employee for CSX as a car inspector for several years.

In his spare time, Avery enjoyed fishing and driving race cars. He raced for many years and was in the Jacksonville Motorsports Hall of Fame. Avery found joy in vacationing in the mountains but

more than anything he loved his family and enjoyed spending precious time with them. He was a loving and devoted husband, father, grandfather, brother and friend that will be deeply missed. Avery was preceded in death by his parents; son Troy Green; and sisters Linda Graham and Margaret Warren.

Avery leaves behind his loving wife, Virginia Green; sons Donald (Melissa) Green, Avery (Teresa) Green and Jason Green; brother Lonnie (Juanita) Green; daughter-in-law Christina Green; sisters Donna (Larry) Bruce and Lorraine Chapman; grandchildren Amber Hare, Chad Green, Samantha Starling, Chloe Mireles, Ethan Green, Evan Green, Alex Green, Trevor Green, Kaitlyn Kight and Madison Green; great-grandchildren Emerson Hare, Locklyn Hare, Sutton Starling, Mackenzie Mireles, Madelyn Mireles, Maybre Mireles and Laken Kight.

A celebration of Avery's life was held Tuesday, January 23 at River Road Baptist Church with Pastor James Conner officiating. Interment followed at River Road Baptist Church Cemetery. The family received friends prior to the service.

Arrangements by Nassau Funeral Home, Callahan, 904-879-1770.

Visit www.nassaufh.com to sign the family's guest book.

her family. More than anything, Leila loved to spend time with her family, especially her grandchildren. Leila was a loving wife, mother, sister and grandmother, who will be deeply missed. She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Calvin Knowles, Sr.; and her daughter Annette Erwin.

Leila is survived by her children Sherry (Donnie) Simmons of Starke and Calvin Knowles, Jr. of Bryceville; brothers James (Linda) Nettles and Al (Jan) Nettles, all of Callahan; sister Velma (Marion) Carter; grandchildren Melissa (Matthew) Evans, Shawn (Candace) Knowles, Sonya Brantley, Tally (Ivan) Moon, Corey (Kim) Dube, Daniel (Jessica) Simmons, Michael (Angela) Sistrunk, Jeramie (Michele) Erwin, Neal (Lisa) Erwin, Scott (Brooke) Erwin and Joseph (Destinee) Erwin; and numerous great-grandchildren and extended family members and friends.

The family will receive friends at noon Thursday, January 25 prior to the celebration of life service at 1 p.m. at Nassau Funeral Home with Pastor Ernest Tatum and Pastor Melvin Schemer officiating. Interment will follow at Riverside Memorial Park Cemetery.

Arrangements by Nassau Funeral Home, Callahan, 904-879-1770.

Visit www.nassaufh.com to sign the family's guest book.

EVELYN L. LOVE



Evelyn L. Love, 95, of Jacksonville, passed away January 12, 2024 at Lanier Nursing Home in Jacksonville. She was born January 11, 1929 to the late William and Verdie Lucas. She was a great cook and loved to cook. She enjoyed fishing, going to the beach and lake and spending time with her family. Her favorite trip was traveling to Biloxi, Mississippi anytime she could! We will miss you so much! She was preceded in death by her son Danny Cannon.

She is survived by her children Larry (Janet) Cannon, Sherrill (Randy) Brown, Karen (John) Dyson; daughter-in-law Brenda Lang; seven grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren; and three great-great-grandchildren.

A celebration of life service will be held Friday, January 26 at 4 p.m. at the Bryceville Community Center on Motes Road.

LEILA EDWINA KNOWLES



Leila Edwina Knowles, 80, of Bryceville, affectionately known as "Granny," passed away January 22, 2024 at the Life Care Center of Orange Park. She was born May 6, 1943 in Jacksonville, to the late Arthur Edgar Nettles and Willie Myrtle Veal Nettles. Leila and her late husband, Calvin Knowles, Sr. married on June 13, 1959, and shared 60 beautiful years together. In 2005, Leila and Calvin, Sr. moved from Jacksonville to Bryceville and loved the laid back, country atmosphere. They resided there until he passed in 2019. Leila and Calvin, Sr. were faithful members of New Beginnings Ministries and enjoyed attending services there. She also enjoyed gardening, tending to her yard work, crossword puzzles, shopping at Walmart and cooking Sunday meals for

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OBITUARIES

DAVID GRADY MINSHEW



It is with heavy hearts that we share the passing of David Grady Minshew, 96, of Yulee, on Saturday, January 20, 2024.

Dave was born in Homerville, Georgia. He honorably served four years in the US Navy, before settling in the Fernandina/Yulee area. Dave was employed by Container Corporation of America for 38 years. He was able to enjoy a retirement that was almost as long as his working career. He was also a longtime and faithful member of Yulee Baptist Church.

Dave was predeceased by his wife of more than 40 years, Laverne; his parents Willis and Corine Minshew; brothers J.W. and Ira Minshew; sister Madaline Testone; son David G. (Dinky) Minshew; and son-in-law Norman Lucio.

Dave is survived by his children Troy "Billy" (Sue) Minshew, Annette (J.L.) Burgess, Helen Lucio, Wayne (Mary) Jacobs, Reggie (Diane) Jacobs and Mike Jacobs (RaTree); 18 grandchildren; 55 great-grandchildren; 12 great-great-grandchildren; along with many nieces, nephews and longtime friends.

A celebration of Dave's life will be held Sunday, January 28 at 5 p.m. at Yulee Baptist Church. Dinner will follow in the church Fellowship Hall immediately following the service.

Interment will be held in the Garden of Remembrance Mausoleum at Green Pine Cemetery at a later date.

MICHAEL RAY PAUL



Michael "Beef" Ray Paul, 52, of Hilliard, passed away unexpectedly January 13, 2024. He was born December 11, 1971 in Jacksonville, to Dan Ray Paul and Mary Jane Carroll Paul.

Michael was of the Baptist faith and loved the Lord. He was kindhearted and had a heart of gold. Michael was always willing to lend a helping hand and was able to help so many people throughout his short life. In addition to his huge, giving heart, he had an excellent work ethic and didn't allow anything to hold him back in life. Michael worked for MAC Forestry, Haddock Timber, Callahan Barbecue and Songbird Trucking to mention a few. He even made time to go to school to learn how to drive semis professionally. In his spare time, Michael enjoyed watching football and was an avid Georgia Bulldog fan. Michael will be dearly missed and loved by all who knew him. He was preceded in death by his mother, Mary Jane Paul; grandparents Josh Carroll and Nettie Crews Carroll; and Wilson Paul and Mary Lou Allen Deese.

Michael is survived by his loving father Dan R. Paul; sisters Karen (Paul,

Jr.) Hudson and Nancy Mullaley (Carlos Negron); nephews Paul (Amber) Hudson, III and Patrick (Kayla) Mullaley, Jr.; great-niece Myra Jane; great-nephew Linden Allen; many cousins and countless friends.

Pallbearers were Jason Carroll, Cory Puckett, Chip Wilkinson, Shane McKendree, Mike Ethridge, Andrew Hurst, Nick Webb and Chip Conner. Honorary pallbearer was Carlos Negron.

A graveside service for Michael was held Monday, January 22 at Mill Creek Cemetery in Hilliard, with Pastor James Conner officiating.

Visit www.nassaufh.com to sign the family's guest book.

WILMA JEAN WHITTEMORE



Wilma Jean (Levy) Whittemore passed away January 18, 2024. She was the daughter of Bertha (nee McLaughlin) and Harlan Levy,

in Mount Vernon, Iowa. She graduated with the Mount Vernon High School Class. Wilma moved to Orlando with three of her high school classmates. She met and married CMSGT (Ret) Gordon E. Whittemore at Pinecastle AFB, FL. Mrs. Whittemore traveled the world as a military wife for the next 31 years, moving from base to base with her husband and three children. Wilma was a lifelong member of Beta Sigma Phi, the Veterans of Foreign War Auxiliary, and the Daughters of the Nile, service organizations. After the death of her husband, she moved to Callahan, where she became a member of the Callahan Methodist Church and was involved with the Bible Study program and the Prayer Group. She formed many close friendships with the members of the church including Pinky Kirkland, Alice Harrell, Charlotte Rogers and Gerry Snipes. She enjoyed vacations to St. Augustine and travels with a local tour group to Alaska, Pennsylvania and Branson, MO. She also travelled with her family on cruises to the Caribbean, Bermuda, St. Lawrence Seaway, and Mexico. Wilma moved to Warner Robins, Georgia to live closer to her eldest daughter and resided at The Phoenix at Lake Joy. She was preceded in death by her parents; and her husband.

She is survived by her children Carol (Andrew) Waits, Debbie Whittemore and Bruce (Donna) Whittemore; her grandchildren Courtney (Mike) Davila and Shawn (Kerry) Bennett; and her great-grandchildren Koen Moralez, Karli Davila and Lauren Bennett; and other family and friends in NE Florida.

Many thanks go to the staff at The Phoenix for their excellent care.

A memorial service is planned for Spring 2024 in Callahan.

January marks Human Trafficking Prevention Month



FSA's President and Nassau County Sheriff Bill Leeper, attended and spoke at a news conference at the Florida Capitol last Wednesday on combating human trafficking throughout the state. "Fortunately for Florida, we have strong legislative voices dedicated to this concern," Sheriff Bill Leeper said.

Sheriff Leeper believes it is important that we continue to advocate for strong legislation that holds traffickers accountable and provides law enforcement with the tools necessary to combat this crime effectively. According to the U.S. Department of State, there are an estimated 27.6 million victims of human trafficking worldwide at any given time. Victims of human trafficking include children, women, and men who are subjected to sexual exploitation or forced labor through force, fraud or coercion. "Human trafficking is a heinous crime that preys on the vulnerable in our society, and it demands our collective attention and action," Leeper said.

The event was hosted by One More Child which highlights the fight against child sex trafficking. It is part of a statewide campaign, "Traffic Stop," which coincides with Human Trafficking Prevention Month in

January. One More Child is bringing awareness to how widespread child sex trafficking has become while calling upon policymakers to support legislation designed to better protect minors and help survivors.

The following are just some key red flags that could alert you to a potential trafficking situation that should be reported: The potential victim is living with an employer, the potential victim is surrounded by poor living conditions, there are multiple people living in cramped spaces, the individual appears too afraid to speak, is submissive, or there are signs of physical abuse.

As a reminder, Nassau County residents who suspect human trafficking or child sexual abuse can report any information by calling the Nassau County Sheriff's Office at (904) 548-4009, or you can report it to Law Enforcement in Florida by calling 1-855-FLA-SAFE or remain anonymous by reporting the information to First Coast Crime Stoppers at 1-866-845-TIPS.

For more information on One Child, visit: <https://onemorechild.org/>.



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Naturally Nassau

Did Nassau County's Bicentennial Kick Off or Squib?

Nancy Lee Bethea

This fictional column features an inside look into the lives of John and Bethany McNair, a couple who live and work in Nassau County. The McNairs have three children, John Jr., 19, Brianna, 15, and Jacob, 5. Mr. McNair is a transplant from Chicago, Illinois, who teaches art. Mrs. McNair is a Nassau County native who works as a forester and has deep roots here.

With all the Christmas decorations packed away, our New Year's Celebration over, and our oldest child, John Jr., back at college, I was excited to take John, Jacob and Brianna to the Nassau County Bicentennial Celebration. So, we loaded up the truck last Saturday morning and drove to Wildlight. We arrived a little after 1 p.m. and parked at the elementary school. A school bus shuttled us from the parking lot to the vendor area. Jacob took off running, then stopped on a dime and lined up at the balloon artist's table. Brianna immediately found a friend and asked if they could check out the food trucks. That left John and me to wander through the vendor area on our own.



We saw everything from ammunition to YMCA memberships being sold. John got excited when he caught a whiff of crockpots full of chili for the Chili Cookoff. He gobbled three samples, and I tried one which was really spicy. By then, Jacob ran up to us swinging his balloon pirate sword.

Moving on, we passed the main stage set up for live music and saw cornhole games on a grassy area. John and Jacob played a few rounds and then moved onto a bouncy house. Meanwhile, I bought a bouquet of fresh flowers and some local honey. We met up again inside a large tent where the Vision 2050 activities were set up. The idea was for residents to share their ideas for the future of Nassau County. Jacob colored a picture while John became intrigued with the maps showing areas of future growth. I stopped at the table where I could write future-me a postcard sharing why I love Nassau County now and what I'd love to see here in the future.

The chili samples had only whetted John's appetite, so we decided to visit the food trucks. Jacob and I wanted a hot chocolate, but John wanted a meal. He chose a Mexican plate from the taco truck, but Jacob and I never found any hot chocolate vendors. We settled on Cokes instead and sat with John while he ate.

"Where's the history?" he asked between bites. "What do you mean?"

"Isn't this a bicentennial? Aren't we celebrating 200 years of Nassau



County?"

"Yeah, so?"

"So, I remember my dad telling me about America's Bicentennial back in 1976. It was such a big deal. He still has the coffee mug he won in a contest. It has the coolest interlocking logo with the years 1776-1976 on it." I sipped my Coke and listened. "Here," John said as he glanced around, "everything is focused on the future. Where's the history? The railroads, the pine trees, the old hotels on US 1? You'd think the historical society would set up a booth or something."

Once he asked the questions, I thought about them. There wasn't anything about my beloved county's history at this kickoff. Then, I remembered my kids and how much I wanted them to know about Nassau County's roots and charm. I reviewed every place we had visited in my mind: a vendor area, a kids' area, a stage with live music, a food truck area, and a tent



with activities focused on the future, but nothing about the past. "You're right," I said after a moment or two. "Maybe that will be part of the next event."

Brianna and her friend found us a few minutes later. She showed me a

pair of gemstone earrings she bought. Then, her friend had to go. At this point, I was cold and more than a little dejected. John and I looked at each other and decided to head home. We caught a shuttle bus to the parking lot and loaded into our truck. Until next time, we will be teaching our kids more Nassau County's rich history as we live our naturally Nassau life.

Nancy Lee Bethea is a local writer who leads the Creative Writing Department at LaVilla Middle School of the Arts in Jacksonville. She is married to Stan Bethea and they live in Callahan with their teenage daughter and their rescue cat.

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