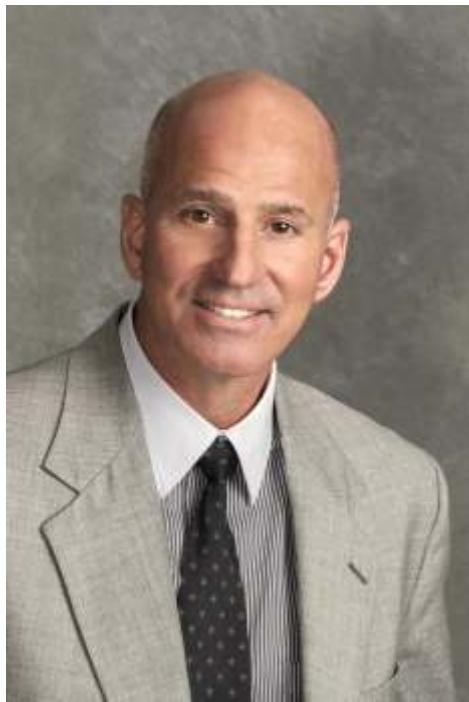


ocala DOWNTOWN

A free publication serving the people of the Ocala area

Volume 16 Issue 10

October 2025



Colonel Nick Navetta served thirty years in the U.S. Army and retired in 2010 from his last duty position as the Training Division Chief for U.S. Special Operations Command. He is a Veteran of Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Operation Joint Forge in Bosnia, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom. Colonel Navetta is branch-qualified in Field Artillery, Combat Military Police, and Civil Affairs. His awards include the Army Achievement Medal with 3 oak leaf clusters, the Army Commendation Medal with 3 oak leaf clusters, the Army Meritorious Service Medal, the Bronze Star Medal, and the Legion of Merit Medal.

Colonel Navetta's last combat tour of duty was in Iraq from November 2006 to November 2007, serving as the Senior Liaison Team Chief for Multi-National Corps-Iraq. Prior to that overseas deployment, Colonel Navetta served as the Government Team Chief for a Civil Affairs Command. He received orders to report to III Corps Headquarters at Fort Hood, Texas and was in a large auditorium with the Corps Commander, primary Staff Officers, and unit chains of subsequent Corps Commands to find out more about the mission they were about to take on. The Corps Chief of Staff was briefing the Corps Commander then about the responsibilities of a Liaison Team.



centered in the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad that would coordinate all U.S. Government agencies/Regional Embassy Offices/Provincial Reconstruction Teams throughout Iraq, Iraqi host nation Government Ministries/Deputy Prime Minister interactions, and serve as a "center of influence" for most activities taking place in the Green (or International) Zone in Baghdad. The Corps Commander asked his Chief of Staff --- "Who is this guy that will coordinate all these actions?" The Chief of Staff replied, "Colonel Nick Navetta, Sir".

With a team of about a dozen Officers, the Liaison Team excelled in their many responsibilities and all members were subsequently awarded the Bronze Star Medal.

There was a 3-month period where 28 friendly forces were killed within the International Zone from incoming enemy rockets and mortars. Colonel Navetta also conducted missions throughout Iraq as well as other countries to include Jordan and Kuwait.

Colonel Navetta was instrumental in setting up the Baghdad Security Plan prior to the U.S. surge of forces under General Petraeus and subsequently helping to turn "the tide of battle" during the "Sunni Awakening". He served as the Corps lead for the Al Anbar II Forum in Ramadi, Iraq where tribal leaders finally sided with U.S. forces to limit the death and destruction that previously went unabated.

In all his combat tours of duty, Colonel Navetta felt that he left each place better than what he found it --- or so at that time. It is frustrating nowadays to see that all that hard work and blood spilled seems for naught. It appears that if a population does not yearn for a free society as much as we want it for them, it most likely won't happen.

Florida Ranks #1 in Education Freedom

Florida Ranks #1 in Education Freedom for the Fourth Consecutive Year

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.— Governor Ron DeSantis announced the Heritage Foundation ranked Florida number one in Education Freedom for the fourth consecutive year. Florida's expansion of school choice and support of parental rights directly led to this top ranking.

"In Florida, we are committed to ensuring parents have the power to make the

education decisions that are best for their child," said Governor Ron DeSantis. "Florida offers a robust array of educational choices, which has solidified our state as a national leader in education freedom, parental power, and overall K-12 education."

"Earning the #1 ranking for Education Freedom for the fourth consecutive year affirms a simple principle: education

Continued page 6



Christine Calvert

By Christine Calvert

I was born and raised in Ocala. I've grown up watching Ocala grow to be The Horse Capital of the World and The Villages become one of the largest retirement communities in the US. I grew up on the dirt

roads and playing in the open fields, where homes and businesses stand today.

I've been a Florida licensed insurance agent for over 20 years, specializing in Medicare plans. In my years in insurance, I've seen many changes affecting the lives of Medicare recipients. Plans change year to year but I pride myself on being the constant, for my clients, in the dynamic Medicare market. They can count on me being here year to year, as an advocate as well as a resource for Medicare insurance.

My insurance career is a part of my life and my business. My business philosophy is treating my clients as I'd want my own parents treated. Because of this, my clients are my strongest advertisement. They are comfortable referring their friends and family to me for guidance. I am very proud of this and never take it for granted.

Christine Calvert, Licensed Benefit Consultant

1737 SW 17th Street, Ocala, FL 34471

Office – 352-401-5611:

Cell – 352-572-8510:

Fax – 352-390-6400

Fire Fort King Middle School



(OCALA, FL.) Sept. 17, 2025 – At approximately 11:41 a.m., Ocala Fire Rescue units were dispatched to reports of a structure fire at Fort King Middle School, 545 NE 17th Ave. As fire units were en route, school staff swiftly evacuated students to ensure the safety of everyone on campus. During the evacuation process, one student fell and was subsequently transported to the hospital for evaluation; fortunately, no injuries

resulted from the fire. Upon entering, firefighters observed haze filling both the bathroom and the hallway. To guarantee that the fire had been completely extinguished, they doused the area once more. The Fire Prevention Division, the Ocala Police Department, and Marion County Fire Rescue also responded to the incident.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation.

**HAVE A SAFE
HALLOWEEN OCTOBER 31st**



CEP CHAMBER NEWS Forward Momentum



Innovation Is Everywhere:
Lessons From Philadelphia & Beyond

By Tamar Fleischhaker

Our team recently traveled to Philadelphia for the ACCE (Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives) Annual Convention, where chamber leaders from across the country gathered to share ideas, explore new strategies, and challenge each other to think bigger about how we can drive growth and prosperity in our communities.

Philadelphia provided a fitting backdrop for these discussions. The city's history of leadership and resilience, combined with its ongoing efforts to innovate and grow, set the stage for practical conversations about how chambers can better serve their communities and position them for long-term success.

Common themes from the ACCE '25 convention:

Talent Development – Chambers everywhere are wrestling with workforce gaps. We saw creative ways to prepare the next generation of leaders and connect young professionals with meaningful opportunities.

Downtown Revitalization – From arts-driven corridors to the reuse of historic buildings, cities are finding ways to blend culture and commerce to energize their cores.

The Power of Storytelling – Chambers are leaning into authentic storytelling by using video, social media, and digital platforms to highlight wins and build community pride.

At ACCE '25, we also discussed the cultural principles of innovation. We were reminded that innovation doesn't depend on big budgets or futuristic tools—it depends on culture. The way we empower each other, ask for help, gather feedback, and collaborate creates the foundation for organizational creativity. Some key Innovation Principles:

1. Look for innovation everywhere.
2. Prioritize iteration and feedback.
3. Embrace passions, curiosities, and skills.

Innovation isn't a spontaneous act. It's a process that can be cultivated, structured, and embedded into the everyday work of our chambers. Like any other business function, it requires focus and discipline. Still, change is never easy. Human nature resists it, and generational differences often add friction. Yet history—and even pop culture—reminds us that innovation is constant. Progress has always been about daring to make possibility real.

What This Means for Ocala – We didn't just attend sessions. We came home with strategies. Expanding our talent pipeline, strengthening our downtown, and continuing to build an Ocala Metro where businesses and families thrive are top priorities. The challenges we face are not unique, but our strengths here in Ocala are.

Philadelphia reminded us of bold visionaries who built something enduring. In the same way, Ocala's story is still being written—and together, we get to be the authors.

Turning 65 or new to Medicare?

It's time to get Medicare-ready

Learn about your plan options from a licensed sales agent with no obligation to enroll

Have Medicare questions? A licensed sales agent can explain how it all works. Get answers to questions like:

How much will my insurance cost each year?

How much will my prescriptions cost?

Are my current doctors in Humana's network?

Does this plan cover me when I'm traveling?

More than a health plan

Humana's Medicare Advantage plans are designed to go above and beyond, with benefits that do more than you might expect. We call that human care.



Call a licensed independent sales agent



CHRISTINE
CALVERT

352-572-8510 (TTY: 711)

Christine@
medicarehealthplus.com

Humana®

A more human way
to healthcare®

Humana is a Medicare Advantage HMO, PPO and PFFS organization with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in any Humana plan depends on contract renewal. **At**

Humana, it is important you are treated fairly. Humana Inc. and its subsidiaries comply with applicable federal civil rights laws and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, ancestry, ethnicity, marital status, religion or language. **English:** ATTENTION: If you do not speak English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call **877-320-1235 (TTY: 711). Español (Spanish):** ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al **877-320-1235 (TTY: 711).** **繁體中文 (Chinese):** 注意:如果您使用繁體中文,您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 **877-320-1235 (聽障專線: 711)**。



► edwardjones.com | Member SIPC

How we work together: Helping you reach your financial goals

My team and I will take the time to truly get to know you, since how we turn your vision into a reality is very unique to you. I'll work with you to create a personalized financial strategy that includes advice, tools and resources to help you achieve your financial goals.

I'll do this in three important steps:

1. Understanding what's important to you

Your strategy should be personalized. So, before I make a recommendation, we'll work closely together to understand what is most important to you, including your goals, comfort with risk and how you'd prefer to work together.

2. Using an established process to build your personalized financial strategies

I use an established 5-step process, incorporating what's important to you, to develop a personalized strategy using our advice, guidance and advanced tools. Our 5-step process helps me fully understand what is most important to you and then create an actionable financial strategy personalized to you.

3. Partnering together over time to help keep you on track

Markets, interest rates and life's priorities may change, but our relationship and my commitment to helping you achieve your goals won't. I'll make sure I'm with you every step of the way by:

- Providing regular reviews and updates
- Identifying timely risks and opportunities
- Helping you keep your emotions in check during market volatility
- Helping you prepare for the unexpected

I believe that when it comes to your financial strategy, you deserve a personal relationship and professional advice. My goal is to help you achieve your goals. That means focusing on the future you see for yourself, building strategies just for you and helping you stay on track by partnering together over the long term.

It takes a team

When we develop your financial strategy, you're backed by all of Edward Jones. Along with my team, you have the expertise of our Investment Policy Committee, our product review team and research analysts behind you all the way.

These teams provide the guidance and resources to help me:

- Develop a financial strategy for your goals
- Build your personalized investment portfolio
- Identify and address potential risks and opportunities



Scan the code
with the camera
on your phone



Nick Navetta
AAMS®

Financial Advisor

814 East Silver Springs Blvd
Suite B
Ocala, FL 34470
352-629-2165

Jessica Gordon
Branch Office Administrator

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. If you want to make contact with the newspaper/Tom Loury email tourney@att.net

PUBLISHER'S NOTES



I have heard & read many tax payers complaining online about Marion County Taxes affecting their monthly payments on their Mortgage. (Especially the elderly. The area was from Rainbow Springs,

OTOW, Lake Tropicana Estates, Rainbow Lakes estates, Rainbows Inn, Marion Oaks and several others in Ocala along 200. When the county raises the taxes it raises the value of their home then the insurance Company can raise their prices, leaving the home owners at the mercy of the insurance Company's and maybe the mortgage company. Go online and look at the fore closers in Marion. Marion County is going to be named the most expensive county to live in Florida. When you call the county says you if you make less than a certain amount per year you can apply. NO it should

be the Insurance Company's should give the people over 65 a rebate at the end of the year to help pay the taxes the county just raised again! Please Marion County Board of Directors, read the letter I sent you, or did it go into the trash that we have to pay for.

Trump has not attacking Venezuela WE hit two drug boats and said he we will stop all drug boats that we can that are at sea. We are not attacking a country we are stopping illegal drugs.

People who are in fear of being harmed carry a defensive weapon so at least you can fight back. I noticed the girl that got stabbed and killed sat on the train with her back to the killer. She was not expecting any problems on her trip home. If she had her back against the wall and was expecting trouble at least she might have had a chance to fight! That killer was a coward and deserves to die! Maybe we can put him down like he put her down. That might

happen in prison.

What is a Turnpike Club, They supposedly raised a lot of money with a golf tourney for a charity. I hope that is not the same Turnpike that has been trying to take private land or put their extension through farms??? Maybe that's just the name.

I'm reading things on the Gov. watchdog says there has been a large number of firings because Government Employees are watching PORN during working hours and on Government issued phones?

A 36 year old man walked into the NYPD and attack a police officer with a knife slashing him on the face. Attacker was not captured his body was taken into custody.

A 9-year-old student in Marion County was arrested on September 9, 2025, for bringing a loaded revolver onto a school bus headed to College Park Elementary School.

Epstein files investigation during a transcript from Ghislaine Maxwell the jailed associate of Epstein has said that Clinton or Trump never said or did anything inappropriate.

They can't leave it there can they? What happens if there are some very influential

World Leaders brought to light Leaders of allied countries of the world, or there family members. That is not the business of the United States! The United States should not take it further if it did not involve our leaders. If it does and now it has been disclosed, it is certainly not the president and not the one I thought would be involved (Clinton).

I think this Epstein thing involves world leaders and that is why the Epstein crimes cannot be exposed. Maybe a few leaders involved but now it has been disclosed they will slink off into the darkness. We have some unexplained resignations.

Right after Ghislaine the interview she was moved from Florida prison to a Texas prison probably because as he is a target. Remember two people died by suicide. Some say they were murdered!

I see a lot of voices on Neighbors blog complaining about taxes. Most on the west side of the county and most are seniors. The county fathers and mothers need to remember 28.3% of the voters are seniors. Also remember they offer financial stability to the economy here because they get check every month and spend money. If you don't believe me just try to go shopping on the first of the month.

Continued page 6

Newspaper Deadlines

Editorial & Ad Copy for November

Seniors Voice & Ocala Downtown

Noon, October 21st

Lady Lake Magazine & Village Spectator

12am, October 26th

Seniors Voice of Ocala/Ocala Downtown Products of TomL Publishing, LLC

P.O Box 1698, Dunnellon FL 34430

Publisher: Tom Loury
Phone: 352-804-1223 | Fax: 352-489-7208
Email: tourney@att.net

The "Ocala DownTown" (Newspaper) www.OcalaDownTown.com (Online Product) and the Seniors Voice of Ocala (Newspaper) and www.SeniorsVoiceofOcala.com are owned and operated by TomL Publishing LLC, a sole proprietor Corp. Its owners, editors, writers, compositors, printers and publishers are not responsible or liable for typographical errors, misinformation, misprints, and the like, unintentionally contained herein. All letter hard copies or online received become the property of TomL Publishing LLC and may be reproduced without further consent. All above are independent contractors.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR reflect the opinion of the writer, not the opinion of these newspapers. Letters should be online typed and limited to 300 words or less. Letters must have the written signature of the author and the current telephone number. Signatures for publication may be withheld on request. Letters that are libelous, or considered in poor taste, or are personal in nature, will not be published.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE 1996. The contents of this publication are protected by the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction in part or in whole is forbidden without the express written consent of the publisher. Violators can be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

COLUMNS are the opinions of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the above named newspapers and online products. Writers are chosen to represent a diversity of views on local issues. The editorial on page 4 is the opinion of the Publisher only.

Lunch & Learn - Keep the Home, Unlock the Value

Convert Equity into Lasting Security

Register: 352-462-0636 or www.RMExplained.com

Tuesday, Oct 14, 12:30pm

The Standard Coffee Lounge, 1552 Bella Cruz, The Villages

Wednesday, Oct 15, 12:30pm

Bob Evans, 360 Colony Blvd, The Villages (near 466a & Morse Blvd)

Lunch provided with Reservation

Call or Text 352-462-0636

Online www.rmexplained.com

PRIME PATH LENDING
YOUR LOAN NAVIGATOR

Empowered By: **NEXA** Mortgage



Presented by:
Dan Kapellen

NMLS 2302495

Loan Navigator

Resident of The Villages



Attention Advertisers!

All ads are 4 color! All of editorial Photos, clubs, ads must be in PDF events, etc, submitted format Jpeg has a must be in focus and tendency to get weak clear. No guarantees to when you change sizes. When you send a PDF ad the fonts are embedded and news copy. email and will not change. Run tourney@att.net



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

FROM THE DESK OF
CONGRESSWOMAN KAT CAMMACK



C a m m a c k ,
Kamlager-Dove, and
Christina Perri Launch
Bipartisan Effort to
Expand Prenatal
Screening to Prevent
Miscarriages &
Stillbirths

Washington, D.C.

— U . S .

Representatives Kat Cammack (R-FL) and Sydney Kamlager-Dove (D-CA) introduced a bipartisan resolution to expand prenatal screening for Antiphospholipid Syndrome (APS), a treatable blood clotting disorder linked to miscarriages, stillbirths, and other pregnancy complications.

This effort builds on the advocacy of multi-platinum recording artist Christina Perri, whose personal experience with pregnancy loss due to undiagnosed APS has fueled her mission to ensure other families do not endure similar tragedies.

"For too long, women and families have endured the heartbreak of miscarriage and stillbirth without answers—losses that, in many cases, could have been prevented with early detection. By expanding prenatal screening for APS, we have the chance to save lives, protect mothers and babies, and spare families untold grief," said Congresswoman Cammack. *"I am proud to partner with Congresswoman Kamlager-Dove on this bipartisan effort, and deeply grateful to Christina Perri for transforming her personal tragedy into a mission to protect others."*

"Anyone who has experienced the heartbreak of even a single miscarriage or stillbirth knows that one is already too many. Yet, current medical guidelines only recommend testing for Antiphospholipid Syndrome after multiple pregnancy losses—this is unacceptable," said Congresswoman Kamlager-Dove. *"Failing to include APS in routine prenatal testing isn't just a medical oversight, it's a glaring failure of our maternal healthcare system. This is not complicated—it's a matter of basic human decency and a call for smarter, more compassionate healthcare policy."*

"I'm so glad my story has a happy ending with my double rainbow baby Pixie. But let's make a change so no one has to have my story again. Let's not get angry, let's get inspired," said Christina Perri. *"This isn't about the past. This is about giving a purpose to my Rosie's life. It's about saving babies and helping all other women, families, and kids avoid the anguish that I experienced. I am here to raise awareness about a blood test that can determine this treatable autoimmune disease."*

"APS is a treatable disorder, yet without screening, it can lead to heartbreaking losses," said Congressman Greg Landsman (D-OH). *"Our bipartisan resolution is a simple fix that would improve birth outcomes and better protect mothers and their babies."*

"Too many families know the heartbreak of pregnancy loss. Often, this heartbreak is met without answers," said Congresswoman Young Kim (R-CA). *"Expanding access to prenatal screening for APS is a critical, commonsense step we can take to give moms peace of mind, help doctors provide the best care, and prevent tragedies that could have been avoided. I'm proud to join Reps. Cammack and Kamlager-Dove in this bipartisan effort to provide clarity for families and raise greater awareness about the importance of expanding access to testing for APS."*

"I'm proud to stand with my colleagues in working to improve prenatal screening for all women," said Congresswoman Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick (D-FL). *"In Florida, over 20% of women received no or inadequate prenatal care in 2023. Early detection of complications like antiphospholipid syndrome can save both mothers and babies. This resolution helps ensure that every woman, no matter where she lives, has access to the care she needs for a healthy pregnancy and future."*

"While it was a huge milestone to get my Maternal and Child Health Stillbirth Act signed into law last year, we have much more work to do to improve care for expecting mothers and prevent stillbirth and miscarriages. I will continue to be a strong

voice for mothers in Congress, and work to ensure all expecting mothers have access to the care they need," said Congresswoman Ashley Hinson (R-IA). *"That is also why I am proud to join my colleagues on this bipartisan House resolution to support prenatal screening for Antiphospholipid Syndrome. Thank you to Christina Perri, Rep. Cammack, and Rep. Kamlager-Dove for your advocacy and leadership!"*

Christina Perri's Advocacy
Best known for her multi-platinum hit "A Thousand Years" from The Twilight Saga—one of the most popular wedding songs of the last decade—Perri has become a leading national voice for expanded prenatal screening. In 2020, she lost her daughter Rosie at 38 weeks and later learned she had APS. If detected early, APS can often be safely managed with simple blood-thinning medications.

B a c k g r o u n d o n A P S
Antiphospholipid Syndrome (APS) is an autoimmune disorder in which antibodies trigger dangerous blood clots. During pregnancy, APS can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, and severe complications. The condition affects at least 1 in 2,000 pregnancies, though experts believe it is widely underdiagnosed. Critically, APS-related pregnancy loss is often preventable with early detection and treatment.

Currently, most medical guidelines only recommend testing after multiple pregnancy losses. Yet the blood test costs less than \$1,000—far less than the \$15,000 average cost of post-miscarriage procedures. The resolution calls for APS screening to become a standard part of prenatal care, an initiative that could save lives, prevent heartbreak, and reduce healthcare costs nationwide.

August may have been a recess on the congressional calendar, but it was anything but quiet for Team Kat. From traveling across Florida's Third District to advancing key initiatives in Washington, our work never stopped.

From meeting with local leaders and first responders to celebrating workforce and education milestones and preparing for the legislative fights ahead, this past month underscored how important it is to stay rooted in the needs of our community while carrying your voices to Washington.

On a personal level, my husband Matt and I were blessed to welcome our adorable daughter, Augusta Dair—our sweet Baby Peanut, affectionately known as Baby Auggie or Gussasaurus.

As always, it remains the greatest honor of my life to represent you in Congress and to hear directly about the issues that matter most—whether that's lowering costs, keeping our communities safe, supporting our farmers, or ensuring Florida has the resources to thrive

Leading America's Deportation Efforts

Florida isn't backing down—we're doubling down. The new Deportation Depot at Baker Correctional in Sanderson, FL is now open and ready to house up to 1,500 detainees just 15 minutes from the runway, modeled after the "Alligator Alcatraz." Thank you to President Trump, Governor DeSantis, local officials, and everyone who worked tirelessly to make this happen and keep Florida safe!

Strengthening National Defense & Local Jobs

Just days before Baby Augusta arrived, I met with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to advance the 81st Readiness Division project in Alachua County—the first Equipment Concentration Supply (ECS) Unit in Florida. This will boost local economic development, improve hurricane readiness, and strengthen our national defense. Once complete, this project will serve as a model for future military readiness infrastructure across the state.

Honoring Florida's First Responders

Florida's first responders are the very definition of courage and selflessness. The stories highlighted through the SKY Valor Honors Program remind us that behind every uniform is a man or woman willing to run toward danger when others run away. From law enforcement to fire rescue to EMS, these heroes don't just serve—they protect, comfort, and inspire us every single day. I was honored to recognize each of the Valor Award recipients with personal letters as small way to personally recognize their incredible service. Thank you all for everything you do and thank you to our friends at the SKY for their unwavering support!

Select Business Associates Of Ocala

Where Friends Meet and Businesses Prosper



- * Exclusive Categories One Per Industry
- * Dues are \$40 a year and you buy your own lunch.
- * Nonprofit Group
- * New membership takes 100% approval by members
- * No texting & no messages

The Club Meets the 1st / 3rd / 5th Wednesdays
at Mojo's on HWY 200
Call Tom Loury 352-804-1223

- Auto
- Ai
- Health Insurance
- Fair Tax
- Digital Newspapers
- Business Broker X2
- Healthy Water

CATEGORIES TAKEN

- Helping People That Lost A Loved One
- Life Insurance
- Travel
- Legacy Builder
- Financial
- Attorney
- Mental Health
- Frank Deluca Wmca
- Painter
- Plumber
- Computer Tech

CHAIR CHAT

RNC Chat October 2025

We are in an ideological war between good and evil. The assassination of Charlie Kirk yet again reveals to us we are battling for the soul of this nation.

When wondering how we got to this place, look no further than our institutions which have been infiltrated with Marxist ideals. In addition, governmental abuse by a political party that propagates the frameworks that create the impetus for violence. Recently, in a Senate oversight hearing, Chairman Chuck Grassley, outlined evidence of Biden's weaponization of his FBI to target nearly 100 conservative groups to include Charlie Kirk's Turning Point USA. In 2022, Biden's DOJ started "Artic Frost," which was an avenue to investigate Republicans without warrant.

The left movement taking place in our country to overthrow the west has raged war on civil society. Even today, there are political actors attempting to change our governing system and to undermine our United States Constitution, suggesting our rights come from government and not God. Social media is a swamp. The internet has platforms with private community chat rooms that have their own immoral belief systems where no one is rational; echo chambers without intervention and a place where the troubled are exploited. Minds are being poisoned with hate. The media continues to cheer the most outrageous and irresponsible statements by leaders of the left that further radicalize evil characters, where they continue to call organizations like TPUSA, fascist.

Reminded of Thomas Paine's "The American Crisis," "Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered, yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods." Charlie Kirk was unafraid to speak about his Lord and Savior. He lived boldly and led with truth in God's words. He was waking up a generation and changing the way they view God, country and themselves. Turning Point USA represented good and the light. Tranjtifa, on the extreme left, represents darkness and evil. Both organizations engaged in influencing the belief structure of our youth.

Charlie was assassinated for his abundant love for Christ and his political views. In his death, Charlie has sparked a spiritual revolution. Millions got up this past Sunday and went to Church, whom may not have otherwise gone. His prescription was drenched in deep conviction in his faith, and that not only is freedom good, but also is marriage and the family. Nothing can stop Charlie Kirk's legacy! Good will win over evil, we know how the story ends!

Ranks #1

Continued from page 1

decisions belong to families," said Commissioner of Education Anastasios Kamoutsas. "Under Governor DeSantis' leadership, Florida will continue honoring parents' right to choose the best educational option for their child's individualized needs. I am proud that Florida offers so many educational options that parents can have confidence in."

The Education Freedom Report Card

began in 2022, and Florida has earned the top ranking every year since its inception. The report card uses five categories: school choice, transparency, regulatory freedom, civic education and spending to rank states.

In addition to Florida receiving the overall top spot for Education Freedom, Florida also earned high rankings in the following categories:

- #1 for Education Choice due to empowering parents across Florida to choose the best learning environment for their children.
- #1 for Civic Education due to Florida's requirement for students to take a course in civics and the use of the Classical Learning Test for admissions at state universities.
- #1 for Academic Transparency due to Florida's expansive legislation allowing parents to access classroom materials and Florida's Parental Bill of Rights.
- #1 for Teacher Freedom due to Florida's alternative pathways to entering the teaching profession.

The full Education Freedom Report Card can be viewed on the [Heritage Foundation website](https://www.heritage.org)

Publisher's

Continued from page 4

I also complained to the Governor about him announcing the financial aid he is giving small towns, nothing for Dunnellon. To the west they received money. How does the state decide who gets money? Maybe they want those areas to develop?

I wonder how the bear hunt went. When the state had to trap a nuisance bear they released many of them in golf hammock. Hunters in that area are making comments about encountering more bears than ever before. Maybe that is why the bear season was opened the state is running out of places to release them.

I recently read something it said :
It's not about being better than someone else!

It's about being than you were the day before.

I believe in that. I have recently apologized for an email that I had from a bad day!

I did not want to wear the close my father bought me, so I got a newspaper job at nine and have been working ever since! I worked selling the FT Lauderdale news selling papers on Dania Beach draw bridge. The bridge would open the line would form and I sold paper down the line. For my age I made good money and bought my own close!

Paddock Mall Shooting

Suspect Arrested in Mall Shooting

A suspect was identified and arrested in the December 23, 2023, Paddock Mall shooting in Ocala.

Details on the suspect and the case:

- Suspect: was arrested on January 8, 2024, after a 16-day manhunt. He is charged with premeditated first-degree murder and two counts of attempted second-degree murder.

- Victim: The shooting resulted in the death of 40-year-old man. Two other people were also injured.

- Motive: According to police, The suspect and the victim knew each other and had an ongoing conflict, suggesting the shooting was targeted.

- Capture: Suspect was apprehended at a home southwest of Ocala after a standoff with law enforcement, which included the Ocala Police Department and the U.S. Marshals Service.

- Status of the case: Suspect has pleaded not guilty, and prosecutors are seeking the death penalty. His trial is currently scheduled to begin in June 2025.

War Against Evil

Last month I wrote Good or Evil? There is no question in my mind "WE ARE IN A WAR AGAINST EVIL!" Just stand back fellow citizens of America and look at what is going on. A POLITICALLY MOTIVATED EVIL WAR! Politicians would rather give up children to destroy their enemy. What I thought use to be up standing citizens have lost their common sense and their reasoning power. They are letting hatred make decisions. Children are dyeing for no sane reason. We are turning our society into victims because of Hatred. Our family and friends are dealing with evil every day. We are letting mental illness go untreated. What is causing this? Look what parents are letting social bullying do! They are confusing the young into losing their gender Identity. Half of the human race is changing into monsters that kill for no reason.

Our previous administration let millions of criminals cross into our country unchecked. It was a planned attack on our country by our enemies. Their thought was to make them voting citizens. Trump and his Team stopped that so far, but they are using the population count to redistricting their state.

The youths are committing suicide, adults are at fault. Why do they want their child to change their Identity or why do they let them change their gender and doctor that performs these procedures, operations and hormone injections are sick! I guess they are doing it for the money. Maybe they are the enemy! There is some parallel it seems that gender changing could cause mental illness. The people mostly the young who realize they can't change back so then hate takes over, they go into a revenge mode. The Church, their mother, father, school, society! If congress could pass a bill to create a trained law enforcement group to protect the people, administer justice and help people who have mental challenges might be the answer. Right now a lot of parents failed to raise their children and the children turn to the dark side. The parents should warn someone that their child has serious problems. Then they can go in for treatments rather than killing other children, themselves or causing problems that hurt others.

EVIL is here to stay so we must suppress it. See something say something even if it is your family member. Then Law enforcement needs tools to deal with it to help the challenged person before they commit personal harm, now instead of children dyeing.

The other thing that they fail to understand that gang are started by friends standing up for friends that are being bullied, mostly in school or in crowded environments. They stand in numbers against the threat of those who want to hurt them. They then grow as a group (gang?) then the gang gets to doing things that is on the edge of illegal. It starts out small then grows to large crimes.

A local boy was approached by a gang member. He said my brother is head of the largest gang in Chicago and I want you to join my gang. The boy answered do you know my father? No, would you like to meet him? Because if I join your gang and he finds out "You will me him!" They left him alone. His father had a talk with him and told him how to handle it! His father explained we are at war against Evil!

Teachers should be trained to identify and to help control what is happening pre-gang activity. They are recruiting little children 8 years old. Let's get them off the streets and keep them off the streets.

The World Of Marion Co (Taxes)

Note: I am sending copies to Marion County Board and taxing authority, Governor DeSantis, Kat Cammack United States Representative

I have been on the same farm for 65 years. It was raw woods when we started out. Using a axe and an attic tractor we cleared and cleared for years by hand. I was the first house within a mile of pavement. To start out with Marion County did not clear any land for me. They did not put in a road for me. I live on a dirt road today and like it. Marion County is charging the maximum property taxes that they are allowed by law. There is 28.5% of Marion County voters are over 65. It would not be so bad if it was just property taxes. Marion County has to raise the taxes which raises the replacement value on your house / and property. When it comes to people who have lived here a long time and supported the taxes. It is not fair to leave them at the mercy of the GREEDY insurance companies. The replacement value should not be charged after so many years. They have been paying that for 20 or in my case 65 years without replacing it. Think about this the county valuing your property, the land with a house on it. If the house burns down the land is still there! But there value is based on your house and property.

We have been ripped off by the insurance companies for years. How about this??? "if a home owner does not have a claim in 2025. Give them a rebate!" HALF BACK!!

The mortgage company makes a decision about our escrow money and dispersing it to the insurance company and tax authority they some time choose! I'm not saying they all do that but it does happen.

I will send a copy of this to Governor DeSantis, Kat Cammack, Marion County Board taxing authorities and who ever else I can get an email address for. This needs to be fixed.

Go on line and look at the foreclosures listed. The Board of County Commission should look. The elderly are losing their homes or worse the insurance company is taking their grocery money! Please take this under discussion and do something. The Insurance or tax break should start at age 65 not based on how much they make.



DISASTER SUPPLY KIT CHECKLIST



General

- Two week minimum supply of medication, regularly used medical supplies, and a list of allergies
- A list of the style, serial number, and manufacturer information of required medical devices
- Batteries
- Flashlights
Do not use candles
- NOAA Weather Radio
Battery operated or hand cranked
- Cash
Banks and ATMs may not be available after a storm
- Cell phone chargers
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children

First Aid

- First Aid Manual
- Sterile adhesive bandages of different sizes
- Sterile gauze pads
- Hypoallergenic adhesive tape
- Triangular bandages
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Sewing needle
- Moistened towelettes
- Antiseptic
- Disinfectant wipes
- Hand sanitizer
- Thermometer
- Tube of petroleum jelly
- Safety pins
- Soap
- Latex gloves
- Sunscreen
- Aspirin or other pain reliever
- Anti-diarrheal medicine
- Antacid
- Laxative
- Cotton balls
- Q-tips

Important Documents

- Insurance cards
- Medical records
- Banking information
- Credit card numbers
- Copies of social security cards
- Copies of birth and/or marriage certificates
- Other personal documents
- Set of car, house, and office keys
- Service animal I.D., veterinary records, and proof of ownership
- Information about where you receive medication, the name of the drug, and dosage
- Copy of Will

**Items should be kept in a water proof container*

Phone Numbers

- Maintain a list of important phone numbers including:
County emergency management office, evacuation sites, doctors, banks, schools, veterinarian, a number for out of town contacts, friends and family

Vehicle

- Keep your motor vehicle tanks filled with gasoline

Clothing

- Rain gear such as jackets, hats, umbrellas and rain boots
- Sturdy shoes or boots and work gloves

Special Needs Items

- Specialty items for infants, small children, the elderly, and family members with disabilities

Food and Water

- Food
Nonperishable packaged or canned food and beverages, snack foods, juices, baby food, and any special dietary items to last at least 7 days
- Water
1 gallon per person per day
- Non-electric can opener
- Paper plates
- Napkins
- Plastic cups
- Utensils

Pet Care Items

- Pet food and water to last at least 7 days
- Proper identification
- Medical records/microchip information
- A carrier or cage
- Muzzle and leash
- Water and food bowls
- Medications
- Supplies for your service animal

Find more disaster preparedness tips at FloridaDisaster.org

FAIRTAX

FAIRtaxSM
SIMPLE • EFFICIENT • VISIBLE
www.fairtax.org

Home ownership is a big part of the American dream and the FAIRtax can play a big part in helping to realize that dream. Under the current income tax system, working families are at a disadvantage when trying to save for a home of their own. *First, there is federal withholding from your paychecks which feeds the government before you can feed your family. Everything you purchase is with post-tax dollars reducing your buying power. *Second, when you purchase items necessary for everyday living, you are paying the 17-30% of the embedded tax costs that are created and hidden within the cost of those items. Remember, corporations do not pay taxes, they simply pass them along to you in the price at the retail level. *Third, if you try to bank money in a savings account, you are taxed on any interest that

may accrue. The same holds true for any investments you may be able to make. How can the FAIRtax help? *First, under the FAIRtax there is no federal withholding from your paycheck giving you an instant "raise" in pay as you bring home what you earn. *Second, although embedded costs will be removed, items for retail sale are subject to the FAIRtax. This should leave prices relatively the same but remember, you are now purchasing those items with pre-taxed dollars giving you more buying power. Plus you will be receiving the "prebate" which reimburses you for the tax paid up to your poverty line. You can save even more if you purchase "used" goods as these items are no longer subject to the FAIRtax. *Third, under the FAIRtax there is no tax on savings and investments making saving for that home much quicker and easier. For more information please go to FAIRtax.org

Country Club of Ocala's Turnpike Cup

Ocala, FL -The Reilly Arts Center is proud to announce that the Country Club of Ocala's Turnpike Cup Awards has raised \$15,000 in support of the Reilly's mission to bring world-class performances, music education, and cultural opportunities to Marion County.

The Turnpike Cup has grown from a friendly competition of eight players into a highly organized event with 28 members competing annually in a spirited Ryder Cup-style format. Founded by Bill Searcy, the Turnpike Cup is more than just a golf tournament – it has become a community of players and families who rally together year-round for camaraderie, competition, and philanthropy.

"I am so proud of the whole Turnpike Cup Family," said Searcy. "TPC is all about competition, camaraderie and giving back. This was our 7th season and we have no signs of slowing down. I'm already planning next year's season, we are heading to The Players Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass."

The Turnpike Cup season begins with team selections in February, followed by months of themed events, dinners, and competitions. The year culminates in the July tournament and the August Awards Show, where philanthropy takes center stage. Over the years, the group has raised funds for local organizations including The F.A.S.T.E.R. System, the Marion County Sheriff's Department K-9 Unit, and other community initiatives.

This year, the Turnpike Cup selected the Reilly Arts Center as its beneficiary and partnered with the Reilly to host this season's awards ceremony at Ocala's Marion Theatre.

"It was a joy to host the TPC golfers and their families this year. It's impressive the impact this generous group has had on our

community since their efforts began. We were honored to be selected as their charitable cause, and deeply grateful for their support," shared Natalie McComb, Executive Director of Reilly Arts Center.

The Turnpike Cup also extends its reach through its YouTube documentary series "High Five" (watch here: www.youtube.com/@DollaBillTPC), which showcases the excitement, traditions, and stories behind the annual event. With five signature events each year and a growing legacy of philanthropy, the Turnpike Cup has become a beloved tradition at the Country Club of Ocala.

Down Memory Lane

One Lady wrote...Going down memory lane.

The gas was cheap and the attendant servicing everything, She remembers getting a free mug or a steak knife with each fill-up. She got a different colored mug each time until I had a complete set of four. After that they started giving S&H green stamps. You filled the book (or books) and went shopping at the S&H store where you could get what you wanted.

Advertisers & Editorial

Attention Advertisers and Editorial Contributors

All ads are in color

All ads must be supplied by you as a PDF
Editorial copy may be sent with no guarantees

All communications are by email



Support the heART
of our community.
mcaocala.org

**Read TomL Newspapers
Online, 24/7**



Serving Communities in Marion, Lake & Sumter County Florida

TomL Publishing LLC
Tom Loury
tloury@att.net | 352-804-1223

Read Online:
TomLPublishing.com
VillageSpectator.com
OcalaDowntown.com
LadyLakeMagazine.com
SeniorsVoiceOfOcala.com



**Special
Olympics**
Florida



Providing free year-round sports training, competition and health services to children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

PARTICIPATE • VOLUNTEER • COACH • DONATE • BE A FAN

specialolympicsflorida.org • (800) 322-HERO

You can help create great futures by sponsoring a child to attend the Boys & Girls Club of Marion County.
PO Box 4109
Ocala, FL 34488
352-690-7440



www.bgcofmarion.com

Ads sponsored by TomL Publishing



Join us at the Ocala Downtown Market (ODM) to purchase a diverse array of products from farmers, artisans, craftspeople, food trucks! A true destination location, ODM is set just blocks off the Ocala Downtown square, in a beautiful open-air Market Pavilion. Besides permanent roof cover the facility it also has large overhead fans, restrooms, a nearby ATM, and water fountains. The Market Pavilion is also available for rental.



Interested in becoming a vendor?
Visit www.ManageMyMarket.com

CALLING ALL Volunteers!

**SEE ALL THE WAYS YOU CAN
VOLUNTEER WITH HABITAT**



CONSTRUCTION

HELP BUILD A HOME!
BUILD DAYS ARE EVERY TUES.
THURS. & SAT. FROM
7:30AM-12:30PM

TO VIEW OUR CURRENT
CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE, VISIT
HABITATOCALA.ORG

WE OFFER COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS!

RESTRICTIONS MAY APPLY

FOR MORE INFO, VISIT OUR
WEBSITE AT HABITATOCALA.ORG



HELP WITH VARIOUS
RETAIL TASKS
FLEXIBLE SHIFTS AVAILABLE
MON-SAT/8:30-4:30



HELP WITH VARIOUS
HABITAT EVENTS THROUGHOUT
THE YEAR INCLUDING THE
STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL &
SOUTHEASTERN PRO RODEO

TYLER STARR
VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR
(352) 351-4663
TSTARR@HABITATOCALA.ORG

Love is just a leash away!!



The HSMC is here for you and the animals who depend on us. We wanted to share that we will continue to be here to help unwanted pets during this pandemic while following all Marion County and Florida state guidelines.



As this situation is constantly changing, we ask that you continue to visit our Shelter using the safety guidelines in place.

How can you help?

Pet Food Bank: Help stock our Pet Food Bank with pet food and supplies for people who cannot afford them due to job loss or other reasons. You can also bring donations to our Shelter daily from 10-6. Masks required please! If you need help keeping your pet with you during this time, our Happy Paws food program is here for you.

Volunteer: A small number of volunteers have returned to help in various departments. We are accepting volunteer applications but do not yet know when we will schedule orientations for new volunteers. Please contact us for more information about volunteering. We are currently working on a digital orientation.

Opt to adopt: According to the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization, there is no evidence that companion animals such as cats and dogs can spread the virus that causes COVID-19.

Donate: We know there is a lot of uncertainty right now but homeless and unwanted animals still need us. Donate to help the Humane Society of Marion County so we continue our lifesaving work and make them feel safe and loved.



Bilbie



Beagle



Kitten



Cat



Cat

Your donations make it possible to provide medical care, food and shelter to animals in need. On behalf of all the animals, thank you for caring.



Humane Society of Marion County
PO Box 1542 Ocala, FL 34478
Mail check or complete the credit/debit card payment form.

Name: _____ Phone: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____ Payment enclosed: \$ _____

Visa M/C Discover Card # _____ Exp date: _____ Code: _____

Donations to the Humane Society are tax-deductible. Check with your accountant for more information.
No goods or services have been provided to the donor as a result of this gift.



■ FROM THE DESK OF ■ ATTORNEY GENERAL UTHMEIER ■



Attorney General James Uthmeier Announces Launch of New Portal to Combat Violent Extremism

ORLANDO, Fla.—Attorney General Uthmeier joined Commissioner of Education Anastasios Kamoutsas at Valencia College to announce the launch of new tool for citizens to help identify and combat politically-motivated violence.

The secure online portal allows the public to submit screenshots, videos, and other evidence of threats of violent extremism directly to Attorney General Uthmeier's Office of Statewide Prosecution. Submissions may be anonymous. Prosecutors will review each report and, where appropriate, prosecute those responsible for the threat. **This portal is not intended for emergencies.** Citizens facing an immediate threat should **call 911.**

"The idea of someone being assassinated for peacefully opposing such radical ideals is vile and anti-American," said **Attorney General James Uthmeier.** "Threats of political violence will not be tolerated in Florida. That is why today we are launching a new tool, simply named the Combat Violent Extremism Portal, to report acts or threats of political violence."

"Any individual who makes a threat that violates Florida law will be dealt with immediately," said **Statewide Prosecutor**

Brad McVay. "We look forward to working closely with our law enforcement partners to enhance the efforts to safeguard the Free State of Florida from political violence."

"Any educator who makes vile, despicable comments celebrating and encouraging violence in schools will be investigated and held accountable," said **Commissioner of Education Anastasios Kamoutsas.** "Thank you Attorney General James Uthmeier for supporting these efforts and helping us ensure Florida's students have the highest quality teachers leading their instruction."

The announcement follows a troubling rise in politically motivated attacks nationwide. Federal reports show assaults on ICE officers have surged by more than 1000% over the past year. Conservative leader and generational icon Charlie Kirk was recently assassinated, with online threats and celebrations of his murder spreading in the aftermath.

The launch of the Combat Violent Extremism Portal reflects Florida's commitment to proactive prevention. By equipping Floridians with a direct channel to prosecutors, the state is strengthening its ability to identify credible threats, disrupt plots before violence occurs, and ensure accountability for those who attempt to endanger lives or undermine public safety.

The Combat Violent Extremism Portal is now live and can be accessed at myfloridalegal.com/CVE

Attorney General James Uthmeier Charges Another Snapchat Predator with Possession of Child Sexual Abuse Material

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier's Office of Statewide Prosecution is charging Luke Sedlock, Green Cove Springs, with three felony counts of possession of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) as well as three felony counts of unlawful use of a two-way communication device.

"Over and over again, our office is prosecuting predators who are using Snapchat to trade disgusting content and victimize children. Protecting our kids is my utmost priority," said **Attorney General James Uthmeier.** "Our statewide prosecutors will ensure that this predator is held accountable for his abhorrent behavior."

The investigation was launched by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement in August 2025 based on tips from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. On Thursday, September 11, the Green Cove Springs Police Department executed a search warrant at Sedlock's residence. Investigators located his electronic devices, which contained both sexual abuse material involving young children and animals.

Sedlock is currently being held in the Clay County Jail on a \$600,000 bond; he is not permitted to have access to devices with internet capabilities or contact with any person under the age of 18.

Attorney General James Uthmeier Announces Arrests in Organized Fraud Ring, Crackdown on Repeat Offenders

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Today, Attorney General James Uthmeier announced that the Office of Statewide Prosecution has charged six defendants with engaging in a multi-year scheme to commit large-scale theft and identity fraud across at least five counties in Florida.

"The broader issue at hand here is that repeat offenders pose a major threat to the safety of our communities," said **Attorney General James Uthmeier.** "Too often, these criminals are arrested, released, and given another chance to prey on innocent people. In Florida, we don't just arrest criminals—we keep them behind bars where they belong."

"The Office of Statewide Prosecution will deploy every tool to dismantle criminal networks made up of career fraudsters and thieves that prey on hardworking Floridians," said **Statewide Prosecutor Brad McVay.** "The Office will pursue hefty and enhanced charges to ensure individuals convicted of operating as part of one of these organized crime rings are kept behind bars for a very long time, where they can no longer victimize Floridians."

The defendants are connected to the "Felony Lane Gang," a Fort Lauderdale-based theft enterprise that operates across the state. Between March 2021 and May 2023, they carried out over 200 smash-and-grab burglaries at gyms, parks, and other public spaces. Their targets were wallets and purses containing checkbooks, credit cards, IDs, and even passports. The defendants were then using the stolen personal identification information to commit fraud by cashing forged checks and fraudulently withdrawing money from bank accounts.

Your "SOURCE" for News, Talk, Music, TUNE-IN Sports, Prizes, & More!

ON AIR

THE SOURCE

News-Talk-Music-Sports

96.3 1370

FM AM

WOCA

FROM THE DESK OF
GOVERNOR DESANTIS



Florida Ranks #1 for Attracting and Developing a Skilled Workforce for Third Consecutive Year

Florida is also home to seven of ten top scoring Large Metropolitan Statistical Areas in the nation

Statistical Areas in

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.— Lightcast released the 2024 Talent Attraction Scorecard, ranking Florida as the number one state for attracting and developing a skilled workforce for the third consecutive year. Florida is also home to seven of the ten top scoring Large Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) and four of the top ten scoring Mid-Sized MSAs in the nation. The Talent Attraction Scorecard evaluates states based on job growth, education attainment, regional competitiveness and migration data.

“Florida set an ambitious goal to be number one in workforce education by 2030—and we continue to march towards this achievement,” said **Governor Ron DeSantis**. “We’re not just preparing for the future—we’re ahead of schedule, building a workforce ready for high-demand, high-wage careers today.”

In the Lightcast Talent Attraction Scorecard, Florida also earned high rankings in multiple categories including:

- #1 for overall job growth;
- #1 for competitive effect;
- #2 for skilled job growth; and
- #3 for high-earning job growth.

Florida has seven of the ten top scoring Large MSAs in the nation with Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach ranked #3, Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford ranked #4, Crestview-Fort Walton Beach-Destin ranked #5, North Port-Bradenton-Sarasota ranked #7, Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater ranked #8, Lakeland-Winter

Haven ranked #9 and Naples-Marco Island ranked #10. Florida also has four of the ten top scoring Mid-Sized MSAs with Wildwood-The Villages ranked #1, Panama City-Panama City Beach ranked #4, Punta Gorda ranked #5 and Sebastian-Vero Beach-West Vero Corridor ranked #9.

“Under Governor DeSantis’ leadership, we’re creating opportunities for both job seekers and job creators through a strong focus on education and workforce training,” said **Florida Secretary of Commerce, J. Alex Kelly**. “Florida continues to lead the nation with an economy where workforce and talent development are a priority to our success as we continue to build a future full of opportunity for anyone ready to grow and succeed here in the Free State of Florida.”

“For the third year in a row, Florida has earned the top spot for attracting and developing a skilled workforce. This consistent Number 1 ranking is proof that our talent pipeline is delivering results,” said **Commissioner of Education Anastasios Kamoutsas**. “We’re committed to keeping this momentum going so Floridians are prepared for high-value careers and businesses have the talent they need to thrive.”

“Florida is a national leader because of intentional collaboration between the state’s business leaders and university faculty shaping curriculum,” said **State University System Chancellor Ray Rodrigues**. “The State University System of Florida’s 2030 Strategic Plan highlights the importance of university presidents working with industry leaders, attracting top-tier faculty, and preparing students for successful careers. Thanks to Governor DeSantis and the Florida Legislature’s recent investment of \$200M to recruit and retain world-class faculty, Florida can remain #1. The Lightcast rankings demonstrate our steadfast commitment to emphasizing degrees that propel students forward and align with Florida’s workforce needs.”

“Florida’s top ranking in talent attraction and development for the third year in a row is a testament to our strategic investments in workforce education and our commitment to preparing Floridians for the jobs of tomorrow,” said **Adrienne Johnston, CareerSource Florida President and CEO**. “At CareerSource Florida, we’re proud to help lead the charge in building a resilient, future-ready workforce that powers our state’s continued economic success.”

Additionally, Florida ranked number six for education attainment, which is a significant leap forward for Florida since the beginning of this administration. This is a direct result of Governor DeSantis’ commitment to aligning workforce education programs with employers’ needs in Florida through strategic investments and a focus on building a skilled workforce that meets demand.

Since Governor DeSantis took office, he has prioritized investments in workforce education, business development and strong infrastructure. These record investments have helped establish a strong skilled workforce pipeline and have continued to attract new businesses to the state. Florida leads the nation in new business formations with 3.8 million new businesses formed since 2019 and already more than 360,700 new businesses formed in 2025.

In Governor DeSantis’ Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget, Governor DeSantis allocated \$726.9 million to support workforce education programs and prepare students for high-demand, high-wage jobs. Additionally, since 2019, more than \$291 million has been awarded through the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund to promote public infrastructure and workforce training across the state creating more than 30,000 workforce education opportunities and more than 40,000 new jobs.

Governor Ron DeSantis Celebrates Continued Everglades Restoration Projects

This project is the first to break ground under Florida’s new Everglades restoration acceleration agreement with the

U.S. Department of the Army

M I A M I - D A D E C O U N T Y, Fla.—Governor Ron DeSantis marked the official groundbreaking of the Blue Shanty Flow Way project, an important milestone in Everglades restoration which will ensure that more water flows from the to-be-completed EAA Reservoir south into Everglades National Park and Florida Bay.

“We are acting on our historic agreement with the Trump Administration to expedite Everglades restoration using federal funds and state expertise,” said **Governor Ron DeSantis**. “Today’s groundbreaking on the Blue Shanty Flow Way project in Miami-Dade County is a milestone in our Everglades restoration efforts, building on our many previous conservation actions.”

This marks the first event since the State of Florida and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers signed a [new landmark agreement](#) on July 18, 2025, to accelerate the restoration of America’s Everglades. Under the new agreement, the State of Florida assumed responsibility for the Blue Shanty Flow Way and anticipates that it will be done about two years faster than planned.

The Blue Shanty Flow Way is the final project to “uncork” Tamiami Trail that was planned as part of the Central Everglades Planning Project under the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

The Central Everglades Planning Project will deliver an average of 370,000 acre-feet of additional water each year from Lake Okeechobee to the Central Everglades – an essential step in restoring the River of Grass. It includes 8.5 miles of a new Blue Shanty Levee and the removal of older levees to allow water to move naturally.

The benefits of the Blue Shanty Flow Way include:

Restoration of a more natural and historic flow of clean water south.

Improved habitat for fish, birds, and other Everglades wildlife.

Support for outdoor recreation and ecotourism.

Strengthening of the connection between the Central Everglades and Florida Bay.

Continued page 12



Bee’s Knees!
I sold it on
Ocala4sale.com
and you can too!

Ocala 4sale.com
Marion County’s Internet Marketplace

Governor

Continued from page 11

"With every project, from reservoirs to flow ways, we are delivering real results on time, under budget and with strong returns for Florida's taxpayers," said DEP Secretary Alexis A. Lambert. "Alongside our federal partners, state leadership and communities, we will continue driving restoration projects forward."

Since taking office, Governor DeSantis has made restoring the Everglades and

improving water quality a cornerstone of his administration. On his second day in office, he issued Executive Order 19-12, which committed \$2.5 billion over four years for water quality and Everglades projects. That goal was exceeded in his first term, with \$3.3 billion invested—more than the previous 12 years combined.

In his second term, Governor DeSantis has continued this momentum. With \$1.4 billion included in this year's FY 2025-26 Budget, the state has now committed \$4.6 billion in the first three years of the term, putting

Florida on pace to exceed his \$3.5 billion second-term goal. Altogether, nearly \$8 billion has been invested since 2019 in Everglades restoration and water quality.

Florida's investments in Everglades restoration are paying off:

- Since 2019, over 75 restoration projects have been completed or launched—more than any administration in history.

- Nutrient reductions now total over 1.8 million lbs. Of nitrogen & 770,000 lbs. Of phosphorous annually.
- South Florida's water storage capacity has tripled to 176 billion gallons.
- The C-44 reservoir is complete, the C-43 reservoir is complete, and the EAA Reservoir, the "crown jewel" of everglades restoration, is projected to be finished by 2029.



DOURY'S
LAND SERVICES LLC

352-427-2423

LAND CLEARING - SITE PREP - DRIVEWAYS
DEMO - DEBRIS REMOVAL - BUSH HOGGING
FREE ESTIMATES **MARION - CITRUS - LEVY**



Dunnellon
COFFEE CO

COFFEE - BREAKFAST - LUNCH - COMMUNITY
11223 N WILLIAMS ST SUITE A, DUNNELLON, FL

INVEST. ENGAGE. GROW.

CEP OCALA / MARION COUNTY CHAMBER & ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

MISSION: To be the catalyst for a prosperous community.

BENEFITS OF PARTNERSHIP

- ATTEND OUR EVENTS**
The CEP practices over 100 events per year, including networking, educational, forums, and more. Get engaged!
- GAIN AN ADVOCATE**
The CEP is a single, strong, and fast voice that advocates specifically for your business. Gain support!
- RECRUIT TOP TALENT**
Let your company work with the CEP to recruit your next staff member. Board your future!
- GET BUSINESS SUPPORT**
The CEP is your support system—marketing, economic development, and more. Gain benefit!
- EARN CREDIBILITY**
Report to your business partners that you are a member of the CEP. Gain recognition!
- IMPROVE YOUR SKILLS**
The CEP offers 3 monthly skill-building opportunities and multiple workshops each year. Gain knowledge!
- INCREASE YOUR VISIBILITY**
Listings in our online & printed directory, mailing lists, and advertising opportunities. Be seen!
- SHOP CEP SAVE MONEY**
Get discounts on office supplies, training, and more. Plus, shop online for exclusive discounts. Start saving!
- MAKE MORE MONEY**
Find your board. Expand your business. Referrals & recommendations pay. Grow your business!

Ready to Move Your Business Forward?
Jennifer Madden, Director of Partner Relations
352.629.8051 Jennifer@OcalaCEP.com
Visit us online at www.OcalaCEP.com

Businesses You Can Trust!

OCALA
BUSINESS LEADERS

If you are looking to build your business, be our guest.

6:45 AM – 8:00 AM at Ocala

Come to a FREE Breakfast Wednesday Mornings and check out this PREMIER networking group.

WE meet at Ocala Golf Club (Muni)
3130 E Silver Springs Blvd, Ocala, FL 34470

Ocala Business Leaders
352-502-3811