

Christmas Eve

The Calvary Church of the Nazarene will hold its Christmas Eve service featuring the church's new worship leader. See page 7A.



Sports

Apopka Girls wrestling wins 2023 Girls Grappler Classic See page 1B.



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Photos by Charlotte White

The community gathered at the Edgewood-Greenwood Cemetery on Saturday, December 16, for the annual Wreaths Across America Day ceremony.

City defies bad weather to lay wreaths on vets' graves



Troy Perez of the VFW Post 10147 speaks at Wreaths Across America ceremony.

Defying the inclement weather, the community held its Wreaths Across America Day on Saturday, December 16, at the Edgewood-Greenwood Cemetery. There, community members laid wreaths on veterans' graves.

Loretta Forlaw organized the event.

This year's National Wreaths Across America Day took place at more than 4,200 participating locations across the country including Arlington National Cemetery, more than 500 above last year's total,

according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

"National Wreaths Across America Day is a meaningful event that takes place each December across the country. Wreaths Across America's mission is to remember the fallen, honor those who serve and teach the next generation the value of freedom. It's a year-long mission that bring together communities and families all over the country," the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reports.

City Council talks next steps in annexation topic, questions possible survey

By Teresa Sargeant
Apopka Chief Staff

After debating what the next step would be in moving the annexation of South Apopka forward, the Council decided to come up with questions to put on a survey and submit to residents to get their opinion on annexing South Apopka.

During the council report at the December 6 City Council meeting, Commissioner Alexander H. Smith brought up the subject of annexation, inquiring about the Council's final decision on how to proceed.

Mayor Nelson said he had been ready to do what the other commissioners wanted.

"My interest is still the annexation, and I think it was asked as to how far we were talking about what area," Smith said in response. "I mentioned before that I think we should go all the way to McCormick Road since we already have city limits on McCormick Road to go to that and just fill in all that area. That's my point of view."

The currently proposed annexation of unincorporated South Apopka includes the southernmost street of Keene Road.

Commissioner Kyle Becker said that he had said "ad nauseum" about what he believed the next steps should be, but that

an ordinance should get drafted and put up for a council vote. However, he believed that the annexation is going to fail because the city hasn't received feedback from people who would be impacted by the annexation.

"The response that I'm receiving from residents and unincorporated Apopka is that this council doesn't want it, that we're just all talk. That's why it keeps fading away. They're saying that we don't want it. That's what the word is," Smith said.

Becker disagreed with Smith's statement.

"We've talked about this many, many times to say, 'Hey, we want to do what's right by the citizens of Apopka, regardless of whether or not they're unincorporated or city residents.'"

Becker added that he uses the word workshop loosely when discussing the community meetings about the annexation because of the presentation about the annexation cost for the city compared to anything else.

"There's accusations made by the community that we have ulterior motives in wanting to annex residents into our city," Becker said. "There's probably evidence of

See CITY Page 3A

Local gas district names new CEO

Lake Apopka Natural Gas District (LANGD) has appointed Brent Haywood, as the company's next chief executive officer and general manager, effective January 8, 2024.

Haywood comes to LANGD from Okaloosa Gas District, where he spent the last seven years as the company's vice president of operations. He will bring over 25 years of industry experience to his role as LANGD's sixth CEO/GM.

"I am looking forward to the opportunity to serve as LANGD's next CEO/GM, and I feel compelled that this is the right opportunity for me and my family," said Haywood.

"The utility business, to me, is about public service and the ability to contribute to the common good. I see myself as a 'servant leader' – I lead by ser-



Brent Haywood
... new CEO/general manager

vice, but I also lead by experience and energy," added Haywood. "Fostering innovation and growth, ensuring fiscal responsibility with our operations, and continuing to implement environmental and organizational programs that support our communities will

See CEO Page 5A



Photo by Ralo Flores

Local businesses, entrepreneurs, and community leaders were honored at the 2023 annual Apopka Chamber Business Awards luncheon. Pictured are the awards recipients including John Ricketson (r), *The Apopka Chief/The Planter* publisher, for Lifetime Achievement.

Chamber awards honors leaders, businesses at yearly event

By Teresa Sargeant
Apopka Chief Staff

Local businesses, entrepreneurs, and commu-

nity leaders were honored for their community service, contributions to the community, and accomplishments at the 2023

annual Apopka Chamber Business Awards.

The Apopka Area Chamber of Commerce conducted its annual

Apopka Chamber Business Awards on Monday, December 18, at the Apop-

See CHAMBER Page 11A

Apopka High SGA delivers gifts at Wheatley



The seniors of the Apopka High School's Student Government Association visited Phillis Wheatley Elementary on Tuesday, December 19, to deliver presents to all the pre-K and kindergarten students as part of Dewey and Daisy's Holiday Wish.

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FloridaPublicNotices.com



Apopka Event of the Week

Time to make New Year resolutions: A recent survey found that overall, 45 percent of respondents noted an improvement in mental health as one of their top New Year's resolutions, compared to 39 percent who said improved fitness, 37 percent who want to lose weight and 33 percent who cited improved diet. (Forbes Health)

Quotable

Many people may have never cracked open the pages of a Bible, but they know the story of Jesus in at least a superficial manner.

Editor shares his understanding about faithful belief in the Christmas season

Opinion

The Apopka Chief
A weekly newspaper founded in 1923

Publisher
John Ricketson

Consultant Emeritus
John Peery

Marketing Director
Jackie Trefcer

Reporters
Teresa Sargeant
Marshall Tempest, Neal Fisher

General Mgr Emeritus
Neoma Knox

Feb. 12, 1929 - Sept. 18, 2021

Our position

Believing in the reason
for the season takes faith

Editor's note: In honor of John Peery, who died this year on October 12, The Apopka Chief is running the following editorial written by him as it appeared in the newspaper's December 23, 2022, issue.

As we celebrate Christmas this holiday season, we always must remember that it is the birth of Jesus Christ, the savior of the world, that we should be observing.

Yes, it takes an enormous amount of faith to believe that a young Jewish woman who was a virgin could conceive. In fact, it does sound preposterous unless you believe that the Lord God is the one true God and that he is, indeed, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent.

As humans, we cannot truly relate to a spiritual being with all those qualities, so many of us decide that it cannot be possible – that God does not exist because we cannot comprehend how he can.

But, those same folks also believe that our Earth just sort of appeared as matter in the universe collided together and then life began – somehow – that eventually ended up with plants, animals, and people.

Seems like it takes a lot of faith to believe that as well.

Yes, it may be a bit of a stretch from a human perspective to think that God actually exists, but when you stop and think about how the Earth and life on Earth came to be, we're sure that believing in God is infinitely easier to do. Our daily walk here on Earth is enabled because of the daily existence of the sun, moon and stars for which not one of us here on Earth has any responsibility.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, certainly had to have a tremendous amount of faith as she was visited by Gabriel, an angel who told her that she would conceive a son through the Holy Spirit and that the son would be named Jesus. Gabriel also told Mary that he would be the Son of God, meaning he would have all the attributes of God.

After she was initially puzzled about Gabriel's words, Mary put her faith in God and realized that she was, indeed, highly favored, but also had the responsibility to not only give birth to, but raise the boy who would one day give his life for every person who ever existed, or would exist, so that they may have eternal life if they be-

lieved, trusted, and accepted him.

While the birth of Jesus and what it truly means is literally an eternal life-and-death matter for each one of us, it is also fine to enjoy the Christmas story on the superficial level that most all of us know about.

Many people may have never cracked open the pages of a Bible, but they know the story of Jesus in at least a superficial manner.

The following is from the very familiar passage of the Gospel of Luke, chapter 2, verses 1-12:

"In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Of course, there is much more to the Christmas story than these few verses. Each year we have been privileged to publish a Christmas section supported by local advertisers that tells of the birth of Jesus and what that birth means to each one of us should a choice be made to believe in His birth, death and resurrection – eternal life.

We wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and pray for each person to understand the true meaning of this miraculous holiday as we celebrate the birth of Jesus.



Leaders build strong neighborhoods

Corridor Chiefs of the Year

I have been writing about the primary importance of local government supporting neighborhoods. My office offers several support programs, such as Quarterly Meetings for training and social opportunity, the Corridor of the Year Contest – a chance to engage residents and build collaboration through beautification, and the Corridor Chief Program, a way to maintain streets.

I have also closely supported several organizations – *The People of Lockhart*, *The People of Wekiwa Springs*, and now a third

County Commissioner District 2



Christine Moore

group, *The People of Clarcona-Ocoee*. I would love to support a fourth group called *The People of Southern Apopka*. However, we have not enough consistent interest here to stand up a separate organization. I am hopeful that will come soon. I'm also considering combining the South-

ern and Northern sections of Apopka for cleaning up the Rock Springs/Park Ave corridor in 2024.

Nevertheless, the *Corridor Chief Program* is a vital part of the work of supporting neighborhoods. The corridor chiefs report infrastructure deficiencies to 311 and pick up trash on a regular basis. Infrastructure deficiencies include plugged drains, cracked sidewalks, burnt out streetlights, etc. I would like to share some stories of a few of these awesome and dedicated Corridor Chiefs.

Jean Ford, a mem-

See MOORE Page 4A

A high school is fined via 2021 fairness act

By David Beasley I
The Center Square contributor

Florida's education commissioner on Wednesday (December 15) praised a decision by the state's High School Athletic Association to fine the Broward County school system \$16,500 for allowing a boy to play on the girls volleyball team.

The student at Monarch High in Coconut Beach, professing to be transgender, should not have been allowed because of the 2021 Fairness in Women's Sports Act.

"Thanks to the leadership of Governor Ron DeSantis, Florida passed legislation to protect girls' sports and we will not toler-

ate any school that violates this law," Florida Education Commissioner Manny Diaz Jr. said in a statement. "We applaud the swift action taken by the Florida High School Athletic Association to ensure there are serious consequences for this illegal behavior."

A Florida LGBTQ group criticized the Athletic Association decision, WLRN reported.

"Student's lives and administrator's livelihoods were upended as a result of the DeSantis administration's focus on culture wars," Jennifer Solomon, Parents and Families Support Manager for Equality Florida, said at a news conference in Fort Lauderdale.

The law "specifies that

an athletic team or sport that is designated for females, women, or girls may not be open to students of the male sex, based on the student's biological sex listed on the student's official birth certificate at the time of birth."

DeSantis' office said in a news release after signing the bill. "The designation of separate sex-specific athletic teams or sports is necessary to promote equality of athletic opportunities, and the majority of Americans support this action."

The athletic association also ordered the principal and athletic director of Monarch to attend rules seminars, according to pub-

See ACT Page 4A

This Week In God's Word

"Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath,
but righteousness delivers from death."
Proverbs 11:4

Mema Says

Your day will go the way the corners of your mouth turn.

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Fathers must be more than just men, they must be responsible

The Bible says, in 1 Corinthians 13:11 "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

I believe some of we men have refused to put away childish things. We treat our responsibilities as requests. We act as if we have no purpose except for our own pleasures to be satisfied at the expense of everyone, or anyone else.

I am exhausted from hearing how a mother



Ike Hayden

with children, just barely old enough to be left alone, must be gone from the home most of the day. Working a job to make ends meet because the father has decided his needs

for pleasure are more important than the basic needs of the children he has produced.

Here we are at Christmas time again and different organizations are asking for Toys for Tots, donations for food, and many other needs. I really commend those charities for the work they do and all the accomplishments they fulfill because there is a real need, but I wonder how much more they could share with the truly needy if they did not have to supply the

things that fathers should provide.

I am old enough to remember a time when a man that would not take the responsibility of caring for his family was treated as an outcast and shunned by other men because he was considered a deadbeat, and a poor excuse of a man. It is no wonder many of our young men are considering trans gendering. They see a woman as a more capable person, willing to take on the challenges of doing what must be done to main-

tain a family.

Even our armed forces are suffering because of a lack of desire to be an active member of the protective services to provide safety for our nation. The United States of America has closed the doors on manhood, making men impotent through the "Great Society" ushered in by Lyndon B. Johnson.

That administration was willing to give families housing, food stamps, and monetary assistance if the home was fatherless.

Within a couple of years, we had an overabundance of fatherless homes, and single mothers seeking government handouts. No more need for a father in the home. Vote for the politician that promised more subsidies and guess who received the most votes.

Freeloading, lazy, doing nothing men only had to find a woman with kids who wanted her physical needs met and he could move in and live without

See HAYDEN Page 4A

City: 1984 was last time annexation referendum was on ballot

Continued from page 1A

all of that coming into play. That’s why I say we have to have a more, not an ‘us versus them’ kind of workshop where you have us up on the dais and everybody there. It has to be on their own terms. ... We haven’t done that at all.”

Commissioner Diane Velazquez said what she got from the annexation workshops was that unincorporated residents had concerns about the annexation’s financial impact on them, but the city couldn’t provide that to them.

Community Development Director Jim Hitt asked each of the City Council members to submit a few questions for the survey for him to compile into a survey, as well as if anybody from the public has different questions to be asked in the survey, they could be submitted, too.

Also, the maps for the targeted annexation, Hitt said there could be two maps incorporated into the survey: the one that was originally put together as part of the city workshops, and the other depicting the McCormick Road as the southernmost limitation.

Nesta said that the city should conduct an initial survey, invite a facilitator to conduct more community meetings, then do a follow-up survey to see if they city was able to educate the residents about the annexation.

“Because we have not provided enough education correctly to what this process looks like, what the cost looks like, anything like that,” Nesta said. “I’ve had more people tell me that this is a land grab from the city of Apopka. We’re going to code enforce, foreclosure and put multi-family out there. That’s what I’ve heard more than anything.”

Nesta suggested that the city has to budget for both the surveying process and for a potential annexation such as more first responders.

Smith said he agreed with doing a survey first, collect feedback, get a facilitator to lead group meetings and educate attendees about the annexation, then do a follow-up survey.

Hitt explained the city staff has never worked on an annexation of a huge area, but only subdivisions – “totally different,”

he said. Therefore, the discussion of South Apopka annexation might require an expert coming in to assist with speaking about the process.

“It might take a little bit more than just staff and council putting together a process that could or could not cover, like everybody’s saying, all the bases. It might end up being more of an expert coming in to do a proper way to approach this. Like we’re saying, we’re kind of flying off the cuff to do these,” Hitt said.

Because December 6 was the last City Council meeting of 2023, (the city canceled the regularly scheduled December 20 meeting) the City Council won’t decide on the survey questions until January 2024.

The year 1984 was the last time the city of Apopka and unincorporated Apopka held a vote to annex unincorporated South Apopka. The city of Apopka voted for the annexation, but the unincorporated side rejected the referendum. Both city and county residents must approve the ballot initiative for the annexation to take place.

The South Apopka an-

nexation topic heated up again during the 2022 municipal election cycle. Since then, the city held public workshops on the subject in late 2022 and early 2023.


Annexation area

The proposed annex-

ation boundary is 2,408 acres which also includes incorporated boundaries. The unincorporated area within the boundary contains 2,340 parcels with a total of 1,082 acres. Of the 2,340 unincorporated parcels, 2,185 are classified

as residential with a total of 714 acres. Of the 2,185 properties mapped as residential, 1,036 have a homestead exemption flag in the property appraiser data (47.4 percent).

See CITY Page 6A



Fri. December 22, 2023
thru
Sun. December 24, 2023

ANYONE BUT YOU (R)
11:40A; 2:20; 5:00; 7:40;
--10:30;
AQUAMAN AND THE LOST KINGDOM (PG-13) *11:20A;
*11:30A; 12:20; 2:40; 3:40;
6:00; 7:00; --9:20; --10:20;
MIGRATION (PG) *10:50A;
*11:00A; *11:20A; *11:30A;
1:30; 2:00; 4:00; 4:30; 6:30;
7:10; --9:00; --9:40;
WONKA (PG) 11:10A; 12:10;
1:50; 3:30; 4:40; 6:20; 7:20;
--9:10; --10:00
GODZILLA MINUS ONE (PG-13) 12:00; 3:20; 6:50; --9:50

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The Public Is Invited To

The Dickens Carolers in Concert

An a cappella quartet from The Dickens Carolers will provide a 50-minute Christmas carols concert at Graceworx Community Church.



11:30AM, SATURDAY, DEC. 23, 2023
Concert is free; no reservation required.

GRACEWORX COMMUNITY CHURCH
(Which meets in the facilities of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church)
9913 BEAR LAKE ROAD, APOPKA, FL 32703
For more details, call 321-228-4599.
Photo courtesy of The Dickens Carolers.

Everybody has an opinion. Why not share yours?

Send, bring or email your signed letters of approximately 250 words to the Editor,

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Community support sets Miss Apopka pageant apart

Dear Editor:

On behalf of the Miss Apopka Scholarship Competition Committee, we would like to thank our family at *The Apopka Chief* and *The Planter* for their exceptional coverage of our pageant held on December 2, 2023.

The Miss Apopka Competition, one of 16 preliminary competitions held throughout the state for Miss Florida, prides itself for garnering such strong support from the Apopka community. And it's that support that really sets us apart and makes our crown one of the most coveted.

From the moment our candidates step into the City Hall Council Chamber for their private interview, to viewing the candidate pictorial in *The Chief*, to taking the stage at Apopka High School, they feel that community support. It makes for such a special day for everyone involved.

Mr. Matthew Morphey with Apopka High School, along with his production team, Brooke Ripley, Tamairah Marsh, and Leilani Delgado, worked wonders making this one of our most dazzling productions to date. Their hospitality is unmatched and we thank them for sharing their

stage with us. At the end of the night, Reilly Cardella, was crowned Miss Apopka 2024, while Maci Miotto placed First Runner Up and Tori Leto placed Second Runner Up. Each took home an exquisite rose bouquet from Apopka Florist and over \$4,100 in scholarship money was awarded.

As a committee, we are often met with surprise when it is discovered that our Miss Apopka is not necessarily an Apopka resident. Though we most certainly welcome young women from Apopka to compete, we are most focused on the impact that

our titleholders make on our community. Since her coronation, Miss Cardella has helped welcome in the holiday season with the Foliage Sertoma Club of Apopka's annual Christmas Parade, the Apopka Police Department's Shop with Cop program, and Apopka Citizens Police Academy Alumni Association Christmas dinner. She is also looking to expand her Community Service Initia-

tive by working with local schools to send thanks to our local physicians and healing wishes and toys to those families impacted by childhood cancer. As a talented vocalist, Miss Cardella further plans to visit our local assisted living facilities to help spread good cheer throughout the coming year.

If you are interested in having Miss Cardella attend an event or if you are

a local family impacted by childhood cancer, please reach out to us at Miss-ApopkaBoard@gmail.com or message us on Facebook or Instagram.

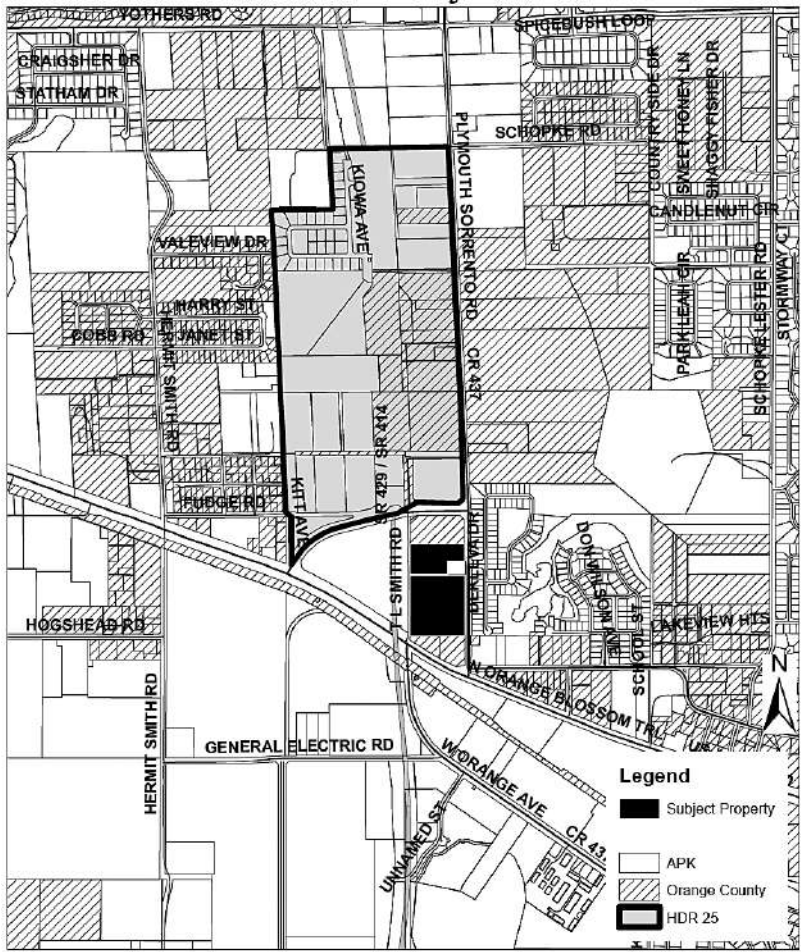
We welcome the opportunity to speak with you.

With gratitude,
Kristi Funke, Rosali Morris and the Miss Apopka Scholarship Competition Committee

CITY OF APOPKA PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE CHANGE OF ZONING

NOTICE is hereby given that **APPIAN ENGINEERING, LLC c/o LUKE CLASSON, P.E** has made an application, in accordance with Florida Statutes 163.3187(c) and the Apopka Code of Ordinances, Part III, Land Development Code, Article II, Section 2.4.7(B) to the City of Apopka Planning Commission, and City Council for a **REZONING OF PROPERTY**. This application relates to the following described property:

ORDINANCE NO. 3038
AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF APOPKA, FLORIDA, CHANGING THE ZONING FROM C-C (COMMUNITY COMMERCIAL) DISTRICT AND T (TRANSITIONAL) DISTRICT TO PD (PLANNED DEVELOPMENT) DISTRICT, FOR CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY GENERALLY LOCATED WEST OF PLYMOUTH SORRENTO ROAD, NORTH OF U.S. 441, AND EAST OF SR 429; COMPRISING 13.04 ACRES MORE OR LESS, AND OWNED BY GARY D CHARLTON LIVING TRUST, PEGGY G CHARLTON LIVING TRUST 1/2 INT AND GARY D CHARLTON LIVING TRUST 1/2 INT; PROVIDING FOR DIRECTIONS TO THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, SEVERABILITY, CONFLICTS, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.



Parcel Identification Number(s): 06-21-28-7172-08-050 and 06-21-28-7172-08-040
Contains: 13.04 +/- Acres

NOTICE is given that a public hearing for Ordinance No. 3038 will be held by the **City of Apopka City Council** at its regularly scheduled meeting in the City Council Chambers of the Apopka City Hall, 120 E. Main Street, Apopka, Florida on **Wednesday, January 3, 2024, at 1:30 pm or as soon thereafter** as possible.

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

December 22, 2023

Publish: The Apopka Chief

Apopka City Council
Community Development Department

175435

Everybody has an opinion. Why not share yours?

Send a letter to the Editor online www.theapokkachief.com

ACT: FDE is to answer questions

Continued from page 2A

lished reports.

The Broward County school system is the first in the state to be sanctioned under the law. The governor's office deferred questions on the sanctions to the Florida Department of Ed-

ucation.

Broward County Chief Communications and Legislative Affairs Officer John J. Sullivan released a statement saying the district had received a letter from the Florida High School Athletic Association that the matter is part of an ongoing

investigation.

According to published reports, the student has identified as female since before elementary school and has been using a girl's name since second grade, according to court documents in a case challenging Florida's law.

Hayden: Men should be providers

Continued from page 2A

having to put any effort into supporting a household.

Marriage has become meaningless. Why go to the trouble when all you are looking for is a non-committal relationship that you can walk away from if it gets tedious?

Oh, he might have to take trash out to the curb, but nothing too strenuous because he hurt his back, neck, leg, or whatever it took to convince his concubine he was not able to work a real job.

I have worked with men who, having true disabilities, considered it nothing more than a chal-

lenge they could face knowing their responsibilities for their commitments outweighed any hindrance a mere handicap provided. I have little sympathy for a person who claims to have a disability to escape working for a living.

Childish thinking leads to men who depend on others to provide their basic needs so they can enjoy the freedom from grown-up decisions to make someone else's life better, and to sink deeper into thinking their presence is what the world is willing to pay for.

It is time to put away childish things and start acting like men! My daughter-in-law, thinking of

her own father, (who has passed), posted something on Facebook that states, "A truly rich man is one whose children run into his arms when his hands are empty." How true!

Men, we need to be aware of our position in our Creator's world as providers, leaders, examples, FATHERS, and then fill that place that GOD has prepared for you and me.

Our Christmas prayer should be for our heavenly Father to give us the wisdom to see the childish things that need to be put out of the way, and then the fortitude to do it! Remember the "Reason for the Season!!!"

Moore: Leaders are appreciated

Continued from page 2A

ber of *The People of Wekiwa Springs*, not only works with the Mills family to clean up Thompson Road, she has also recruited the Apopka Running Club to adopt the western end of Votaw Road for quarterly clean-ups. Thank you, Jean Ford, for your leadership. Thompson and Votaw Roads have never looked better. They also have the best-looking sidewalks around.

Larry Branan, a strong member of *The People of Lockhart*, works very hard on Rose Ave. This street is vitally important to the vision of a rebuilt downtown Lockhart and hosting cyclists traversing from the West Orange Trail to the Wekiwa Trail. Larry not only picks up the trash but has recruited businesses and property owners to do so, as well. The amount of debris Larry has carted off the road is astounding. It would be nice if folks would simply keep trash in their cars and dispose of it once they reach their destination. Thank you, Larry Branan, for your dedication. Rose Ave has never

looked so good, and next year we will be painting a long stretch of fencing and adding roses for greater interest.

Sandy Miller, an engaged resident in Huntley Park off *Clarcona-Ocoee Road* has picked up literally, thousands of snipe signs with her friend Matteo Schulte. The North Pine Hills area suffers from event promoters defacing traffic utility boxes and fake tax preparers leaving signage all up and down Clarcona-Ocoee Road. This dynamic team led the way for the Clarcona-Ocoee Team to win this year's *Corridor of the Year Contest*. I must say, we still struggle with trash thrown on rights-of-way on an almost daily basis. However, all the engaged HOA Board Members are getting out to help pick up the trash and maintain the wonderful walls, entranceways, sidewalks, etc. – improvements wrought over 2023. Thank you, Sandy Miller, for your hard work.

Richard Lippert is our most comical and entertaining Corridor Chief. He represents *The People of Wekiwa Springs* and

services the north end of Wekiwa Springs Road. Richard took my place, for which I am extremely happy. He caught me out in front of my neighborhood and offered to replace me. That was my lucky day. I, however, then moved on to other streets and kept recruiting residents to assist. There is nothing worse than lawn debris left for weeks on the side of the road, rental moveouts filling the curb with unwanted property, and trash left by lazy citizens. I still do not understand why trash cannot be kept in a vehicle until reaching a destination. Richard picks it all up, weighs it, and faithfully calculates his annual amount to my office.

He is on his way to picking up **TWO TONS** of debris for 2023. I cannot thank you enough Mr. Lippert.

If you are a regular walker or cyclist, it is easy to bring along a trash bag and pick up trash.

If you would like to join my *Neighborhood Leader Group*, please contact my office at 407.836.5850 or District2@ocfl.net.

ALL ABOUT APOPKA

The Apopka Chief

Established 1923
(USPS 545-440)

The Apopka Chief is published every Friday and entered as Periodicals, postage paid at Apopka Post Office, under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. The Apopka Chief newspaper is published by Foliage Enterprises, Inc., every Friday at 400 North Park Avenue, Apopka, Fla., 32712-3417. An annual subscription is \$25 in Orange County and \$30 outside Orange County. Phone 407-886-2777. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Apopka Chief, P.O. Box 880, Apopka, Fla., 32704-0880.

The Apopka Chief is a consistent award-winning community weekly newspaper and a member of the Florida Press Association. The newspaper won the group's award as its best newspaper in 1982, 1987, and 1988, the only three-time winner. Letters to the editor are welcome, but must be signed and include a daytime telephone number, address, or email address for verification. Management reserves the right to edit letters.

www.theapokkachief.com, news@theapokkachief.com



City of Apopka Telephone Numbers

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Mayor's Office 407-703-1701
City Administrator 407-703-1649
City Clerk 407-703-1704
Community Devel. 407-703-1712
Code Enforcement 407-703-1738
Finance Dept. 407-703-1725
Fire (non-emerg.) 407-703-1756
Parks and Rec. Dept. 407-703-1741
Police Chief 407-703-1769
Police (non-emerg.) 407-703-1771
Job Line 407-703-1743
Solid Waste Collect. 407-703-1731
Street Maintenance 407-703-1731
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The city of Apopka was chartered in 1882. It is located at 28°30' north latitude and is 150 feet above sea level. Its population is about 48,000 and its total area is more than 30 sq. mi. **www.apopka.net**

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County Commission 407-836-7350
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Clerk of the Court 407-836-2065
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All other departments 407-836-3111
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Marco Rubio (Rep.) 407-254-2573
U.S. Representative
Daniel Webster (Dist. 11) 352-241-9220
State Representatives
Doug Bankson 407-476-6787
Carolina Amesty (Dist. 45) unknown
State Senators
Geraldine Thompson (Dist. 11) 407-297-2045
Orange County Commissioner
Christine Moore 407-836-7350
Orange County Public Schools
Pupil assignment 407-317-3233
Bus routes 407-317-3800
Superintendent 407-317-3200
School Board 407-317-3200
Miscellaneous
The Apopka Chief 407-886-2777
Museum of the Apopkians 407-703-1707
Chamber of Commerce 407-886-1441

CEO: Haywood will succeed Davis, who is retiring

Continued from page 1A

be key aspects of our vision for the future of the District.”

With Okaloosa Gas District, Haywood oversaw the day-to-day operations of the company’s natural gas network, including engineering design, construction, maintenance, facility upkeep and more. His leadership ensured the safe and reliable delivery of natural gas to over 50,000 customers on a daily basis.

Notably, Okaloosa Gas District and LANGD stand as the only two special districts established in Florida to serve as independent utilities owning and operating natural gas transmission and distribution systems.

“We feel very fortunate that we have somebody as qualified and well-experienced as Brent Haywood joining Lake Apopka Natural Gas District,” said LANGD Chairman Bill Arrowsmith. “He is well-qualified, has a wonderful résumé and has come up through this industry, and I


think he is a great fit to be LANGD’s next CEO.”

Haywood will succeed Samuel Davis, who has served as CEO/GM since 2008. Davis announced his plans to retire earlier this summer.

“I started working in the natural gas industry in 1973, and I’ve certainly enjoyed my time at Lake Apopka Natural Gas District,” said Davis. “I feel like I have accomplished everything I set out to do when I originally started as CEO 16 years ago, but I think it’s finally time for me to relax and enjoy retirement. I have 14 grandchildren, and I am looking forward to spending more time with all of them.”

The District achieved historic success under the direction of Davis, growing by more than 93 percent over the past decade to serve over 28,000 customers today. LANGD also received unprecedented recognition under his leadership, including its high-


See CEO Page 10A



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experience and equipment, especially when it comes to expensive cars. Improper towing methods and equipment can cause damage of property, if not personal injury.

BJ’s Towing has been providing towing, transport, and recovery services to the motoring public and businesses in the Central Florida area since 1978. They’ve established a reputation for unsurpassed customer service, which has made them the towing service of choice for individuals and businesses alike. Their business roster alone reads like a “who’s who” in the automotive industry. Just to name a few, their clients have included Collier Jaguar, National Imports, Mullinax Ford, J&K Automotive, Tuffy Auto Repair, A.O.K Tire, Sheeler Auto Repair, and Central Florida Auto Repair.

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local and regional basis, and to continuously strive for flexibility in servicing their customers’ needs in an expedient and cost-efficient manner.

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City: Annexation would put city in a \$2 million deficit

Continued from page 3A

The 2,185 built residential units and 387 vacant residential lots have a combined taxable value of \$213.5 million in taxes assessed for 2021. The residential parcels correspond

to 66 percent of the total acreage with 95 percent of the taxable value of the area, according to a chart shown during the annexation area presentation.

The commercial and industrial properties add up to approximately 84 acres,

of which only 7.6 percent is currently undeveloped — equivalent to nine properties comprising 6.4 acres. Together, the commercial and industrial properties in the proposed annexation area has a taxable value of approximately \$9 million, and \$131,000 in property taxes for 2021.

The proposed annexation is predominantly residential, with 2,185 units representing 66 percent of the annexation area, but 95 percent of the total taxable value. Commercial, indus-

trial, and agricultural areas add up to approximately 13 percent of the area but contribute to less than 5 percent of the taxable total, while parcels considered as “other uses comprise 21 percent of the land, with only 1 percent of the total taxable value.

If the annexation of South Apopka were to happen, the city would be sitting on a \$2 million deficit with a capital of about \$600,000 a year to pay back over time. Overall there would be about a

\$3.4 million operating budget that would be built into the city budget, but the area generates about half of that, or \$1.2 million, according to information from the city of Apopka website, Apopka.net, about the South Apopka annexation.

The area has a total of \$225,568,484 in taxable value, according to Bass. The county’s millage rate for fire and sheriff was 4.0480. the current Apopka millage rate is 4.1876, a difference of 0.1396 or \$31,489. The an-

nexed area would generate about \$944,591 in property tax, with an estimated sales tax increase of \$300,000, to equal \$1,244,591.

If the city went ahead with an election to ask voters about mass annexing unincorporated South Apopka, the city could hold a vote-by-mail election for an estimated \$12,080 or the vote-in-person option for about \$9,300, Orange County Supervisor of Elections Bill Cowles said at the June 7 Apopka City Council meeting.



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Altamonte Springs to ponder a new homelessness ordinance next month

By David Beasley
The Center Square

A recent experience with a homeless man has prompted an Orlando suburb to consider a new ordinance banning people from camping on public

property, including parks and highway rights of way.

“We had a variety of complaints about a specific individual who had set up an encampment on our sidewalks,” Altamonte Springs City Manager Frank Martz told *The*

Center Square. “It included a grill, a heavy workout bag, a bunch of pets in cages.”

The man refused to move.

“We didn’t have a tool to address that,” the city manager said. “Now we

do.”

The proposed ordinance, which will be up for approval next month, carries penalties of up to a \$500 fine and 60 days in jail.

See HOMELESS Page 10A

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Michael McCabe, the new worship leader for the Calvary Church of the Nazarene, will lead the Christmas Eve service.

New worship leader heads Christmas Eve service

The Calvary Church of the Nazarene will hold its Christmas Eve service featuring the church's new worship leader whose credentials include leading several orchestras including the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra.

Michael McCabe began as the Calvary Church's worship leader on August 13. Prior to this accept role, McCabe served as a member of the church's worship team for over 18 months.

McCabe holds a master of arts in music from the University of Central Florida, is the orchestra teacher for Lake Highland Preparatory School, and is a member of several orchestras, including the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra. McCabe also tours and performs with his band, The 91's.

Calvary Church of the Nazarene will take place Sunday, December 24, at 10 a.m. and will be filled with Christmas carols, plus performances by an 18-piece orchestra and Christmas choir will bring joy to this very special day!

The 5:30 p.m. Christmas Eve candlelight and communion service will

also feature Christmas carols, once again accompanied by an 18-piece orchestra, band and Christmas choir. There will be lots of hot chocolate and cider to enjoy, along with an abundance of Christmas goodies to share and snow for the kids.

Calvary Church of the Nazarene's address is 750 Roger Williams Road, Apopka.

Rotary donation



Chris DeClue (l), Rotary Club of Apopka, and U.S. Air Force Sgt. Ocasio of the Wekiva High School ROTC \$1,000 for Ocasio's help with organizing this year's Apopka Rotary Club Fall Family Festival.

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Officer injured in head-on car collision

An Apopka police officer, 22, and his passenger, a 12-year-old girl, are hospitalized in stable condition following a head-on collision with another vehicle, while the driver of the other vehicle is in critical condition.

On Thursday, December 14, at approximately 12:54 a.m., the police officer, en route to a treatment facility with the girl, was involved in a collision on State Road 436, west of Semoran Commerce Place.

According to Florida Highway Patrol, a 2012 Nissan Sentra was traveling eastbound on State Road 436 (Semoran Boulevard) east of Otter Lane in the inside lane. The marked Apopka Police Department patrol car was traveling westbound on State Road 436 (Semoran Boulevard) approaching Otter Lane in the inside lane. The Nissan Sentra failed to maintain its lane crossing the center line and collided head on with the patrol car.

The Apopka officer and passenger are currently in stable condition and remain hospitalized at AdventHealth Apopka for further testing. The driver of the other vehicle involved in the crash is in critical condition at Orlando Regional Medical Center.

The Apopka Police Department vehicle involved in the crash was not equipped with a dash camera, according to Apopka police. The Florida Highway Patrol is investigating

the crash.

“We are thankful that the injuries sustained by our officer and the passenger were not more severe. Despite the gravity of the situation, the potential outcomes could have been far more tragic. Our heartfelt thoughts and prayers go out to our officer, the passenger in the police vehicle, and the driver of the other involved vehicle during their recovery,” Apopka Police Chief Michael McKinley said in a statement.

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Obituaries

LAURETTE M. QUINLAN, 82, of Apopka, passed away on December 12, 2023. Mrs. Quinlan was born on March 8, 1941 in Red Lake Falls, Minnesota. She is survived by her loving husband, Joe Quinlan; children, Lisa Quinlan and Renee Wade; 1 granddaughter; and K9 companion; as well as many extended family members.

...

MANUEL RUIZ GUADALUPE, 83, of Apopka, passed away on December 12, 2023. Mr. Ruiz Guadalupe was born on November 10, 1940 in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico. He is survived by his loving wife, Celia Cruz; 3 children; 7 grandchildren; 18 great grandchildren; as well as 1 great-great grandchild.

...





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Operation Overflow

Pleasant View Baptist Church with Pastor Dr. Willie E. Caison, in partnership with Units Moving & Portable Storage presents Operation Overflow which is a **Christmas Toy Giveaway, on Friday, December 22, from 3-7 p.m.**

Free toys for the residents of Apopka and surrounding communities will be given away. at 1202 South Central Avenue, Apopka. For more information, call 407-383-3133 or email williamsann2011@gmail.com.

It Can Always Be Worse

On the day that I was receiving the news that this would indeed be my last day of employment my next-door neighbor was getting the news that she had a brain tumor. I did not know about her very serious diagnosis until the next day. In fact, I was doing my best to keep my spirits up, calling friends and family, and frankly feeling a bit sorry for myself when I ran into her out front of my house. When she told me the news, and she was incredibly positive about it, I realized immediately that being out of work is of very little concern in comparison to a serious health issue. The good news for her was that the tumor is not malignant and that surgery is an option, and

apparently a pretty good option in her case. Sometimes the news is really bad, and we are told that the tumor is malignant, or that there isn't anything that can be done for us, but even then there is always hope. Sometimes the hope is simply that they can keep us comfortable in our last days, or that we will have time to spend with family and friends. But ultimately, the great hope of Christians, and of people of almost every faith, is that a loving God is looking out for us, and waiting to welcome us to our eternal home when our sojourn here on earth is done.

– Christopher Simon

But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:31

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
Matthew 5:16

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It Can Always Be Worse

(See message above.)

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Jeremiah 29:11



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CEO: Davis encourages team to build leadership skills

Continued from page 5A

est-ever distinction – the American Public Gas Association (APGA) Gold System Overall Achievement Recognition (SOAR) Award – in 2020. Davis will officially retire at the end of March to allow time for Haywood to transition smoothly into the new role.

“I’m ready to get to work,” said Haywood. “I look forward to getting to know the people, the community, and what resources are available to see how we can continue growing and make [LANGD] even better than what it is today.”

“Brent was our top candidate, and I have all the confidence in the world that he’s going to keep moving the District forward while building on the culture and path that Sam Davis has built over the past 16 years,” added Arrowsmith.

A University of Tennessee alumnus and a licensed practicing engineer in four states, including Florida, Haywood has been involved in the utility sector for nearly three decades. Prior to Okaloosa Gas District, he served in various roles with Xcel Energy (2014-2016), CoServ (2012-2014) and Memphis Light, Gas and Water (1999-2012). He also served as vice president of

the Tennessee Gas Authority (2012) and was a member of the authority’s board of directors (2008-2012).

Actively involved in a number of industry associations, Haywood is a current member of the Florida Natural Gas Association’s Operations Committee and the American Gas Association’s Plastic Pipeline Data Committee.

Davis’s leadership views

When Davis was appointed as general manager/CEO of the Lake Apopka Natural Gas District in 2008, he set out to “change the culture of this culture organization,” he said.

“When I first got here, I changed the culture of this organization. I thought it needed change, so I changed the culture and had to get people used to that culture change. Over 16 years, I’ve already done that,” he said.

To do that he used a leadership guide – which he calls his bible – entitled “Encouraging the Heart: A leader’s Guide to Rewarding and Recognizing Others” by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner. The book

Using this book, Davis culled a leadership team and encourages team members to take the 32-hour course administered by



Samuel Davis Jr.
... retiring CEO/general manager

Florida State University’s Florida Center for Public Management that is based on the book and which uses the book as a required course material.

Davis created a leadership team from when he was general manager in Tallahassee and used the same approach when he moved to LANGD in Winter Garden.

“It’s a very good book that I got here over the last 16 years, I’ve had my leadership team take that course. Anybody that comes on my leadership team now has to take that course again. It’s a two-year course.”

Advice Davis said he would like to give his successor would be to follow “Encouraging the Heart.”

“I’m going to let my successor know that, that’s what I follow is my bible.

Just that I don’t know what kind of leadership courses he’s taken in his experience. I don’t know that. But if he hadn’t taken that course I would suggest that he followed that. This job is really a people’s job. You’ve got to be a people person to really have any success in this because it’s all about the employees.”

Davis has a bachelor of science in mechanical engineering from Southern University in Baton Rouge, La., and currently serves as treasurer of the University’s 1880 Foundation Board.

He formerly worked as a professional engineer in the state of Texas, and has Certified Public Management designation from the Florida Center for Public Management at Florida State University.

He began his career in the natural gas industry with Transcontinental Gas Pipeline Company in Houston, Texas, and then went on to work for United Gas Pipeline Company, Gulf Interstate Engineering Company, and Bechtel Corporation, all in Houston.

Davis moved to Florida in 1984, where he served for 24 years in Tallahassee as general manager of the city’s natural gas utility department.

Homeless: City helps fund a local shelter

Continued from page 6A

It would not be enforced if no shelter space is available in the county.

Atlamonte Springs, which has

a population of about 47,000, helps fund a local homeless shelter, Martz said.

The city tried to treat homeless people with dignity and respect, Martz said.

The man who prompted the proposed ordinance has since moved on but with passage of the ordinance, the city will be better equipped to handle future scenarios, said Martz.

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SUDOKU ANSWERS
PUZZLE CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 10B

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



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The Crossword Puzzle is found on page 10B

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Holiday recipes are for the perfect prime rib and old fashioned eggnog

Just in time, we have Perfect Prime Rib from Chef John at AllRecipes.com in this, our Christmas holiday edition of Kapers.



A lot of people save this very special (expensive) cut of beef for their Christmas celebration dinner. Chef John uses simple math to figure how long to roast your prime rib roast to perfection. However, you must have a full-sized, modern oven with a digital temperature setting that indicates when it is preheated. Older ovens with manual controls can vary greatly, and the doors may not have the proper insulation, so says Chef John. (But, I might just chance it with my older oven!)

In her book titled *Gullah Geechee Home Cooking*, Mrs. Emily Meggett says, “Frying Seafood can be a tricky thing. It’s a fast process, but the key is to add just enough oil, and make sure the oil is hot enough for the oysters to actually fry instead of just soaking up the cooking oil. If you have a deep-fry thermometer, clip it to the side of the skillet and heat the oil over medium heat until the thermometer registers 350 degrees Fahrenheit. If you don’t have a thermometer, just drop one oyster in on its side and cook: It should be golden brown on that side within one minute.”

Here is a recipe for sweet potatoes that you will quite possibly want to add to your family’s repertoire of “Favorite Christmas Dinner Dishes.” This comes from Goodhousekeeping’s food and recipes department. It’s called Rosemary-Pecan Mashed Sweet Potatoes. The GH writer says, “Mashed potatoes are tasty and all, but mashed sweet potatoes? That’s my carb go-to, every time! Add a little rosemary and sprinkle the whole shebang with roasted pecans, and watch your guests scrape the bowl clean!”

From the Stay at Home Chef, we have Old Fashioned Homemade Eggnog from Rachel Farnsworth. This is a real treat for me because I remember while celebrating at my Grannie’s house, she served a very thick and creamy eggnog. That eggnog is the “nonpareil” by which I judge all others. And, of course, they never measure up to Grannie’s eggnog. I sincerely hope Ms. Farnsworth’s eggnog will prove to

be its equal. I was way too young to realize I was missing a wonderful opportunity to ask for Grannie’s recipe. Now, I don’t have my Grannie to ask.

About a month ago, in our November 17 issue, we had instructions from *Southern Style* by Jane Bradley on how to process your canning jars in a water bath. My sister in South Carolina, who has been canning her garden produce for better than 60 years, told me last Sunday night that we had failed to caution the readers that they must have a Canning Jar Rack or similar device first placed in the pot to keep the jars elevated off the bottom. Otherwise, the jars are subject to breakage if they are in direct contact with the pot bottom because of extreme heat from the stove. She said, “I’d hate to think that people who have no experience in canning might have their jars break in the canning pot! People experienced in canning will know this already.”

CHEF JOHN’S PERFECT PRIME RIB Recipe from ALLRECIPES.COM

Chef John from AllRecipes.com says to have your prime rib out of the refrigerator for six hours at least to come up to room temperature. The math won’t work if the roast is cold. Multiply the weight of the prime rib by 5 minutes. If your prime rib roast weighs 4 pounds, multiply by 5, which equals 20 minutes; 5.5 pounds 27-1/2 minutes rounded up to 28 minutes. Have your oven preheated to 500 degrees before putting the meat in the oven.

Mix in a bowl, 1/4 cup room-temperature unsalted butter and herbs de Provence (rosemary, thyme, and other Mediterranean herbs) along with a tablespoon of black pepper.

Spread this softened, seasoned butter mixture all over the surface of the room-temperature roast; sprinkle kosher salt all over the buttered roast. Put your roast into the 500-degree oven for however many minutes you have figured, then turn off the oven after that many minutes. Leave the roast in the hot oven. DO NOT PEEK! Don’t even touch the oven door. Set your timer for two hours.

Leave the roast in the oven for those two hours to finish cooking. Then you can take it out of the oven. It will be warm for serving. You don’t have to let it sit for more time.

It will be a perfectly cooked medium-rare prime rib roast.

EMILY MEGGETT’S FRIED OYSTERS Recipe from Gullah Geechee Home Cooking by Emily Meggett

2 large eggs, beaten
1 tablespoon grated onion
1/3 cup self-rising flour
1 pint shucked oysters
2 cups vegetable oil
1 lemon, quartered
Cocktail sauce for serving

1) In a large mixing bowl, beat the eggs. Add the onion and flour, creating a batter. Set aside. 2) Drain the shucked oysters, and add them all at once to the batter. Mix the oysters and batter together, coating the oysters in the batter. 3) Pour the oil into a large cast-iron skillet. Heat the oil over high heat. There must be enough oil for the oysters to float, and the oil should be hot enough so the oysters don’t sit and soak up all the oil. Once you have enough hot oil, reduce the heat to medium. 4) In batches, spoon the oysters into the hot oil and cook for about 1 minute on each side, until golden brown.

Remove the fried oysters to a plate covered with a paper towel to drain. Serve the oysters with the lemon quarters and cocktail sauce.

ROSEMARY-PECAN MASHED SWEET POTATOES Recipe from Goodhousekeeping.com

3 pounds small sweet potatoes
1-1/2 cups pecans, broken into pieces
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/8 teaspoon cayenne
3 teaspoons roughly chopped fresh rosemary
3 tablespoons pure maple syrup
Kosher salt

1) Heat oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit. Prick sweet potatoes with fork and place on plate. Microwave on high for 6 minutes. Turn each potato over and cook until soft, 6 minutes more. Let stand until cool enough to handle. 2) Meanwhile, on rimmed baking sheet, toss pecans with oil, then Parmesan, cayenne, 2 teaspoons rosemary, and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Roast until fragrant, about 3 minutes. Toss with remaining teaspoon of rosemary. 3) Peel potatoes and mash with maple syrup and 1/2 teaspoon salt until smooth. Transfer to serving dish and top with pecans.

NOTE: Make-ahead tip: This dish can be refrigerated for up to two days in advance. To serve, microwave potatoes just until heated through. Warm pecans in 400-degree F oven. Transfer potatoes to serving dish and top with pecans.

RACHEL FARNSWORTH’S OLD FASHIONED HOMEMADE EGGNOG Recipe from the Stay at Home Chef by Rachel Farnsworth

2-1/2 cups milk
4 whole cinnamon sticks
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
7 egg yolks
3/4 cup white sugar
2 cups heavy cream or half and half for a light version
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg

1) Put the milk, cinnamon sticks, cloves, and 1/2 teaspoon vanilla into a large saucepan. Put it over the lowest heat setting on your stove for 5 minutes. 2) In a separate bowl, whisk together the egg yolks and sugar for 1 minute. 3) Turn the heat under the milk up to medium-high heat. Remove the cinnamon sticks. 4) Slowly whisk in about 1/4 of the hot milk into the egg/sugar mixture. Then pour all of the egg/sugar mixture back into the saucepan and whisk it all together. Put it over medium heat, whisking constantly, for 3 minutes. It will thicken a bit. 5) Pour the hot eggnog into a large bowl or beverage container and let cool at room temperature for 1 hour. Add cinnamon sticks back in (optional). 6) After 1 hour, stir in the heavy cream, 2 teaspoons vanilla, and nutmeg. Store in the fridge and allow to cool for at least 4 hours before serving.

Note: Ms. Farnsworth says that it can be made uncooked as it is traditionally with raw eggs. To keep it safe for everyone, she has written the recipe as cooked.

For an uncooked version, whisk egg yolks, sugar, cloves, and nutmeg in a large mixing bowl. Replace the cinnamon sticks with 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon and whisk in with the egg yolks. Slowly pour in milk, cream and vanilla extract, whisk until thoroughly combined. Alcohol can be added if you wish: dark rum, cognac, bourbon.

Chamber: Debate for Council Seats 3 and 4 will be January 16

Continued from page 1A

ka City Center Hilton Garden Inn.

John Ricketson, publisher of *The Apopka Chief/The Planter* newspapers, received the 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Chamber.

As the Apopka Chamber turns 110 years old and *The Apopka Chief* turns 100, Ricketson has invested so much in the community since he purchased the paper in 1979.

“It is indeed special to be able to stand before you, looking back on my career in Apopka, and I can’t tell you how much it means to see you guys here today. It is indeed a special community we live in. I’ll tell you we have a lot of positive things going on, a lot of things we’re going to enjoy that we don’t even know yet. So, I appreciate the award,” Ricketson said, addressing the crowd.

John Peery, late editor of both newspapers who died last October, was honored as a lifetime Chamber ambassador.

Award recipients

2022 Police Officer of the Year: Officer Brian Kennedy Jr.

2022 Paramedic of the Year: Ryan Hobbick

2023 Legacy 60 Years and Growing Award: Dewar Nurseries, a wholesale nursery founded by Alex Dewar in the 1960s that has grown to become the largest rose grower in the nation with five locations throughout Florida and one in California. Kimberly Dewar accepted the award

on her family’s behalf.

2023 Legacy 50 Years and Growing Award: HOPE CommUnity Center, which has been helping immigrants from multiple nations for over 50 years with educational programs and advocacy efforts. HOPE founder Sister Ann Kendrick accepted the award.

2023 Legacy 40 Years and Growing Award: SeaLife Aquarium, Ponds, Turtles and More has been part of the Apopka business landscape. Marie Court is the founder and her son Matthew Court runs SeaLife most days; however, Marie is still at the store. The business provides aquariums and water features for the rich, famous, restaurants, SeaWorld, and local families in Central Florida. Marie and Matthew Court received the award.

2023 Rising Star New Business: Calypso Coffee Bar, a family-owned and led business that Natasha and Julisa Lopez launched last July with their father Elder’s help. Coffee is in the family history, dating back to the 1800s with their great-great-grandfather in Guatemala and Elder owning a coffee farm in Guatemala. At Calypso, patrons can purchase coffee beans directly from coffee bean farmers. Julisa and Natasha Lopez accepted the award.

2023 Business to Watch Under 1 Year: Casillas Medical and Wellness Center and Bling Aesthetics aims to bring back a sense of old school medicine while investing in advanced equipment that

top medical and aesthetic practices use today. Javier Hernandez and Migdalys Salazar accepted the award.

2023 Business to Watch Under 5 Years: 2BWired, which opened its electrical business two years ago in Apopka and now has over 30 electricians and have more than doubled its revenue. Mike Sebben with 2BWired accepted the award.

2023 Small Business with Big Impact Award: Small Business Advocates of Central Florida, which was established in 2020 with the primary goal of advocating for small business in Central Florida through business development, outreach, program management and coordination with local decision makers. Among the organization’s efforts has been working with the Chamber and developed a partnership with Berglund Construction for the new Orlando Health Behavioral Hospital in Apopka. President Mina Robinson of the Small Business Advocates of Central Florida accepted the award.

2023 Chamber Business Champions of the Year: Synovus Bank for its support of other chamber businesses by attending ribbon cuttings, committee participation, open house, and so forth. Elza Clark of Synovus Bank Apopka accepted the award.

2023 Community Igniter of the Year: Propagate Social House for bringing the community together through events such as the Central Florida Plant Swap, Friday Night

Farmers Market, The Apopka Dog Mayor, Spring Fling, Secret Dinner Society and more. Propagate co-owner Ella Duke accepted the award.

2023 Entrepreneur of the Year: Dreysa Skinner, Chamber ambassador and owner of Desserts by Drey. Skinner accepted the award.

2023 Young Entrepreneur of the Year: Apopka High School Senior, Jaynee K. Phelps, lead singer for Driven. She auditioned in December 2022 and since has performed with the band for over 35 shows. She plans to attend Valencia College for her generals and transfer to University of Central Florida. Phelps accepted the award.

2023 Manufacturer of the Year: Coca-Cola Company. Natalie Carpio and Sydney Mukes accepted the award on the company’s behalf.

2023 AgriTourism Award: Long and Scott Farms, which Frank Scott Jr. and Billy Long founded in 1963 with only \$500 and 100 acres of land. Within 35 years, the farm expanded to 1,200 acres and hosts mazes, fresh market and a diner. Hayle Scott and Kirsten Rodriguez accepted the award.

2023 EcoTourism Award: King’s Landing, which draws people from around the world for physical memory building, and kayaking and canoeing experiences. Bob Loomis accepted the award.

2023 Community Champion of the Year: Chad Creech with 28 North Group Engel & Volkers

for his volunteering and support of the Chamber Board of Directors, Chamber members and the community. Creech accepted the award.

2023 Community Impact Business of the Year: Beef O’Brady’s Apopka and The Backroom Steakhouse for their community support by offering space for meetings, providing food for events or during emergencies, being the number one place to work for first-employed high school students year after year and more. Ed Conlan, owner of Beef O’Brady’s Apopka and The Backroom Steakhouse, accepted the award.

2023 Multicultural Business Partner of the Year Award: JP Morgan Chase Bank, which offers free workshops to local small businesses. Gene Martin of JP Morgan Chase Bank accepted the award.

2023 LGBTQ+ Business Ally & Partner Award: HOPE CommUnity Center for bringing LGBTQ+ members forward, standing alongside them, and strengthening their resolve to love and include them in the community. Sister Ann Kendrick, HOPE co-founder, and Debo Ofsowitz, HOPE development director, accepted the award.

2023 Nonprofit Service Impact Award: Michael’s Heart, which was established in 2019 with the objective to increase social skills in individuals with intellectual disabilities such as autism, Down syndrome and cerebral palsy by providing various

activities in the community. Jennifer Biggins, Michael’s Heart executive director, accepted the award.

Chamber/Community events

The New Year’s Eve Ball Drop at Hurricane Grill and Wings, 2209 E Semoran Blvd., Apopka, will take place on Sunday, December 31, 8 p.m.-midnight with Groove Slayers.

A New Year’s Eve event on Fifth Street at Propagate Social House, 40 E. Fifth Street, Apopka, will begin at 7 p.m.

Stephie’s Pub and Irish Eatery, located at 1061 W. Orange Blossom Trail, Apopka, is hosting a live New Year’s Eve event. Tickets can and must be purchased in advance. Visit stephiespub.com for more information.

The Apopka Area Chamber will host the Commissioners Debate on January 16, 2024, at 6 p.m. at the Apopka Community Center/VFW Building, 519 S. Central Ave., Apopka. Tickets may be purchased by visiting the Chamber website at apokkachamber.org.

Campaigning for City Council Seat 3 are Ryan Tucker, Darryl Richardson, and Nadia Anderson. Running for City Council Seat 4 are incumbent Nick Nesta, who is seeking his second term, and challenger Eric Mock.

Commissioner Kyle Becker, who currently occupies Seat 3, announced earlier this year that he won’t run for re-election.



Happy faces, blessing bags, sharing food, show holiday attitude



Ms. Colon was born and raised in Puerto Rico and has only been in the United States for 11 years. She graduated from Valencia College. She came to Dream lake as a Special Education Clerk. Her role is to help the staffing specialist. She tries to help the teachers that need help. Her position is very rewarding. She said, "It is rewarding because even though I am not a teacher, I get to help out with students and teachers." She helps the staff and is always lending a hand with anything they need. We always see Ms. Colon smiling and talking to people. She makes really great connections with people. She told me, "I try to be a good listener because making people feel heard makes them feel special." If someone was interested in her job and she gave



Dream Lake Elementary's Support Person of the Year is.... Shelia Colon.

them advice she would tell them, "Never give up no matter how hard the job is." What makes a good day for Ms. Colon is seeing the students happy and seeing them healthy. Dream Lake is happy to have Ms. Colon as a clerk that supports the staff and students.

By B. Wade

New from the upper elementary

Third grade
Miss Rispoli shared something successful about the start of the year, "My students are getting their grades up." Miss Rispoli's scholars are learning about text features, text structure, and compare and contrast in reading. They are reading about weather stories that are nonfiction. Her scholars are also learning about expository text and hooks

in writing. When a student does not understand the lesson, she will put them in a small group or sometimes go back to the lesson. Miss Rispoli's strategy is using their bodies. Movement helps students to learn better. Her biggest challenge is touches get her students to advocate for themselves. She wants parents to make time for their kids and communicate with their teachers. Miss Rispoli would like to give a shout out to her reading team for supporting her class.

By G. Mian and E. Rodriguez

Fourth grade
Mrs. Beamon went to FUMU for college. She became a teacher because she wanted to teach young minds. She has been teaching for 14 years. Mrs. Beamon's favorite subject is math because it makes you think. She loves the staff. They are welcoming to everyone. Her first few weeks she felt things ran smoothly and every day it feels different. In reading, Her scholars are learning about point of view and character's perspective. In math, they are learning equivalent fractions and modeling with base 10

blocks. She wants to thank everybody that helped her transition to Dream Lake. For free time, Mrs. Beamon enjoys spending time with her family, sleeping, and watching movies.

By C. Ratcliffe

Fifth grade
Mrs. Woods is a sweet teacher who teaches 5th grade at Dream Lake Elementary. She went to UCF college. Really cool! She became a teacher in 2012. Mrs. Woods has been teaching for 11 years and her favorite subject to teach is science. Mrs. Woods likes Dream Lake because of the students, she feels the first half of the year has been amazing! Mrs. Woods' scholars have been currently learning poetry and figurative language. In poetry, her class is focused on rhyme scheme, meter, and stanzas.

Recently Mrs. Woods' class has been learning about argumentative writing. Mrs. Woods appreciates Mrs. Zulich and Mrs. West for all the help they have given her. Mrs. Woods loves to play with her dogs and also hang out with her daughter.

By J. Occenat and L. Houvouras

Shout Outs
Mrs.Pugsley wants to shout out Jamal Morne for being a good example and Kamila Zavoiavana for being a hard worker. Mrs. Griffith would like to shout out Lilly Martinez for working very hard and Eber Mejia Oraco for always helping.

Mrs. Sims appreciates how hard Khloe McDuffie works, even when things are difficult. She perseveres.

Lena'jah would like to thank Mrs.Woods for teaching her all the things she needed to know.

Antonio wants to thank Mrs. Clemens for being nice.

Malani is thankful for Mrs. Glass and Mrs. Griffith for taking time out of their days to teach.

Kaymony is grateful to Jacob for helping him.

Jorge likes that Mrs. Zulich gives them time to talk before teaching begins.

Ayden appreciates that Zathan is such a great friend.

By G. Mian and D. Limage and J. Occenat

Dragon News is written and edited entirely by 5th graders at Dream Lake Elementary



Kindergarten
In the spirit of giving, Mrs. Ussrey and her Kindergarten class created blessing bags for the Next Step organization located at First Baptist Church Apopka. The students were able to fill 44 blessing bags with donations from their parents and Mrs. Ussrey. Each bag contained a pair of socks, gloves, shampoo, conditioner, and lotion. Some bags also contained deodorant, toothpaste, and a toothbrush. The students learned a great lesson about giving to those less fortunate.

3rd Grade
Third grade has completed our study of Native Americans and their Regions across North America.

ca. We are exploring plants and animals and how they are categorized. In math, we are working on all things multiplication! We are looking forward to a great 2024!

4th Grade
We have been busy in Fourth grade! In ELA, students have been learning about the different aspects of poetry while in math, they are wrapping up the unit on equivalent fractions. Force and Motion is our current science unit and students had the opportunity to build Lego snowmobiles and then through the Lego Spike app, they were able to sync the snowmobiles with their computer and then write code to make the snowmobiles move. They had a lot of fun!

P.E.
December is a fun month for all P.E. classes with Coach Bogle! This month, we are focusing on Health-Related Physical Fitness concepts. The



Mrs. Ussrey's kindergarten class donated 44 blessing bags for the Next Step organization.

students will be learning about muscular strength, endurance and flexibility. The Fourth and Fifth grade students will be learning how to develop an individual exercise plan. The Third-grade students will be working on their jumping skills for improving coordination and cardiovascular fitness. Kindergarten, First and Second grade

students will be learning the basics of exercising and why it is important for a healthy lifestyle. All grades will also be learning and performing Cardio Drumming routines during the last week before our Winter Break. This is going to be a great way to keep active while having fun.

ART

Mrs. Palmerini's Wolf Pup artists are so talented! The Kindergarten and 1st grade students have really shown their "stuff" in learning all about COLOR! They are masters of the color spectrum, primary and secondary colors. The 2nd and 3rd grade students have been amazing with their artist's studies. They can tell you a bunch

of fun things about Keith Haring and Gustav Klimt. The 4th and 5th grade artists have some real special skills when it comes to shading and showing light. Their Vincent van Gogh and Claude Monet artwork is evidence of their explorations in various mediums and techniques. We can't wait to see what 2024 holds for our awesome artists!



The holiday season is here. We sure did pack December with lots of fun events. Thank you everyone for your participation. The beginning of the year is a great time to check in with your child's teacher. We are at the halfway mark, so we want students to have work turned in completed with their best effort. I hope everyone enjoyed the magic of the season. We will see you on January 9th to start our 3rd Quarter. Lovell Up, Wildcats! Game on! Congratulations to the House of Majime for winning the Monthly House Challenge by bringing in the most can goods and non-perishable items. The month of December

House Challenge is called Power Up. Students will participate in a Penny Wars competition raising money for our local charity, Hope Community Center. Houses receive positive points for every penny or bill in their bucket. Students can sabotage other houses by placing silver coins in their buckets causing negative points. May the most generous house win!
All students will be taking the second FAST progress monitoring assessments the month of December. These assessments will show your child's progress this school year and will be used to make important educational decisions. Please ensure your child is in attendance and arrives to school on time. Students who show growth since the beginning of the year assessment will earn a special surprise!



A BIG THANK YOU to our Administration Team. Serving special treats is a fun way to start the Holiday Season!

School Calendar Days

- 2-week Winter Break: **Mon. Dec. 25-Fri., Jan. 5**
- Teacher Workday/ Student Holiday: **Mon., Jan 8**
- Begin Third Marking Period/ Begin Second Semester: **Tues., Jan 9**
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Schools and District Offices closed **Thurs., Jan. 15**
- Presidents' Day/ Teacher Non-Work Day. Schools closed/District Offices open **Mon. Feb. 19**
- End of Third Marking Period: **Thurs. Mar. 14**
- Teacher Workday/ Student Holiday: **Fri., Mar. 15**
- Spring Break Schools Closed and District Offices Open: **Mon-Fri., Mar. 18-22**