



HAPPY 250th Birthday

The Star-Spangled Banner
O say can you see, by the
dawn's early light, What so
proudly we hailed at the
twilight's last gleaming, Whose
broad stripes and bright stars
through the perilous fight, O'er
the ramparts we watched, were

so gallantly streaming? And the
rocket's red glare, the bombs
bursting in air, Gave proof
through the night that our flag
was still there; O say does that
star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and
the home of the brave?



Where did this picture come from? I don't know where it came from but it is a sign! It a beautiful picture to display this time and date.

BIG ANNOUNCEMENT

We're excited to share an important announcement!

Lady Lake will always be our home, and the name will always hold a special place in our hearts. We are deeply grateful for the support, relationships, and memories that have shaped our organization over the years.

As we enter a new chapter of growth, we are proud to better reflect the broader community we serve. To be more inclusive of the many businesses and communities throughout our region, the Lady Lake Area Chamber of Commerce will now be known as the North Lake Area Chamber of Commerce.

While our name is changing, our mission remains the same: supporting, connecting, and advocating for our local business community. We are excited about the opportunities ahead and look forward to continuing to serve and strengthen the businesses that make our region thrive.

Thank you for being part of our journey. We can't wait to see what the future holds as the North Lake Area Chamber of Commerce.

Your Chamber Working for You!



Town News Lake County Events

Commissioner Amanda McLea

Commissioner Amanda McLea graduates from Institute for Elected Municipal Officials course

Lady Lake – The Town of Lady Lake is announcing that Commissioner Amanda McLea recently graduated from the Institute for Elected Municipal Officials (IEMO), a course from the Florida League of Cities' premier educational program designed specifically for Florida's elected municipal officials.

Commissioner McLea completed the first level of IEMO training, which is specially designed for newly elected officials and those with less than one term in office. The comprehensive 16-hour course provides participants with an intensive academic program focusing on the numerous aspects of municipal government. Topics of the course include municipal government structure, introduction to municipal finance, council relationships, and more.

IEMO class sizes are kept small, which allows participants to network and share ideas with other elected officials in a personal group setting. By creating an environment in which challenges and best practices are shared, many IEMO graduates have been able to develop solutions to local problems.

"As someone who believes deeply in community service, I know that every conversation, every lesson, and every connection helps us become more effective leaders," said Commissioner McLea. "The experience reminded me that good leadership isn't about having all the answers; it's about being willing to listen, learn, and work together to find the best path forward."

Created more than 30 years ago to educate newly elected officials on the intricacies of municipal government in a cost-effective manner, the IEMO program grew out of a partnership between the Florida League of Cities and the John Scott Dailey Florida Institute of Government.

The officials who completed IEMO I can receive credit toward FLCU's Certificate Program for Elected Officials, which recognizes elected officials who take part in the League's many training opportunities.

Felony Drug Suspect Arrested

Felony drug suspect arrested with the assistance of U.S. Marshals

LADY LAKE — A man wanted on felony drug charges in Marion County was taken into custody Wednesday in Lady Lake following a coordinated effort involving federal and local law enforcement agencies.

On June 10, members of the United States Marshals Service located and detained 20-year-old William Lamont Knights at a residence on East Primrose Lane in Lady Lake. Knights was wanted on an active Marion County warrant related to fentanyl possession and the sale of fentanyl. Lady Lake police officers responded to assist with the arrest and deployed their drone. Officers

transported Knights to the Lake County Jail without incident.

"This arrest is another example of how strong partnerships between law enforcement agencies help keep our communities safe," said Lady Lake Police Chief Steve Hunt. "We appreciate the work of the U.S. Marshals Service and our regional partners in locating and taking a wanted individual into custody."

Armed and Dangerous Suspect

Lady Lake Police seek armed and dangerous suspect in connection with shooting and armed robbery

LADY LAKE — The Lady Lake Police Department is asking for the public's assistance in locating a suspect wanted in connection with a shooting into an occupied vehicle and an armed robbery.

Investigators have identified Jeremiah Mykel Ackon, 18, of Lady Lake, as the driver of a vehicle involved in a shooting that occurred on May 19. At approximately 5:14 p.m., a maroon Nissan SUV entered the parking lot shared by Affordable Lock and Security and Vape Nation, located at 356 and 358 U.S. Highway 27/441. A male exited the rear passenger seat of the vehicle armed with a semi-automatic handgun, ran toward the roadway, and fired approximately 10 rounds at a vehicle traveling east on Griffin View Drive before returning to the SUV and fleeing the area. No injuries were reported.

The unidentified rear-seat passenger involved in the May 19 shooting remains outstanding, and detectives continue to investigate that case.

Through the course of the investigation, detectives identified Ackon as the driver of the vehicle. A warrant has been issued for his arrest on a charge of Principal to Shooting Into an Occupied Vehicle. The vehicle involved in the shooting has since been recovered.

During a separate investigation, detectives determined Ackon is also believed to have been involved in an armed robbery that occurred at Vape Nation, 358 U.S. Highway 27/441, on May 30. A firearm was used during the robbery and has not been recovered.

"These incidents involved brazen acts of violence that placed innocent members of our community at risk," said Lady Lake Police Chief Steve Hunt. "We are asking anyone who knows where Jeremiah Ackon may be to contact law enforcement immediately. Do not approach him. Our priority is locating him safely and holding those responsible accountable."

Ackon should be considered armed and dangerous. Anyone who sees him is urged to call 911 immediately and avoid making contact. Anyone with information regarding Ackon's whereabouts is asked to contact Lady Lake Police Department Investigations at 352-636-5687 or 352-705-3877, or Central Florida Crimeline at 1-800-423-TIPS.

Arrested Armed and Dangerous



The Lady Lake Police Department is announcing the arrest of Jeremiah Ackon, 18, of Lady Lake (reference below press release for background). Ackon was arrested on June 8

by the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office on a warrant for principal to shooting into an occupied vehicle and is currently in the Hillsborough County Jail. We'd like to thank our law enforcement partners including the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office and FDLE's Special Investigations Division for assisting in his apprehension.

LLPD Seek Info on Fatal Crash

Lady Lake Police seek information about fatal crash on U.S. 27/441

A pedestrian was killed early Tuesday morning after being struck by two vehicles on U.S. Highway 27/441, and Lady Lake Police are asking for the public's help identifying the driver of the second vehicle.

The crash occurred around 3:26 a.m. June 16 near Hartsock Sawmill Road.

When officers arrived, they found the male victim injured in the southbound lanes of U.S. 27/441 with a gray 2023 Toyota Tacoma stopped nearby.

According to the preliminary investigation, the Tacoma driver said the pedestrian was standing in the middle lane of the highway and appeared motionless before he was hit. He was wearing dark clothing, and the area was not illuminated by streetlights. The told officers she was traveling 50 to 55 mph when she noticed the man on the road. She attempted to avoid him but was unable to and struck him. The driver immediately stopped, and her passenger went to check on the man while 911 was called.

A short time later a second southbound vehicle struck the man and continued driving without stopping.

The victim was transported to UF Health Leesburg Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

The Lady Lake Police Department is investigating the crash and is seeking information about the second vehicle involved. Anyone who witnessed the incident or may have information is asked to contact the Lady Lake Police Department at 352-751-1560 or submit a tip through Central Florida Crimeline at 800-423-TIPS. Leave a message for Officer Dennis Pranoskes of the Traffic Homicide Unit.

Man in Pink Suit Arrested

Man in pink suit arrested for driving without a license

LADY LAKE - Lady Lake police officers

pulled over a suspect riding a tricycle motorcycle on U.S. Highway 441 and Main Street on June 13 at 9:16 p.m. The driver, who was wearing a distinctive pink suit, was found to be driving 60 mph in a 45-mph zone.

The driver, 58-year-old John Benz, had his license suspended indefinitely for failure to pay traffic fines and eight guilty pleas for driving without a license.

The trike was also not registered.

Benz was arrested without incident and cited for driving while license suspended and operating an unregistered vehicle.

Mayor Ed Freeman Is Honored

Mayor Ed Freeman is honored with the Florida League of Cities Home Rule Hero Award

LADY LAKE - Mayor Ed Freeman has been recognized with the 2026 Home Rule Hero Award from the Florida League of Cities (FLC) for his advocacy on behalf of Florida's municipalities during the 2026 Legislative Session.

Mayor Freeman received the award in May during a meeting of the Heartland League of Cities, where he currently serves as president.

The Home Rule Hero Award recognizes local government leaders who actively engage with state legislators and help ensure that the perspectives of Florida's cities are considered during the legislative process. Recipients are selected by the FLC's legislative team based on their responsiveness to legislative issues and their efforts to communicate local concerns to policymakers.

According to the Florida League of Cities, Home Rule Heroes play an important role in promoting local decision-making and protecting the ability of municipalities to address the unique needs of their communities.

The award honors elected and appointed officials from across Florida who demonstrate a commitment to effective advocacy and strong local government.

Super Speeder Arrested

Super speeder arrested going 95 mph

Under Florida's new "Super Speeder" law, drivers can face criminal penalties for extreme speeding. If you're caught driving 50 mph or more over the posted speed limit, or 100 mph or more in a manner that endangers others, you could face more than a fine. Penalties may include a mandatory court appearance, up to 30 days in jail for a first offense, and even license suspension for repeat violations.

Suspect David Estevan Quiroga-Salazar learned the hard way on May 31, when Lady Lake Police arrested him for driving 95 mph in a 40-mph zone on County Road 466 at Cay Avenue. He was charged with reckless driving and issued a criminal citation for dangerous speed.



Welcome to the community and welcome to the North Lake area Chamber of Commerce. Spinlife Mobility Solutions has all of your mobility needs, lift chairs, wheelchairs, walkers, and more located at 570 N. US Highway 27/441 in Lady Lake, Florida



Welcome, Silver Castle Studio! If you are looking for a photographer that also takes pet photos. Please give them a call at 815-768-9903.

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



I heard a quote that an Iranian woman made about the war. If you are humiliated and you die it ends the humiliation, if you don't die you have to deal with it for the rest of your life! So the way I read that they will have to fight to

the death? Is JD have any hope of peace or has Trump dumped it on him. If that is what happened I will be disappointed!

Marion County and all the other counties have a problem with the County Commissioners raising the taxes. Understand this, they can't be on the cutting edge without money. They need to charge Impact fees and raise the money they need that way. The way they're doing it is giving the greedy Mortgage Insurance Company's an excuse to charge higher Mortgage Insurance rates! Some have thrived in

three years!

So don't blame the Marion County Commissioners for wanting to be on the cutting edge but buyers are not stupid, they are going places that don't have that problem. So I like the County Commissioners that are in there now. They just need another tool to raise money! MISSING PEOPLE?

Conspiracy theories are flying around. I don't think it is a fact that UFO's have anything to do with. This is a way of having the blame put on someone else that is a pie in the sky. Get it (pie in the sky?) I believe it is something like the Cartel's stealing high profile people extracting information from them, selling it and blaming it on the UFO which makes it a mystery they can't go after who did it because they don't know.

I think Nancy Gutherie's abduction was done by Cartel, maybe someone hired them??? They can make money by abducting someone without a ransom fee. The property is worth a lot of money and maybe someone wants to buy it??? There is

all kinds of reasons that could come into play that has nothing to do with the family! Of course law enforcement investigates the family first. A lot of cases find a family member guilty.

Something additional just happened. The Feds just arrested a dual citizenship man for espionage for selling nuclear secrets to Iran. I wonder if that has anything to do with our missing scientist? If they were kidnapped and torched for information. We have to protect our scientist! Iran would do anything to best us so would China or Russia.

Hospital Stay, My wife was in the hospital HCA in Ocala Florida. Was a good stay and she had good care. Three things I would like to mention.

First there were two young nurses on the floor my wife was on. They were identical twin's and their first names fit their jobs, Faith & Hope, I got a kick out of that. Second I wonder where the cellphone chargers go after the Patient is discharged. It seems like I have heard that from patient's a number of times. Where is my charger?

The third thing is you better be in good shape to go visit your spouse, especially if she is on the floor my wife was on. A person in good shape takes twenty minutes of walking. I had to stop and rest a few times to visit my wife. Then had to make it back to the parking lot. They need some electric scooters for wheel chair visitors, after all they may be the ones paying the hospital bill! One more thing, does that sound d filmier, On TV I saw an ad I saw a comfy thing next thing that you put around your neck. IT SAID Buy one and the second half price, Guess what the second one was HALF SIZE. I complained and they said I could pay the difference and get a large one. I said you should be charged with false advertising! So just so you know what your buying half price could mean half size!

I am working toward helping Veterans helping veteran with publicity, a newspaper column and a suppling information that

they might need in their daily lives. We are trying to reach every veteran in Marion County. Thing's are going on that are not good for them so we will try to shed some light on it through Todd Belknap our Veterans editor.

I recently talked to a veteran who is going to the VA hospital. He said it was too far to walk in the hospital for his test and treatment. He is buying an electric scooter to get to where he needs to be in the hospital!

I staying in the Ritz veterans home may not be the veterans home for long. It seems a grant application was not turned in by the expiration date (it was 13 minutes late?) and the grant expired. It takes a special person to write a grant application and it was not turn in by a short expiration TIME date.

One more thing...A couple of election back in California I ran a picture that a reader took of a official ballot in the middle of a park with no body to watch it!

Newspaper Deadlines
Editorial & Ad Copy for August
Seniors Voice & Ocala DownTown
Noon, July 21st
Lady Lake Magazine & Village Spectator
12am, July 26th

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Democratic Socialism

By TomL

In the past the Democrats have used people and used people until they have rebelled. The Democrats took advantage Bernie Sanders in last years. He had a pretty big base of voters but not enough to win so the Democrats told him to throw in with them and look to the future. Bernie did that many times and each time he learned not to trust the Democrats. He got support from Foreign countries and came up with the idea of using the Democratic Party to further his cause. He invented the Democratic Socialism Brand, he is smart enough to realize Socialism does not work. There are shells of countries that were once healthy and rich are no cesspools, crime ridden starving people that get taken over by their enemies. If the Communist no longer have a need for them and they are in financial trouble they pull their resources.

If the people look a t Mamdani has already going back on his promises. He is delaying most of his projects until maybe Democrats might come into power. The delay tactics are being used all around, look at Iran!

We need to make every person that comes to America to visit or work, or go to college take an Oath to America. If they break the

Oath they go to jail. Most of the forigner that are in jail here in America get treated better than the country they came from. Look at ZZIran Hanging people. Tell the Iranian people to keep, track of those who are doing the hanging because their time is coming!

Networking is Awkward at Best

Some think it's about making a deal. IT's NOT! It's about making friends to do business with. I try to do business with people not businesses. The people you choose to represent you need to be real. Genuinely care about you and be a good listener, remember what they say and make note after you get back to your car. Remember their birthday, mention their wife / husband / children. Try to have a welcome package for new comers.

Prompt them to call if they need anything. They will become a real friend. They will also prefer to do business with a friend so really be their friend.

People prefer to do business with friends. They might ask for a discount be ready and say "I can ask?" OR "Do you want my boss to call you to discuss it?"

REFERRALS is where it is at. It opens a conversation with a stranger and makes them and you feel more comfortable. Be friendly, make friends, always be happy.

Through away the negative attitude, you will feel better and do more business!

Note: the CEP Ocala Chamber with CEO Matt McCormick is very good at the art of networking. They make friend right away! I never hear a negative conversation, it is all positive and where they are doing next!

We do not know how many tomorrows we will have so make it happen TODAY!

TomL said that!

Florida Farm Bureau Farm PAC

Florida Farm Bureau FarmPAC Endorses Byron Donalds for Governor

NAPLES, FL — The Florida Farm Bureau FarmPac today endorsed Byron Donalds for Governor. The Florida Farm Bureau is the state's largest agricultural organization representing more than 130,000 member-families across Florida.

"From citrus groves to cattle ranches to the row crops stretching across our Heartland, our farmers and ranchers are the backbone of the Florida Dream," said **Byron Donalds**. "Protecting that land, cutting red tape, and standing with the people who feed us all is essential to our success. I am proud to have the endorsement of the Florida Farm Bureau and thank them for their hard work securing and promoting Florida agriculture. I look forward to

working together to ensure Florida's agriculture stays strong for generations to come."

Florida Farm Bureau Federation President Jeb S. Smith, a fifth-generation Florida farmer, issued the following statement:

"Florida's farmers and ranchers have built one of the strongest agricultural economies in the nation through hard work, innovation, and an unwavering commitment to producing the safest, most abundant food supply in the world. Agriculture remains one of the three pillars of Florida's economy—and one of its most resilient—because of the dedication and perseverance of our farm and ranch families.

To keep Florida agriculture strong, we need leaders who understand the challenges facing producers and who are committed to protecting private property rights, reducing unnecessary regulations, and standing up for rural communities.

Throughout his public service, Byron Donalds has demonstrated that commitment. We are confident he will continue to champion Florida's farmers and ranchers as our next Governor, helping ensure that agriculture remains a cornerstone of our state's economy and way of life for generations to come.

That is why Florida FarmPAC is proud to endorse Byron Donalds for Governor of Florida."

What Say You? TLoury@att.net

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CHAIR CHAT

BY BRIGGITTE SMITH

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

Remembering the true essence of our Independence. As we approach the 250th anniversary of our nation this July 4th, it's time to remember what this holiday is truly about. In 1776, fifty-six brave men stood together and signed the Declaration of Independence. With those signatures, they pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to a dangerous idea — that a free people could govern themselves. These weren't reckless dreamers. They were defying the greatest military power on earth — Great Britain, with the world's most powerful navy. They had no standing army, no navy of their own, and everything to lose.

Yet they chose liberty over safety. Some paid a heavy price. Homes were burned. Property was seized. Families suffered. Richard Stockton of New Jersey was captured and imprisoned. Others lost land and wealth. But they stood firm. Their courage gave us the chance to build something extraordinary.

The Founding Fathers didn't want mob rule or tyranny. In the Federalist Papers, James Madison explained why a large republic could succeed where small democracies had failed. He wrote that liberty is to political differences what air is to fire — you cannot destroy one without destroying the other. Their solution was a constitutional republic designed to protect freedom while controlling its worst impulses.

Today, many young people barely know

who these men were or what they sacrificed. The story of the American Revolution has been softened or forgotten in too many classrooms. But the truth remains: fifty-six men risked everything so that we could enjoy the blessings of liberty.

This 250th anniversary is not just another

celebration. It's a call to remember who we are, where we came from, and what we must protect. The men who signed that document bet their lives on an idea. The least we can do is remember why they did it.

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

Or go to

Tomlpublishing.com and click on Lake County Sheriff on right side under "Contributing Editors".



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LAKE COUNTY EVENTS

SEE MORE ABOUT PARKS & TRAILS IN LAKE COUNTY

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

Jul 01
Summer Movie Series at First Presbyterian Church Mount Dora in Mount Dora
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM First Presbyterian Church Mount Dora in Mount Dora
Join First Presbyterian Mount Dora for a Summer Movie Series featuring inspiring Christian films every other Wednesday, June–August, 6:30–8:30 PM

Jul 03
First Friday
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM Downtown Eustis in Eustis
Each month, the City of Eustis hosts a family-friendly street party, featuring a variety of food, vendors and live music. Join us from 6 - 9 p.m.

Jul 03
Exploration Hike
8:00 AM - 9:30 AM Ferndale Preserve in Clermont
Join staff and explore the habitats and species of Ferndale Preserve.

Jul 03
Hometown Celebration
4:00 PM - 10:00 PM Ferran Park in Eustis
The annual Hometown Celebration will be on Friday, July 3, from 4 – 10 p.m. in Ferran Park.

Jul 04
City of Leesburg's Star Spangled Spectacular
4:00 PM - 9:30 PM Ski Beach Park in Leesburg
Get ready, Leesburg... Star Spangled Spectacular is going to be BIGGER than ever as we celebrate America's 250th Anniversary in true red, white, and blue

Jul 05
Exploration Hike
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM PEAR Park (Gateway) in Leesburg
Join staff on an early evening walk to get some exercise while exploring nature at P.E.A.R. Park.

Jul 05
Patriotic Concert & Ice Cream Social at First Presbyterian Church Mount Dora in Mount Dora
4:00 PM - 5:00 PM First Presbyterian Church Mount Dora in Mount Dora
Join First Presbyterian Mount Dora for a Patriotic Concert & Ice Cream Social on July 5 at 4 PM. Live music, community, and family-friendly fun

Jul 08
Watershed Wednesdays
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM Hickory Point Preserve Pavilion in Tavares
Join us monthly for Watershed Wednesdays to learn how lakes, streams, wetlands, and uplands connect, with rotating presentations on shorelines

Jul 10

Mount Dora's Art in the Alley
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM Royellou Lane in Mount Dora
Join us every 2nd Friday at 6 PM for an exciting evening featuring incredible local artists on Royellou Lane in historic downtown Mount Dora!

Jul 11
Wetland Excursion
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Pasture Reserve in Groveland
Join us for a fast paced guided hike at Pasture Reserve to learn about the fire, flora, and fauna of this pine flatwoods ecosystem.

Jul 11
Amphibians
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM Twin Lakes Park in Leesburg
Trek out with park staff to discuss, listen for and identify frog species. Amphibians play crucial roles in Florida's wilds.

Jul 11
Florida Military Collector Show
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM Renninger's Antique Center in Mount Dora
The Florida Military Collector Show is a one day event on Saturday. It is one of the largest all military collector shows in the South East.

Jul 17
Summer Yard Sale
8:00 AM - 4:00 PM Renninger's Antique Center in Mount Dora
Don't miss Renninger's Summer Yard Sale. Clean out your unwanted items and sell them at this show. Antique Center. Flea Market (Saturday and Sunday).

Jul 17
Ride the Cyclone
7:30 PM - 10:00 PM Theatre South Playhouse in Various
Six teens die in a freak coaster accident and are given one chance to return to life.

Jul 18
Quarterly Bird & Butterfly Survey
7:30 AM - 11:00 AM Pasture Reserve in Groveland
Assist staff with surveying one of Lake County's conservation lands for birds and butterflies.

Jul 18
Shoreline and Wetland Plants
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Ellis Acres Reserve in Paisley
Hike with staff while learning about some of our shoreline and wetland plant species.

Jul 18
Local Author Expo
9:30 AM - 11:30 AM Umatilla Public Library in Umatilla
Meet some of your friends and neighbors who are also published authors. Books will be available for purchase.

Jul 24
Stories of Water - Sabal Bluff
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Sabal Bluff Preserve in Leesburg
Join us for a casual guided hike as we share the Story of Water at Sabal Bluff Preserve.



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North Lake Area Chamber of Commerce Lunch

North Lake Area Chamber of Commerce Business networking lunch was held at Glenview Country Club. They meet the third Thursday of every month. Thank you, Glenview country club for your support and wonderful service.

This is the North Lake County Area Chamber of Commerce Business meeting. People winning door prizes.



North Lake
AREA CHAMBER of COMMERCE

**Join the
chamber**

North Lake Area Chamber Business Luncheon

These are the pictures from the North Lake Area Chamber of Commerce Business Luncheon members sitting at table talking about each other's businesses. You can't

refer someone if you don't know what they are genuine business people!

do! The north Lake area Chamber members



TODD BELKNAP

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE
VETERANS HELPING VETERANS USA



THE VETERAN WATCH STANDER: SERVICE AND SACRIFICE

Greetings! July is steeped in history that has forged our beloved Republic into the standard bearer of freedom for the world.

Pivotal July military battles shaped our nation's independence, altered the course of the Civil War, and helped break the deadlock of World War II. Since the "shot heard around the world" at Concord in 1775, 41 million Americans have served in the military, defending the freedoms and liberties we continue to enjoy present day.

Throughout our 250-year history, two enduring threads connect all who have selflessly and honorably served: service and sacrifice.

The Oath of Enlistment is a solemn pledge

sworn by all enlisted personnel, committing them to support and defend the U.S. Constitution, remain faithful to the nation, and obey lawful orders. It is a binding promise with no expiration date that remains with a Veteran forever.

This means serving a cause greater than ourselves, with our actions focused on the greater good rather than personal interest. Accordingly, as we celebrate 250 years of independence this month, let us pause and reflect upon the cost of said independence as well as what it will continually take to preserve it.

See you next month!



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Christian Help

JULY

Children

Recurring Children's Events

Mondays

Craft Kits- Every Monday while supplies lasts
Grab a take-home craft kit from the Youth Department and get creative! Kits are available on a first-come, first-served basis while supplies last.

Alphabet Adventures- Every Monday at 11:30 AM
Join us for a fun and engaging early literacy program where little ones explore a new letter each session. Children will learn words associated with the letter through interactive activities, enjoy a themed story, and create a simple craft to take home.

Tuesdays

Tiny Tots Toddler Sensory Play- Every Tuesday at 10:30 AM (Ages 1-3)
Tiny Tots ages 1-3 will enjoy a hands-on sensory play experience filled with fun textures and activities. This program supports early learning, creativity, and motor skill development.

Summer Crafting- Every Tuesday at 3:30 PM
Let creativity shine with fun, hands-on crafts inspired by the summer season! Kids can explore different materials, make colorful creations, and take home their own masterpieces. Perfect for young artists who love to create and imagine!

Wednesdays

Storytime- Every Wednesday at 10:30 AM (Ages 5 and under)
Enjoy a fun-filled Storytime with books, songs, and a craft! Listen to a story and sing along to favorite tunes.

Stories with Scarlett- Every Wednesday at 3 PM
Spend time reading to Scarlett, a gentle library dog who enjoys stories and lots of pets. A relaxing way for kids to practice reading and grow their confidence!

Thursdays

Poke' Pals: Trainer Academy- July 9 @ 3:30 PM
Join fellow trainers to learn, trade, and play the Pokémon Trading Card Game in a fun, supportive setting. Build your deck, sharpen your skills, and take on friendly matches. Perfect for teens ready to level up their trainer game!

Fridays

Baby Sprouts Story and Playtime- Every Friday at 10:30 AM (Age up to 18 months)
Designed for babies up to 18 months, this program features gentle stories and playful activities. Enjoy bonding time while supporting early development.

Kids BINGO- Every 2nd Friday at 3:30 PM
B-I-N-G-O! Come play a kid-friendly version of the classic game and see if you can shout "Bingo!" first.

Poke' Pals Event- July 24 @ 3:30 PM
Swap, trade, and add to your Pokémon collection! Bring your cards or consoles and meet other trainers.

Teens

D&D with Grand Mage Miranda- July 2 at 2 PM
Teens are invited to dive into the world of storytelling, strategy, and imagination. Work together to create characters, solve challenges, and embark on exciting adventures in a guided group setting.

Family Movie- July 31 at 3:30 PM
Showing: The Super Mario Bros. Movie

Adult

Mondays

ESL- Every Monday at 10 AM
This program is designed for individuals looking to improve their English language skills in a supportive environment. Registration is required and attendance is a commitment; once you sign up, the instructor will contact you with next steps.

Movie Mondays- Every 1st Monday at 3 PM
Enjoy a monthly movie screening at the library in a relaxed, welcoming setting. Sit back, watch a great film, and snack on free, delicious popcorn.

Wednesdays

SHINE- Every 2nd and 4th Wednesday at 2 PM
SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders) Get free, unbiased help with your Medicare questions from trained Florida SHINE volunteers. Learn about coverage options, benefits, and enrollment to make informed healthcare decisions.

Thursdays

BINGO- July 30th at 2 PM
Enjoy a classic game of bingo in a fun and friendly atmosphere! Test your luck, win prizes, and socialize with others. Perfect for adults looking for a relaxing and entertaining time! Registration required.

Fridays

Crochet Club- Every 2nd Friday at 3 PM
Join our welcoming crochet group open to all ages and skill levels, with guidance available for beginners learning the basics. Supplies are provided, but you're welcome to bring your own; children must be accompanied by an adult.

Social Shuffle- Every 4th Friday at 2 PM
Join us for a fun and social card game session featuring Swoop, a game that's easy to learn, quick to play, and super fun. Registration is required, so be sure to sign up and get ready to shuffle, play, and connect with others.

Apple Tech Support- Every 4th Friday at 10 AM
Learn more about your Apple devices in this helpful session led by a volunteer. Enjoy a short presentation followed by time for questions about iPads, iPhones, and iMacs.

Special Adult Events

Wetland Wonders Series: Marvelous Mollusks- July 9 at 2 PM
Explore the fascinating world of mollusks and their role in wetland ecosystems. Learn about their unique adaptations and why they matter for environmental health.

Is Travel a New Fountain of Youth?- July 21 at 2 PM
Discover how travel can boost well-being, spark curiosity, and keep the mind engaged. Explore the connection between new experiences and a refreshed sense of vitality. Perfect for adults interested in health, lifestyle, and adventure!

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mylakelibrary.org

Help Your Little Ones Learn

(NAPSI)—If any of the nearly 20 million children under 5 in America these days is one you care about, here's news you may be interested to learn: According to a recent report from the Australian Department of Education, the importance of early childhood education is well established. Conclusive international evidence demonstrates that early childhood is a vital period in children's learning and development, and that what happens in early childhood affects later development. This can be especially true when it comes to learning to read and do math.

What Parents Can Do

The National Association for the Education of Young Children suggests five steps:

- **Read Aloud Daily:** This is crucial for building vocabulary and understanding narratives. Reread favorite books to build familiarity.
- **Phonics Fun:** Play with sounds, rhyming words or the starting sounds of familiar objects.
- **Print Awareness:** Point out letters and words in the environment, such as on cereal boxes, signs, or books.
- **Daily Counting:** Count objects during daily life—shoes, toys, or snacks.
- **Shape Hunting:** Look for triangles, squares, and rectangles wherever you go.

Parents can get help with all that from a new pre-kindergarten course. A child who starts it at age 3 or 4 could be reading and doing math at a first-grade level before they

ever walk into a kindergarten classroom. That's the premise behind Smile Zemi's U.S. curriculum, which spans Pre-K through Grade 5, into the earliest years of childhood development, a window researchers widely consider pivotal for establishing long-term academic habits.

The curriculum covers seven subject areas: Alphabet, Math, ELA, Science, Social Skills, Thinking Skills, and Art & Music. In literacy, children start with basic strokes—straight lines, curves—before progressing to full letters, guided by on-screen animations that show proper stroke direction. In math, the focus is number sense: counting, ordering, and writing numerals through hands-on screen interaction meant to build the foundation for later arithmetic.

The course centers on a proprietary tablet and stylus. Rather than tapping or swiping, children write directly on the screen, an approach that can activate deeper cognitive engagement and mirrors the muscle memory development of traditional pencil-and-paper learning.

The program easily adapts to each child's pace, allowing for review when concepts need reinforcement and automatically unlocking advanced content when a child is ready. The tablet itself operates as a closed system: no social media, no outside websites, no games, which means a distraction-free environment for young learners.

"We developed this interface so that children can navigate it easily and experience success from their very first interactions," said Kyotaro Sekinada, President and CEO of Justsystems America,

Inc., which introduced it to the US. "We want them to build a genuine joy of learning before they ever set foot in a classroom."

The platform currently serves students from pre-K through elementary school and uses AI-assisted personalization across all grade levels.

Quick Puzzles Improve Your Day

(NAPSI)—You probably know the feeling: you've been staring at your screen for hours, your inbox keeps growing, and your next meeting starts in five minutes.

Sometimes, the best way to reset is to take a quick moment to focus on something completely different.

Where to Find It

aily puzzle games have become a popular way to take those quick mental breaks, and platforms like LinkedIn are leaning into that trend. LinkedIn's newest game, Wend, blends word finding with logic-based problem solving.

"Wend is a word-finding game where players connect letters in a grid to uncover hidden words, using every letter exactly once," says Helen Smith, Group Product Manager at LinkedIn. "While it may seem like a traditional word game, it adds a logic twist, as players also have to figure out how the entire board fits together."

In addition to Wend, the LinkedIn games lineup includes word-based puzzles like Pinpoint and Crossclimb, alongside logic challenges like Queens, Tango, Mini Sudoku, Zip, and Patches, each offering a different way to exercise your brain

throughout the day.

1. Why your brain needs a recharge

Stepping away from a task for even a minute or two can sometimes be exactly what's needed to return with fresh eyes.

Unlike checking email again or scrolling through your phone, a quick puzzle gives your attention something entirely different to focus on. The result is a short reset with a clear beginning and end, making it easy to fit between meetings, projects, and other responsibilities.

"That's part of the appeal of LinkedIn's games, which can often be completed in just a few minutes," says Thomas Snyder, LinkedIn's Principal Puzzlemaster and 3-time World Sudoku Champion. "It's a quick mental break that feels especially satisfying when everything clicks into place."

2. The social side of puzzle games

While LinkedIn games are played individually, they can create a great opportunity for connection with others.

Players often share scores with colleagues, discuss strategies, send puzzles to friends, or spark friendly competition through posts and messages. After you play a game, you'll see how you stack up against other players you know on a leaderboard.

"For people working across teams, offices, and time zones, games can provide an easy reason to reconnect," says Lakshman Somasundaram, Senior Director of Product at LinkedIn. "A shared puzzle score, a little friendly rivalry, or a quick discussion about strategy can turn into a meaningful conversation that can open the door to new professional opportunities."

And sometimes, according to

Continued page 16



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FROM THE DESK OF CONGRESSWOMAN KAT CAMMACK



Press conference at Ocala fire station spotlights legislation to strengthen mental health support for first responders

OCALA, Fla. — Congresswoman Kat Cammack (FL-03) joined area fire and

law enforcement leaders at Marion County Fire Rescue Station 28 today to champion the Answering the Call Act of 2026 (H.R. 8637), her legislation to strengthen mental health support for first responders through the national 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

"First responders see the worst of the worst, day in and day out, and it takes a toll. This bill creates a resource dedicated solely to them, with counselors trained to understand exactly what they are going through," said Rep. Cammack. "They answer the call every single time, and it is high time we answer the call in return."

The Answering the Call Act directs dedicated outreach and support to first responders through the 988 Lifeline. It funds specialized training for the counselors who answer those calls so they understand what first responders face, provides grants for states and departments to raise awareness of the resource, and keeps access completely anonymous so no one fears retaliation or judgment for reaching out. The bill covers firefighters, law enforcement, corrections officers, dispatchers, and EMS personnel.

Research has found that police officers and firefighters are more likely to die by suicide than in the line of duty, and the crisis has hit Marion County directly.

The choice of Station 28 was deliberate. It was the home station of firefighter and

paramedic Allen Singleton, a six-year veteran and member of the Marion County Fire Rescue and Sheriff's Office SWAT Medic team, who died by suicide in January 2023. Marion County Fire Chief James Banta said the department has lost four firefighters to suicide, a toll that underscores the urgency of the legislation.

"First responders answer the call every day. We respond to tragedy, trauma, and human suffering, often carrying the weight of those experiences long after the incident is over," said Marion Chief James Banta. "Yet for far too long, seeking help has carried a stigma in our profession. If even one first responder reaches out before a crisis becomes a tragedy, it will have made a difference."

Ocala Police Chief Mike Balken echoed the need for greater awareness of and access to mental health resources for first responders: "This legislation sends a clear message: seeking help is a sign of strength. At the end of the day, this is about taking care of the men and women who take care of our communities."

Rep. Cammack, whose husband Matt is a 19-year veteran of Gainesville Fire Rescue, said the measure of success is simple. "Success would be if one life was saved," she said. "That, to me, is the measure of success."

The Answering the Call Act has earned support from the Florida Fire Chiefs' Association, the Florida Sheriffs Association, and the National Police Association.

Congresswoman Kat Cammack Co-Leads Freeze Disaster Assistance Act to Deliver \$3.5 Billion for Florida Growers
WASHINGTON, D.C. —Congresswoman Kat Cammack (FL-

03), alongside Congressman Scott Franklin (FL-18), introduced the bipartisan Freeze Disaster Assistance Act, which would provide \$3.5 billion in disaster assistance to help Florida's agricultural producers recover after the devastating freeze in January 2026. Cammack and Franklin were joined by a majority of the Florida Congressional Delegation. Senators Rick Scott (R-FL) and Ashley Moody (R-FL) introduced companion legislation in the Senate.

"Food security is national security. Right now, Florida's farmers need us to deliver," said Congresswoman Cammack. "As the only Floridian on the House Agriculture Committee, I've seen up close what this freeze did to our growers. Entire seasons gone. Families who don't know if they can plant again. In March, I led our delegation in urging Secretary Rollins to grant Commissioner Simpson's disaster declaration request, and we got it done. This bill puts Florida in charge of its own recovery instead of waiting on Washington. I'm proud to work with Congressman Franklin to deliver the relief our farmers need."

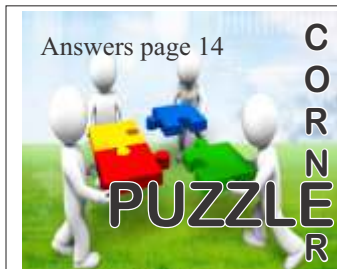
"Florida agriculture operates differently than much of the country, and our disaster response policies need to reflect that reality," said Congressman Scott

Franklin, Vice Chair of the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee. "When a severe freeze hits Florida, many specialty crops and multi-year commodities face years of production losses, replanting costs and long-term financial impacts. Too often, growers are forced into a slow, one size fits all federal process that fails to reflect the realities of Florida agriculture. My legislation is an America First farm policy that ensures our growers stay in business, strengthening our domestic food supply and reducing dependence on foreign producers."

"Florida's farmers and ranchers were hit by a devastating freeze earlier this year that caused more than \$3 billion in agricultural losses across our state," said Jeb S. Smith, President, Florida Farm Bureau Federation. "This legislation is a critical step toward delivering timely, flexible relief to the producers who feed our communities and keep our rural economies strong. We appreciate Congressman Franklin and Congresswoman Cammack's leadership in advancing a block grant approach that will allow Florida to respond quickly and efficiently to the unique needs of our growers. We urge Congress to act swiftly to ensure our farmers have the support they need to recover and continue producing."

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- Across**
1. It's wreaked
 6. British cleaning woman
 10. Recess at St. Peter's
 14. Baker or O'Day
 15. Singular
 16. One way to buy staples (with "in")
 17. Epiphany, e.g.
 20. Start of a promise
 21. It may have a twist
 22. Split to unite?
 23. Chanoyu beverage servers
 25. Proust novel "Remembrance of Things"
 26. Move quickly
 27. Hors d'oeuvre selection, perhaps
 28. Morning condensation
 31. Prepare for company
 34. Overcome difficulties
 35. Troika
 36. Ocean predator
 39. Peak of perfection

40. Contract loopholes
 41. Tries to persuade
 42. Kind of jacket
 43. Some Eutherian mammals
 44. Something many amateurs turn
 45. It may be before one's time?
 46. Panacea
 50. Strong supporters of art?
 53. Mark replacement
 54. Dove chat
 55. Certain noncommissioned officer
 58. Flounder's filter
 59. Show senility
 60. Gallows' loop
 61. Elihu's college
 62. Fancy jug
 63. Units of force
- Down**
1. It may be hard to break
 2. American chameleon
 3. Country estate
 4. Giant who wore four
 5. Coffee's kick
 6. Coagulates
 7. Word with sick or work
 8. Doodlebug's prey
 9. Prepared leftovers
 10. Monastic superior
 11. Orange juice feature, sometimes
 12. Turn on an axis
 13. Supplemented (with "out")
 18. Have status
 19. Choice word?
 24. Public humiliation
 25. Hemingway and Haydn, for two
 27. Frost and Burns, for two
 28. Bummer
 29. Yeats' country
 30. Chinese pans
 31. Guy in a pub
 32. It's fit to be tied
 33. Aurora Greenway's daughter
 34. Waterslide feature
 35. Spasm of pain
 37. Fruit stand locale, often
 38. Encircle
 43. One or twenty, e.g.
 44. Cat or engine sound
 45. Certain ball-goer
 46. More attractive
 47. Respond to, as good advice
 48. No longer caged
 49. Spaces just under a bird's eyes
 50. On pins and needles
 51. La Scala highlight
 52. Place to cool a pie
 53. Boiardo's patron
 56. Response to "When do we want it?"
 57. Demure

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FROM THE DESK OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL OFFICE



Attorney General James Uthmeier Charges Six Defendants in Multi-County Drug Trafficking Enterprise

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Attorney General James Uthmeier announced

that Isaac Lakeith Bruton, Wayne Morgan Bruton Jr., Wayne Morgan Bruton Sr., Omar Dwayne Cooper, Rene Danger Jr., and Cleon Fabian Reid have all been charged in connection with their participation in a drug trafficking ring in Broward County and surrounding areas of South Florida.

“This joint investigation dismantled a criminal enterprise that pumped dangerous drugs into Florida communities,” said Attorney General James Uthmeier. “Through the tireless work of the Office of Statewide Prosecution and our great law enforcement partners, we are taking on more criminal prosecutions than ever before.”

The charges stem from an investigation led by the Broward County Sheriff’s Office’s Organized Crime Unit and the Office of Statewide Prosecution, with assistance from the Federal Bureau of Investigations, and the Miami-Dade Sheriff’s Office.

The investigation revealed that the enterprise obtained and distributed kilogram quantities of cocaine, multiple pounds of marijuana, prescription pills, and other narcotics. The members converted

powdered cocaine into crack cocaine at or near the distribution locations and used vehicles with hidden compartments to transport narcotics. Bruton and Cooper would then launder drug proceeds by purchasing vehicles, real estate, investing in business ventures, restoring classic cars, and buying jewelry.

Isaac Lakeith Bruton and Omar Dwayne Cooper are each charged with:

- Racketeering, F.S. 895.03(3), 1st Degree Felony
- Conspiracy to Commit Racketeering, F.S. 895.03(4), 1st Degree Felony
- Money Laundering, F.S. 896.101 and 777.01, 3rd Degree Felony

Wayne Morgan Bruton Jr., Wayne Morgan Bruton Sr., Rene Danger Jr., and Cleon Fabian Reid are each charged with:

- Racketeering, F.S. 895.03(3), 1st Degree Felony
- Conspiracy to Commit Racketeering, F.S. 895.03(4), 1st Degree Felony

If convicted as charged, Bruton and Cooper face up to 75 years and Bruton Jr., Bruton Sr., Danger Jr. and Reid face up to 60 years in the Florida Department of Corrections.

The case will be prosecuted by Assistant Statewide Prosecutors Jillian Tate and Nicholas Kaleel.

Attorney General James Uthmeier Announces Arrest of 58 Child Predators in Marion County Sting Operation

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier announced the arrest of 58 child predators in a five-day statewide sting operation. The operation

was led by the Marion County Sheriff’s Office, in collaboration with the U.S. Marshals Taskforce, Homeland Security Investigations, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Florida Highway Patrol, Polk County Sheriff’s Office, Columbia County Sheriff’s Office, the Florida Sheriff’s Association, the Office of the State Attorney for the Fifth Judicial Circuit, and the Office of Statewide Prosecution

“With nearly 1,700 predators arrested since I took office, we are just getting started,” said Attorney General James Uthmeier. “58 more child predators are behind bars and away from our kids because Florida has the best sheriffs in the nation who continue to put themselves in harm’s way to keep our kids safe.”

“Once again, the amazing teamwork and determination among all of these agencies involved are sending a clear message to child sex predators that Florida has no tolerance for this and we will continue to do everything we can to protect these children,” said Marion County Sheriff Billy Woods.

“The fact that this many predators are actively trying to prey on the vulnerable children in our community is deeply disturbing,” said Bill Gladson, Fifth Judicial Circuit State Attorney. “My office is proud to partner with Sheriff Woods and Attorney General Uthmeier to continue to conduct these covert operations to apprehend these predators before they cause real harm. Taking these offenders off the streets makes our community safer for our youth. We will relentlessly pursue justice in these cases.”

“FDLE is proud to work with our partners to find and arrest these dangerous individuals who prey on our children. Our mission is to make Florida the safest place for families,” said Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner Mark

Glass. “I commend the unwavering dedication of law enforcement in this great state to work these investigations and continue to prioritize the safety of Florida’s children.”

“This operation reflects exactly the kind of coordinated, multi-agency effort that makes Florida a difficult place for predators to operate,” said Florida Highway Patrol Colonel Gary Howze. “Your State Troopers were proud to support this mission with our aviation assets, working alongside the Attorney General’s Office, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the Marion County Sheriff’s Office, and the Ocala Police Department to protect Florida’s children. Those seeking to victimize children will face the full weight of the law and the full force of every agency committed to protecting them.”

The undercover operation targeted predators who were sexually exploiting children through online chatrooms. The defendants engaged in sexually explicit conversations with the undercover officers despite being informed they were communicating with a child between the ages of seven and 15 years old. The defendants continued to make plans to meet for sexual activity, and were arrested upon arriving at a previously agreed upon meeting spot.

Many of the predators had regular access to children, and included parents and school teachers.

This marks the most successful Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) operation in Marion County, arresting 58 predators as part of an undercover operation that spanned from June 1-6, 2026.

The investigation is ongoing, and law enforcement officials anticipate further arrests in the coming weeks.

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GOVERNOR DESANTIS



Governor Ron DeSantis Signs Five Public Safety Bills to Strengthen Law Enforcement and Hold Criminals Accountable

W I N T E R HAVEN, Fla.— Governor Ron DeSantis signed five

public safety bills aimed at strengthening criminal penalties, combating dangerous drugs and gang activity, enhancing oversight of repeat offenders, and further supporting Florida law enforcement officers.

“Today, I was proud to sign five bills to enhance public safety and support law enforcement,” said Governor DeSantis. “These bills crack down on dangerous drugs, strengthen oversight of repeat offenders, disrupt criminal gangs, support law enforcement, and ensure that violent criminals face serious consequences. Florida is the law and order state, and our commitment to holding criminals accountable and keeping our streets safe forms the foundation for our state’s continued success.”

Since taking office, Governor DeSantis has made support for law enforcement and public safety a top priority.

Florida has prohibited local governments from defunding police departments, strengthened penalties for crimes committed against law enforcement officers, increased officer pay, expanded recruitment incentives, and provided more than 10,000 law enforcement recruitment bonuses. During Governor DeSantis’ administration, Florida has achieved a 50-year low in crime.

“Keeping dangerous predators and drugs away from our kids is common sense, and Florida leads the nation in passing common-sense policies,” said Attorney General James Uthmeier. “Thanks to Governor DeSantis and the Florida Legislature for providing our prosecutors with the tools they need to push our historic crime lows down even further and keep Florida the best state in the nation to raise a family.”

“The bills signed today send a clear message, Governor DeSantis, the Cabinet, and legislators stand firmly in protecting the great state of Florida,” said Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner Mark Glass. “These new laws will strengthen our state, give law enforcement additional tools they need to confront criminals, and ensure the safety of our citizens and the millions of visitors who rely on Florida to remain a secure place to live, work, and travel.”

The legislation signed today includes:

SB 432 - Establishes trafficking penalties for xylazine, commonly known as “tranq,” strengthens penalties for criminals who market dangerous substances to children, and includes “Meg’s Law,” which addresses the misuse of nitrous oxide.

SB 1332 - Strengthens Florida’s Career Offender Registration Act by requiring in-person registration and enhanced reporting requirements for career offenders, improving information sharing among law enforcement agencies, and increasing accountability for noncompliance.

HB 429 - Modernizes Florida’s criminal gang statutes by recognizing online admissions, social media activity, and other contemporary indicators of gang affiliation when establishing gang involvement for criminal prosecutions.

SB 156 (Officer Jason Raynor Act) - Strengthens protections for law enforcement officers, enhances penalties for violent offenses committed against officers, and honors the legacy of Officer Jason Raynor, who was killed in the line of duty while serving the Daytona Beach community.

SB 436 - Increases penalties for repeat violent offenders, expands felony enhancement provisions for battery offenses, and strengthens consequences for offenders who commit violent crimes against law enforcement officers after release from prison. The bills signed today continue Florida’s efforts to support law enforcement, improve public safety, and ensure violent criminals are held accountable for their actions.

Governor Ron DeSantis Announces Medicaid Integrity Initiative to Crack Down on Fraud

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla.— Governor Ron DeSantis announced a comprehensive Medicaid integrity initiative aimed at strengthening oversight, preventing fraud before it occurs, and ensuring taxpayer dollars are spent on care for eligible Floridians.

The initiative includes enhanced provider screening, advanced fraud detection technology, enrollment controls for high-risk provider categories, and a statewide revalidation of all active Medicaid providers.

“Today, we announced major actions to strengthen the integrity of Florida’s Medicaid program and crack down on fraud,” said Governor DeSantis. “In Florida, we work to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent responsibly and that public programs serve the people they are intended to serve.”

Florida has long prioritized fiscal responsibility, reducing spending for two consecutive years, cutting debt, maintaining a AAA credit rating, and exposing wasteful government spending.

“The Medicaid program exists to meet the health care needs of pregnant women, children, seniors, and some of our most vulnerable populations,” said Florida Agency for Health Care Administration Secretary Shevaun Harris. “Every dollar stolen through fraudulent schemes is one less dollar available to meet the needs of those who rely on the program most. That’s why we are working harder than ever to make sure the right people get the care they need, and everyone trying to exploit this program will be stopped.”

The Governor noted that Medicaid fraud has become a growing national concern, citing major fraud investigations in other states and recent federal efforts to strengthen Medicaid program integrity. The Trump Administration and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) have called on states to increase oversight, strengthen provider screening, and remove fraudulent actors from Medicaid programs.

As part of Florida’s Medicaid integrity initiative, the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) will:

Launch a pilot program with SentiLink

AHCA will partner with SentiLink to strengthen provider screening and detect sophisticated fraud schemes, including stolen identities, synthetic identities, and hidden ownership structures before taxpayer dollars are lost.

Implement enrollment moratoriums for high-risk provider categories

AHCA has imposed enrollment moratoriums on certain high-risk provider categories, including durable medical equipment suppliers and adult day care providers, while the agency strengthens screening procedures and oversight.

Conduct a comprehensive statewide provider revalidation effort

All active Florida Medicaid providers will be required to revalidate their credentials and identities. Providers who fail to comply or do not meet program requirements will be removed from the Medicaid program.

Enhance claims monitoring and enforcement efforts

AHCA will deploy additional tools to identify potentially fraudulent billing practices and work with state partners to support investigations, enforcement actions, and victim protection efforts.

Florida’s Medicaid integrity initiative represents one of the most significant anti-fraud efforts undertaken by the state and reflects Florida’s continued commitment to protecting taxpayers while ensuring Medicaid resources are available for those who legitimately need them.

Governor Ron DeSantis Announces Additional Days Off for State Employees as America Celebrates 250 Years of Independence

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.— Governor Ron DeSantis announced that state offices will

be closed on Thursday, July 2, 2026, and Monday, July 6, 2026, in celebration of Independence Day weekend, which this year marks America’s 250th anniversary of its independence.

“America’s 250th anniversary is a historic milestone and an opportunity to reflect on the courage, sacrifice, and enduring principles that established the United States as the freest and most prosperous nation in the world,” said Governor Ron DeSantis. “As Florida leads the nation’s semiquincentennial celebration, I am pleased to provide state employees additional time to celebrate our country’s founding, participate in America 250 events, and spend time with family and friends honoring the blessings of liberty that generations of Americans have fought to preserve.”

State offices will be closed on Thursday, July 2, and Monday, July 6, in addition to the regular state holiday observance of Independence Day on Friday, July 3. These office closures will create a five-day holiday weekend and will benefit nearly 100,000 employees in the State Personnel System.

The additional holiday time reflects Florida’s commitment to recognizing this once-in-a-generation milestone and providing state employees with the opportunity to participate in celebrations taking place across the state and nation.

Throughout 2026, Florida is commemorating America’s 250th anniversary through educational initiatives, community events, historical exhibits, and celebrations that honor the founding of our nation and the principles of freedom, self-government, and individual liberty. As part of these efforts, Florida is encouraging citizens to learn more about the people, events, and ideas that shaped the United States and continue to inspire future generations. Floridians can find more information at America250FL.com, the state’s official hub for the Semiquincentennial celebration.

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			B	I	D	E		C	U	R	E	A	L	L
E	A	S	E	L	S		E	U	R	O		C	O	O
D	R	I	L	L	I	N	S	T	R	U	C	T	O	R
G	I	L	L		D	O	T	E		N	O	O	S	E
Y	A	L	E		E	W	E	R		D	Y	N	E	S

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Quick Puzzle

Continued from page 11

Somasundaram, that conversation can start with something as simple as, "Did you play today's puzzle?"

3. A win before the workday starts

There's something satisfying about solving a challenge before your day fully gets underway.

Completing a puzzle may not clear your inbox or finish your project plan, but it can provide a small sense of accomplishment early in the day. For many players, solving a puzzle becomes part of a daily routine—a quick challenge that helps them ease into work mode before tackling larger tasks.

Learn More

In a workday filled with constant notifications and multitasking, a quick puzzle may be one of the simplest ways to pause, refresh, and reconnect. To try Wend and LinkedIn's other games, visit [linkedin.com/games](https://www.linkedin.com/games).

Managing Landscaping

Managed Landscapes Help Combat Summer's Biggest Challenges

TurfMutt Foundation Highlights How Well-Cared-For Green Spaces Cool, Clean

and Protect Communities

(NAPSI)—Summer brings challenges homeowners and communities often dread: scorching heat, dusty conditions, sudden and heavy storms, and in some regions, increased wildfire risk. According to the TurfMutt Foundation, properly managed landscapes are one of the most effective—and often overlooked—tools for addressing these seasonal concerns.

"People often think of parks, yards and other green space as merely decorative, but they are one of the hardest-working assets in our communities," says Kris Kiser, President and CEO of the TurfMutt Foundation. "They help communities stay cooler, cleaner and more resilient throughout the summer months. That's a pretty impressive return from something some may take for granted."

Here are 4 key benefits that our parks, backyards, schoolyards and other managed green spaces do for us.

Cool the Air

Trees, shrubs, turfgrass and other plants combat the urban heat island effect through shade and evapotranspiration, the process by which plants release water vapor into the air. This natural cooling effect provides relief from summer heat and cools homes, businesses, and neighborhoods.

Capture and Filter Stormwater

Summer storms can deliver large amounts of rain unexpectedly and quickly. Healthy, managed landscapes act as living sponges, slowing rainfall's effects by capturing and filtering water before it enters streams, rivers and groundwater supplies. This also reduces runoff and erosion and helps with localized flooding.

Capture Dust and Particulate Matter

Landscapes help improve air quality by trapping dust, pollen and particulate matter that would otherwise circulate during dry summer conditions.

Reduce Fire Risk

In areas vulnerable to wildfire, properly maintained landscapes can serve as effective fire breaks, and strategic landscape design and ongoing maintenance can create defensible space around homes and businesses. Regular mowing, pruning, irrigation and removal of dead vegetation reduces the fuel for fire and helps reduce its spread.

"Also never forget the important benefit of actively growing trees, shrubs and turfgrass capturing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen," adds Kiser. "Healthy green spaces also support pollinators, wildlife and overall ecosystem health."

The TurfMutt Foundation encourages homeowners, businesses and communities to properly care for and maintain their green



spaces so they can continue delivering these important environmental and quality-of-life benefits throughout the summer and beyond.

For more information about the benefits of managed landscapes and outdoor living, visit [TurfMutt.com](https://www.turfmutt.com).

Send us your events
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