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## Serving Wakulla County, Alligator Point and St. Teresa

# Ernest Toole

The singer-songwriter was honored by Friends of Wakulla Springs for his support

By **LINDA ANN McDONALD**  
Correspondent

Ernest Toole is a fifth generation Floridian. Raised just south of Jacksonville in Mandarin, Toole has lived in Wakulla County for more than 35 years. He still spends much of his time reading Florida histories, hiking, boating, scuba diving, writing, and performing his music in various venues around the State such as State Parks and Museums.

Toole's original stories and songs are true events pulled from Florida's long and interesting history. They will take you to places and events of bygone that most people, even of this State, have never seen or experienced.

On Dec. 9th at Wakulla Springs State Park, the Friends of Wakulla Springs presented the Immense

Turn to Page 7



Granddaughter Sarah Toole with Julie Harrington, president of Friends of Wakulla Springs, and Ernest Toole.

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# What if your kids decide against college?



By **BRIAN ENGLISH**

As a parent or grandparent, you may have diligently saved money in a 529 account to help fund your child's or grandchild's college education.

But what happens if they decide college isn't the right path for them?

It's a valid question that many families are facing as more and more people choose alternatives to traditional four-year colleges.

It's a more common situation than you might think. Fewer students are going to college, and the expenses continue to climb.

American undergraduate enrollment rates peaked in 2010 and have steadily declined since. During the same period, college costs have risen over 12 percent.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

A 529 plan is a college savings plan that allows individuals to save for college

on a tax-advantaged basis. The state tax treatment of 529 accounts is only one factor to consider before committing to this savings plan. You should also consider any fees and expenses associated with a particular plan.

Whether or not a state tax deduction is available will depend on your state of residence. State tax laws and treatment may vary, and state tax laws may differ from federal tax laws. Earnings on non-qualified distributions will be subject to income tax and a 10 percent federal penalty tax.

First and foremost, it's important to remember that having a 529 account doesn't mean that the funds are reserved only for a four-year college education. Several choices are available for using the money saved in the account.

One option is to use the funds for a two-year program, such as those for an associate's degree or at a trade school.

Many vocational schools offer programs that can lead to careers that don't require a four-year degree. When you use the funds in a 529 account for

these programs, you are still investing in your child's or grandchild's future and providing them with skills that may help them succeed.<sup>5</sup>

Another option is to use the funds for education expenses outside the United States. Many countries have educational institutions that offer programs that may interest the student in your life. By using the funds in a 529 account, you can help support their academic goals, no matter where they choose to pursue them. Certain restrictions apply, so you will need to explore this option more thoroughly if you decide to pursue it.<sup>5</sup>

The rules for 529 accounts allow paying up to \$10,000 per year in tuition expenses at elementary, middle, or secondary schools with 529 assets.

Furthermore, a lifetime maximum of up to \$10,000 of 529 assets can repay existing student loans. So if the student doesn't use the 529 plan, it could be used by a different beneficiary. This means that you can transfer the funds to another family member who may be preparing to attend college, or you

might even use the funds for your education if you decide to return to school.<sup>5</sup>

As part of 2022's SECURE Act 2.0, which goes into effect in 2024, a 529 account holder can move money to a Roth IRA account under certain conditions, including:

- The 529 plan must have been open for a minimum of 15 years.

- Changing beneficiaries to another student may restart the 15-year clock.

- The owner of the Roth IRA must be the beneficiary of the 529 plan (meaning the student).

- Any money moved from a 529 plan into a Roth IRA account will be subject to the Roth IRA annual contribution limits. The Roth IRA contribution limit in 2024 is \$6,500, with an extra \$1,000 allowed for individuals over 50.

- The lifetime limit is \$35,000.

To qualify for the tax-free and penalty-free withdrawal of earnings, Roth IRA distributions must meet a five-year holding requirement and occur after age 59½. Tax-free and penalty-free withdrawals can also be taken under other circumstances, such as the

owner's death. The original Roth IRA owner is not required to take minimum annual withdrawals.

It's important to note that taking the money out of a 529 account for nonqualified expenses comes at a cost. Doing so may result in federal income taxes and a 10 percent penalty on the earnings portion of the withdrawal.

However, there is one exception to this rule: 529 plans allow money to be taken out for the exact amount of the scholarship or grant that has been awarded.

The truth is that for some young adults, college does not offer what they need. A person who aspires to enter a creative field might find more value in a vocational school or pursue their chosen field through smaller classes or institutes of learning.

While most universities and colleges offer these courses, the cost involved could be a problem, as might the requirement to take courses beyond the student's chosen field to earn a full degree. In short, college is not for everyone.<sup>5</sup>

As you are guiding and advising the student in your life

through these complicated decisions, it's important to remember that a 529 account offers you a great deal of versatility and is designed with these variables in mind.

Remember that the funds in a 529 account can support the student's educational goals no matter their path.

By understanding how it functions and working with a financial professional, you will find that a 529 plan offers many potential opportunities.

1. Education Data Initiative, August 13, 2023
2. Pew Research Center, October 3, 2023
3. World Economic Forum, January 19, 2023
4. Deloitte Insights, May 17, 2023
5. Schwab.com, May 5, 2022

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

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## The Old Pro: Just some wanderings



By **AL HARTMAN**  
The Old Pro

The weather has really been bizarre. Nice today, terrible the next

few days.

Deer and duck season is in full swing, and it looks like there is plenty for everybody.

The water is getting cooler everyday and a lot of reef fish have moved in closer to shore.

Redfish and seatrout are in the deeper holes in the rivers. You have to hunt for them. Try drifting and when you catch a keeper, drop anchor!

You can catch some nice sized fish in those holes.

As the weather gets cold and stormy up north, the ducks start piling in down here. It looks like it's gonna be really good this season.

A lot of diver ducks so far, but not too many mallards yet. But a few will show up in many places as the season goes on.

As I made mention in previous writings

Chronic Wasting Disease has been found in Central Florida. The state Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is asking for hunters to report any sick looking or deer acting confused and to report them and their location.

It is a crippling disease and take 18 months to two years to finally starve the deer to death.

If you shoot a deer and it looks sickly,

report it to the FWC. They would most likely want to see it.

If you kill a deer that looks like it was suffering with CWD it is not recommended to eat it. We don't know enough about it and if it can be transmitted on to humans.

It has been a strange year. Bird Flu, sick deer and sick turtles also!

Here's hoping you all had a Merry Christmas and have a Happy

New Year, my friends.

I enjoy writing for you and keeping you up to date. It has been over 40 years I've been doing it for you!

Don't forget, if you have a hog problem let me know if I can help.

Happy hunting and fishing, and take a young'un!

*Al Hartman can be contacted at redmanldpg@aol.com.*



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PHOTO BY TYLER JONES, UF/IFAS

Health-related goals are popular when creating New Year's resolutions. However, being specific and realistic about them can help ensure better success.

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## Tips on setting new year's goals



By SAMANTHA KENNEDY

As we approach the beginning of another new year, many of us find ourselves inspired to set ambitious goals.

However, the key to turning these aspirations into reality lies in the art of effective goal setting.

Here are five tips to guide you in crafting meaningful and achievable New Year's goals.

- **Be specific and clear.** One of the most common pitfalls in goal setting is creating vague or overly broad objectives. Instead of saying, "I want to get in shape," try being more precise, such as "I will exercise for at least 30 minutes five times a week." Clarity not only helps decrease frustration, but also provides a roadmap for success.

Specific goals allow progress to be mea-

sured more effectively, making it easier to stay motivated throughout the year.

- **Set realistic and achievable targets.** While it is natural to aim high, setting unrealistic goals can lead to disappointment. Consider current commitments, resources, and time constraints before determining realistic objectives. It is essential to be challenged, but the key is to strike a balance between ambition and feasibility.

Break down larger goals into smaller, manageable steps, creating a series of achievable milestones. This not only boosts confidence but also makes the journey more enjoyable.

- **Create an action plan.** Once realistic goals are established, the next crucial step is to devise a plan outlining how to achieve them. Break down each goal into specific actions and assign deadlines to ensure accountability. If the goal involves a significant lifestyle change, such as adopting a healthier diet, include action items such as

planning meals, creating a shopping list, and identifying potential obstacles.

A well-thought-out plan not only provides guidance but also enhances the chances of success by turning aspirations into actionable steps.

- **Stay flexible.** Life is unpredictable, and unexpected challenges may arise throughout the year. To navigate these uncertainties successfully, it is essential to remain flexible. While goals provide a sense of direction, be open to adjusting the action plan if necessary.

If circumstances change, do not view it as a failure. Instead, reassess set goals, make necessary modifications, and continue moving forward. Flexibility ensures that setbacks become opportunities for learning and growth rather than reasons to abandon all aspirations.

- **Celebrate achievements.** Acknowledging and celebrating achievements, no matter how small, is vital for maintaining motivation and momentum. Take time

to reflect on any progress regularly, and get rewarded for reaching significant milestones.

Celebrating achievements reinforces positive behavior, making it more likely that the goal-achievement journey will continue. Consider sharing successes with friends or family members who can offer support and encouragement, fostering a sense of community.

In conclusion, setting New Year's goals is a powerful way to foster personal growth and positive change. Being specific, realistic, and creating a well-structured plan is a recipe for success. Flexibility and celebration are essential elements in this journey, helping reduce challenges and maintain motivation.

As the new year begins, approach goal setting with intention and determination, and watch as aspirations turn into achievements.

For more information about goal setting, please call Samantha Kennedy at (850) 926-3931.

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# How to raise environmentally conscious kids



By **ERIK LOVSTRAND**

OK, I will admit it for my family's sake, so they will not have to try and explain it to concerned readers of my articles. Often, while enjoying the outdoors together, my wife and kids very likely take under consideration my penchant for sharing interesting facts about the simple wonders of nature (for which I have a keen eye).

From the look in her eye, I believe my sweetheart may be running through a mental list of possible cures for my, let us say "condition." I can easily rule out her first likely thought (me, tied to a cabbage palm at the end of Bottoms Road at dusk, in August). Despite the horrifying imagery of this first thought, I am sure she would never follow through. Mostly because she worries that I would notice something of keen interest to share with her before she could flee the scene. Or just maybe, deep down, she genuinely appreciates this endearing quality of mine.

Anyway, sometimes I wonder (is "wondering" and "noticing" the same thing, I wonder?) exactly what combination of environmental factors during my formative years, shaped this tendency to notice things, much less, my desire to share with others. I have always felt that my personality tended towards the introverted side of the spectrum. If I knew the answer to these questions, then I (meaning you, because I would share it with you) might gain insight into the key drivers that turn young'uns into adults who end up in fields related to environmental sciences.

If these drivers could

be identified, parents who seek to drive (I mean steer) their kids towards a rewarding career in the environmental sciences, would be able to hone their parenting efforts down to what is important regarding raising their kids properly.

Alas, I have observed (sciency way to say noticed) over the years, that simple exposure to people who notice EVERYTHING, does not necessarily result in adult children working in environmental careers. I have two math majors and one computer science major. I hypothesize that there must be a variable related to exposure to my wife, or something. You know, all that time she took advantage by feeding, bathing, dressing, fixing boo boos, etc., while I was "working" on my environmental science career. She has literally used the air quotes around the word "working" in previous conversations regarding my job, honestly.

Regardless, it seems clear that children raised in a loving, nurturing environment, instilled with a respect for the natural world, will end up developing into perfectly functional human beings who appreciate nature, even if they end up in careers that have little to do with the environmental sciences. I have seen it in our children, as well as in many other families in Wakulla County, who truly appreciate the bounty of nature-based learning and recreational opportunities we have. Still, I must take credit in some small part for my kid's appreciation of the natural world around them, regardless of their slightly misguided (hmm... unaccounted variable?) career choices.

Apparently, environmental consciousness is not awakened in our souls around the time we begin thinking about career choices. I must say that the seed is planted around the time that we start noticing things. Wait one



PHOTO BY ERIK LOVSTRAND

The perfect subjects for a lesson on 'nature-noticing.'

dog-gone minute; so now I know exactly why I am the way I am! Even though I do not remember when it happened to me, at some point early in my life, I must have had a life-changing encounter with an exceptionally special person who had the gift of noticing things. Looks like my grandchildren still have hope. Hey kids... come over here with Grandpa and check THIS out!

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

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# Protect yourself from identity theft



By **JARED MILLER**  
Wakulla Sheriff

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.

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 state 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 they can be contacted.

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's website ([www.IRS.Gov](http://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. once your Social Security information becomes compromised, there is no way to get that information back.

Many forms and applications still have places to input this information, but often it is no longer required. Only give out your Social Security number to agencies/businesses with which you wish

or need to do business. 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.

*Jared Miller is sheriff of Wakulla County.*

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# Ernest Toole

From Front Page

Gratitude Award to Toole while friends and family gathered around the fireplace listening to Ernest and Sarah Toole perform. Toole's award read, "for generously sharing his Great Musical Talents of writing and performing songs about Old Florida. His devotion and contributions of his musical performance towards Springs Protection is deeply appreciated." Toole is also a volunteer at the park.

His granddaughter Sarah Toole was also presented with a Certificate of Recognition for "contributing loving support and vocal accompaniment over the years with her grandfather Ernest Toole and for the benefit of protecting Wakulla Springs. Sarah said, "I have been performing with him since I was 5 years old, he is my best friend."

Both awards were presented by the President of Friends of Wakulla Springs, Julie Harrington. When presented with the award, Toole said, "A lot of our work or volunteer work has brought us together, you can see how much we love each other, there is no faking it up here

on the stage. I have moved a lot of goods being a salesman and the awards went in the trash; I can tell you this: This award is not going in the trash."

"I think this award is long overdue," Harrington said. "For all the work he has done in the springs and the cultural history he has presented of this county, it is long overdue."

It was Ken Beattie, a retired sound engineer for FSU and now does water observation for Friends of Wakulla Springs who came up with the idea of the award. "I am thrilled with the Friends of Wakulla Springs considering doing this for Ernest," Beattie said. "It is our way to pay back for all the great things he has done for us."

Of his start in music, Toole said, "I got me a Silvertone guitar at 14 years old from the Sears and Roebuck and I have been hammering on it ever since."

"I learned about Florida through any historical books I can get my hands on," he said. "All my music I narrated myself, not like Bob Dylan, I tell you exactly what I mean in the story of the song."

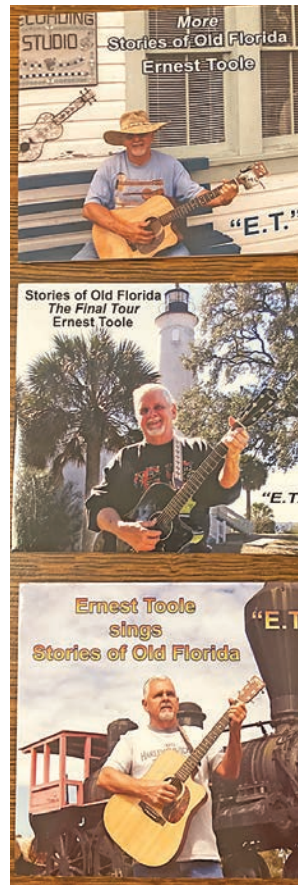
Toole along with flut-

ist Barry Sager played songs such as "Old Joe," "Our Springs They Are Dyin'," "Papa's Lullaby," and "Paddle Wheelers." Toole opened up "Papa's Lullaby" by telling the story, "My father used to take us out on a shrimp boat when Fernandina and Jacksonville were just budding towns, it was a comforting feeling to be with a parent on the shrimp boat."

Friends of Wakulla Springs Secretary Renee Murray wants to help promote the Florida Achievement of the Florida Artists Hall of Fame for Toole. Established by the Florida Legislature in 1986, the Florida Artists Hall of Fame recognizes people who have made significant contributions to the arts in Florida.

The artist may be a native of the state or one who adopted Florida as home. Recipients of this award demonstrate the diversity of artistic accomplishment that comprises the rich cultural tapestry of the state.

The State of Florida recognizes that the individual artist and benefactor are paramount and fundamental to cultural development. These individuals contribute to Florida's national or international reputation as a state with a strong and sustained commitment to-



Some of Ernest Toole's albums.

ward the development of cultural excellence.

The Florida Artists Hall of Fame Wall is located on the Plaza Level in the rotunda of the Capitol building. There is also a framed image of this year's Artist's Hall of Fame inductees on the Hall of Fame Wall. In addition to a plaque mounted on the Hall of Fame Wall, inductees receive a commemorative bronze sculpture commissioned by the

Florida Council on Arts and Culture. The sculpture, La Florida, was created by Enzo Torcolletti, an artist residing in St. Augustine.

"We want to start the momentum and honor Ernest to build energy and help him receive the recognition he earned and he is really well deserving of this recognition, he had done so much springs protection and playing for the events without asking for any payment."

Cal Jamison, also with the Friends of Wakulla Springs, helped come up with the idea of the presentation for Toole. "I hope this is a great kick off to get this process started and get Ernest the recognition he had deserves," Jamison said.

When speaking of his "Stories of Old Florida" album, Toole was asked, Why would he take on a project of learning Florida history and putting it to music? Toole responded: "I've always loved music and been rather adept at it, and I've always loved Florida's unique and interesting history. This album is my attempt to marry the two together and offer the listener some of Florida's old historical stories in song. My thanks to all the good folks who lent and hand and guided

me in the right direction with encouragement and positive direction. It has truly been an education. Hopefully you will find this album historically informative and perhaps entertaining. May we all sing, play, hum or even grunt our own tune and if not at least some tune, for life is music. I'd like to dedicate this album to my mother Helen who once said, 'Son, you need to get a hobby.'"

The deadline for nominations is July 31 for the next year's induction. The Florida Council on Arts and Culture reviews nominations and makes recommendations to the Secretary of State. To access the nomination form, go to Department of State/Division of Arts and Culture/Programs/Florida Artists Hall of Fame.

Currently, Wakulla County does not have any inductees represented at the Capitol.

Toole's music is on YouTube Music under Ernest Toole. His first album, "Ernest Toole 'E.T.' Sings Stories Of Old Florida" is available through iTunes or CD-Baby and his albums, "Stories of Old Florida" and "More Stories Of Old Florida" can be purchased on eBay and Amazon.



## ARE YOU ELECTION READY?

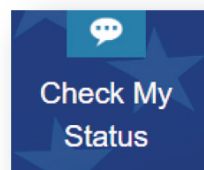
Presidential Preference Primary Election March 19, 2024

### What is the Presidential Preference Primary?

This election is part of the presidential nominating process. You will vote for your preferred candidate that the party delegates will then select as the presidential nominee during the national convention. Since this election will only have candidates for the Republican party nominee, only voters registered with the Republican party are eligible to vote in this election.

### How do I get election ready?

- **Get your registration in order:** visit our website and click on "CHECK MY STATUS". Verify that your name, address and party affiliation are correct. The deadline to register or make a party update is February 20.
- **Have a Plan and Gather your information:** visit our website for election information, to request a mail ballot, to learn the early voting locations and times, and directions to your Election Day polling place.
- **Are you going to vote by mail? Is your signature up-to-date?** You can update your signature by completing a voter registration application and sending it to our office. This application is available for download on our website and is available in our office.



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[www.WakullaVotes.gov](http://www.WakullaVotes.gov)





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Worship 11 a.m.  
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**WILL YOU STAND**

Cozy and snuggled in, awaiting a brand new year,  
The government says peace, peace  
No need for you to fear  
The enemy breached the border!  
There is chaos, and disorder!  
China's infiltrated, from within!  
awaiting their command, for final destruction to begin!

Russia, the brawling bear, stalks us and is a snare!  
Everyone fast asleep, when they should be aware!

Oh Watchmen, Oh Watchmen!  
Tell your people to prepare!

American businesses are mostly gone!  
They are mostly foreign bank owned!

Oh Watchmen, Watchmen on the wall,  
Do you have a bark at all?  
Look Oh Look who's invaded our land!  
Your eating the bread from the enemies hand!

Now LEARN a parable of the fig tree  
When the leaves come forth, so summer shall be,  
Read the word Matthew chapter twenty- four,  
When these come to pass, it is even at thy door!

For as the days of Noah were,  
So shall the coming of the Son of man be;  
Oh' watch therefore  
Hear oh hear; our Heavenly Father's plea!

The Lord said my spirit shall not always strive with man,  
Weed out all the deception if you can!  
Oh America, America  
WILL YOU STAND?  
Tony Duncan  
-All Glory Given to Jesus

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# happy holidays Wakulla

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

**Monday, January 1**

- HAPPY NEW YEAR!
- 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.

**Tuesday, January 2**

- The Wakulla County Board of County Commissioners meets at 5 p.m. in the commission chambers.
- 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 9:30 a.m. and 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, January 3**

- 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, January 4**

- Music Bingo, first Thursday each Month, at the Seineyard in Wildwood. Proceeds benefit the Florida Wild Mammal Association.
- 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.
- Yin Yoga at 9:30 a.m. and 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.
- Alcoholics Anonymous meets at 6:30 p.m. every Thursday at the American Legion, 54 Ochlockonee St.

**Friday, January 5**

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

**Saturday, January 6**

- 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. every Saturday.

**Monday, January 8**

- The Sopchoppy City Commission meets at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall.
- 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.
- Restorative yoga at 9:30 a.m. and 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, January 9**

- Students return to school from winter break.

**Thursday, January 11**

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

**Saturday, January 13**

- The Wakulla High School Theater will hold their

benefit yard sale at Palaver Tree Theater from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

- The Sopchoppy community market will be held from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Depot Park.

**Monday, January 15**

- Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Holiday – banks, schools and government offices will be closed.
- MLK Observance, hosted by the Wakulla Christian Coalition, will be held at the courthouse memorial at 9 a.m. That will be followed by breakfast at Palaver Tree Theater on Shadeville Road.
- The American Legion Post 114 will be meeting at the Wakulla County Public Library at 6:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, January 16**

- The Wakulla County Board of County Commissioners meets at 5 p.m. in the commission chambers.
- The Wakulla County School Board meets in the school administration building at 5:45 p.m.

**Thursday, January 18**

- 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.

**Saturday, January 20**

- KWCB will hold tire am-

nesty day at 318 Shadeville Road in Crawfordville, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Maximum of 8 per family and proof of residency is required.

- The Arbor Day Celebration will be held from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in Hudson Park. Trees will also be given away at the Wakulla County extension office from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Small Business Saturday of Wakulla will hold their Wakulla Winter Festival in Hudson Park from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Saturday, January 27**

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



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# CROSSWORD

**CLUES ACROSS**

- 1. Basics
- 4. Swiss river
- 7. Constrictor snake
- 8. Building occupied by monks
- 10. Discount
- 12. Deal a blow to
- 13. Relating to the ear
- 14. Thyrotropin

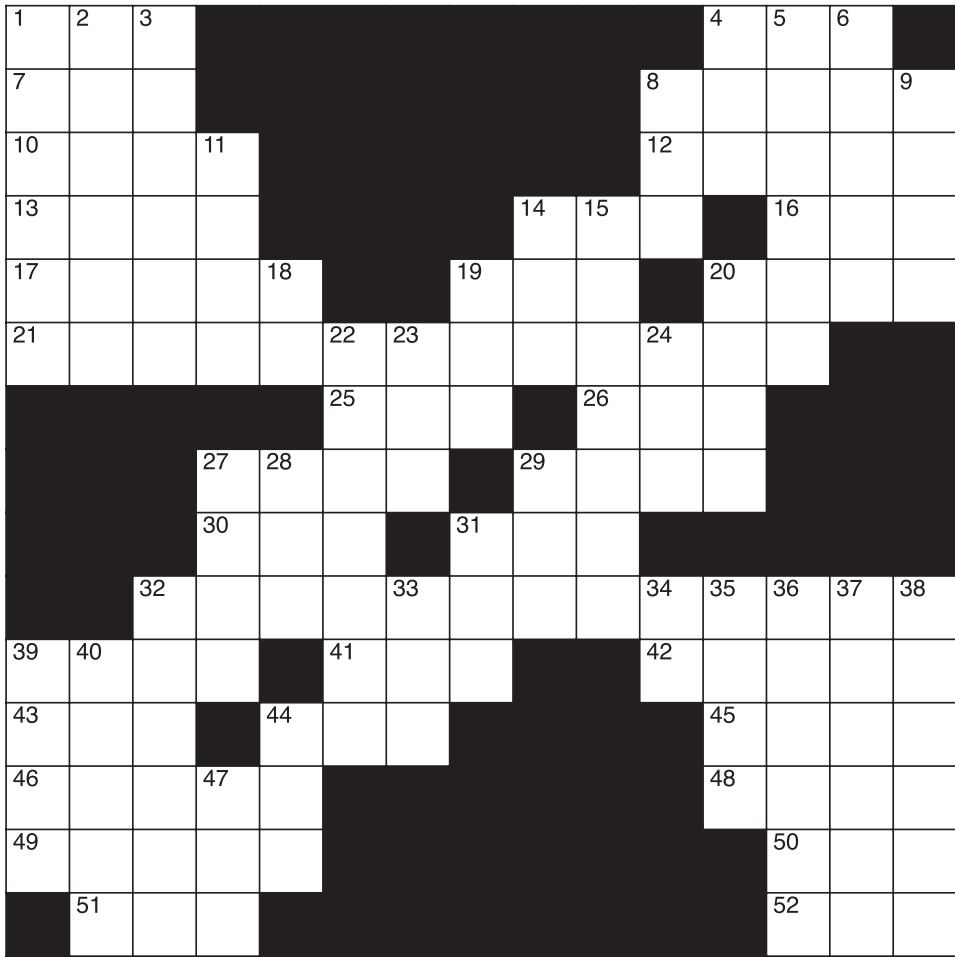
- 16. Loud, unpleasant noise
- 17. Large intestines
- 19. Move with a curving trajectory
- 20. Witnesses
- 21. You need both to live
- 25. Dash
- 26. Network
- 27. Dig

- 29. C. European river
- 30. Supplement with difficulty
- 31. Corporate executive
- 32. Carroll O'Connor's onscreen wife
- 39. No variation
- 41. Airborne (abbr.)
- 42. "Heidi" author
- 43. Affirmative

- 44. Pie \_\_\_ mode
- 45. W. Asian country
- 46. Grotesque or bizarre
- 48. Delicacy (archaic)
- 49. Textile
- 50. Denial
- 51. Electronic data processing
- 52. Attempt

- 11. Outer
- 14. One-time aerospace firm
- 15. Seafood
- 18. Commercial
- 19. Epoxy hardener (abbr.)
- 20. Samoan monetary unit
- 22. Type of gland
- 23. Arrest
- 24. Check
- 27. Past participle of be
- 28. Alias
- 29. A major division of geological time
- 31. Kids programming channel (abbr.)
- 32. Joked
- 33. Helps little firms
- 34. Roman numeral
- 50

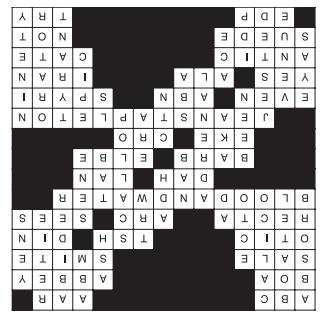
- 35. Impressive in size or scope
- 36. Domineering leader
- 37. A person who delivers a speech
- 38. One after 89
- 39. Young hawk
- 40. The scene of any event or action
- 44. A team's best pitcher
- 47. Integrated data processing



**CLUES DOWN**

- 1. Engulf
- 2. Waterside hotel
- 3. Printed cotton fabric
- 4. Defensive nuclear weapon
- 5. One who follows the rules
- 6. Lace up once more
- 8. Fire byproduct
- 9. Hankerings

- 11. Outer
- 14. One-time aerospace firm
- 15. Seafood
- 18. Commercial
- 19. Epoxy hardener (abbr.)
- 20. Samoan monetary unit
- 22. Type of gland
- 23. Arrest
- 24. Check
- 27. Past participle of be
- 28. Alias
- 29. A major division of geological time
- 31. Kids programming channel (abbr.)
- 32. Joked
- 33. Helps little firms
- 34. Roman numeral
- 50



**Join the Wakulla County Garden Club**  
to celebrate **Florida Arbor Day**  
& the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the *Florida Federation of Garden Clubs*

Friday, January 19<sup>th</sup>  
11:00 – 11:30 a.m.  
Medart Recreation Park

Cheer the planting of 2 live oaks. Enjoy leaf- and tree-shaped cookies.

Wakulla County Garden Club, Duke Energy Foundation, & Florida Federation of Garden Clubs  
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# Sopchoppy School will celebrate 100 years in April

By **COLEMAN WELLS**  
Of Wakulla High School

It's a milestone worth celebrating as the Historic Sopchoppy High School prepares to commemorate its 100th birthday in 2024. This cherished institution holds a special place in the hearts of both its alumni and the local community, having played a pivotal role in the educational and cultural history of Wakulla County.

Constructed at a cost of \$9,500 by the skilled hands of Guy Winthrop, Sopchoppy High School proudly holds the distinction of being the first high school in Wakulla County. However, the journey to its establishment was a community effort. Mrs. Edmonia Stansbury took the reins and organized fundraisers that rallied the community to contribute towards the construc-



tion costs, ensuring the school's accreditation.

The City of Sopchoppy's citizens and the School Board also chipped in, solidifying their commitment to education and the future of their community. As Wakulla County continued to grow during the 1930s, two additional buildings were added to the school campus,

a testament to the institution's commitment to keeping pace with progress.

In 1996, Sopchoppy High School closed its doors to students, teachers, and staff, as they transitioned to Medart Elementary. However, the school's legacy did not fade away. The building quickly found a new purpose, becoming a thriv-

ing center for the community. The Wakulla Community Theater and the Sopchoppy Opry became tenants, hosting major events that breathed life into the historic halls. Notably, the Opry played a vital role in generating revenue to support the ongoing restoration of the school's iconic buildings.

As the centennial celebration approaches, we look forward to sharing first-hand experiences from former students who walked the halls of Sopchoppy High School. Their stories will provide invaluable insight into the profound impact this school and its community have had on the rich tapestry of Wakulla County's history. Mark your calendars for March 2024, as Sopchoppy High School stands ready to mark a century of education, culture, and community spirit.

## Real life optimism



By **GREG GAST**

Most of us tend to fall into one of two categories: optimists or pessimists. These two categories are a matter of seeing the world. Are you an optimist who has a positive outlook on things, even when things are not going your way? Or do you always assume the worst-case scenario no matter what situation you are in?

Winston Churchill once said, "A pessimist see difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty." Optimism is a positive state of mind; a

belief in one's ability to succeed in life and have a bright future. A pessimist believes that only bad things will happen.

Some psychologists suggest that optimism is much more of an explanatory style. It refers to one's confidence that most situations will be mostly good and favorable.

Optimists tend to perceive unpleasant experiences are caused by temporary, specific and external circumstances. Therefore, they are more welcoming and accepting of the idea of change. Optimists have a more positive perspective and a longer lifespan than pessimists. They are also more tolerant of negative consequences of sickness, stress, and depression. Their attitudes are associated with the benefits, such as lower stress levels and a higher perseverance to achieve goals. The downside is that

an optimist needs to be mindful not to have unreasonable expectation about how great their future will be. In being over-optimistic they may take too many risks, especially with their wealth and wellbeing.

Here are a few benefits of optimism: Improved physical health, increased performance, improved mental wellbeing, perseverance, less stress, happier in life, better coping skills, receive more job offers and promotions, and great at bouncing back from adversity.

Can a pessimist become an optimist? Studies have shown that about 25% of optimism is through inheritance. The other 75% maybe be influenced by external factors such as socioeconomic status. In another study it was shown that people can change their attitudes through mindfulness training. That they felt less depressed,

more motivated, and happier due to the training.

Here are some other methods that be beneficial to incorporate into your daily life to become more optimistic: Practice mindfulness it is an excellent approach to counteract one's inclination to dwell on stressful situations; which as fertile grounds for negativity. Surround yourself with like-minded peo-

ple. It has been said that "Whom you spend time with is whom you become" Don't spend time on pessimistic people, it not a mystery that they will make feel more negative. Practice gratitude it comes from the mind. It is the commitment of love and devotion toward those who have value to you in your life. It is a great way to boost happiness in yours and others lives.

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 Monthly.

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*Lisa Craze, CFC*  
Wakulla County Tax Collector

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programs to prevent blindness and provide support for Floridians with disabilities.

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Purchase the red, white and blue Bikers Care tag, you will help thousands of citizens by funding

**20th Annual Free Trees!**  
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# ARBOR DAY

**Saturday, January 20<sup>th</sup>**  
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, Eastern Mayhaw, Live Oak, Pignut Hickory, Possumhaw, Southern Red Cedar, Rusty Black Haw, Dahoon Holly, Chinquapin, Redbud, Overcup Oak, Red Maple, River Birch, Sweet Shrub, Longleaf Pines, & 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 Sun & The Wakulla News.*



# The St. Marks River towns

By Elizabeth F. Smith, published in the Magnolia Monthly in 1964

## Chapter One

Today the St. Marks River on the eastern side of Wakulla County is a sleepy, half tropical stream, not very wide, which above the bridge at Newport looks like a setting for Trader Horn. The stream is so narrow it is doubtful that the draw on the bridge has been used a half dozen times in the past two years.

But the appearance of the river today is deceptive, for the turmoil on that narrow, slithering stream a hundred and forty years ago would make a modest textbook not in history, but in economics. A war was waged all up and down that stretch of water for the cotton trade from the Florida and Georgia interior, and involved in this dog-eat-dog rivalry between towns on the river and other cotton ports on the Gulf were spinning mills in New England, bankers in New York City, and a war of words in newspapers on the whole Florida coast.

The story of this trade was told in earlier installments of the Magnolia Monthly, but it was seen thru the eyes of two New England families, the Hamlins and the Ladds, the first people to settle on the St. Marks in 1826 and start shipping the cotton north by water.

Both families were traced through three and four generations which is why the present article returns to the towns themselves and concentrates on the rise and fall of these communities over a period of 40 years until the places they occupied have returned to the same entangled growth of trees, moss, vines and briar that were there when the first cotton merchant sailed up the river five years after Florida was purchased from Spain and became a territory of the United States.

The first argument historians have is about which town came first, Magnolia or Rock Haven.

The federal government established a post office at St. Marks in 1827 (we do not include St. Marks in this survey since people started building about the old fort at the same time the Yankee Hamlins were going upstream. It was the second group that kept moving around for the best economic advantage), at Magnolia in 1828, and at Rock Haven in 1829.

W. T. Cash, Florida historian and state librarian in Tallahassee before his death, states: "Altho the name Rock Haven appears on Florida maps of the territorial period, we know almost nothing about the early Florida village which stood just below the natural bridge on the St. Marks. While the reasons of its founding are uncertain, we can well believe that its settlers expected the U.S. Government to cut a canal through the natural bridge so that navigation of the St. Marks could be extended 15 or 20 miles above Rock Haven, thus making the newly established cotton planting section of eastern Leon and southern Jefferson counties easy of access. The expected canal was actually dug. (See page 108, U. S. Senate document No. 1, 24th Congress, first session). But when it was finished, Rock Haven had probably been abandoned.

Mr. Cash is at variance with the handbook of the Palm Beach, Fla., Stamp Club which lists Rock Haven's post office being founded in 1829 for he further states: "A post office was es-



The first issue of the Magnolia Advertiser, published Jan. 2, 1828 under editor Augustus Steele. The newspaper lasted just over a year

ablished at this point, possibly as early as 1826. The report of the post office department for the year ending March 31, 1828, gives \$2.40 as the receipts of the Rock Haven office. We can safely infer that it had been discontinued during the fiscal year, as a result of the founding of Magnolia, a few miles down the river."

There may be more about Rock Haven still to be discovered by historians. It is hard enough to find out the actual site of the next town built on the river above St. Marks. Magnolia was supposed to have been built about two miles north of Newport, but there is no evidence today that it was this far above Newport. The ground there along the river is so low and swampy it is inconceivable that docks for shipping cotton could have been built with the material and machinery available in the 1820s. However, the old Magnolia Cemetery, a good distance in from the river is located at this spot, and still survives in the form of 14 still legible headstones.

The possibility that Magnolia was built closer to the sulphur springs a mile north of Newport is much more likely. The springs is still used by the children of Newport as a swimming pool and surrounding it are irregular

lines of coquina rock suggestive early building foundations.

But how old these are is anyone's guess since the sulphur springs had many summer cottages around it in the latter 1800's and is still some distance from the river with all its bustling activity.

The sulphur springs are mentioned in an advertisement of lots for sale in Magnolia printed in the Pensacola Gazette on August 10, 1827:

### TOWN OF MAGNOLIA

Lots in the new town of Magnolia are offered for sale. This place is situated 8 miles from Port St. Marks on the St. Marks River and 15 miles from Tallahassee. The river can be navigated to the town by vessels drawing 8 feet of water. The situation is high, dry and healthy. It has two sulphur springs in the vicinity, one of which is only 200 yards from the public square. They are said to possess great medical qualities. For further information of terms, etc., apply to J. G. and N. Hamlin, St. Marks, and Augustus Steele, Tallahassee.

Augustus Seele, the man who apparently ran this ad, later became the editor of the Magnolia Advertiser. His

name appears from time to time in activities along the river and his career could stand further study.

Mr. Cash continues in his article, "It may have been the influence of progressive Magnolians that caused the U.S. War Department in 1828 to have a survey made of the St. Marks River. In a letter to his Chief of Engineers, dated September 11, 1828, David B. Macomb, engineer in charge, said, 'Vessels drawing over six feet of water are now under the necessity of lightening their cargoes before they can reach Magnolia. About three quarters of a mile below the town is a casual obstruction of about one hundred yards long and twenty feet broad, lying at the bottom and parallel with the river, on the right bank, consisting of deposit of mud and grass, the removal of which would make the river navigable for vessels drawing ten feet of water at high tide...The removal would cost five hundred dollars.'

Two months later appeared the first issue of the Magnolia Advertiser. The editor, Augustus Steele, was a native of Connecticut and one of the promoters of Magnolia. The paper lasted only a little over a year, but considering the time and place of its publication, the fact it was printed at all is remarkable. The heavy iron presses as well as the paper, had to be shipped in by boat. The durability of the newsprint make modern paper suspect, since the originals have been preserved and a complete set still exist. They are at the P. K. Yonge library at the University of Florida. The paper went out of business in January, 1830, but apparently not due to lack of prosperity in Magnolia, for Mr. Cash continues:

"The years 1831 and 1832 must have been the most prosperous in Magnolia's history. The highest postal receipts for any year were \$256.60 for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1831. Proof that the inhabitants were having big dreams of their town's future was their successful attempt to get the legislative council of 1832 to incorporate the Marchants and Planters Bank of Magnolia, with a right to have a capital stock of \$300,000."

The citizens of Magnolia were determined to stop anyone who interfered with their progress. They didn't want towns being built in competition with their own, and they were hostile to the people of St. Marks, the only other town of any size in the vicinity.

Other than the competition that St. Marks offered to the lucrative cotton trade, other unnamed factors may have been present. Unless otherwise proved, the people at St. Marks were southerners, while the Magnolians were nearly all from the New England states, and regional feelings, then as now, were invariably hostile, especially when profits were at stake. (To be continued)

Much of the information for this article came from a typed manuscript in the hands of A. L. Porter of Crawfordville. Judge Porter no longer knows where the manuscript is located, but it was based on an article written by W.T. Cash of Tallahassee and appeared in the 1944 edition of papers read to the Tallahassee Historical Society.

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# Wakulla Senior Center update

By **CHRIS RUSSELL**

Wow! Can you believe that the ball has dropped on 2023 and we are now into 2024?

It seems like just yesterday that we were preparing for total chaos during Y2K, yet that was nearly a quarter-century ago.

Time flies when you are having fun and fun, fun, fun, was what happening during the last quarter of the year at the Wakulla Senior Center.

Some of the highlights included: an amazing Halloween party and costume contest; an awesome Thanksgiving Dinner that fed more than 150 seniors and was sponsored by Southern Oaks Real Estate and Supervisor of Elections

Joe Morgan. Heck, even the Wakulla Senior Center Board of Directors got into the mix of heaping on helpings of delicious fixins and love during the Thanksgiving Dinner.

And rounding out the year, December included Santa's buddy Sheriff Jared Miller donating a new Christmas tree along with an assortment of beautiful decorations to liven up the Senior Center, as well as a Senior Christmas gift event and luncheon where 150-plus seniors received gifts. A special thank you to Crawfordville Pharmacy for their donations to help make this a reality.

As you can tell, it was a fun and busy few months at Your Senior Center and

none of these events would be possible without the generous support of our community, volunteers, and donors. **THANK YOU!**

Included along with the wonderful events noted above, the Senior Center Team was busy as ever taking care of their clients.

Since July the Senior Center has served more than 10,000 meals to seniors in Wakulla County – that's right, more than 10,000 in just the last six months!

Additionally, Wakulla Transportation is operated and managed by this very same team. During 2023, Wakulla Transportation provided nearly 8,000 rides to citizens in Wakulla

County, with more than 3,000 of those trips being medically related. This service is a monumental undertaking by the team, but assisting with the transportation needs of our fellow citizens is a very worthy endeavor and the team does a great job helping out our neighbors.

As a reminder, Wakulla Transportation is available to all citizens of Wakulla County, not just senior citizens.

As we forge ahead into 2024, the Wakulla Senior Center Council Board of Directors will be lead by our new incoming Board President Ms. Pat Dunn, who has served on the Board of Directors for years.

Pat will be taking over the helm from

Mr. John Shuff who during his tenure as President lead the Board into a direction that truly achieved some great accomplishments, including, but not limited to enhancing the financial stability of the Senior Center, developing a Strategic Plan, incorporating annual financial audits to ensure that the Board is on track with its fiduciary responsibilities, helped oversee the transition of several different Senior Center executive directors, and none of the preceding includes his handyman skills that he put to use around the Senior Center.

The Board of Directors and the whole Senior Center Team would like to express a full heart-

felt **THANK YOU** to John for all of his efforts to get the Senior Center to where it is today.

The Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers of the Senior Center would like to sincerely thank each and every individual, business, and agency that helps us to help our senior citizens in Wakulla County, without your gracious support, we would fall short of our efforts to enrich the lives of our neighbors.

Wishing each of you a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year!

*Chris Russell is a director on the Wakulla Senior Center Council's Board of Directors.*



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Small newspaper preview images with headlines: Robyn Hurst remembered, Hertz, Looney to return for retrial, Heavy security at hearing, Charter review discusses spring protection, St. Marks to raise sewer rates 75% on residents

Small newspaper preview images with headlines: Auditions for Musical, Brad Harvey pleads to charges, Two drownings in separate incidents on July 4th, A man died while scuba diving a child drowned in a home pool

Small newspaper preview images with headlines: Election suit over after 3 years, Fired Chiles coach may join War Eagle coaching staff, Kevin Pettis and son may join coach at Wakulla High





*Wishing you a very Happy  
& Healthy New Year!*



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