

Obituary

Robert J. Allegroe (Bob) peacefully left this world. He was 95 years old. See page 10A.



Sports

Apopka High School football players signing day! See page 1B.



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APD introduces registry to help the special needs citizens

By Teresa Sargeant  
Apopka Chief Staff

Apopka Police Officer Emmanuel Sosa introduced his department's special needs registry, created to alert emergency responders of a person with autism or other special needs in a home or vehicle, at the Wednesday, February 7, City Council meeting.

According to Emmanuel Sosa, the special needs registry includes a spreadsheet with the registrant's information that any Apopka Police Department member can access, an at-risk report, and a hazard screen added to the registrant's screen on Molecular Imaging and Contrast Agent Database (MICAD).

As part of the registry, the APD will provide two decals, one for the front entrance of the home and other for the back of a vehicle.

The decals will enable Apopka officers to be

aware that there is a person in a home or vehicle who may have, but not limited to, the following: limited communication, limited mobility, deafness, blindness, intellectual disabilities, autism or be on the spectrum, dementia, Alzheimer's Disease, and epilepsy or seizure disorders.

"The Special Needs Registry program, it means a lot to me. It hits home because I have a lot of family members who are persons with disabilities and/or autism," Sosa told the City Council. "On top of that, over the course of the past six years in my career, we respond to so many calls for service where we are dealing with these people one-on-one, and a lot of our calls for service thankfully have been resolved in a peaceful manner."

"We go into these calls for service blind a lot of the times, and/or with

See CITY Page 5A

Man sentenced to nearly four years in prison for possession of stolen firearms

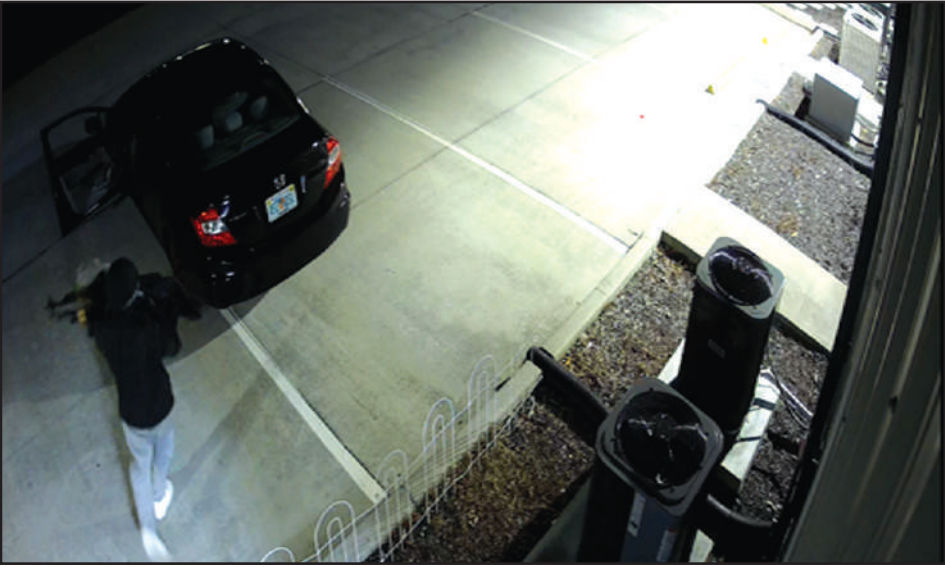


Photo courtesy of U.S. Attorney's Office, Middle District of Florida

Surveillance image of Jeremy Middleton, 25, of Apopka from the Melbourne gun store. U.S. District Judge Wendy W. Berger has sentenced Middleton to three years and 10 months in federal prison for possession of stolen firearms. The court also ordered Middleton to forfeit the 13 stolen firearms he had in his possession.

U.S. District Judge Wendy W. Berger has sentenced Jeremy Middleton, 25, of Apopka to three years and 10 months in federal prison for possession of stolen firearms. The court also ordered Middleton to forfeit the 13 stolen firearms he had in his possession. Middleton entered a guilty plea on September 13, 2023.

According to court documents, on January 4, 2023, Middleton drove to a federally licensed gun store in Melbourne and breached the back door with what appeared to be a grinder and a hammer. Middleton entered

See CRIME Page 6A

City museum to dedicate historical desk

Florida A&M University (FAMU) College of Law and the Apopka Historical Society are inviting the public to the desk dedication of civil rights attorney Alexander Akerman, Jr. on Thursday, February 15, at 5:30 p.m. at Florida A&M University College of Law, 201 FAMU Law Lane, Orlando.

A VIP reception will follow.

Akerman represented the Groveland Four with Thurgood Marshall and other NAACP Legal Defense Fund lawyers. The Groveland Four were four Black men ranging in age from 16 to 26 who were falsely accused of raping a white teenage girl in 1949.

In February 2023, the Apopka Historical Society displayed Akerman's desk at the Apopkan Museum as part of its Black History Month exhibit. The desk was donated as a gift to the museum by Jessey McGee, husband of Akerman's granddaughter Cathleen McGee.

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RSVP to <http://tinyurl.com/54ubs6pm> by today, Friday, February 9.

Summit provides resources, hope for survivors of abuse

By Teresa Sargeant  
Apopka Chief Staff

Leonia Thornton began the For My Sister Foundation in memory of her sister Shakeria Rucker, a 37-year-old Winter Springs mother of four whose body was found with apparent gunshot wounds in an Apopka storage unit on November 18, 2023.

Recounting her own experience as the guest speaker at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Summit and Resource Sharing, Thornton explained that she launched her foundation because she didn't want anyone to endure what her sister endured.

The HUD Jacksonville Florida Office of Field and Policy Management collaborated with

several state, city and county agencies to present the summit on Thursday, February 1, at the Apopka Community Center/VFW Building on South Central Avenue.

The summit's purpose was to educate Central Florida community service agencies, case-workers and support agencies on services available for surviving families and victims of violence, which includes domestic violence, human trafficking, sexual assault and stalking.

Local media reported that Rucker's estranged husband Cory Hill was charged with second-degree murder, four counts of attempted murder, burglary, shooting at a building, and violation of a domestic violence injunction.

According to local news re-

See HUD Page 3A



Photo courtesy of For My Sister Foundation/Facebook

Leonia Thornton, founder/CEO of the For My Sister Foundation (center, in blue dress) stands next to city of Orlando Commissioner Regina Hill (center, in beige outfit) and surrounded by foundation volunteers and supporters at the HUD violence Against Women Act Summit and Resource Sharing Event on Thursday, February 1, at the Apopka Community Center/VFW Building on South Central Avenue.

Celebrating the 100th day of school

Clay Springs Elementary School held its food drive celebrating its 100th day of school by collecting food and toiletry items for Loaves & Fishes. The students collected these items from January 9-25 and then presented their collection to Loaves & Fishes on the 100th day of school on Wednesday, January 31.

This week  
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Apopka Event of the Week

Tiny Tales at the North Orange Branch Library 1211 E. Semoran Blvd., on Wednesday, February, meets from 11:15-11:45 a.m., in the Meeting Room, and is recommended for babies 0-18 months. Tiny Tales is the rhythm and repetition of nursery rhymes used to introduce children to literature. Hold your child in your lap and enjoy the time together.

Quotable

But in the absence of that leadership and the face of dereliction of duty we're going to step up and do our job," DeSantis said.

Guest columnist on need for Florida to send support to Texas

Opinion

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A weekly newspaper founded in 1923

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Feb. 12, 1929 - Sept. 18, 2021

Our position

DeSantis sending troops to join Texas' border standoff with Biden admin

By: Michael Moline  
Florida Phoenix

Gov. Ron DeSantis will deploy as many as 1,000 Florida National Guard troops, plus members of his Florida State Guard and law enforcement officers, to back up Texas in its standoff with the Biden administration over the U.S.-Mexico border.

The governor, who long has complained about border enforcement, announced the deployment Thursday during a news conference in Jacksonville, flanked by uniformed law officers and military personnel. He didn't say exactly how many people will make the trip.

Gov Ron DeSantis announced on Feb. 1, 2024, that he's sending National Guard and Florida State Guard troops to help control the Texas-Mexico border. Source: Screenshot/Florida Channel

"It's sad that you don't have a president willing to just put his foot down and say I'm not going to let this happen to my country. But in the absence of that leadership and the face of dereliction of duty we're going to step up and do our job," DeSantis said.

The fresh troops will join 90 officers of the Florida Highway Patrol, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and Florida Department of Law Enforcement that DeSantis has already deployed to the border, according to numbers provided by the governor's office.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has erected razor wire around a park located along the border in Eagle Pass, Texas, and denied U.S. border enforcement agents from access, as reported by Phoenix partner The Texas Tribune.

The U.S. Supreme Court, citing federal primacy over border control, on Jan. 22 ordered Texas to grant access to the feds but Abbott has refused, drawing support from other Republican governors including DeSantis. Now Florida is backing up Abbott with fresh troops.

"Texas has the right to erect

barriers. They were not even a party to that [Supreme Court] decision. I think they're continuing to do what they're going to do, and we are going to assist them in doing that," DeSantis said.

During his press conference, DeSantis all but dared President Joe Biden to try something.

"Are you going to have folks go in and forcibly remove barriers so that more people can come in illegally? I don't think that's a decision he would want to do, particularly now that we're in this election year," DeSantis said.

Border talks

DeSantis did not address the negotiations between the administration in Washington with congressional Republicans on legislation that would give Biden added authority to block asylum seekers from entering the country. Donald Trump has urged his followers in Congress to scotch any deal. Republicans, including DeSantis, have insisted that Biden already has the necessary authority.

News of the deployment drew outrage from Florida Democrats. "What happened to focusing on Florida?" FDP Chair Nikki Fried said in a written statement.

"As Ron limps back to his mansion as America's biggest loser, he's desperate to grab headlines and get 'wins' on the board. While Republicans in Washington line up to blow up the border deal, Ron is screaming from the sidelines for attention. This latest attempt to insert himself in the national conversation is just another political stunt with a heavy price tag for taxpayers," Fried continued.

"Sending troops and tax dollars to Texas is a massive waste of resources that distracts from delivering results for Floridians. Instead of using this legislative session to address the property insurance crisis, Ron and his Republican supermajority are back to their old tricks. Floridians deserve better," she said.

Florida State Guard

See BORDER Page 4A



So what are the odds we're going to use A.I. responsibly?

Improvements are very costly to do

It has been a busy week working on sidewalk construction schedules, lack of roadway connectivity, septic to sewer meetings, and big policy issues to vote on with the Board. Plus, I'm enrolled in a leadership class which begins this week. It is possible my aide may be writing a few columns for me over the next few months.

New sections of sidewalks are planned for Breezy Heights of Votaw Road, Lake Mendelin near Border Lake, Sutton, Lake Eve, and others off Mag-nolia Homes Road and the older section of county un-incorporated near Sheel-

County Commissioner  
District 2



Christine Moore

er and Apopka Blvd. The county is spending about \$4 million annually to retrofit older communities without sidewalks for improved pedestrian safety.

I must add that the surveyors, while placing stakes for right-of-way for construction, seemingly scare people to thinking the

sidewalks will be halfway up in the front yard. That is never the case, so please be reassured.

I'm also hosting two septic-to-sewer meetings for Wekiwa Manor and Lake Mendelin Estates at Clay Springs Elementary School. While we have been successful in securing over \$100 million dollars for the sewer conversions, there are still thousands of residents who want sewer conversion without sufficient grant funding. Between the state, county, and federal dollars, the grant funding is covering 90 per-

See MOORE Page 4A

Reading novels or books is disregarded

Last week, we closed out January with Literacy Week in Orange County Public Schools. All of our schools held special events for the students to emphasize the importance of reading but, more importantly, to spread the message that reading is fun.

I'm always trying to spread that message because it's important as we work to improve literacy rates in our district, state and nation. One of the negative effects of a test-driven education system over the last 20 years has been the neglect of reading novels or books and instead reading short passages with the sole purpose being to test afterward.

The effect is students are not given the opportu-

Orange County School  
Board, District 7



Melissa Byrd

nities to read as many full-length books and experience the joy that comes from delving into a good book. The problem with not enjoying reading is that children aren't practicing important reading skills needed for life after school.

If students don't continually practice the skills they learn, they lose them. Well, reading skills are no different. The ability to read a passage and under-

stand the meaning, make inferences, and glean the main idea, are all examples of skills that don't get strengthened when they are not practiced every day through reading books for enjoyment. Productive adults need to be able to use those skills to read emails for work or read news articles or any number of things each day to be productive citizens.

So, to that end, I'm always looking for ways to make reading fun, and that is why I worked with Re-Imagine Communities to make the Read Around the City program a district-wide contest this year in all of District 7.

All the schools com-

See BYRD Page 4A

This Week In God's Word

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."  
James 5:16

Mema Says

Give me 6 hours to chop down a tree and I will spend 4 hours sharpening my axe.  
— Abraham Lincoln

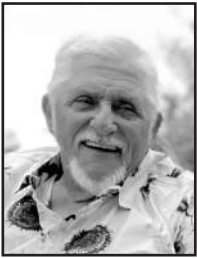
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Misleading citizens of the United States is not a crime or misdemeanor

Lies, lies, and more lies! Today's life lived in the United States of America is full of falsehoods so bizarre they would not have been believed, or even considered fifty years ago. Lying has been so prevalent it has been incorporated into every monologue presented by our government politicians, who are supposed to be our employees, and representative of our directives.

The director of our Homeland Security, Secretary Alejandros Mayor-



Ike Hayden

kas has been adamant about how secure our southern border and our national security is, even though millions of illegal aliens have invaded our border, from as many as 150 or more na-

tions around the world.

Impeachment hearings were set up and the impeachment of Secretary Mayorkas was voted on for the first time. Four Republicans voted no on the impeachment vote, and when Representative Mike Gallagher (R-WI) was asked his purpose for voting against impeachment, his claim was impeachment was set forth by our founding fathers dealing with "high crimes and misdemeanors" and Mayorkas' failures at the border did not qualify

him for impeachment.

So, now we know that lying to, and misleading the citizens of the United States of America is not a crime or a misdemeanor. Evidently it is just a minor thing to be looked upon as common-place occurrence that should be overlooked, and not to be fretted over.

Just as the proponents and executioners of over twelve thousand Jews used as excuses for their blatant murderous behavior, the lying Secretary of Homeland Security said he was "just

following orders."

It is interesting to know Representative Mike Gallagher (R-WI) is chair of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, and that most of the Chinese coming across our southern border are military-aged men.

As in the case of all other groups of invaders, there are women and children in the mix, but in the case of the Chinese, there are no, or very few, women and children. As this in-

vasion is ongoing, we see these Chinese men mingling with the other groups and becoming just a part of the migration northward.

The biggest difference between the Chinese migrants and the others is that they have a camp set up for them alone that will not allow anyone to enter or interrogate the inhabitants there. They have money so they can bypass the treacherous Darien Gap and travel by boat, (where people

See HAYDEN Page 4A



HUD: Domestic violence may be suffered by 22-25 percent of all women

Continued from page 1A

ports last month, Hill was charged with first-degree murder, and State Attorney Andrew Bain said the state will seek the death penalty. “Domestic violence doesn’t care who it chooses,” Thornton said. “This is something that you don’t see on movies or in newspapers. This is something that happened in our home, in our community. It happens to a sister, it happens to a mother. It happens to a brother, a friend, and it happens to a woman of faith and a man. Please know this. It can happen to any of them. It can happen to you. The system might seem frustrating, but there’s hope. I encourage anyone out there to find the correct resources, but words of encouragement. It’s hope. It’s

hope. But we fight back as a community. We have to come together and bring awareness to those that don’t even know they’re in this situation.” Nowadays, Thornton cares for her sister’s children. However painful the process has been, she has found her purpose, she said. “This process has been something that I don’t wish upon anybody. To know that I would never have a chance to talk to my sister again. To know that I would never have an opportunity to share milestones with her again. To know that her children would never have an opportunity to share milestones with her, to know that her children will never be able to hug or kiss her or to even have a conversation with her. It’s a lot to take in,” Thornton said.

The summit included two roundtable discussions with community leaders and expert panelists, vendors and guest speakers. The first roundtable was about “Creating Healthier and Safer Communities” and the second roundtable was about “Connecting With Community Resources” such as justice, safety (housing), healing and resources. Roderrick Love, former Orange County District 2 commissioner, moderated both roundtable discussions. VAWA is a federal law that, in part, provides housing protections for people applying for or living in units subsidized by the federal government and who have experienced domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, to help keep them safe

and reduce their likelihood of experiencing homelessness. Florida Department of Children’s most current national studies on domestic violence suggest that 22 to 25 percent of all women will experience domestic violence at some point during their lives. According to fiscal year 2020-21 reports, Florida’s certified domestic violence centers provided over 412,000 nights of emergency shelter to more than 10,000 survivors of domestic violence. “If we could just hang on to the last thing she (Thornton) said, vow to help someone else’s sister. As we look around this room, we all have sisters,” Dr. Alesia Scott Ford, HUD field office director, said to the summit attendees.

“Even if it’s not a physical sister, we have spiritual sisters, we have sisters in the community. So, let us take advantage of this time and this moment to really meditate and think about the importance of how impactful domestic violence is

on anyone, man or woman, and what can we do to make a difference, what can we do to assist families that are suffering as a result of violence.” Visit hud.gov/vawa for more information and resources.

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## Transfer of funds to be addressed Feb. 21

Dear Editor,

A local & minority bid preference opportunity policy would protect local Apopka businesses and give preference to the local banks currently partnering with and give other local Apopka businesses preference to contract and serve the City of Apopka investment, maintenance contracts, and all other service and development needs.

Nationwide Buy Local, Build Local, Serve Local, Live Local, Give Local, initiatives have become a focus.

As a follow up to my past two letters to the editor following the actions of city council on December 6, creating a policy revision to transfer City of Apopka investment funds out of local banks, to be managed by Morgan Stanley, a Colorado investment fund. Currently Seacoast and Synovus local banks are servicing City of Apopka funds and paying competitive market rates.

On February 7, 2024, the city council meeting included an out-of-town guest, the Morgan Stanley investment firm. At 1:53 into the meeting (which can be found on YouTube) the presentation begins with a commissioner making a “clarifying statement” in reference to the December 6 council meeting when representatives from Synovus, Seacoast and the chamber came to request that council pause on voting on a policy to move funds out of the community banks to speak with partnering banks who were not directly notified of the need to bid on funds they are currently holding. All business leaders came to council to request a pause, but were met with aggression, accusatory statements, demeaning and downplaying the concerns, as well as statements saying the concerns are lies, erroneous, and political folly. Months ago when Commissioner Nick Nesta put One Florida Bank in his crosshairs, it was polit-

ical folly, as the City’s other deposits at Synovus and Seacoast were never mentioned. Policial folly by the very definition of the term. Commissioner Nesta accused One Florida Bank of shortchanging the City of Apopka upwards of \$1MM because they were paying a less-than-competitive interest rate, which is categorically false. Further, in his latest campaign literature Commissioner Nesta claims that he “successfully advocated and secured a solid investment option, earning more than \$1 million more per year in interest for the residents’ funds.” He gives himself too much credit as Fed Chairman Jerome Powell and the Federal Reserve Board oversaw 11 Fed Funds Rate increases between March 2022 and July 2023. The City of Apopka contract with Morgan Stanley includes a cost of \$45,000 per year as an annual investment advisor fee, regardless of whether the City’s investments earn a return or incur a loss. This is the same information that they were receiving for free at One Florida Bank, Seacoast Bank and Synovus Bank. Further, unlike Morgan Stanley, the depository accounts at these banks were not market sensitive inasmuch as there is no risk of the principal being lost.

Yet at Wednesday’s meeting the concerns I and our local banks have expressed were addressed and confirmed directly by Morgan Stanley when they proposed to move \$60 million (30 million from Synovus and \$30 million from Seacoast) banks, and \$54 million from Synovus bank by Q2. This is a contrast to what Commissioner Nesta and Commissioner Becker reiterated multiple times over the past few weeks in verbal and written statements, online, in debates, and from the dais, as they have stated a maximum of \$10 million would be transferred, and not without approval.

I requested and have reviewed the Morgan Stanley contract, and my second letter to the editor spelled out the contradicting statements. The Morgan Stanley contract clearly states a complete investment program (without any “maximum” of total investment funds specified). Morgan Stanley also explained that the return on these investments will be lower than what our local banks are currently paying in interest now.

These are the exact concerns the banks and I expressed in our statements to council and in my prior letters. Morgan Stanley also confirmed that revenue growth from federal interest rate increases is the reason for “growth in revenue”, and that our local banks are giving us a “great deal”.

Wednesday afternoon the commission decided to pause the monetary move for now, and to speak to the local bank partners (as the chamber and banks requested on December 6). They plan to revisit the plan to approve the funding move to Morgan Stanley at the February 21 City Council meeting.

Please reach out to the commissioners to let them know that all Apopka businesses need to have a local bid preference of at least 10% (instead of 3%), and to establish a minority small business bid preference policy for our local, small, veteran and minority led businesses to be considered as contractors prior to using companies outside of the community.

Please encourage the City of Apopka to keep funds and service needs local when local providers are competitive and qualified.

Sincerely,  
Cate Manley  
President & CEO  
Apopka Area  
Chamber of Commerce  
Join at apopkachamber.org  
The Voice of the Business  
Community for over  
110 Years

## Moore: Future changes are expensive

*Continued from page 2A*

cent of the costs. Residents mainly suffer through the construction phase. I’m in one such neighborhood undergoing a conversion and there is dirt everywhere, and yes, my car is perpetually dirty.

So, I’m not worried if these neighborhoods choose to wait and go it alone without county assistance and choose to hire their own contractor once their current system needs repairs. Approved on-site septic systems are anywhere from \$15,000 –\$25,000 and require regular maintenance and partial replacement. Neither choice is inexpensive, but at least with the Orange County Utilities installing the full gravity sewer, there is assistance for problems that are sure to arise.

One tough vote for me was on TDT (or Tourist Development Tax) dollars. After a year of research, wrangling, and debates, I made the motion to proceed with Mayor Demings’ amended plan. I’m proud we were able to fund, through tourist tax dollars, the improvements of Camping World Stadium, Kia Center, and spend \$20 million annually for smaller city projects. Remember: uses are determined by state statute. We are prohibited from using the tax for funding social services or transportation needs.

I met with staff to hammer out the ARC process and offer technical assistance for my smaller cities such as Apopka, Eatonville, and Ocoee. I’m hoping they will apply for funding. I’m hearing interest in

improvements to the amphitheater, construction of a black history museum, and new sports complex, respectively. I stand ready to assist the cities with the application process. I’m also proposing processes for the unincorporated areas to apply for the new ARC funding, such as the Lockhart Lion’s Club to make improvements for a museum and full-scale welcome center.

Additionally, we will be asked during this next meeting about taking a donation of conservation land surrounding the Split Oak Forest during the construction of a new highway through 60 acres of the protected land through Osceola County. This has been a tough issue: to balance the need to save land in perpetuity, to build much needed housing, and to construct and maintain roadways.

Finally, I will also be asked whether the mayor has my consent to place a modified request for a new stream of revenue for transportation funding on the November ballot.

While I, and I suppose all the readers, never want to pay more in taxes, we must confront the \$20-billion dollar deficit for roadway expansion, as well as the need for safety improvements, additional public transportation, and other pressing roadway issues.

Seminole County has used this tax for over 30 years and is so far ahead of us with roadways and trails.

I would love to hear your thoughts on this controversial subject.

## Byrd: We doubled our reading goal

*Continued from page 2A*

peted by having students, staff and community members read and log the minutes they read. The contest started in October and ended last week on January 31. Our goal was for District 7 to read one million minutes.

Well, we not only reached our goal of one million minutes read, we DOUBLED it! Yes, District 7 read TWO million minutes over the duration of the contest. We could not be more proud.

Our amazing school

media specialists at each of the 28 schools in District 7 promoted the contest and got the students excited. The best part of this endeavor was getting staff members, parents, and community members reading and logging minutes for the schools, sending the message to our children that everyone likes to read!

I’m proud of all the schools but I have to acknowledge some schools like Ocoee High School, Wolf Lake Middle School, and Apopka Elementary School that were our lead-

ers for each division.

Our overall leader appears to be Wolf Lake Middle School with well over 300,000 minutes logged.

I’m particularly proud of this since middle school is often a time when children stop reading for pleasure.

I want to thank all the schools and families that helped make this contest a success.

Let us all continue to show our kids that reading is fun and encourage them to read every day. It takes a village!

## Hayden: Do not forget your lies

*Continued from page 2A*

have been murdered, raped, molested, and where others have had to step over the bodies of those who have died in their perilous journey).

Bret Weinstein (a noted biologist), as he was interviewed by Tucker Carlson, stated he has a hypothesis that these Chinese Nationalists are being sent to the United States for an ulterior motive, and this is not a “friendly migration.” His belief is that this invasion is cloaking the entrance of the Chinese antagonists into our nation without vetting or investigating their motives.

Have you heard of this? Let us get back to our original thought. The administration told us they would be transparent and forthcoming with their actions and their dealings with others.

I do not think so! We have been lied to and deceived by those we have hired (voted for) to keep us safe and to bring unity to our people.

We have seen our politicians spend tax-payer dollars, by the billions, to keep other borders safe, but they have miserably failed us ... *we who pay their salaries.*

## Border: We must protect borders

*Continued from page 2A*

The Legislature created the State Guard in 2022 at DeSantis’ behest to supplement to the Florida National Guard and assist in public emergencies. The Legislature voted across party lines last year to create a “specialized unit” within the force with power to arrest civilians if deployed by the governor. Unlike the National Guard, the State Guard answers only to the governor and can’t be federalized by the president.

That same legislation specified that the State Guard was to be used “exclusively within the state, or to provide support to other states.” This would appear to be the first out-of-state deployment. And the measure boosted the State Guard’s maximum numbers to 1,500 volunteers.

In proposing the force in December 2021, DeSantis imagined a “civilian volunteer force that will have the ability to assist the Nation-

al Guard in state-specific emergencies.”

The state, he said then, needs to “be able to use support in ways that are not encumbered by the federal government or don’t require the federal government.”

During Thursday’s event, State Guard Director Mark Thieme repeatedly referred to its members as “soldiers.”

Members of the State Guard received specialized training last fall at a private Panhandle facility in weapons training, first aid and “tactical casualty combat care,” aviation and maritime search and rescue missions, and “aerial gunnery” practices, the Tampa Bay Times and Miami Herald reported in December.

Stronghold SOF Solutions, which operates the facility, at the time listed lists Eddie Gallagher, a former U.S. Navy SEAL who was accused of war crimes, as one of its instructors, the newspapers reported.

### The Apopka Chief

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(USPS 545-440)

The Apopka Chief is published every Friday and entered as Periodicals, postage paid at Apopka Post Office, under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. The Apopka Chief newspaper is published by Foliage Enterprises, Inc., every Friday at 400 North Park Avenue, Apopka, Fla., 32712-3417. An annual subscription is \$25 in Orange County and \$30 outside Orange County. Phone 407-886-2777. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Apopka Chief, P.O. Box 880, Apopka, Fla., 32704-0880.

The Apopka Chief is a consistent award-winning community weekly newspaper and a member of the Florida Press Association. The newspaper won the group’s award as its best newspaper in 1982, 1987, and 1988, the only three-time winner. Letters to the editor are welcome, but must be signed and include a daytime telephone number, address, or email address for verification. Management reserves the right to edit letters.

www.theapopkachief.com, news@theapopkachief.com



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City Clerk407-703-1704  
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Code Enforcement407-703-1738  
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Parks and Rec. Dept.407-703-1741  
Police Chief407-703-1769  
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Solid Waste Collect.407-703-1731  
Street Maintenance407-703-1731  
Utility Billing407-703-1727  
Medical, fire emergency911  
The city of Apopka was chartered in 1882. It is located at 28°30 north latitude and is 150 feet above sea level. Its population is about 48,000 and its total area is more than 30 sq. mi. **www.apopka.net**

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# City: APD trains officers in assisting autistic individuals

Continued from page 1A

lack of information there- of which doesn't allow us to go to these calls for service with as much information as possible," Sosa continued. "So, a lot of the service that we provide as the police department has to do with information that we receive from either a third-party person or information that we have collected in the past that can go into our databases."

Sosa explained that on January 1, the state launched House Bill 1275, known as the "Protect Our Loved Ones" Act, which authorizes law enforcement agencies to have a database for a special needs registry.

The bill exempts any sharing of information of a special needs person or an autistic individual. Such data will only be shared with other first responders, he added.

To qualify for the special needs registry, individuals must reside within the city of Apopka part or full time, and require additional assistance or consideration during an emergency situation or calls for police services. The registry is not intended for people who live in long-term healthcare facilities.

Commissioners thanked Sosa for coming up with the special needs registry, and believed the program to be a good idea that

would help the community. Commissioner Diane Velazquez said she and her family faced many challenges over the decade in helping her autistic and epileptic brother, who is 69 years old. She believed that the special registry program is "good in the right direction," but she was concerned about the residents' privacy.

"You don't want them to stand out and be singled out, but what if someone wants just a sticker to kind of identify that they have a family member that is autistic or falls within the category that you have, but they don't want to register."

See CITY Page 7A

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**LISA FRANKENSTEIN** (PG-13) 1:40; 4:20; 7:10; 9:50

**ARGYLLE** (PG-13) 12:30; 3:40; 7:00; 10:10

**THE CHOSEN: SEASON 4 EPISODES 1-3** (NR) 12:20; 3:30; 6:30

**MEAN GIRLS** (PG-13) 1:10; 4:00; 6:50; 9:40

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**MIGRATION** (PG) 1:20-; 2:00-; 4:10; 6:40; 9:30

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## PHMSA Environmental Review Notice of Availability

In cooperation with the Lake Apopka Natural Gas District, Orange County, Florida, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), has prepared a Tier 2 Environmental Assessment (EA), as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, for the proposed replacement of approximately 13.13 miles of vintage steel and vintage plastic polyethylene (PE) pipe in multiple areas of the system with modern polyethylene pipe. PHMSA published a Tier 1 Nationwide EA for the Natural Gas Distribution Infrastructure Safety and Modernization Grant Program (NGDISM) on November 9, 2022. The stated purpose of NGDISM is for municipality or community owned utilities to repair, rehabilitate, or replace its natural gas distribution pipeline system or portions thereof or to acquire equipment to (1) reduce incidents and fatalities and (2) avoid economic losses by providing grant opportunities to municipality or community owned utilities. The Tier 1 EA is available at <https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/sites/phmsa.dot.gov/files/2023-07/Tier-1-PHMSA-2022-0123-0001.pdf>. The Tier 2 EA is available for review and comment on the web at <https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/about-phmsa/working-phmsa/grants/pipeline/tier-2-site-specific-environmental-documents> and a copy is available at Lake Apopka Natural Gas District, 1320 Winter Garden Vineland Road, Winter Garden, FL 3478. Please submit all comments to: PHMSABILGrantNEPACComments@dot.gov and reference NGDISM-FY22-EA-2023-20 in your response. Pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act, PHMSA has issued a No Historic Properties Affected finding which is available for review in the Tier 2 EA. Comments on the Tier 2 EA are due by March 5, 2024.

Lake Apopka Natural Gas District

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# City: Foundation to help with scholarships

Continued from page 5A

ter them. Would they be allowed to have that sticker?

Sosa said that the police department will continue to do their best to track as much information as it could. Police Chief Michael McKinley added that the registry will offer two different decals because people with special needs don't always react to law enforcement presence as people with autism.

McKinley said every two years, the Apopka Police Department trains other law enforcement agencies in interacting with autistic people. Every Apopka police officer, with the exception of the most recently hired ones, has undergone crisis intervention training, which teaches them where resources in the community are and how to deal with people dealing with a mental health situation or disability.

Commissioner Nick Nesta asked about if the special needs registry could be bridged over to helping homeless individuals, especially since some homeless people might have similar issues.

"Most of our officers are very familiar with our homeless population because we do encounter, and understand what most of their mental disabilities are," McKinley responded. "We can look at some way to interact. I mean, we do have constant contact with them and we do know those that suffer from mental incapacitation or mental disorders. But we'll look at something to try to address that."

If an officer comes

across someone who the officer thinks should participate in the program, the officer should obtain the person's name, address and contact information, encourage them to sign up, provide the website information or a physical application, and forward their information to special-needs@apopka.net.

## The 2650 Foundation

Michael Duran, father of fallen Apopka firefighter Austin Duran, announced the 2650 Foundation's upcoming activities and events. 2650 was Austin Duran's badge number. Michael Duran is the Foundation's founder and CEO.

This year, the foundation will award three full scholarships, working with Apopka and Wekiva high schools to send one graduating senior from each school to a firefighter academy for firefighter minimum standards and a third senior to an EMT school.

Additionally, the foundation will send a firefighter to a paramedic school to "foster the next generation of Austin's Army," Michael Duran said, and send six Apopka firefighters to technical certification training in vehicle machinery rescue operations.

On Saturday, March 16, the 2650 Foundation will host the first annual First Responder Mental Health and Wellness Fair at the Orlando Professional Firefighters Union Hall from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The event will include education, speakers and yoga sessions.

Visit [the2650foundation.org](http://the2650foundation.org) for more information.



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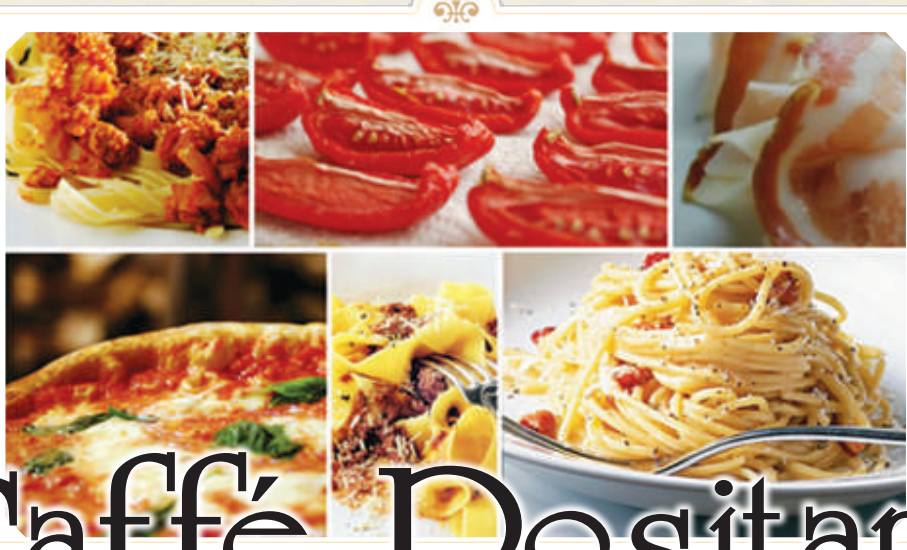
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# Obituaries

**ROBERT J. ALLEGROE (BOB)**, 95, peacefully left this world on Saturday, January 27, 2024. Born in October 1928, Bob was the son of the late Eric and Clara Kochanowski. Bob is survived by his loving wife Barbara Allegroe; children Mark (Nadia) Allegroe and Greg Allegroe; 6 grandchildren; as well as 10 great grandchildren. He will be dearly missed.

See Obituary on page 10A



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## King of Bashan had a bed thirteen and a half feet long

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2. In Joshua 10, which people were killed by great stones cast down from heaven? Amorites, Samaritans, Canaanites, Nazarenes
3. From Genesis 2:24, what phrase describes the marriage of a man and a woman? Holy matrimony, God's reward, One flesh, Today forever
4. Which insect is mentioned in the book of James as an eater of garments? Gnat, Hornet, Ant, Moth
5. What king of Bashan had an iron bed thirteen and a half feet long? Edrei, Og, Argob, Senior



6. On which day of creation was the sun made? First, Second, Third, Fourth

ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) Amorites, 3) One flesh, 4) Moth, 5) Og, 6) Fourth

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Statistics show that first-generation immigrants commit fewer crimes than native born citizens, are more likely to start their own businesses, and they usually bring with them a sense of gratitude for all that their new country offers.

We are incredibly fortunate to live in a country which is sought by so many throughout the world. We should be tolerant of those who come here seeking a better life. They may need some extra help at first, but eventually they will add much to the common good. And finally, remember that all of us ultimately came from somewhere else.

—Christopher Simon

But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:31

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.  
Matthew 5:16

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Proverbs 14:26

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**Assembly of God**  
Apopka Assembly of God  
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One Church  
Markham Woods  
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**Baptist**  
Apopka First Baptist  
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First Antioch Missionary Baptist Church  
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First Baptist Church of Mount Dora  
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First Baptist Church of Sanlando Springs  
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First Baptist Sorrento  
352-383-2241  
First Baptist Church of Sweetwater  
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First Baptist Church of Tangerine  
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First Baptist Church of Zellwood  
407-889-0509  
Forest Avenue Baptist Church  
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Fountain of Life Baptist Church  
of Apopka, Inc.  
407-814-8322  
Gospel Centered Church  
800-924-6850  
Hope Baptist Church  
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Lockhart Baptist Church  
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407-884-4443  
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The Church at Oak Level  
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Pleasant View Baptist Church  
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Riverside Baptist Church  
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Springs Community Baptist Church  
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St. Luke's Full Gospel Baptist Church  
352-735-9199

## A Plea For Tolerance

(See message above.)

"Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt."  
Exodus 23:9 NIV



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**Charismatic Episcopal**  
Ascension Church, CEC  
407-880-9555  
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Christ Centered Christian Church  
321-331-0036  
Journey Christian Church  
407-884-7223  
Real Life Christian Church  
352-735-LOVE  
**Christian Science**  
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Church of Christ of Plymouth  
407-886-1466  
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407-656-2770  
Tri-City Church of Christ  
407-920-1757  
10th Street Church of Christ  
407-884-4835  
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Church of God of Zellwood  
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Grace Street Church of God  
407-298-9188  
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407-886-3780  
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407-886-2696  
Sorrento Church of God  
352-735-4245  
**Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints**  
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Church of the Holy Spirit  
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True Temple of God  
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**Jewish**  
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407-645-0444  
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First United Methodist  
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407-862-1531  
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Calvary Church of the Nazarene  
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407-884-8322  
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Anointed Word Family Worship Center  
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Casa De Oración Internacional  
321-239-7680  
Center of Faith Church for All People  
407-464-9375  
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407-869-1133  
City of Destiny (The)  
407-884-6322  
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In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.  
Matthew 5:16

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## FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES

Congress cannot make a law that favors the establishment of one particular religion; that prohibits the free exercise of religion; or that restricts freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of the people to gather and engage in peaceful demonstration and to petition the government for redress of their grievances.

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Voter registration deadline for upcoming Apopka election is Monday, February 19, 5 p.m.

The city of Apopka will have a general election on Tuesday, March 19, from 7 a.m.-7 p.m., at assigned precincts, for two council seats: Council Seat 3, currently held by Kyle Becker, and Council Seat 4, currently held by Nick Nesta.

Candidates running for Seat 3 are Nadia Anderson and Darryl Richardson to replace Becker, who announced late last year that he won't seek re-election.

Candidates running for Seat 4 are incumbent Nesta and Eric Mock, challenger.

If necessary, there will be a runoff election at a date yet to be determined by the Orange County Supervisor of Election. (OC-SOE) Early voting will be held at the Apopka Com-

munity Center/VFW Post 10147, located at 519 S. Central Ave. Early voting begins March 4 and ends March 17, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. For mail-in ballots, the last day to request one for the March 19 election is March 7.

Voters may also go to the OCSOE office, located at 119 W. Kaley St., Orlando.

If you are *not* a registered voter at this time, the registration books will be open until Tuesday, February 19 at 5 p.m.

Please note that the OCSOE office will be open from 9 a.m.-4 p.m., on Saturday, February 17, to allow people to come in and register for the first time or to make necessary changes to their information prior to the book close.

GOP women's club will host forum for City Council Seats 3 and 4 candidates

The Northwest Orange Republican Women Federated (NORWF) will host a forum for the Apopka City Council Seat 3 and Seat 4 candidates on Thursday, February 15, at the Apopka City Center Hilton Garden Inn.

The forum is an opportunity for voters to listen to each candidate, ask their questions and get them answered.

The Seat 3 candidates are Nadia Anderson and Darryl Richardson. The Seat 4 candidates are Eric Mock and incumbent Nick Nesta.

The lunch meeting starts at 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Hilton Garden Inn Apopka City Center, 580 E. Main St., Apopka.

Attendees are asked to arrive by 11:15 a.m. Cost of buffet lunch is \$25 with reservation and \$30 at the door without a reservation. There is limited seating, so reservations should be made now.

For more information and to make reservations, contact Marty Harrison at 407-493-0471 or marty-aoii@aol.com.

Visit NORWF at facebook.com/norwfc and norwf.org.

Seat 3 candidates Darryl Richardson

Darryl Richardson was born in Augusta, Ga., and the son of Army Col. John Richardson and Elsie Richardson.

Richardson's career started in Florida in the late 1980s in the commercial printing business, focusing on the computer systems required and moving into the Cyber Security and Data Governance roles with locally based Symantec/Veritas.

Currently, he is with

Egnyte, an SAAS-based data Governance tool. His title is Data Governance Architect, and he sees a need to protect the security and integrity of privacy data across the globe.

Richardson is an investor at Three Odd Guys Brewery but also owns a large stake in the brewery and spends a lot of time working on-site. He's married with two children.

Nadia Anderson

Nadia Anderson has a diverse background, from her time in the federal government working in security on the Fort Greely Air Force Base in Alaska to her social services role at the Department of Children and Families in Orange County and as a probation officer for the Department of Juvenile Justice before moving into real estate.

She currently owns Prestige Property Consultants here in Apopka.

Seat 4 candidates Nick Nesta

Incumbent Nick Nesta is a first-term commissioner, winning the special election for the vacated Seat 4 in 2022. He is defending his seat in the City Council election.

Nesta resides in Apopka with his wife and twin daughters.

Eric Mock

Eric Mock has lived with his wife Rhonda, his biggest supporter, in Florida since 1994. They have been married for 33 years and have two wonderful golden retriever dogs, Bailey, and Riley.

After a 31-year career in healthcare leadership, Mock became a realtor and helped others to achieve the American dream of homeownership. Mock is a real estate agent at You Have Realty.

He lives at Vistas at Waters Edge and is the subdivision's homeowners' association president. He is also a member of the Apopka Planning Commission.

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**McDonald's** **ROBERT J. ALLEGROE (BOB)**

Robert J. Allegroe (Bob) peacefully left this world for his next adventure on Saturday, January 27, 2024. He was 95 years old.

Born in October 1928, Bob was the son of the late Eric and Clara Kochanowski. While in high school Bob was a track star and the fastest sprinter in the state of Illinois. He enlisted in the Army where he was stationed in Panama and played accordion in the Army band, entertaining troops at the base. He attended the University of Illinois.

After leaving the University, Bob continued his passion for music and entertainment, opening a music store named Allegroe School of Music. He taught accordion to all ages and started a band called the One Plus One, performing nationally. Bob had the opportunity to play in many venues, including Al Hirt's club in New Orleans, Seattle World's Fair and the Las Vegas strip. He was also involved annually with the Jerry

Lewis Labor Day Telethon to benefit MDA. While performing at a nightclub at Geneva on the Lake in Ohio, he met Barbara Nims. They married in March 1958 and had two sons, Mark and Greg, both of Apopka.

Bob became a McDonald's owner operator in 1972, operating multiple restaurants in Apopka, Forest City, Lockhart, Ocoee, Winter Garden, Clermont, Davenport, until retiring in 2018. He was an active community partner and member of United Methodist Church of Apopka. Residents knew Bob was on the roads, sporting "Big Mac" license plates, throughout the years. He could regularly be seen in his McDonald's restaurants and knew most of his customers and community partners by name. Bob's commitment to McDonald's was solid and throughout the years he received several awards, recognitions, and nominations including Chairman of the McDonald's National Operators Advisory Board, Co-Op President, Leadership Council Chairman, Government Relations Steering Committee member, Chamber of Commerce member (awarded Businessman of the Year in 2011), Rotarian, Florida Hospital Board member, Partner in Education with local schools, Edgewood Boy's Ranch supporter, Apopka Foliage Festival supporter, Sertoma member, and member of the Zoning/Signage Board Committee of Apopka. Bob received two prestigious Ronald

Awards from McDonald's. For many years he emceed the annual Christmas Parade. Bob also awarded several athletic scholarships to high school graduates. In 1976 Bob raised money through McDonald's promotions to send the Apopka High School Band to the International Music Festival in Europe. He also assisted with and donated to community fundraisers. Bob was also an active participant and supporter of Ronald McDonald House Childrens Charities.

"You never get a second chance to make a first impression," was one of Bob's favorite sayings. He certainly made a good first impression on everyone he met.

Bob is survived by his loving wife Barbara Allegroe; children Mark (Nadia) Allegroe and Greg Allegroe; grandchildren Eric Allegroe, Adam (Coral) Allegroe, Aaron Allegroe, Jordan (Amber) Allegroe, Victor (Lili) Alvarez and Monica Allegroe; as well as 10 great grandchildren. He will be dearly missed by his extended family, loved ones and friends.

In lieu of flowers please make a donation to the Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Central Florida



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# The Breakfast Taco recipe uses refried beans, eggs, cheese and spices

From Jane Bradley's cook-book called *Southern Style, Volume 23* from the Collector's Series of The American Cooking Guild, copyrighted 1987, we have Cheesy Baked Grits. Jane says, "This much-maligned product needs some understanding to be appreciated. Grits are never too tasty when simply boiled and served 'au naturel.'" These dressed-up grits will be a real treat!

We have Chesapeake Crab Imperial, also from Jane Bradley's book, *Southern Style*. This Maryland classic is enjoyed wherever fresh crab is available. It is equally well suited for formal, sit-down dinners or informal buffets. Note that Jane gives you the option of either using the crab shells or a casserole when you bake.

From Joyce LaFray Young's book "*Country Cookin'*," we are going to try a very simple dish, Fried Squash. This recipe comes from Hopkins Boarding House in Pensacola. You can use either yellow squash or zucchini. They describe it as, "A nice change for an old favorite!"

Another favorite, also from Hopkins Boarding House in Pensacola, is Sweet Potato Souffle.

Wow! This recipe looks terrific! Breakfast Taco. This recipe is also from *Country Cookin'* by Joyce LaFray Young, and she attributes it to Malaga Street Depot in St. Augustine. The book cover describes the book as "Famous Recipes from Famous Places."

## CHEESY BAKED GRITS

Recipe from *Southern Style* by Jane Bradley

**4 cups boiling water**  
**1 teaspoon salt**  
**1 cup quick grits**  
**8 tablespoons (1 stick) butter,**



**cut into pieces**  
**2 cups (8 ounces) cheddar cheese, grated**  
**3 eggs, beaten**  
**1/4 teaspoon dry mustard**  
**1/4 teaspoon Tabasco sauce**  
**1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**  
**2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan cheese (optional)**  
**Additional butter for dish**

1) Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Butter a 1-1/2-quart baking dish and set aside. Jane says, "I use a porcelain quiche dish and cut grits into wedges for serving." 2) Using a large, heavy saucepan, bring water and salt to a boil. Slowly add grits and stir till well blended. Reduce heat and simmer for 3 to 5 minutes. 3) Remove pan from heat and add butter and cheese, stirring to melt. 4) When melted, add beaten eggs, dry mustard, Tabasco, and freshly ground black pepper, blending well. 5) Pour into prepared baking dish. If desired, sprinkle with Parmesan cheese to aid in browning. 6) Bake for 45 to 55 minutes or until grits are golden brown. Serve piping hot. Serves: 6 to 8.

## CHESAPEAKE CRAB IMPERIAL

Recipe from *Southern Style* by Jane Bradley

**2 pounds backfin crabmeat**  
**1/2 cup mayonnaise**  
**2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**  
**2 tablespoons pimento, minced**  
**2 tablespoons capers, minced**  
**2 tablespoons onion, minced**  
**1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce**  
**1/2 teaspoon salt**  
**1/4 teaspoon white pepper**  
**1 teaspoon mayonnaise per shell (2 tablespoons for casserole)**  
**Paprika for garnish**  
**Butter for shells or casserole**

1) Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Pick any bits of shell or

cartilage out of crab. Place crab in a large bowl and set aside. 2) In a small bowl, mix mayonnaise, lemon juice, pimento, capers, onion, Worcestershire sauce, salt and pepper, and blend well. 3) Add this mixture to the prepared crab and, using a rubber spatula, gently fold in the crab, being careful not to flake the crabmeat. 4) Divide the crab imperial between 8 buttered shells ... or... pour into a 2-quart casserole. 5) Coat filled shells or casserole with mayonnaise and sprinkle with paprika. 6) Place shells on a baking sheet and bake for 15 to 18 minutes (20 to 25 minutes if using casserole), or until lightly browned. Serve immediately. Serves: 8.

## FRIED SQUASH

from Hopkins Boarding House in Pensacola

Recipe from *Country Cookin'* by Joyce L. Young

**2 pounds yellow squash**  
**(may substitute zucchini)**

**Salt**  
**Self-rising flour**  
**Fat for deep fat frying**  
1) Wash and slice squash into 1" pieces. 2) Sprinkle salt over squash so that all pieces are lightly salted. (The salt draws out the extra liquid.) 3) Let sit 1 hour. Pour off liquid. 4) Dip and completely cover each piece in self-rising flour. 5) Fry in deep fat at 350 degrees Fahrenheit until brown and crisp. Serves: 6.

## SWEET POTATO SOUFFLE

from Hopkins Boarding House in Pensacola

Recipe from *Country Cookin'* by Joyce L. Young

**4 cups mashed sweet potatoes**  
**(if potatoes are dry, add up to 1/2-cup evaporated milk)**  
**1/2 cup sugar**  
**1/2 cup butter or oleo margarine**  
**1/2 cup coconut**  
**1/3 cup raisins**  
**1 teaspoon lemon extract or orange peel**

## Miniature marshmallows

1) While potatoes are hot, add all other ingredients. 2) Place in casserole dish. Cover with marshmallows. 3) Bake in 300-degree Fahrenheit oven until marshmallows are brown, 20-30 minutes. Serves: 6.

## BREAKFAST TACO

From Malaga Street Depot in St. Augustine

Recipe from *Country Cookin'* by Joyce L. Young

**2 eggs (beaten)**  
**1/4 cup green peppers (diced)**  
**1/4 cup onions (diced)**  
**1 corn tortilla**  
**3 tablespoons refried beans**  
**1/3 cup cheddar cheese (shredded)**

**Picante sauce (see recipe below)**

1) Combine eggs, green pepper, and onions on griddle or in saute pan. Cook. 2) Heat corn tortilla briefly on griddle. 3) Place tortilla on plate. Top with eggs and refried beans. Fold in sides to seal. 4) Top with cheese and liberal amount of picante sauce. 5) Place under broiler for a few seconds. Serves: 1.

**Picante Sauce:**  
**1 green pepper (diced)**  
**1 small onion (diced)**  
**3-4 Jalapeno peppers (minced)**  
**1 clove garlic (crushed)**  
**28 ounce can pear-shaped tomatoes (crushed with hand)**  
**1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar**  
**2 teaspoons oregano**  
**1 bay leaf**  
**Dash ground cumin**  
**1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon fresh cilantro (may substitute fresh parsley)**  
**Juice of one lemon**

Mix all ingredients for picante sauce together.

Note: The picante sauce can be kept in the refrigerator for future use. You will find many uses for it (It is great for dipping tortilla chips).

## FEBRUARY 2024 ★ ★ EVENTS ★ WEEKLY ★ UPCOMING ★ ONGOING ★ ★

**SCHOOL STARTS UP: JANUARY 8, 2024** Traffic patterns changed. Stormy weather comes and goes! Be careful with your umbrellas. And always watch out for those pedestrians... and ducks. DON'T TEXT WHILE DRIVING - Please! YOU WILL PAY A FINE.

Children must be five years old on or before September 1 to start kindergarten. To enter first grade, a child must be six years old on or before September 1 and must have successfully completed kindergarten (Florida Statute 1003.21). Immunizations must be current.

UNLESS CHANGED: School Start Times for Elementary School & K-8: 8 a.m., Middle School: 9:30 a.m., High school: 7:10 a.m.

City of Apopka's Northwest Recreation Complex, 3710 Jason Dweley Parkway, Apopka 32712, 407-703-1784. On any given weekend, you can see many, many families in attendance at the beautiful complex setting participating in various organized sport programs. Amenities at the complex include: Soccer Fields, Softball Fields, Baseball Fields, Multi-Purpose Fields, Sand Volleyball Courts, Outdoor Basketball Courts, Tennis Courts, **Walking Trail**, Amphitheater, Playground, Concession Stands.

11-mile wildlife drive (complete with directional signs) (opened in 2015) on Lake Apopka shores, by entering from Lust Road off Binion Road, about a mile south of Camp Wewa in the Plymouth area, for one-way drive, 10 miles per hour, with possible wildlife spotting stops. DO NOT FEED THE GATORS - IT MAY CAUSE CLOSING OF THE TRAIL! If you are stopping, drive will take more than 1 hour. Drive runs by canals used in muck-farming days. The one-way drive exits on Jones Road in Zellwood. You will see a freshwater marsh system and wildlife dependent on that type of system. The drive is open on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays and federal holidays and is controlled by the county. Open during daylight hours only (one hour after sunrise and one hour before sunset). Official sunrise and sunset hours can be found online. The road is closed on other days due to ongoing restoration work. The trail is 11 miles long.

WEKIWA SPRINGS STATE PARK is a 7,000-acre Florida State Park in Apopka, Florida. It is located 20 minutes north of Orlando, off Interstate 4 at exit 94, near Altamonte Springs and Longwood. The park also contains the head water of the Wekiwa River. Address: 1800 Wekiwa Circle, Apopka 32712, open from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. For information, call 407-884-4311

FRAN CARLTON CENTER OPEN, for seniors - senior activities at Fran Carlton Center. CALL 407-703-1642 FOR INFORMATION .

### FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9

ZUMBA FITNESS CLASS, FRIDAYS at 9:00 a.m. at 11 N. Forest Ave., at the Fran Carlton Center.. Call 407-703-1642 for information. .

CENTRAL FL CHRISTIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, 1806 S Bay St., Eustis, has Fellowship Friday meetings. For complete details of all chamber events, visit [cfchristian-chamber.com/events-chamber](http://cfchristian-chamber.com/events-chamber). Contact: [latrondra@cfchristianchamber.com](mailto:latrondra@cfchristianchamber.com)

### SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10

VFW POST 10147 continues to have its fund raising breakfast on the the third Saturday of the month on FEBRUARY 17, from 8-10 a.m. at 19 S. Central Avenue. Cost is only \$7.

MUSEUM OF APOPKANS, Saturday, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., 122 E. FIFTH STREET, APOPKA. Managed by Apopka Historical Society. Call 407-703-1624 for info.

AVIAN RECONDITIONING CENTER, for birds of prey, 323 Lester Rd., Apopka, hours: 9:30-1:30 p.m., The center is open on Saturdays to the public, weather permitting. Call 407-461-1056 for information.

### SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

### MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12

FITNESS CLASS, MONDAYS 9-10 a.m. 11 N. Forest Ave at Fran Carlton Center. Masks not required while exercising, but are when socializing before and after class. Temperature taken on entry. Pre-register. Call 407-703-1642 for info.

CRAFTS & CHATTER: 9:30-12 noon. Fran Carlton Center, 11 N Forest Ave.Masks required. Temperature taken. Pre-register. Call 407-703-1642 for info.

OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS meets Mondays at 6:30 p.m., Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit, 601 S. Highland Avenue. If you have a problem with food - overeating, anorexia, bulimia - there is a solution for you. For more information, visit [OA.org](http://OA.org) or call Carrie 781-867-1071.

TOASTMASTERS: Forest Lake Church by Zoom. Time: 7 p.m., Open to everyone interested. For information, call 407-761-2943. Club Number: 4899556, District 84, Area D42. Orators of Excellence

### TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13

THE SERTOMA CLUB meets the first and third Tuesday of each month, beginning at 11:30-noon, at Beef 'O' Brady's in The Back Room, 1410 Rock Springs Rd., Apopka. Interested community members are encouraged to attend and get acquainted. Meetings have resumed on first and third Tuesdays. Masks are encouraged.

SENIOR CHAIR EXERCISE, 9-10 a.m., 11 N. Forest Ave. at Fran Carlton Center. Masks not required while exercising, but are when socializing before and after class. Temperature taken on entry. Pre-register. Call 407-703-1642 for info

ART CLASS. 9:30-12 noon. Fran Carlton Center, 11 N Forest Ave. Masks required. Temperature taken. Pre-register. Call 407-703-1642 for info.

### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14 VALENTINE'S DAY

The Altamonte Springs / Apopka VFW POST 10147. is NOW OPEN Wednesday and Saturday Mornings from (TIME CHANGE) 8:00 to 10:00 a.m. for coffee and doughnuts. (other hours by appointment only). 3rd Saturday of the month is VFW's fund-raising breakfast. Also, evenings of Tribute music are planned. Call 407-889-8266, or email [info@vfw-post10147.com](mailto:info@vfw-post10147.com) for information. The VFW Auxiliary has been formed and is active as well. Don't forget to visit its excellent Military Museum.

ZUMBA FITNESS CLASS, 9-10 a.m., 11 N. Forest Ave., at the Fran Carlton Center. Masks not required while exercising, but are when socializing before and after class. Temperature taken on entry. Pre-register. Call 407-703-1642 for info..

SENIOR CHAIR EXERCISE, 10-11 a.m., Billie Dean Community Center, 225 M.A. Board St., . Masks not required while exercising, but are when socializing before and after class. Temperature taken on entry. Pre-register. Call 407-703-1642 for info

CITY OF APOPKA DRC (Development Review Committee) meets every Wednesday at 9 a.m.-10 a.m. (or as long as necessary) at City Hall, 120 E. Main Street, Apopka. Check for the online version.

BRIDGE CLASS: 9:30-12 noon. Fran Carlton Center, 11 N Forest Ave. Masks required. Temperatures taken. Pre-register. Call 407-703-1642 for info.

TOPS CHAPTER #646. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly). TOPS, a non-profit organization, will help you reach a weight goal with support from friendly, caring members, education, and rewards. Each Thursday weigh-in be-

gins at 9:00 a.m. - meeting ends at 10:15 a.m.. Come to its NEW location 220 W. Horatio Avenue, Maitland, FL 32751 to meet with others who have a like-minded goal to lose weight. No products, no specific diet to follow, no meds. Call 407-580-0897 for more information.

MUSEUM OF APOPKANS. Open on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 12 noon-5 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m.-1 p.m., 122 E Fifth St. 407-703-1642 for info.

EARLY BIRD BINGO at Bahia Shrine Center, 3101 E. Semoran Blvd.. Doors open at 5 p.m., and the early bird game starts at 6 p.m. For more information, call 407-660-8811.

TOASTMASTERS: still meeting every WEDNESDAY, 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m., by zoom. For more information, call 407-765-2629 or visit [www.Apopkatostmasters.com](http://www.Apopkatostmasters.com).

### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15

SENIOR CHAIR EXERCISE, 9-10 a.m., 11 N. Forest Ave., at the Fran Carlton Center. Masks not required while exercising, but are when socializing before and after class. Temperature taken on entry. Pre-register. Call 407-703-1642 for info.

ROTARY CLUB OF APOPKA - For information, call 407-415-6588. Call for updated information on meetings and location.

MUSEUM OF APOPKANS. Open from noon to 5 p.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from 9 a.m.-noon, 120 E Fifth St. Call 407-703-1624 for info.

ZUMBA FITNESS CLASS, 9-10 a.m., 11 N. Forest Ave., at the Fran Carlton Center. Masks not required while exercising, but are when socializing before and after class. Temperature taken on entry. Pre-register. Call 407-703-1642 for info.

### UPCOMING EVENTS4

City of Apopka election for Seats 3 and 4 of City Commission on Tuesday, March 19, 7 a.m.-7 p.m.

Saturday nights Saturday Sounds at Apopka Amphitheater, 3710 Jason Dweley Parkway, 5-7 p.m. Free.

VFW Post 10147 has fund raising breakfast Saturday, **February 17, 2024** 8-10 a.m., 519 S. Central Avenue. Cost is \$7.

### ONGOING EVENTS

Florida Railroad Museum, 101 S. Boyd Street, Winter Garden, is open Tuesday-Saturday, 11-3 each week excluding holidays. For info, call 407-656-0559. . Must see.

CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS are public and will also be broadcast

on this shortened link: <https://bit.ly/2ABrmbb>, and are normally held the first Wednesday at 1:30 p.m., and third Wednesday at 7 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, City Hall, 120 E. Main St., Apopka. Subject to change with notice. For info., call City Clerk 407-703-1704. Agenda and minutes of meeting can be found online. Once posted, check for any revisions by Tuesday at 5 p.m. before the meeting

FOLIAGE GARDEN CLUB OF APOPKA, meets the first Thursday of each month, September through May, at 10 a.m. at the Billy Dean Community Center at Alonzo Williams Park, 225 M.A. Board St., Apopka. Contact: [apopkafgca@gmail.com](mailto:apopkafgca@gmail.com)

FREE PLANT CLINIC in Apopka is open on Tuesdays. Do you have problems with your plants or lawn? Let a Master Gardener help. Orange County residents can bring their questions and samples to UF/IFAS Extension Master Gardener volunteers at the UF/IFAS Mid-Florida Research Education Center (MREC), 2725 Binion Road, Apopka, 32703; 9 a.m.-12 Tuesdays; 407-254-9200. Questions and photos to can be emailed to [orangecomgv@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:orangecomgv@ifas.ufl.edu). to be answered by Master Gardeners. A free plant clinic for commercial growers is open Tuesdays 1-4 p.m. at the same location.

KIWANIS CLUB OF APOPKA IS now meeting MONTHLY on the 3rd Tuesday at 8 a.m. at Seacoast Bank, 345 E Main Street, Apopka. Contact 407-464-4606 for information

BROWN BAG LUNCH - Third Saturday of each month, Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit at the corner of Highland and 6th St., Apopka, from 10 a.m.-12 p.m., offer to all who come a brown bag lunch. In addition, men's socks, flip flops, stuffed animals, some clothing, children's books and pet food which is donated by My Pet World, Apopka, may be available. If interested in volunteering, call Debbie at 407-620-5081 for information.

APOPKA FOLIAGE TOASTMASTER'S CLUB, Monday, 7 p.m., on Zoom, Apopka. 407-765-2629.

NWOC FFA Alumni - Monthly meetings (usually the 4th Monday evening in a month during the school year) are open to anyone. (Looking for more information)

MUSEUM OF APOPKANS, 122 E 5th Street, Hours open: Wednesay to Friday. from noon-5 p.m., and Saturdays from 9 a.m.-1 p.m... Admission is free. Contains displays and information about Apopka's history, and has history books for sale. Monthly meetings of Apopka Historical Society are normally held on a Sunday afternoon. For more information, go

to [www.theapokkamuseum.com](http://www.theapokkamuseum.com).

THE APOPKA ELKS LODGE 2422 meets first and third Tuesdays of month, 201 W. Orange. For more information, call 407-886-1600 or email [apopkaelks@aol.com](mailto:apopkaelks@aol.com) Bar Bingo every Monday night at 7 p.m. promptly.

GFWC APOPKA WOMAN'S CLUB, meets at First United Methodist Church, 201 N. Park Avenue. Call 407-880-2111 for more information.

CITY OF APOPKA PLANNING & ZONING - usually the second Tuesday of the month. 5:30 p.m. City Council Chambers, City Hall, 120 E. Main St., Apopka. All meetings open to the public. Subject to change with notice. For info., call David Moon, 407-703-1739.

BRIDGE GAMES AND CLASSES: Every Monday and Friday morning at 9:15 a.m., at the Lake County Duplicate Bridge Club, 510 W. Key Ave., Eustis. For more information, call 352-315-9934 or visit [lakeduplicate.com](http://lakeduplicate.com).

COMPUTER CLASSES in both English and Spanish: Available daily or weekly at OCLS North Orange Branch.\* Classes are: Computer Basics, Excel, Word Resume Writing, Email for Seniors, ELLIS English Lab, Word, Online Job Searches, Power Point, Internet, Open Lab, How to use a mouse and keyboard, etc. Call OCLS North Orange Branch\* for more details.

HABITAT VOLUNTEERS: Go to [www.habitatseminoleapopka.org](http://www.habitatseminoleapopka.org), click on volunteers. There are a number of opportunities available at the Restores. Call 407-696-5855 or 407-880-8881 to sign up for information.

\*\*\*\*\* (OCLS) Orange County Public Library North Orange Branch Address: 1211 E. Semoran Boulevard, Apopka 436 (Semoran) and Thompson Road. [www.ocls.info](http://www.ocls.info). To reserve a space, call 407-835-7323. The library is now open again Mon-Sat. 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m., and Sunday afternoons

\*Apopka Area Chamber of Commerce, 180 E. Main St., Apopka. For more info, call 407-886-1441

### COMMUNITY EVENTS CALENDAR INFORMATION

Events, fund raisers, and non-profit organizations Send info: fax 407-889-4121, or email [ads@theapokkachief.com](mailto:ads@theapokkachief.com) Subscribe to The Apopka Chief E-Edition or Home Delivery Call 407-886-2777 or Visit [www.theapokkachief.com](http://www.theapokkachief.com) In County: \$30 with E-edition, or \$25 for just postal delivery. Out-of-County: \$35 with E-Edition or \$30 for postal delivery



