

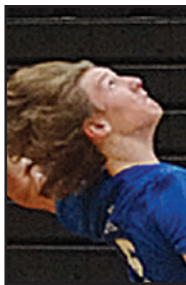
New president

Dr. Rafael Mañon has been named president of Orlando Health Cancer Institute
See page 6A.



Sports

APK Volleyball's Aidan Lowry ranked No.1 in the nation
See page 1B.



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Volume 102 Number 14

City working on use of VFW recreation facility agreement

By Teresa Sargeant
Apopka Chief Staff

The Apopka City Council decided to table the vote on authorizing a renewed recreation facility use agreement with Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 10147, over the use of the Apopka Community Center.

The City Council had on its Wednesday, April 3, agenda the vote to authorize a renewed recreation facility use agreement but moved that vote to its Wednesday, April 17 meeting.

Had the recreation facility use agreement been authorized for renewal, it would have replaced the current management agreement between the VFW and the city and go into effect 90 days after the city sends the VFW a notice of the previous agreement's termination.

This proposed recreational facility use agreement would provide the following for the VFW: they would continue to get to use the facility to conduct VFW business and

meetings at no charge, get paid a \$15 hourly rate for use of VFW equipment during third party rentals, and be able to set up the VFW bar for any VFW uses or events or fundraisers, so long as they maintain their proper license and insurance and follow any of the city alcohol guidelines for the facility.

As part of the proposed agreement, the city would provide all facility operations including staffing the building for customer service functions and rentals, and on site during the events. The city would continue facility maintenance, upkeep, and utilities.

In calendar year 2022, the facility generated a total revenue of \$35,744.50. In 2023, that number increased to around \$57,000. Under the current agreement, the revenue splits between the city and the VFW, with the city getting 6 percent and the VFW getting 40 percent.

According to Radley Williams, city parks and recreation director, the city is

See CITY Page 3A



Photo courtesy of Apopka Historical Society

Apopka City Commissioner Diane Velazquez (l) reflects on her career as an investigator for the NYPD as local artist Delia Miller (r) and the audience listens during the Apopka Museum's Women's History Month event held at the museum on Thursday, March 28.

Apopka Historical Society hosts Women's History Month event at museum

The Apopka Historical Society hosted a special event in honor of Women's History Month featuring city of Apopka Commissioner Diane Velazquez and local artist Delia Miller at the Apopka Museum on Thursday, March 28. The event centered around the theme of advocating for di-

versity, equity and inclusion, highlighting the remarkable contributions of women in various careers.

Commissioner Diane Velazquez captivated the audience with her journey, from her career as an investigator with the New York Police Department to her appointment as the first

Hispanic Commissioner for the city of Apopka. She shared insights into her experiences breaking barriers and emphasized the importance of representation and leadership in promoting diversity and inclusion within communities.

See MUSEUM Page 7A

County accepting capital grant applications

On Monday, April 1, Orange County's Tourist Development Tax Application Review Committee (ARC) opened its application window for capital grants from \$2 million to \$15 million and will accept applications through April 30.

The funding window for capital grants is from fiscal year 2024 through fiscal year 2028 (October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2028).

The ARC reviews grant applications and makes recommendations to the Tourist Development Council, with the final decision being made by the Orange County Board of County Commissioners. The applications and supporting materials will be accepted through the United Arts Grants Portal at shorturl.at/fhjBI.

To be considered, qualified applicants must meet the minimum requirements listed below. A complete list of requirements is included with the grant application.

*The capital project grant request should be for a dollar amount in excess of \$2 million and up to and including \$15 million toward a project for the acquisition, construction, expansion, enlargement, renovation, and equipping of eligible facilities.

*The requested project funding must be for one or more fiscal years from October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2028.

The project must meet the statutory guidelines for the Tourist Develop-

See COUNTY Page 10A



Photo courtesy of Elzbieta Weron

Elzbieta Weron of DeLand, seen here on a photography shoot, will be one of dozens of artists whose work will be featured at the 62nd annual Apopka Art and Foliage Festival during the last weekend of April.

Self-described 'late bloomer' in photography is Apopka festival artist

Elzbieta Weron of DeLand, one of dozens of artists who will feature their work at the 62nd annual Apopka Art and Foliage Festival during the last weekend of April, referred to herself as a "late bloomer" in the photography world.

"I'm a late bloomer, coming to photography about 18 years ago, as a result of searching new ways of reinventing myself after suffering a midlife crisis," she said in a statement. "My first encounter with a camera dates as early as childhood when inspired

by the photography book 'Eye to Eye.' I grabbed my parents' camera and spent the whole summer vacation capturing close-up photographs of insects and flowers. Unfortunately, my dream of becoming a photographer got shuttered by the fact that the camera I was using did not contain any film."

Her second attempt at photography was at 21 years of age, when as a biology student, she got herself a Russian-made Zenith camera.

"(I) used slide film; I got back to take close up

pictures of fauna and flora. This part of my photography work was more documentary than artistic," she said.

The self-taught photographer is the recipient of multiple art show awards in New Jersey, Maine and Florida.

Weron was named the 2008 and 2009 Photographer of The Year by the Polish Nature Photographers Union in Krakow, Poland. In 2016, the Polish Nature Photographers Union awarded her first

See WERON Page 5A

62nd Apopka Art and Foliage Festival scheduled for April 27-28

The 62nd Apopka Art and Foliage Festival, which showcases the work of juried artisans and crafters, and top foliage growers from Central Florida, will be held at Kit Land Nelson Park, 35 S. Park Ave., in Apopka on Saturday, April 27 9 a.m. to 5

p.m., and Sunday, April 28 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free.

Applications are now available for artists and crafters who wish to enter the festival. Visit apopkaartandfoliagefestival.org for further details and applications.

Mayor's Prayer Breakfast is May 2

The Apopka Christian Ministerial Alliance (ACMA) in partnership with Mayor Bryan Nelson is once again bringing the Apopka Mayor's Prayer Breakfast to the community.

The event will take place on the National Day of Prayer, Thursday, May 2, 6:30-8:30 a.m., at the Apopka Community Center/VFW Building, 519 S. Central Ave., Apopka.

The event plans to include an open breakfast buffet from 6:30 to 7 a.m., immediately followed by a formal program involv-



Tim Barton
... event speaker

ing prayers led by various community leaders, musical performances, and an

See PRAYER Page 5A

This week Section A

Opinion..... 2A
Bus. Review 8A
Worship 9A
Dining & Ent..... 12A
Section B
Sports 1B
Kapers 5B
Bus. Review 6B
Legal ads 7-9B
Classified..... 10-12B
Service Dir. 12B

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Apopka Event of the Week

The 17th annual Apopka Health and Fitness Fest will be held Saturday, April 6, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at Kit Land Nelson Park, 10 N. Forest Ave., Apopka, and will include free health screenings, cooking demos, exercise and safety demos, refreshments and more. For information, contact 407-703-1640 or 407-703-1642.

Quotable

Justices approved the ballot initiatives for abortion rights and marijuana, decisions that could undermine Republican efforts on the issues so far.

UF writer gives opinion about Florida Supreme Court decisions affecting the election

Opinion

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Our position

‘Game changers’: Florida Supreme Court abortion, pot rulings could boost voters

By Serra Sowers,
Fresh Take Florida
GAINESVILLE, Fla. —

Back-to-back decisions by Florida’s Supreme Court on Monday allowing voters to decide on separate issues at the ballot box whether to prohibit the state government from setting limits on abortion rights and legalize recreational marijuana will supercharge November’s upcoming election.

Important questions about who benefits the most – and how each political party will strategize on the issues – were already playing out, just hours after the momentous decisions by the court. Former President Donald Trump was mysteriously silent on the issue after the rulings.

“Florida is in play,” Nikki Fried, the state chair of the Democratic Party, wrote in a social media post.

Justices approved the ballot initiatives for abortion rights and marijuana, decisions that could undermine Republican efforts on the issues so far. Those important issues were widely expected to boost turnout among voters who feel strongly about both matters.

The abortion issue could be motivating for suburban women, a key voting group. The marijuana issue could boost turnout among young voters, who traditionally skew toward Democrats.

In a victory for Gov. Ron DeSantis and Republicans, the court also ruled 6-1 Monday that privacy rights spelled out in Florida’s constitution do not conflict with an abortion ban imposed by the Legislature and signed by the governor for women pregnant more than 15 weeks. The justices noted that their ruling also will allow a newer Florida ban on abortions after six weeks – one of the strictest bans in the U.S. – to take effect in 30 days.

But the ballot decisions from the court mean that, in November, voters could roll back the new limits on abortions in Florida just months after they take effect. They also could legalize marijuana in the Sunshine State beyond medical use.

Democrats predicted they would benefit most, after Republicans trounced them here in the 2022 elections and the GOP has maintained an edge on the numbers of registered voters. Lower than expected turnout, especially in South Florida, hurt Democrats during the midterms and helped DeSantis win re-election by the largest margin in 40 years.

Nationally, Democrats said the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision overturning abortion rights protections limited expectations of a red wave of Republican election victories in 2022 outside Florida.

“Our private medical decisions are none of the government’s business,” said Lauren Book, the Senate Democratic leader. “Our freedom is on the line, and the situation has never been more urgent.”

The Republican political strategist Ana Violeta Navarro-Cárdenas said the dual policy issues on abortion rights and marijuana were each important: “Collectively, they could be game-changers,” she said.

“FL just got far more competitive,” she added.

The former Republican consultant, Rick Wilson of Tallahassee, said Republicans will need to spend more money to win results in the state: “Florida just got a lot more expensive for the GOP,” he said.

Debbie Mucarsel-Powell, the former U.S. House member running against Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla., said the six-week abortion ban was dangerous and that it bans abortions before most women even know they are pregnant. “This November, reproductive rights are on the ballot,” she said.

The House speaker, Rep. Paul Renner, spelled out how Republicans will urge voters to keep Florida’s tough abortion limits in place. Renner said the GOP will present the abortion ballot initiative as one that would “legalize full-term abortion for any reason.”

“We are confident that when the people of Florida learn what this amendment does, they will vote



Gov. Ron DeSantis announces road projects

POLK COUNTY, Fla.—

Today, Governor DeSantis was joined by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to announce expedited construction timelines for several “Moving Florida Forward” infrastructure projects, including the widening of I-4 in Osceola and Polk counties and the Poinciana Parkway Connector Project in Osceola County. Thanks to Governor DeSantis’ priorities, these projects are commencing 10–20 years ahead of schedule.

“Under my watch, Florida’s Department of Transportation will be solely focused on transporting people, unlike the federal government’s politicization of

our national Department of Transportation,” said Governor Ron DeSantis. “And because of this approach, Florida’s major transportation upgrades are fully funded and ahead of schedule, by decades. We listen to the people of Florida, and we deliver.”

“Thanks to Governor DeSantis’ bold vision, the Moving Florida Forward projects along I-4 will provide a tremendous number of improvements for nearly 200,000 travelers who have been anxiously waiting for congestion relief as commuter, tourist, and freight traffic grows in Central Florida,” said Florida Department of Transportation Secretary Jared W. Perdue,

P.E. “Transportation needs to be about the movement of people and goods over political ideologies. I’m grateful we have a Governor and Legislature who are focused on delivering actual infrastructure that improves Floridians’ quality of life.”

These I-4 Moving Florida Forward projects will be constructed as multiple project segments to widen 14.7 miles of I-4 in Osceola and Polk counties from six to ten lanes, including through managed express lanes for motorists seeking to travel further distances, which reduces congestion for all mo-

See FDOT Page 4A

Apopka’s young scholars are amazing

It has been an exciting spring already for some of our young scholars in Apopka.

Over spring break, students from Dream Lake Elementary participated in the Global Amazing Shake Competition in Atlanta, GA. This competition is hosted by the acclaimed Ron Clark Academy.

The academy is very well known in the education field and has received national and international recognition for creating a loving and dynamic learning environment for 4th-8th graders that promotes academic excellence and leadership.

The Amazing Shake is a competition that emphasizes teaching students manners, discipline, re-

Orange County School Board, District 7



Melissa Byrd

spect and professional conduct. These young students are literally taught how to “work a room,” just like an adult. They understand how to give a proper handshake, look adults in the eye when talking and how to give a successful interview. It’s quite remarkable to see these kids in action.

This is not the first time Dream Lake has sent students to Atlanta for the competition. They went last

year and upon their return, I invited them to a school board meeting to recognize them. We had the students greet guests in the boardroom and all the adults who interacted with them were amazed at the young students’ poise.

The theme of this year’s competition was “Explore Atlanta.” The students were able to visit the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Park, the Georgia Aquarium, and the Varsity, which is a local, very well-known restaurant in the area. (My husband has to have their chili cheese dog every time we drive through Atlanta!)

Eleven 4th and 5th grade students from Dream

See BYRD Page 4A

This Week In God’s Word

Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy. — Proverbs 28:13

Mema Says

You only live once, so lick the bowl!

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See BALLOT Page 4A

Giving up is not the answer to solving problems that now nationally exist

I have a Banana tree in my back yard that has taught me more about perseverance than many people. It started out as just a little thing (I do not even know where it came from). Unfortunately, I am not much of a gardener, so I did not expect it to last long, but now it has grown into a pretty large tree despite my lack of expertise in foliage care. At first, I knew that the first cold snap would do it in and I was not really concerned. It dropped



Ike Hayden

into the low 30’s and as I watched that pitiful little tree turn brown and droop all the way down, I made plans to gather it up and put it into the trash, but after a day of sunshine that tree

had a little green left and it seemed to pick up and lift its limbs toward the sun.

Again, the chilly night seemed determined to wreak havoc on the little tree, and again I gave a passing thought to trashing it in the morning. Amazingly, after struggling through a multitude of chilly nights, the tree made it and was actually growing! Now, I look out of my office window and watch the little “Lady Finger” bananas growing and ripening in the

springtime warmth.

It caused me to look at my past and think about the times I would have given up and just quit had it not been for the sunshine and warmth of someone’s love. It takes a special someone to give a part of their life to shine, so someone else can feel the desire to take another step up and overcome the fear of life, “in the cold.”

There are many, many people in the world that have already given up and

are just waiting for the “trashman” to pick them up and carry them away. They are like that little banana tree, their limbs are down, their attitude is one of defeat, and it seems as if the end has come. There are people that are preparing to gather them up and get rid of them because you see, they have quit believing, and have given up, too.

As a society brought together by uniting as one people, we should be able to see those that are suf-

fering from the cold of circumstances and surround them with the sunshine of our love and concern. We need to look out for the other person and seek his or her well-being. I love my nation, and I feel as though I am as patriotic as anyone, but in a combat situation my focus was not on the “Star Spangled Banner,” it was not on the thought of marching bands with people waving small flags and

See HAYDEN Page 4A

City: Goal is to improve some of customer service, etc.

Continued from page 1A

looking to improve the Apopka Community Center’s facility operations and provide management oversight of the building, relieve the burden of day-to-day rental operations from the VFW while still providing the VFW the use at the facility for their VFW business fundraiser events, and increase usage of the underperforming facility.

“We never wanted to outlay that the city was looking to push the VFW out of the building,” Williams said to the City Council. “The goal is to take the city facility, try and improve some of the customer service and some of the rentals that we can get into that facility, but still provide the VFW the space for, to be the home for the VFW at no charge. And allow them to continue to build their services.”

The city’s annual utility operating expense for the Apopka Community Center is around \$55,000, not including current staff time.

Since the Apopka Community Center opened in 2005, the city of Apopka has held a long-standing relationship with the VFW

for the use and operation of the facility, with the VFW using the building as the home of Post 10147. In return, the VFW has provided management and operational services for all private rentals at the facility.

In 2015, the management agreement was created between the VFW and the city, and the agreement was updated in 2020. As part of the current agreement, the city is to handle all facility rental bookings, all fee collections, and provide all facility utilities, while the VFW is responsible for providing staff to show the facility to potential renters, staffing the facility for all third-party rentals, providing bar services as the sole provider of such services, and giving the city a yearly calendar of all VFW events to be held at the facility.

The current agreement also provides facility use for VFW-sanctioned events at no charge and a 40 percent revenue share of all third-party facility rental revenue collected by the city. The VFW is entitled to keep all revenue from bar services rendered to a third-party renter, according to city documents.

Before Williams’ presentation, VFW Post 10147 Commander Anderson told the City Council the VFW is seeking a return to a 10-year contract that he signed with Mayor Bryan Nelson. The VFW and the city are currently in the contract’s sixth year.

“What we’re looking for is that the contract that I signed with Mayor Nelson was a 10-year contract,” Commander Anderson said. “We would like to propose that we go back to this contract, which we are presently under, for another six years because it was

a 10-year contract. And we continue to bring in the 40 percent for the VFW and we would still allow the city to have the 60 percent. We would like to go back to making the contracts between the VFW – between who rents the building and the VFW.”

451 Commerce Park plat

The City Council approved 5-0 the plat for 451 Commerce Park, which creates two lots on an estimated 22 acres for warehouse development. Lot 1 is 13.555 acres, and Lot 2 is 8.470 acres.

The location is 550 and 650 Marshall Lake Road and is one for light industrial with a future land use of industrial.

The owner on record is Arrowrock IV 451 LLC. The applicant on record is Jeffrey D. Hofius for Leading Edge Land Services.

This plat also dedicates cross access easement, water easement, force main easement, and an infiltration

pond easement.

Access is proposed via Marshall Lake Road.

This plat is consistent with the Major Development Plan that the City Council approved on August 3, 2022, and the Construction Site Plan that the Development Review Committee approved on January 4, 2023.

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Ballot: Language will be confusing

Continued from page 2A

no,” Renner wrote on social media.

Florida’s Republican attorney general, Ashley Moody, said the two ballot initiatives will be confusing to voters. “We maintain that it will be an uphill battle to educate them,” she said.

The state’s deputy solicitor general made the same argument to justices in February during oral arguments in the case in Tallahassee. Chief Justice Carlos Muñiz shot down the argument during that hearing, saying, “The people of Florida aren’t stupid, they can figure this out.”

The political fight was already underway: The campaign direc-

tor for the group that pushed for the abortion rights initiative, Lauren Brenzel, said early warnings from Republicans that it would allow for very late term abortions was “an absolutely ludicrous claim.”

The language on the ballot said voting yes would prohibit any law that would prohibit, penalize, delay or restrict abortion before viability or when necessary to protect the patient’s health.

This story was produced by Fresh Take Florida, a news service of the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications. The reporter can be reached at serrasowers@freshtakeflorida.com.

FDOT: Area I-4 road project funded

Continued from page 2A

torists.

The projects will also widen all road shoulders for emergency evacuations and rework interchanges to reduce backups and queuing along ramps. Projects will break ground in a cadence beginning this fall.

An additional project, the Poinciana Parkway Connector project, will also be constructed to fill a critical 2.6-mile roadway through a heavily traveled portion of Osceola County, connecting I-4, SR 429/Western Beltway, and the existing SR 538/Poinciana Parkway.

Prior to today’s announcement, the project was unfunded and was estimated to begin in 2034 at the earliest. As announced today, FDOT has expedited its delivery schedule to phase the project, by incorporating 65 percent of the

work into a portion of these I-4 projects that will break ground later this year and the remaining work in 2028.

House Bill 1301, passed this session, provides FDOT with the remaining authority to complete the Moving Florida Forward Infrastructure Initiative.

Additionally, the bill cements Florida’s transportation priorities in state law to focus on reducing congestion, supporting the supply chain, promoting Florida’s quality of life, and spending transportation dollars wisely.

This is in stark contrast to the Biden’s administration’s continued politicization of transportation. The bill puts infrastructure over ideology. Specifically, it:

*Institutes public meeting and voting requirements on all local and regional planning and transit agencies seeking to reduce travel lanes and force people’s

behavior out of car usage or ownership.

*Increases accountability of public transit agencies through transparency and reporting requirements on the overhead and administrative costs of public transit agencies.

*Prohibits the use of state funds to illegally tint and wrap transit vehicles with political messages, like transgender symbolism.

*Expands the areas of the state eligible for local and rural transportation funding to close funding gaps in fiscally constrained communities, including several communities in Florida’s heartland.

*Invests \$15 million annually to Florida’s inland ports and intermodal logistics centers to ensure that goods received at seaports can be shipped and stored throughout the state.

Hayden: Mob rules are not answer

Continued from page 2A

calling out their heartfelt thanks for my being in the Armed Forces. It was on the buddy next to me and how I could protect him, and his was on me. If one of us fell, the other could be overrun and killed.

You wonder why we greet each other with a handshake, or sometimes a hug; it comes from the special bond that grows from experiences we have shared.

Why, as Americans, can we not choose to come together to overcome those who have decided to divide us!? Those who are not willing to give of themselves to protect our American way of life and our nation should not be eligible for protection from breaking the law, by our Constitution.

It is strange how these

rabble-rousers use our Constitutional rights for their anti-American rants and raves but then turn around and promote its destruction. Something stinks! The only other Democracy in the East is one of our greatest allies, the tiny nation of Israel and, as Americans, we should be united in our support for them.

We see anti-Israel demonstrations and pro-Hamas demonstrations popping up all over, and I wonder just how much they are being paid for their involvement. They surely are not doing this as American citizens.

The United States of America has always supported Israel and has stood behind her. She has been a boon to our efforts to weed out and find the perpetrators of 911 and to bring them to justice, (now being released from their jus-

tice served by this administration). We need to unite as one people and realize that we are separate from the rest of the world in our doctrines, policies, and our Constitutional rights.

If you are not a United States citizen, you are not covered by our Constitution! Our Constitutional Republic is decided by Democratic principles but not by mob rules. If you want to protest Israel, move to Iran, but we will not be separated from our American Brothers and Sisters by your fanatical rhetoric, or your demented hatred for our great nation, and her allies.

We choose to be together in our efforts to see our “Banana tree” (Israel) grow and to protect all her fruit as they grow. With the sunshine of our love and concern; they WILL GROW!

Byrd: DLE 5th grader outstanding

Continued from page 2A

Lake competed against 364 other students from 29 states in the U.S., and 3 other countries, including Canada, Honduras and Germany.

The competition has a total of eight rounds. After the first two rounds, a participant had to earn their spot to continue in the competition. Tyson Williams, one of the 5th-grade students, surpassed other 4th - 8th grade competitors from public, private and charter schools.

“Tyson successfully competed in 7 out of 8 rounds, where in the 7th round of debate he met the capacity of his preparation,” Principal Carol-Ann Martin shared with me.

Tyson’s overall final ranking in the entire competition was ninth. He is the youngest, highest-ranking

participant, from a public elementary school. We are so incredibly proud of him and his great showing in this competition and for representing his school and town so well.

This is a wonderful example of the unique and powerful opportunities our students are given in Orange County Public Schools. Our school district has embraced the teachings of the Ron Clark Academy and many of the techniques and principles are seen throughout our elementary and middle schools in our district.

The academy is a demonstration school where educators can visit and engage in excellent professional development by observing best practices and participating in hands-on workshops. The educators then bring the knowledge home and share it with

their home school. OCPS has sent several educators to Atlanta for this experience and the results we see in our schools after are tremendous.

Teachers from Clay Springs Elementary who recently visited the academy shared with me that the trip “re-ignited their passion” in teaching and they came back on fire for their work. It is truly a career-changing trip for our teachers.

Dream Lake Elementary is a school that has fully embraced the Amazing Shake competition and the Ron Clark Academy teachings and the students are benefiting from it. Congratulations on a fantastic trip and thank you to the staff and parents of Dream Lake for supporting our young students for an experience they surely won’t forget!



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ALL ABOUT APOPKA



The Apopka Chief

Established 1923
(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.theapokkachief.com, news@theapokkachief.com



City of Apopka Telephone Numbers

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City Clerk	407-703-1704
Community Devel.	407-703-1712
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Finance Dept.	407-703-1725
Fire (non-emerg.)	407-703-1756
Parks and Rec. Dept.	407-703-1741
Police Chief	407-703-1769
Police (non-emerg.)	407-703-1771
Job Line	407-703-1743
Solid Waste Collect.	407-703-1731
Street Maintenance	407-703-1731
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Medical, fire emergency	911

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

Orange County Telephone Numbers

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Clerk of the Court	407-836-2065
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Hunting/Fishing Lic	888-347-4356
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Property Appraiser	407-836-5044
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Utilities	407-836-5515
All other departments	407-836-3111
Medical, fire emergency	911

www.orangecountyfl.net

Other Area Numbers of Note

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Marco Rubio (Rep.) 407-254-2573

U.S. Representative
Daniel Webster (Dist. 11) 352-241-9220

State Representatives
Doug Bankson 407-476-6787
Carolina Amesty (Dist. 45) unknown

State Senators
Geraldine Thompson (Dist.11) 407-297-2045

Orange County Commissioner
Christine Moore 407-836-7350

Orange County Public Schools
Pupil assignment 407-317-3233
Bus routes 407-317-3800
Superintendent 407-317-3200
School Board 407-317-3200

Miscellaneous
The Apopka Chief 407-886-2777
Museum of the Apopkans 407-703-1707
Chamber of Commerce 407-886-1441

Weron: She co-authored four photography books

Continued from page 1A

place in the landscape category. Weron won third place for the multimedia show “A sio” at the ninth International Wildlife Film and Photography Festival in Torun, Poland; and third place – again for the multimedia show “A sio” – at the 12th International Nature Photography Festival.

“Today, my mission is to portray ordinary/common objects in the light provided by unusual cir-

cumstances,” she said. “Every photograph is a result of both physical and emotional journey that starts with grabbing the camera, trying to free myself from the routine of everyday life, preconceptions, and temptation to follow actual trends in hope of capturing extraordinary moments, to save them into raw images and later conveying them to viewers through post-processing and printing. My recent work is concentrated on showing the beauty of Central Florida cypress trees.

I prefer to take pictures in the soft light of early mornings, I love the occasional feast of color of the pre-dawn sky, and dream of foggy days at the lake.”

Her group exhibits include the Museum of Earth of The Polish Academy of Science’s “In the Colorful World of the Rocks and Canyons of Arizona and Utah” in 2010 at the Nowa Huta Cultural Centre in Krakow, Poland; and Association of Polish Nature Photographers’ “Colours of the World Wild-

life” in 2009, 2010, 2016 and 2017. Weron co-authored the following publications: “Great Destinations NJ” (2008), “In the Colorful World of The Rocks and Canyons of Arizona and Utah” (2010), “Rutting Season in Wolf Mountains” (2017), and the Association of Polish Nature Photographers album “Visions of Nature” (2020).

Weron’s website is eweron.com. Selected photographs are also for sale at elzbieta-veron.fineartamerica.com/.



Fri., April 5, 2024 thru Sun., April 7, 2024

THE FIRST OMEN (R) 11:50A; 1:00; 4:10; 6:40; 7:10; 10:10
DUNE: PART TWO (PG-13) 12:00; 3:50; 6:00; 9:50
GHOSTBUSTERS: FROZEN EMPIRE (PG-13) 12:10*; 1:40**;
4:30*; 4:40**;
MONKEY MAN (R) 12:20; 3:00**;
KUNG FU PANDA 4 (PG) 12:50*; 2:00**;
SOMEONE LIKE YOU (PG) 1:10; 4:00; 6:50
GODZILLA X KONG: THE NEW EMPIRE (PG-13) 12:10**;
3:10**;
KID: DORA AND THE LOST CITY OF GOLD (PG) 11:00A**
KID: HOP (PG) 11:30A**

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Prayer: Event unites community members, groups, leaders on common values of faith and prayer

Continued from page 1A

inspirational message. This year’s keynote speaker is Timothy Barton, president of WallBuilders, a national pro-family organization that presents America’s forgotten history

and heroes, with an emphasis on our religious, moral, and constitutional heritage. Table reservations and single ticket purchases can be made on the ACMA website at acmaonline.org now while tables and seats are available. Single tickets

are \$35 each. Tables can be reserved at differing sponsorship levels, each with various benefits: \$400 for Bronze, \$700 for Silver, and \$1,200 for Gold (note: Gold Sponsorships include two tables). The Apopka Mayor’s

Prayer Breakfast is an annual gathering of municipal, county, and state leaders as well as businesses, churches, non-profits, and individuals of the Apopka area community to unite on the common values of faith and prayer.

For more information about the event itself, table registrations, and/or single ticket sales, visit acmaonline.org or call the ACMA administrator Pastor Joe Bankson at 407-462-7742.

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Mañon named president of Orlando Health Cancer Institute

Rafael Mañon, MD, has been named president of the Orlando Health Cancer Institute, where he will have oversight of the organization's oncology services, Orlando Health announced on Tuesday, April

2. Dr. Mañon brings nearly two decades of experience to this role, serving as a dynamic physician leader and knowledgeable and compassionate patient care provider at Orlando Health Cancer Institute since 2005. He is currently chairman of the Department of Radiation Oncology and has previously served in several leadership roles, including Radiation Safety Committee Chairman, Head and Neck Quality Committee Chairman and Radiation Oncology Research Director. His professional affiliations include the American Society of Clinical Oncology, the American Society for Radiation Oncology, and NRG Oncology. Dr. Mañon has also



Dr. Rafael Mañon ... new president of the Orlando Health Cancer Institute

been published in numerous medical journals and textbooks, served as principal investigator on clinical research studies and been a frequent presenter at national conferences. "Dr. Mañon feels his

greatest responsibility is to serve the community with the highest level of quality cancer care" said Cary D'Ortona, president of the Orlando Health Medical Group. "As a leader in cancer care, Dr. Mañon is committed to connecting with patients to bring clarity and understanding to the challenges they are facing." A graduate of the University of Florida College of Medicine, Dr. Mañon completed an internal medicine internship at Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami and a radiation oncology residency at the University of Wisconsin, where he served as chief resident. At Orlando Health Cancer Institute, patients have access to the most current, state-of-the-art cancer-fighting technologies.

*The Institute recently received FDA approval for its TIL or tumor-infiltrating lymphocytes therapy to treat aggressive, late-stage melanoma and other advanced cancers. *It is Central Florida's only provider of proton therapy, an advanced form of radiation therapy that uses proton beams rather than X-rays to treat selected tumors in adult and pediatric patients. *Orlando Health Cancer Institute's Bone Marrow Transplant and Cellular Therapy program has been recognized among the top 12 performing centers in the nation by the Center for International Blood and Marrow Transplant Research (CIBMTR).

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- Apopka Chief rack, 400 N. Park Ave.
- Apopka High School
- Apopka Quick Mart (BP), Hwy 436 & Lake Cortez Dr.
- Argos Family Diner, 3346 E. Semoran Blvd.
- Beekays, N. Park Ave. (across from the old Fla. Hosp. location)
- CenturyLink headquarters, SR 436
- Chevron Diamond Gas – Hwy 441 & Plymouth-Sorrento Rds
- Chevron Market, Hwy 441 & Roger Williams Rd.
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- Circle K & BP, Hwy 441 S. of Walmart
- Circle K, Keene Rd / Clarcona
- Citgo, 441 & Boy Scout Blvd (Plymouth)
- Citgo, Rock Springs Rd. (behind store by mail boxes)
- CVS #3748 - corner of Park Av & Hwy 441
- Discount Beverage & Smoke (Across from Checkers, Highway 441)
- Circle K (Shell) #2404, Sheeler Rd at corner of Apopka Blvd.
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- Circle K (Shell) #2334, Rock Springs Rd & Kelly Park Rd
- Circle K #1288, Welch Rd & Wekiva Springs Rd.
- Circle K (Marathon) #1063, Zellwood, 2691 Highway 441
- Compare Fresh Market, 436 behind Aaron's

- Crosby's Motor Inn, Hwy 441 & Errol Parkway (Errol Estate)
- Lula Mae's Eatery, Central Ave S.
- Marathon, Main St. (midland downtown)
- McDonald's, Highway 441 (downtown)
- Mobil, (Citgo) Hwy 441 (next to Burger K)
- Orange County Service Center, N. Park Ave.
- Perkins Restaurant Hwy 441, in Victoria Plaza Parking Lot)
- Plymouth Post Office, Plymouth/Sorrento Rd
- Porkies BBQ, Highway 441 (downtown)
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Photo courtesy of Apopka Historical Society
(From l to r) Charlotte White, Apopka Historical Society treasurer; Pam Jones, community relations representative for U.S. Representative Daniel Webster; Nick Nesta, city of Apopka commissioner; Diane Velazquez, city of Apopka commissioner; and Maribel Brinkle, Apopka Historical Society President, at the March 28 Women's History Month event at the Apopka Museum.

Museum: Commissioner, artist discuss obstacles they faced to achieve goals

Continued from page 1A

Delia Miller, a local artist known for her murals, shared her perspective as both a student pilot and an artist. Through her artwork and personal anecdotes, Miller illustrated the intersection of her passions and the challenges she has overcome in pursuing her dreams. Her story serves as a testament to the resilience and creativity of women in pursuing their aspirations across diverse fields.

"We were honored to have had Commissioner Velazquez and Ms. Miller join us for this special event," said Maribel Brinkle, president of the Apopka Historical Society, said in a news release. "Their stories are not only inspirational, but also showcase the vital role that women play in shaping our communities and promoting inclusivity."

The event provided a platform for attendees to engage in dialogue and reflect on the importance of sup-

porting women's voices and achievements.

The Apopka Museum is located at 112 E. Main St., Apopka. Hours are Wednesday and Thursday, noon-5 p.m. and Saturday, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Call 407-703-1707 or email theapokmuseum@gmail.com. For more information about the Apopka Historical Society and upcoming events, visit theapokmuseum.com.

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OCPS teachers ratify a salary raise for 2023-24 school year

The School Board of Orange County and the Orange County Classroom Teachers Association (CTA) announced on Tuesday, April 2, that the CTA bargaining unit ratified a salary agreement for the 2023-24 school year by an overwhelming 99.5 percent “yes” vote. A record 7,123 ballots were cast, 7,047 teachers voting “yes” with only 35 voting “no.” There were 41 “spoiled ballots” that were not counted.

“It is exciting to see our teachers decisively voted to ratify their contract,” said Dr. Maria Vazquez, superintendent of Orange County Public Schools. “With this vote, our hard-working teachers have guaranteed their well-deserved raises.”

The historic 9-percent average raise will be paid to instructional personnel retroactively to the beginning of the school year. Salary increases and retro pay (including advanced degree supplements) will be received in the April 10 paycheck; retention supplement differentials will be paid April 24; and all other applicable supplements will be paid June 5.

The district’s health insurance proposal will be implemented beginning with plan year 2024-25. However, the district will provide a premium discount for plan year 2024-25 totaling \$4.4 million.

To see the full agreement, visit rb.gy/begr4t online.



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- Branches that are touching or laying on your rooftop
- Low hanging branches that obstruct the street or sidewalk
- Branches that appear diseased or insect infested

Another issue trees face in Central Florida is severe storms. Many trees can be damaged from strong winds and hail, or even become uprooted. Since storm damaged trees are often an accident waiting to happen, calling for tree damage repair is not something you want to put off once a problem is noticed. Ignoring the problem of storm-damaged trees is likely to lead to larger, more expensive repair costs down the road.



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Obituaries

GUADALUPE “LUPE” GOMEZ, 74, of Apopka, passed away peacefully on Saturday, March 23, 2024, in Orlando, surrounded by his loved ones. He was born on March 27, 1949, in Ejido Las Cuevas, Ciudad Acuña, Mexico, to Ramon Gomez Villanueva and Santos Diaz Villarreal. He is preceded in death by his parents, Ramon y Santos Gomez, and siblings: Pedro, Ventura (Olga), Crispin Sr. (Olivia), Ramon, Sr. (Margari-ta), Modesto (Leonat), and Pete (a/k/a Peter Gun). He is survived by: his spouse, Sylvia Martinez; children, (with Maria Gpe. Gomez) – Marisol (Giovanny Bautista) Gomez (2 grandchildren; 4 great-grandchildren); Santos Gomez (2 grandchildren); Maira (Jorge) Vega (3 grandchildren; 2 great-grandchildren); Patricia (Abdul Maalik King) Gomez (2 grandchildren); Micaela Gomez (1 grand-child); Lazaro Gomez, *sus hijos de crianza* – Leticia Ortiz (2 grandchildren; 3 great-grandchildren); Jose Martinez (6 grandchildren; 1 great-grandchild); Joann Mar-tinez; John P. (Barbara Bahena)

Martinez (3 grandchildren); Janet Martinez; Peter (Lesli Leticia) Mar-tinez; and Maria (Salomon Tapia Hernandez) Martinez (3 grand-children); as well as his siblings: Julio Sr. (Prudenticanat); Hilario Sr. (Alicia); Elsa (Honororio) and Maria (Juan) Hidalgo; his brother-in-law, best friend and confi-dant, Miguel A. Delgado, along with many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

WILLIAM H. KLINGER JR., 81, passed away on March 1, 2024 from Apopka. Born in Mary-land on March 31, 1942. Wil-liam is preceded in death by his parents, William Sr. and K. Ruth (McKveen); nephew Rodger; stepdaughter Jeanie; grandson Bryan; sister, Sharon May Boyd, passed a few days after William. He is survived by his devoted and loving wife, Carol (Standen); chil-dren, Lorraine, William H. (3rd), Daniel, Michele, Jackie, Cindy, and Amy; 1 nephew, 20 grandchil-dren, 17 great grandchildren.

ALBERT (BO) R. DAVIS, JR., 49, passed away on March 9, 2024. Albert was born on April 2, 1974 in Eustis, to Linda Pettis and Albert Davis, Sr. Albert was prede-ceased by father, Albert R. Davis, Sr.; brother, Derrick S. Davis; Da-mon Sawyer II, and Marcus Saw-yer, aka Julien Klein; grandmoth-er, Rowena DeLidle; 2 uncles; 1 aunt. He is survived by daughter, Audrey Rose Davis; common law wife, Anita Nichols; mother, Linda R. Pettis; sister, Leah L. Hall; 3 aunts; 1 uncle; 8 cousins.

See Obituaries on page 10A



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Our Last Chance to Choose: Heaven or Hell?

I recently read a book about purgatory entitled “The Amazing Secret of the Souls in Purgatory,” subtitled “An Interview with Maria Simma.”

Maria Simma was a Catholic mystic who lived in the mountains of Austria and began having “visits” from the souls in purgatory around the age of 25.

I was given this book by my brother, who is more apt to believe these kinds of stories than I, and thus I was quite skeptical of its contents until I read the entire book. She had her first visit from one of these souls while she was living in a convent, and the only thing that the spirit asked was that she have three masses said for him, so that he might be delivered from purgatory. What followed was a long period of visits from other souls who asked for similar things, and with whom she was able to communicate.

I take reports like these with a grain of salt, but there were two things that really struck me in this book.

First, Maria claimed that we will see God—albeit obscurely—after our death and will have an opportunity to regret our sins and turn towards God in contrition.

Secondly, Maria claimed that many souls came to her asking her to go to their families, asking to have ill-gotten goods returned to their rightful owner, many of which were previously unknown to the families themselves (e.g. property which may have been stolen by the spirit who visited her).

The idea that we will have a chance to accept God and choose heaven over hell is quite beautiful and accords with the idea of a loving God who wishes for everyone to be saved.

– 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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In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.

Proverbs 14:26

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Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. Proverbs 4:7

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

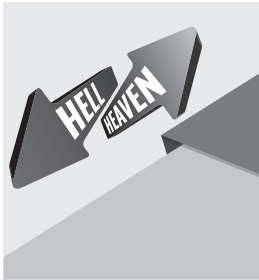
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(See message above.)

“I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” 1 Timothy 2:1–4



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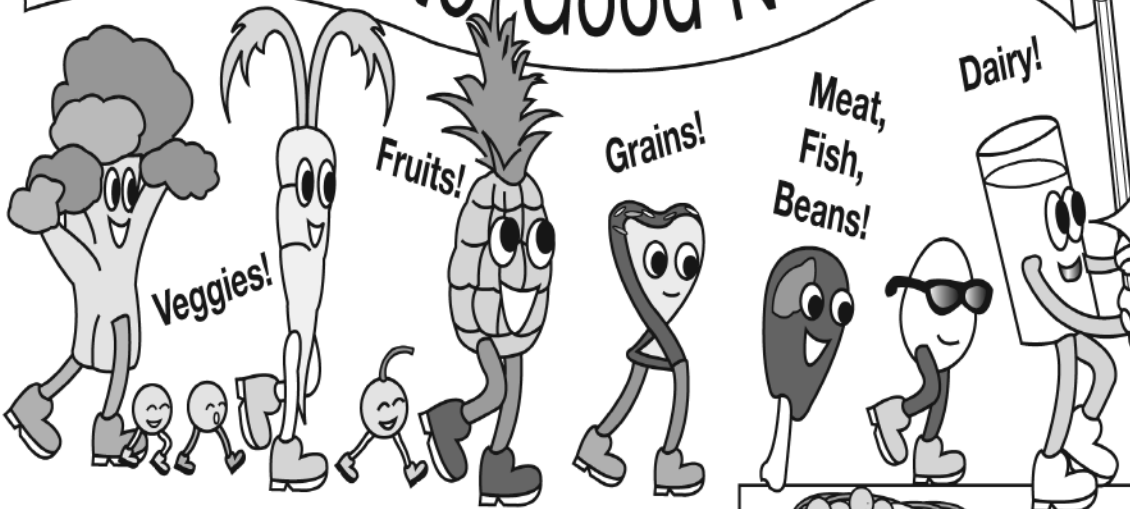
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March Into Good Nutrition!

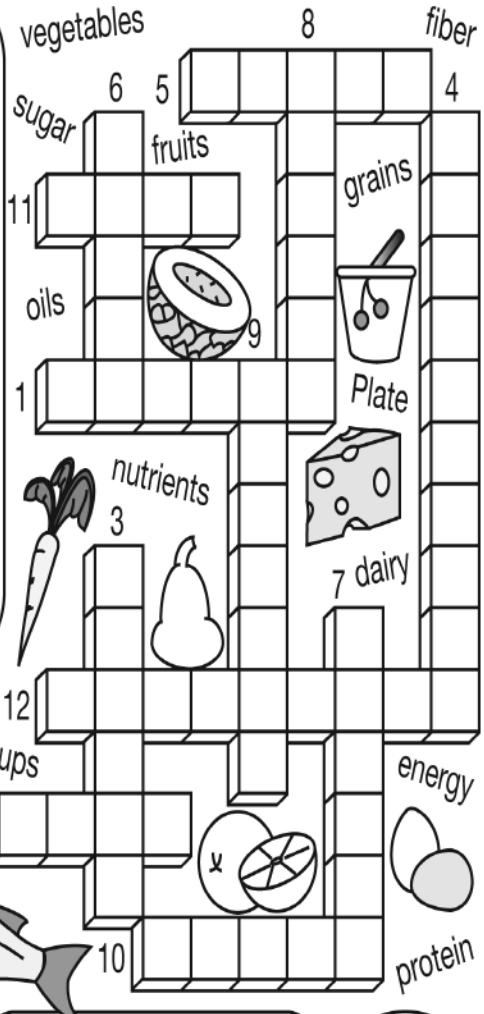


March into good nutrition any time! It's easy to learn about the food groups and how you can choose fresh foods to get vitamins, minerals and other nutrients your body needs to grow and be healthy.

Fun Dinner Idea Yum!
Whole wheat spaghetti or spaghetti squash with turkey meatballs and chunky tomato sauce.

Read the clues to fill in the crossword:

- the food _____ help us to choose different kinds of foods every day: vegetable and fruit, grain, meat and bean, dairy
- "My _____" is a tool to help you see at a glance what and how much you are eating of each food group at a meal
- _____ and vegetables are loaded with vitamins A and C for good skin, eyes and healing
- the largest area of "MyPlate" is for _____: carrots, lettuce, squash, asparagus, tomatoes, green beans, broccoli, peas, cauliflower, celery...
- fruits have lots of vitamins, but may have a lot of _____ too
- it's better to eat fruits than to drink their juice: when you eat an apple instead of drinking its juice, you get _____ too
- foods in the grains group have carbohydrates that give you _____
- whole _____ have more fiber, so try whole wheat noodles or pizza crust
- _____ to build muscles comes from meat, fish, beans and nuts
- foods in the milk or _____ group have calcium to build strong bones and teeth
- some fat is needed for your body and brain to run well; choose _____ over fats that are solid
- eat foods of all colors from all the different food groups and you will get lots of _____ for good health

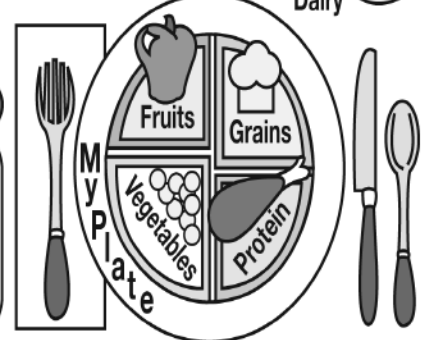


Give peas a chance... then find and circle at least **10** words that have a long "ē" sound as in the word 'peas.'

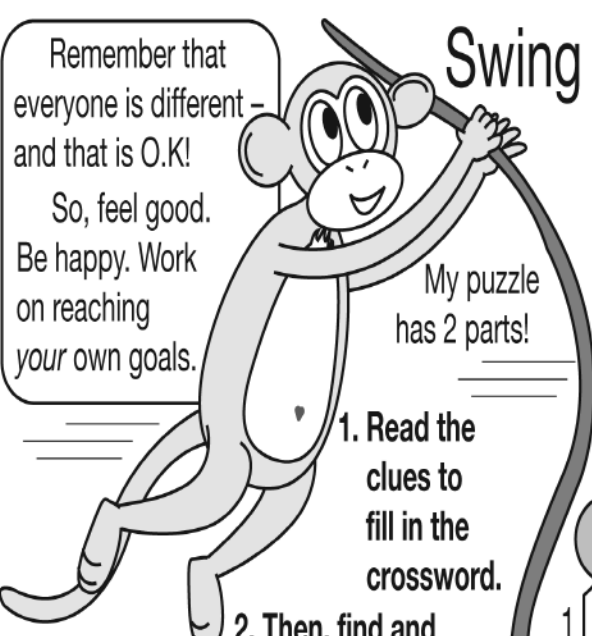
I'm baaaaack...and I'm showing people that the area for 'vegetables' is the largest!

Dairy

• Plate based on USDA source.



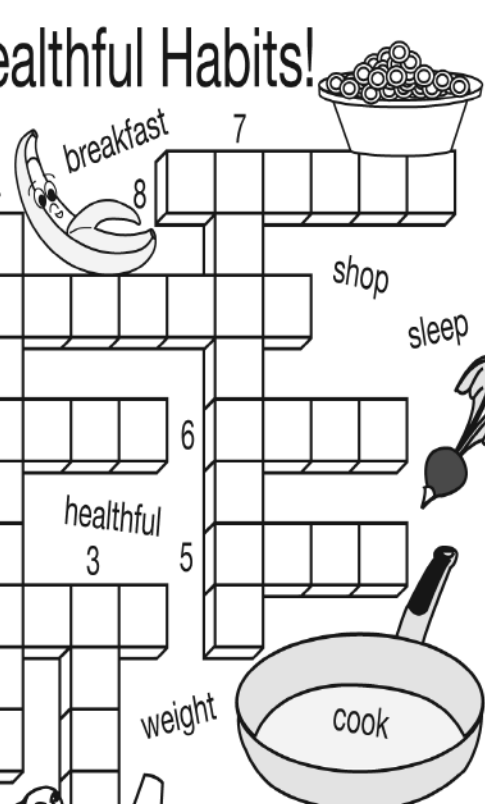
Remember that everyone is different – and that is O.K!
So, feel good.
Be happy. Work on reaching your own goals.



My puzzle has 2 parts!


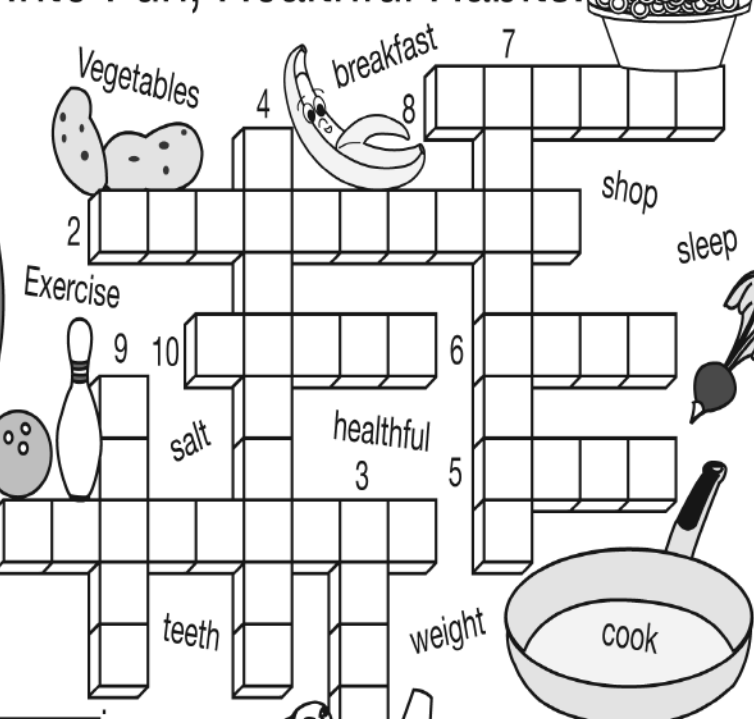
1. Read the clues to fill in the crossword.
2. Then, find and circle the answers in the word search.

Swing Into Fun, Healthful Habits!




1. Start your "engine" in the morning with a healthy _____.
2. _____ can be included in breakfast, as in an omelet (broccoli, onions, mushrooms, tomatoes), and are great for snacks in between meals.
3. Choose snacks that have less fat or _____ and cereals with less sugar.
4. When you eat out, choose items that are fun, but also more _____, such as a baked sweet potato instead of french fries, etc.
5. Help to _____ for and choose vegetables and fruits that everyone likes!

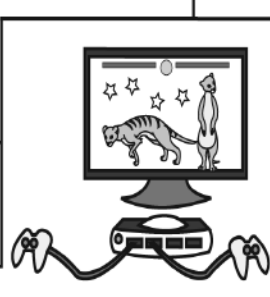
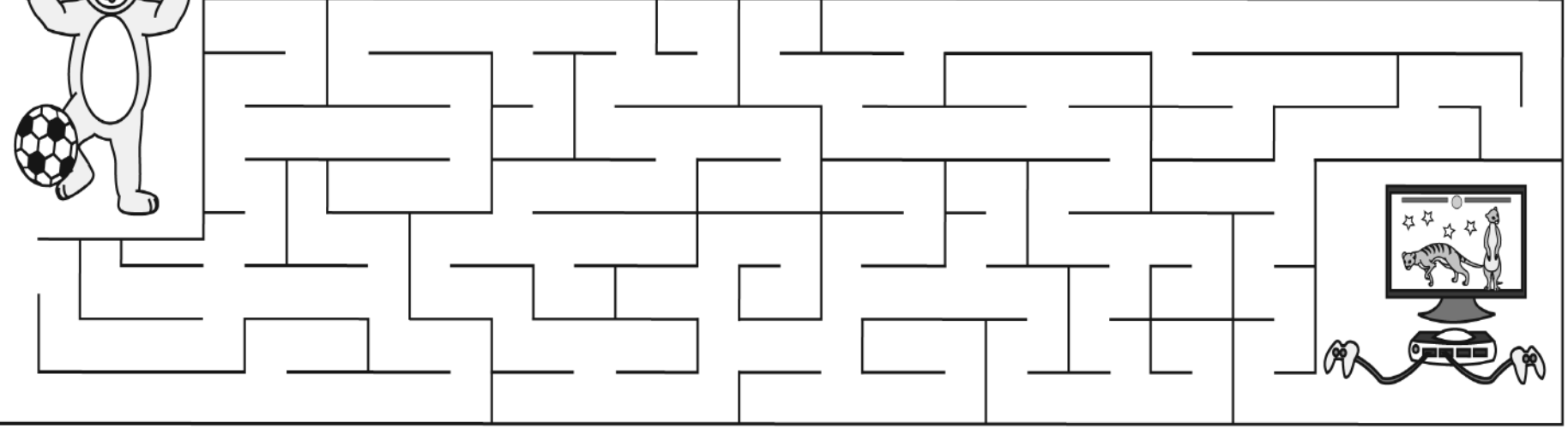
6. Help to plan and _____ meals that are more healthful for everyone.
7. _____ every day for at least 30 minutes.
8. Keep a good _____. Your family doctor can help you to decide what is healthy for your size and activities.
9. Brush your _____ twice a day and floss once too.
10. Get enough _____ so you wake up ready to take on the day!



At the End of the Day



Forest has been to soccer practice, helped with dinner and finished his homework. Now, he has 30 minutes before bedtime to play video games with his brother. **Help him get to the game console.**



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Orange County marks April as Earth Month

April 22 is Earth Day, but this year Orange County is celebrating the environment for the entire month. Orange County’s Earth Month celebrations are designed to promote a more sustainable and resilient living community by hosting various county-wide activities and events.

Earth Month 2024 will highlight countywide sustainability and conservation efforts while providing residents and employees with educational and engaging experiences. The celebration will encourage residents to inspire action, foster education, and promote environmentally friendly practices.

Activities will include an eco-scavenger hunt, information on Florida-friendly landscaping, and water conservation workshops. The Fix It, Don’t Pitch It event allows residents to extend the life of some of their belongings by having them repaired by expert volunteers, thereby reducing the amount of trash sent to the landfill. Residents will also be able to learn about energy-saving tips and how to create Florida-friendly planters from the University of Florida Orange County Extension Office.

For more information and a calendar of events, visit ocfl.net/earth-month.

This collaborative month-long celebration is made possible through the Office of Sustainability and Resilience partnering with various Orange County departments.

Gov. DeSantis announces second year of state’s Toll Relief Program

On Monday, April 1, Governor Ron DeSantis announced a second consecutive year of the highly successful Toll Relief Program, which will cut the toll rates of frequent commuters in half by applying a toll credit from April 2024 to March 2025.

Launched in 2023, drivers utilizing Florida-based toll transponders (including SunPass and other Florida-based transponders) and having 35 or more qualifying toll transactions monthly will receive a 50 percent credit to their account.

“I am pleased to have secured an additional \$450 million for toll relief in Florida that will alleviate costs on our commuting families,” said Governor Ron DeSantis. “Florida is committed to good fiscal

governance, and I am committed to returning our surpluses back to the taxpayers in the form of tax breaks and toll savings.”

In 2023, the Toll Relief Program delivered \$500 million in substantial savings to over 1.2 million commuters, equating to an approximate savings of \$400 per individual. Florida drivers can expect another year of toll savings from April 2024 to March 2025.

“Florida families grappling with persistent inflation due to the Biden administration’s harmful economic policies can rest assured that we are doing all we can to support Floridians, including another historic year of toll relief,” said Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nuñez. “Our toll relief program provides

meaningful cost savings to frequent commuters who rely on our toll roads to provide for their families.”

“FDOT is thrilled to offer the Toll Relief Program to help Floridians with the challenges of rising costs of life. Customers are at the center of all we do at FDOT, and this program will truly make an immediate impact on the everyday lives of our customers,” said Florida Department of Transportation Secretary Jared W. Perdue. “In addition to saving money, drivers in South Florida will soon be saving time as we begin construction of the Golden Glades Interchange, the first project of Governor DeSantis’ Moving Florida Forward Infrastructure Initiative projects to break ground.”

Today, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) also commenced construction on the Golden Glades Interchange project (GGI) in Miami-Dade County, designed to alleviate congestion in South Florida.

The GGI project represents the reconstruction of a pivotal junction that South Florida commuters rely upon where five major roadways intersect: I-95, Palmetto Expressway, Florida’s Turnpike, State Road 9, and NW 7th Avenue.

With over 400,000 vehicles passing through this intersection daily, it’s a crucial component of the local and regional transportation network. Because of Moving Florida Forward, this project will be completed 7–10 years sooner than expected.

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SUDOKU ANSWERS

PUZZLE CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 2B

5	6	1	7	3	2	8	9	4
8	9	2	6	1	4	7	3	5
7	3	4	5	9	8	1	2	6
3	1	8	2	6	9	4	5	7
2	4	7	1	5	3	6	8	9
6	5	9	4	8	7	2	1	3
9	7	5	8	4	1	3	6	2
4	8	6	3	2	5	9	7	1
1	2	3	9	7	6	5	4	8

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Puzzle Solution

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Z	E	E	A	B	A	T	E	A	N	A	S	A
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The Crossword Puzzle is found on page 2B