

## FBI's Ten Most Wanted



The Lady Lake Police Department is proud to announce the arrest of Donald Eugene Fields II, one of the FBI's Ten Most Wanted Fugitives. Fields II was apprehended Saturday, Jan. 26, following a routine traffic stop conducted by Lady Lake Police Sgt. Michelle Bilbrey. The arrest took place at approximately 9:15 a.m. at the intersection of U.S. Highway 27/441 and Rolling Acres Road.

Sgt. Bilbrey discovered that the vehicle's license plate was not registered to the car Fields was driving. This proactive policing effort resulted in the identification and capture of Fields, who is facing federal charges of child sex trafficking and state charges of child rape. Fields had been added to the FBI's Ten Most Wanted Fugitives list in May 2023.

Lady Lake Police Chief Steve Hunt commended Sgt. Bilbrey and the department for outstanding work. "Sometimes, an everyday traffic stop turns into a real game-changer. This is a reminder that every officer, every day, is out there making a real difference," said Chief Hunt. "Every traffic stop is an opportunity for justice. What starts as a routine encounter can quickly turn into a pivotal moment, where an officer's sharp instincts and dedication to service lead to a significant arrest—keeping our community and in this case, the nation, safer."

The FBI also praised the efforts of the Lady Lake Police Department. Special Agent in Charge Ashley Johnson remarked, "Thanks to proactive policing by the Lady Lake Police Department, one of the FBI's Ten Most Wanted fugitives has been captured." Chief Hunt, an FBI National Academy graduate, expressed his gratitude

## Lady Lake Chamber Board of Directors Installation Banquet



"Leading the Way: The 2025-2026 Board – Stronger Together, Building the Future!"

for the ongoing collaboration between the FBI and local law enforcement.

Fields, 60, was federally indicted in St. Louis on Dec. 7, 2023, for attempting to recruit and exploit a minor for commercial sex acts between January 2013 and June 2017. He also faces state charges in Missouri, including statutory rape, statutory sodomy, child molestation, and witness tampering. Fields has been a fugitive since March 2022 when he failed to appear for a court hearing in Franklin County, Missouri.

Following his arrest, Fields will be scheduled to make his first appearance in federal court in Florida.

The Lady Lake Police Department remains committed to serving and protecting our community while supporting efforts to hold offenders accountable for their actions. This arrest underscores the importance of vigilance and dedication in everyday policing.

View this on our website:

<https://www.ladylakefl.gov/>

## WHY?

By TomL

Why did Biden Pardon his family?

Brother Francis, Retired Gen. Mark Milley: Jan. 6. Committee members Bennie Thompson, D-Miss. Liz Cheney, a Wyoming Republican, Zoe Lofgren, Adam Schiff, Pete Aguilar, Stephanie Murphy, Jamie Raskin

Brother James Biden and his wife, Sara. Sister Valerie and her husband, John Owens

Why did Biden Pardon Fauci, Mark Miley, Marcus Garvey, Don Scott, Cheney, Bennie Thompson, Zoe Lofgren, Adam Schiff, Pete Aguilar,

Stephanie Murphy, Jamie Raskin, Elaine Luira?

Why did the Committee wipe all the information clean on the January 6th

insurrection or was it an insurrection? Some say no it was made up!

Because they are all know it did not happen! I hope there is something Pam Bondi can do to look into it and reverse the pardons or charge them with obstruction.

The past president Biden is not competent! They said that is why they did not investigate him! My understanding is if they get any of these people under oath and they lie they can get them on perjury.

How many pardons have the past presidents given?

- George W. Bush (2001-2009) 200
- Barack Obama (2009-2017) 1927
- Donald Trump (2017-2021) 237
- Joe Biden (2021-2025) 8064

Something is wrong here. The Republicans have a couple hundred but the democrats are in the thousands. Someone needs to ask the Supreme Court for a ruling about if there is anything that can be done? Is there a limit on how many people you can pardon or what you can pardon them for?

I guess try to get them under oath and ask them questions?

These people will show up again!

**BIDENS LAST DITCH EFFORT TO HURT AMERICAN PEOPLE!**

Why Denie America's energy independence, Joe Biden issued a sweeping ban on offshore oil and gas drilling across 625 million acres of federal waters. If this is Federal Waters why is Biden allowing China drilling there? Why is Russia drilling there? Why is the Green environmentalists celebrate, the energy sector warns of increased reliance on foreign oil

Why is Biden selling the Trump Wall for penny's on the dollar. Texas stopped him the wall supply's stay in storage. Biden last ditch effort to OBSTRUCT TRUMP Why is Biden trying to get the Guantanamo Bay prison as close to empty as possible.

Why did Biden Bar off shore drilling and in US parks land.

## Meet the Mayor

Lady Lake residents invited to 'Meet the Mayor at the Market'

LADY LAKE — Residents are invited to connect with Lady Lake Mayor Ed Freeman during a special "Meet the Mayor at the Market" event on Tuesday, Feb. 4, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Lady Lake Farmers & Crafts Market, located at 250 Rolling Acres Road.

This casual gathering provides an opportunity to discuss local topics, share ideas, and hear updates about news and events in the community directly from the mayor.

While there, visitors are invited to peruse the market, which features a wide range of offerings including fresh produce, baked goods, preserves, handmade crafts, and artisanal products. Food truck vendors will serve options such as barbecue, hot dogs, and international cuisines.

The market is accessible by golf cart via The Villages at Palermo Place through Chula Vista or Del Mar Drive.

The Lady Lake Farmers & Crafts Market is held every Tuesday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Visitors are encouraged to support local vendors while enjoying a vibrant community atmosphere.

For more information, visit [www.ladylakefl.gov](http://www.ladylakefl.gov) or contact [market@ladylake.org](mailto:market@ladylake.org).



# Town News Lady Lake

## Arbor Day in Lady Lake



Lady Lake named Tree City USA for 20th year

LADY LAKE - For the 20th year, Lady Lake has been named a Tree City USA by the Arbor Day Foundation. To receive the prestigious designation, a Tree City must have a tree board or department, a tree care ordinance, a community forestry program with an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita and on Arbor Day observation and proclamation.

According to Tree City USA, a commitment to tree helps lead to cooler temperatures, cleaner air, higher property values and healthier residents.

"It is a great honor to receive Tree City USA designation for the 20th year," said Parks and Recreation Director Mike Burske. "It represents our dedication to protecting the town's historic trees and collaborating with residents to plant and nurture new ones, creating a lasting legacy for future generations."

Together with community partners, Lady Lake plants trees annually at various locations during its Arbor Day celebration

every April. In 2024, the town joined Lake County in planting several trees outside Lake County Fire Station 52 in Lady Lake.

The Town hosts a tree raffle annually, offering winners \$200 gift certificates to purchase trees at a local nursery. The Lady Lake Tree Raffle is made possible by the town's tree bank, which is funded by developers who are required to donate if they cannot meet the town's stringent tree code.

The Town's land development regulations require developers to put money into the town's tree bank to mitigate any tree loss. This is a way in which the town enforces responsible development and tree conservation.

PHOTO: Mayor Ed Freeman (left) and Commissioner Mike Sage (right) assisted in planting trees at Lady Lake's Arbor Day celebration at Lake County Fire Station 52 on April 25, 2024.

## Rock That Resolution

Lady Lake presents "Rock That Resolution" to kick off 2025

LADY LAKE - The Town of Lady Lake invites the community to its inaugural "Rock That Resolution" event, set to take place on Saturday, Jan. 11 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Snooky Park, 120 W. Lady Lake Blvd.

This new community event is designed to inspire attendees to start 2025 on the right foot with motivational and fun activities to help stay on track with their New Year's resolutions. Whether you're looking to travel more, start a new hobby, go back to school, improve your financial health, enhance physical and mental wellness, volunteer, or read more books, the Town of Lady Lake is here to help you "Rock That Resolution" with a perfect mix of entertainment and resources to reach your goals.

The event will feature:

Free mini classes include Tai Chi at 11:30 a.m., yoga at 12:30 p.m. and Zumba at 1:15 p.m.

Live music from the "Think Big" Band

Delicious eats from local food trucks Lil Fatz BBQ, Weirsdale Winery, and PDixon Desserts

Exciting bounce houses for kids

Opportunities to connect with organizations, resources, and vendors to support your goals.

Vendors include Charter Research, Too Your Health Spa, State Farm, The Kiwanis Club of Lady Lake, Lady Lake Library, Travel with Evelyn, Primerica Financial Services, Your Daily Nourishment, Perhealth Chiropractor, Fleet Feet, health coach Adrianna Watt, wellness coach Mary Soares, Iron Dragon Defense, and pickleball coach Ralph Jones.

"Rock That Resolution" is all about empowering our community to make 2025 their best year yet," said Amy Alicea, Events Coordinator for the Town of Lady Lake. "We wanted to create a fun and engaging event where people of all ages can find the inspiration and tools they need to pursue their goals and dreams."

The Town of Lady Lake is thrilled to bring this unique event to the community and encourages everyone to join the celebration. Admission is free, and all are welcome to attend. For more information about "Rock That Resolution," contact Amy Alicea at

## LL PD Awards

Lady Lake Police Department honors officers at Town Commission meeting

Lady Lake, FL - The Lady Lake Police Department celebrated several milestones during last night's town Commission meeting, including the department's annual recognition awards, the introduction of new officers, and nearly reaching full staff.

The Department proudly recognized several officers for their outstanding contributions and service to the community. Chief Steve Hunt reflected on the department's growth and success in overcoming recent challenges.

"The department was at a crossroads not long ago," said Chief Hunt. "Thanks to the unwavering support of Mayor Freeman, the Town Commission, and Town Manager Lawrence, we've been able to not only retain

our valued officers but also attract top talent from across the nation. This has ensured our ability to continue providing the high level of service our residents deserve."

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of awards recognizing the exceptional efforts of the department's team, including:

Officer Joshua Higgins and Sergeant Heather Couch: Meritorious Service Award for actions that saved a life. They were able to de-escalate a situation with a suicidal caller and convinced the individual to surrender a fully loaded handgun, saving his life.

Deputy Chief Jason Brough: 2024 Chief's Award presented for significant contributions to the police department.

Scott Kolb, Evidence Technician: Certificate of Appreciation for significant contributions to the evidence management system.

Robert Chausse, Training Officer/Quartermaster: Certificate of Appreciation for his role in implementing new programs, including dash cameras, body-worn cameras, new Tasers, a firearm transition project, and the updated Field Training Officer management program, while maintaining ongoing duties.

"Our goal is to set the standard for what a great police department should look like—embodying integrity, respect, and dedication in all that we do," said Chief Hunt.

Chief Hunt also introduced eight new officers who joined the department in 2024, leaving just one position of a total 30 sworn officers to be filled. The officers, who bring a combined 130 years of experience to the department, are Kyle Lawrence, Jim Dunagan, Amanda Hayes, Brian Campbell, Hasheem Choudri, Jeff Burns, Gustavo Eloy, and Ronnie Williams.

The department is in the process of hiring two new lieutenant positions.

Photo Caption: Lady Lake Police Chief Steve Hunt poses with award recipients. Left to right: Police Chief Steve Hunt, Sergeant Heather Couch, Officer Joshua Higgins, Evidence Technician Scott Kolb, and Training Officer/Quartermaster Robert Chausse.

## Lake County Detention Center

### Public Booking Log

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

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

Or go to

[Tomlpublishing.com](http://tomlpublishing.com) and click on Lake County





Lindsay Loury decided to show her sons Lane and Kash ice cycles so she turned the sprinkler on and the results were great. I shot this picture from inside the front door of my house. It has been under freezing for four mornings in a row, WOW. I dumped some ice out of my cooler four days ago

and it is too cold for me to go out. Good job Lindsay, the boys have something to remember! The Polar Ice blast came and took over the weather in north central Florida last week and we don't know when it will warm. Maybe tomorrow?

## NO NEED TO GO OUT ON A LIMB... ADVERTISING WORKS!

Ocala Downtown  
Seniors Voice of Ocala  
Village Spectator  
Lady Lake Magazine

Call/Email Tom: 352-804-1223 • tloury@att.net

# ART IN THE PARK

## AT SNOOKY PARK

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1ST, 2025  
& SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2ND, 2025  
9:00AM - 3:00PM

Join Evelyn Stetler for the 18th Annual "Art in the Park" Festival, held in the new Snooky Park, nestled in the heart of Lady Lake FL - just one block off CR466 behind the historic Log Cabin!

### FEATURING

ARTS + CRAFTS • LIVE MUSIC  
FOOD VENDORS • STUDENT ART SHOW  
FREE DOOR PRIZES

**Interested in Becoming an Exhibitor?**  
Art/Craft Vendor Booth: \$175  
Business Booth (Member): \$550  
Business Booth (Non-Member): \$650

## Record-breaking Snow in Florida!




# LOURY'S

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

### PUBLISHER'S NOTES



#### Publishers notes

It is a new year and very unusual. For the elderly that have house payments. Your payment has gone up again this year. Last year it was \$100 increase and this year it is \$150 more increase.

When the county revalues your house at a higher rate, so they get more taxes from you. When your house is worth more your house insurance goes up. So all the planning you do and decide your fixed rate and monthly payment has other things to consider. Your County taxes and your house insurance. So in two years my monthly has gone up \$250 where does it stop. Who has the right to charge you more money every year? The Social Security has not covered enough of it. Auto Insurance has tripled, WHY? Now you are paying another 2400 per year or \$200 more per month for auto insurance. So if you put these increases together the

elderly is paying \$450 per month. A lot of them can't do that, they could lose their home! Our government need to put a ceiling on the increases. They are being forced into poverty unententially.

The Glenn Beck radio was discussing new information about the Assassination's of the Kennedy's and Martin Luther King. There must be new information about that or information that was being covered up. Trump signed a release for us to see it. I am proud of what he is doing, he just pardon some pro-life people that were sitting in front of the door praying at the abortion Clinic and they were given two years in federal prison.

The FBI I'm sure has bugged Trump. There are laws against that and especially a candidate for President you have to have the approval from the top. Do you think they got it approved?

Well what do you know. There is a report out that Bill Clinton ask Biden for a pardon for Hillary???? I'm not sure they got it. Is that true and could she go scot free of

everything she did? What say you the readers? I am really proud of our small referral group. We donated \$400 to the Marion County Canine for vest. Our member bought complete set of clothes for 8 children for Salvation Army and we just donated \$500 to ORA Club House a place for people to go when they are having mental problems. Trained people will help them. It is for tier building fund. Not bad for a small group of business people. They all honestly like each other and help each other. That is the way a business group should be, no hatred over politics. Just Optimism, Hope, friendship and help each other.

We welcome Ocala Business Brokers

into our papers, thank you Connie. I would like to tell you should try these people (Select Business Associates of Ocala) if are looking for someone you can trust. Look for the ad in this paper. I personally endorse every one.

Looks like we kept our Sheriff. Those guys in the Marion County Sheriff office is a pretty good team. I endorse them also.

I dropped into a Marion County Commission meeting the other day. They were listening to one right after another requesting funds for various non-profits. Some sound like good ideas.

Please give me your opinion [tloury@att.net](mailto:tloury@att.net)

## Newspaper Deadlines

*Editorial & Ad Copy for March*

**Seniors Voice & Ocala DownTown**  
**Noon, February 21st**  
**Lady Lake Magazine & Village Spectator**  
**12am, February 26th**

## Village Spectator / Lady Lake Magazine

Products of TomL Publishing, LLC  
 P.O Box 1698, Dunnellon FL 34430  
 Publisher: Tom Loury  
 Phone: 352-804-1223 | Email: [tloury@att.net](mailto:tloury@att.net)

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## CONTRACTOR & CRAFTS SHOWCASE

Sat. April 12th

WILDWOOD COMMUNITY CENTER  
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[www.RotaryClubOfTheVillagesNoon.org](http://www.RotaryClubOfTheVillagesNoon.org)

## Attention Advertisers!

All ads are 4 color! All ads Photos, clubs, events, etc, must be in PDF format Jpeg submitted must be in focus has a tendency to get weak and clear. No guarantees to when you change sizes. When get them in but we will try! you send a PDF ad the fonts TomL to submit ads and news are embedded and will not copy. email [tloury@att.net](mailto:tloury@att.net) change. Run of editorial

## Tap Home Equity for Financial Security

Tuesday, Feb 11, 12:30pm  
 The Standard Coffee Lounge, 1552 Bella Cruz, The Villages

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

Wednesday, Feb 19, 12:30pm  
 Bob Evans, 360 Colony Blvd, The Villages (near 466a & Morse Blvd)

Safely Apply Home Equity to Your Peace of Mind

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## God Bless our Troops

## Support Our Veterans

## We Endorse The Constitution

## FAIRTAX



Unlawful emigration has been in the news for a long time and some have asked me how

will the FAIRtax help or hinder the control of illegals flooding into our country. Perhaps I can explain how it will help stem the flow of illegals. Remember, the FAIRtax REPLACES the federal income tax and payroll tax system with a national retail sales tax plus a prebate which makes spending up to the poverty level tax free.

This means that those living at or below the poverty level will pay the FAIRtax rate of zero percent. A person spending twice the poverty level would pay a spending tax rate of 11.5%, a person spending three times the poverty level would pay an effective rate of 17.3%, and so on. Your tax rate is determined by you and by how you spend. The FAIRtax will, for the first time, tax undocumented workers who now evade the income and payroll taxes.

Under the FAIRtax, all persons living in

the United States will pay taxes, whether they are here legally or illegally. Under the current system, many illegals do not pay income and payroll taxes even though they are here earning wages and are legally required to do so. They may also be receiving benefits in the form of health care, education, housing, roads and much more.

Under the FAIRtax, both lawful and unlawful residents will pay taxes when they purchase new goods and services for consumption here; however, only lawful residents are eligible to receive the FAIRtax prebate which effectively eliminates taxes on spending up to the poverty level. Unlawful residents will be paying a rate of 23 cents on every dollar they spend since they are not eligible for the prebate.

The only way to get the prebate is to become a legal resident or citizen. In this way, the FAIRtax helps promote legal emigration. It also ensures that unlawful residents contribute to the cost of providing the services they receive. For more information please go to FAIRtax.org

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

Want to learn more?

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

Testament  
my wish

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Chris Semans  
Leadership award



Jeanette McIntosh  
Out Reach award



Patrice DeHaven  
Ambassador of the Year award



Tina St Germain  
Volunteer of the Year award

During the Board of directors installation the annual awards were presented by Leslie DiCesare, Executive Director of the Lady Lake Chamber of Commerce.

## Billy Berg Mac N Cheese Festival



MAC N CHEESE, FUN, COMPETITION, COMMUNITY, CONNECTIONS, YUM!

Calling all cheese lovers and culinary wizards! The Billy Berg Mac N Cheese Festival & Business Showcase is your golden ticket to not only showcase your cheesy creations but also to connect with the vibrant Lady Lake community!

Join us for this exciting cook-off, where local businesses can strut their stuff, art and craft vendors can shine, and competitors can battle it out for cheesy supremacy!

Saturday, March 8, 2025 - 10 AM - 2 PM

Log Cabin Park, 106 S. US HWY 441/27, Lady Lake

## Extraordinary Sedona, Arizona

Immerse Yourself in the Extraordinary Culture of Sedona

Sedona's breathtaking red rock formations are matched only by its vibrant cultural experiences. The city is a haven for creativity, featuring world-class galleries, an incredible food scene, and exciting events. Don't miss **Exposures International Gallery of Fine Art**, one of the largest galleries in the Southwest, where you can admire stunning sculptures, glass art, and paintings.

Stroll along the **Tlaquepaque Arts and Crafts Village**, a charming enclave modeled after a traditional Mexican village. Here, you'll find boutique galleries, artisan shops, and opportunities to meet the artists themselves.

Don't miss one-of-a-kind stores like **The Artists Kitchen**, offering unique culinary-inspired art and goods, or explore other distinctive boutiques in the area such as **Good JuJu**, known for its eclectic and inspiring finds.

Sedona is also home to many annual festivals like **Sedona International Film Festival** and **Sedona Winefest**. For a guide to everything happening during your visit be sure to visit the [Northern Arizona Event Calendar](#). For food lovers, Sedona boasts an impressive culinary scene, with standout restaurants, great coffee shops, and dining with incredible views.

For outdoor enthusiasts, Sedona's natural beauty provides endless opportunities for both physical and spiritual exploration. Embark on the iconic **Cathedral Rock Trail**, a moderately challenging hike that rewards visitors with stunning views of Sedona's red rock landscape. Visit a vortex, a world-class spa, or many other wellness opportunities like **Horse, Heart, & Connection**. Whether you're looking for culture, cuisine, or outdoor adventure, Sedona has something for everyone.

### 2. Sip and Savor in Cottonwood's Wine Country

Just a short drive from Sedona, [Cottonwood](#) is a rising star in Arizona's burgeoning wine industry. Nestled in the Verde Valley, this quaint town offers a delightful mix of rustic charm and sophisticated tasting experiences. Visit **Merkin Vineyards Tasting Room & Osteria**, where you can sample exquisite wines made from locally grown grapes. Pair your wine with house-made pasta or other farm-to-table delights for a truly memorable experience.

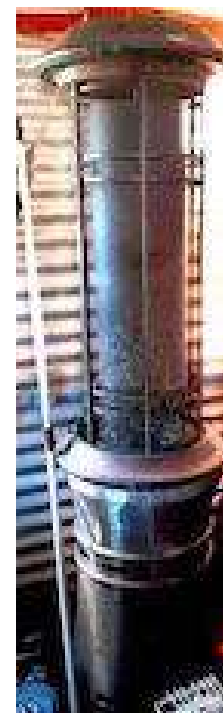
For a more in-depth look at the winemaking process, head to one of the nearby vineyards for a tour. Many wineries in the area practice sustainable farming, adding an eco-friendly touch to your visit. Cottonwood's wine country is perfect for oenophiles and casual wine enthusiasts alike.

### 3. Stargazing in Flagstaff: Embrace Astro tourism

Flagstaff, designated as the world's first International Dark Sky City, is a haven for stargazers. The city's commitment to

*Continued page 11*

## Antique Stoves for Sale



Three pictures on the left are Antique wood burning stoves. Need cleaning & stove black paint. Not pictured is antique

stove square front. I think there are threaded pipe fittings & assorted other heaters - 1 kerosene and 1 propane buddy.

Far right picture is a six foot outdoor heater. Call Tom 352-804-1223

# LADY LAKE COUNTY EVENTS

Feb 1  
**Tavares African American Heritage Festival**  
11:00 AM - 3:00 PM Wooton Park in **Tavares**

The festival goal is to create events that serve the community, promote education, preservation and celebration of the African-American culture.

Feb 2  
**Exploration Hike**  
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM P.E.A.R. Park (Gateway) in **Leesburg**2/23/24/65/4 Plus More

Join staff on an early evening walk while exploring nature at P.E.A.R. Park. Hike Intensity: Light. Reservations required.

Feb 4  
**Who Lives Here?**  
9:00 AM - 11:00 AM Lake May Reserve in **Eustis**  
Explore the natural communities and plant species which support the animal life at the preserve. GPS N 28.52.20.05, W 81.37.47.62

Feb 7  
**Exploration Hike**  
8:00 AM - 9:30 AM Ferndale Preserve in **Clermont**2/73/74/45/2 Plus More  
Join staff and explore the habitats and species of Ferndale Preserve. Hike intensity: Vigorous. Reservations required.

Feb 8  
**Quarterly Bird & Butterfly Survey**  
7:30 AM - 11:00 AM Ellis Acres Reserve

in **Paisley**2/85/37/1911/1  
Assist staff with surveying one of Lake County's conservation lands for birds and butterflies.

Feb 8  
**39th Annual Fox Run Clubhouse Sale + Bake Sale and Snack Bar**  
8:00 AM - 1:00 PM Fox Run HOA Clubhouse in **Tavares**  
Household items, Furniture, Lamps, Linens, Bedding, Small appliances Pots/Pans, Dishes, Kitchen Gadgets, Tableware, Jewelry, Scarfs, Books, Crafts, and more

Feb 8  
**Citrus Champs Carnival**  
12:00 PM - 9:00 PM Victory Pointe in **Clermont**  
Get ready for a burst of fun! The highly anticipated Citrus Champs Carnival (pronounced CAR-NA-VAL) is making its grand debut

Feb 9  
**Who Lives Here?**  
9:30 AM - 11:30 AM Lake Norris Conservation Area in **Eustis**  
Explore the wetlands and uplands whole looking for signs of wildlife that utilize the conservation area. Hiking Intensity: Moderate. Reservations required.

Feb 14  
**Evening of Elegance**  
6:30 PM - 10:30 AM Arlington Ridge Fairfax Hall in **Leesburg**  
Evening of Elegance - This will be an

opportunity to enjoy a refreshing atmosphere of fun and laughter, adorning our best formal or semi-formal wardrobe.

Feb 14  
**Discover Leesburg**  
5:00 PM - 9:00 PM Towne Square, Downtown Leesburg in **Leesburg**  
Join us every 2nd Friday evening of the month on Towne Square in Downtown Leesburg for an unforgettable experience!

Feb 15  
**Native Plant Propagation and Cultivation**  
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Ellis Acres Reserve in **Paisley**  
Native plants are good for wildlife and people. Learn a few tips on how to incorporate more natives into your landscapes. Hike intensity: light.

Feb 15  
**Tracks and Scat**  
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM P.E.A.R. Park Nature Center/ WCA in **Leesburg**  
Who goes there and who left that? Join park staff on a discovery of what animals left their tracks and scat, from bears to bugs. Did you know that you c...

Feb 15  
**Bass Pro Tour Fan Experience**  
1:00 PM - 5:30 PM Ski Beach Park in **Leesburg**2/152/16  
Get hooked on the ultimate fishing adventure at the Bass Pro Tour Fan Experience! February 15th & 16th | 1pm-5:30pm at Ski Beach Park Leesburg, FL

Feb 20  
**George W. Linn Stamp Club**

6:00 PM - 7:30 PM Marianne Beck Memorial Library in **Howey-in-the-Hills**2/203/204/175/15 Plus More  
This is a stamp club that meets at the library in Howey-in-the-Hills every 3rd Thursday of the month from 6:00-7:30 p.m.

Feb 22  
**Quarterly Bird & Butterfly Survey**  
7:30 AM - 11:00 AM Lake May Reserve in **Eustis**2/224/59/2010/25  
Assist staff with surveying one of Lake County's conservation lands for birds and butterflies. These surveys assist with the long term management

Feb 22  
**Explore a Portion of the Green Swamp**  
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Pasture Reserve in **Groveland**  
The Pasture Preserve lies in an area of the Green Swamp, and area of critical concern. Join staff on an exploration hike of the habitats of the area.

Feb 22  
**Leesburg Blues-BQ**  
12:00 PM - 5:00 PM Towne Square, Downtown Leesburg in **Leesburg**  
Join the City of Leesburg for a sizzling good time February 22nd - 12pm to 5pm at Towne Square, Downtown Leesburg! Blues-BQ features mouth watering B...

Feb 26  
**Exploring the Marsh**  
9:00 AM - 11:00 AM Pine Meadows Conservation Area in **Eustis**  
Wetlands provide critical filtration of water and are critical habitats for wildlife.



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# Lady Lake Annual Gala

Attendees of the Lady Lake Annual Gala at the Brownwood Hotel & Spa came dressed to evening included a silent auction, live auction, wine toss, delicious food, drinks, and entertained for the masquerade theme! The



# Lady Lake Chamber Ribbon Cuttings



The Waterfront Inn Renovations and Calypso Restaurant



Happy Dave's



Ay Sonora Mexican Cuisine



Discount RV-Boat Storage of Lady Lake

## Why Join The Lady Lake Area Chamber?

- **Networking Opportunities**- Connect with business professionals
- **Visibility** - Get noticed in your community
- **Credibility**- Membership raises your business reputation
- **Discounts**- Take advantage of member- only discounts
- **Learning**- Member only speaker series on business topics
- **Give Back**- Volunteer on committees to help the community

**Contact us today to be added to our email list and stay connected to local businesses & events!**



# Adult FEBRUARY

## Lady Lake Library

Hours:

Monday: 9am-7pm

Tuesday-Friday: 9am-6pm

Saturday and Sunday: Closed

Closed: February 17th

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

					
<b>Chair Yoga</b> 3 @10am & @11:30am <b>ESL @10-11:30am</b> <b>Sign Up Required</b>	 4	5	6	7	
<b>Chair Yoga</b> 10 @10am & @11:30am <b>ESL @10-11:30am</b> <b>Sign Up Required</b>	<b>Book Discussion</b> @ 2-4pm 11	<b>SHINE @2-4pm</b> 12	<b>Board Games Meetup!</b> @2-4pm 13	<b>BestBuy iPhone/iPad</b> @ 9:30am 14	
<b>Closed for President's Day</b> 17	<b>Crochet and Knitting Hangout</b> @ 3-4:30pm 18	<b>Authors Round Table</b> @ 2-4pm 19	<b>Bingo!</b> @2-3:30pm sign up required 20	 21	
<b>Chair Yoga</b> 24 @10am & @11:30am <b>ESL @10-11:30am</b> <b>Sign Up Required</b>	25	<b>SHINE 2-4pm</b> 26	27	<b>BestBuy iMac</b> @ 9:30am 28	

# Youth FEBRUARY

## Lady Lake Library

Hours:

Monday: 9am-7pm

Tuesday-Friday: 9am-6pm

Saturday and Sunday: Closed

Closed: February 17th

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

		 <b>Join Us In Our Monthly Scavenger Hunt!</b> Follow the clues and win a cool prize!			
3 <b>Craft Kits Available!</b> While supplies last.	<b>Tiny Tots</b> 4 @ 10:30am <b>Family Crafting</b> @ 3:30pm	<b>Storytime 10:30am</b> 5 <b>Read with Scarlett</b> 3:00pm-4:00pm	 6	7 <b>Lego Masters</b> @ 3:30pm	
10 <b>Craft Kits Available!</b> While supplies last.	<b>Tiny Tots</b> 11 @ 10:30am <b>Family Crafting</b> @ 3:30pm	<b>Storytime 10:30am</b> 12 <b>Read with Scarlett</b> 3:00pm-4:00pm	<b>Valentine's Day Card Swap (All Ages)</b> 13 @10:30-11:30am	<b>Baby Storytime</b> 14 @10:30am <b>Video Games</b> @3:30-4:30pm	
<b>Closed for President's Day</b> 17	<b>Tiny Tots</b> 18 @ 10:30am <b>Family Crafting</b> @ 3:30pm	<b>Storytime 10:30am</b> 19 <b>Read with Scarlett</b> 3:00pm-4:00pm	 20	21 <b>Lego Masters</b> @ 3:30pm	
24 <b>Craft Kits Available!</b> While supplies last.	<b>Tiny Tots</b> 25 @ 10:30am <b>Family Crafting</b> @ 3:30pm	<b>Storytime 10:30am</b> 26 <b>Read with Scarlett</b> 3:00pm-4:00pm	 27	<b>Baby Storytime</b> 28 @10:30am <b>Video Games</b> @3:30-4:30pm	

# Sedona, Arizona

Continued from page 6

preserving dark skies has made astrotourism a leading travel trend. Join guided night sky tours or visit the **Lowell Observatory** to marvel at the celestial wonders above. Whether you're a seasoned astronomer or a curious traveler, the starry skies of Flagstaff are truly magical.

## 4. Step Back in Time in Jerome: History and Charm

Perched on Cleopatra Hill, the historic town of Jerome offers a fascinating glimpse into Northern Arizona's mining past. Once known as the "Wickedest Town in the West," Jerome is now a vibrant arts community with a rich history.

Begin your visit with lunch at **The Asylum Restaurant**, located in the historic Jerome Grand Hotel. Enjoy stunning views of the Verde Valley while dining in this beautifully restored former hospital. Then, head to the **Jerome State Historic Park** or explore the **Copper Art Museum**, which features an impressive collection of artifacts that highlight the region's mining legacy and artistic craftsmanship.

Jerome's eclectic mix of historic sites, unique shops, and cool bars make it a must-visit destination for history buffs and curious travelers alike.

## 5. Travel Responsibly

As you explore Northern Arizona, it's essential to travel responsibly to preserve the natural beauty and cultural heritage of the region. Here are some tips:

- **Respect Nature:** Stay on designated trails, avoid disturbing wildlife, and leave no trace.
- **Support Local:** Choose locally owned businesses, artisans, and



restaurants to contribute to the community.

• **Be Culturally Sensitive:** When visiting Native American sites, adhere to guidelines and respect the traditions of local tribes.

Northern Arizona's blend of natural beauty, cultural richness, and historic charm ensures a travel experience that is both diverse and enriching. Whether you're exploring Sedona's art scene, sipping wines in Cottonwood, or marveling at the stars in Flagstaff, this region promises memories that will last a lifetime. Everything you could possibly need to begin your journey; you will find on [sedonamonthly.com](https://www.sedonamonthly.com)

<https://about.newsusa.com/planning-a-trip-to-northern-arizona-check-out-this-unique-experience-guide-by-sedona-monthly>

# Financial Wellness 2025

Start with These Simple Steps

(NAPSI)—Now that 2025 is here, it's time to tackle resolutions for a financially healthier year. The self-improvement journey can be expensive so go for goals that will help keep you on track, especially after an expensive holiday season.

Americans were estimated to have spent upwards of \$1,000 on holiday shopping, a 10% increase from 2023. Roughly 47% of people entered this past holiday season carrying debt from the year prior. With real life back in business, you'll want to find meaningful solutions to achieve financial wellness.

2025 is the year to relieve yourself of financial stress. Here are some ways that go beyond staying financially afloat and that can set you up for success.

## Map out your expenses and create a budget

Identifying where your money goes puts you in control. Spend some time listing out your expenses by category. These may

include insurance, groceries, rent or mortgage, gas, and entertainment. Once you've figured out how much money you really need to spend, you can begin budgeting.

Your budget should be as detailed as possible. Allot a sum of money toward your reoccurring expenses, breaking it down by month. Plan to spend your money on the categories you identified and intentionally put any remaining funds into an account where they can grow.

## Cut out unnecessary bills

Monthly bills rack up whether you notice it or not. From housing costs to healthcare and phone bills, these necessities can eat away at your wallet when on autopilot. For example, Americans spend an average of \$1,365 yearly on phone bills which often carry hidden charges and fees. Switching to phone service provider TextNow makes it easy to track your bill within a simple app and saves you money. You can call and text, free, over Wi-Fi or unlock free cellular service nationwide with a \$4.99 SIM card.

## Take advantage of free trials

Before you commit to an expensive gym membership for your 2025 glow-up, try out

Continued page 13



# Lady Lake Area Chamber



# WQBQ

# 1410 AM & 95.1 FM

# "The Voice Of Lake County"

# www.WQBQ1410.com

## FROM THE DESK OF CONGRESSWOMAN KAT CAMMACK



### Trump's First Week In Office!

President Trump took his Oath of Office in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda. While we were disappointed that our constituents were unable to witness the

ceremonies in-person due to the cold weather outside, we were so pleased to see all of our visitors from Florida's Third in town to celebrate with us.

After an incredible morning of festivities and an afternoon packed with indoor parades, President Trump got to work right away and immediately signed an impressive list of executive orders.

- Of the orders, he declared:
- a national emergency at the border;
  - a national energy emergency;
  - an end to discriminatory DEI practices;
  - the United States' withdrawal from the World Health Organization;
  - And more!

The president and his team have not been shy about the America First Agenda and we're thrilled to be part of all of the amazing work over the next four years.

This week the Laken Riley Act was passed by both the House and the Senate and is now awaiting President Trump's signature. We must take a stand against the national emergency raging at our border and protect our citizens to ensure what happened to Laken never happens again.

We hope everyone enjoys the weekend and stays warm! With all of the cold weather in the Sunshine State recently, we're grateful for our first responders and hardworking plow trucks keeping our roadways and communities safe.

With all that's happening this new Congress, it is my greatest honor to represent you and hear from you about the

issues that matter most. You can read below about what we've been up to this week, and as always, you can stay up to date with us here, on our website, and on X, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

For the Republic,  
Congresswoman Kat Cammack  
Proudly Representing Florida's Third Congressional District

### Rep. Cammack Introduces Resolution To Prohibit Members From Bringing Or Displaying Flags of Foreign Nations On The House Floor

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Yesterday, Congresswoman Kat Cammack re-introduced her resolution to prohibit Members of the House of Representatives from bringing or displaying a flag of a foreign nation on the floor of the House.

The prohibition shall apply to a flag of a foreign nation regardless of the size of the flag. Exceptions include a flag of a foreign nation worn as a lapel pin by a Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner, and the depiction of a flag of a foreign nation used as part of an exhibit during a speech or debate under the rules of the House of Representatives. The Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Representatives is responsible for enforcement of the prohibition.

Following the passage on H.R. 8035 on Saturday, April 20, 2024 during the 118th Congress, lawmakers waved the flag of Ukraine on the floor of the House of Representatives, eliciting frustration from Rep. Cammack and colleagues.

"On the floor of the United States House of Representatives, there should only be one flag on display: ours," said Rep. Cammack. "We make serious decisions on behalf of the American people and their taxpayer dollars on the House floor. This business should be carried out beneath no other banner than our stars and stripes to

remind us of who we represent and why this nation is the greatest in the history of the world. I'm glad to have earned the support of dozens of my colleagues who join me in standing up for the American people and putting our nation before all others."

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### Rep. Cammack Announces Her Energy & Commerce Committee Subcommittee Assignments For The 119th Congress

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today,

Congresswoman Kat Cammack announced her subcommittee assignments for the Committee on Energy & Commerce.

This Congress, Rep. Cammack will serve on the following subcommittees:

- Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
- Subcommittee on Health
- Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade

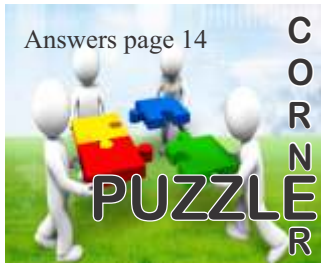
The Subcommittee on Health is a new subcommittee assignment during the 119th Congress.

"I'm excited to continue our great work on the Committee on Energy & Commerce this Congress," said Rep. Cammack. "We accomplished some outstanding policy wins last Congress and I'm looking forward to continue that momentum for the American people and the amazing people of Florida's Third Congressional District."

"Energy and Commerce Republicans are ready to hit the ground running, delivering for President Trump's America First agenda to restore the American Dream," said Energy & Commerce Chairman Brett Guthrie.

Stay tuned for more announcements about the 119th Congress in the coming weeks.

Our local Congress woman with speaker Joh. She is one of our favorites. If you look you can see she is taking the picture. I think this was when they were voting to keep Johnson



Answers page 14

CORNER

### Across

1. Chocolate substitute
6. Meerschaum, e.g.
10. Has the title
14. Greek marketplace
15. Mr. Roberts
16. Pull for
17. Gibberish!
19. Columba
20. Wheelhouse dir.
21. Sultanate of Arabia
22. Portable chair
23. Tiff
24. Breaks out
26. Boring thing to hear
30. Set out for display
31. Jelly for germs
32. Where truckers sleep
35. It has feathers and flies
36. Legal addendum
38. Predatory sea bird
39. Royal Leamington feature
40. Rollers with corners

41. Exhausted
42. Unsolicited opinion
46. Plays the ace
48. Pressure, in slang
49. Ransacks
50. Like many a winter sky
51. Psychic power
54. It may be drawn in the sand
55. Batman and Robin
58. Wing-shaped
59. Hardly illusory
60. Zenith's opposite
61. "The Laughing Cavalier" artist
62. Two-master
63. Prepare parmesan, e.g.
- Down**
1. Motor trailer
2. Literary conflict
3. Cad
4. Christmas bulb, e.g.
5. Nonsense
6. Non-computer chip?
7. Zagros Mountains locale
8. Chum
9. Reindeer's kin
10. Difficult experience
11. Boring thing to hear?
12. Astronomical phenomena
13. Brens' cousins

18. Radiate
22. Traumatize
23. Ella's music
24. Stopping result
25. Galactic bit
26. Youngsters
27. Envelop
28. Not reasonable
29. Weighted down
33. Rhody, in an old song
34. Cleansing vessel
36. "The Vampire Lestat" author
37. Readies the bubbly
38. Lady Macbeth's bane
40. Morse code symbols
41. Swinging from side to side
43. Irrigates
44. Slavery
45. Garment line
46. Islamic deity
47. All done!
50. Eat like a mouse
51. Old Norse poetry collection
52. Diamonds, e.g.
53. Dermal opening
55. Thirsty
56. Aye
57. Mercury or Saturn, but not Mars

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
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65					66					67			

## FROM THE DESK OF ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY



### AG Moody Releases New Scams at a Glance: Grandparent Grifts Resource During Senior Protection Event

Attorney General Ashley Moody

today hosted a Senior Scam Seminar at the On Top of the World Cultural Center in Marion County and released a new senior-protection resource. Attended by more than 500 Florida seniors, the educational symposium focused on senior fraud and how to avoid becoming a victim of cybercrime and schemes related to cryptocurrency, financial crime and exploitation. At the symposium, Attorney General Moody released *Scams at a Glance: Grandparent Grifts*. This new resource aims to help Florida seniors know how to avoid and properly report grandparent schemes. In these schemes, imposters pose as a grandchild and call a target claiming to be in an emergency situation and then request money.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Today, we held a Senior Scam Seminar to educate hundreds of older Floridians about common and emerging scams. During the seminar, we released our *Scams at a Glance: Grandparents Grifts*. This new resource explains grandparent scams and provides tips to help older Floridians spot and avoid these imposter scams."

Joining Attorney General Moody as speakers at the Senior Scam Seminar were Marion County Sheriff Billy Woods, representatives from the State Attorney's Office from the 5th Judicial Circuit and Marion County Sheriff's Office's Fraud Team, as well as representatives from Attorney General Moody's Cyber Fraud Enforcement Unit, Seniors vs Crime and Senior Protection Teams.

Grandparent scams begin with a call from someone pretending to be the grandchild of a target. The schemer may speak softly or make an excuse for sounding different. The scammer, posing as the victim's grandchild, will then claim to be in trouble and need money. The fraudster may urgently demand payment and beg the senior to keep it a secret. Once the victim sends money to the scammer, victims are often unable to get the money back.

To help combat grandparent scams, Attorney General Moody is releasing *Scams at a Glance: Grandparent Grifts*. The resource offers the following tips:

- Resist the urge to act immediately. Hang up and check with the grandchild or other family members directly;
- Know that anyone demanding payment in the form of a gift card, cryptocurrency or wire transfer is probably a scammer — never send money to solicitors through these means;
- Be aware that scammers may use information found on a victim's family members' social media platforms to appear credible; and
- Scammers may request to meet and receive the money in person. If this

happens, hang up and call local law enforcement immediately.

To view *Scams at a Glance: Grandparent Grifts*, click [here](#). To view the resource in Spanish, click [here](#).

To learn more about other types of scams, visit the [Scams at a Glance homepage](#).

Since taking office in 2019, Attorney General Moody has secured:

- Nearly \$700 million in Consumer Protection recoveries, including relief and restitution;
- More than \$9.5 million in Senior Protection Team recoveries; and
- More than \$5.75 million in realized gains through the Seniors vs. Crime team thanks to Senior Sleuths volunteering more than 107,000 hours.

Attorney General Moody is committed to protecting seniors. While in office, Attorney General Moody:

- Launched the Senior Protection Team, consisting of members from the Office of Statewide Prosecution, Consumer Protection Division, Medicaid Fraud Control Unit and Office of Citizen Services;
- Released the [Scams at a Glance outreach program](#) to inform Floridians about common and emerging schemes through online, easily-printable brochures;

- Published the [Consumer Alert webpage](#) that educates Floridians about emerging scams, fraudulent activities and deceptive practices. The program also notifies Floridians about available refunds, restitution and claims resulting from actions taken by the Consumer Protection Division; and

- Urged the [Federal Communications Commission to adopt STIR/SHAKEN technologies](#) to reduce illicit robocalls, joined the [Anti-Robocall Multistate Litigation Task Force](#) and joined a bipartisan coalition to prevent and investigate illegal robocalls.

### Following Report Showing Alarming Increase in Hate Crimes Against Jewish Floridians, AG Moody to Host Law Enforcement Training to Combat Antisemitism

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Following the latest Hate Crimes in Florida Report showing an alarming increase in hate crimes against Jewish Floridians, Attorney General Ashley Moody will be hosting a law enforcement training to address antisemitism on college campuses. The recently released report detailed an alarming 94% increase in hate crimes against Jewish Floridians from 2022 to 2023. The report also noted that the Jewish community has been increasingly targeted on college campuses since the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel in October 2023. Florida stands with the nation's ally, Israel, and Attorney General Moody is proud to announce an upcoming training designed to help law enforcement and investigators combat hate crimes and antisemitism on college campuses.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Florida is a law-and-order state, and we

have taken extraordinary steps to protect the Jewish community since the October 7th attacks. While law enforcement continues to vigilantly protect Jewish Floridians, we are seeing an increase in reported antisemitic hate crimes. That is why we are hosting a training to help combat antisemitism on college campuses."

Following the Oct. 7, 2023, terrorist attacks on Israel, antisemitic incidents [more than tripled](#) across the United States. The epicenter of much of the antisemitic activity is college and university campuses. Attorney General Moody previously reached out to higher education officials in 2023 and 2024 advising them of Florida's zero-tolerance policy against antisemitism and provided information on state statutes that outlaw antisemitic hate crimes and supporting terrorist organizations.

In partnership with the Combat Antisemitism Movement, Attorney General Moody is proud to announce an upcoming training designed to educate law enforcement and investigators about hate crimes and antisemitism on college and university campuses.

The training program was developed from the George Washington University's Program on Extremism and addresses the presence of Hamas in America and campus protests. Specifically, it examines Hamas' history in America and the network's evolution, tactics, key players and activities, including the roles of Iranian and Hezbollah networks in propaganda, education and campus-related initiatives. The training is tailored to educate individuals from federal and state agencies, detectives, police officers, sheriff's deputies, university police and other public-safety officers.

The training will be held at Florida Atlantic University's Boca Raton campus on April 30th, from 8 a.m.-Noon. Those interested in attending the training should reach out to Gabe Groisman, Senior Advisor of the Combat Antisemitism Movement, at [gg@groisman.llc](mailto:gg@groisman.llc) for further information.

### Attorney General Moody Supports President Trump's Immigration Policies to Reinstate Order at the Border on Day One

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody is standing in support of President-Elect Donald Trump's immigration policies. Over the past four years of the failed Biden administration, more than 10 million illegal immigrants poured into the country through the open border with Mexico. As a result of Biden's dereliction of duty, transnational criminal organizations used the chaos at the southern border to bring massive amounts of illicit substances, like fentanyl, into the United States, resulting in the drug overdose deaths of more than 100,000 Americans each year. Attorney General Moody and a coalition of 18 other attorneys general support President Trump's plan on day one to clear up the border, reinstate law and order, and protect Americans.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "The last four years, we have seen the Biden administration ignore the rule of law, destroy any semblance of order at our Southwest border, allow millions of unvetted illegal immigrants into the country and put the safety of Americans at risk. We have aggressively fought back in court against these unlawful and irresponsible actions and won many legal victories. However, the Biden administration never stopped creating new unlawful policies.

"As the country looks forward to change in administrations, we are excited to have a president who puts the interests of Americans first. I am proud to stand with my colleagues from other states in support of President Trump's immigration plan to reverse the dangerous policies enacted by the outgoing administration on DAY ONE."

## Financial Wellness

Continued from page 11

different forms of exercise through free trials. Try Pilates, yoga, cycling, kickboxing, HIIT, and group workouts—the options are nearly endless. Save money and experience all that's out there. Ask about corporate, student, senior and youth discounts while you're at it.

**Buy in bulk and coupon clip**  
Buying in bulk or using refill stations is another way to save money in the long run. You may have stocked up for the new year. Make it a habit to buy and re-stock the essentials. Fill up your pantry, seek out stores that offer re-fills and take advantage of your freezer.

Stick to the budget you created and be on the lookout for deals and coupons. Beyond offering free phone service, TextNow also has a Perks program where you can find various deals and discounts from your favorite brands, updated weekly. Simply download the app to start saving!  
With TextNow, you are not only saving, but gaining control of your budget, year-round. Getting started with TextNow is easy. Download the [app](#) to call and text for free over Wi-Fi or unlock free cellular service nationwide with a \$4.99 SIM card.

Free Phone Service: Unlimited calling and texting on the nation's largest 5G network—for free. No gimmicks, no contracts.

Free Essential Data: Get free data for essential apps such as maps, rideshare, and email when you activate your SIM card.

Additional Flexible Data Plans: Add extra data only when you need it, with hourly, daily, or monthly passes.

Access free deals from your favorite brands including Hulu, Disney, Chime, Walmart and more with TextNow Perks.

Instead of spending more in 2025, do something different and focus on goals that will pay dividends over time. With inflation and debt, it's more difficult than ever to save a penny but with these tips we hope you can swim in the savings you'll accumulate.

For more details, visit [www.TextNow.com](http://www.TextNow.com).

FROM THE DESK OF

GOVERNOR DESANTIS



**Florida Graduation Rate Breaks State Record at 89.7%**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Today, Governor Ron DeSantis announced that Florida's high school graduation rate rose to 89.7 percent during the 2023-2024 school year, an increase of 1.7 percentage points over last year, exceeding the pre-pandemic rate of 86.9% for the 2018-2019 school year. The 2023-2024 high school graduation rate represents the highest rate in Florida history, with the exception of the pandemic school years 2019-20 and 2020-21, in which graduating classes were exempt from statewide, standardized assessment requirements stipulated in state law.

"Florida leads the nation in education because we put education over indoctrination, empower parents, and have made school choice universal," said Governor Ron DeSantis. "This record graduation rate is a prime metric of our success, in addition to our #1-in-the-nation rating."

"Florida's graduation rate continues to climb," said Florida Department of Education Commissioner Manny Diaz, Jr. "Florida is number one for education because of our commitment to providing a quality education that fits the needs of each student, and our climbing graduation rate is proof positive that our approach is working. Under the leadership of Governor DeSantis, Florida will continue to lead the nation in educational success."

Highlights from Florida's 2023-2024 high school graduation rate include:

- The 2023-24 graduation rate rose to 89.7 percent, an increase of 1.7 percentage points over last year and 2.4 percentage points from 2021-22.

- African American students' graduation rate rose 2.1 percentage points over last year, and 3.3 percentage points since 2021-22.

- Hispanic students' graduation rate increased by 2.2 percentage points from last year and 3.1 percentage points over 2021-22.

- The graduation rate for students with disabilities rose 1.3 percentage points over last year and 3.3 percentage points from 2021-22.

- Economically disadvantaged students' graduation rate rose 2.4 percentage points over last year and 3.1 percentage points from 2021-22.

- English Language learners' graduation rate improved 4.6 percentage points over last year and 7.7 percentage points since 2021-22.

Under Governor Ron DeSantis, Florida's graduation rate has increased significantly, moving from 70.6% to the record high rate of 89.7 in 2023-2024.

**Governor Ron DeSantis Announces Proposals for Immigration Special Session**

Governor Ron DeSantis announced proposals for Florida's upcoming Special Legislative Session. The proposed actions will position Florida to quickly carry out

President-Elect Donald Trump's mandate to combat illegal immigration.

"Florida is ready to lead," said Governor Ron DeSantis. "With President Trump taking office, Florida has a unique opportunity to help facilitate the end to America's immigration crisis."

Proposed legislation includes:

- Mandate maximum participation in the 287(g) deportation program, with penalties for non-compliance, including suspension of officials;
- Establish a state crime for entering the U.S. illegally and a process for self-deportation;
- Appoint a dedicated officer to oversee coordination with federal authorities and the Unauthorized Alien Transport Program (UATP);
- Expand UATP to detain and facilitate the deportation of illegal aliens from the U.S.;
- Broaden the legal definition of gang-related activities to include more groups of dangerous illegal aliens;
- Repeal in-state college tuition for illegal immigrant students;
- Require voter registration affirmation of U.S. citizenship and Florida residency;
- Increase penalties for unauthorized aliens committing voter fraud or providing false voter registration information;
- Mandate identity verification for foreign remittance transfers; and
- Create a rebuttable presumption that illegal aliens are flight risks and deny bail.

**Governor Ron DeSantis and First Lady Casey DeSantis Establish Hope Florida Office within the Executive Office of the Governor**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.— Governor Ron DeSantis and First Lady Casey DeSantis established the Hope Florida Office within the Executive Office of the Governor to oversee and administer the growing Hope Florida Pathway to Prosperity Initiative. Established in 2021, Hope Florida is a first-of-its-kind initiative that maximizes support from community partners outside government—predominantly non-profits, faith-based organizations, and private sector business partners. Utilizing a personalized navigation model, Floridians seeking government assistance are provided a Hope Navigator who utilizes those aforementioned entities to meet immediate needs and guide them on a Pathway to economic self-sufficiency. In fact, Hope Florida has already led to more than **30,000** Floridians decreasing or eliminating reliance on public assistance. Estimates show that Hope Florida could save taxpayers nearly \$1 billion dollars over the next 10 years. Under the Hope Florida model, government serves as a convener and collaborator between good people who need help and good people, outside of government, who are willing to help. Government is uniquely positioned to make the connection and thus reduce its role in assisting people in need, while also providing preventative navigation that aims to prevent Floridians from reentering or becoming dependent on the "government

system."

Celia, a mother of three, was a graduate student who was struggling with student loans, rent, and childcare. While deciding between leaving school and applying for government assistance, Celia was introduced to Hope Florida. Through Hope Florida, Celia was connected with daycare resources, enabling her to finish school and land a full-time job. Her Hope Navigator encouraged her to continue her education and helped her develop a sustainable financial plan.

"Hope Florida is the alternative to government dependency," said Governor Ron DeSantis. "Thanks to Hope Florida, Floridians will receive better services that lead to self-sufficiency through this one-of-a-kind program."

"Hope Florida is revolutionizing the way state governments meet needs," said First Lady DeSantis. "By bringing together existing resources outside of government and pairing those in need with a navigator to guide them through all of the available help, Hope Florida is using government as the connector and then getting out of the way. In short, Hope Florida is help finding help."

Since Hope Florida's creation in 2021, more than 150 Hope Navigators across the state have referred over **100,000** Floridians for assistance, established **5,600** Hope Florida partners, including over **2,000** faith-based partners into the Hope Florida network.

The newly established Hope Florida office within the Executive Office of the Governor will work closely with state agencies to deepen partnerships with the public and private sectors to optimize Hope Florida's effectiveness across the state. Erik Dellenback, who currently serves as the Governor's Liaison for Faith and Community, will lead the Hope Florida office as Executive Director.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to serve in this new role, but more importantly to steward the bold vision of the Governor and First Lady for Hope Florida," said Erik Dellenback. "Through Hope Florida, I believe we are standing witness to an incredible model of simple yet profound connection that will change our state and sweep across the nation."

In August, Governor DeSantis and First Lady Casey DeSantis announced "Activate Hope," an expansion of Hope Florida to serve Floridians recovering from the impacts of disasters.

**Governor Ron DeSantis Announces School Choice Success**

JACKSONVILLE, Fla.— Governor Ron DeSantis announced Florida has surpassed 500,000 students participating in Florida's school choice scholarship program. Additionally, more than 30,000 students are participating in the New Worlds Scholarship Accounts Program, with an additional 18,000 students utilizing the transportation stipend created by House Bill 1 (2023).

"Florida is the number one state for education because of our commitment to providing every student with the option that works best for them," said Governor Ron DeSantis. "I am proud that we have enabled over 500,000 students to access a high-quality education that fits their individual needs."

"Under Governor DeSantis' leadership, Florida continues to lead the way in providing the best educational opportunities for every student.," said Florida Department of Education Commissioner of Education Manny Diaz, Jr. "I am proud to see how many Florida families we are helping through school choice programs."

In 2023, Governor DeSantis signed House Bill 1 (HB 1), which established universal school choice. The bill eliminated financial eligibility restrictions and the enrollment cap for the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options. HB 1 also increased the annual scholarship cap growth for the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities and created a new opportunity for Florida students not enrolled full time in a public or private school to participate in the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program through a parent-directed Personalized Education Program. Additionally, HB 1 added a transportation stipend to the Florida Empowerment Scholarship Program.

In total, nearly 1.4 million students are utilizing a school choice option in Florida. Highlights of participation in Florida's school choice programs for 2024-25 include:

- More than 524,000 scholarships awarded under the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship (FTC), Florida Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options (FES EO) and the Florida Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Disabilities (FES UA)
- 107,000 FTC Scholarships including Personalized Education Plans.
- 295,105 FES EO Scholarships
- 121,907 FES UA Scholarships
- More than 30,000 students to receive New Worlds Scholarship Accounts to access tutoring, curriculum and other supplemental support.

- Another 18,000 students utilizing FES Transportation Stipend to commute to schools outside their designated school zone

For decades, Florida has led the nation in providing school choice options for students and families. Through a robust array of school choice programs, Florida empowers every family and every child to achieve their educational goals.

For more information about Florida's school choice programs, visit

<https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice>

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# Vape Detection Canine



Vape Detection Canine Helps Law Enforcement Officers Discover Stolen Firearm in School

Just one week ago today, Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody honored our School Resource Unit and its vape-detection canine, Samba, with the Back the Blue Award for Samba's outstanding performance in detecting vapes and THC in our schools. Today, Samba and her handler, Erica Stamborski, who also received the Back the Blue Award, again proved Samba's value and demonstrated why she's deserving of such a prestigious honor!

Earlier today, K9 Handler Stamborski and Samba responded to Leesburg High School for a routine scheduled visit to proactively walk areas of the campus. K9 Samba alerted to a backpack in the media room, which was absent of any students at the time, in an area where students typically leave their belongings. A search of the backpack was conducted, and located inside was a loaded Glock 9mm handgun, which was later determined to be stolen out of Lake County. This alert led to a felony arrest of a student by officers with the Leesburg Police Department.

In addition to locating the firearm, Samba also found three vapes and a cigar in other backpacks. We are incredibly proud of K9 Samba's and Handler Stamborski's efforts and their

unwavering dedication to ensuring a safe learning environment for children in Lake County.

(Pictured left to right: Handler Erica Stamborski, K9 Samba, Attorney General Ashley Moody, Captain Michael Marden, and Sheriff Peyton Grinnell)

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