

Contest

Dream Lake Elementary School students compete in the Amazing Shake Contest. See page 10A.



Sports

The new and improved Blue Darters basketball team shows out in blue and white game. See page 1B.



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The Apopka Chief

Your trusted local news source

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Volume 102 Number 46

Friday, November 15, 2024 / 50 cents

State of the City updates fire, parks and rec, athletics

Mayor Bryan Nelson delivered the 2024 State of the City on Friday, which highlighted the city's accomplishments and milestones over the past year and spotlighted what's in store for the community.

From various updates on different departments such as the fire, and economic, and community development departments to the unveiling of the city's newly redesigned flag, the mayor's address covered a wide array of topics on Friday, November 8, at the Apopka Community Center/VFW Building.

Below is part two of two parts of the State of the City script. Part one ran last week in the Friday, November 8, issue of *The Apopka*

Chief. The full video of the 2024 State of the City address is available on the city of Apopka website, Apopka.gov.

2024 STATE OF THE CITY (PART 2)

Fire department

The fire department highlights include rendering care to over 10,000 patients, and upgrading the portable radios. We also finalized the union contract, making the city of Apopka very competitive on pay and benefits across Central Florida. We added a second set of bunker gear to make sure that they always have

See CITY Page 11A

City sets intention to repay debt for road improvements

By Teresa Sargeant
Apopka Chief Staff

The Apopka City Council adopted a resolution, Resolution No. 2024-38, at the Wednesday, November 6, meeting to officially declare the city's intent in repaying a debt not expected to go over \$3 mil-

lion on the Emerson Park subdivision roadway project.

The \$3 million includes the project cost, \$2,032,008; project contingency, \$203,201; debt service reserve fund, \$300,000; capitalized inter-

See ROADS Page 11A



Members of the community attend the Veterans Day Ceremony at Kit Land Nelson Park on Monday, November 11. Veterans Day is observed on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month.

Veterans are thanked for their service at Monday's ceremony in park

By Teresa Sargeant
Apopka Chief Staff

The city of Apopka and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 10147 honored Veterans Day with a ceremony in Kit Land Nelson Park on Veterans Day, Monday, November 11.

Highlights include a special message by Congressman Daniel Webster of Florida District 11; U.S.M.C. Sgt. Keith Richardson, member of VFW Post 10147, as the Veterans Day ceremony speaker; a reading of the poem "In Flanders Field"; and

special musical performance by impressionist John Morgan, who performed first as President-elect Donald Trump then as musician Willie Nelson.

In attendance were city of Apopka commissioners Alexander Smith, Diane Velazquez, Nick Nesta, and Nadia Anderson, and Apopka Mayor Bryan Nelson.

"Whether it's a soldier, a sailor, airman or woman, Coast Guard, Marines, thank you for what you've done. Your fight-

See VETERANS Page 8A



U.S.M.C. Sgt. Keith Richardson, member of VFW Post 10147, is the Veterans Day speaker at the November 11 ceremony.

Over 200 devices deployed through nonprofit to community



Over 200 devices are deployed this week through Hope Community Center, (HCC) pictured in boxes and packages. Pictured (l to r) are Meilyn Santana, HCC chief of staff; Felipe Sousa-Lazaballet, HCC executive director; Carey Carter of T-Mobile; David Volz of Office of Innovation and Emerging Technology; David Collins, president/CEO of Aeras Foundation; Christine Moore, Orange County District 2 commissioner; Marcus Scott, lab manager for Aeras Foundation; and Andrea Escareno, assistant for HCC's Adelante Caminantes program.

By Teresa Sargeant
Apopka Chief Staff

This week, over 200 new and repurposed devices got deployed to nonprofit staff, students and others in need through Hope Community Center (HCC) for various uses.

The loaning of devices was part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which Orange County received in 2022. Orange County has teamed up with Aeras Foundation and T-Mobile to provide 194 Samsung Tablets, 22 Dell

latitudes and four desktops loaner devices to HCC.

Some HCC programs will make the devices available to students such as for homework completion and as part of the nonprofit's elementary tutoring program. The devices will also be used to support HCC staff when they work remotely.

"We're very, very excited to be able to help our students, our program participants, our staff. Also, I forgot to mention that we have a lot of communi-

See DEVICES Page 7A

Trust honors late newspaper publisher at gala



Photo by Ralo Flores

At the November 7 John H. Land Apopka Community Trust Legacy Gala at Highland Manor, the late John "J.R." Ricketson, *The Apopka Chief/The Planter* publisher and founding board member, was named Humanitarian of the Year. Pictured (l to r) are Apopka Mayor Bryan Nelson; Misty Taylor, Apopka Community Trust president; Jerry Ricketson, J.R.'s son; Eileen Ricketson, J.R.'s wife; David Rankin, retired Apopka Community Trust Board member; and Misty Touchet, Apopka Community Trust Board secretary.


With 175 people in attendance, the John Land Apopka Community Trust Legacy Gala showed a video highlighting the Trust's accomplishments in serving the community, as well as posthumously named *Apopka Chief/Planter* publisher John "J.R." Ricketson Humanitarian of the Year.

The Legacy Gala was held on Thursday, November 7, at Highland Manor at Apopka City Center. A silent auction that raised funds for the Trust was held during the social hour.

In place of a keynote speaker – a break from the gala's traditional format of

See GALA Page 12A

This week
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Business Rev. .. 6,10A
Worship 9A
Section B
Sports 1B
Kapers 5B
Dining & Ent..... 7B
Legal ads..... 8-10B
Classified..... 10-12B
Service Dir..... 12B

Find Public Notices
Online at: TheApopkaChief.com/public-notices OR
FloridaPublicNotices.com


Apopka Event of the Week

The First Methodist Church Apopka ladies have put the final touches to all of the creative hand-made items to be sold at the 50th Christmas Bazaar in the Fellowship Hall at the Church, 201 S. Park Avenue, Apopka, on Saturday, November 16th, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Quotable

“We have to find a way to reach young voters, especially in historically low-turnout areas. Simply expecting young people to age into voting hasn’t worked.

Supervisor of Elections ePlains reason for developing the scholarship program

Opinion

The Apopka Chief
A weekly newspaper founded in 1923

Publisher Emeritus
John Ricketson
Mar. 5, 1940 - July 16, 2024

Publisher
T. Jerrod Ricketson

Marketing Director
Jackie Trefcer

Consultant Emeritus
John Peery
Mar. 28 1956 - Oct. 12, 2023

Reporters
Teresa Sargeant
Marshall Tempest
Neal Fisher

General Mgr Emeritus
Neoma Knox
Feb. 12, 1929 - Sept. 18, 2021

Our position

Scholarships a good idea, but funding source wrong

Gaëlle usson
Florida Politics

Orange County Elections Supervisor Glen Gilzean is facing backlash for a \$2.1-million scholarship fund he recently started for graduating high school seniors to attend local community colleges.

Orange County Mayor Jerry Demings called it an inappropriate use of taxpayer dollars while Gilzean argued “The Glen Gilzean, Orange County Supervisor of Elections, Promise of the Future Scholarship” is a meaningful use of taxpayer dollars to educate the next generation of voters at Valencia College and Orange Technical College.

“This money was all made possible thanks to our office’s saving \$5 million during the year. What better use for savings than investing in the next generation of voters,” said Gilzean, who had been appointed by Gov. Ron DeSantis in a blue district, in a statement. “This is a clear-cut case of the Orange County political class hoping to score cheap political points.”

But Demings voiced concerns that Gilzean never alerted the county about his plans to create full scholarships for all 2025 graduating seniors from Evans and Jones high schools as well as any private, charter, or home school graduates from select zip codes.

“In my opinion, it is inappropriate for Mr. Gilzean to use taxpayer funds to name a scholarship fund after himself. He certainly should not have pledged unused funds from his FY 23-24 budget for the purpose of establishing a scholarship fund in his name at Valencia College. Instead, the funds should have been returned to Orange County Government,” Demings said in a statement.

Orange County Comptroller Phil Diamond, the county’s legal team and budget director are researching what steps they can take next, said county spokesperson Jane Watrel.

Gilzean argued the scholarship’s name can be changed and his aim is to only help students with the surplus in his office’s budget.

“This program can be named anything, or after anyone, and come January, that will be up to the next Supervisor of Elections. It’s not about me. It’s about lifting our next generation,” Gilzean said in a statement. “We have to find a way to reach young voters, especially in historically low-turnout areas. Simply expecting young people to age into voting hasn’t worked. This is a way to reach the next generation. If it works, it could be a model for the rest of the state. If it doesn’t then at worst, we’ve helped kids get an education.”

Jones and Evans high schools were planning full-on pep rallies, complete with bands, cheerleaders and banners to celebrate the scholarship winners. The list of potential speakers for the event included Demings, which had been a surprise since the Mayor said he didn’t know the taxpayer funded scholarships even existed in the first place.

Demings said, “After I voted at an early voting location on October 28, Mr. Gilzean had a brief conversation with me indicating that he would soon be making an announcement about scholarships for Jones and Evans High School students. He offered no details, but indicated that he would send me an invitation to attend the event. I did not learn of the details until my office received a media inquiry today. It appears Mr. Gilzean signed an agreement with Valencia College on September 27,” just before the end of the county’s fiscal year Sept. 30.

Gilzean has a connection at Valencia College through his longtime friend and associate. The school’s trustee chair is Michael Sasso, who was Gilzean’s best man in his wedding and was hired under a no-bid contract to represent Gilzean’s office over election-related litigation issues, according to the Or-

See SCHOLARSHIP Page 4A



Public property not usable for shelter

As many of you know, state legislation requiring unsheltered individuals being prohibited from camping on public property has forced counties and municipalities to increase their programs. Orange County up to now spends more than \$50 million annually on homeless services. Nevertheless, I want to brief readers on the context of homelessness in the county and the proposed implementation plan to come into compliance with new state laws regarding the unhoused. Finally, I will share a legal overview of the legislation.

Homelessness has increased over the past year

County Commissioner
District 2



Christine Moore

by 28.5 percent in Orange County. Those that were counted include 2,091 individuals. Of these individuals, 21 percent reported having a serious mental illness, 25 percent are chronically homeless, 4 percent are unaccompanied youth, and 7 percent are veterans.

The county-funded homeless services include prevention and diversion

services, rental assistance, shelter or Drop-in center operations, supportive services outreach, rapid rehousing services, funding for capital improvements in partnership with the City of Orlando and other non-profit associations.

\$10 million additional funding will be provided to our Mental Health Homelessness Division.

The implementation plan encompasses the following:

1. Expand existing services for outreach, bridge housing, permanent supportive housing, and intensive management training.

See MOORE Page 4A

New technical college is in Ocoee

Last week, we were blessed to officially cut the ribbon on the brand new Orange Technical College - West Campus in Ocoee. This beautiful campus replaces the old campus in Winter Garden, is conveniently located right next to Ocoee High School and will serve students from all over our area.

While all of our high schools offer Career and Technical classes on their campuses, our five Orange Technical College campuses around Orange County offer specific complete training programs. Our high school students can dual enroll and spend part of their day learning at an OTC campus. All five campuses are undergoing renovations or rebuilds, and this

Orange County School
Board, District 7



Melissa Byrd

is the second one to open.

This ribbon cutting event was very special for me because this campus not only offers adult education classes like GED and English for Spanish speakers, but it offers complete training programs in cosmetology and the building construction trades.

I shared during my speech at the ribbon cutting that I got a bit emotional the first time I walked

through the site because I was sad I would never be able to bring my late father to the school.

A general contractor by trade, he spent his life in Central Florida building new buildings and renovating historical buildings all over the state. He loved what he did every day.

We couldn’t take a road trip without him stopping to show us a project he was working on or a building that he had built years before. He was so proud of the work he did.

He didn’t go to college but he built a successful business in the construction trade that allowed him to do something he loved for over 40 years. It allowed

See BYRD Page 4A

This Week In God’s Word

Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless. — Ecclesiastes 5:10

Mema Says

Divine assignments come from divine alignments.

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Experience proves to be the best teacher of doing things correctly

Elvis Presly sang a song “Didja’ Ever” and today felt like one of them “Didja’ Ever” days

It seemed as though I could do nothing right. After spilling the dogfood all over the floor, stepping on the cat’s tail, which caused a loud screech from her and scaring me out of my wits, thinking I had surely killed her, I was ready to go back to bed and start over. When I considered that choice, it came to mind I still had a mess to clean up before I could attempt any retreat.



Ike Hayden

While sweeping up the dogfood, grumbling all the while, I began to recall the many times I had been saved from catastrophic events that could’ve taken my life or caused severe injuries that might have ru-

ined my life forever.

I remembered how, after driving for 20 hours straight and following another semi-tractor trailer through a 2 a.m. foggy night in the Appalachian Mountains, I saw my headlights blinking. I could not figure what I had done to cause the malfunction, and I did not want to disturb the driver ahead thinking I was in trouble. Just before we entered the Appalachian Tunnel through the mountain, I pulled off to an area set aside for trucks

that might have overheated due to the climb up the mountain.

There was no traffic to speak of and I and the truck I had been following were the only westbound vehicles I had seen, so I decided I would crawl into my sleeper and wait until I did not need headlights to finish my journey.

I fell sound asleep and would have slept longer except for a banging on my cab door. After climbing into the driver’s seat, I rolled my win-

dow down and there was a State Trooper. The officer asked how long I had been there, and I explained why I had stopped, and the approximate time I had pulled over. He asked me if I had seen another truck on the turnpike, and I told him I had been following another semi.

The trooper then told me the truck I had been drafting (following close behind for saving fuel) had been hit head-on by another vehicle and they were trying to get everything un-

tangled. Had it not been for my blinking headlights, no doubt I would have been part of the tangled metal barrier in the tunnel.

As it was, I was late for my load pickup, and I lost the load to another driver. I grumbled about that, too, until I thought about what it could have been. My headlights worked just fine, and the junkyard (hub) mechanics could not find anything that could have caused my

See HAYDEN Page 4A

Gas district gets second grant from federal agency

On Thursday, November 7, the U.S. Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) presented a second check – this time in the amount of \$132,470.80 – to Lake Apopka Natural Gas District as part of its ongoing Natural Gas Distribution Infrastructure Safety and Modernization Grant Program (NGDISM).

The grant follows \$3.1 million in initial funding the District received from PHMSA in May 2023 and will further support the repair, rehabilitation and/or replacement of natural gas distribution pipeline systems. The NGDISM program will ultimately help improve public safety, protect public health and reduce methane emissions from natural gas distribution equipment. In total, this round of funding will support 60 modernization projects for natural gas pipelines across 20 states.

PHMSA representatives presented the grant to Lake Apopka Natural Gas District CEO and General Manager Brent E. Haywood, as well as the District’s board of directors at


See GRANT Page 5A

Commissioner Moore is GOP club guest speaker

Northwest Orange Republican Women, Federated (NORWF) will have Orange County District 2 Commissioner Christine Moore as the guest speaker on Thursday, November 21, at The Apopka Hilton Garden Inn, Apopka City Center, 580 E. Main Street, Apopka. She will present updates, recent neighborhood winners, getting ready for the holidays, and a future outlook of 2025.

The lunch meeting is from 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., at a cost of \$25 with reservation and \$30 at the door without reservation. Guests are asked to arrive by 11:15 a.m. to sign in. There is limited seating, so reservations should be made now.

For more information and reservations, contact Marty Harrison at 407-493-0471 or martyaoui@aol.com. Visit NORWF.org and [Facebook.com/NORWFC](https://www.facebook.com/NORWFC).



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Plus, our Community Specialists can connect you with:

- Assistance with employment readiness
- Healthy food programs
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- Medicaid and food stamp (SNAP) applications



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Florida Blue Center
434 N Orlando Ave
Winter Park, FL 32789



1-321-441-2020
FloridaBlue.com/WinterPark

Moore: Shelter locations needed

Continued from page 2A

Our manager suggested the groups need to all utilize the same management system and work more collaboratively.

2. Increase shelter capacity. A work group has been tasked with finding new shelter locations throughout the county, specifically targeting east and west Orange County.

Orange County is partnering with the City of Orlando to utilize the Work Release Center on Kaley Avenue as an additional shelter space.

3. Launch new initiatives, Erect steel modular units or comparable struc-

tures to expand supportive housing.

Operate a 24/7 Drop-in center to provide bridge-housing and case management for clients aged 55 plus and diversion from jail.

Provide transitional housing and wellness services for individuals with co-occurring behavioral disorders.

Utilize Housing Connector Zillow to increase access to housing.

Add emergency bridge housing with services (30 more rooms).

Expand the partnership with their Valencia Accelerated Skills Training Program

Expand the Faine House for youth aging out of foster care

House Bill 1365 prohibits the county or cities from authorizing or allowing any person to regularly engage in public camping or sleeping. The law declares that the County may not authorize or otherwise allow any person to regularly engage in public camping or sleeping. The enforcement provision begins January 1, 2025, where residents, business owners, or the Attorney General may bring a civil action against the County or City if not in compli-

See Moore Page 5

Scholarship: Full audit is planned

Continued from page 2A

lando Sentinel. Sasso was appointed by DeSantis to serve on Disney World’s governing board that later hired Gilzean in 2023. DeSantis then appointed Gilzean to run Orange County’s elections in March 2024 after longtime elections supervisor Bill Cowles resigned abruptly in his term.

“While Chair Sasso was not directly involved in this contract, we do share a passion for empowering the next generation,” Gilzean said in a statement.

The controversy has put the school district and the college system in an awkward position.

“The Orange County Supervisor of Elections approached Valencia College about creating an educational partnership to support workforce development in Orange County. College officials worked with him on different options, which resulted in the final scholarship agreement,” Valencia College offered in a statement. “The college relied on his representation that he, as an Orange County constitutional officer, had the authority to enter into this agreement.

The college has not been contacted by county officials and, as al-

ways, welcomes their partnership.”

Orange County Public Schools did not respond to a request for comment Monday afternoon or say whether the upcoming pep rallies will be canceled or delayed.

Since Gilzean did not seek another election supervisor term, Karen Castor Dentel won Tuesday’s election to replace him.

Castor Dentel said she already planned to ask for a full audit into the Supervisor of Election’s office to look at contracts, spending and business practices before she learned of Gilzean’s scholarship program. Castor Dentel, who is currently an Orange County School Board member, said “scholarships are certainly a worthy cause” but said she didn’t think it was appropriate for the election supervisor to fund them. “The mission and mandate of the office is to run effective elections,” she said.

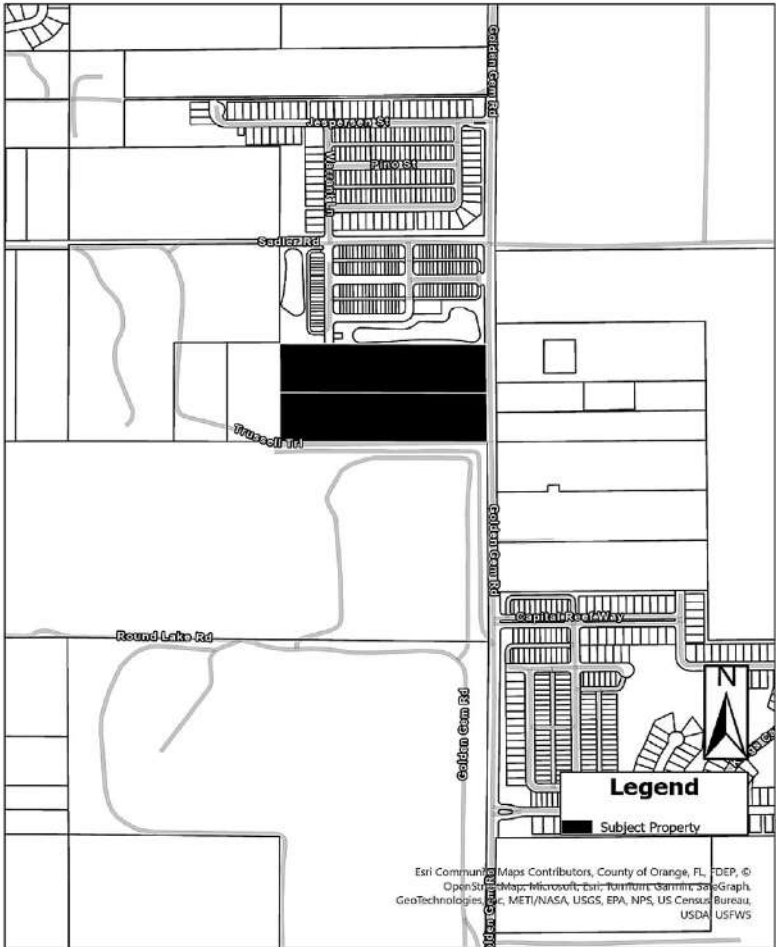
Editor’s note: The funding source for the scholarships is not under investigation to determine whether taxpayer dollars remain in the hands of the supervisor of elections and can be used to fund the planned scholarships. The name of the Orange County supervisor of elections has already been removed from the title.

CITY OF APOPKA PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE SMALL-SCALE FUTURE LAND USE AMENDMENT

NOTICE is hereby given pursuant to Secs. 163.3184 and 166.041(3)(a), Florida Statutes and the Apopka Code of Ordinances, Part III, Land Development Code, Article II, Section 2.4.7.B, that **G L Summitt Engineering, Inc. c/o Geoffrey L. Summitt, P.E.** has made application relating to the following described property.

ORDINANCE NO. 3074

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF APOPKA, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE FUTURE LAND USE ELEMENT OF THE APOPKA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF THE CITY OF APOPKA; CHANGING THE FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATION FROM COUNTY RURAL TO MIXED-USE FOR CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY; OWNED BY TIMOTHY BURCHFIELD, ROBERT AND STACY MOSS; LOCATED WEST OF GOLDEN GEM ROAD, SOUTH OF NIGHTSHADE GROVE LANE AND SADLER ROAD; COMPRISING 19.76 ACRES, MORE OR LESS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY, CONFLICTS, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.



Parcel Identification Number(s): 14-20-27-0000-00-025 and 14-20-27-0000-00-083
Contains: 19.76 +/- Acres

NOTICE is given that a public hearing for Ordinance Number 3074 will be held by the **City of Apopka City Council** at its regularly scheduled meeting in the City Council Chambers of the Apopka City Hall, 120 E. Main Street, Apopka, Florida on **Wednesday, December 4, 2024 beginning at 1:30 P.M. and December 18, 2024 at 7:00 P.M.**

Affected parties and the public may appear at the above listed hearings to speak. The proposed Future Land Use and Rezoning Applications can be inspected at the Apopka Community Development Department located at Apopka City Hall on weekdays between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 4:30 P.M. City Hall address shown below. Please be advised that, under State law, if you decide to appeal a decision made with respect to this matter, you will need a record of the proceedings and may need to ensure that a verbatim record is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), persons with disabilities needing assistance to participate in any of these proceedings should contact the City Clerk’s Office at 120 East Main Street, Apopka FL 32703, Telephone: 407-703-1704, no less than 48 hours prior to the proceeding.

Apopka City Council
Apopka Planning Commission
Community Development Department

November 15, 2024

Publish: The Apopka Chief

177616

Byrd: Technical education is a must

Continued from page 2A

him to raise a large family and create a life he loved.

That is why career and technical education is so special.

This is more than just a new building, it is a gateway to success, to a bright future for years to come for the students bold enough to step through the doors. For them and their families.

For nearly a century, Orange Technical College has evolved to meet the changing needs of our students and the job market. This campus is a testament to that evolution. It’s modern, clean, and designed to prepare students for the

future.

Our programs on this campus are focused on preparing today’s students to be tomorrow’s leaders in their chosen fields. The skills learned on these campuses are desperately needed.

Let’s be honest, Orange County is expanding and we need more well-trained professionals to step in and fill the talent gap so many industries are experiencing.

The fact that this campus can act as a stepping stone into these fields for so many local adults and young people is incredibly important. Not just for them and their futures, but

for our community.

These new facilities are our promise to everyone that OCPS will always fully support Career and Technical Education and the students who benefit from it.

Career and Technical Education changes lives every day, and I’m so proud of our district for recognizing that and continuing to prioritize it.

Most of all, thank you to the Orange County voters who overwhelmingly approved yet again, the renewal of the half-cent sales tax that made this building possible as well as all the other new buildings yet to come for our community.

Hayden: Solving problems important

Continued from page 2A

headlights to act the way I described.

Sweeping up dogfood didn’t seem so bad after all.

I don’t know what GOD saved me from, but I’m glad I was straightened out and my attitude was sweetened before a service tech showed at my door. After the mess was cleaned up, the cat was mollified and forgave me for my clumsiness. The service technician came in and took care of our TV problem without any interruptions, or problems.

I’ve often thought about all the times my schedule has been rearranged because I had experienced delays, caused by something we would call

problems, and afterwards we see how there was a disaster awaiting had we been on schedule.

I’ve learned, for today, that sometimes we are put on hold for our benefit and for our salvation. That song, “Didja’ Ever” by Elvis Presley ends with these words, “Didja’ ever get one of those days when you should have stayed in bed?”

Today started out as one of those “Didja’ Ever” days, but I’m so thankful I didn’t stay in bed. I think of all the clumsy things I performed that changed my day from “ho hum” to expectation of what’s next and the challenge of facing it. My Mama used to say, “Ikke you’re as clumsy as a cow with a crutch, but even

a cow with a crutch can be gracefully clumsy.”

I’m still trying to learn grace from my clumsiness, but I know Mom is well pleased with my attitude of expecting learning to come from mistakes, using them as stepping stones rather than stumbling blocks.

Didja’ ever get one of those days? Thank GOD for it. Whatever delayed, stopped, or detoured you, might have saved your life or given you the wisdom to enjoy the scenery, even on a detour.

Socrates once stated, “Smart people learn from everything and everyone, average people from their experiences, stupid people already have all the answers.”

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.theapopkachief.com, news@theapopkachief.com



City of Apopka Telephone Numbers

City Hall	407-703-1700
Mayor’s Office	407-703-1701
City Administrator	407-703-1649
City Clerk	407-703-1704
Community Devel.	407-703-1712
Code Enforcement	407-703-1738
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
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	

Orange County Telephone Numbers

Animal Services.....	407-836-3111
Auto/Boat Tags.....	850-617-2000
Building Dept.....	407-836-8550
County Mayor	407-836-7370
County Commission.....	407-836-7350
County Attorney	407-836-7320
Clerk of the Court.....	407-836-2065
Elections Supervisor.....	407-836-2070
Fire/Rescue	407-836-3111
Solid Waste	407-836-6601
Garbage Collection.....	407-703-1731
Health Dept.	407-836-2600
Hunting/Fishing Lic	888-347-4356
Parks and Rec. Dept.	407-836-6200
Property Appraiser.....	407-836-5044
Sheriff Administrative	407-254-7000
Non-Emerg. Complaint.....	407-836-4357
Utilities	407-836-5515
All other departments	407-836-3111
Medical, fire emergency.....	911
www.orangecountyfl.net	

Other Area Numbers of Note

U.S. Senators	
Rick Scott (Rep.)	202-224-5274
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

Grant: PHMSA reps visit district

Continued from page 3A

the District's Winter Garden offices.

PHMSA representatives visited the LANGD Winter Garden office on November 7 to congratulate the District and present the award. GM/CEO Brent E. Haywood, Lake Apopka Natural Gas District Board of Directors, U.S. Representative Daniel Webster, State Representative Doug Bankson, Winter Garden

Mayor John Rees and city of Apopka Commissioners Diane Velazquez, Nadia Anderson and Alexander Smith were in attendance.

Established by President Biden's historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law – which was signed into law on November 15, 2021 – the grant provides nearly \$1 billion in funding to modernize municipally and community-owned natural gas distribution pipes, helping to keep communi-

ties across the country safe from pipeline leaks. It designated \$200 million a year, a total of \$1 billion in grant funding, over its first five years.

The latest round of funding brings the total amount awarded under the grant program to nearly \$800 million across 227 projects in underserved rural and urban communities across 29 states since the program was created in 2022.

Moore: Counties should be first

Continued from page 4A

ance. The complaint must include that the County "... failed to take all reasonable actions within the limits of its governmental authority to cure the alleged violation within five business days after receiving a written notice..." from the complainant. A court may award reasonable expenses including court costs, attorney fees, investigative costs, witness fees, and deposition costs if a resident or business owner prevails in the case. Optional County or City actions may include alternative lodging, trespassing people engaging in public

camping, and an ordinance prohibiting trespassing and/or public camping with prior authorization.

I believe with our current tax structure that counties should take the lead in providing these safety net services. Cities should consider coming alongside the county programs and form partnerships. Thus far, only the City of Orlando has funded and operated shelters in Orange County. Yet even the City of Orlando has relied on the county assisting with capital and operating costs.

The cure for homelessness is housing. No amount of temporary feeding will

get an individual housed. I strongly recommend any feeding program utilize and enter guests into the new management system to assist in sharing information with clients on other available services. It is obvious from the information in this column that more options and assistance is being offered.

It is helpful if we all avail ourselves of knowledge about existing and new programs for the unhoused.

You never know when you might need this information to help a person avoid camping on the street.

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The Apopka Chief

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7:00; 7:30; 9:00; 10:00;
10:30
THE WILD ROBOT
(PG) 12:20; 3:30; 6:40;
9:30
THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER (PG)
12:40; 3:40; 6:50; 9:40
HERETIC (R) 12:50;
4:00; 7:10; 10:40
VENOM: THE LAST DANCE (PG-13) 1:10;
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SMILE 2 (R) 1:20; 4:30;
7:40; 10:10

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The Way I See It
Patti Bankson

Clueless in Living Color

As the whole world now knows, it's official ... In January, 2024, Donald Trump will be sworn in as President of the United States. Again. I know, he's not the first president to be elected to a second term, but he did finish the race with other firsts to his credit, starting with being the first Republican president to win the popular vote in 20 years. Going beyond that, he is now the first president in 132 years, since Grover Cleveland, to lose the presidency, then win it again 4 years later! I have been open about supporting him, so, of course, I'm happy he won.

But, as happy as I am, on the other side of the fence, those who have openly shared their anger, disdain, and hatred for him are, at least, as unhappy, if not more so. I'll admit that I have trouble understanding why those on the left think and vote as they do, but I still believe in their right to think whatever they want to think, and I believe in my right to have a different opinion and to voice that opinion. What I don't believe is that holding public office entitles you to use the power of that office to take away my rights. That's what has made our country so different from others and so much better. Perfect? No. But, one in which we have rights those others don't have? Absolutely. I wish people who obviously don't love America could have to live under foreign regimes, without the wealth and privilege their wealth affords them, both of which are only given to the countries' dictators, for an extended period of time. Not to punish them, but to give them a more realistic perspective. Flying out of here in your (or your friend's) private jet to laze around in your mansion with the

brehtaking view of Lake Como is not anywhere near "real life" for most citizens in other parts of the world, like Venezuela, Cuba, China, to name just a few. That's probably why some celebrities and other celebrity-wanna-bes, cry over the possibility, or reality, of losing an election, threaten to leave America if so-and-so wins, but never do. When push comes to shove, they are not as clueless as they sound.

Speaking of being clueless, we on the right aren't either. And, just as we don't like to hear lefties call Trump Hitler, we don't want to be called names, either ... and we find some of their rhetoric offensive, like this Los Angeles Times article (on Yahoo News) dated October 23, 2024, looking ahead to the election: "Many Harris supporters express incredulity that Trump remains a viable candidate. But veteran political analysts said that, for mostly apolitical voters who don't follow the news closely and who may decide the election, Trump's repeated departures from political norms may have little practical effect on their daily lives. The analysts say it is incumbent on Harris to use the closing days of the campaign to explain why Trump's past failures should matter to them. 'I think for her it is about saying that this is a guy who brings chaos, who is unhinged, who is too out of control,' said Patrick Toomey, a partner in BSG, a Democrat-aligned polling firm. 'With that and his crazy vendettas and penchant for retribution, will he ever be focused on delivering help for average Americans?'"

If you've watched any reporting from what's laughingly called "mainstream" media, you've watched clueless and hypocrisy in living color ... talk about crazy vendettas, penchants for retribution and being unable to focus on delivering help for average Americans! Wow! There it is, folks. There it is.

We'd like to know What YOU think?
barefootwahine1@yahoo.com
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Devices: Donated tablets, laptops are both new and repurposed

Continued from page 1A

ty members that we work very closely with, that we knew needed laptops, needed a tablet, so that's going to be distributed to some of the community members as well," said HCC Chief of Staff Meilyn Santana.

The deployment of devices follows the rollout Orange County had last August to bring broadband internet access to over 1,300 residential addresses in the Bithlo/Christmas area and South Apopka.

Afterward, Orange County's local technology planning team met with various nonprofits and in-

ternet service providers to find out the needs and gaps in the community, said David Volz of the Orange County Office of Innovation and Emerging Technology.

Under the ARPA funds, Orange County must retain ownership, hence the reason the devices are loaned out, not distributed, Volz said.

The Aeras Foundation was born out of the 2020 pandemic from Aeras Technologies, an Apple-focused IT company that has an office in Maitland.

During the pandemic, Aeras learned that many students didn't have a de-

vice and had to learn at home without one, said David Collins, founder/CEO of the Aeras Foundation. The Aeras Foundation asks customers to donate their old devices, repurposes them, and redistributes them through Aeras' nonprofit partners.

Universal Studios was Aeras Foundation's largest donor, having donated 3,900 keyboards, monitors, and computer mice, Collins said. Among other donors were McCoy Federal Credit Union and the Morgan and Morgan law firm.

The deployed devices have wraparound services, such as controls to manage

content filtering, and applications relevant to Orange County and the nonprofit that deployed them.

"So, all those wrap-around services are on the device so we can manage and control the device," Collins said. "Not that we're tracking people like Big Brother, but we do want to make sure the device is working, and: are they using it, are they not using it, has it been lost, stolen, broken."

Aeras Foundation is becoming a tech bank, Collins said, in a manner of how food banks distribute food and blood banks collect and store donated

blood for later use in transfusions.

All device connectivity and hotspots are provided by T-Mobile. T-Mobile is the city of Apopka's main carrier.

"They (the devices) are

a hundred percent T-Mobile. So that kind of tells you how good the coverage is. The 5G network that T-Mobile operates in Apopka is huge," said Carey Carter, Education, T-Mobile for government.

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Obituaries

PETER G. NOACK, 77, passed away on October 29, 2024. Born January 12, 1947 in Port Arthur, TX to Marvin E. Noack, Sr. and Mabelle A. Noack. Brother Marvin E Noack, Jr. He is survived by his five children, 18 grandchildren, and 22 great-grandchildren.

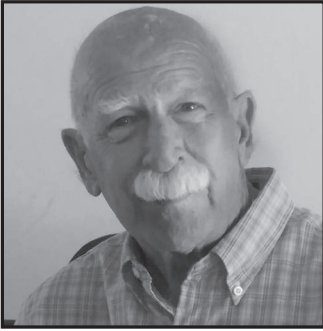
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Peter G. Noack

Peter G. Noack, passed away at 77 yrs. of age on October 29, 2024. Born January 12, 1947 in Port Arthur, TX to Marvin E. Noack, Sr. and Mabelle A. Noack. Brother Marvin E Noack, Jr. Beloved father, grand-father and friend to 5 children, 18 grandchildren, and 22 great-grandchildren



A Quiet Mind

Amid the noisy clutter and clatter of everyday life, most of us long for peace and quiet. But even when the television, the radio and the smartphone have been turned off, we still have the problem of the voices in our heads clamoring for attention.

What is a person to do? Start with the physical environment, turning off all the noisy appliances and cleaning up and decluttering the room you are in. We are almost always happier and more at ease in a clean, decluttered space.

Next, sit, kneel, or lie down and quiet your body. Try to slow down your breathing and just relax. This may take several minutes; do not rush it. You cannot have a quiet mind without a quiet body. Once you are physically relaxed and breathing comfortably,

notice your thoughts and feelings. You do not need to change anything; just notice where your thoughts are going, as if you are observing your own mind from outside.

Lastly, take your mind to a favorite quiet place. Maybe you go to a quiet wooded glen or beside a stream. Maybe you prefer to imagine yourself inside a quiet church or temple. Can you smell the incense burning and hear the gentle tinkling of bells? An amazing thing about the mind is that you can take it wherever you want, and an imagined experience is often as good—or better—than the real thing.

A quiet mind can be had wherever and whenever you want.

— Christopher Simon



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Matthew 5:16

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(See message above.)

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Psalm 23:1-3 NIV



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Students shake up Amazing Shake



On Tuesday, November 12, Dream Lake Elementary School students participated in the Amazing Shake contest, which places an emphasis on teaching students manners, discipline, respect, and professional conduct. Students compete at the local level. Winners advance to the Global Amazing Shake competition, hosted at the Ron Clark Academy in Atlanta, Ga.


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The holiday season is a time for gathering with loved ones, sharing special moments and giving thanks, but with the joy of the season also comes the stress of cooking meals, buying gifts, planning family gatherings and traveling. This festive whirlwind can be overwhelming—but there's one way to simplify your celebrations: by choosing versatile, reliable and cost-effective natural gas from Lake Apopka Natural Gas District.

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perature, making for far shorter and less stressful cook times. Don't make the family wait all day to enjoy the Thanksgiving feast. By using natural gas, your meal will be ready in no time. And when you're done, gas burners cool down just as quickly—especially important when the kitchen is bustling with activity and little ones running around.

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weather, and as the chill of winter sets in, natural gas can help you keep your home warm and cozy, ensuring your family stays comfortable throughout the season.

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As the weather changes and temperatures drop, give yourself the gift of savings and peace of mind this holiday season. By choosing natural gas, you're

investing in an energy source that delivers reliability, efficiency and versatility—all while helping you save money on your utility bills. From keeping your home warm to making sure every meal is cooked to perfection; natural gas has got you covered.

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Roads: Homeowner majority voted to ask city to maintain roads

Continued from page 1A

est, \$150,000; cost of issuance, \$150,000; Emerson Park contribution, \$64,425; and financing contingency, \$229,216.

“The alleyway cost is separate and that’s estimated at about \$487,000 with a contingency of about \$49,000. Offsetting that \$600,000 donation (from Emerson Park) leaves an excess of about \$64,000 that is applied to the project costs. So, at this point, we’re just requesting authorization to approve the reimbursement resolution,”

Blanche Sherman, city finance director, told the City Council.

After adopting the resolution, publications will run ads for four consecutive weeks. After that, city staff will return to council for a public hearing and adoption of another intent resolution, that one for project assessment itself, Sherman said.

“This is a 33-step process and we are now on the third step for the adoption of the reimbursement resolution,” Sherman said.

Dave Woods, an Emerson Park resident, thanked the City Council for part-

nering with Emerson Park on the subdivision’s roadway project.

“I’m getting one heck of an education,” Woods said. “I know the 12-step process, but I’ve never heard about 32-step process. But again, thank you all and we appreciate your partnering with us.”

Emerson Park Assessment Project

On October 16, the Apopka City Council approved 5-0 to move forward with an assessment project that will help the Emerson Park subdivision with its request to have

its roadways, curbs, gutters, and street signs transferred from private to public ownership and to create a Municipal Service Business Unit (MSBU) funding source to bring this infrastructure up to city standards.

The estimated cost to upgrade the Emerson Park infrastructure would be \$3,778,342 if the project does not start by September 2025; this amount includes the main roads, sidewalks, curbs, signs and alleyway. The estimated cost for the alleyway is \$730,330, and therefore the assessment will be based

on \$3,048,012, total cost, less the cost of the alleyways.

If the project does commence before September 2025, the cost would be around \$2.5 million with the use of the current active paving contract the city has, according to Sherman.

Over 500 homeowners live in Emerson Park, which is located near the S.R. 414/429 interchange and along Harmon Road and Ocoee-Apopka Road, across the street from AdventHealth Apopka.

It has been a struggle for Emerson Park homeowners themselves to pay

for the infrastructure upkeep. Built in 2007, the subdivision was originally planned as a mixed-use development of townhomes, single-family homes, and a public town center with public access roads. The infrastructure was built for the town center, but the town center itself was never constructed.

In December 2023, the Emerson Park community voted a 95 percent majority in favor of establishing a roadway project in which the city would take on the subdivision’s infrastructure cost and maintenance.

City: Redesigned flag is introduced, contest winner is announced

Continued from page 1A

a clean set, and Ambulance 3 finally made its arrival to Apopka.

Our training division onboarded 21 new firefighters last year, with 10 of those coming in September.

Our firefighters had over 48,000 training hours, and we had 13 firefighters sponsored through paramedic school.

Fire Station 6 is underway on Marden Road and should be operational early in 2025 with a \$1,014,623 state grant to help pay for the building.

Our Air Care team opened up Air Care 3 at Fire Station 4 and has just completed one year at that location, transporting 540 patients in the first year.

Our Fire Explorer Program has been a huge success, and we currently have 13 active high school students that meet every Tuesday night. This marks the 41st year of the program as we continue to pique the interest of our young people about a firefighter career.

Our fire team inspected and tested 2,200 hydrants, completed 1,561 fire safety inspections and completed community outreach with the AdventHealth Cath Lab team.

We hosted the World Heart Day at Apopka High School, completed fire prevention training at area schools and held a scholastic book fair at Fire Station 5.

Josh Roell, Tim Sundvall, and Josh Baker were recognized for delivering a healthy baby late last year.

Information technology

The information technology department has upgraded our new website with Chatbot and a language Selector option.

Our social media stats, I think you will be impressed. Our Apopka Proud Weekly email subscriber base is now 4,200 and our Apopka Proud Blog which highlights the prior month’s activities has grown to 227. Our Facebook numbers are 19,285; Instagram, 5,201; X, 706; NextDoor, 24,344; YouTube, 1,164; and Linked-In, 689.

Our facilities team has been busy, proactively keeping our AC units across the city running at peak performance. They have focused a lot of efforts on upgrading our fire stations, updating our security and fire panel systems, keeping our facilities safe and aesthetically pleasing. They completed almost 800 work orders last year to keep us running smoothly.

Parks and recreation

Next up is Parks and Rec with 10 new full-time positions and 41 part-time positions.

Our dedicated staff maintains almost 500 acres of parks and recently completed the 50,000-square foot athletic field renovation at Alonzo Williams Park with brand new Bermuda grass and irrigation which now rivals any grass multi-purpose field in the area.

Our youth and adult sports include such programs as baseball, softball, lacrosse, football volleyball, soccer, tennis, and basketball. We proudly partner with Apopka Little League, Apopka Pop Warner and the Apopka Raptors AAU to bring high quality athletic programing to Apopka. We have also added two new programs with adult kickball and adult co-ed softball.

Our NW Recreational Complex hosted 84 tournaments and attracted over 72,000 visitors. We hosted baseball, softball (slow pitch and fast pitch), soccer, lacrosse, Special Olympics, flag football and ultimate frisbee.

The KSA event which ran from March 11th through April 5th hosted 90 baseball teams and 60 softball teams with over 6,000 athletes competing. The BBYO International Convention hosted 920 attendees in February of this year.

Our senior programs continue to shine with 3,177 participants spread among the six senior programs with a new mahjong program just getting started. We hosted nine senior field trips and 36 senior events. Our seniors love to come hang out at Fran Carlton Center with their friends and new acquaintances.

Our youth camps continue to sell out with Billie Dean Community Center, winter, spring and summer break camps combined registration of almost 400 participants with an 88 percent city resident registration rate. New this year in cooperation with OCPS we will be hosting summer camps at Apopka Middle and Wheatley Elementary and are expecting to fill all 200 slots giving kids a chance to play and learn during the summer break. Camp Wewa hosted 800 campers and 135 swim lessons this past year.

Apopka continues to expand our events which have been enthusiastically embraced by all ages with traditional long-standing events as well as new programming that has been requested by the public. For our veterans, we have wonderful Veterans Day, Wreaths Across America, and Memorial Day programs. For our youth, we have the Apopka Christmas Parade, Breakfast with the Easter Bunny, and Halloween in the Park. For the families, we have the Christmas Concert, New Year’s Eve, MLK Parade, the Apopka Fair and Festival, Apopka Art and Foliage Festival, the Apopka Health and Fitness Fest, the Emancipation Celebration, Juneteenth, July Fourth Celebration, Hispanic Heritage Celebration, Saturday Sounds Concert Series, National Night Out, and the Lake Apopka Eco Bike Ride. What wonderful programing put on by our very dedicated parks and recreation team.

Our Apopka Amphitheater continues to impress not only the public but also the national and even international promoters. Our Apopka Proud Concert sold almost 1,600 tickets and our wildly successful Saturday Sounds Concert Series collectively brought over 15,000 to the Amphitheater

to sit, relax and listen to some great music. Our Holiday Pops Orchestra brought over 3,000 patrons to the Amphitheater to hear your favorite Christmas music. For the promoter-led concerts, we had almost 20,000 attendees come listen to such diverse groups the Heart and Soul, Jingle Jam, Willie Nelson, Awakening Event, Steel Pulse and Jamey Johnson. Check out our new website, Facebook page, and email newsletter to keep up on all the exciting concerts free and paid coming to Apopka.

Our partnership with the Orange Audubon is beginning to take shape with a rendering of the new Audubon Nature Center being built at our Apopka Birding Park. This project could not have been possible without the help of St. Johns Water Management District who suggested a land swap with Apopka giving us the 70-acre birding site for our four-acre prime commercial property. We also had help from CFX who moved a pond in cooperation with an industrial developer giving the city of Apopka another 10-acre buffer.

We just received our 31st Tree City USA designation and are happy to partner with the Foliage Garden Club, Woman’s Club, and the FNGLA to add more trees to our city.

Some of the [recreation] projects in progress include a one-of-a-kind all-inclusive playground and sensory garden at the Northwest Recreation Complex that wouldn’t have been possible without the financial help from the nonprofit group Unlimited Capabilities.

We are in the bidding process for a tennis and pickleball center just east of Jason Dwelley Parkway, which ultimately will have 10 tennis and 10 pickleball courts.

We are replacing the gazebo at Kit Land Nelson Park with a mini-amphitheater which will have almost double the space and be more functional.

The most exciting news at parks and rec is the \$13.1 million dollars Tourist Development Tax ARC grant that the city received. For decades, the Apopka hotel taxes that we have collected have been spent downtown, and we are excited to finally bring some of that money back to Apopka to increase our attractiveness for folks to stay overnight in Apopka. With this grant, we will be making major improvements to the Amphitheater which will attract bigger and better talent, and we are adding four new softball fields on the east side of Jason Dwelley to bring bigger baseball and softball tournaments to Apopka. I would like to thank our parks and rec team for their hard work on putting together such an impressive package that scored the highest of all applicants.

Our Edgewood Cemetery installed two double-sided 84-niche columbariums and are set to add two additional 84-niche columbariums this year.

Economic, community development

Our new economic development department, under the leadership of Michelle Boylan, has hit the ground running, launching a Business Retention and Expansion Program, and Sites and Building Database to give site selectors the ability to see with a couple of clicks what properties are available.

Michelle has already secured 13 confidential leads from OEP, advertised in the *Florida Trend* magazine, launched a new website and branding logo and help launch the Retail Attraction Initiative.

Our Apopka Youth Council has been busy putting together the Black History Month book project, helped with the city’s Wekiva Parkway grand opening booth and helped the VFW 10147 with the Wreaths Across America project.

Our 2024-2025 class represents four high schools and has already hit the ground running. We are excited to see what all they accomplish this year.

They helped Stephen Cribb set-up for the third annual Lake Apopka Eco-Bike Ride, which just happened last Saturday. If you haven’t ridden your bike on the Wildlife Drive, check it out. You will be amazed at the diversity of birds, gators, and maybe even a bobcat that you might see.

Community development has been busy this year. Our building safety division has issued 10,850 permits and inspected 17,264 properties to make sure that the homes and commercial buildings are up to our high standards.

Our planning and zoning division is in the middle of re-writing our comprehensive plan with help from the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council. This will be the blueprint for the city’s development for the next 25 years. Some exciting new businesses opening up in Apopka include the new Starbucks on Rock Springs Road, Rock Springs Dental, Hick’s Seafood, Grain and Berry and Just Like Momma’s restaurant.

We are now in the design phase for a mountain bike park on Apopka Ocoee Road, which is a partnership with Orange County Parks and the Ridge and AdventHealth. I would like to thank Craig Perry from The Ridge for coming out this morning. Please give him a hand. This 30-acre property has some very unique contours that will be a challenge for even die-hard Mountain Bike enthusiast.

With the money that Apopka secured from the Legislature, we are starting the design for completing the gap in the West Orange Trail which will complete the trail from Clermont to Sanford which will be a 60-mile trail that will be the envy of many communities. We are so excited to be a part of this game-changing outdoor attraction.

We are so proud of our very unique relationship with Central Florida Expressway (CFX) and are excited to partner with them on another SR 429 entrance off of Binion Road which will make the

area more accessible to the greater Central Florida community.

Apopka is proud to welcome Miller’s Ale House to Apopka right here in the Apopka Town Center and we are already impressed with their philanthropic attitude toward our city.

The Kelly Park Interchange (KPI) is beginning to take shape. Planning for this new area could not have been possible without the 429 Interchange at Plymouth-Sorrento and Kelly Park roads. The plans include over 400,000 feet of commercial and office and over 2,500,000 of industrial space.

There is the Kelly Park Town Center and School featuring a retail anchor, wholesale club, 12 outparcels and multi-family development by Benge Investments. Please stand, Tony Benge.

Wyld Oaks has made national news with its unique plans of a walkable downtown with a park called Yonder Park that will rival any park in Florida. Please welcome Tim Dennard from Wyld Oaks to the city of Apopka.

I am so proud of our VFW 10147 for their Hometown Heroes banners, which highlight many of our veterans and their branch of service. We hope to grow the program next year filling up every banner in Apopka during November. Please stand Loretta Forlaw and be recognized!

Flag redesign and seal

We had a panel of flag enthusiasts including vexillologists who came to the city about a contest to redesign the city flag with unique criteria that will make your flag stand the test of time and with 161 entrees from across the country and even England, and our judges were able to narrow it down to 10. At that point, we put the 10 designs out to the public and had over 1,000 votes as to the best design.

We are proud to introduce Faith Lee, the artist who submitted the winning flag design. A second generation Apopkan, she is an art and music teacher at Apopka Christian Academy. Please give Faith Lee a round of applause for her dedication to our community and this wonderful new city flag.

We also want to remember our roots and the Apopka city seal is a trademarked iconic symbol worthy of saving and highlighting our great history. Along with the flag contest we opened up an Apopka Seal essay contest to students in the Apopka area as to symbolism of the Seal. [VIDEO SHOWN]

Please stand up Selena Lim and be recognized. What an impressive young lady that our whole community should be proud of. I couldn’t be more excited about the future of Apopka which is bright with youth like Selena, dedicated city staff, and our involved Community to lead the way forward.

Thanks again to Nick Grounds and the Apopka Chamber for hosting the State of the City, and we look forward to another exciting year here in Apopka.

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Gala: Video will be posted on website

Continued from page 1A

years past – the Trust unveiled a professionally produced video themed “Together We Thrive” which features the Trust’s his-

tory, purpose, and works. The video was produced by HBA Productions of Clermont.

“It’s our 11th year, so we’ve supported all types of youth groups in the com-

munity, starting from back in the very beginning when a high school football team won the state championship and we gave them all rings and jackets,” said Trust Board member Bill Arrowsmith. “That was a huge expenditure right off the bat when the trust was first formed. Since that time, we had a long list of benefactors from our fundraising events. We’ve given out over \$180,000 now in grants over the last 10 years. We started out with \$200,000. That was the basic seed money from the city. At this point we still have probably \$230,000 of that left even after giving out over \$180,000 in grants. We’re very proud of that; we’ve been good stewards of the money and been able to make it work like it has.”

Ricketson was publisher of *The Apopka Chief/The Planter* for over 45 years. He was a participant, board

member, and head of several organizations, including founding board member of the Apopka Community Trust.

“It was very, very fitting because he (Ricketson) was one of the original founders of the Trust when it was first formed and served as its president and then as its chairman for a number of years. (Therefore) It was very fitting for J.R. to receive the award and for his family to receive the award this year,” Arrowsmith said.

The John Land Apopka Community Trust is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that was founded in 2013, in honor of Mayor John H. Land, to carry John H. Land’s legacy forward by serving the community of Apopka.

Arrowsmith said that the gala video will be posted on the Trust’s website at JohnLandApopkaCommunityTrust.org/

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Graceworx to Host Concert

November 16, 2024



Graceworx Community Church will host a 50-minute concert by **Sabbath Strings**—an ensemble of violins, violas, cellos and double bass—on Saturday, November 16, at 11:30 AM. The event is free and the public is invited. The string ensemble, which also features other instruments and vocalists, is directed by Sabdiasep Rosado and draws on talent from a variety of Central Florida congregations. Learn more about the group at <https://sabbathstrings.com/>. **Graceworx**, a non-denominational congregation, conducts its worship service at 11:30 AM every Saturday morning in the sanctuary of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, 9913 Bear Lake Road, Apopka, FL 32703. For more information phone 321-228-4599; email graceworxcc@gmail.com.



National Wreaths Across America Day will take place on **Saturday, December 14, 2024**

Please join the Apopka/Altamonte Springs VFW Post 10147 to help our location by scanning the QR Code or clicking on this flyer to sponsor wreaths and/or to volunteer to help lay wreaths on December 14th. **Please purchase your sponsorship by November 25, 2024.**

On December 14, 2024 at 1:00 PM (Wreath Placement Immediately Following Ceremony), Wreaths Across America will be at Edgewood/Greenwood Cemetery in Apopka to Remember and Honor our veterans through the laying of Remembrance Wreaths on the graves of our country’s fallen heroes and the act of saying the name of each and every veteran aloud.

Thank you so much for supporting Edgewood/Greenwood Cemetery and Wreaths Across America!

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