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Johanna Reams

Founder of Small Business Saturday has seen it grow to 84 vendors

By CHARITY TUMBLESON
Reporter

Johanna Reams began the Small Business Saturday with just 15 vendors and the most recent event included 84 vendors.

In her childhood, her grandmother would always sew and used an older-styled sewing machine. But as a child, there was a running joke that every time Reams would walk by the sewing machine the needle would break. Her family would always try to get her to crochet, "But every time I tried to do it, a square would turn into a



PHOTO BY LYNDA KINSEY

Johanna Reams offers a cookie to a youngster at Small Business Saturday in December.

Turn to Page 5

Happy New Year!

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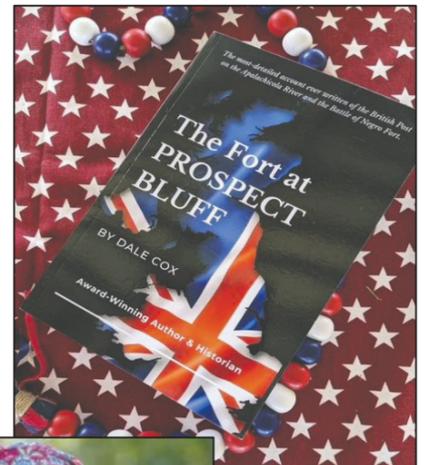
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EVELYN CELINA JOE JASON

WAKULLA COUNTY SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS OFFICE

CORRECTION: In The Wakulla Sun's Christmas Section on Dec. 22, a Christmas Greeting ad for the Wakulla County Supervisor of Elections Office had question marks instead of names of two office members. After the correct names were added the link failed to update the file and the ad ran with the question marks. We regret the error.

Thinking about adopting a pet? Some things to consider



By JOANN SANDERS

“He is your friend, your partner, your defender, your dog. You are his life, his love, his leader. He will be yours, faithful and true, to the last beat of his heart. You owe it to him to be worthy of such devotion.” - Author Unknown

There are many good reasons for owning a pet, not the least of which is the unconditional love that a faithful dog or cat can bring you.

However, getting a pet on a whim is never a good idea. Companion animals are domesticated creatures that depend on humans to provide for all of their needs, including food, water, shelter, vet care, and companionship. As such, making the commitment to care for a creature that can live 20 years or more is a serious legal and moral responsibility that should never be taken lightly.

Did you know that acquiring a new pet impetuously, without careful consideration of the possible consequences, is the leading cause for neglect and abandonment of companion animals?

A substantial proportion of the intakes at Wakulla Animal Services are owner-guardian surrenders, and while there are sometimes good reasons for having to give up a pet, the majority of surrenders are because an owner failed to do their homework before purchasing or adopting.

Before you make the decision to add a pet to your family, there are several things you should consider:

- **Have you done the required research in choosing a pet that fits your particular lifestyle?** If you're an active person, a lively and energetic pet will make the most sense for you. On the other hand, if you're a more laid-back person, a calmer breed with a relaxed nature will be a better fit.

- **Are you committed to meeting all the needs of a living, breathing, sentient be-**

ing for its entire lifetime? A lifetime is equal to 10-15 years in most cases, but it can be as many as 20-25 years for some pets.

- **Because the lifespan of an animal is shorter than that of a human, most pet owners will outlive their pets, but have you considered what will happen to your fur baby should you die first?**

Millions of companion animals end up in shelters every year because their caretaker died without having made any plans for them. Do you have someone that you can designate as a trusted caregiver to provide for your pet's future without you?

- **Have you considered the financial costs of owning a pet?**

According to the website “The Spruce Pets” estimates range from \$1,500 to \$9,000 a year to own a dog, with some estimates being even higher. The total cost will depend on the choices you make, your dog's age and breed, the area in which you live, your lifestyle, and your dog's individual needs. Sadly, many people don't take the time to budget for a dog or cat before getting one, and this can give rise to trouble in the future. Just a few of the items you'll need to purchase, many of them on a recurring basis for the life of your pet, are: a collar, leash, ID tag, bed, crate and/or pet carrier, food, toys, and treats. In addition, you should also consider the cost of routine vet care, including yearly vaccines, and flea, tick, and heartworm prevention. The cost of a medical crisis or illness, plus grooming and pet sitting/boarding services should be taken into consideration, as well.

The adorable puppies and kittens that we all fall in love with so easily will grow up very quickly. They will need proper training while they're still young, and accidents are bound to happen! Do you have time to dedicate to this crucial training period? What will you do when you find poop or vomit on the carpet, or discover that a treasured belonging has been chewed up, scratched, or destroyed?

It's important to be able to see life from your puppy's perspective, remembering that he wants nothing more than to please you but is still just a baby. Even adult dogs and cats require an adjustment period that usually lasts

about three months, on average. Are you able to extend love and patience to your new family member as they go through the process of learning what is expected of them?

Are all family members/roommates in complete agreement when it comes to bringing home a new pet? Is anyone in the household allergic to pets?

Although we can never know for sure what life has in store for us, the average person will go through at least one (if not all) of these events in the course of a lifetime...a marriage, a new baby, a divorce, a move, a job that requires long hours or travel, and the occasional disaster or emergency that shows up when we least expect it.

Will you still have room in your life for a beloved pet if any of these changes take place?

Pets suffer from separation just as humans do, and they should never be discarded like old clothing when they don't “fit” anymore.

Why do pets end up in shelters? It's because of us, not them. Therefore, please be thoughtful when you're considering bringing home a pet, and do your homework ahead of time. Make sure that adopting a furry companion is something you're willing to commit to for the life of the animal, come what may. They deserve nothing less from the people who have taken them in and promised to love them forever.

If you've come to the conclusion that you're not ready to take on such a commitment but you would still like to have a pet, then why not consider fostering for the animal shelter?

When you foster, you are temporarily providing a safe, stable, and loving environment for an otherwise homeless dog or cat. It is a beautiful act of love and kindness, plus it's fun and free!

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If you'd like to submit an application to foster, please call the shelter at 850-926-0902.

Shelter hours are Tuesday-Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. As always, on behalf of all the homeless dogs and cats of Wakulla County, we thank you for your continued love and support!

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Important dates over 50



By **BRIAN ENGLISH**

and “half-birthdays” are critical to understand because they have implications regarding your retirement income.

Age 50

At age 50, workers in certain qualified retirement plans are able to begin making annual catch-up contributions in addition to their normal contributions. Those who participate in 401(k), 403(b), and 457 plans can contribute an additional \$6,500 per year in 2022. Those who participate in Simple Individual Retirement Account (IRA) or Simple 401(k) plans can make a catch-up contribu-

tion of up to \$3,000 in 2022. And those who participate in traditional or Roth IRAs can set aside an additional \$1,000 a year.^{1,2}

Age 59½

At age 59½, workers are able to start making withdrawals from qualified retirement plans without incurring a 10% federal income-tax penalty. This applies to workers who have contributed to IRAs and employer-sponsored plans, such as 401(k) and 403(b) plans (457 plans are never subject to the 10% penalty). Keep in mind that distributions from traditional IRAs, 401(k) plans, and other employer-sponsored retirement plans are taxed as ordinary income.

Age 62

At age 62 workers are first able to draw Social Security retirement benefits. However, if a person continues to work, those benefits will be reduced. The Social Security Administration will deduct \$1 in benefits for each

\$2 an individual earns above an annual limit. In 2022, the income limit is \$19,560.3

Age 65

At age 65, individuals can qualify for Medicare. The Social Security Administration recommends applying three months before reaching age 65. It’s important to note that if you are already receiving Social Security benefits, you will automatically be enrolled in Medicare Part A (hospitalization) and Part B (medical insurance) without an additional application.⁴

Age 65 to 67

Between ages 65 and 67, individuals become eligible to receive 100% of their Social Security benefit. The age varies, depending on birth year. Individuals born in 1955, for example, become eligible to receive 100% of their benefits when they reach age 66 years and 2 months. Those born in 1960 or later need to reach age 67 before they’ll become

eligible to receive full benefits.⁵

Age 72

In most circumstances, once you reach age 72, you must begin taking required minimum distributions from a traditional Individual Retirement Account and other defined contribution plans. You may continue to contribute to a traditional IRA past age 70½ as long as you meet the earned-income requirement.

Understanding key birthdays may help you better prepare for certain retirement income and benefits.

But perhaps more importantly, knowing key birthdays can help you avoid penalties that may be imposed if you miss the date.

1. If you reach the age of 50 before the end of the calendar year.

- 2. IRS.gov, 2022
- 3. SSA.gov, 2022
- 4. SSA.gov, 2022.

Individuals can decline Part B coverage because it requires an additional premium payment.

- 5. SSA.gov, 2022

Brian can be reached at (850) 926-7487.

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Johanna Reams

From Front Page

circle and I would say 'I'll never use this why are y'all trying to teach me this?'

Now Reams makes a living from crocheting and sells her products at her business Auntie Jyo's This and That.

In 1999, Reams was diagnosed with Systemic Lupus Erythematosus, the most common form of lupus, an inflammatory disease caused when the immune system attacks its own tissues.

"That's the worst out of the four. So SLE lupus is the genetic form of lupus. So it affects your central nervous system. Some days I feel like I'm 89 years old," Reams says.

One morning in 2014, Reams woke up and couldn't open her hands. She made a doctor's appointment and the doctor told her, "if I don't get my hands moving I'll lose them, they'll cripple... When I get stressed out, or mad I start to deep clean," Reams says. After the doctor's visit, she started to deep clean the entire house. After a few hours of cleaning, Reams made her way to the closet where her deceased grandmother's tote was that she had given to Reams before she passed.

"My grandmother passed in 2011, she gave me this tote, and I had never opened it, I knew I would cry so I never opened it," she says. As fate would have it, Reams knocked the tote from the top shelf of the closet and it fell on her head, giving Reams a concussion.

After a visit to the hospital to get checked out, Reams finally decided she wanted to

know what was inside the bag. She found a set of hat boxes. "My first thought was, 'oh God she left me her church hats, what am I going to do with those?'" she says. She put the hats to the side and opened the next box on the inside of the tote, finding a 1980s sewing machine with a note that said, "One day you will need these" with a smiley face and a bunch of hahas on the note," Reams recalled.

This reminded Reams of the joke in her family between her and that sewing machine. Continuing on looking more into the hat box at the bottom she found balls of yarn and some antique bamboo crochet hooks.

"All I could do was cry and laugh and cry and laugh because my entire life they had tried to get me to crochet," she says. "So this is how Auntie Jyo's got started."

In 2015 is when she started the business because of bags and bags of crocheted items she had made. When her husband was opening the closet and the bags started falling out, he suggested she start selling her work.

Reams wasn't sure

anybody would want to buy crocheted products, so she started small and started selling them on Facebook marketplace, "and before you know it everything I put up for sale all sold, and it only took two weeks to get rid of nine totes," she says.

This prompted Reams to start going to Small Business Saturdays in Perry to sell. After a hot day at one event that didn't go so well, the next morning Reams' husband and daughter were cooking breakfast for her and her husband asked her, Why do you drive all the way to Perry to sell your products – why don't you start your own here in the county?

So in August, Reams took this suggestion and went up to the county parks and rec department to talk about using the park and started her journey.

"I came in strong I had a plan. So September was my first Small Business Saturday. Five people didn't show up. We had 15 vendors, but people were still coming up."

Now the Small Business Saturdays have grown. Reams is making plans to further the



Johanna Reams with her grandson Gauge at the December Small Business Saturday.

thing to do too."

With all that, Reams does she makes no profit from her booth at the Small Businesses Saturdays – the money she makes goes back into the community, and for adding non-perishable food to the local Blessing Boxes around the county.

Reams also takes her earnings and creates octopals that go to Neonatal Intensive Care Units units, hats and shawls to cancer patients, and makes prayer shawls for churches, as well as helping seven elderly couples in the community every month in her free time.

Above all, she says family is most important – and that's where she spends most of her time when she's not giving back to the community.

Reams reminds everyone of how important small businesses are and welcomes anyone who may be considering starting one to reach out to her.

"I could talk about small business all day," she says. "But if there's anyone out there who may be thinking about it, my door's always open."

Small Business Saturdays and is thinking of dressing in costume for each one, for the kids.

"I want it family-oriented, where the parents can come shop, but the kids have some-

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Holidays in real life



By GREG GAST

When you hear the word holiday, what comes to mind? If you're like most folks, shopping, parties, sales, parades, football and more shopping.

The truth is that many holidays are becoming so commercialized that our proud traditions are in danger of becoming trivialized.

Traditions represent a critical piece of our culture. They help form the structures and foundation of our families and our society. Between tasks, celebrations, and family obligations the holiday season can be a trying time for anyone.

Whether you feel holiday blues or are coping with feelings that aren't merry and bright, taking care of your mental health during the holidays is important.

Here are some easy tips that will hopefully help you find some peace during this stressful holiday season and into the New Year.

1. Set aside some time for yourself: Quality alone time can be a great way to distress, decompress, and assess where you are and what you feel. Some alone time can do you plenty of good.

2. Keep a regular sleep and exercise schedule: Rest allows you to recharge and helps your body function optimally. Adding exercise is a great way to manage your mental health. It releases dopamine and makes you feel good.

3. Set Boundaries: Too often we feel that our relationships need to be perfect. It can be hard to speak up,

especially in front of friends and family. However, issues do occur even with the ones we love. Setting boundaries are important so long as you do so with care and respect for all involved.

4. Accept your feelings: It's okay not to feel okay. When you picture the holiday season everyone seems very happy. It's almost a requirement. Take some time to accept how you feel and work through your emotions as they are.

5. Try Relaxation techniques: When you feel overwhelmed it's a good idea to relax and distress as much

as possible. Deep breathing, yoga, walks whatever works. Taking time to relax always helps during stressful times.

6. Keep expectations manageable: It will keep you balanced and saves you from disappointments. Take the time to assess how things are going, and how they could go, and prepare for each outcome.

7. Spend time with supportive people: Surround yourself with people who lift you, support you, and care about you. You don't have to tolerate people that hurt you or don't appreciate your worth. This holiday

season make sure you're spending time with people who see you and accept you for who you are.

Remember, Christmas and the holidays are the season of giving. It is a time when people should be more kind and open-hearted.

Let me know what you think...

Send your questions to Real Life Counseling, 3295 Crawfordville Hwy., suite #4, Crawfordville FL 32327 in care of Gregory E. Gast, MS, LMHC, NCC. Your name will be changed and the answer to your question will appear in an upcoming issue of The Wakulla Sun.

Best Wishes at the New Year

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FROM THE CLERK OF COURTS

Join the Florida Attorney General's 100% Club



By GREG JAMES

Hello from the Clerk's Office! I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! The Florida Court Clerks & Comptrollers (FCCC) Association President, Carolyn Timmann (Martin County Clerk) announced one of her presidential priorities is to have all Clerk's Offices across the state participate in the Attorney General's 100 Percent Club. The 100 Percent Club is a training and awareness campaign that is committed to ending human trafficking in Florida. Florida ranks 3rd in the U.S. in human trafficking cases reported. Knowing the signs of human trafficking will help raise awareness and potentially save a life.

Many of us have started or are thinking about starting a "New Year's Resolution". Each of us have thoughts of how we want to improve or we want this next year to be better or different. I hope you succeed in yours! Sadly, for some of our most vulnerable citizens, the only resolution they are thinking of is that they want to be in control of their own life.

Statewide, the FCCC's mission is that we are "United Statewide to Pro-

tect the Public Trust". We are putting those words into action by actively addressing human trafficking issues through several initiatives. As leaders on the frontline within our community, Clerks and their employees have a unique opportunity to help end human trafficking in Florida. By the end of January, every employee at the Wakulla County Clerk's Office will be trained to recognize the signs of human trafficking.

I have already asked the Board of County Commissioners to participate in this program because county employees interact with our citizens every day in so many ways. Many of the County's departments have already started the process of participating in the 100 Percent Club. As community and business leaders, you also have a unique opportunity to learn how to spot the signs of human trafficking and have an impact on this state-wide issue, even if it's just for one person. There are several different forms of human trafficking and this training will inform you of them and help you spot the physical and verbal signs that someone might be in danger.

Participating in this program is easy and I have outlined the steps to take below. You do not need to draft any policies to participate and participating won't cost you or your business anything more than a little training time. You only need to require that each employee take a one-hour online training. Here's

the process:

1. Complete the application to participate in the program. The application can be found at <https://www.youcanstopht.com/training.html> and submit it to the Attorney General's office at this email address: citizenservices@myfloridalegal.com.

2. After the application is completed, you will receive an email from the Deputy Director of Special Projects & Initiatives with the Florida Office of Attorney General with a link to the online training.

3. Have all staff complete the training. Each employee will have the opportunity at the end of the online training to print a training certificate.

4. Verify with the AG's office that all required staff have completed the training and request a membership certificate for your office.

5. Once your application has been approved and training has been verified, you will receive a membership certificate from the Florida AG's Office for display at your business and training material that can be distributed to all staff and the public.

In advance, thank you for considering your participation in this important program and, together, we can help stop human trafficking in Florida.

Greg James is Wakulla County Clerk of Court and Comptroller.



Tired of old tires??

Bring them to the KWCB Tire Amnesty Day and lets keep them out of our forest and waterways!!

We will be accepting maximum 8 tires per resident with proof of residency. Tires from commercial shops will not be accepted. Tires must be off of the rim. Photo ID must be presented.

Saturday, January 14, 9 am – 1 pm

318 Shadeville Rd., Crawfordville, FL 32327

MARPAN



Call 850-745-7111 or email to keepwakullabeautiful@gmail.com for more information

18th Annual Free Trees!

CRAWFORDVILLE ARBOR DAY

Saturday, January 21st

10:00 am - 1:00 pm

84 Cedar Avenue
Wakulla County Extension Office
Rain or Shine

Hundreds of young trees (in pots) will be given away!

Parsley Haw, Arrowwood Viburnum, Hop Tree, Yellow Poplar, Red Maple, Sand Live Oak, Overcup Oak, Dahoon Holly, Chinquapin, & more.

**Drive-Thru Giveaway
2 Trees per Vehicle**

From Courthouse (Arran Rd.), drive north on Ochlockonee St., pass Hudson Park on right, turn left onto Cedar Ave., follow signs, turn right onto circle drive at Extension Office.

Wakulla County Garden Club, Florida Forest Service, Sarracenia Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, UF/IFAS Extension & Master Gardeners, & National Wildlife Federation with Florida Wildlife Federation, Just Fruits & Exotics, The Wakulla News & The Wakulla Sun.

SOPCHOPPY OPRY

Season Tickets \$120⁰⁰ www.sopchoppyopry.com 850-962-3711
SAVE \$60

2023 Season Schedule

In historic Sopchoppy High School Auditorium

featuring South Bound Band

January 28 – South Bound & Friends

August 26 – Highway 59

February 25 – Anna Wescoat & The All Girls Band

September 30 – All Gospel w/ South Bound & Guests

March 25 – Wayne Martin & Country Gold

October 28 – Jay & Tammy Show

April 29 – Doug Jernigan – Fiddle & Steel Show

*November 18 – Walkers' Crossing

*December 09 – Purvis Brothers' & Encore II

May 27 – Purvis Brothers' & Encore II

+23rdrd Anniversary Show
*Please note that the November & December shows are on Saturdays, November 18 & December 09, respectively. January - October shows will be on the last Saturday night of the month. Individual show tickets are \$15 each. Group rates are available.

June 24 – Tony Anderson & Easy Company

July 29 – Todd Allen Show+

Thanks for your support of good family entertainment, the restoration of historic Sopchoppy High School & classic country, bluegrass & Gospel music! You can always find out what coming up at the Opry at www.sopchoppyopry.com

FROM THE PROPERTY APPRAISER'S OFFICE

Want to save \$550?

By **ED BRIMNER**

The Property Appraiser's Office wishes you a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

It's time! If you purchased a home in 2022, you need to file for Homestead no later than March 1st of 2023. If you are eligible for Florida's Homestead Exemption and haven't filed, you are missing some special bene-

fits and up to \$550 in tax savings. Homestead property is protected from creditor claims and gets significant property tax discounts. This article will address your tax benefits.

Homesteaded property tax exemptions are not automatic. Homestead applications for any homestead in Wakulla County must be filed with this office and the owner must prove that the homestead is the owner's permanent residence. In Wakulla County, this is a onetime requirement. The Wakulla Board of County Commissioners has approved this of-

office to automatically renew homestead exemptions once a person has filed and been approved.

Homestead property is exempt from taxes on the first \$25,000 of the appraised value of the homestead and gets up to an additional \$25,000 exemption of county taxes of appraised value between \$50,000 and \$75,000. At the current tax rates in Wakulla County, this equals a yearly tax savings of \$550 on a home valued at or above \$75,000.

Possibly more important than this initial tax savings is the "Save Our Homes" cap.

The "Save Our Homes" cap limits the annual increase in assessed value to 3% or the cost of living, whichever is less. The market value of a homesteaded home could increase in value much more than 3% but the assessed value increase is limited. This benefit sometimes creates huge annual savings in the future.

Our website has the following warning, in bold red letters, "Do not rely on current taxes as an estimate of future taxes following a change in ownership. A significant change in taxable value may occur af-

ter a transfer due to a loss of exemptions, reset of the Save Our Homes or 10% Cap, and/or market conditions. Please use our Tax Estimator to estimate taxes under new ownership."

We have many visits from new homeowners who are surprised (and angry) to learn their taxes are much higher than the previous owners. The differences are sometimes thousands of dollars a year. That is a shock to new home owners but is a huge benefit to long-term homeowners in Florida – a benefit you can have just by dropping by our office or visiting our website and fil-

ing for a homestead exemption.

My office is here to serve you as we work for Honest and Impartial Assessments!

If we can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us at (850) 926-0500 or stop by to meet with a member of our staff.

You can also visit our updated and continuously improving website for information associated with your property in Wakulla County at mywakulapa.com.

Ed Brimner is Wakulla County Property Appraiser.

On the Horizon

The monthly calendar of events

Saturday, December 31

- **New Year's Eve.**
- New Year Eve celebration at the Lodge at Wakulla Springs from 5:30pm to midnight. There will be live music from Hot Tamale and Garnet & Soul. Price is \$70 per person plus tax & gratuities, with option for small bites for \$25 per person. Call 855-632-4559 to RSVP.

Sunday, January 1**• HAPPY NEW YEAR!****Monday, January 2**

- Intro to Tai Chi held at the Community Center from 9 to 10 a.m., every Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday. All ability levels are welcome; please wear comfortable clothing. For questions call Rich or Terri Bushman at 850-228-9214.
- The Wakulla Respite Program will be available for anyone with memory impairment at no cost from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Lake Ellen Baptist Church every Monday.
- Rise and Shine with Lacey at 6 a.m. Hatha yoga with Zoe at 9 a.m. and at 6 p.m., every Monday. Packages available for \$12 at New Posh on 3079 Crawfordville Hwy. Please RSVP email at newposh3079@gmail.com or text/call at (850) 528-5838.

Tuesday, January 3

- Sopchoppy Community Dinner is held every week on Tuesday at the Towles House at 6:30 p.m.
- Yin Yoga with Nellie at 10:30 a.m. and Flow Yoga at 6 p.m., every Tuesday.
- County Commission meets in the commission boardroom at 5 p.m.

Wednesday, January 4

- A Line Dance class will be held at 1 p.m. at the Wakulla Senior Center every Wednesday.

Thursday, January 5

- The VFW Auxiliary Bingo Night will be held at 7 p.m. at 475 Arran Road in Crawfordville, every Thursday. There will be concessions and raffles.
- The Rotary Club of Wakulla County will have their weekly meeting at the TCC Wakulla Center at 8:30 a.m., every Thursday.
- Hatha Yoga with Zoe at 9 a.m. and Yin Yoga with Nellie at 6 p.m., every Thursday.

Friday, January 6

- Alcoholics Anonymous meets at noon and 8 p.m. every Friday at the American Legion, 54 Ochlockonees St.

Saturday, January 7

- Panacea Farmers Market held in Downtown Panacea next to the Panacea fire department from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Local vendors will be selling homemade and homegrown items and food vendors will be there.

Monday, January 9

- The Wakulla County Planning Commission will have a meeting in the commission chambers at 6 p.m.
- The Sopchoppy City Commission meeting will be held at Sopchoppy City Hall at 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, January 10

- The Wakulla County Parks Advisory Committee will hold a public meeting at 4 p.m. at the community center.

Wednesday, January 11

- The Wakulla County Code Enforcement board meeting will be held in the Commission Chambers at 5:30 p.m.
- The Wakulla County Garden Club will be meeting at the Wakulla County public library hosting presentations and workshops

about gardening in Wakulla soil at 12 p.m.

Thursday, January 12

- The Sopchoppy Depot Committee meeting will be held at the Depot, 34 Railroad Avenue at 4:30 p.m.
- The St. Marks City Commission meeting will be held at St. Marks City Hall at 6 p.m.

Saturday, January 14

- Tire Amnesty Day, sponsored by Keep Wakulla County Beautiful, will be held at the community center, 318 Shadeville Road, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tires must be off the rim and photo ID must be presented.
- The Wakulla Caregiver Support Group will meet at the Wakulla County Public Library at 10 a.m.
- **No Sopchoppy Community Market this month or February.**

Monday, January 16

- MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BIRTHDAY HOLIDAY – Schools, banks and government offices will be closed.
- MLK BIRTHDAY IN THE PARK, an annual observation of Martin Luther King Day by the Wakulla Christian Coalition, begins at 9 a.m. After breakfast, a memorial service is held at the King memorial on the Courthouse grounds.
- The American Legion Post 114 will be meeting at the Wakulla County Public Library at 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, January 17

- County commission meets in the commission boardroom at 5 p.m.

Thursday, January 19

- The Wakulla County Cancer Support Group will meet in the Education Center of the Crawfordville United Methodist Church at 7 p.m. This group meeting is for men and women, regardless of the type of

cancer. Spouses, caregivers, and friends are welcome. For more information, call 850-926-6050.

Saturday, January 21

- Arbor Day Celebration from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Extension Office. Rain or shine. Sponsored by the Iris Garden Club of Wakulla.
- Small Business Saturday at Azalea Park from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Wakulla County Horseman's Association show will be held at 1757 Lawhon Mill Road. All shows start at 11 a.m. and the Jackpot starts at 12 noon. Entry Fees are \$25 for Jackpot; exhibitions are \$3; club classes are \$6 for members and \$8 for nonmembers. Membership is \$25 for single and \$40 for family.

Monday, January 23

- The Sopchoppy Lions Club meets the 4th Monday of each month at the Historic Sopchoppy High School at 6:30 p.m.

Friday, January 27

- The Wakulla County Veterans Services Office will host a veterans town hall meeting at the Wakulla County Community Center from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Saturday, January 28

- Sopchoppy Opry at the Historic Sopchoppy High School Auditorium featuring South Bound Band and Friends starting at 7 p.m. Individual show tickets are \$15 each.

Monday, January 30

- The Wakulla County Legislative Delegation will hold a public hearing in the Commission Chambers at 4 p.m.

A morbid fascination: red-tailed flesh fly



By **ERIK LOVESTRAND**

Fair warning if you tend to be squeamish around dead, rotting things (bet I just triggered some folks). The subject matter for this month's article is not for those with a hair trigger gag reflex.

However, if you are one who just cannot resist digging a little deeper into the mysterious lives of nature's (let's just call them "biodegraders"), because they are so FASCINATING, then read on.

This topic came to me one day while sitting in my office. Literally, it showed up in my office. One of my colleagues was standing in the doorway talking to me when she looked up at the ceiling. There were several bugs inside the light fixtures that turned out to be large flies. It was plain to see there was no way into the fixture from below so I figured they had been attracted to the light

from the attic space above. Of course, this was all it took to spark my innate (some would say inane) curiosity and get me heading for the attic ladder to check it out.

Soon after turning on the attic light, a large fly headed right to it. I got lucky and knocked it down with the first swipe of my hat, which stunned it long enough for me to catch it and get it in a jar.

I had seen flies that looked like this before and once back at my desk, I immediately Googled "carrion flies" on my computer.

Sure enough, images of several similar-looking flies popped up. Upon closer examination of the captive, I noticed that it had a bright red tip on its abdominal segment.

With this important detail noted, the search was over. A positive identification of the red-tailed flesh fly (*Sarcophaga haemorrhoidalis*) immediately precipitated another trip to the attic in search of something dead. Hence, the gruesome photo of the rather large rat.

Flesh flies are truly amazing creatures. They are usually one of the first to arrive when something dies.



RAT PHOTO BY ERIK LOVESTRAND/FLY BY DONALD HALL, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

The red-tailed flesh fly (photo inset) is one of nature's important decomposers.

Eggs hatch prior to birth so females actually deposit first instar larvae (a.k.a. maggots) on a corpse. Larvae go through three instar stages in a very short time (5-6 days) before pupating.

Due to their relatively large size and rapid development, they quickly turn a body into a flattened, empty shell of skin and fur.

The pupal stage typically takes a little over two weeks before an adult fly emerges to begin the cycle again. Due to the predictable

timeframes between various developmental stages, this is a species that is useful in forensic entomology to closely approximate a time of death.

Even though these flies fulfill an important role as a decomposer in nature, they do have some disturbing attributes that I thought fitting to include here (for scientific accuracy, of course).

This fly is known to larviposit near the ears, nose or rectum of immobile animals and humans. The maggots

then crawl into places to feed that will make the victim very uncomfortable, to say the least.

Another means of infestation is through the consumption of contaminated food. They are also capable of infesting open wounds, hence the name "flesh fly."

Most of the human-related cases have taken place in unsanitary or over-crowded conditions. However, cases have occurred in hospitals and nursing homes as well.

Now that I am familiar with this species' habits, I should probably get busy fixing that damaged soffit screen where the rat likely gained entry to the attic.

Until then, I must never; I mean NEVV-ERRR, fall asleep on the job in that building.

Erik Lovestrand is a UF/IFAS regional Sea Grant agent in Wakulla, Franklin and Gulf counties.

Protect yourself from identity theft



By **JARED MILLER**
Wakulla Sheriff

From the Desk of Sheriff Miller,

Now that the holidays are all behind us, and everyone is mostly back into a normal routine, I wanted to take some time to discuss identity theft. This month I'd like to talk about ways you can help protect yourself and your personal information. Tax season is just around the corner for us, and unfortunately this is also a peak time for identity theft and fraud in general.

As with any crime you can not completely help becoming a victim, but there are steps you

can take to help protect yourself during this season and throughout the year.

In a broad sense, it's important for everyone to keep personal information such as Social Security and credit card numbers safe. Please remember that your bank, credit card company, or government agencies will never call you out of the blue and request this information from you over the phone (or via email if that be the case). These agencies if doing legitimate business will already have your personal information and would not require you to provide it to them.

A common scam now is for a scammer to contact you via phone and state they are from a bank or government agency. They say there is some sort of problem with your account but before they can help you fix it, they'll need you to verify your personal information.

That information could be anything from your bank account, credit card information, or your Social Security number depending on the scam.

If you receive these calls do not give out this information. If you believe you are being scammed via one of these phone calls, hang up. If you have a question for the agency, or are doing legitimate business with them, they all will have phone numbers or emails posted on their website where they can be contacted.

Additionally, always report suspicious or fraudulent activity to the Wakulla County Sheriff's Office by Calling 850-745-7100.

With specific regard to tax season and the IRS, the same rules apply. The IRS will never contact you either by email or phone and request that you provide them with your Social Security number.

If you happen to owe

taxes or fees to the IRS, this will be done through the Electronic Federal Tax Payment system. They will never contact you directly and require you to make a payment over the phone or email.

This and so much more information regarding identity theft, and securely filling your taxes can be found at the IRS website (www.IRS.Gov) and I encourage you to go there if you have any questions.

A good rule of thumb during this time of year and any time really when it comes to fraud is, if it sounds suspicious or too good to be true, it probably is.

If you receive a phone call or email requesting credit card or personal information, and the caller/writer is either making threats (arrest, foreclosure, etc) or making promises which seem to good to be true, please end that communication to protect yourself.

On a day-to-day basis, make sure you are careful about when and who you provide personal information too. Limit the number of websites and phone apps you provide credit card and personally identifying information to, as even if they are legitimate, they always run the risks of being hacked.

Most importantly, safeguard your Social Security number. Though aggravating, stolen credit card information can be dealt with cancelled and if need be reimbursed. However, once your Social Security information becomes compromised, there is no way to get that information back.

It is a mistake that, as many know, can continue to haunt you for many years to come.

Many forms and applications still have places to input this information, but often it is no longer required. Only give out your So-

cial Security number to agencies/businesses with which you wish or need to do business, and which the use of your Social Security number is explicitly required to do business.

Again, this is to limit the number of people who have access to, or number of places your personal information is located to help avoid theft.

Lastly if you currently carry your Social Security card in your purse or wallet, I advise you to take it out and store it some place safe in your home. There simply is no need to carry it on a day-to-day basis and doing so only creates an opportunity for it to be stolen or lost.

If you believe you have been the victim of identity theft, any sort of fraud, or know of suspicious or criminal activity, as always, I ask you to call WCSO at 850-745-7100 and speak with one of my deputies or detectives.

HELP SUPPORT COMMUNITY JOURNALISM

You can support The Wakulla Sun with a tax-deductible donation to help us cover the stories that matter to you.

By donating, you help us keep citizens informed, hold officials accountable and cover the most important topics in our community.

Your contributions will equip our newsroom to better serve you and all our readers. That means:

- More reporters on the street
- More local news about our community
- More local content on the environment and local businesses

A little bit goes a long way. With your help, we can keep the presses running through hard times.

We would very much appreciate your contribution.

William Snowden
Editor & Publisher of The Wakulla Sun and Wakulla Sun Monthly

Are donations tax deductible?

Yes, the Florida Press Foundation is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization with its principal place of business in Florida.

The Florida Press Foundation is registered to solicit charitable contributions in Florida. Financial and other information about the Florida Press Foundation's purpose, programs and activities can be obtained by visiting <https://floridapressfoundation.org> or by writing to Florida Press Foundation at 336 East College Avenue, Suite 304, Tallahassee FL 32301.

We accept donations by card or check. If by check, payment must be made to the Florida Press Foundation and write in the check memo line that you want the donation to go to The Wakulla Sun.

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Lisa Craze, CFC
Wakulla County Tax Collector

ENACTED: 2006.

More than \$1 million has been raised through the sale of Florida Realtors "Support Homeownership for All" specialty license plates, which help fund affordable housing programs across Florida. The goal is to provide housing assistance to teachers, nurses and others unable to afford a home. Ninety percent of the proceeds from the sale of the "Support Homeownership for All" license plate goes to support affordable housing programs. Just 10 percent of the funds go toward marketing the plate.



Enacted: 07/01/2014.

The annual use fees are distributed to the Florida Sheriffs Association to develop and provide important training for members of local sheriff's offices as well as deputies across the state.

Accountability. Since 1893, the Florida Sheriffs Association has been the voice of Florida's sheriffs, 67 men and women united in the service of protecting Florida's citizens and visitors.



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American Legion Post 114
Crawfordville, Fl

Meeting at the
Wakulla County
Public Library

3rd Monday of
the month

6:30pm
Main Meeting Room
(South end of library)

Come a few minutes early if interested in joining or transferring in and speak with an officer. You'll need to provide your 9-digit member ID (if transferring) and should also be prepared to show a copy of your DD214 (or similar) to verify your eligibility. You did NOT have to serve in a combat zone to become a member of the American Legion and thanks to the LEGION Act (Let Everyone Get Involved In Opportunities for National Service Act. Congress expanded the current eligibility period to cover Dec. 7, 1941, to the present. and includes the current war campaigns.

Legion.org

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Al Hartman, aka The Old Pro: 'Tis the season



By AL HARTMAN

I want to wish all my neighbors in Wakulla a very Merry Christmas and I hope your New Years is super.

I guess old age is catching up to me. I had a CT and the results were all but super, but I'm still kicking and hope to write to you for years to come, God willing! I've had a wonderful 42 years with you folks.

I got a message from a Federal Wildlife agency, and it was a surprise. I have been writing about invasive species in Florida and someone must

have questioned them about the feral cats. They told me: "Mr. Hartman, we enjoyed your article you wrote for the Wakulla newspaper. But you had the number of feral cats wrong. The number is not in the millions, it is 2.4 billion! And research has shown that feral cats and house cats are responsible for the death of 25% of the wild bird population in the United States yearly."

Holy cow. Can you imagine that? 25%! I will keep you updated on invasive species in Florida.

Now if we can stop our litter problems that would be wonderful.

And another shocker to me is our waste systems only recycle 6% of all the plastic we give them. The rest goes to the

landfill! Hunting season is in full swing and the ducks and deer seem to be in good numbers. Here is a picture of a deer taken by Justin Lane just outside of Crawfordville on Oct. 24 with a bow.



Justin Lane with buck he took on Oct. 24 with a bow.

Wishing you a very Happy & Healthy New Year!

SAVE THE DATE
Thursday, February 23

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