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"The little paper"

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# Operation Santa

The group helps children and families during the Christmas season

By **LINDA ANN McDONALD**  
Correspondent

The emotions of the holiday season can vary from person to person, depending on their circumstances, expectations, and experiences. Some common emotions during the holidays include Joy or happiness. Some people may feel joy or happiness if they are able to celebrate the holidays with their loved ones, or if they experience gratitude, generosity, or kindness.

For others, it can spark feelings of loneliness, worry and stress. Some struggle with the pressure and expense of buying gifts. Christmas can be expensive, but there is even more financial pressure with the rising cost of living. Many families have less money to spend, so going to the shops and seeing the Christmas



Tammy Godwin, William Stoffel, and Crissy Cornelius

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# Think before giving a pet as a Christmas gift

By JOANN SANDERS

With Christmas just around the corner, many people will be considering giving or getting a pet as a gift, and understandably so! There are many good reasons for having 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 twenty 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 being 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? 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 or giving one as a gift, 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.

The staff at Wakulla Animal Services wish you and your furry family members a happy holiday season! Shelter hours are Tuesday-Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Joann Sanders is a volunteer for Wakulla Animal Services.

## Deer season is underway



By AL HARTMAN  
The Old Pro

We are into deer season and it looks like this should be a good season. There's plenty of deer again this year. I've had several close calls on the highway this fall! It was running on the left side of the road ahead of me and I slowed down. Glad I did as it did what I thought it would. At the last minute it turned and ran across in front of me. Keep alert, folks.

In Central Florida a few deer have been found with Chronic Wasting Disease. It took a while for it to get here and it has been in several other states for quite a while. CWD is a prion disease, (protein infectious particle) that effects all the animals in the deer family. As of 2008, CWD has been found in wild deer, moose and elk in Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, South Dakota, Utah, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming and in the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Experimental evidence indicates that infected animals probably transmit the

disease through animal-to-animal contact and/or contamination of feed or water sources with saliva or bodily waste material.

If you see or find a deer that looks like it starved to death, don't touch it. Contact FWC and give its location. If you shoot a deer that looks unhealthy, contact FWC, they will want that deer.

Now to problem No. 2: Wild hogs! Wild hog are actually taking over the world. Really!

In the U.S., Florida is No. 3 behind California and Texas. They have cost over \$3 billion in damage last year in the U.S. alone. They can devastate a farmer's field overnight. A female hog can have three litters a year, producing up to 12 or more young in each litter.

We hunters need to get serious and try to bring the population under control.

I know several hunters that spend hours more on hunting wild or feral pigs than deer. Some states have started night hunts.

We here can shoot feral hogs on our own property legally at night. You can also trap them all year long on private property. If you need help, contact me. I'll do what I can.

Happy Hunting and Fishing and sign up for the FWC newsletter to your email.

Al Hartman can be contacted at redmandlpg@aol.com.

## Retirement seen through your eyes



By BRIAN ENGLISH

**How do you picture your future?** Some see retirement as a time to start a new career. Others see it as a time to travel. Still others plan to spend more time with family and friends. With that in mind, here are some things to consider.

**What do you absolutely need to accomplish?** If you could only get four or five things done in retirement, what would they be? Answering this question might lead you to compile a "short list" of life goals, and while they may have nothing to do with money, the financial decisions you

make may be integral to pursuing them.

**What would revitalize you?** Some people retire with no particular goals at all. After weeks or months of respite, ambition may return. They start to think about what pursuits or adventures they could embark on to make these years special. Others have known for decades what dreams they will follow ... and yet, when the time to follow them arrives, those dreams may unfold differently than anticipated and may even be supplanted by new ones.

In retirement, time is really your most valuable asset. With more free time and opportunity for reflection, you might find your old dreams giving way to new ones.

**Who should you share your time with?** Here is another profound choice you get to make in retirement. The quick answer to this question for many retir-

ees would be "family." Today, we have nuclear families, blended families, extended families; some people think of their friends or their employees as family.

**How much do you anticipate spending?** We can't control all retirement expenses, but we can manage some of them. The thought of downsizing your home may have crossed your mind. One benefit of downsizing is that it can potentially lead to no mortgage or a more manageable mortgage payment.

**Could you leave a legacy?** Many of us would like to give our kids or grandkids a good start in life, but leaving an inheritance can be trickier than many realize. Tax laws are constantly changing, and the strategies that worked years ago may have more limited benefits today.

Keep in mind this article is for informational purposes only and is not a replace-

ment for real-life advice, so make sure to consult your tax or legal professional before modifying any part of your overall estate strategy.

**How are you preparing for retirement?** This is the most important question of all. If you feel you need to prepare more for the future or reexamine your existing strategy in light of recent changes in your life, conferring with a financial professional experienced in retirement approaches may offer some guidance.

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

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PHOTO BY TYLER JONES, UF/IFAS

Wrapping gifts in recycled materials is just one small way to be more mindful this holiday season.

# Mindful holiday gifts



By SAMANTHA KENNEDY

The holiday season is synonymous with gift-giving, but in the rush to find the perfect present, it is easy to overlook the significance of giving mindfully. Mindful gift-giving involves choosing gifts that convey thoughtfulness, align with the values of the recipient, and contribute positively to the well-being of the planet. In this article, we explore how to buy mindful gifts during the holidays, ensuring that your presents carry meaning far beyond the unwrapping.

When selecting a gift, take the time to think about the recipient's interests, hobbies, and passions. A gift that aligns with their preferences is more likely to be appreciated and valued. Whether it is a book, a cooking class, or a piece of art, the thoughtfulness behind the choice will shine

through.

Instead of material things, consider giving the gift of an experience. Concert tickets, a spa day, or a pottery workshop can create lasting memories. Experiences are often more memorable and fulfilling than material possessions, and they can help reduce clutter and waste.

Shopping at local and small businesses not only provides unique and hand-crafted gift options but also supports the local economy. These businesses often offer items that are made with care and attention to detail, making your gifts all the more special. Saturday, November 25 is the annual Small Business Saturday nationwide shopping day. Also, do not forget to peruse the offerings at Wakulla's November Small Business Saturday event in Hudson Park on November 18, starting at 10:00am.

Look for gifts that have a minimal environmental impact such as reusable products, items made from recycled materials, or goods that promote eco-conscious living. For example, reusable water bottles, organ-

ic cotton clothing, or beeswax wraps can make eco-friendly and thoughtful gifts.

Handmade gifts often carry sentimental value and uniqueness. Got talent? Consider creating a personalized gift. Hand-knitted scarves, homemade candles, or a photo album filled with cherished memories can be deeply meaningful.

Many organizations offer opportunities to make a charitable donation as a gift in someone's name. These gifts provide support to important causes and can be a touching way to make a difference in the world while honoring the recipient's values.

Personalized books are a delightful and meaningful gift for children and adults alike. They can include the recipient's name and sometimes even customize the storyline to reflect their interests and experiences. It is a thoughtful gesture that shows reflects care and affection for the gift recipient.

Subscription services can be a unique and thoughtful gift idea. Whether it is a monthly book club, streaming service, or a curated box of arti-

sanal products, these gifts can bring joy throughout the year.

Don't forget about the presentation! Sustainable and reusable gift wrap options are readily available, such as cloth bags or recycled paper. Additionally, consider making unique, homemade gift tags or cards from recycled materials.

If unsure of the recipient's preferences, consider a gift card with a personal touch. It can be accompanied with a heartfelt note suggesting favorite places to shop or dine, or sharing a special memory they may enjoy creating for themselves.

In today's consumer-driven culture, mindful gift-giving reminds us of the deeper significance of the holiday season. Mindful gifts not only show our love and appreciation but also contribute to a more conscious and thoughtful holiday experience for everyone involved.

For more information about this or other mindfulness topics, please call Samantha Kennedy, County Extension Director, at (850) 926-3931.



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# Fall butterflies in Wakulla: What a show!



By **ERIK LOVSTRAND**

in addition to monarchs (milkweeds) include the Gulf fritillary (passionflower vine), cloudless sulphur (plants in pea family), many species of skippers (the pea family and others), and buckeyes (false foxglove, plantain and others). These are the ones I see most often, however, there are also many other smaller species that are not quite as showy. I even see large numbers of dragonflies traveling along the coast as they move southward.

Most people are probably aware of the epic migration of monarch butterflies that spans the North American continent and reaches as far south as Central America. A significant number of these colorful winged travelers pass through North Florida on their journey, and it is well documented that some even spend the winter here.

However, there are many other less well-known species that undertake similar migratory flights. A critical factor in the success of these migratory species is the presence of abundant nectar sources, as well as host plants for their larvae. As they wing their way south, many are reproductively active during October and November, which leaves plenty of time to hatch a new generation to join the trip before it gets too cold. Species (followed by host plants for larvae) that commonly pass through our area

Favorite habitats include almost any disturbed, open area where sunlight reaches the ground to support a proliferation of flowering plants. Along road shoulders, Spanish needle provides nectar for travelers and a rolling wave of yellow and orange color that delights those who follow behind a large vehicle that temporarily disturbs mealtime. Open fields that have not been mowed for a season or two are prime locations for the bright, lavender blooms of false foxglove, where you can find both adult and larva buckeyes in great numbers. Even pesky yard weeds, such as Florida pusley, provide tiny white flowers that fritillaries and buckeyes flock to for sweet sustenance.

If you want to do a



PHOTO BY ERIK LOVSTRAND

A Vibrant Orange Gulf Fritillary and larvae (inset) on native Firebush.

few native plantings that will draw these annual visitors closer to home try one called firebush

(Hamelia patens). It is attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds with its tubular, bright red

blooms. Another easy-to-grow larval food plant for fritillaries and zebra longwings is the pas-

sionflower vine (*Passiflora incarnata*). There are many online resources to assist with plant selection and how to develop a butterfly garden if you seek to have more extension plantings. At the very least, get outside and enjoy the show while these colorful, winged masterpieces are with us for the Fall season. Wakulla County has no shortage of butterflies or great places to observe them.

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

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# Safeguard yourself during the holiday season



By **JARED MILLER**  
Wakulla Sheriff

During this holiday season I would like to take the time to discuss with Wakulla County's citizens steps they can take to safeguard themselves from potential thieves and would-be criminals.

This time of year typically sees a spike in thefts and burglaries and locally we often see an uptick in these crimes along with issues such as "porch pirates." It's important to know that most thefts and burglaries commit-

ted in Wakulla County are crimes of opportunity.

For those in the community who celebrate Christmas or other gift-giving celebrations during this time, there are steps you can take to help keep yourself and your home safer. If you have window blinds or curtains, ensure they are closed when you are not around so thieves cannot look inside and see any valuables you may have. Have a box or secure location for packages to be delivered so they are not simply left visible at a mailbox or on a porch. If possible schedule or track deliveries so that you or a trusted person is available to accept them and they do not sit unattended. Do not put out boxes or packaging to new items until the day of trash pickup,

so you don't advertise to everyone items now within your home. Lastly, just like your car always remember to lock your home, at night and when you are not home.

A former detective with Wakulla County Sheriff's Office once told me he could count on one hand the number of vehicle burglaries he had worked in which the suspect had forced their way into a car. More often than not, would-be car burglars engage in what is known as "car hopping," where they enter an area and move from car to car pulling on doors. When they find an unlocked door, the criminal enters the car and grabs anything of value left in the car. This is perhaps the most valuable tip I can give you to help protect yourself during

this (and any) season, lock your car doors and do not leave valuables (especially personal information or firearms) inside of your vehicle unattended.

Lastly, if you plan on being out of town for the holidays, please remember to take some simple steps such as placing a hold on your mail (so it does not pile up in your mail box), and not advertising the specific times you will be gone on social media. Most residential thefts, and burglaries occur purposely when the homeowners are not around, and limiting signs you are not home will help keep your home and property more secure. If you can afford to purchase security camera's, an alarm system, or motion sensor lights, I strongly encourage you to do so as it creates a

great deterrent for anyone who would look to steal from you.

It's true that you could take every possible precaution and still have someone break into your car or steal from you. However, the harder you make it for a criminal to commit a crime the more likely they will be to avoid your home or if not leave behind evidence. In doing so you make it all the more likely my Deputies and Detectives will find and arrest these criminals. Neither myself nor anyone at my office will ever blame someone for being the victim of a crime, however I do want citizens to know that most property crimes are committed by criminals because of opportunity. Do the best you can to make yourself a hard target to would-be criminals

and you'll be able to largely prevent yourself from becoming a victim. If you lock your house and car doors, don't leave valuables in plain sight or in your vehicle, and don't advertise when you will be out of town, you will drastically reduce your chances of being targeted.

If you suspect you have been the victim of a burglary, theft or any crime never hesitate to contact the Wakulla County Sheriff's Office at 850-745-7100 (911 for emergencies). We operate 24/7 365 days a year and are always ready to respond and help. The sooner you can report any suspected crime to us the better the odds we will be able to solve it.

*Jared Miller is sheriff of Wakulla County.*

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# Operation Santa

## From Front Page

items out on display can trigger stress and guilt. In addition, the demands of the holidays can trigger feelings of inadequacy for some parents.

Director of Operation Santa Crissy Cornelius, who has been with the organization for 12 years, along with Volunteers William Stoffel and Tammy Godwin all agree, “We will not let any child in Wakulla County go without Christmas, if a family is struggling with providing Christmas, Operation Santa steps in to fill that gap and keep Christmas alive for the children of Wakulla.

Operation Santa, which is a part of Operation Wakulla, the Mission Statement proclaims Operation Santa strives to make the holidays brighter for Wakulla County individuals, children and families who need a hand during the Christmas season this tradition is made possible because of the dedication of community volunteers and donations from caring individuals, agencies, providers and businesses. The joy provided to families,

shared by the giver and the receiver, strengthens our community, provides a sense of purpose and worth, as well as countless blessings.

Tammy Godwin, a volunteer going on her 4th Christmas at Operation Santa said, “I got started volunteering here because I knew someone who needed help with Christmas, I loved the feeling of the happy I had by being able to help this family, so I signed up to volunteer, here I am after 4 years.” She also said, “The feeling of happy grows everyday here at Operation Santa and the good this charity does for the children is amazing, and the outpour of the citizens and local businesses to make this happen year after year is truly humbling.”

Volunteer William Stoffel said, Christmas is my jam, Christmas is my destiny and by giving my time and witnessing the joy of kids at Christmas is a passion for me, I want to make their Christmas morning happier.”

Cornelius sang Stoffel’s praises and proved his genuine dedication to the charity by sharing, “William was sick

and as soon as he was better, like a trouper, he was right back out in the community handing out applications at the grocery stores, this charity means so much to him.” Laughing, she added: “He keeps applications in his car at all times to share with folks just in case he comes across someone that may need some extra Christmas help, he is always equipped to help.

“We all give 40 to 50 hours a week to this, and we do this because of our hearts, it is not a money paying job, it is a joy-paying job which outweighs everything.”

“I work a full-time job,” Stoffel said, “I have a family, kids, dogs, church attendance, areas in my life that demand all my time; but I still make time for this organization it is so great. Toy donations and monetary donations to purchase toys, gift wrapping supplies are 100% donation based.”

The holidays are a time to get into the holiday spirit and spread cheer by giving to charity. Giving to charity is a proven way to do a good deed for someone in need and receive more in return than you might expect. Giving makes both the giver

and the receiver happy.

“Although Operation Santa welcomes monetary and toy donations,” Cornelius said, “the donation of time for those who don’t have money to give – to simply wrap gifts – is just as valuable and there is always the opportunity to help by gift wrapping at Operation Santa. They can still participate and receive the Christmas spirit.”

The organization also offers community service hours for students needing credits.

“October 1 we come into the Operation Santa building like bulldozers, dust off the furniture in preparation for the upcoming Christmas season and we get ready to work hard. Responsibilities at Operation Santa include collection donations, sorting donations and separating toys, processing applications, and all the work must be done on time, but we here at Operation Santa we ensure every single need is met and every child’s Christmas morning happens.

“The director role,” she says, “is stressful at times, I am not going to lie, but the reward of joy I receive makes it all worthwhile. Christmas is a time to do what Jesus Christ lays

on my heart, which is give selflessly, give my time, give my patience, anything he needs me to do.

“I love meeting different families and parents and to know this Organization can help a stressing or worried parent who fears Christmas will not be provided for and assuring them Operation Santa is here and we are here to fill that gap is a beautiful thing to see, I love the way the community and the businesses come together in a time of need to support this non-profit organization is really what Wakulla County is known for; Operation Santa has been around for about 15 years and the fact that every year we are constantly growing is a true blessing,” Cornelius said.

“Although we are not physically present on Christmas morning with the families we help, and we wish we could, but the pictures in our heads of what we imagine that Santa Claus came through along with the knowing the burden was relieved from the parents/guardians is utmost rewarding.”

As for future plans of the Organization, Cornelius said, “We are

taking this one holiday season at a time although we are here to help families, we would love to know the help we did provide enabled that family to grow strength, to get over that hump, to stand on their own and progress; that we were here to get them through a hard time, provide Christmas joy and to know struggles do happen and are only temporary, and the magic of Santa will still come through, and to know Wakulla County Operation Santa had their back.”

Operation Santa’s primary goal is to assist Wakulla families, going through a temporary hardship, to provide Christmas for their children. We thank the Wakulla County Coalition for starting this program approximately 15 years ago.”

### WANT TO HELP?

Santa’s Workshop is located at Operation Santa at 3051 Crawfordville Highway, Crawfordville FL 32326. Checks can be made payable to Operation Santa at P.O. Box 895, Crawfordville, FL 32326. Operation Santa has a Facebook page. Crissy Cornelius can be reached at (850) 570-4069.



# Merry Christmas

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Genesis fourty-nine and ten  
Let the story of Jesus feet begin.

As it is written; before the Passover feast, Jesus hour was to come, that he should depart from this world

He God's only begotten son.

Now Jesus knew the hour of satans great defeat!  
He prepared his disciples,  
And began to wash their feet.

With their feet, they could stand on the rock of every age,  
With their feet, the Gospel written,  
Every book, every page.

With their feet, they would carry A great desired treasure!  
With their feet, the Gospel  
God's love with no measure!

As Jesus; is eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame,  
The disciples carried about all their works,  
And done so in Jesus name.

With their feet, they went the distance,  
If asked one mile; they went twain,  
With no respect of person's  
They treated each and all the same.

Behold the feet of Christ!  
Most Beautiful in my sight!  
The feet I want to follow after,  
The feet of everlasting life!

Let his marvelous feet  
March on in me! Tony Duncan  
-All Glory Given to Jesus

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## On the Horizon: The calendar of events for December

### Friday, December 1

- Palaver Tree Theater is performing "The Caretaker" at 8 p.m., tickets are \$15 at the door.
- Alcoholics Anonymous meets at noon and 8 p.m. every Friday at the American Legion, 54 Ochlockonees St.

### Saturday, December 2

- Keep Wakulla County Beautiful will hold a River Cleanup at Upper Bridge on Shadeville Road, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon.
- Christmas in Panacea will be held from 3 to 6 p.m.
- Palaver Tree Theater is performing "The Caretaker" at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m., tickets are \$15 at the door.
- Wakulla County Historical Society holds an open house from 1 to 4 p.m., at the museum, 24 High Dr. in Crawfordville
- The Panacea Community Garden Farmer's Market will be held from 9 a.m. to 12 noon in Panacea.
- Alcoholics Anonymous meets at 6:30 p.m. every Saturday at the American Legion, 54 Ochlockonee St.
- The Wakulla Caregiver Support Group will meet at the Wakulla County Public Library at 10 a.m.

### Monday, December 4

- Panacea Waterfronts holds its Christmas Bingo night at Posey's Steamroom, with dinner starting at 5:30 and bingo starting at 6:15 p.m.
- The Wakulla County Planning Commission meets at

- 6 p.m. in the commission chambers.
- The Wakulla Respite Program is available for anyone with memory impairment at no cost from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Lake Ellen Baptist Church every Monday.
- Alcoholics Anonymous meets at 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. every Monday at the American Legion, 54 Ochlockonee St.
- Gentle yoga at 9 a.m. and Restorative Yoga at 6 p.m. with Zoe, every Monday at New Posh, 3079 Crawfordville Hwy. RSVP to newposh3079@gmail.com or text/call at (850) 528-5838.

### Tuesday, December 5

- The Wakulla County Charter Review Commission meets at 6 p.m. in the Wakulla Community Center.
- Sopchoppy community dinner is held every week at the Towles House at 6:30 p.m.
- Alcoholics Anonymous meets at 6:30 p.m. at the American Legion, 54 Ochlockonee St.
- Flow Yoga at 6 p.m. with Nellie, every Tuesday at New Posh, 3079 Crawfordville Hwy. RSVP to newposh3079@gmail.com or text/call at (850) 528-5838.

### Wednesday, December 6

- Muffins with Moms Prenatal Support Group meets at 9 a.m., 9:30 a.m., and 10 a.m. at the Wakulla County Health Department. Contact Liz Neighbors at 850-888-6078 or elizabeth.neighbors@flhealth.gov for more information.
- A line dance class is held at 1 p.m. at the Wakulla Senior Center every Wednesday.
- Wakulla County Coalition for Youth meets at 12:30 p.m. at the health department.
- Alcoholics Anonymous meets at noon and 6:30 p.m. every Wednesday at the American Legion, 54 Ochlockonee St.
- Gentle Yoga and Stretching Class, every Wednesday, 11 a.m. Wakulla Community Center. Bring a mat. Come early to sign in. Chair Yoga participants welcome. \$2 per class.

### Thursday, December 7

- Joy-Filled Christmas, a free event for Special needs students in Wakulla will be held at the Wakulla Springs lodge from 6 to 8 p.m.
- Palaver Tree Theater is holding "A Seat at the Table" event at 6:30 p.m.
- The VFW Auxiliary Bingo Night will be held at 7 p.m. at 475 Arran Road in Crawfordville, every Thursday. There are concessions and raffles.

- The Rotary Club of Wakulla County meets at the TCC Wakulla Center at 8:30 a.m. every Thursday.
- Gentle Yoga at 9 a.m. and Yin Yoga at 6 p.m. with Zoe every Thursday. Classes are \$12, at New Posh on 3079 Crawfordville Hwy. RSVP to newposh3079@gmail.com or text/call at (850) 528-5838.
- Music Bingo, first Thursday each Month, at 30 Palms in St. Marks. Proceeds benefit the Florida Wild Mammal Association.
- Alcoholics Anonymous meets at 6:30 p.m. every Thursday at the American Legion, 54 Ochlockonee St.

### Saturday, December 9

- The Chill Spot presents the Battle for Bennie car show and chili dinner at 3123 Spring Creek Hwy. at 4 p.m. Car registration is \$20, Chili is \$10 per bowl. All proceeds go to helping Bennie Mott, who has been diagnosed with Medulloblastoma.
- Palaver Tree Theater is holding the "A Real Mother For Ya" music festival, doors open at 3:30 p.m., music goes from 4 to 10 p.m., tickets are \$15 online and at the door.
- The Christmas in Sopchoppy celebration will be held from 1 to 7 p.m. at the Sopchoppy Depot Park.
- Alcoholics Anonymous

- meets at 6:30 p.m. every Saturday at the American Legion, 54 Ochlockonee St.
- The Wakulla Caregiver Support Group will meet at the Wakulla County Public Library at 10 a.m.

### Monday, December 11

- The Wakulla County Board of County Commissioners meets at 5 p.m. in the commission chambers. A workshop on recreational facilities will be held at 3:30 p.m. before the regular meeting.
- Crawfordville Woman's Club monthly meeting is the second Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at 64 Ochlockonee St., in Crawfordville. Call (850)566-5727 for more information.

### Thursday, December 14

- St. Marks City Commission meets at the St. Marks City Hall at 6 p.m.

### Saturday, December 16

- Small Business Saturday of Wakulla will have its 6th Annual Christmas Market Extravaganza in Hudson Park from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- The St. Marks golf cart Christmas Parade will be held at 7 p.m., with floats lining up at 6:30 p.m.

### Monday, December 18

- The Wakulla County School Board meets in the school administration building at 5:45 p.m.
- The Sopchoppy City Council meets at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall.
- The American Legion Post 114 will be meeting at the Wakulla County Public Library at 6:30 p.m.

### Thursday, December 21

- The Wakulla County Cancer Support Group meets 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.

### Friday, December 22

- Palaver Tree Theater hosts "Christmas with Aaron & Friends" a Holiday concert, tickets are \$25 on Eventbrite

### Saturday, December 23

- The St. Marks Community Market will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in St. Marks at 815 Port Leon Drive.

### Monday, December 25

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# Four generations of Wakulla teachers

By SARAH THURMOND and JANIE WARD THURMOND

One hundred years ago in 1923, my grandmother Eunice Green started her career as a teacher. Since then three generations have followed in her footsteps. Eunice's daughter, my grandmother Janie Thurmond and my Mom, Anne Thurmond, both taught in Wakulla County Schools. I am now a fourth generation educator in Wakulla County - working as a speech therapist at Crawfordville Elementary where I am the third generation teaching at Crawfordville Elementary.

I was curious to ask Grandma what the district was like 100 years ago when her mother began teaching. Only 1 in 13 families owned a car in 1923, so students were only able to attend schools within walking distance of their homes. In Wakulla there were numerous one room school-houses spread throughout the county. These schools did not have electricity or air conditioning, but did have an outhouse with rudimentary plumbing. Students had to bring their own lunch - often consisting of a biscuit and honey.

Great Grandma Green taught at Live Oak School where she had attended and graduated from 8th grade (the highest grade level in Wakulla County at the time). She walked one mile from her house to the



Eunice Green, left, in the 1920s. Janie Ward Thurmond, seated, and Sarah Thurmond.

one room schoolhouse on the corner of what is now Emmett Whaley Road and Lawhon Mill Road in Medart. She was the eldest of eight children of W.T. Green and Ruth Gwaltney Green and became teacher to most of her younger siblings. You know those family stories that become legend because they are told over and over? We have a story about Great Grandma Green's young brother, Homer, who got in trouble at school and got a paddling from his sister/teacher, so he decided to leave school and walk home by himself. His mom gave him another paddling and sent him back to school where he received a third paddling for leaving school without permission.

Before becoming a teacher, Great Grandma Green helped her parents with farming, carpentry, brick lay-

ing, boat building, and any other jobs that needed to be done. When her dad passed away at the early age of 42, 18-year-old Eunice was left to help her mother raise and support her seven younger siblings. The superintendent of schools at that time was Jake Pigott, who was a friend of the Green family. He needed a teacher for the schoolhouse at Live Oak and knowing Eunice to be an intelligent and capable young lady he contacted her about filling the position. He sent her a letter (which Grandma Thurmond still has) stating that he wanted her to teach at Live Oak, and that he would get her a temporary teaching certificate. He suggested that she study for the state teacher's test and take it in February of 1924. Grandma Thurmond has her mom's temporary cer-

tificate and her three professional teacher's certificates. It is very interesting that each of these have her test scores on the front of the certificates.

During Eunice's second year of teaching she married Nathaniel Walker Ward and became Eunice Green Ward. She would teach in three different schoolhouses in Wakulla County before she retired to care for her three children.

In addition to Live Oak she taught at St. Marks and Otter Creek. Little did she know in 1923 the legacy she would be starting for her future generations.

Eunice's daughter, Janie, became a teacher in 1972 - exactly 20 years after graduating from Sopchoppy High as valedictorian. Grandma says she got a late start in teaching because she first stayed home to do her mothering. She took classes at Valencia Junior College in Orlando, Tallahassee Junior College, and Florida State University where she graduated in 1972 with honors and taught at Crawfordville Elementary for 23 years until retirement. I've met many people who have had her as a teacher and they all report that she was strict but a great teacher. I can believe both of these to be true.

In addition to homeschooling her kids, my Mom, Anne McCoy Thurmond, taught at Wakulla Middle School, COAST Charter School, Riversprings Middle School, and Crawfordville El-

ementary. She mostly taught exceptional student classes. I should also mention the many others in my family who have worked in education - Grandpa Harold Thurmond, husband of Janie Ward Thurmond, worked as a teacher and in various roles in Administration in the county; my maternal grandmother Geraldine McCoy was the Director of Food Services in Wakulla; my sister Meagan Thurmond Cronan, brother-in-law Travis Cronan, three cousins, Alli Currieo Pope, Chris Pope, and Matt Rousseau, and Aunt Janna Thurmond Currieo have also served as teachers in the Wakulla and Leon Schools.

I am proud to follow in the footsteps of these hard-working women and men working in the field of education. Like my mom, I primarily work with ESE students, which I find so fulfilling. I'm just grateful that I don't have to walk to a school with no air conditioning every day like Great Grandma Green.

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# Life and death of Magnolia

From a manuscript found in the Wakulla Historical Society archives and attributed to Elizabeth F. Smith

The town of Magnolia on the St. Marks River in Middle Florida was founded July 4, 1827, by four brothers from Augusta, Maine named John, George, Nathaniel, and Weld Hamlin. This quartet of Yankees had come down to New Orleans by sailing vessel with their father, Theophilus Hamlin, a hotel and tavern keeper, in 1816, looking for land to subdivide and sell in lots along the Mississippi River. They remained in the South when their father returned to Augusta to operate the Kennebec Tavern.

The brothers went to Liberty County, Mississippi, and lived there for a decade, but came to Tallahassee shortly after it was proposed as the capital of the new Territory of Florida in 1824. They remained for several years and finally purchased a townsite near a sulphur springs about 13 miles north of the river's mouth. Two dirt roads were hacked through the pine forests to Magnolia, one from Tallahassee and one from Lake Miccosukee by way of Chaires.

To protect the townspeople from the Seminole Indians at a tense period in Indian and white relations, a stockade of vertically set logs was erected around Magnolia. In 1829 Gov. William Duval visited the town on a trip down to the fort near St. Marks and commended the Hamlins for their enterprise. The same year a third road was built to Magnolia from Monticello in Jefferson County by way of Waccissa by James Scott, and the first bridge ever to be built across the St. Marks was composed of rough-hewn timbers about a half mile above the town. This road continued westward to Wakulla Springs, Fisher's Mill and Ft. Braden.

In 1829 also, the youngest of the brothers, Weld Hamlin, died and was buried in the town cemetery. His is the oldest recorded tombstone in Wakulla County. The brothers advertised their town lots for sale in Tallahassee, Pensacola, and Augusta newspapers and in the fall of that year a shipload of prominent citizens from Augusta came to see the town. Many of them owned mills along the Kennebec River in Maine and wanted to have a dependable source of cotton for their spinning machines as well as a market for their manufactured products.

One of this band of men was Joseph Ladd, husband of Mary Jane Hamlin and brother-in-law of the remaining trio.

Joseph Ladd had owned a fulling mill on the Kennebec River and a farm, and he sold his property to finance his trip as well as to take care of his wife and ten children he had left in Augusta. Several of the men beside Joseph bought lots and stayed in Magnolia, but most of them sailed back to Maine, a distance of 2000 miles around the Florida peninsula and past the treacherous shoals of Cape Hatteras in North Carolina.

There was a weekly newspaper published throughout 1829 in Magnolia by Augustus Steele, known as THE MAGNOLIA ADVERTISER. Since it was begun late in 1828 and ceased publishing early in 1830 it lasted only shortly over a year. Most of its information was gleaned from other newspapers which came by sailing vessel into Apalachee Bay. Its columns mentioned ships in port and those preparing to leave.

There were about a dozen other merchants in Magnolia, nearly all of them buying, pressing and forwarding cotton to northern mills. Beside the Hamlins, the largest merchant was Benjamin Byrd of Miccosukee. Byrd later became Florida's first Treasurer when it achieved statehood in 1845. Robert Larkins and L. W. Burnet each ran a dry goods store, and E. Kline had a drugstore. John W. Argyle, Edward Seixas, William Haskins, William Burgess, David Burley, and Augustus Steele were cotton commission merchants. Some of these men also had ownership or part ownership in the ships that came up the river.

Despite the claims that ships drawing 11 feet of water could reach Magnolia, sea captains soon discovered that the ads for Magnolia had exaggerated its accessibility. An obstruction in the river not far above the fort of St. Marks prevented any but the smallest vessels from reaching Magnolia, and that only at high tide. The obstruction was known as the Devil's Elbow. Consequently, many of the ships anchored at a deep spot in the bay known as the Spanish Hole and lightered their cargoes up the river in shallow draft flatboats. Meanwhile the newspaper reminded people that they were not allowed to cut trees into the water south of Magnolia, and they were requested not to dump the entrails of slaughtered livestock into the main street of the community.

The leading citizens

of Magnolia were prominent in politics, backing Joseph White for the U. S. House and excoriating Territorial Gov. Richard K. Call, an enemy of Whites's. They also wrote many letters to Washington, for a custom's port, for dredging of the river by the Army engineers, for help against the Indians, and for a lighthouse. The lighthouse was built in 1830 – 31 and soared to 70 feet, located on the open bay near the Spanish Hole and about three miles from the juncture of the St. Marks and Wakulla River where the old Spanish fort was located. Although sailors claimed that its kerosene lamps were too dim to be seen far out at sea, it was a better indication of the channel into the St. Marks River than blind chance.

At the same time Magnolia also became a customs' port, but many captains coming up to the town complained that the customs' man was seldom there. Furthermore, St. Marks was attempting to provide competition to Magnolia. When Magnolia was first founded, St. Marks was only a collection of rude houses thrown up around the fort, but when it realized Magnolia was getting most of the cotton export trade, it moved two miles up from the fort to another site and laid out streets and sold lots for a town. It advertised in the Tallahassee paper that its advantages included being nearer to open water while Magnolia claimed its upriver position was safer from storms.

Meanwhile Magnolia acquired a hotel built and operated by Thomas Cunningham, who offered a bar serving "the choicest wines and liquors", and John Hamlin built a saw and grist mill. David McBride built a sawmill on the east bank of the river and some logs from his mill were seen in the river bottom for many years afterward.

To accommodate the business in Magnolia, a Merchants and Planters Bank of Magnolia was chartered in 1832 by the Legislative Council in Tallahassee with an authorized capital of \$200,000. The bank failed in less than two years but money printed by the bank turned up in faraway places for 135 years, worth more to collectors than it ever was to its bearers at the time. When the Central Bank of Florida tried to sue the Magnolia Bank for \$10,000 in 1834 the marshal could not find a respondent.

In 1833 Joseph Ladd's wife and five of his chil-

dren came to Magnolia from Maine. Among them was his 16-year-old son, Daniel, who went to work in the cotton factorage business for his uncles where he acquired a knowledge of trade that was to make him in 20 years the richest man on the St. Marks River and one of the richest in Middle Florida.

By this time Magnolia had about 40 houses, a post office, a Masonic Hall, and 300 people. Articles about the cotton port appeared in New York and Philadelphia newspapers, all of them encouraging people to migrate to this southern lotus land and become rich. Seldom was anything ever mentioned about storms or "the fevers" which people thought came from the damp odor emanating from swamps. Postal receipts began slowly to fall off and the Hamlins were in debt for \$10,000 because of their too rapid expansion of warehouses and credit. In 1835 came the biggest shock of all. The United States Supreme Court denied that the United States government ever owned the land between the St. Marks and Apalachicola River known as the Forbes Purchase. This piece of land had been granted by the Seminole Indians to the Pantone, Leslie Trading Company and its successor, the John Forbes and Company during Florida's British period between 1763-83 for payment of debts owed them before the United States acquired the territory during the second Spanish period, 1783-1821. The Spanish Governor of West Florida confirmed the grants. Colin Mitchell, a Havana merchant claiming United States citizenship, acquired title to the grant and Congress enacted a law in 1828 providing for judicial settlement of all unsettled lands claims resulting from the 1821 acquisition of the territory.

Little did the Hamlin brothers of Maine know what was in store for them when they ventured southward in search of trade. The Superior Court of Middle Florida invalidated the claim in 1830 and Mitchell appealed the case to the United States Supreme Court. In March 1835, the high court reversed the lower court decision and Mitchell gained title to 1,200,000 acres of land including the entire towns of Magnolia and Apalachicola. The company was involved in court for a generation and people were still clearing land titles in the late 1850's.

That same year a Scot in Tallahassee by the name of Alexander Campbell informed some New York creditors of the Hamlin family that the brothers were in trouble and the sheriff of Leon County rode down the dirt road to Magnolia and closed their places of business. Infuriated at this turn of affairs the brothers plotted revenge against Campbell and tried to figure some way to have him challenge one of them to a duel so they could name the choice of weapons. George, the only unmarried brother, was the logical person for the task. Going to the capital, which had less than a thousand people and only one principal street, George was walking down the wooden sidewalk when he chanced upon Campbell. He flogged the man with his riding crop and Campbell was forced to challenge him. The code duello in Territorial Florida was a remnant of the Spanish period and George accepted the challenge and chose pistols for the match. Unbeknown to his wife, Campbell left church one day to practice with his weapon. With his seconds he met George Hamlin on the Georgia border near Mannington's wayside tavern and George killed him with his first bullet.

Only a month later Joseph Ladd bought up all the property of his brothers and soon thereafter died from yellow fever. His tombstone is the second oldest one in Wakulla County and a larger, more imposing commemorative monument was erected to his memory in the Winthrop Street Cemetery in Augusta Maine.

George Hamlin, regretting that his brothers had urged him to fight with Campbell, took a sailing vessel to Key West where he died a year later.

Most of the Forbes Purchase was acquired by the Apalachicola Land Company of whom Gov. Richard Call was a partner. In 1836 the company built a mule tram from Tallahassee to St. Marks, by-passing Magnolia. Although the tram was a rude affair with stringers laid across a shifting bed of sand, it managed to carry 50,000 bales of cotton to St. Marks a year and spell the decline of the cotton factorage business in Magnolia. Ships no longer came up the river, postal receipts fell off in Magnolia ever further, and merchants sold their stock and left the town.

People dispossessed by the Apalachicola Land Company moved their houses to other places,

most of them northward toward Chaires or down to St. Marks. Joseph Ladd's widow returned with her children to Maine except for Daniel, who was so busy making money he decided to stay in Florida. Nathaniel Hamlin went to New Orleans and started a new cotton export business, but his two children went to Maine and married there.

In 1839 the Tallahassee Railroad extended its tracks on a wooden bridge across the river from St. Marks for three miles to a site which it developed nearer the open bay, calling it Port Leon. This cut off sailing vessels entirely from coming upriver and the few remaining people in Magnolia left there and bought lots in the new town. Daniel Ladd bought the most expensive one on the waterfront and raised his buildings on pilings. The town was surrounded by a fence and did a brisk business with sailors and soldiers coming in to fight in the Second Seminole War. Most of them dallied in the town's dramshops before getting on the train to go northward to Ft. Stansberry near Wakulla Springs and Ft. Lawson near Magnolia. John Hamlin also went in business in Port Leon but had his nephew take charge of his legal affairs.

In 1843 the Legislative Council in Tallahassee divided Leon County, carving Wakulla County out of the southern portion, and naming Port Leon as the new county seat. Before a courthouse could be built the town was wiped out by a hurricane and tidal wave and the survivors moved back up the river and founded the town of New Port two miles south of Magnolia. Until John Hamlin or Daniel Ladd had any buildings erected in New Port they offered storage in their old warehouses in Magnolia.

Nathaniel Hamlin returned to Florida and died in Newport in 1848. John Hamlin died there in 1868, and Daniel Ladd in 1874. People were buried in the Magnolia Cemetery until 1869 and 14 legible tombstones stand in grotesque positions in the scrub. Some rotting log buildings could still be seen in the 1890's but since then the town has disappeared, the pine trees and vines growing over the land. Only the ghosts remain.

**The Wakulla County Historical Society Museum is in the Old Jail at 24 High Drive in Crawfordville. Visit us online at [WakullaHistory.org](http://WakullaHistory.org).**



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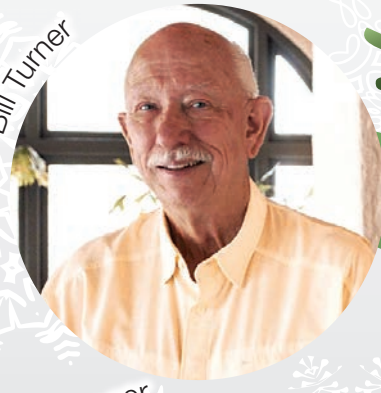
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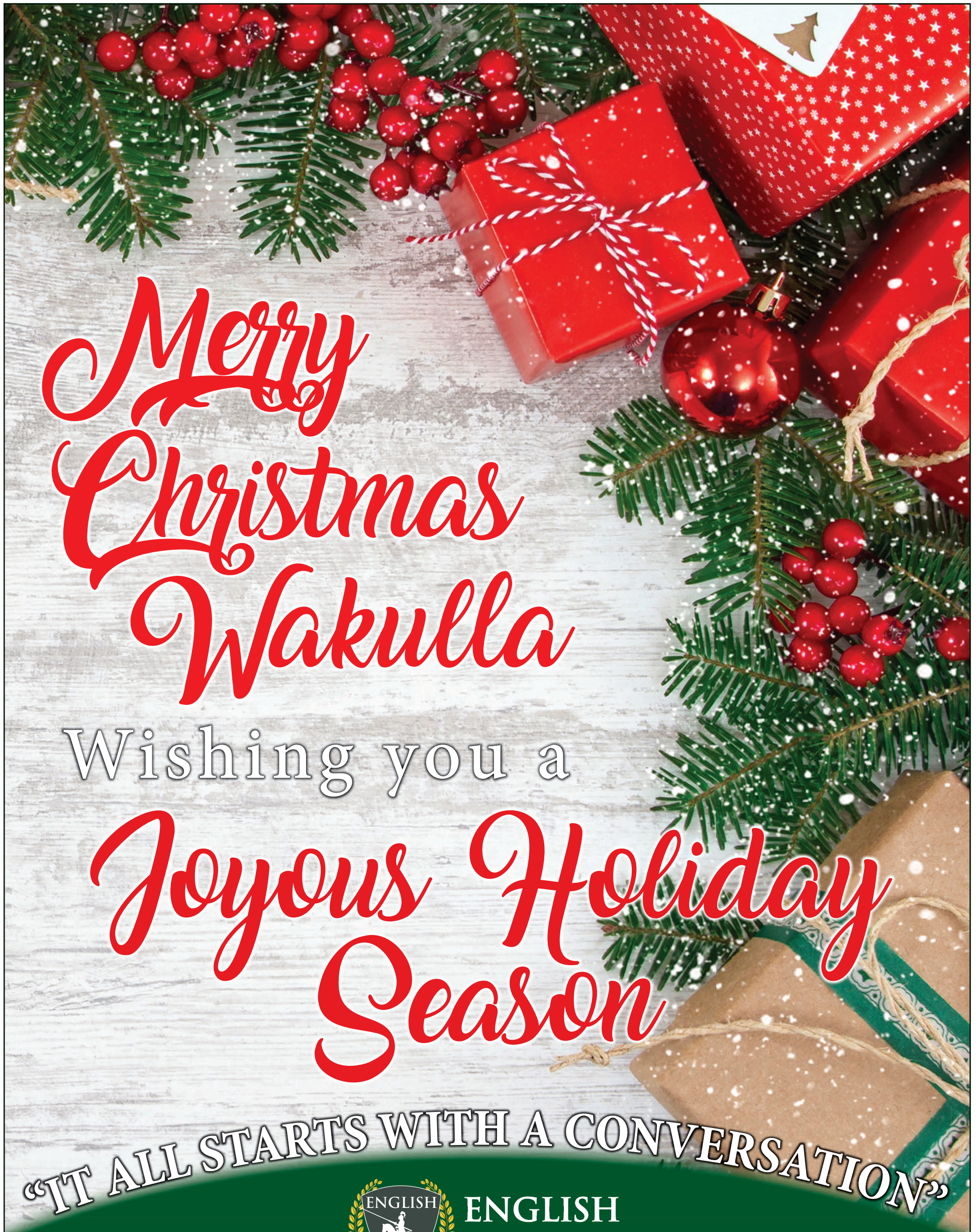
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