

The Chattahoochee News-Herald



Sneads Sentinel

Because Great Communities Deserve Great Community Newspapers



County commission approves contemporary design for new Boys and Girls Club; June groundbreaking could incur higher cost

Fabrizio Gowdy
Gadsden County News Service

On Jan. 20, the Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners unanimously approved designs for the county's new Boys and Girls Club. It hopes to break ground by June, although that accelerated timeline could come at a higher cost.

Bret Hammond of the Tallahassee-based Hammond Design Group, the architect tasked with designing the new Boys and Girls Club, presented the board with floor plans and renderings for two design options.

Option one was a simple rectilinear design, while option two featured a central receiving area and a wing branching off each side.

For both options, the building would measure 6,000 square feet and be located on the Ward's Lot property in Quincy. The Gadsden County School Board voted to hand over total control of the Ward's Lot property to the BOCC.

According to Interim County Attorney Louis J. Baptiste, the BOCC will control the property as long as it uses it for recreational purposes.

The exterior would be

a contemporary design based on community input. The designs took inspiration from the Boys and Girls Club in Quitman, Ga.

Hammond told commissioners to think of the new facility as a complex, starting small and building out in the future. While there are not yet enough funds to build a gymnasium, he said one could eventually be constructed on the property.

Hammond insisted he needed a decision from the board the night of the meeting, because he planned to meet with consultants in his office

the next morning to meet the "compressed timeline" the county is trying to achieve.

The plan is to have all construction documents completed by mid to late March, award a contractor in April, and break ground by late June

"It's an aggressive schedule, I think we can do that. It may mean overtime for people, but I believe we can hit the March deadline.

The accelerated timeline could increase the cost however. Hammond explained that consultants and others working on the project will likely charge

more for speeding up the timeline.

I don't anticipate them coming back and saying they want exorbitant fees, but I do expect them to ask for a higher premium to put it ahead of other projects they currently have on their boards or ask their people to work Saturdays and Sundays," said Hammond.

The board voted unanimously to adopt design option two at the recommendation of Hammond and the design committee.

In other business, the board voted unanimously to table a \$300,000 proposal

to build restrooms at Robertsville, St. John, Sawdust, St. Hebron, and Scott Town Community Parks at a cost of \$60,000 per restroom.

Commissioner Brenda Holt raised concern over the cost of the project, which she alleged was far too high given the small size of the restrooms. In response, Roosevelt Morris of the county building department said the cost should be lower when it came before commissioners at the next meeting.

The next BOCC meeting will be held Feb. 3 at 6 p.m.



Investigation underway after fire damages Pilgrim's Rest Missionary Baptist Church

Fabrizio Gowdy
Gadsden County News Service

Early Sunday morning, a fire caused major damage to Pilgrim's

Rest Missionary Baptist Church on Gibson Road south of Havana.

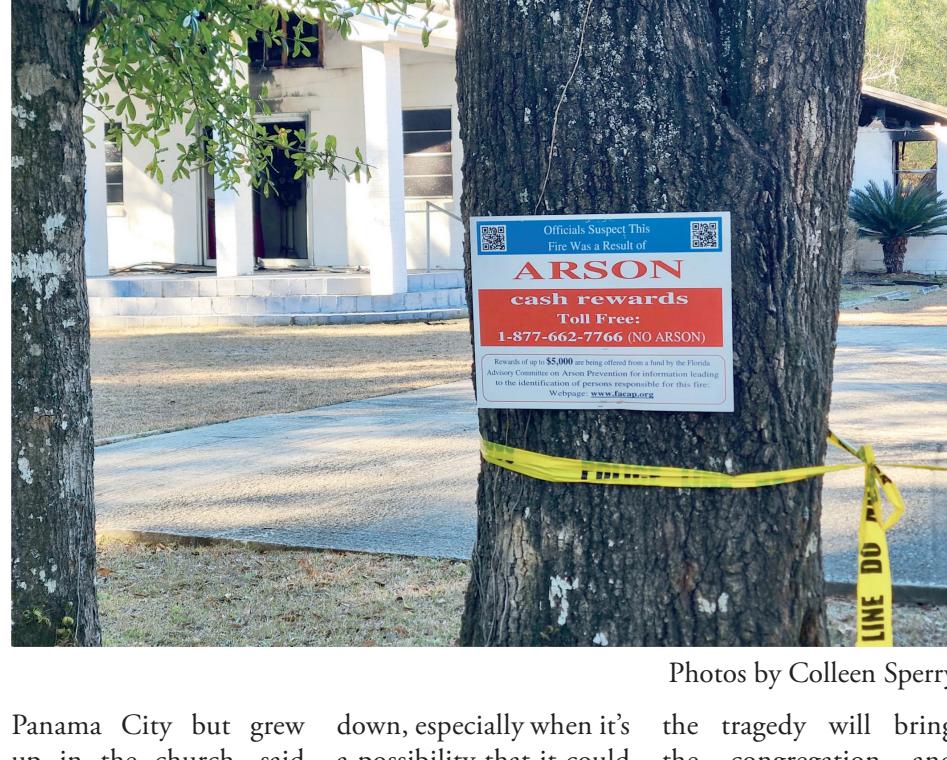
A sign posted on a tree outside the church states that officials suspect the fire was the result of arson. The State Fire Marshal's Office is investigating, but the cause has not yet been determined.

According to Havana Fire Chief Don Harrison, the pre-dawn blaze appears to have started in the rear of the church in a kitchen area. Harrison told the Havana Herald he believes the building is a total loss.

"I just don't see how they could salvage anything out of it," Harrison said.

Harrison said the State Fire Marshal has not yet informed him of an official cause. The Fire Marshal's Office had not responded to requests for comment as of press time.

Adrian Andrews, who recently moved to



Photos by Colleen Sperry

Panama City but grew up in the church, said the loss has been deeply emotional.

"It definitely takes a toll on you being told your home church, a sacred place that your parents took you to since you were an infant, is burned

down, especially when it's a possibility that it could have been done with malicious intent," said Andrews, who served as the church's drummer for 10 years and attended services there for more than 20 years.

Andrews said he hopes

the tragedy will bring the congregation and surrounding churches closer together.

"Hopefully, we get the help to rebuild, because it's been a spiritual haven for Christians in Gadsden County and even in Georgia," he said.

Motrail Harris, a former member who remains active in the ministry, said Pastor Simon Simmons Jr. and other church leaders are unable to comment because of the ongoing investigation. Harris confirmed the church was founded in 1930 off Highway 27 and moved to its current location in 1959.

The Havana Volunteer Fire Department was assisted by the Concord Volunteer Fire Department, Quincy Fire Department and Midway Fire District.

"They were a very big help," Harrison said.

Rewards of up to \$5,000 are being offered through the Florida Advisory Committee on Arson Prevention for information leading to the identification of those responsible. Tips can be submitted at facap.org or by calling 1-877-662-7766.



Community Calendar

January

Library Tea Time in Havana

- Wednesday, Jan. 28
- 4 - 5 p.m.
- 203 E 5th Avenue, Havana (Havana Public Library)

Enjoy a cozy afternoon of tea tasting. Great for all ages. Please call to reserve your spot. Spaces are limited.

(850)627-7106.

- Monday, Feb. 9
- 5:30 p.m.
- 300 Maple St., Chattahoochee (Cowen Library)

Stress Free Saturday

Woodworks Edition

- Saturday, Jan. 31
- 10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
- 300 Maple Street, Chattahoochee (Cowen Library)

Cookie decorating at the Cowen Library.

Boba Lab

- Tuesday, Feb. 10
- 5 - 6:30 p.m.
- 203 E 5th Avenue, Havana (Havana Public Library)

Hosted by UF/IFAS and Florida A&M University Cooperative Extension. Registration is required. Spaces are limited. Sign up today with the Gadsden County Extension Offices at 850-875-7255.

Make DIY popping boba. Learn the science behind the bubble tea magic and enjoy your own custom boba tea. Contact the library to register (850) 539-2844.

Kids Paint-a-DOT

- Saturday, Jan. 31
- 11 a.m.
- 732 S. Pat Thomas Parkway, Quincy (McGill Library)

Fun painting for children. Spaces are limited. RSVP to

Valentine Cookie Decorating

January 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Holidays

1st - New Year's Day

19th - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Savory, Satisfying Ideas for Lunch and Dinner

When cold and flu season calls for savory and satisfying meals, remember you don't have to be sick to enjoy the best this time of year has to offer. Skip the same old soups and stews, though, and level up your comfort food cache with the flavor and versatility of pearl couscous.

Distinguished from traditional Moroccan couscous by its slightly larger and rounder shape, plus its less dense, firmer consistency, pearl couscous is thoroughly versatile and a perfect fit for cold weather classics. With Success Boil-in-Bag Pearl Couscous, you get high-quality semolina wheat pearl couscous made just right. After the water boils, it's ready in under 7 minutes and prepared similarly to pasta.

It features a slightly nutty flavor on its own but can absorb any flavors of soups and salads while retaining its density and chewy texture. You can use

it in your family's meals to complement a range of greens, veggies, fish, meats and stews, making it a pantry staple to keep on hand throughout the year.

A hearty solution, this Italian Penicillin Soup is ideal for those feeling under the weather or simply craving a filling meal after a chilly day. It's loaded with rotisserie chicken, tender veggies and pearl couscous simmered in broth then finished with fresh lemon, Parmesan cheese and parsley for a meal that's as satisfying as it is appetizing.

Elegant in its simplicity, this Simple Lemon Butter Pearl Couscous is a perfect partner for grilled seafood, chicken or vegetables. Easy to serve as a standalone dish or a savvy side that practically cooks itself, you can add this highly versatile grain to your family's menu any day of the week – whether you're cooking for a crew or just two – and enjoy

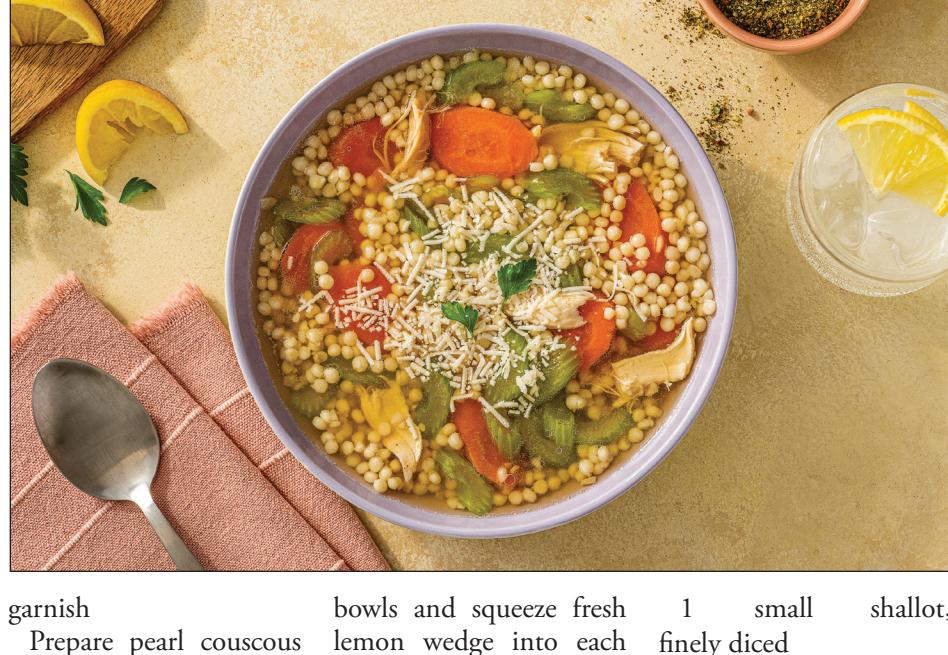
steamy leftovers for a light lunch.

Don't let the cold sap your creativity in the kitchen; turning to versatile, flavorful ingredients can make winter meals a cinch. Discover more pearl couscous-inspired dinner ideas by visiting SuccessRice.com.

Italian Penicillin Soup

Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 15 minutes
Servings: 4

2 bags Success Pearl Couscous
4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
1 cup carrots, sliced
1 cup celery, sliced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup rotisserie chicken, shredded
1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
4 lemon wedges
shredded Parmesan cheese, for garnish
chopped fresh parsley, for



garnish
Prepare pearl couscous according to package directions.

In large pot, bring broth to boil. Add carrots, celery and garlic. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook 5 minutes until vegetables are slightly tender.

Add chicken and Italian seasoning; simmer 5 minutes. Add pearl couscous and cook 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.
Ladle soup into four

bowls and squeeze fresh lemon wedge into each bowl. Garnish with Parmesan and parsley.

Simple Lemon Butter Pearl Couscous

Prep time: 5 minutes
Cook time: 10 minutes
Servings: 4

1 bag Success Pearl Couscous
3 lemons, juice only, plus 1 teaspoon zest
2 tablespoons butter

1 small shallot, finely diced
1 tablespoon fresh parsley, finely chopped

Prepare pearl couscous according to package directions, adding lemon juice to water.

In small pan, melt butter over medium heat. Add shallots and lemon zest. Cook 3 minutes. Stir pearl couscous into pan.

Divide pearl couscous into four bowls and top with parsley.



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TSC announces honorees for the 26th Annual Cherry Hall Alexander African American History Calendar

Erin Hill
Gadsden County News Service

Tallahassee State College recently announced the honorees for the 26th annual Cherry Hall Alexander African American History Calendar. Since 2001, TSC has recognized African American individuals whose dedication, leadership, and service have made a meaningful difference in their communities and beyond.

The theme for this year's calendar, "A Century of Impact: African Americans in the Military," honors the contributions of service members across generations. It celebrates those who have bravely defended our nation while continuing to build and lead through a legacy of service.

The honorees are as follows:

John R. Nelson Sr.
(President's Award honoree)

John Nelson is a Vietnam-era Army veteran, serving from 1968 to 1969, with additional service in Germany from 1970 to 1971. He earned recognition as the United States Army Europe 15th Aviation Soldier of the Year in 1970. His commitment to veterans' advocacy continued long

after his service, including founding Jefferson County VFW Post 251 in 2000. Over a 40-year professional career, Nelson held numerous leadership roles in public safety, government, and insurance. He is also a professional saxophonist with more than 60 years of performance experience.

Darryl Hall (February)

Following four years of active duty in the U.S. Army and an honorable discharge, Darryl Hall enrolled at the then-Tallahassee Community College while continuing his service with the Florida Army National Guard. Hall joined Leon County Emergency Medical Services shortly after its founding and rose through the ranks to become Deputy Chief Operations. With more than 35 years of experience in EMS, he has played a pivotal role in shaping emergency response services across the region.

Cedrick "Doc" Foster
(March)

As a Vietnam-era U.S. Army veteran, Cedrick Foster has demonstrated a lifelong commitment to service in all its forms. He earned degrees from Alcorn State University and Prairie View A&M University before serving as a communications specialist with

assignments at Fort Hood, Texas, and in West Germany, where he supported the 2nd Armored Division and received multiple commendations for excellence and leadership. Following his military service, Foster continued to give back as a mentor, volunteer counselor, youth sports coach, and community leader, while also building a long career in broadcasting and currently hosting a weekend program on WSST 730 AM in Thomasville, Georgia.

Jessie Clayton (April)

From 1980 to 1983, Jessie Clayton served in a medical unit, providing critical care to soldiers and nearby units. Alongside his medical responsibilities, he trained extensively in weaponry and marksmanship, earning recognition for his skill and dependability. Following his military service, Clayton earned a degree in information systems at Auburn University. Clayton's commitment to service extends beyond his professional work as he regularly volunteers with organizations such as the Kearney Center, Special Olympics, and the Oasis Center for Women and Girls, and has provided disaster relief assistance to communities affected by hurricanes.

Heather Marie Mitchell
(May)

The native of Gadsden County is a retired United States Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer. She served for more than 22 years with distinction, earning a reputation for developing future leaders and guiding Sailors through both professional and personal milestones. Mitchell earned both bachelor's and master's degrees in leadership from Grand Canyon University and is a certified DISC Facilitator and Corporate Trainer. She serves as the Training and Development Manager at Tallahassee State College and is pursuing a Doctor of Education in Educational and Organizational Leadership.

David L. Johnson (June)

Captain David Johnson is a Bronze Star recipient whose impact spans military service, professional excellence, and community engagement. Commissioned as a Second Lieutenant after graduating from Florida A&M University, Johnson served as an Infantry Officer with the Florida Army National Guard from 1990 to 2004, assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment, 53rd Separate Infantry Brigade. Following military service, he dedicated

more than 25 years to the financial services industry and currently serves as a Financial Services Professional with New York Life, helping individuals and families plan for the future.

Joe E. Alexander (July)

In August 2001, Joe Alexander enlisted in the Florida Army National Guard. His career began as a Private First Class, then he rose through the ranks, holding a wide range of operational and leadership roles throughout his tenure. His assignments included service as a constructive equipment supervisor and foreman, heavy equipment operator, operations sergeant, platoon sergeant, intelligence noncommissioned officer, and First Sergeant of Headquarters and Headquarters Company.

Alongside his military career, Alexander built a parallel career in law enforcement. He retired in August 2022 after 21 years of distinguished military service. He served as a Detective with the Tallahassee Police Department for more than 26 years.

Dr. Marcy Muldrow Sanders (August)

Dr. Marcy Muldrow Sanders is a retired United States Navy Commander (O-5). Most recently, she served as Regional

Engagement Principal for Florida with the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU), where she established DIU and National Security Innovation Network programming across Florida A&M University and the Florida State University System. Her work connected Department of Defense stakeholders with nontraditional problem solvers in academia, fostering innovation and opening pathways for research, collaboration, and entrepreneurial engagement.

Joseph Williams
(September)

A World War II veteran, Joseph Williams served in the United States Navy as a steward's mate in the Pacific Theater, spending years at sea during one of the 20th century's most consequential global conflicts. Following the war, Williams pursued additional education and went on to establish a long and respected career as a house painter. At 106 years old, Williams stands among the nation's oldest surviving African American veterans of World War II.

Tonja Fitzgerald (October)

After serving 21 years in the Florida Army National Guard, Tonja

TSC
on page B2

The Havana
Herald

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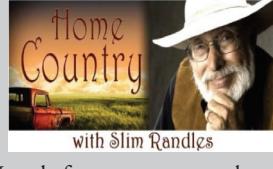
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Now before you can sneak away, here comes that pharaoh of the feed-store, that baron of the bunkhouse, that titan of the tack room...Windy Wilson.

Well, t'other day I meandered around town until I crept into Sarah's bookstore. You know the one. Has that sign on them bookshelves says "Love and other Fiction." Been meanin' to ask her 'bout that one a these days. Oh, Alphonse

Wilson here 'course.

Well, Miz Sarah shore is a sweetie and I like droppin' on in there ever now and then. Wellsir, this day, I was huntin' Farmer's Almanac for the new year. You know how it is... hate to do somethin' stoo-pid like plant cabbages in the wrong bowls of somethin' like that.

Wellsir, Sarah kinda looks me up and down, and I got glad as could be about bein' a upright fine-lookin' beast, and then she rears back and asks me to put on this yere Santa suit and talk to the kiddies later that day. She said she'd even give me that almanac for doin' it.

Well, hot dingles, campers! I got the suit and them fakeroo whiskers slapped 'em on and took up my perch right there next to them history shelves.

I didn't notice anything strange 'til I was 'bout three kids in, you know. Then I noticed o' Sarah had got the Santa elf fever her ownself!

Yep, she come over and stationed herself right next to good ol' Santa. That's me, you know. Wellsir, the very next tike that come up was this cute little girl and she hopped up in ol' Santa's lap. So I nacherly sent seasonings greetings across to 'er.

I said, "Hello there, young lady. Do you wish to convey an appurtenance of Christmas time wishes to all of us at this conflagration?"

And she says "Huh?" kinda like she didn't understand. Then Sarah whispers to her "Say Merry Christmas."

And she says Merry Christmas, Santa.

"Tell Santa what you want for Christmas," said Sarah. And the kidlet says, "Oh...I want a doggie!"

"I see! Says I. You desire to bask in the unabashed afflictions of our four-legged compatriots."

"No" she says, "...I want a doggie."

"Well a-course you do," says I. I looked at her mama and she gives me the nod.

You know how it's a adult duty to appertain responsibility, so's I look down and says, "Now you realize, a-course, that havin' a dog means providin' it with ampulatory nourishment and care. And there may be some...excretory surprises to be remediated."

The girl looked up at her mother. And her mama says she'll hafta feed it and clean up after it.

And that little angel says, "I will, Santa!"

So as to put the Santa visit into terminatin' remembrances, I said and a felicious cerebellum of the sanctified parturitionin' occurrence to you, my dear."

And she looked up at me and says "Merry Christmas!"

I musta done a good job of it, too, 'cuz when the guys come in from the Mule Barn, I heard Sarah tell 'em next year she was a-goin' to charge admission.

And you can tell 'em I said so!

Brought to you by your local classic country radio station which carries Home

Country Radio with Slim Randles. Windy's always hanging around there somewhere. ==

At The Pump

Local State, and National

National Average:

\$2.89 per gallon

State Average:

\$2.83 per gallon

Gadsden County Average:

\$2.72 per gallon

Jackson County Average:

\$2.70 per gallon

Leon County Average:

\$2.67 per gallon

Numbers based on AAA Gas Prices report, as of Jan. 27, 2025



Propane risks raise safety questions across North Florida

Zoning approvals can cause a domino-effect for disaster when public safety is overlooked and development quickly pushes forward

Patricia Smith

Across North Florida, propane storage and distribution facilities are expanding rapidly in rural and semi-rural areas, prompting safety experts to raise concerns. While economic development and energy demand are driving growth, the placement of large-scale propane facilities near residential neighborhoods, public infrastructure, and environmentally sensitive lands is creating urgent life-safety risks.

Propane is stored under pressure as a liquefied gas. If a tank or transfer system is compromised, escaping vapor can form a dense cloud that travels along the ground. Once ignited, that cloud can produce intense heat, overpressure, and fire within seconds. When multiple tanks are clustered together or located near homes, schools, or public facilities, the danger increases significantly, creating conditions where one failure can trigger a catastrophic chain reaction.

Jefferson County: A Mass-Casualty Risk Zone

In Jefferson County, the consequences of insufficient zoning have become increasingly evident. County approval of Cooksey Propane Inc. and Southern Quality Propane placed large volumes of propane in close proximity to residential homes, a local apiary and educational learning center visited by children, and critical public infrastructure, including the county water tower, sheriff's office, county jail,

and emergency management offices. Safety professionals warn that this configuration creates overlapping thermal radiation and blast zones, where a single tank failure could rapidly escalate into a mass-casualty event.

The concern resonates beyond Jefferson County. "I recently visited the Jefferson County Industrial Park to pick up some honey from the apiary," a Gadsden County

Propane
on page B1

NURSE JUDY'S NOOK

A bad little violet

George Cassidy Payne

It was almost a hallelujah day at our house today. We have many different kinds and prerequisites for Hallelujah days. This one was not because the new pastor at our church gave a wonderful sermon (although he did). It was not because there was suddenly world peace. It was not because of some miracle or even a special wish or prayer being granted. It was a small insignificant moment for some but a happy smile maker for me. Let me explain.

I have seven little African violets sitting on my kitchen windowsill. They are pink, deep rose, violet, purple and variegated. Every now and then all seven of them will blossom at the same time. At our house I call this a hallelujah day. I just love to see their pretty little perky faces smiling up at me. Visitors always comment on their effort to beautify the world. I think, but I'm not sure that it even makes the cats a little friskier as they dance around the kitchen.

I told you it was almost a hallelujah day, and here's the reason why it wasn't. There

is one little violet who is a holdout. He has furry leaves, but not even the beginning of any kind of a bud. He sits there among his glorious blooming brothers and sisters without even the slightest sign of shame. I look at him with disappointment. Isn't this always the case? Theres always someone who refuses to be a team player. I try talking to him.

I say, "Little violet, look around you. Do you see the show your brothers and sisters are putting on? Do you see the joy they are bringing to my kitchen? Do you not want to join them?"

That bad little violet just keeps staring out the window and does not respond. I've been snubbed before and it has not stopped me from whatever mission I'm on at the time. The good violets keep up their good work. They open their petals wider and wider and keep getting new little buds. The display gets bigger and prettier each day. The bad little violet just sits in their midst showing nothing but his mossy green leaves.

My happiness at this

wondrous thing happening right on my windowsill lasts about a week. Then the blooming beauties begin to lose their petals, and I know that soon I will have seven healthy little violets with only green leaves.

I am still a little disappointed that they all couldn't have pulled together and I happen to mention this to that spoil sport alter ego of mine, Nurse Judy. She, as always, is nothing but negative. "Have you no memory?" she asks.

"What do you mean?" I ask.

"Yes, there are times when they all bloom at once, but there have also been other times when all but one bloomed."

"know," I say, with an exasperated sigh. "That's when I get disappointed."

"I know you do," she says. "You mope around and scold that one violet, and you forget what happens next."

"What happens next?" I ask.

One day after all the other violets are done blooming, that little holdout t who is tinier than all the rest and plainer than all the rest since he is only white, bursts into bloom. He makes you so happy because

he is the only bloom there is."

"So, what are you trying to tell me?" I ask.

"That sometimes someone who never gets any attention but also has potential needs to go solo to be noticed for what they have to offer. You are sometimes too hard on non-participants. Sometimes everyone working together can be a beautiful thing but sometimes an individual not quite so talented can cause just as much happiness."

I think about this. Nurse Judy is smarter than I think. "Do you mean that when you and I go out together everyone pays attention to us, but if I went out alone, I could show off my less extravagant self and they would love me too,"

"No," she says. "You'd still be a frump."

So much for that

More later,
Judy
www.nursejudyinfo.com

P.S. I can't even measure up to a bad violet, who turns out to be good.

Grace Notes

When WWJD isn't enough

Nancy Kennedy

Years ago, a woman called me with an idea for my column.

She was discouraged by all the turmoil in the nation — things haven't changed much, have they? — and suggested we should all start wearing WWJD bracelets again.

Back in the 1990s, WWJD ("What Would Jesus Do?") was trendy among Christians. There were bracelets, bumper stickers, coffee mugs — the whole thing. The slogan came from a resurgence of the 1896 book *In His Steps* by Charles Sheldon, a fictional story about a pastor who challenges his congregation to ask, "What would Jesus do?" before every action for a year.

"Wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone read the book and we all did what Jesus would do?" the woman said.

The world probably would be a better place — although Jesus managed to tick off plenty of people by what he did and said.

He told religious leaders they were "whitewashed tombs full of dead men's bones" and that their father was the devil. He flipped over the tables of the moneychangers in the temple and took a whip to them, disrupting their thieving business practices. He ate with sinners and earned a reputation as a drunk and

a glutton, although he was neither.

Mostly, though, Jesus did things like heal the sick, raise the dead, walk on water and multiply loaves and fish to feed thousands.

Jesus could do those things because he's God.

Even if we could turn water into wine or make blind men see, even if every person in the world committed to living by "WWJD?" and tried their hardest and did their best, it still wouldn't work.

We might be able to change behavior. Maybe even stop wars, crime and family feuds. We might achieve a kind of peaceful coexistence, possibly even reduce poverty and hunger.

But it wouldn't change us inwardly.

We can polish the outside, but we can't fix our rebellious nature. There's always going to be someone who asks, "WWJD?" and then decides that flipping tables and cracking whips is the faithful response.

That's the problem — and the appeal — of WWJD. It offers a do-it-yourself approach to God.

True Christianity, however, is not about doing what Jesus would do. It's about trusting and resting in what Jesus has already done.

WWJD isn't the gospel. But WDJD is — What Did Jesus Do?

On the cross, Jesus' final words were, "It is

finished."

That's not a challenge. It's a promise.

One of my favorite hymns, "Before the Throne," puts it this way: "Because the sinless Savior died, my sinful soul is counted free; for God the just is satisfied to look on Him and pardon me."

When that truth comes first, something changes. Obedience stops being fueled by fear or grit and starts being shaped by gratitude. Mercy follows mercy received. Grace begets grace.

I don't need a bracelet to remind me.

Years ago, two women approached a pastor after church, both in tears. "We've gone to church all our lives and tried so hard to climb the mountain and live up to God's demands," they told him, "when Jesus climbed the mountain for us."

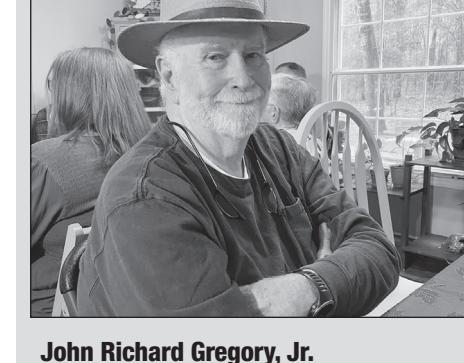
They weren't crying from guilt. They were crying from relief.

That's the difference between WWJD and grace — between striving and resting, between trying harder and trusting deeper.

WWJD?

He would smile — not because we finally figured out how to do better, but because we finally believed what he already did.

Contact Nancy Kennedy at 352-564-2927 (leave a message) or email at nkennedy@chronicleonline.com.



John Richard Gregory, Jr.

John Richard Gregory, Jr., father, father-in-law ("second dad"), brother, and friend, passed away at his home on Sunday, January 4, 2026. Born in Delray Beach, FL on July 22, 1943, at a time when Delray had dirt roads and children were born at home, he was the son of John Richard Gregory Sr. (Chief of the Delray Beach Fire Department) and Elizabeth Ida Gregory. He married the love of his life, Rebecca "Becky" Babb, in 1969.

When he first met Becky, she was home only for the summer in her hometown of Brevard, North Carolina (on break from college at the University of North Carolina) and he was in Brevard to deliver flowers grown on Pineland Farms of Boynton Beach, Florida.

It was clear, though, that they were a perfect match. During the next decade that they would later term "before the boy," John and Becky traveled America, camped and had a great time together, including an epic, month-long trip to Alaska from Delray in a modified Chevy Suburban that Becky named "Seamour." After their respective parents impressed upon them that it was now time to grow up and settle down, John and Becky built a home in Loxahatchee, FL and helped to found St. Peters United Methodist Church in Wellington, Florida. A few years later, they added their son, John "Jay" Richard Gregory III, to the family.

Theirs was an ideal life of family, fun and togetherness while Palm Beach Country grew and changed.

Anyone who knew John appreciated his easy, detailed and practical turn of mind — there was not much he could

not fix, create, or build. After retiring, he was able to enjoy his lifelong hobby of woodworking. He would sign each piece with his name and species of wood and give to his friends and family — how many of us have a "JRG JR" original item sitting on a desk or table or in a kitchen? He also loved camping with Becky and, after retirement, RVing with Becky, and then RVing with dear friends. Coming as a shock to his friends and family, John adopted a cat, Dixie, who joined him on RV trips after Becky passed in 2010. He was active in the First United Methodist Church of Chattahoochee, Florida in retirement, and always enjoyed the interactions with friends and pastors. Reflecting on his adventures with Becky, raising a family in Loxahatchee and making new friends for new adventures in Chattahoochee, John's life was truly a life well-lived.

Known as a kind, intelligent, quiet, and funny man, John will be dearly missed by his son Jay, his daughter-in-law Priscilla, his sisters Mary, Margaret, and Barbara, Becky's family, and his close RVing friends from Chattahoochee. The love of his life, Becky, passed away in 2010. We find solace in the knowledge that Becky and John are back together again while remembering, "What we once enjoyed, we can never lose. All that we love deeply becomes part of us."

A Celebration of Life service will occur Saturday February 21, 2026. Please join us at the United Methodist Church of Chattahoochee, Florida on that date at 11 a.m. Eastern Time. A traditional Methodist covered dish luncheon is to follow at the fellowship hall.

In lieu of flowers, gifts may be made to the United Methodist Church of Chattahoochee, Florida, 18 W. Main Street, Chattahoochee, Florida 32324 (850-663-4920), or St. Jude.

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Propane
from page A4

resident said. "When I got out of my truck, I just stood there staring at the massive propane tanks. I felt like I was in a war zone."

Another resident described the toll on nearby families. "I have

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friends that live there," she said. "I fear for them. Their lives have changed drastically. They no longer can have family BBQs in the yard, let the children play freely, or even flip a light switch without wondering if that is the day they might die." She paused, emphasizing that the reality has been

devastating, while county officials have yet to acknowledge residents' anguish.

"Proper siting and safety planning for propane storage is critical to preventing catastrophic fires or explosions from affecting nearby homes, schools, and essential infrastructure," explained a fire safety consultant familiar with industry standards. "When tanks are placed too close together or near public facilities, a single incident can escalate rapidly into a life-threatening situation. Preventive planning and strict safety measures are essential to protect both residents and emergency responders."

The county water tower represents a critical single point of failure. If compromised during an incident, Jefferson County could lose a vital water supply for fire suppression, leaving responders dependent on neighboring counties. Despite repeated warnings from residents and safety advocates over several months, officials have taken little action. Instead, they continue to rely on

zoning technicalities, characterizing public safety concerns as "civil matters."

Ethical questions have also emerged. Jefferson County public records list Planning Commissioner Stewart Cooksey as a property owner of Cooksey Propane Inc. while his wife allegedly owns the facility. Additional public sources indicate he also serves as a manager. The overlap has raised concerns in the community about potential conflicts of interest. Tensions continue to grow as residents, workers, and visitors face a hazard they did not create — one capable of producing catastrophic consequences for hundreds of lives, local wildlife, and surrounding wetlands.

Emergency Response and Regional Implications — The risk extends well beyond county borders. Rural emergency response capacity across North Florida is often limited, with fire departments relying on small, minimally staffed teams and constrained water supplies. In the event of a major propane incident, neighboring counties could be called upon to provide mutual aid, straining regional resources and potentially delaying life-saving intervention. Transportation corridors — often the same roads used by tanker trucks, emergency vehicles, and residents — would further complicate evacuation and response efforts.

Zoning Comparison: Gadsden County's Preventive Measures — Gadsden County has taken a more precautionary approach to propane-related risk. According to its Land Development Code, the county prohibits the sale or dispensing of propane gas within recreational vehicle parks, limiting use to small consumer containers such as those used for grills or stoves. The restriction is intended to reduce fire and explosion hazards in areas where people live, congregate, and visit. Nearby counties, including Jefferson, have not adopted similar targeted measures. While general permitting standards and setbacks exist, there are no equivalent restrictions specifically designed to limit propane exposure in sensitive land-use areas. The contrast illustrates how zoning decisions can directly influence public safety outcomes when hazardous materials are involved.

A Cautionary Example for North Florida — Jefferson County's experience serves as a warning for local governments across the region. Rapid approvals and limited oversight in high-risk industrial development can transform economic opportunity into public danger. Residents, including children and other vulnerable populations, now face hazards that could escalate into a regional emergency. For North Florida counties weighing growth against safety, the lesson is clear: proactive planning, comprehensive hazard review, buffer zones, and coordinated emergency responses are essential to prevent tragedy.


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PROBATE DIVISION
FILE NO. 26000002CPA

IN RE: ESTATE OF CLARICE MICHELLE WHITFIELD
a/k/a MIKKI HOUCK,
Deceased.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

The administration of the Estate of CLARICE MICHELLE WHITFIELD, deceased, File Number 26000002CPA, is pending in the Circuit Court for Gadsden County, Florida, Probate Division, the address of which is Gadsden County Courthouse, Quincy, Florida. The names and addresses of the Personal Representative and the Personal Representative's attorneys are set forth below.

All creditors of the decedent and other persons having claims or demands against decedent's estate, including unmatured, contingent, or unliquidated claims, on whom a copy of this notice is served within three months after the date of the first publication of this notice must file their claims with this Court **WITHIN THE LATER OF THREE MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE OR THIRTY DAYS AFTER THE DATE OF SERVICE OF A COPY OF THIS NOTICE ON THEM.**

All other creditors of the decedent and persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent, including unmatured, contingent, or unliquidated claims, must file their claims with this court **WITHIN THREE MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE.**

ALL CLAIMS AND DEMANDS NOT SO FILED WILL BE FOREVER BARRED.

The date of the first publication of this Notice is January 29, A.D. 2026.

Personal Representative:

JOCILLA WHITFIELD SMITH

198 T.E. Smith Road

Bainbridge, GA 39819

Attorney for Personal Representative:

ALEXANDER L. HINSON

121 N. Madison Street

Post Office Box 550

Quincy, Florida 32353-0550

Telephone: (850) 875-1300

E-mail: ahinson@lineshinson.com

2t: 1/29, 2/5

NOTICE TO RECEIVE SEALED BIDS

The Quincy City Council will receive sealed bids from any qualified person, company or corporation interested in constructing the:

Quincy Paving Project 2026

The project will consist of milling and resurfacing multiple streets within the City limits. Signing and striping will also be included within the scope.

Bid documents can be obtained at Dewberry Engineers Inc., 20684 Central Avenue East, Blountstown, Florida 32424, (850) 674-354-5208. The bid must conform to Section 287.133(3) Florida Statutes, on public entity crimes. Digital copies of the plans and specifications will be available free of charge by contacting Sherry Gayheart with Dewberry at sgayheart@dewberry.com

Completion date for this project will be **90 days** from the date of the Notice to Proceed presented to the successful bidder.

Liquidated damages for failure to complete the project on the specified date will be set at \$200.00 per day.

Please indicate on the envelope that this is a sealed bid for the "Quincy

Paving Project 2026".

Bids will be received, opened, and read aloud at **2:00 pm EST** on **February 18th, 2026** at the City Manager's Office in the Quincy City Hall, 404 West Jefferson Street, Quincy, FL 32351

The Quincy City Council reserves the right to waive informality in any bid, to accept and/or reject any or all bids, and to accept the bid that in their judgment will be in the best interest of The City of Quincy.

If you have any questions, please contact Matthew Chester at

(850) 354-5202 or

MChester@Dewberry.com.

3t: 1/29, 2/5, 2/12

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TSC
from page A2

**Jarvis V. Rosier, Sr.
(November)**

Fitzgerald created a well-known leadership record defined by integrity, adaptability, and operational excellence. Fitzgerald rose to senior enlisted leadership positions, including Distribution Platoon Sergeant and Utilities Equipment Repair Supervisor. She received multiple awards and honors for her service. Following her military service, Fitzgerald dedicated 29 years to education with Leon County Schools, beginning as a classroom teacher and rising to Assistant Superintendent.

active and reserve duty, including a combat tour in Afghanistan.

**Dr. Pia S. Woodley
(December)**

Representing the fourth generation of his family to serve the country, Jarvis Rosier, Sr.'s assignments included operations leadership with the 189th Infantry Brigade at Fort Bragg, service as First Sergeant with Task Force Cerberus during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, and Chief Instructor at the United States Army Reserve Military Police School in California. His work and leadership were recognized with numerous awards and commendations. He retired from the United States Army in 2009 after serving 34 years of

she led. Currently, Woodley serves as Chair of the Florida Veterans Foundation, overseeing a \$2.2 million budget and advancing initiatives that improve veterans' quality of life.

**Tariq Rashad Bonnett
(January)**

Tallahassee native, Tariq Bonnett, earned a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology from Florida A&M University in 2018 and was commissioned in the United States Navy after graduating from Naval Officer Candidate School in 2019. He went on to become a Naval Aviator and currently serves as a Lieutenant. Throughout his aviation career,

he has accumulated over 770 flight hours across multiple aircraft platforms, including the T-6, T-44, and P-8. His service includes two overseas deployments, during which he completed more than 60 combat flight hours and earned multiple military honors. Bonnett is dedicated to developing future leaders, which is why he currently serves as an Assistant Professor of Naval Science with the Naval ROTC Program at Morehouse College.

during the designated dates and times listed:

- Monday, February 2, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Tuesday, February 3, from 3 to 5 p.m.
- Wednesday, February 4, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Thursday, February 5, from 3 to 5 p.m.
- Friday, February 6, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Monday, February 9, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Tuesday, February 10, from 3 to 5 p.m.
- Wednesday, February 11, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Thursday, February 12, from 3 to 5 p.m.
- Friday, February 13, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

MEETING NOTICE

The next regular meeting of the Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners will be on Tuesday, February 3, 2026, starting at 6:00 p.m. The following items have been agendaed: Awards, Presentations, and Appearances; Consent: Ratification Memo, January 20, 2026, Regular BOCC Meeting, January 29, 2026, Special Meeting Items Pulled for Discussion. Citizens Requesting to be Heard on Non-Agenda Items (3-minute limit): The Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners welcomes and encourages public participation at all Board meetings. Citizens can speak for up to three (3) minutes on non-agenda items. Public comments and participation are also encouraged for items on the agenda. Additionally, if you are unable to attend a meeting in person, comments from the Public can also be submitted via email to CitizensToBeHeard@gadsdencountyfl.gov by noon on the meeting date. Comments submitted after the deadline but prior to the meeting will be added to the official record, but the County cannot guarantee that Commissioners and staff will have adequate time to review them prior to the meeting. Citizens are further encouraged to participate on the County's website at www.gadsdencountyfl.gov. Public Hearings, Proposed FY2027 Budget Calendar, General Business: Approval of Resolution 2026-011 Grant Budget Amendment for FY26 Clerk of Court: Updates; Interim County Attorney: Updates; Interim County Administrator: Updates; Discussion Items by Commissioners: Updates. (This agenda and a listing of the Receipt/File items may be viewed in electronic format on the County's website at www.gadsdencountyfl.gov.)

If a person decides to appeal any decision by the Board of County Commissioners with respect to any matter considered at such public meeting, he/she will need a record of the proceedings and for such purpose, he/she may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes testimony and evidence to which the appeal is to be heard.

In accordance with Section 286.26, Florida Statutes, persons needing special accommodation to participate in this meeting should contact the Facilities Management Office, 9-B East Jefferson Street, Quincy, FL 32351, by written request at least 48 hours prior to the meeting. Telephone: (850) 875-8665 or 850-363-1360.

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Gadsden County News Service

Gadsden Chapter of National Hook-Up of Black Women hosts MLK Celebration, Freedom Walk and Breakfast

Erin Hill
Photos by Dorian Williams

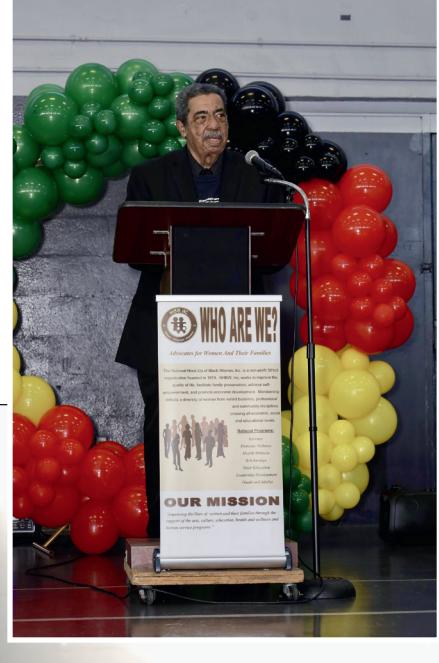
The National Hook-Up of Black Women Inc., Gadsden Chapter, hosted its annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration on Monday, Jan. 19, at The Joe Ferolito Center in

Quincy.

Held under the theme "Mission Possible II: Building Community, Uniting a Nation the Nonviolent Way," the event brought community members together for the organization's Annual Freedom Walk and

Community Breakfast in honor of the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The program began at 8 a.m. and featured Elijah Key Jr., superintendent of Gadsden County Schools, as the keynote speaker.



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