



Lady Lake named Tree City for 18th year LADY LAKE - For the 18th year, Lady Lake has been named a Tree City USA by the Arbor Day Foundation. To receive the prestigious designation, a Tree City must have a tree board or department, a tree care ordinance, a community forestry program with an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita and an Arbor Day observation and proclamation. According to Tree City USA, a commitment to trees helps lead to cooler temperatures, cleaner air, higher property values and healthier residents. "We are very proud of our Tree City USA designation," said Parks and Recreation Director Mike Burske. "We view this as a commitment to our community to continue to maintain our trees whenever possible, and work with residents to plant new trees for future generations." Together with community partners, Lady Lake plants trees annually at various locations during its Arbor Day celebration every April. Last year, the town planted several fruit trees with the hopes of one day growing a community orchard. Also

in 2023, the Town officially opened the new Snooky Park, a natural preserve with a 2,000-foot walking trail surrounded by a canopy of cedar, live oaks, water oaks and palm trees. It also features amenities such as picnic shelters, water fountains and restrooms. To further enhance the experience and promote interest in the trees, a recent Eagle Scout project identifies unique tree species in the park. The Town hosts a tree raffle annually, offering winners \$200 gift certificates to purchase trees at a local nursery. The Lady Lake Tree Raffle is made possible by the town's tree bank, which is funded by developers who are required to donate if they cannot meet the town's stringent tree code. The code requires developer to pay \$100 per caliper inch for trees removed that are over 36 inches in diameter, which adds up to a minimum of \$3,600 per tree. The Town currently has over \$200,000 in its tree fund to support future tree giveaways, plantings and major beautification projects.

## American "True Grit!"

By TomL

Many Americans have been known for their bravery, grit, pride, family, God and country. Most have a lot of grit meaning they face danger with resolution, take action and move on to the next challenge.

I remember when the movie "True Grit" came out starring John Wayne. In the movie John Wayne had a lot of grit. Here was an old Sheriff / Bounty Hunter, alcoholic that was a real True American. At the end of the movie he was on one side of a clearing and a number of bad guys were on the other side making fun of him. He was on his faithful horse, took the reins in his teeth and a gun in each hand and charge the group of bad guys. That is true Grit!

That is what we need, not necessarily a cowboy but a person of courage. Not

necessarily a goody goody but a bit of a rough who throws caution to the wind and does the right thing. We have someone who has some of those characteristics in the name of "Donald Trump". The Democrats are afraid of him because he will hold them accountable for the wrong things they have done. The Dictators around the world are also afraid of him because he will, no questions asked retaliate if we have been wronged. He will hit them harder then we got hit. If a Terrorist continuously keeps coming into view by killing our people or trying to kill our people "he will take them out!"

I think if there is a modern day True Grit, it would be Donald Trump. We need to gather up our American grit and with God at our side, get behind him and stand up for him



Director of Member Services, Janet Fraley with Executive Director, Leslie DiCesare and Board President Jeanne

Lazo enjoyed a starry night at the 2024 Annual Celebration Dinner & Board Installation. See page 8 & 9 for more.

and take him all the way into the White House, then trying to keep him alive! I'll bet once he is back in the White House we will all sleep better and if you make your personal stand you will feel better about yourself.

You ask where are we now and how could Trump fix our Border / Illegals problem. Our current administration think more of Illegal Aliens than they do our starving Americans and our homeless Veterans that live here. They just took a school away from our students and gave it to the aliens to keep them comfortable. There were three Presidents in the past that dealt with Illegals. "It is called Deportation."

President Hoover deported millions! President Truman deported two million during World War II. President Eisenhower deported thirteen Million Mexicans.

You ask why they could do it then and Biden can't, "They were men of Honor!"

Trump says let's be honest about this. They are after you and your tax money. If they control what you eat, what job you do, the car you drive, take all the children at age 15 into the military and indoctrinate them, we will no longer be a free society. In Cuba if a person does something the government does not like they shut the power off in that neighborhood and the people suffer, that is why they don't want gas stoves. If you have nothing but electricity they have you. It's called control of power grid. CONTROL of you!

We have many Warriors in this Country, we need a WARRIOR LEADER!

**Vote Trump!**

## Fentanyl Poisoning Pawn Star Son Dies

By TomLoury

Pawn Star Rick Harrison's son dies of Fentanyl poisoning. The recent death of Adam Harrison 39 shows us how wide spread this crisis is. We do not have a plan to stop the flow of drugs, we stop some but a lot gets across carried by Cargo ships and trucks, Terrorist, Illegals both are breaking the law. The Cartel's are inventing new way every day on how to get drugs into the United States. They send it by land, Sea or air. They fly a load into a rural wooded area and drop it. They dump the load if they are getting caught and then the question is do they chase the bad guy or do they chase the drugs so they don't have it to sell. I ask myself? Why are our people using drugs? Then how can they tell what is poison? We are living in a very depressing world right now. Much of it is cause by the greed of powerful people. We are caught in the middle, for instance we approve money for the border and they divert it to feeding and housing illegals. All I know it has to stop. You the voter have vote smarter, we need to elect someone that can make it stop! Someone with Grit!



Ocala Villages  
News



Erik Lehane

## THE GAITWAY GROUP



### For Grownups Only Santa, the Tooth Fairy

By Erik Lehane

I remember the day my world came crashing down. Johnny Picaro, my third grade bestie spilled the beans. Johnny had caught his old man placing his GI Joe with kung fu grip under the Christmas tree in the wee hours of the morning. Santa was a fraud and the Easter Bunny and Tooth fairy were his accomplices. What next... is Elvis really alive?

Years later I had a similar epiphany, this one more attuned to a sledgehammer smacking me upside the head. I held Betty almost to the same standards of Santa, albeit in a different context. As a physical therapist, one yearns for the perfect client—someone who can muster the strength to leg press 250 lbs., effortlessly palm the floor and gracefully navigate an obstacle course. At the prime age of 78, Betty was all that and more.

Betty's impending discharge was a mere formality. I would document a final assessment based on all the physical/cognitive attributes that an active senior should possess in order to live a safe, productive, high-quality life. As expected, she breezed through the preliminaries, her perm still as elegant as ever. Her final test was "The get up & Go," a gross evaluation of a hodgepodge of functional skills, where from a supine (lying on your back) position, one must then progress to a standing position.

As expected, Betty flawlessly rolled to her right (her dominant side), seamlessly transitioned to a quadruped position (on all fours) and propped a leg up, text book stuff. For the grand finale, Betty would drive off the the propped leg and stand. My pride swelled as my prized pupil drove her foot down into the mat and...

The look in her eyes has been etched into the deep archives of my mind forever. Shock, disbelief and anxiety all wrapped into one, the Santa is a fraud look! Betty dug, pushed and heaved but nothing, she could not budge. After two grueling minutes, her perm now a tangled mess of frizzle, I reluctantly helped her up. The was my Christmas tree moment.

I now refer to the years preceding Betty as BB (Before Betty) and the subsequent years as AB (after Betty). In the BB era, my practice revolved around "traditional" exercise — strength, mobility, stability, balance, and endurance, all deemed necessities for active seniors, right?

In the AB era, a single insight reshaped my entire scope of practice. With aging, we lose approximately 1% of muscle mass,

2–3% of strength, and a staggering 4–6% of power annually. Betty was strong but lacked power — the vital element for everyday tasks. Power enables seniors to climb stairs, get up from the floor, lift suitcases into overhead compartments, pick up grandchildren, hike hills, and stumble instead of falling. Power is our lifeline, ensuring safety, independence, and a high quality of life. Look no further than your local grocery for blatant examples of seniors that have lost the ability to exert power.

Science unequivocally asserts, that as we age, unless acted upon, we lose fast twitch muscle fibers at an alarming rate. Think fast twitch as the power houses. Slow twitch (think endurance) fibers are maintained and here is the kicker. If we are exercising inappropriately, focusing on non power producing exercises, we are in fact accelerating the process of fast twitch fiber atrophy (loss).

For my practice, this insight led to the evolution of Revolution Exercise 180 (REX 180) — fast twitch muscle fiber stimulation and growth under the banner of safety. The key lies in speed (fast twitch stimulation) within quality-based functional movement patterns. If you're pain-free with no medical contraindications, you can start today within the confines of your living room.

Here's a snapshot of the REX 180 approach:

- Chair Exercises: Sit and stand as quickly and safely as possible with quality movement for 10 repetitions. Progress to a lower chair or step stool, focusing on quality and speed.

- Lunges: Stand sideways to your kitchen counter, staggering your feet and holding onto the counter with one hand. Focus on quality as you lunge up and down, gradually increasing speed.

- Pushups: Face your kitchen counter, placing hands shoulder-width apart. Walk your feet back, raising onto your toes. Practice pushups with quality movement, gradually increasing speed.

- \*Remember, master the movement pattern before ramping up the speed

As for Betty — her perm remains a wave of phenomenon, and she can now get up and down without using her hands.

I've observed numerous energetic seniors with admirable intentions fall prey to common pitfalls in traditional exercise routines. Whether you find joy in traveling, hiking, golf, tennis, pickleball, cycling, or simply relishing playful moments with your grandchildren on the floor, it's crucial to move effectively and swiftly. Ensure that your "get up and go" doesn't get up and go.

I hope this resonates as a Christmas tree moment for you.

\*Erik Lehane, a dedicated physical therapist with expertise in preventive care, is the visionary founder behind The Gaitway Group. Through this venture, he empowers active seniors with the knowledge and tools to "add life to their years." For inquiries, contact Erik at [erik@eriklehane.com](mailto:erik@eriklehane.com).

## AI in Homebuying



### AI in Homebuying: Separating Fact from Fiction

(NAPSI)—The homebuying journey has undergone a radical transformation in the digital age. Long gone are the days of sifting through stacks of paperwork, replaced by a streamlined, tech-driven consumer experience. As part of this progression, artificial intelligence (AI) is being woven into the fabric of daily life and has the potential to have a massive effect on the path to homeownership, offering tools that make finding and purchasing a home easier than ever before.

#### How AI Changes Homebuying

AI has the power to streamline the mortgage process—often the most daunting part of homebuying. A 2023 report by LiveVox found that AI-driven customer experiences scored 20% higher in satisfaction than traditional human-led approaches. Companies such as Rocket Mortgage are now automating document collection, verifying information instantly and even showing loan officers the best mortgage products for their clients. This efficiency speeds up the process and increases confidence for consumers.

"AI is not just a technological advancement, it is a transformative force reshaping the homebuying landscape," said Brian Woodring, Chief Information Officer for Rocket Mortgage. "AI is the compass guiding us toward a future where homeownership is accessible and stress free for everyone."

Beyond the financing, remote home tours—powered by AI—can virtually transport shoppers to a prospective home, letting them explore every nook and cranny with 360-degree views. AI-driven platforms can also sift through mountains of listings to recommend homes that match a buyer's preferences, budget and lifestyle, creating a personalized experience and saving countless hours of manual search.

#### The Importance of Human Involvement with AI

While AI is certainly transformative, it is not a one-size-fits-all solution. When it

comes to such things as credit decisioning, humans still take the lead. Credit decisions are complex and nuanced, requiring a deep understanding of a person's financial history and current circumstances. AI can provide data and options, but the final call should always be made by a human who can interpret the subtleties and make an informed decision.

Moreover, AI cannot replace the personal touch of a real estate agent or the reassurance and expertise of a loan officer. These human interactions and relationships are vital to the homebuying experience, providing knowledge, negotiation skills and emotional support that AI simply cannot replicate.

This combination of AI with the human touch is already showing results. In fact, over the last year, Rocket Mortgage saw it help shorten the amount of time it takes their clients to close on a home purchase by nearly 20%. AI can handle the heavy lifting of data processing and provide valuable insights, but it takes a backseat where humans perform best—building meaningful connections.

#### The Future Of Homebuying

As consumers embark on their homeownership adventure, AI will open doors while the professionals will help them cross the threshold into their new home.

#### Learn More

For further facts and stats on buying a home, visit [www.rocketmortgage.com](http://www.rocketmortgage.com).

## Undercover Alcohol Sting Operation

On December 19th and 20th, 2023, detectives with the **Lake County Sheriff's Office Special Investigations Bureau**, in conjunction with our City/County Investigations Bureau detectives from Mt. Dora, Eustis, Leesburg, and Clermont Police Department, conducted an undercover operation utilizing an un-derage confidential informant. The confidential informant attempted to purchase an alcoholic beverage or a vape from convenience stores throughout Lake County.

As a result of the operation, detectives visited 71 stores throughout Lake County, 29 of which sold to the underage buyer. Out of those 29 stores, 66% of the time the clerk did not ask for identification to verify the correct age, and 34% of the time the clerk requested identification; however, they still sold the alcoholic beverage to the minor even though

*Continued pag 7*

## Lake County Detention Center

### Public Booking Log

See the frequently updated public booking log of those recently charged in Lake County. Go to:

<http://tomlpublishing.com/category/villages-news/lady-lake-police-dept/>

Or go to [Tomlpublishing.com](http://Tomlpublishing.com) and click on **Lake County Sheriff** on right side under "Contributing Editors".



**SEND US YOUR**  
[TLoury@att.net](mailto:TLoury@att.net)



DENNIS K. BAXLEY



Dear Friends,

We are over half way through the 2024 Legislative Session and have plenty of more ground to cover. Over the course of the 2024 Legislative Session, the Republican Caucus is committed to being focused on delivering real results for Florida's families and ensuring that Florida continues to lead the nation with a world-class education system and thriving economy.

The Senate Committee on Fiscal Policy passed the Live Healthy Legislative Package with unanimous support. This robust policy proposal addresses key shortages in Florida's health care workforce and stimulates innovation in health care. This Legislative Package combines targeted policy enhancements and critical investments to increase Florida's health care workforce and efficiency across the health care sector.

Senate Bill 7016, presented by Senator Colleen Burton (R-Lakeland), Chair of the Senate Committee on Health Policy, seeks to enhance Florida's healthcare workforce by addressing key shortages of physicians, nurses, technicians, and other health care professionals.

Senate Bill 7018, presented by Senator Gayle Harrell (R-Stuart), Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, funds strategic investments in health care innovation through a revolving loan program.

The Florida Senate also passed a critical deregulation package that enhances our public schools and empowers them to deliver an educational experience fit to the needs of their local community.

Senate Bill 7000, presented by Senator Alexis Calatayud (R-Miami), enhances the

authority of local school districts to recruit and retain the very best teachers. Specifically, this legislation provides flexibility to districts in setting salaries for instructional personnel, in offering multiyear contracts, and in personnel evaluation systems.

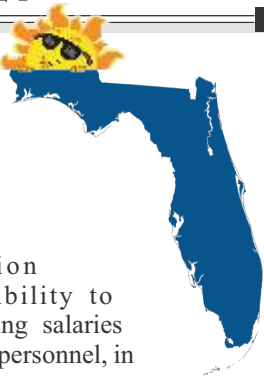
Senate Bill 7002, presented by Senator Travis Hutson (R-St. Augustine), removes burdensome administrative guidelines on local school districts that have hindered the operational success of Florida's neighborhood public schools for far too long. This legislation provides flexibility to schools regarding communications, finances, construction, and administration.

Senate Bill 7004, presented by Senator Corey Simon (R-Tallahassee), directly improves the educational experience for students and families. This legislation enhances progress monitoring processes to allow for early intervention, ensuring that student's get the support they need before retention is necessary. Senate Bill 7004 also reduces high-stakes testing and revises graduation requirements, allowing for students to be evaluated in a more holistic manner.

We have made tremendous progress towards improving Florida's healthcare landscape, as well as the education that our children receive. We will continue to work diligently on behalf of all Floridians.

Thank you for letting me be your Senator, and for allowing me to fight for faith, family, freedom, opportunity, and life.

Onward & Upward,  
Senator Dennis Baxley



Connect with local garden enthusiasts and cultivate your green thumb!

**FEB 3**  
**49th Mount Dora Arts Festival**  
Experience the Mount Dora Arts Festival, nationally ranked as one of the TOP 20 fine arts festivals in the USA. See and support 300 exquisite and eclectic artists from all over the world.

**FEB 4**  
**Exploration Hike**  
Join staff on an early evening hike to get some exercise while exploring nature at PEAR Park.

**FEB 8**  
**Friends of the Umatilla Public Library**  
Support your hometown library by joining Umatilla's Friends of the Library. Friends members raise funds to support library projects, programs and book purchases.

**FEB 9**  
**After Dark Hike**  
Bring your flashlight, headlamps and insect repellent to see what wildlife is active in the park after everyone goes home and the sun goes down.

**FEB 10**  
**Sandstorm BNQ**  
Beach Volleyball Event

**FEB 10**  
**Quarterly Bird & Butterfly Survey**  
Assist park staff with surveying the birds and butterflies that inhabit Lake County's conservation lands.

**FEB 11**  
**Healing the Land**  
Restoration of human altered landscapes to Florida natural communities is a long term process. Hike with staff to learn about the process which is on-going at the site.

**FEB 11**  
**Sunday Funday: Woodland Critters**  
Come to Trout Lake Nature Center for an event all about the critters found in our woodlands such as bears, bats, owls, and alligators. Wander through the activities at your own pace and learn about the exciting wildlife that Florida has to offer.

**FEB 12**  
**Vegetable Gardening (UF/IFAS Master Gardener)**  
UF/IFAS Master Gardener Program - Pre-Registration Required Learn how to grow your own food. This class looks at how to start a garden, what to grow, how to manage pests and more!

**FEB 14**  
**Kids Crafts**  
Relax with crafts. For elementary school students.

**FEB 16**  
**Celtic Angels**  
Step back in time to the ancient Land of Saints and Scholars, where the captivating Angels' magical melodies will transport you to another world. When the spirited Celtic Knights Dancers take the stage, get ready for your heart to pound.

**FEB 17**  
**Explore Historic Downtown Clermont**  
Explore historic Downtown Clermont while

sampling more than 20 wines at participating locations. For more information visit [clermontdowntown.com/events](http://clermontdowntown.com/events)

**FEB 17**  
**Poochapalooza**  
Bring your pup to visit exhibitors and vendors, see demonstrations, run on a lure course, go on an obstacle hike for dogs of all abilities, grab a bite to eat, listen to live music, and have a chance to win great prizes!

**FEB 17**  
**Take Flight, Birds of Winter**  
Many bird species use Florida in the fall, winter and spring as a stop over to rest and refuel on their way to someplace else. Hike with staff to see if you can spot any of these migrants.

**FEB 22**  
**2024 Air Force Contracting Summit**  
Register Now for the 2024 Air Force Contracting Summit, scheduled for February 22 - 23, 2024 at the Rosen Centre in Orlando. Join more than 700 defense contractors at one of the top defense industry forums of the year and get the latest details on bi

**FEB 23**  
**A Tribute to Alan Jackson & George Strait**  
Dust off your guitar and warm up those vocal cords because we're about to pay homage to the greatest country icons in music history!

**FEB 23**  
**Evening Nature Hike**  
Come see what the overlook trailhead has to offer and learn about what shaped the topography of Florida.

**FEB 25**  
**Swamps of the Green Swamp**  
Learn about the flora of the wetlands and their role in the Floridan Aquifer recharge.

**FEB 25**  
**Experience The Culture of Haiti**  
Art, food, music, culture, family fun! Vendors(space available \$35)

**FEB 28**  
**Stories in the Sand**  
Wildlife use the trails of Lake May Reserve just as humans do. Can you identify the tracks and signs left by the wild residents?

Lake County Events

**FEB 2**  
**Fruitland Park Farmers Market**  
Fruitland Park and Orange Blossom Market Co. are delighted to announce Fruitland Park Farmers Market! The First Friday of the month from 10:00am-2:00pm between September through May, come visit local businesses for food, shopping, drinks, and more.

**FEB 2**  
**Exploration Hike**  
Join staff to explore the habitats and species of Ferndale Preserve.

**FEB 2**  
**Downtown Clermont First Food Trucks**  
ather your family or your friends and head to Clermont for a fabulous evening this Friday! ?? Explore downtown while dining at an array of food trucks offering everything from savory dinners to mouthwatering snacks and heavenly sweets

from 5:30 to 9 pm! ?????? Discover the charm of downtown as you sip on your favorite beverages and take a leisurely stroll. Discover a variety of vendors showcasing their unique creations and don't miss the chance to shop till you drop at our local retail stores and chic boutiques!?? ?????

**FEB 3**  
**CleanUp Eustis**  
CleanUp Eustis is having our next CleanUp group event, and we need YOUR help! Grab your community groups and neighbors and help for an hour or two! Supplies and Bright Future Hours Provided.

**FEB 3**  
**Quarterly Bird & Butterfly Survey**  
Assist Park Staff with surveying the birds and butterflies that inhabit Lake County's conservation lands.

**FEB 3**  
**Umatilla Garden Club**





Tom Loury Long time member of CEP/Ocala Chamber of Commerce, Past President of the Ocala Business Leaders and current member, Co-Founder and past President of Select Business Associates, Past President of the Lady Lake Chamber and current member.

## PUBLISHER'S NOTES



Farmers I read on the internet that bamboo charcoal will get rid of rodents. Believe it or not! OK farmers there is your answer. Actually you can order it online. That would even work in the fields if it's not too expensive, check it out!.

I am getting notes from reader which is a good sign. The notes are 99% positive. I get one from a soldier overseas. Keep the notes coming. It tell me you are a reader.

I see Texas has finally had enough of being accused of things they were not doing! The rest of the states need to follow. This administration is letting these Illegals come in. Border Patrol was accused of drowning Illegals, but when they watched the video's they were saving peoples from drowning. They were accused of whipping the aliens with their horse reins and they were using long reins to control the horses. Again watching the video's and realized they were

not hitting anyone. They were using the horses as barriers to stop illegal entree.

Remember the movie True Grit? We need a Rooster Caugburn for president. Get on his horse, take the reins in his teeth with, a gun in each hand and charge the bad guys. Just a scene from True Grit! Maybe something like "Donald Trump!"

I really believe that Trump will be our next President, It's not that Biden is to old it's because he does not always have the thought process he needs to get off the stage or go up or down the stairs. The Left is making up things and call them laws and some of the appointed judges are going along with it. I believe that oil and the border are the two things that need to be addressed the first day. Three past presidents deported millions of people that need to go home. This is not their home, this a free ride. A bunch of them pile up in a hotel room that we the tax payers pay for, they are getting credit cards, expense money. They should not be allowed to be sent home with a lot of money in their

pocket. Just enough to get home. It won't take long for the incoming will get the picture NO FREE RIDES! Get in line and ask for asylum.

I was proud that our referral lunch group (The Select Business Association) was able to donate \$500 to the Fort McCow Veterans Village. We meet every first and third Wednesday for lunch at MOJO's. Call me if you want an invite we'll talk. It takes a special invitation to join. 352-804-1223. Only one of the same category, no acceptance's. It cost \$40 per year, we pray, we pledge, we do business and a little social talk. Each person gets a fair amount of time to talk about their business. We help each other! Call me! 352-804-1223

## Hunter Biden Stunt

Thomas, this is just another stunt by Hunter Biden and the Democrats to change the narrative and distract and obstruct the investigation into the Biden Family.



Let me be clear, the President's son isn't above the law.

He can run, but he can't hide from accountability.

His refusal to comply with my lawfully issued subpoena is a criminal act, and I won't let him get away with it.

The Biden's are pulling out all the stops and doing everything they can to obstruct my investigation, but I will not be deterred.

## Newspaper Deadlines

*Editorial & Ad Copy for March*

**Seniors Voice & Ocala DownTown**

**Noon, February 23rd**

**Lady Lake Magazine & Village Spectator**

**12am, February 28th**

## Village Spectator / Lady Lake Magazine

Products of TomL Publishing, LLC

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## Update on Reverse Mortgages

**Tuesday, February 13, 12:30pm**

The Standard Coffee Lounge, 1552 Bella Cruz, The Villages

Register: 352-462-0636 or [www.RMexplained.com](http://www.RMexplained.com)

**Learn the History, Myths, Facts  
and if a Reverse Mortgage Can Work for You**

Lunch with Reservation

Presented by:

Dan Kapellen

NMLS 2302495

Certified Reverse Mortgage

Specialist

Resident of The Villages



Pacific Lending Group  
Mortgage Bankers



**Rotary Club  
of The Villages  
NOON**

**SAVE  
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DATE!**

**2nd ANNUAL  
SPRING  
THING  
FREE!**

**Proceeds to various charities including**

**Live Bands • Food Trucks • Arts & Crafts • Contractor Showcase**

For more info call: **ANDY 503-956-8533** or **DICK 352-461-9235**

**Gold Wingnut  
Productions  
Foundation**

**MARCH 23, 2024  
WILDWOOD  
Millennium Park  
11:00 AM  
to  
6:00 PM**

**National  
Brain Tumor  
Society**

**alzheimer's  
association**

**AUTISM  
AWARENESS**

**St. Jude Children's  
Research Hospital**

**PLEASE  
SUPPORT  
THE WOUNDED  
WARRIORS!**



**God Bless our Troops  
Support Our Veterans  
We Endorse The Constitution**



## FAIRtax



"Is anything happening with the FAIRtax? Why don't I ever hear about the FAIRtax on tv? Will the FAIRtax ever pass?" These are a few of the questions that I hear on a fairly regular basis. Let's take them one at a time:

"Is anything happening with the FAIRtax?":

Just a few weeks ago Steve Hayes (Chairman of Americans for Fair Taxation) was invited to testify before the House Ways

and Means Subcommittee on Taxation in Washington, D.C. This proved to have both negative and positive results. Those members who do not like the FAIRtax and enjoy the rewards of having an incomprehensible income tax code to further their own political gains asked scripted questions to people other than Steve. They in turned gave scripted answers that misconstrued or lied about the FAIRtax without giving Steve a chance for rebuttal. Fortunately, the chairman asked Steve direct questions that gave him the opportunity to set the record straight. After the meeting, Steve was approached by 3 different Congressmen wanting to talk more about the FAIRtax. Steve is in the process now of trying to set up one-on-one sessions with these members to teach them more about the

Want to Kill the Death Tax?  
Only the FAIRtax can  
Pull the Trigger!

Want to learn more?  
Go to: [FLfairtax.org](http://FLfairtax.org) or Call 352-804-0007

FAIRtax  
FL FAIRtax EDUCATIONAL ASSEN

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## From the Past

FAIRtax and find common ground in hope of pushing the FAIRtax bill forward.

Why don't I hear about the FAIRtax on tv?":

The FAIRtax Bill is sitting in the House Ways and Means Committee and, so far, we have not been able to get the bill out onto the floor for an open debate. It would be very helpful if our movement were financially able to put big splashy ads on tv but, unfortunately, we are an all volunteer organization with limited funding. That doesn't mean we are invisible. We have a presence in every state and we are always looking for more volunteers and more funding. There are 5 states that our volunteers are in various stages of working with their state legislators to eliminate their state income tax and replace it with a statewide FAIRtax program. We are also on FaceBook, YouTube, X (Twitter), iHeartRadio, Apple Podcasts, WTOB and WAME radio in N. Carolina, WLSC radio in S. Carolina as well as having information booths at local events throughout the country. You can also browse our website at FAIRtax.org for Steve Hayes' Chairman's Report and Jim Bennett's Grassroots Corner, news, information and to sign up and/or donate.

"Will the FAIRtax ever pass?":

I believe it will because the income tax has become so complicated, inefficient and corrupt that it will eventually implode. Hopefully we can get the FAIRtax implemented before that happens as the FAIRtax is the only sensible alternative on the horizon. So keep the faith and keep pushing forward. This is a brand new year so let's work together to make it a FAIRtax year.

## Puff Pastry Berry Hearts



### Ingredients

- 1 cup whipping cream
- 1 teaspoon powdered sugar
- 1 package frozen puff pastry, defrosted
- 1/2 cup fresh raspberries (or mixed berries)

### Instructions

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Unfold the puff pastry and cut into hearts using heart-shaped cookie cutters.

Place the puff pastry hearts on a baking sheet and bake for 10-12 minutes, or until golden brown.

In the bowl of a standing mixer, or with an electric mixer whip the cream on medium-high speed for 2-3 minutes. Add the powdered sugar and beat on high for 30 more seconds or until thick and fluffy.

Remove hearts from the oven and allow to cool completely. Slice hearts in half. Top the bottom half with whipped cream and berries, and place the other half on top to form a sandwich.

Reference:

<https://weelicious.com/puff-pastry-berry-hearts/#wprm-recipe-container-924>

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# Youth FEBRUARY

## Lady Lake Library

**Hours:**  
 Monday: 9am-7pm  
 Tuesday-Friday: 9am-6pm  
 Saturday and Sunday: Closed  
 Closed: February 19th

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
			 1	<b>Baby Storytime</b> 2 @10:30am <b>Video Games</b> @3:30-4:30pm
5 <b>Craft Kits Available!</b> While supplies last.	<b>Tiny Tots</b> 6 @ 10:30am <b>Family Crafting</b> @ 3:30pm	<b>Storytime</b> 10:30am 7 <b>Read with Scarlett</b> 3:00pm-4:00pm	<b>Valentines Day</b> 8 <b>Card Exchange</b> @10:30-11:30	<b>Lego Masters</b> 9 @ 3:30pm
12 <b>Craft Kits Available!</b> While supplies last.	<b>Tiny Tots</b> 13 @ 10:30am <b>Family Crafting</b> @ 3:30pm	<b>Storytime</b> 10:30am 14 <b>Read with Scarlett</b> 3:00pm-4:00pm	 15	<b>Baby Storytime</b> 16 @10:30am <b>Video Games</b> @3:30-4:30pm
<b>Closed for President's Day</b> 19	<b>Tiny Tots</b> 20 @ 10:30am <b>Marsha Paint Class</b> @2pm Sign Up Required <b>Family Crafting</b> @ 3:30pm	<b>Storytime</b> 10:30am 21 <b>Read with Scarlett</b> 3:00pm-4:00pm	 22	<b>Lego Masters</b> 23 @ 3:30pm
26 <b>Craft Kits Available!</b> While supplies last.	<b>Tiny Tots</b> 27 @ 10:30am <b>Family Crafting</b> @ 3:30pm	<b>Storytime</b> 10:30am 28 <b>Read with Scarlett</b> 3:00pm-4:00pm	 29	

# Adult FEBRUARY

## Lady Lake Library

**Hours:**  
 Monday: 9am-7pm  
 Tuesday-Friday: 9am-6pm  
 Saturday and Sunday: Closed  
 Closed: February 19th

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>AARP will be here every Tuesday and Thursday to file your federal tax return. You do not need to be a member of AARP or a senior citizen to use this service. To make an appointment visit <a href="http://villagestaxaid.com">villagestaxaid.com</a>.</b>			1	 2
5	 6	7	<b>Confessions of a Hallmark Writer</b> 8 @2-3pm	<b>BestBuy iPhone/iPad</b> 9 @ 9:30am
<b>Coping with Dementia</b> 12 @ 11-1pm Room 204	<b>Book Discussion</b> 13 @ 2-4pm	<b>AMAC</b> @9-4pm 14 <b>SHINE</b> @2-4pm	<b>MEDICARE 101</b> 15 @ 11-12pm <b>Let's Talk Books</b> @ 2pm	16
<b>Closed for President's Day</b> 19	20	<b>Authors Round Table</b> 21 @ 2-4pm	<b>Non-Fiction Book Talk</b> 22 @ 2-4pm	<b>BestBuy iMac</b> 23 @ 9:30am
26	 27	<b>SHINE</b> 2-4pm 28	<b>Bingo!</b> 29 @2-3:30pm sign up required	



## Combat Screen Time Eye Strain



### Smart Lighting Solutions to Combat Eye Strain from Screen Time

(NAPSI)—[Research](#) shows that remote workers spend over half of their day—13 hours on average—looking at screens. This much time spent looking at a computer can produce digital eye strain, also known as Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS).

#### How To Help Your Eyes

It's [estimated](#) that digital eye strain affects 60 million people worldwide, and over 70% of computer users. Resulting [symptoms](#) include headaches, blurry vision, neck and eye pain, double vision, delay in shifting focus, and more.

Sound familiar? If you're experiencing digital eye strain from spending countless hours in front of a screen, you will be glad to know, BenQ's tech-driven smart lights can offer a solution.

Digital eye strain is often caused by differences in light—screen glare, light reflection, screen brightness and contrast are all contributing factors. Renowned for its pioneering lighting solutions—including the world's first monitor light bar, the ScreenBar—the company boasts a full line

of smart lights that help reduce digital eye strain. Designed based on extensive research by a team of optical professionals and backed by EU IEC/IR 62778 and IEC/EN 62471 dual certifications for blue light hazards, these smart lights bring tech-driven eye comfort to computer users everywhere.

#### Reimagine Laptop Lighting

For someone needing a portable solution to mitigate insufficient computer light, BenQ's new LaptopBar (<https://bit.ly/4arLWb2>) is ideal. This compact light bar attaches to your laptop via a non-damaging magnetic patch, and through an innovative process involving 20 million beam simulations, creates a CIRCUM-Light™ 3D-surrounding illumination that brings together central brightness and ambient light to alleviate eye strain.

The light bar also offers:

- A personalized auto-dimming feature, which remembers your specific lighting preferences and intelligently adapts to changes in environmental light.
- A foldable arm offering height adjustability for your smart light, letting you choose between a limited or wide field of light.

Weighing less than an iPhone 15 Pro, the LaptopBar is easy to transport and intuitive to use. A built-in battery can maintain 100 minutes of operation at 100% brightness and 160 minutes at 50% brightness, so you can use it anywhere.

#### Tech-Driven Lighting Solutions

An innovator of eye-comforting light for your monitor, BenQ's ScreenBar Halo (<https://bit.ly/3Rxgn6R>) securely clamps onto most monitor models to distribute light around your workspace. It features:

- BenQ's first immersive back lighting mode, which lets you switch among three lighting modes to balance any contrasting light between your computer screen and its surroundings.
- An ASYM-Light™ asymmetrical optical design that prevents reflected glare on the screen and reduces digital eye strain; and a real-time auto-dimming feature with a built-in light sensor detects ambient lighting and supplements illumination of the desktop as needed.

The wireless controller lets you switch lighting modes from your desktop and customize the lighting for a range of environments.

#### Taking Control of Your Eye Care

You can take care of your eyes by supplying the light relief they need. Your screen time likely won't be decreasing any time soon, but with smart lighting solutions like BenQ's LaptopBar and ScreenBar Halo, you can decrease eye strain and promote eye comfort no matter how much time you spend in front of a screen.

#### Learn More

For additional information and resources on improving eye health, visit: <https://www.benq.com/en-us/lighting.html>.

## Alcohol Sting

Continued from page 2

their license clearly identified them as underage. Additionally, of those 29 sales, 25 individuals were issued a misdemeanor summons to appear in court, three individuals were physically arrested and transported to the Lake County Jail, and one received a warning. Also, of those 29 individuals, one subject was the same

individual who sold a vape to an underage confidential informant during the last undercover operation in March 2023.

Physically Arrested: Shekhar Kumar, Helal Uddin, and Vishal Patel

## SWAT Team Execute Search

**Lake County Detectives and SWAT Team Execute Search Warrant Leading to Multiple Arrests and a Felony Amount of Narcotics**

12/28/2023 On December 27, 2023, the Lake County Sheriff's Office SWAT team and detectives with the Lake County Sheriff's Office Special Investigations Bureau executed a lawful search warrant at the residence of 38945 Pine Street Umatilla, Lake County, Florida. Detectives with Homeland Security and the Mount Dora, Eustis, Leesburg, and Clermont Police departments assisted with the six-month investigation, which stemmed from Crimeline tips and complaints from concerned citizens that indicated the main subject of this investigation, Robert Donaldson (DOB 02/06/1977), was distributing large quantities of narcotics from the residence. In the early morning hours, the Lake County SWAT Team secured the residence and Robert Donaldson, Joana Silva (DOB 04/08/2001), and Lashonda Gaston (DOB 03/12/1979) were located inside. Once the scene was secured, detectives conducted a search of the residence.

A search of the residence revealed a large amount of cocaine, a large amount of cocaine that had been manufactured into crack cocaine, blue pills that were stamped

*Continued page 11*



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# Annual Celebration and Board Installation





# Annual Celebration and Board Installation




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- Dog and cat food
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## SWAT Team

*Continued from page 7*

with a handicap symbol that tested positive for fentanyl, a large amount of marijuana, and one handgun that was stolen out of Lake County. The combined weight of the cocaine and crack cocaine seized was approximately one and a half pounds. The combined weight of the blue pills that tested positive for fentanyl was approximately one ounce. Approximately seven pounds of marijuana was seized. Detectives also seized approximately \$10,000 in U.S. currency. The street value of all narcotics seized was well over \$50,000.

As a result of this investigation, Robert Donaldson was arrested and charged with trafficking in cocaine over 400 grams, trafficking in fentanyl over 4 grams, possession of marijuana with intent to sell over 20 grams, possession of ammo by a convicted felon, manufacturing cocaine into a cocaine base, possession of drug paraphernalia, and ownership, lease, rental, or possession a residence for trafficking in or manufacturing a controlled substance. Robert Donaldson has an extensive criminal history and is currently on felony probation.

Robert Donaldson's probation was violated, and he was not given a bond for his new charges.

Joana Silva, who was identified as Robert Donaldson's fiancé, was arrested and also charged with trafficking in cocaine over 400 grams, trafficking in fentanyl over 4 grams, possession of marijuana with intent to sell over 20 grams, manufacturing cocaine into a cocaine base, possession of drug paraphernalia, ownership, lease, rental, or possession a residence for trafficking in or manufacturing a controlled substance, and tampering with evidence as she tried to flush crack cocaine down the toilet during the

execution of the search warrant.

Joana Silva was not given a bond for her charges.

Lashonda Gaston was arrested and charged with trafficking in fentanyl over 4 grams and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

Lashonda Gaston has a total bond of \$60,000 dollars.

## The Grassroots Corner 2024

Have you ever thought there is so much good about the FAIRtax that, when someone asks you about it, you are tongue-tied because you don't know where to begin? Imagine getting a question about the FAIRtax while riding in an elevator, and you have twenty seconds before the door opens.

Why Democrats Should Support the FAIRtax

AFFT president Steve Hayes' testimony before the House Ways and Means subcommittee on taxation was largely political theater. Both sides used the occasion to advance their own talking points—Republicans touting the success of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, and Democrats attacking the FAIRtax at every turn.

Still, two Democratic Congressmen, John Larson of Connecticut and Danny Davis seemed willing to put the partisanship aside and take a look at the merits of the FAIRtax plan. That's encouraging.

If more Democrats would be willing to take an honest look at the FAIRtax, they'll find that there's a lot there for them to like. The FAIRtax is actually non-partisan. It favors neither side's spending agenda. This week, the FAIRtax Guys look at ten reasons why Democrats should be supporting the FAIRtax.

## Marine Toys



### Marine Toys for Tots Announces Record-Breaking Year!

(NewsUSA) - Marine Toys for Tots had another record-breaking year in 2023 thanks to the generous support of the American public, National Corporate Partners, volunteers, and our dedicated local Coordinators. Your generosity makes a lasting impact on children in need. During 2023, Toys for Tots distributed nearly 25 million toys, books, games, and other gifts to over 10 million economically disadvantaged children.

"You helped us deliver hope and comfort to children in need throughout the year, and for that, we are extremely humbled and proud. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to each and every one of you," says LtGen James B. Laster, USMC (Retired), CEO of the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation.

"Now, with a new year comes new resolve to be an even stronger force for good, because children growing up in poverty deserve nothing less," he adds.

The Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program, which is the U.S. Marine Corps' premiere Community Action Program, provides security and hope to children and

families in need at Christmastime and beyond.

Toys for Tots is committed to providing emotional relief and support to disadvantaged children throughout the year with our Toys for Tots Literacy Program, Foster Care Initiative, Disaster Relief activities, and our Toys for Tots Native American Program. Today's children are tomorrow's future, and Marine Toys for Tots is dedicated to making it as bright as possible for children living in challenging circumstances, no matter the time of year.

In 2023, with your help, Marine Toys for Tots achieved tremendous milestones by:

- Delivering hope and comfort to over 10 million impoverished children.
- Expanding our Foster Care Initiative by providing support to over 332,000 children living in Foster Care across the Nation.
- Providing 100 truckloads of emotional relief gifts to nonprofit partner, Good360, to distribute to nonprofits across the Nation during the Spring and Summer months.
- Assisting families affected by natural disasters in communities in Ohio, Tennessee, Kentucky, Puerto Rico, Florida, and Maui.

• Supporting over 220,000 Native American children through our Toys for Tots Native American Program.

• Distributing 3.2 million books to disadvantaged children through our Toys for Tots Literacy Program to include 1 million books to Title I funded schools, and books valued at \$1.1 million to the Kids in Need Foundation (KINF).

The assistance given was astronomical, and we are grateful to the American public, our National Corporate Partners, and our local Coordinators that enabled us to reach incredible milestones in the Program's 76th year.

*Continued page 12*



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FROM THE DESK OF

CONGRESSWOMAN KAT CAMMACK



**Congresswoman Kat Cammack Announces City Of Ocala Grant To Improve Local Road Safety**

GAINESVILLE, FL — Congresswoman Kat Cammack

announced the City of Ocala received a \$104,000 grant from the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program. The SS4A program funds regional, local, and tribal initiatives through grants to prevent roadway deaths and serious injuries.

The City of Ocala will use the grant to conduct supplemental planning to develop a city-wide Local Road Safety Plan (LRSP) and a Speed Management Plan targeting safer speeds in residential areas and around schools.

"I'm excited to see the City of Ocala making excellent use of this grant," said **Congresswoman Kat Cammack**. "Safer roadways are important for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists in Ocala, ensuring everyone makes it to their destination and back home safely. I look forward to seeing the City's thoughtful planning in action."

The Office of Congresswoman Kat Cammack provides assistance to municipalities seeking grant funding opportunities from the federal government.

**Rep. Cammack Joins Sen. Rubio, Colleagues Seeking Answers About "Forever Chemicals" At Florida Bases**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Exposure to per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) is linked to cancer and other diseases. Unfortunately, these substances may have contaminated the water of several Florida military bases, putting service members and their families at risk.

Rep. Cammack joined U.S. Senator

Marco Rubio (R-FL) and colleagues in sending a letter to U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Secretary Lloyd Austin, asking about PFAS remediation efforts at Florida's military installations and clarifying the extent of the health impacts of PFAS exposure on service members and their families.

"Our service members, and their families, deserve full information on the health risks of PFAS, as well as a commitment by the DoD to mitigate any harm that may be caused by PFAS exposure on military installations. As such, we request a full accounting of the progress for PFAS remediation efforts on each of Florida's military installations."

**Rep. Kat Cammack Named Winner Of 2023 Bone Health Champion Award**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Rep. Kat Cammack (R-FL) received the 2023 Congressional Bone Health Champion Award from the Bone Health and Osteoporosis Foundation (BHO). The national award annually recognizes four Members of Congress who have demonstrated outstanding leadership, advocacy, and commitment to protect and improve the bone health of Americans. BHO, the leading health organization dedicated to preventing osteoporosis and promoting strong bones for life, presents the awards to highlight the importance of bone health and raise awareness about the osteoporosis crisis in the U.S. The other 2023 winners are Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY), Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Rep. Susie Lee (D-NV).

Rep. Cammack is co-chair of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues and a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee which has jurisdiction over Medicare and other key health programs. Rep. Cammack joined

with the Caucus and the Bone Health and Osteoporosis Foundation in sponsoring a congressional briefing on women's bone health throughout the lifetime. This briefing provided a great opportunity to raise awareness about osteoporosis and promote action to improve the bone health of all Americans. In [Florida](#), with its large senior population, 144,000 Medicare beneficiaries suffered over 172,500 fractures tied to osteoporosis in 2016.

"The importance of bone health and its impact on an individual's overall health as well as healthcare costs is often overlooked by policymakers," said **Claire Gill, CEO of the Bone Health and Osteoporosis Foundation**. "We greatly appreciate Rep. Cammack's work to raise awareness and shed light on what is a crisis in bone health in the United States. We know what needs to be done to address this crisis. There are simple steps Congress and the Biden Administration can take that would greatly improve the care of millions of Americans with osteoporosis."

**Rep. Cammack said**, "It's an honor to be named one of this year's Congressional Bone Health Champion Award recipients. As a co-chair of the Bipartisan Women's Caucus, women's health is one of our top priorities, and we were fortunate to hold a bone health briefing earlier this year. For women—and adults across the U.S.—bone health is too often overlooked, but it's an important part of an individual's overall health. I look forward to continuing to raise awareness around this issue."

Osteoporosis is a growing yet often ignored healthcare problem that disproportionately impacts women. Ten million Americans have osteoporosis and 44 million are at high risk of the disease due to low bone density. According to a 2021 report, two million Medicare beneficiaries (about 70 percent women) suffered up to 2.1 million osteoporotic bone fractures in 2016. *For women, the risk of any osteoporotic fracture is greater than their risk of a heart attack, stroke or breast cancer combined.* The total annual cost for osteoporotic

fractures among Medicare beneficiaries was \$57 billion in 2018 and is expected to grow to over \$95 billion in 2040 without reforms, as the population ages.

Marine Toys

Continued from page 11

Join us in 2024 as we strive to be an even stronger year-round force for good by providing hope for a brighter tomorrow to children in need. Visit [toysfortots.org](#) to learn more about Marine Toys for Tots and to donate to any of our Programs.

Article Link  
<https://about.newsusa.com/marine-toys-for-tots-announces-record-breaking-year>

Intelligence Community

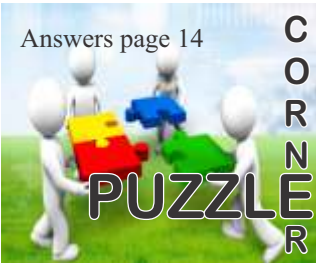


**Intelligence Community Leverages AI**

(NewsUSA) - The future of the intelligence community will hinge on how well intelligence services can adopt and leverage artificial intelligence (AI) tools to make the most of the constant flow of data from all parts of the world, according to experts at the Special Competitive Studies Project (SCSP), a bipartisan nonprofit organization.

The U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) should take immediate action to leverage emerging generative AI (GenAI) capabilities to protect the nation and maintain our competitive advantage over global rivals, according to a new report from SCSP. The IC has been at the cutting edge of adopting

Continued page 13



Across

1. Browning's Ben Ezra, e.g.  
6. Epps, the actor  
10. Sgt. Preston's grp.  
14. With force  
15. "Aida" backdrop  
16. Author Wiesel  
17. Book protection  
19. Parent's warning  
20. Invite  
21. Peter Fonda role of '97  
22. Debate subjects  
24. Hilton Head Island, for one  
26. Put to the test  
27. Be in control  
32. Church part  
35. \_\_\_ avis  
36. Fury  
37. Parts of mins.  
38. Some are blind  
40. "There's \_\_\_ day dawning . . ."

41. Debate side  
42. Rash reaction?  
43. Famed fed  
44. Pompous person  
49. Stadium levels  
50. Deceived  
54. Secret information  
56. Dark, poetically  
58. Bullring "Bravo!"  
59. Printer's blue-green  
60. Metier  
63. Cleopatra's love Antony  
64. Beanery offering  
65. Become allied  
66. In \_\_\_ (existing)  
67. Metal-stamping tools  
68. Conundrum

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1. Detecting device  
2. Tickle one's funny bone  
3. Soaks up sun  
4. Byte fraction  
5. Wound  
6. "For \_\_\_ in My Life" (Stevie Wonder)  
7. Nichols or Wallace  
8. Pub staple  
9. Go on a pension  
10. View from Jidda  
11. Seventh heaven  
12. Selfish one's exclamation  
13. They may be collared

18. They have crosses to bear  
23. Take tea  
25. Hasn't ponied up  
26. Island roof material  
28. Fast waters  
29. Harness races  
30. Spanish crowd?  
31. Keeps folks in stitches  
32. Egyptian cobras  
33. Feeling one's oats  
34. Army reconnaissance transports  
39. Israel's Peres  
40. Garden soldiers  
45. Ring bearer?  
46. Swampland  
47. Videotaped over  
48. Register a sale?  
51. Heavyweight champ from 1937-49  
52. Ins  
53. A way to discourage  
54. Vertex  
55. Certain thick-piled rugs  
56. Noted Harper's Bazaar illustrator  
57. Nickname for Springsteen  
61. Mai \_\_\_ cocktail  
62. \_\_\_-cone (summer treat)

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## FROM THE DESK OF ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY



**Attorney General Moody Warns Floridians About Rise In Deaths From Dangerous Designer Drug Often Called Fake Xanax**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody is warning Floridians about a rise in deaths nationwide from bromazepam, a potent benzodiazepine. The drug is gaining popularity throughout the country and is reportedly being mixed with illicit fentanyl. Benzodiazepines are depressant drugs that produce sedation and feelings of relaxation. According to the [Center for Forensic Science Research and Education](#), bromazepam went from being present in only 1% of toxicology cases submitted to the National Medical Services Labs in 2021 to 13% in mid-2022. Side effects of bromazepam include loss of coordination, drowsiness, dizziness, respiratory depression, coma and death.

**Attorney General Ashley Moody** said, “It is imperative that Floridians understand how dangerous bromazepam is on its own. It is also reportedly mixed with fentanyl, leading to adverse health conditions, overdoses and even deaths—including here in Florida. Please, never use an illicit substance. Just one pill can kill.”

Bromazepam is an illicit substance within the category of novel benzodiazepines, also referred to as synthetic benzodiazepines. Novel benzodiazepines are a classification of drugs that are not regulated by strict clinical guidelines the way that traditional benzodiazepines like Xanax and Valium are. Novel benzodiazepines have similar depressant effects to prescribed benzodiazepines but can be more potent and unpredictable. According to the [CFSRE](#), bromazepam made up just 4% of novel benzodiazepines in circulation in 2021. The CFSRE estimate that bromazepam's presence rose to 73% of the supply of novel benzodiazepines through the first six months of 2023.

Bromazepam may be laced with fentanyl, making the drug even more potent and dangerous. The CFSRE reported that 83% of its samples tested positive for fentanyl. Other [reports](#) claim that naloxone, commonly used to reverse opioid overdose, is ineffective when dealing with bromazepam.

From 2016-2018, [law enforcement seizures of bromazepam](#) never exceeded three per year nationwide. In 2023, that number rose to 2,913. Bromazepam use is rapidly increasing all across the country, leading to rises in overdose and death.

To educate Floridians about the dangers of illicit substances and where to find help, Attorney General Moody developed the Dose of Reality Florida website. The site serves as a one-stop resource to learn about the dangers of opioid misuse, how to receive support for addiction and where to safely dispose of unused prescription drugs.

If anyone is struggling with drug addiction, visit [TreatmentAtlas.org](#) to find treatment resources and get help.

### On National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, Attorney General Moody Adds First Florida Hospital To 100 Percent Club

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—On National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, Attorney General Ashley Moody is announcing the addition of Tampa General Hospital to the 100 Percent Club. Attorney General Moody's 100 Percent Club recognizes businesses who train employees to spot and report human trafficking. Tampa General Hospital is the first hospital to join the club. Studies have found that more than 88% of human trafficking victims come into contact with the health care system while being trafficked. Now, medical staff at TGH is trained and equipped to spot and report signs of trafficking.

TGH's Clinical Education Department will also be placing informational signage around the hospital so visitors and trafficking victims in need of medical care know how to seek help.

**Attorney General Ashley Moody** said, “Human trafficking harms victims in various ways—with most seeking medical care at some point during their captivity. That is why it is so important that doctors, nurses and medical staff know how to spot and report human trafficking. I am pleased to announce on National Human Trafficking Awareness Day that we have added our first Florida hospital to our 100 Percent Club, and the staff at Tampa General Hospital will now be trained to be our eyes and ears to help victims escape captivity. TGH's proactive stance sets a powerful precedent in our collective efforts to protect victims, stop trafficking and prosecute traffickers.”

**Tampa General Hospital President and CEO John Couris** said, “Patients across the state and the nation turn to Tampa General Hospital for world-class care. The care we provide at TGH often extends beyond the walls of our hospital to ensure our patients are safe and have access to basic necessities. Our team can also play an important role in putting an end to human trafficking. Through information and training, we're working to equip our team with the knowledge to act when we come across a victim and engage law enforcement to respond. We're proud to partner with Attorney General Ashley Moody on this important effort, and I am grateful to our team for taking the initiative to join the 100 Percent Club, further elevating our care for the patients and communities we serve.”

TGH reportedly sees more than 780,000 patients a year, and more than 8,000 hospital staff members pass by signage daily on how to report human trafficking. With the addition of the Clinical Education Department, there are nearly 10,000 individuals trained in the 100 Percent Club to spot and report human trafficking.

Attorney General Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution will also provide an in-depth human trafficking prevention training to TGH's surgical staff. The training will involve specialized instruction in how the hospital staff should interact with identified victims.

Attorney General Moody launched the 100 Percent Club in 2022 to recognize companies taking proactive steps to train employees on the signs of human trafficking. To join the 100 Percent Club, companies commit to providing this training to employees and issuing a quick-reference guide about how to report human trafficking.

### Ag Moody Demands Acc Release Espn Agreement And Other Public Records At Center Of Fsu's Case To Leave Conference

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today sent a public records request to the Atlantic Coast Conference demanding the college athletics organization immediately turn over public records currently being withheld from Florida State University. Attorney General Moody is seeking the release of the conference's “ESPN Agreement” and several other agreements, amendments and documents crucial to FSU's legal battle to leave the ACC. The conference is refusing to turn over the documents—instead demanding that FSU officials travel to North Carolina to view the documents in secret and under ACC supervision.

**Attorney General Ashley Moody** said, “One of Florida's top universities is facing the possibility of forfeiting more than half a billion dollars, and the ACC is refusing to hand over the agreements at the center of this astronomical financial penalty. They are unlawfully keeping these documents locked away in North Carolina. However, North Carolina and Florida state laws are clear that these agreements are public records and must be handed over immediately. Today, I am taking action to ensure FSU and the public are able to review these agreements.”

The agreements and amendments are at the center of FSU's legal battle to leave the ACC—and are the basis for a reported \$572 million in forfeited media rights, unreimbursed broadcast fees and a conference exit fee. The agreements were entered into by ACC officials on behalf of the schools in the conference, and FSU does not have copies of, or access to, these public records. The records are vital to FSU's case to leave the conference and could have a major financial impact on the state school.

Following the ACC's refusal to produce the agreements, Attorney General Moody sent a public records request demanding, among other things:

- Executed copy of the Multi-Media Agreement between the ACC and ESPN;
- Executed copy of the 2014 Amended Multi-Media Agreement;
- Executed copy of the ACC Grant of Rights Agreement;
- Any other executed agreements referred to as the “ESPN Agreement”; and
- Any other executed agreements between the ACC and the Walt Disney Company.

Attorney General Moody demands that the ACC provide records no later than 10 days from the receipt of the request, noting that these public records are readily accessible.

## Intelligence Community

*Continued from page 12*

emerging technology for decades, but GenAI will have an exceptionally broad impact, and will further complicate the already complex world of intelligence.

“Intelligence services will eventually need to plan and account for AI-enabled machines acting as semi-independent actors, directing operations and making decisions, both for our adversaries and allies,” according to the SCSP report.

Large Language Models (LLMs), the multi-modal models that can generate images, video, and sound, and other forms of GenAI will become more numerous, faster, more accurate, and more capable, according to the report. IC agencies will need to adapt their approaches to all aspects of the intelligence cycle, from planning and collection to analysis and dissemination.

The rapid expansion of AI provides the IC with an opportunity to make the changes needed to succeed in the digital era; the SCSP offers four actions for the U.S. intelligence community to consider.

**Start using AI tools now.** Training the IC workforce will help the IC create the infrastructure and policies needed to manage AI.

**Be an agile adopter.** ICs should partner with a foundation model provider to acquire their large language model, rather than creating one from scratch.

**Take on privacy concerns.** The IC should tackle privacy issues head-on, giving IC agencies the authorization they need to secure and use personal data if necessary.

Collaborate when possible. The nature of intelligence is for different agencies to safeguard their own unique datasets and capabilities. However, the IC will need to strike a balance and promote coordinated approaches to innovation. Collaboration will not only yield economies of scale, but will avoid the proliferation of smaller LLMs that will pale in comparison to those of global rivals, such as the People's Republic of China.

The SCSP also advises the U.S. intelligence community to create a committee on AI deployment and use to advise the DNI on the creation of IC datasets and AI algorithms to ensure access and responsibility.

For more information, visit [scsp.ai](#).

Article Link

<https://about.newsusa.com/intelligence-community-leverages-ai>

## School Choice the “New Normal”

(NewsUSA) - What do parents really think about school choice in 2024? A new survey by the National School Choice Awareness Foundation sheds light on what they're thinking, and looking for, as National School Choice Week spurs families to start the process of choosing new schools for the fall. Two truths, and one oft-repeated myth, offer insights into how they'll shape the landscape of education with the choices they make.

Here's truth number one. Parents are more interested in changing their children's schools than they were during the pandemic. 72% considered new schools for their

*Continued page 14*



FROM THE DESK OF

# GOVERNOR DESANTIS



**Governor Ron DeSantis Touts Record-Breaking Success of Great Outdoors Initiative**

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** — Governor Ron DeSantis highlighted the record-breaking success of his three-

month Great Outdoors Initiative, providing 50% discounts on Gold Sportsman hunting and fishing licenses and Annual State Park Passes. First [announced](#) on October 14, 2023, the Great Outdoors Initiative encouraged Floridians to get outdoors and explore Florida's natural resources by saving Florida families money. The discount lasted through January 13, 2024, and was the highest discount ever provided for these licenses and passes in Florida history. More than 75,000 Gold Sportsman licenses totaling \$24 million and more than 55,000 state park passes totaling \$2.86 million were sold during the initiative. More than 23,000 of the hunting and fishing licenses purchased were for first time license holders.

“Florida is the Fishing Capital of the World and is home to some of the best recreational lands in the country for Florida families to enjoy,” **said Governor Ron DeSantis.** “The success of this initiative is impressive and I am happy to see so many families take advantage of these savings to enjoy our great outdoors.”

The more than 75,000 sportsman licenses sold through Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) totaled \$24 million in sales, representing an increase of over 400% compared to the 18,300 sportsman licenses sold during this same period last year. The collective interest, sales and participation highlights the initiative's impressive, statewide success and further underscores the importance outdoor recreation plays within Florida's overall economy.

The more than 55,000 annual state park passes sold through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) breaks down to nearly 15,000 individual passes and more than 40,000 family passes. This is more than four times the number of annual passes sold during this same period last

year. “I want to thank Governor DeSantis for establishing the Great Outdoors initiative between us and FWC to highlight Florida's natural spaces,” **said DEP Secretary Shawn Hamilton.** “It's our hope that everyone gets outside in the coming year and discovers firsthand what makes Florida so special.”

“Since October, over 75,000 people have taken advantage of the Great Outdoors Initiative by purchasing a license that will support conservation and provide an incredible opportunity to enjoy the most beautiful state to live in and recreate,” **said FWC Executive Director Roger Young.**

At a time when soaring inflation is adversely affecting families across the nation, Governor DeSantis signed [Executive Order 23-209](#), which directed DEP and FWC to offer a significant 50% discount on Florida State Parks annual entrance passes and FWC Gold Sportsman hunting and fishing licenses, respectively. These savings helped make the great outdoors more accessible to families looking to enjoy Florida's natural resources.

In addition to creating and maintaining more than 50,000 jobs and benefitting the state economically last fiscal year to the tune of \$3.6 billion, the Florida Park Service boasts the honor of being the only four-time winner of the Gold Medal distinction which recognizes the nation's best park system.

Legislation signed by Governor DeSantis in 2023 also affords Floridians the [firstchance](#) to reserve campsites. Starting January 1, 2024, Florida residents may now make campsite or cabin reservations up to 11 months in advance. Non-Florida residents may make campsite or cabin reservations up to 10 months in advance.

Florida is renowned as the Fishing Capital of the World, and FWC offers freshwater and saltwater fishing licenses for experiencing the best of coastal and inland fishing options, along with unique hunting opportunities. The economic impact on our state through these opportunities is tremendous with nearly \$15 billion contributing to our state's economy.

Governor DeSantis wholly encourages Floridians and visitors alike to experience our state's natural resources, and supports activities such as fishing, hunting and hiking that are family traditions for millions of Floridians.

To find a state park near you, visit: [FloridaStateParks.org](#).

To find more information on fishing and hunting licenses in Florida, visit: [MyFWC.com/License/Recreational](#).

**Governor Ron DeSantis Awards \$20 Million for Water Quality Improvement Projects in Biscayne Bay**

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** — Governor Ron DeSantis awarded \$20 million through the Biscayne Bay Water Quality Improvement Grant Program to strengthen

ongoing efforts to restore water quality in the bay. Since 2019, the state of Florida has invested more than \$70 million for targeted water quality projects in Biscayne Bay. To ensure restoration efforts continue, Governor DeSantis has again included \$20 million for Biscayne Bay in his [Focus on Floridas Future budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2024-25](#).

“The Biscayne Bay is a hub for sport and commercial fishing and tourism,” **said Governor Ron DeSantis.** “Our comprehensive approach to addressing water quality statewide and our investments in targeted estuaries, such as the Biscayne Bay, Indian River Lagoon and the Caloosahatchee, will ensure Florida's economic vitality and Floridians' way of life for decades to come.”

“As our administration has shown over the years, protecting Florida's water quality and supply is a priority,” **said Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nuñez.** “This \$20 million investment continues to deliver on the promise Governor DeSantis made to provide significant and meaningful support to Florida's natural resources and preserve it for future generations.”

Biscayne Bay is important to Florida both environmentally and economically, which is why [Governor DeSantis signed legislation](#) in 2021 to expedite water quality improvements in this area. This legislation established the Biscayne Bay Commission, which ensures that objective and sound science informs decision-making regarding the bay.

“Biscayne Bay is Florida's largest estuary and it has a direct connection to Florida's Coral Reef,” **said Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Shawn Hamilton.** “Restoring this vital ecosystem is critical to not only ensure healthy fisheries, but also to safeguard the natural buffer along this populated coastline.”

Selected projects include wastewater improvements (including septic-to-sewer), stormwater management and other projects that will help improve water quality in Biscayne Bay.

## School Choice

Continued from page 13

children last year compared to 52% in 2022. If you're not the parent of a school age child, you'd be forgiven for assuming parents crave stability after the upheaval of the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years, but the data says something different. The high water mark of interest in choosing a new school during the pandemic came in the fall of 2020, when 63% of parents were considering it. Yet this month, January 2024, 72% said they have considered choosing a new school for their child in the last year.

Truth number two is this: America's parents know that school choice is expanding—and they are talking about it. More than half of parents say their state now offers more education options, and the majority also say they've talked about school enrollment decisions with friends and families in the last month. More options, and more open conversation about these choices, is what we can expect in this "new normal"

Here's the myth: school choice is a partisan issue. The truth of the matter is that school choice decisions are personal, not



political. If you're only listening to the pundits, it may surprise you to hear that parents who identify as Democrats are searching for new schools at a higher rate than those who identify as Republicans. On the other hand, parents identifying as Republicans are interested in choosing public schools for their kids at the same levels as parents who identify as Democrats.

Clearly, school choice is the new normal for American families. Thankfully, 27,000 schools, homeschool groups, and community leaders are stepping up to take part in National School Choice Week, ensuring that parents see the options in their community firsthand. Millions of parents are doing their part to proactively explore the changing educational land-scape for their children. Working together, educators and parents are poised to ensure that this new normal puts kids first.

Shelby Doyle, based in Nashville, TN, is the vice president of public awareness at the National School Choice Awareness Foundation, the 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that hosts National School Choice Week each January and maintains the nation's largest online portfolio of English- and Spanish-language school navigation resources.

Article Link  
<https://about.newsusa.com/school-choice-is-the-new-normal>

## New Year, New You



New Year, New You: How Connectivity Helps Achieve Resolutions

(NewsUSA) - Another year has come and gone and with it many Americans are

*Continued page 15*

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## New You

*Continued from page 14*

once again working to stick to their New Year's resolutions. Whether it's mastering a new skill, maintaining a new exercise routine, or learning a new subject, increasingly they are turning to online resources to help them in their pursuit. But, despite all the tools at their disposal, only 9-12% of Americans ended up keeping last year's resolutions due to a combination of setting unrealistic goals, the inability to track them, and perhaps most of all, the lack of convenience.

Convenient access to the tools you need to be successful is critical when starting a new routine. Yet, as of 2020, the over 46 million Americans residing in rural areas of the United States lack local access to resources like gyms, libraries, or recreation centers.

Fortunately, new online resources are being made available every day that enable families in even the most remote parts of the country to achieve their goals from the comfort of their homes. In rural America, where 15% of the population resides, cable or fiber internet is often not available. There, satellite internet plays a crucial role in providing access to online tools for these residents, offering fast, reliable, and widespread coverage.

Hughes®, a pioneer in satellite internet technology, recently introduced new Hughesnet® service plans that are transforming connectivity and accessibility

in rural America. Leveraging the capabilities of JUPITER™ 3, the most advanced commercial communications satellite ever built, Hughes is offering customers enhanced choices for connecting, streaming and engaging in online activities in the upcoming year. With unlimited data, faster speeds, and a new low-latency Hughesnet Fusion® plan, the new Hughesnet is enhancing the internet experience for rural America.

Reliable connectivity empowers individuals to utilize various resources in pursuit of their goals. For instance, those aspiring to develop culinary skills can conveniently attend cooking classes from the comfort of their own kitchen via platforms like YouTube. Similarly, individuals interested in learning a musical instrument can opt for a Masterclass instead of commuting to a traditional music school. For those focused on weight loss and fitness, tools such as Noom offer assistance in monitoring daily calorie intake and healthier food choices.

Maintaining steadfast New Year's resolutions becomes significantly more manageable with a robust and dependable internet connection. Rural families can count on satellite internet to deliver the necessary tools and activities directly to them, facilitating better tracking and adherence to their resolutions.

Article Link

<https://about.newsusa.com/new-year-new-you-how-connectivity-helps-achieve-resol...>

## Emerging Adults

**Emerging Adults Stay Positive Despite Financial and Social Pressures**

(NewsUSA) - The designation "GenNext" represents adults ages 18-34, the life stage often referred to as "emerging adulthood," and refers to the next generation of workers, heads of households, consumers, and investors with significant decisions to make about their future. Many in this group are optimistic, despite experiencing personal and professional challenges wrought by recession, inflation, the COVID-19 pandemic, and job transitions with changing workforce expectations, according to a survey from financial services firm Edward Jones, with Next360 Partners and Market Cast.

Overall, the survey found GenNext to be a resilient group, although 80% of respondents currently see themselves as struggling or surviving financially.

"Our research offers a deeper understanding of GenNext, an age group defined by their shared experiences, not the year they were born," says Lena Haas, head of Wealth Management Advice and Solutions at Edward Jones. "With most worried about rising costs and an inability to save, this will have vast implications for the wealth management industry."

Contrary to popular belief, GenNext is hardworking and ambitious, but this demographic has distinct approaches to work and life in the face of today's social and economic challenges. Money matters, but so does comfort, security, and stability.

Members of GenNext also value

flexibility, and are open to alternative career paths, which further impacts their saving, spending and investing.

GenNext does not expect the same job stability as previous generations, according to the Edward Jones survey. They place less value on employer loyalty and plan for highly mobile careers of moving from one job to another, wearing many hats, and engaging in "side hustles" and multiple jobs to fund their lifestyles. Although they were born in the digital era, the GenNext lifestyle prioritizes real-world experiences; more than half of survey respondents reported being happiest when at home with friends and family, and they value face-to-face connections in work and home life.

GenNext cited a short-term mindset when it comes to finances, prioritizing everyday expenses, budgeting and saving for large purchases over other financial matters. When it comes to financial planning, more than half (52%) talk to their parents, many of whom may have long-term relationships with financial advisors. Although only 12% currently discuss finances directly with a financial advisor, two-thirds (68%) said they viewed financial advisors as a sounding board for ideas.

"Working with a financial advisor can help improve your financial knowledge and confidence and help you feel more in control," added Haas. "It's never too early to get started. Financial advisors can help remove burden and complexity and help you focus on the most important first steps."

<https://about.newsusa.com/emerging-adults-stay-positive-despite-financial-and-social-pressures>

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