

Sertoma

The Apopka Foliage Sertoma Club donates on behalf of its award winner to a local nonprofit of her choice. See page 5C.



Sports

Volleyball will face No. 4 or No. 10 ranked team with a win over Winter Park. See page 1B.



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The Apopka Area Chamber of Commerce building, 180 E. Main St. Apopka.

Chamber retains lawyer for its building, seeks 10-year lease renewal

By Teresa Sargeant
Apopka Chief Staff

The Apopka Area Chamber of Commerce has retained an attorney in its fight to keep its office building, located at 180 E. Main St., as well as requesting a new 10-year lease agreement with 10-year renewal terms.

The Orlando Law Group informed the city of Apopka in an April 29 letter that the Chamber has retained the law firm for representation regarding the Chamber building lease, which is set to expire in January 2025.

"At this time, the Chamber is requesting a new lease agreement for a

term of ten years with ten-year renewal terms prior to committing to a loan debt to repair the building at the Chamber's expense due to the current intent of (Apopka city) commissioners to revoke the location from the chamber, it seems unreasonable to take on such debt for a city owned asset," the April 29 letter read.

According to the letter, the Chamber made several repairs to its hurricane-ravaged building: "In September of 2022, from Hurricane Ian, and in November of 2022, from Hurricane Nicole, the subject premises suffered extensive damage to the roof, which caused further damage to the ceiling, walls, floors, and contents of the property."

"The chamber has had the roof replaced and extensive remediation performed to remove the interior structural damage and contents."

"The chamber has also obtained three bids for repair and had the intention to secure a Hurricane Disaster loan from the SBA to conduct these repairs."

The letter states that pursuant to the lease terms at paragraph 13, the Chamber intends to hand over the property in its current condition to the city, since the Chamber is excluded from repairing the damage by "unavoidable casualty," according to the lease terms,

and a hurricane is covered under the paragraph's terms.

"Please be advised that the Chamber has already attempted to surrender possession of this property and is willing to relinquish possession before the termination of this lease. It is also happy to sign over any insurance proceeds that it is still in possession of after doing extensive work to make post-hurricane repairs and continuing to maintain the building during the entire period while not being able to occupy it. They have been a good partner to the city, but the Board also has a fiduciary

See CHAMBER Page 7A



Screenshot from video courtesy of Valeria Williams

On Wednesday, May 8, this airplane made an emergency landing in Apopka with no reported injuries of the two passengers that were onboard.

Airplane makes emergency landing

An airplane made an emergency landing 2.5 miles southeast of Apopka-Orlando Airport with no reported injuries of the two passengers that were onboard, according to Apopka police.

On Wednesday, May

8, at 11:30 a.m., the Apopka Police Department (APD) responded to 3000 Shelby Industrial Drive regarding a report of an airplane crash, which later turned out to be the emergency landing.

See PLANE Page 5A

Winners are announced at Apopka Art and Foliage Festival



Photos courtesy of Apopka Woman's Club.



The Best of Show winner at the 62nd annual Apopka Art and Foliage Festival is Robert Fragale, for his metal sculpture (l). Fragale poses with Apopka Woman's Club members including Joann Castillo (front r), festival committee chair.

The following are the winners of the 62nd annual Apopka Art and Foliage Festival, which took place April 27-28 at Kit Land Nelson Park in Apopka.

Fine Art

Best of Show – Robert Fragale
Award of Excellence – Gregory Jones
Award of Distinction – Norman Gaulding
Award of Distinction – Elzibta Weron
Award of Merit – Cliff Jackson

See WINNERS Page #A

Over 350 attend community prayer breakfast

By Teresa Sargeant
Apopka Chief Staff

Between 350 and 400 people attended this year's Apopka Mayor's Prayer Breakfast, which coincided with National Day of Prayer that falls on the first Thursday of May.

The Apopka Christian Ministerial Alliance (ACMA) and Mayor Bryan Nelson organized the event that took place on Thursday, May 2, at the Apopka Community Center/VFW Building on South Central Avenue, Apopka. The event included an open breakfast buffet, followed by a formal program involving

prayers led by various community leaders, musical performances, and an inspirational message.

The keynote speaker was Timothy Barton, president of WallBuilders, a national pro-family organization that presents America's forgotten history and heroes, with an emphasis on the country's religious, moral, and constitutional heritage.

Barton spoke about the history of prayer in the United States, its importance for the nation's founding and that prayer has always been what the nation turned to in times of needing guidance for the

future.

"He also spoke about how our leaders who traditionally turn to prayer versus everyone looks at separation of church and state. But that's the modern take on that is a twist of the original intention of that."

"I thought it was powerful. I think our community and nation need a reminder that our dependence comes from God and that we need to return to prayer," said Joe Bankson, ACMA administrator.

Organized by the Apopka Christian Ministerial Alliance (ACMA).

See BREAKFAST Page 8A



Photo courtesy of Apopka Christian Ministerial Alliance/Facebook.

Keynote speaker Tim Barton delivers his message at the Thursday, May 2, Apopka Mayor's Prayer Breakfast.

This week

Section A

Opinion 2A
Bus. Review 3,7A

Section B

Sports 1B
Classified 6-8B
Service Dir. 8B

Section C

Dining & Ent. 1C
Worship 2C
Kapers 4C
Legal ads 6-16C

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Online at: TheApopkaChief.com/
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FloridaPublicNotices.com



Apopka Event of the Week

North Orange Branch Library, 1211 E. Semoran Blvd., on Thursday, May 16, from 1-2 p.m., Yoga For Adults with Michelle from Soul-Ga-Yoga, in the meeting room: Yoga is for everyone: male & female; young & elderly; non-flexible and active! Attendees are encouraged to dress in comfortable clothing and bring your own mat. Designed for adults and seniors.

Quotable

The tax package will help homeowners by providing a one-year exemption on taxes on residential property and flood insurance premiums.

Article on the signing of legislation by Gov. DeSantis to give Florida families tax relief

Opinion

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A weekly newspaper founded in 1923

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Our position

Bills passed and signed by governor will continue to save Floridians tax \$\$

Cape Canaveral, Fla. — Today, Governor Ron DeSantis signed House Bill 7073, providing \$1.07 billion in tax relief for Floridians this year, in addition to the \$450 million in toll relief that he signed last month, bringing the total savings for Florida families to \$1.5 billion for Fiscal Year 2024-25. Since 2019, the Governor has secured nearly \$6.7 billion in tax cuts while maintaining a comfortable budget surplus.

“Florida’s economy has remained strong despite reckless federal spending and failed policies in Washington,” said Governor Ron DeSantis. “This tax relief package will provide much needed relief for Florida’s families, especially as the D.C. political class shows no signs of reversing course on the inflationary policies of the federal government.”

“At a time of rising inflation, Florida’s legislative leaders and Governor DeSantis continue to deliver meaningful tax relief to help the people of Florida,” said Florida House Speaker Paul Renner. “People across the country are finding out what Floridians have known for years — allowing people to keep more of what they earn benefits Florida families, workers, retirees, and businesses. With the signing of HB 7073 we continue that tradition—a tradition we like to call, ‘the Florida Way’.”

“With the signing of the state’s tax package today, Floridians will enjoy some of the lowest taxes in the nation,” said House Ways & Means Chairman Stan McClain. “Thanks to the leadership of Speaker Renner, Senate President Pasidomo and Governor DeSantis, Floridians can work, play, raise their family and hold on to more of their hard-earned money in the process. That’s ‘the Florida Way’.”

The tax package will help homeowners by providing a one-year exemption on taxes on residential property and flood insurance premiums. This is in addition to the \$200 million that was signed last month for the My Safe Florida Home Pro-

gram, bringing the total investment to the program to over \$600 million since 2022. Since the Governor signed sweeping reforms in 2022 and 2023, eight new companies have joined the homeowners insurance market in Florida. The success of these reforms is becoming increasingly clear in rate filings for insurers. In fact, 10 companies have filed a zero percent increase and 10 more have filed a rate decrease to take effect in 2024.

Additionally, this year’s tax cut package is a continuation of our annual tax holidays. These tax holidays include:

*Two Disaster Preparedness Holidays, June 1-14 and August 24-September 6: Families can prepare for hurricane season with items like tarps, batteries, and flashlights, sales tax free.

*The Back-to-School Sales Tax Holiday, July 29-August 11: Families can save on pens, pencils, computers, clothing, and other school supplies.

*The Tool Time Sales Tax Holiday, September 1-7: Floridians can save on power tools, hand tools, toolboxes, and other items.

*The Freedom Month Sales Tax Holiday, July 1-31: Florida families can purchase summer items like pool floats, fishing supplies, and outdoor equipment, in addition to admissions to museums and state parks, sales tax free.

Among other savings, the tax relief package also includes a sales tax credit for businesses that employ persons with disabilities. Additionally, the bill increases the cap for the Strong Families Tax Credit Program from \$20 million to \$40 million, which supports organizations focused on child welfare.

For a breakdown of the tax relief package, see below:

*Insurance Premium Tax Relief: Waives insurance premium taxes for one full year on homeowners’ insurance policies and flood insurance policies.

*Sales Tax Relief: Back to

See TAX RELIEF Page 6A



Letter of thanksgiving is delivered

This week I was able to enjoy one of my favorite activities as a school board member in Orange County besides graduation: Delivering Project Impact letters to very well-deserving teachers.

Project Impact is something very special OCPs does each year where they ask graduating seniors if there is a teacher that had a special impact on their life. The letters are framed and hand-delivered to teachers by school board members or cabinet members during the school day, during teacher appreciation week in May.

Not only are the letters themselves usually very moving and thoughtful, but the presentation is fun as well. We usually walk in with the principal of the school during class time to

Orange County School Board, District 7



Melissa Byrd

surprise the teacher. The principal introduces the special guest and the special guest reads the letter aloud to the class and the teacher.

I always like to keep the name of the student a surprise until the end and the teacher is always working hard to try to figure out who has written the sweet words. That is if they are not crying too much!

Yes, these letters often have that impact. One letter caused a room full of emo-

tion for a teacher at Lockhart Middle School this week. The student wrote how he had moved from out of state and had been bullied all through elementary school.

Because he was so quiet and shy, this teacher took a special interest in him and guided him in ways to be more sociable and encouraged him to interact more with his peers. She was positive and kind to him and after all these years, he still remembered how she had made him feel special.

Towards the end of that school year, he wrote about a special recognition she gave him in front of the class when she told the class that he had grown so much in that year. That one gesture made him feel

See BYRD Page 6A

‘Main Streets’ are emphasized

We have all watched numerous towns around us rebrand, grow, and prosper. I have been on a mission to help areas in my district prosper and revitalize. I have visited other “Main Streets” such as Ocala, Winter Garden, Winter Park, Kissimmee, St. Cloud, Stuart, and most recently, Deland. Exploring these towns has inspired me to attend the Florida Main Street Conference.

This July, I will be attending the Main Street Conference in Tallahassee for their 200th Anniversary. Many of you have read my columns sharing vari-

County Commissioner District 2



Christine Moore

ous tidbits from this fantastic conference when it was held last year.

I convinced Mayor Demings’ staff to begin a “Main Street” program in Orange County Government. I’m hoping and praying after I leave the commission in 2026, the coun-

ty’s new “Main Street” program will propel Lockhart and other unincorporated cities on an upward trajectory. Small towns should be delightful places to live, work, and play.

Last Friday, I was honored to partner with Caitlyn Kasheta, Executive Director of Apopka’s new “Main Street” program, to facilitate a group of county residents and employees, Lockhart residents, and Apopkans in meeting with some of the “magnificent seven.” The “magnificent seven” as they are called,

See MOORE Page 6A

This Week In God’s Word

Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end. — Proverbs 29:11

Mema Says

Don’t stumble over something that’s behind you.

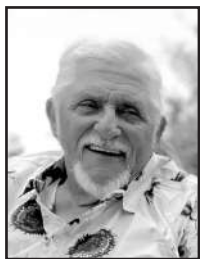
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Heartbreaking trip gives lifetime memories along with a song

We would be traveling to or from a vacation spot, or a family reunion and my dad would start singing old gospel favorites, with country songs interspersed as he was led. We (my sister and I) learned most of the songs from trying to sing along, and most of the songs still resonate in my mind.

We made a heartbreaking trip to “down home” to say our last goodbyes to Mommy. This was my dad’s mom, and all us kids called her Mommy because



Ike Hayden

that is all we ever heard her thirteen kids call her. Mommy was seated in her favorite easy chair in the family room. She called each of the grandchildren in by name and she held out her arms to embrace us and

give us a kiss on the cheek. Then all the grandchildren were ushered into the front room and our parents went back into the family room to spend Mommy’s last moments on earth together. The daughters, and daughters-in-law, took turns brushing her beautiful silvery hair that cascaded back over the chair to the floor. Daddy (my grandfather) knelt by the side of the chair, and silently the tears fell as he focused on the face of the one earthly being that had been his

rock of strength, the only one that could quiet his anxieties, and soothe his fearsome anger over injustices done by criminals to those who had elected him Sheriff. The men of the family would pat his shoulders but could not quench their tears of woe as they thought of the time Mommy had spent darning their socks, sewing patches on their jeans, and making sure they always had clean clothes. Back then, it shamed someone to have unpatched holes, or stained

clothing.

After Mommy had passed, Daddy went to his chair and sat as if in a trance. The ladies took Mommy and after bathing her, they arranged her beautiful hair and laid her out in the living room for neighbors and friends to come by and pay their last respects.

Not only was she respected as a friend, but even those that were not on a first name basis with her, respected her for the behavior of her thirteen children

in and out of the public’s eyesight. One of Mommy’s greatest joys was hearing how well her son or daughter did in serving other people, and their courteousness in the deed.

Moms have changed. It is hard to imagine a wife, mother, psychiatrist, referee, chief cook and bottle-washer, keeping up with kids in today’s society, and all this while holding down a job that is necessary to supplement Dad’s income

See HAYDEN Page 6A

Winners: More Art and Foliage winners

Continued from page 1A

Award of Merit – Debra Sherman
Award of Honor – Hannah Allen
Award of Honor – Leland Williams
Award of Honor – Madylan Hudson

Creative Craft

First Place – Lori Wisniewski
Second Place – Laia Gore
Third Place – Elizabeth Guilhem
Award of Honor – Jo Cook

Award Of Honor – Arielle Stankiewicz
Award of Honor – Heather Cease


REGAL
Fri., May 10, 2024 thru Sun., May 12, 2024
KINGDOM OF THE PLANET OF THE APES (PG-13) 10:50A; 11:50A; 12:50; 2:30; 3:30; 4:30; 6:00; 7:00; 8:00; 9:30; 10:30
THE FALL GUY (PG-13) 11:00A; 12:20; 3:40; 6:50; 10:10
GODZILLA X KONG: THE NEW EMPIRE (PG-13) 11:10A*; 1:50; 4:40; 7:30; 9:50
UNSUNG HERO (PG) 11:20A; 2:10; 4:20; 7:10
STAR WARS: EP 1- THE PHANTOM MENACE (PG) 11:40A; 3:20; 6:40; 9:40
TAROT (PG-13) 2:00; 4:50; 7:40; 10:20
KID: MINIONS: THE RISE OF GRU (PG) 11:10A**
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Apopka's Rock Springs Realty notes bump in active listings is good for buyer and seller

After a year of rising interest rates, low inventory and affordability issues, experts predict the housing market outlook may be improving.

"Inventory levels have increased slightly, its highest level in over a year. So, is it a good time to sell? Or might it be a better time to buy? Florida's housing market in April saw more for-sale inventory and higher median sales prices compared to a year ago, and sales continue to trend closely with the pre-pandemic market. Central Florida remains one of the top 10 housing markets in 2024, and we're hopeful that mortgage rates will ease a bit more this year, but remain in the low-mid 7% range," stated Joe Bornstein, **Rock Springs Realty** Broker/Owner.

"Gone are the days of the abundant 3% mortgage, but at least buyers have gotten some relief from recent highs. Freddie Mac's latest data notes that the 30-year mortgage rate is 7.17% - down from 7.70% in late October 2023. This could be a good sign for the easing of mortgage interest rates, which truly is the lifeblood of the industry. Additionally, with listing inventories moving up, and prices stable, many buyers are predicted to get off the side-lines and pursue their home search in preparation for the summer selling season," stated Bornstein.

If you're looking to sell or buy anywhere in the Central Florida area, you need the knowledge and experience of the seasoned team at **Rock Springs Realty** to guide you through all the complexities of the real estate market. You need a



Rock Springs Realty operates with a rigorous commitment to stay ahead of rapidly changing market conditions. Visit www.RockSpringsRealty.com or call toll free at 877-333-2811 today to learn how they can help with your real estate needs. Pictured above is Rock Springs Realty Broker/Owner Joe Bornstein, Realtors Dawna Hosier, Kelli Crosby, Joanne Montchal, Kyle Moro and Christine Nejame-Evans.

team you can trust who will always look out for your best interest.

And, if you're considering purchasing a new construction home, be sure to have an experienced Realtor® on your team. "When you walk into a builder's model home and are greeted by the salesperson, it's important to remember they work "FOR" the Builder and have the Builder's best interest in mind, NOT YOURS! That salesperson is not going to fight to get you the lowest price possible, best terms, incentives, and discounts available. The salesperson working for the Builder makes an extra commission if you don't utilize a Realtor®. The odds are truly stacked against you in this situation," stated Bornstein.

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closing process. They are skilled negotiators who can get you the best deal possible.

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broad range of expertise earns superior results across market cycles and asset classes.

Joe Bornstein and his team foster a culture of efficiency, open communication, and a complete dedication to their clients' needs. The experienced team of professionals at **Rock Springs Realty** include Realtors Dawna Hosier, Kelli Crosby, Joanne Montchal, Kyle More and Christine Nejame-Evans. The combined experience of this team represents decades of successful accomplishment of their clients' real estate transactions.

Always delivering results, you can visit them at www.RockSpringsRealty.com or call toll free (877) 333-2811 to find out how they can assist you with your specific real estate needs in this rapidly changing market. "It's all about results," stated Bornstein.

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Police are searching for a suspect, seen in this image, who robbed Fifth Third Bank at 1495 Rock Springs Road on Wednesday, May 8.



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Police search for robbery suspect

Police are searching for a suspect who robbed Fifth Third Bank on Rock Springs Road.

On Wednesday, May 8, at 12:40 p.m. Apopka police responded to a bank robbery at the Fifth Third Bank, located at 1495 Rock Springs Road.

The suspect entered the bank, walked behind the teller counter, and removed money from an open drawer before fleeing the scene on foot, according to police. There were no injuries resulting from this incident.

This continues to be an active investigation. Members of the Apopka Police Department Criminal Investigations Unit are actively working to gather additional information.

If anyone has information that could assist in resolving this case, contact the Apopka Police Department at apdcid@apopka.net or to remain anonymous, information can be provided through CrimeLine at 800-423-TIPS or by visiting crimeline.org.



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Police offer free steering wheel locks for Kia, Hundai models

The Apopka Police Department has partnered with Hyundai and Kia to offer free steering wheel locks due to the rise in Kia and Hyundai vehicle thefts.

Hyundai has joined sister company Kia in offering free steering wheel locks to owners of some cars concerned about a spike in thefts. Certain older Hyundai and Kia vehicles became common targets for thieves after social media videos in late 2021 taught viewers how to steal them with a screwdriver and a USB cable.

Base models of some 2015-or-newer Hyundai and 2011-or-newer Kia cars lack an engine immobilizer. This common anti-theft device prevents a vehicle from starting unless the correct transponder is built into the smart key.

More expensive trims of older Hyundai and Kia models tend to have immobilizers. But base models don't, making them easier prey than most vehicles for car thieves.

Both Hyundai and Kia say all their 2022 and 2023 models now use immobilizers.

In response to the increasing incidents of vehicle theft, Kia and Hyundai are providing steering wheel locks for the listed years and models of vehicles.

If a vehicle qualifies, a lock can be obtained from the Apopka Police Department Community Policing Unit located at 112 E. Sixth St., Apopka. The vehicle owner must be a resident of Apopka, and present a valid

identification and proof of ownership.

These locks will be available by scheduling an appointment. Email Apopka Police Department Community Policing/Crime Prevention Unit Sergeant Jason Wiggins at jwiggins@apopka.net to set up an appointment.

Go to <https://short-url.at/eDF39> to apply for a lock.

Plane: Owner will have vehicle towed

Continued from page 1A

agency landing. 3000 Shelby Industrial Drive is about 2.5 miles southeast of Orlando-Apopka Airport.

The plane reportedly sustained wing damage in flight and made an emer-

gency landing at this location. There were two passengers onboard, no injuries were reported.

The Federal Aviation Administration and National Transportation Safety Board have been notified and are responding, an

APD news release originally stated. Later on May 8, the APD said it had received an update that the FAA and NTSB have declined to respond to the incident, and that the plane owner will privately tow the plane.

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Tax Relief: Floridians save money

Continued from page 2A

School Sales Tax Holiday: Clothing priced \$100 or less; School supplies priced \$50 or less; Computers or related accessories priced \$1,500 or less; Learning aids and puzzles priced \$30 or less.

*Two Disaster Preparedness Sales Tax Holidays: For specified disaster preparedness supplies for families and their pets.

*Tool Time Sales Tax Holiday: Tools used in skilled trades — power tools, tool belts and boxes, etc.

*Freedom Month Sales Tax Holiday: For specified recreational items.

*Child Focused Tax Credits: Increases the cap for the Strong

Families Tax Credit from \$20 million to \$40 million, which provides tax credits to companies that make charitable contributions to child welfare organizations; creates a tax credit for employers who operate or support a childcare program for their employees.

*Other Tax Relief: Provides automatic return filing extensions for sales tax and corporate income tax in certain emergencies; creates a corporate income tax credit for businesses that hire persons with disabilities; limits documentary stamp tax assessments for reverse mortgages.

Visit floridarevenue.com/SalesTaxHolidays for more information on the sales tax holidays

Byrd: Teachers need appreciation

Continued from page 2A

so good, that it encouraged him to continue to try hard to achieve more positive feedback.

He wrote that he is graduating this month and is attending college in the fall and he credits this one teacher for changing his life for the better.

When I read the student's name, the teacher gasped through a tear-

stricken face and said, "Oh my goodness, I thought he hated me!"

She then continued to cry tears of joy as I congratulated her on being such an impactful teacher and changing lives every day, just as she did for this young man.

It was truly an incredible experience and I'm so grateful for the students who take the time to write these letters because they

truly are so special and mean so much to the teachers who receive them.

I hope all our teachers had a fantastic appreciation week this week.

You deserve it and so much more.

Thank you for your passion, commitment and everything you do for our students every day.

We see you and we are so thankful for each and every one of you!

Moore: Teamwork is most important

Continued from page 2A

are responsible for Deland's rebirth. I am grateful to those individuals who attended from Deland representing the city, county, chamber, museum, and business communities.

Deland's mayor, Chris Cloudman, set up the luncheon for us. Incidentally, Mayor Cloudman plays euphonium in the Deland Orchestra, while I play flute in the Harmony Symphonic Winds for our Apopka community band led by Frank Taylor.

As I planned the morning tour, I noticed the Boston Coffee Shop on New York Avenue which was the busiest place in town. Activity is always a sign of success. The shop had great coffee, colonial décor, and an available meeting area. This is where we began our tour.

We began by sharing our stories and love affairs with small towns. Additionally, we broke up into three teams to better speak about the tactics Deland employed in their resurgence. We learned Deland was intentional about collaboration.

Deland's Main Street Director reminded everyone that he existed to make everyone look good. Rebuilding Deland was truly a

team sport!

We had a notetaker to record the improvements employed in this nationally honored Main Street Program. We observed upgraded sidewalks, traffic calming, awnings, artwork, sculptures, water features, outdoor eating areas, wayfinding signage, potted plants, a diverse stock of restaurants, boutiques, and shops.

We visited several small parks, and the boulevard was replete with benches and garbage cans. You may say, why did you notice garbage cans? Because I organize District 2 residents into corridor care teams where our biggest chore is picking up trash. I saw no trash in Deland.

Teams weren't allowed to dwell on negatives. The Main Street Program has figured out best practices and none of their affiliated chapters have failed. We should be "glass half full" cheerleaders.

We were blessed to receive a special tour of the Athens Theater. The story of this 1920s structure included tales of good and bad days. I am now motivated to attend a film or show in Deland. The director also mentioned how the theater collaborates timing of shows to assist businesses in avoiding surges

of customers. The city received over \$12 million in state and federal grants to renovate the historic theater. Not one dime of local taxpayer dollars was utilized.

At the luncheon, Mayor Cloudman introduced his team of collaborators – a former mayor, several businessowners, the city assistant manager, and Main Street Director. Our group asked them many probing questions. My biggest takeaway is we must be a team. For example, the city's CRA repaired and upgraded the sidewalks and wayfinding signage. The city's garden club maintains the fresh flowers in irrigated pots at street corners. The chamber of commerce works with the local merchants to become profitable. The city supports all efforts as does the state transportation department when streets must be shut down for festivals.

Nevertheless, I hope you ask one of the two dozen attendees what their takeaway was from the trip. I'm sure you will get numerous perspectives. Stay tuned for future columns and next steps. We are still processing information from the tour.

Rest assured we will be back with ideas, projects, festivals, and action.

Hayden: Dad added a new song

Continued from page 2A

for daily expenses. My hat is off to them!! There are many that do it as a matter of course and encourage their husbands at the end of each day with affections that drive the husband to want to do more and better for his family.

There are moms out there that do not have the assistance of a husband, or a father figure, to help them with all the responsibilities of family life. To you also is a big HIGH FIVE! I have seen you struggle to keep your family strong and vibrant. I thought of the many times you must have been ready to give it up, BUT you did not!

Mother's love is the closest to GOD's love you can experience. That love gives unconditionally without thought of "tit for tat." Mothers, you are truly a gift from heaven, and your worth in unselfishly giving of yourselves is so that life may continue and be recognized for eternities to come. Not only will you be acknowledged by those who have marveled at your strength, and resilience, but your children will remember you as the source of joy,

safety, and perseverance even in dismal times.

Mother's Day is a day we set aside to honor our mothers and what they mean to us, and it should be observed, but every day of our lives we ought to honor our mothers. Our lives ought to be a testimony and a beacon for everyone to see the high honor we hold for our mothers by the way we present her love and grace to one another.

After Mommy's funeral, we went back home to resume our daily routine, and we stepped back into the traces and started pulling the wagon of daily chores. But something had changed. When we went on vacation, or to family reunions, Dad had added a new song to his repertoire. He still sang loudly and with much gusto, but now somewhere in his list he included the song, "Mother, the Queen of My Heart."

I still sing the songs Dad taught me, I love them all because it reminds me of the love Dad had for life itself, but the one song that I sing with tears streaming, and a heart full of thanksgiving is, "Mother the Queen of My Heart!"



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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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Street Maintenance	407-703-1731
Utility Billing	407-703-1727
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	

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County Attorney	407-836-7320
Clerk of the Court.....	407-836-2065
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U.S. Representative	
Daniel Webster (Dist. 11).....	352-241-9220
State Representatives	
Doug Bankson	407-476-6787
Carolina Amesty (Dist. 45).....	unknown
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City wants to reorganize Diversity Equity and Inclusion committee

By Teresa Sargeant
Apopka Chief Staff

The city will go back to the drawing board in reorganizing its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, possibly through a resolution for review at a future City Council meeting.

At the May 1 City Council meeting, a resident questioned the

state of the city's DEI. Later during the meeting's council reports, Commissioner Diane Velazquez said that the city's DEI Committee "really has not been functioning as a committee. The last few events said we had the DEI hosting, but there was only two people hosting (that were) from the DEI group."

"So, I think it would only

be fair that we disband the current group that's in place because they have not met; I think they met once or twice. And since then we've only had two active members and one of them has been a city employee and Mr. Mark Wright, who has been very involved but not the rest of the DEI group. And I think we need to start again," Velazquez contin-

ued.

Charles Vavrek, interim city administrator, recommended that the city comes up with a resolution that would lay out a formal way of operating the DEI Committee, such as the selection process of its members.

Commissioner Alexander H. Smith also requested that the city doesn't disband the DEI Commit-

tee, but only to restructure it. He was the one who requested the committee's initial formation.

Community events that the city DEI Committee organized included the Hispanic Heritage Celebration held in September, and the Emancipation Day Celebration held in May.

Chamber: Building suffered damages from two hurricanes

Continued from page 1A

duty to the organization, and they must take that duty seriously."

Advocating for regional businesses, jobs, workforce, and economic opportunities, the Apopka Area Chamber of Commerce represents an average of 500 businesses over different sectors including consultants, entrepreneurs, specialty retail, healthcare, restaurants, hotels, and more.

The Apopka Area Chamber of Commerce was established in 1913. The building was erected in 1975. The single-story, two-bath, 2694 gross sq. ft. commercial building sits on a 0.34 acre lot. The property's 2023 assessed and market values are \$509,971, ac-

cording to county appraiser records.

May 1 Council meeting

At the May 1 City Council meeting, Chamber members asked the City Council for the 10-year lease renewal.

"Before committing to the next \$200,000 to rebuild this city asset we called home for 50 years, we are requesting the City Council renew the Chamber lease agreement to 10 years with a recurring 10 years, or allow us to vacate the building as our lease allows in case of unavoidable casualties such as hurricanes," Charles Chambers, Chamber board chair, told the City Council on May 1.

The Chamber has given much support to the business community, Nor-

va Carrington, Chamber treasurer, told the council at the same meeting. During the pandemic, the Chamber was a guide for local businesses by increasing their awareness of funding resources, health protocols, and ideas for businesses to adapt and sustain their businesses.

The Chamber also waived annual membership dues for nearly 1-1/2 years while increasing the number of gatherings such as business networking, communitywide events, and cleanups, Carrington said.

In the last three years, the Chamber spent a little over \$12,241 in its utility bills, over \$31,900 in its insurance coverage, and over \$114,000 in leasehold and building repairs, Carrington said. Of that

\$114,000, \$46,000 was spent on mold remediation. Additional funds were used to repair the roof to do the demolition and prep the building to get it ready for the rebuild.

After the hurricanes struck, the Chamber board chair and president asked the city administrator at the time if the Chamber was responsible for the extensive hurricane damage to the building. The city administrator said yes, the Chamber was responsible, according to Carrington.

The Chamber hasn't considered relocating from its Main Street building until April 17, when some of the City Council members began asking about the organization's lease status and thought about taking the building back for the

city, Carrington said.

April 17 Council meeting

The April 29 Orlando Law Group letter reads that "At a recent city council meeting, commissioners Nesta and Valezquez (sic) stated that they would like the city to take back control of this building."

Nesta asked city staff about an update on the Chamber building at the April 17 City Council meeting.

Charles Vavrek, interim city administrator, said he spoke with the Chamber earlier on April 17 for an update.

"As you know, there's storm damage to that building. They (the Chamber) had to file some insurance claims to get that moving," Vavrek replied to Nesta.

"They replaced the roof and then they also had to do some remediation inside the building. That's all been completed. The latest update I got today was that they're approximately three weeks away from hopefully beginning the interior renovation of the building. They've received quotes and bids to do that work and have made a selection, and they'll be starting that again approximately, they gave me, in about three weeks."

Velazquez said she recommended to Radley Williams, city recreation director, about possibly reclaiming the Chamber building to accommodate the growing city staff, since the Chamber has been doing well without the building.

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Graceworx Community Church Pays Tribute to Mothers and Mother Figures

On May 12, people throughout the United States will pay tribute to mothers.

Whether we celebrate our biological mother, an adoptive mother, a stepmother, a grandmother, some mother figure who made a real difference in our life, or all the above, Mother's Day is a great opportunity to reflect on the role mothering has played in making us what we are today.

Times of national celebration often give people the incentive they need to pause and reminisce about the good times, to try to make sense of any not-so-good times, and to resolve to do whatever we can to make all aspects of parenting and family more of what it should be.

Graceworx Community Church encourages the whole of Central Florida to make Mother's Day special for all mothers. If you're looking to attend a church service where the sermon and various other parts of the worship service will focus on mothers, we'd like to invite you to **Graceworx** on Saturday, May 11, at 11:30 AM,

To encourage all readers of this column to reflect for a few moments on the impact children, youth, and all of us can have when we show due respect for mothers and moth-



Graceworx is a non-denominational congregation that conducts its worship services each Saturday morning at 11:30 AM at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, 9913 Bear Lake Road, Apopka, FL 32703. Contact at 321-228-4599; graceworxcc@gmail.com.

er figures, we share the following classic poem, written in 1878.

Somebody's Mother
By Mabel Down
Northam Brine (1816-1913)

The woman was old and ragged and gray
And bent with the chill of the Winter's day.
The street was wet with a recent snow
And the woman's feet were aged and slow.
She stood at the crossing and waited long,
Alone, uncared for, amid the throng.
Of human beings who passed her by,
Nor heeded the glance of her anxious eyes.
Down the street, with laughter and shout,
Glad in the freedom of "school let out,"

Came the boys like a flock of sheep,
Hailing the snow piled white and deep.
Past the woman so old and gray,
Hastened the children on their way.
Nor offered a helping hand to her —
So meek, so timid, afraid to stir.
Lest the carriage wheels or the horses' feet,
Should crowd her down in the slippery street.
At last came one of the merry troop,
The gayest laddie of all the group:
He paused beside her and whispered low,
"I'll help you cross, if you wish to go."
Her aged hand on his strong young arm,
She placed, and so, without hurt or harm,
He guided the trem-

bling feet along,
Proud that his own were firm and strong.
Then back again to his friends he went,
His young heart happy and well content.
"She's somebody's mother, boys, you know,
For all she's aged and poor and slow.
"And I hope some fellow will lend a hand
To help my mother, you understand,
"If ever she's poor and old and gray,
When her own dear boy is far away."
And "somebody's mother" bowed low her head
In her home that night, and the prayer she said,
Was "God be kind to the noble boy,
Who is somebody's son, and pride and joy!"

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Breakfast: Pastor Hezekiah Bradford wins Pillar Award

Continued from page 1A

Among the highlights of the breakfast was the granting of the Pillar Award to Pastor Hezekiah Bradford, former ACMA president and senior pastor of St. Luke Full Gospel Baptist Church in Zellwood.

“There’s so many reasons (he was selected), but he has been just involved

in the community in a variety of ways,” said Bankson. “Always jumped into helping to lead in various organizations and leadership roles. He’s just always stepped up to the plate and we’re surprised. Well, let’s just say he’s been long overdue to be recognized in the community.”

Bradford became ACMA president in 2022

for a two-year term, according to Bankson.

“He had stepped in to cover, to take over when another president had to step down. So, he took up the charge,” Bankson said.

The ACMA are still looking at what other events to do this year and will announce them at a later time, according to Bankson.

“We are still exploring what other events we want to do this year. We have been expanding. For instance, we added the community Good Friday service this year. So that’s still to be announced. But we should have more informa-

tion soon about some more endeavors. Our organization is strong and growing.”

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.

The ACMA sponsored the National Day of Prayer that was held on the steps of Apopka City Hall at noon also on May 2, where a presentation of colors, prayer and music took place.



Photos courtesy of Apopka Christian Ministerial Alliance/Facebook.



Pat MacGuffin (r), current president of the Apopka Christian Ministerial Alliance (ACMA), presents the Pillar Award to Pastor Hezekiah Bradford, former ACMA president, at the Apopka Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast on May 2 at the Apopka Community Center. Below, the attendees engage in prayer.



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