The Front Porch

Where The Tea Is Sweet and the Talks Are Long

November/December 2026



CAMINEZ & YEARY

Making Connections Across North Florida

Page 12

The Kline Family
Bringing Holiday Cheer to Hamilton County
Page 42

Judy Townsend
A Blessed Life
Page 48

Jessica Groover
The Realest Real Estate Agent
Page 20

Steven Danaher
Kickboxing Champion
Page 54

GREENE PUBLISHING, INC.

SUWANNEE VALLEY PLUMBING LLC

Local, Reliable, 20+ years experience

RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL

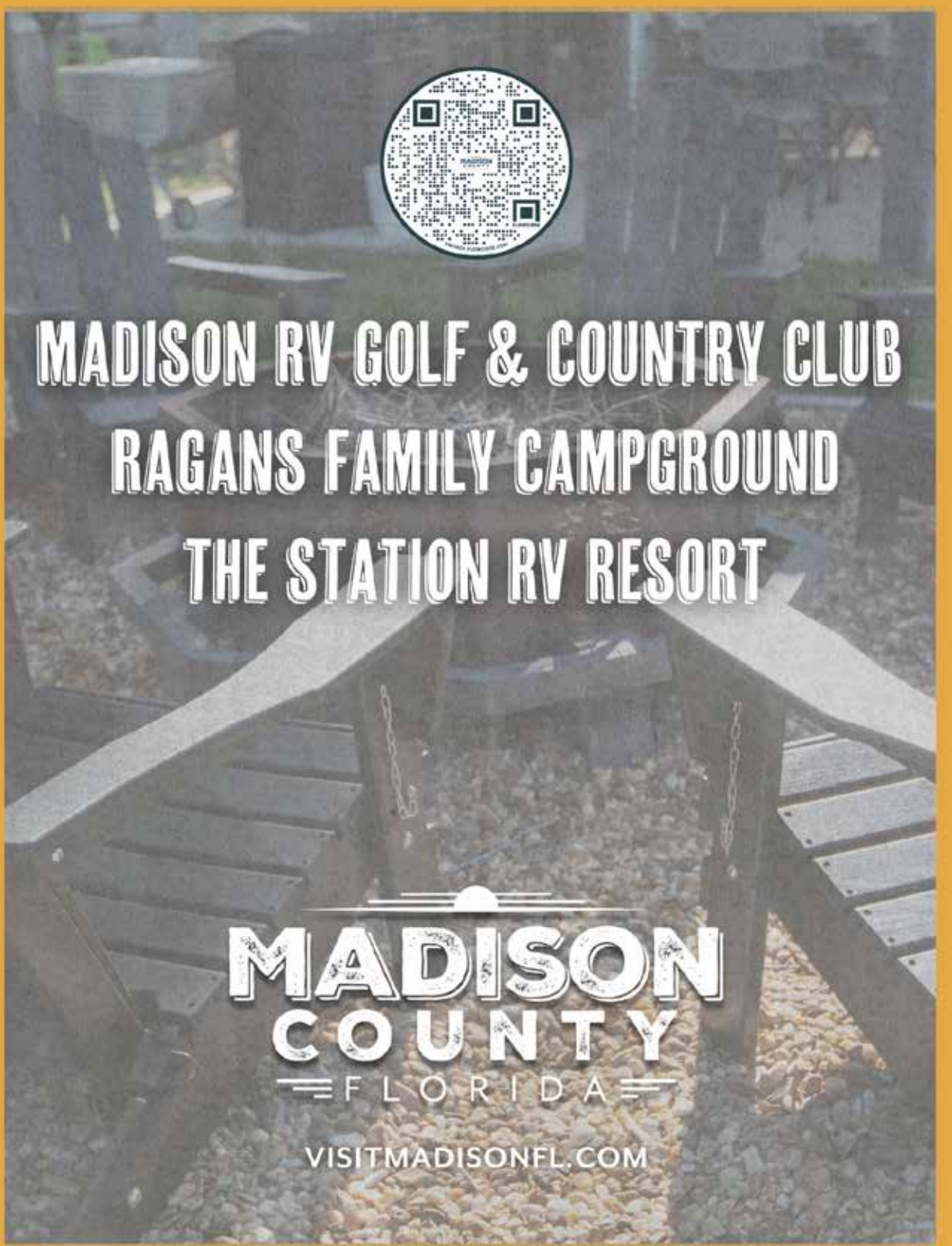
With over 20 years experience, our plumbers are dedicated to providing the highest quality service. We can tackle new installs as well as most repair issues. We take pride in our work and are always willing to go the extra mile to make sure our customers are satisfied. We cover Suwannee County as well as many of the neighboring communities. Give us a call & let us help you today!

SERVICE
386-287-0250

CONSTRUCTION
386-678-1555

CALL TODAY

suwanneevalleyplumbing.com
CFC1432405


MADISON RV GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB
RAGANS FAMILY CAMPGROUND
THE STATION RV RESORT
MADISON
COUNTY
FLORIDA
VISITMADISONFL.COM

PEAVY FENCING
Top-Quality Fencing & Outdoor Solutions

Done right the first time.



Follow us on facebook: Peavy Fencing

Locally owned and family operated • (850) 464-7838 • Peavyfencing.com

contents

The Front Porch | November/December 2026

Features

12 **COVER STORY**
Caminez & Yeary
Making Connections Across North Florida



8 **Sittin' on the Porch**
Margaret Franklin

20 **Spotlight on Jessica Groover**
The Realest Real Estate Agent

24 **Shop Local**
Your Christmas Shopping Guide

30 **Regional Reads**
Recent Releases from Local Authors

31 **Excerpt from *A Red Hills Life***
By Mike Willis

36 **Kaila Hardee**
Overcoming: One Day at a Time

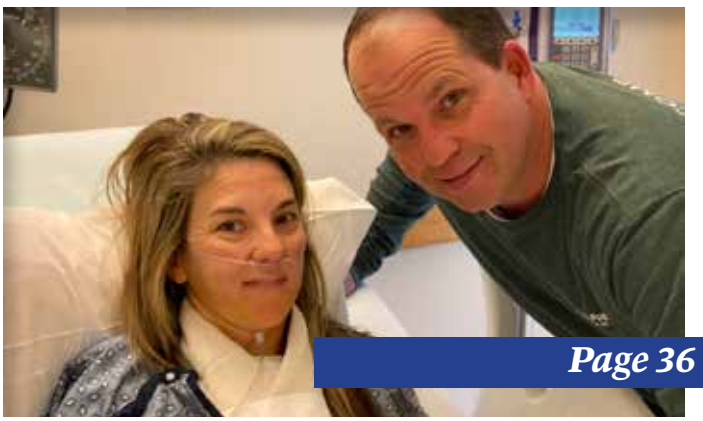
42 **The Kline Family**
Bringing Holiday Cheer to Hamilton County

48 **Judy Townsend's Blessed Life**
From the Clerk's Office to Commissioner

56 **Striking Gold**
Branford's Danaher Claims International Kickboxing Title

67 **What's Happening**
November/December Events









The Front Porch

Established 2019
Vol. 8 Issue 2 • Nov/Dec 2026
The Front Porch
is published every other month at
1695 South SR 53
Madison, Fla. 32340

Published by
GREENE PUBLISHING INC.

Publisher
Emerald Greene

General Manager
Cheltsie Holbrook

Editor
Laura Young

Staff Writers
Rick Patrick
Mickey Starling
Autumn Raulerson
Hailey Heseltine
Danny Federico

Contributor
Mike Willis

Sales Representatives
Tiffany Blaner
Amber Moore

Advertisement Design
Mark Estefan
Dona Gilbert
Lucy Golub

Graphic Design
Maine St. Media

Advertising & Subscriptions
(850) 973-4141

On the Web
www.greenepublishing.com
www.ecbpublishing.com
www.riverbendnews.org

Member of
• Florida Press Association
• Florida Newspaper Advertising and Marketing Executives



Mail checks or money orders to:
Greene Publishing, Inc.
1695 S. SR 53, Madison, Fla. 32340
For all credit card payments, call:
(850) 973-4141

Subscribe Today

Name:_____

Address:_____

City:_____ State:_____ Zip Code:_____

Phone:_____ Email Address: _____

Please note: If you are a subscriber to the *Madison County Carrier, Monticello News,* or *Riverbend News,* and you live in Madison, Jefferson, Taylor, Suwannee, Hamilton or Lafayette County, you will automatically receive the magazine when published.

The Front Porch

Meet Our Staff



Emerald Greene
Publisher



Cheltsie Holbrook
General Manager



Laura Young
Editor



Mickey Starling
Staff Writer



Rick Patrick
Staff Writer



Danny Federico
Staff Writer



Hailey Heseltine
Staff Writer



Autumn Raulerson
Staff Writer



Mike Willis
Contributor



Mark Estefan
Graphic Designer



Lucy Golub
Graphic Designer



Dona Gilbert
Graphic Designer



Amber Moore
Sales Representative



Tiffany Blaner
Sales Representative

MARGARET FRANKLIN



Story and Photograph by Hailey Heseltine

Look anywhere along the Big Bend, and you will see traces of Margaret Franklin's influence. Beyond her business as founder of Franklin Academy, she's educated and left an impact on hundreds of local lives.

Franklin was born and raised in Tallahassee. Her mother, Elizabeth Lawson Dobbins, was from Gadsden County, and her father, Charlie Dobbins, was from Vernon, Alabama. Franklin has fond childhood memories of the store that her father owned and operated, Super X Food Market, which was located in the Frenchtown neighborhood of Tallahassee. Dobbins began working there when he was only 10 years old and slowly worked his way up the ranks from bag boy, stock boy, cashier, meat market manager to eventually become the owner of the store. It was in that store that Franklin was introduced to the basics of business and hard work as her first job. Her mother, meanwhile, was a teacher for 25 years, and Franklin often assisted her as an aide during the summers.The skills she learned from her parents had a lasting impact and set her up for success beyond the store.

Franklin also grew up feeding her interest in music with piano lessons. She loved learning to play Bach, Beethoven and Clementi, among others, and entered the concert stage when she was 16 years old. Today, she continues to enjoy playing piano and has developed a program for early childhood music education, which she does as a hobby.

Franklin graduated from Florida State University Schools (Florida High) and then took college classes at Florida State University (FSU) for a year before transferring to Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU). At FAMU, she joined the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), despite her family's protests. She graduated FAMU with a bachelor's degree in marketing management and a minor in music education. Later she attended a pre-professional graduate program at University of Florida for a year and then went on to earn a master's degree in education leadership.

While serving in the U.S. Army as part of the

Finance Corps in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Franklin earned a marksmanship badge, learned how to drive tankers, flew planes and gained many skills that she says she never would have had the opportunity to learn otherwise.

"The worst experience I ever had was in basic training," she laughs. "I was walking through the woods, and a snake fell on my neck. It fell off the tree and onto me, and I didn't even realize. The guys started teasing me and said, 'Ms. Franklin, you have a visitor.' When I looked down and saw the snake, I fainted, and they had to carry me back to the base."

She adds, "All of those experiences make you who you are. It makes you stronger. It was so, so much fun, and it made me a strong female."

When she was ready to start a family, she was honorably discharged with a rank of second lieutenant.

She believes that founding Franklin Academy was her destiny but says that she "did not know that teaching was [her] talent until [she] had to help [her] own child."

It all began in the '90s, when she learned that her son, Gallop Franklin, was struggling in school.

"He came home one day, and then he said to me, 'Mommy, please help me.' He said, 'These people are gonna mess your only baby up.' So I looked at him strange, and I said, 'Well, what do you mean?' He said, 'I'm smarter than most of the kids in my class, and I can do this. They're giving me all this stuff that's so easy. I'm gonna be bored,'" Franklin recalls. "I asked him, 'Well, what do you want me to do?' and he said, 'I don't know, but I need you to help me.'"

Franklin decided to go on a one-year leave of absence from work to homeschool her son. During that first year, she says, he went up two grades. He was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder, placed in speech therapy, and put under the guidance of a psychologist to help him develop a positive attitude.

"With all that put together," Franklin says, "he became a doctor. He has a doctorate degree in pharmacy and works as a compound pharmacist for Tallahassee Memorial Hospital. He compounds medicines for different blood types, that kind of thing. Then, last year, he got a master's in business administration from Cornell University … He's also now a State Representative for District 8."

Franklin is, of course, a very proud mother. She's also proud of what she built as founder of Franklin Academy, her private school. She was inspired to found the school after the positive experiences she had with her son made her wonder if other children in the area weren't getting the help they needed. After she experienced what she believes was a sign, she took action and, in 1994, began operating the school with just a handful of students out of her home garage.

Today, Franklin Academy has expanded tremendously from its humble beginnings and now has locations in Monticello, Tallahassee and Gadsden County. She says that the schools are intended to serve as a "helpmate" to the public schools, preparing most students to re-enter the system when they're ready. For some students, Franklin Academy might be a better long-term fit, so they also graduate some high school students each year.

Through Franklin Academy, she also met one of the most important mentors in her life, Dr. Barbara Thomas-Reddick, who was the academy's first instructor. As one of 12 children, Reddick earned a doctorate degree and runs her own business through which she assists mental health and substance abuse patients. The two women have a friendship built on mutual mentorship and communication, which has been very valuable to Franklin. It is through these sorts of relationships that she is able to refine herself and continue her enterprises.

"It's been a real blessing. Life never has a dull moment. I love helping other people every day. It's just part of my nature. I never dreamed that this would be what I'm doing," says Franklin.

There's nowhere she would rather be than North Florida. Between the connections she's made, the lives she's influenced, the family stories she can tell and the bonds she's built, she loves her hometown. She also believes that it's a great place for anyone to grow up, learn and live.

Franklin says, "The thing that I love about living in the Big Bend area is that, because of the education, there's so much opportunity. We have three major colleges in Tallahassee: FSU, FAMU and Tallahassee State College. There's also great parks and recreation around here, and you often don't have to have the money to go to them. Then you have free youth programs, like Boys and Girls Clubs and YMCAs. If a child wants to make it, they could be the greatest – because in the Big Bend area, we have good people, and we have so much to do." ▪



Jay Boy's

Built with one purpose:

to be the kind of stop your family actually looks forward to!

CHECK US OUT: https://jay-boys.com/
https://www.facebook.com/JayBoysFamilyTC

OFFERING:

- 54 Fuel Pumps
- A&W All American Food
- PJ's Coffee of New Orleans
- A Boutique
- Tate's Bake Shop
- Candy Wall
- RV Dump Stations
- Clean Restrooms



EXIT 11, I-75, VALDOSTA, GA. OPEN 24/7, 365 DAYS A YEAR.

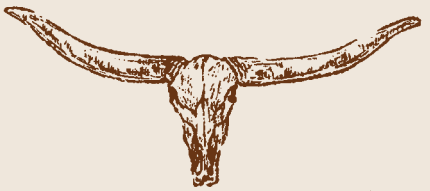
J+J STRONG





J+J STRONG provides farm fuel deliv and construction site delivery in Madison & surrounding counties. We provide freight services in a 200-mile radius. All public is welcome at the Cardlo 3955 SW SR 14, Madison, Fla. and is OPEN: 24/7

Phone: (850) 973-1431
Fax: (850) 290-7443
www.jj-strong-fuel.com



Cactus Creek Boutique

1409 OHIO AVENUE NORTH
LIVE OAK FL 32064

HOURS: MONDAY - FRIDAY (10-6)
SATURDAY (10-4)



Party with
THE BIG DAWGS

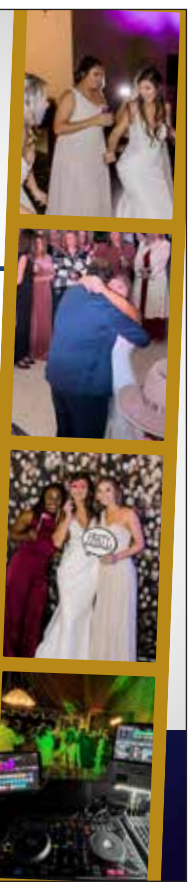
WE OFFER photobooths

• Weddings • Birthday parties • Class reunions • Live Sound
Sound, music, & lights for any occasion

Silver Reception Package: $600
- Basic Wedding Reception (up to 4 hrs)
- Basic Sound System (No Subwoofer)
- Basic Dance Floor Lighting
- Wireless Microphone for Toasts and/or Speeches
- Professional Event DJ/MC
- Virtial Planning Session

Gold Reception Package: $800
- Classic Wedding Reception (up to 5 hrs)
- Professional Sound Equipment (1 X Subwoofer)
- Premium Dance Floor Lighting Package
- Wireless Microphone for Toasts and/or Speeches
- Professional Event DJ/MC
- Virtual Planning Session

Platinum Reception Package: $1000
- Premium Wedding Reception (up to 8 hrs)
- Premium Professional Sound Equipment (2 X Subwoofer)
- Platinum Dance Floor Lighting (up-lighting included)
- 2 Wireless Microphones for Toasts and/or Speeches
- Professional Event DJ/MC
- Virtual Planning Sesson
- Additional Room Sound System for Overflow (if needed)



3 DAWGS PRODUCTIONS

CONTACT US AT: info@3dawgspro.com
3dawgspro.com • (229) 560-2824 – Andrew Moore

Agents Who Are
REALTORS®
Have the *Expertise* to Guide You as You Make Your Next Move.



Find a REALTOR®

Tallahassee BOARD of REALTORS®
REALTOR®
Proudly Serving Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Madison, and Wakulla Counties

850-224-7713 • TBRnet.org



Caminez & Yeary on

"Making Connections With Families Across North Florida"

Sponsored Content
Story by Hailey Heseltine
Photographs Courtesy of Ryan Yeary

Caminez & Yeary has served North Florida since 1972, and along the way, they've learned a thing or two about what it means to work local. From two locations in Monticello and Tallahassee, they offer decades of experience in personalized care to residents of the Big Bend.

"We're a personal injury law firm primarily, which means we represent people who are injured in car accidents, slip and falls and sometimes medical malpractice. That is our primary area of work," explains Ryan Yeary, P.A., the firm's current attorney.

Jon Caminez (1941-2016) was the founder of the firm that is now known as Caminez & Yeary. He created the firm in Tallahassee in 1972, after earning his law degree from the University of North Carolina and thereafter spending some time working for the United States Department of Justice. Caminez's motto was that he was "in the business of helping people," which he put into action by taking even large corporations to trial for his North Floridian clients.

Less than a decade after he founded the firm, Caminez was already building a reputation beyond Leon County. He moved to Jefferson County, where he lived off of Waukeenah Highway. He only realized the need to expand his practice when locals began visiting his home for legal advice. Not long after, he opened a Monticello office in the Jefferson Square business plaza, providing a close space to meet with his clients from Monticello, Perry and Madison. When Caminez met Yeary, he was evidently impressed by the younger lawyer's work and invited him to join his firm. Yeary has now been with

the firm for 10 years, becoming its owner after Caminez passed away in September 2016.

Yeary originally is from the Dallas-Fort Worth area of Texas, but his family moved to Tallahassee when he was only 11 years old. He attended Leon High School, which was also where he began considering a career in law.

"Probably in junior or senior year, we were studying government," Yeary recalls. "I was always interested in it. Part of it was my curiosity for my own protection – knowing the law, knowing what rights I had. I think that's probably what got me into wanting to be a lawyer."

His interest in law, however, did not seriously alter his path until later. When he studied at Florida State University (FSU), he earned a bachelor's degree in accounting. While he was finishing his undergraduate degree, however, he was still considering what would come next.

"During my last year or so in college, I basically had two paths to go down," he explains. "I could get my master's in accounting and become a Certified Public Accountant (CPA), or I could go the legal route. I'd been working for a great CPA firm in town, but I knew I didn't want to do that for the rest of my life. I thought it seemed more fun to be a lawyer."

About the same time that Yeary applied to the master's in accounting program at FSU, he also applied to the Stetson University College of Law. When he was accepted to Stetson, Yeary decided to go to law school. Leaving his hometown to attend Stetson was a tough decision, but he knew that in order to succeed in law school, he would need to leave behind the ample distractions in Tallahassee, including hangouts with his friends and the golf course's irresistible call. Another advantage of Stetson, he says, was that it was known for its skills-based trial advocacy program, which prepared lawyers for the courtroom with hands-on work.

"At the time, I thought I'd be some business lawyer, some transactional lawyer, tax lawyer, something of that nature," Yeary says. "But of course, that never ended up happening."

After he graduated in 2009, earning his law degree with honors and a Master's in Business Administration, he headed into the workforce as a trial court law clerk at the circuit court in Leon County. In that position, he built practical experience while also becoming familiar with the local judges. He describes it as being a great experience. Not only was it his first job, it was also the job that pointed him in the direction he wanted to go.

"Along the way, I was talking to one of the local judges, former Judge Charlie Dodson," recalls Yeary. "He said to me, 'Ryan, you don't seem like the law clerk type. You seem like you want to do something different.' And I said, 'Well, I would like to do some type of

"Maybe it's the small town feel, but we're just a little more laid back, and we're more about taking care of the client first. If we do right by people, it'll work out in the long run."

— Ryan Yeary, P.A.



Attorney Jon Caminez (1941-2016) founded Caminez & Yeary in 1972. His motto was that he was "in the business of helping people," which he put into action by taking even large corporations to trial for his North Floridian clients.



In 2016, Attorney Ryan Yeary (left) joined the law firm founded by Jon Caminez (right). Today, Yeary honors Caminez's legacy by continuing to be guided by the firm's mission of helping people across the Big Bend.

civil litigation.' I clerked for a law firm in St. Pete that did business litigation, and I enjoyed it. So, I thought that's what I wanted to do. The issue was that nobody wants to hire a litigator with no litigation experience."

Yeary ended up bringing his resume to various personal injury and insurance defense firms. Eventually, he got a call back from Heath & Rasky, a firm that did insurance defense work. Over the next five years working for Heath & Rasky, he learned the ins and outs of personal injury law from the insurance defense side.

"I was also given the opportunity to try a few cases," says Yeary. "I was having a lot of success doing that. Along the way, I started litigating cases against Jon Caminez."

Yeary recounts, "We actually had one case go to trial over in Perry … Jon was 73 or 74 at the time. That's when he first started talking about me coming to work for him. It was the summer of 2015, and he told me that he needed some help. At the time, I just had a lot of success. I won two trials within three weeks. I was like, 'I don't really want to leave right now,' so in the summer of 2015, it didn't seem like the right fit."

However, Caminez was persistent. By spring 2016, Yeary decided that he was ready to make the move, and he joined the business that July. Both attorneys expected that Yeary, the younger of the two, would eventually take over the firm, but it happened sooner than they expected. Caminez passed away that September, and after Caminez's family sold him the business, Yeary suddenly found himself at the helm with only months of experience in the firm.

"You know, you don't get into the nitty gritty of running a business until you get thrust into it," says Yeary. "Even when I started here with Jon, Jon ran the business, and I was doing the legal work and collecting my paycheck. He made the decisions, did the advertising, dealt with the phones, the computers, all the other employment type issues, the legal assistants, the rent, the lease and everything that goes into the day-to-day running of a law firm. Now, all of the sudden, it was my job. So not only did I have to do the lawyer stuff, which I was familiar with from being an insurance defense attorney, but I was learning the business side of it … Everything was a challenge. It was all new to me."

One of the first – and the most difficult – changes that Yeary made was digitizing files. In Caminez's 40 years of running the firm, paper files remained a constant. Under the old system, if Yeary wanted to simply call a client, it could take an hour just to locate a file and find the client's contact information. It was just one of the many modern updates that added first challenge, then convenience to the firm's processes.

"Now, the way we do things around here looks nothing like what it did 10 years ago," says Yeary.

In early 2017, the firm officially shifted from Jon D. Caminez, P.A., to its current form as Caminez & Yeary, P.A. Yeary humorously notes that some local clients still refer to it as "The Caminez Firm."

While Yeary often felt that he was just getting started during the shift, he was aided by experienced staff members, including Case Manager Shannon Brown.

Brown was born and raised in Madison, which he still calls home today. Nearly as deep as his Madison roots run, so do his roots with Caminez and Yeary. While he was attending high school, he started his career as an office clerk and investigator for the firm. He then attended Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University and graduated

with a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice in 2001. He also studied to become a certified paralegal.

When Brown started working under Jon Caminez, he was a runner, which meant that he went to the courthouse to physically bring items to be filed. From there, he gradually learned more about the business, eventually progressing to case manager.

"He meets with clients early on, like when they first get in an accident," says Yeary. "He follows up with them throughout their medical treatment, collects the records and makes sure all of the information is submitted to the insurance companies. Over the years, he has worked with countless families throughout North Florida and, in doing so, has established longstanding relationships that provide Caminez & Yeary a stream of clients."

Today, the Caminez & Yeary team is small but mighty. Yeary is the sole attorney; Brown continues to serve as case manager. Suzanne Spana is the receptionist, and Rachel Dodrill is the legal assistant. The close-knit staff of four is the lifeblood of the firm.

In a reversal of the common path of many firms, Caminez & Yeary went from being headquartered in the state capital of Tallahassee to calling small-town Monticello the location of its main office. There, Yeary is able to better reach his main clientele – the people of the smaller counties in Big Bend. He jokes that the best part of it all is being able to more easily find parking at the courthouses, but what he truly enjoys the most is connecting with locals.

"Since that time [the firm's change of ownership in 2017], we've continued to primarily represent the injured folks in Jefferson, Madison, Leon, Gadsden, Taylor, Suwannee – pretty much throughout North Florida," says Yeary. "We still do a lot of local advertising, since the bulk of our clients are primarily local. We try to advertise in the local paper. We try to support the local communities, the schools, and giving back to them, because that's generally the folks we're representing … I deal with folks that live in Tallahassee, that live in Perry, that live in Madison, and the legal work for these clients is pretty much all the same. But the biggest difference about working in Monticello is that when I go on break, or I'm out to lunch, I see people that I know – people that I've represented. Everyone is friendly, and takes time to stop and talk to you. It's not a rat race where everyone's hustling. It's just a much more relaxed atmosphere. I'm not necessarily a native of Jefferson County or Madison County, but after 10 years of doing work out here and working with different



The spirit of many of the Big Bend communities that Yeary serves affects every part of his life. He's pictured with his family, getting ready to watch the 2025 FSU vs. University of Florida football game.

families and getting to know other people in the community, when things come up, people will say, 'Oh, you should call Ryan.'"

"The most rewarding part of it all is, you know, helping people who have been hurt," comments Yeary. "It may sound silly, or cliché – it's the truth. Some of the folks we represent don't have a lot to begin with, and they've been injured, and we'll settle their case, and it may not always seem like a lot of money, but you would be surprised what it means to some of our clients. We may hand someone a check for $4,000, and it's more than they've ever seen in their life. I think that's the most rewarding part – I mean, you'll have people come in here crying tears of joy when you give them a check. It feels good helping people. My clients are good people who were doing nothing wrong and, due to someone else's carelessness, got hurt and had their lives turned upside down. You can't wave a magic wand over somebody and make their pain go away, but you can try to get them some kind of compensation."

The small town spirit affects every part of Yeary's life. For instance, family stays central. His days usually begin with dropping off his kids at school, then commuting from the Bradfordville area to the main office in Monticello for his duties as attorney. His wife, Jessica Yeary, is also an attorney, serving as Public Defender for Florida's Second Judicial Circuit. The couple met while both were studying law at Stetson, and the rest was history; they got married in 2009. They have two sons, a sophomore in high school and a seventh grader. Since both children are involved in sports, the family is often traveling to athletic events. When Yeary gets a moment to himself, he enjoys playing golf and cheering on the FSU Seminoles at Doak Campbell Stadium during football season.

Speaking to the folks of the Big Bend, Yeary says: "You know, 10 years ago when I took over this firm, I didn't know what was gonna happen. We had a few clients leave, because they had known Jon for years, and they didn't know me. So, at first, it was like, 'Are people gonna stay? They could always go somewhere else.' If anything, I want to say thanks to the community for being so accepting of me and keeping this firm going. It's been here for so long, and I would hate for it not to be here, because there are people in this community that need help, but can't get to a bigger city. A lot of businesses don't make it five years, much less 10 years, and for us to be able to continue is because people have put their faith in us and allowed us to help them when they have all these other options. At this point, it's become that you can hire an attorney in Miami to handle your personal injury loss in Monticello. I wouldn't advise it, but you could. So, the fact that people continue to put their faith in us and come back here – that's the message I want to send. After 10 years, we're still here."

As they move forward, the staff of Caminez & Yeary are grateful to continue to live up to Jon Caminez's motto of being "in the business of helping people." Connecting with families across North Florida is part of the job – but more importantly, it's what makes it all worthwhile. ▪



The staff of Caminez & Yeary is small but close-knit and hardworking. Pictured, from left to right, are Case Manager Shannon Brown, Receptionist Suzanne Spana, Legal Assistant Rachel Dodrill and Attorney Ryan Yeary during a holiday lunch in 2025. This staff of four is the lifeblood of the firm.

Caminez & Yeary

P.A. | ATTORNEYS AT LAW

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD LAW FIRM



RYAN YEARY
Attorney

SHANNON BROWN
Case Manager

Auto, Trucking, Motorcyle Accidents, Wrongful Death, Malpractice, Slip and Fall, and more

Offices Monticello & Tallahassee

850-997-8181 **caminezlaw.com**

JACOBSEN HOMES™
Factory Outlet

Home FOR THE HOLIDAYS IN YOUR NEW HOME.

We Buy Used Homes.

Now Ordering 2027 Homes!



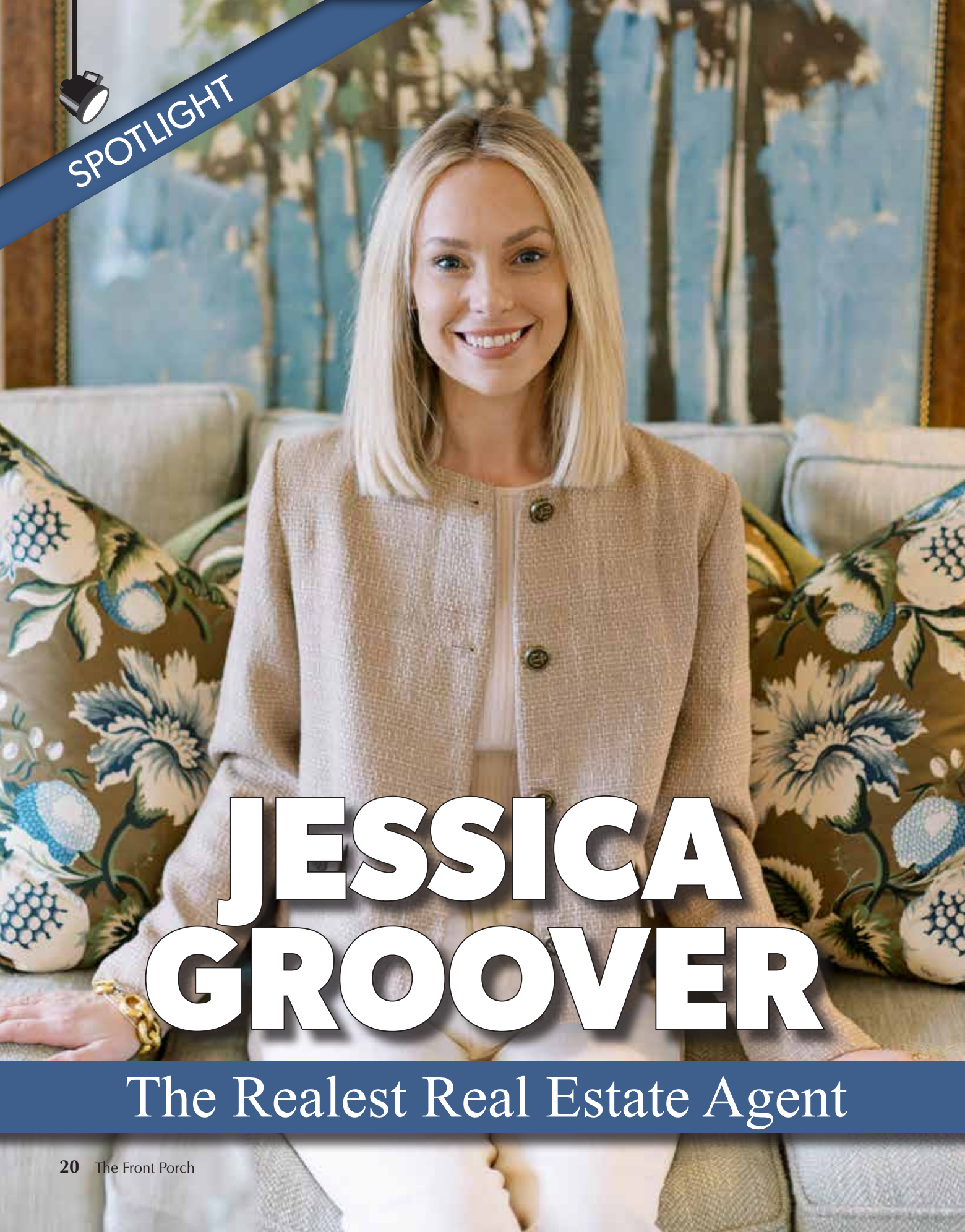
386.438.8458
3973 West US HWY 90
Lake City, FL 32055



100% CUSTOMER SATISFACTION
IS OUR GOAL!

DUNHAM BODY SHOP
FOREIGN & DOMESTIC
Body & Paint Work
Frame Straightening
~ FREE ESTIMATES ~
INSURANCE WORK WELCOME
11615 U.S. Hwy. 319 N.
Thomasville, Ga. 31757
(Past Walmart, across the street from Stallings Dodge Chrysler Jeep)
(229) 226-2077





JESSICA GROOVER

The Realest Real Estate Agent

Sponsored Content
Story by Autumn Raulerson
Photographs Courtesy of Jessica Groover

Nestled in the heart of Madison is Jessica "Jessie" Groover, the real estate agent who will always invest herself into realizing your residential dreams. Throughout North Florida, she goes above and beyond the call with every deal, no matter how small. Her personal philosophy is to always put the relationships with her community and her clients first, because every person matters to her.

Groover is a multi-generational Madison native. When she started out selling real estate, it was a way to provide for her family while being able to stay home and spend time with her son, Lawson. As children do, her success and reach in the community kept growing into something much bigger than she could have ever imagined. The resulting relationships she has made have helped immensely in creating the perfect home for her family and every one of her clients since.

Since 2017, Groover has provided her personal touch to real estate transactions for over 315 families. What distinguishes her from any other agent is her emphasis on a personal relationship with her clients, as well as the hard work ethic and confidence she brings to every deal. Being willing to roll up her sleeves and do whatever it takes to close a deal is a huge part of her success.

Groover's clients are more than clients – they're friends.

"I want to sit at your breakfast table and drink coffee with you," she says. "I want to come cook out after we close. I want to see the renovation pictures, and I want our kids to know each other."

Her clients are never just transactions to her. She is always fully invested with each individual person or family that comes to her for help. For example, when sending mailers, Groover says that she hand-writes every single address on the envelopes, no matter how long it takes. The letters she personally addresses are sometimes to the owners of properties that may have an expired listing on the Multiple Listing Service, to explain why it may not have sold and how her approach is different. Other times she sends these letters to inform neighbors when nearby properties are listed or sold.

"I never want my business to grow so much that the individual person stops feeling important," Groover adds.

That care and interest in each one of her client's lives is part of what puts her in a class of her own when it comes to real estate agents.



No difficulty is too large or too small for Groover to work out. She strives to always be there for her clients, whether it's to help them solve their problems or to celebrate their joy.

"I want people to feel comfortable calling me," she says. "I want them to know they can ask me the question they're worried might sound silly. When something goes wrong, I don't disappear."

Most real estate agents will send you to an assistant or a voicemail machine when making first contact. Groover will always make herself personally available to her clients, whether they've never met or they've known each other for years.

A personal touch isn't all that sets Groover apart from regular real estate agents. It's also her incredible work ethic and the amount of help she is willing to offer when it comes to the comfort and happiness you find in your new home.

"I always do whatever I can to close the deal," she explains. "I've shampooed more carpets than I can count, and painted trim. I'll line up anything I can to help the clients feel more comfortable when buying their home."

Groover shares some of the experiences she's had with client-turned-friends in the past, like visiting a family for coffee once a week, or the gift of Christmas cookies made together with her kids and one of her client's kids.

Groover also isn't afraid to roll up her sleeves and do actual labor to help provide a better experience to her clients. At one time, she found herself giving one of her clients a ride from the airport to his new home, along with occasional help getting around town as he settled.

Confidence is the key to success, which is advice Groover lives and works by. Real estate transactions involve people, money and emotion, so they won't always be easy. There are sometimes financing issues, inspections, appraisals, title problems, negotiations or other unexpected situations that could stop a less confident agent in their tracks.

"I've had transactions come very close to falling apart, and we've had to figure out how to put the pieces back together," Groover says.

Without that confidence in her abilities, the "difficult deals" would be a roadblock. Groover creatively navigates around every obstacle in the path to helping her clients secure their property. Anybody can look good when everything goes perfectly. An agent really earns their place when it doesn't.

When people are buying homes, there's a lot of help available that they may be unaware of. That's when Groover's toolbox can differ from another real estate agent's. She has helped clients get assistance through the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) program, which helps very low to moderate income earning families secure affordable homeownership. Groover says she has also helped clients in making unfinanceable homes more accessible to buyers by lining up insurance that offers a grace period, coordinating seller credits, setting up private financing through lenders or anything else in her power to help create an attainable market for those families who find themselves on the outside of the arena.

There is no denying that the real estate market has become increasingly difficult to navigate in the last decade,

which is something that has only pushed Groover to work even harder.

"A difficult market can be discouraging," Groover shares, "for agents, sellers and buyers. Deals take more work, properties may take longer to sell and transactions fall apart. Those are the times when communication and experience become even more important to succeed."

It's easy to be a real estate agent when everything is selling fast and cheap. A tougher market requires grit, the ability to work through problems, adjust expectations, communicate honestly and keep on moving forward even when things don't happen the way you had planned. After more than nine years selling properties in northeastern Florida's roller coaster of a market, Groover has all the knowledge and skills she could ever need to work through any problem that comes her way.

Being available and supportive to each individual client is important to Groover.

"I want to help provide plenty of resources to my clients, no matter what their needs might be. Accessibility is a big part of how I do business," Groover shares. "I don't want to become an agent who hands every client off the moment they call. People know they're dealing with me directly."

That means, no matter what, her clients will always be able to reach out directly to Groover with any problem, at any time.

"I want people to feel comfortable calling me. This is one of the biggest financial decisions anyone will ever make, and I never want to lose sight of the importance of that," Groover explains.

Community is at the heart of Groover's work.

"This isn't just an area where I sell real estate. This is home," Groover explains. "In a small community, relationships matter. You're going to see your clients again at the grocery store, at school and at community events. That creates accountability, but it also makes this career incredibly rewarding. I'm not just selling properties. I'm working with people whose lives often continue to cross mine long after we leave the closing table."

Groover doesn't define her career by the production numbers or properties sold. She's incredibly proud of the friendships she's made with people in her community and those who have come from far and wide to find their perfect destination.

"I've spent the last nine years [while working for Mossy Oak Properties] building relationships in the community, and I'm really excited about creating a space that reflects that," Groover shares about her plans to create a safe, comfortable place for anyone interested in buying real estate.

Nestled in the heart of Madison, right across the street from the courthouse, Groover is working on big plans for the historic building located at the corner of Range Avenue and U.S. Highway 90, which has operated as a real estate office since the 1980s and has stood strong in downtown Madison since 1885.

"There are some big things in the works for that little corner of downtown Madison. Stay tuned," Groover shares.

There is no perfect deal, no perfect system to make things always work out. Groover knows that, and she prepares for it.

"I'm not the agent with a perfectly organized system for every minute of the day. I've built my career around something much simpler: working hard, answering my phone, solving problems and taking care of people," Groover says. "It's really hard to shake me once I'm invested in getting somebody to the finish line."

Working hard and never giving up. That's how she made her work into a dream, not a job. ▪



FROM FRONT DOOR TO FENCE LINE.

REAL ESTATE
for the way you live.

Whether you're buying, selling or simply exploring what's possible, I'm here to provide trusted guidance, local expertise, and hands-on client care every step of the way.





RESIDENTIAL HOMES | LAND & RECREATON | WATERFRONT PROPERTIES | FARMS & RANCHES | INVESTMENT OPPOTUNITIES

JESSIE GROOVER
REALTOR
850.464.1303

MOSSY OAK PROPERTIES
Southern Land & Homes

Local roots.
Real relationships.
Results that matter.

ADAMS SPRINGS RANCH

GREENVILLE, FLORIDA









Owned and operated by
Scott & Pam Adams
Purebred & F1 Cattle Breeders
scottadamsfarms@outlook.com


SHOP
LO-ho-ho-CAL
Make North Florida small businesses your Christmas Shopping Destination!


Discover where Christmas Traditions Come to Life
Revive
Stay
Play
Dine
JEFFERSON COUNTY
FLORIDA
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

SHOP *Local* IN MADISON THIS HOLIDAY SEASON



A vital part of North Florida's history, Madison's story began in 1838 when it was carved from the wilderness as a prominent hub for the region's boom in agriculture and commerce. Shaded by majestic, moss-draped oaks older than memory, the city's timeless charm is beautifully preserved in its historic district, where grand 19th century architecture remains a testament to the city's deep roots. From the elegance of the Wardlaw-Smith-Goza Mansion to the beautiful, artistic dignity of Four Freedoms Park, which is home to the historic monument honoring local World War II hero Captain Colin P. Kelly, Jr., Madison is a proud testament to Old Florida's heritage. Today, this rich legacy provides a stunning, slow-paced backdrop for the underlying community spirit that still defines the heart of the city, where supporting independent businesses and merchants along these historic streets contributes to keeping the true character of Old Florida alive.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Madison Antiques Market Interiors

GIVE SOMETHING TIMELESS FOR CHRISTMAS!

197 SW Range Ave.

(850) 973-9000

HAVE AN OLD FASHIONED CHRISTMAS

The Country Store

FIND A ONE OF A KIND CHRISTMAS TREASURE!

256 SW Range Ave.

(850) 973-2476

HAVE A BLOOMING CHRISTMAS

Amazing Grace Designs & Florist

BRIGHTEN THEIR CHRISTMAS WITH BLOOMS!

687 E Base St.

(850) 270-9933

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM DR. MM

Mary Santerfeit (Dr. MM)

FILL THEIR STOCKING WITH STORIES!

Order "Christmas Chains," "The Magic of Christmas Eve," "A Dog Named Cow" and more by Dr. MM on Amazon today!

WISHING YOU A WORLD OF CHRISTMAS JOY

Travels with Katrina

GIVE THE GIFT OF ADVENTURE THIS CHRISTMAS!

(850) 567-6451

MAY YOUR HOME BE MERRY & BRIGHT

Johnston Signature Furnishings

GIVE THEM SOMETHING THEY CAN COME HOME TO!

349 SW Range Ave.

(850) 629-7697



SHOP LOCAL IN MONTICELLO FOR Christmas

Come spend the day in charming Monticello, Florida! Stroll through our historic downtown and explore the many cute boutiques, unique shops and hidden treasures that make our small town special.
Bring your appetite and enjoy one of our many wonderful restaurants and cafés. With delicious food, friendly faces and plenty of Southern charm, Monticello is the perfect place for a relaxing day of shopping, dining and making memories!

BUILDING WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS

Gulf Coast Lumber

His Christmas list starts here.

1400 S. Jefferson St., Monticello
(850) 997-2519

MERRY CHRISTMAS PLANT LOVERS

Monticello Plant Boutique

Give the gift that keeps growing this Christmas.

165 E. Dogwood St., Monticello
Find us on Facebook

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Monticello Opera House

Give the gift of theater this Christmas at the historic Opera House.

(850) 997-4242
monticellooperahouse.org

MAY YOUR HOME BE MERRY & BRIGHT

Johnston's Signature Furniture

Give them something they can come home to.

405 S. Jefferson St., Monticello
(448) 222-7030

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM THE PALMETTO PIONEER

Palmetto Pioneer

Give the gift of history.

Pick up your copy at:
The Monticello News, Vintage Treasures,
Monticello Chamber of Commerce
or The Luckie Pearl

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

The Luckenbooth Shop

Your place for expert embroidery services and gifts from the UK and Ireland.

235 N. Jefferson St., Monticello
(448) 222-7026

A LITTLE PEARL MAKES CHRISTMAS SPARKLE

The Luckie Pearl Boutique

Chic fashions, jewelry and gifts worth the trip.

240 N. Jefferson St., Monticello
Find us on Facebook at
www.facebook.com/p/The-Luckie-Pearl-100058006431124/

MERRY CHRISTMAS

BeYOUtiful Skin Spa

Give a gift card for fresh, healthy, glowing skin this Christmas.

1180 W. Washington St., Monticello
(850) 800-7495

WISHING YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY TAILS

Wolf Creek Pet Adoption Center

Share, adopt, donate and support our homeless pets.

2123 E. Washington Hwy., Monticello
(850) 342-0244

HAVE A PAWSITIVLY MERRY CHRISTMAS

Way The Dog Thrift & Treasure Shop

Shopping with us helps support our shelter pets.

155 N. Jefferson St., Monticello
(850) 997-2416

HAVE A CHARMING CHRISTMAS

The Rusty Quail

Unique gifts, holiday decor and southern charm.

151 N. Jefferson St., Monticello
Facebook: The Rusty Quail

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM OUR SHOP TO YOUR HOME

Monticello Soap Co.

CREATE. CLEAN. COMMUNITY.

262 N. Cherry St., Monticello
monticellosoap.com

HAVE YOURSELF A VINTAGE CHRISTMAS

Vintage Treasures

Give the gift of a memory for Christmas. Antiques and collectables.

110 E. Dogwood St., Monticello

KREATE A KISMET CHRISTMAS

Kismet's Kreations

Come kraft your Christmas. Vintage ceramic trees and more

168 E. Dogwood St., Monticello
(850) 528-7485

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM ON POINT BOUTIQUE

On Point Boutique

Celebrate the season with us and shop our outdoor-inspired and western styles for the whole family!

166 E. Dogwood St.
onpointboutique.com

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given."
- Isaiah 9:6



Shop Local. Give Big. Spread Joy.

The magic of Christmas is found right here in our hometowns! This holiday season, skip the big-box rush and discover the unique gifts, friendly faces and hometown charm our local businesses have to offer.

From one-of-a-kind treasures and stylish finds to relaxing experiences and thoughtful gifts, there's something special waiting just around the corner.

When you shop local, you're doing more than checking names off your Christmas list. You're supporting families, helping small businesses thrive and keeping our communities strong.

This Christmas, shop small, give from the heart and keep the holiday spirit close to home!

Tis the Season for a vintage Christmas

Come visit us where the Christmas decorations, antiques and vintage collectables are, all year round!

Live Oak Antique Mall
217 W. Howard St., Live Oak
Wed.-Fri. 10am - 3pm

Merry Christmas from Kay's Southern Charm

Celebrate the season with Southern charm! Shop women's clothing, hats, jewelry, accessories, and unique gifts online or in-store.

Kay's Southern Charm
701 US-41, Jasper
Mon.-Fri. 9am - 5pm
Sat. 10am - 4 pm

Have a Holly Jolly, Rootin' Tootin' Christmas!

Thanks for supporting Cactus Creek Boutique all year long! Come get your last minute christmas gifts for the whole family!

Cactus Creel Boutique
1409 Ohio Ave. N, Live Oak
Mon.-Fri. 10am - 6pm
Sat. 10am - 4 pm

All I want for Christmas is a little Selph Care

Unwrap the gift of relaxation this holiday season! From soothing massages to hair services, skincare and spa treatments, we are here to help you look and feel your best!

Selph Care Wellness & Beauty
201 2nd Ave. SE, Jasper
Mon.-Fri. 9am - 5pm
Sat. 10am - 4 pm

the Chamber

2026 Christmas on the Square
Historic Downtown Live Oak, FL



Thursday, December 3
5:00 pm
Ribbon Cutting, Tree Lighting, Jingle Bell Fun/Run Walk, Movie at Millennium Park

Friday, December 4
4:00 pm to 10:00 pm
Annual Art & Crafts Show (Over 300 vendors from across the United States),
Food Vendors, Live Entertainment, Fireworks, Santa Land &
Snow on the Square

Saturday, December 5
8:00 am to 4:00 pm
Annual Art & Crafts Show (Over 300 vendors from across the United States),
Food Vendors, Live Entertainment & More
6:00 pm
Lighted Christmas Parade

www.suwanneechamber.com

SCAN ME

Regional Reads

By Laura Young

The interesting small towns that dot the landscape of Florida's Big Bend have produced a fascinating fusion of people, many of whom channel their experiences and interests into equally fascinating books. In this issue, we're taking notice of a Red Hills memoir, a self-help guide to recapturing a child-like faith and an inspirational romance novel perfect for Christmastime reading. If there's a local author whose recent work you'd like to see noted in a future issue of *The Front Porch* magazine, email emerald@greenepublishing.com.

A Red Hills Life

By Mike Willis
(A to Z Publications, 2026)

Lifelong Jefferson County resident Mike Willis captures the life he has lived entirely within the Red Hills region of North Florida and South Georgia. Readers get a firsthand look into modern-day plantation life – from Willis' fascinating childhood on a quail plantation up to and through his time serving as a plantation manager as his father and grandfather had before him. It offers a behind-the-scenes view into the history, management and many changes and challenges that have faced and are still facing plantation owners and employees alike.



The memoir explores the full fabric of a life rooted in the Red Hills and nurtured by its people. It's a story of hard work as the main tool for achievement, and it illustrates how honesty, trust, loyalty, faith, a little luck and a never-give-up attitude can serve as guides through life's challenges. It offers an insightful look back at how life once was and a glimpse into the possible future of the unique area known as the Red Hills.

Copies are available at Vintage Treasures in Monticello as well as major online booksellers.

Someone from Christmas Past

By Lesa Henderson
(White Rose Publishing, 2025)

Suwannee County native and award-winning author Lesa Henderson's latest novel is *Someone From Christmas Past (Laurel Ridge Book 3)*, a Christian romance set in the Smoky Mountains that weaves together faith, forgiveness, suspense and second chances.

The story follows recently divorced Elise Raines as she returns to Laurel Ridge for a quiet Christmas, only to reconnect with her first love, Jaxson Bleu. As old feelings return, a hidden danger from their past threatens an innocent child, and both must depend on faith and forgiveness to find their way forward.



Henderson said her Suwannee County roots helped shape both her heart and her writing. Her love of reading began in Mrs. Barr's first-grade class at Suwannee Elementary School and grew into a lifelong passion for storytelling. She won her first writing contest at age 10 and earned another prize in seventh grade in a contest sponsored by the *Suwannee Democrat* for Live Oak's Centennial Celebration.

Henderson's most recent release, *Armed & Victorious* (2026), is a 30-day devotional.

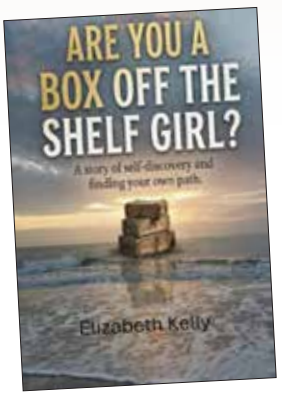
Both books are available through major online booksellers.

Are You a Box Off the Shelf Girl?

By Elizabeth Kelly
(2026)

What if the life you are living is simply a reflection of the thoughts you've been repeating?

For decades, author Elizabeth Kelly carried a unique nickname given to her by her mother: the box off a shelf girl. It was born from a moment of pure, uninterrupted childhood faith – a day when a 6-year-old girl's unspoken birthday wish miraculously tumbled off a store shelf and straight into her mother's shopping cart.



As the years rolled on, life poured concrete over that childhood wonder. Navigating the heavy, exhausting loops of anxiety, self-doubt, a painful divorce and the fierce battles of single parenthood, she realized she had traded her limitless dreams for a survival mindset. She had started protecting herself from disappointment rather than guarding her heart.

In this powerful, scripturally anchored guide, she invites readers to shatter their own mental boundaries and step out of survival mode. Blending raw, vulnerable storytelling with timeless biblical truths, *Are You a Box Off a Shelf Girl?* provides a practical blueprint to breaking cycles of negative thinking, dismantling generational trauma, trampling anxious thoughts through faith and mastering the daily practice of vision boards.

She encourages readers to reconnect with their unpolluted, child-like faith and welcome God's gifts right off the shelf.

Copies are available through various online booksellers.

An Excerpt from

A RED HILLS LIFE

By Mike Willis

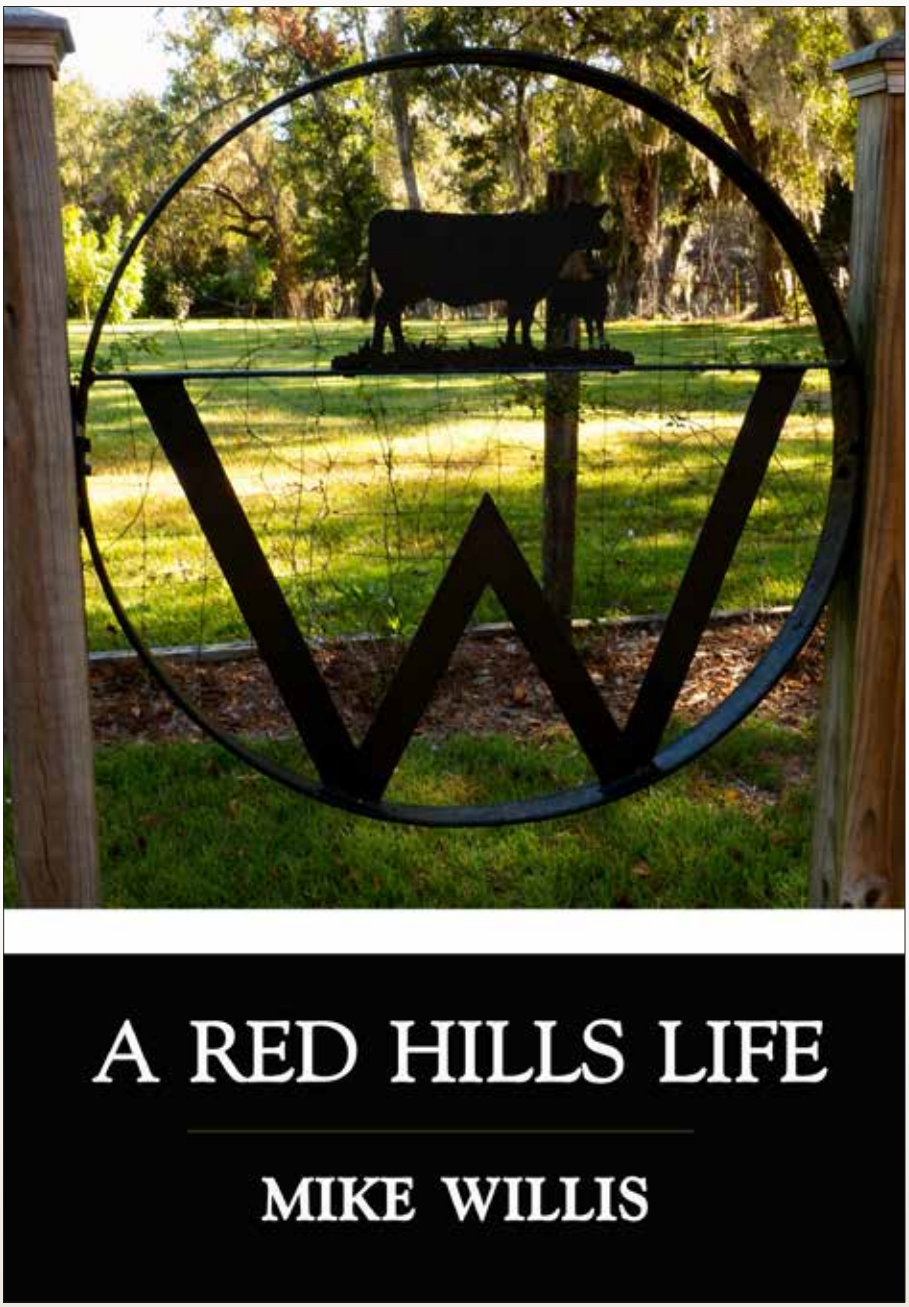
The Red Hills and Its Plantations

The Red Hills region of North Florida and South Georgia is described as the land lying above the Cody Scarp between the Ochlockonee River to the west and the Aucilla River to the east. The area got its name from the fertile, rolling red hills that make up the topography of the area. Within the Red Hills region there are over sixty privately owned quail plantations ranging in size from a few hundred acres up to several thousand acres, making the region one of the largest contiguous privately owned areas in the entire country. Although the region has been made up of plantations for as long as white settlers have occupied it, these plantations were not always dedicated to quail and quail hunting as they are today.

The United States acquisition of Florida coincided with the expansion of the cotton industry in the southern states, and the lands of the old Apalachee Indian region were ideal for the production of cotton. The 1820s saw a rush of settlers into the area, and these newcomers began buying land, clearing forests, farming and building towns. It did not take long before large cotton plantations took over the area between the rivers.

Cotton was definitely the main cash crop, but there were other crops such as rice, sugar cane and corn as well as fruit orchards and extensive gardens that supplied the needs of the plantation owners as well as their slave labor. Most of these plantations had their own blacksmith shops, grist mills for grinding corn, sugar mills for grinding sugar cane, and some even had their own cotton gins. Many of the places also had their own skilled brick masons and carpenters, and a few even had their own shoemakers. It was a common practice to exchange the labor of these skilled craftsman between the plantations and the smaller farm owners in the area. The smaller farmers would pay the owners of the plantations for the services of their skilled craftsmen. The area saw one of its greatest periods of growth and prosperity during the 1850s. The Indian troubles were over, cotton prices were good, and transportation was getting better.

Cotton was in great demand not only in the United States but in Europe as well, and it did literally become King in the South. A lot of farmers growing cotton were able to acquire more and more land, and many became very wealthy due to the crop's profitability. The images in most people's mind during this time in history are ones of large antebellum homes occupied by beautiful southern



belles and mint julep-sipping owners relaxing on their porches shaded by massive magnolia trees while the toilsome fieldwork was being done by slave labor. Such images are more common in the movies than they were in the actual everyday lives of the southern people, but life was pretty good for the wealthy plantation owners and smaller farmers alike. Change is inevitable, however, and the one dark cloud hanging on the horizon was the growing tensions in the country over the slavery issue. The lifestyle of the southern cotton plantations and the South in general was about to be "gone with the wind."

The change started to take place on Dec. 20, 1860, when the South Carolina Convention adopted an Ordinance of Secession. The southern states of Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia and Louisiana (in that order) followed the lead of South Carolina. This was the beginning of the bloodiest four years in American history, and when the fighting ended, over 620,000 Americans were dead. The War Between the States – or, as some called it, the Second American Revolution – divided the country during those four years of fighting, and that division remained for a long time after the fighting ended.

When the war was over, so was the lifestyle of the old Southern cotton plantations. Most of the accumulated wealth of the plantation owners had been spent during the war, leaving many of them penniless and destitute. A lot of them sold off their lands to northern individuals. The ones who were able to hold on to their land did so by renting off portions to tenant farmers or sharecroppers who received their provisions in advance from the landowner, and liens on the growing crops served as security to the landowner. The owners often had to buy these provisions on credit, using their land as collateral. This system usually meant long-term debt for both the farmers and the landowners. With cotton and timber practically worthless, some in the Red Hills region sold their places for pennies on the dollar and moved closer to the area's rivers and lakes so they could hunt and fish in order to provide for their families.



This major change in land use and shift in the population, as drastic as it actually was, began setting the stage for things to come. President Lincoln felt that it was important for the country to reunite as soon as possible, and he had a reconstruction plan that was somewhat favorable towards the South, but after his assassination in 1865, all of that changed. Andrew Johnson was not as sympathetic towards the South. During his reconstruction plan, actual reconstruction was very slow in coming. It took almost ten years for things to begin getting better in some areas of the South, and even longer in others. The people of the Red Hills region had once again turned back to the land for survival, and farming once more became their means of existence. Gone, however, were the large cotton plantations, and replacing them were much smaller farms. One man could farm forty acres with one mule, so the size of the farm was determined in many cases by how many mules a man could afford to own. Around these small farms and fields, hedgerows and fencerows began to take shape, thus establishing a habitat that was ideal for the bobwhite quail, a small game bird that would play a major role in the future of the Red Hills region.

As the South was once again becoming an agricultural society, the North was becoming an even greater industrial society. It was during this time that such people as Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Frank Woolworth, Richard Warren Sears, Alexander Graham Bell, John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie and many others were beginning to make names for themselves with ideas and inventions that would change the world forever. Some of these wealthy industrialists began to travel south during the winter months to escape the cold weather of the north. The fastest means of transportation during the late 1800s was by train. Thomasville, Georgia, was the last town on the rail line that had luxury hotels, so it became

the winter destination for some of these wealthy northern families, especially those from Cleveland and New York. The mild winter climate and the fragrant pines, along with the abundant wildlife and Southern hospitality, made the area quite attractive. With land prices ranging from a few cents to a couple of dollars an acre, some of these wealthy northerners began purchasing large tracts of land around Thomasville. Howard M. Hanna from Cleveland, Ohio, was one of the first of these wealthy industrialists to buy land in the area, and many of his descendants still own properties in the Red Hills today. It was once said that a quail could walk from Jefferson County, Florida, to Thomasville, Georgia, then to Grady County, Georgia, and back down to Leon County, Florida, and never get off of land owned by descendants of the Hanna family. Quail hunting soon became one of the favorite sports in the area, and it wasn't long before Thomasville was known as the quail hunting capitol of the South.

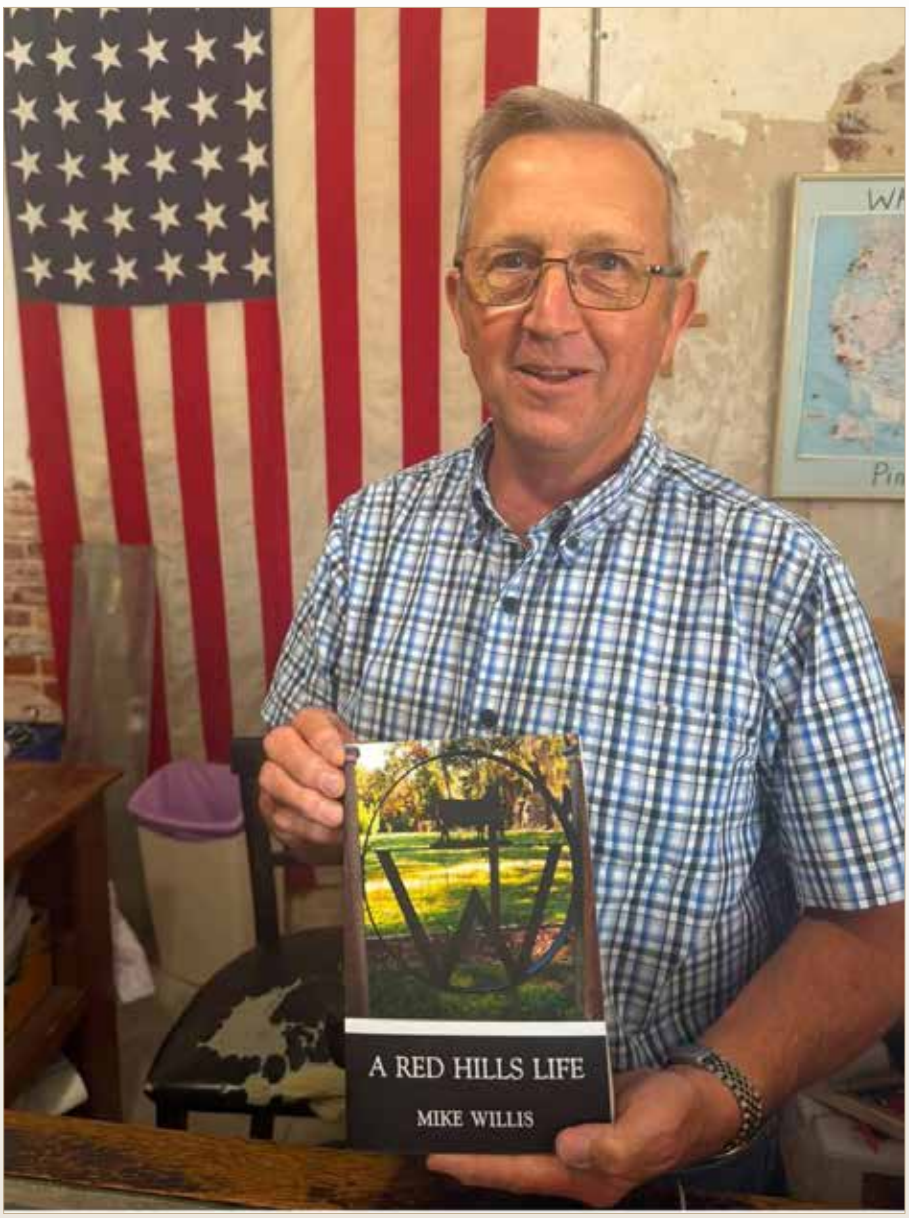
As time went on, these large quail hunting plantations were passed down from one generation to the next. Some were divided among the heirs and run as separate places, and some remained intact and were shared by the heirs.

There were a few occasions when one of the plantations was sold, but on most of these occasions a family member or an adjacent owner would purchase the property. Some of the extremely large plantations such as the Norias Hunt Club in northern Jefferson County (originally owned by Walter C. Teagle, president of Standard Oil) were divided into several plantations, of which many are still in existence today. Although the ownership of the plantations in the Red Hills may have changed from generation to generation, the main reason for the existence of these places has remained the same, and that reason is quail hunting. Whether done the old traditional way with mule-drawn wagons and on horseback or the more modern way of using jeeps, trucks and ATVs, quail hunting is still the number one sport of the plantation community.

The quail plantations of today, just like the cotton plantations of the past, are vital to the economy of the Red Hills region. In 2023 the total economic impact equated to $231.7 million while creating 1,386 jobs producing $77.4 million in personal labor income. The plantations and their owners hosted 10,789 overnight guests in 2023 as well as contributing $15.6 million to local charitable organizations. Besides the economic impact, one of the most important roles the plantations play, however, is keeping and protecting thousands of acres of land in a rural and natural state and providing habitat for the many forms of wildlife native to the area. Today this protection is being enhanced by placing these lands in conservation easements which protect them from the threat of development for perpetuity.

The beauty of the Red Hills region along with the plantations of the area makes this a very unique place, to say the least. Conservation and preservation go hand in hand here, and both are a big part of the local communities. Nowhere else is there more private money spent to protect and preserve the land than here in North Florida and South Georgia. No one can predict what the future holds, but for the sake of the entire Red Hills region, we should only hope that these places remain intact for years to come.

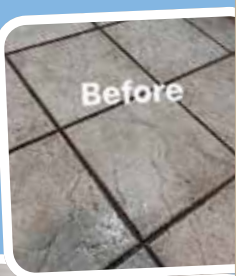
Mike Willis is a sixth generation Floridian and a lifelong resident of Jefferson County. He is a landowner, cattleman, businessman, consultant and retired plantation manager. He serves on the boards of Healthyways, Inc., the Aucilla Research Institute, Citizens for Responsible Government, Jefferson Progress and Preservation Committee and Angel's Rock, an outreach ministry for youth and young adults. He is active in state and local politics with a passion for conservation and protection of agricultural lands and the rural lifestyle. Mike and his wife Pamela live on their farm in northern Jefferson County. They have four sons. ▪



RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL CLEANING

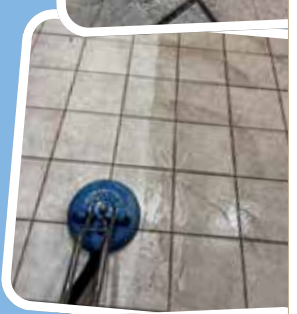


PIONEER JANITORIAL
& CARPET CLEANING
"We Bring the CLEAN"



SPECIALIZING IN:

- Carpet Cleaning
- Tile & Grout Cleaning
- Window Cleaning
- Pressure Washing
- Stone Polishing
- Upholstrey Cleaning
- Floor Refinishing
- Water Damage Restoration & Much More



OUR MISSION:
To make your home or business healthy, clean and beautiful through hard work and family values.



CALL AND SCHEDULE
AN APPOINTMENT TODAY!
(386) 362-3845



SERVING LIVE OAK, LAKE CITY &
SURROUNDING AREAS!

www.pioneerjanitorial.net | pioneerjanitorialservice@gmail.com

HURRICANE PROOF
PRIVACY FENCE!

All clumping plants.

OPEN WED TO SAT 9AM TO 3PM, OR APPOINTMENT



CLEAN WATER

PURE AIR

"Don't wait to plant Bamboo,
Plant Bamboo and wait!"

Founded 2010
Deer Stream Productions LLC

David Harvey
850-841-0459
legendarybrowser@gmail.com

TIMBERBAMBOONURSERY.COM

Poole Realty inc.
Live Oak Branford

TWO OFFICES.
ONE MISSION.
YOUR HOMETOWN REALTOR.

PROUDLY SERVING
NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA

LIVE OAK OFFICE
127 Howard St. East
Live Oak, Florida 32064
386-362-4539
info@pooleralty.com

BRANFORD OFFICE
122 Suwannee Ave. SW
Branford, Florida 32008
386-935-9271
riverside@pooleralty.com

RESIDENTIAL | WATERFRONT | COMMERCIAL
LAND & ACREAGE | PROPERTY MANAGEMENT | NEW CONSTRUCTION

LAFAYETTE STATE BANK

We Have Roots
Where Others Have Branches
Providing Exceptional Service with Trust & Integrity


Tiffany Beville
Branch Manager


Jennifer MacFadden
VP/Residential Loan Officer


Allison Fralick
Commercial Loan Officer


Jacey Gresham
Chief Lending Officer


Sandra Milian
Branch Manager


Gloria Camejo Arroyo
Chief Retail Officer/ISO

Local People, Local Roots, Local Decisions

Specializing in all your commercial and personal banking needs including online banking & bill pay, mobile banking, treasury services, commercial and personal loans, line of credit and more

Proudly Serving Lafayette, Suwannee,Gilchrist and surrounding counties since 1946

Live Oak
386-330-2626
106 Grand St NE Live Oak

LafayetteStateBank.com
Member FDIC

Branford
386-935-6363
103 US-27 Branford

KAILA HARDEE

Overcoming: One Day at a Time





Kaila Hardee's family attended her bell ringing in 2022, which celebrated the conclusion of seven weeks of radiation treatments.

Story by Mickey Starling
Photographs Courtesy of Kaila Hardee

The year 2019 was the beginning of a long and difficult journey for Madison resident Kaila Hardee. In October, she was diagnosed with papillary thyroid cancer. Over the next three years, Hardee endured four surgeries on her neck, with two of them occurring in 2022.

If that wasn't enough, in July of 2022, Hardee received a change in her diagnosis just before her fourth surgery. She now had anaplastic thyroid cancer. Her doctor quickly advised her not to Google information about this aggressive form of cancer. With a response of "I will not be shaken," Hardee researched the cancer, noting quickly that there was only a six-month life expectancy associated with it. She remained unshaken.

Surgery soon followed, along with seven weeks of radiation and weekly chemotherapy. The follow-up scan showed the cancer had metastasized.

As October approached, Hardee remained unshaken, despite no obvious signs of improvement. One night, while praying at the altar of her church, The Collective, in Valdosta, Hardee's pastor offered some divinely inspired encouragement.

"It doesn't matter how you feel. You know the promises of God over your life," said the speaker that evening.

"I jumped up and danced," recalls Hardee. "I knew this came from the Holy Spirit, and I knew I was healed."

Hardee continued with treatments, temporarily moving to Jacksonville in order to be closer to the Mayo Clinic.

"My church family continued to confidently stand with me," remembers Hardee, who maintained a routine of posting and speaking healing scriptures. "This helped me more than the medicine."

More scans were taken in April of 2023, revealing the cancer was shrinking. When the July scan took place, the cancer had continued to shrink. Yet, this battle was far from over. Monitoring continued on a regular basis.

In 2025, new areas of concern appeared, requiring more radiation. With an aggressive cancer like anaplastic thyroid cancer, new mutations can occur quickly.

After her December scan, Hardee was asked if her neck hurt. She responded with a definitive "yes." The doctor said the pain was a result of her neck being broken. It is likely that the extensive chemotherapy treatments weakened her neck. Vertebroplasty surgery took place in January of 2026 to cement the vertebrae in her neck and contain any existing cancer cells.

Soon after, physicians at Mayo Clinic suggested Hardee obtain a second opinion about her treatment through MD Anderson Cancer Center, in Houston, Texas. That visit resulted in some medication changes, one with effects so adverse that Hardee spent eight days in the hospital.

In August, she made the trip back to Houston for a PET scan. After reviewing the results, the doctor was surprised.

"This is not what I expected," said the physician.

The scan was clear. No cancer, again.

Plenty of others shared the surprise expressed by Hardee's doctor, but she wasn't one of them.

"Why are you surprised?" asked Hardee. "I know what I know. There's no other explanation. It's Holy Spirit. We bring the report. We are not waiting on one from the doctor."

Early on, Hardee recognized the need to be surrounded by the right people and environment.

"We needed a community of warriors, not worriers," stated Hardee, who is certain the clean scans are a result of her declarations of the Word of God.

"Christ is the only 'C' word in our home," says Hardee. "We leave pity and fear at the foot of the cross."

Hardee continues to take daily chemotherapy pills and regular immunotherapy treatments, but she is quick to tell you her story isn't about cancer.

"It's about what God can do and how good He's been to me," says Hardee.

She also credits the community for giving her family outstanding support.

"I'm so grateful for it," Hardee said.

Throughout this difficult journey, she has never seen herself as a victim.

"Everybody has a 'cancer' they are dealing with, and we all have access to the same solution," says Hardee. "This story isn't over yet." ▪



We *Love* to see our trash cans around town



Pop's Sanitation, LLC is a family-owned, local business that provides residential and commercial trash pick-up for your home or business.





Where our *family* takes care of *Yours*

Churches
Sign up and get one 96-gallon FREE weekly pick up

First Responders, Law Enforcement, Dispatchers, Military and Nurses
Sign up and get 1 month FREE

PROPERTY OF
POP'S
SANITATION SERVICES, LLC
1-855-563-9400

Providing residential trash pick-up for all of Madison, Jefferson, Taylor, Suwannee, Hamilton, and Lafayette Counties

(855) 563-9400
www.popssanitation.com


GLOVES
ARE OFF!
LET'S DIG
• Mowing
• Site Prep
• Driveways
• Land Clearing
• Fill Dirt
• Rock
• Mobile Home Pads
• House Pads
Locally owned and operated
PIONEER
PAUL KINSLEY'S LEGACY
EXCAVATING & TRACTOR SERVICES
Cheltsie Holbrook
Owner
www.pioneerexcavating.org •(850) 464-1230

CHRISMILL HOMES
FLORIDA

BUILD WHAT MATTERS

LEGENDARY CUSTOM HOMES
SERVING NORTH FL & SOUTH GA
CHANGE IS COMING!

North Florida Custom Home Building & Design







Over 50 Floor Plans to choose from!

In-House Draftsman for Custom Plans

Build On Your Land, or Ours!

WHERE DO WE BUILD?



REFERRAL PROGRAM

Each time you send a friend/family member to build with us, we pay $500!



COMING SOON

MAGNOLIA RIDGE
28 lots in Madison!

Summerwood Estates of Pinetta
lots, homes & building packages available!

www.cmhflorida.com 229-212-1100 354 Enterprise Dr, Valdosta, GA 31601



Family-owned means a little more around here.

It means working side by side, teaching the next generation, and taking pride in every job that carries our name.

At Asphalt Management Group, we're not just building roads, driveways, and parking lots—we're building something our family can be proud to pass down. Hard work, family values, and quality craftsmanship are at the heart of everything we do.

Family owned. Florida grown. Built to last.

The Kline Family: BRINGING HOLIDAY CHEER TO HAMILTON COUNTY



Story and Photography by Rick Patrick

Before one even sees the first Christmas decoration, one can feel the warmth and welcoming spirit alive in the old "Tuten House," in Jasper. The current owners of the house, Jackie and Arletta Kline, have worked hard to restore the house, which originally dates back to the 1860s, according to Jackie, from his best information. An addition was made to the house in the 1920s.

The Klines moved to Jasper from Naples, Florida, where Jackie had a career as a law enforcement officer and Arletta worked for an optometrist. Seeking a more rural, small town atmosphere, they began looking for a location in North Florida.

"We were looking at maybe Live Oak or Lake City," said Jackie, who is also a skilled carpenter. "We knew we wanted an old, two-story farmhouse with a wrap-around porch. We also wanted something that we could fix up, hopefully with a barn."

At this point, Arletta chimed in with, "A creek would be nice."

Soon, the real estate agent with whom the Klines were working made a call informing them the Tuten House was going on the market and they had to move quickly. As it turned out, the house checked off every item on the Kline's "wish list," including the nearby creek.

"As soon as we pulled into the driveway, we knew this would be the one," said Jackie.

The Klines began the arduous task of fixing and repairing the house to their liking, including major work in the kitchen and dining area, as well as replacing many of the walls with new sheetrock. The project took 12 years, one weekend at a time. The effort the Klines have put into the house reflects their love of tradition, while bringing in modern amenities.

The "old" feeling of the house easily lends itself to Christmas decorations,

which can be found throughout the house at this time of year. Arletta admits her decorating for the holidays started small and soon began to grow. She takes great joy in decorating many of the rooms with their own theme.

The Music Room in particular is decorated with various musical decorations, such as Santa playing a saxophone. The room reflects Arletta's love of music. She plays piano, guitar and dulcimer, as well as sings. For many years, she performed with two other women singing hits from the 1950s. Arletta continues to perform for many retirement homes and lends her musical talents at First Baptist Church, in Jasper. The Music Room is also the scene of many joyous evenings of gathering around the piano and lifting voices to sing Christmas carols and many holiday favorites.

"I think that's probably my favorite," adds Jackie, "when everyone gathers and sings. People don't do that very much any more."

Each year, the Klines host a Christmas party for their Sunday School class, which can include upwards of 30 guests.

Another themed room has red, white and blue patriotic trimmings, nutcrackers and much more. One bathroom features Santa relaxing in a bathtub, complete with "bubbles" that resemble Christmas tree ornaments. Yet another room sports decorations reflecting the popular holiday film, *A Christmas Story*, about a youngster who only wants a B-B gun for Christmas, despite warnings that "you'll shoot your eye out."

The festive decorations around the Kline household reflect their love of celebrating the holiday season. This extends to fun traditions within the family. This includes friendly competition for the K-Cup Trophy. The K-Cup is a prized possession which can be earned only through stiff competition in games such as corn hole and other contests. While the Klines have usually traveled to South Florida for Christmas, they are looking forward to having family come to Jasper this year. Arletta has promised to assure the two small great-grandchildren that Santa will be aware of their location.

Jackie and Arletta enjoy traveling and visiting thrift store and antique shops. These have served as a source for many of the holiday decorations Arletta uses today. This time of year, of course, they enjoy entertaining friends and family in their warm and inviting home. For the Klines, the Christmas spirit is alive and active well before December and lingers long after the New Year. ▪





After a long night of riding in his sleigh and delivering toys, Santa likes to relax in a nice bubble bath. [Arletta Kline/Courtesy]



The Music Room is a favorite spot during holiday gatherings at the home of Jackie and Arletta Kline.



Jackie (left) and Arletta (right) Kline use their Christmas spirit to transform the home into a warm, welcoming holiday haven.

We Promise to Always Do What Is Best For Our Clients.

ACCURATE HEALTH PLANS

Insurance Needs for Individuals, Families & Seniors
AREA AGENT: Anita Starling | AccurateHealthPlans.com
386-339-1995 | Email: *anita@accuratehealthplans.com*

Top Medicare Advantage Companies You Might Recognize

- Freedom / Optimum
- Cigna HealthSpring
- United Health Care
- WellCare
- Humana
- Anthem
- Cigna
- Aetna



Accurate Health Plans is your one-stop-shop for getting Health and Medicare insurance. Affordable Care; Short-Term Medical. *Helping Individuals and Families Find the Most Affordable and Comprehensive Healthcare & Medicare Plans.*

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT TODAY!

106 Howard Street East | Live Oak, Florida 32064

NFAAT CLOSE Local

NORTH FLORIDA ABSTRACT & TITLE

LEARN MORE

If you're buying, selling, building, or refinancing in Florida, **we can help:**

- Experience small town service
- Personal service available 24/7
- Flexible closing locations and times
- For sale by owner assitance
- Smooth and uncomplicated process



850.294.1307 | leslie@NFAAT.com | NFAAT.com

North Florida Abstract & Title
710 N. Jefferson St, Monticello, FL 32344

Leslie Wilkinson
Owner

Buying or Selling in North Florida?

CONTACT CHELSEA MORGAN FOR LOCAL EXPERTISE, GENUINE RELATIONSHIPS, REAL RESULTS.



OAKFEATHER REALTY | THE CHELSEA GROUP

(386) 209-2634
realtorcmorgan@gmail.com
TheChelseaGroupFl.com

SUWANNEE GOP
REPUBLICAN PARTY OF SUWANNEE COUNTY

Update registration • Register to vote
Public Invited • Become Engaged

www.florida.gop/Suwannee
Suwannee County Republican Party
meets at 7 p.m. every first Thursday of each month at Live Oak City Hall.

Suwannee County Republican Party

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK ★ FAITH • FAMILY • FREEDOM

REGISTER TO VOTE! **REGISTER TO VOTE REPUBLICAN TODAY!**

Stand with President Trump and our Republican Team

Register to Vote online at
www.Florida.GOP/Register

FLORIDAGOP

Scan to Register Right Now

Congratulations to all of our
REPUBLICAN WINNERS
in the November Election.

Heritage Oaks
RV RESORT

MAKING MEMORIES ONE CAMPSITE AT A TIME



RELAX • RECONNECT • ENJOY RESORT-STYLE CAMPING
IN WELLBORN, FLORIDA


RESORT-STYLE POOL



HERITAGE PATIO

RESORT AMENITIES

- Resort-Style Pool
- Heritage Bar
- Relaxation Room (Massage Services)
- Clubhouse & Game Room
- 24/7 Laundry Pavilion
- 24/7 Bath Pavilion
- Playground
- Basketball Court
- Pickleball Court
- Beach Volleyball
- Fenced Dog Park

CAMPSITES MADE FOR COMFORT

- Full Hook-Up Sites (Water & Sewer)
- 30/50 Amp Service
- Concrete Paved Sites
- Pull-Through & Back-In Sites
- Spacious Sites
- Pet Friendly

COME FOR THE CAMPING. STAY FOR THE MEMORIES.

Whether you're looking for a weekend getaway, a place to relax with the family, or a fun place to meet fellow campers, Heritage Oaks gives you plenty to enjoy without leaving the resort.



Heritage Oaks
RV RESORT

7623 31st Road
Wellborn, FL 32094
386-385-7677

RV LIFE • GOOD FRIENDS • GREAT MEMORIES



YOUR LAND, MY CANVAS

ROX & ROLLS
Land Services LLC

Let us help you turn your dreams into a reality today!

OUR SERVICES

- Site Prep
- Land Clearing
- Driveways
- House/Mobile Home Pad
- Water Drainage
- Ponds
- Mowing
- Storm Clean Up
- Material Hauling





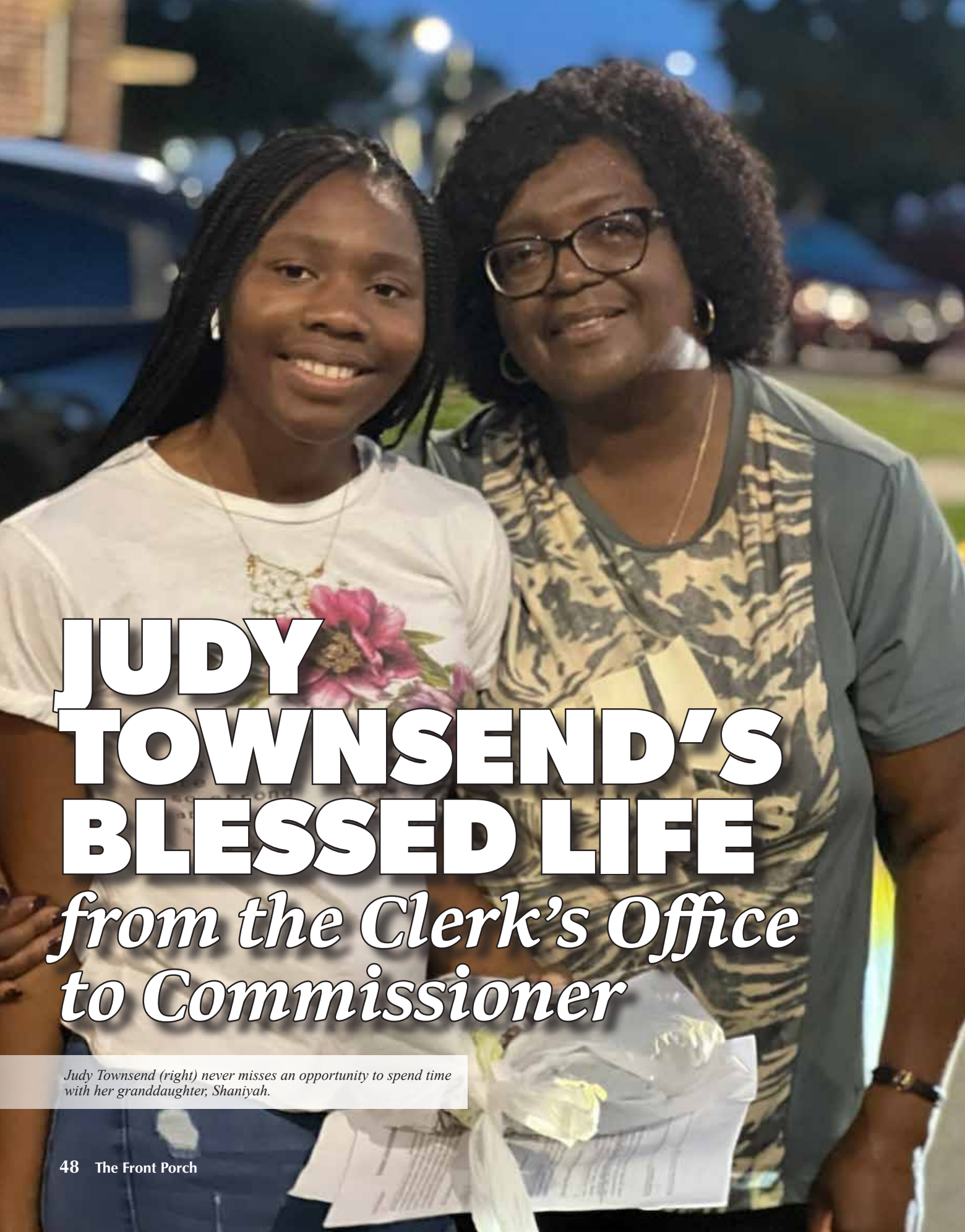




CONTACT US

(850) 464-0345

JAMES & AMBER HUTCHINGS
OWNERS



JUDY TOWNSEND'S BLESSED LIFE

from the Clerk's Office to Commissioner

Judy Townsend (right) never misses an opportunity to spend time with her granddaughter, Shaniyah.

Story by Mickey Starling
Photographs Courtesy of Judy Townsend

Judy Townsend is a Madison native in the truest sense of the word, having been born at home. Though she is one of seven siblings, she is the only one to be born at home.

Townsend graduated from Madison High School in 1977 and soon after was married. She spent more than four years working in the Madison County School District, first at Madison Primary School, then at Lee Elementary School and finally at the Madison County School Board.

In 1984, Townsend began her career at the Madison County Clerk of Court's office, serving with Clerks Alfred Welch, Tim Sanders and Billy Washington. Townsend retired in 2021.

In the 1980s, Townsend began a lengthy tenure of service on the Madison City Commission, as she was asked to replace the retiring Clarence Ganzy.

"At first, I thought, 'I don't really like people, but I will give it a try,'" remembers Townsend.

Dealing with people obviously grew on her, as she served as a commissioner for 30 years, four of them as mayor. After so many years of service on the Commission, Townsend became well known for her business-like approach to the job.

"You just got to do your job, not make friends," said Townsend. "You can't pick favorites. Just follow the law."

When people occasionally frustrated Townsend with their actions, she drew from her mother's words of wisdom: "They would do better if they knew better. Not everyone was raised like you."

It isn't the difficult days that Townsend recalls most. She is most proud of several accomplishments while on the Commission.

"I am proud that we got funding for repaving Horry Street and County Camp Road," said Townsend.

She was also instrumental in helping Madison's police officers get raises well before they were mandated by the state.

Townsend concluded her time in office in March of 2026, and she is proud of her service.

"I wouldn't change a thing," said Townsend.

Now, she focuses her work on her garden, where she grows numerous vegetables and happily shares them with family and neighbors. When the garden is quiet, Townsend enjoys attending church and spending time with her grandchildren, even if that requires traveling to Mississippi to attend a rededication service. She has been an active member of New Mt. Zion Baptist Church, in Clyattville, Georgia, for 10 years, where she currently serves on the culinary staff. Cooking large meals is enjoyable to Townsend, who has her family over for Sunday dinner each week.

For Townsend, her blessings seem to come in fours. She had four children, four grandchildren and four godchildren. Townsend enjoys spending time with them all, though she is amazed at how fast time passes.

"I used to rattle my keys to let the kids know it was time for a ride," recalls Townsend. "Now, they rattle their keys for me."

The future holds an impressive bucket list for Townsend, who loves to travel. Her family takes yearly cruises, which they plan to continue. She also looks forward to picking apples in Washington, enjoying a delicious pineapple in Hawaii and visiting Africa. An RV trip around the U.S. is planned before too long.

Townsend feels incredibly blessed to be enjoying good health after two serious illnesses. She thought gallbladder issues were her biggest concern when stomach cancer was discovered in 2011. Townsend continued working, despite being in immense pain. Surgeons noted that her type of cancer is normally diagnosed during an autopsy. She is fortunate that the cancer was contained and then removed without the need for chemotherapy or radiation.

Four years later, Townsend had a ruptured appendix. Again, she continued working through much pain before the issue was diagnosed two weeks later. Such ruptures normally require emergency surgery, but the fluids in Townsend's appendix pooled in one area, never moving. Doctors believe that her daily intake of apple cider vinegar prevented the dangerous fluids from spreading.

"All I can say is God is good," stated Townsend. "I've done a lot, but now I like to stay out of the way, enjoy some crocheting and watch some of my favorite westerns." ▪



Mayor Judy Townsend introduces Town Manager Stanford Amos during the Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration held in January of this year.



Judy Townsend (right) is pictured with Congressman Al Lawson during an event held in Madison.

FEEL BETTER. MOVE BETTER. LIVE BETTER.

Don't Let Pain
Send You Off Course



Choose safe, all-natural chiropractic care for drug-free pain relief and injury prevention.

Now offering Shockwave Therapy

Shockwave Therapy helps with tennis & golf elbow, platar fascitis & rotator cuff tendinopathy.

Call or book your appointment online today!
***VA Insurance excepted ***

North Florida
Chiropractic Center
Dr. Michael Wood, D.C.

(386) 362-2022
www.northflorida-chiro.com
328 W Howard St., Live Oak, Fla. 32064



Madison Plumbing
Matthew Browning, Owner
Certified Plumbing Contractor
Commercial and Residential
Lic #CFC1429684



- *Trenching Work*
- *Plumbing Repairs*
- *New Construction*
- *Drain Cleaning*

(850) 973-6895 • 413 SW Range Ave., Madison, Fla. 32340



PLAN TODAY. PROTECT TOMORROW.

Helping families across North Florida plan ahead and navigate life's important moments.

Estate Planning & Probate Services in North Florida

RICKERSON LEGAL

SHEENA RICKERSON, ATTORNEY AT LAW

ESTATE PLANNING
Wills, Trusts, Power of Attorney, Healthcare Directives & more.

PROBATE ADMINISTRATION
Guiding families through the probate process with compassion and clarity.

SCHEDULE YOUR CONSULTATION
(386) 269-0440
rickersonlegal.com

Proudly serving
Jasper • Live Oak • Lake City • Madison and surrounding Communities



Residential & Commercial
Service & Installation
Licensed & Insured
EC0001647

David**Lutz**
Master Electrician
(850) 404-4529
dave@lutzelectricservice.com

LUTZ ELECTRIC SERVICE, Inc.



Nammo

SECURING THE FUTURE

www.nammo.com

FUELING OUR LOCAL HOMETOWN RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES AND FARMS

COOKSEY PROPANE

CALL US TODAY
850-363-1756

We're more than just a propane company — we're your neighbors. Our team is made up of local professionals who take pride in providing reliable service, honest advice, and friendly support to our community. From the office to the field, every member of our team is committed to keeping your home and business comfortable and safe year-round.

Owners Stewart & Kim Cooksey



Scan here to sign up for our services

Reliable Delivery • Competitive Pricing • Residential & Commercial

Locally Owned & Operated

www.CookseyPropane.com

Gulf Coast Lumber
& Supply, Inc

Locally Owned & Operated for Over 45 Years!



Crawfordville
3361 Crawfordville Hwy
Crawfordville, FL 32327
(850) 926-5559
gulfcoastlumber@gmail.com
M-F 7 am-6 pm • SAT 7:30 am-5 pm

Monticello
1400 S. Jefferson Street
Monticello, FL 32344
(850) 997-2519
gulfcoastlumbermonticello@gmail.com
M-F 7 am-6 pm • SAT: 7 am-5 pm

Woodville
9141 Woodville Hwy
Woodville, FL 32362
(850) 421-5295
gulfcoastlumber@hotmail.com
M-F 6 am-6 pm • SAT 6 am-5 pm

Stay Informed... Print or Digital

Bringing Local News *Home*



Subscribe Now!

Madison County Carrier
(850) 973-4141

Monticello News
(850) 997-3568

Riverbend News
(386) 364-4141

The Front Porch
(850) 973-4141

Blinds • Shades • Shutters • Drapes • Home Automation

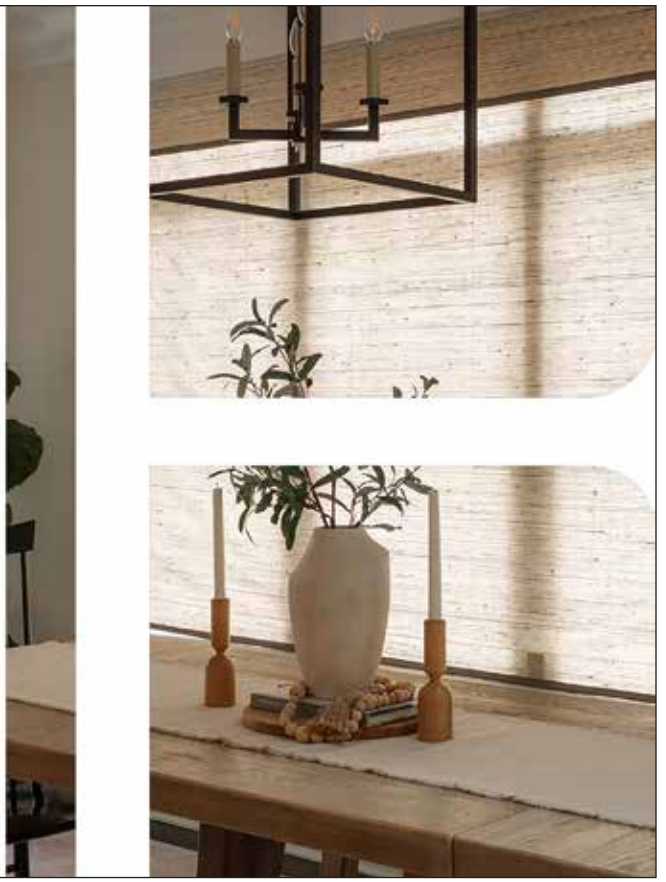
BUDGET BLINDS

Style and service for every budget.®

Style that Warms *Every Room*

Make every room feel warmer and more inviting this season with custom window treatments designed for comfort, style, and energy efficiency. From insulating shades and layered looks to convenient motorization, Budget Blinds helps you create a home that feels cozy throughout the season.

Call for a free consultation
(850) 668-4835



©2026 Budget Blinds, LLC. All Rights Reserved. Budget Blinds is a trademark of Budget Blinds, LLC and a Home Franchise Concepts Brand. Each franchise independently owned and operated.

PRUITT'S
Well & Pump LLC

Residential – Commercial – Agricultural

- New Installation
- Maintenance
- Repair/Service

Let Pruitt Do It!

www.pruittswellandpump.com





Steven Danaher posed with his gold medal following his 3-0 win in the championship. / Photograph Courtesy of Fight Fitness618

STRIKING GOLD

Branford's Danaher Claims International Kickboxing Title

Story by Danny Federico

The Brazilian team did not enter quietly.

As teams filed into the opening ceremony of the World Association of Kickboxing Organizations (WAKO) Pan American Kickboxing Championships, held Wednesday, Aug. 12, through Sunday, Aug. 16, in Olmué, Chile, the Brazilian delegation arrived roaring and chanting. Sitting among Team USA was Branford native Steven Danaher, who knew his first fight of the tournament would be against one of their own.

But the noise didn't intimidate him. Rather, it energized him.

"I knew our fight was gonna be epic," Danaher recalled.

Three fights and three days later, the noise surrounding Danaher sounded a little different.

This time, they were chants of "U.S.A." as he stood, wrapped in an American flag, as a Pan American champion.

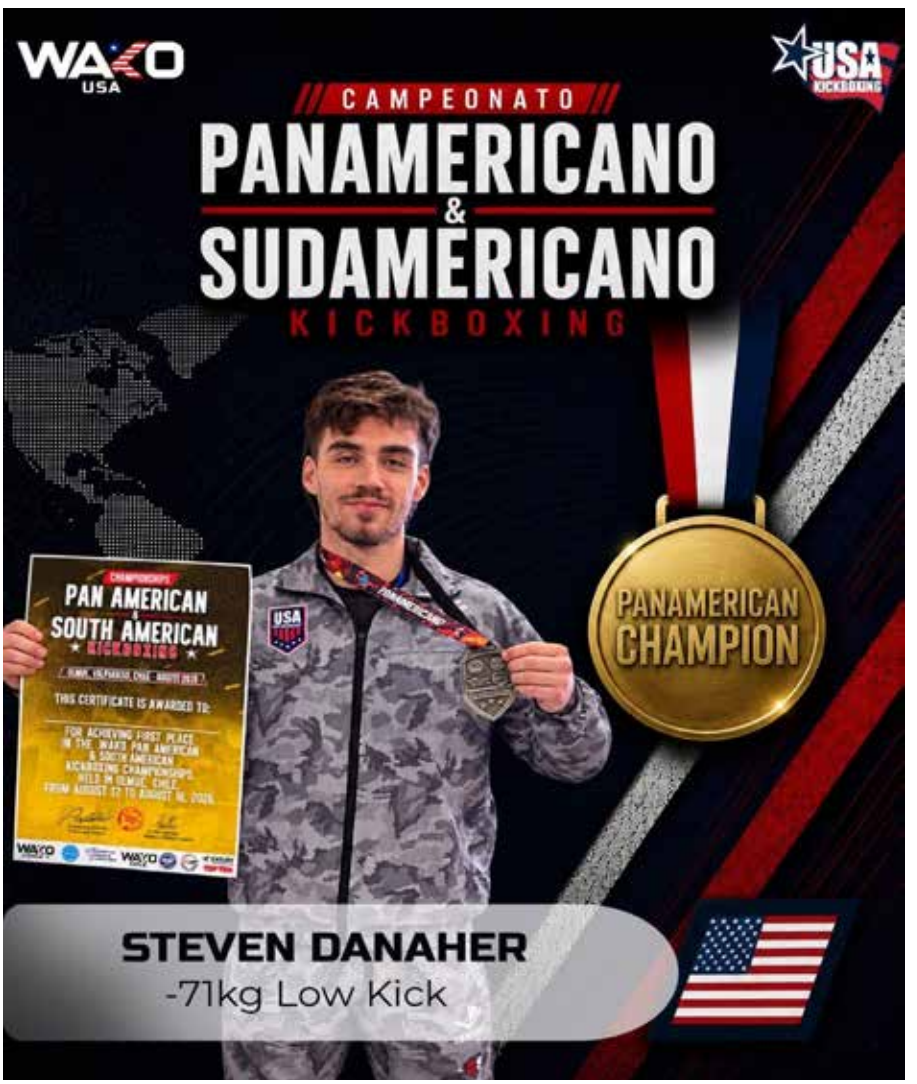
Danaher captured gold in the 71-kilogram Low Kick division, defeating two fighters from Brazil and one from Chile.

"I feel everyone I faced in those three days of fights were worthy challengers," Danaher said. "They all had strong heart and toughness."

Each presented a different challenge. But waiting in the final was the man Danaher considered the best fighter he faced: a tough, experienced Brazilian who, according to Danaher, had knocked out his first two opponents in the first round.

Yet, when Danaher stepped toward the biggest fight of his career, he did not feel overwhelmed. Instead, he felt "free."

"I put in so much work to get to this point," Danaher said. "I felt free to go



Branford native Steven Danaher captured gold in the 71-kilogram Low Kick division of the WAKO Pan American Kickboxing Championship, defeating two fighters from Brazil and one from Chile. / Photograph Courtesy of WAKO USA Kickboxing



Steven Danaher celebrates with members of his team following a match at the WAKO Pan American Kickboxing Championships in Chile. / Photograph Courtesy of Fight Fitness618

out there and perform to the best of my ability. I was ready."

Sensei Shane Walker had formulated the game plan. Danaher's job was to execute it.

Walker had long told him that medals are won in training and collected at competition. In the final, Danaher said years of preparation came together as he delivered his most dominant performance of the tournament.

"I knew this was my moment from the start," he said.

Even after his strongest performance, Danaher credited his opponent with helping him grow as a fighter.

"He was skilled and has a champion's heart," Danaher said of his final opponent. "I respect him. I definitely became a better fighter after facing him."

Then came the flag and the chants. His family, teammates and those closest to him celebrated around him.

"The moment was epic," Danaher



Steven Danaher stood with Sensei Shane Walker for a photo after the award ceremony in Olmué, Chile. / Photograph Courtesy of Fight Fitness618



Steven Danaher and Sensei Shane Walker celebrated following the championship match. / Photograph Courtesy of Steven Danaher



Steven Danaher stood over his opponent during a match at the WAKO Pan American Kickboxing Championships in Olmué, Chile. / Photograph Courtesy of Steven Danaher

said. “I was grateful for the moment.”

On the podium, the accomplishment had begun to settle in, leaving him able to enjoy the celebration.

“It was amazing,” Danaher said. “At that point I’d already settled in, so I really just enjoyed the moment and soaked it all in.”

It was a moment four years in the making.

Danaher’s path to international gold began far from the Pan American stage. In August 2022, he walked into Fight Fitness 618 in Marion, Illinois, for a cardio kickboxing class. Walker eventually convinced him to try sparring, and Danaher entered his first point competition that November.

From there came tournament after tournament, lesson after lesson. Danaher progressed through WAKO’s novice, intermediate and advanced levels, winning three national championships and eventually earning a place on Team USA.

“Just experience and growth,” Danaher said of his progression. “I’m a completely different person now than I was when I began. Constantly evolving, as things should be.”

His ambition took hold early.

“Immediately, I knew I wanted to set out and see how good I can become,” he said. “The vision is the same. The goal posts just get higher and higher.”

But Danaher does not point to one victory as the reason he reached Chile.

“It wasn’t one moment, rather an accumulation of doing the right things, learning from mistakes, staying the course and always seeking growth and improvement that got me to this point,” he said.

He likens the journey to a seed planted four years ago inside Walker’s dojo. The championship, he said, is the result of years spent watering and nourishing it. Those years demanded sacrifice.

“Either you sacrifice for your goals or your goals become the sacrifice,” Danaher said.

They also required help. Danaher credited Walker and training partner Damon Danaher, as well as the family members, friends, businesses and supporters who helped make his trip possible.

“It takes a strong team to be successful, and they are crucial members of my mastermind team,” Danaher said of Walker and Damon.

The support also made it easier for him to concentrate on preparing for the tournament.

“It makes it much easier to just focus on the work and training,” he said. “I am super grateful for all the support!”

And after all that work, Danaher finally has his Pan American gold. He has little interest in resting on it.

“I’m never 100% satisfied,” he said. “I’m far from complacent.”

His attention has already turned toward returning to training and finding ways to improve.

“The thing I’m most excited for is to get back to the gym, back to the lab to work on myself and improve,” he said.

The medal has been won. The moment has passed. But for Danaher, more work is already waiting.

“It is done and gone. It’s history now,” he said. “It’s in the books, but the story continues. There is much more to be written.”

To keep up with Danaher’s kickboxing journey, follow his Suwannee Strikers page on Facebook. ▪



Steven Danaher landed a knee against his Brazilian opponent during the championship match. / Photograph Courtesy of Steven Danaher.



Steven Danaher was filled with excitement during the championship’s opening ceremony. / Photograph Courtesy of Fight Fitness618



Stay & Play

at Madison RV & Golf Resort, which features access to world-class golfing, top-notch amenities, close proximity to area attractions and much more.

MADISON
RV & GOLF RESORT

- 95 spacious RV sites that are big rig friendly with back-in, pull-through and waterfront options.
- Pet friendly, so bring your pups to our dog park for a run!
- All lots are spacious, 80' long x 37' wide, with beautiful landscaping for privacy.
- All monthly stays can upgrade to our Monthly Golf Package to receive a golf cart and 20 rounds of golf a month at Madison Country Club!!

445 SW Country Club Rd. ◊ Madison, Fl. 32340
(850) 688 ◊ 0363
www.madisonrvresort.com

May your Christmas

be filled with the love of family,
the joy of friendship and the warmth of treasured memories.



Merry Christmas

BRYNWOOD
HEALTH AND REHABILITATION

OUR PROMISE

We are dedicated to providing exceptional skilled and long term care which meets the highest standards in the field.
Brynwood Health & Rehabilitation Center cultivates an atmosphere that is welcoming, inviting, wholesome, and community-centered.

1656 S Jefferson St • Monticello, FL 32344
P 850.997.1800 • F 850.997.7269
E info.ocbr@brynwoodhrc.com • brynwoodhrc.com



Create a tribute as unique as the life you're remembering.

Funeral Directors
Steve Green,
Tommy Murrow,
Rusty Newsome,
Mark Kalinowski,
Joe Rodgers, and
Jaclyn Mulvaney

Joe P. Burns Funeral Home
of Madison
323 SE Lakeshore Dr., Madison, Fla. 32340
(850) 973-1337

Joe P. Burns Funeral Home
of Perry
1400 N Johnson Stripling Rd., Perry, Fla. 32347
(850) 584-4149

Joe P. Burns Funeral Home
of Mayo
440 SW Monroe Ave., Mayo, Fla. 32066
(386) 294-2658

www.joepburnsfuneralhomes.com

RESET.
RESTART.
REACH
YOUR GOALS.

WOOD'S FAMILY FITNESS



- Free weights
- Weight machines
- Cardio Equipment
- Group fitness classes
- 24-hour access
- Day passes
- Certified Personal Trainer

**additional to membership fees.*





Multiple membership packages available
JOIN TODAY!
Call or come by for more details

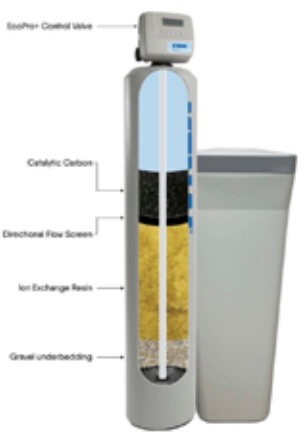
1397 Ohio Ave., N., Live Oak, Fla. 32064 | (386) 330-0363
woodsfamilyfitness@gmail.com

Waterboy
FLORIDA
Home Water Treatment

Locally owned & operated in Lee, Fla.

Whole Home System
Water Softener & Catalytic Carbon Filter

$2,995



- Soft, clean & healthy quality drinking water from every faucet
- Great tasting, clear water
- Spot-free dishes & shower glass
- Chemical-free drinking water
- Reduce high level of contaminants, minerals & heavy metals, 20-30 microns & larger
- Soft skin, hair & clothes
- Longer life for water appliances
- Eliminate hard calcium & magnesium buildup on fixtures
- Eliminate harmful PFAs & plastics
- Pesticide & herbicide-free water
- Manufactured in the USA & Warrantied by the leading National Supplier of Water Systems for over 40 years
- ***Free water testing & analysis***

850-464-1755
WaterboyFL.com

Full Hook-Ups • 90′ Pull-Thrus • Wifi • Heated Pool • Propane • Cabins



KOA HOLIDAY

BASECAMP FOR THE GREAT Outdoors

Perry KOA

A great place whether you're vacationing, working, hunting, kayaking the Gulf, fishing or just want to enjoy peace and quiet while you explore Florida's Big Bend!

3641 S. Byron Butler Pkwy., Perry, FL. • 850-584-3221 • perry@koa.com

www.koa.com/campgrounds/perry/





"Community Minded, Just Like You"

Loan officers available until 8 p.m.

-- Apply Online --

424 W. Base St.
Madison, Fla. 32340
(850) 973-2600

1825 S. Jefferson St.
Perry, Fla. 32348
(850) 223-7100

3003 Mahan Dr.
Tallahassee, Fla. 32308
(850) 223-7100

www.mybcfcu.com

Trademark Homes Center



New / Used
Land • Home

- 2027 Model Homes Arriving Weekly!
- In-house, on-the-spot financing, No Minimum Credit Score Required and ZERO down for qualified buyers. All credit situations considered.
- Top dollar paid for your Trade-in, regardless of age or condition.

-OPEN HOUSE DAILY-

Custom build your home online at www.TrademarkHomesCenter.com

At Trademark Homes...you have friends with LOW PRICES

1700 S. Jefferson St., Monticello, FL
(850) 459-4864 - call anytime


Clear Cut Tractor
& Equipment Services LLC
SITE PREP
LAND CLEARING
DRAINAGE
GRADING & MORE!
RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL
FAMILY OWNED AND OPERATED
NORTH FL • SOUTH GA
850-973-7680
"Turning Your Dirt Into Dreams"


THE MAGIC OF CHRISTMAS EVE NIGHT
Dr. MM
CHRISTMAS CHAINS
By Dr.mm
MEET LOCAL AUTHOR
Mary Santerfeit
PEN NAME
Dr. MM
THE STORIES JUST KEEP COMING!
Give the gift of reading this Christmas holiday!
A DOG NAMED COW
Butter the Butterfly
GRACIE'S BEAUTIFUL LILIES
Dr. MM is a local author and her books are available on Amazon.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

November 5

Taste of Suwannee
Sample local food and drinks while supporting education, 6-8:30 p.m. at the Suwannee County Coliseum (1302 11th St. S.W., Live Oak). Proceeds benefit the Suwannee Education Foundation, helping provide resources, grants and opportunities for local students and educators. Tickets are $30. For more information, contact Kelly Pennington at 386-208-2124 or email suwanneefoundation@gmail.com.

November 7



Wild Florida Trail Run
Run Bum Races presents the Wild Florida Trail Run, featuring scenic trails along the Suwannee River and races finishing at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park in White Springs. The 50K begins at 6:45 a.m., the 25K at 8:15 a.m. and the 10K at 9 a.m. Optional shuttles are available for the point-to-point 50K and 25K races at an additional cost. A portion of the proceeds benefits the Florida Trail Association. Registration closes Friday, Nov. 6, at 11:59 p.m. For registration and complete race details, visit www.runbumtours.com.



Jefferson County Vendor's Village
This First Saturday event featuring local farmers, makers, bakers and more takes place 9 a.m.-12 p.m. in the parking lot of the Jefferson County Courthouse (123 E. Washington St., Monticello).

Harvest in the Heart of Jasper
Celebrate fall at the first annual Harvest in the Heart of Jasper Fall Festival and Pumpkin Patch (Central Avenue/Florida Branch Railroad Trail), 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Enjoy pumpkins, games, a soda toss and a special storytime with Mayor Jhelecia Hawkins. Free hot dogs and drinks will also be available. Admission is free. For vendor or sponsorship information, call Kay Turner at 229-437-0518.

Wellborn Cornbread Festival
Enjoy arts and crafts, live music, children's activities, food vendors, a car show and cornhole at Andrew's Square (1340 8th Ave., Wellborn), hosted by the Wellborn Community Association. A blueberry pancake breakfast will be available for purchase, and visitors can sample entries in the cornbread and chili cook-off for a small fee. Festival admission is free.

Community Festival Chili Cook-Off
Sample chili from 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m. at the Suwannee River Greenway (502 S.W. Suwannee Ave., Branford), hosted by the Rotary Club of Branford. Awards will be presented at 2:15 p.m. Throughout the event, enjoy live music, activities for children and vendors offering crafts, baked goods, candles and more. The event supports local youth and community programs. For more information, call 321-278-6514 or email cflowers0101@gmail.com.

November 11



Veterans Day in Madison
The Madison County community will come together to recognize and honor the men and women have worn the uniform and have served the country. The parade begins at 11 a.m. and will make its way along U.S. Hwy 90 from behind O'Neal's Buffet to downtown Madison. Vendors of all kinds will be set up at Four Freedoms Park until 6 p.m. For more information, contact Kaysona Jones at 850-464-8456.

Veterans Day Breakfast – Monticello
Hosted by Otto M. Walker American Legion Post #49 (1065 S. Water St., Monticello), the free breakfast starts at 8:00 a.m., speeches begin at 8:30 a.m. and raffle drawings take place at 9:15 a.m.

November 13



Romeo and Juliet at MOH
One night only, see Southern Shakespeare Company's fast-paced production of the famous love story. This lively production brings all the romance, action, excitement and heartbreak of Romeo and Juliet to life in a way that feels fresh, fast and fun to watch. For showtimes and tickets, call (850) 997-4242 or visit www.monticellooperahouse.org.

November 13-14



Sugar Cane Festival
Experience an old Florida tradition at Suwannee Hardware & Feed (10572 Bridge St., White Springs). Friday's festivities last 5-10 p.m., featuring a chicken wing cook-off, live music and a street dance. On Saturday 9 a.m.-4 p.m., enjoy cane grinding and syrup cooking demonstrations, the Cross Creek Cloggers, more than 60 food and craft vendors, a car show, a backyard BBQ cook-off, a cane syrup tasting contest and cornhole. Car show registration begins at 8 a.m., with a $20 donation entry fee benefiting the local food bank. Festival admission is free, and pets are welcome. For more information, visit www.suwanneehardware.com or call 386-397-2551.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

November 14



CarQuest Car Show
Monticello CarQuest's annual Car Show and Customer Appreciation Day takes place 9 a.m 1 p.m. at 1321 S. Jefferson St. There will be free food and raffles every 15 minutes throughout the event. Proceeds support a local charity.

November 14 thru January 2

Members Holiday Exhibit at JAG
The annual holiday all-member art show opens on Saturday, Nov. 4. at Jefferson Arts Gallery (575 W. Washington St., Monticello) with a reception from noon to 4 p.m. See and shop for lots of giftable art and many holiday-themed pieces – all original, handmade designs by local artists. The exhibit continues through Jan. 5 during regular gallery hours, Wednesdays and Saturdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., or by appointment by calling 850-997-3311.

November 22

Community Thanksgiving Service – Monticello
An interdenominational worship service takes place at 6 p.m. at the Family Ministry Center (325 W. Walnut St., Monticello). The event, organized by the Jefferson County Ministerial Association, includes music, prayer and a Thanksgiving message.

November 27-28

Old Tyme Farm Days and Swap Meet
Celebrate traditional skills and rural heritage at the Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park and Campground (3076 95th Dr., Live Oak). Enjoy cane grinding, syrup making, blacksmithing, soap making, arts & crafts, antique equipment exhibits, a swap meet, food vendors,

Thanksgiving Weekend
OLD TYME FARM DAYS AND SWAP MEET

homemade treats, children's games and music activities throughout the weekend. For more information, visit www.MusicLivesHere.com or call 386-364-1683.

November 27-December 30



Suwannee Lights
Enjoy more than 15 million lights at the Spirit of the Suwannee Music

Roofing Experts
You Can Trust
Building on 3 generations of Roofing Experience
Commercial & Residential
Florida Roofing
AND SHEET METAL WORKS, INC.
850•222•1050



United Healthcare
Thomas Wallace
Licensed Sales Agent
850-445-1838
tomdiesel72@yahoo.com



Covering Madison and Jefferson Counties

Park and Campground (3076 95th Dr., Live Oak). Open nightly 6-10 p.m., with drive-through and walk-through displays, holiday photo opportunities, live entertainment, campfires, hot cocoa and caroling. Santa and his elves will visit Thursday through Sunday. After the drive, explore the illuminated garden and amphitheater on foot. For more information, call 386-364-1683.

December 3-5

Christmas on the Square

Celebrate Christmas in downtown Live Oak with hundreds of arts & crafts vendors, food and live entertainment. Festivities begin Thursday at 5 p.m. with a ribbon cutting, tree lighting, the Jingle Bell Fun Run/Walk and a movie at Millennium Park. On Friday 4-10 p.m., enjoy shopping, Santa Land, Snow on the Square and fireworks. Saturday's activities run 8 a.m.-4 p.m., featuring vendors, a car show, an agriculture exhibit and more, followed by the lighted Christmas parade at 6 p.m. Admission is free. Parking is available at Paul Langford Stadium (302 Parshley St. S.W., Live Oak). For more information, visit www.suwanneechamber.com or call 386-362-3071.

December 4-24

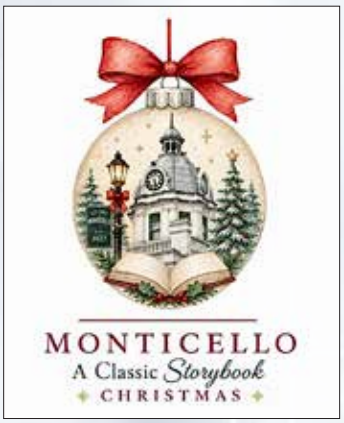
Festival of Lights

Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park (11016 Lillian Saunders Dr., White Springs) welcomes visitors 5-9 p.m. for Holiday Magic Nights, Dec. 4-23, featuring illuminated displays, complimentary popcorn and hot cocoa, marshmallow roasting, visits with Santa, children's crafts, food and craft vendors. Silent Night on Dec. 24 offers an evening to enjoy the lights. Admission is $4 per person; children under 3 are admitted free. Last admission is at 8:30 p.m. For more information, call 386-397-7009.

December 5

Jefferson County Vendor's Village

This First Saturday event featuring local farmers, makers, bakers and more takes place 9 a.m.-1 p.m. in the parking lot of the Jefferson County Courthouse (123 E. Washington St., Monticello). To become a vendor sign up at tinyurl.com/JCVV-app.



A Classic Storybook Christmas – Monticello

Beginning at 3 p.m., historic downtown Monticello comes alive with musicians, entertainment, a holiday marketplace and a fun zone for kids. Into the winter night, there will be a light parade at 6 p.m., tree lighting and visits with Santa until 8:30 p.m. For more information, call 850-997-5552 or visit www.monticellojeffersonfl.com or monticellochristmas.com.

Madison's Local Market

The quarterly market lasts 9 a.m.-3 p.m., with local vendors of all kinds around the Madison County Courthouse lawn.

Light Up Madison Christmas Celebration

This favorite holiday tradition, hosted in partnership with the Madison Kiwanis Club and the Madison County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, lasts from 4 to 7 p.m. and will certainly put everyone in the holiday spirit with vendors, entertainment, activities, shopping and fun for the entire family. The parade steps off at 6 p.m. from Farmer's Home Furniture (349 SW Range Ave.). For more information, call 850-973-2788.

December 12

Christmas at the Commons

Shop, eat and enjoy the fourth annual Christmas at the Commons (1409 Ohio Ave. N., Live Oak). Browse 9 a.m.-2 p.m. for holiday gifts and seasonal food.



The Krickets and the Currys Christmas Concert at MOH

Ring in the holiday season at the historic Monticello Opera House with The Krickets and The Currys, two acclaimed roots music bands who join forces to feature their hit songs and holiday favorites. Showtime is 8 p.m. For tickets, call 850-997-4242 or visit www.monticellooperahouse.org.





KITCH-ENCOUNTERS
Kitchen & Bath Remodeling



Over 25 years of experience
Kitchen and bath remodeling has never been easier
Top quality cabinets in traditional and contemporary styles
(850) 386-6555
2740 Capital Circle NE • Tallahassee, Fla.

HOLIDAY HK KITCHENS | DC DESIGNERS CHOICE Cabinetry | INTEGRITY CABINETS

TD-00002431 www.Kitch-Encounters.com

POV: Your younger self would be proud of where you are today.



DISCOVER.NFC.EDU

NFC has helped thousands of students just like you chase their dreams to earn certificates and degrees.

Start Today

NFC NORTH FLORIDA COLLEGE

325 NW Turner Davis Drive | Madison, FL 32340 | 850-973-2288

WILLIAMS
Fence Services
386-590-0201

Joey Williams
7090 161st Road
Live Oak, Fla. 32060
joeywilliams@williamsfenceservices.com





Aflac
Aflac of the Big Bend Area
We Care on Purpose
RJSW & Associates
An Independent Broker

112 W. Green St. - Perry, FL 32347
Office: (850) 584-3160 • (850) 584-3124

1344 Vickers Rd. - Tallahassee, FL 32303
Office: (850) 531-9908 • (850) 553-9332



James Madison
PREPARATORY HIGH SCHOOL



Innovative Curriculum

Since its creation as Madison County's only charter high school, JMPHS has continued to build on its reputation of offering opportunities to a wide range of learners.



Hands-On Learning

Kids learn best by doing, Our interactive classes and dedicated teams, allow students to build, expand and reach their full potential.



Expert Instructors

Our faculty and staff are committed to providing as much energy, necessary in order for our students to become successful in an ever changing and competitive world.

About Us

JMPHS is a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) focused, college preparatory institution that carries an excellent reputation in a small atmosphere, making JMPHS conducive to individualized student and teacher interaction.

2025'-26' ENROLLMENT OPEN NOW



Ready to kick start your child's future?

Apply today at www.jmphs.org

JAMES MADISON 1HGP TEAM

Contact Us
(850)253-2173

Visit Our Website
www.jmphs.org

Our Location
2812 US-90, Madison, FL 32340



Let Your Home
Embrace Comfort

Elevate your living room with timeless style and exceptional comfort. From relaxing after a long day to sharing special moments with family, discover furniture that makes every moment feel a little more luxurious.

JOHNSTON
SIGNATURE FURNISHINGS

Madison
464 Duval St,
Madison FL 32340
(850) 869-1005
Manager Mandy Whitaker

Owner
Andy Johnston

Monticello
405 S Jefferson St,
Monticello FL 32344
(448) 222-7030