

Live oak

The City and the Foliage Garden Club of Apopka plant a live oak in honor of Florida Arbor Day. See page 3A.



Sports

Apopka Native Wins Gold at Florida Senior Games and Heads to Nationals See page 1B.



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Boy, 6, killed in DUI crash



This memorial was set up in memory of Emiliano "Alex" Garcia, who was killed in a DUI crash on Saturday, January 18 on White Cloud Avenue and Tahoe Street at Rock Springs Mobile Home Park.

By Teresa Sargeant Apopka Chief Staff

An Apopka man was arrested on charges that include DUI manslaughter for the fatal vehicular crash, which resulted in the death of a six-year-old Apopka boy who was riding a bicycle over the weekend, according to Florida Highway Patrol (FHP).

The crash occurred on Saturday, January 18, at around 4:43 p.m. on Cloud Avenue and West Tahoe Street in the Rock Springs Mobile Home Park.

The driver of the 2003 Chevy Suburban, Francisco Rosillo Arriola, 53, of Apopka, was arrested and booked into the Orange County Jail for the following charges: DUI manslaughter, DUI third violation, vehicular homicide,

See DUI Page 9A

Remembering MLK



The 16th annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Parade celebrated the late civil rights leader's legacy on Monday, January 20, marching from the VFW Building on South Central Avenue to the John H. Bridges Community Center on West 13th Street. During the parade, churches, nonprofit organizations, businesses, elected officials, and schools celebrated the day with music, floats, and performances. An honorary program at the Bridges Center had dance, music, the distribution of awards, food, and socializing. Pictured is this year's winner for Best Float, Temple of Faith Church, located on Marvin C. Zanders Avenue in Apopka. See more photos on page 10A.

VFW gives annual outstanding awards

Special to the Chief

On Saturday, January 18, the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 10147 in Apopka conducted its annual awards program for outstanding educational and community performance. The awards given included a plaque for accomplishments in 2023-24 for Teacher and in 2024 for Police Officer, Fire Fighter and EMT. Also handed out were plaques for student patriotic essays for middle and high schools.

Angela Shaw, who was not able to attend, was named Teacher of the Year for her exceptional year as a teacher, coach and advisor for home school activities. The middle school

award was earned by Maliya Cushman, home school, for her Patriot's Pen essay, My Voice in Democracy, which she summarizes with the closing lines, "I love being an American, living in the land of the free and the home of the brave. Having lives full of liberty is the greatest privilege we Americans have."

Sumeira Singh of Winter Springs High School won her Voice of Democracy plaque for her essay, "The American Journey," where she discusses the "... everlasting principles that set a clear distinction between the United States and every other country."

Apopka Fire Chief Wil Sanchez Introduced two award winners

for their outstanding service in the Apopka Fire Department for the year 2024: Lt. Mandy Mathis, Fireperson and Cody Minchey, EMT.

Other awards for winners for the year 2024 who could not attend the ceremony included: Police Officer, Cody Grow, and Loomis Funeral Homes for Business Booster of the year.

Bob and Steve Loomis provide their invaluable support in the proper disposal of American and other flags. In front of the Apopka Community Center, located at 519 S. Central Ave., Apopka, is a converted mail box into which faded and tattered flags can be deposited.



Pictured (l to r) at the Saturday, January 18, annual Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 10147 awards dinner in Apopka are Andy Anderson, post commander; Rolland Doerfer, senior vice commander; Cody Minchey, Apopka EMT; and Mindy Mathis, Apopka Fire Person, both of the year 2024, Maliya Cushman, Patriot's Pen Middle School essay winner for the school year 2023-24, and Alice Boria, president of VFW Auxiliary.

Workshop reviews proposed Wyld Oaks code updates

The Apopka City Council conducted a joint workshop for proposed code updates to Wyld Oaks on Wednesday, January 22, at the Apopka City Hall council chambers, 120 E. Main St., Apopka.

The workshop reviewed the developer-proposed Kelly Park Interchange red-line amendment for the Wyld Oaks development, the 215-acre mixed-use development that broke ground in January 2024 off the 429 Beltway and West Kelly Park Road Interchange in Apopka.

The Statement of Justification for the Text Amendments, found in the joint workshop agenda packet, explains the reason for the proposed code updates to Wyld Oaks:

As the market dynamics, development standards, and overall character of the area have evolved since the original conception of the Wekiva Parkway Interchange Vision Plan, and

subsequent codification of the Mixed Use Kelly Park Interchange (MU-KPI) Form Based Code, the need for flexibility and evolution in the standards applicable to this area have changed as well.

The creation of the Town Center Overlay District as a new character zone is applicable to large project sites, encompassing a minimum of 170 acres. It will permit an innovative set of zoning and development standards to ensure that the gateway to the City's premier mixed use area can capture the range of uses at the desired intensity and density that will provide maximum benefits to the City and residents from the standpoint of the local economy, public open space, and quality of life. In particular, all citizens will benefit from the greater amount of open space that can be provided in a Town

See CITY Page 9A

In 2024 city revitalizes downtown, fire chief retires

By Teresa Sargeant Apopka Chief Staff

Note: This is the third of a four-part series reviewing the news in Apopka in 2024 as written in the pages of The Apopka Chief. This week covers July, August, and September.

July

Four of the current eight active capital projects, which the city parks and recreation department is helming, are tentatively scheduled for construction later this year, department director Radley Williams said at the Wednesday, June 19, City Council meeting. ... Consumers can pur-

chase qualifying recreation and outdoor items and admissions to entertainment and cultural events exempt from tax during the 2024 Freedom Month Sales Tax Holiday. ... Five new officers took an oath to serve and protect while being sworn-in at Apopka City Hall last week by Apopka Police Chief Michael McKinley.

The Apopka City Council decided to table the setting of the city's 2024-25 millage rate for the Wednesday, July 17, regular meeting. ... The city is considering setting aside funds in the fiscal year 2025 budget for a downtown revitalization

program, while the city is searching for a new community development director – who will also serve as the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) District director ... The Orange County Mayor's Veterans Advisory Council's Veteran of the Year Committee recently selected Sgt. Fred Robinson, USMC, Retired, as the recipient of the Orange County Veteran of the Year Award 2023 for his exceptional service and dedication to veterans and his continued willingness to serve the community. ... Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) is currently looking for help from families that plan on using

transportation services for the 2024-25 school year. ... U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services presented 20 Orlando-area residents to the United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida for naturalization during a special ceremony on, Thursday, July 4, at Hope Community Center on North Park Avenue in Apopka.

The long-time owner and publisher of The Apopka Chief and The Planter newspapers passed away Tuesday, July 16, at the age of 84. ... In separate votes, the Apopka City Council voted 5-0 to set the proposed millage rate at 4.6876 and the roll-

back rate at 3.8384 for the city's fiscal year 2025 budget. ... Apopka Fire Chief Sean Wylam will retire after serving 22 years in the Apopka Fire Department that includes five years in his current post.

The Apopka Community Redevelopment Agency fiscal year 2025 budget remains the same except for two major changes to two projects, the city wayfinding signs program and the community-oriented policing program for the downtown area. ... Virginia Bankson celebrates her 106th birthday on Wednesday, July 24, at Brook-

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This week

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Apopka Event of the Week

Seeing 20/20 in 2025 will be held in the meeting room of the North Orange Branch Library, 1211 E Semoran Blvd., on Thurs., Jan. 30, from 5-6 p.m. Recommended for teens. Don't be blindsided in the new year! Create a clear picture for where you want to go with a vision board.

Quotable

Maintenance crews perform important work at the complex, but it's not enough to keep up with the wear and tear that comes from constant use.
Editorial shares the good and the not so good aspects of the NW Recreation Complex

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

Our position

Improvements are necessary, additional choices appreciated

The Northwest Recreation Complex has been approved to undergo some expensive improvements.

At the October 29, 2024, Orange County, Florida Government Board of County Commission meeting, the City of Apopka was awarded \$13.1 million in Tourism Development Tax (TDT) ARC funding for the city's Northwest Rec: 2025 & Beyond grant application. The grant project will bring capital improvements to the Apopka Amphitheater and four additional softball fields to the Northwest Recreation Complex.

The city will pay for the project in stages and then Orange County will reimburse the \$13.1 million over three years.

In addition, there will be a brand-new, all-inclusive playground featuring new play structures, swings, slides, We-Go-Rounds, ZipKrooz, a children's play area, accessible pathways, a sensory garden, and additional enhancements, including new parking areas and a new exit roadway to Jason Dwelley Parkway.

The new playground at the Northwest Recreation Complex in Apopka is being funded primarily through a combination of City of Apopka Recreation Impact fees and a significant donation from the local non-profit organization, Unlimited Capabilities, which focuses on providing recreational opportunities for individuals with special needs or disabilities; with a portion of their donation coming from the Halliday Foundation

As exciting as it is to know about the improvements coming to the complex, information shared by a recent visitor to the complex found the following:

The good:

Staff are "user-friendly" - they look up, smile, and greet park users.

The restrooms are clean, but why some players choose to clean their cleats in the sinks is inexcusable.

The bad:

Drinking fountains are nearly always dirty - again, why do some players choose to clean their cleats in the drinking fountain?

"Closed" signs at fields remain up during scheduled activities and create a license for everyone else to ignore them.

The Ugly:

The same multi-purpose fields are used week after week for the same activities. This is especially true for flag football. As you may recall, last year the fields used for flag football were destroyed by constant utilization, especially given wet weekend conditions.

Paying for the installation of sod is questionable when it is placed over what is, at best, very rough graded ground, in an area used for hurricane debris and now designated for future multi-purpose fields west of the football stadium and Pads 9-12.

At the baseball fields, overuse has left dirt holes in the infield grass and the outfield grass, leading to bad hops and risk of injury. Backstops have bent fencing from thousands of balls slamming into them. The fields are popular for travel tournaments, but our local players are left with substandard facilities.

Maintenance crews perform important work at the complex, but it's not enough to keep up with the wear and tear that comes from constant use.

We hope the improvements will include needed renovations to existing fields.

It is also important that the visitors to the complex use common sense and take responsibility for their actions. While it may be necessary to clean cleats, it is also necessary that the mess created is cleaned up. Taking a few more minutes to clean the sinks also increases respect others have for the facilities.

Cleanliness promotes cleanliness.



More growth requires more schools

I thought this week I would again address a concern that I have written about, and one we often hear about here in Apopka. The concern is over development and growth in our community and the need for new schools to accommodate that growth.

We all know that Apopka is one of the fastest-growing areas in Orange County. The school district is aware of this as well. The district has identified four areas of rapid upcoming development including the Lake Nona area, east Orange County, Horizon West, and Apopka.

Orange County School Board, District 7



Melissa Byrd

The district has a robust school planning department that closely tracks developments, land sales, and projected enrollment of schools. Each year the Advanced Planning Committee for the district, after assessing all these factors, adjusts the 10-year capi-

tal plan. On the most recent plan, the Apopka area has four new schools planned to be built in the next 10 years.

While concerns over adequate infrastructure in Apopka to meet the needs of this growing development are often mentioned by citizens at community meetings and council meetings, I'd like to address the difference with school planning.

While difficult to understand at times, schools cannot be built before the growth happens. This

See BYRD Page 4A

New subdivisions, more roads a must

Local governments have a conundrum in areas of mixed jurisdiction regarding planning and financing roadway infrastructure improvements. I know you are aware that when new subdivisions come along, road capacity is rarely expanded. For example, 300 residents came out last Monday to look at a potential new 600-acre development along Vick and Ponkan roads (Pau-lucci development). Here we saw the problem again - no money offered by the developer, city, or county for external roadway infrastructure improvements.

To look for solutions, I spent an hour with the county public works staff mapping manager George

County Commissioner District 2



Christine Moore

Shupp. I needed information on roads, right-of-way, and intersection responsibilities. I focused this column on Northern Apopka. I will come back with Southern Apopka soon.

Here I found the conundrum again. For "functionally classified roads" (roads of high importance to the county), the city doesn't have to request a transfer of ownership of the

road. Few counties will improve a functionally classified roadway if a city has significantly annexed adjacent land. To top it off, the city doesn't have the funding to increase capacity, either. Roadway construction is just cost prohibitive.

Can we work through these transportation funding deficits?

Orange County is already \$5 billion behind on increasing roadway capacity under its jurisdiction. Residents have regularly voted against any kind of sales tax funding for roadway improvements. Plus, the county doesn't realize any transportation impact fees from any new pro-

See MOORE Page 4A

This Week In God's Word

God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.
— John 4:24

Mema Says

Sometimes you can get so busy saving others, that you don't realize you are drowning.

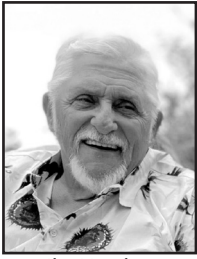
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Past administration action has insulated citizens from the right way

One of the most ludicrous things I've seen in the news today is the differences between what Israel is releasing and what Hamas is releasing in the hostage-for-prisoner swap. Don't get me wrong, I'm not against the hostages coming home. It's just the disparity between those we're getting back for those we are releasing is untenable.

I know Benjamin Netanyahu did not appreciate the unbalanced trade-off. The only reason he agreed



Ike Hayden

to it was for the people's sake and his compassion for those who have children, parents, and other loved ones being held hostage.

Number one, I don't understand how we al-

low those terrorist rebels to hold our people hostage when I know the capabilities of our special forces. I understand Joe Biden's unwillingness to engage in any aggressive action.

Although I do not think that it was Biden making decisions, I do hold him accountable as the President of the United States of America!

My prayer is that the incoming administration will pick up on the necessity of our American citizens being returned im-

mediately, and my hope is that Donald Trump will consummate his promise to give them hell (!) if they don't follow through with this cease-fire arrangement.

We have been so insulated from the truth by the previous administration, it's hard to tell between the right way and the wrong way. I believe that, as Americans, we have the power to discern right from wrong, and I believe the American spirit will win out with our new administration at the reins.

Citizens of the United States of America should be allowed to pat themselves on the back and be comforted with the knowledge that our government has been returned to the people through their own volition. That is the way our Founding Fathers intended it to be! When I look at the lawlessness in our nation today, it brings back memories of when the enforcement of the law was hindered by the lack of law-enforcing personnel. I'm talking about in

the latter half of the 1800s when we saw vengeance being exercised by those that were wronged, rather than by law enforcement agencies that were not available.

Back then, they called it "stomping their own rattlesnakes," which meant they would protect themselves and wreak vengeance on those responsible for their losses, similar to the Old Testament law of "an eye for an eye" (Deu-

See HAYDEN Page 4A

City, Foliage Garden Club plant live oak



On Friday, January 17, the city of Apopka celebrated Florida Arbor Day with members of the Foliage Garden Club of Apopka with a proclamation and tree planting at Edgewood-Greenwood Cemetery. The Foliage Garden Club of Apopka secured the native live oak tree for the planting. County Line Ornamental & Tree, Inc. donated the tree for the celebration.

Photo courtesy of city of Apopka/Facebook.

Two-year scholarships available for students

Five Orange County high school students will get a chance to win a two-year scholarship from the Farrah & Farah Empowering Greatness Scholarship, totaling \$50,000.

Students can submit their applications through the Big Brothers Big Sisters Association of Florida online application portal,

See FARAH Page 8A



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- **February 1, 2025:** Stereo FM
- **February 15, 2025:** Mardi Gras with Chubby Carrier & The Bayou Swamp Band
- **March 1, 2025:** Midnight Mayhem
- **April 5, 2025:** Beatle Beat
- **April 19, 2025:** Are Friends Electric
- **April 26, 2025:** HAPCO
- **May 3, 2025:** Journey Tribute: Never Stop Believin'
- **May 17, 2025:** NFusion

Schedule subject to change.



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www.Apopka.gov/SaturdaySounds to
learn more about this free concert series

Byrd: Student enrollment must be sufficient to justify its funding

Continued from page 2A

makes school planning different from other forms of infrastructure.

The reason for this is the way public schools are funded. Not the funding for building the schools, but the funding for operating the schools once built.

Per state law, our public schools are funded on a “per-student” basis, meaning: for every student who fills a seat, the school receives a set amount of money. That amount is about \$8,000 this year.

That money is what the school is required to use for the operating budget of schools. Each school is given its own budget to operate based on how many

students are attending the school. The money is used for all expenses including hiring and paying for teachers and staff, supplies, and energy to run the school among other things.

A high school needs a rather large budget to run the day-to-day operations and to fully staff the school to be able to offer the numerous courses that high schools need to offer.

That leaves school districts in a waiting game. An uncomfortable, overcrowded waiting game, waiting for enough students to partially fill a new school enough to provide the needed funding to run that school.

How does that affect our school planning?

Well, Apopka High School is currently 221 students over capacity. If we were to build a relief high school in Apopka tomorrow, we would not have enough students attending that new school to provide the funding needed to run the high school.

This is why schools have to use portable classrooms to accommodate new growth until enough students are in a certain area to fund the operation of a new school. This is precisely why relief schools cannot be built ahead of growth.

As hard as it is to see, cities have to approve new growth, and those developments have to be built, houses sold, and fami-

lies moved in before new schools can be built.

Again, this is state law, not an Orange County Public Schools policy.

As we look at our current enrollment in our schools in Apopka, Wekiwa High School is considerably under capacity – 673 students under capacity.

I also think it is important to point out that almost all of our other schools are under capacity as well in Apopka. Only Wolf Lake Middle School is over capacity, with about 100 more students than it should

have. Kelly Park School still has room for more than 200 students.

Almost all of our elementary schools still have room for new students, as well.

While there is a lot of development being planned, the school district monitors every approved development and keeps track of those developments and the effect it will have on the nearby school enrollment.

That is how the 10-year building plan is developed, and that is why there

are four new schools for the Apopka area on the current plan. That includes two elementary schools, one high school, and one middle school.

We are ready, and that is what I want to ensure the public. When these developments actually get built and families move into our area, new schools will be built to accommodate those students.

If you have questions about school capacity, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at melissa.byrd@ocps.net

Moore: Consider all road aspects

Continued from page 2A

jects in a city. It is clear the City of Apopka can’t afford to widen Vick or Ponkan Road either for the above-mentioned new Paulucci development.

To top all of this off, the state does not allow a municipality or county government to vote against a new development on sheer disdain for resulting traffic woes.

The developer gets to pay mitigation fees which are rarely enough to increase capacity. Yes, here is another state preemption which is causing harm to our local communities.

I also want to further elucidate Florida law about functionally classified roadways.

Functionally Classified Roadways

Orange County Responsibility and Authority:

1. Repair of potholes
 2. Resurfacing
 3. Curb repair
 4. Repair and cleaning of culverts, pipe systems, storm water drainage inlets, ditch systems contiguous to the road, and carrying roadway storm water runoff
 5. Painting of pavement markings
 6. Issuance of driveway permits
 7. Issuance of underground utility and right-of-way utilization permits for work done under the roadbed
 8. Sweeping of road surface
 9. Bridge inspection and maintenance
- City Responsibility and Authority
1. Establishment of all traffic regulations
 2. Installation and maintenance of traffic control signs and signals
 3. Construction, main-

tenance, and repair of sidewalks

4. Mowing of all areas within the right-of-way

5. Installation and maintenance of guardrails

6. Issuance of right-of-way utilization permit for work not under the roadbed

7. Establishment of building setback lines

8. Clearing or removal of trees within the right-of-way

References: Chapter 316.006, 334.03, 335.04

Let me further clarify responsibilities for functionally classified roadways in the northern area of District 2.

Functionally Classified Roads in the northern area of the city of Apopka

Ponkan Road is a bit of a mixture of responsibilities. From Vick Road east to Evelyn Road, the county handles the pavement and drainage. All other aspects of this portion of Ponkan Road, like sidewalks, rights-of-way, etc. of this segment belong to the city. From Evelyn Road to Rock Springs Road, this section of Ponkan belongs exclusively to Orange County Government.

Plymouth Sorrento Road belongs to Orange County Government. The challenge for the county is, again, that most of the infrastructure pressure is the result of city approvals for new development.

New development charges for transportation impact fees to the agency which governs the land. Plymouth Sorrento Road is scheduled for complete resurfacing in 2026 and 2027. I’m also endeavoring to accelerate the Duke Energy lighting package which is funded along Plymouth Sorrento Road.

Completely county-maintained roadways (functionally classified and county)

Rock Springs (Welch Rd north to Kelly Park)
Wekiwa Springs Road
Thompson Road
Welch Road (Ustler east to Wekiwa Springs)
Votaw Road (county line west to Oaks on the Lake)

Additional completely city-maintained roadways (northern)

Vick Road
Lester Road
Lester Schopke (north of Highland to Lester)
Kelly Park (Mt. Plymouth to Round Lake)
State-maintained roadways (FDOT):
US 441
SR 436
CFX-maintained roadways:
SR 429
SR 451
SR 453

Financing infrastructure improvements are incredibly difficult for all the jurisdictions. My suggestions for determining the true cost of maintaining roads is influenced by a new tool recently approved by the voters of Orange County in the November 2024 charter reforms. Every project with this new tool can be evaluated to determine if the project makes sense fiscally for building new infrastructure and maintaining that infrastructure.

I believe we shouldn’t build projects if tax revenues cannot sustain new infrastructure long term.

Finally, much more infrastructure pressure and potential density issues must be improved with developers. Planners should lay out projects closer to existing infrastructure.

Hayden: We must abide by the laws

Continued from page 2A

teronomy 19:21).

Although it sounds barbaric today, it did make men consider the consequences of their behavior, be it good or bad!

With the lack of law enforcement enablement by the previous administra-

tion, we would have eventually come to the conclusion that we would have to “stomp our own rattlesnakes.”

The lawlessness we have been seeing in our cities and our nation has been made worse by the justice system’s *indifference* to the crimes and the lack of ac-

countability for the law-breakers.

Let’s pray that this administration will be able to uphold justice and set the people free to Make America Great Again!

May God bless The United States of America, President Donald J. Trump, and We the People!

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ALL ABOUT APOPKA			
The Apopka Chief	City of Apopka Telephone Numbers	Orange County Telephone Numbers	Other Area Numbers of Note
<div>Established 1923 (USPS 545-440)</div> <div>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.</div> <div>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.</div> <div>www.theapokkachief.com, news@theapokkachief.com</div> <div></div>	<div>City Hall407-703-1700</div> <div>Mayor's Office407-703-1701</div> <div>City Administrator407-703-1649</div> <div>City Clerk407-703-1704</div> <div>Community Devel.407-703-1712</div> <div>Code Enforcement407-703-1738</div> <div>Finance Dept.407-703-1725</div> <div>Fire (non-emerg.).....407-703-1756</div> <div>Parks and Rec. Dept.407-703-1741</div> <div>Police Chief.....407-703-1769</div> <div>Police (non-emerg.).....407-703-1771</div> <div>Job Line.....407-703-1743</div> <div>Solid Waste Collect.....407-703-1731</div> <div>Street Maintenance407-703-1731</div> <div>Utility Billing407-703-1727</div> <div>Medical, fire emergency..... 911</div> <div>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</div>	<div>Animal Services.....407-836-3111</div> <div>Auto/Boat Tags.....850-617-2000</div> <div>Building Dept.....407-836-8550</div> <div>County Mayor407-836-7370</div> <div>County Commission.....407-836-7350</div> <div>County Attorney407-836-7320</div> <div>Clerk of the Court.....407-836-2065</div> <div>Elections Supervisor.....407-836-2070</div> <div>Fire/Rescue407-836-3111</div> <div>Solid Waste407-836-6601</div> <div>Garbage Collection.....407-703-1731</div> <div>Health Dept.407-836-2600</div> <div>Hunting/Fishing Lic888-347-4356</div> <div>Parks and Rec. Dept.407-836-6200</div> <div>Property Appraiser.....407-836-5044</div> <div>Sheriff Administrative407-254-7000</div> <div>Non-Emerg. Complaint.....407-836-4357</div> <div>Utilities407-836-5515</div> <div>All other departments407-836-3111</div> <div>Medical, fire emergency..... 911</div> <div>www.orangecountyfl.net</div>	<div>U.S. Senators</div> <div>Rick Scott (Rep.) 202-224-5274</div> <div>Marco Rubio (Rep.).....407-254-2573</div> <div>U.S. Representative</div> <div>Daniel Webster (Dist. 11)..... 352-241-9220</div> <div>State Representatives</div> <div>Doug Bankson407-476-6787</div> <div>Carolina Amesty (Dist. 45).....unknown</div> <div>State Senators</div> <div>Geraldine Thompson (Dist.11) 407-297-2045</div> <div>Orange County Commissioner</div> <div>Christine Moore407-836-7350</div> <div>Orange County Public Schools</div> <div>Pupil assignment.....407-317-3233</div> <div>Bus routes.....407-317-3800</div> <div>Superintendent.....407-317-3200</div> <div>School Board.....407-317-3200</div> <div>Miscellaneous</div> <div>The Apopka Chief407-886-2777</div> <div>Museum of the Apopkans.....407-703-1707</div> <div>Chamber of Commerce.....407-886-1441</div>

Equipment of the past



On Friday, January 17, Orange Lodge No.36 F&AM donated historic agricultural items to the Museum of the Apopkans. These items have been with the Lodge since the late 1800s. The Brothers of the Lodge voted to donate them for future generations to enjoy. Pictured top left is a mid-1800s oxen yoke, bottom left is a late-1800s cattle yoke, top right is an early 1900s barley rake, and bottom right are mid-1800s wooden stirrups.

Photo courtesy of Patrick Tessier

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The Way I See It
Patti Bankson

HERE'S TO FREEDOM

Well, once again, we have a new president. I don't need to tell you that the former and the latter couldn't be more different ... in personalities, and ideologies, to mention just a couple of their differences, but, most of all, in reception by The People. Having won the popular vote and the electoral vote, as well, he, rightly so, believes he has been given a mandate by We, The People, who have grown weary of one-party rule. Weary, too, of weird philosophies that fly in the face of common sense, not to mention, the idea that there is a God, who is the Author and Creator of All That Has Been, Is Now, and Will Be Forever.

Nevertheless, here are some "thoughts" from just one of our "Independent and Fair" media, The Washington Post, titled "some takeaways from Trump's inaugural speech": The speech ... was a relatively subdued affair by Trump's standards. But it carried many of the same dark themes of his 2017 address, and Trump repeatedly built himself up as a singular figure in history – one even God had ordained. Trump decreed the 'radical and corrupt establishment'. He cast the government as unable to protect people from rampant crime and natural disasters. He said that the 'pillars of our society lay broken and seemingly in complete disrepair.' And Trump didn't just express optimism that we would confront these challenges; he pitched himself as the divinely chosen antidote. He claimed that his life was spared from an assassin's bullet in Butler, Pennsylvania, last year because he 'was saved by

God to make America great again.'

Whether one believes that President Trump has been "ordained by God", or not, or whether he was 'saved by God to make America great again', he was saved by something ... if you want to believe it was pure coincidence and unconnected to any real thing or if you want to believe, or not, that he was saved by God for whatever reason, one thing I believe ... that if I say I choose to believe it was God's doing, a miraculous event, I already feel free to say what I think or believe, without the left taking away my right to my thoughts or beliefs. And, if you don't get that, then I'm guessing you were on another planet while Covid rules (passed off as laws) were mandating vaccines, handcuffing people for taking their children to public parks, and while keeping certain businesses and churches closed, some never to open again, allowing bars and restaurants to stay open, with no six-foot distances enforced. Or even suggested.

So, in this new atmosphere we're already experiencing our past atmosphere in which we can: buy whatever car – gas or electric - we choose; whatever stove we choose to cook on, or to heat our homes; and raise our children in line with our personal beliefs, believing that God gave them to their parents, not the government.

Personally, I'm thrilled at the prospect of getting back the kind of freedom that sets our country apart from others in the world: the freedom to think, believe, pray and make personal choices and decisions ... The Freedoms that make me feel more secure, happy, and proud to be an American.

So, God Bless America, and our new President, Donald J. Trump.

We'd like to know What YOU think?
barefootwahine1@yahoo.com
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(PG) 12:30; 3:10; 6:20
DEN OF THIEVES 2: PANTERA (R) 12:40; 3:30; 6:40

MOANA 2 (PG) 12:50; 4:00; 6:30

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 3 (PG) 1:00; 3:40; 6:50

ONE OF THEM DAYS (R) 1:10; 3:50; 7:20

MUFASA: THE LION KING (PG) 1:20; 4:10; 7:10

FLIGHT RISK (NR)

1:30; 4:20; 7:00
WOLF MAN (R) 1:40; 4:30; 7:30

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BUSINESS PROFILE

Your Guide to Local Businesses

Lake Apopka Natural Gas District Ringing in the New Year with Reliable Natural Gas

As we ring in the New Year, it's time to toast to fresh beginnings, bold resolutions, and brighter futures. For residents across Lake Apopka Natural Gas District's (LANGD) service area, there's one resolution that's as practical as it is powerful: making the switch to safe, affordable, and reliable natural gas.

Natural gas isn't just a choice for today—it's a smart investment in your future. If your New Year's goals include saving money, enhancing energy efficiency or making sustainable lifestyle changes, the District is here to help you achieve them with ease.

Here are just a few ways natural gas can power your New Year's resolutions:

Save Money Without Sacrificing Comfort

Direct-use natural gas is one of the most affordable energy sources available. In fact, according to the American Gas Association, households with natural gas stand to save up to \$1,100 annually compared to those that are all-electric. Whether it's heating your home during chilly winter mornings or cooking up delicious family dinners, natural gas delivers high performance at a fraction of the cost.

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If you are considering making the switch to using natural gas, please get in touch with the LANGD marketing team at (407) 656-2734 ext. 307 or marketing@langd.org, or visit www.langd.org for more information on natural gas service for your home, business or vehicle.

ers can also receive up to \$650 in rebates by switching non-gas appliances to natural gas-powered ones or old gas appliances with new ones.

By switching, you can keep your financial resolutions on track while enjoying reliable comfort year-round.

Boost Efficiency and Reliability

One of the many benefits of natural gas is that it burns cleaner than other fossil fuels, producing less emissions in the process. According to Natural Gas Intelligence, natural gas releases 45% less carbon dioxide than coal and 30% less than oil. When you choose natural gas, you're taking a step toward a greener future for our community and the planet.

Efficiency isn't just about saving energy; it's about making life easier.

Natural gas appliances also heat up faster and deliver consistent performance—whether it's your water heater, stove, or dryer. Natural gas provides a broad range of choices that can add value to your home and complete the look and feel of every room.

Finally, unlike an all-electric model, natural gas is delivered underground right to your home, ensuring unmatched reliability. That's why so many essential services like hospitals, nursing homes and fire stations depend on natural gas, because when every second counts, losing power is simply not an option.

Making the Switch

Ring in the New Year with natural gas has never been easier, thanks to recent energy choice ordinances passed in Winter Garden, Clermont, and

Apopka. These forward-thinking policies now ensure new developments include natural gas infrastructure, providing residents with seamless access to this efficient and cost-saving energy source while preventing the extra costs of adding natural gas infrastructure to their homes after construction. Learn more about how the District is continuing to help bring energy choice home in 2025 by visiting www.LANGD.org/Home/PressAndEvents.

Here's to a happy New Year powered by safe, affordable, reliable natural gas. For more information on natural gas service for your home, business or vehicle, please contact the District's marketing team at (407) 656-2734 x307, marketing@langd.org or visit www.langd.org.

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BUSINESS PROFILE

Your Guide to Local Businesses

Highland Funeral Home, Highland Memory Gardens offers Traditional Funeral Services with Cremains

No funeral service is one-size-fits-all; decisions on whether to be buried or cremated are influenced by various personal, religious, financial, and cultural factors. A funeral is a final act of love, so why not ensure it reflects your wishes when it comes to your interment? If you're wondering whether you can be cremated and still have a traditional funeral service, the answer is yes!

Over the years, cremation has become an increasingly popular choice, but it doesn't mean families must forgo the rituals and traditions associated with a funeral service. Traditional funeral services provide a sense of closure and an opportunity for loved ones to gather and honor the deceased. Cremation can be seamlessly integrated into such services. For instance, the loved one's urn can be surrounded by flowers or meaningful items as the focal point of the ceremony, replacing the casket. This arrangement mirrors the traditional set-up and allows families to include all the familiar elements of a funeral service.

Another example of combining elements is holding the service before cremation, using a ceremonial casket. Most funeral homes offer ceremonial caskets, which are a cost-effective alternative to purchasing one. This option ensures the service retains the visual and symbolic elements of a traditional funeral. After the service, the deceased can be cremated as intended, allowing families to ex-

perience the full ceremonial aspect while accommodating their choice of cremation.

After the cremation, unless specified by the deceased, families have several options for memorializing their loved one. Some choose to place the ashes in a columbarium or niche, providing a designated space for reflection and remembrance. Others opt to scatter the ashes in a meaningful location or keep the urn at home.

Incorporating traditional service elements such as musicians, eulogies, and meaningful objects into an end-of-life celebration offers families flexibility while maintaining the respectful and honorable essence of a funeral. This combination allows for closure through rituals while embracing the simplicity and adaptability that cremation offers. Ultimately, how you choose to be interred is a deeply personal decision. Combining elements of both traditional services and cremation respects the wishes of the deceased while providing families with the opportunity to celebrate their loved one's life in a meaningful way.

Highland Funeral Home Highland Memory Gardens is located at 3329 East Semoran Blvd, Apopka, Florida. Contact them at 407-869-1188 or visit highlandfh.com

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A ceremonial urn can be used as the central element in a funeral service that incorporates both cremation and traditional elements.



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Ellen Mattox-Meisel: Celebrating a century of love and service

By Bob Coury
Special to the Chief

Apopka bids farewell to one of its most cherished residents, Ellen Marie Kjeldgaard Mattox-Meisel, who passed away peacefully on January 11, 2025, at the remarkable age of 100. Ellen's

life was a testament to faith, family, and an enduring commitment to her community, leaving a legacy that will resonate for generations.

Born on July 17, 1924, on a farm in Defiance, Iowa, Ellen's Danish roots shaped her resilient and spirited personality. Af-

ter earning her nursing degree from Immanuel Nursing School in Omaha, Neb., she boarded a train to Central Florida, marking the start of a lifetime of service and adventure. Her nursing career began in Orlando, where her care and compassion touched many lives.

Ellen married T.L. "Bucky" Mattox in 1947, and the couple's journey led them to several Florida cities before they planted roots in Apopka in 1969. Bucky was tasked with opening the Commercial Bank of Apopka where he served as president while it grew to be one of the most prominent

banks in the area. Those years were filled with dedication to her family and community. Whether helping with school activities, attending church events, or cheering on her children in their school and sports activities, Ellen was al-

See MEISEL Page 12A

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Hope CommUnity Center opens food pantry

Hope CommUnity Center held the grand opening of its community food pantry, a new resource to support local families in need. The pantry will serve as an emergency food source for those facing food insecurity.

The celebration took place, past press time, on

Thursday, January 16, at the nonprofit's south campus on South Hawthorne Avenue.

The community food pantry is a partnership between Second Harvest Food Bank and Hope .CommUnity Center.

"Guided by our slogan 'Filled with Hope,' we

want to ensure that every individual has access to food in a welcoming and supportive environment. This initiative represents a significant step forward in our mission to strengthen our community through compassion and care," said a Hope CommUnity Center press statement announcing the grand opening.

The pantry will operate on Tuesdays from 9:30 a.m.

to 5 p.m. at 1016 N. Park Ave., Apopka, and Thursdays from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 800 S. Hawthorne Ave. Apopka, offering non-perishable goods, and other essentials to families in need.

For more information about how to support the community food pantry, contact Olivia Flores at Oflores@hcc-offm.org.

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tinyurl.com/4ak7933j

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graceworxcc@gmail.com
321-228-4599

Farah: Deadline to apply is Feb. 18

Continued from page 3A

which opened on December 16, 2024. The deadline to apply is Friday, February 18.

This scholarship is a collaborative effort between Farah & Farah, Big Brothers Big Sisters Association of Florida, and the Florida Prepaid College Foundation.

To qualify, students

must be currently enrolled in a public or charter high school in Florida, demonstrate a strong commitment to their communities and academics, and meet additional eligibility criteria. Scholarship recipients will be announced in May.

For more information, visit farahandfarah.com/scholarship or email scholarships@farahandfarah.com.

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City: Wyld Oaks to feature amenities such as retail and parks

Continued from page 1A

Center Overlay District as a master planned network of parks, plazas, squares, greenspaces, pedestrian and bicycle pathways, outdoor recreation facilities, wetlands, woodlands, native plant community conservation areas and preserves, pet recreation facilities, and stormwater facilities that are enhanced as visual amenities.

The Town Center Overlay District is consistent with and advancing

es the Wekiva Parkway Interchange Vision Plan, the Wekiva Parkway Interchange Land Use Plan, and the Wekiva Parkway Interchange Goal, Objectives, and Policies contained in the Future Land Use Element. The Town Center Overlay District ensures development will occur in a predictable, yet flexible manner consistent with the intent of the Wekiva Parkway Interchange Vision Plan, the community vision, and the City's economic development goals. This will

enable more creative master planning and urban design that will provide a balanced land use scenario accommodating a broader mixture of land uses that reflect the desired character of the community, promote realistic housing-job balance, offer varied housing opportunities, protect environmentally sensitive lands, incorporate a larger network of parks/open space, and use traditional community building practices. This District will provide a balanced land use

scenario that can accommodate economic and residential growth" located in the City's "primary targeted area for greenfield development within the Wekiva Study Area".

In order to encourage innovative land use techniques, creative urban design, environmental protection and the use of sustainable development principles and practices, this new Overlay district meets the spirit and intent of the MU-KPI, the Comprehensive Plan and the Wekiva

Parkway Vision Plan.

Wyld Oaks will feature several amenities including up to 200,000 square feet of retail and outparcels, two hotels, 3,000 to 4,000 multifamily and condominium residences, expansive outdoor entertainment venue, up to 200,000 square feet of office space, a 10-acre park and preserve called Yonder, and a section named Wyld Green that will include a multi-use trail network.

At the time of the groundbreaking, the 2024 demand for Wyld Oaks re-

tail was estimated to be nearly \$1.1 billion, while supply was only \$700 million, leaving a gap of about \$400 million, according to a Wyld Oaks press release.

Wyld Oaks is intended to boost economic development, relieve the regional affordable housing crisis, and bring more vibrancy to the Orlando area, according to several speakers at the January 2024 groundbreaking.

The joint workshop was livestreamed on the city's YouTube channel.

DUI: Residents blame gated access for delayed response to scene

Continued from page 1A

no driver's license causing death, and running the stop sign.

According to the FHP report, the Chevy Suburban was traveling northbound on Cloud Avenue approaching West Tahoe Street. The bicyclist was traveling eastbound on West Tahoe Street approaching Cloud Avenue.

The FHP report states that, according to a witness, the Chevy Suburban did not stop at the posted stop sign and struck the bicyclist. The driver was not injured and stayed on scene. The bicyclist was transported to AdventHealth Apopka, where he was pronounced deceased.

The crash remains under investigation.

Emiliano "Alex" Garcia memorial fund

The OCPS Foundation for Orange County Public Schools began a memorial fund for Emil-

iano "Alex" Garcia, who was a kindergarten student at Lovell Elementary School. The fund is to support his family with funeral arrangements, transporting his remains back to Guatemala, and with personal needs.

"He enjoyed going to school to see his teacher and playing with his friends. Emiliano loved his mother and couldn't wait to share all he learned at school with her," the memorial fund website states.

According to website details, Emiliano's mother suffered the loss of her one-year-old child three months before Emiliano's death.

Visit online at shorturl.at/Ri7Gm to donate.

Did gated access delay response to scene?

Residents said that if the community's two entryways from Rock Springs Road had been left open – one of which had direct

access to the crash scene – then first responders would have been able to save Emiliano.

Emiliano died on the scene, according to Yadira Romano, an eight-year resident of the community.

The mobile home park has three entrances directly off Rock Springs Road: Tanglewood Drive next to the Citgo gas station, East Seaflower Street, and Tahoe Street. Along with Tahoe Street, East Seaflower Street is also gated.

A fourth entrance from Rock Springs Road leads into the parking lot for the community's sales office, but steel poles are set up so vehicles can't drive onto the grass field outside the office building.

Romano said she didn't know Emiliano, but knew he was visiting the community, perhaps family. Arriola is her friend's uncle, but Romano didn't know Arriola personally, she said.

"The mom went to go down

the street and he (Emiliano) was playing with some little kids in the corner," Romano said. "One of our neighbors, he usually drinks a lot and he was going down the street here on Virgil Street and Tahoe Street. Once he hit the stop sign, he didn't stop. He just kept going."

Romano set up a memorial for Emiliano outside her house, which is at the corner of Virgil and Cloud Avenue. Sixty people attended a vigil on Sunday, January 19. That evening, people brought stuffed animals, toy vehicles, flowers and candles to the site, and the memorial grew since then.

Like Romano, David Kelley, a 24-year Rock Springs Mobile Home Park resident, blames Emiliano's death on the closed access points because the emergency vehicles had to take a U-turn into the community.

Kelley said a Lakeshore Management regional represen-

tative told him that fire and police gave the company the okay to close the access points. Yet homeowners don't believe that story.

"One thing that they (Lakeshore) do throw up all the way around is it's private property," Kelley said. "That's the clause we've been trying to take away from them."

A homeowners association meeting was set for Thursday, January 23, to discuss reopening the two access points.

Carlos Yanes, mobile home park manager, said he is "not at liberty" to comment because of the ongoing investigation. However, Yanes said that police and fire did inform Lakeshore to close the Tahoe and East Seaflower street access.

The mobile home park lies within Orange County's jurisdiction. Orange County Fire Rescue did not return a phone call with a comment as of press time.

Review: Controversy erupts over public comment at meetings

Continued from page 1A

dale Wekiwa Springs in Apopka. ... Dr. Nicholas Grounds has been tapped to be the new executive director of the 111-year-old Apopka Area Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber announced this week. ... The Apopka City Council approved 5-0 the first reading of an ordinance, which would require future subdivisions and resubdivided areas be developed with natural gas infrastructure and related improvements. ... Orange County Library System has temporarily closed its North Orange Branch Library due to the building's high humidity and water intrusion that's causing a musty smell at the branch.

August

The city is preparing to launch a new economic development database this month, one that will display available commercial and industrial sites and buildings for sale or lease. ... Hundreds of attendees showed up at the annual Political Hob Nob, where they met up to 25 candidates who are running in the upcoming primary election on Tuesday, August 20. ... Former City Commissioner Kyle Becker refuted allegations that Mayor Bryan Nelson previously made about the former Apopka official arranging a quid pro quo with a city employee regarding the mayor's censure. ... The Apopka community has elected its 2025 Apopka Dog Mayor. ... On Friday, July 26, United States Attorney Roger B. Handberg announced that Yessen Vasquez Tolentino, 37, of Apopka has pleaded guilty to one count of smuggling goods from the United States.

The Wednesday, August 7, City Council meeting livestream ended without having public comment, after city officials had discussion about whether public comment should take

place at the beginning of the meeting. ... Early voting for the August 20th Primary election in Orange County began on August 5 and will last through August 18 daily from 9 a.m.-7 p.m. ... Last week, the city of Apopka carried out the Bike/Walk Central Florida's Operation Best Foot Forward: Back to School pedestrian safety program, which brings awareness and education to drivers to keep the youngest pedestrians safe as they walk to and from school. ... The Apopka Police Department added a new officer to its police force on Monday, August 5, at Apopka City Hall.

Orange County Public Schools administrators, school board members, and local law enforcement gave the community a preview of the upcoming 2024-25 school year and what the district is doing to make returning to school a success. ... Students returned to Orange County Public Schools on Monday, August 12, after summer break, including at Apopka Memorial Middle School on Park Avenue in Apopka. ... Country artists Sawyer Brown and John Anderson are returning to the Apopka Amphitheater for the highly anticipated 2024 Apopka Proud concert. ... The Orange County Sheriff's Office and fire departments will be at National Night Out, which will take place on Tuesday, October 1, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at the recreation hall of Clarcona Resort, 3000 Clarcona Road, Apopka. ... The city of Apopka is searching for a fresh redesign of its flag in a competition, which began on Thursday, August 8 and will run until Friday, September 6. ... WomenLife Apopka Chapter 825 Volunteer Members stuffed backpacks at their local Chapter Hall with foodstuffs and school supplies to donate to Apopka Memorial Middle School to give some students a head start on the new school

year.

Protestors gathered near Apopka City Hall as part of public backlash to the livestream cutoff for public comment held at the end of the August 7 City Council meeting. ... The August 20 primary election was held in 259 precincts across Orange County, including the one at the Northwest Recreation Complex, 3710 Jason Dwelley Parkway in Apopka. There were 811,612 registered voters, 137,918 ballots cast, and a 16.99 percent voter turnout, according to the Orange County Supervisor of Elections. ... In an effort to protect the safety of these most vulnerable road users, the Apopka Police Department is conducting High Visibility Enforcement Details from Tuesday, August 20, until the middle of May 2025 along U.S. 441 and East S.R. 436 (Semoran Boulevard) in Apopka. ... Broadband internet access is now available to residents in the Bithlo/Christmas area and in South Apopka, Orange County officials announced on Friday, August 9, at the Orange County Administration Building in Orlando.

Wolf Lake Elementary School unveiled an educational amenity that makes the school unique in Orange County Public Schools: a walk-through village complete with buildings such as police and fire departments, a city hall, and even Publix and McDonald's. ... Following the last two City Council meetings in which their YouTube livestreams were cut at the start of public comment scheduled at the meeting's end, Mayor Bryan Nelson said that section will stay scheduled where it is. ... The Florida Department of Law Enforcement arrested Isai Arias, 23, of Apopka, on two felony charges of solicitation of a minor and transmission of harmful material. ... On Wednesday, August 21, the Com-

munity Redevelopment Agency Board voted unanimously on two resolutions regarding the approval of the CRA's fiscal year 2025 budget of about \$4.5 million. ... Zellwood Elementary and Kelly Park schools are recognized as Apple Distinguished Schools for the three-year program term of 2024-2027. Orange County Public Schools announced on Wednesday, August 28. ... Wyld Oaks debuted two designs for its BARK dog park at ICSC@Florida and kicked off public voting on Sunday, August 25, to help determine which design will become America's Top Dog Park.

September

The Apopka Police Department is seeking donated bicycles for distribution to students who need transportation to and from school as an alternative to bus rides or walking long distances in possibly harsh weather. ... After listening to residents asking for a reconsideration in increasing the water and reclaimed water rates, the Apopka City Council tabled the first hearing of the tentative millage rate of 4.6876 and the tentative fiscal year 2025 city budget and its adjustments until later this month. ... On Wednesday, August 21, the Apopka City Council unanimously passed Ordinance No. 3070, better known as the "Energy Choice Ordinance," mandating the installation of natural gas infrastructure in future real estate developments. ... Only nine months after breaking ground at the Apopka City Center, Miller's Ale House will open its first Apopka location, which will add 115 new jobs to the local economy. ... The GFWC Apopka Woman's Club presented Stella Swanberg her 50-year pin of membership in the club.

The community honored and remembered the victims who died in the ter-

rorist attacks on September 11, 2001. ... On Saturday, September 19, at 9:30 a.m., South McGee Street at Main Street in Apopka will be dedicated to former Orange County Sheriff, Capt. Jonathan Clay Stewart, southside, and his brother Pvt. Philemon Bryan Stewart, northside, both of whom died in service to their country. ... Miller's Ale House at the Apopka City Center had its grand opening on Monday, September 9, at 505 E. Main St., Apopka. ... The St. Johns River Water Management District announced the temporary closure of the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive beginning Friday, September 6 until Sunday, September 8 due to localized flooding.

After years of struggling with what to do with it, 5th Hole Investments LLC put the former golf course at Errol Estate on the market for \$7.5 million. ... On Wednesday, September 18, the Apopka City Council approved and ratified a collective bargaining agreement between the city and the Apopka firefighters union. ... The public called out the DeSantis administration for its "dereliction of duty" from protecting the state's springs. On Thursday, September 12, people gathered outside the St. Johns River Water Management District Apopka Service Center, on South Binion Road in Apopka. ... Liz Felter was awarded the 2024 Gene A. Batson Award on Tuesday, September 10, at Highland Manor in Apopka at the Florida Nursery, Growers, and Landscape Association (FNGLA) Action Chapter Action Chapter's 29th Gene A. Batson Award luncheon. ... In honor of September as Chikari Malformation Awareness Month, an event took place at Apopka City Hall on Friday, September 13, when the building was lit purple.

The Apopka City

Council adopted, 5-0, the millage rate of 4.6876 for fiscal year 2025 (2024-2025), but voted 3-1 on the total FY 2025 budget of \$201,720,799, in two separate resolutions at the Council's final budget hearing on Wednesday, September 25. ... On Friday, September 13, the Apopka Fire Department celebrated the graduation of its newest probationary firefighters at the Apopka Community Center. ... A moratorium for temporarily halting development in Apopka so the city can assess impact fees is being considered for the Wednesday, October 2, City Council agenda. ... In celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, the city of Apopka hosted a reception for the artwork of Alberto Gómez-Gómez, now on display in the Apopka City Hall atrium through October 15. ... Apopka Mayor Bryan Nelson and State Representative Doug Bankson will host a forum for local homeowner associations to learn more about how recent legislative changes are impacting HOAs. ... The Orange County Board of County Commissioners voted unanimously on Tuesday, September 10, to award developers nearly \$21 million in funding, enabling the construction of five affordable housing communities in Orange County totaling 573 units, including one development for Apopka. ... This month, the city installed wayfinding signage around downtown Apopka (such as across the street from City Hall on Main Street/U.S. Highway 441 and at Kit Land Nelson Park on Park Avenue) as part of the city's efforts to revitalize this area.

The 16th annual MLK Parade filled the streets of Apopka



Orange County Sheriff John Mina waves to the crowd with a bag of goodies in one hand.



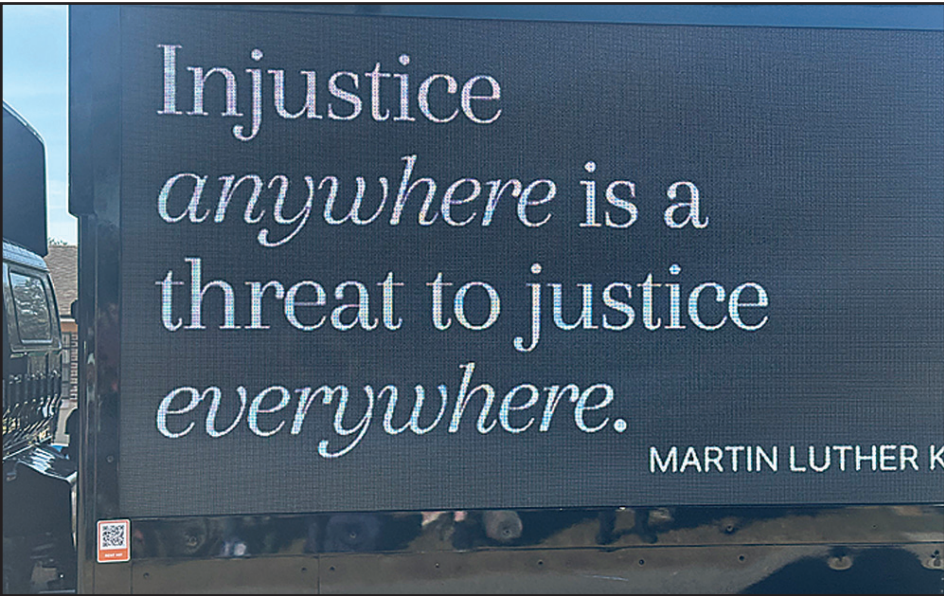
The Farmworker Association of Florida, who has an office on Apopka Boulevard in Apopka, displays its float in the Martin Luther King Jr. Parade, organized by the South Apopka Ministerial Alliance.



Orange County Sheriff's Office motorcycle cops ride in circles.



Believe Dance Academy put on a show for the parade watchers and judges.



An LED billboard truck displays a quote by Martin Luther King Jr.: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."



Maynard Evans High School Band is this year's winner of Best Performance -- Band.



Drumlines of America

In celebrating the life and legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., we learn from his example that one person has the potential to inspire a world of change. Let this day be an inspiration to do something in our community that helps others.



New Hope Missionary Baptist Church members dance at the MLK honorary program after the parade at the John H. Bridges Community Center.



40-Plus Double Dutch is this year's winner for Best Performance -- Group.

Obituaries

JIMMY ATTLEE WADE, 76, of Apopka, passed away on January 16, 2025. Mr. Wade was born on August 13, 1948 in Orlando, to the late Attley and Georgia Wade. He is survived by: children, Jimmy (Stephanie) Attlee Wade II, and Cheryl (Bill) Lynn Kirkland.

...

LOUIS “LOU” WAYNE FOLBER, 73, passed away on January 20, 2025, in Apopka. Louis was born on September 23, 1951, in Queens, NY. He is survived by: wife, Stacey; children, Kelli, Joel, Janice, Caralyn; brother, William Folber; sisters in law, Joanne, Sandee, Shari, Suzanne; brother in law, Chris; eight grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; numerous nieces and nephews.

...

IDA LEE HENDRIX, 81, of Tavares, passed away on January 18, 2025. Mrs. Hendrix was born on March 13, 1943 in Island Grove, to the late Olaf and Amour Harper. She is preceded in death by: children, Amy Uptagrafft, June Owen, and Matthew Hendrix; sister, Lois Browder. She is survived by: sister, Judy Le Duc; four grandchildren; seven great grandchildren.

...

ELLEN MARIE KJELDGAARD MATTOX-MEISEL, 100, passed away on January 11, 2025. Born in Defiance, Iowa, on July 17, 1924, to Peter Kjeldgaard and Viola Falk. She is survived by: children, L. Scott Mattox (Ginny), Christine Mattox, Kathleen Coury (Bob), Susan Goddard; 10 grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren.

...

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Ida Lee Hendrix

Ida Lee Hendrix, 81, of Tavares, Florida passed away on January 18, 2025. Mrs. was born on March 13, 1943 in Island Grove, Florida to the late Olaf and Amour Harper. She is preceded in death by her children Amy Uptagrafft, June Owen and Matthew Hendrix; as well as her sister Lois Browder.

She is survived by her sister Judy Le Duc of Tavares, Florida; as well as 4 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren. She will be missed by her many loved ones and friends.



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See Obituary on page 12A

Who is Jesus?

It is possible to read the Gospels carefully and still be at a loss about what Jesus was really like.

While the Gospels give us the outline of his life, where he was born and some details about his mission, his preaching, and his death and resurrection, very little is actually said about his character and personality, or even his appearance.

We are largely left to fill these important details in ourselves, which we inevitably do, but it is interesting how easy it is to come to radically different portraits of Jesus. And perhaps this shouldn't surprise us, as even in Jesus' time this was apparently the case, as his disciples believed he was at the very least a prophet, or perhaps even

the messiah, while important and powerful men among the Jewish leadership thought he was a dangerous and false prophet who was leading the people astray. In modern times, philosophers and theologians have continued to try to "paint" a portrait of Jesus, with radically different pictures emerging.

Comparing the Jesus of Albert Schweitzer with that of Friedrich Nietzsche, for instance, might lead you to wonder if Schweitzer and Nietzsche were even reading the same Gospels. But perhaps there is divine wisdom in this, insofar as we are all able to make Jesus our own, seeing in Him the particular Lord and Savior that each of us needs.

—Christopher Simon

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

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

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

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

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 - Pleasant View Baptist Church 407-886-6717
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 - Plymouth (and Apopka) Church of Christ* 407-886-1466
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Who is Jesus?

(See message above.)

“But what about you?” he [Jesus] asked. “Who do you say I am?” Matthew 16:15 NIV



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- Church**
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 - Everlasting Covenant Christian Center 407-884-8598
 - Faithworks Church 302-293-1391
 - Freedom Fellowship 407-299-6311
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Meisel: She was known for her hospitality

Continued from page 8A

ways there for support and involvement.

Her connection to The Church of the Holy Spirit in Apopka was profound. For 43 years, Ellen was a faithful parishioner whose faith guided her every step. She was an active participant in church life and found solace and purpose within her spiritual community.

In addition to her

church activities, Ellen was a devoted supporter of the local Apopka VFW Post #10147, where she honored the legacy of her two husbands, both proud veterans. After Bucky's passing in 1983, Ellen found love again with William Ray Meisel. Their marriage in 1997 brought her 16 more joyful years until his passing in 2013.

Ellen's contributions to Apopka extended be-

yond her affiliations. She was known for her warm hospitality, delicious homemade meals, and signature chocolate chip cookies, which were always ready for anyone who stopped by. Her kitchen was a hub of love and laughter, embodying her generosity and nurturing spirit.

Despite her deep ties to Apopka, Ellen was a global citizen. She traveled extensively, visiting all sev-

en continents and enriching her life with experiences that she shared with her family and friends. Her passion for basketball and Florida State University football showcased her love for sports, a passion that began while playing basketball in high school and continued throughout her life.

Ellen's centennial milestone in 2024 was a celebration of a life filled with love and purpose. She is survived by her four children, ten grandchildren, and fourteen great-grandchildren, all of whom were inspired by her strength and kindness.

Funeral services will be held at The Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit in Apopka on Saturday, February 1, 2025, at 1 p.m. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to The Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit or the Apopka VFW Post #10147 in Ellen's honor.

Ellen Mattox-Meisel's life was a shining example of what it means to serve others with grace and love. Apopka has lost a beloved member of its community, but her spirit will continue to inspire all who were fortunate enough to know her.

Ellen Marie Kjeldgaard Mattox-Meisel

July 17, 1924 – January 11, 2025

Ellen Marie Kjeldgaard Mattox-Meisel passed away peacefully on January 11, 2025, at the remarkable age of 100. She was surrounded by love and gratitude for a life well-lived.

Born on a farm in Defiance, Iowa, on July 17, 1924, to Peter Kjeldgaard and Viola Falk, Ellen cherished her Danish heritage, which she credited for her longevity. Quoting her sister Dixie, "We are Danes.... Danes are strong". After graduating with a nursing degree from Immanuel Nursing School in Omaha, Nebraska, she embarked on an adventure that would define her life. She rode a train from Nebraska to Central Florida and began her nursing career in Orlando, eventually leaving an indelible mark on the communities she served.

Ellen married T.L. "Bucky" Mattox in 1947, sharing a loving marriage until his passing in 1983. During those 36 years they made their home together in Orlando, Winter Park and Jacksonville before moving to Apopka in 1967. It was that time with Bucky that she was most busy with their church, children's schooling, sports activities, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. Ellen found love again with William Ray Meisel, whom she married in 1997 and shared 16 joyful years until his passing in 2013. Both Bucky and Bill were proud veterans, and Ellen devoted much of her later years to supporting the VFW Post in Apopka.

Ellen and Bucky moved to Apopka, Florida, in 1969, where she was a faithful parishioner of The Church of the Holy Spirit for 43 years. Her faith was the cornerstone of her life, where she remained active in every Episcopal community she joined. In 2013, Ellen moved to John Knox Village in Orange City, Florida, living out her final years enjoying the senior activities and retirement lifestyle. By the time she finally settled in Orange City she had travelled the world, having visited all seven continents!

A lifelong basketball fan who once played in high school, Ellen never lost her love for the sport. She was also an enthusiastic supporter of Florida State University football, cheering on the Seminoles as two of

her children graduated from FSU. Ellen was also well known and loved for her baking and cooking skills. Many family and friends enjoyed her homemade sausage gravy, spaghetti dinners, pies, and of course her delicious chocolate chip cookies which always seemed to be available whenever anyone stopped by.

Ellen is survived by her four children: L. Scott Mattox (Ginny) of Carlsbad, NM; Christine Mattox of Winchester, KY; Kathleen Coury (Bob) of Parkland, FL; and Susan Goddard of Jacksonville, FL. She was immensely proud of her 10 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren who will forever cherish her memory.

Funeral services will be held on Saturday, February 1, 2025, at 1:00 PM at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit in Apopka, Florida. Ellen will be remembered for her strength, faith, and unwavering dedication to family, community, and service.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to The Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit in Apopka or the Apopka VFW Post #10147 in Ellen's honor.



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SUDOKU ANSWERS
PUZZLE CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 2B

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

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Puzzle Solution

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D	E	L	I	B	E	R	A	T	E	D			S	A	D	
A	G	O	N	E			D	H	O	L	E		E	T	H	
H	O	G	G	S			Y	A	R	D	S		S	E	E	

The Crossword Puzzle is found on page 2B