

Apopka Museum celebrates March as Women's History Month with special guest speaker. See page 8A.



Apopka man wins gold at world championships. See page 1B.



The Apopka Chief



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City IT: Former administrator opened, deleted DOG emails

Velazquez, residents criticize handling of termination

By Teresa Sargeant Reporter

Former city administrator Jacob Smith received and deleted two emails from the state Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) and the Florida League of Cities days before he was fired, according to the city's IT department.

News of the deletions add context to Mayor Bryan Nelson's decision to abruptly fire Smith on March 21, but during the Apopka City Council meeting on Wednesday, Vice Mayor Diane Velazquez and citizens voiced concern about the process and communication surrounding the termination.

Nelson read a statement outlining the timeline of events at the meeting, first by quoting from a post Smith made on a local website that denied he ever received any correspondence from the state Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Nelson said neither he nor the city finance director had gotten the DOGE emails from the governor's office or the Florida League of Cities. Nelson instead learned about the correspondence from a state political blog he follows that is outside city of Apopka communication.

According to documentation the city IT department provided to The Apopka Chief, Smith received the EOG DOGE email at 6:34 p. m. on March 18. He read it from 8:02-8:04 a. m. the following day, March 19, googled DOGE at 8:04 a. m. but was unsuccessful, then deleted the EOG email.



Photo by Marshall Tempest

Mayor Bryan Nelson read a statement about events that led to the termination of the city's administrator last month.

At 11:35 a. m. on March 19, the Florida League of Cities emailed Smith about the significance of the DOGE correspondence, but at 11:38 a. m., Smith opened and deleted this message as well.

"This timeline shows either a complete lack of understanding about the severity of the situation or this was a direct attempt to create chaos for the City. You be the judge," Nelson said in his statement.

Last week, Nelson attributed the termination to a communication breakdown during the last four weeks of Smith's employment. Nelson said Smith not reporting to him the EOG DOGE Team correspondence was the final straw.

Nelson said his terminating Smith wasn't meant to hurt the city administrator as he searched for another government job, but Smith's editorial prompted Nelson to address what he wrote.

"I was not trying to ruin his career, but it became evident early on that he wasn't capable of running a city the



Courtesy of Jacob Smith Jacob Smith

size of Apopka," Nelson said. Vice Mayor Diane Velazquez expressed concern that elected officials are not holding themselves to a higher standard in the way they treat city employees, not whether Smith saw the DOGE correspondence.

"That is the chair's right, as the mayor, to terminate an employee that he feels that something so important was not addressed by his chief administrator, but for me, as an elected official, where we all depended on our chief administrator to always be so above go between our staff and the mayor's office that he was

unaware of why he was being terminated...we need to conduct ourselves at a much higher standard," Velazquez said.

Velazquez said a few months ago, she asked human resources to provide her a list of personnel that have left the city employment. She received 19 pages of employees who left since 2018. About 40% were seasonal, but many were long-term employees, many who had resigned, many who retired.

During public comment, some residents expressed frustration with what they viewed as city officials' lack of transparency and concern for city staff, and that Smith shouldn't have learned about the reason for his termination through the media.

"There needs to be something in HR to protect employees, and not just protect them, but also protect the city from having any lawsuits or liabilities that may come in effect to this," said resident Virginia Street, adding that

See CITY Page 4A

Bracy siblings to vie for Thompson's Florida Senate seat

Gov. DeSantis has not yet announced special election

By Teresa Sargeant Reporter

Gov. Ron DeSantis has not yet announced a special election to fill the seat of the late state Sen. Geraldine Thompson, but two siblings are already running to fill it.

Siblings Randolph Bracy III, a former state senator, and current state Rep. LaVon Bracy Davis, D-District 40, have announced their campaigns for Senate District 15.

Bracy held the District 15 seat from 2016 to 2022 before vacating it for a congressional bid. Rep. Maxwell Frost defeated him in the 2022 Democratic primary. Last November, Bracy lost a Senate District 15 primary race to Thompson, who garnered more than 60 percent of the vote.

He announced his latest campaign in a Feb. 14 Instagram video.

"I'm currently in Amalfi Coast, Italy, and I've been receiving a number of calls, text messages asking if I'm going to run for my old Senate seat, District 15," Bracy said. "The answer is yes, I will be seeking election to District 15. God bless."

Bracy Davis announced her campaign for District 15 in a March 21 Facebook video.

"Today I stand with deep gratitude, purpose and reverence for a pioneer who paved the way, Senator Geraldine Thompson," Bracy Davis said. "Senator Thompson dedicated her life to uplifting our community and fighting for those whose voices too often go unheard. With the bless-



Courtesy of LaVon Bracy Davis Rep. LaVon Bracy Davis

ing of her beloved family and a heart full of purpose, I am proud to announce my intention to run for Florida State Senate District 15."

Touching upon community issues such as affordable housing, racial and social equity, the right to vote and more, Bracy Davis said courageous leadership and steady commitment are needed to navigate families and neighborhoods through such challenges.

"Orange County deserves bold and fearless leadership, leadership that stands strong when the fight gets tough, leadership that delivers real results," Bracy Davis said. "This campaign will be about honoring our past while building a future we all can be proud of, because progress never pauses, and neither can we, but I can't do this alone."

Bracy Davis called for the passing of the Florida Voting Rights Act, a bill that Thompson first filed, at a March 26 news conference in Tallahassee.

The Florida Voting Rights Act would set up same-day voter registration, restore voting rights to returning citizens, make general Election Day a state holiday, make translation services available at voting precincts, repeal restrictions

See SENATE Page 5A



Photo by Marshall Tempest

The Apopka Woman's Club is organizing the 63rd annual Apopka Art and Foliage Festival in partnership with the city of Apopka. The event will take place April 26 and 27 at Kit Land Nelson Park, 10 N. Forest Ave., Apopka. The Apopka Woman's Club members, pictured wearing green shirts, received a proclamation about the festival at the April 2 City Council meeting. Visit ApopkaArtandFoliageFestival.org for more information, including how to become a vendor.

City Council awards \$372K contract for public safety facility

Project design will take 17 months

By Teresa Sargeant Reporter

The Apopka City Council awarded H.J. High Construction a negotiated contract as Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) for the city's new public safety facility during the council's meeting on Wednesday, April 2.

See CONTRACT Page 6A

The new facility will have several city departments, including fire, police, an emergency communications center and the information technology department.

The contract is worth \$338,382, plus a 10% contingency of \$33,838 for a total of \$372,220, according to Finance Director Blanche Sherman. The facility design project timeline is 17 months.

H.J. High Construction will collaborate with Architects Design Group on the facility's design. In September

This week

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- Sports 1B
- Fishing 2B
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- Classifieds 8B
- Service Directory 8B

View public notices online at www.TheApopkaChief.com OR FloridaPublicNotices.com.



Opinion

The Apopka Chief

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CAT Fund is stabilizing force in state insurance market

I was appointed to the Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund Board (CAT Fund) by CFO Jimmy Patronis more than eight years ago. This fund was created in 1993 after the devastating Hurricane Andrew, which bankrupted many insurance companies and many others fled the state of Florida.

Apopka Mayor



Bryan Nelson

lars, giving them more than a 10-1 leverage for their premium dollar. Because the CAT Fund is a state agency, there is no profit and hence the premiums pay only losses and a small overhead.

This year's premium has an overall rate decrease of 9.51% because of a lower coverage level by insurance carriers of 2.45% and a projected growth in exposure of 4.75%.

We have five modelers who set the rates. They have determined that layer loss costs have decreased by 10.7%.

Some of the lower costs are attributed to the legislation that has been implemented in the last several years reducing attorney fees, rooting out fraud and making sure that the process is transparent.

We will pay off the 2020A prevent notes of \$1.25 billion in July of this year, which will generate a .8% rate decrease. Also, newer roofs will get a better rate, and older roofs will pay more.

The CAT Fund has helped all property insurance carriers to stabilize the reinsurance market and over the last three decades has saved taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars in excess premiums.

The CAT Fund is the backbone for reinsuring our insurance companies for hurricane coverage and gives them the ability to pay claims. The CAT Fund's exposure for the 2025 contract year is 3.661 trillion dollars of property, which includes residential, condos, mobile homes and commercial.

The CAT fund does not cover auto, liability, workers compensation or other specialty insurance policies.

The Insurance carriers who write policies in Florida have \$11.27 billion in retention, which means they are obligated to pay that amount first before the CAT Fund steps in to help pay claims. After the \$11.27 billion has been paid, the CAT Fund steps in with \$17 billion in resources to help the insurance carriers pay their claims.

The insurance carriers' premium for this coverage is \$1.359 billion dol-

Letter to the Editor

For months Apopka Citizens have requested a moratorium on new growth until we have the infrastructure in place to manage our growth.

Orange County's Ordinance No. 2024-30 approach to slowing growth accomplishes this without the more restrictive and cumbersome requirements of a moratorium. This is a viable approach.

Apopka's infrastructure has not and is not meeting our community needs as evidenced by:

- ongoing city flooding
- the lack of reclaimed water

pressure

- faulty water meter replacement still not completed

- failure to install back-flow preventers

- record increase in public utility rates due to the city's failure to provide necessary new or upgraded plants and equipment

- blue-green algae in Lake Apopka
- multiple key staff departures

We count on the City Council to get in front of our growth. They must act.

Rod Olsen
Apopka

Promoting a strong downtown

I am always eager to learn more about making our District 2 communities better. So I recently attended a Zoom meeting on the National Main Street program and Local Conversations with the Strong Towns organization. If you recall, I hosted Edward Erfurt at my January Neighborhood Leader 1st Quarterly at Wekiva High School.

The speaker was Amanda Lanata from Louisiana Main Street, who also heads up a Local Conversation group in Baton Rouge.

She believes the two organizations, Main Street and Strong Towns, support the concept that downtowns are the heart of a community and the economic driver of local government. Both organizations drive the following principles: community walkability, preservation of historic buildings, revitalization and proper maintenance of existing building stock, and the value of incremental development rather than suburban sprawl.

As a top advocate for the Main Street Program, Mrs. Lanata says her organization is

County Commissioner
District 2



Christine Moore

more than just "party planners." Main Street programs foster new jobs, new businesses, and encourage private investment. She believes that it is easy to see which cities have a Main Street program and those who don't. She espoused that after 40 years in existence, the Main Street program is a proven, time-tested framework to improve downtown areas.

Preservation is important as it is for historic integrity, community character, and a sense of place. She talked about the Old Quarters in New Orleans. While they have the strictest building codes, the sector is the most visited and sought after in the city. Historic preservation provides a unique flavor to a neighbor-

hood. Incidentally, she is restoring a Craftsman bungalow within walking distance of a trail in Baton Rouge for her family to reside.

Her website has additional information: LouisianaMainStreet.org.

Despite all the benefits of supporting the Main Street Program, Mrs. Lanata also leads a Local Conversation group based on the Strong Towns approach. This is a similar approach to my Neighborhood Leader Program. Her group is creative about projects. They have picked up trash, improved the local bus system, and planted flowers. She has several statements I believe would be helpful.

- Think small – small successes build capacity
- Schedule one-on-one meetings with talent
- Do the next smallest thing you can
- Quick wins attract more volunteers

It is important to get fresh ideas from proven organizations for our work in District 2. I highly recommend the Main Street and Strong Town organizations.

Legislature considers numerous bills affecting public education

As you know, if you've been keeping up with the news, the legislative session is in full swing. We just finished up week 5 of the session at the time of this writing, and it was a week full of education policy.

I thought I would give an update on some of the items we are watching in Tallahassee that could have big impacts on our local schools.

The Senate unanimously passed SB296, giving flexibility back to the school districts on school start times. As you may recall, in 2023, the Legislature passed a law that would have required big changes to start times of schools across the state beginning next school year.

These changes, while they may have been motivated by good intentions to give our older students a later start time, have been met with much resistance by school districts because it is not financially viable or logistically possible in many districts.

Orange County School
Board, District 7



Melissa Byrd

For example, since most districts use the same buses to pick up all students at different times, like ours does, if you move high school students later, then elementary students would have to go into the early slot, which could put very young children at bus stops in the dark.

The Florida House of Representatives is still considering the bill.

The Legislature is also looking to make changes to graduation requirements. Right now, students are required to pass an Algebra 1 End of

Course Exam and pass a 10th grade English Language Arts test to get a standard diploma. This bill would remove those requirements and instead make the tests 30% of the final grade in those courses.

Finally, last week, there was a new bill that came, HB5101, that is looking to greatly reduce (by half) the added funding that districts get for students who take and pass advanced classes like AP, IB, AICE, or other workforce training courses.

To be clear, at a loss of over \$16 million to OCPs, this change would be detrimental to these courses that so many students find not only engaging but save students significant money by providing a free way for students to attain college credits.

If you are inspired by any of these bills, please reach out to your legislators. They do appreciate hearing your concerns. You can find your representatives at FLHouse.gov or FLSenate.gov.

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Letters to the editor are welcome and encouraged, but they should be signed and include a daytime telephone number, address, or email address for verification. Management reserves the right to edit letters.

www.theapokkachief.com



ALL ABOUT APOPKA

City of Apopka Telephone Numbers

City Hall.....	407-703-1700
Mayor's Office.....	407-703-1701
City Administrator.....	407-703-1649
City Clerk.....	407-703-1704
Community Devel.....	407-703-1712
Code Enforcement.....	407-703-1738
Finance Dept.....	407-703-1725
Fire (non-emerg.).....	407-703-1756
Parks and Rec. Dept.....	407-703-1741
Police Chief.....	407-703-1769
Police (non-emerg.).....	407-703-1771
Job Line.....	407-703-1743
Solid Waste Collect.....	407-703-1731
Street Maintenance.....	407-703-1731
Utility Billing.....	407-703-1727
Medical, fire emergency.....	911

The city of Apopka was chartered in 1882. It is located at 28°30 north latitude and is 150 feet above sea level. Its population is about 48,000 and its total area is more than 30 sq. mi. www.apopka.net

Orange County Telephone Numbers

Animal Services.....	407-836-3111
Auto/Boat Tags.....	850-617-2000
Building Dept.....	407-836-8550
County Mayor.....	407-836-7370
County Commission.....	407-836-7350
County Attorney.....	407-836-7320
Clerk of the Court.....	407-836-2065
Elections Supervisor.....	407-836-2070
Fire/Rescue.....	407-836-3111
Solid Waste.....	407-836-6601
Garbage Collection.....	407-703-1731
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Property Appraiser.....	407-836-5044
Sheriff Administrative.....	407-254-7000
Non-Emerg. Complaint.....	407-836-4357
Utilities.....	407-836-5515
All other departments.....	407-836-3111
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www.orangecountyfl.net

Other Area Numbers of Note

U.S. Senators	
Rick Scott (Rep.).....	202-224-5274
Marco Rubio (Rep.).....	407-254-2573
U.S. Representative	
Daniel Webster (Dist. 11).....	352-241-9220
State Representatives	
Doug Bankson.....	407-476-6787
Carolina Amesty (Dist. 45).....	unknown
State Senators	
Geraldine Thompson (Dist.11).....	407-297-2045
Orange County Commissioner	
Christine Moore.....	407-836-7350
Orange County Public Schools	
Pupil assignment.....	407-317-3233
Bus routes.....	407-317-3800
Superintendent.....	407-317-3200
School Board.....	407-317-3200
Miscellaneous	
The Apopka Chief.....	407-886-2777
Museum of the Apopkans.....	407-703-1707
Chamber of Commerce.....	407-886-1441

Bill introduced to rename roadway after Sen. Thompson

By Teresa Sargeant
Reporter

A state lawmaker has introduced a bill to rename roadways to mark prominent community leaders' contributions, including those of Florida Sen. Geraldine Thompson for District 15.

State Sen. Kristen Aston Arrington, D-District 25, introduced Senate Bill 274, according to the March 31 newsletter from the Office of Senate District 15. The bill would rename a section of West South Street between South Division Avenue and U.S. 441 as "Geraldine Thompson Way."

The bill would also dedicate a part of International



Photo courtesy of Office of Florida Senate District 15

Sen. Kristen Aston Arrington, D-District 25, introduces Senate Bill 274, which would rename roadways in honor of local leaders such as the late state Sen. Geraldine Thompson.

al Drive between State Road 428 and Sand Lake Road as "Harris Rosen Way," after the founder of Rosen Ho-

tels and Resorts who died on Nov. 25, 2024.

The bill directs the Florida Department of Transporta-



Sen. Geraldine Thompson

tion to set up markers for the roadways.

The bill takes effect July 1.

"As we enter the fourth week of Session, the pace continues to quicken with important bills taking shape and crucial discussions un-

derway," the March 31 newsletter said. "From advancing legislative priorities to addressing key issues impacting our communities, the focus is sharpening on areas that will define the rest of the session."

Thompson died on Feb. 13 due to complications from knee replacement surgery. She had been in Florida politics for almost 20 years, including her most recent and last position as state senator for District 15, which includes Apopka and much of west Orange County.

Known as a civil rights advocate, Thompson championed for voters' rights and the preservation of local African American history.

The Senate District 15

newsletter highlighted other bills that were front and center during the previous week. Such legislation was Senate Bill 130, which the Senate passed and which would change different sections of state law pertaining to compensating the wrongfully imprisoned; the introduction of Senate Bill 158, which would strengthen access to important breast health services; and the postponement of Senate Bill 234, called the Officer Jason Raynor Act, which would better protect police officers and increase penalties for crimes against them.

The Legislative session began on March 4 and will last 60 days until May 2.

Apopka residents express concerns about county redistricting

John Bridges Center event was second in six-meeting series

By Teresa Sargeant
Reporter

In the second of six community meetings organized in Orange County districts, the 2025 Mid-Decennial Redistricting Advisory Committee (MRAC) held a public input meeting on April 2 at the John H. Bridges Community Center in Apopka, which is in District 2.

Such community meetings give residents the chance to voice their thoughts about the redistricting process and recommend ideas. The MRAC is tasked with the redistricting process which would increase the number of

Orange County Commission Districts from six to eight.

Many residents expressed various concerns about redistricting, from asking that the committee not divide communities to claiming that the MRAC already yielded a map with newly drawn boundaries without public input.

Last November, Orange County voters passed a charter amendment for redistricting. In January, the Orange County Board of County Commissioners formed the MRAC to help with the process that includes setting up new boundaries and adding two more districts.

The commission gave MRAC a mandate to conduct community meetings, evaluate census data, and suggest boundaries for the two new districts and how to recon-



Photo by Teresa Sargeant

The 2025 Mid-Decennial Redistricting Advisory Committee conducted the second of six community meetings on the redistricting process on April 2 at the John Bridges Community Center in Apopka.

figure the borders of existing districts. The committee is scheduled to give the Board of County Commissioners a drafted recommendations this September.

MRAC co-chair Camille Evans recommended people

visit the website OCFL.net/redistricting, which contains information about the redistricting process and an official repository of maps submitted in accordance with the committee's rules of procedure.

No map has yet been submitted in a manner consistent with the committee's rules of procedure, Evans said.

"I just want to remind everybody that you may see maps throughout this process that float around, and they may have good ideas, or they may have ideas you don't agree with," Evans said. "However, there is a process for submitting them, and that we do encourage everybody to go on the website and avail yourself of the mapping software."

Co-chair Tico Perez said he appreciated everyone who attended the meeting and assured them that MRAC is listening to residents' concerns. He said some comments surprised him about MRAC's refusal to listen, or that the committee already has a re-

districting plan.

"There's 15 of us here. We signed on for 20 public meetings, one a week for the next five months," Perez said. "We have canceled our vacations. We have changed our work schedules. We sure ain't getting paid, unless you want to count the lunch in the back [of the room]. So we're here to be your partners. We're here to be your friends. We're here to be your advocates. We are going to do the absolute best that we can. Nobody's got maps tucked away. We are just here to do the job that the citizens gave us."

The MRAC's next public meeting is 6-9 p. m. on April 10 at Meadow Woods Recreation Center in District 4 (1751 Rhode Island Woods Circle, Orlando).

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City
Continued from page 1A



Photo by Marshall Tempest

The Apopka City Council discussed the termination of the city administrator at Wednesday's meeting.

the city should pay whatever is owed to Smith.

Resident Rod Olsen said any staff decision must be the decision of the council, not only the mayor's, regardless of who the mayor is. Olsen also said he found Smith to be "honorable, respectful and responsible." Whenever Olsen reached out to Smith, Smith responded to him.

"I don't know it's like working with the gentleman," he said. "All I know is my experience was outstanding."

At Wednesday's meeting, the City Council discussed the severance package for Smith, effective March 21. According to the City Council staff report, the mayor and/or City Council may terminate the agreement at any time without cause as may be appropriate per the City Charter.

The city must give at least a 60-day written notice of termination without cause; during that notice period, the employee's duties can be adjusted to a 40-hour work week to transition to the replacement. If the city does not provide

the 60-day notice, the employee is entitled to payment for the 60 days as well as 20 weeks of severance pay.

The city also must pay the first two months of COBRA health benefits without normal employee premiums for the 60-day timeframe, according to the City Council staff report.

Smith started employment with the city of Apopka in June 2024, contracted at a yearly estimated \$170,000 base salary plus benefits.

DOGE emails

A Tuesday, March 18, letter from Governor Ron DeSantis's office — reviewed by the Chief — explained that the Executive Office of the Governor (EOG) has set up an EOG DOGE Team "which will use advanced technology to identify, review, and report on unnecessary spending within county and municipal governments and recommend legislative reforms to promote efficiency, maximize productivity, and eliminate waste in state and local government."

To that effect, the EOG DOGE Team is requesting municipalities to submit financial solvency reviews to the office no later than April 8, which was three weeks after the letter was sent. The letter requested confirmation about whether the municipality has any financial emergency or distress such as inability to pay loans or debts, uncontested outstanding claims from creditors over 90 days old and more.

In a previous interview with The Apopka Chief, Smith said he was never given a reason for the termination, that communication with Nelson had been good until the winter when the mayor began to ignore him, and was not in communication with the mayor the last four weeks of employment because he was out of town for his daughter's wedding and then became sick.

Last week Smith denied ever getting communication from DOGE or about DOGE. He did not respond to phone calls and a text message requesting additional comment on Wednesday, April 2.

Police Beat

If a law enforcement agency charges you with a crime and this paper reports that information, please notify us within 90 days if the charge is dropped, or if you are found not guilty by the court. After verifying the information, we will be happy to publish it. Please send notification to The Apopka Chief, P.O. Box 880, Apopka, 32704-0880.

In the period from March 23-29, 2025, the Apopka Police Department received 1,376 calls for service, responded to 30 crashes, issued 29 citations, and made 21 arrests. There were ten vehicle burglaries. No juveniles were charged.

The following adults were arrested and charged:

Richard Michael Austin, 62, 4805 Okeefe St., Orlando, drug equipment-possession and/or use; drugs-possession of controlled substance without prescription (cocaine).

Justin Edward Bailey, 35, 85 Washington St. #5307, Plainville, out-of-county warrant.

Elvin Javier Bellalobos, 32, 306 Lake Ave., Maitland, moving traffic violation-operate motor vehicle without valid license 1st conviction; DUI-unlawful blood alcohol, DUI-influence of alcohol or drugs.

Julio Cesar Castillo Torres, 36, general delivery, Apopka, larceny-other theft.

Jorge Luis Cienfuegos Parra, 58, 2702 Brandon Cir., Apopka, DUI-unlawful blood alcohol, DUI-influence of alcohol or drugs; resist officer-obstruct without violence.

Andrew Martin Cool, 40, 16511 Quarter Horse Ct., Montverde, larceny-petit theft, merchandise farm transit 2+ prior conviction.

Hermilo Quintana Cruz, 26, general delivery, Apopka, damage property-criminal mischief \$ 1,000 or more.

Robert Anthony Ladonne Eu-

banks, 43, 18 N. Terry Ave., Orlando, other agency warrant.

Judy Frederick, 42, Apopka, contempt of court violation-injunction protection domestic violence; cruelty toward child-abuse child without great bodily harm.

Kyannah Ariel Hudson-Reynolds, 25, 1002 Armada Ct., Ocoee, drugs-possession of controlled substance without prescription.

Ashwin Steven Jagmohan, 21, Apopka, battery-touch or strike.

Mackenzie Fleites Kindler, 27, 1653 Boulder Creek Ct., Apopka, other agency warrant.

Michael Frederick Martin, 41, Apopka, battery-touch or strike.

Mary Elizabeth Martinez, 42, Apopka, damage property-criminal mischief \$1,000 or more; battery-cause bodily harm.

Pamela Marie Neville, 63, 239 Plumosa Rd., Debary, DUI-unlawful blood alcohol 0.15 or higher or with person under 18 in vehicle.

Ronald Levon Postell, 54, 4544 Conley St., Orlando, larceny petit theft-merchandise farm transit 2+ prior conviction.

Mynor Eliseo Ruiz-Vasquez, 51, general delivery, Apopka, other agency warrant; larceny-other theft.

Amy Francis Schmidt-Belcher, 41, 801 Monroe Ave., Apopka, other agency warrant; fraud-impersonate/misrepresent self, commit personal ID, misdemeanor

Bobby Louis Strong, 34, 487 Apopka Hills Cir., Apopka, marijuana-possession less than 20 grams cannabis; obstructing justice-tamper with evidence in criminal proceeding; smuggle contraband into prison employee, marijuana in correctional institution.

Raul Lionel Vazquez, 24, 1209 Falconcrest Blvd., Apopka, other agency warrant.

Taityana Patrice Walker, 23, Apopka, battery-cause bodily harm; simple assault-on specified person-

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Duke Energy Florida grants \$5K to Habitat Seminole-Apopka

Since 2020, Duke Energy has given over \$200K to state's affordable housing program



"Supporting nonprofit organizations like Habitat for Humanity allows the company to improve the vitality of the communities we serve while making a lasting difference in the lives of individual customers."

Staff Reports

Duke Energy Florida and its foundation is giving a total of \$75,000 to three Habitat for Humanity organizations in Florida including \$5,000 to Habitat for Humanity Seminole-Apopka, Duke Energy Florida announced in a March 27 news release.

Besides the \$5,000 to Habitat for Humanity Seminole-Apopka, Duke Energy Foundation is also giving \$20,000 to Habitat for Humanity Lake Sumter, and

\$30,000 to Habitat for Humanity Tampa Bay Gulfside.

Duke Energy has also given another \$20,000 to help these organizations' operations this year.

In addition to the grants, employees will construct houses in west Orange and Citrus counties during volunteer events later this year.

"Habitat for Humanity builds homes, communities and hope," Melissa Seixas, Duke Energy Florida state president, was quoted as saying in a press release.

Since 2020, Duke Energy Foundation has given to the state's affordable housing programs over \$200,000, a portion of the \$1 million in contributions and over 10,000 volunteer hours to Habitat for Humanity.

To learn more about Habitat for Humanity's work through its 49 affiliate organizations across Florida, Visit habitatflorida.org to for more information about Habitat for Humanity's works through it 49 affiliate organizations across the state.



Courtesy of Habitat for Humanity Seminole-Apopka

Habitat volunteers and local CEOs gathered on November 4, 2024, for the annual CEO Build event, in which 21 of the region's CEOs and business leaders discussed the Central Florida affordable housing crisis.

Senate

Continued from page 1A

on third-party voter registration groups, and create a Florida Voting Rights Act commission to oversee and protect voters.

"We're here today to champion the Florida Voting Rights Act, Senate Bill 1582 and House Bill 1409, a piece of good, common-sense leg-

islation that does what democracy demands: protect the rights of every voter in our state," Bracy Davis said.

Bracy Davis told Florida Politics that she does not want the race to become personal.

"I love my brother and I wish him well," she said.



Photo courtesy of Randolph Bracy III/
RandolphBracy.com

Randolph Bracy III is running for Florida Senate District 15 against his sister.

Orchids in full bloom at Apopka International Spring Orchid Festival

Domestic, international vendors to showcase flowers

Staff Reports

Orchids from all over the nation and the world will fill up greenhouses at the Apopka International Spring Orchid Festival next week.

Free to the public, the event will take place 9 a. m. to 5 p. m. from Friday, April 11 to Sunday, April 13, at Krull-Smith, 2800 W. Ponkan Road, Apopka.

Featured local and domestic vendors will be from Florida, California, New Jersey and North Carolina; and international vendors will come from South Africa, Brazil, Japan, Taiwan,

and Thailand.

The exhibiting vendors include Afri Orchids (South Africa), AWZ Orchids (Brazil), Blue Ridge Orchids (North Carolina), Blumen Insel (Japan), Bredren Orchids (Florida), Cactus & Exotics (Florida), Ching Hua Orchids (Taiwan), Gold Country Orchids (California), Hang-a-Pot (Florida), Ingram's Better Orchid Books (Florida), Kanjarrin Greens (Thailand), Mac's Orchids (Florida), Mainshow Orchids (Taiwan), Miranda Orchids (Florida), OFE Orchids & Supplies (Florida), Orchid Eros (Hawaii), Orchidabilia (Florida), Paph Paradise (California), Scented Diva Candles (Florida), Springwater Orchids (Florida), Sunset Valley Orchids (California), Waldor Orchids (New Jersey) and Wilson Orchids (Taiwan).

Five Apopkans make dean's list at Mars Hill

Staff reports

Five Apopkans were named to the dean's list for the fall 2024 semester at Mars Hill University in North Carolina.

Jackson Paul Adams, Braylon Anthony Reynante, Thomas

Jay Burske, Philip John Devita and Alyssa Marie Jordan were a few of the 482 students named to the dean's list last autumn.

To qualify for the dean's list,

To make it on the dean's list, students must earn a grade-point average of 3.5 on a mini-

mum of 12 semester hours and have no grade below a C.

Founded in 1856 by area Baptist families, Mars Hill University is a private liberal arts institution located 20 minutes north of Asheville in western North Carolina.

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CITY OF APOPKA PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE REWRITE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TRANSMITTAL HEARING

NOTICE is hereby given pursuant to Florida Statutes Section 163.3184 and the Apopka Code of Ordinances, Part III, Land Development Code, Article II, Section 2.4.7(B) that the City of Apopka proposes to rewrite the Comprehensive Plan in its entirety with the exception of the Transportation Element.

ORDINANCE NO. 3101
AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF APOPKA, FLORIDA, REWRITING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IN ITS ENTIRETY WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT; PROVIDING FOR LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Notice is given that the **City of Apopka Planning Commission** will hold a public hearing at its regularly scheduled meeting in the City Council Chambers of the Apopka City Hall, 120 E. Main Street, Apopka, Florida on **Tuesday, May 13, 2025 beginning at 5:30 P.M.**, or as soon thereafter as possible.

FURTHER NOTICE is given that a public hearing for **Ordinance Number 3101** the transmittal of the proposed amendment to the Florida Department of Commerce will be held by the **City of Apopka City Council** at its regularly scheduled meeting in the City Council Chambers of the Apopka City Hall, 120 E. Main Street, Apopka, Florida on **Wednesday, May 21, 2025, beginning at 7:00 P.M.**, or as soon thereafter as possible.

Affected parties and the public may appear at the above listed hearings to speak. The proposed Rewrite of the Comprehensive Plan can be inspected at the Apopka Community Development Department located at Apopka City Hall on weekdays between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. City Hall address shown below. Please be advised that, under State law, if you decide to appeal a decision made with respect to this matter, you will need a record of the proceedings and may need to ensure that a verbatim record is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), persons with disabilities needing assistance to participate in any of these proceedings should contact the City Clerk's Office at 120 East Main Street, Apopka FL 32703, Telephone: 407-703-1704, no less than 48 hours prior to the proceeding.

**Apopka City Council
Apopka Planning Commission
Community Development Department**

April 4, 2025

Notice of Limited Liability Company Dissolution

NOTE: This page is optional

This notice is submitted by the dissolved limited liability company named below for resolution of payment of unknown claims against this limited liability company as provided in s. 605.0712, F.S.

This "Notice of Limited Liability Company Dissolution" is optional and is not required when filing a voluntary dissolution.

Name of Limited Liability Company: Apopka Vet Clinic, LLC

Document number of Limited Liability Company is: L17900238114

Date of dissolution was: 12/31/2025

Description of information that must be included in a written claim:

All claims against the assets of Apopka Vet Clinic, LLC must be made in writing and include the claim amount, basis and origination date. The deadline for submitting claims is 120 days from the date of this notice.

Mailing address where claims can be sent: (Claims cannot be sent to the Division of Corporations)

DHN Attorneys, PA
448 South Alafaya Trail, Unit 8
Orlando, FL 32828

A claim against the above named limited liability company will be barred unless a proceeding to enforce the claim is commenced within 4 years after the filing of this notice.

Shellie Campbell DVM
Printed Name of the Person Filing

[Signature]
Signature of the Person Filing

Fee: No charge if included with Articles of Dissolution. If filed separately \$25.00

Police, fire chiefs talk duties, departments

McKinley says city must follow immigration law

By Teresa Sargeant
Reporter

Police Chief Michael McKinley and Fire Chief Wil Rivera-Sanchez spoke about their respective department structure and operations and how they interact with the community on various issues during the Apopka Area Chamber of Commerce's April 1 Lunch and Learn at the Hilton Garden Inn in downtown Apopka.



Photo by Teresa Sargeant

Rivera-Sanchez (L) and McKinley (R) speak at the chamber event this week.

While enjoying lunch, Chamber members got the opportunity to speak with both chiefs about community relations, including with the homeless population and undocumented immigrants, and briefly learned about the yet-to-be-constructed new public safety complex.

The Apopka Police Department is a full-service department that operates 24/7 and has 141 authorized officers, up from 92 a decade ago, according to McKinley. He

said the department includes a dispatch, accreditation manager and a legal advisor, ensuring best practices.

McKinley briefly mentioned the city's plan to build a public safety complex that will house both the fire and police departments. The public safety complex, which will also house the emergency communications center and information technology department, will be built close to the current Apopka Municipal Jus-

tice Building, where the police department is located, on East Sixth Street.

On April 2, the Apopka City Council was set to vote on approving a negotiated contract for construction manager at risk to H.J. High Construction for \$338,382 plus a 10 percent contingency of \$33,838, totaling \$372,220. The complex's design timeline is about 18 months followed by another 12 to 16 years for the project, McKinley said.

Integrated with emergency management service (EMS), the fire department currently has 146 employees, including 138 on shift, and operates six stations throughout the city. The fire department has a command staff overseeing fire prevention and EMS services, with two field inspectors checking business fire protection systems. All units are equipped with advanced life support (ALS) equipment, Rivera-

Sanchez said.

According to Rivera-Sanchez, people have asked why the fire department sends a fire truck and an ambulance to emergency scenes.

"Time matters," he responded, noting the average response time is six to eight minutes from the moment the 911 dispatch center receives a call.

"If anybody's ever been trained in CPR, we know for every minute that goes by that nobody's pumping on that chest, we're losing about 10% survival chance," Rivera-Sanchez said. "By having our equipment, as far as dually equipped, our fire trucks and our ambulance services, it doesn't matter which truck is available, they're going to come to you, then we get the proper transport units to actually transport."

McKinley clarified that unlike what has been said on social media, Apopka police officers haven't been directed to proactively arrest homeless people.

He said with the exception of new police officers who are still in training, all the officers

have crisis intervention training for dealing with the mental health issues not only among the homeless but the community in general.

As for undocumented individuals, McKinley said the city must obey immigration laws or else face legal consequences that include up to a \$5,000 fine and the loss of government public safety funds. If the city has to defend itself, it must do so with its own money, he said.

"We have to follow these laws, obviously, and it's putting us in a bad position," he said.

However, the city police are not going to violate anyone's constitutional rights or ask people "who look Hispanic or is Hispanic" about their immigration status, McKinley said. If undocumented immigrants want to report a crime, they can still do so without law enforcement learning about their immigration status.

"What we don't want them to become is victim to crime, because people think they're afraid to report that crime to us," McKinley said.

Contract

Continued from page 1A

2024, Architects Design Group was awarded a negotiated contract for the public safety facility's design services. Once the design is finished, a construction phase contract will be given to the City Council.

In a construction project, a CMAR is brought on as a consultant who first oversees the design then, once the design is complete, transitions to role of general contractor for

construction. The CMAR supervises different aspects of a project including budget such as the guaranteed maximum price.

The process for selecting a company and negotiating the CMAR contract began last year, which included an evaluation committee that was organized that looked at the top-qualifying firms from April 2024 to May 2024. In

June 2024, the City Council approved city staff to begin negotiations and to give H.J. High Construction the CMAR contract.

Last month, the City Council authorized the purchase of a Seventh Street property through eminent domain, if necessary, to build the public safety facility. This property, the final one necessary to build the new facility, has a three-

bedroom, two-bath house with a 2024 market and assessed value of \$61,495, according to Orange County Property Appraiser records. The owner on record is McGee Family Trust.

Eminent domain refers to the power of the government — repeatedly upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court — to take someone's property for public use, as long as the government provides "just com-

ensation."

The current police department is in the Apopka Municipal Justice Building, which stands on about 1.7-gross acres of real property at 112 E. Sixth Street.

The city has attempted to work with the property owners and their attorney, but the owners were considering eminent domain because of the possible tax benefits, Police

Chief Michael McKinley told the City Council at the March 5 meeting. The city tried reaching out to the property owners' attorney but couldn't make contact.

Besides attempted negotiations, the city also offered fair market value, which was rejected, and an appraisal showing that the property's value was significantly higher than the owners' last offer.

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THE WOMAN IN THE YARD (PG-13) 11:10; 2:00; 4:30; 7:40; 10:30
A MINECRAFT MOVIE (PG) 10:50; 11:20; 1:10; 1:40; 4:00; 7:00; 7:30; 9:50
THE CHOSEN: LAST SUPPER PART 2 (NR) 11:00; 3:00; 7:10
THE CHOSEN: LAST SUPPER PART 1 (NR) 12:00; 3:20; 6:30; 9:40
A WORKING MAN (R) 12:30; 3:50; 6:50; 10:00

DISNEY'S SNOW WHITE (PG) 12:40; 3:40; 6:40; 9:30
DEATH OF A UNICORN (R) 1:30; 4:10; 7:20; 10:10

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Puzzle Solution

S	L	A	T		S	A	H	A	R	A					
C	E	R	E		A	C	I	D	U	L	O	U	S		
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				P	I	P	E	R		M	A	R	A	S	
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The Crossword Puzzle is found on page 4B

SUDOKU PUZZLE
DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦♦ ♦ Moderate ♦♦♦ Challenging ♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

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

SUDOKU ANSWERS: PAGE 4B
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... CALENDAR OF EVENTS ...



To submit an event, you can email them to news@theapokkachief.com.

Monday, April 7 - A Hope for a New Beginning -

Join us at 10 a.m. as Gale Sussman, the daughter of Holocaust survivors, shares with you, "A Hope for a New Beginning." Born in a displaced persons camp in West Berlin after World War II, she will share her personal journey through significant chapters of history. Her presentation will cover topics such as life before the war, the actions of the Einsatzgruppen mobile killing units, life in a displaced persons camp, and her eventual arrival in the United States where she adjusted to a new culture. Presented by the University Club of Winter Park History Group. Location: 841 N. Park Avenue, Winter Park. Free.

Tuesday, April 8 - Matinee Movie -

At 2 p.m., we will show "The Power and the Prize (1956), with Robert Taylor. An American business executive plans to marry and Austrian refugee in London but he encounters disapproval and opposition from his American social and business circles. Presented by the University Club of Winter Park. Location: 841 N. Park Avenue, Winter Park. Free.

Wednesday, April 9 - Armchair Travel - On and Off the Beaten Path -

Beginning at 2:30 p.m., club member and author Myrna Ossin will feature Orlando and Central Florida, on and off the Beaten Path. Presented by the University Club of Winter Park. Free. Location: 841 N. Park Avenue, Win-

Thursday, April 10 - Mental Health Fitness -

Beginning at 12:30 p.m., Laura Bowman, Licensed Mental Health Counselor will present, along with Molly Losey, Licensed Mental Health Counselor as the group facilitator. Who among us experiences good mental health? Does the term "mentally healthy" have any meaning other than a simple lack of symptoms? Good mental health is a constellation of qualities and skills that we can become aware of and foster in our lives. We will have a format of 20-30 minute presentation followed by one hour of discussion that hopefully ignites resonance and connection among us. Presented by the University Club of Winter Park. Location: 841 N. Park Avenue, Winter Park. Free.

Month of April - City of Apopka Meetings at the Apopka City Hall Council Chambers, 120 East Main Street, Apopka. Development Review Committee Meetings -

every Monday April 9, 9:00 a.m.-12 noon
April 16, 9:00 a.m.-12 noon
April 23, 9:00 a.m.-12 noon
April 30, 9:00 a.m.-12 noon
City Council Meetings - at 1:30 p.m. on the 1st Wednesday of each month and at 7 p.m. on the 3rd Wednesday of each month
April 16 at 7 p.m.
At the Apopka City Hall Council Chambers, 120 East Main Street, Apopka.
The City of Apopka live streams the Apopka City Council and Apopka Planning Commission Meetings on

ter Park. Free. ...
the City's YouTube Channel. View City Council page to learn more about our members and meetings. Regular Meetings are held the 1st Wednesday of the month at 1:30 PM and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7 PM. Visit our meeting calendar for a list of meetings.

Tuesdays, every week -

Plant Clinic - From 9 a.m. to 12 noon, you can get answers for your problem plants and yard from experts at the UF/IFAS Extension Master Gardener Volunteers program at the UF/IFAS Mid-Florida Research Education Center (MREC), 2725 Binion Road, Apopka, 32703. Let a Master Gardener help. Orange County residents can bring your questions and samples from your plants or lawn. More info at 407-254-9200 or email your questions and photos to orange-comgv@ifas.ufl.edu to be answered by Master Gardeners. A free plant clinic for Commercial Growers is also open Tuesdays from 1 to 4 p.m. at the same location. Free.

MISCELLANEOUS: VITAS Innovative Hospice Care of Central Florida

VITAS needs volunteers in this area who can befriend terminally ill patients, provide relief for weary caregivers, accompany their pet on Paw Pals visits, visit with veterans, and much more, or help with administrative work. Info: email central.floridavolunteers@vitas.com or call 407-691-4541.

Round Robin Tennis for Women of Older Ages

Sundays, from 9:30-11 a.m. All levels of players are welcome. Location: The Winter Park Tennis Center, 1075 Azalea Lane, Winter Park. Call ahead because only 24 players are accepted. Cost: \$7. Info: call 407-599-3445.

O-Town Sound Chorus

A local chapter of Sweet Adelines International, invites women of all ages to join them. Women from 12 countries participate in this chorus. They also offer a free voice lesson. Time: every Monday, from 7-10 p.m. Location: Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church, 3900 S. Hiawassee Road, Orlando. Info: or to book a performance, visit www.otschorus.com or call 407-415-1939.

A variety of fitness programs are offered to senior participants aged 55+ and provide many levels of health and wellness.

Ballroom dancing

Ballroom dancing is offered with five bands alternating weekly. Couples and singles are welcome. Time: Fridays, 7-10 p.m. Location: Marks Street Senior Center, 99 Marks St., Orlando. Cost: \$4 for members; \$ and \$5 for guests. Info: call 407-889-4047.

Florida Cabin Fever Quilt Guild:

Visitors interested in quilting are welcome. There will be a brief business meeting before the program, which may include a national speaker, tips and tricks for quilting, and a show-and-tell where members show off their latest creations. Time: 1st Monday of each month, 6 p.m. Location: Marks Street Senior Recreation Complex, 99 E. Marks St., Orlando. Cost: The first two visits are free. Info: Call 407-277-1821 for info.

...
Writer's critique: Read from your own work and offer positive critiques to fellow writers in a friendly, supportive environment. Call prior to first attendance. Time: 10 a.m.-noon, Thursdays. Location: Maitland Senior Center, 345 S. Maitland Ave., Maitland. Free and open to the public. Info: call 407-539-6251.

Orlando Society of Model Railroaders:

See a large, fully operational HO scale model railroad with eight scale miles of main line track and fully detailed areas of urban and rural scenery. Visitors are welcome and memberships are available for those who would be interested in participating in club activities regularly. Time: 6-9 p.m., Tuesdays or 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Saturdays. Location: Orlando Society of Model Railroaders, 7208 Aloha Ave., No. 500, Winter Park. Info: call 407-496-8225.

The Sound of Sunshine Show Chorus

is a female harmonizing singing group that shares a variety of musical genres, including contemporary. The group is open to any age, and visitors are welcome for fun and friendship. Time: Thursdays, 7 p.m. Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, 1600 S. Orlando Ave., Orlando. Info: call 407-703-2491 or 321-354-5312.

The Barbershop Harmony Society

invites anyone interested in singing to join them. Time: Tuesdays starting at 7 p.m. Location: Melody Manor, 813 Montana St., Orlando. Info: call 407-365-7062.

If your organization has upcoming events, be it Zoom or in person, that you would like to publicize, send your announcements to The Apopka Chief Newspaper and we will do our best to accommodate. Please allow two weeks notice. You can email them to news@theapokkachief.com or ads@theapokkachief.com; fax them to 407-889-4121; mail them to The Apopka Chief Newspaper, P.O. Box 880, Apopka, FL 32704-0880 or 400 N. Park Ave., Apopka, FL 32712; or call 407-886-2777 for more information.

Rabbit: Delicious - roasted, braised, stewed, smoked, and used in casseroles

From *Charleston Receipts*, submitted by Mrs. R. O. Dion, Hasenpfeffer is a German recipe for cooking rabbit. The process starts with a soak time, some say of up to four days, but this recipe says two days. The soaking may apply more to wild rabbit. From one who used to raise and eat rabbits, I can attest that it really is a delicious meat to cook and serve. I never fixed Hasenpfeffer, but I used to braise it, which is covering it tightly and roasting and steaming, but not stewing. Wonderfully versatile, rabbit is high in protein, low in fat and cholesterol, rich in B vitamins, and a good source of minerals such as phosphorous and potassium. You can ask your butcher for domestic rabbit and if he doesn't have it, he can order it.



Chicken, Italiano comes from *Paths of Sunshine* cookbook. The accompanying note instructs: "Prepare this recipe the day before serving to allow melding of flavors."

Creamed Green Beans from *Savannah Style* is very good and will work out well for our readers when planning their evening meals. This dish is always great for special occasions or simple suppers for your loved ones.

Frances McHale contributed her Potato Soup recipe to Apopka Historical Society's *Preserving the Big Potato, a Collection of Potato Recipes*. I'm sorry to say there is no copyright date in this volume, but am sure it is from quite a few years ago.

From *Charleston Receipts*, Crab Meat Salad calls for a pound of fresh crab meat. You can substitute shrimp for the crab meat. This recipe was contributed by Miss Elizabeth Williams.

Molasses Popcorn Balls from *The Original Country Cookbook* should be a lot of fun for both kids and grown folks.

Marvin Woods' Made-from-Scratch Lemonade looks as if it is going to be the best lemonade we've ever had.

MRS. R. O. DION'S (ELEANOR WALKER) HASENPFEFFER

Recipe from *Charleston Receipts*, America's Oldest Junior League

Cookbook in Print, a Cookbook by The Junior League of Charleston, Inc.

- 1 rabbit
- Vinegar and water
- 1 sliced onion
- Butter
- 3 cloves
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 cup thick sour cream
- Salt and pepper

Disjoint rabbit, wash and place in crock or jar with enough vinegar and water in equal parts to cover. Add onion, a few cloves, bay leaf, salt and pepper to taste. Let the meat soak for two days. Then wipe dry and brown in hot butter, turning frequently. Slowly add some of the solution used for soaking the meat to the depth of one quarter of an inch. Cover tightly and simmer until done (about 30 minutes). Do not boil. Just before serving, stir sour cream into sauce.

CHICKEN, ITALIANO
Recipe from *PATHS OF SUNSHINE COOKBOOK*

- 8 chicken breasts, skinned, boned, split (16 pieces)
- 1/2 cup red table wine
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic granules
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 cups seasoned stuffing mix, divided
- 1 tablespoon Parmesan cheese, grated
- 1 (8 ounce) carton sour cream
- 1/2 cup slivered almonds, blanched
- 1/4 cup butter, melted

Place chicken in flat plastic container (with cover). Blend wine, lemon juice, garlic and pepper together. Pour over chicken breasts, cover and refrigerate for 2 to 3 hours, turning container over several times during this period to thoroughly marinate the pieces. Toss together 1-1/2 cups stuffing mix and cheese. Drain chicken breasts and pat dry with paper toweling. Coat chicken thoroughly with sour cream. Dredge the chicken pieces with the 1-1/2 cups cheese-stuffing mix. Place chicken pieces, closely together, in casserole dish. Cover and refrigerate. Before baking, sprinkle with reserved 1/2 cup stuffing mix, slivered almonds and melted butter. Bake at 325 degrees for 1 hour or until chicken is fork tender. Place

chicken pieces on warm serving platter. Additional Parmesan cheese may be passed. Serves 6 generously.

CREAMED GREEN BEANS

Recipe from *Savannah Style*, a Cookbook by The Junior League of Savannah, Inc.

- 1/2 cup onion, finely sliced
- 1 tablespoon parsley, minced.
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon peel, grated
- 1 cup sour cream
- 5 cups green beans, cooked and drained (should be French-sliced)
- 1/2 cup mushrooms, sautéed
- 1/2 cup sharp Cheddar cheese, grated
- 1/2 cup bread crumbs
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted

Cook onion and parsley in butter until tender, but not brown. Add flour, salt, pepper and lemon peel. Add sour cream and mix well. Stir in beans and mushrooms. Place in a 7 x 11-inch casserole. Top with grated cheese. Combine bread crumbs and melted butter and sprinkle on top of green beans. Bake at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 30 minutes.

FRANCES McHALE'S POTATO SOUP

Recipe from Apopka Historical Society's *Preserving the Big Potato - A Collection of Potato Recipes*

- 6 cups water
- 6 medium potatoes peeled and diced
- 2 stalks celery diced
- 1 small onion diced
- 3 tablespoons chives, chopped
- 1-1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1 cup evaporated or whole milk
- 2 tablespoons butter

Bring water to a boil in a 2-quart saucepan. Add potatoes, celery, onion, chives, salt, and pepper. Reduce heat and simmer slowly for 25 minutes. Add butter, then stir in milk. Bring to a boil. Serve.

MISS ELIZABETH R. WILLIAMS' CRAB MEAT SALAD

Recipe from *Charleston Receipts*,

America's Oldest Junior League Cookbook in Print, a Cookbook by The Junior League of Charleston, Inc.

- 1 pound crab meat
- 1 cup celery, diced
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- Lettuce
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 2 hard-cooked eggs, diced
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise or salad dressing
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Remove any shell from the crab meat. Combine all the ingredients and serve on lettuce. Shrimp may be used instead of crab meat. Serves 6.

MOLASSES POPCORN BALLS
Recipe from Paragon Products, Inc., *The Original Country Cookbook*

- 3 qts popped corn (3/4 cup unpopped)
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup water
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup molasses
- 1/4 cup butter
- 3/4 teaspoon vanilla

Pop the corn, and set aside. Place all of the ingredients, except vanilla, in a saucepan and cook, stirring until sugar is dissolved. Continue cooking without stirring until syrup forms a brittle ball in cold water (270 degrees). Add vanilla and stir only enough to mix in through hot syrup. Put popped corn in a large bowl. Pour cooked syrup slowly over popped corn and mix well. Wet hands slightly and shape corn into balls.

MADE-FROM-SCRATCH LEMONADE
The New Low-Country Cooking
by Marvin Woods

- 2 quarts water
- Juice of 6 lemons
- Juice of 2 oranges
- Juice of 1 lime
- 1 cup granulated sugar (give or take a little, according to your preference)

Mix all the ingredients together in a pitcher. Stir until the sugar dissolves. Serve in chilled glasses filled with ice.

Ministerial alliance announces Good Friday service

Event resurrected in 2024 after years-long absence

Staff reports

On Good Friday, April 18, the Apopka Christian Ministerial Alliance will host a communitywide Good Friday Service at noon. The

event this year will be held at the First Baptist Church of Apopka in downtown, and everyone in northwest Orange County is invited.

Dozens of churches in the Apopka area make up the Apopka Christian Ministerial Alliance, and this communitywide event location moves each year to a different host church. After

a years-long of absence, the Apopka pastors restarted the event last year, with strong attendance from a wide variety of churches.

“We are excited to honor our Lord Jesus on this significant day in the life of Christianity and Apopka,” said Pastor Pat McGuffin, this year’s ACMA president, and pastor of Freedom Fellowship

Church. “Last year’s event was held at Calvary Church of the Nazarene, and it was so exciting to see the fantastic turnout of people from all ages, churches, cultures, and backgrounds pause their day, and honor our Lord for an hour.”

McGuffin noted that when he was a child growing up in Apopka, business-

es and schools would let their people off to go to the Good Friday Service at noon, and he hopes that tradition could arise again.

The service will feature representatives from a variety of churches during the one-hour gathering. No reservations are needed, and you can find more information at ACMAonline.org.



Pastor Pat McGuffin

Apopka Historical Society event marks Women’s History Month

By Maribel Brinkle
Special to the Chief

Editor’s note: Maribel Brinkle delivered the following remarks at an Apopka Historical Society event on March 27.

It is an honor and a privilege to welcome you all to today’s celebration of Women’s History Month. As we reflect on this year’s theme, “Moving Forward Together: Women Educating & Inspiring Generations,” we honor the incredible strength, courage and wisdom of the women who have come before us.

You, the young women of today, are the voices of tomorrow. You are the ones who will carry forward the torch of progress, inspiring those who will follow in your footsteps.

Remember that every small step you take matters. Your dreams, your actions, and your passion for making a difference are the building blocks of a future where women continue to break barriers and lift one another up. Keep pushing boundaries, keep challenging norms,



Courtesy of Maribel Brinkle

Commissioner Nick Nesta, Carol Burkett, Deputy Chief of Staff for Mayor Jerry Demings, Maribel Brinkle President AHS, Apopka Vice Mayor Diane Velazquez attended the event.

and keep inspiring the world with your brilliance. You are not only the future — you are shaping it, today.

To the women who

have paved the way and made history with your resilience, wisdom, and grace, this month is for you. Many sitting here with us to-

night have fought hard for the rights and opportunities that we now cherish, and your legacy continues to inspire us all. As we celebrate

“Women’s History Month,” your strength serves as a guiding light to younger generations.

Your experiences are invaluable, and your voices continue to hold immense power. Know that your contributions — whether big or small — have made an indelible mark on the world. You have taught us the importance of lifting others up, and you continue to lead by example.

Thank you for being the trailblazers, mentors and role models. As we move forward, we celebrate the power of unity and shared wisdom. Whether young or a little less young, we are all part of a rich tapestry of women who educate, inspire and support one another. The theme “Moving Forward Together: Women Educating & Inspiring Generations” is a reminder that our strength lies in our ability to stand together, uplift each other and ensure that future generations of women continue to break barriers, lead with compassion and build a brighter future for all.

I would like to recognize our special guest Carol Burkett from Orange County government and Deputy Chief of Staff to Mayor Jerry L. Demings for her tenure and three-plus decades in public service, politics and government affairs. To the women dignitaries, Vice Mayor of Apopka Diane Velazquez, District 2 commissioner Christine Moore, Commissioner Nadia Anderson, District 7 School Board member Melissa Byrd, First Lady of Apopka Debbie Nelson, the hundreds of women in our local clubs, city of Apopka women employees and many women volunteers around town.

A salute and special remembrance of Mrs. Elizabeth Grossenbacher, first president of the Apopka Historical Society, and finally a very special shout out to all the women at the AHS Board.

Together, we are a force. Together, we create history. And together, we will continue to inspire and move forward — one step at a time.

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APR. 30 8am – 4pm
Leadership Apopka Session 2

APR. 30 11:30am – 1:30pm
Lunch & Learn:
 With Special Guest Lt. Gen. Mark Hertling

LT. GEN. MARK HERTLING

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 The American Battle Monuments Commission.**

Join us for an exclusive Lunch & Learn. Prior to Memorial Day, Retired Lieutenant General Mark Hertling will present the stories from America’s 26 overseas cemeteries and those who rest at those sites. He served a total of 38 months in combat - as a major in a cavalry squadron during Desert Storm, as an Assistant Division Commander in the 1st Armored Division in Baghdad in 2003-4, and as the Commander of 1st Armored Division and Multinational Task Force Iron in Northern Iraq in 2007-8. Hertling was the Joint Staff War Planner (J7) during 9/11 and after.

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Since 1913, the Apopka Area Chamber of Commerce has prided itself on fostering an environment of networking and building sustainable relationships within the business community. If you aren’t a member, we invite you to explore three reasons why you should be. First, the Apopka Area Chamber of Commerce is the voice of the Apopka business community. Secondly, the chamber connects business and people. With over 600 members strong, there’s a high probability that you’ll connect with someone new in our community. Lastly, it serves the businesses and people of our community. The Apopka Area Chamber of Commerce is more than just a chamber. It is a collection of great organizations, businesses, elected officials, community leaders and an awesome new staff that is focused on meeting your needs and ensuring your business’s success, all while enhancing our broader community.

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For over 45 years, **Hunt Club Medical Care** has been caring for people and improving the quality of life in the community

they serve. Their aim is to deliver the highest quality health care available in the area, and they’ve cared for many of those for decades. Their doctors are board-certified physicians in Internal Medicine and Family Practice.

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Hunt Club Medical Care is open seven days a week and offers urgent care and same-day appointments. Pictured above are, (l-r), Whitney Dailey PA-C, Elisabeth Duer PA-C, Michael Gordon MD, Pinida Toochinda MD, Kristen Consiglio PA-C, and Roshani Levister PA-C.

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Apopka baseball steamrolls Wekiva, 16-1

Blue Darters undefeated since spring break

By Marshall Tempest
Reporter

The Apopka Blue Darters dominated cross-town rival Wekiva, 16-1, on Friday, March 28, to improve to 2-0 in the friendly confines of their new home field. After defeating the Mustangs for their fourth straight win,

the Blue Darters faced off against South Lake and Winter Park.

As of Wednesday, April 2, the Apopka baseball team is 12-6, 1-1 in district matchups, and ranked 119th in the state. The Blue Darters sit third in 7A District 4 below Lake Brantley and West Orange but above Lake Mary, Ocoee and Seminole (Sanford). Apopka has scored 116 runs and allowed 54 for a positive scoring differential of 62 runs so far this season.

Apopka vs. Wekiva (16-1) Win

"When you get hitting, pitching, defense and base running like that, it's hard to lose," head coach Bobby Brewer said after the win.

In just four innings, Apopka scored 16 runs, and the game was called due to the run rule. The Blue Darters scored one run in the first inning, five runs in the second, four runs in the third and six runs in the fourth.

Apopka's first run of the game came in courtesy of

Wyatt Jagers, who laced a line drive to center field that turned into a triple. Jagers was left on base as no one could bring him home in the bottom of the first as Apopka went into the second inning up 1-0.

In the second inning, everything started coming together for Apopka. The Blue Darters' Reef VanKuren brought in the second and third runs for Apopka on a line drive single to left field.

See **APOPKA** Page 2B



Photo by Marshall Tempest

Apopka's Jarred Goodson started on the mound in Apopka's dominant 16-1 win over the Wekiva Mustangs.

Apopka's Johnston grabs gold, silver at world championships

Two locals participate in international event

By Seth Johnson and Marshall Tempest
Reporters

Jumpin' Joe Johnston of Apopka brought home the hardware after competing last week in the World Masters Athletics Indoor Championships held in Gainesville, winning two gold medals and a silver medal.

"If you live long enough, your dreams can come true," Johnston said in an interview this week.

Johnston, 81, won in the 60-meter hurdles and pole vault and earned second in the high jump. He also competed in three other events: the 60-meter dash, 200-meter dash and long jump.

The World Masters Athletics (WMA) is an international athletic competition for adults 35 years and older. It hosts an indoor championship on odd numbered years and an outdoor championship on even numbered years. The eight-day competition in Gainesville marked the first time the indoor championships have been held in the United States.

George Fields, another Apopka resident, also competed for Team USA in the



Photo by Seth Johnson

Joe Johnston finishes second in a heat for the 60-meter dash. First place went to Team USA's Kenton Brown, who set a world masters indoor record with his time in the final.

35- to 39-year-old long jump division. He had the third highest qualifying distance with 6.8 meters heading into the competition but failed to hit the same distance in the competition, finishing sixth with a top jump of 6.02 meters.

Johnston's first event was the 60-meter dash. He finished second in his heat to advance to the final. But no one in the field had a chance to catch Team USA's Kenton Brown.

Brown finished the heat in 8.89 seconds to earn a

championship record, just a hundredth of a second short of a World Masters Athletics record. In the final, Brown broke the WMA record with a time of 8.76 seconds. Johnston finished 7th with a 10.89 time.

Johnston also fell short in the 200-meter dash before finding his groove in the last three days of competition.

On Friday, he won the pole vault competition after clearing 2.3 meters (7 feet, 6.5 inches). On Saturday, he snagged silver in the high jump with a 1.17-meter clear-

ance and fourth in the long jump with a 3.02-meter jump.

Johnston returned to the track on Sunday to clinch the gold in the 60-meter hurdles, finishing in 12.32 seconds.

The medals will join a store of other trophies that Johnston has collected, including setting many records in the Florida Senior Games. In the 2024 games held in December, Johnston earned five medals (a 1st place, three 2nd places and a 3rd place) in long jump, high jump,

See **ATHLETICS** Page 3B

Apopka softball wins first home game

Team wins two out of three contests

By Marshall Tempest
Reporter

The Apopka softball team snapped its first losing streak on Friday, March 28, when it defeated the Windermere Wolverines 5-4 with a walk-off win in the first game at the Blue Darters' new home field. The Blue Darters followed that up this week with a huge 10-2 win over Dr. Phillips and a close 7-5 loss to Horizon.

As of Thursday, April 3, the team is 10-4, including 3-1 in district, and ranked 94th in the state, according to MaxPreps. The Blue Darters sit second in 7A District 3 behind Lake Brantley and in front of Seminole (Sanford), Ocoee and Lake Mary.

Apopka vs. Windermere

"We challenge our players to put a product and team on the field that matches the quality of the facility," head coach Mike MacWithey said after the win. "We've done our part (in building the complex); you need to do your part on the field. It's your responsibility to do that part."

In the 2024 season, the Wolverines made it to the Final Four of the FH-SAA Class 7A Softball



Photo by Marshall Tempest

Sydney Bartkin leads the Blue Darter bullpen with a 1.68 ERA.

State Championships and have been a regular playoff contender over the years. The Blue Darters lost both matchups (5-4, 2-1) against the Class 7A, Region 2 champions and state semifinalist in the 2024 season.

After taking two of their three losses this season last week to Lake Brantley (No. 17) and Deltona High School (No. 75), the team needed to reset. They had the perfect opportunity when hosting the first home game in the brand-new softball facility.

When I initially spoke to him after the win, MacWithey was at a loss for words. Bearing through his

See **AHS** Page 3B

Wekiva softball drops to 4-7 after back-to-back blowout losses

Mustangs prepare for the district tournament

By Marshall Tempest
Reporter

The Wekiva softball team is trying to turn its season around after going 2-2 over the last four games. This week the Mustangs had three games with the first being against West Orange followed by a matchup against Ocoee with a final game against Lake Buena Vista to close out the week.

The Mustangs are 4-7, 2-0 in district matchups and ranked 436th in the state. Wekiva sits first in their district above Lake Howell,

Oviedo and Evans.

Wekiva vs. West Orange (18-3) Loss

The Mustangs started off great in this game, pulling ahead of the Warriors early on a run in the top of the first inning. It was Arianna Garcia who brought in the first run on a ground ball sent to center field. They couldn't score any more runs in the first but kept West Orange without a run going into the top of the second.

Wekiva added to its lead in the second inning, when Camilla Delgado drove in a run on a single to left field, but the lead was short-lived. Warriors answered in the bottom of the second with four runs of their own.

See **SOFTBALL** Page 4B

Wekiva sent in one more run on a Maci Fix single in the third, but that would be the team's final run of the game.

The Warriors ended the game in the bottom of the third, piling up 14 runs to end the game early due to the mercy rule.

Standing out at the plate for Wekiva was Delgado, Garcia, Fix and Janelle Rodriguez. Delgado and Rodriguez each went 2-for-2 and scored a run, while Garcia and Fix each went 1-for-2 with an RBI.

Mustangs did well in the field, recording a .867 fielding percentage as a team. Wekiva collected eight put-

Mustangs more competitive in March

By Marshall Tempest
Reporter

The Wekiva High School baseball team has just four more games in the regular season after this week's matchups against Mount Dora and Davenport.

Wekiva is 6-13 this season, 2-0 in district matchups, after going 4-5 in March — a significant improvement from the Mustangs' February campaign when they finished 2-8. As of Tuesday, April 1, the Mustangs have scored 119 runs and allowed 209, for a negative scoring differential of 90 runs.

Wekiva vs. Apopka (16-1) Loss

The Mustangs were not prepared for the Blue Darters

See **BASEBALL** Page 4B



Photo by Marshall Tempest

The Mustangs' Caden Lopez has a 7.76 ERA in nine appearances on the mound for Wekiva. He has given up 21 hits, 35 runs (17 earned), 11 walks, and eight stolen bases while collecting 15 strikeouts.

Tourney held on the Harris Chain, folks catchin' their limit of panfish



GOIN' FISHIN'

Jim Keck
Correspondent

Hello Folks,
I hope you had a great weekend and, hopefully, you got to do some fishin'. There was lots of activity on The Harris Chain over the weekend. Major League Fishing held their Toyota Series tournament over three days last week on March

27th through the 29th. There were more than 150 boats in the tournament so if you were on the chain, no doubt you experienced a lot of boat traffic.

Dylan Quilatan, who is just 17 years old and a senior in high school, won the tournament. He weighed in 83 pounds, 8 ounces. of bass over three days. He also had the biggest bag on Day 2 of the tournament which hit the scales at 33 pounds, 6 ounces. Dylan becomes the second youngest angler to win a Toyota Series event. Dylan pocketed 39,055 dollars for his win. Congrats to you,

Dylan, on your win.

Comin' in second place was Bobby Bakewell. Bobby drove all the way from Texas overnight to get here to fish The BassMaster Classic. He was able to practice for one day prior to the tournament, and over the three days of competition, he brought 70 pounds, 10 ounces to the scales.

Another angler from Central Florida who finished in 6th place was John Kremer. You might remember John who is no stranger to bass fishin' tournaments here in Florida. He has won his share of money over the

years, and he is a big stick to contend with in any tournament he fishes.

Well this past week, my fishin' buddy Rick Mullins wrapped up his week of fishin' with his brother-in-law Greg Fugate from Kentucky. They had some real good days on the water and were able to catch fish every day. Their best day where they caught the most fish was on The Butler Chain. Rick said that they caught over 20 bass. Most of their bass were caught on plastic worms and slow sinkin' Senko's. They had lots of fun fishin' Johns Lake, The

Butler Chain, and The Harris Chain. Greg had such a good time he's comin back in June for another week of bass fishin'!

If you want to catch some panfish, I suggest goin' to Lake Kissimmee. Folks are catchin' their limits of bluegills and shellcrackers in the pads. Most of the panfish are bein' caught on red worms, crickets, and grass-shrimp.

Folks have been reportin' that they are catchin' their limits by 10 in the mornin', so now would be a great time to go pan fishin'. We have a full moon co-

min' up on the 12th of April, so if there are any bluegills or shellcrackers that need to go on the beds, that would be a good time for YOU to go fishin' for panfish.

Well, that's it for this week, folks. I hope you get a chance to do some fishin' this week or over the week-end. The weather is still pretty good now, and we'll have some good weather left before we get into our hot summer days.

See ya' next week.
Tip of the week: Go Fishin'!
SAVE A FEW AND GOOD LUCK!

Apopka

Continued from page 1B

Aiden Rieli followed with an RBI single to extend the Apopka lead to 4-0 with no outs. Jagers then brought in the fifth run with a bases-loaded walk, and Jez Hamrick closed out the scoring with an RBI fielder's choice.

Wekiva answered in the third when Jaden Graham lined an RBI double to left field, but that would be the Mustangs' only score of the night.

Apopka went back to work in the bottom of the third. Chance Saunders reached on an error that brought home a run, before Ty Livingston scored two more on a single to center field. Peyton Neeley put Apopka on top 10-1 with a sacrifice fly.

The Blue Darters put the last nail in the Mustangs' coffin with six more runs in the bottom of the fourth. Apopka's 11th run of the game was another force run as Livingston showed discipline at the plate to take a walk and send in a run with the bases loaded. Jagers sent in the next two runs with a line drive single to right field. Livingston was then sent home due to a balk. The game's final runs came from the bat of Camron Pennock, who smoked a line drive double to right field that cleared the bases for two more runs.

Brewer praised his team for the win but also credited the very young and inexperienced Wekiva team.

"We're a young team, but they are even younger than we are," he said. "We've been



Photo by Marshall Tempest

Aiden Rieli leads the Blue Darters in batting average this season with .375. He has collected 21 hits, 19 runs, 11 RBIs and four doubles.

swinging the bats really good lately. Coming off (spring) break, we came out swinging the bats, and we haven't stopped yet."

The Blue Darters had a great offensive game, with Jagers, Livingston, Pennock and VanKuren leading the way. Jagers went 2-for-2 at the plate, collecting four RBIs, a triple and a run scored. Livingston went 2-for-2 with three RBIs and three runs scored. Pennock went 1-for-2 at the plate, including a double and two RBIs. Van Kuren went 1-for-2, scoring one run and driving in two.

The Blue Darters also stole nine bases, with Nico Posluszny and Saunders accounting for three a piece. Livingston stole two bases, while VanKuren collected one.

"We got a lot of guys that can really play," Brewer said. "I could start mention-

ing names, but I'd be pretty much mentioning the whole ball club."

In the win, Jarred Goodson, Maddox Stinson and Ben Decker were on the mound for Apopka. Goodson started and pitched a scoreless first inning. Stinson came on in relief and pitched the next two innings, allowing two hits and one earned run while collecting four strikeouts in two innings of work. Decker closed out the game with a scoreless, hitless fourth inning.

Brewer praised his pitchers in the win and said he's pleased with their performances on the mound all season. He is also beyond happy with Apopka's fielding and defense, which have controlled the pace of the games.

In the field, Apopka was once again perfect in the win with no errors. Apopka had 12 putouts on 12 total chances

in the field. VanKuren led the defense with nine putouts on nine chances.

Brewer told me after the game that he's most impressed with how his players have attacked at the plate when the team needs a hit.

"When we are in a critical moment, when we really need a hit — we get a hit," he said. "The kids just seem to sense it right now. They have a little bit more killer instinct at the plate now than they did before the break."

Apopka vs. South Lake (Postponed)

On Tuesday night Apopka's skies were littered with lightning and dark clouds that prevented a lot of sports from happening in the area. Apopka's game against South Lake was postponed to Thursday night because of the weather conditions.



Photo by Marshall Tempest

Maddox Stinson pitched for two innings in Apopka's win over Wekiva, tallying four strikeouts while giving up one run.

The Blue Darters didn't even get to finish the first inning because the weather hit so fast. The game was paused in the bottom of the first inning as Apopka was up 3-1 with one out to go.

South Lake was able to secure one run in the first, but Apopka went on to score three in the bottom of the inning before the postponement. Apopka's first run of the game came in from Collin VanFleet on a line drive single to right field. Tyler Spaid followed with a line drive single to right field to plate two more runs, but VanFleet was tagged out trying to score on the play.

Officials then called the game due to lightning. It was moved to Thursday evening, after press time, to continue. Bobby Brewer told me after the lightning postponement

that the team looked really good to start out the game, and he was glad they get to continue it later in the week.

What's next

After this week's matchups the team has just three games left in the regular season. Next week will be the final week of the Apopka baseball team's regular season as they prepare for the district tournament. Apopka hosts University on Tuesday, April 8. After that, The Blue Darters will travel to Horizon on Wednesday and St. Cloud on Thursday to finish the regular season.

In the Class 7A District 4 Tournament, Apopka will face off against Lake Brantley, West Orange, Lake Mary, Ocoee and Seminole for the district title and a state championship playoff berth.

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AHS

Continued from page 1B

emotions at the time, he said, "...everybody is a budding rose, and we're here to have you blossom on this field."

After the win, the stadium played For King and Country's "Priceless," which MacWithey said reflected the program's foundational beliefs.

"We feel like they (the team) are priceless," he said. "The victories are priceless."

Apopka started ahead in this game, with the first run coming from the hands of Bartkin on a ground ball single to left field. Windermere quickly answered in the top of the second with a run of its own.

The third inning was quiet, but the Wolverines brought in three runs in the top of the fourth after loading the bases. Apopka stopped the bleeding quickly and returned with three runs of their own in the bottom of the fourth.

Starting to heat back up at the plate, the Blue Darters got two runners on base after Alicia Lopez and Alezia Hatcher secured singles. Windermere brought in a new pitcher as Skyla Durand, one of Apopka's power hitters, stepped to the plate with one out.

Durand homered on a flyball to center field, sending in three runs to tie up the game 4-4, as the crowd erupted in a deafening cheer.

Both teams held the other scoreless in the fifth and sixth innings, and in the top of the seventh, Bartkin was on the mound looking to secure a chance to win the game for her team. After striking out the first batter, Bartkin gave up an infield single, but she got two flyouts to send the game to the bottom of the



Apopka's Ava Millspaugh has a 2.78 ERA this season in 13 appearances.



Shylah Pino is batting .356 this season collecting 16 hits, 22 runs, eight RBIs and one double.

Apopka led 4-0 early, the Hawks came back to tie the game and then take the lead in the top of the eighth inning.

Apopka's first runs came in the bottom of the second inning, when the Blue Darters quickly tallied up three runs. Lopez opened the game with a line-drive single to send in the first run. Then Hatcher sent in a run with a groundout. The third run came in on a solo home run from Durand's bat.

The Blue Darters kept Horizon without a run in the top of the third and scored another run in the bottom of the third when Pino scored on a passed ball.

Horizon answered with four runs over the next two innings to send the game into the sixth tied 4-4.

Neither team scored in the sixth or seventh innings, pushing the game into extra innings. In the top of the eighth, Horizon scored three runs off two sacrifice bunts and a home run.

Lopez brought in Apopka's final run of the night on a sacrifice fly, but the next two batters struck out to end the game.

Durand and Lopez led Apopka's offensive attack, collecting two hits apiece.

Apopka's pitching and defense were not at their best in the game. Millspaugh started on the mound for Apopka, and she gave up three runs (one earned) in three and 1/3 innings of work. The defense made four errors. Bartkin came on in relief and allowed three earned runs on five hits.

Apopka will travel to Olympia on Friday to close out their matchups this week.

seventh.

Bartkin reached first on a Windermere fielding error, followed by Riley Ford bunting for a single. After a fly-out advanced runners to second and third, Hagan McGatlin came to the plate with one out. During McGatlin's patient at-bat, Bartkin raced home on a wild pitch to score the winning run.

After the game, MacWithey told me that it all came down to the fundamentals in the bottom of the seventh. He said his three best bunters were coming up to lead off the inning, so he was confident in their ability to execute.

"In reality, we won on a wild pitch," MacWithey said. "But that wild pitch doesn't send in runs unless we get the bunt down and advance that

runner to second and third."

Durand and Bartkin led at the plate for the Blue Darters, accounting for all five of the team's runs. Durand went 1-for-3 at the plate and collected one hit, one run, three RBIs and one home run. Bartkin went 1-for-4 at the plate and collected one hit, run, RBI and stolen base.

After the win, MacWithey highlighted Durand's ability to be a power hitter, adding another home run to her season total of two.

"That's what she does," he said. "She hits bombs. She was doing what she needed to do, and that was hit the ball hard."

Apopka vs. Dr. Phillips

The Blue Darters started a three-game week with a convincing 10-2 win against

Dr. Phillips on Monday night.

Apopka's runs in the first inning started with a ground ball single from Smith that sent in the first run. The next run came in from a passed ball, followed by the final run of the first, which came in on a ground out from Ava Gonzalez. Apopka was up 3-0 in the bottom of the first.

The first run of the fourth inning came from a wild pitch that sent in Shylah Pino, followed by a groundball single by Bartkin that sent in another run. The last two runs of the fourth inning scored on a fielding error as the Blue Darters stretched their lead to 7-2.

Smith destroyed a ball in the fifth to send it over the fence on a solo home run. The second run came in on a passed ball again. Victoria

Shaw sent in the game's last run on a ground ball fielding error.

Smith, Bartkin and Ford led the way for the offense. Smith went 3-for-4 at the plate and collected three runs, two RBIs, two stolen bases and a home run. Bartkin went 2-for-5 with a double, an RBI and two runs scored. Ford went 1-for-2 and scored three times.

Ava Millspaugh started on the mound for Apopka. She gave up two runs on four hits and one walk. Bartkin came in to relieve and gave up no hits or runs in her three innings of work while striking out four batters.

Apopka vs. Horizon

The Blue Darters lost to the Horizon Hawks in extra innings on Wednesday.

Athletics

Continued from page 1B

200-meter dash, 100-meter dash and 50-meter dash.

Johnston is a long-time Apopka resident and was once a physical education teacher and track and field coach for Apopka High School. Before that, he was just a kid that loved pole vaulting. His love for flying through the air brought him all the way to college, where he competed at a small school in Arkansas.

Johnston was part of the early masters track and field movement that began in the mid-1970s and created competitive opportunities for athletes as they aged.

"Find something that you love so much you want to do it every day," Johnston said.

Johnston trains in his homemade facility, coined the Joe Dome by his daughter, featuring multiple pole vaulting stations. He says that he is always in the Joe Dome but trains about two to three times a week. The Joe Dome also serves as a train-



Photo by Seth Johnson

Joe Johnston, in the far left lane, takes off at the start of a 60-meter dash for men aged 80-84. Johnston earned second in this heat, enough to qualify for the final.

ing space for local athletes, including pole vaulters from the high school team who lack their own pit.

Johnston said he still trains and competes because he loves doing it so much. It's also important to him that he stays active and healthy at his age. His love for fitness, pole vaulting, track and field and their respective commu-

nities have kept him competing and training.

He likened the care needed for one's body to the care an expensive car warrants.

"If you had a new Lamborghini and it was the only car you'd ever get, how would you take care of it?" Johnston said. "Well, that's how you should treat your body."

The World Masters Athletics Indoor Championships started in 2004 and feature a host of track and field events, but the organization has held other championships since the 1970s. Alachua County won the bid to host the indoor championships in 2024 after another site fell through.

Americans used their

home court advantage and arrived in numbers with 1,457 athletes competing. Canada had the second largest contingent with 214 athletes followed by Great Britain and Northern Ireland with 181. Florida residents accounted for 274 athletes competing for multiple countries.

With large numbers, America swept the medal

count, winning 557 medals. Great Britain and Northern Ireland came in second with 93 medals and Germany with 70 medals.

In total, just under 4,000 athletes representing 99 countries arrived in Alachua County for the championships, and the county estimated around 9,000 total attendees.



Photo by Marshall Tempest

Joe Johnston's indoor pole vaulting facility in Apopka.

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SE HABLA ESPAÑOL

Baseball

Continued from page 1B



Photo by Marshall Tempest

Wekiva's Jaden Graham is batting .340 this season collecting 16 hits, 10 runs, eight RBIs, five doubles and triple in 47 at-bats.

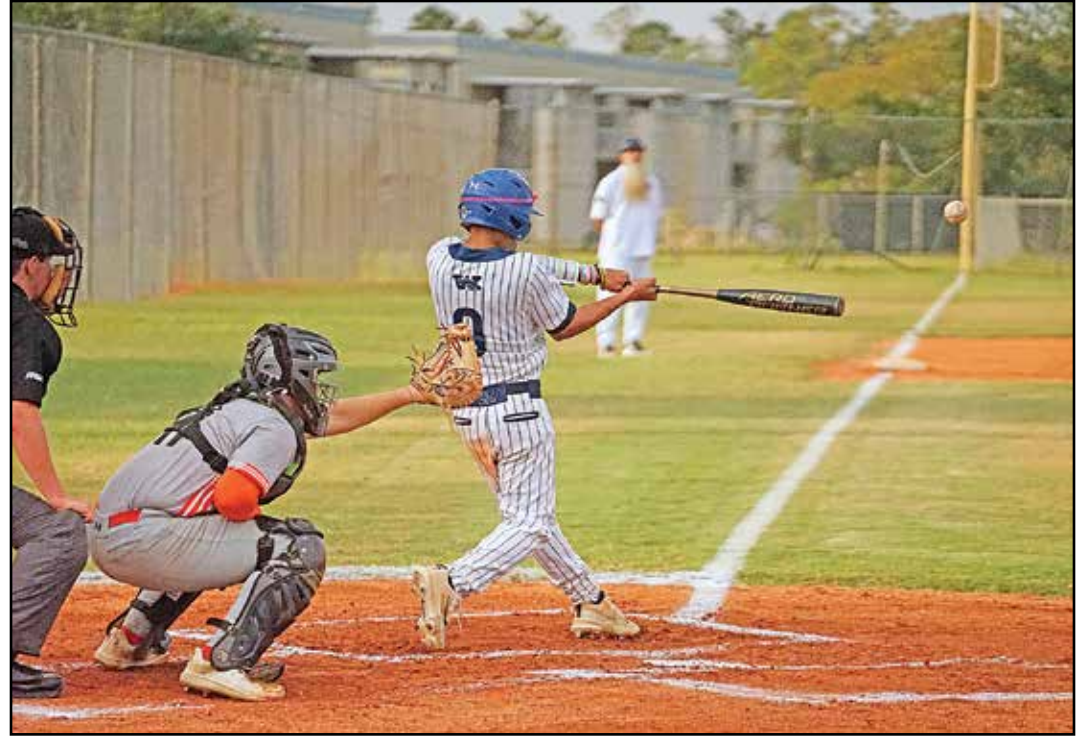


Photo by Marshall Tempest

Darelle Martinez is batting .310 this season collecting nine hits, 13 runs, two RBIs and one triple in 29 at-bats.

last week when they traveled to J. Barnes Field. The Wekiva batters, at times, showed great patience at the plate, earning six walks but also striking out eight times. Wekiva couldn't get anything going for themselves and tallied just two hits in four innings and left 11 runners on base.

Wekiva's two hits came from Caden Lopez and Jaden Graham, with Graham sending in the lone Wekiva run. Graham sent in the Mustangs' only run on a line drive

double to left field.

Defense and pitching played a big part in Wekiva's loss. The Mustangs made three errors, and pitchers Graham, Sean John and Austin Schwartz gave up seven hits, 16 runs (12 earned), 12 walks, and hit five batters with pitches while collecting just three strikeouts.

Graham started for the Mustangs and gave up seven runs (five earned) on four hits and three walks in two innings of work.

Schwartz followed Gra-

ham on the mound and allowed eight runs (six earned) while pitching 1 and 1/3 innings. He allowed two hits and walked four while striking out one batter.

John finished the game on the mound for the Mustangs, facing just three batters. He gave up one run on one hit before the game was called due to the mercy rule.

Wekiva vs. Mount Dora (Suspended)

On Tuesday, the Weki-

va Mustangs rematch against the Mount Dora Hurricanes was postponed due to lightning near the field. Before the game was delayed, though, Wekiva was in good standing against a Hurricanes team that beat them 11-0 in late March.

Wekiva kept the Hurricanes from scoring a run in the first inning and then grabbed a 2-0 lead in the bottom of the frame. It was Graham who once again brought in the first run for Wekiva when he lined a double to

center field. The second run came in from Graham, who stole home while another Wekiva runner was tagged out trying to steal second.

Unfortunately for the Mustangs, the Hurricanes came right back and answered with four runs in the top of the second. Even worse, Wekiva could not put up anything in the bottom of the second as the Mount Dora pitcher retired the Mustang side in order.

In the third inning, Gra-

ham came in to replace Wekiva's starting pitcher, Caden Lopez. With his second pitch on the mound, Graham hit a Mount Dora batter right in the helmet, sending him to first base. Right after that at-bat, the Wekiva athletic department staff advised that they were under a lightning warning and the game would be delayed until it cleared. The lightning did not clear, so the game was postponed to another date with Mount Dora leading 4-2.

Softball

Continued from page 1B

outs, five assists and only two errors.

Wekiva vs. Ocoee (16-1) Loss

The Ocoee Knights scored 14 runs in the top of the second inning to help defeat the Wekiva Mustangs 16-1. Wekiva once again started out well in this game,

matching Ocoee in the bottom of the first inning with a single run.

The Mustangs first and only run of the night came from Rodriguez on a sacrifice fly to center field. Wekiva was tied up with Ocoee 1-1 going into the second inning.

The Knights broke the

game open with a flurry of hits in the second inning. Once Wekiva stopped the onslaught of runs they found themselves down 15-1 going into the bottom of the second inning.

Wekiva was unable to secure any more runs and gave up one more run in the top of third as the run rule

kicked in.

Ocoee pitchers Jadore Thompson and Addy Sims combined to no-hit the Mustangs, allowing a single baserunner on a walk.

What's next

The Wekiva Mustangs have just four more games after this week's matchups.

Their first will be a home game against Windermere on Wednesday, April 9, followed by an away game against Dr. Phillips on Tuesday, April 15. Their final two games are a home against Jones on Thursday, April 17, followed by an away matchup against Evans.

After the regular season

the team will prepare for the Class 6A District 5 tournament where they will compete against Lake Howell, Oviedo and Evans for the district title. Based on their performance in the district tournament, the Mustangs could earn a berth in the state championship tournament.

SUDOKU ANSWERS

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

PUZZLE CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 6A

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VERSE OF THE WEEK

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 16:18

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CLUES ACROSS

1. Narrow piece of wood
5. African desert
11. Waxy covering on birds' beaks
12. Sour
16. Infrequent
17. Former AL MVP Vaughn
18. Policemen wear one
19. Out of the question
24. Used to chop
25. Symptoms
26. Not moving
27. Folk singer DiFranco
28. Comedian Armisen
29. Quantitative fact
30. Incline from vertical
31. Scottish musician
33. Rooney and Kate are two
34. Positioned

CLUES DOWN

1. Unshaven facial hair
2. More thin
3. Show up
4. Seethed
5. Ancient Greek city
6. Poisonous plant
7. Hello
8. College sports official
9. Monetary unit of Russia
10. Wings
13. Take too much of a substance
14. A citizen of Uganda
15. Most appealing
20. Atomic #18
21. Global investment bank (abbr.)
22. Jewish calendar month
23. Popular sandwich
27. Swiss river
29. Incorrect letters
30. Popular entree
31. Foot (Latin)
32. A driver's license is one form

33. Extinct flightless bird
34. Appetizer
35. After battles
36. It neutralizes alkalis
37. Beverage container
38. Partner to "Pa"
40. Gray American rail
41. Salt of acetic acid
42. Canadian province
44. Dish made with lentils
45. Narrative poem of popular origin
46. For each one
47. Come to terms
48. Test
50. More dishonorable
51. Unit of loudness
52. The Ocean State
54. Monetary unit in Mexico
55. Lying down
57. Thus
61. Where LA is located
62. Western State

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9	10				
11					12					13	14	15		
16					17				18					
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28							29				30			
				31	32					33				
34	35	36	37						38					
39							40	41	42					
43							44				45	46	47	48
49											51	52		
53										55				
56		57											59	
60							61	62						63
														65

Solutions can be found on page 6A of this newspaper.

Everyone is different and that is O.K.!



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We can fill your lunchbox with fruits and vegetables that you like. Let's cut out fun shapes from your favorite cheese too.

Nutritious and Delicious

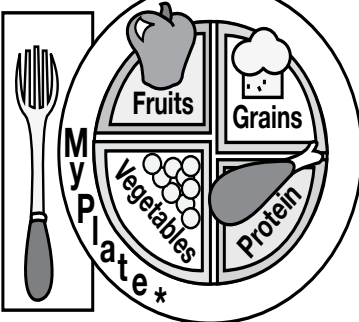
Families may grab a quick takeout meal when they are pressed for time or on the go. Takeout meals can be a tasty treat, but home-cooked meals are less expensive, and we know exactly which ingredients we're using.

When families plan menus together we can choose our favorite meals. When we shop together we can look for the freshest foods – vegetables and fruits – and everyone can choose the kinds that he likes the most. By checking labels on packages, we can learn which foods have the best ingredients. When we cook at home we can adjust our recipes to use small amounts of healthful oils, salt or sugar. Some families are steaming or baking part of their favorite meals.

Read the clues to fill in the crossword:

- Choose foods from each of the food _____ every day: vegetables, fruits, grains, proteins and dairy.
- _____ are low in fat, sugar and calories and high in fiber and vitamins, like vitamin A, which is good for our eyes and skin.
- Many fruits have _____ and are famous for vitamin C, which helps to repair body tissue and heal cuts.
- Low-fat milk and cheeses will give you _____ for strong bones and teeth.
- Meat, fish, beans, eggs, peanut butter and nuts have lots of protein to help build _____. Choose lean cuts of meat if possible.
- Oats, brown rice, popcorn and buckwheat are whole grains with lots of fiber and carbohydrates that give us _____.
- "My _____" lets us see at a glance what, and how much, we are eating.

* plate based on USDA source



Moderate amounts of fat are good for your brain!

I've "bean" here before.

Eat lots of brightly colored fruits and veggies.

Try half of a frozen banana for a cool treat.

March into good nutrition!

I'm so "beat."

We're good sources of protein.

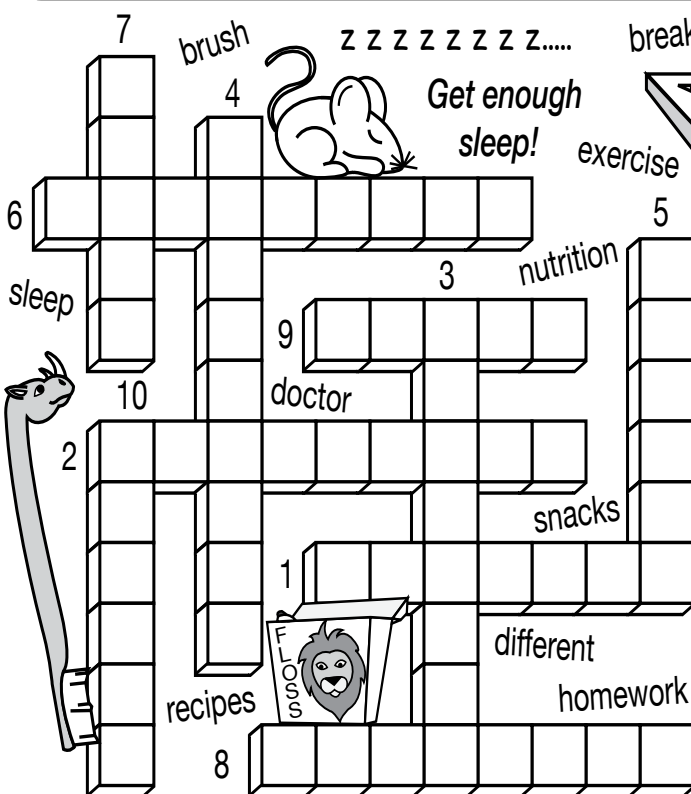
Check out whole grains!

Plate Vegetables groups calcium energy muscle

- Notice that _____ of the area of MyPlate is for vegetables and fruits.
- We can buy _____ vegetables, ones that were frozen right after picking or canned soon after – they are all good for us.
- We can use less _____, go light on the salt shaker and add flavor to our cooking by adding herbs like basil and spices like cinnamon.
- Some _____ is needed for our body and brain to function well. Choose liquid fats like olive oil rather than solid ones.
- Eat _____ treats in small amounts: dark chocolate, half of a frozen banana, a yogurt or low-fat ricotta cheese parfait with nuts and fruit.

It's easier to keep on a healthful track if your family and friends do too. It's fun to cook and exercise with others. We're checking out the sports and activities at our school and local Parks and Recreation Department for upcoming spring months. That will keep us moving!

Healthful Fun with Family and Friends

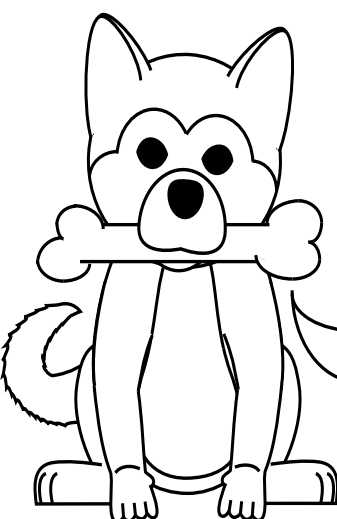


Read the clues to fill in our healthful habits crossword, then find and circle the words!

- Check out some new, healthier _____ for favorite comfort foods like macaroni and cheese.
- Try some _____ vegetables like *kalettes* – (a cross between Brussels sprouts and kale) or purple potatoes or rainbow carrots (orange, red, purple, white).
- Play soccer, dance, fly kites – find a type of _____ you like and have fun with it for 30 - 60 minutes a day.
- Spark your energy each morning with a good _____.
- Eat three meals and don't forget 2 - 3 small _____.
- Choose snacks that will give you lots of _____: nuts, veggies with low-fat dip, fruit.
- _____ your teeth twice a day and floss too.
- Get your _____ done, then, if allowed, enjoy playing a computer or video game.
- _____ is important for resting and repairing our bodies, so get a good night's sleep.
- Visit a _____ for a checkup and an eye exam; and the dentist to check your teeth.

Y R M R L S N A C K S E T U H E
R R N U T R I T I O N S H H L S
U V N H M S L E E P A Q O M C I
D I F F E R E N T F J U M L U C
J O K E C B V M K R K B E M I R
R E C I P E S A R C T R W H L E
T T L T Y P E J Y S L U O T N X
D I P L O R S N L P W S R P P E
M Y I F B R L R X J Q H K S U K

Ideas To "Chew" On!



Every day we make choices about the food we eat. We may grab something tasty that is not very nutritious. If we keep lots of healthful food choices around the house it will be easy to grab a tasty bite that is better for us. Here are some choices for meals and snacks. **Do you know which one would be a better choice? Circle it.**

Breakfast:

- A. bacon, eggs, fried potatoes
B. oatmeal, fruit, milk
- A. pancakes with fruit
B. fried egg, bacon and cheese sandwich

Lunch:

- A. corndog, french fries, soda
B. boiled hot dog, baked beans, milk
- A. grilled chicken patty, salad, milk
B. chicken nuggets, onion rings, milk shake

Snacks:

- A. nacho chips with cheese dip
B. baked tortilla chips with salsa
- A. chocolate chip cookies
B. rice cakes with a little peanut butter

Supper:

- A. cheeseburger, fries, soda
B. turkey burger, fruit salad
- A. pepperoni and cheese pizza
B. vegetable and cheese pizza

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CC 0328-0425 TAY 32

61. APPLIANCES, LARGE

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