

"MAY THE GOD OF HOPE FILL YOU WITH ALL JOY AND PEACE AS YOU TRUST IN HIM, SO THAT YOU MAY OVERFLOW WITH HOPE BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT." - ROMANS 15:13

Huge Fourth of July Celebration Planned



Dawn S. West

The Callahan Town Council met Monday night for their first meeting of June. The first part of the meeting was a presentation from Callahan resident and business owner Paul Schwend. "This year the July 4th celebration will be bigger and better. For one thing, Nassau County is celebrating 200 years this year and will be helping to fund the fireworks. The towns of Callahan and Hilliard have joined together for the past two years to fund the show, now the county will also be adding money to make the show bigger," said Schwend. "We also will be honoring Mr. Rodney Mills, also known as the Father of Southern Rock.

Rodney was in the music industry for over 60 years, as a producer, mixing and/or engineering music. Rodney and his wife Mary have lived in Nassau County for 40 years. Here's just a little playlist of songs that will be played and sang by different artists on July 4th right here in Callahan at the fairgrounds!" Schwend then played little snippets of just some of the songs Rodney had a part of. "This is going to be a fun day for our community and county," added Schwend.

"I am honored for Paul to have taken on this task," said Mills. "I've always been behind the scenes with my production and am okay with that. I was raised in Coffee County, Georgia

and worked in the fields. I told myself then, I wasn't going to do that for a living. Music has been good to me and I'm thankful for this great honor."

The July 4th Celebration will be held on Thursday, July 4th this year at the NE FL Fairgrounds.

The gates will open at 4 p.m. There will be food trucks, pie baking contest, watermelon eating contest, vendors, games and much more, and of course spectacular Fireworks at dark.

The first agenda item was a concern from Mr. Micheal Benjamin, who has a house on Dixie Avenue that he has been renovating. "I currently live in Lake City until I can finish the work on my house. I would like the town to turn my lights back on for me. Also, the town is still taking money out of my account for water," said Mr. Benjamin. "I have been working on this small house for four years and I have about 1 more month and I could be finished. I just need a new roof and some siding."

"Mr. Benjamin, you came before this council in September 2023 about this house as you received a letter from our inspector saying your house was deemed unsafe," said Town Clerk Shawna Gugliuzza. "You were told at that meeting, you needed to have a structural engineer to inspect your house and give you a letter of approval to live in the house. You told us then, that you would bring the letter to us. You never did."

"Ma'am, I talked to a structural engineer and they wanted lots of money to inspect my little house," added Benjamin. "I don't have that kind of money. And I'm still having money

See 'Huge Fourth of July' on page 3

Fatal Accident Claims Two

Last Tuesday, the lives of two families were changed forever from a head-on collision on US 17 north of Yulee. According to Florida Highway Patrol reports, around 6:40 p.m. a Dodge Ram pick-up truck, driven by a 58-year-old Fernandina Beach man, was traveling north of US Highway 17, north of Quail Ridge Road. A 2018 Kia Sportage, driven by Charles Cribbs, 53, of Hilliard, was traveling south on US Highway 17, with his wife Denise, 48, as a passenger. The driver of the Dodge pick-up failed to maintain control of his vehicle, which caused his vehicle to enter the southbound lane and into the direct path of the Kia Sportage. The front of the Dodge collided with the front of Kia.



After the impact occurred, the Dodge went over the concrete wall and fell to its final rest. The Kia came to final rest, facing east, in the southbound travel lane. The driver of the Dodge and the passenger of the Kia, Denise, were pronounced deceased at the scene. The driver of the Kia, Charles, was taken to UF Health with serious injuries.

Charles and Denise Cribbs are both well known throughout the towns of Callahan and Hilliard. Denise has been

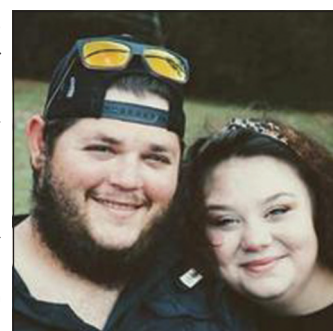
a hair stylist for many years and has built up her clientele to a huge group of people that have grown to be dear friends. She recently opened her own salon in Hilliard, Lovely You Beauty Parlour. All the salons in both towns were shattered to hear the news of Denise's passing. She was a stylist that not only did an amazing job with cuts and styles but also took time to enjoy her customers by always listening and caring about their lives. That included not only women, but also men and lots of children.

Charles has been in the paint and body industry for years. He is employed with Green's Rod Shop in Callahan. He is also known as one of the best car body shop people around. He has also built a name for himself in the industry and has been sought out for some incredible jobs and made many beautiful creations out of a mess. Our prayers continue for Charles' complete recovery, as he has a long road ahead in healing.

A celebration of life for Denise will be held this Thursday, June 6 from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. at The Barn at Cottonwood Ranch in Callahan. Please continue to pray for these families during this difficult time.

Freak Accident in Hilliard

A Hilliard family is mourning the loss of their loved one, Austin Thrift, who was hit and killed by an out-of-control car while standing in a parking lot. According to Florida Highway Patrol reports, last Sunday around 5:50 p.m., a 27-year-old male driver of a Sport Utility Vehicle lost control and the vehicle veered off the roadway and flipped of US 1. When



the vehicle began to flip, it hit an empty parked Subaru and the pedestrian, 32-year-old Austin Thrift, who was standing in the parking lot.

The victim's brother, Travis Thrift, said his brother Austin was just going to the store less

than 3 miles from home. Austin leaves behind a wife and two children and was loved by many.

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A Word From the Publisher



wasn't too much traffic. In fact, for it to be the first week of school being out, our hotel wasn't slammed full. There were plenty of people but not crowded by any means.

We headed up to the room, showered and went to one of our favorite places to eat, Aunt Catfish's. It's just a nice seafood place on the Halifax River. Prior to the China virus, they had an amazing salad bar. I don't think I've ever seen one that big...bigger than Ruby Tuesdays. Now, they have changed it and in the place of the massive salad bar is where they make homemade cinnamon rolls. Now they offer a fixin's plate to replace the salad bar. The fixin's include cheese grits, baked beans, cole slaw, stewed apples and cornbread. So really, by the time you eat your fixin's and about four cinnamon rolls, I should have been done, but no. The dinner was great and such a pretty view of the river.

Spending time just relaxing is something I think we all forget to do. Life is so busy that we don't take the time we need to. I'm so thankful for the opportunity to slip away and enjoy some time with my husband and enjoy some beautiful scenery at the same time.

Tuesday night, I received a text from my daughter-in-law, Summer, telling me about the accident with Charles and Denise Cribbs. Immediately my heart sank as tears filled my eyes as I read the text. I called her to find out any details with my heart aching for the families. Denise has been my daughter's hair stylist and friend for years. My daughter

Last week, I celebrated another birthday, thank you Jesus! Roger had made some reservations in my favorite place, Daytona Beach, and we headed out Tuesday. I must say, I think both of us were much in need of a getaway. You know, sometimes you just need a break from the normal. The weather was absolutely perfect with a wonderful breeze blowing on the beach each day.

One of the things we always do is to rent a couple of chairs, a table and umbrella and relax on the beach all day. I love walking on the beach mainly in the mornings. It's such a peaceful time to reflect and have some time with Jesus. We enjoyed some breakfast at the hotel and then headed to our beach chairs. We must be old as we don't even listen to music. The sound of the waves and surf just bring in the calm and relaxation. Daytona does allow driving on the beach but thankfully there

Letters to the Editor



Letters to the Editor may be emailed to news@westsidejournal.net but must include a complete name. Letters should be no longer than 300 words.

America the Boo-tiful

Dear Editor,

We have witnessed a modern-day crucifixion by a judicial system modeled after the Pharisees. Why? An angry mob, led by a contaminated judge sinking in the quicksand of bigotry and short-lived infamy. A gluttonous prosecutor whose next assignment is a blimp in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, if he doesn't explode from overeating before. Two maladjusted witnesses: an adult porno flick performer, commercial slut, looking to add to her already shameful reputation; and a disgraced/disbarred lawyer second only to Biden's henchmen as a contemptible liar. And, finally, 12 angry jurors who are really pissed off about having to live in a city of crime, grime and slime were given a target for their anger.

Irony! A well-intentioned citizen who has done nothing but stand up for us, lead the government in making a better life for us, materially, financially with the protection of law and order in our streets and at our borders.

While the squinty-eyed walking dead, "just an old man with a bad memory" who will forget causing World War III and robbing us of enough money to live on, sits comfortably ensconced in the "People's House." And the

American people watch in the same way they approach a sports or any other event, hoping their team will win.

Woe is me!
B. R. McConnell

Here's Your Sign!

Dear Editor,

To everyone that doesn't vote or votes for the same person expecting a different outcome ~ "Here's your sign." The easiest and simplest way to affect change is to vote. If the person you voted for does not keep their word, hold a special election and get someone new!

This is not rocket science! As we are finding out the hard way; the status quo is not working. In my opinion, not only get rid of the politicians that do not keep their word, but get rid of the people that are hired or appointed by them. It seems the biggest problem is people who can't be fired, like me the voter. I think everyone in government services should be voted on. Your job in government is to serve the people, not act like a tyrant because you can't be voted out...politicians will never fire themselves. Term limits are up to the voter. If you don't like them - VOTE THEM OUT!

Sincerely,
Chris Book

Jenny called me early Wednesday morning to see why I called her late Tuesday night. When I told her, she broke down. Once again, my heart was breaking. Prayers continue for all the family and friends through this tragedy.

As I was talking to Jenny, I opened the blinds to see the sun beginning to rise. After our conversation, I went for my walk on the beach. As the sun

continued to rise, I was reminded of God's grace and mercy for each day. Following such a horrible event, God remains faithful each day with new mercies. We don't understand but we know we can be comforted by God's loving arms anytime.

Have a blessed week!

Dawn S. West

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Huge Fourth of July

Continued from page 1

drawn out for the water and sewer bill and I can't even use it."

Following a long discussion, Gugliuzza asked, "Why have you not turned the water off?"

"I did," he replied.

"I will look back and see if you ever came in to request to turn off the water at the house. If I see that you did, you will receive a refund from that," said Gugliuzza. "I will also get you a couple of names of structural engineers so you can get a quote from them, because you can't do anymore work until we receive a letter of approval for you to live in the house."

The next order of business was a discussion about the Verizon Wireless Lease Renewal. "I just need a consensus from the council to move forward on looking over the new contract," said

Mayor Knagge.

In closing comments, Councilwoman Janet Shaw advised the council about getting a cost on some upgraded cameras for Ewing Park. "I know we have discussed it but I think we need make a decision about it," said Shaw.

"I think this is more of a public safety issue and we need to have better cameras," said Councilwoman Jacquelyn Fleming. "We want to people to be able to enjoy the park, safely."

"Currently, we are spending \$900 per week for Nassau County deputies to patrol three days a week," said Gugliuzza. "We can't continue to do that." The council agreed to move forward on getting prices for better cameras for Ewing Park.

The next council meeting will be held Monday, June 20 at 7 p.m.

JUST MY OPINION

Roger R. West

My computer crashed last week, and I mean a total crash, as in fatal! I have lost so many folders and saved information that it makes me sick. My pictures were backed up in the cloud so at least I have those. With that being said, I finally received my new computer Monday afternoon. Hopefully, Dawn will publish this even though I am skirting the deadline.

In my humble opinion, Donald Trump won the Presidential Election of 2024 last Thursday when the crooked biased judicial system convicted him of 34 felonies in a New York courtroom. The trial was a low point in American history. It was manipulated in such fashion that everyone knew what the verdict was going to be. The judge presiding over the trial was specially chosen even though he was not even on the rotation list. He is a strong Biden supporter and his daughter is neck deep with the Biden campaign. The pungent smell of lawfare was overwhelming. The jurors were chosen from a district that voted 87% for Biden in 2020, and people think there was no bias?

Now some of the Democrat operatives that were pushing these manufactured charges are realizing they underestimated the American people. Instead of this mock trial turning the masses away from Trump, it has incited just the opposite. Within 48 hours of the verdict, people donated \$70 million dollars to the Trump campaign,

longtime Democrats have come out in support of Trump, the number of black voters supporting Trump have already doubled from 2020, numerous Hollywood elites have stepped out in support of Trump.

The Democrat Communist Party is going to have a very difficult time stealing the 2024 election. They will try, you can bet your last dollar on it (if you have a dollar left after Biden's build back better). There's a meme floating around social media that states, "If you are better off today than you were four years ago, then you must be an illegal alien." But with Trump leading in all major polls, even the "swing" states it's going to be interesting what the Dems will do.

According to a financial consultant firm, 'we the people' must make \$11,000 more in 2024 just to maintain the level of living we had in 2023. I don't know about you, but I certainly did not get a \$11,000 raise this year. Of course, there are many more serious problems facing us other than financial, we also have to be very concerned with Biden being close to allowing the "World Health Organization" (WHO) and NATO to have absolute control of many areas of our lives. This is most concerning and we need to be extremely vigilant. The Democrat Party has no regard or allegiance to our Republic.

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

GET HELP NOW!



If you love someone struggling with drug or alcohol use, you may feel alone and unsure where to turn for help. That is where Parents of Addicted Loved Ones (PAL) can help. PAL weekly meetings provide a structured, evidence-based curriculum to give you the tools you need to encourage your loved one's recovery without enabling their addiction. The free and confidential meetings are held on Mondays at 6 p.m. at the Northeast Florida Baptist Association in Yulee; and Wednesdays at 6 p.m. at the Hilliard Library. Come and learn new ways to deal with your loved ones and gain a better understanding of addiction. For more information, call (904) 703-7847 or email at tashiad210@gmail.com.

In the Kitchen...

- 1/2 cup butter, melted
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon ground mustard

Tasty Onion Chicken

- 1 can (2.8 oz.) French-fried onions, crushed
- 4 boneless skinless chicken breast halves (4 oz. each)

In a shallow bowl, combine butter, Worcestershire sauce and mustard. Place onions in another shallow bowl. Dip chicken in butter mixture, then coat with onions. Place chicken in a greased 11"x7" baking dish; drizzle with remaining butter mixture. Bake, uncovered at 400° for 20-25 minutes or until an internal thermometer reads 165°.

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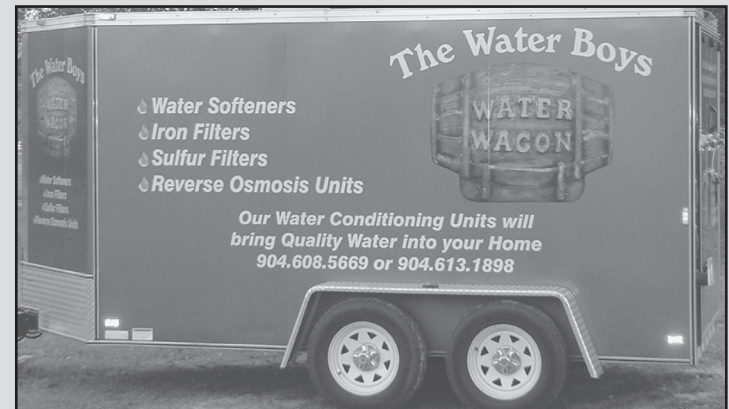
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Thinking Of Christmas in June

Pastor Marty Paparo, Friendship Alliance Church, Callahan



This most recent December, our church participated in the Callahan Christmas Parade. Following that exciting event, a group in our church immediately started to plan. They wanted to tell one story in multiple floats from multiple churches in this year's Christmas Parade. We met with other churches and shared the vision and many were excited about the idea. We decided that the 'Churches on the Westside' would present the "Miracles of Jesus."

Our goal is three-fold: 1) Share the miracles you know and love on a float; 2) Share some of the lesser-known miracles on a float; and 3) Show a trait that is unique to the Westside of Nassau County: Church Unity.

It amazes me how God has blessed our community with pastors and church leaders who love Jesus, love our community, and love other churches in our area. I cannot tell you how many times we have been helped by another church or how often we have worked with another church to accomplish a goal bigger than ourselves.

In Ephesians 4, Paul instructs us to, "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift." Ephesians 4:1b-7, ESV

We worship in different churches with different styles and different beliefs on some of the lesser theologies, but we all love Jesus. We all are one body, share one hope in Christ, and share one Spirit. If you know of a church that would like to work with other churches by making a float of one of Jesus's miracles, send me an email; we would love to include them: marty@friendshipcma.org.

CHURCH NEWS

North Hilliard Baptist Church, 552823 US HWY1, would like to invite all men to our Men's Prayer meeting held the 1st Monday of month & the 3rd Saturday of the month, both at 6 p.m.

Sanctuary Baptist Church meets Sundays at 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. at the Callahan County building, 45401 Mickler St. in Callahan. Come join us as we Worship Jesus.

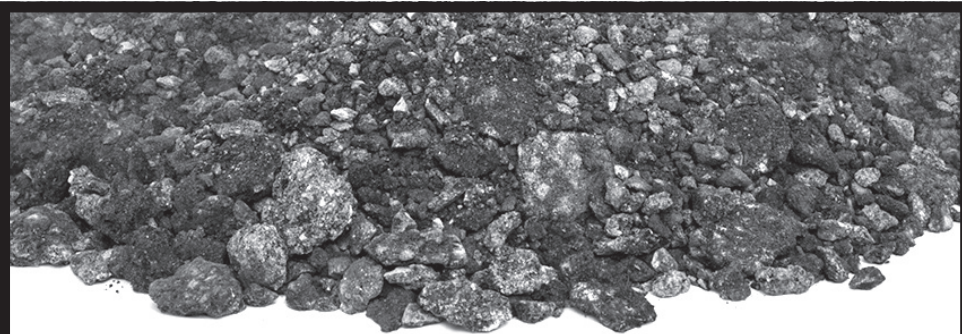
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Nassau County Medical Reserve Corps Honored

At the National Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Summit Awards Ceremony on Thursday, May 23, 2024, Nassau County MRC, unit #2678, received the prestigious recognition as the country's Outstanding MRC Unit of 2024 in the Preparedness & Resilience category. This honor highlights the unit's distinguished contributions to reducing vulnerabilities, building resilience, and enhancing public health preparedness at the county level.

In addition to the unit's accolade, lead instructor Jim Bollenbacher was selected as a presenter at the summit. He delivered an insightful presentation on Hands-only CPR and was awarded the national 2024 Preparedness & Resilience Volunteer Award for his exceptional volunteer service and commitment. Nassau County Emergency Management (NCEM) wants to thank Commissioner



Jeff Gray and the Board of County Commissioners for partnering alongside the Nassau County MRC as they work to have Nassau County recognized as a HEARTSafe community. The Nassau County MRC continues to lead the way in public health and emergency preparedness, demonstrating excellence and dedication in serving the community.

Genealogy Tidbits

Claude Arpen

Another free genealogy website is: linkpendium.com. It is a list of the ten million genealogy and historical websites across the United States and the UK. You can search by name or by location where your ancestors came from. This should keep you busy for a while!

To learn more, join us at the West Nassau Genealogical Society meetings the second Monday of each month at 10:30 a.m. at the Callahan Lions Club, located just past the NE FL Fairgrounds on US Highway 1. Visitors are always welcomed!

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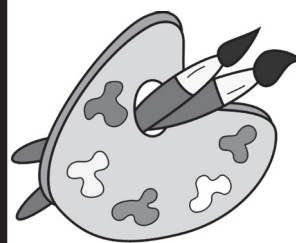
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Citizens for a Better Nassau County Releases Updated Study

Citizens for a Better Nassau County released an updated study, performed by the real estate economics consulting firm RCLCO, that reexamines Nassau County's fiscal sustainability. The original study, which was commissioned by Citizens for a Better Nassau County back in 2016, showed that Nassau County was facing long-term fiscal sustainability issues.

Specifically, the 2016 study found that the county's tax base was much more dependent on its residential tax base than surrounding counties, counties of a similar size and to Florida as a whole. It also showed that the anemic growth in industrial and commercial land use development had created a much greater reliance on residential property taxes to fund the county government and that a lack of higher value industrial and commercial development had contributed to the one-mill property tax increase that had happened at that time. "We're excited to be releasing an updated study that shows where Nassau County is today," said Bill Gingrich, a retired GE executive and the chairman of Citizens for a Better Nassau County. "The 2016 study stressed the need for the county to diversify and broaden its tax base and decrease its dependence on residential property taxes to fund all government services, in order to become more fiscally sustainable, and we wanted to see if the county has made any progress toward doing so."

Over the past two years, Citizens for a Better Nassau County has detailed the concerted effort that Nassau County has made to address its fiscal sustainability, which has included the following: Shifting historic development patterns to higher quality and more compact, mixed-use community developments to minimize the impacts of inevitable population growth while encouraging non-residential land uses and economic development to strengthen tax rolls; Right-sizing impact fees paid by builders after many years of mismanagement; Developing and executing fully funded capital improvement plans, resulting in new fire houses, parks and infrastructure improvements across the county; Implementing multi-year budgetary practices; All while maintaining low millage rates.

"We wanted to know if all this work by our county commission had paid off, and the updated study shows that it has and that what they are doing is moving the needle in the right direction," said Gingrich.

The updated study found the following: While Nassau County still remains more reliant on residential development than other counties in the state and the region, the county has seen an increase in retail and office development, which has helped to create a more diverse tax base; Office occupancies are also strong relative to more urban areas, insulating the county budget somewhat from declining office property values seen in other parts of the country; and In turn, millage rates have declined modestly since 2016, in part due to the support of a growing tax base.

All commercial development – industrial, retail and office – increases fiscal strength more than residential uses do, with 25 acres of retail generating over 26 times the net fiscal impact of 25 acres of single family residential. This means that additional commercial development in Nassau County will enable the county to continue to maintain its low millage rates. "While the industrial development that is needed to further diversify the tax base hasn't borne out yet in the current economy with high uncertainty, development costs and interest rates, the county is now well positioned for it," said Gingrich. "The county now has the means to do so, as both the Crawford Diamond, southwest of Callahan, and the Wildlight Commerce Park are ready for development. Diversifying our local economy and tax base benefits everyone, creating an economy more resilient to future economic downturn, high-wage jobs for current and future generations of citizens, lower residential property taxes, a higher quality of life and a more fiscally sustainable county," continued Gingrich. "Our county commissioners and staff deserve a lot of recognition for helping to get our county on the right fiscal path. We hope they keep up the great work!"

To learn more about Citizens for a Better Nassau County and to read the 2016 RCLCO study, as well as the updated study, visit: www.citizensforabetternassau.com.

Living Financially Free

Yvette Outler

Affordable Summer Fun Plans for the Kids

The kids are out of school. They are already asking the infamous question, "What are we going to do today?"

Having raised three children, I know all too well how quickly children become bored. It is good to have fun outings on the calendar to give them (and you) something to look forward to. Here's a handful of ideas:

1. AMC Theaters Summer Movie Camp – Between June through August AMC will have a variety of loved familiar movies to watch such as: Minions the Rise of Gru, Sing, Sing 2, The Secret Life of Pets, Migration, Despicable Me 2, and Despicable Me 3. According to their website www.amctheatres.com the tickets will be \$3.00+tax. Advance purchase is available. That is an affordable day out!

2. Park Day – Ewing Park (Callahan) or Town Hall Park, Oxford Street Park, North Oxford Street Park, and D. H. "Buck" Buchanan Town Square Park (Hilliard) – Meet up with your friends and enjoy the local park. Bring your lawn chairs and home-packed lunch and plan on staying a while. Cost: FREE!

3. Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge – 2700 Suwannee Canal Road, Folkston, Georgia. They have a nice tree canopied picnic area. There is an interactive walkway loop for children. They charge \$5.00 per carload (this ticket lasts one week). If you want to splurge and take the 90-minute boat tour it is worth it! The ride costs \$35.00 per adult and \$30.00 per child under thirteen. Two and under are free. When we took our grandchildren, we saw tons of gators!



4. Swimming – Hilliard Parks & Recreation – Pool: It is open from Memorial Day through Labor Day. They have affordable daily, monthly, and seasonal rates. www.townofhilliard.com and click on Parks & Recreation and then their "Rates Sheet."

5. Skate Park – Hilliard - Hilliard has a fun skate park. Pads and helmets required. The skateboard/bicycle park includes ramps and a shaded sitting area. Cost: free!

6. Scavenger Hunt(s)– This can be completed a couple of ways; either by taking pictures with your phone or creating a check list of the items. Nature: pinecone, small stick, snail, flower, frog, caterpillar, large leaf, rock, bird's nest, green leaf, spider web, feather, bug, grass, pine needles, fallen branch, smooth object, flying insect, cloud, water, and bird. Beach: Waves, three types of shells, crab, fish, sand, seagull, kite, beach towel, sunscreen, sea turtle, beach bucket, boat, oyster, fishing pole, dolphin, and sharks' tooth. Cost: FREE!

Yvette Outler is a Dave Ramsey's Solution Master Financial Coach. If you are in over your head in debt and need hope and help, contact her at Fiscallyfree7@gmail.com.



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Importance of a Blood Clot Surveillance System

Douglas Adkins

You may not be aware of the true threat posed by blood clots ...but you should be. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an estimated 900,000 families are affected by blood clots each year and 100,000 of them have suffered a death as a result. Florida may be at the forefront of a breakthrough by becoming the first state in the nation to introduce a blood clot surveillance system. Floridians are generally unaware of not only their risk of developing blood clots but also the life-saving steps they can take to prevent them. A survey of Floridians last year showed that of those who were aware they had a blood clot risk factor, fewer than 1 in 5 said their doctor talked to them about a prevention plan. The effort to track blood clots will be championed by the policy workgroup established under the Emily Adkins Prevention Act, a Florida law inspired by our nonprofit foundation, Emily's Promise, dedicated to honoring the life of our daughter who died of a blood clot. The workgroup consists of lawmakers, medical experts, and blood clot survivors working hard to see this surveillance system come to life.



system have been identified by the policy workgroup as:

1. Develop case definitions;
2. Identify indicators and data sources;
3. Identify partners to undertake surveillance;
4. Collect, analyze, and disseminate data and findings;
5. Evaluate the system and its impact on

Venous thromboembolism (condition caused by blood clots). By establishing a surveillance system, Florida would lead the nation in establishing a tool to let health care providers obtain valuable data from various sources, including hospitals, research institutions, and clinics. This data would further advance knowledge of trends, risk factors, outcomes related to blood clots, and available resources to address such outcomes effectively. Additionally, by tracking such information, we may be able to see and track a reduction in blood clots as awareness efforts expand.

Executing this tool will save lives, protect public health, drive research and innovation in the medical field, and transform preventive medicine and patient care. It's time to recognize the urgency of implementing such a system and put it into action now for the sake of those who will be affected by the silent threat, and potentially life-altering heartache, of clot-related conditions.

The steps to build and implement a statewide blood clot surveillance

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Nassau County School Millage Update!

Thanks to the voters of Nassau County, the millage funds are helping to enhance Employee Compensation, Arts, Athletics, and Security across all our schools. Millage revenues are being divided between the four areas of Employee Compensation, Safety, Arts, and Athletics: 70% - Compensation, 12% - Safety, Health, Intervention and Prevention, 9% - Arts and 9% - Athletics.

Enhancing athletics in our schools, the Nassau County School District recently completed the first weight room. They began refurbishments at Hilliard Middle-Senior High School, which was in dire need. They are not stopping there. Along with weight room refurbishments, funds are also being used for full-time athletic



trainers at all four high schools, new equipment for all middle and high schools, track refurbishments with



rubberized surfaces at all four high and quality enhancements and upgrades to athletic fields. Renovations are already in progress at our other high schools!

In an effort to keep our students and staff safe, NCS D has implemented the purchase of the Centegix mobile panic alarm system, access control for all schools, new video surveillance equipment, walk-through metal detectors, new police radios, and the addition of a technician specializing in security equipment operation, installation, and maintenance.

In order to enhance Fine Arts in our schools, for the first time in many years, we will have art teachers in each of our nine elementary schools. Our middle

and high schools will receive funds to purchase new equipment, instruments, and materials for all of their fine arts programs, including band, drama, chorus, and visual arts.

Nassau County School District teachers and support personnel are also benefiting from the millage. Revenue

generated by the one mill has allowed teachers to receive supplements ranging from \$2,000.00 to \$10,000.00 based on years of experience. The supplement amounts were determined through union negotiations and a teacher vote of approval. Over the past three years, state funding has been targeted at increasing beginning teacher pay while veteran teachers' pay has remained stagnant. The one mill has allowed our veteran teachers to receive a well-deserved and overdue boost in pay. Our support personnel, including bus drivers, custodians, paraprofessionals, food service workers, maintenance workers, and clerical staff, provide a range of services that contribute to the school district's success. The millage provided salary supplements for all of these employees. The supplement amount was determined through union negotiations and an employee vote of approval. This will continue to support us in our recruitment and retention efforts.

SCV Florida Division Reunion



Kim Hoffecker, Chaplain

Kirby-Smith 1209 served as the host camp for the 54th annual Florida Division Reunion, Sons of Confederate Veterans held in Trenton, Florida. General business was discussed as well as ongoing and future projects. This was an election year and Cmdr. Calvin Hart, Adjutant Rick Roberts and Treasurer Mark Sizemore returned to their positions unopposed. There were also Lieutenant Commander and Brigade Commander positions voted on.

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NCCOA and FPL Partner to Distribute Free Hurricane Kits

Nassau County Council on Aging (NCCOA) and Florida Power & Light Company (FPL), with support from the Florida Council on Aging (FCOA), are partnering to distribute free hurricane preparedness meal kits to more than 150 seniors in Nassau County, Monday, June 10 from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. (or while supplies last), at the Westside Senior Life Center, 37002 Ingham Road in Hilliard. You must be at least 60 years of age to receive 3 kits, containing three days of shelf-stable food, water and snacks.

With the start of what is anticipated to be a potentially active hurricane season, this effort will help provide vital supplies to seniors in the communities FPL serves. NCCOA and FPL staff will distribute the kits to seniors who may not be able to leave their homes or receive home-delivered meals after a storm; NCCOA will also deliver kits to seniors not able to travel to the distribution



event. “We are extremely grateful to FPL for partnering with us, making sure that our seniors can be sustained in the event of a severe storm,” said Janice Ancrum, NCCOA President & CEO. “Nassau County continues to be a caring community, and this partnership is evidence of this fact. Thank you, FPL.”

NCCOA has served Nassau County for more than 50 years, providing nutrition, home health, transportation and other critical services to local seniors, helping them live happy, healthy lives. FPL is committed to powering strong communities, making them a better place to live, work and raise a family. Since 2016, the company has worked with local community nonprofits to deliver thousands of hurricane kits to help seniors prepare for storm season. For more information on how you can prepare, including tips, checklists and more, visit FPL.com/storm.

Historical Society to Offer Youth Art Classes

The West Nassau Historical Society is pleased to announce the offering of a series of youth summer art classes to be held on Saturday, July 13th. Each class is age-specific and will be held at the historic Callahan Train Depot, 45383 Dixie Avenue. Art supplies will be provided by the Historical Society through a grant from Arts and Culture Nassau (ACN), an advocacy for art and culture throughout Nassau County. A signed parental/guardian permission form and nominal fee of \$12 are required for each child attending the classes. The classes being offered are:

Saturday, July 13, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m., Ages 5-8 and Ages 9-13; Saturday July 13, 1 p.m. – 3 p.m., Ages 14-18; \$12 fee per student. A \$2 handling fee will be added to credit card payments.

Two of the classes will be taught by retired Nassau County educator Erica Dodge. With 22 plus, years experience in art education, Ms. Dodge specializes in fiber art and enjoys incorporating unusual materials into her art. She wants the viewer to spend time searching her art and enjoying the surprises they find inside. Since retirement, Ms. Dodge has been busy working in her studio specializing in fiber arts and glass fusing. The third class for ages 5 to 8 will be taught by an art teacher TBA.

Class sizes are limited to 12 students each so preregistration is required. A registration form is available from the West Nassau Historical Society website at: www.wnhsfl.org or by calling 904-879-3406. Do not pay anyone on Facebook or any other social media platforms as they are scammers and not authorized to collect for us. The West Nassau Historical Society is a 501c3, all-volunteer nonprofit dedicated to the promotion of history and culture in Nassau County, Florida.



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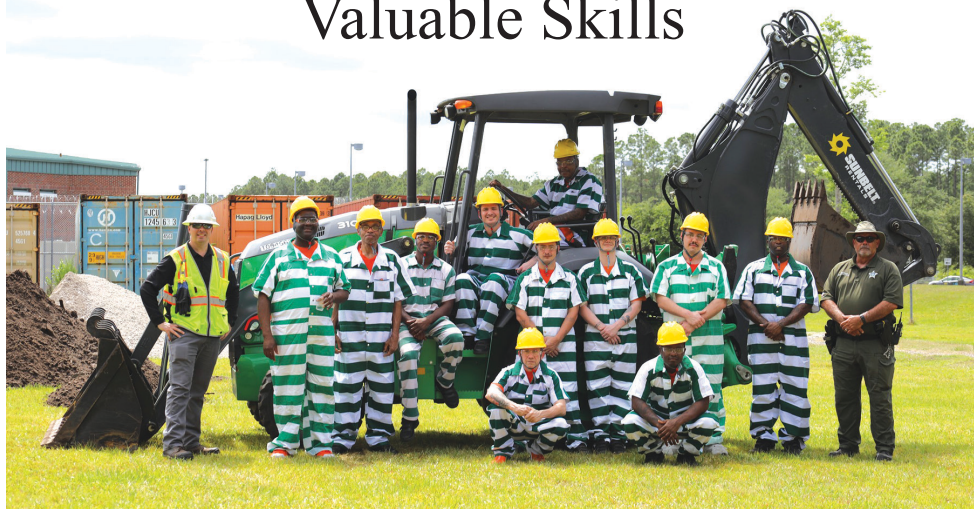
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The Nassau County Sheriff's Office is excited to share that their Earth Moving Equipment Class is providing inmates with a fantastic opportunity to become certified in operating crucial machinery like skid steers, backhoes, and excavators. Through their partnership with Sunbelt Rental, successful participants will receive a five-year certification, opening doors to potential career paths upon release.

But that's not all! This comprehensive three-week program, facilitated through our collaboration with Cypherworx, also equipped inmates with invaluable skills beyond equipment operation. They received training in crucial areas such as interviewing techniques,



resumé building, customer service, fall prevention in construction, construction hazard awareness, heat illness prevention, and an introduction to OSHA regulations.

Graduates of this program will not only possess valuable equipment certifications, but also updated resumé, positioning them for success in the job market. NCSO is proud to offer these transformative opportunities, empowering individuals with the tools they need to rebuild their lives and contribute positively to society.

They would like to thank District Safety Manager Justin Smith and our partners at Sunbelt Rental and Cypherworx for making this impactful initiative possible.



Supervisor of Elections Office Receives Clearie Awards

The United States Election Assistance Commission recognized Nassau County Supervisor of Elections office with four awards in the following categories: Distinguished Voter Education and Communications Initiatives, Outstanding Innovations in Elections, and Best Practices in Recruiting, retaining, and training poll workers from the United States Election Assistance Commission (U.S. EAC) Clearinghouse Awards. The U.S. EAC opened submissions for its Clearinghouse Awards this past February, and applications were submitted nationwide. Thirty-two entries, including four entries from Nassau County, were recognized. "We strive daily to build trust and transparency and to improve communication with voters. A public office is a public trust and everything we do is built on increasing public trust in Nassau County elections. This national recognition is evidence of the dedication and commitment to excellence that our team puts forward for Nassau County voters," said Supervisor Janet H. Adkins.

The United States Election Assistance Commission commends Nassau County for sending voters text messages and emails reminding them of early voting and election day, including a picture of their polling location. This initiative was awarded the Distinguished Voter Education and Communication Initiatives category for the Mass Messaging sent out during election time.

Nassau County is recognized

twice in the Outstanding Innovations category. The first recognition is for our website's chatbot which allows voters to quickly get information by submitting a chat request. Our office then contacts the voter after researching the request. The second recognition is for our new Precinct Management app, which allows our office to improve communication with election workers at the polls during early voting and on election day.

Election workers are at the heart of our office, which makes the final recognition even more meaningful: Recognition for best practices in recruiting, retaining, and training poll workers. With the implementation of the ROAR (Recruit, Orientation, Assign, and Retain) program, we have nearly doubled our election worker pool, expanded the number of positions to improve workflow, and trained a record number of election workers for the 2024 Presidential Preference Primary. Building a culture where election workers want to be a long-standing part of our Election Team is a win-win for our voters and community. "Nassau County has one of the very best elections team in Florida. I am excited and thrilled that this office has earned a record four Clearie awards for the incredible work being done. The new ideas and energy in this office is what makes this an outstanding team," said Supervisor Adkins.

For any questions regarding election-related concerns, don't hesitate to contact 904-491-7500 or email: info@VoteNassauFL.gov.

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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.

Our daughter Brianna just celebrated her 16th birthday. No, we didn't buy her a car (she will start driving my dad's old Buick "land-yacht" soon), but we did give her a nice party and a few gifts a week or so ago. Her friends came over and ate, danced, made crafts, and did make-overs on each other. She loved it.

A day or so after her party, she asked, "Mom, when can we go shopping? I have nothing to wear."

Since I do most of the laundry in our household, I know this is not true. "You should think about getting a job this summer," I replied. "The grocery stores and other places are hiring."

"Ugh," she said and walked to her room.

Just a few days ago, Brianna wanted to go to the beach with her friends.



Naturally Nassau

Lifeguard Loot?

School's out, summer's here. I told her she could go. "Can I have some money?" she asked.

"Do you still have your birthday money?" I asked.

"Uh, not much. I treated some friends to Cold Stone and Starbucks a couple of times."

"You should think about getting a job this summer," I told her again.

I had my first job at 14. I worked for the 4H UF/IFAS Extension Office here in Nassau County, helping file paperwork and answer the phones. It was really fun, and I think it's what lit my fire to go into forestry. I decided to speed up the process, so I called the local YMCA branch. It just so happens they were looking for summer lifeguards. Brianna was on the swim team her freshman year, so she already had the swim training. She just needed to take the life-saving course. I signed her up. That evening at dinner, I told her



she was scheduled for the course and a job interview at the Y the next day.

"You're scheduling my summer for me, Mom? That's so incredibly tyrannical," she responded in a condescending tone. "And, if I have a job, I won't have time to go shopping with my friends."

"But if you have a job," my husband piped up, "you will have the money to go shopping."

I chuckled and said, "It's a job opportunity for you. At least consider it."

The dinner conversation shifted to the art project John is working on this summer and preparing little Jacob for his first-ever sleep away camp.

I didn't know if Bri would go for the training and the interview until the next day. As I cleared the breakfast dishes, I saw her walk to the truck with her dad. She had on her swimsuit, a cover-up, and carried a backpack with a change of clothes.

A few hours later, she texted me at work.

"Guess who has a summer job?" her text said.

I smiled to myself and texted back a thumbs-up.

Then I added sunscreen to my shopping list.

Until next time, we will be loving summer and living 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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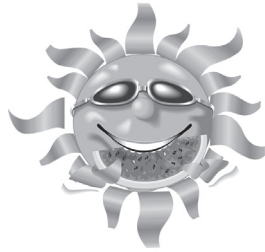
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KATHERINE ANN BURCH



It is with deep sorrow and much love that we mourn the passing of Katherine Ann "Kathy" Burch, 77, May 23, 2024 in Hilliard. She passed peacefully with her family by her side. Katherine was born August 13, 1946, in Milledgeville, Georgia to the late John DeWitt, Sr. and Adrienne Murray DeWitt. Katherine lived a life full of love and compassion. She walked through life with a gentle strength, touching the lives of everyone she encountered with an unforgettable grace and loving kindness. Katherine was full of wisdom, quick to laugh and cherishing every moment spent with her loved ones. She was a wonderful mother who was always there when she was needed the most, offering support, wisdom, and love in abundance. She loved to read and was always looking for the next best spy fiction thriller.

Kathy was a wiz at crossword puzzles and puzzle games. She adored Harry Potter and must have watched them a few hundred times with her faithful little dog, Lucy, snuggled by her side. Katherine's children will forever cherish her stories, the songs she would sing, and her comforting words followed by the warmest hug you've ever felt. She was a pillar of strength and a beacon of love; her absence leaves a void in our hearts. Kathy was a woman who was loved deeply and will be sorely missed. She is leaving behind a legacy of warmth and kindness. Katherine is preceded in death by her parents; son Keith Smith; and brother John DeWitt.

Katherine leaves behind her loving children Trudi (Rick) Allphin, Wesley Smith and Gene Burch; brother Ted DeWitt; grandchildren Shane Allphin, Tyler Smith, Keith Smith, Jr. and Joseph Bishop.

A celebration of Katherine's life was held Monday, June 3 at Nassau Funeral Home with Chaplain Jim Cox officiating. Interment followed at Riverside Memorial

Park. 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.

OBITUARIES

JOY "DENISE" CRIBBS



Joy Denise Cribbs, 48, of Hilliard, passed away May 28, 2024. She was born in Alma, Georgia, to Danny and Patricia Ann Bazemore (Nipper). She graduated from West Nassau High School in 1993. Following graduating high school, she continued her education to achieve her cosmetology license. Denise made a lifelong career serving our community as a hairdresser. She was currently the owner of Lovely You Beauty Parlour in Hilliard. She enjoyed the one-on-one interaction and the personal connections with all her clients and friends. When she was not doing hair, she was spending time with her family. Being a Gigi to her grandkids was the highlight of her life. She enjoyed traveling with her husband and friends, spending time outdoors near water, and going to restaurants with good music. Denise is preceded in death by her brother Ricky Bazemore.

Denise is survived by her husband, Charles Cribbs; daughters Morgan Cribb (Trey Loyd), Maci (Austin) Drew; stepson CJ Cribbs; three grandchildren Hazel and Vera Cribb and Dallen Drew; parents Danny and Patricia Ann Bazemore (Nipper); sister Peggy (Chris) Cravey of Hilliard; nieces and nephews Carlee (Lantz) Sullivan, Chase and Kinsley Cravey.

A private graveside service will be held at Jones Cemetery Thursday, June 6 for

immediate family.

A celebration of life will be held Thursday, June 6, from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. at The Barn at Cottonwood Ranch.

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

Visit: www.nassaufh.com to place condolences for the family.

EDWIN DARMOFAL



Edwin "The Polka Putter" Darmofal, beloved husband, father, brother, and the undisputed king of one-liners, peacefully teed off for the last time May 24, 2024. The fairways in heaven just gained a new hazard, and if there's a heavenly polka band, it's about to get a lot livelier. He was born December 3, 1948, in New Britain, CT. Edwin was a natural-born entertainer. Even as a baby, his gurgles sounded suspiciously like polka rhythms, and he learned to polka shuffle before he could walk. Ed, or Eddie, as everyone knew him, developed his love for cars during these formative years. Ed would often stop by the local gas station on the way home from elementary school and hop into random cars, pretending to drive. Always a fast learner, by age six he discovered how car keys worked, much to the chagrin of the gas station attendants.

After graduating Pulaski High School in 1968, Ed paused his quest to be crowned Polka King of New Britain and traded his accordion for combat boots. Ed proudly served in the US Air Force during the Vietnam War from 1968 - 1972 and rose to the rank of Sergeant. He always said the war taught him two things: how to appreciate a good laugh; and how to make a bed so well you could bounce a quarter off it. His

military service was marked by bravery, camaraderie, and a fair share of practical jokes that are still classified to this day.

In 1972, Edwin married Patricia May, a woman whose golf game was as bad as his, and whose cooking was the butt of many a good joke for 45 wonderful years. They settled in Liverpool, NY, where they raised four children. Ed took great pride in subjecting the kids to his not so melodious caterwauling every Sunday as he listened to his favorite Polka station. Ed spent as much time looking for his golf ball in the rough as he did turning his house into a home. It was said that to see Ed with power tools was to understand where Tim Allen later got his inspiration for Tim "The Tool Man" Taylor.

The Darmofal family moved to Jacksonville in 1993, seeking sunnier skies and more time for Ed to continue to miss the fairway. Ed enjoyed restoring classic cars with his son Joe, hoping to pass on his penchant for setting carburetors on fire, a talent that Joe excels at to this day. With his son Mark, woodworking was their shared passion. As fast as they could come up with an idea, code enforcement was there to condemn it. Ed had a love of softball he shared with his daughter Kristy. She was as proficient in the batter's box as he was on the tee.

He was predeceased by his father Joseph Darmofal; sons Michael and Mark; mother Helen Niedzwicki; wife Patricia; brother Tommy; and sister Josephine Poland. Edwin is undoubtedly organizing the most epic family reunion in the afterlife.

He leaves behind his son Joseph (Meaghan) Darmofal of Jacksonville; daughter Kristy Darmofal of Callahan; brother Richard (Patty) Darmofal; sister Marcia Alfano; and numerous nieces, nephews, and friends who will forever cherish his memory and his gift for making every moment a bit brighter.

Edwin's parting wish is for everyone to live by his philosophy: "Life is a game: play it, a joke: laugh at it, and a car: drive it

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like you stole it." The family requests you tell a joke, share a laugh, and maybe even dance a little polka in his honor. Just be sure to keep an eye out for Edwin's spirit on the golf course...he's likely to be the one causing your ball to mysteriously slice.

For those who wish to make a donation in Edwin's name, please visit: American Legion, www.legion.org; or Vietnam Veterans of America, www.vva.org. Rest in peace, Edwin. May your drives always be long, your engines always roar, and your jokes always hit the mark. The world may be a little quieter without you, but your laughter will echo in our hearts forever.

A Mass service was held Tuesday, June 4 at Our Lady of Consolation Catholic Church with Father Bui officiating. Interment followed at Jacksonville National Cemetery. The family received friends Monday, June 3 at the funeral home.

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

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

JOHNNY STANTON EASON



Johnny Stanton Eason, 87, of Hilliard, graduated from this world and entered the gates of Heaven April 15, 2024, at the Community Hospice Warner Center in Fernandina Beach, with his loving wife by his side. A memorial service for Johnny will be held Wednesday, June 12 at 12 p.m. at Buford Grove Baptist Church.

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

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

RAYMOND C. FUGLESTAD



Raymond Charles Fuglestad, fondly known as "Ray," 55, of Callahan, passed away May 29, 2024. He was born June 24, 1968, on the Langley Air Force Base in Virginia to the late Kenneth Wayne Fuglestad and late Maureen Catherine Poss. Ray was a

OBITUARIES

master carpenter who poured his heart into his work. His skillful hands created not just structures, but also lasting memories for those fortunate enough to benefit from his expertise. Ray had a passion for the outdoors. Whether he was casting lines into the water, tinkering with engines, or simply enjoying the company of his cherished dog, "Chevy." He found solace in the simple joys of life. In this time of sorrow, the family extends their heartfelt gratitude for the outpouring of love and support received from friends, family, and the community.

Ray is survived by his loving wife Traci Fuglestad; two children Matthew (Noel) Fuglestad and Danielle Fuglestad; and one brother Gary Fuglestad.

A funeral service to celebrate Ray's life will be held Monday, June 10 at 12 p.m. at Nassau Funeral Home, 541720 US 1, Callahan, officiated by Pastor Gerald Wollitz. The tribute above was lovingly crafted by Ray's family, who will forever hold him dear in their hearts.

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

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

DENNIS J. SCHUMACHER, SR.



Dennis J. Schumacher, Sr., 85, of Callahan, went home to be with the Lord May 16, 2024. He was born January 7, 1939. He proudly served his country



in the US Navy. Dennis is survived by his loving wife of 57 years, Pat Schumacher; daughters Amy (Brad) Zink of Ohio; sons Eric (Helen) Schumacher, Dennis J. (Judi) Schumacher, Jr., Duane Schumacher and Rick (Aimee) Morgan; daughters Kandi (Phil) Clark of Colorado and Tammie (Troy) Keen; grandchildren Sean, Jeffery, Steven, Jessica, Anthony, Erica, Jeremy, Brandon, Jazmine, Samantha, Savanna, Emily, Amanda, Stephanie, Tonya, Megan, Madison and Bonnie; and several great-

grandchildren.

A memorial service was held Sunday, May 26 at 1 p.m. at Jacksonville National Cemetery.

Arrangements by C.L. Page Mortuary, Jacksonville, 904-353-4434.

KEVIN AUSTIN THRIFT



Kevin Austin Thrift, 32, passed away Sunday, May 26, 2024 in Hilliard. Austin was a native of Jacksonville and son to Richard Kevin and Valerie Thrift. He was a graduate of First Coast High School and worked as a land surveyor for Landmark Surveyors. Austin enjoyed anything outside, the beach, fishing and playing pool. He loved spending time with his family and especially being a father.

Austin is survived by his wife Kasey Thrift; sons Kayden and Trenton Thrift; brothers Ryan (Jessica) Thrift and Travis Thrift; grandmother Hilda Thrift; father & mother-in-law: Wayne and Wendy Reliford; grandparent-in-laws Jerald and Paula Reliford; best friend Quinn Smith; and numerous, nieces, nephews, extended family and friends.

A funeral service was held Tuesday, June 4 at the Event Center at Peeples with Rev. Chris A. Coram officiating. The family received friends prior to the service.

Peeples Family Funeral Home served the Thrift family.

CHARLES D. WILLARD



Charles D. Willard, 74, of Callahan, went to be with the Lord Thursday, May 30, 2024. He was born July 16, 1949, in Mt. Airy, North Carolina to the late Harvey and Bertha Willard. Charles loved the outdoors and could always be found in the yard. He loved his family and friends and never met a stranger. Charles was an Air Conditioning Technician for 30 years and retired from William Catlin and Son. In addition to his parents; Charles was preceded in death by his sister Bonnie Kalis.

Charles is survived by his loving wife, Roberta T. Willard; daughters Mary M. (Neal) Timmons and Barbara J. (Joe) Timmons; sons Joseph (Amanda) Willard and Dean (Tracey) Willard; grandchildren Graci Mae Belcher, Lilli Thurman, Hunter Thurman, Joseph Willard, Miranda Willard, Cody Willard, Mackenzie Willard and Kacey Willard.

A celebration of Charles's life will be held Friday, June 7 at 1 p.m. at Nassau Funeral Home. The family will receive friends from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. prior to the service at the funeral home.

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

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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.

Sunday, May 26

Deborah Ann Sims, 64, Bryceville: Resist without Violence; Possession of Cocaine

Monday, May 27

Christopher Michael Langley, 47, Bryceville: Resist without Violence

Tuesday, May 28

Iesha Fisher, 31, Callahan: Violation of Probation Community Control Felony

Thursday, May 30

Kaleb Michael Boyd, 29, Callahan: Violation of Probation Community Control Felony

Tina Sweat Nutty, 55, Callahan: Possession of Methamphetamine

Sunday, June 2

Ernest Lee Johns, 32, Hilliard: Possession of Gun/Ammo with DV Injunction; Battery on Person older than 65

David Zachary Molin, 36, Callahan: Battery Touch/Strike; Aggravated Assault with Deadly Weapon; Shoot/Throw Deadly Missile into Dwelling

Scholarships Awarded



The Patricia V. Williams Chapter of the Concerned Citizens of Nassau County is proud to announce the recipients of their 2024 Scholarship Awards. Each year, the scholarship is given to deserving students to assist in furthering their education. Bishop Walter Cooper and Mrs. Carol Higginbotham presented the scholarship to Earl Moore of West Nassau High School.

Rev. Dr. Tyronne Blue, Lillian Lambert and Sandra Stewart presented both Kaitlyn Williams and Alexis Geohagan of Hilliard Middle-Senior High School with scholarships. The members of the Concerned Citizens organization wish the students much success in their future endeavors.

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Grooms Named Teacher of the Year in St. George

Ashley Deringer

We are thrilled to announce a dedicated and passionate educator, Cindy Grooms, has been named Teacher of the Year, at St. George Elementary School!

Cindy's commitment to excellence, innovative teaching methods, and unwavering dedication to her students have earned her this well-deserved recognition. With decades of teaching and leadership experience, Cindy has made a profound impact on the lives of countless students, colleagues, and parents. Her classroom is a vibrant and nurturing learning environment where students are inspired to dream big, think critically, and achieve their full potential.

Cindy's colleagues describe her as a

true leader in education, always willing to share her expertise, collaborate on projects, and mentor new teachers. Her innovative teaching methods, creative lesson plans, and genuine passion for teaching make her an invaluable asset to the St. George Elementary School community. In addition to her outstanding work in the classroom, Dr. Grooms serves as the Nassau County School Board Chair. Her dedication to holistic education goes above and beyond, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. As Teacher of the Year, Cindy Grooms exemplifies the qualities of an exceptional educator – compassion, dedication, and a relentless commitment to student success.



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Remember to Pray for Our Troops

The Westside Journal would like to pay tribute to all the brave servicemen and women. Please take time to remember each of these service members in your daily prayers.



Gabriel Albert (Hawaii), Jacob Ash-Medina (Japan), Jewel Rene Barron (Virginia), Timothy Beasley (Cuba), Cody Beaver (Virginia), Jessica Bell (Hawaii), Chad E. Black (South Carolina), Kevin & Brooke Blanton (Georgia), Sgt. Caleb Bohannon (Oklahoma), Israel Marcos Bonilla (Missouri), Derek Borden, Benjamin Black (Iraq), Conrad Brauhn (Afghanistan), Ryan Brooks (Connecticut), John Brookshire (North Carolina), Aaron Brown (Japan), Branden Brown (USS Nimitz), Anthony Broekema (Virginia), Ethan Bulford (Virginia), SSGT Thomas W. Burnette (North Carolina), Ahmad Butler (Japan), Brayden Lamar Carroll (North Carolina), Allen L. Carter (Alaska), Samuel S. Clemons (Japan), John Coltrane (NAS Jax), Cody Cooper (Florida), Scott Cooper, Trevor Corum (Nebraska), Charlie I. D. Cox (South Korea), Quinn Coxwell (Georgia), Gavin Crews (Germany), Tison J. Crews (Korea), Charles 'CJ' Cribbs, III (Washington, DC), Dennis L. Davis II (Alabama), Joshua M. Davis (New York), Shannon Davis (Nevada), Johanna Diaz (Nevada), Clif Dixon (Iraq), Devin Michael Dowling (Missouri), Christopher Downs (Arizona), William Clay Dryden (South Korea), James Dale Evans (Baghdad), David Farhat (North Carolina), Christen Fernandez, Randall Heath Forde (Georgia), Medford Foskey (Arizona), Clinton Fouraker (Virginia), Jeremy Francisco (Mayport), Jennifer D. Frederick (Colorado), Kevin J. Gahrts (United Arab Emirates), Michael E. Garcia (Afghanistan), Marcus Gee (Iraq), Samantha Gee (Korea), Tabetha Gee (Korea), Chadrick Gibson (Iraq), Charles Gibson, Darrell Goodwyne, Jr. (Iraq), Sgt. Daniel Graves, Jr. (North Carolina), Eric Greene (Georgia), Branden R. Griffis (Florida), Wendy Griffis (Afghanistan), Phaylyn Griffith (California), Kandis Guyton (California), Hunter C. Guzman (Georgia), Micah Hall (Georgia), Michael Hall, Michael Hallman (Key West), Ronnie Hammer (Kentucky), Todd W. Hanner, Jr. (Texas), Andy Harper, Harley Henderson (Texas), Nathan Hess (Alaska), Jeff Higgs (Spain), Jonah Hilliar (Poland), SPC Hodge (Iraq), Josh Hoyle (California), Levi Hren (West Point), AT2 Brian Hughes (Bahrain), Bryan K. Jeffers II (Iraq), Jacob Jensen (Middle East), Cade Johns (Virginia Beach), Aaron L. Johnson (Colorado), Carlus Johnson (Texas), Donald Johnson (North Carolina), Joshua Michael Johnson (Italy), Jamaal Jones (Hawaii), Bradley Justice, Brian J. Kerns (Virginia), Kayla King (Germany), Scott Kirkland (California), Joshua Knight, PO3 Travis E. Kornacki (North Carolina), Jordan Kriner (Italy), Victoria LaMontagne (Florida), Tyler Landreville (Florida), John C. Larkin (Iraq), Thomas Layden (North Carolina), Chase M. Lewis (North Carolina), Katelyn Lewis (Japan), Mattie Lewis (Texas), Nicholas Louese (Spain), Jason Lovejoy (Colorado), Patrick Lynagh (Nevada), Steven Lynn (Michigan), Gatlin Mackie (Virginia), Kevin Marshall (Germany), Canisha Martin (Georgia), Tony Martin (Georgia), Anthony Mastrogiovanni (Georgia), Stacey McDaniel (Virginia), Caleb McGee (Virginia), Noah E. McKinnon (Iraq), Michael McQuaiz, Matthew McRae (North Carolina), Russell Mellroy (Afghanistan), Ivory Melton, Jr. (Kuwait), Brian Middleton (Afghanistan), Weston J. Miller (South Carolina), Steven Miner (Germany), Dallon Mirando (North Carolina), Chase Allen Mitchell (Colorado), Britt Mizell (South Carolina), Dillon Mock (Florida), Joshua Monds (Virginia), Spencer Money (North Carolina), Anthony Moore (Afghanistan), Anthony Moore (South Carolina), Roland Moore (Iraq), Chris Morehead (North Carolina), Sgt. Travis Morris, Climart 'CJ' Moses (Afghanistan), Michael Murphy (Iraq), Aaron Musgrove (Afghanistan), Stephen Myers (Korea), Jonathan Neeve (Texas), Gary Nelson (Kuwait), Michael Nettles (Iraq), Lee Nickola (Iraq), Ryan Norton (North Carolina), Jesse O'Berry (England), Daniel O'Dell, Shannon O'Dell, David Oppfelt (Florida), Lane O'Quinn (Alaska), Steven A. Oxforth (Connecticut), Walter Oxforth (New Mexico), Chase Parden (Kansas), Michael Park (South Korea), Danielle Parker (North Carolina), Jeremy Pelkey (Georgia), Christopher Phelan (Virginia), Darren Phelan (Washington State), Kyle Pipkins (South Carolina), Joshua Poirier (Georgia), Austin Potochnik (California), Dusty Price (Iraq), Michael Price (Germany), Jeffery Rapadas (Kuwait), Justin Reed (North Carolina), Kasie Richardson (North Carolina), Jeffrey Rigdon (Kentucky), Camilla Roberts (Alaska), Sydney A. Robinette (Florida), Michael Robinson (Alabama), Jason Rodgers (Texas), Douglas Raymond Roth, Marc Rowe (Georgia), Dillon Rozar (Louisiana), Brian M. Sartain, Jr. (North Dakota), James Sanders (Germany), Tressie Scott (Afghanistan), Marcus Sharpe (Michigan), Donald Shaw (Iraq), Michael Shearer (Illinois), Jesse D. Silcox (Japan), Daniel Singley, Corey Slayton (California), Christopher E. Smith (Iraq), Michael J. Smith (North Carolina), Nathan Smith (Texas), Robbie Smith, Jr. (Germany), Nicolas Snow (North Carolina), David Stallings (Kuwait), Bill Starling (Iraq), David Starling (North Carolina), Larry V. Starratt, III (Korea), Scott M. Stephens (Hawaii), James 'Mike' Stringer (Iraq), Joseph R. Taylor (Texas), Luke Thomas (Germany), Michael Thomas (Japan), Crystal Thompson (Iraq), Terry Thompson (Virginia), Tiffany Thompson (Washington), Sarah Tindell (North Carolina), Corey M. Turner (Kuwait), William Varner (Florida), Shawn W. Vickers (California), Jonathan Vroman (Tennessee), Brett Wade (Florida), Reece Wade (Arizona), Jeff Walters (Iraq), Shawn Ward (Texas), Brian Waring (Iraq), Daniel Waters, David Watson (California), Justin Webb (Japan), James D. Whitman, Carson Williamson (North Carolina), Earl Youman, Jr. (Virginia)



It is our honor to recognize our local Armed Service members. We would like to update our 'Pray for our Troops' list, adding those who have recently joined our Armed Services or removing those who no longer serve. Please read over the list. If you need to make a correction, addition or deletion, just give us a call, 879-4180. You may also email changes to news@westsidejournal.net.

God Bless our Troops!

Yellow-Legged Hornet with a Dangerous Sting

Rob Horsburgh

On August 9, 2023, the U.S. Department of Agriculture confirmed the detection of yellow-legged hornet in Savannah, Georgia. This hornet is a pest of honey bees and, if established, has the potential to significantly impact Florida's vast apiary industry, which provides not only honey but pollination services all over the country. In response to this find, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Division of Plant Industry (FDACS-DPI) formed the Florida Taskforce for the Yellow-Legged Hornet. This taskforce was formed to develop safeguarding strategies should this pest be found in Florida. The sting from this



particular hornet can be dangerous. Should you be stung and seek medical attention, try to bring the dead hornet with you to the doctor or emergency room if you have to go.

In October, a delegation of the

taskforce visited the current eradication program in Savannah to participate in ongoing eradication efforts by the Georgia Department of Agriculture and collaborate with personnel to begin developing emergency response protocols to implement in the event of an introduction of this pest into Florida.

The yellow-legged hornet belongs to the subfamily Vespinae, which includes yellow jackets and hornets. This group can generally be identified by the combination of two characteristics: the wings are longitudinally folded at rest,

and the anterior end of the abdomen has a blocky shape. In Florida, there are three native species of Vespinae: the southern yellow jacket, the eastern yellow jacket, and the bald-faced hornet. In some cases, the color forms of some species of vespine wasps can be variable. *Vespa velutina* exhibits significant color variation in its native distribution. Yellow-legged hornets are large, about 1 inch long, including queens and workers.

The yellow-legged hornet builds paper nests in trees, shrubs and human-made structures. Nests are egg-shaped and similar in appearance to nests of the bald-faced hornet. Colonies have an annual cycle and each spring a single queen will start a nest from scratch. The nests grow rapidly during the warmer months and at the end of season new queen's mate and disperse. This makes locating and destroying nests prior to the dispersal of potential foundresses a priority.

Westside Senior Life Center Afternoon Activities

Join us for our afternoon activity program at Nassau County Council on Aging's Westside Senior Life Center, 37002 Ingham Rd., Hilliard. All programs are free of charge. Questions? Contact Missy Snead, Activities Coordinator, 904-675-9833 or msnead@nassaucountycoa.org.

- Monday, June 10 • 2-4 p.m. • Game Day: Checkers, Connect 4, etc.
- Tuesday, June 11 • 1-3 p.m. • Crocheting Class with "Hilliard Hookers"
- Wednesday, June 12 • 2-3 p.m. • YouTube Crafts
- Thursday, June 13 • 1:30-3:30 p.m. • Line Dancing with Tanya
- Friday, June 14 • 2-3:30 p.m. • Q&A with NCCOA Staff



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As the county experiences rapid growth, voters in Yulee, Wildlight, Callahan, Hilliard, Bryceville, and off-island Fernandina Beach will soon decide whether to expand the TDT user fee. This new revenue ensures that visitors contribute to maintaining and preserving the natural beauty of Nassau County, benefitting all local residents.

Your participation is essential as we strive to improve our community's amenities and safeguard our environment. To learn more or share your thoughts, please visit NassauTourismWorks.com.

