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New affidavit alleges school maintenance supervisor stole more than \$224,000 from district

Michael Pride accused of selling copper purchased with school district funds over nearly five years

Erin Hill
Gadsden County News Service

A newly filed arrest affidavit alleges a longtime Gadsden County School Board maintenance supervisor stole more than \$224,000 from the school district over nearly five years by purchasing copper wire with district funds and selling it for personal gain.

Michael Rochelle Pride, 50, of Quincy, now faces a charge of first-degree grand theft after investigators with the Florida

Department of Law Enforcement expanded their investigation into the alleged thefts. The new charge follows Pride's April arrest on charges of dealing in stolen property, grand theft and driving while license suspended or revoked.

According to the affidavit, the investigation began April 7 after a citizen reported that a school district employee had been purchasing unusually large quantities of copper wire from an electrical supply company over several

months. Investigators later reviewed purchase invoices, work orders, electronic mail records and scrapyard transaction records dating from September 2021 through April 2026.

The affidavit alleges Pride purchased a p p r o x i m a t e l y \$660,474.57 worth of copper wire using school district funds during that period. Investigators believe he later sold copper wire to a Tallahassee metal recycling business, receiving a total of \$224,022.85 in cash

and depriving the school district of that amount.

Investigators said they conducted surveillance on April 28 and observed Pride pick up spools of copper wire from an electrical supply company before later taking the material to a Tallahassee metal recycling business, where he was detained while allegedly attempting to sell the copper.

During an interview with investigators, Pride admitted selling copper wire to the recycling business, according to the affidavit. He told

investigators he replaced old wiring in school buildings with new wiring and then sold the removed copper. He also stated that no one with the school district knew he was selling the material and keeping the proceeds.

The affidavit states Pride told investigators he kept a small portion of the money for himself and used the remaining funds to buy food for employees or assist employees' families during times of need, such as after the death of a family member.

As part of the

i n v e s t i g a t i o n , Superintendent Elijah Key Jr. provided investigators with a letter stating that no one employed by the Gadsden County School District had been authorized to dispose of or sell district property for personal gain.

Based on the investigation, agents determined there was probable cause to charge Pride with first-degree grand theft. A Leon County judge signed the arrest warrant July 17.

Quincy man killed in single-vehicle crash

Erin Hill
Gadsden County News Service

A 51-year-old Quincy man was killed Friday afternoon in a single-vehicle crash on State Road 65 in Gadsden County, according to the Florida

Highway Patrol.

The crash occurred at approximately 12:38 p.m. July 24 on State Road 65 south of Old Federal Road.

According to the preliminary investigation, the man was

driving a pickup truck north on State Road 65 when the vehicle traveled off the right side of the roadway and came to a stop.

The pickup continued before striking a tree on the north shoulder, troopers said.

The driver, who was the vehicle's sole occupant, was pronounced dead at the scene. Authorities said he was wearing a seat belt.

The Florida Highway Patrol said the crash remains under

investigation.

Gadsden County Emergency Medical Services, the Gadsden County Sheriff's Office and Gadsden County Fire Rescue assisted at the scene.

Former principal alleges retaliation after reporting deputy accused of sexually abusing students

Erin Hill
Gadsden County News Service

Former Gadsden County High School Principal Bernard Marlon Ball has filed a federal lawsuit alleging the Gadsden County

School Board and Superintendent Elijah Key retaliated against him after he reported allegations of sexual misconduct involving former school resource deputy Sedale Canidate and later cooperated with investigators.

The lawsuit, filed July 20 in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida, alleges Ball was reassigned, subjected to retaliation, investigated, reprimanded and ultimately not reappointed after he disclosed allegations involving Canidate and participated in the criminal investigation that followed. Ball is seeking damages, attorney's fees, reinstatement or front pay, and has requested a jury trial.

According to the complaint, two female students reported allegations against Canidate to Ball on Nov. 10, 2025. Ball alleges he obtained

written statements from the students, reported the allegations to the Florida Department of Children and Families, and notified Assistant Superintendent Dr. Sylvia Jackson and Key.

The lawsuit claims Key's attitude toward Ball changed after the report. Ball alleges he was informed on Dec. 22, 2025, that he would be removed as principal and reassigned. According to the complaint, Key cited a "broken trust," an unbalanced master schedule and that Ball "talked too much" as reasons for the decision.

Ball further alleges that after he submitted a written whistleblower complaint in January 2026 and later gave statements to investigators with the Office of the State Attorney, he was subjected to an undisclosed investigation, excluded from principals' meetings and professional development, disciplined

over attendance and leave usage, and eventually reassigned to positions with few or no meaningful responsibilities.

According to the complaint, Ball was never provided a formal or informal performance evaluation during the 2025-26 school year before he was removed as principal. The lawsuit alleges the district documented no performance deficiencies before deciding not to renew his administrative contract.

The complaint also alleges that during an April 16, 2026, meeting, Key informed Ball he would not be reappointed and stated he did not have to provide a reason for the decision. Ball alleges Key remarked, "I know that's what y'all been waiting on."

Ball contends the actions violated Florida's public-sector Whistle-blower's Act and his First Amendment rights.

The lawsuit alleges the district retaliated against him for reporting suspected misconduct by a law enforcement officer and for participating in the subsequent criminal investigation.

The lawsuit stems from the criminal investigation involving Canidate, a former Gadsden County Sheriff's Office school resource deputy assigned to Gadsden County High School.

Canidate was arrested July 10 following a Florida Department of Law Enforcement investigation. He faces multiple felony charges, including sexual battery by a law enforcement officer, lewd and lascivious conduct, indecent or lewd and lascivious touching of certain minors, and attempted solicitation of lewd or lascivious conduct. Prosecutors allege Canidate sexually abused multiple students over two school years while serving as a

school resource deputy. Canidate has pleaded not guilty, and the criminal case remains pending. He is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in court.

In his complaint, Ball alleges his reporting of the students' allegations and his cooperation with investigators directly led to adverse employment actions that damaged his career and hindered his ability to obtain comparable administrative positions in other school districts.

Court records show the Gadsden County School Board and Key have waived formal service of the lawsuit. By signing the waivers, the defendants agreed to accept service without requiring formal delivery of the complaint. As of Tuesday, neither defendant had filed an answer or other response to the lawsuit. Under the waiver, the defendants have 60 days from July 27 to file a response.



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LEGAL ADVERTISEMENT

N THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SECOND JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN AND FOR GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA. CASE No. 26000256CAA

TOWD POINT MORTGAGE TRUST 2019-2, U.S. BANK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, AS INDENTURE TRUSTEE, PLAINTIFF, VS. THE UNKNOWN HEIRS, BENEFICIARIES, DEVISEES, GRANTEES, ASSIGNORS, CREDITORS AND TRUSTEES OF THE ESTATE OF SERINA LOFTON A/K/A SERENA O. LOFTON A/K/A SERINA OCE LOFTON A/K/A SERINA O. LOFTON (DECEASED), ET AL. DEFENDANT(S).

To: NOTICE OF ACTION THE UNKNOWN HEIRS, BENEFICIARIES, DEVISEES, GRANTEES, ASSIGNORS, CREDITORS AND TRUSTEES OF THE ESTATE OF SERINA LOFTON

A/K/A SERENA O. LOFTON A/K/A SERINA OCE LOFTON A/K/A SERINA O. LOFTON (DECEASED) RESIDENCE: UNKNOWN LAST KNOWN ADDRESS: 809 W Clark St, Quincy, FL 32351

To: UNKNOWN SPOUSE OF SERINA LOFTON A/K/A SERENA O. LOFTON A/K/A SERINA OCE LOFTON A/K/A SERINA O. LOFTON (DECEASED) RESIDENCE: UNKNOWN LAST KNOWN ADDRESS: 809 W Clark St, Quincy, FL 32351

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that an action to foreclose a mortgage on the following described property located in Gadsden County, Florida: THE FOLLOWING DESCRIBED LOT, PIECE OR PARCEL OF LAND, SITUATE, LYING AND BEING IN THE COUNTY OF GADSDEN, STATE OF FLORIDA, TO WIT: PART OF LOT 30 IN ROBERT'S CITY, SAID LAND LYING AND BEING IN THE COUNTY OF GADSDEN, SECTION 12, TOWNSHIP 2 NORTH, RANGE 4 WEST AS DESCRIBED IN DEED NO. 244 OF THE COUNTY OF GADSDEN, STATE OF FLORIDA, THROUGH THE TRUSTEES OF THE INTERNAL IMPROVEMENT FUND OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA, GRANTOR; THIS LAND BEING FURTHER DESCRIBED AS BEGINNING 188.5 FEET EAST OF THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF LOT 30, ROBERT CITY, AND RUN

EAST 66 FEET, SOUTH 166 FEET, WEST 66 FEET AND THEN NORTH 166 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING.

has been filed against you, and you are required to serve a copy of your written defenses, if any, to this action, on Tromberg, Miller, Morris & Partners, PLLC, attorneys for Plaintiff, whose address is 600 West Hillsboro Boulevard, Suite 600, Deerfield Beach, FL 33441, and file the original with the Clerk of the Court, within 30 days after the first publication of this notice, either before 8/30/26 or immediately thereafter, otherwise a default may be entered against you for the relief demanded in the Complaint.

This notice shall be published once a week for two consecutive weeks in the Havana Herald.

Date: July 22, 2026.
(Court Seal)
NICHOLAS THOMAS
Clerk of the Circuit Court
By: Charlotte Willeby
Deputy Clerk of the Court
2t: 7/30, 8/6

Community Calendar August

Thursday, July 30

- Ice Cream Social

The Gadsden County Public Library System will host an Ice Cream Social at 1 p.m. at the William A. McGill Public Library, 732 S. Pat Thomas Parkway, Quincy. Ice cream and refreshments will be available while supplies last.

Saturday, Aug. 1

- Community Job & Resource Fair

Gadsden County Probation, in partnership with the DJ DAP's Loreen Mathews Foundation and the Upsilon Theta Sigma Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc., will host a Community Job & Resource Fair from 9 a.m. to noon at the Joe Ferolito Recreation Center, 122 N. Graves St., Quincy. The event will include employment opportunities, human resources assistance, wellness exams, food, giveaways, school supplies and children's activities.

- Step Up for Dads BBQ Cookoff

Proud Dad Gadsden will host the Step

Up for Dads BBQ Cookoff from noon to 4 p.m. at the E.C. Richardson Building on the New Life Campus, 640 S. Shelfer St., Quincy. The event will feature a barbecue cookoff competition, music, games, father recognition, clothing giveaways and family activities.

Sunday, Aug. 2

- Free Back-to-School Health Fair

The City of Quincy and St. Paul's Episcopal Church will host a free Back-to-School Health Fair from 2 to 6 p.m. at the Joe Ferolito Recreation Center, 122 N. Graves St., Quincy. The event will feature more than 20 vendors, wellness checks, vaccinations, free haircuts, door prizes, giveaways, music,

August 2026						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
27	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

games, food trucks and information on community programs and services.

Tuesday, Aug. 18

- Don't Leave Your Family Guessing

The Gadsden County Public Library will host "Don't Leave Your Family Guessing: Preparing Today for Tomorrow" at 6 p.m. at the William A. McGill Public Library, 732 S. Pat Thomas Parkway, Quincy. The free

community event will cover estate planning, pre-need funeral planning and life insurance. Registration is required by Aug. 14, and space is limited.

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Puzzle Solutions

Don't Peek. Puzzles on page 5.

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

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B ₃	R ₁	E ₁	V ₄	I ₁	T ₁	Y ₄	RACK 1 = 67
O ₁	C ₃	E ₁	L ₁	O ₁	T ₁		RACK 2 = 8
A ₁	R ₁	T ₁	W ₄	O ₁	R ₁	K ₅	RACK 3 = 64
C ₃	A ₁	L ₁	C ₃	I ₁	F ₄	Y ₄	RACK 4 = 84
PAR SCORE 150-160							TOTAL 223

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Bear Creek Bethel M.B. Church celebrates 139th anniversary

Dr. Deborah Thigpen
Gadsden County News Service

Bear Creek Bethel Missionary Baptist Church marked a monumental milestone on Sunday, July 19, 2026, as the congregation gathered to celebrate its 139th anniversary. Under the dedicated leadership of Host Pastor Terrence D. Milton, the historic church celebrated under the theme, “A Legacy of Faith, Honoring Our Past, Celebrating Our Presence, and Inspiring Our Future.”

The 3:00 p.m. commemorative service, held at the church’s 3476 Old Federal Road sanctuary, was a beautiful afternoon of worship, reflection, and community. The program commenced with an earnest prayer given by Evangelist Mimi Ellis, followed by a foundational scripture reading delivered by Evangelist Betty Carter. Mother Nadine Reed

then extended a warm and gracious welcome to the congregation and visiting guests. Throughout the afternoon, the sanctuary was filled with uplifting and spirited musical selections provided by the Mount Calvary Primitive Baptist Church choir. Setting the stage for the keynote message, First Lady Lakendra Green took the podium to proudly introduce the afternoon’s guest speaker: her husband, Elder Lakendric Green of Mt. Calvary P.B. Church in Quincy.

Drawing from the Gospel of Matthew (16:15-18), Elder Green anchored his sermon in the biblical moment when Peter confessed his faith, and Jesus declared, “upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Turning his attention to the present-day congregation, Elder Green challenged attendees with

a deeply personal question: “What is the church to you?”

He enthusiastically reminded the members that the true essence of the church extends far beyond its physical walls, decorations, and traditions.

“The church is more than nice chandeliers. The church is more than where we meet up on Sunday morning,” Elder Green preached. “The church is more than where the deacon lines the hymn... The church is where you meet up and have an encounter with God.”

Throughout his impassioned delivery, Elder Green encouraged the congregation to bring vibrant energy and gratitude to their worship.

“I believe when you show up in God’s house, you ought to come clapping your hands, you ought to come stepping your feet, you ought to come leaping



Photo Left to Right: Elder Lakendric Green and Pastor Terrence D. Milton

for joy,” he shared. “In my 39 years of living, God has been mighty good to me. And just for the record, let me serve the devil notice: if God don’t do nothing else, He has already done enough.”

Following the dynamic message, Pastor Terrence

D. Milton delivered sincere remarks, expressing his deep appreciation for the congregation’s enduring legacy and ongoing dedication to being “A Caring Church for Changing Times.”

The joyous 139th anniversary celebration

concluded with Elder Lakendric Green offering the blessing of the food, final closing remarks, and the benediction, sending the congregation forth to enjoy a time of cherished fellowship and a delicious anniversary meal prepared by Poolah’s Kitchen.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

THE GADSDEN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ARE CONSIDERING PROPOSED CHANGES TO ITS BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026.

THE CHANGES WILL BE DISCUSSED AT THE BOARD’S NEXT REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING TO BE HELD AUGUST 4, 2026 AT 6:00 P.M. IN THE GADSDEN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSION CHAMBERS, 9 EAST JEFFERSON STREET, QUINCY, FLORIDA.

Public comment for the meeting should be submitted via email to citizenstobeheard@gadsdencountyfl.gov until 10:00am on Tuesday, August 4, 2026 in order to allow sufficient time for provision to the Gadsden county commission prior to the meeting. Any comment submitted after this time will be accepted and included as part of the official record of the meeting.

The Purpose of the Public Hearing will be to amend the following budgets:

General Fund

A FINAL DECISION ON THE PROPOSED CHANGES WILL BE MADE AT THIS MEETING.
A SUMMARY OF THE CHANGES ARE:

	GENERAL FUND	SPECIAL REVENUE FUND	CAPITAL PROJECTS
REVENUE	+ (-)	+ (-)	+ (-)
Fund Balance	(624,894.46)		
Charges For Services			
Intergovernmental Revenue			
Transfers In			
Miscellaneous Revenue			
Net Change	(624,894.46)	-	-
EXPENSE			
General Government			
Public Safety	624,894		
Economic Environment			
Human Services			
Transportation			
Culture/Recreation			
Net Change	624,894.46	-	-

Obituaries



George Lamar Munroe, III

Memorial services for George Lamar Munroe, III, 78, of Quincy, Florida, will be at 2 p.m. Friday, July 24, 2026, at St. Peter’s Anglican Church, Tallahassee, Florida. (Church address: 4784 Thomasville Road, Tallahassee, FL 32309)

On July 21, Lamar went home to be with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He was born and raised in Quincy, Florida, in a loving family, where he enjoyed the outdoors and playing football. After working alongside his father for 30 years at Flint Hardware, he became a contractor and built beautiful custom homes across the Panhandle. His

love of the outdoors was passed on to his sons and grandchildren. Though quiet by nature, he was kind, honest, generous and understanding, all flowing from his strong beliefs and convictions. He is survived by his sons, grandchildren, and loving sisters and brother.

Survivors include his sons, George Lamar Munroe IV of Quincy, Florida; Ben Munroe (Katie) of Havana, Florida; and Matt Williams (Jill) of Richmond, Virginia; grandchildren, Taylor Munroe of Houston, Texas; Wallace Munroe and Madeline Munroe, both of Marianna, Florida; Forest Munroe of Quincy, Florida; Laura Louise Munroe, Ginger Munroe and Roxie Munroe, all of Havana, Florida; and Hayes and Carter Williams of Richmond, Virginia; brother, Arthur Munroe (Freya) of Regensburg, Switzerland; sisters, Connie Munroe of Winter Springs, Florida; Jean Munroe of Micanopy, Florida; Sally Munroe of Matthews, North Carolina; Mary Ann Munroe of Gainesville, Georgia; and a host of nieces, nephews and extended family.

He was preceded in death by his loving wife of 35 years, Ann Sholar Munroe; and his parents, Jean and Lamar Munroe Jr.

Memorials may be made in Mr. Munroe’s memory to Big Bend Hospice Inc., 1723 Mahan Center Blvd., Tallahassee, FL 32308.

Guests may sign the online register at www.clarkfuneral.com.



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MEETING NOTICE

The next regular meeting of the Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners will be on Tuesday, August 4, 2026, starting at 6:00 p.m. The following items have been agendaed: **Awards, Presentations, and Appearances:** Proclamation for Archie Mae Carter **Consent:** Ratification Memo, June 16, 2026, Property Tax Workshop, June 16, 2026, Pre-BOCC Workshop, June 16, 2026, Regular BOCC Meeting, Approval and Signature for Special Assessment Lien Satisfaction, Approval of Signatures for Special Assessment Liens and Contracts - State Housing Initiative Partnership Program (SHIP) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Technical Revision and Approval of Resolution No. 2026-for the State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program (SHIP) Local Housing Assistance Plan for fiscal years(s) 2026-2027, 2027-2028 and 2028-2029, Public Officials Bond Review **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.** Board direction related to Budget Amendment 2026-094 and 2026-095 for the payment of year one (2024-2025) of the ACHA EMS Medicaid Billing and Reimbursement Agreement **General Business:** Board Approval to Execute M0026-A4 for EMS Building Award increase (1.9 million) and Time Extension (1-year), Approval of contract with the selected proposer of Request for Qualifications (RFQ) 26-09 EPA Brownfields, Approval to begin the Bid Process with Proposers Responding to Invitation to Bid (ITB) 26-16 Old Courthouse Renovations Phase II, Approval of Bid Award ITB 26-15 Timber Run Road and Jamieson Road Paving Project, Approval of Roadway Lighting Agreement with Talquin Electric Cooperative, Inc., Consideration of Approval for Amendment One to grant agreement between The Florida, department of Commerce and Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners for Grant Agreement (HL222), Approval of Resolution 2026-035 Grant Budget Amendment for FY2026, Approval of Substance Abuse and Mental Health managing Entity memorandum of Agreement, Approval and Execution of Florida Humanities America 250 Book Collection Grant, Approval of Replacement of HVAC Air Handling Units for County Jail, Approval of Replacement HVAC Chiller for Sheriff’s Office, Approval of Indigent Burial Services, Approval of memorandum of Agreement for Florida Department of Health Emergency, Medical Services Matching Grant Award, Approval of Health Insurance Rates, Approval of contract with Cook Brothers for Chattahoochee Library MPCF, Approval of contract WITH Tip Top for Havana Library MPCF, Approval of contract and GMB for Havana Medical Center, Approval of Emergency Services Ambulance User Fee Schedule **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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“Now that’s the job I want,” said Steve, putting down the paper. “A guy could really sink his teeth into something like that.”

Doc looked up from his coffee. “Didn’t know you were looking for work, Steve. Cowboying not working out for you?”

“It isn’t that,” said the cowboy/farrier, “it’s just that a guy should always keep his eyes open so as not to miss an opportunity to better himself. That’s why I’m so interested in becoming a chicken ranger.”

“A what?”

“He said a chicken ranger, Doc,” said Bert, “but I never heard of one.”

“Scoff if you must, friends,” said Steve with a flourish, “but right here in the pages of our own glorious newspaper, the Valley Weekly Miracle, comes one of the best ideas for a job I’ve ever heard of. It seems if your chickens run around loose, you get more money for their eggs. No. Seriously. Look at this ad. The store says they are from certified free-ranging chickens. Got it stamped right on every free-ranging egg.”

“Heard about that,” Doc said, nodding. “It’s not that the eggs are better, but it makes you feel better about eating an egg from a happy hen, ‘cause she can run around and peck on other hens and get pecked on rather than be caged.”

“And therein lies my new job, gentlemen,” Steve said. “Someone has to make sure those are happy, unfettered, free-ranging manufacturers of cackleberries, and I’m just the guy to get ‘er done.”

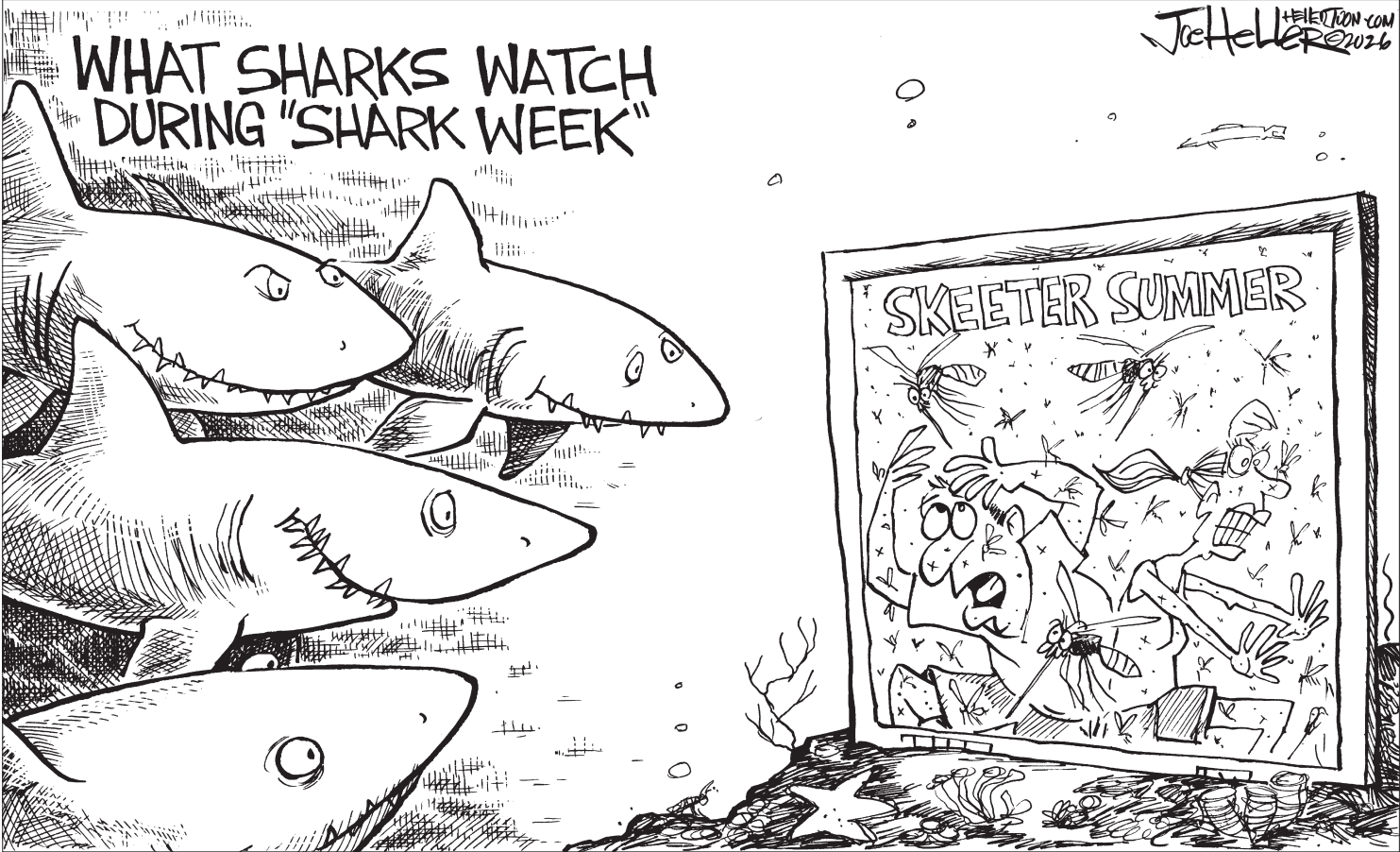
Bert, who takes his charter membership in the Mule Barn truck stop’s philosophy counter and world dilemma think tank very seriously, said, “Doesn’t sound like much work to me.”

“Each egg has to be certified,” Steve explained. “Gotta be a chicken ranger there to certify those hens didn’t bunch up in a corner somewhere, right? So I’ll be sitting there on my horse, keeping an eye on the girls...”

“On your horse?”

“Of course,” Steve said. “If you can’t do a job horseback it ain’t worth doing. Don’t you know afootare the two saddest words in the English language?”

Brought to you by “Whimsy Castle,” my most recent novel. Available online at Amazon.com.



An Editorial from the Publisher

Higher postage, worse service:
How the USPS is squeezing Gadsden County

When you open your mailbox to pull out The Gadsden County Times, The Havana Herald, or The Chattahoochee News-Herald & Sneads Sentinel, you hold more than ink on paper. You hold the story of our community—our local government meetings, high school sports, small business milestones, and church announcements.

For decades, community journalism and the United States Postal Service shared a simple, foundational relationship: we provided the vital local information, and the postal service delivered

it to your door at a fair, predictable rate.

That partnership is now under severe strain. On July 12, 2026, the USPS implemented another round of rate increases—the latest in an relentless series of compounding hikes that hit rural communities like ours hardest.

The reality behind the numbers

The Postal Service claims these broad adjustments (including raising First-Class Forever stamps to 82 cents) are necessary for «financial sustainability». But a look at

the specific breakdown for Periodicals tells a much darker story for local newspapers:

- In-county mailings: Up by an average of 9.32%. This is the postage rate applied directly to hometown readers living right here in Gadsden County.
- Outside-county mailings: Up by 6.56%.
- Overall periodical class: Up 6.80%—outpacing the overall 4.8% increase slapped on standard First-Class or Marketing mail.

The hidden fine print: On top of raw rate hikes, the USPS fundamentally altered

how costs are calculated. While they eliminated separate container and bundle fees for Outside-County mail, those expenses weren’t erased—they were rolled directly into higher per-piece base costs. Meanwhile, separate Destination Area Distribution Center (DADC) rates were eliminated entirely, forcing papers to adapt to shifting Sectional Center Facility (SCF) structures just to maintain basic distribution routing.

USPS
on page 6

NURSE JUDY’S NOOK

The walking stick saga continues

Judy Conlin

I had such a bad first day with my new walking stick that I couldn’t fit all my problems into just one week’s column. If you recall, I had gone to the theater, then to Whole Foods, where I was a disaster in motion with that stick refusing to stay in my cart, knocking things off shelves and scaring old men. I then proceeded to the lab for bloodwork, where I remembered to leave with the stick but forgot my purse. When I went back to get it, I was locked out. With the help of a kind office worker, I was finally able to retrieve it. I was ready for the next errand I had to do, and that’s where I begin the story today.

I only needed to stop at Publix for some cat food. I know you are wondering why I didn’t get it at Whole Foods while I was wreaking havoc there. The reason is my fussy cats will not eat their brands of cat food. I got to my car without mishap, but it was beginning to rain again.

By the time I got to Publix, it was pouring so badly I could hardly see. I parked and sat there waiting for the rain to subside. It didn’t. It just got worse. I was wearing a raincoat, and I had an umbrella, but with

the wind blowing, I would still be drenched. The parking lot was full of people sitting in their cars. I listened to the radio and waited. When visibility was good enough to drive, I decided to go on to Havana. I could pick up the butter I needed there, and the cats would eat cat food from the Dollar Store next door.

I made it to Havana, although the rain was now coming down in sheets again. There were no handicapped parking spaces open, but I was pleased to find a regular spot only three spaces down the slope. I snugged up my rain gear and stepped out of the car. The water was rushing down the slope, and it came up 5 inches on my slacks. I had worn plastic shoes with fancy cutout holes in them. The water rushed right in and out of them, so I decided I would just wade through this and get my stuff. As I struggled up the slope and onto a less flooded area, I remembered I didn’t have that stick. I also began worrying about those plastic shoes. What if they were glued together and all this water unglued them? I would be sure to fall again. I decided I must go back and get the stick.

Back through the rushing flood I went, grabbed the stick and continued back up

to the store. My stick pulled no shenanigans here. I think it could tell I was mad at it. I got my butter, and since things were going well, I soon had a shopping cart full. I checked out and pushed that cart right into the Dollar Store. I got some preferred brands of cat food and then, since I was there, continued to buy a few odds and ends here and there. Again, my walking stick rode along completely docile, and I praised it and patted it on its crook.

I couldn’t seem to get my cart, now piled high with plastic bags, out the door, but a nice man came to my rescue. It was still raining, but not nearly as hard. My shoes were still holding together, and the stream going down the hill was not nearly as deep. I put my bags in the car with the Whole Foods bags and used the good walking stick to walk around and get into the car.

All was well. The bad day was over. Or was it?

When I got home, the rain was pouring. I now had 10 bags to carry in. I do not have a garage. It was just those bags, my purse, the walking stick and me trying to get into the screened porch. I locked the screen door open, and the stick and I began traversing the long

walk across the deck with each load until we were down to the last two bags. These were from Whole Foods, and they pack their goods in paper bags. They were slightly soggy, but the stick and I got the first one in. We also got the second one in, but just inside the screen door it burst open and everything came rolling out. Cherries rolled across the whole length of that long screened porch. A little squash merrily rolled along. It was a mess.

All this commotion intrigued the cats, who thought this was wonderful fun. They were batting things everywhere. Once they were captured and I got the place cleaned up, my bad walking stick day was over. The shoes are completely formed without glue, so they suffered no damage from the water running in and out of them. The cats are fed and happy. The stick and I are mostly friends, although I forget her half the time. I wish she were like a dog and would just follow me everywhere.

I’m going to name her Fido and see if that works, but I doubt it.

More later,
Judy
www.nursejudyinfo.com

At The Pump

Local, State, and National

National Average:

\$4.10 per gallon

Florida Average:

\$3.94 per gallon

Gadsden County Average:

\$3.94 per gallon

Jackson County Average:

\$3.92 per gallon

Leon County Average

\$3.98 per gallon

Numbers based on AAA Gas Prices report, as of July 20, 2026.

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COMICS AND PUZZLES

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3-22

JUMBLE

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

RYOWR

TOAFO

OWSSHO

TGONET

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Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Twitter @PlayJumble

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: OUNCE SHYLY PEBBLE FLAUNT
Answer: The most popular sitcom episodes featuring the Brady family were the — BEST OF THE BUNCH

JUMBLE FOR KIDS

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME!®

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

The letters of these crazy words are all mixed up. To play the game, put them back into the right order so that they make real words you can find in your dictionary. Write the letters of each real word under each crazy word, but only one letter to a square.

UCB

LEBL

ERTE

EGMR

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Now you're ready to solve today's Jumble For Kids. Study the picture for a hint. Play around with the letters in the circles. You'll find you can put them in order so that they make your funny answer.

Print your answer here:

Jumbles: CUB BELL TREE GERM
Answer: Which country sounds like it could be slippery? — GREECE

I HOPE THEY DIDN'T SALT THE ROADS!

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WHY DID YOU NAME YOUR BOAT THAT?

BECAUSE IT'S A WITCH CRAFT!

IT WASN'T THAT BAD A JOKE!

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How have you and Loweezy been, Snuffy?

Fine! It's been so cold in Hootin' Holler...

..when Loweezy milks th' cow, it gives us creamsicles!

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MOM, CAN DAD COME OUT TO PLAY?

HE'S STILL RECOVERING FROM THE LAST TIME HE CAME OUT TO PLAY.

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SCRABBLE G R A M S

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A1E1I1Y4L1S1P3

E1E1I1U1R1F4G2

O1O1U1W4L1F4T1

Triple Word Score

1st Letter Double

RACK 1

RACK 2

RACK 3

RACK 4

PAR SCORE 150-160
BEST SCORE 227

FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. Finally, 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All the words are in the Official SCRABBLE® Players Dictionary, 5th Edition. SOLUTION TOMORROW

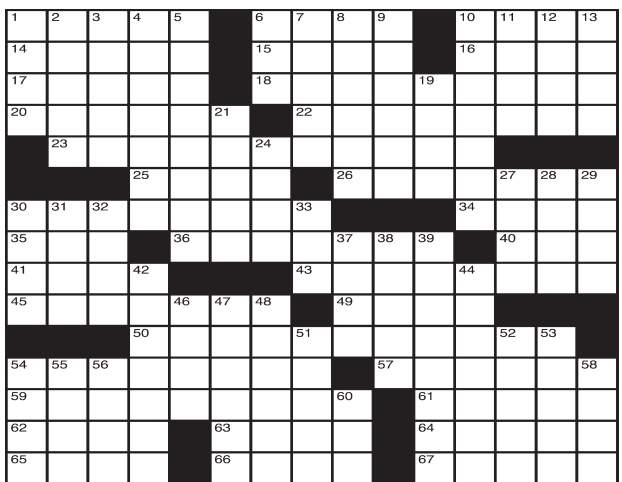
For more information on tournaments and clubs, email NASPA - North American SCRABBLE Players Association info@scrabbleplayers.org. Visit our website - www.scrabbleplayers.org. For puzzle inquiries contact scrgrams@gmail.com

12-16

EDITORS: Here is the solution to today's SCRABBLEGRAM. You can print the solution on the same day elsewhere in your paper, or beneath the following day's puzzle. If you choose to run the solution elsewhere in the same day's newspaper, insert the appropriate type (below) over the SOLUTION TOMORROW line in the puzzle.

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

Puzzle solutions on page 2



- Across
- 1 False earnestness
- 6 Sawbuck halves
- 10 «Pencils down»
- 14 World capital once called Thang Long
- 15 Zoom
- 16 Human rights lawyer Cloney
- 17 Bonus feature
- 18 Sea creature who lived across the Strait of Messina from Scylla
- 20 Like good things
- 22 Not obviously true
- 23 Objects for separating subjects
- 25 Staffer
- 26 Norman Lear's specialty
- 30 Establish anew, as authority
- 34 Sandwich cookie
- 35 End of a professor's address
- 36 Seafood appetizer often seasoned with Old

- Bay
- 40 Heat quickly
- 41 Mattress option
- 43 Some «Percy Jackson & the Olympians» characters
- 45 Onset of
- 49 Isolated group of employees
- 50 Land of giants in «Gulliver's Travels»
- 54 Person experiencing the bystander effect, perhaps
- 57 Heroic sister of children's literature
- 59 Rodentlike features, and a phonetic hint to a segment of 18-, 23-, 36-, and 50-Across
- 61 Ticked off
- 62 Check status
- 63 Cozy retreat
- 64 Truly stuck
- 65 Home of Lucas Oil Stadium, familiarly
- 66 SoCal school
- 67 Snail trail
- Down
- 1 Literary citation abbr.
- 2 Cross with
- 3 «The United States vs. Billie Holiday» Oscar nominee Day
- 4 iRobot products
- 5 Bygone audio format
- 6 Character's beginning, middle, and end
- 7 Faith founded in Persia
- 8 Paperless Post offerings
- 9 Pianist Rachmaninoff
- 10 Hot sauce from Louisiana
- 11 Website with a STARMeter
- 12 Vote by —
- 13 Otherwise
- 19 Circular shelter
- 21 Beer alternative
- 24 Designer Wang
- 27 Short-cut pasta
- 28 Beer alternative
- 29 Soaks (up)

- 30 Penalizing sorts, for short
- 31 Trade unions for onions?
- 32 Vibe
- 33 Brief «Not sure yet»
- 37 Comedian Lydic
- 38 Chatting on Slack, for short
- 39 Voyagers of 1620
- 42 Victim in Clue
- 44 Sister of Regan and Cordelia
- 46 «Iliad» city
- 47 Arcade currency
- 48 Did as instructed
- 51 Shift, for one
- 52 Arcade pioneer
- 53 Phrase beginning a chase scene, maybe
- 54 Slangy «Duh»
- 55 Club light
- 56 Put down
- 58 Journo's intro
- 60 «The Simpsons» disco guy

Thanks to Frank Gallop Raynham, Massachusetts

IT'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, BUT I'D LIKE YOU TO SEE A SPECIALIST.

A plugger used to think, "Another day, another dollar;" and now thinks, "Another day, another doctor."

Today Can Be Different

When we don't want to 'count it all joy'

What if our faith was never tested? Would we still grow?

Probably not.

Consider James 1:2-4 (ESV): “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

We might laugh or scream at the words “count it all joy” when we face a trial – unless we understand the meaning of the rest of the text. Only when our faith is tested (when we’re feeling mistreated or facing a devastating ordeal) will we experience firsthand God’s power and intervention. And, consequently, discover how strong our faith is.

“But let’s be real,” you say. “Counting it all joy when a loved one faces a terminal illness or when a dream dies goes against human reason.”

I agree. But we’re not talking about human reasoning.

Although I still struggle with anxiety when I imagine the worst-case scenario, my faith is growing because I know God will continue to carry me and change me for the better in difficult seasons.

This is where joy comes in.

The devil loves to entice us to think about the worst-case scenario. He loves to make us forget that God is far greater and much more powerful than he (the devil) ever could be. Therefore, I meditate on Scripture that reminds me of God’s love, mercy, power, ability, compassion, etc., etc., etc.! (Take that, Satan, for messing with me!)

Being joyful in tribulation isn’t about being happy when bad things happen. Rather, we can have confidence that, through it all, we can grow in spiritual maturity by abiding in God’s presence through prayer and Bible reading.

Furthermore, finding joy in trials sets a believer apart from the rest of the world. It allows those around us to see the gospel hope within us.

Let’s pray to our heavenly Father now:

Father, show us how different we can be from the person we are today. Give us a glimpse of what we’ll be like when we mature in our faith. And, if we can handle the truth, show us what our future self will be like if we don’t change.

In the meantime, Lord, remind us how important it is to count it all joy as we trust that You are in control – no matter what we’re going through, especially when we can’t “feel” You. Amen.

Sheryl H. Boldt is a faith columnist and the author of the blog www.TodayCanBeDifferent.net. You can reach her at SherylHBoldt@gmail.com.

Young chefs get creative with edible dirt cups at Havana Public Library

Erin Hill
Gadsden County News Service

Young aspiring chefs rolled up their sleeves and put their culinary skills to work during a Junior Chef Event at the Havana Public Library, where participants created edible “dirt cups” while learning basic food preparation skills.

The hands-on program, hosted by the Gadsden County Public Library System, gave children the opportunity to assemble the popular dessert using chocolate pudding, crushed cookies and gummy worms while following simple recipes and practicing kitchen skills.

Children worked alongside library staff and parents to prepare their treats, with each participant creating a personalized dessert to enjoy at the end of the session.

The event was free and open to children ages 15 and younger with parental assistance. Due to limited space, advance registration was required, with only eight spots available.

The Junior Chef program is one of several youth activities offered through the Gadsden County Public Library System during the summer. In addition to promoting creativity, the program encourages children to develop confidence in the kitchen while following directions, measuring ingredients and working together in a fun, interactive environment.

Library officials regularly host educational and recreational programs at branches throughout Gadsden County to keep children engaged through reading, crafts, science activities and other hands-on experiences during the summer months.



Photo courtesy of Havana Public Library's Facebook page



Our Newly-Expanded Game Room is Now OPEN!

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Duck Claw
Board Games
A-Holes
More!**



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facebook.com/ OfftheRailsIrishPub

306 1st St. NW Havana, FL 32333 | 850-397-1518



Kid-friendly Karaoke every Tuesday Night 6:30 - 9:30

USPS
from page A4

More pay, less performance

What makes these skyrocketing expenses particularly frustrating is that higher prices have not come with better service.

If mail delivery were faster, more consistent, or more reliable, a rate increase might be understandable. Instead, local publishers across the country are paying dramatically more for a system that delivers papers late, loses bundles, and routinely reduces delivery standards.

When our delivery suffers, it isn't just an administrative problem for a newspaper publisher—it's a loss for our entire community:

1. For local newspapers: Compounding postal hikes act as a direct tax on local news. Every extra dollar sent to Washington to cover postage is a dollar that cannot go toward keeping reporters in the field or maintaining deep local coverage.

2. For small businesses: Local merchants rely on community papers to reach neighborhood customers. When distribution costs jump, advertising rates face upward pressure, forcing small businesses to spend more just to tell the community about their goods and services.

3. For consumers & seniors: In rural areas, many of our neighbors—especially fixed-income seniors—depend on the postal service for physical delivery of news, billing, and vital communications. Raising postage rates across First-Class and Periodicals squeezes family budgets when inflation has already stretched every dollar.

Standing up for local news

Local newspapers remain one of the few places dedicated strictly to keeping citizens informed, holding local government accountable, and celebrating community life. We are committed to continuing that mission across Gadsden County—across Quincy, Havana, Chattahoochee, Sneads, and every neighborhood in between.

However, the current USPS policy of demanding «more money for less reliability» threatens the very existence of local press nationwide.

We will continue absorbing as much of these costs as possible to keep your weekly paper affordable. But we also ask for your support: voice your concerns to our elected federal representatives, advocate for postal oversight that protects local news delivery, and keep reading and supporting hyper-local journalism.

Our community deserves a postal service that delivers—literally and figuratively.

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