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The county planning director is passionate about her work and community

By **LINDA ANN McDONALD**
 Correspondent

Passion in the workplace is a term that can have different meanings for different people. A common way to understand it is as a strong liking or desire for or devotion to some activity, object, or concept that relates to one's work. Being passionate about work means that you have a deep desire to do your job well, and you take pride in what you do. You're not just going through the motions, but instead, you're fully engaged in your work and committed to achieving your goals. It also means that you're motivated to learn and develop new skills.

To take pride in something means to feel very pleased about something or someone you are

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PHOTO BY LINDA ANN McDONALD

Somer Pell has worked for Wakulla County since 2005, when she started as a planning technician under then-Planning Director Donnie Sparkman.

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Reviewing your life insurance needs



By **BRIAN ENGLISH**

Life is an ever-evolving journey marked by significant milestones, personal growth, and unexpected changes.

As life unfolds, your financial and insurance needs also shift, changing from year to year, decade to decade.

A good example of this is life insurance. If you have a life insurance policy that you haven't reviewed recently, it may no longer align with your current needs. That is why reviewing your life insurance periodically may be a good approach.

Several factors affect the cost and availability of life insurance, including age, health, and the type and amount

of insurance purchased.

Life insurance policies have expenses, including mortality and other charges.

If a policy is surrendered prematurely, the policyholder may also pay surrender charges and face income tax implications.

You should consider determining whether you are insurable before implementing a strategy involving life insurance. Any guarantees associated with a policy are dependent on the ability of the issuing insurance company to continue making claim payments.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF PERIODIC REVIEWS

Some may think that once you secure a life insurance policy, you can set it and forget it. But life insurance isn't static. Just as your life doesn't stand still, neither should your

life insurance.

Periodic reviews of your policy help keep your life insurance in step with your evolving situation. Changes in your life can impact the role you want life insurance to play.

HOW TO REVIEW YOUR LIFE INSURANCE NEEDS

Reassessing your life insurance and bringing it in line with your life doesn't have to be complicated. Here are some suggestions that may help:

THE DIME METHOD

One practical approach to determining your life insurance needs is the DIME method.

This method involves adding your Debt, Income, Mortgage, and Education expenses.

- **Debt** - Consider all your outstanding debts, excluding your mortgage. This could include credit

card debt, personal loans, or car loans.

- **Income** - Calculate ten years of your income. This can start to help you understand what financial gaps may occur if you were gone.

- **Mortgage** - Add the amount required to pay off your mortgage. Using life insurance proceeds to pay off a mortgage may help your family keep its home.

- **Education** - Estimate the cost of your children's college education. You may want to use a range since costs can vary from school to school.

LIFE CHANGES

Has any life-changing event happened to you? These are situations that may alter your needs and responsibilities moving forward.

- **Change in Marital Status** - A marriage or a divorce can change your financial situation as well

as factors such as your policy's beneficiary.

- **Birth of Child** - A child is a gift. But they are also a financial consideration that you may want to take into account.

- **Change in Employment** - A new job or role in your company may change your income, which may cause you to reconsider your life insurance benefit.

- **Buying, Selling, or Paying off a Home** - Changes in ownership or the standing of your mortgage can alter your needs and strategy for the future.

THE VALUE OF PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE

While these steps provide a general idea of your life insurance needs, nothing can replace the expertise of a financial professional, who can provide assistance, answer your ques-

tions, and guide you through the process. In addition, a financial professional can provide insights into how certain policies are structured and may have thoughts on the life insurance company you may be considering.

Life insurance is not a one-size-fits-all solution.

It is a dynamic financial tool that may need to evolve with your life.

Periodic reviews can help determine what your family needs, no matter what life brings your way.

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

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The Old Pro: What's next?



By **AL HARTMAN**
The Old Pro

Hello, and I hope you had a good New Years!

The weather has been harsh, and it's looking like this winter is going to be a tough one. So keep your snuggies close at hand.

A lot of the reef fish have moved in close

er to shore as the water has cooled down. But it's been hard to get out there. Uncertain weather is keeping a lot of anglers off the water. High winds and choppy water and waves has made it tough.

But the weather hasn't hurt hunting much. Especially hunters with enclosed stands.

There are some fancy ones being made now. You can even take a portable heater with you. A friend of mine has a stand that is more like a room in a house. He has a coffee maker, a reclining chair and sliding windows.



I have been hunting this guy for a couple of years but just haven't got a lucky shot yet!

I have to build me a new one as that nasty storm last week wrecked mine. I can

remember years ago we climbed a tree and hung on to a limb for deer life.

From the reports I've gotten from hunters it has been a good season so far. Plenty of deer moving and the duck hunters are saying not as many ducks this year and the weather has been rough on them too.

And just to remind you, duck season closes Jan. 28, and zone C deer season in Wakulla County closes Jan. 21.

In the last few months I have written about various diseases and invasive species affecting wildlife and domestic animals in Florida.

We have sick turtles, birds, deer, dogs, cats and horses. We have pythons, lizards

and several venomous snakes not native to our country. I saw a post from FWC that there are a population of anacondas, world's largest snake, now roaming our state. One was found in North Florida near the Alabama border.

Last month I wrote about Chronic Wasting Disease affecting deer herds across the nation. They found one in Florida, but it was in Northwest Florida in Holmes County, not central Florida.

Well, happy hunting and fishing.

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



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Drinking enough water is important to our overall health and well-being. Adding fruit, spices, and other flavorings can make water more palatable to people who do not like plain water.

The growing Watertok trend



By SAMANTHA KENNEDY

In a world where health-conscious choices are becoming increasingly popular, Watertok emerges, for some, as a refreshing trend, offering a new perspective on hydration. Watertok is a growing community on TikTok where people share “water recipes,” a fusion of water and additions such as sugar-free syrups and flavored powders. These concoctions have gained traction as alternatives to the sugary beverages that dominate our market. At its core, Watertok encourages individuals to explore the vast possibilities of homemade flavored water and the importance of proper hydration.

Water is essential for our well-being, and many struggle to meet their daily intake requirements. Watertok addresses this chal-

lenge by transforming ordinary water into something more palatable for those who dislike plain water. One benefit of Watertok lies in its simplicity – water infused with various fruits, herbs, and spices. This mixture not only enhances the flavor but may also add an additional nutritional boost to the otherwise plain liquid.

One of the key advantages of Watertok is its versatility. Whether it is a burst of citrusy freshness from lemons and oranges or a soothing hint of mint and cucumber, the possibilities are endless. This innovative approach to hydration encourages individuals to tailor their water to their taste preferences while reaping the benefits of added nutrients.

Homemade flavored water allows people to break free from the monotony of plain water, making hydration an enjoyable experience. This is particularly beneficial for those who find it challenging to consume an adequate amount of water daily. The subtle sweetness of fruits or the aromatic infusion of herbs can

entice even the most reluctant water drinkers.

Beyond its flavor-enhancing qualities, Watertok brings a nutritional dimension to hydration. Fruits like berries and citrus provide a rich source of vitamins, antioxidants, and essential minerals. Herbs such as mint and basil not only add a refreshing taste but also contribute unique health benefits. For example, mint is known for its digestive properties, while basil is a source of anti-inflammatory compounds.

The homemade nature of Watertok also aligns with the growing trend of sustainability and eco-conscious living. By using fresh, locally sourced ingredients, individuals can reduce their carbon footprint and contribute to a healthier planet. It is a small step that carries significant implications for both personal well-being and environmental sustainability.

However, Watertok is not without its pitfalls. Critics have made the argument that the addition of flavored powders and syrups in the amounts suggested can

be unhealthy due to the copious amounts of artificial sweeteners and colors they contain. They claim those in the Watertok community are misleading their followers with their health claims. While water serves as the beverage’s base, can it still be called water if so many things have been added to it? After all, water is the base of coffee, tea, and soda, but they are not called water. Where is the line drawn?

The debate continues.

Watertok is not just a beverage trend; it is touted as a lifestyle choice that promotes hydration and nutrition. Embracing the art of homemade flavored water allows individuals to take control of their hydration needs, making it a personalized and enjoyable experience. But as with most nutrition trends, it is important to get all the facts before jumping right into trying it.

For more information about this and other nutrition topics, please contact Samantha Kennedy at the UF/IFAS Wakulla County Extension Service at (850) 926-3931.



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The fungus among us



By **ERIK LOVSTRAND**

In my opinion, this is a wonderful time of year for many reasons. Not the least of which is the opportunity to witness the fruiting phase of a wide variety of mushroom species that we would otherwise be totally unaware of.

Fungi were once grouped with plants in the Kingdom Plantae. They have since been classified into their own Kingdom-level grouping due to several key differences from plants. The Fungi Kingdom is incredibly diverse, with an estimated 2-3 million species, a tiny fraction of which have been described. It includes not only mushrooms but also molds and yeasts.

Winter temperature fluctuations, along with consistent rainy fronts across our area trigger many fungi to fruit. However, long before we see a mushroom, an extensive mycelial network has been busily working, out of sight and mind, colonizing the substrate that the organism is growing on. Food sources are often organic material in the soil, or dead (and occasionally living) wood from trees. Fungal mycelia secrete enzymes to digest organic material and are responsible for a significant portion of all decomposition in terrestrial ecosystems. Fungi are also critical partners with most plants via mycorrhizal relationships with root systems that provide important benefits to both partners. Of course, as any gardener knows, not all relations with fungi are beneficial to their host.

One interesting mushroom that has been popping up lately is a species of “stinkhorn” known as the

columnar stinkhorn, which describes the four orange columns, connected at the top, that arise from an “egg” in the ground. The egg stage resembles a puffball prior to the columns erupting. One interesting (many say disgusting) feature that all stinkhorns have in common is a foul-smelling odor produced by mature specimens which smells like rotting meat. The odor arises from the dark, sticky spore mass inside the columns and attracts flies, which serve as this group’s dispersal mechanism. This mushroom commonly erupts where people have used wood chips for a mulch layer. Right now, I am seeing many of them at my house where I cut down some large pine trees last year and left a healthy supply of wood chips on the ground.

Another interesting mushroom that developed on a downed log in our woodlot is called the bear’s head tooth mushroom. This species can be quite large, and our specimen was at least 14 inches wide. It had several branching arms, which terminated in clusters of hanging “icicle-like” fingers. As visually stunning as mushrooms can be, they tend to make us forget that they are only a small piece of a much larger organism. Have you ever wondered how mushrooms can erupt in a large circular ring, all at the same time (referred to as a “fairy ring”)? It is because the perimeter of the ring is where the active growing portion of the fungal mycelia extends to. The open interior of the ring is where the mycelia have already consumed the organic material in the soil as the fungus spread.

Take your kids for a walk in the woods to look for mushrooms this winter. It is a good way to teach them early about the importance of these amazing decomposers, while also warning about never putting them in their



mouth. One species that I have seen locally is called the “destroying angel”: very beautiful but very deadly.

A quick read regarding mushroom toxins and their effects should inspire a healthy dose of caution in any mushroom enthusiast.

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

PHOTO BY ERIK LOVSTRAND

The fetid odor of the columnar stinkhorn will usually be your first clue that it is fruiting nearby.

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Living a great real life



By GREG GAST

What is a good life? Is it a life that is self-fulfilling? Is it characterized as being joyful, filled with the enjoyment of the small pleasures of life?

A good life consists of many different experiences of goodness such as saying that you are healthy, happy, pleased, blessed or have a good reputation.

Is it enough just to live a good life? What

about living a great life.

You need a plan. You won't go on a road trip without a map. And you shouldn't try to build a great life without a plan either. A plan that will take you from here to there to a great life you can envision.

To begin creating your plan you'll need to clarify why you want a great life. You will need new skills and you will need to commit to the goal of having a great life.

The first step is to believe in yourself. Remember the first time you rode a bike, or drove a car? It's engaging in personal development, and you have had it in you all along.

Developing a mindset that focuses

on your belief in your ability to create a great life, identifying your values, defining what a great life is in your own words is a good start.

Next begin to think positively about life. We all know someone who will find the one bad thing in every situation. Learning to think happy thoughts can make even the most obnoxious situation more enjoyable.

Finding the silver linings in every moment of everyday makes life a little better. Boost your self-confidence if you don't have self-confidence, it's easy to think that there's something wrong with us. It's a skill that when we learn how to think, feel, and act in ways that

makes us a person we really love, we can be more self-confident and happier.

Create a work-life balance. Find out if you're at risk for burnout.

Establish better boundaries. Engage in restorative experiences and do more things that energize you and help you live happily.

Build resilience – life sometimes knocks us down, there's no getting around it. Practice mindful acceptance observing the situation to increase your awareness.

Find the positives in negative situations – understanding the benefits of negative emotions. Beef up your coping skills and stop your negative thought cycles.

Build mindfulness – be more in the present moment. Take a break from technology and find your life purpose. By building this skill your life will become more meaningful and more satisfying and you can be happier more easily.

Practice kindness – because sometimes we forget or ignore how we affect others. Kindness fuels a longer lasting and more enduring type of happiness. Practice gratitude and make positive impacts on the lives of others.

Finally, build healthy relationships. It is the most important factor in both our health and our happiness.

Stay off the phone when you're with

others and be careful about how you use social media.

Don't be comfortable with living a good life but turn goodness into greatness by continually developing yourself, exercising your passion, setting bigger goals, and making meaningful impacts on society.

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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Somer Pell

From Front Page

closely connected with, such as your work, your achievements, or your family.

Somer Pell, Wakulla County's Assistant County Administrator of Community Development, brings both her pride and passion for Wakulla County to work with her every day.

"I love Wakulla County, I love Wakulla County so much it's almost to a fault," Pell says. She has been in her current role since Oct. 1, 2023.

"I have lived in Wakulla most of my life and attended Wakulla School District my entire academic career. I started working in 2005 with the county administration as a Planning Technician, entry level...front line...boots on the ground type of position, and I knew this was the place for me."

"My first public meeting was at the planning commission with Donnie Sparkman as the director and Mike Falk was chair at the time, the agenda item at the time was the Wakulla Springs bottled water facility. It was very high profile and serious, I went home concerned thinking, 'What did I get myself into?'"

"But my love for the county only fueled the desire within me to represent and support my community and what is best for it," Pell says. "That exact experience grew me in the direction of my career and I knew then what I truly wanted to do for my county, which is to represent, support and fight for my county and what is best for the people's interest."

Pell brings an arsenal of 19 years worth of expertise, experience, and knowledge to her role as Assistant County Administrator of Community Development. Certifications include Certified Flood Plain Manager which is a federal level certification which manages flood hazard areas and is utilized in emergency management for post-disaster assessment and disaster recovery, and to ensure requirements FEMA has for Wakulla County are met and maintained. Certified Public Manager, Certified Code Enforcement Officer and Certified Green Guide which offers environmental tours and education in flora and fauna.

Pell served as Director of Planning and Zoning for 9 years. She is responsible for the Plan-

ning and Zoning, Code Enforcement, Housing, GIS, Building Department, Industrial Development Authority, Historic Preservation, Local Mitigation Strategy, Parks and Facilities and Recreation, she is still serving as Planning Director. Pell is also responsible for Technical Review Committee meetings and serves as the liaison between county administration and Florida Department of Health.

"Wakulla is home for me, I enjoy Wakulla's Sportsman's Paradise, I spend my time in the woods, on the bay, any of the four rivers, this has always been my home and I have no desire to live anywhere else."

She is married to Brent Pell, former Engineer for Wakulla County and currently Director of Public Works for Leon County. Together they share four boys – Ethan, Evan, John and William, three dogs – Barney, Drake and Sudsy, one female barn cat named Rona, and six chickens.

"My favorite fishing is inshore, offshore, scalloping, gardening, plants are a passion for me, I absolutely love Sunblest's nursery plants."

Pell's community involvement includes working with the Gridiron Club for Wakulla



Somer Pell loves being outside. Here she is with a red snapper she caught.

High School when her son was on the War Eagle football team.

"My son was playing football at Wakulla High School and a need was identified, I wanted to give back to the organization my children were in, it was important to

me," she says. "Football is life to my family; we have four boys!

"We had football season, soccer, baseball, track... All boys at the rec park all the time. Two of the boys graduated from Wakulla High School and moved onto

to trade skills, the other graduated from Wakulla Christian School and he is in college now, and my youngest is a junior at Wakulla High School, I am very proud of all of them."

"Wakulla County has such a great community of great caring people and serving them, addressing the needs of commissioners and balancing the new development and infrastructure development is what is important to me, the (county administration) is the backbone of the community, my role is like a puzzle with all the different pieces (the many sections) and making it all fit together to best benefit the interests of both the community and the people is what makes my job fulfilling," says Pell.



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On the Horizon:

The calendar of events for February

Thursday, February 1

- 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, February 2

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

Saturday, February 3

- Mardi Gras, sponsored by Friends of the Library, will be held at the community center from 6-9 p.m. with live music and a cash bar. Tickets are \$50 each.
- The Panacea Community Garden Farmer's Market will be held from 9 a.m. to 12

noon in Panacea.

- The WHO (Wildlife, Heritage, and Outdoors) festival will be held at the St. Marks Wildlife Refuge from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- 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, February 5

- The Wakulla County Board of County Commissioners meets at 5 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.
- 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, February 6

- 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, February 7

- 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 Stetching 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, February 8

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

Friday, February 9

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

Saturday, February 10

- The 25th Annual Valentine's Day parade and festival will be held at 10 a.m. and last until 5 p.m. in Hudson Park.
- The Sopchoppy community market will be held from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Depot Park.

Monday, February 12

- 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.

Thursday, February 15

- 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.

Monday, February 19

- President's Day – **Banks and some government offices will be closed.**
- The American Legion Post 114 will be meeting at the Wakulla County Public Library at 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 20

- 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.
- The Wakulla County BOCC will conduct a Workshop on at 3:00p.m. at the Commission Chambers, regarding the Opioid Settlement Funds Implementation Plan.

Saturday, February 24

- St. Marks hosts a community market every fourth Saturday of the month at 815 Leon Port Drive from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m.

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CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Shed tears
- 5. Luxury jewelry designer
- 10. Goddess of wisdom
- 12. Convert into a particular form
- 14. Working-class people
- 16. It borders Canada (abbr.)
- 18. A princess can detect its presence
- 19. Red-brown seabream
- 20. Defunct retail empire
- 22. Vase
- 23. Demeter's equivalent

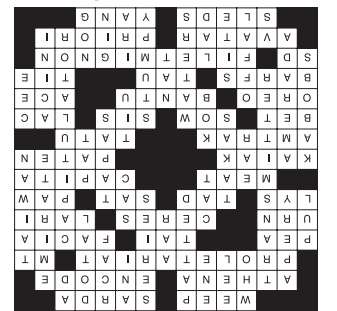
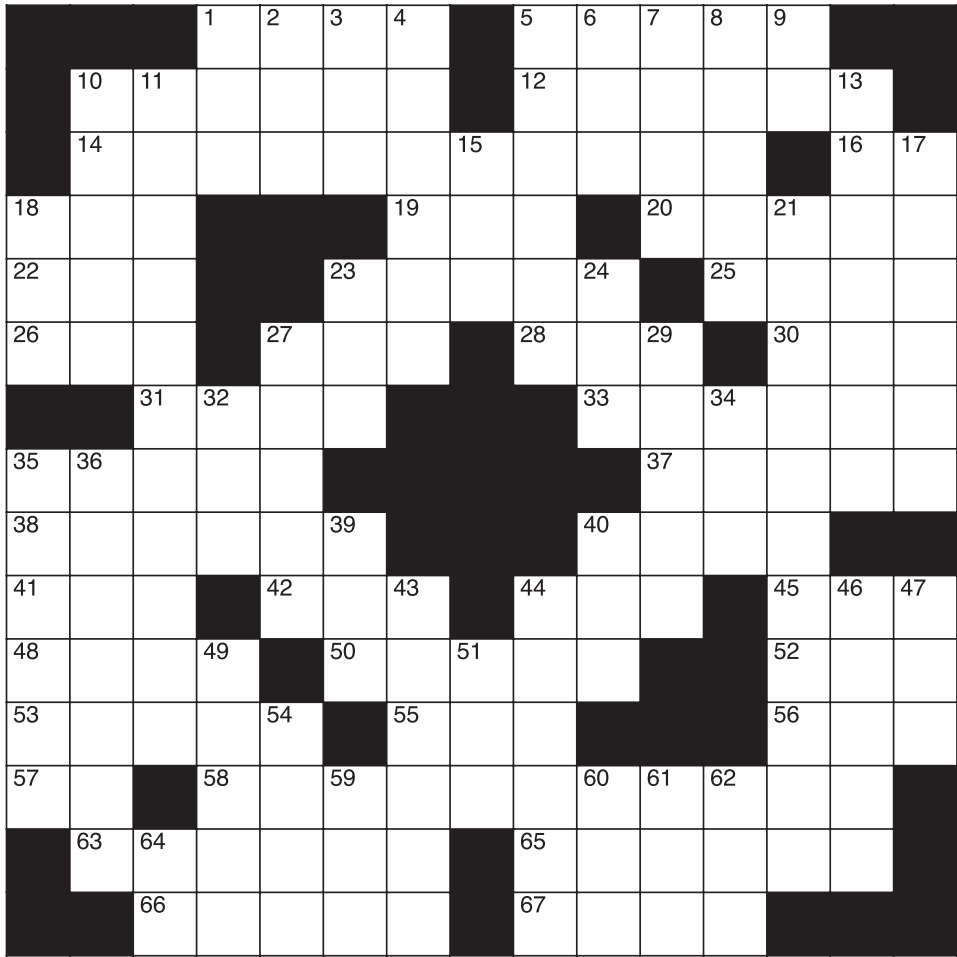
- 25. Monetary unit of the Maldives
- 26. French and Belgian river
- 27. Small amount
- 28. High schoolers' test
- 30. Animal's foot
- 31. Some is red

- 33. Per ___: each
- 35. Swedish jazz pop duo
- 37. Plate for Eucharist
- 38. Train line
- 40. Russian pop duo
- 41. Stake
- 42. Plant by scattering
- 44. Female sibling
- 45. City of Angels hoopsters (abbr.)
- 48. Popular cookie brand
- 50. Group of Niger-Congo languages
- 52. A team's best pitcher
- 53. Vomits
- 55. 19th letter of Greek alphabet
- 56. Men's fashion accessory
- 57. Its capital is Pierre (abbr.)
- 58. Expensive cut of steak
- 63. Popular James Cameron film
- 65. A ___: relating to knowledge gleaned from deduction
- 66. Kids' snow toys
- 67. Flip side to yin

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Global public health agency
- 2. Snake-like fish
- 3. Midway between northeast and east
- 4. Dabbed
- 5. TV show
- 6. Folk singer DiFranco
- 7. Canadian flyers
- 8. Of the dowry
- 9. Commercial
- 10. The act of imitating
- 11. Equipment used to broadcast radio or TV signals
- 13. Lands of an emir
- 15. Swiss river
- 17. Island
- 18. Monetary unit of Afghanistan
- 21. One who surrenders under agreed conditions
- 23. Garfield is one
- 24. A baglike structure in a plant or animal
- 27. Small boats used in the Black Sea
- 29. Small savory Spanish dishes
- 32. Body part
- 34. Touch lightly

- 35. Popular grilled foods on a stick
- 36. ___ Hess: oil company
- 39. Antelope with a reddish coat
- 40. Pharaoh of Lower Egypt
- 43. Pink Floyd's Roger
- 44. Short and thick
- 46. Small, sac-like cavities
- 47. Performer ___-Lo
- 49. Entrails of animal used as food
- 51. ___ King Cole, musician
- 54. Where construction is done
- 59. Chap
- 60. Investment vehicle
- 61. Often mixed with tonic
- 62. Holiday beverage egg ___
- 64. Against



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Sign up for the sheriff's Citizens Academy



By **JARED MILLER**
Wakulla Sheriff

When I took office as Sheriff in 2017 one of the central platforms I established for my administration was transparency. One of the ways that I helped further that goal was bringing back the Wakulla County Sheriff's Office Citizen's Academy.

Since taking office WCSO held at least one academy every year, except for 2020. I am excited once again to announce the dates for our next Wakulla County Sheriff's Office Citizen's Academy.

The Wakulla County Sheriff's Office is a multiweek course that provides those who attend with an inside look at the Sheriff's Office. Over the course of the class those who attend are given a guided tour of the Wakulla County Jail, get an up-close look at our communications and Road Patrol equipment, work with the Wakulla County CSI crew, and get to go through

some realistic training scenarios. My staff and I try to provide as many hands-on and active events as possible during the course. Every academy is a little bit different, however in the past students have gotten to walk through replica crime scenes and utilize the WCSO "shoot house" with simunition guns. Most recently during the Citizen's Academy our training division has utilized state of the art electronic equipment from the Florida Sheriff's Association to run students through life like use of force scenarios. Attendees will also receive loads of information regarding what it takes to run WCSO day to day, and an in depth look into the criminal justice system.

Beyond giving citizens hands-on experiences and information about the working of the Sheriff's Office. The Citizen's Academy allows me and my staff an opportunity to better get to know the Citizens of our great county. The first and last night of the Academy end with a group dinner, where WCSO staff, students, and myself have the chance to sit and fellowship with one another. We do this because while it is important that citizens understand what

goes on behind the scenes at WCSO, it is vital for them to know the individuals who make up this office. Being able to build relationships with citizens and them with us is my greatest goal of the Citizen's Academy. We've had former students of the class go on to become certified and work with us, and hopefully everyone who attends will become an ambassador for the Wakulla County Sheriff's Office and law enforcement.

This year's Citizens Academy will begin on March 5th and will be held every Tuesday from 6:30-8:00 PM. It will be held weekly every Tuesday (except the week of school spring break, 3/19) through April 23rd. If you have any questions or are interested in attending this or any future Citizen's Academy classes WCSO may hold, please contact Lt. Jeffrey Yarbrough at jyarbrough@wcsos.org.

As always please do not hesitate to call if there is anything that the Wakulla County Sheriff's Office can do for you, and please always report suspicious or illegal activity, 850-745-7100.

Jared Miller is sheriff of Wakulla County.

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The St. Marks River towns

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

Chapter Two

The Magnolians asked the same legislative council that granted them a bank charter NOT to grant a charter to St. Marks for building a bridge across the river near the old fort.

In the high flow rhetoric of that day the memorial read: "You (the council) are induced to believe that the applicants to your Honorable Body for the creation of this charter are not residents of this Territory: and that the sole object of this application is, by means of the Bridge, to bring into market, and secure the sale of lots laid off upon a tract of improved land, to which a bridge would give access, for individual and private speculation. For it is well known that upon the opposite shore of St. Marks, near the port there is no population to be accommodated by a Bridge, and it is respectfully submitted, whether the country can possibly be benefitted in any manner by having offered to it the facility of crossing the river by means of a proposed Bridge."

History being encrossed with speculation as well as facts, anyone reading the memorial could guess that no one lived in the area where the bridge wanted to go. The people who wanted a bridge were speculators who had lots to sell across the river from the town of St. Marks, and could not possible make money on the deal if there wasn't a bridge to make the land accessible. The Magnolians not only wanted as much of the cotton export as they could get and the bridge would not only cut off their upriver business by forcing the ships to stay below the bridge so that goods had to be lightered to their town, but every future resident of St. Marks was competition in an economic battle. *

Fort St. Marks was incorporated as a town on January 3, 1827,

more than a year before the incorporation of Magnolia, but the settlement around the fort must not have lasted long. "As early as 1828" says Mark F. Boyd in the Florida Historical Quarterly, "enterprising individuals, probably with the status of squatters, were making establishment on the St Marks, in and above the fort for the reception of the trade of that part of Florida and Georgia."

It was probably those above the fort, doubtless on or near the present site of the town, who got the name changed, leaving off the word Fort. The present town was incorporated February 1, 1833. In 1834, the Tallahassee Railroad Company,

which had recently been chartered by the Florida Legislative Council, asked Congress for a grant of 100 acres of land "commencing at low water mark at the point of confluence of the rivers of St. Marks and Wacolla (sic), and entering up the margin of said river, until a direct line from one river to another, there will be included the number of acres as aforesaid, according to the plat herewith exhibited."

The railroad company apparently wanted the 100 acres of land which included the site of old Fort St. Marks for a townsite, but their request was not granted. Instead of getting 100 acres, they were given ten a little farther up the river.

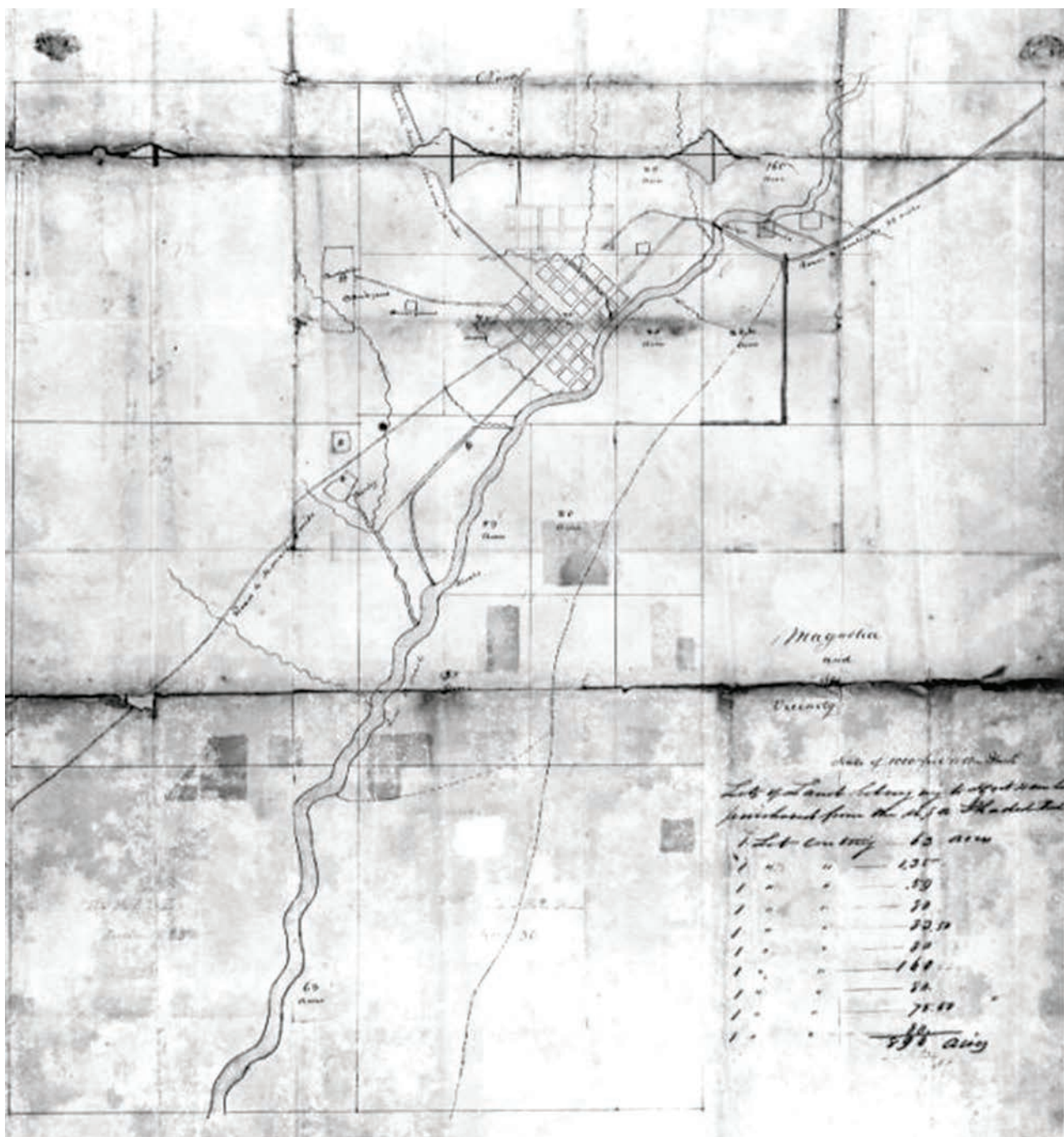
The company stated that the fort had long been abandoned as a military post and was then "in a state of dilapidation and ruin." As this was prepared the latter part of 1834, it seems to indicate there was no longer any town in or immediately adjacent to the fort.

Whatever the situation, four years before this a George Graham, commissioner of the General Land Office, recommended that a town be laid off at St. Marks. Graham's recommendation may have been made because he wanted the squatters on government land above the fort made to pay for the lots they had settled on. Whether this is so or not, in 1832 the U.S. Land Office advertised lots in the town for sale. The federal government was therefore unwittingly promoting a rival to Magnolia.

But even by this time Magnolia had already started to decline. Its bank, chartered in 1832, according to Brevard's "History of Florida", soon suspended specie payment. The legislative council of 1834 authorized the removal of the bank of Magnolia to Tallahassee, but according to Brevard, "the change was never made and the bank disappears from the scene."

Perhaps even more discouraging to Magnolia's promoters was an Act of Congress approved June 30, 1834, reading ad follows: "Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the U.S.A. in Congress assembled, that the President of the United States be, and he is hereby authorized, to remove the custom house now established at Magnolia to the town of St. Marks Harbor, which may be deemed suitable, when in his judgement the public interests and convenience may require it."

Continued on Page 14



FLORIDA ARCHIVES

An old map shows the location of the Town of Magnolia on the St. Marks River.

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The St. Marks River towns

From Page 12

Postal receipts had begun to decline in 1833 or earlier, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1834, they were down to \$221.50 and the next year they were only \$130.40.

A U.S. Post Office report for March, 1832 furnishes proof that Magnolia still had a post office and that Benjamin Byrd, who later served as state treasurer of Florida, was postmaster. However, the office had been abolished prior to July 1, 1840.

Magnolia's demise had more than one reason. The chief cause was the Tallahassee Rail Road Company's decision to strike the St. Marks River at a point several miles lower down. The second reason



A drawing of the Town of Magnolia, which was abandoned in the 1840s.

was undoubtedly the rather shallow depth of water in the river at Magnolia.

David B. Macomb of the U. S. Army Engineers in a report to his chief, Charles Gratiot, made September 11, 1828, said that vessels

drawing more than six feet of water had to have part of their cargoes unloaded two miles below Magnolia unless an obstruction he mentioned was removed. We have no record of the obstruction's removal and it

is pretty safe to infer that if it was, it did not produce the results Macomb expected. This obstruction was mentioned earlier in this report, and it would be interesting to deduce that Magnolia went out of ex-

istence because of a mere \$500, but there were too many other reasons to believe that Magnolia would have gone out of being anyway.

*In 1963 the people of Apalachicola, in neighboring Franklin

County had the same battle in the Florida Legislature over building a bridge to St. George Island, an almost empty piece of real estate which a group of Tallahassee realtors hope to develop and sell, and to which only a ferry went. An Apalachicola newspaper and the area senator, Luther Tucker, fought the proposed bridge for which county road funds would be used, but a bill authorizing the structure was passed anyway. So old are the problems of investments and the hope of profit.

The Wakulla County Historical Society Museum is in the Old Jail at 24 High Drive in Crawfordville. Visit us online at WakullaHistory.org.



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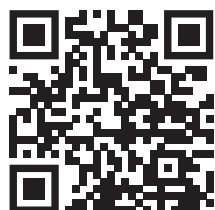
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Your local
source for news



SPRING WEDDING EXPO
AT THE LODGE AT SHERLOCK SPRINGS

Sunday, March 3, 2024 from 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Meet local wedding vendors, including florists,
caterers, DJs, bar services, photographers and more!

For more information or to reserve a vendor space,
please contact Kathy Rouse at 850 274-0512.



SHERLOCK
SPRINGS

2335 Bloxham Cutoff Road
Crawfordville, FL 32327

Top Left Photo By Briana Sealy Photography



**Open year round
to serve you.**

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Tax Returns
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Year Round



AWARDS

- 2013 Business Excellence Award
- 10 years (2014-2023) nominee Business Excellence Award
- 2023 Accounting Firm Readers' Choice, Wakulla Sun
- 2023 Accountant – Jessica Revell Readers' Choice, Wakulla sun
- 10 years (2014-2023) Accounting & Tax Firm Readers' Choice, Wakulla News

Located at 3234 Crawfordville Hwy. • www.shepardaccounting.com
Lorra@shepardaccounting.com | Jessica@shepardaccounting.com



Happy Valentine's Day!

**"Do everything in love."
1 Corinthians 16:14**



Your *Hometown* Financial Advisors

FEBRUARY WORKSHOP

What Baby Boomers Need To Know About Retirement Income

Savvy Social Security Planning for Boomers Workshop

**Presenters/Financial Advisors:
BRIAN ENGLISH and JORDAN LEE**

**At this workshop
you will learn...**

- 5 factors to consider when deciding to apply for benefits
- When it makes sense to delay benefits- and when it does not
- How to coordinate Social Security with your other forms of retirement income

Learn the rules for...

- How your benefit will be affected by the age at which you apply
- How spousal benefits work
- How survivor benefits work
- How divorced-spouse benefits work
- How benefits affect taxes
- When should you apply

The decisions you make today can have a tremendous bearing on the total amount of benefits you stand to receive over your lifetime.

**Tuesday,
February 27
6PM – 7PM
RSVP by Friday, February 23**

Don't miss this valuable workshop designed especially for baby boomers. Seating is limited.
Call today to reserve a spot for you and your friends.



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