

City to pay legal fees for elected officials

Anderson recuses herself due to pending lawsuit

By Teresa Sargeant
Reporter

The Apopka City Council on Wednesday voted 3–1 to approve a new policy allowing the city to advance public funds to cover certain legal expenses for the mayor and city commissioners

involved in non-criminal legal actions tied to their official duties.

Commissioner Nadia Anderson recused herself from the vote because she is currently involved in a pending lawsuit challenging her residency. Local attorney William McLeod filed the suit in September.

Effective immediately, the resolution sets up a formal process for advancing up to \$5,000 per case to elected

officials facing civil or administrative proceedings related to their role in office. If the official ends up losing the case or is not cleared, the individual must reimburse the city.

Andrew Hand, assistant city attorney, said the resolution’s purpose is to ensure elected officials can defend themselves in matters arising from their public service

LEGAL FEES, A6



Photo by Dana O’Connor

Commissioner Nadia Anderson recused herself from the legal fees vote.

Mayoral debate tix available

Event to take place at Highland Manor, open to public

By Teresa Sargeant
Reporter

Free tickets to the Feb. 3 Apopka mayoral debate are now available online.

The debate, which will take place at Highland Manor, is a partnership between The Apopka Chief and WESH 2 News. Even though the event is open to the public free of charge, tickets are required due to limited seating.

“We are grateful to Maynard Nexsen law firm for stepping up as a sponsor to cover the costs of this event and make it free for those who would like to attend,” said Apopka Chief publisher J.C. Derrick. “We’re looking forward to a great evening.”

All three active mayoral candidates — Orange County Commissioner Christine Moore, incumbent Mayor Bryan Nelson and City Commissioner Nick Nesta — have committed to participate in the debate which will take place 5:30–7 p.m. Doors will open at 5 p.m.

“As a national full-service law firm, with a local Central Florida office, Maynard Nexsen values the intrinsically democratic nature of a candidates debate and the need for open, respectful dialogue about the future of our community,” said Maynard Nexsen shareholder Jason W. Searl. “As this particular race is important for both the candidates and the residents of the city of Apopka, our ability to support this event underscores our commitment to serve our community as a land use law leader in this region.”

To reserve tickets, go to Eventbrite.com and search for “Apopka mayoral debate.”

“The number of pre-requests we’ve received for tickets indicates strong interest in this election,” Derrick said. “There are many important issues on the ballot in March,

DEBATE, A1

Thousands turn out for Apopka MLK parade



Photo by Dana O’Connor

The Apopka police color guard kicks off the 17th annual Apopka Martin Luther King Jr. Parade Monday afternoon.

Organizations, bands march on Marvin C. Zanders Avenue

By Teresa Sargeant
Reporter

The 17th annual Apopka Martin Luther King Jr. Parade returned Monday with music, dance and tributes to community leaders under the theme “The Dream Marches On.”

The South Apopka Ministerial Alliance organized the parade, which marched down Marvin C. Zanders Avenue in Apopka from the Apopka Community Center on S. Central Avenue to the

John H. Bridges Community Center on West 13th Street.

The event brought together city officials, law enforcement, local organizations and residents for a celebration honoring King’s legacy and those who serve Apopka.

Parade chair Monique Morris, who also served as emcee, opened the program by recognizing public servants and sponsors.

The parade highlighted youth and arts organizations, including the Orlando dance school Believe Dance Academy.

Nastasshi Lewis, academy director, said the group has become a regular part of Apopka’s MLK celebration.



Photo by Dana O’Connor

Sophia Bascom was one of the grand marshals, representing education.

This is the school’s fourth year participating in the event, with 40 dancers ranging from ages 3 to 18.

Lewis explained how her academy connects dance

with the parade’s theme.

“How we prepare is we find out the theme, and we try to create dances that will leave a lasting impression on the community,” she said. “We love the Apopka community. We love that we see all ages zero to 99 in the Apopka community, and our objective is to make them smile, especially the senior citizens of this community.”

The dancers blended generations and styles when performing in the parade.

“We use old school, new school blend to hit every crowd, every age range,” Lewis said. “The style of dance that we did was

MLK PARADE, A8

Criminal justice reform advocate visits Apopka to jumpstart talks

Reform Alliance focuses on probation and parole reform

By Teresa Sargeant
Reporter

A Florida-based criminal justice reform advocate began meeting with Apopka community leaders this week to spark conversations around probation, parole and workforce reentry reform, with the goal of building local support for future state and federal legislation.

Tanaine Jenkins, state organizer and director for the

Florida Safety Coalition, is working with Reform Alliance on probation and parole reform. She said she traveled to Apopka to connect with community leaders as part of a wider effort to reduce barriers for people returning to their communities after incarceration. Reform Alliance is a national nonprofit focused on probation and parole reform.

“I came to Apopka to meet up with Clinton Stanley, because I know he’s one of the pillars in the community that does advocacy,” Jenkins told the Chief in a Thursday interview. “I just

wanted to get embedded into the community to see how we can work together and how we can support each other in removing barriers for people to get back to work after they come home from prison or jail, as well as get in with the commissioners and your representative to push the reform and probation and parole agenda.”

Jenkins said she helped pass 22 laws across 12 states over the past six years and is currently working toward federal legislation.

In Florida, she pointed

REFORM ALLIANCE, A5



Photo by Patsy Whitely

Tanaine Jenkins (l) meets with Clinton Stanley in Apopka this week to discuss justice reform with goal of building local support for future state and federal legislation.

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The Apopka Chief

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Property tax: A new hope

Editor's note: This is the second part of a series on property tax reform. To read Rep. Bankson's first column, visit www.theapokkachief.com and enter "property tax" in the search field.

In keeping with our Star Wars theme, there is a "New Hope" on the horizon regarding homestead property tax. However, it diverges into two schools of thought.

The first approach supports the model of maintaining taxes for certain essential services such as schools and first responders. Preferred by local governments, this method still taxes homeowners for essential services and thus does not truly eliminate homestead taxes.

The alternate approach is a true homestead tax relief that completely eliminates ad valorem on a primary homestead, removing the risk of losing one's home due to unpaid taxes. Preferred by many homeowners, this model will make up the revenue through various means, from increased state sales tax to fees for essential services.

As promised in my last column, here is a brief synopsis of the options presently working their way through the process:

- HJR201 proposes exempting all homestead properties from non-school property tax levies. This proposal effectively removes all ad valorem taxes except school property taxes.
- HJR203 proposes phasing in exemption of all homestead properties from all non-school property taxes by adding an additional \$100,000 exemption each year for 10 years with total elimination beginning in year 11.
- HJR205 proposes exempting all homestead properties from non-school property tax levies for homesteaders who are aged 65 and older.

Florida House of Representatives



Doug Bankson

- HJR207 proposes creating a new non-school homestead exemption on top of existing exemptions, equal to 25% of the remaining assessed value after existing exemptions apply.
- HJR209 proposes increasing the non-school homestead exemption to the assessed value of \$25,000-\$250,000 for homesteaders that hold a multiperil insurance policy.
- HJR211 proposes removing the existing \$500,000 portability cap and removing the requirement that a portability amount be reduced if the homestead owner downsizes.
- HJR213 proposes changing the existing limitation on assessment, increasing to 3% for a homestead and 15% for non-homesteads once over a three-year period, applying to non-school levies only.
- House Bill (HB) 215 proposes authorizing married couples to combine their separate Save Our Homes portability benefits when establishing a joint homestead, up to the existing \$500,000 cap.

All these proposals follow the first approach in that they reduce but do not fully eliminate property taxes.

On the other side of the coin, state Rep. Ryan Chamberlin has proposed three measures that will in tandem work to remove property tax for homesteads:

- HB789 Removal of county and school ad valorem taxes
- HB791 Increasing specified sales and use tax
- HJR787 Proposing amendments to state constitution removing taxing authority from counties and school districts.

Together, these combine to accomplish the goal of eliminating homestead property taxes altogether.

Next time, we'll discuss how to make your voice heard.

Apopka, Wekiva graduation rates soar

Last week, the Florida Department of Education released the official graduation rates for the class of 2025. Once again, the strong effort of our public schools to educate all children and ensure that every student has a bright future was successful.

While the state excitedly boasted a 2.5% gain, bringing the state graduation rate to 92.2%, Orange County Public Schools' rate is considerably higher. Its average graduation rate among its 22 traditional high schools is 97.2%!

We are incredibly proud of this continued growth and the ability of our schools to make a concerted effort to reach every student, no matter their circumstances, and ensure that they cross the finish line and graduate with a diploma.

Our own local high schools continue to show growth each year as well. Apopka High School had a graduation rate of 97.5%, increasing about four percent over last year, and Wekiva was right behind them at 96.9%. I am incredibly proud of both schools

Orange County School Board, District 7



Melissa Byrd

for their hard work in this area.

These graduation rates are impressive on their own, but especially when you consider that OCPS had one of the lowest graduation rates in the state just 25 years ago. The class of 2000 graduation rate was a dismal 49.5%. Imagine just half of our students receiving a high school diploma. What happens to those who don't graduate? What happens to our community?

Successful schools influence the culture, well-being, crime rate and economic prosperity of a community. In other words, the success of our schools has a direct

correlation to the success of our community.

Higher graduation rates create a more qualified, readily available workforce. We have significantly more students also graduating and going to college, as well as significantly more students graduating with a workforce certificate or training, which makes them ready to enter the workforce.

These drastic increases don't just happen by accident. These increases happened because the district made a conscious effort to focus on getting every child to graduate.

It meant making appointments with every student and going over graduation plans.

It meant making sure schools did not "hope" every student would graduate but instead "expected" every child to graduate.

I'm incredibly proud of our schools for this work, ensuring that every student has a bright future. Education changes lives, and I'm so glad we are not letting lives slip through the cracks!

A good cat won't quit until the job is done

Cats are not cantankerous and indifferent little beasts. They are hardworking professional animals who are totally focused on three missions: Endear and amuse; test the limits of human irritation; and the other one.

Bella was well-prepared, arriving as a little white bundle of confused and clumsy fluff, so pretty that her name just came naturally. This was the kind of kitten that can make people who ought to know better say, "Okay, we'll take two of them."

Once inside the door, it was showtime. She was a master of comedy, which was a good thing since she didn't seem to come equipped with any of the other standard cat skills. Leaping, bounding and pouncing were out of the question. As she became an increasingly larger bundle of fluff, her recreation consisted primarily of crawling into boxes half her size where she would sit with her head poking out, as if wondering how she got there.

She didn't see any reason to chase anything when she knew that whatever she needed would be brought to her regularly. If she did, the thing being chased would have little to worry about. Her gait was not meant for hunting. She moved in rapid but tiny little steps — sort of frantic, like a portly woman in high heels hurrying to catch a bus.

Columnist



Jake Vest

I sometimes called her Prissy Waddlebottom, which could have been a good stage name for a musical career.

Bella sang to my sock.

In the middle of a quiet morning, we'd hear unbelievable screeching and caterwauling, the kind that goes with a life-threatening emergency, and charge out of our offices to see what was going on. We'd find Bella sitting calmly in front of a sock she had pulled out of my bureau, giving it a good talking to in an operatic way. Always the same sock.

She would look at us with an expression that said, "Do you two need something? I'm kind of busy here." It was hilarious. At least it was for the first two or three hundred times.

And that brings us to The Second Job Cats Were Sent Here to Do: Testing the limits of human endurance. Again, she was a master. Some of those operatic sock hops happened at 3 a.m.

Every fleece thing we own is covered in a layer of fluffy white fur. Lots and lots of hairballs and other upchucking. Cuddling up with her butt in a human face at night, cuddling up on a book you're trying to read, ripping the fabric off furnishings, climbing curtains, running into and breaking breakable things when the curtains fall...

Being a cat.

Her best tactic was the wake-up call. If Bella got hungry at 7 a.m. and we were still sleeping, she would show us that she could pounce with the best of them. At 7:01, she'd launch herself from the nightstand, a TV wrestler coming off the top rope, and it would be like a 14-pound sack of something had been dropped on your abdomen from the roof. This could be repeated as necessary for as long as it took.

We had our fights. She won them all.

And then it came time for that Third Job, the one cats really excel at: Breaking your heart.

Bella left us last Thursday. We sent her home curled up in a box too small for her, wrapped in a blanket she ruined, with food dish, an extra can of Tender Vittles and a bag of treats.

And I've got a sock on my desk that makes me both smile and cry every morning.

Mission accomplished.

About The Apopka Chief

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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



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Apopka City Council, citizens debate naming policy

Commissioners consider naming playground after late Vietnam vet

By Teresa Sargeant
Reporter

The Apopka City Council voted 5-0 on Wednesday to consider naming the new inclusive playground at the Northwest Recreation Complex in honor of Vietnam veteran James Roger Griffin, following a public discussion about the city's lack of a formal policy for naming parks, streets and public facilities.

The Wednesday meeting wasn't the first time former City Commissioner Bill Arrowsmith submitted Griffin's name and background for consideration. Arrowsmith

smith brought forth Griffin's name at council meetings two weeks prior, on Jan. 7, and on Dec. 3, 2025.

Griffin, who is from Plymouth and graduated from Apopka Memorial High School, entered the Marine Corps Reserves during his high school senior year. He died at age 20 on Sept. 16, 1966; his final resting place is at Highland Memory Gardens in Forest City. At the time of his death, Griffin was on an assault from helicopter carrier USS Iwojima.

During council discussion, some commissioners said they were not opposed to naming the playground but were concerned that the city does not have a standardized process for honoring individuals. The all-inclusive playground, which had its grand

opening in October, was created to be accessible for children of all ages and abilities to enjoy.

Vice Mayor Diane Velazquez said she had received feedback from residents asking that park naming be opened up to broader community input rather than decided case-by-case.

Commissioner Nick Nesta echoed that concern, saying the city needs a formal, transparent process so residents understand how names are proposed, reviewed and approved.

"I think the conversation that was brought up previously, I think a few meetings [ago], is that I don't think it's anti-naming," Nesta said. "It's — let's create a standardized process as we move forward, I think is the goal here."



Photo by Dana O'Connor
Commissioner Nick Nesta speaks at Wednesday's meeting.

speaking to [Duran's] parents, they still don't have any closure," resident Albert McKimmie said. "If we can't provide closure for a family who lost a son to the city of Apopka, then that's, in my opinion, is what we should be looking at early on, and procedures and how to do that is something that needs to be set in stone."

Arrowsmith told the council he was disappointed by how the issue had become politicized. He said Griffin, as a veteran, had served the community well and deserved recognition.

"I want you all to do your process, get your procedure straightened out, and possibly somebody else can recommend it that is not as politicized as I am," Arrowsmith said.

CRA Board asks for revision of facade renovation grant rules

Lodge requested \$20K, waiver from match contribution

By Teresa Sargeant
Reporter

The Apopka Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Board on Wednesday directed staff to tighten its facade renovation grant rules and have Davis Lodge No. 47 reapply once the updated policy is in place.

At the meeting, Antranette Forbes, city economic development director, informed the board the Davis Lodge initially requested \$20,000 for exterior improvements including window and door replacements, stucco work, painting, a canopy and lighting.

Under the CRA's facade grant rules, the \$10,000 cap is the most the agency will pay toward a project, while the required contribution is the share of



Courtesy of city of Apopka
Davis Lodge #47 applied for a CRA grant for its exterior upgrade.

the cost — 25% for businesses and 50% for nonprofits — that the applicant must pay out of pocket.

"According to our existing policy, the max that they are allowed to receive is \$10,000," Forbes told the board. "It also requires a contribution because

they are a nonprofit. From my conversations with the lodge, they are requesting a waiver of both of those requirements that they can have the \$20,000 without the contribution."

Board members questioned how the request could be approved when it exceeded the program's \$10,000 limit and conflicted with the required match. They also raised concerns about staying fair to other applicants and noted the policy has no way to waive either the cap or the contribution.

CRA Board member Diane Velazquez said it would be best for the city to revise its application policy and then ask Davis Lodge to reapply once the updated policy is in place.

"I think that would be best for Davis Lodge, because right now what they're asking for is [\$20,000] and if what we have on the books is

only up to [\$10,000], they would get disapproved," CRA board member Diane Velazquez said. "If we wouldn't give them 20, we would only give them 10. And if what they need is 20, it would be best if they can come back and when it's revised."

Forbes told the board that city staff would revise the policies and bring the revisions back to the board for review and approval, after which Davis Lodge could submit a new application.

Board vacancy

The Apopka CRA Board includes seven seats — all five members of the City Council plus two appointees. County appointee John Drago sits on the board, but the city is now searching to appoint a new member because Nikki Williams submitted her resignation last month.


The city began solicit-

ing applications last week. It is looking for applicants with experience or a background related to redevelopment, including real estate, urban planning, architecture or engineering design, construction, or project management.

The CRA aims to transform designated areas into vibrant commercial districts and neighborhoods by executing the city's redevelopment master plan and addressing blighted areas. The agency operates under Chapter 163, Part III — known as the Community Redevelopment Act — of the Florida Statutes.

The CRA Board administers tax increment revenues to fund infrastructure improvements, public space projects, and business assistance programs, while encouraging redevelopment and public-private partnerships that promote economic growth and job creation.

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HOA, city celebrate completion of Emerson Park right-of-way

By Teresa Sargeant
Reporter

A Tuesday roadway dedication culminated a lengthy process of negotiations, planning and construction of miles of infrastructure within the Emerson Park subdivision — a project totaling nearly \$3 million and funded entirely by residents.

City officials and Emerson Park residents dedicated the total of 7.65 miles of roadways paved at the community located just east of AdventHealth Apopka. The city will maintain the main



Courtesy of city of Apopka

City officials and Emerson Park homeowners cut the ribbon at the right-of-way dedication on Tuesday.

roadways, while the homeowner's association (HOA) will take responsibility for three miles of alleyways.

The total cost was \$2.65 million, and the HOA contributed more than \$700,000 up front. The remainder is

a municipal service benefit unit (MSBU) that will be paid through homeowners' taxes yearly for 15 years.

The road reconstruction, completed in October 2025, was a major milestone for the neighborhood's more than 500 homeowners, said HOA president Jennifer Hay.

"Our community is solely paying for it," Hay said. "We've just worked out a payment plan with the city, so the city is not paying any portion of the remodeling of the roads."

Although the roads appeared to be public — with

no gates or access restrictions — the HOA learned they were privately owned and therefore the responsibility of residents to maintain. Estimates showed the cost of full reconstruction would exceed \$2.5 million, a figure far beyond what most homeowners could pay up front.

Under the agreement, the city oversaw the work and allowed the HOA to pay the full cost over 15 years, rather than requiring the association to secure its own private loan.

The HOA will retain responsibility for maintain-

ing the neighborhood's alleyways, which make up a smaller portion of the overall infrastructure. In addition, the association maintains about 64 acres of green space throughout the development.

The road project also revived discussion of original development plans that once called for a town center with businesses along the community's main entrance, including a supermarket. Those plans were never realized, and the area instead became open green space used by residents for recreation, according to Hay.

Apopka High to send 2 teams to OCPS Biomedical Challenge

Challenge to take place Feb. 24 at AdventHealth Nicholson Center

By Sarah Merly
Reporter

The Apopka High School Medical Careers Magnet program will send two student teams to the 25/26 OCPS Biomedical Challenge on Feb. 24 at the AdventHealth Nicholson Center.

"Competitors will be tasked with developing a Community Awareness Campaign Portfolio to educate their own community about one health and/or safety-related issue of local, state, and/or national interest," the challenge guidelines said. "The team will present their community campaign to a panel of judges, sharing a portfolio of their research and their community awareness outreach plan or accomplishments."

According to magnet instructor Kristy Connor, 10 schools will compete in this year's competition, selecting from 10 challenge topics.



Courtesy of Thomas Perez

Thomas Perez and one of his teammates show off smart watches.

Apopka High students Thomas Perez, Yamin Simjee and Cristian Medina chose the topic "Wearable Health Tech & Remote Monitoring." Students Dillon Falloon, Jezabel Colon and Makayla Smith chose "Misinformation & Public Health Communication."

Junior Thomas Perez said his team is promoting the health benefits of smartwatches. Although smart-

watches can cost hundreds of dollars, Perez said the watches help reduce medical bills. His team's campaign website, medwear.info, cites studies noting a 38% reduction in ER visits and an average of \$3,200 saved per patient per year due to wearable medical devices.

Perez aspires to be a critical care physician after he finishes the medical magnet program, citing his own health background as his inspiration.

"I was misdiagnosed with an improper disease," Perez said. "I've gone through a horrendous medical journey."

Perez shared the story of his misdiagnosis in his essay for the United States District Court-Middle District of Florida, Orlando Division's 2025 High School Essay Contest. On March 2, 2025, Perez collapsed and started experiencing fainting and seizure spells in the days afterward.

"March 31st was another big day for me," Perez wrote in his essay. "My family went out to dinner, and as we were leaving, I passed out, but this time it was different."

Perez was admitted to the pedi-

atric intensive care unit (ICU), where he was diagnosed with Functional Neurological Disorder (FND).

"This is a neuro-psychiatric disorder that is not fully understood, but it is believed to be caused by stress, anxiety, and previous trauma," he said. "My mother refused to accept this. She pushed for more testing, arguing with doctors who wanted to stop searching, but I would always get the same diagnosis: Functional Neurological Disorder (FND)."

Eventually, a specialist and a rheumatologist discovered the correct diagnosis for Perez's symptoms.

"They discovered the real issue: Sjögren's syndrome, a rare autoimmune disease causing mitochondrial dysfunction," he said. "Once treated, my episodes stopped completely."

Perez credits his mother's determination to be his biggest advocate as the reason he is alive today.

"Without my mother, I wouldn't have seen Dr. Reddy, I wouldn't have been diagnosed, and, like Dr. Ben said, by the time the correct diagnoses would have been made, it

would be too late, as the Sjögren's would have attacked and destroyed many organ systems in my body," Perez said. "Children especially need parents willing to fight for them. Advocacy saved my life."

Perez's passion helps his team pursue each of the topic's three criteria as outlined in the competition guidelines: explore devices like smartwatches, glucose monitors, and ECG patches; address privacy concerns and data accuracy myths; and demonstrate how wearables empower patients and reduce hospital visits. The team's Instagram page can be found under the handle @medwear_apk.

The Misinformation and Public Health Communication topic requires the other Apopka High team to investigate how false or misleading health information spreads; clarify common myths; showcase strategies communities can use to fact-check, improve health literacy, and build trust in science; and promote campaigns that empower people to distinguish between credible and non-credible sources.

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NOWOCATS First Public Meetings

Northwest Orange County Areawide Transportation Study (NOWOCATS)

JAN. 26TH
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Apopka Community Center
519 S. Central Ave.
Apopka 32703

JAN. 28TH
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Kelly Park School
4700 Jason Dwellley Pkwy.
Apopka 32712

Come and meet with Commissioner Christine Moore, Orange County Public Works staff, and the consultants to discuss NOWOCATS.

Commissioner Christine Moore

Check out Your Library

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ocls.org

Wekiva High School shines at national debate championship

Mustangs competed against over 300 high school students from 15 states

By Teresa Sargeant
Reporter

Wekiva High School (WHS) students performed well at the recent National Civics and Debate Championship against over 300 high school students from 15 states, ranking high on the list of event honors.

Sponsored by the Florida Civics and Debate Initia-

tive in partnership with the Florida Department of Education, the National Civics and Debate Championship tested students' civic knowledge, debate skills and perseverance in various debate events that took place Jan. 16–19 in Orlando.

“We experienced record-breaking participation, unforgettable moments and the highest level of competition we’ve ever seen,” the National Civics and Debate Championship posted Monday on Instagram.

Wekiva students received individual honors for their debate skills. Junior Andrea Lara finished second

place overall in impromptu speaking. Senior Diego Alvarez ranked in the top 20 nationally for extemporaneous debate.

Wekiva seniors Azul Garcia and Daniel Idowu, juniors Joyce Chasya Dadje and Gloria Pierre, and freshman wZanaya Bailey also competed at the national tournament.

“Competing against a massive field of over 300 high school students from 15 states, our team proved they are among the best in the country,” Wekiva principal Anthony Russell wrote in his weekly school newsletter.



Photos courtesy of Wekiva High School

Wekiva High School senior Diego Alvarez (center-left) and junior Andrea Lara (center-right) earned high ranks in the National Civics and Debate Championship last weekend. They are both pictured with FCDI founder Tara Tedrow and Florida Education Commissioner Anastasios Kamoutsas.

REFORM ALLIANCE

FROM A1

to Senate Bill 752, passed in 2021, as an example of recent reforms aimed at incentivizing compliance for people on probation.

“It’s an incentives bill for those who are on probation,” Jenkins said. “If they maintain a job 30 hours a week or more, every six months they receive 30 days off their probation. If they get any education, they get 60 days off of their probation, and it also allows them to remote report.”

Jenkins said future reform efforts could include the creation of a new parole system in Florida, which eliminated parole for most offenses in 1993. Only about 3,600 individuals remain eligible under the former system, she said, noting that Florida’s prison population is aging and becoming increasingly costly to taxpayers.

“The prison population is aging, and it’s costing taxpayers 10 times as much to take care of someone over the age of 40 as it would someone under,” Jenkins said. “If we had a parole system in place, then those people would be able to get parole, and basically, taxpayers wouldn’t be paying for their care while they’re in prison.”

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, 157,000 of Florida’s residents are incarcerated in various facilities, including local jails and state and federal prisons.

Each year the state releases over 24,000 incarcerated people with over 60% rearrested within three years, according to the Florida Policy Project.

Another focus of potential reform is occupational licensing. Jenkins said ap-

proximately one-third of jobs in Florida require an occupational license, which often excludes people with prior convictions from employment opportunities.

As part of her visit, Jenkins met with Apopka resident and community advocate Clinton Stanley, whom she described as a key local voice on issues affecting returning citizens. She said her approach centers on listening to residents, rather than proposing predetermined solutions.

“We just want to start the conversation now, so people can understand who we are, what we’re trying to do,” Jenkins said. “We don’t come into a state and say, ‘We think you need this.’ We come into a state and we say, ‘What do you need?’ We ask the question. And

last year we did six listening sessions across the state of Florida ... just listening to returning citizens, listening to policymakers, listening to probation officers, listening to local elected officials. So we try to listen to people and then create policy around what the actual residents are saying.”

Stanley emphasized the role of local government in supporting grassroots organizations and investing in community resources, particularly for youth and families.

“Local officials really [need to be] getting to the root of the problem, really helping grassroots organizations help reform and change the dynamics of the community, starting with the youth and even with the parents, with resources, giving them job opportunities, skill train-

ing, bringing these resources to the community,” Stanley said. “We need the local officials who really buy in and invest into the community. Even when they’re doing development, making sure that developers are also buying in and investing into the community as it’s being gentrified.”

Stanley also said community engagement should be part of development decisions, especially in neighborhoods experiencing redevelopment and rising property values.

Jenkins said she hopes to meet with Apopka city officials including Mayor Bryan Nelson, City Council members and local law enforcement leadership, along with state legislators representing the area.

Although no meetings

have been scheduled yet, she said her goal is to begin discussions now in anticipation of possible legislative efforts over the next one to two years.

“With Reform [Alliance], we’re looking at passing policy in the next one or two years, so we just want to start the conversation now so people can understand who we are, what we’re trying to do,” she said.

Jenkins said engaging those most affected by the criminal justice system is essential to crafting effective reform.

“The people closest to the problems are the ones closest to the solution, and that’s why I’m meeting with Clinton to see the problem so we can try to figure out some solution,” she said.



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THE HOUSEMAID (R)
12:20; 4:10; 7:10; 10:15

AVATAR: FIRE AND ASH (REALD 3D)
(PG-13) 9:15

AVATAR: FIRE AND ASH (PG-13) 12:30; 3:20; 6:20
WICKED: FOR GOOD (REISSUE) (PG) 12:40
ZOOTOPIA 2 (PG) 1:10; 4:00; 6:40; 10:05

THE SPONGEBOB MOVIE: SEARCH FOR SQUAREPANTS (PG)
12:50; 3:50

28 YEARS LATER: THE BONE TEMPLE (R)
1:20; 4:30; 7:20; 10:00

MERCY (REALD 3D) (PG-13) 9:40

MERCY (PG-13) 1:40; 4:20; 7:00

HAMNET (PG-13) 3:30

ONE BATTLE AFTER ANOTHER (REISSUE) (R)
6:30

RETURN TO SILENT HILL (R) 7:30; 10:20
SINNERS (REISSUE) (R)
10:10

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THEME: SUPER BOWL

ACROSS

- Pakistani attire
- Research location
- Partridge's fruit tree
- *Grid follower
- * ____ Upshaw, multiple Super Bowl winner
- Canada's national tree
- Like Homer Simpson's head
- Allege
- Agenda entries
- *Adding a rushing player
- Aphrodite's lover
- Not host
- Tire meas.
- Composure under strain
- More distant
- Thompson of "Some Kind of Wonderful"
- Ubiquitous deciduous tree
- Genealogical plant
- Poetic feet
- Dream time, acr.
- The Romanovs, e.g.
- Song for solo voice

DOWN

- Bro to bro
- Speedy steed
- Chuck Berry's " ____ Over Beethoven"
- Rainbow color
- *Santa Clara's ____ Stadium, Super
- Dishevel, as in hair
- Clever humor
- *SoFi ____, Super Bowl LXI venue
- *Last year's Super Bowl winners
- Web robot
- Tesla Roadster with Starman location
- a.k.a. podagra
- *The only NFL team with perfect season
- Plant-based laxative
- Symphony member
- "No ____ for you!"
- No gains without them
- Retired, abbr.
- Field worker
- Bohemian
- Not Miss or Ms
- Poker amount

Bowl LXI venue

Beside, archaic

Titanic's frozen enemy

*Team with most Super Bowl appearances

Fencing weapon

Charitable contributions

Hi- ____

Garden shelter

Unhealthy atmosphere

Little hills

P in m.p.g.

Mark Twain to Samuel Clemens

Lively

Vampire of Greek mythology

*One of two teams to win while hosting Super Bowl

Long fishing line

Like haunted house

What the defense does?

High school dressy affair

Romanian money

*Super Bowl LXI halftime show headliner (2 words)

Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young: " ____ Your Children"

Egyptian boy king, for short

Long jump

I to Greeks, pl.

Rob Marshall's 2005 movie "Memoirs of a ____"

On the wagon

Land parcels

*Shoulder pads and cleats

"Put a lid ____!"

College dwelling

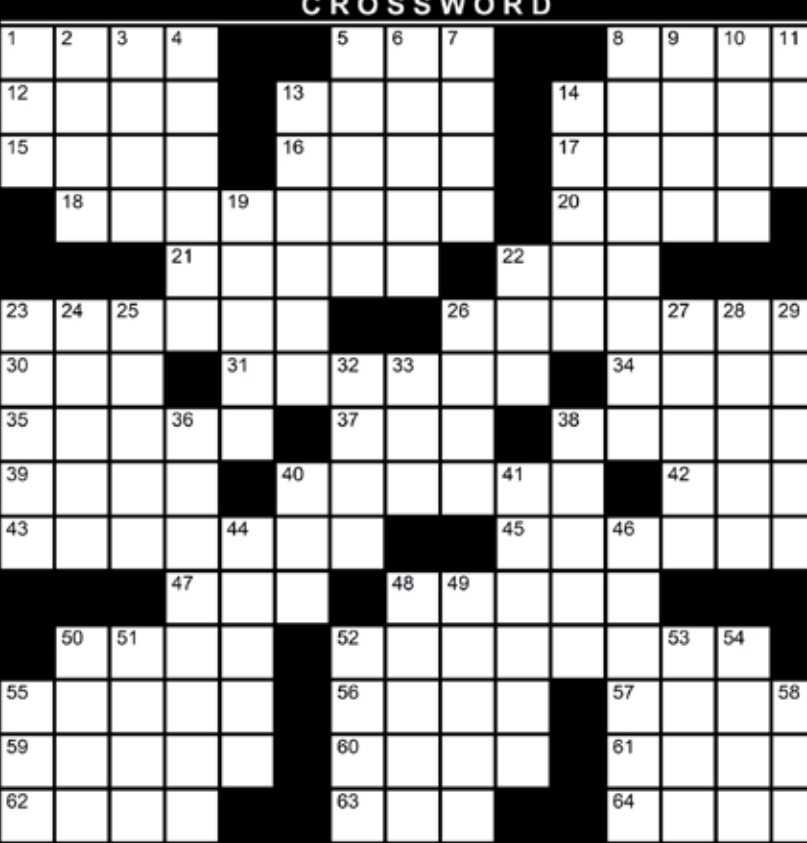
High part of day

Edible fat

Facial site

*Charlie Puth and Brandi Carlile, ____ game stars

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THIS WEEK'S SOLUTIONS





County to host transportation meetings in Apopka Jan. 26, 28

Study area includes parts of northwest Orange County

Staff Reports

Orange County officials will host two community meetings later this month as part of the Northwest Orange County Areawide Transportation Study (NOWOCATS), a long-range planning effort focused on future transportation needs in the region.

The first meeting will be 6-8 p.m. Monday, Jan. 26, at the Apopka Community Center, 519 S. Central Ave., Apopka. The second meeting will take place 6-8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 28, at Kelly Park School, 4700 Jason Dwelley Parkway, Apopka.

Both meetings will present the same information to allow the public many opportunities to participate.

According to the meeting notice, both sessions will start with an open house at 6 p.m., giving attendees a chance to look at meeting materials. A formal presentation is slated to start at 6:30 p.m., followed by a public comment period.

Orange County, in partnership with the city of Apopka, is conducting NOWOCATS, which aims to operate as a long-range transportation plan that pinpoints and examines possible projects to improve connectivity, cut down congestion, and boost mobility for several means of transportation, including vehicles, tran-



Photo by Teresa Sargeant

The Jan. 28 NOWOCATS community meeting will take place at Kelly Park School.



Courtesy of Orange County

This map shows the study area of the Northwest Orange County Areawide Transportation Study.

sit, bicycles and pedestrians.

The study area includes parts of northwest Orange County north of Clarcona-Ocoee Road, south of the Orange/Seminole County line, east of the Orange/Lake County line and west of the Orange/Seminole County line.

The purpose of the first round of community meetings is to present data collected on existing traffic conditions and projected traffic conditions based on a 2050 model forecast. Officials are also seeking feedback from residents on transportation issues they

consider important within the study area.

Meeting materials including the presentation will be made available before the meetings on the project website at NOWOCATS.com.

Public participation is open to all residents. Accommodations are available for individuals who need language translation, interpretive services or assistance under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Requests for accommodations must be made at least seven days before the meeting, according to the notice.

ARBOR DAY



Photo by Sarah Merly

From left to right: Mayor Bryan Nelson, Foliage Garden Club's Arbor Day chairman Ann Mixon, Kay Wilson, Pat D'Amico, Lou Staley, Foliage Garden Club president Bobbie Dougherty, Christy Faircloth, Pam Groseclose and Nick Nesta gather around the newly planted tree at the Northwest Recreation Complex's all-inclusive playground on Jan. 16. Each year, the Foliage Garden Club of Apopka plants a tree in honor of Arbor Day. Florida celebrates Arbor Day on the third Friday of January, since less water evaporates in the winter, making trees easier to transplant. County Line Ornamentals in Mount Dora donated the tree.

DEBATE

FROM A1

and voters know that."

Derrick and WESH 2 political reporter Greg Fox will co-moderate the debate. Fox, a seven-time Emmy Award winner and two-time Walter Cronkite Award recipient, is a veteran debate facilitator who has worked at WESH since 1987.

Apopka Chief members will receive reserved

seating at the event and may submit questions in advance. Other residents who wish to submit questions must attend in person and fill out a question card.

Nelson was first elected in 2018 and is seeking a third term, which he has said would be his last.

Moore, now in her sec-

ond term as Orange County's District 2 commissioner, announced her mayoral campaign in April.

Nesta entered the race in November. His entry prompted local attorney Matt Aungst to withdraw, saying he was concerned about "splitting the reform vote."

LEGAL FEES

FROM A1

without immediately taking on the full financial burden.

He said the policy applies only to civil or administrative actions — not criminal cases — such as ethics investigations, challenges to an official's qualifications to hold office, or alleged violations of the city charter.

Under the policy, an official seeking an advance must submit a written request to the city administrator detailing the legal action and providing a cost estimate. The request must then be approved by a majority vote of the council at a pub-

lic meeting. A written reimbursement agreement is required, specifying that the official must repay the city in full if the case is not resolved in the official's favor.

According to Hand, the resolution defines "successful" as having allegations dismissed, being exonerated, or otherwise prevailing on the merits. If an official does not meet that standard, repayment would be due within 30 days of the final decision unless the council approves an alternative arrangement. City staff would maintain accounting records

for all advances.

The proposal drew sharp criticism from residents during public comment, with speakers questioning the fairness of using taxpayer funds to front legal costs for elected officials.

"Whether you get off or you're found guilty, you need to be responsible for your own bill, because if it's a citizen out there, if something happens to them and they get charged, the city ain't coming to their rescue," resident Leroy Bell said.

Other speakers argued that existing insurance cov-

erage or reimbursement after a case finishes would be more appropriate, and also that the resolution could create the appearance of preferential treatment.

"The city has — I'm assuming, this is a question — the city has general and professional liability. Is that correct?" resident Rod Olsen said. "If yes, then you are covered. You are covered in the performance of your duties. If it's outside that, then we have no business. The city has no business in providing you money."

Supporters, including

Mayor Bryan Nelson, said the policy protects public officials from being financially strained or even ruined by lawsuits filed over their official actions, even when those actions are ultimately deemed lawful. Nelson cited past cases where officials had to cover their own legal bills before seeking reimbursement from the city after being cleared.

Commissioners also debated whether the \$5,000 cap was sufficient, noting that complex cases can far exceed that amount. Some also questioned the timing of the

policy, given ongoing litigation and ethics complaints involving members of the dais.

Earlier this month, Nelson filed a lawsuit against Orange County District 2 Commissioner Christine Moore, challenging her residency and ability to run for mayor. She is running against him in the mayoral election, as well as City Commissioner Nick Nesta.

Nesta urged the council to postpone the vote to refine the language and clarify how the policy would be administered.



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Moderated by Greg Fox and J.C. Derrick

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POLICE BEAT

APD responds to 26 crashes Jan. 11-17

If a law enforcement agency charges you with a crime and this news outlet 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 dhayden@the-apokkachief.com.

In the period from January 11-17, 2026, the Apopka Police Department received 1,629 calls for service, responded to 26 crashes, issued 104 citations, and made 22 arrests. Burglaries: 01 vehicle, 0 residences, 0 business. Juveniles were charged with vehicle theft-grand theft of motor vehicle (X3); burglary of unoccupied dwelling unarmed; larceny-other theft.

The following adults were arrested and charged:

Tyrone Ladexter Bradford, 44, 426 W. Ella J. Gilmore St., Apopka, drugs-pos-

session of controlled substance without prescription (X2).

Quintary Drelle Bridges, 49, 1375 Golf Course Dr., Apopka, larceny petit theft-merchandise farm transit 2+ prior conviction.

Vic Morris Chambers, 58, Apopka, simple assault-intent threat to do violence.

Maureen Heather Cummings, 35, transient, Apopka, drugs-possession of controlled substance without prescription; loitering-loiter/prowl in unusual place or manner.

Ryan Nathan Drinkwater, 35, Apopka, sex assault by custodian, sex battery victim 12 years of age under 18 years of age; lewd lascivious behavior 24+ years of age, lewd lascivious touching victim 16-17 years of age.

Robert Anthony Ector, 59, 1341 Welch Ridge Ter., Apopka, larceny-other theft.

John Thomas Fitzgerald, 37, 71 Federal Ln., Palm

Coast, drug equipment-possession and/or use; drugs-traffic fentanyl/fentanyl analogues 4 grams+.

Kevin Roland Gonzalez, 37, 62 Jett Loop, Apopka, other agency warrant.

Robert Kentrell Hamilton, 40, general delivery, Orlando, other agency warrant (X4).

Keosha Kenyotta Hardy, 33, Apopka, cruelty toward child-abuse child without great bodily harm; resist officer-obstruct without violence.

Tavion Ladarius Harley, 22, Apopka, lewd lascivious behavior-promote sexual activity victim less than 16; public order-crimes use 2-way communication device to facil felony; family of fense-interfere with custody of minor/incompetent person; obscene communication-travel to meet after use computer to lure child.

Terry Eugene Hickey, 47, 19 E. 18th St., Apopka, moving traffic violation-operate

motor vehicle without valid license, 1st conviction.

Katlyn Patricia Hunter, 32, 261 Springs Colony Cir. Apt. 166, Altamonte Springs, obstruct criminal investigation-false information to law enforcement officer report, missing person or felony; drug equipment-possession and/or use; drugs-possession of controlled substance without prescription (methamphetamine); other agency warrant.

Chad Alan Knight, 35, 1507 Camel Ct., Apopka, drug equipment-possession and/or use; drugs-possession of controlled substance without prescription (fentanyl).

James John Laravuso, 33, 1010 Olive Avenue, Sanford, larceny petit theft-merchandise farm transit 2+ prior conviction.

Eric Lemaine, 38, 9509 Southern Garden Cir., Altamonte Springs, resist officer-obstruct without violence; trespassing-failure to leave property on order of owner.

Mario Humberto Lopez Simaj, 45, 1759 Wekiwa Crossing Blvd., Apopka, drugs-possession of controlled substance without prescription (cocaine).

Myles Brandon McRoy, 34, 816 Hickory Knoll Ct., Apopka, firing weapon-discharge firearm from vehicle.

Sonya Renaye Ray, 58, 4 Ginger Cir., Leesburg, out-of-county warrant.

Bramkumarie Shields, 40, Apopka, aggravated assault-with deadly weapon without intent to kill; battery-touch or strike.

Shaina Marie Stouffer, 36, 581 N. Park Ave. #1208, Apopka, drug equipment-possession and/or use; drugs-possession of controlled substance without prescription (fentanyl); drugs-possession of controlled substance without prescription.

Noelio J. Vega Camueiras, 33, 1155 Timberline Rd., Apopka, larceny-other theft.

FDOT delays intersection improvements

Staff Reports

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) announced on Jan. 23 that it postponed an intersection closure in downtown Apopka because the traffic signalization improvements will not be conducted as planned.

“FDOT will send an update when the work has been rescheduled,” a Jan. 23 email from the FDOT to the city of Apopka stated.

Previously, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) had planned to close the U.S. 441/Main Street (Orange Blossom Trail/Park Avenue) intersection 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. from Jan. 18 to Jan. 22 to complete signalization improvements.

Between those closed hours, detours would have been in place with signage indicating the detour routes for eastbound and westbound motorists on U.S. 441/Main Street.

FDOT did not communicate a reason for the postponement of the work.

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CITY OF APOPKA

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

SPECIAL EXCEPTION

NOTICE is hereby given that **Michael R Cooper Const Co Inc.** has made an application, pursuant to the with Apopka Code of Ordinances, Part III, Land Development Code, Article II, Section 2.5.1.G for a **SPECIAL EXCEPTION FOR THE FOLLOWING USES ON PROPERTY LOCATED AT 335 S. HAWTHORNE AVENUE, APOPKA, FLORIDA, 32703 SHOWN BELOW: ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY, ADULT LIVING FACILITY, ADULT FOSTER HOME, BOARDING HOUSE, CHILD FOSTER HOME, CONTINUE CARE RETIREMENT, EMERGENCY SHELTER OR HOME, PLACE OF WORSHIP, COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY, VOCATIONAL OR TRADE SCHOOL, UTILITY FACILITY, LAWN CARE, POOL CARE, PEST CONTROL, TANNING SALON, BUILDING HVAC, PLUMBING, ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR WITH STORAGE YARD, GENERAL INDUSTRIAL SERVICES ENCLOSED, MACHINE SHOP METAL WORKING, WELDING, PLUMBING OR GAS, STEAM OR WATER PIPE FITTING, MANUFACTURING, ASSEMBLY OR FABRICATION LIGHT, WAREHOUSE STORAGE, SHOWROOM WHOLESALE, OTHER WAREHOUSE USE.**

Parcel
335 S. Hawthorne Avenue

0 0.04 0.07 0.14 Miles

N

Parcel Identification Number(s): 09-21-28-0196-10-250
Contains: 2.42 +/- acres

Notice is given that the **City of Apopka Planning Commission** will hold a public hearing to consider the Special Exception request at its scheduled meeting in the City Council Chambers of the Apopka City Hall on **Tuesday, February 10, 2026 beginning at 5:30 P.M.**, or as soon thereafter as possible.

Interested parties and the public may appear at the above listed hearing to speak. 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. Additional information regarding the application and review process may be inspected at the Apopka Community Development Department located at Apopka City Hall, 120 E. Main Street, Apopka, Florida, 32703 on weekdays between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Written public comments regarding the application for the proposed special exception may be submitted by mail to the City Clerk's Office at 120 East Main Street, Apopka, Florida, 32703. 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, Florida, 32703; Telephone: 407-703-1704, at least 48 hours prior to the proceeding.

Apopka Planning Commission

Community Development Department

January 23, 2026

CITY OF APOPKA

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

CHANGE OF ZONING

NOTICE is hereby given pursuant to Sec. 166.041(3)(a), Florida Statutes and the Apopka Code of Ordinances, Part III, Land Development Code, Article II, Section 2.5.1.D, that **Thomas Faber** has made application relating to the property located at 550 W. Lester Road, Apopka, Florida, 32703 shown below for change of zoning and requested that the City of Apopka adopt the following ordinance:

ORDINANCE NO. 3154

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF APOPKA, FLORIDA, CHANGING THE ZONING FROM T (TRANSITIONAL) TO RSF-1B (RESIDENTIAL SINGLE FAMILY - LARGE LOT), FOR PROPERTY LOCATED 550 W LESTER ROAD; OWNED BY CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS AND KATRINA BARRETT COMPRISING 3.05 ACRES, MORE OR LESS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY, CONFLICTS, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Parcel
550 W. Lester Road

0 0.07 0.13 0.26 Miles

N

Parcel Identification Number(s): 33-20-28-0000-00-069
Contains: 3.05 +/- Acres

Notice is given that public hearings for Ordinance Number 3154 will be held by the **City of Apopka City Council** at regularly scheduled meetings in the City Council Chambers of the Apopka City Hall, 120 E. Main Street, Apopka, Florida, 32703 on **Wednesday, February 4, 2026 beginning at 1:30 P.M. and Wednesday, February 18, 2026 beginning at 7:00 P.M.** or soon thereafter.

Interested parties and the public may appear at the above listed hearings to speak. The proposed Ordinance, along with any additional information regarding the application and review process, may be inspected at the Apopka Community Development Department located at Apopka City Hall, 120 E. Main Street, Apopka, Florida, 32703 on weekdays between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. 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. Written public comments regarding the application for the proposed ordinance may be submitted by mail to the City Clerk's Office at 120 East Main Street, Apopka, Florida, 32703. 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, Florida, 32703, Telephone: 407-703-1704, at least 48 hours prior to the proceeding.

Apopka City Council

Community Development Department

January 23, 2026

MLK PARADE
FROM A1

HBCU [Historically Black College or University] marching style dance.”

Lewis said her program also reflects King’s message of unity.

“We keep the younger ones integrated with the older ones and the older ones with the younger ones,” she said. “I believe that that is definitely a part of the dream that Martin Luther King set, for the old and the new to blend.”

The Apopka Police Department (APD) participated in the parade, with Lovetta Quinn-Henry making her first appearance at the parade as the Apopka police chief after she was sworn in last fall.

“It was inspiring to see families, friends, and neighbors come together to celebrate unity, hope, and the legacy of Dr. King,” the APD posted on its Facebook page. “A heartfelt thank you to everyone who came out to line the streets, wave, cheer, and celebrate alongside us. Seeing so many smiling faces and feeling the energy, positivity, and pride throughout the parade reminded us why events like this are so important.”

Several high school bands joined the parade, including Apopka, Wekiva, Oak Ridge, Evans and Ocoee. This year, Campbell Middle School from Daytona Beach also joined the lineup. The school principal is Marcia Owens, a former Apopka High School assistant principal who served in that role for many years.

Othellus Swift, an Apopka resident, served as the parade’s grand marshal for the community. The grand marshal for education and youth was Sophia Bascom, an Apopka day-care owner. The “bridge



Photo by Dana O'Connor
Orlando school Believe Dance Academy performs a routine.



Photo by Dana O'Connor
Wekiva High School had one of several marching bands in the parade.

builder” grand marshal was Joshua Black.

Sister Ann Kendrick, Hope Community Center founder, and Juana Perez served as the Hispanic co-grand marshal.

The following are the parade winners: Best Performance Band — Campbell Middle School, Daytona Beach; Most Creative Entry — Mount Olive Seventh Day Adventist Church; and Best Theme Float — AdventHealth.



Photo by Dana O'Connor
An Orange County Sheriff’s Office motorcade was part of the parade.



Photo by Dana O'Connor
State Sen. LaVon Bracy Davis of District 15 waves to the crowd.




Photo by Dana O'Connor
The Maynard Evans High School band breaks into a dance routine for the judges.




Photo by Dana O'Connor
Members of the 40-plus Double Dutch Club were energized.


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1. flat grinding tooth in the back of the mouth

2. tool for correcting crooked teeth

3. doctor who specializes in the care of human teeth

4. pain in a tooth, sometimes a sign of a cavity

5. sticky buildup on teeth, helps bacteria grow

6. rows of hard, bony, white structures in mouth; grind, bite

7. tool used to remove tooth decay to prepare for a filling

8. sharp front teeth – four on top, four on bottom, used for tearing

9. material used to repair a tooth that has tooth decay

10. thin outer covering that protects teeth

11. mineral treatment that repairs tooth enamel

12. clean teeth twice a day using this

13. waxed, silky string used to clean between teeth

14. gel or paste used with toothbrush to clean teeth

15. little hole in a tooth (due to bacteria)

16. “eating away” of teeth by acids, causes a cavity

17. the part of the tooth seen inside the mouth

18. person who cleans and checks teeth

19. a way for the dentist to take a picture inside the teeth, even behind the gums

plaque

toothpaste

fluoride

decay

molar

filling

X-ray

toothache

braces

incisors

toothbrush

dentist

floss

crown

cavity

hygienist

enamel

teeth drill

Apopka boys hold off Ocoee, 52-44

Blue Darters win fourth straight behind Andino's extra minutes

By Vinnie Cammarano
Reporter

The Apopka Blue Darters continued to grind through a demanding week with district play Friday night, knocking off Ocoee 52-44 despite being short-handed and tested late.

Apopka entered the matchup without two key contributors, as Xavier Bell remained sidelined after suffering an injury Monday, while Jarquavion McClain continued to nurse an injury from the Wekiva game. Still, the Blue Darters showed little sign of fatigue, building on momentum from back-to-back wins over Lake Minneola, 69-56; and East Ridge, 45-39, earlier in the week.

Jaden Andino got a big boost in minutes and had a much larger role this game. He opened the scoring on Apopka's second possession with a corner 3.

Coach Scott Williams praised Andino's ability to step up.

"Jaden's always been a young man that we felt is going to be really good in our program, but this current stretch continues to give us more and more confidence," he said.

The Apopka crowd traveled well and made its presence felt, erupting after a Trent Jean ankle-breaker and Noah Ferrer pull-up jumper.



Photo by Vinnie Cammarano

Jacques Evariste is fouled on his layup attempt against Ocoee.

Ocoee answered with free throws, but Andino responded again at the line, pushing the Blue Darters ahead 7-2 and forcing an early Ocoee timeout with 4:10 remaining in the first quarter.

After an Ocoee bucket inside, Andino continued his hot start, floating one in from the baseline off another Jean assist. Defense dictated much of the quarter, but Apopka closed strong when Rafi Betancourt found Xavier Freeman in the corner for a 3, sending the Blue Darters into the break with a 12-4 lead.

Evariste opened the second quarter by drawing a foul and converting both free throws, though Ocoee answered with a 3 and two more from the line to cut into the margin. After a loose-



Photo by Vinnie Cammarano

Zee Davis fights for an offensive rebound.

ball scramble and an Apopka timeout, Andino found space again in the corner and buried another triple. The pace quickened as Ocoee at-

tacked the rim, but Evariste countered with a strong finish through contact and a

BASKETBALL, B2

Apopka boys soccer season ends in first round

Lake Brantley upsets Blue Darters

By Vinnie Cammarano
Reporter

Apopka's soccer season came to a crushing end Tuesday night, as Lake Brantley upset the Blue Darters 2-0 in the opening round of the Class 7A District 3 playoffs at Wekiva.

In a rematch of an evenly played 2-2 draw just eight days earlier, the postseason meeting told a very different story.

"We just lost focus," Apopka head coach Billy Willier said. "They were too emotional from minute one, they were just very nervy players tonight. We were hoping the classroom film work would settle them down, but it didn't seem to work today. Take nothing away from Lake Brantley — they played an excellent game."

Apopka entered the match as the district's No. 4 seed at 7-5-4, while Lake Brantley, the No. 5 seed, came in at 1-10-4. Despite the disparity in records, Willier expected a tight battle, especially after the teams' recent draw. The Blue Darters even spent time reviewing film from that match — something they had rarely done this season — hoping it would help them clean up mistakes and play more connected soccer.

Instead, Lake Brantley struck immediately.

Just four minutes in, the



Photo by Vinnie Cammarano

Landon Carter looks for a counter attack.

Patriots earned a corner kick and capitalized, sending a ball into the box that found the back of the net to make it 1-0. Apopka struggled to settle after the early goal, with both teams battling for possession and searching for through-ball opportunities that never quite materialized.

Lake Brantley doubled the lead in the 17th minute, controlling possession inside the box before finishing from a tight angle on the right side, sneaking a shot inside the near post for a 2-0 advantage. At the water break, Lake Brantley head coach Ewan Lindo called for his group to regroup and focus on staying connected.

From there, the Patriots were content to sit back, control their defensive third, and bleed the clock.

Apopka couldn't register a single shot on goal before halftime, unable to break through a disciplined Lake Brantley back line. Things

became even more difficult early in the second half when Apopka committed a bad tackle under pressure, resulting in a red card and forcing the Blue Darters to play a man down.

Eight minutes into the half, Apopka created pressure, earning a corner kick. Estevao Amaral delivered a perfectly placed corner into the box that bounced dangerously and nearly resulted in Apopka's first goal of the night. The Blue Darters saw more possession, but long runs and final passes continued to fall just short.

Defensively, Garrett Perfater anchored the back line, repeatedly shutting down Lake Brantley through-ball attempts and keeping Apopka within striking distance. Amaral nearly sparked life with 11 minutes remaining, curling a beautiful free kick from the left side toward the far post, but no Blue Darter was there to finish it.

Down a man and facing a two-goal deficit, Apopka simply ran out of time.

Senior captain and leading scorer David Campana reflected on both the match and his final season in blue.

"It was a really good season for us," Campana said. "But in the last few games, we lost our minds a little bit. We were arguing in the mid-field, and we didn't practice well. In the second half of this game, we were good, but we got one man down, and you can't play like that."

Despite the disappointment, Campana took pride in his senior year as the top scorer for the Darters.

"It was amazing," he said. "Everybody congratulated me and was very happy with me. It was my senior year, so I'm done here, but I'm going to keep playing with my club now. This season was really good."

While the playoff exit stung, Willier emphasized the bigger picture.

"One of our goals was to have a positive season," he said. "Last year, we didn't. This year, we accomplished that. Obviously, we wanted to get to the district finals, and that didn't happen tonight, but overall I'm very pleased and proud of the guys."

With a large group of players expected to return, including several JV contributors who saw time Tuesday, Willier remains optimistic.

"I think they were starting to click," he said. "Get-

BOYS SOCCER, B2

Apopka girls soccer shuts out Ocoee

Blue Darters win 8-0 behind hat trick from Ava Croeze

By Vinnie Cammarano
Reporter

The Apopka Blue Darters hosted round one of the Class 7A District 3 tournament and rolled past fifth-seeded Ocoee, 8-0, Tuesday night to advance to the second round.

"We have a great group of girls and the whole thing is for them to come in mentally ready," Sangster said after the match. "Remember

who we are, because once you know that, then you know who and what you're playing for. And I think that's been the message this whole time."

Apopka wasted no time turning that mindset into goals. On the opening run of the match, the Blue Darters earned their first corner kick. After the initial attempt was cleared, the ball found Sydney Chandler on the right side, who played it back to Jillian Kurz nearly 25 yards out. Kurz unloaded a perfectly struck shot that

GIRLS SOCCER, B3



Photo by Vinnie Cammarano

The Blue Darters celebrate the game-winning goal from Ava Croeze.

Nailbiter closes Wekiva's historic soccer season

Horizon surprises Mustangs, 3-2

By Vinnie Cammarano
Reporter

Wekiva's season came to a tough end Wednesday night, falling 3-2 on the road to Horizon in the opening round of the Class 6A District 4 boys soccer playoffs, a game that swung wildly and asked everything of the Mustangs until the final whistle.

"Regardless of what happened in this second half of the season, it doesn't define what we've accomplished," Wekiva coach Jordain James said, referring to the Mustangs' program-record win total. The team lost its last five games but still finished the season 11-7-1.

"I'm very proud of them," he said. "Great season."

The fifth-seeded Mustangs wasted no time showing they were ready for the moment, even after an early punch from the fourth-seeded Hawks (4-8-6). Horizon struck just one minute into the match, taking advantage of space in the opening buildup to grab a 1-0 lead before Wekiva could settle in.

That lead lasted less than two minutes.

On Wekiva's first sus-

tained push forward, Harold Jimenez found an opening in the third minute and buried the equalizer, finishing calmly to bring the Mustangs level at 1-1.

Senior goalkeeper Sebastian Galves was tested early and often in goal, making an early save before Ricardo Garcia forced Horizon's keeper into action with a rushed shot around the 14-minute mark. By the first water break, possession was nearly even, but Wekiva began to look sharper to loose balls and quicker in transition.

The Mustangs continued hunting through balls, but several promising runs rolled just a step too far into the goalkeeper's hands. Horizon answered with a free kick from midfield with 11 minutes left in the half, but Galves denied the scorching shot.

Wekiva nearly grabbed the lead late in the half when a long ball found Garcia, who slipped Jimenez through the defense. Jimenez ripped a shot on frame, but the Horizon keeper made a diving save to keep the match tied. The teams hit halftime locked at 1-1, with Wekiva feeling confident.

"We just need to connect one more pass and get

WEKIVA SOCCER, B3



Photo by Vinnie Cammarano

Nathaniel Ellis dribbles through the slide tackle.

Specks rewarding anglers on area chains, lakes

Hello Folks,
If you’ve been waitin’ for the specks to start bitin’... I’ve got news for ya: they’re bitin’. I’m gettin’ lots of reports that the specks are bitin’ in just about all the major chains and lakes in our area.
The reports comin’ out of the St. Johns River has been excellent and folks are catchin’ lots of specks in Lake Woodruff. Lots of specks bein’ caught in the 2-pound range. Limits of specks are bein’ caught almost every day. The specks are bitin’ in Lake Monroe.
The Get Hook’d Bass and



Crappie tournament was held last weekend on Lake Monroe. There were lots of anglers fishin’ the tournament. Congrats to the team of the Pride Boys who weighed in 10.68 pounds of specks to win the crappie division. And, congrats to the team of the Co-

coa Boys who won the Bass Division with 20.43 pounds. Of course, congrats to all the teams that fished this tournament and to all the anglers, whether you made it to the leaderboard or not. Everyone enjoyed a great day on the water.
The bass fishin’ down in Palm Bay at the Headwaters is showin’ out. One of the guides down there took some clients out for 5 hours. They caught 48 bass, with multiple 5-pounders. bein’ caught. Folks, that is some great fishin’ in anybody’s book!
The bass fishin’ on the

Harris Chain is gettin’ better each week. With these cold fronts comin’ to town, it’s gonna keep the bass in a little deeper water until the shallow water warms up. Once the water warms up, we’ll see lots of bass goin’ shallow to bed. There are some male bass startin’ to make some beds, but these cold fronts will pull ‘em back out for just a while.
We have a full moon the first weekend of February, and that should bring some bass back to shallow water to spawn. The bass fishin’ on the Butler Chain is still doin’ good. Lots of small bass are

bein’ caught on slow sinkin’ Senko type baits, lipless crankbaits, and swim-jigs. A few bigger bass are startin’ to bite on the chain.
West Lake Toho bass fishin’ has been pretty good, as well. Some big bass are bein’ caught on shiners around the Kissimmee grass and along the edge of the hydrilla clumps. I got a report from the Clermont Chain this week. The water temperature is down a little, but the bass fishin’ is pickin’ up.
Just a reminder that on January 31st, there will be a kids’ fishin’ rodeo at the pond

located at Highland Park Fish Camp. You need to get your tickets prior to this event, because there’s only a limited number of tickets. It’s a free event for children 12 years old and younger.
Signup is between 8:30 and 9 a.m. The tournament goes from 9 until 11 a.m.
Well, folks, that’s it for this week. I hope you get a chance to do some fishin’ this weekend, and I sure hope to see you on the water real soon.
Tip of the week: Specks are bitin’!
SAVE A FEW AND GOOD LUCK!

BOYS SOCCER

FROM B1

ting that extra year together is going to be nice. I think we’ll have a good

balanced team, and I’m excited to see what the future holds.”



Photo by Vinnie Cammarano



Photo by Vinnie Cammarano

Garrett Perfater cuts off a defender and steals the ball.

BASKETBALL

FROM B1

completed three-point play.

Apopka’s ball movement continued to pay off. After a missed 3, Betancourt grabbed an offensive rebound and skipped the ball cross-court to Andino, who drilled yet another corner 3. Ocoee responded with back-to-back deep triples, trimming the lead to 24-17 and energizing the crowd.
Betancourt answered with a 3 of his own off an outlet pass, forcing another Ocoee timeout. Following an inbound violation on the Knights, Trent Jean found Amare Wilson on the wing for a deep 3, closing the half with Apopka firmly in control, 32-17.
Ocoee opened the second half by getting to the line, but Zee Davis answered immediately with a corner 3. After a brief lull and a pair of turnovers, Ferrer jumped a passing lane and tossed ahead to Jean, who found Davis for his second straight long ball. Ocoee again fought back with an and-one, but Andino answered once more from the corner for his fourth 3. Alex Congdon added his first points on a pull-up jumper, and Apopka maintained a 43-32 advantage heading into the fourth.
Ocoee applied heavy pressure to start the final quarter, but Apopka handled it well. Jean dribbled through a trap and delivered a pinpoint skip pass to Freeman for a layup, and Evariste followed by cleaning up a blocked shot for two more. Ocoee responded with a 3, then capitalized on

turnovers and second-chance points to cut the deficit to single digits.
With the Knights threatening, Apopka called timeout at 49-42. After another Ocoee trip to the line made it 49-44, Jean delivered another beautiful pass, finding Freeman in the corner for a clutch 3.
Evariste then delivered a crucial block on the defensive end, and Apopka managed the clock efficiently from there, bleeding nearly a full minute in one long possession that included fouls. Neither team scored again, sealing the 52-44 Blue Darter victory.
Williams hopes this run could be what establishes confidence in a deep roster.
“What you hope after you get through the injuries and are back to full heath, is that your club is now deeper and more equipped to have different guys step up when it matters the most.”
Andino led all scorers with 16 points, adding four rebounds and two steals. Evariste finished with nine points, four rebounds, and a key late block, while Jean orchestrated the offense with nine assists to go along with four rebounds and two steals. Both teams struggled with turnovers in the second half, but Apopka’s execution in key moments helped seal the game.
The win marked Apopka’s fourth straight and improved the Blue Darters to 12-8 overall and 3-0 in district play.



Photo by Vinnie Cammarano

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GIRLS SOCCER
FROM B1

sailed over the goalkeeper’s outstretched hand and into the net just 2 minutes and 40 seconds in to give Apopka a 1–0 lead.

The early goal set the tone. Apopka kept Ocoee pinned in its own half, controlling possession and attacking in waves. Near the eighth minute, the Blue Darters fired two more shots on goal, and their pressure paid off again moments later.

Nevaeh Nguyen found space and calmly picked out Ava Croeze at the top of the box. Croeze slipped a pass through to Robyn Pickard making a run, and Pickard rolled a low finish past the keeper to make it 2–0 just over 10 minutes into the match.

Apopka struck again before Ocoee could regroup. Eighteen minutes into the game, Ariana Obregon carried the ball up the left side and delivered a pass into the box to

Croeze, who ripped a clean finish for her first goal of the night, pushing the lead to 3–0.

After the water break, Ocoee found possession in Apopka’s defensive third for the first time in the match, but it was short-lived. The Blue Darters quickly regained control, and Addison Kramer found Nguyen outside the top of the box. Nguyen fired a blistering shot to the left side that the goalkeeper couldn’t reach, extending the lead to 4–0.

Apopka continued to pile on late in the half. With 2:25 remaining before the break, Croeze struck again, ripping a long-range effort from the top of the box to give the Blue Darters a commanding 5–0 advantage at halftime.

The second half followed the same script. Just 4 minutes and 30 seconds in, Apopka earned a free kick from about 25 yards out. Kramer lined it up and drilled a shot that de-

flected off a defender and into the goal for a 6–0 lead.

Just over a minute later, Nguyen found space inside the box and buried another, making it 7–0 with more than 34 minutes still to play.

With 17:59 remaining, Kramer rang another free kick off the post, and Croeze crashed to the net to finish the rebound for her third goal of the night, triggering the mercy rule and ending the match at 8–0.

Croeze finished with three goals and an assist, while Nguyen added two goals and an assist. Pickard, Kramer and Kurz also scored, with Kramer contributing two assists. Chandler and Obregon each recorded assists as well, helping drive Apopka’s relentless attack.

Captain Nevaeh Nguyen was smiling throughout the match as she enjoyed the offensive outburst.



Photo by Vinnie Cammarano

Jillian Kurz launches a perfectly placed shot from 25 yards out for the first goal.

“I had a lot of fun,” Nguyen said. “It was great to be out here with my team and score as many goals as we did, especially on this field since it’s our last home game.”

As a top two goalscorer for Apopka, she’s happy she had this opportunity.



Photo by Vinnie Cammarano

Nevaeh Nguyen having fun as she crosses up defenders.

“It’s awesome because I don’t usually get to do this during club,” she added. “I’m a center back, so it’s great to be able to contribute to this team.”

With the win, Apopka advances to the second round of the district tournament, where it will face top-seeded Lake Mary (13–2–1). Lake Mary won last year’s state champi-

onships and currently sits sixth in the national rankings.

“I think they know it’s going to be a difficult one,” Sangster said. “We have to make sure that we work together, communicate, attack and defend as a team. Hopefully we can catch them on a counter. We just have to come up with the right game plan and compete.”

WEKIVA SOCCER
FROM B1

another in the net,” James said at the break.

Wekiva did exactly that coming out of halftime.

Just 51 seconds into the second half, a through ball found Garcia in stride. He beat the defense and finished one-on-one with the goalkeeper to give Wekiva a 2-1 lead and quiet the home crowd.

Horizon answered with pressure of its own, firing two shots that Galves turned away with point-blank saves. The senior goalkeeper stood tall, doing everything he could to extend his high school career.

“I always give everything for the coaches, the players, and the fans,” Galves said. “At the end of the day, we give our all for each other.”

Horizon broke through in the 50th minute, when a long-range strike sailed just over Galves’ outstretched

hand and into the perfect spot to tie the match at 2-2.

Three minutes later, Wekiva conceded a handball in the box, resulting in a penalty kick and a yellow card — but Galves caught a break as the shot rattled off the crossbar.

The momentum shifted again just before the second-half water break. Horizon sent a cross into the box and finished cleanly to take a 3-2 lead with 30 seconds remaining before the break.

Ricardo Garcia and Nathaniel Ellis urged their teammates to keep their heads up, reminding them there was still time.

Out of the break, Wekiva pressed. David Bohdert drew a free kick from the left side, bending a dangerous ball near post that the keeper deflected away. Moments later, Galves tipped a blistering Horizon shot off the crossbar to keep the Mustangs alive. Though three goals were on



Photo by Vinnie Cammarano

Ricardo Garcia deflects a shot off the keeper.

the board, Galves stood on his head with consecutive epic saves throughout the match.

The final blow came with 10 minutes left, when Wekiva was reduced to 10 men after a second yellow card resulted in a red. Even down a man, the Mustangs

continued to push, creating one final chance that was saved before the whistle ended the match.

“We had some defensive mistakes,” James said. “My midfield opened up again... and that’s been our Achilles heel this season.”

Despite the loss, Galves



Photo by Vinnie Cammarano

Sebastian Galves boots the ball downfield.

reflected with pride on a historic season.

“It feels amazing,” he said. “Knowing I did it with this group is incredible.”

Galves, who plans to

serve in the Navy after high school, leaves behind the most successful season in program history — and a team that never stopped fighting until the very end.

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Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.

VERSE OF THE WEEK

“Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.”

—1 Peter 1:13

Visit us online for all the Apopka area church listings

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

Friday, Jan. 23

Friday Nights at the Morse
4 p.m. at 445 N. Park Ave., Winter Park
Free evening admission to the Morse Museum.

Winter Fest 2026
5 p.m. at 861 Maitland Ave., Altamonte Springs
Free family festival with food, games, and live entertainment.

16th Annual Polaris Star Awards
5:30 p.m. at 11184 S. Apopka-Vineland Road, Orlando
Annual awards ceremony and reception.

The 8th Annual Empowering Night of Laughter
6 p.m. at 100 S. Eola Drive, Suite 100, Orlando
All-female comedy showcase.

Opening Reception: The Situated Body
6:30 p.m. at 210 W. Packwood Ave., Maitland
Opening reception for a contemporary art exhibition.

Sip and Savor Wine and Buffet Cruise
6:30 p.m. at 433 N. Palmetto Ave., Sanford
Sunset cruise with wine tasting and Italian buffet.

Bobby Jo Valentine Concert
7 p.m. at 5151 Lake Howell Road, Winter Park
Folk-pop concert and storytelling.

Chico Bean
7 p.m. at 9101 International Drive, Suite 2310, Orlando
Stand-up comedy. 21+.



Courtesy of AFSP

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's (AFSP) 2026 Orlando Out of the Darkness Community Walk will take place, Feb. 7, in Baldwin Park. The annual walk raises funds and awareness for suicide prevention, mental health education, and support for survivors of suicide loss.

Celtic Nova and Friends
7 p.m. at 1042 N. Mills Ave., Orlando
Celtic rock performance.

Emo Night Karaoke
8 p.m. at 1490 E. Buena Vista Drive, Lake Buena Vista
All-ages karaoke night.

Lucy Prebble's "The Effect"
8 p.m. at 1220 Oviedo Mall Blvd., Oviedo
Contemporary theater performance.

Darryl Worley Live
8 p.m. at 1200 S. French Ave., Sanford
Live country music.

Saturday, Jan. 24

Birding Park Workday
9 a.m. at 2851 Lust Rd., Apopka
Volunteer habitat restoration workday.

Pedals, Pipes, and Pizza
10 a.m. at 338 E. Lyman Ave., Winter Park
Hands-on pipe organ experience for young musicians.

Portrait Drawing Workshop
10 a.m. at 805 W. Central Blvd., Suite A, Orlando
In-person portrait sketching workshop.

Messy Craft 1st Birthday Party
11 a.m. at 1595 Meeting Place, Orlando
Crafts, giveaways, and open studio fun.

Bonsai & Cheers
2 p.m. at 1121 N. Mills Ave., Orlando
Bonsai workshop with drinks.

Latinx Representation Panel & Signing
3 p.m. at 1052 W. Morse Blvd., Winter Park

Romance authors discuss Latinx representation. Registration is required.

Saturday Sounds with The Spazmatics
5 p.m. at 3710 Jason Dwellley Parkway, Apopka
Live outdoor concert.

Candles & Cocktails
6 p.m. at 975 W. Fairbanks Ave., Orlando
Candle-making experience with cocktails.

Detours International Film Festival
6:30 p.m. at 5901 Hazeltine National Drive, Orlando
Short film screenings.

Line Dancing
6:30 p.m. at 36 E. 5th St., Apopka
Beginner-friendly line dancing.
ICMF: Gurvich-Zuniga Quartet
7:30 p.m. at 2000 S. Summerlin Ave., Orlando
Contemporary jazz performance.

Sunday, Jan. 25

Sunday Run at The Salty
8 a.m. at 3025 Corrine Dr., Orlando
Easy group run with a free donut for registered runners.

Blood Drive
8 a.m. at 4851 S. Apopka Vineland Road, Orlando
Donate and receive a free blood pressure screening.

Mommy and Me Tea Time
10 a.m. at 601 N. Orlando Ave., Suite 203, Maitland
Sunday morning tea party for parents and children.

Fortunes & Familiars
11 a.m. at 2500 Curry Ford Road, Suite 4, Orlando

Cat yoga, tarot readings, and rescue cat cuddles.

TheXpos Wedding Expo & Bridal Show
11:30 a.m. at Ocoee Lakeshore Center, Ocoee
Wedding inspiration, vendors, and fashion.

Javier Pérez
1 p.m. at 4939 Rock Springs Road, Apopka
Live music spanning rock, pop, and Latin styles.

Anne & Emmett – One Act Performance
2 p.m. at 11184 S. Apopka-Vineland Road, Orlando
Educational play exploring history, tolerance, and memory.

Plant Hanger Workshop
2 p.m. at 1920 N. Forest Ave., Orlando
Create your own macramé plant hanger.

GriefShare: Loss of Spouse or Partner
2 p.m. at 4851 S. Apopka Vineland Road, Orlando
Support program for those grieving a spouse or partner.

Sourdough Pizza Workshop
5:15 p.m. at 324 N. Park Ave., Winter Park
Hands-on sourdough pizza-making experience.

Monday, Jan. 26

Cold Weather Preparedness Kits for Seniors
11 a.m. at 814 W. Oak Ridge Rd., Orlando
Drive-thru distribution of cold-weather kits for seniors, while supplies last.

No-fuss meals with tilapia, tortilla soup, and magic cake

Diana from Little Sunny Kitchen.com, says, "Pan Fried Tilapia might be the quickest, easiest main dish I have! Thin tilapia fillets cook so quickly in a single pan with just some olive oil and simple seasonings. **No breading needed!** Enjoy this flaky, tender fish with mashed potatoes and your family's favorite veggies.



Maegan at BakerMama.com, says, "This homemade take on Chick-fil-A's Chicken Tortilla Soup tastes even better than the original and you can enjoy it year-round and even on Sundays!" We have Maegan's recipe for "taste-alike" Chick-fil-A Chicken Tortilla Soup!" We are taking full advantage of Maegan's recipe!

From Paula Deen's website, here is a wonderful recipe from Paula's son, Bobby Deen, who has long been an essential ingredient in the recipes that has made his mother an American cooking icon. This recipe for Brussels Sprouts sounds easy, yet bacon will really dress it up for your special occasions.

Paths of Sunshine, a collection of recipes put out by The Florida Federation of Garden Clubs in 1988, has some wonderful recipes for us. One of them is Amish Magic Cake; it will become a favorite of yours once you try it.

PAN FRIED TILAPIA
Submitted by Diana of Little Sunny Kitchen.com

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:
12-inch non stick skillet
Fish spatula

INGREDIENTS:
3 6-ounce tilapia fillets (thawed if frozen)
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
or....
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

Tilapia Fillets: This recipe will work with tilapia fillets or tilapia loins which are a trimmed version of the fillet that just includes the thickest parts. If you're using frozen tilapia, let it thaw overnight before cooking.

Olive Oil: This allows us to cook the fish in a pan without any sticking, and helps the seasonings to adhere to the tilapia well.

Salt and Pepper: Simple seasonings make the fish taste good.

Smoked Paprika and Garlic Powder: For more flavor, these two spices are perfect! The paprika also gives a smoky flavor and nice color to the fish.

DIRECTIONS:

1) **Prep The Fish:** Use paper towels to prepare the fish so that it's as dry as possible. This will help with browning. Drizzle half of the olive oil over the fish, and then season with smoked paprika, garlic powder, salt, and pepper on both sides. 2) **Heat the Pan:** It's important to heat the pan before adding the filets. Use a non-stick pan, and heat over medium heat with a tablespoon of olive oil. 3) **Pan Fry Tilapia:** When the oil is hot, add the fish fillets to the pan. Don't overcrowd them – work in batches if needed. Sear for 3-4 minutes per side until the fish is opaque and cooked through.

Tip! **Keep it Warm!** The fish only takes a few minutes to cook, so it may be done before everything else is! Remove it from the pan onto a plate, and cover with foil to keep it warm and ready to serve.

Recipe Tips: 1) **Use a Non-Stick Pan.** Without a non-stick pan, your fish WILL stick to the pan. While this won't affect the flavor of your fish, it will make it very difficult to remove it from the pan without it breaking into pieces. 2) **Don't crowd the pan.** You can easily make more or fewer fillets, but be sure that you only cook as many as will fit comfortably in a single layer in the pan. Work in batches if needed. 3) **Get a Fish Spatula.** If you don't already have one of these, you don't know what you are missing! The long, slotted spatula allows you to lift a whole fish fillet to flip it over. 4) **Keep It Simple.** Feel free to add seasonings that you enjoy to this recipe, but don't overdo it. Too many spices can overwhelm tilapia. Lemon pepper seasoning is always tasty with fish!

Lemon Butter Sauce for Tilapia:
Pan-fried tilapia is flavorful and perfect on its own, but you can whip up a rich buttery sauce to drizzle over it to make it fancy and decadent! I use this same sauce on my Air Fryer Salmon, but it's a simple mixture that works on shrimp, fish, chicken, and more! In a

saucepan, mix together 3 tablespoons butter, 2 cloves of minced garlic, 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, and 2 tablespoons of vegetable stock or dry white wine. Simmer until the mixture reduces by about half and creates a fragrant, savory sauce!

CHICK-FIL-A'S CHICKEN TORTILLA SOUP
Contributed by Maegan at BakerMama.com

INGREDIENTS:
Canola oil
White onion
Garlic
Cumin
Dried oregano
Kosher salt
Canned cannellini beans, undrained, separated
Canned diced tomatoes with green chilies (such as Rotel), undrained
Canned cream-style corn
Canned whole kernel corn, undrained
Canned black beans, undrained
Rotisserie chicken
Lime
Tortilla strips or chips, for serving

DIRECTIONS:

1) Heat canola oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add chopped onion and minced garlic. Let saute for about 5 minutes until onions become translucent. Stir in cumin, oregano and salt. 2) Meanwhile, puree 2 cans of cannellini beans in a blender until smooth. Do not drain beans of liquid before blending. 3) Add pureed beans, remaining can of cannellini beans, 2 cans diced tomatoes with green chilies, cream-style corn, whole kernel corn, black beans, and shredded chicken to onion mixture in pot. (Do not drain any cans of their liquid.) Stir to combine. 4) Let soup simmer over medium heat until heated all the way through. Add juice of 1 lime and season with salt to taste before serving. Serve with tortilla strips or chips. 5) Store leftovers in the refrigerator in an airtight container for up to 5 days. 6) Let the soup cool completely and then store in a freezer-safe sealed container in the refrigerator first until it's cold and then in the freezer for up to 3 months. 7) Defrost in the refrigerator overnight before reheating and enjoying it. 8) So, *get your soup on year-round* and save yourself a trip through

the drive-thru with this yummy chicken tortilla soup! 9) Enjoy!

BOBBY'S BACON AND BRUSSELS SPROUTS
From Paula Deen's website

INGREDIENTS:
6 slices bacon
1-1/2 pounds trimmed and quartered Brussels sprouts
1 pinch Kosher salt to taste
1 pinch black pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS:
Add sliced bacon to a large non-stick skillet over medium high heat. When the fat has begun to render, toss in Brussels sprouts and sauté until crisp, about 6 minutes. Season the Brussels sprouts to taste with salt and pepper.

AMISH MAGIC CAKE
Recipe from *Paths of Sunshine*

CAKE:
1 cup quick cooking oatmeal
1/2 cup butter
1-1/2 cups boiling water
1 cup white sugar
1 cup brown sugar
1-1/2 cups flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 eggs

In large mixing bowl, combine oatmeal, butter, and boiling water. Mix well, and let cool. When cool, add rest of ingredients; mix well, and pour into a 13- x 9-inch greased pan and bake at 350 degrees for 35 to 40 minutes.

TOPPING:
1/2 cup butter
1 cup brown sugar
1 cup coconut
1 cup chopped nuts
1 teaspoon vanilla

In saucepan, bring butter and brown sugar to a boil. Add coconut, nuts, and vanilla. Pour topping on cake while cake is hot. Place under broiler until lightly brown or until bubbly.

FLORIDA against such articles for labor, services, skill or material expended upon a storage furnished for such articles at the request of the following designated persons, unless such articles are redeemed within thirty days of the publication of this notice.
Name: HECTOR ANTONIO CAMACHO JOVET & ASHLEY MARIE PEREZ MORENO
Name: WALKESKA SALAS HERNANDEZ
Name: VENTURE HOLDINGS AHP LLC
Description: VIN: WHC024492GAA & WHC024492GAB
Year: 2019
Make: Clayton
Size: 24 x 48
Lien: \$3,850.50
January 16, 23, 2026

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE
PERSONAL PROPERTY OF THE FOLLOWING TENANTS WILL BE SOLD FOR CASH TO SATISFY RENTAL LIENS IN ACCORDANCE WITH FLORIDA STATUTES, SELF STORAGE FACILITY ACT, SECTIONS 83.806 AND 83.807. CONTENTS MAY INCLUDE KITCHEN, HOUSEHOLD ITEMS, BEDDING, TOYS, GAMES, BOXES, BARRELS, PACKED, CARTONS, FURNITURE, TRUCKS, CARS, ETC. THERE IS NO TITLE FOR VEHICLES SOLD AT LIEN SALE. VEHICLES SOLD 'AS IS' AND FOR PARTS ONLY. OWNERS RESERVE THE RIGHT TO BID ON UNITS. LIEN SALE TO BE HELD ONLINE ENDING **TUESDAY February 3rd 2026** AT THE TIMES INDICATED BELOW. VIEWING AND BIDDING WILL ONLY BE AVAILABLE ONLINE AT www.storage-treasures.com BEGINNING 5 DAYS PRIOR TO THE SCHEDULED SALE DATE AND TIME! ALSO VISIT www.personal-ministorage.com/orlando-fl-storage-units/ FOR MORE INFO.
PERSONAL MINI STORAGE APOPKA- 1365 E SEMORAN BLVD., APOPKA, FL 32703-AT 10:30 AM : UNITS:
#306-Khalilah Hammond;
#311-Kendra Moore;
#828-Richard Adams;
#908-Kendra Moore;
#1029-Kendra Moore
1973 Chevrolet Caprice 1L47H3D243752;
#1105-Ramon Vargas;
#1231-Joseph Nelson;
#1415-Megan Ann Montagano;

#1547-Abram Martinez
January 16, 23, 2026
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 18TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN AND FOR SEMINOLE COUNTY, FLORIDA
Case No.: 2020-DR-002985-O
Division: Blanca Azucena Lara Salazar
Petitioner and Respondent: Fernando Villaseñor,
Respondent.
NOTICE OF ACTION FOR SUPPLEMENTAL PETITION TO MODIFY TO: (name of Respondent) Blanca Azucena Lara Salazar
Respondent's last known address) N/A
YOU ARE NOTIFIED that an action for Dissolution of Marriage with a minor child has been filed against you and that you are required to serve a copy of your written defenses, if any, to it on Fernando Villaseñor, whose address is 392 W Welch Rd Apopka FL 32712, on or before 2/10/2026, and file the original with the clerk of this Court at 101 Eslinger Way Sanford FL 32773, before service on Petitioner or immediately thereafter. If you fail to do so, a default may be entered against you for the relief demanded in the petition.
(If applicable, insert the legal description of real property, a specific description of personal property, and the name of the county in Florida where the property is located)
N/A
Copies of all court documents in this case, including orders, are available at the Clerk of the Circuit Court's office. You may review these documents upon request.
You must keep the Clerk of the Circuit Court's office notified of your current address. (You may file Designation of Current Mailing and E-Mail Address, Florida Supreme Court Approved Family Law Form 12.915.) Future papers in this lawsuit will be mailed or e-mailed to the addresses on record at the clerk's office.
WARNING: Rule 12.285, Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure, requires certain automatic disclosure of documents and information. Failure to comply can result in sanctions, including dismissal or striking of pleadings.
Dated: December 12, 2025.
GRANT MALOY
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT
COMPTROLLER
By: /s/ Amanda Hoffman

(Deputy Clerk)
January 16, 23, 30, February 6, 2026
Notice Under Fictitious Name Law Pursuant to Section 865.09, Florida Statutes
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the undersigned, desiring to engage in business under the fictitious name of **REALTY ONE GROUP INSPIRATION** located at 7208 W SAND LAKE ROAD STE 103, in the County of ORANGE, in the City of ORLANDO Florida 32819, intends to register the above said name with the Division of Corporations of the Florida Department of State, Tallahassee, Florida. Dated at ORLANDO, Florida, this 16th day of JANUARY, 2026.
INSPIRATION PARTNERS, LLC
January 23, 2026

Notice Under Fictitious Name Law Pursuant to Section 865.09, Florida Statutes
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the undersigned, desiring to engage in business under the fictitious name of **Fifth Dimension Astrology** located at 1068 Cottonwood Ct, in the County of Orange in the City of Apopka, Florida 32712, intends to register the above said name with the Division of Corporations of the Florida Department of State, Tallahassee, Florida. Dated at Apopka, Florida, this 20th day of January, 2026.
Susan Luke and Angelo Bodoy
January 23, 2026

NOTICE UNDER FICTITIOUS NAME LAW PURSUANT TO SECTION 865.09 FLORIDA STATUTES
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the undersigned, desiring to engage in business under the Fictitious Name of **Misty Blue Publications**, with a mailing address of 1364 Seburn Rd, Apopka, FL 32703 and a principal office located in Orange County, intends to register the said name with the Florida Dept. of State, Division of Corporations, Tallahassee, Florida. Owner: Sabrina Hart-Carter
January 23, 2026

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE NINTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR ORANGE COUNTY, FLORIDA
CASE NO. 2026-CA-000131-O

DIV NO.: 34 MARRIOTT RESORTS HOSPITALITY CORPORATION, a South Carolina Corporation, Management Agent on behalf of MVC TRUST CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION, INC., a Florida not for profit corporation, and All Owners as Agent, Plaintiff, vs. WILLIAM H. BLAND, AS INDIVIDUAL, et. al., Defendants.
NOTICE OF ACTION BY PUBLICATION AS TO COUNT VII
TO THE FOLLOWING DEFENDANT WHOSE RESIDENCE IS UNKNOWN: **TO: MICHAEL W. WELDON, DECEASED**
4769 MAYBANK AVE LAKEWOOD, CA 90712-3345
The above named Defendant is believed to be dead and, if dead, the unknown spouses, heirs, devisees, grantees, assignees, lienors, creditors, trustees, or other claimants, by, through under or against said Defendant and all parties having or claiming to have any right, title or interest in the property described below.
YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED of the institution of the above-styled foreclosure proceedings by the Plaintiff, MARRIOTT RESORTS HOSPITALITY CORPORATION, upon the filing of a complaint to foreclose for other relief relative to the following described property:
COUNT VII
16 Interests (numbered for administrative purposes: R79045 & R79046 & R79047 & R79048 & R79049 & R79050 & R79051 & R79052 & R79101 & R79102 & R79103 & R79104 & R79105 & R79106 & R79107 & R79108) in the MVC Trust ("Trust") evidenced for administrative, assessment and ownership purposes by 4000 Points (250 Points for each Interest), which Trust was created pursuant to and further described in that certain MVC Trust Agreement dated March 11, 2010, executed by and among First American Trust, FSB, a federal savings bank, solely as trustee of Land Trust No. 1082-0300-00, (a.k.a MVC Trust), Marriott Ownership Resorts, Inc., a Delaware corporation, and MVC Trust Owners Association, Inc., a Florida corporation not-for-profit, as such agreement may be amended and supplemented from time to time ("Trust Agreement"), a memorandum of which is recorded in Official Records Book 10015, page 4176, Public Records of Orange County, Florida ("Trust Memorandum").

The Interests shall have a Use Year Commencement Date of September 01, 2017 (subject to Section 3.5 of the Trust Agreement).
AND you are required to serve a copy of your written defenses, if any to the complaint, upon EDWARD M. FITZGERALD, ESQUIRE, Holland & Knight LLP, 200 S. Orange Avenue, Suite 2600, Orlando, Florida 32801, attorneys for the Plaintiff, on or before thirty (30) days from the first day of publication herein and file the original with the Clerk of the above-styled Court either before service on Plaintiff's attorney or immediately thereafter, otherwise a default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint.
DATED on this 12th day of January, 2026.
Tiffany Moore Russell
Clerk of the Court
BY: /S/ Nancy García
As Deputy Clerk
CIRCUIT COURT SEAL
CONFORMED COPY TO:
EDWARD M. FITZGERALD
HOLLAND & KNIGHT, LLP
200 S. Orange Avenue, Suite 2600
Orlando, Florida 32801
Ph. (407) 244-5198
ATTORNEYS FOR PLAINTIFF
If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Please contact Court Administration at 425 North Orange Avenue, Suite 2130, Orlando, Florida 32801, telephone (407) 836-2303 within two (2) working days of your receipt of this document. If hearing or voice impaired, call 1-800-955-8771.
THIS DOCUMENT IS AN ATTEMPT TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE.
HK#129710.0163/MP27
January 23, 30, 2026
Public Notice
is hereby given that **Johnsons Wrecker Service**, will sell at PUBLIC AUCTION, free of all prior liens, the following vehicle(s)/ vessel(s) that remain unclaimed in storage, with charges unpaid, pursuant to Florida Statutes, Sec 713.78, to the highest bidder. The sale will be held at 580 Wilmer Avenue, Orlando, FL 32808.
The following vehicle(s) will be sold on 02/05/2026 at 0700.
Year Make VIN
2003 Ford

1FMUR15W23LB45490
2020 Jeep
1C4RJFAG6LC271568
2016 Land Rover
SALGS2EF9GA295694
2020 Jeep
1C4HJXDN4LW204705
2019 Volvo
4V4NC9EH6KN208099
2003 Chrysler
2C8GP44363R108220
2015 BMW
WBA5A5C52FD523770
2000 GMC
1GDG6H1B7YJ907258
2006 Ford
1FMEU73E86UB64801
2020 Kia
3KPA24AD2LE329155
2016 Chevrolet
2G1WB5E3XG1104362
2024 ZHILONG
HZ27BCN56R1000641
2010 Toyota
2T1BU4EE0AC531196
pride
X0216024149FV0
2006 Infiniti
JNKCVC54E36M701777
2010 Mazda
JM1BL1SFXA1212973
2001 Suzuki
JS1GR7HA212104676
2009 Toyota
JTDBL40E799070073
2002 Chrysler
2C8GP64L52R706860
2010 Ford
3FAHP0JG5AR288454
2010 Chevrolet
3GNBAADB3AS514284
2001 Toyota
4T1BG22K71U775609
2006 Honda
5FNRL38826B092622
2004 Buick
3G5DA03E34S542771
2002 Toyota
JTDDBT123520213347
Terms of the sale are CASH. No checks will be accepted. Seller reserves the right to final bid. ALL SALES ARE FINAL. No refunds will be made. Vehicle(s)/ vessel(s) are sold 'AS IS', 'WHERE IS', with no guarantees, either expressed or implied.
January 23, 2026

The Apopka Chief

 A MAINSTREET DAILY NEWS PUBLICATION

ENTER TO WIN TICKETS TO

ORLANDO

WHISKEY

FESTIVAL

BECOME A MEMBER: WIN TICKETS TO THE WHISKEY

FESTIVAL ON FEB. 6!





CLASSIFIEDS

CLASSIFIED DEADLINE: MONDAY 5 P.M.
classifieds@theapokkachief.com

Call 407-886-2777
Fax 407-889-4121

21. HEALTH AND NUTRITION

HEALTH CARE FOR entire family: Pediatrics, Family, Internal, OB/GYN, Dental and Pharmacy. www.chcfl.org. Community Health Centers throughout Central Florida. 225 E 7th Street, Apopka. 407-905-8827.
JT 0116-0206 TFN 21

61. LARGE APPLIANCES

APOPKA APPLIANCE offers in home service on washers, dryers, stoves, refrigerators, dishwashers installed. \$50 off service calls with installation. All help vaccinated for virus. Be safe! Free haul away (no matter where you bought your new one). Used appliances available. Service call \$39.99 with repairs. 407-886-2255 or 407-497-7458
CC 1016-0206 APO 61

Advertise Your Business Here!
Use our online form:
www.theapokkachief.com
or call
(407) 886-2777

70. MERCHANDISE MISC.

TRAILER PARTS FOR sale. Largest stocking dealer in NW Orange County (Apopka). 407-293-5788. www.surplus-steel.com.
B 0109-0130 SUR 70

OVER 400 LP ALBUMS for sale. \$400 OBO. You pick up! 407-399-6359
CA 0123-0213 BLA

81. AUTOS FOR SALE

USED CARS. NEW cars. Low upfront pricing. No dealer fees. 407-972-1678. Mullinaxfordfl.com
JT 1226-0116 MUL 81

ADVERTISE YOUR GARAGE/YARD SALES IN "CLIP 'n SAVE" 407-886-2777

First 15 words \$12, each
additional word \$.50 each.

130. REAL ESTATE

5 ACRE PLOT: 541 E. Osceola Rd., \$250k "no Realtors" 407-682-7898 leave message, financing available.
B 0109-0130 IRV 131

133. HOMES FOR SALE

BUYING, SELLING, rentals or property management. We're your friend in the business. Rogers & Rogers Realty. 407-880-8888.
CC 0123-0213 ROG 133

136. MOBILE HOMES / RV'S FOR SALE

DOUBLE WIDE MOBILE 549 Hawkins Cir., Apopka, 3bd/2ba, 1400 sq. ft., Valencia Estate 55+, remodeled floors, close to bus line & shopping. \$35,000 or best offer. 407-808-4499
CC 0102-0123 KEL 136

Special 3/4: Pay for 3 weeks get the 4th week free.

140. HOMES / DUPLEXES FOR RENT

TWO STORY HOUSE 3BD/2.5BA. 30527 Brae Burn St., Sorrento, Barbara DeLoach, Black Tie Realty. 321-229-5968
CC1226-0116 DEL 140

141. MOBILE HOMES FOR RENT

2BD/2BA MOBILE HOME, with 2 porches, Oak Springs Community, Sorrento. \$1,500 monthly, first/last/security, background check, private parking. 321-230-1221
CC 0102-0123 PAS 141

142. ROOMS FOR RENT

SWEENEY'S ROOMS Cleanest. Quietest. WIFI, Internet. Multiple locations. Call Dwayne 321-271-6773. sweeneysrooms4rent.com
CC 0116-0206 JAC 142

GOOD WEEKEND FOR A YARD SALE! IT MIGHT BE PARTLY CLOUDY

Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. I Thessalonians 5:15v

142. ROOMS FOR RENT

Roommate wanted: furnished room. \$700 monthly. Non-smoker. Apopka/Mt. Dora line, private bath, senior community. Applicant 45+
407-747-4410
CC 0109-0130 MAR 142

ROOMS FOR RENT: ZELLWOOD area, weekly rentals available. 407-435-1792
CC 0116-0206 GRA 142

Tell Them You Saw It In The Classifieds



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Service Advisors
Service Valet
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Full-time and part-time opportunities available in Orlando, Winter Park, Maitland, and Sanford.

FLORIDA STATEWIDE

STATEWIDE CLASSIFIED ADS FOR WEEK OF: 01/19/2026-01/25/2026

1. Home Improvement/Service
PROTECT YOUR HOME from pests safely and affordably. Roaches, Bed Bugs, Rodent, Termite, Spiders and other pests. Locally owned and affordable. Call for a quote or inspection today 1-833-542-1732 Have zip code of property ready when calling!

2. Miscellaneous
Donate your vehicle to help find missing children and prevent abduction. Fast free pickup, running or not, 24 hr response. No emission test required, maximum tax deduction. Support Find

the Children, call: 1-833-546-7050.

3. Medical
ATTENTION OXYGEN THERAPY USERS! Discover Oxygen Therapy That Moves with You with Inogen Portable Oxygen Concentrators. FREE information kit. Call 1-833-661-3729

4. Medical
Attention: VIAGRA and CIALIS USERS! A cheaper alternative to high drugstore prices! 50 Pill Special - Only \$99! 100% guaranteed. CALL NOW: 1-877-349-1243

5. Medical
STOP OVERPAYING FOR HEALTH INSURANCE! Reduce premiums and out-of-pocket costs while getting the coverage you need! Call now for a competitive

free quote. 1-877-351-3442. Plus... Income based government subsidies are available for those that qualify!

6. Home Improvement/Service
BATH & SHOWER UPDATES in as little as ONE DAY! Affordable prices - No payments for 18 months! Lifetime warranty & professional installs. Senior & Military Discounts available. Call: 1-833-754-2465

7. Wanted to Buy
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