

Modern Day True Grit



Fight Fight Fight!

By TomL

Is it a Bird? Is it a Plane? NO it's Superman! Oops NO! wrong hero! One of my favorite hero's was John Wayne and the character parts he played. But remind yourself it was make believe. He was always the hero and the last movie I remember watching. At the end there was big open field and the gang of bad guys were calling him out he got on his horse Duke, and hollered "Fill your hands you SOB,s!" took the reins in his teeth, he road against the whole gang of bad guys guns blazing guns one in each hand. Remember that was make believe!

Fast forward to modern day hero which this is not make believe, I bring you Donald J. Trump. Is he a bully maybe? Does he do what he says he is going to do, probably? Remember Trump is always setting someone up to negotiate. Did it work? Most

of the time. I did not like the words "We are going to take Greenland!" As you can see we did not, but we did get a sweet deal and that was what he wanted in the beginning. But saying we are going to take them over bothered me. The people in Greenland are living a quiet life not bothering anyone but quietly the Russians and Chinese are trying to take control of them. We need it for defensive reasons to for us to build "The Big Beautiful Golden Dome" we want it to protect ourselves and everyone else on the other side of Greenland from Chinese and Russian missiles. With the Dome we would have a chance to shoot them down.

So just remember when he says something he is negotiating with someone. Is Donald Trump doing what he said he was going to do almost? I live in Florida and have paid as low as \$2.46 for gas not \$4.00 so that is going down, I am on a medication that my co-pay was \$524 per year, It is now it is ZERO. The price of egg went back down. General groceries need work but if you give him time and the Republicans can keep control. You will see growth like we have ever imagine. I will keep fighting for him. I'm in my 80's but as long as I have the energy and my four digital monthly newspapers, I will fight for him. When did I decide he was one of the greats. It is hard to say but when he got shot in the ear that was not make believe, it was the real thing. When he raised his fist while bleeding he said FIGHT FIGHT FIGHT, I can't get that out of my brain.

Continued page 11



Best of the Best Medical Team!

By TomL

I would like to tell you about an amazing medical team. But the story must start back a few weeks before in the Shans medical emergency room Ocala Fl.. My wife fell and hit her head on the corner molding opening her head up quit a bit it took nine staples to close her up. We took her to the Shan's emergency room in Ocala located I-75 and SR 27, nice clean looking facility no waiting quick service. After closing the wound. They had to check to see if she had internal damage, she did not but "oh no" there a mass (tumor) in her head, The doctors were surprised. They recommended we take her to a neurosurgeon with urgency.

I'm a newspaper guy so I know a little bit about research. My research told me the best neurosurgeon was Doctor Jacob Freeman, he is one of the few that does this kind of surgery. He is very busy and was kind hard to access. His staff was on it. When I told the Surgical Nurse I was afraid my wife was on her way out and she needed his help. That was New Year's Eve, he said go to the HCA emergency room now, he will call ahead and after checking her they would give her a room and begin testing. Three days of testing they had scheduled her surgery for the next week. Surgery date was approved. While talking to Doctor Freeman he said he has been working with an ear nose and throat specialist a Doctor Jose L. Ziron Jr. MD so we were waiting to see if he could assist. Next day they scheduled the operation.

We showed up at the hospital at 5:30 AM and they started preparing her for the operation. The ear nose and throat specialist Doctor Ziron started by opening a passageway for Doctor Freeman to do the

tumor surgery. He went in through the Nasal passage with a camera and surgical tools and took out the tumor. He explained later, he took most of the tumor it was benign, it was attached at a bad place. He settled for him taking approximately 90% of the tumor to avoid damaging a very tricky area where it was attached.

We are blessed, my wife said we had three the best of the best in the operating room the two specialists and the Lord. She was never afraid! We had hundreds or maybe thousands of people praying for her and the surgeon's skills. Lady Lake Chamber sent a best wishes with 40 signatures on it. The business club that I am president of, all members wished her well. I believe GOD was holding her hand but the next sign was two days in ICU and two days in a regular room and home to the recliner! She was instructed to do nothing, especially don't sneeze. Then I needed God holding my hand! Ha, just kidding. Her sinuses were packed. Using a walker for a few days she was walking again in two days, now it is therapy twice a week and is doing everything the therapist says. Two weeks she is walking better without assistance of a walker, telling this story at press time my wife is seeing better she is threading the needle on her sewing machine, the tumor was putting pressure on her optics. She is sleeping better at night! She remembers everything and is doing most of what she did five years ago. Someone said her falling was an act of GOD and her healing is an act of top notch neurosurgeon Doctor Jacob Freeman and Ear/nose & throat doctor Jose L. Ziron who said, she was an assume patient and not to forget the great hospital

Continued page 11



The Lady Lake Area Chamber of Commerce was honored with a presentation on the Ai Playbook by Coach DJ Carroll. The event was sponsored by

Chris Semans' State Farm Agency. Attendees learned valuable information and tools to utilize in their own business.

Town News Lake County Events



The Lady Lake Library celebrated the grand opening of its expanded Children's Library with an open house, officially welcoming families into a larger, modernized space designed to support learning, creativity, and the town's growing population.

Berry Sweet Fun

Berry Sweet Fun is coming the Lady Lake

Join us for the Lady Lake Farmers & Crafts Market Strawberry Festival on Tuesday, March 10 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Rolling Acres Sports Complex (250 Rolling Acres Road).

- Enjoy a fresh-picked day filled with:
- Locally grown and homemade products
- Live music by the Jiffy Feet Band

Artisan vendors featuring baked goods, decadent desserts, glassware, sewn & embroidered items, jewelry, lotions, cheese, BBQ & so much more!

Whether you're shopping, snacking, or just soaking up the sunshine, there's truly something for everyone. Bring a friend, bring your appetite, and come celebrate strawberry season with us!

Sounds of Spring Concert

The Town of Lady Lake is again presenting the annual Sounds of Spring Concert Series, a lineup of free live music bringing the community together for an unforgettable season of fun, food, and live entertainment. Held under the oak trees of Snooky Park, located 120 Lady Lake Blvd., this three-part concert series will feature talented tribute and cover bands, food trucks, and beverages for all to enjoy.

Location: Snooky Park, 120 W. Lady Lake Blvd.

Time: 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Dates:

March 7: Decade of Soul

March 21: Peace of Woodstock

April 18: Think Big

New this year, the Town is offering 7 levels of VIP service to include at minimum a picnic blanket rental, 2 chairs rental, picnic basket (to keep) with snacks for two and water. Beer and wine is available for purchase and is part of upgraded VIP packages.

To learn more, contact Amy Alicea at 352-205-3826.

To stay up to date on these events, text SpringConcerts26 to 38276. The Town's Spring Concert Series is sponsored by Seacoast Bank.

Special Election

Special Election for Ward 2 to be held March 24th

Town News Posted on February 09, 2026
A Special Election will be held to fill the unexpired term of the late John Gourlie for Town Commission, Ward 2. The Special Election will be held Tuesday, March 24 from 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. at the Lady Lake Community Building located at 237 W. Guava St. and Community Center and Crossroads Community Church at 275 Griffin Ave.

Voters must be residents of Ward 2.

The following candidates have qualified to be placed on the ballot.

Jason Accurso

Maggie Geraghty

Amanda McLea

The term of office shall expire in November 2028.

LL Will Celebrate Easter

The Town of Lady Lake will celebrate Easter with a day of family-friendly activities and competitive fun for adults on Saturday, March 28, at Snooky Park.

The day begins at 9 a.m. with the Town's popular Adult Easter Scavenger Hunt, "An Eggstraordinary Adventure," followed by the annual Easter Eggstravaganza at 11 a.m. for children, presented by the Town of Lady Lake and sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of Lady Lake.

Both events will take place at Snooky Park, offering residents and visitors an opportunity to enjoy a day of community

celebration in the heart of Lady Lake.

The Adult Easter Scavenger Hunt will kick off at 9 a.m. at Snooky Park, 120 W. Lady Lake Blvd. Teams of two will follow clues to multiple locations throughout town, collecting eggs and competing for more than 20 prizes, including a 75-inch smart TV, Meta sunglasses, a smart home system and a \$250 Visa gift card.

Each participating business along the route will hide two golden eggs this year, doubling participants' chances to win top-tier prizes. Teams that find a golden egg will

Continued page 11

CHAIR CHAT

Sent on Behalf of the Marion County Republican Executive Committee (MCREC)

Dear Board Member

Subject: Promises Made / Promises Broken

The school board made a commitment to the Marion County citizens that it would conduct a national search to fill the leadership role of School Superintendent. This commitment was discarded, as honestly noted with concern by Board member Cummings during the Dec 18th Board meeting.

First – We have no malice or adverse position against Dr Brewer; however, we do object to circumventing the promised process to nationally seek and evaluate all qualified candidates. The MCREC supports selecting the best leader to improve the lagging academic performance of this school district. We request the continued evaluation of the current leadership while conducting the national search process. This approach accomplishes two complementary goals;

- a) assessing on-going student performance / improvement, and
- b) completing a competitive leadership search to sustain long-term improvement.

The Dec 18th announcement to short-circuit the comparative / competitive process, immediately followed an overview of recent PM2 test score data, as well as anecdotal comments by the Board. The test

scores review just prior to the “Superintendent decision,” appears to be part of the rationale to discard the promised “national search” process. As noted below, the recent test scores indicate county-wide there is a significant segment of students that are still lagging in essential skills.

2025 PM2 Test Data - County-wide Grades 3 to 8 scores indicate: 60% of students did not meet criteria for reading, and 70% did not meet criteria for math

A further review overview of select data indicates:

PM2 2024 vs 2025 Language Arts Test Scores

Language Arts - The 3rd, 4th and 10th grade individual schools language/reading scores were evaluated using a paired t-test ($\alpha = 0.05 / 95\%$ 2-tail confidence interval) – this simple analysis indicates there is no statistical improvement in student performance.

As an example; for 3rd grade - 17 out of 31 schools scored below 31% proficiency; therefore, more than 70% of third grade students in these schools are lagging in reading / language skills. This is very problematic since third grade performance is cited by experts as a predictor of future success.

Subject: Promises Made / Promises Broken (page 2 of 2)

Math – 3rd, 4th and 5th grades 2024 vs 2025 data (same statistical methodology as above)

Grade 3 - statistical improvement although the 2025 PM2 county-wide average is below 25%, therefore, 75% of students are not demonstrating on grade

math skills.

Grade 4 -no statistical change, scores indicate 24 schools scored < 20% proficiency, therefore, ~80% of students at these schools are below math criteria.

Grade 5 - data indicate a statistical improvement; however, 15 schools scored < 25% proficiency; that is 15 schools with ~75% of students below criteria

Overall, the test scores reflect a school system that continues to struggle to educate

students to achieve basic skills needed for future success.

Promise Made / Promise Broken – Given the sustained lagging performance of Marion County Schools a rigorous competitive recruitment for Superintendent should be a key driver. If at the end of this competitive process Dr Brewer is selected, this would further validate her for the position; the decision to short-cut a

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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



If anyone is a Hall of Famer it is Bill Belichick. He is the winningest coach of all times, with 8 Super Bowl. Tom Brady and fans are very upset. They are demanding consideration or overturning their

decision to SNUB him. It is strictly politics. It is done by secret vote. A new stadium has tens of millions invested could be at stake. Some say Belichick might turn down the offer if it's made next year. A SNUB FOR A SNUB! Maybe they need to over hall the Hall of Fame if the best does not win? They need to have transparency on who voted for who. There is 50 members voting takes 80% of the vote, now everyone acts shocked. I think the decision should take a revote and over turned. There is to much to lose over stupid politics! All this is over a first pick that was adjudicated years ago! Our world is filling with hate and it seems to

be coming from the same place. Tom Brady said it was completely ridiculous! Donald Trump voiced outrage. I don't think anything will come good from this and it will hurt the game! But while I am at it TV is hurting it. We use to be able to see football on regular channels without paying extra. Most people are not watching because they don't want to pay extra! They could double the audience by putting it on regular TV. Football is our national sport and making us pay extra for it is like asking us to pay to fill out a political poll. It is unAmerican! Everything is about money. 800,000 voter were clean off the list making that many fewer opportunities for voter fraud...

Speaking of illegal acts! By the way I have been harassed by telephone foreign solicitors. Probably 5 years now, ten times a day at least. I ask them many many times over the years. Last week this guy says hi I'm Mack from XYZ pharmacy selling EYZ drugs, I said I have been asking you guys for years to take me off

your call list, He called me an MF'er and hung up. Ten minutes later I got another call from the same company, so I said one of your people cursed me and called me an MF'er he said and I quote "That is because you did not buy anything from him!" An hour later a woman called me selling the same thing. I explained that I would never buy anything from them one of your caller cursed me and used language that is probably against the law. When you call the number back it is not a working number which means they are stealing access to the phone system. As sophisticated as our systems are why can't they stop this? Attorney General Uthmeier or Governor DeSantis or Kat Cammack can you please look at this outrageous illegal act and misuse of cell phones?

"The Save America Act!" When the announcement came out about "The Save America Act!" 70 some politicians are co-sponsoring it. I always thought co-sponsors were a couple of reps, but now it means many. Thinking back I wonder how many times I heard the term I am open of the co-sponsors.

Speaking of illegal acts! 800,000 unqualified voters were clean off the voting list making it fewer opportunities for voter fraud...which means that Judicial Watch lawsuits brought under the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) have now been responsible for removing 5.8 million invalid names from voter rolls nationwide. WOW!

Trump Endorses Sununu

It is my Great Honor to endorse America First Patriot, John E. Sununu, who is running to represent the beautiful State of New Hampshire in the U.S. Senate.

John is strongly supported by the most Highly Respected Leaders in New Hampshire, and many Republicans in the U.S. Senate and, as your next Senator, he will work tirelessly to advance our America First Agenda. John will fight hard to Grow the Economy, Cut Taxes and Regulations, Advance MADE IN THE U.S.A., Unleash American Energy DOMINANCE, Provide Access to Affordable and High Quality Health Care, Champion School Choice, Keep our Border SECURE, Stop Migrant Crime, Support our Brave Military, Veterans, and Law Enforcement, Ensure LAW AND ORDER, and Defend our always under siege Second Amendment.

John E. Sununu has my Complete and Total

Endorsement - HE WILL NOT LET YOU DOWN. MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN — ELECT JOHN E. SUNUNU! Trump Endorses Sununu

What Say You?
TLourey@att.net

Newspaper Deadlines
Editorial & Ad Copy for April
Seniors Voice & Ocala DownTown
Noon, March 20th
Lady Lake Magazine & Village Spectator
12am, March 25th

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: tlourey@att.net

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FAIRTAX



The Council of Economic Advisors (CEA) is an agency within the Executive Office of the President that provides

objective economic analysis and advice on both domestic and international policy. The CEA is considered one of the most prestigious appointments an economist can receive and is often viewed as the "pinnacle" career. Unlike other government agencies that are often led by political operatives, the CEA is almost exclusively staffed by top-tier academic economists including several Nobel Prize winners. This is why reports issued by the CEA are taken seriously by both politicians and economists.

The January 2026 report by the CEA is labeled "The Economic Impact of State Income Tax Elimination" and their Executive Summary states:

- * Income taxes are more economically damaging than sales or property taxes;
- * The harmful economic effects of state income taxes include outmigration, brain drain, stifled innovation and entrepreneurship, and reduced GDP;
- * The harmful fiscal effects of state income taxes include revenue volatility with "feast and famine" cycles, with states often gaining little or no new revenue from income tax hikes because of the negative economic effects they unleash. Key findings

from CEA's analysis of state income tax phase-out include:

- * A 1 to 1.6 percent increase in the level of GDP for the average state;
- * A 16 to 19 percent increase in new startups for the average state;
- * A \$4,000 increase in the average wage;
- * A significant influx of new high-income taxpayers;
- * An average state sales tax of under 8 percent under full revenue replacement with no limits on spending growth;
- * An average state tax rate of 6.2 percent under a scenario with spending growth limits.

The remainder of this CEA report discusses extensively each of these points. While the economists who have done studies for the FAIRtax have pointed out many of these points, it is great to see a group as prestigious as the CEA make a compelling case for the elimination of state income taxes and replacing them with consumption taxes. This CEA report is an indicator that serious people are paying attention to what is a growing movement among states for eliminating their state income tax.

What is missing from this analysis is the effect of a family consumption allowance (FCA), the prebate. The FCA allows purchases up to the poverty level to be not subject to the state sales tax.

Alabama and Georgia are contemplating passing a state version of the FAIRtax. One

of the reasons that the plans are gaining favorable attention from both sides of the aisle is the inclusion of the FCA ensuring that people in the lower income levels are not adversely affected.

The momentum is growing. As of now Mississippi, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Iowa and Georgia have passed legislation targeting the full elimination of the state income tax. Other states are moving to greatly reduce or eliminate their state income tax.

The other thing that is not directly considered by the CEA report is the effect

that the repeal of the federal income/payroll tax system and replacement by a consumption tax, like the FAIRtax, will have on the U.S. If elimination of the state income tax has these benefits, the benefits on the national level will be even more pronounced than at the state level.

The FAIRtax is the answer.

For more information, please go to FAIRtax.org

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LAKE COUNTY EVENTS

SEE MORE ABOUT PARKS & TRAILS IN LAKE COUNTY

<https://lakecountyfl.gov/parks-and-trails>

Mar 01
Annual Italian American Street Festival at The Plantation
11:00 AM - 4:00 PM The Plantation at Leesburg in Leesburg
Come enjoy a fun day. We have vendors, food trucks, entertainment, games, Basket Raffles other Raffles. Parking is free, free trolley to festival from parking lot. Inside & Outside Spaces avail. Message for info debbboyleiac@yahoo.com

Mar 01
Gary Sinise Foundation Concert for Veterans Fundraiser
3:00 PM - 5:00 PM Highland Lakes Clubhouse in Leesburg
Highland Lakes will honor all veterans with a fundraiser for disabled veterans in this area. Las Vegas singer Jonny Bird brings his energetic, patriotic show to our stage to support the Gary Sinise Foundation. Food trucks on site. Great entertainment

Mar 04
Scrub Ecosystems
9:00 AM - 11:00 AM Pine Forest Park in Deland
The scrub, scrubby flatwoods and ephemeral pond of Pine Forest Park are home to many native plant and animal species. Explore the ecology of the site <https://www.lakecountyfl.gov/parks-and-trails>

Mar 07

Love of Life Festival
12:00 PM - 8:00 PM Grand Oak Resort in Weirsdale
Indulge in delicious fare from various food trucks & refreshments available for purchase, while admiring beautiful works of art, & soaking in the sounds of live music. Bring your own seating & get ready to groove the day away at this exciting event!

Mar 08
Guitars and Cars
8:00 AM - 2:00 PM Renninger's Antique Center in Mount Dora
Guitars(Big Al's Lake County Musicians Swapmeet) Buy-Sell-Trade Tons of great gear and deals Central Florida Blues Lovers' Jam at noon Cars Car Cruise, Vendors, Showing in multiple categories for a variety of prizes. \$6 to show your car.

Mar 08
Two Pianos, Two Pianists
4:00 PM - 5:15 PM First Presbyterian Church Mount Dora in Mount Dora
First Presbyterian Church invites the community to an engaging afternoon of music, Two Pianos, Two Pianists, on Sunday, March 8 at 4:00 p.m. Pianists Phoenix Park-Kim and Randy Frieling perform an exciting program. Featuring Carnival of the Animals,

Mar 12
Cooking with Chef Danny
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM Mission Resort + Club

in Howey-in-the-Hills
Chef Danny's Cooking Class is back! Join us Thurs, Feb 12 at 6PM for a hands-on evening. Menu includes German Potato Soup, Pork Schnitzel, and German Chocolate Rum Balls. \$40++ Call Grove House to reserve: 352-324-2718

Mar 13
Shamrockin' BBQ & Beer Festival
5:00 PM - 11:00 PM Fountain Green Park, Downtown Eustis in Eustis
Come explore Shamrockin BBQ & Beer Festival March 13th & 14th in Downtown Eustis. Live bands on 2 stages, beer & whiskey tastings, cornhole, Chili Cook Off, BBQ & sauce tastings, ultimate kids zone, vendors, food & drinks all with an Irish flair!

Mar 15
Butterfly Bucket List
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Ellis Acres Reserve in Paisley
Butterflies and their young rely on certain hosts for plant life, come learn about some common butterfly life cycles.

Mar 15
Florida Native Moths - Nighttime Pollinators
1:30 PM - 3:30 PM W.T. Bland Public Library (Mount Dora) in Mount Dora
Moths are a vital food source for animals, and serve as key pollinators for night-blooming plants. Learn how you can protect and attract them.

Mar 20
Spring Yard Sale
8:00 AM - 4:00 PM Renninger's Antique Center in Mount Dora 3/20/21/22

Don't miss Renninger's Spring Yard Sale. Clean out your unwanted items and sell them at this show. Antique Center. Flea Market (Saturday and Sunday only). Free Parking. Free Admission. Pet Friendly.

Mar 27
Stories of Water - Sawgrass Island Preserve
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Sawgrass Island Preserve in Umatilla
Join us for a casual guided hike as we share the Story of Water at Sawgrass Island Preserve. Limit 15 participants. Hike intensity: Moderate. Reservations required.

Mar 28
Japan Festival Eustis
10:00 AM - 6:00 PM Downtown Eustis in Eustis
The Japan Festival Eustis is a new cultural event celebrating Japanese heritage & global friendship featuring: live performances cultural exhibitions arts workshops unique food offerings interactive gaming kids zone

Mar 28
Spring Plant Sale
8:00 AM - 2:00 PM UF/IFAS Extension Discovery Gardens in Tavares
MGVs have been busy in the greenhouse for months, propagating and tending to a variety of Florida-friendly plants and shrubs, including herbs, sun-loving perennials, shade-tolerant options and Native Plants!



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Lady Lake Business Luncheon

The February Networking Lunch at Glenview Country Club featured so many lucky winners!
Guests are always welcome to join in on the fun!



Lady Lake Business Luncheon



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
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KIDS BINGO!

with special guest:
Officer Redmond

Join us for kids Bingo!
Friday, March 13th at 3:30 p.m.

Adult



MARCH

Lady Lake Library

Hours:

Monday: 9am-7pm
 Tuesday-Friday: 9am-6pm
 Saturday and Sunday: Closed

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2 ESL @10-11:30am Sign Up Required	3 The Latest in Astronomy and the Sun @2-3pm Rm 219	4	5	6 Crochet Club @ 3:00-4:00 pm
9 ESL @10-11:30am Sign Up Required	10 Book Discussion @ 2-4pm	11 SHINE @2-4pm	12 America's Alligator w/ Author Doug Alderson @2-3pm Rm 219	13
16 ESL @10-11:30am Sign Up Required	17	18 Authors Round Table @ 2-4pm	19	20
23 ESL @10-11:30am Page Turners Book Club Reading: Acts of Violet by Margarita Montimore @5:30pm	24 BINGO @2-3:30pm sign up required	25 SHINE @2-4pm	26 Cyber Security Awareness for Phones Sign up Required @ 2-3pm Rm 219	27 Apple Support iPhone, iPad, iMac @ 10:00-11:30am Movies at the Library! Showing: Tron: Ares (PG-13) @ 3-5pm
30 ESL @10-11:30am Sign Up Required	31	Friends of the Library Meeting March 23 @10-12 pm Room 152		

Youth



MARCH

Lady Lake Library

Hours:

Monday: 9am-7pm
 Tuesday-Friday: 9am-6pm
 Saturday and Sunday: Closed

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2 Alphabet Adventures @11:30am Craft Kits Available! While supplies last.	3 Tiny Tots Toddler Sensory Play @ 10:30am Storybook Studio (Craft and a Story!) @ 3:30pm	4 Storytime 10:30am D&D with Grand Mage Miranda Grades 6-12 @2:30 Stories with Scarlett @3:00pm	5 	6 Baby Sprouts Story and Playtime @10:30 (up to 18 mos.) Bricks & Beyond @ 3:30-4:30pm
9 Alphabet Adventures @11:30am Craft Kits Available! While supplies last.	10 Tiny Tots Toddler Sensory Play @ 10:30am Storybook Studio (Craft and a Story!) @ 3:30pm	11 Storytime 10:30am Stories with Scarlett @3:00pm	12 	13 Baby Sprouts Story and Playtime @10:30 (up to 18 mos.) Kid's Bingo! w/ Officer Redmond! @3:30pm
16 Alphabet Adventures @11:30am Craft Kits Available! While supplies last.	17 Tiny Tots Toddler Sensory Play @ 10:30am Storybook Studio (Craft and a Story!) @ 3:30pm	18 Lake Co. Animal Services Storytime @10:30am Stories with Scarlett @3:00pm	19 Zoo Mom Reptile Show @10:30am	20 Baby Sprouts Story and Playtime @10:30 (up to 18 mos.) Pokemon Trading Event. Bring your Cards or Nintendo Switch! @3:30pm
23 Alphabet Adventures @11:30am Craft Kits Available! While supplies last.	24 Tiny Tots Toddler Sensory Play @ 10:30am Storybook Studio (Craft and a Story!) @ 3:30pm	25 Storytime 10:30am Stories with Scarlett @3:00pm	26 	27 Baby Sprouts Story and Playtime @10:30 (up to 18 mos.) Tournament of Games @3:30-4:30pm
30 Alphabet Adventures @11:30am Craft Kits Available! While supplies last.	31 Tiny Tots Toddler Sensory Play @ 10:30am Storybook Studio (Craft and a Story!) @ 3:30pm	HELLO SPRING		

AI Class

Continued from page 1

Our politicians are causing this. They lost power and they put Trump on the center of the target! He has had every obstacle throw at him that they could make up can lie about, make up story, Impeach him? Now we are finding some of the reasons why. They are sealing the American Tax payers money. I don't have to tell you everything they have but this I know 'THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES HAS GRIT! He is my modern day John. Wayne. There are people in history that left their mark. His mark is the biggest ever made. He is the BEST OF THE BEST! If he can stay alive he will be recognize of the greatest. One of our most renowned historian Newt Gingrich who, served as speaker of the house is known as the most significant Historian ever known rates Trump in the top three. He is afraid to make him number one. I'm not he is the greatest president I have ever known.

If the opposite party had not weaponize the top Government Law enforcement Agency's to lie and make up untrue stories we would be a lot further with our wealth and the Left would not had stole so much of the tax payers money and given it to the enemy.

Maybe Obama and our great Doctor Fauci would have been stopped. Then to make it worse Fauci was honored and Biden issued a pardon. Hopefully that might change. Their actions Killed millions!

I would never believe that we are living in such a corrupt country. I wrote about how the money was going to the Wuhan lab through a religious group. They tried to shame me! That is when I became a

Republican during Obama's time. My father raised us to be Democrats and he said they were for the working man and they were. Not any more, they are stealing and mismanaging our tax money by giving it to the enemy! I had been watching and disagreeing with Obama but Wuhan Lab receiving our money was just not right! What say you? tloury@att.net

Best of the Best

Continued from page 1

care at HCA, they were caring for her when she needed it and the Nurse from Doctor Freemans Office.

A few years back I had a not so good experience at this hospital in the emergency room area, I was kept overnight, it was a difficult problem. I checked myself out the next day but there curtaining was no sign of that now. I recommend HCA based on my wife's experience.

While researching I met two ladies separately that had surgery done by Freeman, I met another lady who had worked for Dr Freeman for nine years, she said he is the best, then our graphic artist had tumors removed by Dr Freeman, then I was talking to a person on the phone that is a surgical nurse, she said she has works with Dr Freeman some times and he is the best. Wow talk about a sign and checking the internet finalized it. Their credentials were limitless. I think they are THE BEST of the BEST and they bring the Lord with them!

"I endorse this doctor team and HCA Hospital"

Tom Loury said that Thank you All!

Easter

Continued from page 1

receive a top prize. All remaining participants will be entered into a drawing during the prize ceremony at 12:30 p.m. Teams must return to Snooky Park by 12:15 p.m. to qualify.

Tickets for the scavenger hunt are \$20 per team of two. Participants must be at least 18 years old and present a valid driver's license. The deadline to purchase tickets is March 20 at Lady Lake Town Hall or the Lady Lake Library.

On the same day, families are invited to the annual Easter Eggstravaganza. Thousands of eggs will be hidden for children to find during the event. Activities will include bounce houses, food vendors and photo opportunities with the Easter Bunny.

Food will be available for purchase from Lil Fatz BBQ, Weirsdale Weiney, Simple Eats & Treats and Nothing Bundt Cakes.

For more information on either event, text "LLEaster26" to 38276 or call 352-205-2826.

Chair Chat

Continued from page 3

competitive selection in essence undercuts her credibility.

Comments were made by Board members about the subjective feeling of "comfort and familiarity," this is not a rigorous metric. In fact, some level of discomfort often drives change that could lead to greater academic success. Yes, there are schools / students excelling and achieving solid academic results; however, the data indicates an

overall (county-wide) lack of academic excellence.

Our Ask:

As an organization the MCREC supports the Board's work to improve our schools, however, we respectfully request the Board revisit the matter to continue the competitive recruitment process for a new superintendent as publicly promised. At this point there is no dramatic improvement in test scores to warrant or justify a decision change at this time.

Again, promises made / should be promises kept!

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Marion County Republican Executive Committee, please feel free to contact us if there are any questions.

Len M Racioppi, V. Chair MCREC
Brigitte Smith, Chair MCREC

The Great Tornado Drill

Seminole County, FL (February 3, 2026) — Seminole County's Office of Emergency Management invited community members to practice their tornado action plan during 'The Great Tornado Drill' on Wednesday, February 4, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.

Some community members participated as a business, school, faith-based organization, or family unit. Participants should discuss how they would receive a tornado warning alert and practice taking shelter in the most secure interior room at work or home.

Continued page 16



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FROM THE DESK OF CONGRESSWOMAN KAT CAMMACK



Cammack Leads Florida Delegation Calling for USDA Disaster Declaration After Historic Freeze

Washington, D.C. — Congresswoman Kat Cammack and all 29 members of Florida's

bipartisan congressional delegation are urging U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins to immediately approve a USDA Disaster Declaration for Florida counties devastated by historic freezing temperatures in late January and early February.

The freeze struck during peak production for many of Florida's major commodities, causing widespread and catastrophic losses across the state's agricultural sector. A disaster declaration would unlock critical federal assistance for farmers and ranchers facing severe and ongoing recovery challenges.

"Florida supplies fresh produce to nearly 150 million Americans during the winter months, and when Florida agriculture is hit, the entire country feels it," Cammack said. "This is a national security issue. A nation that cannot feed itself, cannot secure itself. This freeze caused widespread, historic, and devastating damage. Farmers are facing wiped-out crops, lost income, and months or even years of recovery through no fault of their own. A USDA Disaster Declaration is essential to get relief on the ground now and protect Florida agriculture and America's food supply from collapsing under this blow," said Congresswoman Cammack.

Agriculture is Florida's second-largest economic sector, producing more than 300 commodities and supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs. During the late January and early February freeze, temperatures

shattered long-standing city and county records. According to the USDA's National Free On-Board Review, central Florida is already experiencing a strawberry shortage following extreme cold on February 2-3, 2026.

Beyond strawberries, significant losses are expected across a wide range of commodities, including citrus, vegetables, sugar cane, nurseries, apiaries, and aquaculture operations. Some impacts are expected to last months and, in some cases, extend into future growing seasons. Florida Agriculture Commissioner Wilton Simpson estimates the freeze caused more than \$1 billion in crop damage statewide.

In their letter, the bipartisan Florida delegation stressed the urgency of deploying disaster assistance and called on USDA and the Administration to work with Congress to ensure adequate funding to help producers recover.

Cammack Cosponsors SAVE America Act

Washington, D.C. — Today, Congresswoman Kat Cammack (R-FL-03) joined more than 70 House Republicans in cosponsoring the SAVE America Act, the most comprehensive election integrity bill to date.

The SAVE America Act requires voter ID in federal elections and preserves existing requirements for proof of U.S. citizenship when registering to vote. Despite false Democratic claims, the bill does not disenfranchise women or minorities. Election integrity measures like voter ID are supported by more than 80 percent of Americans, including a majority of Democrats.

"This is a real issue with real consequences," said Congresswoman Cammack. "The SAVE America Act does what voters want: proof of citizenship, voter

ID, and common-sense limits on mail-in ballots. That's not extreme, it's responsible. If Democrats are blocking it, Americans should ask why."

Congresswoman Cammack remains committed to protecting election integrity and ensuring every legal vote counts.

The SAVE America Act will:

Require photo ID to vote in federal elections.

Require proof of U.S. citizenship, in person, to register to vote.

Remove non-citizens from voter rolls.

End universal mail-in ballots, with limited exceptions.

Full text of the SAVE America Act is available [HERE](#).

FL Delegation USDA Disaster Declaration Letter 02.10.2026

The Honorable Brooke Rollins, Secretary U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW,
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins:

We write in support of Florida Agriculture Commissioner Wilton Simpson's request for a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Disaster Declaration for counties in the State of Florida impacted by the freezing temperatures that occurred at the end of January and the beginning of February. This declaration will make it clear that the federal government's resources will be available to Florida's farmers and ranchers.

Agriculture is the second-largest economic sector in Florida's economy, and this weather disaster struck during the production seasons for many of our state's 300 commodities. These plummeting temperatures broke city and county records not seen in decades across the state. Already, the USDA has reported in its National Free On Board Review that central Florida will see a shortage of strawberry supply due to the extreme cold weather on February 2-3, 2026. More commodities, including avocados, bell peppers, sugar cane, broccoli, celery, sweet corn, cucumbers, radishes, cabbage, citrus,

eggplant, green beans, potatoes, squash, tomatoes, apiaries, nurseries, and aquaculture, face threats of production loss that will last for months and in some cases even into future years.

We appreciate your dedication to American agriculture and hope that you will call on Congress and those in the Administration who oversee and operate disaster programs to quickly provide the necessary funds to help our state recover from this tragic event.

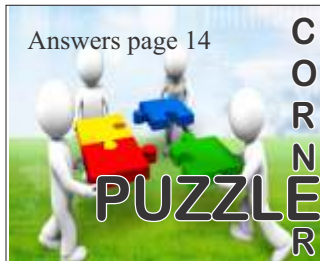
Thank you for your consideration and for your continued leadership in supporting American agriculture.

Sincerely,
Kat Cammack, Member of Congress
C. Scott Franklin, Member of Congress

What Say You?
TLoury@att.net

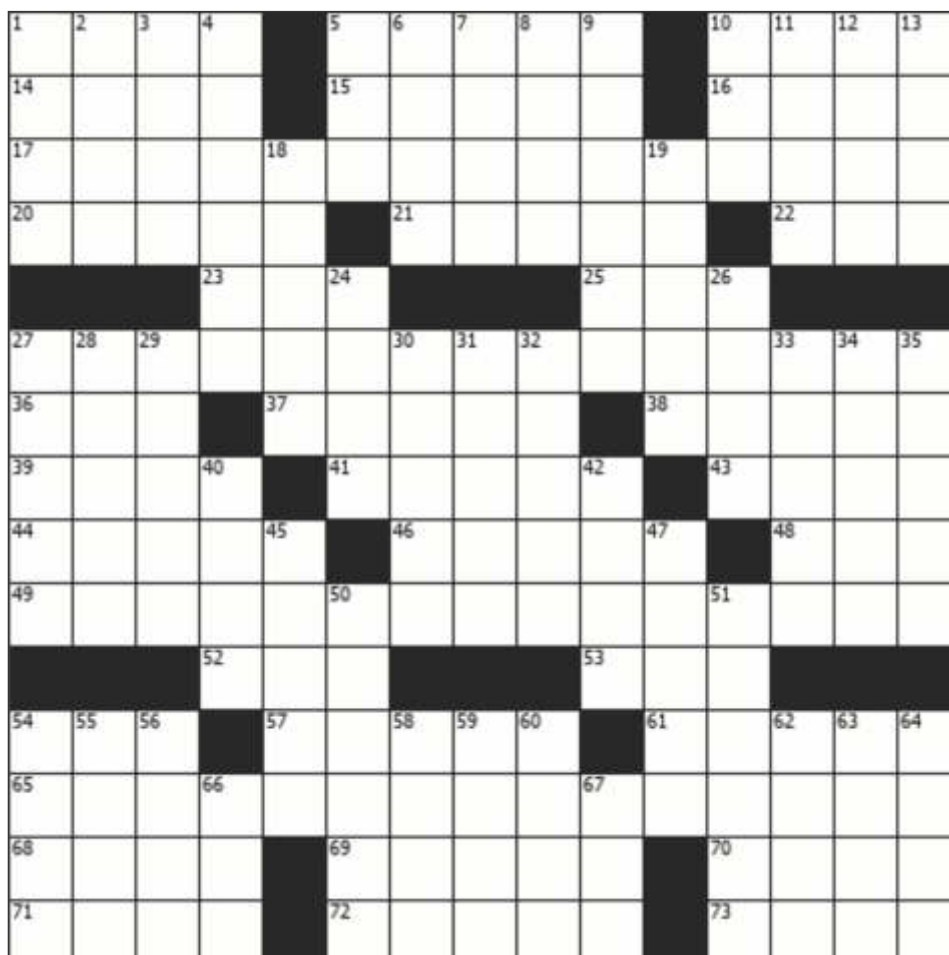
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Answers page 14

- CORNER PUZZLER**
- Across**
- "Ma, He's Making Eyes"
 - Beet variety
 - Nasty shock
 - Monorail unit
 - Classical reading
 - State of Xenia
 - Performs a certain exercise
 - Parting remark
 - Regarding ebb and flow
 - "Say what?"
 - Metric work unit
 - Snug bug's place
 - Glances at briefly
 - Trial judge Lance
 - Type of blockade
 - Inscribed pillar
 - Naldi of the Ziegfeld Follies
 - They represent trillions
 - Nutmeg coat
 - Asimov's domain
 - Like movies
 - Any seaworthy vessel
 - Grieve inconsolably
 - Disencumber
 - Oilcan letters
 - "Intimations of Immortality," e.g.
 - Insinuate
 - Potato variety
 - Renounce interest in
 - Son of Rebekah
 - More frost-covered
 - Small accessory case
 - Adjust with a wedge
 - "USA, USA, USA ..."
 - Kind of board
- Down**
- Lead-in to "boy!" or "girl!"
 - Walked on
 - Pacific paradise
 - Hosts a roast
 - Bearded revolutionary
 - Party thrower
 - Mine, in Marseilles
 - Tear apart
 - Bleak
 - Notate quickly
 - "___, I'm Falling in Love Again" (Dee Mullins tune)
 - In ___ of
 - Reggae artist Peter
 - Second largest of the Great Lakes
 - Twists around
 - No-see-um, e.g.
 - Jim Croce's "I ___ Name"
 - Dishwasher cycle
 - New York thruway city
 - Tag game call
 - "Miss ___ Boys" (1997)
 - "The Divine" Vaughan
 - Send to seventh heaven
 - Left-hand page
 - Nobel Peace Prize winner Root
 - Rent to another tenant
 - Get an ___ effort
 - Word with seven or high
 - Architect Jones
 - Things go down it
 - Like paradise
 - Spread hay
 - Has bills
 - Hyphen's cousin
 - Actor Morales
 - Kind of support (Abbr.)
 - Pacific Rim region
 - "... and ___ some"
 - Cinematic pooch
 - Word with rush or happy
 - "Think nothing ___"
 - Engine sound
 - Gallery display



FROM THE DESK OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL OFFICE



James Uthmeier Secures Convictions in Multi-Million-Dollar Organized Retail Theft Scheme

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Attorney General James Uthmeier announced that the Office of Statewide Prosecution

secured a conviction for husband-and-wife duo, Robert and Jaclyn Dell, of St. Petersburg, for running an organized retail theft scheme. Robert, a former pastor at The Rock Church in St. Petersburg, and his wife, Jaclyn, operated a 'transformation center' purporting to provide counseling and assistance to individuals recovering from drug addiction.

"These fraudsters hid their true motives behind faith and charity to launder proceeds from a large-scale criminal enterprise," said Attorney General James Uthmeier. "I am grateful to Ag Law Enforcement, FDLE, Chief Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Paul Dontenville, and Assistant Statewide Prosecutors Eric Ross and Gianna Fina for ensuring that justice was served in this case."

"These verdicts show exactly what happens when Florida refuses to be a soft-on-crime state," said Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson. "Our Agricultural Law Enforcement agents were

alongside the Attorney General's Office, FDLE, and Home Depot to dismantle a long-running retail theft ring that victimized businesses across multiple counties. Organized retail crime drives up costs for everyday Floridians and undermines public safety. We will continue to use every tool at our disposal to protect law-abiding families, support our law enforcement, and deliver real results for the people we serve."

"These two criminals were defrauding vulnerable Floridians while pretending to serve our communities," said Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner Mark Glass. "I applaud our analysts and partners for uncovering the full scope of their exploitation and helping secure this verdict."

"Today's guilty verdicts are yet another powerful example of Attorney General James Uthmeier's relentless efforts to dismantle organized retail crime for the safety of our stores, our customers and our team members," said Scott Shalley, President and CEO of the Florida Retail Federation. "In collaboration with Agriculture Commissioner Wilton Simpson, FDLE Commissioner Mark Glass, local law enforcement and our retail stores, General Uthmeier has made clear that Florida is a law and order state, where organized retail crime is not tolerated and criminals will be held accountable. With the strongest laws and enforcement in the nation, Florida is a safer place to work and

shop."

"At The Home Depot, the safety of our associates is our top priority. We have implemented comprehensive strategies to protect against organized retail crime (ORC) over the past few years with great success, but it remains at a high across the retail industry," said Scott Glenn, Vice President of Asset Protection at The Home Depot. "We're proud to play a role in the nationwide effort to combat ORC and grateful for the partnership and dedication of Attorney General Uthmeier and local law enforcement in investigating these cases and holding offenders accountable."

Robert and Jaclyn Dell were arrested in August 2023 following a joint investigation by the Office of Statewide Prosecution, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, and The Home Depot Asset Protection Team.

Investigators determined that under the guise of counseling and assistance for people recovering from drug addiction, the Dells coordinated a long-running, multi-million-dollar retail theft scheme targeting The Home Depot.

Co-conspirators Jessica Wild and Daniel Mace stole power tools from The Home Depot locations across Citrus, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Sarasota counties. The stolen merchandise was delivered nightly to the Dells' house and then sold online. The scheme generated over \$2 million in illegal proceeds from 2015-2023.

Following a two-week jury trial, Robert was found guilty as charged of RICO,

Conspiracy to Commit RICO, Dealing in Stolen Property, and Money Laundering (2 counts). Jaclyn was also found guilty as charged of Conspiracy to Commit RICO. They are facing up to 150 years and 30 years in the Florida Department of Corrections, respectively.

Sentencing is set for March 13, 2025, in Pinellas County.

Attorney General James Uthmeier Secures 120-Year Prison Sentence for Convicted Human Trafficker

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier announced that the Office of Statewide Prosecution secured a 120-year prison sentence for Marquett James, 50, of Hillsborough County; the incarceration will be served over 90 years, with some terms running concurrently.

"In a case that the Biden DOJ refused to prosecute, our Office of Statewide Prosecution worked with HSI under the Trump administration to deliver a sentence that ensures this offender will never have the opportunity to exploit another victim," said Attorney General James Uthmeier. "Crimes of this nature cause life-long harm and must be met with punishments that reflect their severity. In Florida, there will be no leniency for sexual predators and human traffickers."

James was convicted in November 2025 on felony charges of Human Trafficking (2 counts), Racketeering, and Conspiracy to Commit Racketeering. He will serve his sentence in the Florida Department of Corrections.

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FROM THE DESK OF

GOVERNOR DESANTIS



Governor Ron DeSantis Announces Another Record-Breaking Year For Florida Tourism: Florida Welcomes 143.3 Million Visitors In 2025

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Governor Ron DeSantis announced

preliminary estimates from VISIT FLORIDA indicating that Florida welcomed 143.3 million visitors in calendar year 2025: another record-setting performance for the Sunshine State. In the fourth quarter of 2025, an estimated 33.5 million visitors traveled to the state, making it the highest fourth quarter visitation on record.

Preliminary estimates show that domestic travelers accounted for 91.5 percent of all visitors in 2025, with 131.1 million Americans traveling to Florida. Overseas visitation reached 9.3 million, while Canadian visitation totaled 2.9 million, consistent with historical trends where Canadian travel represents approximately two percent of total visitation. Florida also experienced continued growth from key international markets, with strong increases from Latin American countries such as Brazil and Argentina, as well as European markets including the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands. Brazil is now the second-largest international source of visitors to the state. VISIT FLORIDA remains focused on expanding international visitation through strategic marketing efforts.

Florida continues to be the #1 domestic travel destination in the United States and a top choice for international visitors.

“Florida continues to set the standard as the top travel destination in the nation, welcoming millions of visitors while delivering real economic benefits for our residents,” said **Governor Ron DeSantis**. “Through strategic investments in infrastructure, public safety, and environmental stewardship, we are ensuring that Florida remains a place where families can vacation with confidence and where our tourism industry can continue to thrive.”

“Florida tourism continues to lead the nation,” said **Bryan Griffin, President and CEO of VISIT FLORIDA**. “Florida’s tourism success is a result of the people and businesses in our state who offer the world’s greatest vacation experiences, attractions, lodging, and dining options. VISIT FLORIDA is proud to play our part to represent our state and keep our destinations top of mind for travelers in a crowded and dynamic market.”

“As the #1 domestic travel destination, families and vacationers know that Florida has set the gold standard for the tourism industry,” said **Secretary J. Alex Kelly, Florida Department of Commerce**. “This new milestone is the direct result of strategic investments in our communities that promote job growth, bolster small businesses and fortify infrastructure—cementing Florida’s place as a travel destination, both nationally and internationally. Governor DeSantis has made Florida the premier destination for

travelers looking to experience all Florida has to offer.”

Key highlights from VISIT FLORIDA’s fourth quarter and calendar year 2025 preliminary visitation estimates are below. Final figure confirmations are expected as data becomes available throughout the spring.

Q4 2025

Preliminary estimates indicate that 33.5 million total visitors (in person-trips) traveled to Florida in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2025, a +0.6% increase from Q4 2024 and a record high for a fourth quarter.

- In Q4 2025, Domestic visitation is estimated at 30.31 million, and international visitation is estimated at 3.2 million.

- Domestic visitors accounted for 90.5% of total visitors, while international visitors accounted for 9.5%.

- Total enplanements at 19 Florida airports totaled 27.4 million in Q4 2025, up by +2.8% from Q4 2024.

Calendar Year 2025

- Preliminary estimates indicate that 143.3 million total visitors (in person-trips) traveled to Florida in calendar year (CY) 2025, a +0.2% increase from CY 2024.

- Domestic visitation accounted for 91.5% of total visitation in 2025, up slightly from 91.4% the previous year, while overseas visitation made up 6.5% and Canadian visitation made up 2.0%, in line with historical visitation records.

- Domestic visitation is estimated at 131.1 million in 2025, an increase of +0.3% from 2024. Overseas visitation is estimated at 9.3 million, with Canadian visitation at 2.9 million.

- Florida saw growth across all top 5 overseas origin countries year over year. Brazil grew 10.4% from 2024, Argentina grew 17.8% and Spain entered the top 10 origin countries with 10.4% growth in visitors.

- Preliminary estimates indicate an air/non-air split for domestic visitors of 35.8% / 64.2% in 2025, with a smaller share traveling to Florida by air than in 2024.

Travel trends indicate that finding value shapes the contemporary tourists’ travel choices. According to a recent Marketing Effectiveness Study, travelers to Florida who are aware of VISIT FLORIDA’s marketing efforts express that Florida offers good value for money by an additional 23 points as opposed to those who are not.

Flags at Half-Staff in Honor of Marjory Stoneman Douglas Remembrance Day

On February 14, 2018, the 17 innocent lives of Alyssa Alhadeff, Scott Beigel, Martin Duque Anguiano, Nicholas Dworet, Aaron Feis, Jaime Guttenberg, Christopher Hixon, Luke Hoyer, Cara Loughran, Gina Montalto, Joaquin Oliver, Alaina Petty, Meadow Pollack, Helena Ramsay, Alex Schachter, Carmen Schentrup, and Peter Wang were taken when a murderer opened fire at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Students, teachers, and faculty showed great courage in the face of danger on that fatal day. The sacrifices of these heroes, as well as the brave actions of first responders, will never be forgotten.

In memory of the lives lost at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, I hereby

direct the flags of the United States and the State of Florida to be flown at half-staff at all local and state buildings, installations, and grounds throughout the State of Florida from sunrise to sunset on Saturday, February 14, 2026.

Governor Ron DeSantis Appoints Jolene Sheive to the School Board of Osceola County

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Governor Ron DeSantis announced the appointment of Jolene Sheive to the School Board of Osceola County.

Jolene Sheive

Sheive is a Broker at Legacy Realty of Central Florida and is the Owner of Stadium Place Administration. Active in her community, she serves as a Planning Commissioner for Osceola County. A resident of Osceola County for over 20 years, Sheive has served as a member of the Osceola County Association of Realtors, the Osceola Chamber of Commerce, and the Osceola County Education Foundation.

Governor Ron DeSantis Appoints Terrance “Blake” Iverson to the Baker County Board of County Commissioners

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Governor Ron DeSantis announced the appointment of Terrance “Blake” Iverson to the Baker County Board of County Commissioners.

Terrance “Blake” Iverson

Iverson is the Owner of Hometown Electrical. Active in his community, he currently serves as the President and Pastor for the Firm Foundation Youth Ministry, Inc. Iverson earned his electrician’s certification from the Jacksonville Joint Apprenticeship.

Governor Ron DeSantis Appoints Clyde Fleming to the Suwannee County Board of County Commissioners

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Governor Ron DeSantis announced the appointment of

Clyde Fleming to the Suwannee County Board of County Commissioners.

Clyde Fleming

Fleming is currently retired and was previously elected as a member of the Suwannee County Board of County Commissioners. Active in his community, he was the recipient of the Florida Association of Counties Trailblazer Award. Fleming is a member of the Suwannee County Quarterback Club and previously served as a Technician at W.S. Badcock Corporation.

Governor Ron DeSantis Appoints James “Matt” Terry as Gulf County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Governor Ron DeSantis announced the appointment of James “Matt” Terry as Gulf County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller.

James “Matt” Terry

Terry is the Owner and Appraiser for the Appraisal Group of North Florida. Active in his community, he is currently elected to the School Board of Gulf County and is the President of the Appraisal Institute of Florida’s Gulf Coast. Terry earned his bachelor’s degree in business from Flagler College.

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Tornado Drill

Continued from page 11

The Seminole County Office of Emergency Management and the National Weather Service in Melbourne partnered to develop The Great Tornado Drill in 2015. Since then, the State of Florida adopted the event, with all 67 counties participating annually during Florida Severe Weather Awareness Week.

Florida Blue Tony Jenkins



Florida Blue Names Tony Jenkins Northeast Florida Market President Jacksonville, Fla

Batson, Aleizha

[Feb. 9, 2026] – Florida Blue, the state's leading health insurer, has named Tony Jenkins as market president for Northeast Florida, effective Mar. 1, 2026. Jenkins, a native of Jacksonville, will succeed Darnell Smith, who recently announced his retirement after 35 years of dedicated service to Florida Blue.

Jenkins joined the organization in 2001, serving the last 20 years as market president for Central Florida. A seasoned health care executive with a track record of leadership and community engagement, Jenkins also brings a deep understanding of Northeast Florida's unique needs and opportunities.

"Tony's extensive experience in health care, strong local connections, and exceptional community leadership make him ideal to take this role," said Kari Regar, senior vice president, Florida Market Leader at Florida Blue. "We are excited about his return to Jacksonville, and confident Tony will advance our 80-plus year commitment to our members and partners throughout Northeast Florida."

Jenkins joined Florida Blue following a distinguished career with CSX Corporation and the Walt Disney World Company. He has distinguished himself for his commitment to improving the health and well-being of communities.

Jenkins has received numerous awards for his contributions to health care industry community service, including:

- Orlando Business Journal's "Top 10 Businessmen to Watch" and "CEO of the Year"
- Orlando Business Journal's "Diversity in Business Lifetime Achievement Award"
- i4 Business Magazine "Business Leader of the Year"
- Orlando Magazine's "50 Most

Powerful People in the City"

As Market President, Jenkins will be responsible for regional business operations and community engagement efforts for 17 counties in Northeast Florida, and work closely with customers, local health care providers, business leaders, and community organizations to improve health outcomes and access to care.

"I am honored to return to my hometown and lead Florida Blue's efforts in Northeast Florida," said Jenkins. "I look forward to working more with our area customers and local partners to address the unique health care needs of the community and to continue Florida Blue's legacy of impact."

Jenkins holds a Bachelor of Arts in Hospitality Management from Morris Brown College in Atlanta, Ga. He is active on a number of civic, business, community, and health care organizations.

About Florida Blue

Driven by its mission of helping people and communities achieve better health, Florida Blue is the leading health insurer in Florida, and part of GuideWell, a not-for-profit health solutions company. Florida Blue offers a range of health plans and personalized care programs for individuals, families, businesses of all sizes, and Medicare beneficiaries. For over 80 years, the organization has been member centric and committed to making health care as accessible and affordable as possible. Serving more than six million members across all 67 Florida counties, Florida Blue has more than 8,000 employees and is headquartered in Jacksonville, Fla., is owned by its policyholders, and is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

For additional information visit www.FloridaBlue.com. For the latest news and content, visit the Florida Blue Newsroom, and follow Florida Blue on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram @Florida.Blue; and X (formerly Twitter) @FLBlue.

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Nationwide Blood Shortage



Red Cross Urges Immediate Donations Amid 35% Drop

(NAPSI)—The American Red Cross has declared a severe blood shortage after the

national supply fell by about 35% in the past month—a crisis fueled by a surge in flu cases and winter storms disrupting blood drives. Hospitals already strained by flu-related admissions are now being forced to triage critical blood products, putting trauma victims, mothers in childbirth, and patients with cancer or sickle cell disease at serious risk.

"After the holiday distractions, we enter flu season—a time when Hispanics face a higher risk of hospitalization due to limited access to healthcare," says Dr. Maribel García Colón, Medical Director at the American Red Cross. "At the same time, winter weather leads to more accidents where a person may require an emergency transfusion. This is where Hispanics can make a difference: 60% of this population has type O blood, the most commonly used blood type in emergencies when there's no time to determine a patient's blood type. By donating blood, we give others the chance to live."

Last month alone, nearly 400 blood drives were canceled due to severe winter weather, leaving thousands of donations uncollected. With more storms forecast, the situation

could worsen without immediate donor action.

"Thanks to blood donations, Valerio is celebrating his sixth birthday."

Having just turned six, Valerio has overcome health challenges that rival those faced by the superheroes he admires. Born with a rare congenital condition affecting the left side of the heart—Valerio's doctors told his mother, Liliana, that he would need multiple heart surgeries to survive.

The first of four open-heart surgeries took place just one week after his birth. Blood transfusions were critical to the success of each procedure. "If he hadn't received the blood he needed during surgery—and the platelets afterward—Valerio wouldn't have recovered so quickly," says Liliana.

She vividly remembers the fear of imagining what might happen if blood hadn't been available. "Blood donations have shaped the course of our family's life. My son is resilient and faces everything with courage, but none of this would be possible without the generosity of blood donors."

How You Can Help

There's no time to wait. Book an appointment now to give blood or platelets by using the Blood Donor App, visiting RedCrossBlood.org or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767). All blood types are needed, especially O, A negative, and B negative.

Special Thank-You

Those who donate by January 25 will be entered for a chance to win a trip for two to Super Bowl LX in Santa Clara, California. From January 26–February 28, donors will also receive a \$20 e-gift card. Learn more at RedCrossBlood.org/SuperBowl.

A vibrant promotional graphic for the 5th Annual Billy Berg Mac n Cheese Festival. The background is yellow with a pattern of orange and yellow dots. At the top, it says "5th Annual BILLY BERG Mac n Cheese FESTIVAL" in large, bold, orange and red letters. Below this, there is a heart-shaped graphic on the left that says "FREE SAMPLES" and a cartoon character of a slice of pizza wearing sunglasses on the right. At the bottom, it says "FUN FOR ALL!" and "Join the Lady Lake Area Chamber for a Day of Cheesy Goodness, business vendors, kids' activities, and more!" followed by "SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2026 10 AM - 2 PM WILDWOOD COMMUNITY CENTER 6500 Powell Rd, Wildwood FL".